

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE PROPHET MAKES LOVE TO ME.—I HAVE OTHER VIEWS.

The Prophet Casts his Eye on Me.— He Objects of My Beaux.—“A Low Set Anyway.”—I Didn’t Want to Marry the Prophet.—He Considers Himself an Irresistible Lover.—My First Drive with the Prophet.—I join the Theatrical Corps.—How We “Got Up” our Parts.—How “Fun Hall” was Built.—The Prophet Erects a Theater out of Temple Funds.—How Julia Deane, the Actress, Fascinated the Prophet.—How Brigham Cheated the Actors in his Theater.—The Girls Grumble over their Scanty Fare.—They Want Something Good to Eat.—My New Beau.—Love at First Sight.—I am Engaged to My First Husband.

SOON after I took my Endowments, Brigham Young showed his consciousness of my existence. He had always seen me frequently, but had regarded me and treated me as a child. He seemed suddenly to realize that I

had grown to be young lady, and the first intimation he gave of it was by interfering with my beaux.

L i k e most girls of my age, I was very fond of gay society; liked honest admiration and atten-

tion; and I should like to know what a girl of seventeen does not, whether she be Mormon or Gentile?

I was at that time quite intimate with Emmeline Free’s children, and I knew nearly all of the rest of Brigham Young’s

374 “A LOW SET ANYWAY!”

children; but Emmeline’s were nearer my own age, and circumstances had thrown us more together. Emmeline had a

younger brother, Finley Free, who was at one time a great friend of mine; indeed, as many boys and girls before us have done, I suppose we fancied we were in love with each other. Finley was a jolly fellow, full of fun, and we agreed capitally. Emmeline used to throw us together in every possible way,—for, I suppose, like most women of a somewhat romantic turn of mind, she was fond of matchmaking, and having no other convenient couple at hand, she amused herself with us.

Brigham saw me often at Emmeline’s, and twice at the theater, always with Finley Free. He was always very pleasant to me, and I quite liked him, until one day he went to my mother, and told her that he wished her to stop my going about with Finley Free; that I ought not to have anything to do with “those Frees;” they were “a low set anyway,” and didn’t amount to anything, either the boys or girls—a rather peculiar remark for him to make, when his favorite wife at that time—for that was before the reign of Amelia opened—was one of those selfsame Frees of whom he spoke so contemptuously to my mother.

Of course I didn’t like this interference at all, and I considered myself quite a martyr to the Mormon priestly rule. I expressed my opinion of the Prophet very freely, and, I have no doubt, very foolishly, and I spoke of him in a manner that fairly horrified my mother, who considered me nearly as profane and blasphemous as if I had found fault with the overruling of Providence. The Mormon people bow as humbly, and say as resignedly, “Thy will, not mine, be done,” before a fiat of Brigham Young’s as they do before a mysterious dispensation of the Lord’s; and I honestly believe they would dare question the justice of God sooner than that of Brigham Young. The latter holds them so completely, body and soul, that they shrink before his displeasure in absolute terror, and regard religiously his every slightest wish.

375 “THAT HATEFUL OLD THING!”

All the girls of my acquaintance knew of the trouble, and, naturally enough, all sympathized with me; and a more rebellious set of morals was never seen. We indulged in the most incendiary talk, and turned the torrent of our wrath especially against polygamy. One girl suggested that, as the old men always interfered with the girls’ “fun,” it was more than likely that it was because they wanted them for themselves; and ended by turning to me, and saying, “Perhaps Brother Brigham means to marry you himself.”

“But he won’t,” said I, angrily; “I wouldn’t have him if he asked me a thousand times—hateful old thing.”

My spirit was warmly applauded by my auditors, and we all entered into a solemn compact, then and there, never, *never*, to enter polygamy. How fortunate it was that



our futures were unrevealed to us! I look back now to that time, and then think of the girls as they are today—most of them polygamous wives—hating the bondage in which they are held, yet wearing their galling fetters with a hopeless sort of patience, that is, after all, only silent endurance; for it would avail nothing if they should cry out in despair and desperation; they would only be treated with greater neglect, insulted oftener and more openly, or else held up to public ridicule by their religious leader, to whom the unhappy husbands of these complaining wives—women who dared to be wretched when Mormonism declared they should not—had related their domestic grievances.

