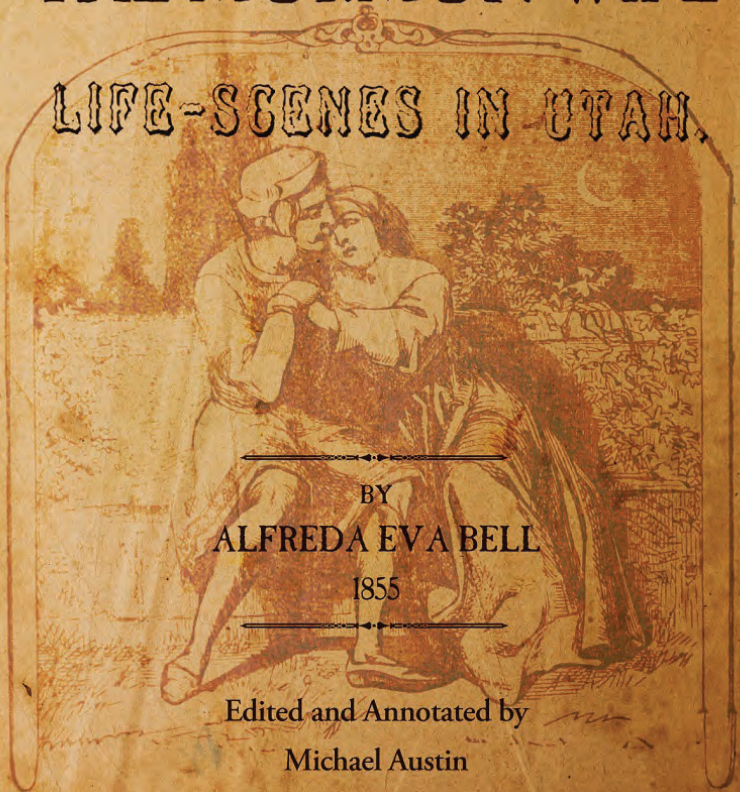


THE MORMON IMAGE IN LITERATURE

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BOADICEA; THE MORMON WIFE

LIFE-SCENES IN UTAH.



BY
ALFREDA EVA BELL

1855

Edited and Annotated by
Michael Austin
and Ardis E. Parshall

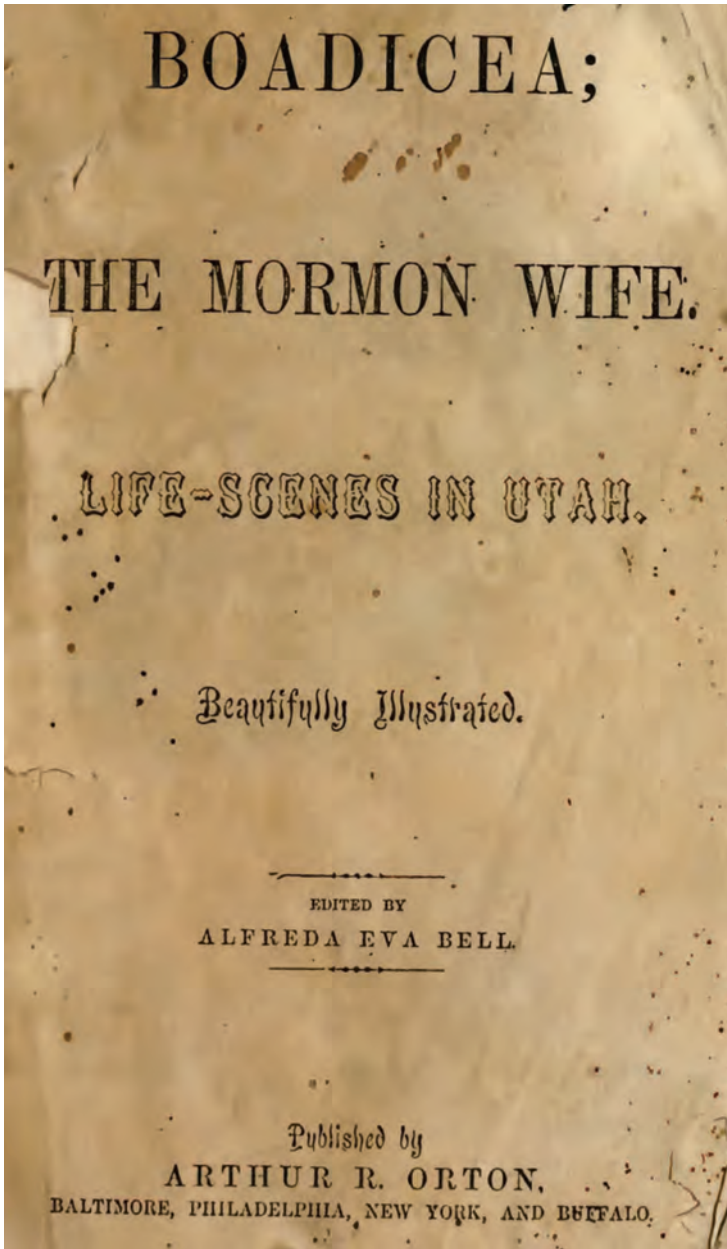
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edited by

