

CHAPTER X.<sup>1</sup>

TRIP TO BEAR RIVER AND RETURN.

*Northward afoot—Hot Springs—“Sessions Settlement”—Polygamy again—“Ephe Roberts’ young wife”—Farmington—Kaysville—Three wives, and stone walls between—“Let us have Peace”—Red Sand Ridge—Ogden—Brigham City—Into the poor district—Scandinavian Porridge—English cookery—Rural life in Utah—Bear River, North—Cache Valley and the Cañon—“Professor” Barker, the “Mad Philosopher”—A New Cosmogony—Mormon science—“Celestial Masonry”—“Adam” redivivus—A modern “Eve”—Folly and fanaticism—Mineral Springs—The country vs. the city Mormon.*

FINE weather was running to waste, and I had seen nothing of Utah outside the city; so on the afternoon of September the 25th, I threw a few pounds of crackers, dried beef, sugar and tea into my valise, to serve in case I should get beyond the settlements, and took my way northward on foot, determined to see Mormonism in its rural aspects. The nearest point on the Great Salt Lake is about twelve miles from the city, and this road nowhere approaches it nearer than two miles, but runs due north; with the Wasatch mountains to the east and the lake to the west, leaving a valley with an average width of five miles. My route led me by the Warm Springs, already mentioned; three miles farther there is another known as the Hot Springs, from being twenty-six degrees higher in temperature than the former. A stream of scalding water as large as a man’s body boils out of a rock at the foot of the mountain, forms a hot pool two or three rods in circuit, whence the branch runs across the road, and westward into Hot Spring Lake. These springs will be more fully described in another place.

The sun was near the horizon when I reached the highest point on the road, the sky which had been hazy all day became clear, and glancing back towards the city I saw her light colored dwellings and green gardens glistening in the evening sunlight, reminding one strangely of pictures of Oriental Scenes, while the

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<sup>1</sup> Original chapter page numbers: 260-277.



SCENE ON THE UPPER PART OF BEAR RIVER, UTAH.

gray peaks to the east, the blue mountains to the southwest and the Lake Island hills combined to form a grand circle of beauty surrounding the modern "Zion." Seated on a projecting rock above the road, as the sun sank slowly behind the islands, I tried again and again to convey some description of the scene to paper, and as often dropped book and pencil with a mixture of delight and despair.

Ten miles out brought me to Sessions Settlement, sometimes called Bountiful, where I spent the night at the house of Mr. Perry Green Sessions, a Mormon elder and returned missionary, who entertained me with some account of his experience in England and the Eastern States "while laboring to build up Zion among those that are in darkness."

From there, I continued my journey along the stage road, now along the base of the mountains where cold springs break in jets out of the rocks, and again far out in the valley among corn and cane fields, or amid dwellings surrounded by peach orchards, where the trees were breaking under the load of ripening fruit, a sight I had not seen for many years. A larger and finer orchard than ordinary attracted my attention, and, as the gate stood invitingly open, I walked forward to where two women sat beneath a

tree preparing fruit for drying, and proposed to purchase a dozen or two of peaches. Fruit in plenty was offered and all pay refused, and while I took a proffered seat, the younger lady, a bright, lively, voluble woman, entered at once into conversation by asking what State I had come from. "How do you know I am not a Utah man?" I asked. "Oh, I knowed you was a Gentile the minute you stepped in at the gate, and you bet everybody knows it the minute they see you," was the reply.

Further conversation showed that the lady had quite a history. She told me her father came to Salt Lake City twenty-one years ago, and she was the third white child born in the place.

"But I couldn't see it in my way to marry a Saint, not much; though I was raised to believe in it, and do believe in the religion all but that."

"Is your father a Mormon?" I ventured to ask.

"Oh, yes, and got four women; only one wife, mind you, that's my mother; but four women who call themselves his wives. I never was raised to know anything else, but when I was nineteen father married me to a Gentile, 'cause he couldn't help himself, I reckon. My husband was raised next door to me, and went to California, and stayed five years, and soon as he come back we was married. I'd a stayed an old maid a thousand years before I'd take a pluralist. Plurality's all well enough for the men, but common sense shows that it don't suit women."

"Why, then, do some of them hold up for it?"

"Well, they think they must to get salvation; it's a part of their religion, and sometimes they get along pretty well. We never had any trouble in father's family. The children all growed up just like brothers and sisters, and treated each other so. Father always taught me to respect his other women, and I always did so.

