

George Francis Train and Brigham Young

Davis Bitton

One of the most unusual literary productions to appear following the death of Brigham Young was a lengthy "poem" by George Francis Train. First published in the *Buffalo Agitator*, "The Death of Brigham Young" was reprinted in the *Deseret News* on 17 October 1877, less than two months after the president's death. In order to appreciate it we must have some idea who George Francis Train was and what he had to do with the Mormons.¹

Train's early life was crowded. Born in 1829, he became an orphan at age four when his parents and three sisters died of yellow fever. Raised by his grandmother in Massachusetts, he farmed and learned to be self-reliant. In his late teens he moved into Cambridge and supported himself by working in stores. At sixteen he was taken on by the shipping company of Enoch Train (a relative), and soon, by hard work and determination to do more than he was told, he was assigned responsibility for dispatching ships. Still a young man, George Francis made valuable contacts, and, never lacking in self-confidence, he began trying things on his own—buying and selling, sending different goods to different parts of the world, turning a profit wherever he could. Soon after the discovery of gold in California he commissioned construction of a 2,000 ton clipper ship, the *Flying Cloud*, which he sold for a handsome profit. Before this phase of his life was over, many other clipper ships had been built, for which he was later not reluctant to take full credit: "I was still in my teens, and consider it not an insignificant thing to have accomplished the initiation of this magnificent clipper service which revolutionized sailing vessels all

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¹Biographical sketches are in the *Dictionary of American Biography*; the *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*; and D. C. Seitz, *Uncommon Americans* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1925). Autobiographical, but sketchy, is George Francis Train, *My Life in Many States and in Foreign Lands* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1902).

over the world. . . .”² In 1850, at age twenty-one, George Francis Train was assigned to take charge of the Liverpool office. He returned to the States briefly in 1851 and married the beautiful seventeen year old Wilhelmina Davis. Steadily increasing his interest in the parent company, he soon left for a two year stint in Australia, where the gold rush was at a fever pitch. After traveling extensively in China, India, France, and Russia—and having experiences which he wrote of in his first books—Train returned to the United States.³ He played at least an important role in arranging for the financing of 400 miles of railroad construction connecting the Eastern and Midwestern states. Then in 1858 he returned to England. Always a wheeler-dealer, Train established the first municipal streetcar or tram systems in England—in Birkenhead, Staffordshire, and Darlington. A pro-Union spokesman during the Civil War, he ran into strong opposition in England. He returned to America as “the most popular American in public life.”⁴ Always able to catch the eye of the public, he lectured to and debated before enthusiastic crowds.

It was at this time, during the Civil War, that Train began organizing the great transcontinental railway. If we can trust his own account, he put together the trust, retained control, and traveled to Omaha to break ground for the first mile of track west of the Missouri River. It was from this point that he sent the following telegram to Brigham Young:

Citizen Brigham Young, chief of the Mormons. I hereby make you director that end of Union Pacific. Don’t say no. Answer paid.
Signed George Francis Train.

Young’s reply was equally to the point:

All right. Yes to the directorship. Push on U.P. Signed Brigham Young.⁵

During the next six years Train continued to attract attention by speeches and “spectacular activities” such as the construction of a magnificent villa at Newport. He was well satisfied with the Mormons’ work on the railroad, and in 1869, the year the transcontinental line was completed, included in his lecture in New England a substantial defense of the Mormons:

Who established the first newspaper west of the Missouri, in 1832, at Independence? The Mormons. Who in 1846, penetrated

²Train, *My Life*, p. 76. Train did not invent the clipper ship; nevertheless, the *Flying Cloud* was a noteworthy vessel, twice holding the record for fastest passage from New York to San Francisco.

³Early books written by Train include *An American Merchant in Europe, Asia, and Australia* (1857); *Young America Abroad* (1857); *Young America in Wall Street* (1858); and *Every Man His Own Autocrat* (1859).

⁴Train, *My Life*, p. 276.

⁵Letter of George Francis Train, *Deseret Evening News*, 17 January 1903.

from Iowa, the western land and moved towards the Pacific the great column of progress? The Mormons. Who first raised the American flag in the great western basin? The Mormons. Who made the Utah wilderness blossom as the rose? The Mormons. [Applause] What other sect, creed, or church in America ever expended five millions in immigration? (That's so.) How does it happen that the red Indian never interferes with a Mormon train? That the American government never spent but \$75,000 for the Indians in the Mormon land when they threw away millions outside of that? [Applause] Who was it discovered the great gold mines out of California? The Mormons. The first emigrants at Yerba Buena landed from the Brooklyn, a Mormon ship; and the first "brick" made in California was mined by a Mormon, and the first printing press was taken there in '48 by a Mormon. Who sheltered and fed the poor starving emigrant bound for the Eldorado in '48 and '49, when, foot-sore and heart-sick, they found themselves in the wilderness? The Mormon colonists. [Applause, and "That's so."] Who made the Pacific Railroad a necessity? Brigham Young and his Mormon host. Who fed the miners, gave Montana food, and clothed the naked? These same much-abused Mormons.