Alfreda Eva Bell

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SALT LAKE CITY, 2016
GREG KOFFORD BOOKS

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*Boadicea; the Mormon Wife:
Life-Scenes in Utah*

A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

The nineteenth century's flood of popular fiction about Mormons began in earnest in 1855. Between 1830 and 1854, only three novels published in America or Great Britain even mentioned Mormonism or Mormon characters.¹ Three more appeared in 1855: Alfreda Eva Bell's *Boadicea; the Mormon Wife: Life-Scenes in Utah* (1855); Maria Ward's *Female Life Among the Mormons: A Narrative of Many Years' Personal Experience* (1855); and Orvilla S. Belisle's *The Prophets; or, Mormonism Unveiled* (1855). A fourth—Metta Victoria Fuller Victor's *Mormon Wives*—appeared a few months later in 1856, completing the tetralogy that one scholar now calls “the nucleus of the first wave of propaganda” against Mormon polygamy.² By the end of the century, the number would be counted in the hundreds.

All four novels can be loosely characterized as “anti-Mormon” in that all of them express concern for the threat that polygamous Mormons posed to American morals. All four of them lament the plight of Mormon women forced into a life of servitude and debauchery by a corrupt theocratic system. It is no coincidence that all four novels had (or at least pretended to have) female authors—as did most of the subsequent anti-polygamy literature of the nineteenth century. Most Americans saw plural marriage as a form of captivity for women, making it comparable to slavery—the other great evil that crusading writers attacked vociferously in the 1850s. In 1856, the new Republican Party held its first convention

1. The first novel to feature Mormon characters was Frederick Marryat's *Monsieur Violet* (London: Dent, 1843), which had its hero encountering Mormons in Nauvoo during a series of travels through the Western United States. The second was John Russell's *The Mormoness; or The Trials of Mary Maverick* (Alton, Ill.: Courier Steam Press, 1853). The third was Robert Richards's (pseud.) *The Californian Crusoe, or, The Lost Treasure Found: A Tale of Mormonism* (London: John Henry Parker, 1854).

2. Sarah Barringer Gordon, *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 29.

in Philadelphia and dedicated itself to eradicating the “twin relics of barbarism”: polygamy and slavery.

The connection between the two relics, as legal historian Sarah Barringer Gordon writes, “was deep and abiding in political thought across the North.”³ Much of this was just good politics. Slavery was a thorny issue that divided the country and would soon lead to a catastrophic civil war. Polygamy, on the other hand, was universally despised by all good Christians in both the North and the South. By linking them together, Republicans could use the national outrage over the recent and relatively isolated problem of polygamy to peel away support for the much larger and expansive problem of slavery. This connection was especially galling to Southern Democrats, as Republicans called for federal intervention against polygamy that would undermine the principles of territorial sovereignty—the same principles that those same Democrats relied on to support the institution of slavery. Both sides knew very well that, if one peculiar domestic institution could be attacked by the federal government, then so could the other one. Democrats, therefore, were forced to choose between defending the rights of polygamists or approving federal legislation that they knew would eventually be used to attack slavery.

But the early anti-polygamy novels worried about more than just the fate of a small number of Mormon women in far-off Deseret. In all four of these books, polygamy is presented as a grave threat to the American family because it indulges men’s deepest desires and removes the practical restraints that civilized society places on the male libido. “All men have a passion for variety,” says one of Maria Ward’s characters.⁴ All men, therefore, would be polygamists if law and custom allowed it. In all four of the novels, the female protagonist marries a good and decent man who promises monogamy. But, when Mormonism enters the picture, the husband gives into internal and external pressures and takes another wife—only to realize his mistake and repent as either he or his wife succumbs to an unnatural death. The not-so-subtle subtext of these books is that

3. Ibid., 55.

4. Maria Ward, *Female Life Among the Mormons: A Narrative of Many Years' Personal Experience* (New York: J.C. Derby, 1855), 211.

