

CHAPTER XXXVI.

BREAKING THE YOKE.—I LEAVE MY HOME.

The Workings of Destiny.—A Noble Lawyer.—A Small Stove and a Large Family.—Last Interview with Brigham.—A Startling Proposal.—Sickness and Gentle Care.—Brigham's Police.—A Moral Thunderbolt.—My Third Baptism.—A Religious Farce.—I Decide to Escape.—A Memorable Day.—Removing in Forty Minutes.—The Walker House.—Among the Gentiles.—A Perilous Situation.—New Hopes.—Interviewed by Reporters.—Unwelcome Notoriety.—A Touching Letter.—A Visit from my Father.—The Paper War.—Overshooting the Mark.—Suing for a Divorce.—A Tempting Offer, \$15,000 and my Freedom.—The Prophet Astonished.

AFTER a person has made up his or her mind to take any step in a new direction, it seems as though every event of the life points the same way. It is almost as if decision had been forced upon him, and the course of action was inevitable.



ALONE AT THE HOTEL.

It was but a very few days after my first memorable visit to Mr. and Mrs. Stratton, when I received in my family a gentleman and his wife by the name of Hagen. Mr. Hagen was a lawyer of considerable repute in Salt Lake City, and I found both himself and

his wife very pleasant inmates of my home.

My family had increased so, that it was quite impossible to do the necessary amount of cooking on the very small

MY LAST VISIT TO BRIGHAM.

stove which was in my "toy" kitchen. I made up my mind to ask Brigham for another, since, as I was working hard to

support myself, he ought to be willing to assist me to this extent.

I called one day at his office,—the last call I ever made him, by the way—and preferred my request. He looked at me for a moment in evident surprise.

"I believe you are keeping boarders."

"Yes I am," was my reply; "and that is why I want the stove. I cannot do the necessary cooking on the one I have."

"If you want a cooking-stove, you'll get it yourself. I've put you into a good house, and you must see to the rest. I cannot afford to have so many people calling on me for every little thing they happen to think they want."

I was much distressed and disturbed after this interview. I had known that I must take care of myself for some time, and I had gone about it bravely and willingly, and I felt that this rebuff was as in every sense undeserved. Never, during my whole married life, had I made one unnecessary request; and, however much I might have "cost him," as he used to say in speaking of the very small amount he spent for me, I felt that I had more than repaid in hard, unceasing labor. If he does not wish to support us, why does he place us in the position to expect support from him, was my bitter thought. I did not seek the position of wife to him; it was forced upon me; and I was now compelled to endure the indignities which he chose to heap upon me.

Mrs. Hagen's kindly eyes discovered my distress, and she instantly begged my confidence. I gave it unreservedly and fully. She asked leave to tell her husband, and he, indignant at the treatment I was receiving, consulted with other lawyers, and all agreed in advising me to bring a suit against Brigham for divorce and alimony.

Mr. Hagen assured me that if I did not gain the suit

544 A STARTLING PROPOSITION.—DARK DAYS.

I should have found a way of getting out of my life in Mormonism; that it would be a test case, showing how the polygamous wives of Mormons stood in the law, and that I would find ready sympathy from the outside world.

This proposal, although it startled me, came at a time when I was more ready to entertain it than I should have been at any other period. My mother had discovered Brigham's feelings towards her, and had left my house to return to my father's house at Cottonwood, and I was grieving over her absence; still, had she been with me, I should have said nothing to her on this subject; for, although she was losing confidence in Brigham Young, she still clung to her religion, while I had not one spark of faith in it remaining.

In the mean time Mr. Hagen went to California for a short trip, begging me to decide upon the matter before his return. The more I thought upon the subject the more

perplexed I grew, until I fairly broke down under the weight of nervous anxiety, and became very ill. My boarders took all the care of me thorough the sickness. I was entirely dependant on them for every care. Not one member of Brigham's family came near me, and I was at utterly neglected by them as though they had not known of my existence.

Those days of struggle were dark indeed, and oftentimes I did not know which way to turn. Perils and miseries faced me on every side. I was in doubt as to which was the true religion, or whether any were true. The question frequently arose, What would become of me if I apostatized? My church taught me that I should be given over to eternal damnation. And although I had ceased to regard my church and its teachings, yet I had a slight feeling of superstition left, and in my weak state I could but portray to myself the horrors of my situation if what it taught were really true.

At this juncture, I received a visit from the Ward Teachers, whose duty it is to visit each family in the city, and ex-

545 MY THIRD BAPTISM.— A RELIGIOUS FARCE.

amine the different members as to their spiritual welfare. They are an inferior order of ecclesiastics, who serve the various purposes of religious instructors for the weak and ignorant, revenue officers to gather tithing, and general police to spy out and report irregularities or weakness of faith among the brethren.

The spokesman began by asking, "Sister Young, do you enjoy the spirit of our religion?"

"No, sir, I do *not*," was my reply.

