

# CHAPTER XXXVIII.

## MY ESCAPE FROM SALT LAKE CITY.—MY PUBLIC CAREER.

Thoughts of the Future.—The Gentile Papers.—A Private Audience at the Walker House.—Hopes and Fears.—I Resolve to Take the Platform.—Sneers and Ridicule.—Brigham is made Acquainted with my Plans.—Packing Under Difficulties.—My Perilous Escape from Utah.—A Noble Woman.—Arrival at Laramie.—Denver.—My First Public Lecture.—A Grand Success.—Brigham at Work.—A Scandalous Article in the Chicago Times.—A Mean Lawyer.—Lecture at Boston.—Kindness of the Members of the Press.—Opposed by George Q. Cannon.—Washington Lecture a Success.—First Glimpses of the True Faith.—Conversion to Christianity.

**A**S soon as I had fully decided that compromise was impossible, I began to consider my future. I felt able to take care of myself and my children, if I could see the way to do it. I was not afraid to work, and I



MY FLIGHT AT NIGHT.

felt a new impulse stirring within me which made me strong. Life was my own, and I would do the best I could.

The thought of a public career had never occurred to me. I had no ambition to gratify, and I had already gained more notoriety than I cared for. I was keenly sensitive to

### 567 MY TALK AT THE WALKER HOUSE.

wittily written, by persons who neither knew me nor understood the situation in which I was placed, wounded

me deeply.

The gentile papers in Utah were, without exception, friendly to me, and I am sure kindlier words were never given than they have sent after me, since the very day I came out from under Brigham's control.

During my residence at the Walker House I was requested to give some account of Mormonism to the residents of the hotel and a few of their friends. I consented to do so, and an evening was appointed. I prepared a simple history of my life, and introduced, in the course of it, an epitomized description of the Mormon religion and its rites; and when the evening arrived, and I entered the parlors of the Walker House, I was startled to see the numbers of persons who had assembled to listen to me. I stood for a moment gazing in sudden bewilderment; the blood rushed to my face, and my first impulse was to run away and hide myself in my own room. But the applause which greeted me, the smiling, reassuring faces which were turned towards me, and the sympathy which I read in them all, gave me courage.

My audience listened with the closest attention, and when, after a while, I grew more accustomed to my strange position, and ventured to look up, I saw tears on more than one cheek, and when the last word was read, and I laid my manuscript down, I was surrounded by my newly made friends, all enthusiastic in their demonstrations of sympathy.

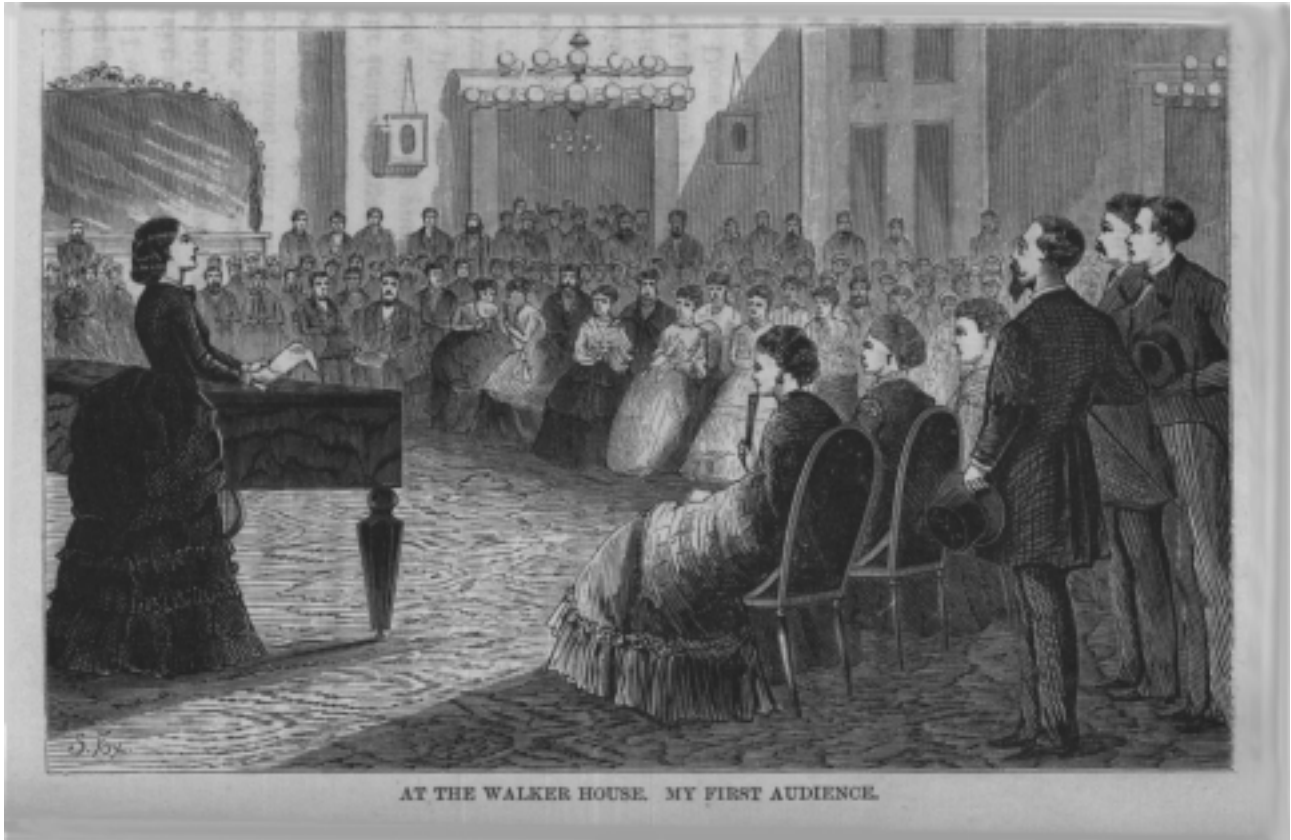
Previous to this involuntary public appearance, it had been suggested to me that I should take the lecture platform against Mormonism. I shrank from the very mention of it, and replied to the friends who proposed it that I could not, and would not, do it. To parade myself and my troubles before the world seemed such an indelicate thing to do! But when it was shown me that I might make myself a power against Mormonism which should be felt, and which should open people's eyes to the enormity of the religious system

