

MARY ELLEN WRIGHT SMITH

Written by her husband, Orson Gurney.
Smith

I want to pay tribute to my wife, Mary Ellen Wright, who was born at Old Paradise January 4, 1865, oldest daughter of John F. and Martha Gibbs Wright. She was reared and schooled in New Paradise and Logan Brigham Young College. My first meeting with her was when she was twelve years old at the old log meeting house in Paradise where I was sent to preside as bishop in 1875. I was 22 years old at the time. I met her constantly at Sabbath School and meetings from that time on until July 4, 1884 when I married her in the Logan temple by Apostle M.W. Merrill.

As a child she was a leader among her associates, bright, active and intelligent, obedient and helpful to parents and neighbors, lovable and kind to all she came to know of people and all God's creatures; at school she was progressive, studious and apt in all her work. With her sister Martha she came to Logan and attended the BYC here. She showed marked ability in all her studies, beloved by all her teachers and schoolmates. But as wife and mother she achieved her crowning glory, for it was in this field of labor and under adverse and trying circumstances she proved her faith, integrity, devotion, love and usefulness.

At the time of our marriage the ban on polygamy was being worked up against the church. Polygamy was abandoned altogether in 1890 by the Manifesto. During these trying six years Mary was constantly on the move to

avoid court proceedings against me. Seven indictments had been found against me under the infamous segregation act, which meant 21 years of imprisonment for the violation of no law whatever. So to avoid that, we went railroading, first in Montana, then in Washington. All this time Mary did our cooking in our exile camp life. Two children were born to us under these conditions. Our next move was to Cardston, Canada, where two more children came to us. Much of this time Mary was all alone, for I could not always be there, but she struggled on, working in church matters whenever and wherever she found a resting place among our people. For three long years she remained in Cardston, most of the time alone with her little ones. The story of those trying times can never be told. It is beyond the ken of men to know the pangs of sorrow and heartbreak that prevailed among those who endeavored to uphold and maintain that divine principle, plural marriage, as revealed to Joseph Smith, the Prophet. Here Mary stood foursquare for the truth, never once betraying the trust imposed in her, never once belittling the law of God, boldly defending it at all times and in every place.

After the clouds of persecution had vented their fury, peace came and we returned to Logan, Utah, where Mary resumed her duties in the home and church as secretary of the Stake Relief Society, teacher in the ward Relief Society work and other ~~calls~~ calls, as well as member of the Pioneer camps. We now numbered ten children, fine, healthy, intelligent and physically fit for long and useful

lives. Mary saw to it that all got schooling first of all, after something to eat. Wise and careful in her management she succeeded to a marked degree.

Our first loss by death was Walter, a fine, black-eyed boy of two years. The next loss was Seymour Elliot, 19 years old, to pneumonia. These losses were a sorrow of telling effect upon Mary, and while she rallied remarkably, they plainly affected her health. George, her last born, almost cost her her life and from which she never fully recovered her health.

However, a visit to the coast with her parents helped her nerves and brought back some of the bloom of former days. Later a trip to Honolulu with her daughter Hattie further added to her health and happiness, as did also another trip to Los Angeles with her daughter, Mary Jordan and her son George, where she spent the winter.

As the children grew and married and formed their own units, more and more she devoted herself to temple work and religious activity. For years these matters had been her joy. Her visits with her children and their visits with her have made her happy, and every one of them love, honor, and revere her. A more devoted mother never lived, always doing something worthwhile for them, never shielding them in wrong doing, but always holding up the good to them, constantly teaching them to pray to God, honor the priesthood, and live honest, clean lives. A truer and more clean wife a man never could ask for.

God blessed her with intellect, an inborn devotion to the gospel and to her convic-

tions. Forty-eight years we have been husband and wife, a long, happy life for me. I ask no better. True to the truth, devoted to her husband, ambitious for the faithfulness of her children, strong in the faith of the gospel and every law and ordinance of the same. She had every blessing bestowed on her that has been restored in this dispensation, a glorious life for anyone to live and attain to.

Great has been her battle and greater her victory. She kept strictly to the Word of Wisdom. No child can say that they ever saw her drink tea, coffee, liquor, or use tobacco. She never contaminated their lives with any of these things. Oh, what a heritage from a mother!

I do glory in her achievement and I do cherish her life equally with my own. Now that her life is almost done, I pen this tribute of her to her children. Seven months ago cancer developed in her vital organs and has gradually eaten into her stomach making its way to where it will close her life. She has made a brave and persistent fight against this arch enemy of the human family. God knows best. We bow to his will and say in all humility, "Thy will be done, Oh Lord, not mine."

She passed away peacefully at 5:45 a.m., January 27th, 1934, after 12 months of struggle with the dread disease, all this time without a murmur or complaint. She lived a Latter-day Saint life and died faithful to the end. She fought a good fight. She kept the faith and henceforth a crown of glory awaits her. Where she goes, I want to go, God being my helper.