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A Mormon "Widow" in Colorado: The Exile of Emily Wells Grant

As the southbound Denver & Rio Grande train pulled out of the depot at Salt Lake City in November 1889, Emily Wells Grant breathed a sigh of relief, and relaxed. As a plural wife of Elder Heber J. Grant, she was used to dodging United States marshals. Her recent crisis, she admitted, was of her own making. Why had she insisted on attending her father's seventy-fifth birthday celebration in the Twelfth Ward after five years of secrecy? She had been spotted there, the grand jury had reopened her husband's cohabitation case, and she had been forced to flee again. The federal government was increasing its pressure on The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to end polygamy. Emily was now leaving Utah and entering a year-and-a-half exile in Manassa, Colorado. From there, she would regularly correspond with her husband, her lively letters conveying a rare view of the feelings of the "privileged" plural wives who were allowed to set up separate households. Since such a practice required considerable means, these women comprised the social and economic elite of the practicing polygamists. The story of Emily Grant's exile illustrates the human side of the Church's transition from a regional sect that practiced plural marriage to its more expansive and "American" form of today.¹

Emily Wells had known and liked Heber J. Grant from her earliest memory. She was born in Salt Lake City on April 22, 1857, next door to the Grant family's homestead on Main Street. A daughter of former Salt Lake City mayor and current General

Authority Daniel H. Wells and his plural wife Martha, she had become an early friend of Heber, five months her senior, who was the son of Rachel Ivins and Jedediah Grant, also a former Salt Lake City mayor and church leader who had died when Heber was nine days old. In their late teens, the friendship between Emily and Heber cooled after they sharply disagreed on the question of plural marriage. At the time, she was a student at the University of Deseret and the coquette of the Salt Lake City crowd, slender and of medium height, with chestnut brown hair and blue eyes (illus. 9-1). She might be a Wells, and the offspring of a plural marriage, but nothing could persuade her to enter polygamy.²



Courtesy Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Illus. 9-1. Emily Wells and Heber J. Grant had been childhood friends. Decades later Emily became Heber's third wife.

Finding Emily adamant on the subject of plural marriage, Heber married Lucy Stringham in 1877. Seven years later, by then a prominent Church leader and rising businessman, he decided to take Augusta Winters as his second wife. But there remained the unrequited attraction of Emily. When Heber first proposed marriage to her in 1883, she stoutly denounced him and the idea. But Heber persevered and Emily began a prayerful study of the principle. Within a year her opposition to Heber and polygamy ended, and she became his third wife on May 27, 1884, the day after his marriage to Augusta.³

Emily faced great obstacles as a plural wife. Two years before her sealing to Heber, Congress had passed the Edmunds Act, which subjected men convicted of plural marriage or living polygamously (defined as "cohabitation") to fines and imprisonment. In 1887 the government stiffened its opposition. The Edmunds-Tucker Act

disincorporated the Church and forced it to surrender its properties. With Benjamin Harrison and the Republicans elected on an anti-Mormon platform, and with more draconian measures apparently on the way, the times were unpropitious for the illegal wives, or "widows" as they were called. If captured with their offspring, they were deemed sufficient evidence to convict their husbands (illus. 9-2). Consequently, in the late 1880s these women took to the "underground" with little hope that they might soon emerge to lead more normal lives.⁴

Thus, to conceal the birth of her first child, Emily had sought refuge in Liverpool, England, at 42 Islington, the Church's dilapidated and supposedly ghost-ridden mission headquarters. As United States authorities continued to eye her husband's activities, she had stayed in England an additional sixteen months. Her circumstances had not improved upon her return to America. Heber briefly sequestered her in a specially constructed apartment hidden in her mother's home, and for a long period she was on the "open"



Source: Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Illus. 9-2. Because the Edmunds Act prohibited plural marriage, Emily—like many other plural wives—went into hiding in the 1880s to escape prosecution. Heber and Emily's family: (*seated*) Heber J. Grant, Emily Grant Mansen, Frances Grant Bennett; (*standing*) Grace Grant Evans, Emily Wells Grant, Dessie Grant Boyle.

underground, shifting residences throughout northern Utah and southern Idaho. During that time, her interludes with Heber were never as frequent or as extended as she wished.⁵

Emily's destination in November 1889 was Manassa, a little town in the San Luis Valley in south-central Colorado, over five hundred miles from Salt Lake City. She did not have to travel there alone. As Heber could not be seen with her publicly, he had taken an earlier train, leaving friends to navigate Emily through the D & R G depot without being arrested. John Henry Smith, a fellow member of the Twelve with Heber, escorted Emily and her two children, Deseret and Grace, who were three years and eleven months respectively. At Pueblo, Colorado, the two Grant parties met and traveled to Manassa together.⁶