America will face dire consequences if the entire weight of law and culture are not utilized to confine men to a single sexual partner.

But these books were also written to make a quick buck. Each of them shows signs of hasty writing and outright plagiarism—not to mention ignoring available evidence about Mormon life—in order to capitalize on popular outrage. By most accounts they were wildly successful in doing so. *Female Life Among the Mormons*, for example, reportedly sold 40,000 copies within the first few weeks of publication.⁵ These were remarkable sales figures for a mid-nineteenth-century book by an unknown author—sales attributable to the enormous interest that Mormonism occasioned when Americans finally learned that the Saints were openly practicing polygamy.

Even more than the other three novels, though, *Boadicea, the Mormon Wife* appears to have been hastily constructed to take advantage of the surge in popular interest about Mormon polygamy. Unlike the other three books, which were published in traditional book format, *Boadicea* was more like an illustrated pamphlet than a novel. It was printed on cheap newsprint with no cover, with the final page advertising another tawdry “true” story for the low price of 15 cents. And though the book ended with page 97, it was actually only 82 pages, but began on page 15 rather than 1—a deliberate strategy that the authors of low-end books used to make their wares appear more substantial. We do not know how many books like this were published in the 1850s. They were not designed for long shelf lives, and the few that do remain often make references (usually through back page advertisements) to others that have been lost. They seem to have occupied the cultural space that dime novels would occupy in the next decade and that comic books would occupy in the next century: low-concept, low production value stories written quickly and sold cheaply to the newly literate masses.

WHO WAS “ALFREDA EVA BELL”?

False pagination is not the only deception that *Boadicea* perpetrates on its readers. The person listed as the editor, “Alfreda Eva

5. Leonard J. Arrington and Jon Haupt, “Intolerable Zion: The Image of Mormonism in Nineteenth-Century American Literature,” *Western Humanities Review* 22 (Summer 1968): 253.

A CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF WORKS ATTRIBUTED TO A.R. ORTON

Year	Work	Author	Publication Information
1851	<i>The Bank Director's Son, a Real and Intensely Interesting Revelation of City Life. Containing an authentic account of the wonderful escape of the beautiful Kate Watson, from a flaming building in the city of Philadelphia.</i>	George Lippard	Philadelphia: E.E. Barclay and A.R. Orton, 1851.
1851	<i>The Avenger's Doom, or the Singular, Thrilling, and Exciting History and Lamentable Fate of J.O. Beauchamp and Miss Ann Cooke.</i>		Louisville, Ky: E.E. Barclay and A.R. Orton, 1851.
1851	<i>The Extraordinary and All-Absorbing Journal of Wm. N. Sheldon, One of a Party of Three Men Who Belonged to the Exploring Expedition of Sir John Franklin, and Who Left the Ship Terror, Frozen Up in Ice, in the Arctic Ocean, on the 10th. Day of June, 1850: Together with an Account of the Discovery of a New and Beautiful Country, Inhabitated by a Srmage Race of People.</i>	William N. Sheldon	Detroit, Mich.: E.E. Barclay and A.R. Orton, 1851.
1851	<i>The Arch fiend, or, The life, confession, and execution of Green H. Long . . . who was a member of that celebrated gang, known as the "Banditi of the West."</i>		New York: A.R. Orton, 1851.
1852	<i>The Life, career, and awful death by the garote [sic], of Margaret C. Waldegrave; otherwise, Margaret C. Florence—alias Mrs. Bellville, Madame Rolande, Madame Le Hocq, the poisoner and murderess, at Havanna, Cuba, June 9th, 1852. For the murder of Charles D. Ellas, Lorenzo Cordoval, and Pierre Dupont, (April 14th, 1852,) who were three desperate members of a powerful and sanguinary band of robbers, counterfeiters, and assassins, known as "the alumni."</i>		New Orleans, Charleston, Baltimore, Philadelphia: A.R. Orton, 1852.
1853	<i>"The Derienni"; or, Land pirates of the isthmus. Being a true and graphic history of robberies, assassinations, and other horrid deeds perpetrated by those cool-blooded miscreants, who have infested for years the great highway of California, the Eldorado of the Pacific . . . Together with the lives of three of the principal desperadoes as narrated by themselves.</i>		New Orleans, Charleston: A.R. Orton, 1853.