### 568 "FAIR PLAY FOR WOMEN."

which was tolerated by the government, I hesitated no longer.

I wish it to be distinctly understood that I did not undertake this work with a view to self-aggrandizement, or to gratify an inordinate ambition. Nothing has wounded me more, since I commenced my labors, than the oft-repeated accusation within a few months in the *Woman's Journal*, the leading organ of woman suffrage in Boston, in an article written by one of its editors and part proprietors, who, in the same article, commended Brigham Young to public favor because he gave the suffrage to women.

"Making capital" out of her woes, and, above all, her domestic infelicities, is something no woman of delicacy could do; and had I been governed by no motive except



AT THE WALKER HOUSE. MY FIRST AUDIENCE.

one so unworthy, I should deserve all the contemptuous criticism which I have been treated to be this apostle of "Fair Play for Women."

Does any one think that, for the sake of emolument, I could thus open my heart to the rude gaze of a curious public, bear all the slurs, slights, jeers, and aspersions that are cast at me by malicious Mormon and thoughtless Gentile papers, be made a by-word of, have my name on every vulgar lip? Never. My womanhood revolts at the idea.

As a means of support, I would never have undertaken it. When I saw it was a duty, I adopted it without hesitation, and I shall never cease my labors as long as I have strength to work. While I have a hand or voice, Mormonism and Polygamy shall find in me a relentless foe. I will never rest, God helping me, until either I, or this hellish system, so fraught with misery, go down in the contest.

When my decision was fully made, I confided it to my father, who was my constant visitor. He gave me the warmest encouragement; but it was a terrible blow to my mother who considered that I was setting the final seal to my future and eternal misery.

#### 569 MY PERILOUS ESCAPE.

I discovered, after my arrangements were made, that my intention had become known to the Mormons, who



MY ESCAPE FROM SALT LAKE CITY.

were threatening me with all sorts of vengeance if I insisted on carrying out my plans. It had been arranged that I should make my first appearance in Denver, and as I was extensively advertised there, the news of my proposed lecture had been telegraphed to Salt Lake, so that the date of my departure was made public.

I did not dare to leave Salt Lake by rail, nor would my friends allow it, and all our final arrangements were forced to be made with the greatest secrecy. I did not venture even to take my own trunk. A new one was bought, carried to a friend's room, my clothing conveyed to the same room, a piece or two at a time, packed as we could find opportunity, and then taken to a carriage, and carried outside the city.