The oration went on, building up to a point of climax, to praise "the enterprise of this Napoleon of colonists—Brigham Young." He urged Young to resist the government's anti-Mormon legislation: "Take my advice, Brigham: fight for your rights!"⁶

Not surprisingly, this kind of lecture led some people to ask whether George Francis Train had become a Mormon. In San Francisco, he answered a reporter's question by saying that "he had only one wife and was not a Mormon, but he was not sure he would not become one." He went on to explain that the Old Testament authorized polygamy, so that "if we accept the Old Testament as part of the rule of Christians, we must accept Brigham's doctrines."⁷

While in Utah in 1869 Train gave two lectures, which, one gathers, were his usual mixture of personal experiences, anecdotes, and strong opinions, with a seasoning of remarks complimentary to the Mormons and their leader. He would appear on the stage dressed in top hat, overcoat, gloves, and carrying a cane. Divesting himself of these one at a time, he then stood forth dressed in "a dress coat with gilt buttons, white vest and black pantaloons," and "on the left breast of his coat he wore the badge of the Fenian Legion of Honor."⁸ Train was a real showman—a combination of Liberace and Billy Graham.

⁶*Deseret News*, 31 March 1869; also 22 March 1869.

⁷*Journal History of the Church*, 29 June 1869, Church Archives, Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

⁸*Deseret Evening News*, 4 September 1869.

Through the eyes of this visiting celebrity we get three valuable glimpses of Brigham Young. Having made an appointment, Train was waiting for his private interview with the Mormon leader. While waiting he was introduced to George Q. Cannon, George A. Smith, and others. He was even introduced to two different "Mr. Youngs," two of Brigham's brothers, one of whom explained, "There are five brothers of us here." Train then became deeply involved in some kind of discussion with George A. Smith and did not hear, when another person was introduced to him, the words, "This is the president." The whole thing quite unsettled the visitor: "It was a considerable time before I became aware that he was the President. He sat there so modest and unassuming that I could not believe he was the President." When Train came to his senses and finally realized to whom he was talking, he told Brigham Young that a man of his accomplishments "ought to put on more airs."

When Train came out on the stage for his first lecture he noted that there was too much light—too many gas stage lights had been turned on for him. He asked that some of them be put out. The stage manager did not hear the request or was otherwise occupied. Train asked again that some of the footlights be extinguished. "I furnish all the gas required for this stage," he said. "Turn out the gas!" From a proscenium box Brigham Young quietly got up, came onto the stage, and with his broad-brimmed hat put out the lights at the rear of the stage. "Well," said Train, "for once I consider myself beat. I might have done it myself; I am very glad, for once, to be thrown entirely in the shade." He led the audience in three cheers for Brigham Young, "the grand head of Mormondom."

One more glimpse. President Young called on the visitor at his hotel, took him out in his carriage, and then took him in a special train on a trip to Ogden. Seated together were the two men, Brigham's wife Amelia, and "one other lady." At every station there were cheering crowds. At one of the stops President Young

got out and bought four balls of red sugared popcorn and brought them in his pocket handkerchief, giving one to each of the ladies, ate one himself and gave me the other. I broke mine in two and ate it.

Such homely scenes remain in the memory when many other things are forgotten.⁹

⁹Ibid., 17 January 1903. The incident with the lights at the theater was only vaguely remembered in 1903: "There was loud applause when a gentleman got out of a proscenium box and with his broad-brimmed hat put out every light in the rear of the stage." Closer to the event is the ac-

The 1869 visit ended as quickly as it had begun, for Train was on his way eastward the first day of September. Before leaving he wrote, in his distinctive hand, a note addressed "To President Brigham Young, The Man of Destiny":

Having come all the way to Salt Lake to see a man who has reduced religious morality to real life—actually practicing what he preaches—a man who does not believe in the Speculum, Vaccination, Wine at the Sacrament or Restelism—a man who has organized a society where men live in their own houses and wear American clothes—making sage brush Deserts blossom with fruit and vegetable gardens—I can only say, as I bid you good bye, that high as was my admiration for your wonderful faith and code, my visit has only strengthened my former opinions.