Mormons had settled in the San Luis Valley only a few years earlier. While Spaniards and their Mexican descendants had lived there as early as the seventeenth century, it was not until the late 1870s that a railroad spur opened the valley to Anglo development. The Mormons responded by founding Manassa and several satellite communities. Considered solely by latitude, the Mormon settlements seemed ideally located to receive a regular flow of converts from the Southern states, and each March and November new companies of emigrants arrived. To aid them, Church leaders sent seasoned Utah pioneers, particularly Scandinavians from the Sanpete country in Utah, to the San Luis Valley.⁷

When Emily arrived in Manassa, most of the houses were small frame dwellings, only a minor improvement over the log construction of the local church. There were two schools. The village had an assortment of stores that included the Mormon co-operative and furniture, hardware, and four general merchandise establishments, most of which would vanish during the next several years. Manassa claimed four hundred inhabitants, with another two thousand scattered nearby in the valley.⁸

Emily could see little evidence of the fertility and promise the Salt Lake City *Deseret Evening News* reported in its periodic descriptions of Manassa. While its soil and 7,500-foot altitude were ideal for irrigated potatoes, legumes, and short-season grains, the town sat on a windswept and treeless flatland. The San Luis Valley was huge, almost fifty miles wide and 175 miles long, its mountain rim barely

visible in the distance. The valley's magnitude dwarfed Manassa's few buildings and gave the community the aspect of a bleak Western prairie town. To someone like Emily, who delighted in the sociability and excitement of city life, it looked painfully forlorn.⁹

She hoped her stay would be for only a year or two, but Heber, who remained for two weeks setting up house, seemed intent on a longer timetable. He clearly spent on a scale that suggested permanence. He purchased a sturdy two-room house that would provide protection from the San Luis winds, had the spaces between the wall studs filled with sawdust for insulation, ordered cloth, and had new wallpaper applied to the interior. A kitchen was later built on. With new carpets, furniture, stove, and other accessories, Emily's home was one of the most comfortable in the settlement. And to further accommodate her, Heber hired a chore boy and left his mother for companionship.¹⁰

Emily also had the society of other Utahns. With federal pressure mounting, Manassa had become a haven for polygamist families. Mormons reasoned that territorial marshals were not apt to travel that far for their prey, and if the marshals did, advance word could be sent to the settlement. Several Mormon patriarchs accordingly settled with their extended families in the San Luis Valley, often on land remote from the larger Latter-day Saint settlements. Manassa became a popular refuge for "widows." Among Emily's neighbors were the wives of General Authorities Francis M. Lyman, John Morgan, B. H. Roberts, John Henry Smith, and Moses Thatcher. Another dozen were plurally married to prominent Utah businessmen and bishops. However, the exiles with their children constituted less than 10 percent of Manassa proper.¹¹

Emily's initial feelings about her surroundings were pleasant. She admitted to being "better contented & happier than I thought I would be." Manassa's air was bracing. She enjoyed "lovely cream[,] fresh eggs[,] and chicken" on demand. With a horse and buggy, she could visit and sight-see. And her home was satisfactory, save for one unredeemable flaw. "I have got every thing in it now that I want," Emily reported to Heber upon his return to Salt Lake City, "except you." She developed leisurely routines, rising for a late breakfast, retiring early, and doing "just as we please about everything." She especially relished her liberty: "Too be able to go out in

the day time without a thick veil and to ask at the general post office for my own mail is indeed a treat."¹²

Still, there was no denying the hard reality of Manassa. Its wind, isolation, and rustic life (not to mention its bed bugs) were formidable challenges for citified Emily. When a stranger advised that it was the proper season for one of her cows "to go South," she reportedly entrusted the animal to him—and both he and the cow "went south," never to be seen again. Clearly, she was neither prepared for nor attracted to her new life. "I realize that I am buried alive and don't know nothing no how," she complained with more edge than humor.¹³

When Heber gave her two expensive paintings for Christmas, she responded: "Thank you sweetheart but what did you send a pair of costly pictures down here for. To please me?" The pictures added greatly to the room's appearance, but they were too nice for Manassa. "I don't want anything down here that I can ever become attached to and will hate to part with," Emily wrote. "Your Christmas present, of course, I shall always want to keep so [I] have carefully put the box, the pictures were in, away so I can pack them up and take them home with me."¹⁴

Emily was hardly alone in her feelings. The Manassa "widows" disliked their Colorado exile, and their distaste increased with time. There was a variety of complaints. Rose Williams found only patent medicine on the store shelves. Josephine Smith complained that the local settlers had "no desire to be or do anything in the way of improvement," and during one winter wrote: "There isn't a green thing to be seen in this valley, only the house plants, and a good many of them are dead." While more stoical than most, Rhoda Lyman longed to see her handicapped son living in Utah.¹⁵

Local bickering also made the environment less pleasant. "I never in all my life heard of so much contending among 'Mormon' people as there is here," one wife reported. "I hardly ever hear one person speak well of another. Snubs and criticism is the order of the day." The problem lay at the roots of the settlement. The colonists arriving from the Southern states were unprepared for Manassa's chilly climate and for the earthy speech and plain habits of the Utah pioneers sent to assist them. Conflict was always present. Several times Church meetings were disrupted by near fights. In the mid-1880s

