

Buried Alive!

By Percy B. St John

Table of Contents

<u>Buried Alive!</u>	1
<u>By Percy B. St John</u>	1

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The harem system, where eighty wives or more lived under one roof, or divan the parent abode had not, at the time of which we speak, been introduced. Mormonism, in its open defiance of the world, was not the hideous thing it is now shameless, reckless, vile beyond power of description. But even in its early days, when polygamy was restricted to two, or, at most, three wives, it was revolting enough.

A man may here keep a wife and concubine under the same roof, in the shape of a governess, or servant, or companion; but the woman knows it not; or even, if she suspects it, and, for her own dignity's sake, or the happiness of her children, declines to make a scandal of it, at least, she avows it not. Let us enter Dou's Creek, and see the picture it represents. It was a village of about thirty houses and tents, built without much regularity, but the doors always looking towards a common centre. There was always an affectation of Arcadian and patriarchal simplicity about the Mormons, which seems as suitable as might be with a congregated mass of London pickpockets and street-walkers.

In the centre were held the games, chancing, wrestling, running, and such like. There were several empty houses, which had belonged to Mormons, who had been forwarded to the upper settlement as they were ready.

It was now eight o'clock. Once again the altar of the false prophlet had been erected to go through the blasphemous mockery of a marriage. All the chiefs of the Mormon camp were assembled and all the most contented of the women.

Walter de Vere was dressed out in a brave array. He had contrived to curb his drunken propensities for once, and stood on one side of the altar calm, collected, but very pale. Sarah Paulding was ghastly. Everybody whispered that they had never seen so unearthly-beautiful a pair. Both had a strange gleam in their eyes, which was, to a keen observer, perfectly Satanic.

Nobody could make out, to see them, whether they were being united by great hate, or very great love. They stood about two feet asunder.

One of the Mormon elders took up the prayer-book and began to reach its impressive "Form of Solemnization of Matrimony". He turned to Walter de Vere and asked him the usual question.

"Yes," was the ready reply.

"Wilt thou," continued the imposter priest, "have this man to be thy wedded husband, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of matrimony? Wilt thou obey him, and serve him, love, honour, and keep him in sickness and in health; and forsaking all others, keep thee only unto him, so long as ye both shall live?"

"No!"

Had a thunderbolt fallen in among them, it could not have caused greater sensation than this single monosyllable.

Buried Alive!

"But Miss Paulding!" cried Walter de Vere paler still with rage.

"What is the meaning you will not have him?" asked the astonished priest.

"False and outcast minister of God!" she said, "do you think, I, the daughter of a real servant of the Lord, would wed a forger, and thief, who has already dragged two wretched beings into the mire?". Walter de Vere fell back as if stunned. The blow was so fearfully sudden, the charge so unexpected, terrible, yet true.

"Who has been calumniating me?" he cried, amidst the suppressed jeers of his companions.

They had all paid their bets. His discomfiture was amusing. But there were serious interests at stake, and to this it behoved them all first to look.

"No one here has said a word about you, except in your favour," replied Sarah, standing cool, collected, and firm, amid the excited mob.

"But what I say I know to be true, Mr Walter de Vere alias Mr William Hicks, for whose apprehension I saw many bills about, when I was last in England."

"By heavens woman!" cried de Vere alias Hicks, savagely, "whether you like it or not, you shall be my wife. No one shall brave me with impunity."

"Proceed," said one of the elders.

"You dare not," cried Sarah, "you dare not violate the liberty of a poor woman. I will not wed this man, say or do what you will."

"Proceed," said the same nasal voice.

The ceremony proceeded, Sarah's two friends Lydia and Amy covering their faces with their hands, and weeping. Two strong men held Sarah by the wrists, and had the reckless audacity to announce to the assembly that Sarah had said "yes". The villain had money, which, on an occasion like the present, he used freely to lavish on his comrades.

Then Sarah was taken to a tent by four women. Lydia and Amy were sternly told to stop where they were.

"You had better mind what you are at," said Lydia, with a curl of the lip, which startled William Hicks.

"Why?"

"Two hours ago, a mounted messenger started to alarm her friends at the settlement," replied Lydia, with a triumphant smile.

"D n!" shouted several of the Mormons.

To the reader: if you can read this this story (and probably many others) have been ripped off from another website . . . H M "Who went?" said Harry sternly.

"You are angry. If you knew all, you would not be. Miss Paulding was an old and dear friend,"

answered Lydia.

Buried Alive!

Buried Alive!

