

CHAPTER XVII.

TROUBLES IN OUR OWN FAMILY.—LOUISE COMES UPON THE SCENE.

Increase of Polygamy.—Marrying going on Day and Night.—“Taking a Wife and Buying a Cow.”—A Faithful Husband in a Fix.—How Men get “Married of the Sly.”—How Wives were Driven Crazy by their Wrongs.—My Father Marries Considerably.—He “Goes in” for the Hand-Cart Girls.—Marries a Couple to Begin with.—Takes a Third the same Month.—Rapid Increase of his “Kingdom.”—How the Girls Chose Husbands.—Instructing the New Wives in our Family.—Louise Flirts and Rebels.—She is Scolded and Repents.—Goes to Bed and Weeps.—Bestows her Goods on the Family.—“Lizzie” Interviews Her.—She Poisons Herself.—Is a “Long Time Dying.”—She gets a Strong Dose of Cayenne.—Is sent on her Travels.—The Last we Heard of Her.

ANOTHER immediate effect of the “Reformation” was to increase the practice of polygamy. To alter an old rhyme to suit the occasion,



ONLY A WIFE OUT OF THE WAY.

—
“Then were those
wed who never
wed before;

And those who
once were wed
now wed the
more.”

Marrying and giving in marriage was carried on to such an extent, that, as in the old days of the first

“Endowments” in Nauvoo Temple, the ceremony of sealing was literally going on day and night. “The man who refuses to enter poly-

291 NO HEAVEN WITHOUT POLYGAMY.

gamy will be eternally damned,” announced Brigham Young from the Tabernacle. “Who marries out of the church marries for hell,” supplemented Herber C. Kimball. Polygamy

was preached from the platform, and taught by the ward-teachers in private. It was not only advised—it was commanded, and no one dared of disobeying the prophetic mandates.

There was scarcely a family in the Territory at that time which was not increased by a plurality of wives. Men married in the most reckless fashion, with nothing in the world on which to support their families. Girls went to the Endowment House in the morning to take their Endowments, with no idea of marrying, and came away in the afternoon sealed to some brother whose fancy they had taken, or who, being advised by Brigham or Herber to avail himself of his “privileges,” had left the matter in apostolic hands, and submitted to everything, even to the choice of a wife.

Wives did not know when their husbands would bring home another woman to share their home and their husband; for the clause in the “Revelation” that declared that a man should seek his wife’s consent to a plural marriage, and that she should herself give the new wife to her husband, “even as Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham,” was merely a dead letter, and was not minded in the majority of cases. Indeed, the men many times did not consider it at all necessary to inform the wives of their intentions, and the poor women would know nothing of the new marriage until the husband brought home his latest acquisition, or until she was informed of it by some outsider.

Those were the days when even the most trusting wives lost faith in their husbands; when solemn, oft-repeated promises were broken, evidently without the slightest qualm of conscience; when the tender, watchful affection of the husband and father was swallowed up in mad desire of

292 ONLY A WIFE!

possession of the brute. There were tragedies enacted then that the world never will hear of; women died of broken hearts, and their sad fates brought no pang, or repentance, or remorse to the men who were as much the murderers as though they had deliberately taken their lives with the knife, the bullet, or the poisoned cup.

“Only a wife” out of the way; and what did that matter?—plenty more were to be had for the asking. “I think no more of taking a wife that I do of buying a cow,” was one of Herber Kimball’s delicate remarks, made from the stand in the Tabernacle to a congregation of several thousand. Most of his hearers thought even less of it, for they would have had to pay money only for the cow; and as for the other, he only to throw his handkerchief to some girl, and she would pick it up and follow him.

