

tion of taxes and for lack of co-operation in the various services which must work together if prohibition is to have genuine enforcement. The facts on record are

adequate proof of the need for just such a reorganization as the President has authorized. If the tax provisions of the revenue law are applied, prohibition can

be made to pay for its own enforcement. There seems to be no reason, in law or justice, why a bootlegger should not be made to pay for his own conviction.

The Book Table

Edited by EDMUND PEARSON

The Mormon Chief¹

A Review by WOODBRIDGE RILEY

A MORMON enthusiast once described Brigham Young as "a Vermont Pericles, an American Cromwell, a Western Columbus." This is absurd. One can hardly imagine Pericles being responsible for such architectural atrocities as the various Mormon temples, or Cromwell being a polygamist, and as for being a great discoverer, Young followed the trail to Salt Lake Valley already marked out on General Frémont's map.

The matter is not quite as simple as that. It takes the author of "Barnum" to size up the situation. If historic parallels are wanted, Brigham Young was a combination of Mohammed, Henry VIII, and the American Prince of Humbugs. Young was an efficient propagandist, a merry monarch in the matrimonial line, and a peddler of religious wooden nutmegs. As he described himself: "I am a Yankee; I guess things, and very frequently I guess right." But the question remains, How could the Mormon leader sell his wares and succeed as he did? Werner states as his conviction that Mormonism is a perfect example of religion carried to its illogical conclusions, and that is what makes it more fascinating than most of the dissenting sects in the religious history of the United States. All other sects were amazed by its effrontery and outraged by its acts only because the Mormon leaders were men with literal minds; they determined to puzzle out exactly what the Bible meant in everything it said and to act upon what other church-goers were content merely to repeat. And the Mormon minds were so literal and so untrained that they could not understand the persecution which was visited upon them by the Christians of other denominations and by the exponents of other economic and political beliefs. This persecution bewildered, baffled, and enraged them.

With the recent evolution trial at Dayton in mind, this is a helpful diagnosis as to literalism, except that where the

people of Tennessee were negative the Mormons were positive. The Daytonian jury held that the Old Testament does not teach evolution, therefore evolution is wrong; the Latter-Day Saints believed that it does teach polygamy, therefore plural marriage is right. It also teaches continuous revelation, therefore the Book of Mormon as a divinely inspired work, a new Bible, is possible, while a theocratic despotism, a literal living according to the laws of Moses, is desirable. So Werner's attitude towards the religious emotions and experiences recorded by Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and the men around them is based on the advice of William James: "The only sound plan, if we are ourselves outside the pale of such emotions, is to observe as well as we are able those who feel them, and to record faithfully what we observe."

This, then, is the author's purpose—not to expose but to explain Mormonism in the person of its chief leader. However, the explanation is perfectly deadly. With the same ironic humor with which he described P. T. Barnum and his Great American Museum with curiosities ranging from desiccated mermaids to living Siamese Twins Werner describes Brigham Young from his acceptance of the Book of Mormon to the founding of the State of Deseret and the fight with the Federal authorities. The Mormon Moses in the bulrushes, asserts the author, was not especially religious in his youth because he found nothing to interest him in the old sects. "Only a new religion, made to order, would completely satisfy such a mind." In western New York there was cutthroat religious competition, but the goods offered were evidently fly-specked. However, Mormonism was a new religion, and as a business proposition might be worth looking into.

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¹Brigham Young. By M. R. Werner. Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York. \$5.

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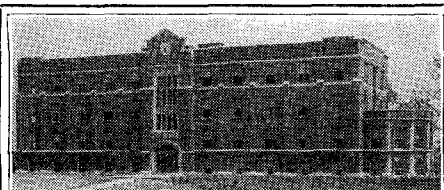
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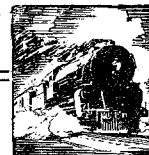
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ARTHUR W. PEIRCE, Litt.D., Headmaster

Latter-Day Saints there follow some highly interesting chapters on Joseph Smith, Prophet, Seer, and Revelator. But here, continues the author, there arises the query of James Hunecker: "What is the difference between a false and true prophet? Aren't they both fakirs?" In the case of Joseph Smith the faithful try to make out that Joseph as a boy was a good, true, brave, and upright story-book hero. However, it is hard to get rid of the impression that he was more of a Huckleberry Finn. Thus when he hunted for the buried treasure of Captain Kidd he insisted that the blood of a black sheep must be sacrificed, but it was rumored that the Smith family, who seldom could afford meat, had mutton for dinner several days thereafter.

Hunting for buried gold suggested golden plates, and these in turn prepared the way for the fabrication of the Book of Mormon. Werner's account of all this is highly amusing. Thus Smith at first would not allow the rich Martin Harris, who was backing the book, to show the manuscript to his doubting family. But Harris was insistent, so the prophet had a fresh revelation "because the necessity for conciliating the majority stockholder apparently dawned upon the Lord." In the same way fresh revelations were received as to the Golden Bible. Each revelation began with the sentence, "A great and marvelous work is about to come forth among the children of men." It was as if God, through his agent, Joseph Smith, Jr., was planning an advertising campaign and had hit upon that phrase as an advance slogan.

