

tion, that man will prevail, that some measure of peace and justice can come to this troubled world. These, in themselves, are worthy aspirations, but they are not the same thing as the Gospel. Jesus put the matter quite plainly: "In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 17:33).



## STORYBOOK GRANDMOTHERS

*Caroline Addy*

*Mary Fielding Smith: Daughter of Britain.* By Don Cecil Corbett, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1966. xxii, 310 pp., \$4.50.

*Life Is a Fulfilling.* By Olive Kimball B. Mitchell, with sketches by the author. Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1967. 267 pp., \$4.95.

Caroline Addy, a Provo housewife, received her M.A. in history from Brigham Young University, writing her thesis on her pioneer grandfather.

Mormon history is full of tales about formidable women, bearing the stamp of true matriarchs despite petticoats and plural marriage. The present biography of Mary Fielding Smith is written by one of her descendants and is a hagiographic work typical of Mormon biographical writing.

A certain aura surrounds Mary because of her position in Church history as the widow of the martyred Patriarch and because, unlike some of the Smith widows, she chose to cast her lot with Brigham Young and the majority of the Church when they moved West. Moreover, the fact that she was the mother of the sixth president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who remembered her as one of the greatest influences in his life though she died when he was only fourteen, makes the temptation to inquire into her life and personality irresistible. The problem is that it is very difficult to write a biography about one whose distinction is the quality of her inner life when

she has left so little to delineate its scope and depth. Her public life, as is attested by those who knew her and seems proven by the scarcity of sources, was modest and restrained.

Mr. Corbett has tried to make up for this lack by using the testimonials of those who remembered Mary Fielding Smith; by using the journals of Joseph Fielding, her brother, and the memoirs of Mercy Thompson, her sister, in addition to the writings of other members of the Fielding family who remained in England; and by interspersing all with substantial digressions into the Church history that directly or indirectly may have affected Mary. He is thus forced to assume many things about his subject (for example, the intellectual climate of her English home), such assumptions not necessarily being bald fiction but of so general a nature that Mary never really emerges as a whole personality. Her race into Salt Lake valley against the hostile captain of her company comes as a relief, for the single incident reveals that she was capable of spite — a human quality for which Mr. Corbett's previous eulogies have not prepared us.

Many of Mr. Corbett's sources are secondary. He relies considerably upon *Essentials in Church History* and the *Life of Joseph F. Smith* by Joseph Fielding Smith, in addition to a number of short biographical sketches of prominent Latter-day Saints appearing in Church periodicals and other works. His primary sources include the journals and memoirs mentioned above plus a number of letters, only two of which were written by Mary herself. Therefore, unless additional materials can be found by systematic and exhaustive research, it would seem that Mary Fielding Smith must remain an almost legendary heroine.

Mr. Corbett has included an index and pictures in his work. Of special interest are colored portraits of Hyrum Smith, the Patriarch, and Mary, reproduced in print for the first time.

The second work, by Mrs. Olive Kimball B. Mitchell, is also on the theme of the exemplary pioneer woman. Mrs. Mitchell has written the life of her grandmother, Sarah Diantha Gardner Curtis, a task that many of us with a loving, courageous, and virtuous grandmother wish we had the nerve to undertake. Her problem, like Mr. Corbett's, was that of finding sufficient solid information. In order to solve it, Mrs. Mitchell has not only turned to the general history of Utah and of southern Arizona, since the Curtis family pioneered near Tombstone, but has added a fictional dimension that attempts to bridge the gaps in Sarah Diantha's personal story. Conversations, feelings, and possible day-to-day events are imagined and reconstructed. While this is not an entirely unrecognized device in writing biography, it would have been useful if the reader could have been supplied with footnotes and bibliography in order to follow the "live show." Mrs. Mitchell may have felt that the technical apparatus of history writing would detract from her story. Nevertheless the absence of such can only add to the wonder of the reader, since she has named as president of Mexico the governor of the State of Sonora and has made Sonora's capital, Hermosillo, the capital of Mexico. Further, the citation of sources might have helped students of Utah history who will be in-