"But, law, I've seen such sights in other families. Why, I've seen our neighbor's women just pull the hair right out of each other's heads. There's so many men when they get a young wife, will let her abuse the old one, and encourage her to do it.

"I've seen the man stand by, and say, 'Go in, kill her, if you can.' Now, there is Ephe. Roberts, right over there,"—pointing to a stone house near the mountain,—“he brought a real young delicate wife from New York, now goin' on sixteen years ago, and

she worked awful hard, I tell you; why, I've known her to do all her own work when Ephe. had three hands and the threshin' machine at his house, and sometimes she worked out in the field, bound wheat and raked hay, which, you know, is awful hard on a delicate New York woman—'taint as if she been raised to it, like we folks, and after all, just last year, Ephe. went and married another woman, a real young one, not over twenty, and, don't you think, this spring she knocked Maria—that's his first wife—down with the churn-dasher, and scalded her. Ephe. stood by, and just said, go in Luce kill her, if you can!' It all started about a churn, too. Both wanted to use it at once. Maria had it, and her butter was a little slow a comin', and they got mad, and Luce struck her, and then snatched the kettle right off the stove, and then poured hot water on her feet, so she fell down when she tried to run out. And what was the result, finally? Well, Maria left him; of course, she had to, or be killed. It's very nice, though, for the men. I had a dozen chances to marry old Mormons, but law! I wouldn't give that for all of 'em. Why, just turn things round, and let a woman have two or three men, and see how they'd like that! There wouldn't be no murderin' done in these parts, oh, no! And, I reckon, a woman has as fine feelin's as a man. I tell you, if my husband ever joins 'em, or tries to get another wife, that day I'll hunt another Gentile; you bet!" The testimony of "this witness," professionally speaking, was certainly plain; nor did she trouble me to cross-examine, but gave her views freely. I note one singular fact in all similar cases: During a long residence in Utah I have never in a single instance talked ten minutes with a young lady of polygamous family, that did not manage in some way to tell me, *she was the daughter of the first, or legal wife*, if such was the case. If silent on that point, it may safely be presumed they are of polygamous mothers. And in more than one instance, I have known them to falsely claim legitimate birth.

From this "apostate's" I journeyed on to Farmington, eighteen miles north of the city, a beautiful town and settlement of some two thousand inhabitants; the residence of the Mormon hero, Lot Smith, who commanded their guerilla force at the time it confronted Johnston's army in Echo Cañon, burned his wagons and drove off his cattle.



I spent the night with a well-to-do Mormon who occupied a long, one-story, stone house, divided into three large rooms, with a kitchen in the rear of each; each room was occupied by one of his three wives and her children. He seemed to be living at the

time with the middle one, where we took supper. The partition walls must have been two feet thick, without any communication, each wife with her progeny keeping strictly to her own department. He was doubtless a "Grant man;" his motto seemed to be "Let us have peace." A "constitutional" the next morning brought me to the next settlement, Kaysville by name, where I took breakfast with a Gentile who had a Mormon wife. He was a Missourian some fifty years old, and belonged to the Church, he told me, ten or fifteen years ago, but was "dis-fellowship[p]ed for not payin' tithes."

He talked quite earnestly when he found I was from the States, and gave his views on the entire subject without troubling me to ask a question. "I never heard in my life," said he, "that Christ and his Apostles rode around the country in a fine carriage with two span o' gray hosses, and made the people turn out provision enough to keep him up, as we've had to do for the bishop here. Brigham Young pretends to be His successor, and at the same time makes his brags that he never touches anything he don't make money outen. Now, just look at that Deseret Telegraph line. He had all the people pay tithes and make donations for it, sayin' it would be such a nice thing for the people, and every settlement had to furnish a certain number o' poles; and now they'll charge you five dollars for sendin' ten words, be you Saint or Gentile. And here after all, he's round makin' every Saint, the poorest ov 'em, give so much to help pay these operators that come down to teach the girls along through the Territory, how to work the wires. Now, what comes o' that money? it goes into Brigham's pockets. But, pshaw, these people won't listen to you. Can't make my wife believe a word o' that."

The good woman retorted with a wordy defence of the Church and the Prophet, averring her firm belief in everything Mormon, to which the husband listened with a dry quizzical smile, and finally remarked: "Well, p'raps I *had* better go back. Guess I *will*, and git me another wife. Like dernation well to have a nice, trim, young creatur about twenty-five."