All the finer feelings and sensibilities of man’s nature were killed by this horrible system. He regarded women’s suffering with utter indifference; he did not care

for their affection; their tears bored him, and angered rather than touched him. He lost all the respect and chivalrous regard which he once had for the sex, and spoke of his wives as “my women,” “my heifers,” or, if he, a Herber Kimball, “my cows.” He was taught that they were his inferiors, dependent on him for everything, even for their future existence, and he considered that it was sufficient that he give them his name; the rest they might get for themselves. He believed that the Mormon Church was to bring about the time “when seven women shall lay hold on one man, begging to be allowed to be called by his name,” and should promise to eat their own bread and wear their own apparel. The latter they have been merely allowed but obliged to do ever since they entered the system, and poor and scanty have been both bread and apparel in the majority of cases. It makes, in short, a brute of what might be a man.

I know a first wife who was driven to such utter despera-

293 HOPE GONE FOREVER!

tion by the total neglect of her husband, that she determined to take her own life, since it had grown such a burden that



it was intolerable to bear.

One night, in the dead of winter, the snow falling thick and fast, and the wind sweeping down the mountains and through the canyons, cutting to the very bone, as only a mountain wind can, she wrapped a tattered shawl about her, and rushed madly through the night and the snow to the river, intending to lay down her life and her miseries together. With a wild prayer for mercy, she was about to throw herself into the water, when she was restrained by a strong, imperative hand, and her husband’s voice, hissing angrily in her ear, bade her go home and not make a fool of herself.

He was on his way home, or, rather, to his first wife’s house, for a change of linen, that he might attend his second and more favored wife to a party, when he caught sight of the flying figure, and, suspecting her intentions, followed her swiftly, and was just in season to prevent her from taking the fatal step.

294 MARRYING “ON THE SLY.”

He had no word of sympathy for her; on the contrary, he was angered at what he called her obstinacy “and determination to make a fool of herself.” Her anguish of heart brought no response of tenderness from him; he made her return home, get the articles of apparel which he wished, and assist him in his preparations for taking her rival out for the evening. In her frenzy, the maternal instinct which is so strong in every woman utterly failed her, and she went away to seek the death she coveted, leaving her little baby wailing piteously in its cradle.

My mother had a friend whose husband had, for a long time, withstood the desires and counsels of the priesthood, and had incurred their marked displeasure by neglecting for so long to “live up to his religion,” and “avail himself of his privileges.” At the time of the Reformation, however, he did not dare neglect his “duty” any longer, and decided to take a second wife. Neither did he dare tell his first wife of his determination, for he knew how entirely she loved and trusted him, and he knew, too, how bitter an opponent she always had been to polygamy. He knew as well how many times he had assured her that she had nothing to fear; that he would be faithful to her, as he had promised to be in the old days when he married her, and before God had vowed to “cleave to her only until death should them part.” And he felt how bitter would be her sorrow, how justly indignant her feelings towards him, how intense her anger, and he did not dare to brave it all; so he stole quietly away to the Endowment House one day, leaving his true and confiding wife ill in her bed, and fresh from her sick room, took the blasphemous vows which claimed to bind him to another woman for time and eternity.

The first wife knew nothing of what had transpired until she was very delicately told by a kind neighbor, who, knowing that she must find it out sooner or later, thought it her duty to break the news to her as quietly as possible.

She was almost maddened by the intelligence, and at first

295 “GOD HELP ME IF IT’S TRUE!”

she utterly refused to believe it. It could not be possible that the husband of her youth, the man whom she had so loved and trusted, would betray her thus; would take ad-



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF SALT LAKE CITY

vantage of her illness to skulk away and take another wife, and that, too, after al his repeated promises to her.

“It can’t be true,” she cried, wringing her hands, and growing deadly pale. “It *isn’t* true! I can’t believe it. I won’t believe it. O my God, help me if it is true. Tell me that it isn’t; that you are mistaken.”

But no assurance could be given her, and her friend tried in the gentlest manner to comfort her; but what consolation could she bring that would heal a shattered faith or bind up a broken heart?

This story had had many, many repetitions since then, until now it has got to be “an old, old story often told.”

It was all very well for this man to take this step as a religious duty, if he had been sincere. But would he, or would any true man who believed fully that he was obeying the revealed law of God, and doing what he did for conscience’ sake, be afraid to meet any opposition, from whatever a tacit acknowledgment that he does not believe in its divinity at all, and that conscience stings, rather than approves him for his cowardly act?