Bishop W. L. Ball left the settlement amid charges of fraud and embezzlement. Disgruntled Saints repeatedly charged Stake President Silas S. Smith with misconduct and on one occasion threatened to lynch him.¹⁶

Manassa's conditions were irritating, but the main source of the widows' discontent was their having to go underground. Above Josephine Smith's mantelpiece hung an old-fashioned sampler with the inscription: "What Is Home Without a Father?" Its irony may have been lost upon Josephine, but not others. Many women longed for something more than occasional marital companionship. They saw themselves as second-class wives, living outside the law and subject to arrest. "It is such a different life, than the married one that we always picture," one underground wife wrote. It was "so hard to always be alone, no one to look to but the Father of all, and sometimes He, even, seems so far away."¹⁷

Because of their common plight, the "widows" turned to each other for companionship. "We do a good deal of visiting," Emily wrote. "There is quite a colony of us now and we have pleasant times together." She developed a special bond with Celia Roberts and especially with Georgie Thatcher, a cousin of Lucy Grant, Heber's first wife. When the women met as a group, it usually was for an afternoon dinner party. Emily's report of one of Josephine Smith's fêtes was probably descriptive of most: "a perfect success, lovely dinner, plenty of gossip & a house running over with babies."¹⁸

Church activity provided another release from the local monotony. Emily's Sunday attendance was fitful, restrained by the uncertain spirit at the meetings and by the logistics of tending two babies. Special needs and recreation, however, provided more compelling reasons to leave the house. When a mother died leaving nine children, the Mormon exiles and local Relief Society sisters made clothes for them. Emily also assisted at the church fair. Dancing at the regular church socials brought back memories of her youth. The log meetinghouse could accommodate eighteen couples when the benches were removed. Three of the "widows" regaled the Thanksgiving costume ball by dressing respectively as a "Gypsy, Hun, and Indian." Emily usually attended these events for social contact or to hear "organ and fiddle," but on some occasions she became a part of the ball. "Sister [Clara] Lyman, the bride [apparently recently married],

and myself were the belles," she wrote Heber. "I danced until I was positively too dizzy to know where I was and so tired for the two day's following I could hardly drag around."¹⁹

Other celebrations brought a more restrained response. The Fourth of July seemed small stuff to Emily, and she had only disdain for "Sister" McKay, then living with her, who thought otherwise. From ten in the morning until one, they listened to songs and speeches at the stake church house. After lunch, they "went up on the square stood around for two or three hours watching a few cranks foot race in their stocking feet, bare heads and shirt sleeves." Then in the evening, Emily took the children back to the stake house, where she paid her "two bits" and "joined in the gay festivity of the dance" until ten o'clock. Back home, Emily put the children to bed and "read until after one o'clock when the giddy sister McKay came home," saying that she had "had such a lovely time." Emily was glad that her companion had "remained until the end of the programme for I think if any body can enjoy that kind of a shindig or get the least amusement out of dancing by the music of a fiddle there ought not to be a straw thrown in her way."²⁰

Nor did Emily's distemper improve three weeks later when the Pioneer Day celebration was held in Manassa. "You would have died, had you seen the procession here yesterday morning," she reported to Heber. "I hurried to get the children & myself ready to go up on Main Street to get a good view of the procession and we had it too. I shall not attempt a description for I can't without laughing and am in too much of hurry this morning to spare the time."²¹

Christmastime went better. Since the stores at La Jara, Colorado, a railroad terminus a few miles from Manassa, stocked a wide variety of supplies, Emily's first Christmas lacked nothing except Heber and the traditional turkey. There were gifts, a trimmed tree, and a dinner that included such frontier delicacies as celery, cranberries, grapes, oranges, oysters, and sweet potatoes. The following year she did better. For Emily's daughter Dessie, then in her fourth year, the event was one of her earliest and most indelible memories. On the day before Christmas, a wagon stopped in front of their house, and a man "began unloading boxes, sacks, barrels, and packages." Dessie recalled that there were "oranges and bananas—great delicacies for that day—there were apples and candy, nuts and

raisins. There were lovely dolls and toys and new dresses and a seal skin coat for mother." These unexpected gifts from Heber completely changed not only the family's Christmas but also that of many townspeople who were invited to share. The "widows" capped the occasion by a dance, which Emily described as "the best party I have ever attended down here."²²

Manassa's tempo always quickened when a General Authority spouse arrived in town. "When one of the husbands is in town we don't do a thing but visit," Emily admitted. "We have a round of sociables, dinner parties and good meeting and there are so many of us here now that there is generally one or two good fellows with us." While in the valley, the General Authorities often tried to visit each plural wife in the colony, a courtesy that the First Presidency continued during their August 1890 tour. Sometimes the men did more. They invited groups of "widows" to accompany their families on outings. Camping on the upper Conejos River was a favorite. There, Emily caught six trout during one excursion.²³