BOADICEA; THE MORMON WIFE

LIFE-SCENES IN UTAH

edited by

Alfreda Eva Bell

1855

CHAPTER XXIII.

JOURNAL OF BOADICEA.—PART XXI.

Hubert is strangled—Discovery of his Body through Cephysia.

I NOW approach that part of my history which I tremble to write—it is so horrible; and yet I must, I will nerve myself to write it out; for I am but one of many who have suffered misery,—even such misery as my wrung heart has borne.

Hubert left me one lovely morning, promising to return soon, his countenance glowing with health and animation—every thing speaking in his gait, his manner, his words, his looks—of love, hope, and life.

Little did I think then, when his lips pressed mine, as he retraced his steps to kiss his boy, that I looked upon his living face for the last, *last* time.

How sad seems the future—how dark—how hopeless! for my poor husband, whom his very faults could never estrange from my heart, sleeps, alas! with the hidden dead.

I know not what presentiment of evil made me weary soon of my work, and I restlessly wandered about from room to room, occasionally running to the window, fancying I heard Hubert's voice. I *never* heard it more.

While, having at last seated myself again, I was quieting my boy to sleep, Cephysia entered my room. It struck me that she was lividly pale, but the second time I looked I fancied it might be the candle-light, night having set in.

"Come with me," said she, in a hollow and fearful voice; "come to your lord and master."

"What mean you?" answered I. "Where is he?"

"If you would see him alive, come with me. He has embraced you, my white lily," continued she, using the pet name by which Hubert sometimes called me; "he has embraced you for the last time."

"In heaven's name, tell me what you mean!" exclaimed I, clasping my hands in entreaty.

"Come and see," answered Cephysia. {74}

I laid my sleeping infant down, and as I carefully arranged the clothes about his little form, I noted the wild, wicked eyes of

Cephysia fixed upon me, and then upon him, with so malignant an expression that I shuddered involuntarily.

I did not attach much importance to her wild words, and wilder manner, for I had long looked upon her as insane. I followed her, however, to some distance from the house, and I noticed that the earth seemed roughened and broken, as if by the tread of heavy feet.

We still continued to walk on, and a heavy dread began to overpower me. Scarcely could I drag myself along, I seemed as if under the influence of some hideous nightmare. The form of Cephysia, as it looked up beside me, (she was a tall, as well as a large woman,) seemed to assume diabolic outlines and weird proportions.

We continued to walk until I heard voices muttering. As I looked up, I saw a group of persons assembled together; each of them held a dark lantern, and in the moonlight their faces were distinctly visible. Two of the group were Howard and Holmes.

Over what did they bend, think you, with eyes glaring with malignant and fiendish satisfaction? It was above the corpse of Hubert, the dead body of my husband, strangled by their demon-hands!

At first I did not discern Hubert's face, but presently the lantern of Howard was turned round, and the light flashed upon his up-turned brow.

"Dead, stone dead!" said Howard.

In one instant I darted from Cephysia, who had held my arm as in a vice. I flung myself into the midst of the conspirators.

"Leave him to me, leave him to me!" cried I. "You have killed him, you have killed my husband; your hate is satisfied against us both; leave his cold corpse with me!"

With one accord they rose; Howard dropped the body; they fled one and all, leaving Cephysia alone with me, and the dead body of the dearest being on earth, to his poor, heart-broken wife.

I imagined that he might not be quite, quite dead! In vain I loosened the cords from his throat—in vain did I chafe his hands, and kiss his stony and clay-cold brow. He was dead!—he was dead!

CHAPTER XXIV.

JOURNAL OF BOADICEA.—PART XXII.

Horrible and malignant Exultation of Cephysia—Horror of Boadicea—
Her swoon—Hemorrhage of the Lungs.

LOOKING up, I saw Cephysia; to the hour of my death I can never forget her face. Hate was satisfied against me. Hubert was dead, {75} and upon her countenance was de[p]icted malignant and devilish satisfaction.

Then she exclaimed, “Now we are even—the white lily and the dark lady stand on the same level now. The dead is neither yours nor mine. Yes!” continued she, “he sought me; and of all the world, him only have I loved, him alone, him alone! You robbed me of his heart when at last it was all mine; and I hate you with an undying hate. To death will I pursue you, for you have driven me mad! mad! mad!”

And tearing her hair, howling, and wailing, the maniac fled from me out of the country, leaving me petrified with speechless horror.

