Exposé of Polygamy
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CHAPTER XVI.


I have watched the whole system of Polygamy closely, and have tried earnestly to discover wherein it was productive of any good; but in not one single instance could I find, after the most diligent observation, any but the very worst results. On the contrary, it was the same story again and again repeated—evil—evil—evil!

That some men have practised Polygamy with honest intentions and a desire to “keep the commandments of God,” I know well to be true. I respect such men even while they do so. They err in blindness, and I believe they suffer while they are willing to make the sacrifice, (for to such men it is a sacrifice;) but it is only the first step that troubles them. They soon get over it. I know others in whom I had not this confidence—men who seem always ready and anxious to “live up to their privileges,” as they call it, without regard to any sacred obligations.

It has been frequently said to me in my travels, both in the Eastern and Western States, that gentlemen from Utah had been asked how the ladies submitted to Polygamy, and that they had made answer, “Oh! very well: they are perfectly happy, for they look upon its practice as a religious duty, and are satisfied and contented with it.”

Those women (if there be any?) who prefer this state of things are few and far between, and wherever such a woman may be found, I am certain that it will be discovered that the husband is some worthless fellow, or else so disagreeable in his family that the wives have no affection for him, and they therefore seek the companionship of each other.

Why gentlemen should make statements so very likely to mislead the public, I do not know. Possibly some of them really believe it; for, as I
before stated, where a man has more than one wife his wives are careful
to conceal their real feelings from him, for fear of creating a prejudice
against themselves and in favour of the other wife; for whether a woman
loves her husband or not, she does not like it to be said that she has been
cast off for another; and I know from experience that Mormon husbands
are the very last to learn of their wives’ feelings.

Women who tell the world that they are happy and contented, if
they would only express themselves freely would tell of their heart-aches,
of their sleepless nights, and of their loneliness. Others could tell that,
in spite of their husband’s kindness to them, their hearts knew no joy or
happiness. If a woman in this condition of mind were asked if she did not
love her husband as formerly, very probably she would answer, “O dear!
no; if I did, I could not live. The greatest trouble I had was to withdraw
my affections from my husband and fix them on my children. If I had
not done this, where would my children be?—with their mother in the
grave.” Oh! how true this is! I know it—I feel it!

Heaven help these poor women! If they could only know for them-
selves that this continued sacrifice was not necessary, their very hearts
would sing for joy.

I once said to a lady holding a high position in the church,¹ when
she was persuading me to give another wife to my husband, “What good
will it do me to give him another wife? I cannot do it with a good feeling.
I know that I should loathe both him and her; and how could I expect to
get any blessing from God by so doing?” She answered, “If you had a loaf
of bread to make, what would it matter how you felt while making it, so
long as you did make it?” That is just what the church authorities have
thought; no matter how many women were crushed, or how many were
sent to their graves, in the effort to establish Polygamy, if only they could
establish it.

The young girls in Utah feel about Polygamy much as their moth-
ers do. They like it so little that when one of the city girls marries a man
who has already a wife or wives, it is generally supposed that she does so
because he can keep her better than a younger man could. Until very
recently, the young men in Utah were not generally very attractive to any
sensible girl. They seemed to be destitute of ambition, but perhaps, after
all, they were not so much to blame for that. Poor boys! There was really
but little else for them to do but to haul wood for their fathers’ different
families, and hunt stray cattle.

It is now greatly different in Salt Lake City; as young men can get
remunerative employment, and are very willing to engage in useful work;
while a corresponding change is effected in their favour with the girls.
There are very few sensible, educated girls in Salt Lake City, who would to-
day prefer Polygamy to monogamy: I doubt whether there is really one.
The sermons, newspapers, and songs at one time were full of “the glory of the old man and the maiden going forth in the dance together,” but the rapid change that is coming over the country and people is fast dispelling all this. In a few years more, the anxiety to fulfill ancient Hebrew predictions at the cruel sacrifice of youth, beauty, and honourable maid- enly ambition, will disappear and be looked back upon by the Mormons themselves as follies of the past. When the Mormons lived in log huts and “dug-outs,” wore coarse, homespun garments, drank “coffee” made of roasted barley and wheat, and their women and children wore shakers and sun-bonnets in summer, and covered their heads in winter with cravats and shawls, an extra wife, or an extra half-dozen wives, could be very easily provided for. In that condition of poverty and isolation, the women did truly “eat their own bread and wear their own apparel.” The commercial development of the country has changed every thing and every body; and in no one has the change been more observed than on Brigham Young himself. Accordingly, Polygamy is becoming unpopular, and a natural desire for a higher condition in life is taking its place.

