

A MORMON MOTHER

Over eighty years old, he was survived by three wives, and, of course, many children. His second wife, herself a mother of a large family, who is now in her seventies, observed without apparent resentment, yet with some sadness: "Well, I had buried him years ago." So it was with me.

And now, Mr. Tanner was proposing that we interest ourselves again in Canada. Kneland was the financier of the family, and he thought we had better take his father's suggestion; so Lois and Obert, the day he graduated from the eighth grade, left for Canada.

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But now I was beginning to wonder: Is God "the same yesterday, today, and forever?"

I can remember so well the relief that I felt when I first realized that the Church had decided to abandon its position. For all of my earlier convictions, a great relief came over me. At that moment I compared my feelings of relief with the experience one has when the first crack of dawn comes after a night of careful vigilance over a sick patient. At such a time daylight is never more welcome; and now the dawn was breaking for the Church. I suppose its leaders may have realized, at last, that if our Church had anything worthwhile for mankind, they had better work with the government of our country rather than against it.

Notes from my diary, October 11, 1890:

Mother left me when baby was three weeks old. I was comfortably situated, having my new carpets down and all necessary things in my room. Baby had colic, and although my hands were full, I felt thankful for such worthwhile labor.

November 8, 1890:

It was Young People's Conference at this stake. My husband was invited. I did not attend meeting, but as Mr. Tanner could not come here in daylight, we visited at Mr. George Parkinson's. Mr. Parkinson blessed the baby, and he was named Myron.

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bonnet down to hide my face, wet with tears, and it seemed that John would try to comfort me. "We must be reconciled to His will," I imagined him saying, and then I wondered why His will required us to make such a great sacrifice. Of course John's body could not be brought home, so he lies buried at the foot of Mt. Carmel in Haifa, Palestine.

The year 1895, May 18th, my father and Aunt Mary celebrated their golden wedding anniversary. Relatives had come to Farmington from California and Missouri, and from many places between these states. Also the Church Presidency and several of the Twelve Apostles were present. The Social Hall was decorated as never before in its history. Aunt Mary looked lovely in her golden wedding dress, and she enjoyed all attention and honor that could be thought of. My mother in her stately way appeared unmoved. Her home was filled with guests who had come for the celebration.

For the first time in my life, I began to realize that my mother had had an uneven break as a second wife in her polygamous marriage. Perhaps these new thoughts were partly caused by the extra attention Aunt Mary was receiving at that time. It was in such contrast to the obscurity of my own mother's life. But in any case, I looked at the principle of plural marriage from many angles that summer. I was aware now that my mother's early married life must have been humiliating and joyless on many occasions because of her position as a second wife. As a girl I had been proud that my father and

be leaders among professional people. With this anticipation for us, I became located just fifteen miles north of Salt Lake, a favorable position to carry out my plans for the education of my family. On the other hand, my husband, through circumstances that were not anticipated, secured a large farm nearly a thousand miles from home. There he was, struggling with all his might to make the farm a success, and here was I, struggling and just as determined as he, to realize my ambition to have an educated family. This is the picture as one sees it now.

At the beginning of his experiences in Canada I had no intention of opposing my husband; neither had I any idea of using the children for our advantage in a financial way. It never occurred to me that the children were under any obligation to us. I wanted my children to do as well by their own children as I had tried to do by them, and with knowledge increasing and conditions improving, each generation should be ahead of the present or past generation. Thus, I thought, the people of the world evolve in an evolutionary way to higher standards.

I had the attitude of many Mormon women in polygamy. I felt the responsibility of my family, and I developed an independence that women in monogamy never know. A woman in polygamy is compelled by her lone position to make a confidant of her children. How much more is this true when that woman is left entirely alone.

As I have observed monogamy, the husband and

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problems; and if six, double that, in which case, the attitude is generally "everyone for himself," as was largely the case when my husband in later years married three additional women. This was extreme, but not as much so as polygamous practices by some of the earlier leaders of the Church.

this freedom. It seemed to me that polygamy was on a higher level than in my mother's day.

Methods of practicing the principle sometimes changed in the family, as was the case in my father's home. My mother, in her later years, no longer went to the first wife for provisions. President Young also discarded this practice. Mother acquired a new home and surrounded it with lovely lawns and flowers. As the years passed, my mother had sons, who, when they took a load of hay to Salt Lake, returned with a sack of sugar or a piece of furniture. The methods had changed and she was now more satisfactorily provided for, but where was the companionship of her husband?

Such were my thoughts at this time.

True, those who had the integrity to be honest in their purpose, kept the respect of their families and were comparatively successful.

Sometimes, however, the religious motivation was lost sight of in the maze of the practical difficulties involved. Who thinks of eternal glory when there is discord in the family? Too, in the times of difficulty, people are so apt to think that the situation will last forever.

Here is life, with all its weakness of human nature; some are selfish and jealous, many without adequate psychological knowledge or experience to meet even the simpler problems. Perhaps in poor health, and in comparative poverty, one may say that monogamy is heir to these same limitations, which is true. But with three wives in one family there may well be three times the

or even durable? Yes, I reasoned, to live the principle successfully was a fine character test. One must be generous, sympathetic, patient, and above all, have self-control. Hence, I argued, there were advantages in polygamy here on this earth as well as reward in the Celestial Kingdom. However, some humiliation could result to children of a polygamous family, if the wives were of different cultural levels. I often felt sorry when one wife was a woman of high standards, and the husband married another wife whose background was decidedly inferior.

Why was I so speculating? Was all this argument necessary to support the principle because it was a never-ending problem that we were struggling with, trying with all our might to recognize in it some good?

Many gave up the attempt to live in polygamy when the Manifesto was issued by President Woodruff in 1890. Some girls were glad to go home and shift for themselves, and some men felt a relief and justified themselves in forsaking their families. It is true that I, too, rejoiced, because I did not want anyone to have the miserable experience that had been mine. However, it did not occur to me, for one minute, to give up the struggle of living polygamy. I was happily married, so far as happiness goes in a polygamous marriage.

The methods of practicing polygamy differed in every family. Mr. Tanner was a salaried man. He gave to his wives their allowance and seemed quite indifferent as to how they spent it. I felt it a great privilege to have