The wife, whose waist was after the pattern of a rum barrel, and her feet models for a patent brick machine, reddened a little and was silent. I think he will convert her yet.

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The Deseret Telegraph line to which he referred, follows this road to the northern boundary of the Territory, and south of the city extends nearly to Arizona, with side branches connecting all the detached settlements; the wires center in Brigham Young's office, and thus at a moment's notice he can send a warning of danger to five-sixths of his people, and in twenty-four hours' time the most isolated settlers could be ready to move. Whether for good or bad purposes, it is a remarkable monument of Mormon enterprise. I had intended to keep the Sabbath at this point, but falling in with a farmer returning to Cache Valley from the city, I rode some twelve miles with him, passing over the Red Sand Desert. This is a ridged piece of land jutting out from near the mouth of Weber Cañon, towards the lake, about ten miles long and eight wide, and too high for ordinary irrigation. Most of the land north of the city has one general character, a mixture of gravel and loam, or of fine red sand and "dobie earth," a peculiar whitish clay; in its natural state it is as barren as any part of the plains.

A piece of land is worthless unless water can be brought upon it; but with irrigation it produces equally with any soil in the world. Leaving the ridge we descend into Weber Valley, and in five miles reach the city of Ogden, the most important in northern Utah; containing with its vicinity a population of three or four thousand, and now the point of junction of the Union Pacific, Central Pacific and Utah Central (Brigham's) Railroads. Thence two day's sauntering, twenty-two miles, brings me through Willard settlement to Brigham City, some sixty miles north of Salt Lake City. This is the county seat of Box Elder Co., which contains at present a Gentile population of at least a thousand.

It has a beautiful location at the foot of the Wasatch, at the mouth of a cañon, which sends out a large stream of pure, clear water, and a little northeast of the head of Bear River Bay, the northeastern projection of Great Salt Lake. From Brigham City, northward, the valley of Salt Lake shows much less sign of cultivation and settlement than below that point. Peach orchards entirely disappear, apple-trees and grape vines are quite rare, stone-houses and stucco-finished "dobies" are seen no more, and their

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place is filled by rude log-cabins, with a very uninviting exterior and interior not over clean, inhabited mostly by Welsh, Danes and Swedes.

The English inhabitants of the valley live quite well, nearly as well as the corresponding class in our Western States, though I have visited no part of America where I found them so entirely English in dialect and manner as here. Taking my meals wherever the hour overtook me, I have found rich brown coffee, golden butter and light white bread in company with the broad English accent, and have learned to associate the "hexasperated haitch," with 'igh' opes for a 'ungry man.

But if I stepped into a cabin and heard the Welsh or Danish guttural, I asked some trivial favor and passed on to the Britons, whom I consider the best part of the Mormon people. A traveler should not be an epicure, but I acknowledge a weakness in that respect, and while I had that glorious appetite, I hated to waste it on the suspicious looking porridge, which is a standing dish among the Scandinavian Saints.

A few of the American Mormons come up to the English standard, but in the country the majority fall below it; they constitute, however, so small a part of these people, that I do not stop with them one time in five. They are nearly all from New York and Pennsylvania, and belong to the original sect, all the late converts being foreigners. I see no Western people among them to speak of. I met one middle aged lady from Greene County, Indiana, and when she learned I was from Parke County, adjoining, she was quite overcome, got me up the best breakfast the cabin afforded, and talked and cried alternately while I was eating it. Her parents joined the Mormons while she was a young woman, and she has heard from her old home but three or four times since.

That region was attracting considerable interest, as the probable site of the "great central city of the future," the town on the railroad which *was* to be, the most convenient spot for staging and freighting to Montana, Idaho, Oregon and Washington, which would doubtless be a city of great and permanent importance. But the railroad was yet four hundred miles distant, and the location of the future city in great doubt. Many thought it



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would be at the last crossing on Weber River, while others were equally sanguine it would be in Curlew Valley, a hundred miles west of Bear River. Meanwhile, work was pushed forward rapidly; the Union Pacific Company had just let contracts for a hundred miles of grading north of the lake, teams were passing that way in considerable numbers, and graders' camps were thick along the route.

