

EDITORIALS.

UNDER the not altogether original title of "The Mahomet of the West," in the *Overland Monthly*, Mrs. Thomas Fitch ventilates her views of the phenomena of Brigham Young and "Mormonism." A lady of ability and culture, it is evident that she has endeavored to write frankly and fairly upon a topic of commanding interest, and one that is peculiarly subject to hasty, one-sided, bitter, and sometimes insolent treatment.

Mrs. Fitch says that the question before the nation now is not doctrinal "Mormonism," nor domestic details affecting prominent "Mormons," but a remarkable development of that "religio-politico system." The peculiar development which the lady alludes to, all the ladies will promptly guess, especially when we say that she declares that it is a temporary, accidental, and altogether despicable development, indeed, a mere fungus upon the system, which womanlike assertions it is far easier to make than to successfully maintain.

It is natural enough that the lady should consider every other question swallowed up in or overshadowed by this family question, for is not the family the germ of all society, and, has not Tilton just informed Greeley that "there is nothing that a woman so much wants as a home and to dwell in it as the happy wife of a noble husband, and as the loving mother of beautiful children," that "this is every woman's ideal?" Now as a matter of course every wife is happy, or ought to be; every husband is noble, or ought to be; every mother is indisputably loving, and he who doubts that any mother's child is beautiful is a heathen, if not a perfect brute. We all acknowledge this, but then comes the query—how is every woman to become the happy wife of a noble husband and the loving mother of beautiful children? This is the great unsolved query, unsolved outside of "Mormonism," and therein solved as far as possible, but only by that very "temporary, accidental, and altogether despicable fungus development," which Mrs. F. rejects, and which rejection, by this lady, reminds one of that Scripture which speaks of the identical stone which the builders rejected becoming the head of the corner. Indeed, we do also read of the names of the tribal offspring of a similar development being prophetically chosen for honored inscription upon the twelve gates of the holy city, the New Jerusalem. And all this, let it be remembered, when the civilization, the governments, the ethics, the manners and the customs, the religio-politico-socio philosophy and practices of the nineteenth century, and all the systems of this world shall have passed away, like the baseless fabric of a vision, leaving not a wreck behind. Anything temporary, accidental, despicable, or fungus in that? The lady means well, certainly she does, but she must have made a slight mistake here. However, by reason of the excellence of her meaning, she must be freely forgiven. Indeed it is a great thing for her to virtually concede that everything else of "Mormonism" excepting this single development can be excused upon a pinch. This step is a notable one, and has not been taken by Mrs. F. alone, for many other publicists have also taken it, both upon this continent and upon the continent of Europe. It is an evidence that the world moves in regard to "Mormonism," that the world was wrong, or at least unnecessarily and unseemly excited and embittered against it in former times; it is a tacit condemnation of all those persons who virulently opposed or who proscribed "Mormonism" before this development was manifest to the world; and may we not also say it is an earnest that the world will by and by concede that even this now opposed development is worthy, and has been all along, of a more favorable reception and consideration than it has been accorded?

Mrs. F. is generous as to motives. She thinks Brigham Young and thousands of others do really believe in the doctrine which she considers fungus. She says:

Brigham Young, the prophet, the seer, and therefore the oracle of the people, is without question, one of the boldest, most sagacious, and capable of living men. A hundred and twenty thousand people are, to-day, busy realizing his ideas, articulating his plans, and giving earnest voice and response to the spirit of his projects and purposes. As an organizer, a harmonizer, a magnetizer, few will deny his great

power, self-instituted as it is, self-poised, and supreme with his subjects and followers. But the question naturally arises, Does this man believe in the doctrine he promulgates? or is he the victim of lust, avarice and ambition? Here are scores of thousands of men and women who not only believe in this religion, but live by it literally, and die by it actually. Is this man then—the inspirer of all this zeal, the successful administrator, the councillor and law-giver—but a vile impostor, a trickster, who practices his juggler's arts before the very walls of Heaven? Marking the tender confidence of his people, who have tried him long and well, the successful workings of his system, with the practical results and operations of that system upon the minds and character of his people, it is impossible—divested of prejudice—to believe this. There enters into the composition of some men an unresting, mercurial element, which assimilates with, but is no part of, genius, and is always urging them to do something, and not infrequently their efforts culminate in achievement. But possessing courage, Brigham Young uses even that cautiously. Having almost unlimited power in his sphere of action, he makes, so far as the material well-being of his people is concerned, the wisest and fittest use of it. Whatever he claims of Divine interference, his measures seem to be the result of reflection: the dignified expression of a thoughtful, consistent mind, a benevolent heart, and a large executive brain. His perceptive faculties are peculiarly excellent, his observation more than ordinary, while his knowledge of the motives of men—the result of these faculties—rise to an intuition. Now, for the motives of this man, there is no neutrality argument to be advanced. Either he means well, or he means altogether ill. The precise question is not whether his revelations are from Heaven, but whether he believes them to be so. It is late in the century of manifestation to altogether doubt spiritual revelation, or to deny that once the Spirit of the Lord may have descended in the form of a dove. For more than twenty years this man has proceeded, apparently, upon a hypothetical basis—for history furnishes no precedent—developing results with the same precision as if they were the emanations of a regular law, and deducing effects from causes, hitherto untested, with a philosophical acumen only equaled by the wonderful perfectness of his system.

