

questions that only further research can answer, particularly about the crucial role of plural marriage in the teachings and practices of Latter-day Saints in Britain during these decades. Including maps with the essays would have helped the reader better track the activities of the

Church. Another oversight seems to be the exclusion of the Reorganization and its growth in Britain during this period. In general, however, this volume closes a major gap in Mormon history. Jensen, Thorp, and the University of Utah Press are to be commended for their efforts.

## Heloise and Abelard

*Letters from Exile, The Correspondence of Martha Hughes Cannon and Angus M. Cannon* edited by Constance L. Lieber and John Sillito (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 286 pp., \$60.00.

Reviewed by Carol Cornwall Madsen, associate professor of history, research historian, Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

ONE OF THE BY-PRODUCTS of the federal crusade against plural marriage in late nineteenth-century Utah is the correspondence of separated spouses which dramatically records the personal impact of this volatile period in Mormon history. Because they are animated by the anticipation of an immediate reaction and response, such exchanges have an authenticity and immediacy that diary confidences often lack. While numerous studies of polygyny have included diary and letter excerpts from women who suffered the deprivations of the "underground" and exile, this collection is the first to offer a sustained chronological account of the personal and social dynamics of this furtive life. Until the entry of Angus Cannon's responses nearly halfway through the volume, the letters read like a lively, dramatic monologue by Cannon's fourth wife, Martha Hughes, "exiled" in England from 1886 to 1888.

A woman of uncommon ambition and determination, by 1882 Martha Hughes had earned her way to a superior education and prominence in the field of medicine. With degrees from the University of Utah, University of Pennsylvania, National School of Elocution and Oratory,

and a medical degree from the University of Michigan, she became one of Utah's most highly educated women. After receiving her medical degree she returned to Utah to much acclaim, set up practice, and was soon appointed resident physician at the newly established Relief Society-sponsored Deseret Hospital.

In 1884, the twenty-seven-year-old Martha married fifty-year-old Angus Cannon in a secret ceremony, the beginning of a thirty-one year marriage in which the two were never able to live openly together. After the birth of their first child in 1885, Martha left Utah to avoid testifying against her husband and subjecting him to imprisonment. "I would rather be a stranger in a strange land and be able to hold my head up among my fellow beings," she reflected late in her exile, "than to be a sneaking captive at home" (p. 269). But the years of unacknowledged marriage, the stress of hiding from federal officers, and the long period of exile which subjected her to dingy boarding houses, unpalatable food, the curiosity and suspicion of landlords and neighbors, and the need to use assumed names and code words in her letters made her question the reason for the life she was forced to live: "It is certainly one of three things," she wrote. "Earning a 'big' reward, atoning for past delinquencies, or else because I am a 'damned fool'" (p. 273). Exile in Europe was not the enforced adventure some historians have assumed. Initially high spirited and optimistic, Martha Cannon soon found that the clandestine life she disdained at home followed her to Europe where she underwent all of its inconveniences and apprehensions with-

out the conjugal visits or support network that sustained those in hiding in Utah.

Of wide emotional range, from whimsical and irreverent to introspective and philosophic, the letters reflect the findings of recent scholarship in women's history which revise earlier assumptions about the "passionless" nature of Victorian marriages, the lack of romantic love in polygyny, and the pervasiveness of female bonding. The letters give tender evidence that Eros dominated this relationship and fueled the couple's anticipation of reunion. Tragically, as Martha feared, the Cannons were destined to share the fate of the famous star-crossed lovers, Heloise and Abelard, whose graves Martha visited. In a letter to Angus, Martha resignedly echoed Heloise's plea to Abelard: "Give me what thou canst and let me dream the rest" (p. 184). Unfortunately, dreams were a poor substitute for reality and generated frequent outbursts of jealousy and resentment. In one fit of petulance, Martha complained to Angus, "Life with you men is so different from ours. In your case monotony can be relieved by new courtships and matrimonial engagements, which are the sweetest things in the world to you when *new*" (Angus took two additional wives in Martha's absence) (p. 27). Each bitter expression, however, was followed by long passages of repentance and affirmation of her belief in the principle that had joined and then separated them. She was always assuaged by her husband's solicitous responses.

Martha's camera eye and artful pen caught the idiosyncracies of the country folk she lived among and enticingly portrayed the "local color" of the British countryside and the few historic sites she managed to visit with her often fretful, sickly baby in tow. Always dispensing some of her medical wisdom to keep her husband healthy at home, she wrote a gripping, clinically detailed account of her efforts to purge her baby's system of the ammonia she accidentally swallowed one evening (pp. 88-91). Like that one, each letter is a self-contained vignette, provid-

ing a compelling segment of Martha's life in exile.

Signature Books and editors Constance Lieber and John Sillito are to be congratulated for bringing such an intelligent and complex personality to light through her own engaging and articulate letters. Though Angus Cannon's responses are expressive and informative, they are mere footnotes to Martha's perceptive, detailed documentation of her life incognito. This is very much her book. Her passion for learning, living, and loving breathes life into every letter. Each is a journey into the mind and heart of a true Mormon original. With no sign of artifice or pedantry, despite a generous sprinkling of literary allusions, the letters are witty, intelligent, and absorbing, and the book emerges as a fine piece of historical literature.

A brief chronology, data on the most commonly mentioned persons, explanatory footnotes, and a thorough index lead the reader carefully through the maze of references throughout the letters. While one who reads this volume as autobiography might well be satisfied, the historian in me wishes that the fine biographical introduction had been extended to provide a broader interpretive framework. What do these letters contribute to the general historiography of polygyny? Of Mormon women? Were the exigencies of life on the underground or in exile more challenging than living the principle itself? What were the after-effects of such fragmented living? And how does this volume contribute to the genre of epistolary literature?

Obviously a brief introduction to these letters was not meant to explore all of the ramifications of Mormon women in exile or of the subject of polygyny itself. Yet a deeper analytical context would have given this excellent volume a meaningful place in Mormon women's history and the historiography of polygyny. It not only offers new insight into the life of a remarkable, highly individualistic LDS woman, but furnishes another perspective on a significant portion of the Mormon past.