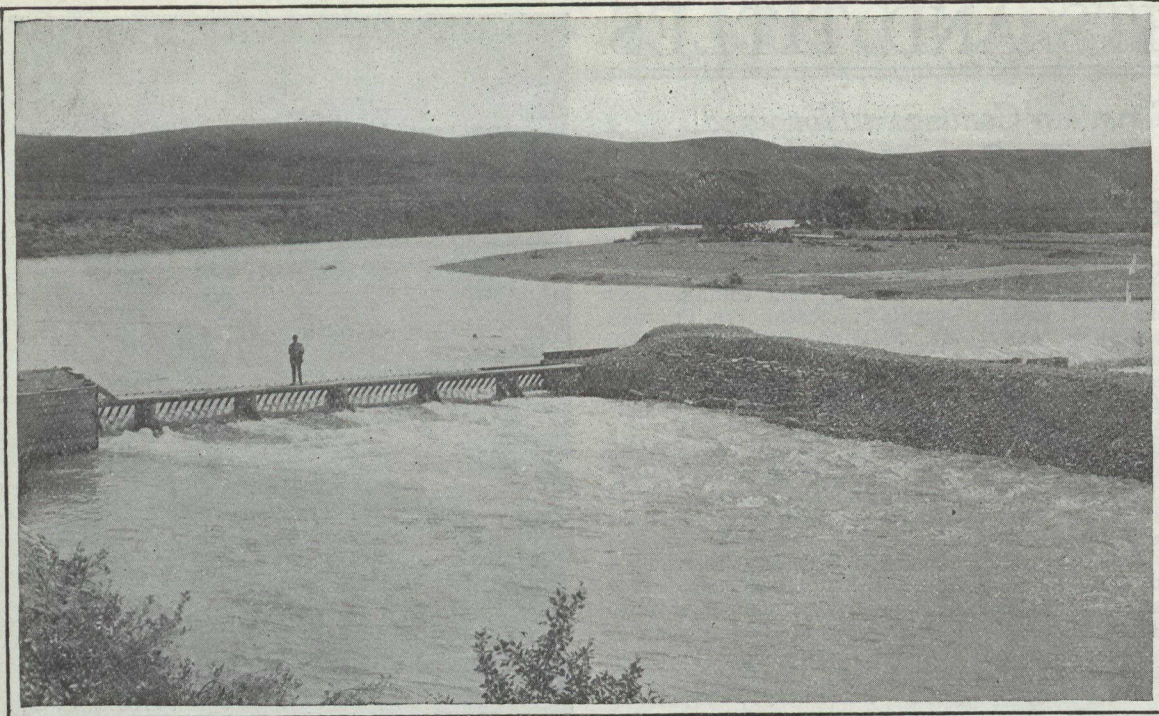




Irrigation Dam and Ditch made by the Mormons at Kimball, Alberta.

HAS ALBERTA GOT POLYGAMY?

If so, the Church Authorities do not Advocate the Practice, which is against the law of Canada; but in the Colleges they systematically teach the Principle of Plural Wives which is a Church Doctrine.

By NAN MOULTON

"In the heavens are parents single?
No! The thought makes reason stare.
Truth is reason.
Truth eternal,
Tells me I've a mother there."

—Eliza R. Snow.

FATHERHOOD implies motherhood. A father God, then, may not be without a mother God. And so, from the beginning, children of this father God and mother God are nascent intelligences, little unfinished, fluttering spirits waiting anxiously to be born of the body in order that they may become perfect souls. Even as Jesus, born once of celestial parents, was again born of a woman, all these spirits must have bodily existence to attain spiritual perfection. There, for your orthodox Latter-Day Saint, is enough reason for plural marriage—enough and to spare.

A man's children are his attainment, his wealth, all that will belong to him hereafter, and, as he has given the more spirits the chance to become perfect

life, and sealed by the Temple mysteries, are married for all eternity. The family relationships will continue in eternity, marriage and propagation go on, with everyone growing more God-like always, for God was once man, you know, and is not yet perfect, but growing into greater God-head always, even as man grows into god-head. All this, though, if the men and women are true to the marriage vows. For there is divorce in the Mormon Church, Mr. Bramwell told me, difficult to attain, and of rare occurring, but granted for the shedding of blood or a broken marriage-vow.

So much for the principle. Now for the practice. Plural marriage was not originally one of the tenets of the Mormon faith, but a later revelation to Joseph Smith; and everyone knows, I presume, of the outcry against the sect that drove them out of New York to make that wonderful hand-cast journey across a continent and to re-establish themselves afresh in the desert, of the Edmunds Law of 1882 against polygamy and the Edmunds-Tucker Law of 1887, requiring a certificate of marriage to be filed in the offices of the probate court, of the promises when Utah was admitted to Statehood, and of what they term "the cruel legal persecution that drove hundreds into exile and retirement."

Said "exile and retirement" partly took place into Alberta, Canada. It seems the usual thing in Utah to refer casually to "a polygamous Mormon settlement in Alberta." Mr. Cannon says John W. Taylor came here to escape a summons to Washington at the time of the Smoot investigation, and that, while ostensibly deposed from the Apostolate, he continued his ministrations in the church and remained high in favour in the hierarchy. One wonders if his recommendation a few weeks ago is a repetition of an only apparent degradation. The second Stake of Zion in Alberta is called the Taylor Stake, which shows sufficiently his then position in the regard of the Church. And I know a lady who called pleasantly upon Mrs. Apostle Taylor, and, desiring a few months later to renew the former pleasure, was ushered into the presence of Mrs. Apostle Taylor, but this Mrs. Apostle was not the same one.