Emily lionized the male visitors. Had he not discounted her penchant for wit and sentimentality, Heber might have become concerned by her reactions. During the First Presidency's visit, she reported that Joseph F. Smith had grown "handsomer than ever I think, and is so very pleasant. We are all dead in love with him and one of the widows remarked that she wished she was not married. Brother [George Q.] Cannon was perfectly irresistible, too." Emily's attraction, however, did not center on these two. At other times she found Moses Thatcher "perfectly divine" and relished the company of B. H. Roberts, whom she had known since her Liverpool days. Francis M. Lyman, in turn, constituted a "full team in himself at any [Church] conference." After a dinner party, she was even more effusive about Lyman: "I am quite in love with him tonight—he was so interesting and looked perfectly stunning."²⁴

A psychologist might find Emily's idolizing as evidence of compensation and transfer. To be sure, behind the outward whirl of the General Authority visits there existed within most of the "widows" an inner loneliness for their own husbands. Upon the departure of a distinguished visitor, their feelings deepened into despair. "It is always such a comfort to have them here," Emily remarked, "and so lonely after they have gone."²⁵

Emily released her frustrations by letter writing, a task made dangerous by the “Raid” by federal prosecutors. Fearing that her correspondence, if it were intercepted, might incriminate Heber, she concealed identities with aliases (Emily was “Mary Harris” and Heber “Eli”) and employed for the sake of prying marshals veiled language and out-and-out obfuscation. “Who do they accuse H[.] J[.] Grant being married to[?]” read one letter to Heber. “I heard it was rumored after my departure from home that I was his second wife. . . . I am sorry if they arrest him on my account.” Emily, of course, preserved verity by being Heber’s *third* wife.²⁶

Emily and Heber often exchanged weekly letters, and commemorated their wedding with a “must” letter on the twenty-seventh of each month. They also agreed to avoid tainting their correspondence with arguments and faultfinding. And both insisted on promptness. She was “in a fever” when the “gawk” of the Manassa postman mislaid several of Heber’s letters. Upon their receipt she “devoured” them. Heber’s letters, she claimed, were “all that keep me up.” She called them “love letters” and requested that they always be handwritten.²⁷

Because Emily and Heber were separated for months, their letters during the Manassa period became the binding tie and most tangible expression of their marriage. With so much time on her hands and so much to tell, Emily wrote long, warmly anecdotal letters. She paused in the middle of one to warn: “I am not half through yet so brace up old boy.” She often felt that her letters bore the aspect of a “ten cent novel” and were too frank for her Victorian time. “I . . . remember the first letters I wrote to you after our marriage,” Emily recalled. “How awfully bad I had it then & have not entirely recovered yet.” At times she wished she could “indulge in a few kisses” and confessed “getting mighty hungry” for his company. She justified their painful separation by rationalizing that it was better that love’s “fire burned even if it hurts occasionally.” And on occasion Emily was even more direct. “I can not satisfy myself telling you how I feel & just wish I had an opportunity to express my true sentiments in a more substantial manner than having to resort to an old stiff pen and some horrid ink to tell you that you are the best and kindest old darling the sun ever shone on.”²⁸

Heber visited Emily five times during her year-and-a-half sojourn at Manassa and met her briefly on another occasion in Denver.

The mathematics of these visits became a serious matter. However sisterly the "widows" were in most matters, they carefully compared their husbands' attentions and, at times, noted any personal advantage. For example, one wife reported her child's apparently innocent prattle that "none of the husbands came to see their families as often as papa, neither do they stay as long." Emily noted that the woman worked this thought into her conversation in as many ways and as often as possible.²⁹

True, Heber did not visit as often as men with older and larger families. He was at the acme of his early business career, juggling a half-dozen Church-business enterprises. Moreover, his husbandly duties also required times with wives Lucy in Salt Lake City and Augusta in distant New York City. Emily was satisfied that he came when he could. Six weeks after her arrival in Manassa, he astonished her by unexpectedly appearing at the front door. His visits carried her emotions on a roller coaster. "I am so grateful and so happy to have you come, so homesick and forlorn when you go," she wrote. She wondered if he might best not come at all. And then she would return to reality. His visits were "all I have to look forward to or to live for, except of course my precious babies."³⁰

When Heber visited Manassa, he usually was on the wing. His restlessness signaled to Emily that he was no fonder of Manassa than she. In private moments, he admitted his frustration in "running all over the country" to see his plural wives, instead of locating them openly at home. At times he sensed the futility of his best intentions. "It is almost impossible for a person," he concluded, "to make his plural wives think that he cares as much for them as he should." But he persistently tried. Blaming the federal government and not plural marriage itself for his and his wives' frustrations, he undertook his marital responsibilities with religious seriousness: "I would sooner die a hundred times than have my wives and children turn against me and depart from God's work because of my unkindness to them or [due] to my failure to be just."³¹