I fell beside my dead husband in a swoon. I found myself, on awaking, at home. A neighbor hearing my child cry, had, in passing, entered, and procured assistance. I lay upon my bed—beside me, the corpse of Hubert, the face veiled; and a handkerchief which covered my mouth was saturated with blood from a copious hemorrhage of the lungs.

The kind neighbor, Mrs. Munroe, an old lady, whom I had known in the States, and an excellent woman, was walking up and down the room, wringing her hands.

“How horrible!” said she to me. “How did all this happen?”

I could not speak to tell her. I fell back in a long, death-like trance, from which I awoke to a delirious fever, which lasted a month.

Mrs. Munroe watched over me and my child, as a mother might have done. I know nothing of what happened within the month—it is a long blank in my life.



ILLNESS OF LITTLE HUBERT.

CHAPTER XXV.

JOURNAL OF BOADICEA.—PART XXIII.

Despair of Boadicea—Illness of Little Hubert—Cephysia Poisons the Little Hubert.

I AWOKE to despair. A dull, gloomy, settled despondency weighed continually upon my heart, when I began, as the expression is, to *realize* my fate. Alone, except for a helpless child, a widow indeed, friendless, surrounded by bitter enemies, and the object of the inveterate hatred of an insane woman.

How heavily the icy hand of Death presses upon the heart! Death, the *great reality*, which not even the atheist, the infidel, can deny; the solemn, mysterious parting for that

—“bourn from which no traveler returns.”¹

All other afflictions seem trivial in comparison to this. Illness, mental suffering, poverty, distress of all kinds, may be borne with {76} cheerfulness and resignation, but the dreary separation of death,

1. From Hamlet’s famous “To be or not to be” soliloquy in Act III, scene 1, death is described as “the undiscovered country from whose bourn / No traveler return” (lines 80–81).

the dark uncertainty which makes the spirit faint lest the parting be for all eternity, forever and ever; this is, indeed, the sorrow of sorrows.

I often wonder to see how callous it is possible for persons, even the most fondly attached to each other, to become, alluding with calmness to the dead and gone. Their trust must be great.

My heart seems to me the grave of Hubert, and ever and anon rings in my ears the wild song of poor, crazed Ophelia.

“And will he not come again?

And will he not come again?

No, no; he is dead;

Go to thy death-bed,

He never will come again.

“He is dead and gone,

And we cast a weary moan,

And peace be with his soul.”²

In the midst of this dull, heavy sorrow, as if purposely to rouse me to exertion, my little boy fell ill. Despite my care, he rapidly grew worse, moaning and tossing with fever, and continually tortured with pain.

The lovely creature had twined himself about my very heart-strings. I loved him next to Hubert, but with another love; that deep, intense, unutterable feeling—“a mother’s love.”

Perhaps there is no love so tender, so deep, so earnest, so unalterable.

I would cheerfully, willingly have died to secure happiness to my boy. To a mother it seems nothing to die for her child. {77}

Little Hubert still grew worse. It was impossible for me to procure good medical assistance, and I was too young and inexperienced to act with promptness and discrimination; and even had I been better informed as regarded the illnesses of children, it would have prolonged his life but a little while, for he, too, my poor darling child, was doomed. Yes! Have I not reason to hate the Mormons, since their hellish doctrines ultimately produced the death of both my husband and child?

One day Cephysia entered my house. She seated herself beside me, though I recoiled, and offered her no welcome, and began talking in a wild, rambling manner, now common to the poor, frantic being.

2. *Hamlet*, Act IV, scene 1, line 160.

“Let me take the baby,” said she, at last; and I, fearing to refuse her, let her take him; “I have brought him some medicine to quiet him,” said she, and immediately administered some by pouring down his throat a large draught, from a small bottle which she held in her hand.

“What is that, Cephysia?” exclaimed I, snatching the infant from her.

“Nothing but a cordial,” said she; “don’t disturb yourself—he’ll soon be quieted now.”

It never occurred to me that she was giving the infant anything that would injure him, though I should have feared it, from her attempt to poison me.

Presently my infant, still faintly moaning, closed his eyes, and after a few moments fell into a deep and tranquil sleep. From that deep sleep he never woke—the she-devil, Cephysia, had drugged him with a heavy dose of laudanum!

On the morrow finding that he still slept, I sought for her every where. At last I found her crouched beside the place where, through my entreaties, the Mormon authorities had interred my husband.