Another wife, whose husband had promised her as faithfully that he would not take another wife, did take one in the same way, and under precisely the same circumstances. On hearing the news she became a raving maniac, and died in the insane hospital. Still another, who was as bitter an opponent of the system of “Celestial Marriage” as either of the other two, was one day invited by her husband to go for a drive. Touched by this unusual act of kindness—for he had been anything but kind to her, since he could not obtain her consent to his taking another wife—she quickly made herself ready, and went with him. He drove her to the insane asylum, and left her, and she is

296 DISPOSING OF THE HAND-CART GIRLS.

still an inmate of the place, although she is as sane as I am at this moment.

I could cite hundreds of such cases that occurred during the first years that directly followed the Reformation, and that have multiplied since, until the recital of them would fill a large volume; but I will, instead, tell a little what te “Reformation.” And the subsequent “Celestial Ordinance” fever, did for our own family.

It added several more to our circle in a very short time. My father was counseled, as were most of the Mormon men, to take some of the “Hand-Cart girls,” as they must be provided for some way. My mother had already had her burden given her; and after she had been obliged to see another women taking the love and care that by right belonged to her, and her alone, she grew indifferent on the subject, and declared that a few wives, more or less, would make little difference to her now, and she would be as well satisfied with one fourth of a husband as with one half.

That is generally the way first wives argue; if there is to be a plurality of wives, it may as well be half a dozen as one. The hurt comes with the first plural wife; no suffering can ever exceed the pain she feels then.

The second wife was made ill, however, by the new arrangement; it was the first time she had felt the hurt of being superseded; but she bore it very patiently, and made no complaint. After she recovered from her illness, she joined my mother in her efforts to make friends with the other wives, for two had already been added to the family, and placed under the same roof with us.

The Hand-Cart girls, not being disposed of rapidly enough to satisfy the authorities, they urged them to make proposals to the brethren, which, by the way, they were not at all backward in doing. One young lady selected “our” husband, to use my mother’s expression; and to quote from her description, “as it was done in obedience to counsel, we extended our arms to receive her, the third one

297 RAPID INCREASE OF MY FATHER’S “KINGDOM.”



That we had welcomed within the month. Our ‘kingdom’ was increasing, but each individual share of husband was growing ‘small by degrees and beautifully less.’”

This last acquisition proved to be anything but an agreeable one, and she made plenty of trouble for us all. When she offered herself to my father, after having been counseled by the authorities to do so, he received her proposition somewhat coolly and cautiously, for, to tell the truth, he would much have preferred to make his own selection, and Louise (for that was her name) would, most emphatically, have not been his choice. Yet he would have been openly ridiculed, and held up to derision in the Tabernacle, had he ventured to refuse; so there was nothing to do but to take her, and make the best of it.

He had been so long absent that his affairs were by no means in a flourishing condition, and he needed all the assistance he could obtain from his wives. My mother and Elizabeth were both hard-working women, and as hard as they had labored during their husband's absence, they did

298 LOUISE FLIRTS TOO FREELY.

not relax their exertions in the slightest now that he had returned. My mother took the young wives at once under her protection, and commenced teaching them to be useful. The two first ones proved very nice girls, and worked with a will, showing a great readiness and aptitude at learning, and a genuine desire to do their part.

But the "free-will offering," as Elizabeth and mother always called Louise, did not love work, and she would not do it. She said she was a milliner, and had once been an actress, and declined "to soil her hands with menial labor." That was her speech in refusing to assist about the household work.

There was some little friction in the running of the household machinery on account of this; but Mormon women are expected to exercise patience, and there was very little fault found audibly, although it was quite apparent that the new wife was unhappy, and that all the rest were disgusted with her selfishness and indolence, which amounted to laziness.

My father was appointed to another mission in the States, directly after he was married to Louise, and he left his entire family living all together on a farm about seventy miles west of Salt Lake City.