Heber's concern strengthened Emily, but as time passed she grew increasingly out of sorts. When in June 1890 Mother Grant, her amiable live-in companion for the past half year, left Manassa, Emily faced a crisis. She felt more alone than she had ever felt since coming to Manassa. At first she turned inward for strength. A voracious

reader of novels and popular literature, she vowed to give herself a diet of "good books" and prayer. She acknowledged to Heber that her Manassa experience had been beneficial after all and resolved to be more contented and accepting of her condition. "The wind may blow and the chickens fail to hatch—Let the frost come who cares," she wrote. Emily even planted some fruit trees, which symbolized her long-term plans to stay. "I thought as long as I am doomed to live here," she explained, "the sooner some trees & fruit were put in the sooner we would have something green on the place."³²

Yet her resolve exceeded her strength. Without her mother-in-law, Emily's nerves flared. She jumped at the slightest noise and felt unsafe in her home, especially when an adjoining house was burglarized. As time passed, her cries became plaintive. "Don't forget [to] pray for me dear one," she asked Heber, "for without the aid of my father in heaven I can not stand this much longer & be sane." Two days later, she struggled to regain her equilibrium: "I am doing the best I can to make myself contented & happy. . . . I generally succeed pretty well and with the help of the Lord I'll succeed entirely."³³

Manassa gradually became more than a way station on the underground for Emily. It became a spiritual passage. "It is my desire to do right," she resolved to Heber, "and I pray to be able to meet the trials of this life in a noble manner and in a way worthy of your wife." She related a dream that conveyed the larger message of her soul-searching. She dreamed that Heber had telegraphed from Denver asking her to come at once, for he was very sick. She rushed about and reached the railway station "just in time to see the train pass me by without even stopping." At that point she awoke. "I trust the dream is not typical of how I'll get left." She continued: "I have made all sorts of new resolutions again and feel more determined than ever to accomplish something and make myself more worthy of your confidence and love and live in a manner to always to retain it."³⁴

Heber sensed Emily's growing desperation and dispatched Katherine and Heber Wells, Emily's sister and brother, to Manassa. Thereafter, during most of her stay in Colorado, Emily had Katherine or her mother as company. Her relatives helped check her despondency and disorientation, but they could do little to ease the harshness of Manassa. In summer 1890, when Emily was sorely depressed, measles broke out among the children. Then came the news that

diphtheria had appeared in nearby Antonito. "If it breaks out here," Emily warned, "don't blame me if I pack up and emigrate for I can never stand the stress." Six months later, smallpox closed Manassa's schools and church and claimed several lives. Fears of an epidemic became rampant when a quarantined man walked into the Manassa post office, declaring that he did not "give a damn" if he spread the pestilence.³⁵

Added to these fears was the specter of the federal marshals. Despite Manassa's isolation and relative security, there was always the threat that "smarties," as adventurous lawmen were labeled, would cross the territorial line to seek evidence. Emily was prone to attract their attention because Heber had been repeatedly investigated but never charged nor convicted. He was a prime target, unlike many of her friends' husbands who had been arrested and imprisoned. In July 1890 word was telegraphed that marshals were on their way to Manassa. Two of the "widows" were the reported objects of investigation, but Emily and the others were told to "keep a little quiet." Later, a similar unconfirmed rumor sent one heavily pregnant woman scurrying. In another instance, General Authority John Morgan, visiting his plural wife at Manassa, was captured and convicted.³⁶

Pressures on polygamists and the Church itself became unbearable. Like other "widows," Emily was dismayed when the Mormons lost political control of Salt Lake City to their arch-opponents, the Liberal Party. More threatening was the Supreme Court's decision to uphold the Idaho Test Oath. The ruling not only denied the vote to Idahoans who believed in polygamy but also threatened disfranchisement of the entire Latter-day Saint community. "The clouds seem to be growing blacker and thicker," Emily wrote, "but there . . . [must be] a silver lining . . . if we only have patience long enough."³⁷

When Emily read in the newspapers that President Woodruff's 1890 Manifesto banned plural marriages in the future among the Latter-day Saints, she at first was quite optimistic. "I felt almost like rejoicing and I seemed to see the first ray of light I have ever seen for us through our difficulties," she wrote Heber. "You know I believe so devoutly in you sweetheart that things, done by the authorities, which I do not perhaps understand, do not try me as they might were I married to a mortal."³⁸

Emily's second thoughts, however, were reflective and dispirited. Why had plural marriage, the ideal for which she had become a six-year fugitive, been suspended? Heber assured her that no plural marriages would be repudiated. But this provided little solace. Groping to understand the surrendering of a basic tenet of faith, she found no fault with "the principle" but with its practitioners. "I agree with you," she wrote Heber. "Very few men have made a success of plural marriage: and after the experience of our fathers and mothers before us, it seems like we ought to improve and do nearer right: though I fail to see much more justice in families now day's than existed years ago and in some respects I think they did nearer right."