Werner concludes that Joseph Smith's visions and revelations were probably produced by a combination of self-hypnotism and the desire to deceive for the purpose of gaining a living. Was the same thing true of Brigham Young? The author states that, although Young was in many respects naïve, there must have been many things about Joseph Smith which he doubted were divine. He adds that there are no definite hints in his sermons and conversations of these doubts, yet he cites one discourse in which Young said he once felt a want of confidence in Brother Joseph Smith. This was not concerning religious matters, but financing. Still Young confesses that if he were to harbor a thought in his heart that Joseph could be wrong in anything, he would begin to lose confidence in him until at last he would be ready to plunge into the gulf of infidelity. Now Young was a man of strong will, and in this matter exerted the will to believe. As an astute Yankee he must have seen the absurdities of the prophet's revelations concerning the Lord's Boarding



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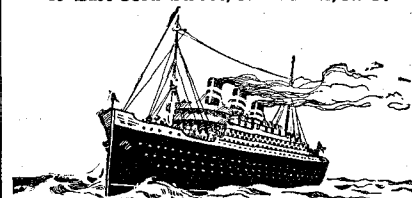
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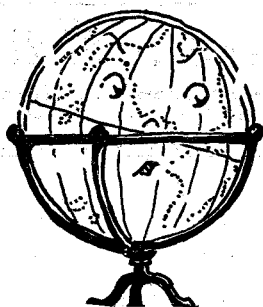
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House, the Kirtland wildcat bank, and the like. As for the revelation on plural marriage, that was a different matter. The prophet practiced polygamy, that we know. At his death Brigham Young took over some of his wives and finally became the most married man in the country. How did he justify this? The belief in Joseph Smith as a divinely inspired prophet came from the will to believe. The belief in plural marriage came about by another psychological process, that of rationalization. When the Old Testament precedents of the patriarchs were worn threadbare, a new reason was given. As Werner puts it: "According to the Mormon theory, God instituted polygamy solely for the purpose of multiplying the number of the righteous, and not to satisfy the carnal desires of man. A large part of the Mormon celestial world is inhabited by spirits, who go about, like Maeterlinck's souls of the unborn in 'The Blue Bird,' searching for tabernacles. It is absolutely necessary to their eventual resurrection that these spirits should have tabernacles, or earthly bodies."

Since writing the "Founder of Mormonism" I have often wondered what was the real source of this strange doctrine. It is a species of animism, an extremely primitive form of belief hardly held at present except among certain African tribes. There is a possible source through the medium of the much-traveled Orson Pratt, the Mormon "Gauge of Philosophy," whose speculations were as wild as his whiskers. But how a hard-headed Yankee like Brigham Young could hold to such a fantastic doctrine is difficult to understand. Werner cites Young's sermon on this subject in his chapter entitled "Puritan Polygamy." The word Puritan is significant. It is possible that an early New England superstition regarding wandering spirits may have suggested this. The wretched victims of the Salem witchcraft delusion were firm believers in "Satan's Invisible World" of evil spirits. By a logical conversion it might be that Young assumed the existence of a celestial world of unembodied good spirits. Consequently he could reason that the Lord had instituted plural marriage "for a holy purpose" and that some wandering soul could say to the Creator: "Let me have a tabernacle, that I may have a chance to be perfected."

All this might seem quite incredible, except that Werner uses authentic sources, the "Journal of Discourses," containing that set of sermons and addresses which lay bare the Mormon mind as nothing else can do. Young tried to uphold the purity of plural marriage, but

his descriptions of the holy state of matrimony in Mormondom are vulgar and disgusting beyond measure. How far "spiritual wifeism" is still practiced is a question. Since Young and other leaders were arrested for "lascivious cohabitation" polygamy as such has disappeared. Werner correctly says that this has been due to economic causes as well as legal enactments. He adds that the younger generation, especially those educated in Eastern colleges, "have become a bit ashamed of their grandmothers, and especially of the fact that there were so many of them."

Polygamy may have disappeared, but its pernicious aftermath remains. We have been led to understand that the boys and girls of Utah are not all they might be. As Latter-Day Saints they argue that they may follow where the Saints have trod, just as their grandparents appealed to the precedent of the patriarchs. The Mormon mind is quite human, after all. Literal Bible believers can find excuses for almost anything. Werner has already described Mormonism as a perfect example of religion carried to its illogical conclusions. This should be changed to logical conclusions, for there were other doctrines besides polygamy that were justified by an appeal to Holy Writ. Take the case of that monstrous doctrine, blood atonement. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has portrayed this in the form of fiction in his "Study in Scarlet." But the practice was a fact, and many Mormons who murmured against the authorities or sought to escape from the Valley had their throats cut, their blood being "spilt upon the ground, that the smoke thereof might ascend to heaven as an offering for their sins." These are the very words of Brigham Young, stenographically reported in the "Journal of Discourses," and are quoted in connection with the Mountain Meadows Massacre. As Werner concludes the matter: "This was the height of fanatical Puritanism. . . . It was one of the limitations of Brigham Young's mind that he himself always preferred a dead Saint to a living sinner."

Fiction

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Some of the publicity sent out with Mr. Wright's new book not only tells us that he is inspired, but (and over and over again) that he is "the inspired novelist" (italics ours, but you can't read it otherwise). This inspiration idea works two ways: Mr. Wright quite sincerely feels that he has inspiration that will help mankind to idealism and brotherhood; the reader who is not critical of

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