During his absence Louise made herself disagreeable in every possible way. It actually seemed as though she had made up her mind to annoy us all as much as possible, and that she tried every expedient she could devise to accomplish her intentions.

My mother was particularly annoyed by her familiarity with the men employed on the farm, and remonstrated with her on her undignified behavior. She was very impertinent, although mother had spoken to her in the kindest possible way, and informed her that she should do as she pleased; that she was my father's wife, and her rights in the house were equal to any other person's.

Fortunately, my father remained away but a short time,

299 MALINGERING!

and on his return he was speedily made acquainted with the state of affairs. He disapproved of her conduct quite as much as my mother had done, and treated her with such a marked coolness that she demanded the cause. He told her

that he was greatly displeased with her, annoyed particularly at her lack of respect for herself, him, or his family, and that he did not feel at all like acknowledging her as his wife unless she would most decidedly behave in a more becoming and dignified manner.

She was very penitent, and promised all sorts of things if he would only allow her to remain in his family; she went about the house the very personification of grief and humility, until my father was called by church business to Salt Lake City. No sooner was he fairly started than she determined to create a sensation in the family.

She shut herself up in her room, after announcing that she wished to be left quiet and not intruded upon by anyone. However, one of the younger wives entered her room on some pretext or other, and found Louise in bed.

"Are you ill? She inquired.

"O, no; only heart-broken!" was the reply, in the most doleful tone which she could possibly assume, and a great display of grief in the shape of a pocket-handkerchief which she applied to her eyes, then flourished in the air, and then returned to the eyes. After some more conversation, Eliza came out with a pair of valuable earrings in her hand. Mother asked her where she got them.

"Louise gave them to me," was the reply.

"Isn't that a sudden freak of generosity?" inquired my mother.

"She says she shall never want them anymore, and she cried when she said it," was the answer.

Louise had always seemed to like Eliza better than she did any of the other wives, and my mother at once fancied that there was some trickery going on, and that Louise was trying to win Eliza over to her. I was a little curious my-

300 HOW I GOT A WATCH AND CHAIN.

self, as girls of thirteen are very apt to be when anything unusual is going on in the family which they do not fully understand; so I determined to visit Louise myself, and see what was the matter with her.

She was very pathetic in her conversation with me, and made me quite miserable by the recital of her wrongs. Somehow I felt as though I was personally to blame for all her misery, and yet I didn't see how that could be. She gave me her watch and chain, which I had always admired and coveted, and told me she had done forever with such gewgaws. I was so delighted with the jewelry that I quite neglected to be properly sympathetic, and rushed off to show my gift to my mother, and tell her what Louise said.

She began to be a little startled by this new development of affairs, and asked Lizzie, the third wife, to go up to her. Lizzie was not a great favorite with Louise, and my mother did not anticipate that she would receive such fine

presents, to say the least. She came back, saying that Louise said she was going to die, and then she wished her wardrobe divided among the family. She also wished that my mother would come to her. She at first felt inclined to refuse, but upon consideration, and being urged by the different members of the family, she went, and found her groaning with pain, real or pretended. She couldn't tell which then.

"What is the trouble?" she asked.

"O," said Louise, with a groan, "I am dying. I shall never cause any more trouble in your family."

"It is not right for you to talk in that manner," replied my mother; "if you are ill, I will do all I can to relieve you."

"I don't want anything done; I only want to die: my husband does not love me, and I cannot live; all I desire is death," wailed the woman.

"It is not always so easy to die when we desire," was my mother's somewhat crisp reply, as she was a little annoyed by what she considered Louise's "foolishness."

"But I have made sure," answered she; "I have taken poison."

301 THE HUSBAND "SETTLES" THE MATTER.

"You surely cannot be so wicked as that," was mother's surprised reply. "You are certainly telling me a falsehood."