On the evening of the 27<sup>th</sup> of November, I went with my father, and one or two friends, to the house of Mr. and Mrs. Stratton. We left the hotel by the back door, for the front entrance was closely watched, although it was not expected that I would attempt to leave the city until the next morning. About eleven o'clock we left the Stratton's, and started, ostensible to walk home. A carriage was in waiting at the corner. We got in, called for Mrs. Cooke, who was to be my travelling companion, and were driven rapidly out of the city. I was to take the cars on the Union Pacific road of Uintah, and thus avoid travelling at all on the Utah railroad, where I should be sure to be recognized.

The night was intensely dark; we could not see our hands before our faces, and, as we plunged on through the night and the darkness, we were a gloomy and apprehensive party. We were not sure how closely we had been watched, or whether we had succeeded in eluding Mormon vigilance. Even then "Danites," those terrible ministers of Mormon vengeance, might be upon our track, and I could not cast off the feeling that every moment brought us nearer and nearer to some dreadful death.

#### 570 A MIDNIGHT RIDE.

Twice during the night we were lost. The last time, we missed our way, and went several miles up a cañon, and I felt sure that we were betrayed, and that our driver was carrying us to certain destruction. I spoke to him, without letting him know my suspicions, and told him we were going wrong. He turned about, and drove rapidly back, and we reached the mouth of the cañon just as the day dawned. Confusion vanished with the darkness, our driver found the right road, and by fast driving we reached Uintah just as the train came up. Tickets and checks had been secured at Ogden, and with a hurried "goodbye" to my father, I jumped on board the train, with Mrs. Cooke, and we were off.

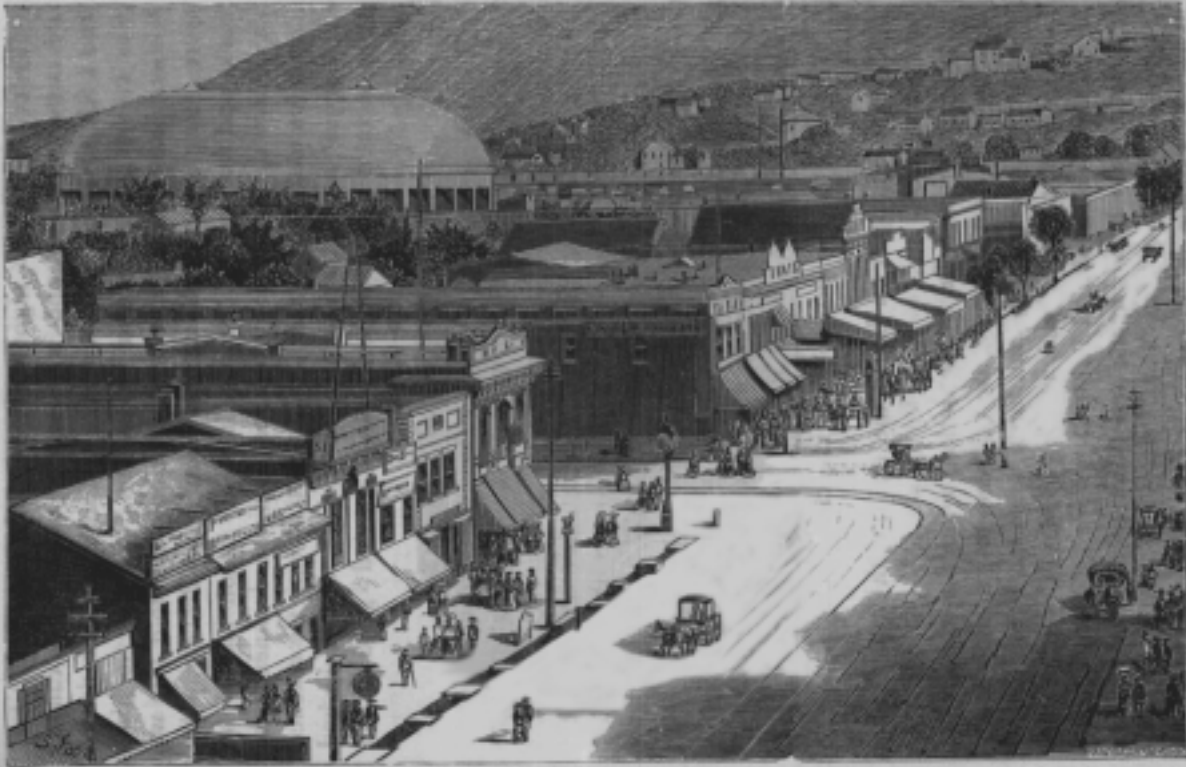
I can never describe my sensations when the train began to move. With the new sense of freedom came a feeling of such utter loneliness that, for a moment, I was bewildered by the situation, and, turning to Mrs. Cooke, I said, helplessly, "What shall I do?"