It may seem rather strange that such a simple affair as a school-girl's indignation-meeting should be reported to the Prophet. But it was; and, among other things, my unlucky speech was repeated to him. Most men would have laughed at it as mere girlish nonsense and folly, and never have thought of it again, much less spoken of it; but not so Brigham Young. No affair is too trivial to fail to be of interest to him; and, besides, in this speech of mine—girl as I was—his vanity was sorely hurt. If he has one

376 MY FIRST DRIVE WITH BRIGHAM.

weakness above all his other weaknesses, it is his vanity regarding the power he possesses over my sex; and to have



his fascinations called in question was a sore hurt for his pride.

What cowards we all are, to be sure! I was as brave as you please in making my declaration of independence to my mates, with whom, at that particular period, I was something of a heroine; but when called upon to defend that declaration, I am ashamed to say, I left it to take care of

itself, and employed myself in stammering out excuses for its existence.

I was going home one day, and was walking leisurely along, when the presidential carriage, with the President himself as the sole occupant, stopped at the edge of the sidewalk. Brother Brigham gave me a very kindly greeting, and said, "You are some distance from home; get in and ride with me; I will carry you there."

377 "YOU SAID YOU WOULDN'T MARRY ME."

I knew the invitation was equivalent to a command; so I got reluctantly into the carriage, feeling very small indeed, and hating myself that I did not refuse. As we rode along, he suddenly burst out with, "I heard you said you wouldn't marry me if I wanted you to ever so much."

I was so surprised that it nearly took away my breath. I managed to stammer out a very incoherent, lame reply, and grew every minute more embarrassed. He said no more to me on the subject, but was very pleasant, and took me home to my mother, who was quite surprised to see me appearing in that style. I think Brigham's mind was made up from that time that I should one day be his wife; not, I think, from any particular affection which he cherished for me, but to punish me for my foolish speech, and to show me that his will was stronger than mine, and that he did not choose to be set at defiance even by so insignificant a person as myself.

The autumn in which I was eighteen years of age, he sent for me to come to the theater as a member of the company, for he wished to make an actress of me. At the same time he told my mother that he thought I had better stay at the "Lion House," which is where the larger part of the family live, as our own house was so far away from the theater that it would be extremely inconvenient for me to live there, as I would be obliged to be back and forth from the theater every evening, and often through the day. He wished me to enter upon my new duties at once, and as I had no thought of disobeying him, I went immediately on receiving the summons. I did not see why I should be sent for, as I had no particular talent or taste for the stage, and I knew absolutely nothing about the art of acting. I never had the slightest training or preparation for it, but plunged into it, entirely ignorant of what I was undertaking. I did "juvenile business," with an occasional "sourbrette" [a **saucy, coquettish, intriguing, maidservant**] part as a variation; but in the latter line I was not nearly so successful. Several of Brigham's daughters were acting at

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the time. The most prominent were Alice, who did "lead-

ing” business, and Zina, who was “leading juvenile.”

At that time the theater was a church affair. All the actors and actresses were Mormons, with the exception of an occasional “star,” and all of them played without salaries. They were selected from the first families in the city by the owner of the theater, who, of course, was Brigham Young, and spent literally all their time in studying, rehearsing, and preparing wardrobes, which they furnished themselves. The honor of being selected by Brother Brigham to amuse him and assist him was supposed to be sufficient remuneration.