Louise called on all heaven to witness the truth of what she had said, and made so many solemn asseverations to the truth of her having poisoned herself, that my mother began to fear that she had really done so, and that the affair was much more serious than she had supposed, for she had really no idea that Louise would do so desperate a thing as that, for she seemed altogether too fond of the good things of this life to relinquish them voluntarily. We had all considered before this that Louise was giving us a taste of her dramatic powers, and that it was a piece of very poor acting, after all. But if she really had taken her life into her own hands, determined to throw it away so recklessly, she must be looked after at once.

So everything that could be thought of as an antidote to poison was given to her; she all the time groaning and screaming with pain. There was no physician within thirty miles, and our nearest neighbor lived five miles away. My brother was summoned from the hay-field, where he was at work, and sent for our father, who had set out on horseback some hours before. He would necessarily travel very slowly, however, as he was driving cattle. The boy had to climb high mountains, and consequently made but slow progress; yet, on descending, he ran as fast as possible, and succeeded in overtaking his father when about fifteen miles from home. He was perfectly exhausted by his efforts, and fell fainting at his father's feet, after he had

managed to gasp out, "Father, Louise has poisoned herself!"

It was some time before he recovered sufficiently to tell the whole story, which my father instantly pronounced a hoax. "However," he said, "I will go back and settle the difficulty."

During all the time elapsed between my brother's

302 IT'S YOUR FAULT I'M NOT DEAD!

Departure and his return with his father, Louise was continuing the tragedy in a way that was calculated to frighten the whole family. She reached out her hand and bade us all farewell, at the same time exhorting us to greater piety. She said it had been her desire to do right, but she knew she had failed in her most earnest endeavors; this she regretted, as she was now nearing her end, and had no means of rectifying her past wrong-doing. Yet she wished to die in peace with all, and she forgave the wrongs she had received at the hands of some members of the family.

After talking on in this strain for some time, until, indeed, she had exhausted the topic and could find no more to say, she tried her hand at acting a kind of stupor; from which she soon aroused, however, and recommenced her exhortation, and ended by informing my mother that she had never understood her, and had never sufficiently appreciated her, and that she would rather die than be the cause of contention.

My mother at last was beginning to understand her most thoroughly now; and losing all patience with her, and feeling very indignant at her shallow attempt at deception, which was beginning to be very patent to us all, said, —

"It seems to me you are a long time dying, Louise; I feel quite satisfied that you are deceiving us all, and as I do not care to be duped any longer, we'll call the farce ended—for you can't make a tragedy of it, try as you may."

"It is your fault that I am not dead," Louise answered, her eyes flashing suddenly, and a great deal of the old-fashioned spirit in her will; "if you hadn't administered an old antidote, against my will, I should be dead now."

We none of us could restrain a smile at her mention of the "antidote" for salt and water, salt and vinegar, and mustard and water, were the only medicines we had given her. With these simple remedies,—none which had the slightest effect on the patient—my mother's "medicine box" was exhausted, and there was nothing else which she could do, except to abandon the case, which she did.

303 "THERE'S NOBODY DEAD!"

Her friends, the hired men, came in at night anxiously inquiring after Louise. We were all totally unde-

ceived by that time, and one of the wives replied to their questions, that they need have no fear about her, as she no doubt would outlive all the rest of the family; and they had all decided to "leave her for Mr. Webb to deal with." The men thought this very heartless, and said they had feared they should find her dead.

My mother, who had overheard the last remark, replied, rather sharply, that nothing would kill her unless it was the mixture she had administered, for she was positive that she had taken no poison. Her object had been to frighten the family, and she had administered, for she was positive that she had taken no poison. Her object had been to frighten the family, and she had succeeded admirably. She had turned the house topsy-turvy, and sent Edward off on a wild-goose chase, and we were all getting quite angry.

About nine o'clock in the evening my father returned. My mother met him at the door.

"There's nobody dead!" was her greeting.

"I didn't expect there was," he replied, passing her and entering Louise's room.

"What are you in bed for?" was his inquiry.