When Emily realized the Manifesto promised no redemption from underground life, her rawest feelings came to the surface. It seemed like five years since she had left home, almost that long since she had come to "this detestable place." She wrote Heber: "I hope it wont be long before I have some kind of a change or I am afraid I'll do something desperate. . . . I am so tired and disgusted with the sight of cows I feel like cussing at the very thought of one. . . . I love you devotedly but my heart is nearly breaking."³⁹

In response, Heber began to consider alternatives to Manassa. Unlike many San Luis polygamists, Emily had ruled out Mexico. Elder Moses Thatcher, who believed "the least said about the Manifesto the better," hoped to continue polygamy by persuading a number of Church members in the valley to join his Mexican land schemes. Emily found more attractive the proposal that she join Augusta, Heber's second wife, in New York City. Because of underground conditions, Heber's three wives previously had had little contact. Emily had exchanged letters with Lucy in Salt Lake City, but by going East she could establish a relationship with Augusta and escape Manassa.⁴⁰

But the New York proposal quickly faded. Emily's first intimation of difficulty was "Mother" Rachel Grant's letter disapproving the move. Next, several "widows" who were discomfited by Emily's good fortune asked their husbands to intervene and change Heber's mind. When he announced his reversal, Emily was stunned by the decision. For the first time, anger and bitterness filled her heart.⁴¹

Emily appreciated Heber's willingness to "satisfy" her, despite the financial hardship involved and his belief that she would not like

New York any better than Manassa. She had not expected "perfect bliss in New York but only believed I would like it better and could see something occasionally [and] have a little amusement." She knew that the present circumstances had to be endured, and she was doing her "share of making the best of them," whether Heber thought so or not. She had always known him to "have made big allowance" for her, by understanding her life and the way she was brought up. But, she wrote, "I will admit your letters not only hurt my feelings but make me wish I could pay you back with interest every dollar you ever spent for me and I wish I never had to accept another cent of your money." She added, "I just adore you and hope this letter will not wound your feelings as yours did mine but sweetheart you might just as well stick a knife into my side and ask me not to notice it as to write what you did." Emily's vial of wrath was still not emptied. She composed another letter sixteen pages long, but upon reflection she burned it.⁴²

Heber, who regarded "the love of wives as one of the greatest blessings," unconditionally surrendered. After several sleepless nights, he offered Emily New York City, Salt Lake City, or Manassa as options. "It will be either home, or New York," Emily dryly commented, having made up her mind "to leave this 'land of Exiles, Greasers & smallpox.'" Nor was there a contest between New York and Salt Lake City. In March 1891, sixteen months after her arrival at Manassa, Emily began to sell her furniture, pack, and prepare to return to Salt Lake City. She was scheduled to leave in April, but her father's death in late March hastened her departure.⁴³

Emily Grant was neither the first nor last of the "widows" to leave Manassa. In June 1892, Elders Francis Lyman and John Henry Smith met with some of the remaining families, and "all agreed to get over the [territorial] line." But Celia Roberts and Georgie Thatcher remained two years more; and Josephine Smith, apparently the last of the "widows," did not return to Utah until 1896. The wives' frustration with Manassa depended on their backgrounds, personalities, and length of exile. None looked back.⁴⁴

Emily learned that her Salt Lake City friends planned an "ovation" upon her return. She wanted none of it. "I only want a visit with my folks & friends without making myself conspicuous anywhere," she said. "Not to have to jump and run from every body will

be too lovely for any thing if I don't go out at all." Originally, she and Heber planned that her Salt Lake stay might extend to a year, or until the possible arrival of another baby. Then, as Utah territorial law still forbade cohabitation, she would again go underground. As she traveled the D & R G tracks westward toward Salt Lake, neither Heber nor she realized that she was pregnant and within months would need another retreat.⁴⁵

Emily's future underground adventure would not be as trying as Manassa. In that little isolated Colorado community, she and the other "widows" had experienced the worst of the "Raid." After the 1890 Manifesto, governmental pressure eased, and the plural wives gradually and cautiously emerged from the underground. When Emily died of cancer in 1908, Utah society recognized her as Heber's wife and the mother of six of his children. Heber Grant survived to become the Church's longest-tenured President in the twentieth century. At his death in 1945, after a twenty-seven year administration, the pathos and struggle of places like Manassa had long been forgotten.⁴⁶

Notes

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1. Heber J. Grant, Diary, November 1, 1887; October 25–26, 28, and November 9, 1889, typescript, Heber J. Grant Papers, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City. Emily Grant to Heber J. Grant, November 7, 1889, Family Correspondence, Grant Papers, Church Archives. As most of the letters in the Grant Papers are listed chronologically and easily located, box and folder numbers are indicated only for those out of sequence. Strangely, the distaff side of plural marriage has received limited attention. Two pertinent articles are Lawrence Foster, "Polygamy and the Frontier: Mormon Women in Early Utah," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 50 (summer 1982): 268–89; and Kimberly Jensen James, "'Between Two Fires': Women on the 'Underground' of Mormon Polygamy," *Journal of Mormon History* 8 (1981): 49–61. Broader treatments are in Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiments of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: University of Illinois Press, 1981); and Kimball Young, *Isn't One Wife Enough?* (New York: Henry Holt, 1954).