The theater, by the way, has been, and still is, a prolific source of revenue to the Prophet. Theatricals have always been largely patronized by the Saints, and rank with dancing as an amusement. They were introduced into Nauvoo by Joseph Smith, and as soon as possible after the arrival in Salt Lake Valley they were commenced. The actors were all amateurs, and the playing, no doubt, was something quite extraordinary; but it was a recreation, and fortunately the audiences were not critical. Dramatic effects are very much liked by this people, and they would reduce everything to a play, if possible. They certainly make it a part of religious service; for what is the “Endowment,” if it is not a drama, and a very silly one at that?

The first Utah theatricals were held in a building called “Social Hall,” but after a time the Prophet became impressed that another building was required. So, taking “Amusements” as a text, he delivered a sermon on the proposed new building. He said he should christen it “Fun Hall,” as he thought that would be the most appropriate name that could be given it. “It is,” he said, “to be a place where the Saints can meet together and have all the fun they desire. And no Gentiles shall ever desecrate its sacred stage with their tragedies. It is built exclusively for ourselves and our own holy fun.”

379 BUILDING A THEATER WITH CHURCH-FUNDS.

This was good news to a people who were already becoming very weary with the exactions of their priesthood.



Now, the Prophet said, it was the will of the Lord that we should have a little relaxation from the constant, wearing toil, which was beginning to be almost unendurable. The Prophet further enlightened us how it was to be built. “We can borrow some of the ‘Temple fund,’ for present use,” he explained; “but that will be a matter of but small moment, since we can so soon replace it.” So “Fun Hall” was built with the tithing, and any Saint could have access to the amusements given there by paying whatever entrance fee Brigham demanded. It did not retain its name after it was finished, but was called “Brigham’s Theater.”

As soon as it was completed it was dedicated, after the usual Mormon fashion. The choir sang, and the singing was followed by earnest and lengthy prayer from some good brother—I have forgotten which one—after which Brigham rose, and said—

“Through the help of the Lord, we have been able to

380 THE PROPHET IN LOVE WITH A PRETTY ACTRESS!

build this theater. I know that it is as good a building as any of the kind that was ever built, and I am not going to have it defiled like the Gentile theaters. I will not have a Gentile on this stage. Neither will I have tragedies played. I’ve said that before, and I mean it. I won’t have our women and children coming here to be frightened so they can’t sleep at night. I’ll have a Saint’s theater, for the Saints, and we’ll see what we can do ourselves.”

Yet, in flat contradiction to all this bombast, it was not three months before tragedies were represented on that stage, and, the very first winter, a Gentile actor was engaged, who played there through the entire season. Gentile players and Gentile plays have been continued up to this day, and let me assure you there is no more appreciative admirer of the actresses who visit Salt Lake than Brigham Young. He has fallen a victim to the charms of several, but he never was so impressed as he was with Julia Deane Hayne. He was madly in love with her, and, for a while, Amelia’s position seemed a little precarious. He bestowed every attention upon the lady, had her portrait painted on his sleigh, and made her an actual offer of marriage, which she refused on the spot, without even taking time for consideration. His regard for her never ceased, and I have heard, on what seemed very good authority—although I cannot vouch for its truth—that after he heard of her death he had one of his wives baptized for her, and then sealed to him for her; so he is sure, he thinks, of possessing her in the next world, although he could not induce her to look kindly upon him here. No doubt she will be properly grateful when she finds out that he has taken care of her future welfare, and has assured her salvation, and fixed her position in the next

world.

Since the theater was first opened, all or nearly all the “stars” have played there, on their way to California. We have had all the actors and actresses, from Forrest and Le Clerq to Lydia Thompson and Dickie Lingard, and the

381 HOW BRIGHAM SWINDLED THE ACTORS.

entertainments have varied from tragedy to a “variety show.” We have had as musical entertainment everything from opera to Negro minstrelsy. We have had Gentiles in the stock company; and some of our Mormon girls, who have made success in their profession, have slipped away to other places, renounced Mormonism, and are making fine positions for themselves in the outside world. A Miss Alexander, especially, who was one of our most promising actresses, became a very great favorite in California, where she played for some time.

