



Officers of the Women's Relief Society in their Church at Cardston, Alta.



The Mayor and his Council in Session at Cardston. Mayor Hanmer is an ex-Bishop.

HAS ALBERTA GOT POLYGAMY?

In her article last week Nan Moulton told of interviewing Mormon leaders, who stated that the principle of plural marriage is taught in the Colleges, and that plural marriage would be practised again in Canada if the Government absolved the Mormons from their pledge against it. This week's article deals with Polygamy from the viewpoint of the women.

By NAN MOULTON

AND then I went to the women. But what, after all, can the women do or say? Most of them were born in polygamy, and would you have them proclaim their own illegitimacy to their own daughters?

The high-heartedness of them is wonderful. But they do not deny the pain. It is good for the soul, it makes women unselfish, it is discipline, and their place in heaven will be higher. Yes, they mind, they mind terribly. And how can they reconcile the rightness of plural marriage with the pride of the first wife and the pride of the children of a first wife? No one, the women told me, can take the place of honour of the first wife here or hereafter, and their lips went tight with a determined satisfaction.

Even when there is no polygamy the woman is more or less sacrificed to the housing of those untabernacled spirits. Mostly homes are small and families crowded and the children come fast and

the mother works too hard for such rapid child-bearing, and you are aghast at the percentage of women who, you are told, are in need of critical operations. You see a generation of very pretty young girls in any of these towns. In three or four years, you won't know them, you hear, they will be just child-bearers and drudges. Perhaps that was too sweeping a statement, but it was told me earnestly. Such conditions no doubt obtain elsewhere than among Mormons, but they do not obtain as the result of a religion and they are not encouraged as here. And see the homes—not all, but the majority. They are small, as a rule. Children are put to sleep under the bed and in holes in the wall. One visitor rubbed his eyes as little gopher-like children emerged in the morning from the walls of a dug-out. Another told me of a two-roomed shack on a ranch wherein abode the rancher and his wife, his brother and his brother's wife, a

hired man, a hired maid, and twelve children. The hired man had taken refuge in the barn, but the disposal of the rest was not made known. Among the younger girls in Magrath, I heard, the sentiment is all against polygamy. They resent its mention as our girls repudiate some old-fashionedness of their grandmothers. And one old woman in Raymond lifted up her voice in lamenting that a daughter of hers had so far ignored the laws of Canada as to have become a plural wife—oh, yes, quite recently.

And lastly I went to the Gentiles, though why they submit to being so called I don't know. And the Gentiles, most of them, buttoned up their lips so over-tightly that one could see more of what was behind them than if they had spoken. The acoustic properties of Mormonism are such that a pin of happiness dropped into the hat of a wandering reporter may be heard in the centre of Utah, and one does not drop such pins—to endanger one's business. Later, lips unbuttoned a bit. "Polygamy!" one lady said, "Cardston is full of it. In that house a fifth wife lives. Don't talk to me about any manifesto, her children are all toddlers. And over there lives a man who sometimes brings up a son from 'down below' to live with his family here, families contemporaries in age." And I have a list of twelve names at least, of men in the Mormons towns, high in the church, all of them, who are openly known as having plural wives. Some of them have been listed in the Salt Lake Tribune during the past few weeks as polygamists. It makes exciting gossip at Mormon evenings. And in stores on rainy days and after lodge-meetings, the Mormon men argue after their sort—Brother Dash is a polygamist, names and evidence adduced. His opponent argues hotly in the negative. If another man were sure he would lay information with the Church authorities. And so the weave of talk goes on, unheeding an occasional Gentile who has been long in their midst.

BUT how do you know? I kept asking. "We know as well as we know we breathe or the sun shines, but if the woman won't tell, where is your proof? It is like this: An attractive girl is noticed not going out with the young people, nor receiving the masculine attentions that are her due. You wonder, and the Mormons say, 'Oh, she is now the wife of —' (and the name follows.) Bye-and-bye the girl goes down to Utah, to college, it is announced. Post-graduate courses keep her there, and, a few years later, some one from Alberta visiting Logan or some other Mormon settlement in Utah suddenly comes upon the lady with two or three children, and perhaps the ecclesiastic from Alberta, too." The principals in most of these stories come from Raymond, the men risen to ecclesiastical eminence, the girls often stenographers from some of the other towns.

And polygamy does exist in Alberta, covered up, concealed, but not wiped out, rather growing if anything. Proof? There you are! The women won't tell. And usually the children are born out of Alberta and the registration dodged.

I do not know if any investigation into this colony has ever been attempted. As far as I read, the Blue Books are silent. The newspapers won't touch the subject. It is a delicate question, they say in Calgary and Lethbridge, we are business concerns with big circulations in Southern Alberta, why should we pry? The business and professional men see as little as possible and say less. The Mormons pay their debts, they say, they are kind and industrious, they buy from us, or are our clients, why should we start an agitation against them? The Alberta Government—that is one of my best stories. A few years ago, in Cardston, the Church Elders grew desperate over their young men and the "blind pigs," and they sent up to Edmonton saying, "We can do naught. Our young men are in your hands, come down and punish them." And a Mounted Policeman came down quietly and observed and listened for a few weeks. When he turned in his report, besides the blind pig statistics, there was illuminating detail of polygamy—the blind pigs had squealed—"a string of wives" in the policeman's graphic phrase adorned many a prominent name.

The Presbyterian missionary is the only man in the West who has persistently hauled the hobgoblin of Mormonism to the light of day. But he is too prejudiced, everybody says, and the inquirer is constantly assured that the Mormons, besides having given the Canadian prairies an object-lesson in agriculture, are sober, orderly, intelligent, progressive, and law-abiding, and no cause of grief to Alberta—which is, in the main, correct. And everybody is satisfied and the missionary disregarded. And the general impression is that of an official who was emphatic that there was no Mormon immigration as such, and your thoughts went catching up in some unwonted haste with his direct conclusion that