2. Andrew Jenson, "Heber Jeddy Grant" and "Daniel Hamner Wells," in *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia: A Compilation of Biographical*

Sketches of Prominent Men and Women in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson History, 1901–36), 1:64, 147, 149.

3. Heber J. Grant to Dessie [Deseret Grant Boyle], March 1, 1935, Heber J. Grant Letterpress Copybook, 72:280–81, Grant Papers; and Heber J. Grant to Ray O. Wyland, December 12, 1936, Grant Letterpress Copybook, 74:532–34.

4. Gustive O. Larson, *The "Americanization" of Utah for Statehood* (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1971), esp. 207–22.

5. Emily's feelings and experiences during her early underground days are found in her letters to her husband and family, box 121, Grant Papers, Church Archives.

6. John Henry Smith, Diary, November 22, 1889, John Henry Smith Papers, Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City; Grant, Diary, November 20–21, 1889.

7. Judson Harold Flower Jr., "Mormon Colonization of the San Luis Valley, Colorado, 1878–1900" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1966), esp. 172; Hanna Daphne Smith Dalton, "*Pretty Is As Pretty Does*" (South Africa: privately published, n.d.), 26; "Manassa, Conejos County, Colorado," *Deseret Evening News*, May 5, 1880, [4]; John Morgan, "Gathering Saints—Good News from Colorado," *Deseret Evening News*, November 30, 1881, [2]; Andrew Jenson, "San Luis Stake, Colorado," *Deseret Evening News*, December 21, 1893, [9]; Andrew Jenson, "The Founding of Mormon Settlements in the San Luis Valley, Colorado," *Colorado Magazine* 17 (September 1940): 174–80.

8. Jenson, "San Luis Stake, Colorado," [9]; Heber J. Grant, "Manassa Matters," *Salt Lake Herald*, December 8, 1889, 14.

9. *La Jara (Colorado) Tribune*, as quoted in "Manassa, Colorado," *Deseret Evening News*, September 5, 1888, [2].

10. Grant, Diary, November 22–December 4, 1889; Emily to May [Wells Whitney], January 5, 1890, Grant Papers.

11. Flower, "Mormon Colonization of the San Luis Valley," 172.

12. Emily to May [Whitney], January 5, 1890; Emily to Heber J. Grant, December 27, 1889, Grant Papers. Emily had a penchant for underlining. In this and subsequent citations, the emphasis is hers.

13. Emily to Heber J. Grant, December 20, 1889, Grant Papers; Emily to May [Whitney], May 18, 1890, Grant Papers. Her episode with the cow may be apocryphal, but it is very much a part of family tradition. Truman G. Madsen, interview by author, Provo, Utah, January 28, 1982, in author's possession.

14. Emily to Heber J. Grant, December 27, 1889.

15. Josephine to George A. Smith, March 26, November 5, 1893, George A. Smith Papers, Western Americana, Marriott Library. Emily to Heber J. Grant, October 3, 1890, and January 27, 1891, Grant Papers.

16. Joseph Smith to George and Lucy Smith, December 31, 1893, George A. Smith Papers; H. P. Dotson, "Manassa, Colorado, February 7th, 1881," *Deseret*

Evening News, February 15, 1881, [1]; "The San Luis Valley Affair," *Deseret Evening News*, February 27, 1884, [2]; "The Situation in the San Luis Valley," *Deseret Evening News*, April 2, 1884, [2]; "From Colorado," *Deseret Evening News*, October 2, 1885, [3]; B. H. Roberts, Diary, January 27, 1893, B. H. Roberts Papers, Special Collections, Marriott Library.

17. Louise [Stringham?] to Lou [Lucy Stringham Grant], March 25, 188[?], Grant Papers. Although the letter apparently was not written from Manassa, it aptly summarizes the feelings of the women there. Frances G. Bennett, interview by author, August 6, 1981, typescript, 48, James Moyle Oral History Program, Church Archives.

18. Emily to May [Whitney], March 10, 1890, Grant Papers; Emily to Heber J. Grant, November 19, 1890, Grant Papers; Emily to Heber J. Grant, March 20, 1891, Grant Papers.

19. Celia Roberts to "Dear Grandma," November 22, 1891, Roberts Papers; Emily to May [Whitney], March 10, 1890, Grant Papers; Emily to Heber J. Grant, February 2, 1890, Grant Papers; Emily to Heber J. Grant, July 11, 1890, Grant Papers; Emily to Heber J. Grant, October 3, 1890, Grant Papers; Emily to Heber J. Grant, October 27, 1890, Grant Papers; Emily to Heber J. Grant, November 9, 1890, Grant Papers; Emily to Heber J. Grant, December 27, 1890, Grant Papers; Emily to Heber J. Grant, January 6, 1891, Grant Papers.