The theater has been a source of wealth to Brigham. Built by money extorted from the people for the avowed purpose of erecting a Temple to God, it, of course, was no expense to him, personally; and yet, although built by the church money, he has appropriated it as private property, and he pockets every dollar that is made at the theater, and devotes it exclusively to his own use. For a long time his actors, except the Gentile ones, whom he was obliged to pay, cost him nothing, and as everyone furnished his or her wardrobe, the owner of the theater was put to very little expense in carrying it on.

Now he has to pay even his Mormon players. He tried a short time ago to return to the old system again, but he failed utterly, as the actors would not listen to such a proposition for a moment, and he did not dare to press it, lest he should lose some of the best members of his company. The younger Mormons are not afraid to leave Utah, and the church; and, thrown as they constantly are with people from the outside world—the “Babylon,” which they have been taught to dread and look upon with fear and horror, as a place full of all kinds of lying abominations, and wickedness of every sort—they have many opportunities of learning of that some world and what it offers. This Gentile intercourse is doing more than anything else to break the tyrannical yoke of a corrupt priesthood, and liberalize the minds of the Utah people.

382 MY THEATRICAL LIFE.

In the days of my own dramatic experiences, the Gentile element by no means predominated, and we all worked for the good of the Prophet. I was never enthusiastic over my profession, and never made a brilliant success in it, though I was something of a favorite, and had very

pleasant things said of me, not only in the Salt Lake, but even in the California papers, by some persons who had seen me act. Whatever it was that kept me from being an absolute failure I never knew. It certainly was not because I had prepared for my profession, for I had not; and I only went through the parts assigned to me as I fancied they should be given, and I never attempted any stage tricks or mannerisms. If I had, my doom would have been sealed. I fancy that my adherence to nature, and a constant refraining from striving for effect, had a great deal to do with my popularity; for I was liked, even though I was no artist, and it is not egotism for me to say it. I was glad to be like, and I am glad still, and I knew that the liking was genuine and honest, and I returned it, too. My public was like a party of friends, and I was always on the best of terms with them, and grateful to them for giving me so much encouragement.

Then the company were all my friends. It was almost like a family; and I do not believe there was ever a theater where there was less of envying, and jealousies, and strife’s, than there was among us. I look back on those days as among my pleasantest recollections; for, in addition to my happy theatrical life, I then first realized the romance of love.

As had been proposed by Brigham when he summoned me to the theater, I spent most of the time at the Lion House with my family. Most of them I had known from my earliest childhood; so I was not among strange people, but rather among good friends. I went home every Sunday, and once or twice during every week, and called it living at home; but I visited in the Prophet’s family.

383 WE GRUMBLE WITH OUR BREAD AND BUTTER.

They lived there in the most frugal manner. There was enough on the table, but the fare was not so varied as might have been, and the younger ones, especially, used to get very tired of the constant repetition of dishes. We usually knew just what we should find on the table; for, whatever else was absent, bread and butter and dried peach-sauce were always there. It got rather monotonous after a while; and I must confess I used to enjoy rushing off to my mother and getting something good to eat, and “the girls” used to enjoy going with me, when I would take them. They grumbled as much as they dared over the home fare; but they did it very quietly among themselves, as they did not dare to have their complaints reach their father’s ears, for he would not endure grumbling from them any better than he would endure it from any of his people.

But it was a very funny sight, if one could only have seen it as I did, to watch the girls when the bell rang for tea or for breakfast. They would all jump up from what-

ever they happened to be doing, and, striking various attitudes, would exclaim, "Bread and butter and peach-sauce." Sometimes the tone assumed would be tragically in the extreme; sometimes it would be pathetic, sometimes despairing, sometimes expostulatory; and the attitudes would all agree with the tone. Then all the way down the long hall that led to the dining-room, as long as they could without being perceived and reprov'd by any of the elder members of the family, they would march along, and chant, in subdued tones, in a doleful sort of wail, "bread and butter and peach-sauce." I once suggested that it sounded like a dirge.

"Don't we wish it were!" answered one, quickly; "but in that case, my dear, we should put more spirit into our performance."