Aware of the marked difference in his own appearance, and in the comforts and luxuries with which himself and family are surrounded, Brigham tries to excuse himself for wearing broadcloth by pleading the old-fashioned weakness of Eden, “The woman tempted me”—“My wives insist that I shall wear better clothes.” This is the only instance wherein Brigham Young was ever known to be ruled by his wives!

While his family was confined to his first fifteen or sixteen wives, good women of faith and hard labour, he was plain, home-clad “Brother Brigham;” but with the later additions of vanity and fashion to his household, he found his Delilah. And if he lives long enough, at the rate he has been going on of late years, he will soon rival Solomon in more ways than one. He has apostatized further from his first teachings of faith and on Polygamy than any man in Mormonism.

When once a Mormon has entered into that order of marriage, he is no longer a free man; he is bound and cannot help himself, and this the authorities know. Where could a man go to outside of Utah with more than one wife? He must remain where he is, or give up his family.

That many a man has been counselled to add wives to his first with the intention of binding him to the church and hindering him from either apostatizing or leaving the country, is a commonly understood fact; and many a man has keenly felt the wrong to himself as well as to his wife, when neither of them desired to disturb the peaceful harmony of their family happiness by the experiment of imitating the domestic life of the Jewish Patriarchs.

One man only of my acquaintance has been successful in breaking his polygamic relations and in leaving the country. He was in business as
a merchant, and apparently tied up, so that he could not leave; but as his wives were as anxious as he was to break up the relationship, their movements were so well concealed that none of the authorities of the church had the slightest idea of his intended departure. His family had gone a few miles into the country on a visit, and he left his store with his coat off, and rode out of the town in a grain-wagon as if he were going to the gristmill. The overland mail-stage picked him up a few miles from Salt Lake City, and a few miles further, the family were taken into the stage, and they were off to California. The second wife, who had no children, acquiesced in the right of the first wife to remain with the husband. She got a satisfactory portion of his property, became a “Miss” again, and is to-day in California, rejoicing in her deliverance.

I know a gentleman in Salt Lake City who was urgently and constantly “counselled” to take a second wife. For years he resisted, but finally gave in to the importunities of counsel, as he saw that he must do so or rebel. As he could not do the latter conscientiously, he took a pure and beautiful girl for his second wife. Now, when he is no longer under the same religious obligations, he realizes that he is bound to protect and support her; yet he knows that in living with her, he is violating the laws of the land. In obeying “counsel,” he felt that he had done right in a religious sense; but, as a man and citizen, he knows that he is not acting as he should, and that is one of the intended difficulties in leaving the church.

It is related of Joseph Smith that when he got Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball to take other wives he was perfectly delighted, because, as he expressed it, he had got them “as much in the mud as he was in the mire.” He was liable to indictment for bigamy in Illinois when he took other wives, and they were then in the same predicament. Many men of faith in Utah have become polygamists, not from any personal desire on their part to assume either its obligations or possess its glory, but purely to share in the risks and penalties of violated law with their brethren. Such appeals to the patriotism and devotion of men to their religion, accounts for much that has been done. They obeyed in haste, and repented at leisure.

Brigham Young’s first violation of the law against Polygamy was regarded by the Saints, whether he intended it or not, as an expression of his confidence in God and his defiance of Congress. The faithful and believing brethren could not do less than follow the example of their leader. The law of 1862 against Polygamy has made very many more polygamists in Utah than existed there before. This opposition was not confined to the men only: the women in many instances partook of the same spirit; and in their moments of enthusiasm have seconded their husbands, but have afterwards had bitter cause to repent.

The greatest enemy to Polygamy is found in almost every polygamous family. It may be concealed; but it nevertheless is there, and only requires
time to accomplish its overthrow. This enemy is the great dislike or repugnance that many children born in Polygamy have to that system. It can have no foe more powerful than this. If the husband is neglectful of his wife, the son comes to the aid and protection of his mother; while the gentle, loving daughter consoles her with sweet sympathy.

Between mother and children there exists a bond of union in which the father has no part. They counsel with each other; and the result of their communings is unfavourable to Polygamy. This is indeed the leaven which will eventually permeate the whole system of Mormonism.

It is painful to witness among the rising generation of boys in Utah the contempt which many evince for every thing that a woman says or does, looking upon her as an inferior being. But this is not to be wondered at, when it is remembered what kind of teaching they have had in the Tabernacle, and the example of some of their own fathers. The sermons abound with allusions to woman’s dependence upon men. Even her salvation through Jesus Christ has to be obtained through her husband! How much greater, then, must man be, with his numerous wives, than either of the wives is individually.
Polygamy in Poverty.