20. Emily to Heber J. Grant, July 9, 1890, Grant Papers.

21. Emily to Heber J. Grant, July 25, 1890, Grant Papers.

22. Emily to Heber J. Grant, December 27, 1889; Emily to Heber J. Grant, December 27, 1890; Dessie Grant Boyle, "An Appreciation," draft in Grant Letterpress Copybook, 74:100.

23. Emily to May [Whitney], May 18, 1890, Grant Papers; Emily to Heber J. Grant, July 13, 1890, Grant Papers; Wilford Woodruff, Diary, August 10, 1890, Wilford Woodruff Papers, Church Archives; John Henry Smith, Diary, February 15, 1890; George Goddard, Diary, August 11–14, 1890, George Goddard Papers, Church Archives.

24. Emily to May [Whitney], March 10, 1890; Emily to Heber J. Grant, May 14, 1890, Grant Papers; Emily to Heber J. Grant, August 19, 1890, Grant Papers; Emily to Heber J. Grant, November 6, 9, 1890, Grant Papers.

24. Emily to Heber J. Grant, November 6, 1890.

26. Emily to Heber J. Grant, [July 1886?], Grant Papers. While in England, Emily started using pseudonyms in her correspondence. To provide footnoting clarity, actual names have been substituted for aliases.

27. Emily to Heber J. Grant, May 27, 1890, Grant Papers; Emily to Heber J. Grant, July 11, 1890; Emily to Heber J. Grant, October 3, 1890, Grant Papers; Emily to Heber J. Grant, December 1, 1890, Family Correspondence.

28. Emily to Heber J. Grant, August 11, 1890, Grant Papers; Emily to Heber J. Grant, November 19, 1890, Grant Papers; Emily to Heber J. Grant, November 27, 1890, Grant Papers.

29. Emily to Heber J. Grant, May 27, September 13, 1890, Grant Papers.

30. Grant, Letterbook Diary, January 30, 1890, Grant Papers; Emily to Heber J. Grant, February 2, 1890; Emily to Heber J. Grant, April 27, 1890, Grant Papers; Emily to Heber J. Grant, June 24, 1890, Grant Papers.

31. Emily to Heber J. Grant, March 18, 1891; Grant, Letterbook Diary, September 29, 1890; Grant, Diary, November 21, December 13, 1889; Grant, Diary, holograph, May 27, 1888, Grant Papers.

32. Emily to Heber J. Grant, June 24, 1890, Grant Papers.

33. Emily to Heber J. Grant, July 11, 13, 1890, Grant Papers.

34. Emily to Heber J. Grant, September 14, 1890, Grant Papers.

35. Grant, Letterbook Diary, June 20, July 22, 25, and 28, 1890; Emily to May [Whitney], January 27, 1891, Grant Papers; Emily to Heber J. Grant, July 16, [1890?], Grant Papers; Emily to Heber J. Grant, July 27, 1890, Grant Papers; Emily to Heber J. Grant, January 1, 1891, Grant Papers; Emily to Heber J. Grant, January 11, 1891, Grant Papers; Emily to Heber J. Grant, January 23, 1891, Grant Papers; Flower, "Mormon Colonization of the San Luis Valley," 126.

36. Emily to Heber J. Grant, January 27, 1890, Grant Papers; Emily to Heber J. Grant, July 16, 1890, Grant Papers; Emily to Heber J. Grant, February 11, 1891, Grant Papers; John Henry Smith, Diary, July 16, 24, and August 2, 1892. The feelings against Stake President Silas Smith were so strong that he was accused of aiding the lawmen.

37. Emily to Heber J. Grant, December 27, 1889, Grant Papers.

38. Emily to Heber J. Grant, October 13, 1890, Grant Papers.

39. Emily to Heber J. Grant, October 27, 1890, Grant Papers. Emily's statements are interspersed with long miscellaneous comments. By bringing them together the effect is more dramatic.

40. Emily to Heber J. Grant, November 9, 1890; Emily to Heber J. Grant, January 21, 1891; Grant, Letterbook Diary, November 29, 1890.

41. Emily to Heber J. Grant, December 10, 1890, Grant Papers; Emily to Heber J. Grant, December 27, 1890; Emily to Heber J. Grant, January 21, 1891.

42. Emily to Heber J. Grant, January 27, 1890, Grant Papers.

43. Heber J. Grant to Emily, January 27, 1891, Grant Papers; Emily to Heber J. Grant, February 11, 1891; Emily to Heber J. Grant, March 20, 1891, Grant Papers; Grant, Diary, March 23, 1891.

44. John Henry Smith, Diary, June 17, 1892; Josephine Smith to George and Lucy [A. Smith], December 31, 1893, George A. Smith Papers.

45. Emily to Heber J. Grant, March 20, 1891, Grant Papers.

46. "Death of Mrs. Grant," *Deseret Evening News*, May 26, 1908, 1; *Deseret Evening News*, May 29, 1908.