At the north crossing of Bear River I found a "home station" of Wells, Fargo & Co.'s stages, where their branch line to Boise City and into Oregon takes its start; also a fine hotel, bridge, store, and quite a little village. A few miles above, Bear River, which has run around a long U of three hundred miles from its source in eastern Utah, "canyons" downward a thousand feet in three miles, out of Cache into Bear River Valley.

Seventy miles up the river, in Idaho, are the noted Soda Springs; near them Camp Connor and a small settlement of "Morrisites," a sect of recusant Mormons, a little more crazy than the rest, but not quite so mean, who sought the shelter of the military in their escape from Brighamism.

My return trip from Bear River was varied by two incidents worthy of special mention—a visit to the Mineral Springs and an interview with the "mad philosopher" of Utah. This eccentric genius merits more than a passing notice. His name is J.W. Barker, generally called "Professor," an Englishman by birth, who came to this country fourteen years ago with a Mormon party. He claimed to have discovered the primitive laws, which govern the whole material universe, and that, in time, he would refute all the theories of such philosophers as Newton, La Place, and Descartes, from whom he dissented *in toto*. True to his convictions, as soon as he had his family comfortably settled, he fell to work investigating, collecting facts, analyzing and arranging specimens, and writing the *principia* of his great work, the "Magna Charta of Universal Science," which was to annihilate all our present ideas of gravity, light, and momentum, and usher in the scientific millennium, at the same time with the moral regeneration of mankind.

For ten long, weary years, he has devoted every hour, beyond those requisite for obtaining the bare necessities of life, to this

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research. He has traveled hundreds of miles among the mines and cañons, digging into drift, wash dirt, gravel, quartz, and gold gulch and bar, till he is known to the miners from Montana to Salt Lake. Night after night he has watched the moon and stars, and calculated the slightest changes of the atmosphere and mist, and every observation has been faithfully recorded, and assigned to its proper cause, in his new classification of principles. Being an unlettered man, whose only knowledge of geology was gained as an English miner, he has worked his way against difficulties which would have daunted any but a half-mad enthusiast; has surrounded himself with dictionaries and lexicons of science, and hammered his way into the first principles of more than one language, by the most exhaustive labor. I found the "Professor" in a mountain nook which might well excuse a man for going mad over the works of nature.

Directly fronting his house, three majestic gray peaks of the Wasatch range rise a mile above the level plain, while a short distance in the rear of his farm spread the azure waters of the Salt Lake, beyond which is the blue line of the mountains on the promontory.

His painfully thin and gaunt appearance showed that he had hung over his books and burned the midnight oil till the vital frame had shrunk; but his manner was earnest and his voice firm, while the corded muscles stood out on a body without an ounce of fat, and seemed to run over the bones like the wire pulleys of a metal clock. He conversed pleasantly and quite intelligently on various topics, till glancing at the mountain peaks I remarked that they must have been thrown up by some great convulsion of nature; then his eyes lighted with a strange fire as he hastily replied: "They *certainly* were *not* thrown up; they were thrown down." Then holding forth an hour on the origin of mountains, he invited me to his study. A low room half underground in the rear of his house, built of logs, had been rudely fitted up with board, chest and table, block candle-holders attached to the wall by wires, so as to bend out and in, and a few chairs. The walls were completely covered with rude maps and charts, and with long lists of words, which he stated he had to use often and did not know how to spell, all copied from the dictionary in large capitals.

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Producing a seat for me and a large bowl of water for himself, he entered on a three hours' exposition of his views. He holds that all the fluid elements of nature are resolvable into four gases; that all the grosser elements are in like manner reducible to four simple solids; and from varying proportions of these few primitives are derived all possible materials throughout the universe. He contends also that the entire Newtonian theory of gravity is erroneous and false to true science; that there is, in strictness of language, no such principle as gravity anywhere operating in creation; that the terms refraction and reflection are based on a total misconception of the nature of light; that all space outside of the atmosphere contains a material medium, and that the atmosphere is shown by actual demonstration to be eight thousand miles thick instead of forty-five.

He thinks that all nature is operated upon by four simple, constant and regular laws, and that all we observe are but combinations and inter-relations of these four, which depend for their action simply on the will and moving power of God. They operate in one course through countless cycles of time, tending always to a common center, and, having run that course, are directed in a returning course for other terms. The mental, moral and spiritual world is but a microcosmical copy of the material, consisting, too, of four subtle elements mingled with four grosser elements, and moved upon by infinite combinations of four simple laws, directly referable to the will of God.