"It matters not," said the young man, coldly. "The laws of the Saints must be obeyed."

"What mean you?"

"And those who aid and abet traitors must be punished," he continued. "Who was the messenger?"

"Jessie."

"By the foul fiend," cried William Hicks, "that girl will will be the ruin of us!"

Phineas Bristowe, an elder who hitherto had not said one word, groaned aloud.

"Let all the women return to their houses," said the elder, who had officiated as priest; "the Saints will enter into deliberation."

The women shuddered and obeyed. There was something in the tone of the man which terrified them. William Hicks hastened to the nuptial tent, turned out the women, and remained alone with his so-called wife. She was seated on a box.

"But dearest lady," he began in husky and constrained tones, "what is the meaning of this change?"

Silence.

"After all that passed this morning," he continued, in his old seductive tones, "surely you cannot have forgotten all that was understood."

"You are a Mormon."

"Well."

"Answer me."

"I do, for convenience sake, take that name in order to travel with the tribe."

"You have two other wives."

"Well, according to the ideas of the Saint I have, but in my own idea, I have only one wife, and that is you, my own, dear darling."

"You are William Hicks, the forger and embezzler the man who would, if caught, suffer at the Old Bailey," she continued.

"Woman beware!" he cried, advancing closer to her, his eyes flashing, half with fury, half with passionate desire.

"Back!" she said.

As she spoke she rose, and showed a sharp knife, which hitherto, she had concealed up her sleeve. But William Hicks was nothing daunted by this display.

"Ah! ah! my Lady Macbeth. This acting will not do. Put down that knife, my dainty wife, or it will be the worse for you."

Buried Alive!

Buried Alive!

"Worse for you, felon!"

"Use that word again," he said, with sullen and lowering brow, "and you will repent it the longest day you live."

"Would you strike me, coward?" cried the exasperated girl.

A cold gleam of concentrated fury shot through his eyes, as, with a cry of frantic rage, he flew at her. She drew back, and, cold and firm, stabbed right at him. He fell to the ground, weltering in his blood, after giving one despairing cry for help.

"Murder help!"

In they poured, to find her standing calm, resolute, firm, with the bloody knife held high above her head. Men, women, boys, came rushing and were scared by the sight before them. A man approached Hicks, while Sarah, without the slightest hesitation allowed herself to be disarmed.

"Is he dead?" she whispered.

"I know not, murderess but dead or living, you shall die the death!" cried one of the elders.

"Anything better than his paramour," she replied.

"Bind her let all leave but elders," continued the speaker, "remove the wounded man to his own waggon."

After some little difficulty and hesitation, this order was obeyed, and Sarah remained in the tent with the twelve elders. A brief conference was held, in low, hushed whispers, and then Sarah was seized, blindfolded, gagged and taken out into the open air.

She felt herself placed upon a horse; the clatter of other horses' hoofs could be heard around her, and then she was hurried away at a rapid rate. Presently they halted. They were in a dreary kind of dell, overshadowed by tall and wavy pine trees. They ungagged her, took off the bandage from her eyes, without untying her hands, and seated her on the grass. Two lanterns were placed upon the ground about seven feet apart. Then a pickaxe and two shovels were produced, and three men, casting off their coats, began to dig. Anyone could see at once that they were digging a grave.

Sarah shuddered. It was hard thus to die in her unrepented sin. She had acted in self-defence, but her hands were red with blood. It seemed a kind of retribution that she, too, should perish by a violent death. The idea of past happy days came over her, and the thought forced itself upon her, that she had been a wicked and ungrateful girl. Her uncle's character now appeared in a clear and vivid light the light of truth and reason. How could she have so misjudged him? But these ideas availed her no longer. She was in the hands of men actuated by wild feelings of revenge. She knew that she was going to die.

It was strange, but she looked on at the preparations with a strange, odd, wild kind of curiosity.

They were digging a mere hole in the earth; but then, what a hole. Not one spoke to her, reproached her, or alluded to the crime or the punishment. They were sullen, silent, and did not even speak among themselvesur," she replied.

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They were digging a mere hole in the earth; but then, what a hole. Not one spoke to her, reproached her, or alluded to the crime or the punishment. They were sullen, silent, and did not even speak among themselves. Whenever they glanced at the wretched girl, it was with looks of the most virulent hatred and scorn.

Up in the heavens not one of the starry lamps illumined the horrid, the fearful, and unparalleled scene. Sarah had been to a certain extent religiously educated, though a fond mother had nurtured her pride. She thought for a moment and then murmured a prayer. It was time.