"Keep a brave heart, and think of the work before you." Said she.

Her experience in Mormonism had been no pleasanter than mine, and she was as glad to get away from it as I

#### 571 FRIENDLY CALLS.

was. For twenty years she had taught Brigham's children, and acted in Mormon theater, and had never received a cent of remuneration. Her husband, a member of the special



STREET SCENE IN SALT LAKE CITY.

police force, was killed on duty, and after his death the prophet, through his counselor, Daniel H. Wells, swindled her out of the two thousand dollars which the city had granted her, and tried to get her house from her. She put the matter into a Gentile lawyer's hands and still retains her home. She was with me several months, a devoted and faithful companion.

Our first stopping-place was Laramie, Wyoming Territory, where we were to await the arrival of my agent from Salt Lake. My presence in town was soon discovered, and I received many friendly and congratulatory calls. After my lecture every hospitality was shown me, and I felt fresh courage, so kindly was my reception, and so genuine were all the expressions of interest.

My agent arrived in a day or two, and we set out for Denver. The news of my escape from Utah had been

#### 572 A GRAND RECEPTION AT DENVER.

telegraphed, and on my arrival, I found myself eagerly expected. I was visited by the editors of the different papers, who assured me of the friendly feeling toward me, and offered me the use of their columns. The clergymen all came to see me, and spoke generous words in my behalf from every pulpit in the city. They all literally "took me on trust." I shall never forget the earnest, spontaneous kindness which I met from the professional men of Denver.

The night on which I was to give my first lecture, the 5<sup>th</sup> of December, 1873, was extremely cold, and the snow fell heavily. I was discouraged and despondent, for I had come to consider this first evening as prophetic of my future career, and I saw failure before me. I did not know whether I should be able to reach the church, the storm was so furious; but as a faithful few had promised to be in attendance, let what might happen, I determined to make the trial.

My foreboding had been utterly useless. Long before the church doors were opened a large crowd was in waiting, and before the hour for beginning the lecture arrived the house was full, and hundreds had gone away unable to gain admission. As I looked into the crowded house, before I came on the platform, my courage almost left me. But while hesitating, the thought of the poor women whose cause I was to plead, came vividly into my mind, and with a firm step, and beating heart, I walked onto the platform, and stood facing my first audience, who greeted me with tumultuous applause.

I have never spoken more effectively in my life than I did that night. It seemed to myself almost as though I was inspired. I forgot myself in my subject, and new indignation thrilled me as I told my story of bondage, such as my hearers never dreamed of, and unveiled the horrors of the Mormon religion. I made no attempts at oratorical

effects, I worked up no dramatic "points." Naturally and simply as I could, I said what I had to say, without a single rhetorical flourish.

#### 573 BRIGHAM HEARD FROM.

The lecture was a success. After it was over, my audience crowded around me, with such earnest words of commendation, that I felt my first victory won. Since that memorable evening I have addressed hundreds of audiences, but never have I found one more sympathetic than the one composed of the true-hearted people of Denver.

I was not permitted to be quiet after that evening. Engagements came pouring in, and I worked my way steadily eastward. I was universally well received, but I knew that I should somewhere encounter Mormon opposition. I had seen too many attempts made by Brigham Young to ruin anyone who dared to differ with him, to think that I should escape.

The first blow came through the columns of a Chicago Paper, which devoted considerable space one day to a scandalous article concerning me, giving an air of truth to the statement by mentioning the persons who were authority for the reports. I was overwhelmed by it, for I feared it would put an end to the career of usefulness which I had marked out for myself. After I read the shameful article, my first words were, "Brigham Young's money is at the bottom of this."

And so it proved. The matter was put into the hands of Leonard Swett, Esq., of Chicago, for investigation. Letters came, in most cases unsolicited, from the persons referred to as having started the scandal, each one indignantly denying the whole. Further inquiry revealed that George C. Bates, a Mormon lawyer, of low repute, and twenty thousand dollars, induced the Paper to publish the article which originated in the foul imagination of Bates.

The papers of good standing came at once to my defense, and endeavored in every possible way to heal the wounds which the article had so cruelly inflicted on me.