Sincerely
Geo. Francis Train¹⁰

It is interesting to note what Train was complimenting the Mormons for. They did not believe in the speculum (a horoscope), vaccination (still relatively new, the practice was approached cautiously by most Mormons), and wine in the sacrament (water had become standard in Mormon meetings a few years earlier). "Restellism" (properly spelled with two l's) was a nineteenth-century synonym for abortion, named after the infamous abortionist Madame Restell.¹¹

George Francis received a letter from Young in early 1870, explaining that a Turkish bath house was now being constructed in Salt Lake City and wishing Train success in his race for the presidency. Responding, in a letter dated 15 January 1870, Train wrote:

Thanks for your kind letter, which finds me on my 300th successive lecture, in course of 1,000 on the way to the White House.

You have shown your usual good sense in building the Turkish Bath. It will subtract twenty pounds from your body, and add a score of years to your life. Cannon and Cane [John T. Caine] both tried them in England.

Train was enthusiastic about Turkish baths as part of the "psychologic" system he espoused. More than once he urged Brigham Young to undergo this water cure if he would live long. To some extent it seems that the enthusiast was convincing his Mormon friends, although the idea of water cures and steam baths was not limited to George Francis Train.

count of the newspaper reporter: "His request not being immediately complied with, he repeated it, when President Young stepped forth and extinguished them, using his hat as a fan for the occasion." *Deseret Evening News*, 4 September 1869.

¹⁰George Francis Train to Brigham Young, 7 September 1869, Church Archives.

¹¹James Mohr, *Abortion in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 48-53, 94-96, and *passim*. I am indebted to David Brion Davis and Lester F. Bush, Jr., for helping me discover the meaning of this term.

The letter continues:

Congratulations on completion of railway. Where there is a will there is a way. It draws the fire of all who said you were afraid of the weapons of commerce and transportation. Where would the Pacific Railway have been but for you? Your response was prompt when I invited you to the banquet at Omaha, Dec 2, 1863, when Augustus Kountze (the Omaha backer) and your correspondent first broke the ground. Who advanced Reed the money for engineering? You did. Who first subscribed to Credit Mobilier? You did—and the Directors will cheat you out of the 500 per cent profit on stock unless you look sharp. The opening of the Railroads give the lie to your slanders. All said it would destroy you—it only strengthens your position. You remember I told you that the Colfax-Bross-Bowles-Wilkenson-Dickenson-Radical-Union-League conspiracy would culminate in Congress. It has. Cullom revamps Cragin's old bill, which originated long a go in the Gentile camp, by a Gentile Clerical Bummer connected with the Military Department. The success of the first Mormon War (a \$40,000,000 steal) makes the thieves smack their lips for more pickings from the Treasury.

Four bills already are before Congress. Cullom disfranchises all who have opinions of any kind in Utah. Cragin introduces the Witch Burning, French Guillotine, Spanish Inquisition plan. Howard Bastardizes all Mormon children—and Stewart proposes to steal your untaxed Union territory to pay Nevada's infamous sesesh debts. Congress is a coward—each member, privately is with you—but party tyrannizes. Last Sunday, I preached in Blackened Sepulchres, in reply to Anna Dickinson and *L'Homme qui Rit*—reminding my Irish Boys that twenty years ago, the same element that is now trying to steal your country and destroy your church, burnt Catholic Convents, destroyed Catholic Churches, rode Catholic Priests upon rails—and I notified the thieves in power, that the moment they moved on Utah, I would tear down a Puritan Church or two in New York by way of diversion! They cry Polygamy but mean plunder!¹²

This was 1870, let it be remembered, perhaps the lowest point in the most corrupt period of American politics. Although Train sounds extreme, he had reason for despising the politicians at Washington. Popular among lower-class Irish for having espoused the Fenian cause, he was threatening violence if the national government once again moved against the Mormons. Bluffing? Perhaps, but this same Train had seen revolutions in Europe and, aware of the use of "goons" and Mafia-type organizations, was ready to fight fire with fire.

He went on to urge Brigham Young, as he had in Utah, to stand up and fight:

Although they cannot appreciate moral power and intellectual superiority, they have a great respect for physical force. Hanging a

¹²Young's letter and Train's answer were printed in the *New York Globe*, 18 January 1870. The article was clipped and sent to President Young by George P. Bemis, Train's secretary.

Judge, a Congressman, and an Army Thief or two, on a lamp post, will clear the moral atmosphere. You took my advice on the Turkish Bath; take it once more. Buy a good stock of powder, balls, revolvers, rifles, and cannons. Act the Echo Canon Tragedy over, rip up the railroad, shoot down the invaders, play the Moscow in Salt Lake City, if necessary—in a word, stand by the guns. Don't give up the ship, and I will back you with a million of shellalaghs. Pulpit, party, and press are organized against you—but interest or fear is my motto.

Train concludes with regards to "George A. Smith, George Q. Cannon, Hiram B. Clawson, and all friends." He reports that he had briefly seen Robert T. