

CHAPTER XXVI.

AFTER MY DIVORCE.—AFFAIRS AT HOME.

After my Divorce from Dee.—“Is Polygamy Good to Eat?”—Curious Experiences Among the Saints.—A Man Who Thought His Heart was Broken.—How Two Wives Rebelled.—The Husband in a Fix.—He Runs Away from Home.—Dismisses his Plural Wife.—Being “Sealed” to Old Women for Eternity.—Nancy Chamberlain’s Story.—Who is to be Brigham’s Queen in Heaven.—An Old Wife Dresses Up as a Ghost.—How Brother Shaw Replenished his Exchequer.—The Battles Between my Father’s Wives.—My Mother Enjoys his Troubles.—The Story of a Turkey.—A First Wife Asserts Her Rights.—My Life at South Cottonwood.—I Receive Offers of Marriage.

AFTER my divorce, I went with my mother to live at my father’s farm in South Cottonwood. Here, I think, I was happier than I had ever before been in my life. My health was much improved, and what with the care of my children and the portion of the house-



“GRANDMA, WHAT IS POLYGAMY?”

413 “GRANDMA, DO YOU LIKE POLYGAMY?”

How thankful I was that they were not girls! I knew too well the troubles of my sex in polygamy to wish to bring one girl into the world, who, under the system, would be sure to endure such certain suffering. I made up my mind to teach my boys to shun it, even if it was a vital part of my religion. I was willing to accept all else that Mor-

monism taught, and to teach its underlying principles to my boys; but that I could teach them was right. Young as they were, they realized something of polygamy from hearing it constantly talked of; for when any two women meet, it is the chief topic of their conversation, and they knew enough to discover that it was something that was decidedly unpleasant; but what it was, they, of course, had not the slightest idea. Still, with the curiosity natural to children, they were determined to come to the truth of it some way or other.

One day, my youngest boy, then a little over three years old, astonished my mother by asking, very abruptly,

—
“Grandma, do you like polygamy?”

“Not at all,” was the reply, wondering what would come next.

“Is polygamy good to eat?” was the next inquiry of this youthful investigator.

My mother thought that it was not very palatable; at least she had not found it so, and as far as her observation went, she had not seen anyone who relished it particularly.

The men had their “crosses” in polygamy as well as the women, and I must confess that I was wicked enough to enjoy their small “miserics,” they seemed so insignificant beside their wives’; but as is the case generally, I fancy, they bore them with much less patience. The chief masculine troubles seem to be, that they cannot, with all their trying, make their plural wives agree and dwell together in the “sweet unity” which is so delightful and so essential to entire family happiness, and that they cannot make the wives, or wife, they already have, welcome with any great

414 A NICE YOUNG WIDOW!

show of cordiality the proposal to add another to the family circle.

Not very long before my apostasy, while visiting at the house of a friend, I was introduced to a man, who, my friend afterwards told me, was almost heart-broken at the dreadful conduct of his wife. My sympathies went out at once to the sufferer, and I inquired what indiscretion, or crime, his wife had been guilty of. “O,” said my friend, “she is determined that he shall not take another wife, and fights against it all the time, and he had just buried two children; and, all together, he is completely bowed down by grief.”

This was before I had dared to give my honest opinion, and I was silent; but my heart ached for the poor mother whose babies were dead, and whose husband, not content with her love, was denouncing her to his friends because she was unwilling to have polygamy added to her other burdens.

A man in Utah, whom I knew very well, married a young widow for a second wife, his first strongly disapproving of the principles of polygamy. She had by no means a submissive spirit, and she sought revenge by the only means in her power—by tormenting her husband in all possible ways.

He, like all good Mormon brethren, intended to build up a “celestial kingdom” after the “divinely ordained plan,” and he wished his wives to live together. There was no use talking, he said; they must agree well enough for that, as he did not intend to build another house. So he commenced this plan; but he found, after a few days, that whatever it might be in the future, it was far from “celestial” here. There was no such thing as peace in the house. His Prophet had often told him that if he could not rule his earthly kingdom, he never would be fit to be a king in the world to come; and as he was very ambitious for royal honors, he was in terrible grief and perplexity. But how to govern two unruly women was quite beyond him. His

415 KEY-HOLE SECRETS!

first wife was a very independent woman, with a habit of speaking her mind quite freely; and the second had a fiery temper, which she did not hesitate to display when she considered occasion demanded.



In a few weeks he found that he must separate them; so he divided the house, giving each one her apartments—the first wife receiving the principal share, as she had several children. But he had not bettered matters, it seemed. He had intended dividing his time equally between the two; but the first wife was so opposed to this arrangement that he offered to give her two thirds of his time, which, strange as it may seem,

did not satisfy her, and made the second wife very angry, until, between them both, the poor man was driven almost to his wits' ends.

They had a peculiar way of finding out each other's secrets; and when the husband was visiting one, the other would apply her ear to the key-hole of her rival's apartments. On certain occasions, when the first wife was too

416 NANCY C. TELLS A NAUGHTY STORY.

much engaged to attend to the key-hole herself, she would place her little daughter—a child not more than six years old—there, and bid her tell her what she heard. Imagine the effect on the child. It seems impossible that any woman, however jealous or curious, would take this means to satisfy her curiosity. Of course the child told the mother the most ridiculous things, which she affected to believe, and told to her husband on his next visit to her; in consequence of which some of the bitterest quarrels ensued.

As soon as possible the husband built a second house, a few rods from the other, and removed the last wife thither, hoping then for a little respite. But he was hoping against hope; for the trouble would never be quieted while the cause remained, and the two women could never come within speaking distance without a fearful quarrel, which often ended in personal violence, blows being exchanged, hair pulled, and dresses torn in the struggle.

Every experiment was in vain. After running away from home once himself, and coming back on account of his children, whom he really loved, he found himself obliged to send Number Two away, when quiet was again restored, although it was secured at the expense of his “kingdom.”

The fault was not with either of the women; each one was good enough by herself; but it was in the accursed system, which brought, as it always does, the very worst passions to the surface, and made of each woman—who, alone, would have been a comfort to her husband—a fiend, and a constant torment to him.

Some of the Mormon brethren are so anxious to increase their kingdom that they frequently have very old ladies sealed to them. As they are all to be rejuvenated in the resurrection, and as the sealing is done for “eternity” alone, it will be all right in the future, and the discrepancies in age will go for nothing. Even Brigham Young himself has not hesitated to avail himself of his privileges in this peculiar direction, if Nancy Chamberlain's story can be believed.

417 HOW A WOMAN “FREED HER MIND!”

Nancy Chamberlain is a very old, half-crazed woman, known, I fancy, to every Mormon in the Territory, who sol-

emly declares that she was sealed to Brigham in Nauvoo, and that she had the promise of being promoted to the place of first wife. She lived in his family for a long time, but she grew old, and infirm, and useless, and he turned her out of the house some years ago; and now she lives as best she may, going about from house to house, and doing light work to pay for her support.

She considers it her duty every little while to go and “free her mind,” as she calls it, to Brigham’s wives, telling them that they may usurp her place and defraud her of her rights in this world, but she shall be Brigham’s queen in heaven. She is an eccentric old woman, but there is no doubt, I think, about her having been sealed to the Prophet. He has a great many old ladies that he expects to resurrect, and assign them to their true position in the eternal world.

These old ladies are sometimes as exacting as their younger sisters, and the husband has all he can do to pacify them and keep them quiet; but not all of them have my mother’s experience and that of my old acquaintance, Mr. Ramsay. He was a very devout follower of Brigham’s, and, when he was about forty years of age, he was sealed to an old lady eighty years of age, who had no husband, and consequently no hope of salvation, until he very kindly became her savior. He had three wives already, but that was a trifle not worth mentioning to a man expecting to people a world some time in the future; so, as this woman—who was called Catherine—would count one on the list, she was taken, and brought into the house with his other wives.

The first of these women, who had always been a slave to her husband and his wives, was now called upon to take the sole charge of this last selection, which she did willingly enough. But it was a difficult matter to please Catherine. No woman could do more to keep the peace than Mrs.

418 A BELLIGERENT WIFE.

Ramsay, who was one of the sweetest tempered, kindest hearted women in the world, yet in this case is seemed to require superhuman exertions. Catherine complained of her food, her clothing, and her situation generally; but the principal cause of complaint was, Mr. Ramsay was not sufficiently attentive to her.

“I am your wife,” she used to say, in a querulous, piping voice; “I have rights and privileges equal to any other wife, and you must and shall spend one fourth of your time with me.”

This not being Mr. Ramsay’s view of the case precisely, he would reply,—

“It is true you were sealed to me, but it was not for time, but for eternity; and I cannot give you any part of my time here. I am willing that you should be taken care of in my family, and that should satisfy you.”

But that did not satisfy her, and she determined to make him all the trouble she could. One of her first freaks was to impersonate a ghost; and, robing herself in white, she visited different apartments of the house while the family slept, more particularly where the husband was. Failing to bring him to terms by this mode of action, she tried something more desperate, and actually set the house on fire; it was soon discovered, however, and not much harm was done. Mr. Ramsay had been very patient with her, and viewed all her pranks in as charitable a light as possible, saying, “it was somebody’s duty to exert themselves in her behalf, for she was surely worth saving; and as for her queer actions, she was nothing but a child anyway; so the best thing was not to mind them.” Yet this last act of hers made him consider her a very dangerous person, and he advised her to seek a home elsewhere, which she was very soon forced to do, as he went to the southern part of the Territory with his other wives and left her behind.

She consoled herself by thinking that although she had no husband on earth, she was provided for hereafter, and

419 AN IMPECUNIOUS POLYGAMIST.

was very complacent over the reflection, which seemed to afford her wonderful consolation. Mr. Ramsay must be acquitted of having married the old lady for money, as she was very poor, and he gained nothing at all by his marriage. It was really an act of kindness on his part, and real conscientious regard for her future.

Not so unselfish was Brother Shaw, a Mormon whose poverty might be estimated by the fact that he had been twenty years in Brigham’s service as a laborer. His impecuniosity was no bar to his entering the Celestial Kingdom, and setting up a realm of his own, over which he should be ruler. He had already married two wives, when a very old lady, possessed of considerable property, arrived in Zion, and Brother Shaw decided that she needed salvation at his hands, and proposed marriage to her.

She saw through him at once, but fearing for her salvation, she accepted the proposal, and was “sealed.” This was her first offer in Zion, but she feared, at her time of life, she might never have another; so she allowed herself to be installed as third wife in the Shaw family. Her money was found very useful for the support of the entire family, and was spent very freely until it was all gone, when she, like the rest, was obliged to live in great destitution. She certainly has paid handsomely for her “exaltation.”

In a family where all were so peacefully inclined as in our own, “trying” occasions are rare; but they would occur sometimes, and I think my mother took a little malicious pleasure in seeing my father bothered about something that had occurred to make “plurality” a trial. He tried

as hard as possible to be just, and had always been very particular in dividing everything equally between his wives. One must have no more than the other. There must be the most perfect exactness in everything. I believe he thinks he has dealt out the most even-handed justice, although he used occasionally to be accused of a partiality

420 STORY OF A CHRISTMAS TURKEY.

for his third wife, especially by those comforting persons who liked to talk to the other wives about him.

One year he had a turkey presented to him two or three days before Christmas. He was away from home on receiving it, and he returned quite late at night to my mother's house with his gift. He was in a dilemma. Here he was with a turkey on his hands, and not feeling rich enough to buy the requisite number in addition to give one to each wife. He could not decide at which house to have the fowl roasted. He would have liked to have had the table of each wife graced with just such a bird, but that was out of the question, and it was equally impossible for all to dine together that day. He was unable to solve the problem; so he concluded to leave it for accident to decide.

On arriving home he placed the turkey quite out of sight, as he supposed, and retired.

My mother in her rounds of morning work, discovered a suspicious-looking bundle, and, although a little curious concerning it, did not open it, but carried it to my father, with the wrapper on, at the same time asking him what it was.

"It is a turkey," was his reply.

As he said nothing else, she hastily returned it to its place, concluding that she had stumbled on positive proof of his partiality for some other member of his family; and remembering all he had said about equal justice, she resolved that she would find out all about the affair, and, if her suspicions were correct, she would not submit with patience, but would "speak her mind," if the heavens fell. She opened the battle by saying,—

"I think it very strange indeed that you should purchase a turkey for only one table, and leave the others destitute; and I also think it a very unjust proceeding on your part; if one portion of the family is to have a Christmas turkey, the others should receive the same attention."

"Hold on my dear, interrupted my father; "not so fast,

421 A HUSBAND IN A FIX.

if you please. You shouldn't jump at conclusions in such a hasty manner. I didn't buy the turkey; it was given to me

by a friend."

"O," said my mother, quite mollified, "is that so?" And she was preparing to be quite amiable, when, unfortunately, she happened to recollect that he asked her at breakfast if she had not better have some chickens killed for Christmas, and she returned to the charge with renewed vigor.

"What are you going to do with it?" demanded she.

"Why, you may have it if you wish," said he; "I am sure I don't know what else to do with it."

Although she was quite prepared to wage warfare for her rights to the very last, my mother really was not prepared for such willing surrender, and, determined not to be outdone in generosity, she replied, —

"O, I really do not care about it. I have chickens, you know, and I like them equally well; in fact, I think I prefer them. But," she continued, with a beautiful stroke of diplomacy, "I would like to decide which of the other wives shall have the turkey, if you will allow me, since you have given me the privilege of refusing it."

My father was glad enough to leave the disposition of the turkey with her, as he did not really know any better what to do with it than before, and if she decided for him, all responsibility would be off his shoulders. So he said, with very great cordiality of tone, —

"All right. I have given it to you, you know. You shall make what disposition you please of it."

"Thank you," said she, with equal graciousness of manner; "I should like Elizabeth to have it. She deserves it, and needs it, too, and would be very grateful for it; and then, too, you see, she, being next to me, would claim it by right of seniority."

"Wisely said," was my father's rejoinder, delighted to have it settled so amicable. So he carried the turkey to

422 CHICKENS, BUT NO TURKEY.

Elizabeth as his Christmas offering, and she received it, as my mother thought she would, gladly and thankfully.

Our Christmas dinner, with the chickens, and my mother's delectable puddings and pies, was a success, and we didn't even miss the turkey, though we did have a good laugh over it, and my mother was jubilant, because she had kept it from gracing the tables of the younger wives, since, according to her ideas of justice, if any partiality was to be shown, it should be given in the order of "seniority." I have no doubt that the other tables were well set, in some way or other, but we none of us saw the bills of fare. "Father's turkey" was for a long time standing jest at home.

During this time at South Cottonwood, while I was teaching my children, helping my mother, and getting all these peeps into the inside experiences of polygamy, my



own life running along in the smoothest channels it had ever known, a great change was preparing for me. I had

423 EASE AND CONTENTMENT.

no thought or premonition of it, as I went blithely about my daily duties, happy and content in the quiet life which I was leading in my mother's companionship, and in my darling children's love. I dreamed of nothing beyond this peaceful life; I wished for nothing else. Such a sweet restfulness had taken possession of me, and I pictured myself growing old in this quiet spot, with my strong, brave boys near me to make my rough path smooth, and to help my faltering footsteps over the stony places with their strong arms that would encircle and hold me then, as I encircled them now. The improvement of my health was a source of great joy to me. I never was so well in my life. The color had come back to my cheek, the sparkle to my eye, the smile to my lips, the elasticity to my step, and something of the old life to my spirits, although I had suffered too much to have them quite as light as they were in the old frolicsome days when I had gone merry-making with my old companions, had won friends in the theater, and had wailed "with the girls" over the monotonous fare of the Prophetic table. I was a child with my children, and it would be difficult to tell which of us got the most scolding and petting from the fond grandmamma.

She was happy, too, at having me with her again; and thought she sorrowed at my sorrow, she could not regret anything that brought me back to her, so long as it did not make me utterly unhappy; and she recognized as well as I the fact, that my life was fuller and freer without my husband than with him, and that my children were better off, and stood far better chances of becoming the men that both she and I wished them to become, under my guidance

alone, than under the influence of such a father as theirs. They would never have felt a strong, steady, guiding hand, but would have been, as their mother had been before them, the victim of alternate passion and rough good nature, that was easily shaken.

I had very many offers of marriage. A moderately pre-

424 MY PERSISTENT SUITORS.

possessing woman in Utah is sure not to be long without them; and I knew that I was that, at least, but I could not be brought to look with favor upon any of my suitors. I did not care to try matrimony again. I had vowed that I would not become a plural wife, and, with my past experience, I was afraid to try even a monogamous alliance again; for I knew that in Utah the step from monogamy to polygamy is very short, and very easily taken. My answer was the same to one and all—"I have my children; I shall live for them alone; they are my only loves."

Some of them appealed to my father and mother to use their influence to make me change my mind; but they refused to interfere, saying that I probably knew my own mind, and, if I did not wish to marry, that was quite enough.

I usually had my own way; and when I knew that any of my persistent suitors had turned to my parents for sympathy and assistance, I laughed to myself to think how little of either they would receive. To tell the truth, they—especially my mother—were no more anxious for me to marry than I myself; and I knew that so long as they had a home, my children and I should share it. I was not allowed to feel that we were in any way a burden, and, to tell the truth, I did honestly try to do all in my power to assist my mother, and make life easier for her to bear.

"I shall never, never leave you," I used to say, as I would nestle at her feet, and lay my head in her lap in the old childish fashion—a habit that I could not bring myself to abandon, even though I was a mother myself, with two bouncing boys to curl down in my own lap in the same loving way, begging for caresses.

"God willing, we will never be parted, my darling."

"Never! Never!" cried I, with loving enthusiasm, as I felt her hand on my head, resting in tender benediction there. I kissed the hand that had grown hard with toil with me and for others; and together we sat with no premonition of the

425 BRIGHAM ON HIS WAY TO COTTONWOOD.

future that was so near, and that was to change the whole current of both our after lives.

Brigham Young and some of the apostles were com-

ing to South Cottonwood to hold a meeting. But what was that to me? How did it affect me when he came or went? I had no part nor lot in his movements. Life was nothing to me beyond my mother and children; and all the Prophetic coming and going would not cause a ripple on the surface of my placid life.

So I thought, as I lay cradled in my mother's arms that summer evening in the old farm-house at Cottonwood; and the stars, as they looked down upon me there, revealed nothing more to me.