When in doubt, play trumps. So I went straight to the Mormons themselves and asked them about polygamy in Canada. I was amazed to find them so willing to talk. But they were glad that I had come to themselves, they said, they were tired of being misrepresented and they hoped I would tell things from their side. Writing as a scribe, I told them, I wanted to get every side, but I would tell truly what they said to me.

"Bishop Hanmer," I asked, "Is polygamy abolished in the Church of Latter-Day Saints?" They don't like the word "polygamy," and change it to "plural marriage."

"No," he said, "not abolished, but suspended."

"Do you teach your children that plural marriage is wrong?"

"We do not. We teach them it is against the law of Canada or the United States, as the case may be."

"Then, if by any chance, you were in a country that did not definitely forbid its practice, or if the governments should absolve you from your pledge, what would be your attitude towards plural marriage?"

"We would practise it again," he said. "Yes, ma'am! Sure! We believe it to be a revelation from the Lord. We count it the only correct principle to solve the social evil."

"Then is polygamy not practised in Canada at all?"

"Not with the knowledge and consent of the Church, no, ma'am! Not since the manifesto of 1890. There are survivals of plural marriages before 1890, a man might not desert a woman married in all good faith, and some of the older men—he gave a name or two—have two wives here in Alberta, one in Stirling and one in Raymond, or Magrath and Raymond, as the case may be, one his wife keeping his home, the other a wife no longer, but within supporting distance."

"Then since the manifesto," I persisted, "have no plural marriages been solemnized in Canada?"

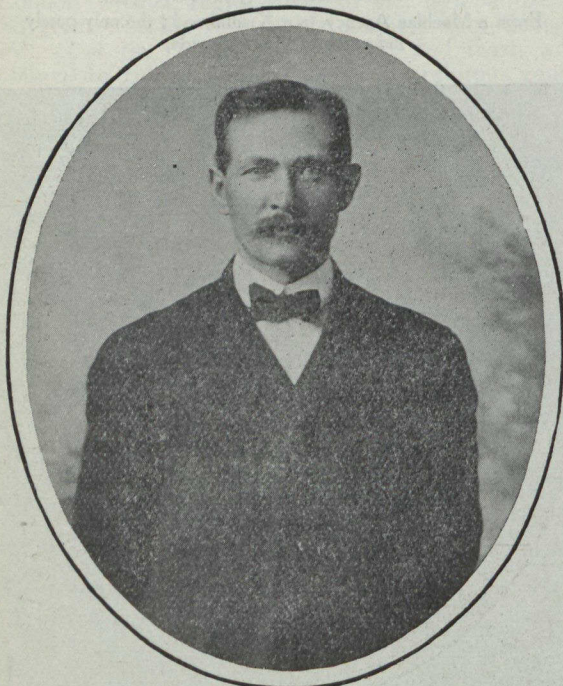
"Well," he admitted slowly, "I have heard of some, you have likely heard of the same cases, it is common talk, but we do not know, and never has there been the sanction of the Church. If the case has been proven, the Church punishes. 'We are not all good, you know,' and he smiled at me behind his earnestness, 'and a law does not stifle polygamy any more than it stamps out drinking. You have laws against stealing, but thieves are put in gaol, and you have laws against the shedding of blood, but murder is done. We try to have our people keep a law, that to us is not the law of God, just because it is the law of your country. When they do not keep it, believe me, the Church is grieved. Yes, ma'am!'"

There is a quality of malice about the wind that inhabits that Southern Alberta plain many days in the year, and, beating my way up to the Knight Academy in Raymond, an eerie yellow dust staining the horizon's edge, though thick mud had obtained an hour before, I felt, for the first time, a queer hostility in the atmosphere. But Mr. Bramwell, the Principal, soon dispelled that, being of a sunny courtesy and interesting in conversation. He is an eager, busy man, and teachers and pupils came and went as we talked. Later on I'll tell about the Academy. Now, this man had been educated broadly, is planning to take his Ph.D. degree at Chicago University this summer, but in all soberness and apparent sincerity he, too, put up a case for the principle of plural marriage. It was he who told of the difference of opinion in regard to the pledge given that polygamy should be discontinued, which was first cause of the exodus to Alberta. And he said that it was not till 1904 that the Church's command against polygamy became of world-wide application.

"Are you teaching plural marriage in this Academy?" I asked him.

"The principle, yes!" he said. "I wish you had been here a half-hour ago. It was our class in theology, and I said to the boys, 'Boys, never go back on that principle. But keep the law in Canada.' We have theology classes from three to five times a week, regular recitation periods of forty-five minutes. And we have sex meetings once a month, when we teach our young people how to live, teach them the very vitals of life."

"But," I wondered, "if your command is of God, ought you not to obey it, rather than the law of a



Stirling Williams, President's Councillor.

souls, the higher will be his position in the celestial kingdom. A woman's glory and salvation come, of course, only through her husband. With the doctrine of plural marriage is interwoven that of celestial marriage. A man and woman, married in this



The Knight Academy at Raymond.

country, a man-made law? How do you reconcile things?"

"There was the command first, you see," he explained, "and our people were being thrown into prison, torn from their families, suffering unspeakably, and they cried up to God to ease this command until the eyes of their persecutors were opened, and in this night of dreary darkness, President Woodruff, too, sought the Lord, and to him