Even regarding this development which Mrs. F. so strongly opposes, she acknowledges that it has great merits, that it is possibly a "rational, vital theory resting upon conscientious principles, looking to the final abolition of those illicit practices which debauch the soul and damn the homes of at least two-thirds of the adults of this broad continent," and as such is worth investigating. The lady is ready to admit that this despicable fungus development has claims to sober consideration because of its promises to abolish certain physically and morally destructive practices which, in spite of civilization and Christianity and progress and enlightenment and all those sorts of things, two-thirds, at least two-thirds, of the adults of this favored land indulge in. Now here are two very startling admissions, for which we beg to sincerely thank the lady—that at least two-thirds of the men of America need reforming in some most damning particulars, expressly and vitally affecting the other sex, and that the most objectionable feature of "Mormonism" actually looks, and looks promisingly, to the effecting of such a reformation! Mrs. F. could not pay a greater compliment to "Mormonism." If the worst of "Mormonism" will do that unspeakable good, what glorious results may be expected from the best of it?

Does not Mrs. Woodhull confirm Mrs. F.'s statement of the prevailing profligacy, not in low life only, but in higher circles? Mrs. W. declaims against and says she knows, the sham pretensions of virtue on the part of editors, politicians, and leaders in all spheres before the public, who (with Greeley and a few other noble exceptions) make disgusting revelations of their own nature and frank admissions of utter profligacy in private. This is equal, at least, to the admission of at least two-thirds male profligates. In the mouth of two or three witnesses, etc.

This development, monstrosity she also kindly terms it, appears a puzzling paradox to Mrs. F. Being "despicable" and "monstrous," of course it is, she is really perplexed that it should also promise and actually accomplish grand

results. She says it is perfectly adapted to the "conditions of the poorer classes," "it is a system of general relief for the poor." She will hardly deny that it is equally well suited to the rich and the well-to-do. She also acknowledges that it is favorable to the scriptural injunction to increase and multiply, and to industry, morality, and domestic virtue, for "the excellence of the church policy furnishes ample security against the miseries that fellow idleness, as well as those immoral practices which almost everywhere else invite depravity and destitution."

Even this objectionable development, Mrs. F. confesses is, truer, more honest than, and therefore "an improvement upon, the present tendencies of society." Perceiving and frankly acknowledging excellences in this development, it is a paradox to her simply because her traditions, training, and prejudices lead her to assume that it is the despicable fungus and monstrosity which she says it is. The statements, however, that it justifies and religionizes sensuousness, and that it is a system of organized indulgence, cannot be permitted, any further than the same statements can be truthfully made concerning the divinely established institution of marriage. For wherein is a man necessarily more sensuous with a second wife than with the first, wherein is there culpable indulgence in union with one wife than in union with another? There is none, except in imagination. When in accordance with divine laws, in neither instances is there any censurable sensuousness or culpable indulgence, for in either instance the act is the following of the divine appointment, in obedience to a divinely bestowed inspiration, for the gratification of a divinely implanted instinct, for the orderly and well regulated accomplishment of a divinely ordained, beneficent and essential purpose, and therefore is as unblamable, pure, honorable, noble as any act can possibly be.

Mrs. F. commends the industry of the "Mormon" people and the financial management of the rulers:

The concentrated wealth, however, of this Church of Latter-day Saints will not, in my opinion, be found in unproductive accumulations anywhere, but ultimately, unless thwarted by special interposition, in institutions of industry and skill, in railroads and steam-wagons, in woolen factories and cotton mills, grist mills and paper manufacturing, newspapers and co-operative stores, cattle and horses and sheep, irrigating-ditches, mortgages on farms, and advance funds to emigrants. In these, and a hundred unnamed industries, extending all the way from Bear River to the Colorado, the accumulated capital of the church will be scattered, as it is already to a great extent, in irrigating, fertilizing, and ever-swelling streams. No public or private enterprise, not based upon sound financial principles, can engage the attention or receive the indorsement of the Mahomet of the West. No public or private enterprise of approved merit need go abroad for capital. Unlike prominent leaders of political rings in the East, this man invests in power alone those gains which they squander in flashy libraries which they never read, and in pictures and jewels, and articles of virtue, of the value and quality of which they are alike ignorant.