The mountains are remains of precipitated satellites, of which the earth has had many, the moon only remaining; but like all the others it is a hollow globe, destined to fall upon and give final shape to the surface of the earth. The planets inside of our orbit have now no satellites, but are hurrying on to their destiny on the face of the sun; while those outside of us have many, and are coming in more slowly. We on the earth are approaching the latter part of our career, and have barely time to complete the moral regeneration of the race.

It is consoling to know that the grand smash-up will not take place till after the millennium. The old gentleman has just finished his great work, and required all the information I could give him as to the cost and facilities of getting it printed in the East. It

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consisted of forty-six chapters, bound up in as many separate manuscript volumes. Take him all in all he is a curious case of scientific insanity, well worthy the attention of Mr. Beck, the learned, writer on the subject. The "Professor" lectures in Salt Lake City occasionally, and Orson Pratt—professor and elder, and the learned man of the city—has thought it worth while to reply to him through the press. Wild and strange as this man's ideas may appear, he is but a type of hundreds in Utah. In science as in theology, Mormonism is at war with all existing systems; one-third of the whole people seem a little crazy on some subject or other, and the wildest, most baseless theory, the one farthest removed from natural causes, is ever the one most likely to prevail.

Having cut loose from all recognized standards in spiritual matters, they seem equally determined on the supernatural, and extra human in medicine, science, astronomy and natural history. I was once called upon by a Mormon, a little more crazy than ordinary, with an immense chart of what he called "Celestial Masonry." For the medical museum of a mad-house, it would have been a priceless treasure. A canvass three feet square was covered by the pictured folds of an enormous serpent, along which were drawings of the various' scenes, symbols and implements of the new Masonry, divided for the various degrees, of which there [are] twenty-seven! All the work had been done with colored crayons; by "inspirational writing," as the Mormon averred, the spirits guiding his hand without his volition; and as a work of art it showed remarkable style and finish.

Some three years ago a "Josephite," or recusant Mormon, who had adopted the new Mormon doctrine of "transmission of spirits," conceived that he was Adam sent back to the flesh; his wife, a little worse crazed, was Eve; but during the six thousand years of their separation she had fallen away and become a prostitute. To "purify her" he cut off all her hair, pulled out her teeth, and for the better convenience of locomotion dressed her in man's clothes, when both started on foot for the States. A year afterwards they made their appearance at a *ranch* in Colorado, nearly dead with hunger and fatigue; nor did it ever appear how they had reached there. From there they came with a returning train to the

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Missouri, where the authorities properly consigned them to the lunatic asylum.

There is no refuge for the insane in Utah; fortunately, perhaps, for it might require a small war to settle who should occupy it. Few are violent, but many are deranged; and the whole Territory would present a fine field for the student in the jurisprudence of insanity.

The Mineral Springs are ten miles south of Bear River Bridge, and seventy north of the city; but I defer a full description, which will be found under the proper heading.

In my trip to Bear River, and return, I journeyed nearly two hundred miles among the rural Saints, and observed their ways with all earnestness and curiosity. The country Mormon is more religious than his city brother, but less intelligent. He is a greater stickler for the small matters of his faith, but much less able to give a reason why. He is more hospitable, generous and social, but much more offensive in thrusting the unpleasant features of his faith upon you. But the greatest difference is among the women. The polygamous wife in the city is in paradise compared with her sister in the country, where farm labors and cares must be shared in common. There the condition of woman is already fast tending to what it is in other polygamous countries, and there the degeneracy is soonest manifest. While the men are enthusiastically devoted to their faith, I did not see a single woman in the country who defended polygamy, though strongly Mormon in everything else.

At least one-third the entire population of the valley is from Great Britain, one-third or more from Sweden, Norway and Denmark, while possibly one-sixth is American. As far as I know all the posts of honor, indeed all the easy and lucrative positions, are filled by Americans, simply because the others are generally incapable. The missionaries are largely of foreign birth, each being sent back to his native country, after a few years residence in Utah.

Little more than a year afterwards, in visiting the same section, I met with an experience in Brigham City, which, though equally novel, was nothing like so pleasant. The Saints, who had seemed

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indifferent on my first visit, were altogether too pointed in their attentions the last time.

But I anticipate. I reached Salt Lake City the morning of October the sixth, in time for the "fall Conference" of 1868.