At first she declined to reply to him, but on his repeating the question, and insisting on an answer, she told the same story that she had told to the rest of us. He was as skeptical regarding the truth of it as the rest of us had been, but said that he would suggest the free use of cayenne pepper, and asked my mother to make her some tea of it. I am afraid there was a little malice in her heart, as she asked of she might make it as strong as she liked.

"Yes," he replied; "give her a strong dose. She shall have enough to make her sick of her nonsense."

There was no further assurance needed, and I, fancy there never was a stronger decoction [**a concoction made by concentrating a substance by boiling it**] mixed than the one my mother prepared for the impostor. At first Louise declared she would not take it; but my father insisted upon it, telling her that he knew nothing better for people who

304 A BIG DOSE OF CAYENNE.

had poisoned themselves, and she was compelled to swallow the whole of it.

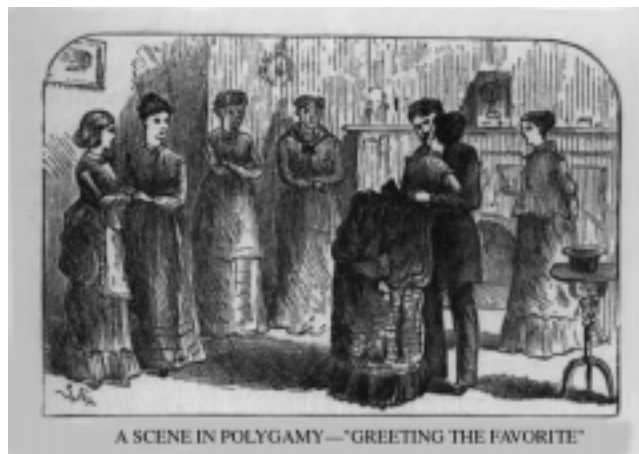
There was no need, after that, for her to pretend illness, for she was sick enough for one hour to thoroughly frighten her, and to satisfy the rest of the family, who felt that she deserved just the punishment she was getting for the deception she had practiced, and the fright she had caused, which was genuine for a while.

My mother was specially angry because my brother was made very ill by his long run after his father, and he came very near losing his life in consequence. After Louise had recovered somewhat from the paroxysms of pain into which she had been thrown by the cayenne pepper, my fa-

ther had a serious talk with her, and told her that she must no longer consider herself a member of his family. Her conduct had been such that she had forfeited all right to consideration, and he would not have such a woman as she had proved herself to be in the house with his wives and his young daughter; so she must go away and find a home for herself elsewhere.

She had not expected this, and she suddenly changed her tactics, and begged to be allowed to remain in the family in any capacity whatever. She confessed that she had been trying to frighten us all, and that she had taken no poison, but had got up the scene in order to create sympathy for herself. She professes great sorrow at her actions, and again pleaded to be allowed to remain.

But my father was inexorable; and, in spite of tears, entreaties, and protestations, she was taken to Salt Lake City, and we none of us ever saw her again, although we heard of her several times. She married again in a very short time, and in three weeks was divorced from her second husband, to whom she had been sealed, "for time and eternity." After leaving this husband of three weeks, she went to the southern part of the Territory, and married another man, whom she persuaded to take her to St. Louis.



305 MONEY AND WIFE GONE!

While there she suddenly went away one day, taking her husband's money and leaving him behind. When next heard from, she was on her way to England. Her husband made no attempt to follow her, but returned to Utah without either money or wife, yet entirely reconciled to the loss of one, since it had been the means of ridding him of the other.

Louise was the only one of all my father's wives who ever made the least trouble. The rest of them were good women, doing their best to make things pleasant. They did not like a polygamous life, and only endured it because they thought they must. They were not happy women—no women in polygamy are happy, however loudly they may

claim to be—and they made no pretense of being. Neither did they quarrel with each other, or complain of one another to their husband. Whatever difficulties they might have they settled among themselves, and did not trouble any outsiders. In fact, in my father's family the best side of a polygamous life was shown, but the best side was by no means a bright one.

This episode of Louise shows the absurdity of marrying without previous acquaintance, and also the miseries that may be endured by other wives when there is one bad woman in their midst.