Mrs. F. thinks the Mormon women are misguided, deluded and unhappy, but that "this life of theirs is the sublimity of heroism;" that there is with them no artificial restraint, little falsehood, no superficial assumption, but earnest, serious work; that there are patient faces, faces shorn of hope for this life, faces stolid with despair, some withered and weakened with earth-work and long waiting, and a few pictured with expectation and full content—conditions which, in some or other or all of their varieties, are common to all civilized countries, so far as we have traveled, and to communities which have not endured a fourth part of the ostracism, the privations and the excessive labors which this community has. Well do we remember, years ago, when we first traveled through some New England and other Northern States, the cadaverous, parchmenty, wizened, wearied appearance of many of the inhabitants of that region, although we have never thought of upbraiding them for the peculiar physiognomical phenomena which they presented, because we considered there might be certain climatic or other causes therefor, and the latter by no means necessary vicious if indeed advisedly removable.

The gentle Anna D. and her "Whited

Sepulchre" efforts and her "Woman's cry" from Utah, are noted as failures, proved by the fact of the granting of the suffrage to the women of the Territory.

Now as to the conclusions—what are they? Mrs. F. deems prediction, even concerning this disliked development, hazardous and speculative at best, for "Mormonism" has already succeeded so well as to inspire its followers with faith in permanent success, and the policy of the present leader, so far as known, has never betrayed unsoundness. Can the same thing be said of any other religious, social, or political leader now living? Mrs. F., however, conceives that the element of success is not in the principle, but in the man, and that when the man passes away the system will crumble. We think the element of success is in the principle, although the principle is inoperative without instrumentality. But let the instrument abandon the principle, and the instrument will fail. It may be opportune to state that the same idea of the omnipotence of the instrument was entertained when the Prophet Joseph Smith was the President of the Church. But his assassination proved that in the principle lay the power, and God was able to raise up another instrument for its effective development, which He straightway did. What He has done, He can do again in a similar emergency, and He may be reasonably expected to do so whenever He shall deem it well for the accomplishment of His purposes.

Mrs. F. suggests that the United States may deal with the question and the courts do wonders; that the "potent, effectual influence of Gentile society, or the inevitable fact of Congressional interference," unless forestalled by the "great prophetic mind," may solve the question; that the mines may undermine the institution; that its suppression must be accomplished by majorities, though she thinks that long before such an eventuality "revelation" will direct the discontinuance of the development; that signs of such discontinuance are already manifest; that the days of the institution are numbered; and that it will die of punctures and absorption. Now any lady who wishes to lay such flattering unction to her soul is at perfect liberty to do so. We may simply observe, as the foreigner said of himself, that the institution, even without express divine sanction, never has died yet, but it has existed from remote ages; that it is believed in by the majority of the world's inhabitants; and furthermore, that by the lady's own confession, the fact of plural intercourse is the practice of the overwhelming majority of the men of these very United States, although that fact is to them a damning fact, and to their victims a degrading and ruinous fact, because it is accomplished in an unmanly, clandestine, illicit, vicious, and irresponsible manner, for the express gratification of masculine lust, and with the most cowardly, debasing, and destructive recklessness as to results. Plural intercourse is confessedly the rule, and, therefore, monogamous intercourse is the exception.

Our article is already lengthy. We must hasten to a close. But there are one or two other things which we should like to notice. Mrs. F. speaks of civilization shedding new light, revealing social practices and moral environs without, to make "these men and women grow ashamed, and so gradually relax in this feature of their old-time faith." How does this agree with the lady's confession of such a heavy majority of people following damning and debasing "social practices" in "the moral environs without," that this development, even in her view of it, may be a God-send for salvation, and worthy of serious investigation? We have seen the "new light of civilization," indeed from our youth up we have basked in its refulgent rays, but we can't say that we are very greatly enamored of it, nor are we likely to be unless Mrs. F. and Mrs. W. and others will thoroughly revise and very seriously modify their showing of it, and unless our conception of its manifest nature shall also undergo a very material modification.

Mrs. F. says, "No system based upon the passions or infirmities of men can have more than a temporary existence." We are not aware that this development is based upon the passions or infirmities of men. We always thought it was a provision for the orderly and honorable satisfaction of feminine instincts, masculine humanity paying feminine humanity this express deference—that he and his passions are simply nowhere, so far as union is concerned, only as her womanly nature shall

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