The scandal was published on the eve of my first appearance in Boston, and I was greatly distressed lest it should injure my prospects in that city. I wanted my visit there to

#### 574 ARRIVAL IN BOSTON.

be a success, as I felt that, if I made a favorable impression, I should hold the key to all New England. And it was to the staunch and loyal New Englanders that I looked for assistance in my labors. My new and good friends had taught me to consider Reform and New England synonymous terms, and I really believed my battle would be well begun if I could

gain such devoted allies as her brave, inflexible sons and daughters. But after the attack by the Chicago Paper, I regarded failure as certain. How surprised and gratified I was to find, instead of prejudice I had expected to meet, a feeling of earnest kindness toward my self personally, and of unfeigned interest in my work.

All the papers sent representatives to visit me, and I found them kind and intelligent gentlemen, and the papers which they represented were as generous as they. Nowhere have I met that courtesy and chivalric consideration which have been uniformly accorded me by the members of the Boston press. They have refrained from sarcasm and indelicate witticisms; they have been ready with sympathy, and quick to encourage; and whatever their politics or principles, they have been unanimous in their generous treatment of me.

My first lecture was given in Tremont Temple, before a large and enthusiastic audience. Mr. James Redpath introduced me and the short speech he made fairly inspired me, it was so kind, so reassuring, so generous, and above all, so just. He had never heard me speak, but he was so bitter an enemy to this horrible system, as indeed he is to every wrong, that he was willing to take me for me work's sake. After the lecture was over, I felt that my hopes were realized, and that New England was open to me.

In Washington, nearly all the government officials attended my lecture, and expressed themselves enthusiastically in my favor. George Q. Cannon was contesting his seat in Congress, and Mormonism and its rulers were at that junct-

#### 575 A HOPELESS "NO."

ture prominently before the public. Cannon resented my appearance at the capital, and tried to break me down by ridicule. He made friends with the Washington Chronicle, in Brigham's most approved style of winning allegiance, and the day after my first lecture a burlesque report of it appeared in that paper. It was intended to prejudice the public; but when the lecture was over, and all the papers were unanimous in their commendation, the Chronicle suddenly grew ashamed of its disreputable alliance, and refused to maintain it any longer, and, at the same time, grew more respectful toward me.

I have had hundreds of pleasant platform experiences since I commenced my crusade against polygamy; but the three which stand out the most vividly in my memory, are the first evenings at Denver, Boston, and Washington.

All this time I was learning to love my Gentile friends very dearly, and to feel at home in "Babylon." I was comparatively happy, but I was not at rest. There was something lacking in my life—a void which nothing seemed

to fill. Ever since I had found myself the dupe of a false religion, I had drifted blindly on, with no belief in anything, no faith in any system; sometimes, even, doubting the existence of God.

I was in this bitter mood when I spoke, one day, before the Methodist clergymen of Boston and vicinity. Among the persons to whom I was introduced on this occasion, was the Rev. Dr. Daniel Steele, of Auburndale. I had noticed him during my address, and felt quite strongly toward him, on account of the extreme interest which he evinced. One of his first questions was whether I had found any religion to take the place of the superstition I had cast off.

A hopeless "No," was my reply.

Then, for the first time in my life, I heard the principles of the religion of Christ. It was like a day-dawn after a night of the blackest darkness, and I cried out eagerly—

#### 576 MORMON INFLUENCE IN WASHINGTON.

"This is what I want—this religion of love."

A few weeks after this I was the guest of the Methodist Female College, at Delaware, Ohio, of which Rev. Dr. M'Cabe was president. I was recovering from a severe illness, and was very much depressed. My mother was constantly writing to me, telling me of the struggles through which she was passing in giving up her religion; for Brigham's treatment of me, his utter disregard of the truth, and his malicious attempts to ruin me, opened her eyes, and unbound her reason; and she soon saw the falsity of the whole Mormon plan of salvation. I knew every pang which she was suffering, for I have passed through it all myself. Yet I was powerless to comfort her, for I was not at peace.

Dr. M'Cabe was my frequent visitor, and patiently and kindly he pointed out the way of rest to me, until at last I willingly placed myself and my troubles in the living, outstretched arms of God. Life opened out to me fuller than ever of possibilities, and my work grew holier. Peace brooded over my tired heart, and in the new experience I found infinite rest. Tossed all my life on a stormy sea of superstition, I was at last anchored in the sheltered haven of Christian belief.