Upon my resolutely demanding of her what she had given my child, she exclaimed, “Laudanum enough to kill you!”

Then, with a loud cry of maniacal exultation and triumph, she arose and bounded away.

APPENDIX 1.

Extracted from: Henry Mayhew, *The Mormons, or, Latter-day Saints: A Contemporary History*, London, 1852, 304–12.

{304} According to Mr. Bowes, the author of the pamphlet from which we have already quoted, the social life of the Mormons is an extensive and well organized system of licentiousness. Joseph Smith, he tells us, taught a system of polygamy; that he sought to seduce Nancy Rigdon, Sarah M. Pratt, and others; that, in some instances, he was repulsed, in others, he succeeded. Joseph Smith is also accused of having endeavoured to secure Martha H. Brotherton, once of Manchester, for his friend Brigham Young; in both cases attempting to influence his victims by persuading them that he had received a revelation from God, justifying adultery, seduction, and other sins. A letter from Martha Brotherton sets forth the whole charge against Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, and if to be believed, proves it:—

“I had been at Nauvoo near three weeks, during which time my father’s family received frequent visits from Elders Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball, two of the Mormon Apostles; when, early one morning, they both came to my brother-in-law’s (John M’Ilwrick’s) house, at which place I then was on a visit, and particularly requested me to go and spend a few days with them. I told them I could not at that time, as my brother-in-law was not at home; however, they urged me to go the next day, and spend one day with them. The day being fine, I accordingly went. * * * * He led me up some stairs to a small room, the door of which was locked, and on it the following inscription; ‘Positively no admittance.’ He observed, ‘Ah! brother Joseph must be sick, for, strange to say, he is not here. Come down into the tithing-office, Martha.’ He then left me in the tithing-office, and went out, I know not where. In this office were two men writing, one of whom, William Clayton, I had seen in England; the other I did not know. Young came in, and seated himself before me, and asked where Kimball was. I said he had gone out. He said it was all right. Soon after, Joseph came in, and spoke to one of the clerks, and then went up stairs, followed by Young. Immediately after, Kimball came in. ‘Now, Martha,’ said he, ‘the Prophet has come; come up stairs.’ I went, and we found Young

and the Prophet alone. I was introduced to the Prophet by Young. Joseph offered me his seat; and, to my astonishment, the moment I was seated, Joseph and Kimball walked out of the room, and left me with Young, who arose, locked the door, closed the window, and drew the curtain. He then came and sat before me, and said, 'This is our private room, Martha.' 'Indeed, sir,' said I, 'I must be highly honoured to be permitted to enter it.' He smiled, and then proceeded—'Sister Martha, I want to ask you a few questions; will you answer them?' 'Yes, Sir,' said I. * * * * 'To come to the point more closely,' said he, 'have not you an affection for {305} me, that, were it lawful and right, you could accept of me for your husband and companion?' * * * * I therefore said, 'If it was lawful and right, perhaps I might; but you know, sir, it is not.' 'Well, but,' said he, 'brother Joseph has had a revelation from God that it is lawful and right for a man to have two wives; for, as it was in the days of Abraham, so it shall be in these last days, and whoever is the first that is willing to take up the cross will receive the greatest blessings; and if you will accept of me, I will take you straight to the celestial kingdom; and if you will have me in this world, I will have you in that which is to come, and brother Joseph will marry us here to-day, and you can go home this evening, and your parents will not know anything about it.' 'Sir,' said I, 'I should not like to do anything of the kind without the permission of my parents.' * * * * 'Well,' said he, 'I will have a kiss, any how,' and then rose, and said he would bring Joseph. He then unlocked the door, and took the key, and locked me up alone. He was absent about ten minutes, and then returned with Joseph. 'Well,' said Young, 'sister Martha would be willing if she knew it was lawful and right before God.' 'Well, Martha,' said Joseph, 'it is lawful and right before God—I *know* it is. Look here, sis.; don't you believe in me?' I did not answer. 'Well, Martha,' said Joseph, 'just go a-head, and do as Brigham wants you to—he is the best man in the world, except me.' 'O!' said Brigham, 'then you are as good.' 'Yes,' said Joseph. 'Well,' said Young, 'we believe Joseph to be a Prophet. I have known him near eight years, and always found him the same.' 'Yes,' said Joseph, 'and I know that this is lawful and right before God, and if there is any sin in it, I will answer for it before God; and I have the keys of the kingdom, and whatever I bind on earth is bound in heaven, and whatever I loose