I little thought, in those days, that I should ever be in a position to "wail" in earnest over the Prophet's parsimony—in those days when I "assisted" his daughters at their daily

384 NEW LIFE.—MY FIRST LOVE APPEARS.

performances. I think I should have put more heart into my wailing, and sorrowed quite as much for my own sake as for the lack of luxuries on the prophetic table. But the fun that we got out of it, and the knowledge that we should be disapproved of if our grumbling were known, gave a relish even to the monotonous fare, and we endured it as we could not if we had not the memory of the frolic to assist us. Nothing is hard to endure if you can in some way make a jest of it, not even "bread and butter," and the driest of dried peach-sauce.

It was while I was acting that I met my first husband, Mr. James L. Dee. He was an Englishman, a very handsome fellow, and a very great favorite with all the girls. It was one of those romantic affairs called "love at first sight," and I surrendered at discretion, without attempting to resist the hold which the new fancy took on me. We met accidentally at the house of a mutual friend, and the chance meeting soon ripened into a friendship, and that into a nearer relation. My whole life was brightened by the new, sweet glory that had swept in, in such a torrent upon me. It took on a new look, and even the most common things were invested with a strange, novel interest. Nothing seemed natural. Everything in my life had deepened and broadened in the light of my new experience. Commonplace people grew interesting, commonplace events stirring. The whole world was tinted with the rose-color of my romance. I was very happy. My friends did not approve of my lover at all, and they all advised me not to encourage his attentions, they saw that he was in no way my equal; but I was so blinded that I would not see what they pointed out to me. There was disparity in disposition and in temperament,

all of which promised, to those who could see and understand the matter, unhappiness of we came into a closer relationship.

But what girl of eighteen ever thinks seriously of these things? I was, I suppose, no more unwise than all

385 MY LOVE AND MY LOVER.—OPPOSITION.

girls of that age are, nor any more unreasonable. I had a touch of romance in my nature, and I did what so many women do who are in love. I made an ideal; then I set myself to find some living person to invest with all the virtues and graces, mental, moral, and physical, of my imaginary hero. I found the person, and straightway set myself to worship. But he was a very different person from the one of my creation; the one was brave, gentle, noble, kind, and steadfast; the other—well, time will show what he was.

But all the winter, after I went on to the stage, I was loving this imaginary being, and calling it James Dee. I grew ambitious, and I acted better all the time. I think, perhaps, if I had remained on the stage, and had not lost my ideal, I should have accomplished something in my profession. Love does make a woman ambitious. If she never had before, in all her life, a desire to be, to do, to excel, she has it now. She wants to do something to make herself the better worth his taking. There is such a sweet humility about a woman's love! She is always depreciating herself, always growing shy and timid in the light of the superior wisdom which she insists that her lover must possess.

It is very sweet to worship in this way, but it is disastrous. It is bad for both lover and beloved. But girls, in their first romance, don't take this into account.

My parents did not forbid my engagement, although they plainly told me they did not approve of it; and after they found that I was determined, they gave a reluctant consent, but they counseled silence on the subject, hoping that I might see something in my lover which should induce me to change my mind. They were wise enough not to tell me the reason, but I know it intuitively, and the very knowledge that they were hoping that I might give him up made me only the more determined to cling to my lover in spite of them all. And I did. I never wavered

386 THE HAPPY HOURS OF MY FIRST LOVE.

in my devotion for a moment. I gave him the truest love a woman can give a man; the entire wealth of my affection I lavished on him; and he repaid it as men of his class, selfish, overbearing, and domineering, usually repay it—in neglect and abuse when once I was in his power.

But he showed none of that domineering spirit in the days of our early acquaintance; he deferred to me in the

slightest matter; he professed to love me very tenderly, and I believe he did love me as well as he was capable of loving anything, or anybody, outside of himself. At all events, I found nothing to miss in his care for me, and affection towards me, and for the few months preceding me marriage, everything in my life was tinted with the softest rose glow.