Two of the men raised her and placed her in the deep hole, which was almost up to her beautiful cold neck. Then, while these two held her with the rigidity of bars of iron, the others began to shovel in the earth. Then the agonizing and maddening thought entered her brain that they were going to bury her alive! This was too much for her, and she burst forth with the most awful shrieks that female throat ever tittered.

"Silence!"

"Never! I will not be murdered. Let me have a fair trial. If you are men you will not thus ill use a poor girl."

"Gag her," said a sullen ruffian.

Again she gave a wild and horrible shriek. It resounded through the hills with fearful intensity.

It was the agony of death. But then they gagged her. Then the men who were working did all they could, and in a few minutes the earth was up to her neck. She struggled fearfully, but it was of no avail.

"Hark! what noise is that?"

All listened, it was the trampling of horses.

"Mount and fly. Smother the hell cat some of you," shouted one of the Mormons.

She had forced off her gag and had given another fearful shriek.

"Kill—slay—burn!" shouted a maddened and infuriated voice. "No quarter to the bloody heathen!"

Every Mormon shuddered, and abandoning pickaxes, shovels and lanterns, they rushed to their horses, mounted and flew. Like a whirlwind, a body of mounted men sped by in chase. But two figures halted. One of them bounded to the grave, and casting himself flat on the ground, gazed in agony at the pale face of the girl.

"Dead, dead! my life, my soul, my own darling Sarah!" said a manly voice, in tones of fearful suffering.

"Not dead, but she has fainted," said Jessie, dismounting.

"Dig away the earth—quick. I will support her head."

The young man did as he was told, working with the strength and vigour of a young Titanic giant. In a very brief space of the he had released her. A flask of brandy scattered over her face and pressed to her lips brought her to.

"Charles—dear Charles!" she said, clasping him round the neck and kissing his very lips, "was that a horrid dream? No! no! no! Take me away—I know I'm going to die—but take me home.

Will you forgive me, Charley? I am very sorry—I wouldn't do it again. But you know that now. Let me die where aunt and uncle will be there to forgive me. I couldn't help it, he wanted to marry me—air—I killed him!"

"Killed him!" gasped Jessie.

"Served him right!" said Charles, lifting her up in his arms; "but do not die—you shall not, will not die. You

Buried Alive!

will live to be my happy, dear and honoured wife."

"You won't let them bury me alive?" said Sarah wildly.

"B—t 'em, no!" shrieked Charles, who saw that her head was slightly wandering.

He raised her quite up now, and placed her on a horse; Jessie mounted and he walked. In this way they reached their settlement, where none but women and children awaited them. The men were all out after the Mormons. At the entrance of the house Jessie paused.

"You will not go back?" said Charles, anxiously.

"I must."

"But not directly. Step and see how she is. Besides, if the people muster strong enough, not a Mormon will leave the country alive."

Jessie sighed and went in. They put Sarah to bed, and, under the judicious care of Mrs Paulding, she so far recovered in the framing as to be able to converse rationally. She did not recollect all that passed except as a kind of fearful dream or nightmare. She got up to breakfast.

The old man and Charles advanced to meet her with eager and sympathising looks.

"How do you feel, my child?" said the uncle, kindly.

"Like an erring child, seeking the pardon of her father," said Sarah, falling on her knees before the whole family.

"I will shrive you on one condition," said the old man.

"And that?" said Sarah, rising and taking a chair.

"It is that you bcome my daughter as soon as possible."

"Yes, Sarah—pronnise to be my wife, and all will be happy."

"If you are not afraid to take a weak, silly and vain girl to be your handmaiden, Charles, I shall be too proud to have have won your honest heart," she replied.

"Though I am not a gentleman," said the delighted lover.

"Don't say that again. I had enough of that yesterday. Have you heard?" she said, with a shudder.

"The man is out of danger," replied Charles "the miscreants who abducted you have fled far away, and the whole Mormon gang have left our state—or else—"

"No message for me," said Jessie, sadly.

"A letter," replied Charles; "but why, from a mistaken sense of duty, return to such infamous bondage?"

"I have promised."

"But such promises—surely you do not hold them binding?"

"All and every promise. Besides, those who love me are on the track. I know I am in no danger; give me the letter."

Jessie read it, but made no remark. She took her breakfast quietly, and then wishing them all farewell, left—after a solemn promise to call if she ever passed that way.

Such is a portion of a Mormon episode of every-day occurrence, and which only did not end in the usual disastrous manner, because the woman had both a bold and valiant heart, and a sympathising friend.