If a thunderbolt had fallen among them they could not have been more surprised. They argued with me, counseled me, prayed with me, and finally I concluded to make one more attempt to cling to Mormonism. They begged me to be rebaptized, and I consented, although I had little faith in the ordinance.

Accompanied by a friend, I went to the Endowment House, where they have a font in which this rite is performed. We waited two hours for those in charge to get names and ages of a lot of Danes, who were to be baptized for their dead relatives. My patience and very doubtful faith were about exhausted. At last they were ready, and I, as a wife of the President, was honored by being first taken. The men officiating were talking and laughing as if engaged in an every day affair, while I was trying to feel solemn and to exercise faith,—a signal failure, I assure you. I was led into the water by a great strapping fellow, who mumbled a few words over me and plunged me in. I was

taken from the water gasping for breath, and placed in a chair. Some more words were spoken over me, and the farce ended. Everything was done in such a business-like manner, with an utter absence of anything of a devotional nature, that I was thoroughly disgusted, and made no fur-



ther effort to believe in Mormonism or its ordinances.

Mr. Hagen, on his return, found me fully determined on following his advice. I was ready to renounce my religion and leave my home. I did not know all that was included

546 REMOVING IN HASTE.

in my resolution, else I might have faltered in my new determination. My plans were quickly laid, and with the assistance of the friends whom I had found in this hour of trouble, were carried into instant execution, before they could be discovered by Mormon spies.

On the 17th of July, 1873, I sent all my furniture to an auction-room, leaving my house stripped and desolate. It was done so quickly that no one had time even to suspect my intention. Arrangements having been previously made, three furniture vans came at the same time, and in forty minutes my entire household goods were in charge of the auctioneer. They were sold the next day, and I realized three hundred and eighty dollars from the sale. The furniture was worth almost nothing, being old and worn, and of common quality at its best; but my friends bought it at large prices, "to help the young apostate," as the Tribune said.

547 A HOTEL FOR THE FIRST TIME.

I had sent the elder of my boys to his grandmother,

the younger remained with me, and together we went to Mr. Stratton's house, where we passed the afternoon. In the evening Mr. and Mrs. Stratton took us to the Walker House, the Gentile hotel, which I have ever since claimed as my Salt Lake City home.

Imagine, if you can, my feelings, on being alone with my little child, in a strange place, under such peculiar circumstances. I had abandoned my religion, left father, mother, home, and friends—deliberately turned away from them all, knowing that the step I was taking could never be retraced. My heart cried out for my mother, who I knew would be more sorely stricken with my action than anyone else in the world I would have spared her if I could, but I was powerless to act in any other manner.

It was the first time in my life that I had been in a hotel; and, as I was among people who I had been taught were my bitterest enemies, I was overwhelmed by a sense of desolate hopelessness. I did not know what my fate would be. Every footstep in the halls startled me; for I expected that each would bring some one to summon me to a dreadful death. I fully believed that was to be my last night on earth, so I prepared for death; but the agony of suspense was awful. I had been taught that no deed was too bad, no outrage too dastardly, for the Gentiles to commit upon the Mormons; and here I had allowed myself to be placed so fully in their power that they might do with me as they pleased, and my fate would never be known.

Does anyone wonder that I did not seek refuge with some Mormon friend, of whose sympathy I was sure? No Mormon friend would have dared to give me shelter. I was in open rebellion against their leader, and had I remained one day among them, my doom would have been irrevocably fixed.

Neither did I dare to remain with my friends, the Stratton's; for in so doing I should expose them to Mormon fury,

548 A DREARY NIGHT.—EXCITING TIMES.

and endanger their lives and their home. So I sought the only place of refuge open to me with untold fear and dread.

I had lain awake all night wishing for the day to dawn, yet fearing that I should never see it; and when the first ray of light came through my windows I was relieved and hopeful.

With morning came a new excitement. The news of my flight from home had gone abroad, and the morning papers were full of it—the Mormon journals abusing, the Gentile journals praising and congratulating me. It had never occurred to me that it would be made a public matter, and I shrank from the very thought. I felt myself a marked object. Reporters called on me, seeking interviews for the California, Chicago, and New York papers, and questioned

549 AN AGONIZING LETTER FROM MY MOTHER.

me until I was fairly bewildered. I had gone to bed a poor, defenseless, outraged woman, trying to find my way out of a false life into something truer and better, and I arose to find that my name had gone the length and breadth of the country, and that I was everywhere known as Brigham Young's rebellious wife.

People who were curious to see one of the wives of the Prophet, swarmed into the hotel. I could not leave my room, nor did I dare to do so, nor to allow my children out of my sight for nearly two months. The Mormon papers commenced to assail me in every way, while the Gentile papers came unanimously to my defense. In the midst of it came this most heart-rending letter from my mother—

“MY DEAR CHILD: You can never know how dear you are to your grief-stricken mother. Your death would have been far preferable to the course you are taking. How gladly would I have laid you in your grave, had I known what was in your heart. I now pray that you may be spared for repentance and atonement; for, as sure as you are living, a day of repentance will come; a day of reckoning and sorrow, such as you have never imagined. Now, let me entreat you to pause, and retrace your steps before it is too late. The Lord, my Father, grant that you may listen to your mother's last appeal, and flee from your present dictators, as you would from the fiends of darkness.

