

## FAMILY LIFE AMONG THE "MORMONS."

BY A DAUGHTER OF BRIGHAM YOUNG.

We make the following extracts from an article by Susie Young Gates in the *North American Review* for the current month:

The common statement that plural marriage debases husbands, degrades wives, and brutalizes offspring, is false. It was not the case in ancient Israel; it is far less so in this enlightened age. If any one wishes to prove this, here in Utah are men, women, and, above all, children to speak for themselves.

My father, Brigham Young, had fifty-six living children, all born healthy, bright, and without "spot or blemish" in body or mind. Thirty-one of the number were girls; twenty-five were boys. Seven died in infancy, three in childhood, seven more since reaching maturity. What bright memories we cherish of the happy times we spent beneath our father's tender watch-care, supplemented by the very sweetest mother-love ever given to mortals! Ever thinking of us and our welfare, father was particularly anxious about our education. Deprived of all advantages in his youth but the often-mentioned "thirteen-days' schooling," he determined we should have the opportunities he had missed.

Such schools as our first ones were! Across the road from the Lion House stood the big, high-ceilinged, low-windowed, one-roomed schoolhouse. At one end was a small entry way, far above which swung the brazen-voiced bell in its lofty spire, while on one side was a tiny wing for the use of the teacher. What a merry, noisy stamping of feet in the entry just before nine o'clock, summer and winter! The room must be thirty feet high, with long, deep windows on one side. Here we all are, a restless, giggling, merry little crowd, looking upon the unlucky school ma'am or master as a sort of moral necessity. What lazy intellectual happiness in the cool, breezy, spring mornings to sit down after the lengthy, fervent prayer and hear the teacher call out: "First Readers, come to your class!" There we gathered, dozens of little legs unable to reach the floor, kicking back and forth, while little, restless tongues whispered, faces alternately raised in questioning glances to "teacher," or hid with quick giggle behind the book. \* \* \*

In my papers is a relic of the second university year in the shape of a modest printed paper, called the *College Lantern*, on whose editorial staff appear the names of two of Brigham Young's children, a son and daughter, among the weighty list of editors; six there were in all.

Let anyone who wishes to know the mental calibre of polygamous children ask the genial and learned Dr. Park, who has stood at the head of this university for twenty years, who have been his brightest and

keenest pupils. His unhesitating answer will be a convincing argument for my position.

About that time—1868—the best stenographer in the Territory was engaged by my father to come twice a day, one hour before school, two after, to teach all his children the useful art of phonography. No need to dwell on the seventy or eighty pupils who crowded the schoolroom for the first week or two, or on the slim company of seven who faithfully clung to those troublesome lines and curves through the whole two-years' course. A black silk dress had been promised by father to the girl who should first report his sermon in full. It was won—it would not become me to say a little unjustly—by a dear recently-dead sister. Our crusty, lame, harsh, red-haired but good teacher told us all in his rusty, crusty way, the very first week, just how we would act; and thereafter, as one and another would fail to appear, he would say, triumphantly: "I told you so. You are a lazy set; can't half appreciate the advantages your father lavishes upon you," pulling his fiery red whiskers resentfully as he talked.

Music was, from before my remembrance, the constant companion, bore, and comfort of father's family. Himself a natural musician and a fine bass singer, he early bought musical instruments—piano, organs, and a beautiful harp—and procured as competent musical teachers for the children as the country afforded. We inherited, almost universally, his taste in this direction, and the old piano in the long parlor was rarely allowed to rest its weary keys, but was ever laughing under Phebe's or Nettie's hands, sighing under Fannie's or Ellie's skilful touch, or groaning or rattling beneath the infliction of more juvenile learners.

How pleasant were the seasons of evening prayer when ten or twelve mothers with their broods of children, together with the various old ladies and orphans who dwelt under the sheltering care of this roof, came from every nook and corner of the quaint, old-fashioned, roomy house at the sound of the prayer-bell. Even the bell has a memory all its own, for no matter how faintly the sound came to our distant ears, we always knew whether father rang it or some of the others. He had a peculiar, measured, deliberate ting-tang that could not be successfully imitated. Once when in St. George (a town in Southern Utah) I said to him at his prayer-time:

"Father, we can't quite get the same ring of the bell that you do." We were generally pretty good mimics and prided ourselves on the accomplishment.

"Can't you, my daughter? Well, I believe you are right about that; but listen,—ting-tang, ting-tang, ting-tang, ting-tang,—four times, you see."

I tried, but somehow the bell refused to sound exactly as it did in his hands. He smiled, and again ringing it slowly, remarked: "Were it possible for me to suddenly step into my home in Salt Lake City to-

night and ring the prayer-bell, every one in the Lion House would know I was at home without any announcement of my arrival."

To the clang of the familiar bell we crowded from upstairs and downstairs, each one taking his accustomed place, mothers surrounded by their children, while near father sat Aunt Eliza Snow, the honored plural wife of Joseph Smith, the Prophet. A little merry or grave chat, questions asked and answered, then the quiet paternal request, "Come now, let us have prayers," succeeded by a subdued rustle as every knee bowed and every tongue was stilled as the dear voice prayed for "the poor, the needy, the sick and the afflicted, the widow and the fatherless, that He might be a staff and a stay to the aged and a guide to the youth." The prayer was always a short, simple, earnest one, not too wearisome for the tiniest restless listener, while the sweetly solemn hush of the room held a calm over even the baby's laughing voice.

With the general amen, all resumed their seats and were at liberty to return to their rooms or to stay and hear the chat that usually followed. Sometimes, especially on Sunday evenings, the girls would be requested to sing and play, or we would all join in a hymn. Afterwards father would kiss the children, dandle a baby on his knee with his own particular accompaniment of "link-e-toodle-ladle-iddle-oodle," surprising baby into round-eyed wonder by the odd noise; then a general good-night and we would all separate, father returning to his duties in the office. What a blessed time that regular, never-neglected prayer-time was! For every one complied with one of the few unwritten laws of the household that nothing but sickness was an excuse for absence.

We were so numerous that we seldom went beyond our own home for amusement except to an occasional dancing party or theatre. Instead, we got up theatres and concerts, pantomimes and minstrel shows, with unwearied vigor and fun. Father was seldom so busy that he would not spend an hour or so witnessing the theatrical performance or aid in the final rites of pulling candy and braiding it into creamy sticks of delicious sweetness.

One of my sisters, Dora, a bright, beautiful girl, when twelve years of age wrote a play which she called "Love and Pride," at the performance of which she was principal character, stage-manager, costumer, and musician. For this little play, which contained the lover, distracted maiden, and villain, with quite the orthodox *dénouement*, we were allowed to borrow costumes from the regular theatre; and we were surprised in the opening of the piece to see father step in, accompanied by the manager of the theatre, H. B. Clawson. They, to be sure, were "complimentary" witnesses, but the rest of the audience paid for admission in good straight pins or proper candles.

After the girls began to "grow