“You will know the effort I am making to write this. When I first received the blow, it struck me down like a flash of lightning, and the first I remember, I was praying for your death before you sinned past redemption. My much-loved child, come to your mother, and try to smooth her pathway to the grave. I should pray to be laid there at once, if I did not hope to save you yet. The path you are pursuing leads to the lowest depths of woe, and I pray, every moment of my life, that you may speedily be arrested. Oh, how could you turn against us? How could you break our hearts? Your father's house, and your brother Gilbert's house, are both filled with weeping friends, who are deploring your fate; and I implore you, in the name of all that is sacred, to come back to us. You seem to be encircled in a cloud

550 WAR COMMENCED.

of almost impenetrable darkness, but the Lord our God is able to remove the veil, and enlighten you in his own way. I can only pray for you.

“My heart is broken, my dear and much-loved child. I loathe the sight of food, and sleep has forsaken my eyelids. The idol is rudely broken that I have worshiped so long. My fault has been in loving you too well, and having too great anxiety for your welfare.

“I pray you to forgive me for all the wrongs you imagine I have done you in bringing you up as I have done. I have ever been laboring, teaching, and instruction with the best of motives, with an eye to your interests. I shed the bitterest of tears I ever did in my life. God grant you may never have cause to shed such tears. If I can ever be the least comfort to you, do not fear to let me know. I close by repeating, come to the arms of your heartbroken but still anxious

“MOTHER”

If she agonized over the writing of that letter, so I did over the reading. I longed to fly to her; but even to make her happy I could not violate my conscience, and go back into the old bondage of darkness again.

My father came at once to see me; and although he at first disapproved of my course, yet when the Mormon press commenced to assail me, he came over to my side at once.

Brigham and his friends commenced their usual method of warfare against a woman who opposes them, by instigating slanders of all sorts for the Gentile papers outside of Utah to publish. They found a ready assistant for their noble and generous attempt in the person of a fellow of low repute, employed as item-gatherer for the Salt Lake Herald, who had recently been converted to Mormonism through the agency of Brigham Young’s purse, and was now ready to do any foul work for his master.

His first act was to send a dictated falsehood to the San Francisco Chronicle. He was a telegraph operator, and, through Brigham Young, who, it is alleged, virtually con-

551 BRIGHAM TRIES TO COMPROMISE.

trols the Associated Press and the Western Telegraph Office in Utah, he had access to wires, and sent all the scandalous messages which his employer dictated, until it became so plainly apparent that he was serving Mormon interests, that the papers refused to publish any more of his misstatements.

As a reward for his labor, he was promised a daughter of Mayor Wells as his wife. The young lady has not yet acquiesced in the arrangement, and he still hangs about Salt Lake, despised alike by Mormons and Gentiles.

The Gentile element in Salt Lake made itself strongly felt in my favor, and the Gentile press combated bravely the scurrility of the Mormon organs. Ladies and

gentlemen called on me with offers of sympathy. All the persons connected with the hotel were kindness itself. Mr. and Mrs. Stratton stood by me nobly, and I have never ceased to thank God for raising up such friends in my time of need. I shall always hold them most specially dear, although our paths in life have so diverged that we rarely meet. Through General Maxwell, who was so kind as to come forward with offers of assistance, I brought suit for divorce against Brigham Young.

Surprised, as everyone was, by this action, I think no one was more astonished than the Prophet himself. He would have looked for rebellion from almost any other wife sooner than from me, I had been so quiet and acquiescent during all my married life with him. He was annoyed by the publicity of the affair; for, although he like notoriety, and courts it, he did not care to appear as defendant in a suit for divorce, on the grounds of neglect and non-support. It would not sound well in the Gentile world.

He tried to effect a compromise with me, and through his son-in-law, Hiram B. Clawson, offered me fifteen thousand dollars and my freedom if I would carry it no further. I will confess that the offer tempted me. I could take my children and go away quietly with them, and avoid the

552 A LEGAL FIGHT COMMENCED.

notoriety which I so hated. If it had been my own individual case alone, I should have eagerly accepted the offer, and made the compromise. But when I thought how much was involved, how many other lives would be affected by the decision which would be given in my case, I put all thought of settlement aside. I would not now be bought by the man who refused to care for me when it was his duty to do so; and I said to my lawyers, and General Maxwell, “Go on.” There was no further delay, and the legal fight commenced at once. As so much has been said concerning this trial, and as it seems so generally misunderstood, I will devote a chapter to the legal points, and an epitome of the court proceedings, as far as they have reached, so that the general public may more fully understand what I sought, and what grounds I had to justify my action.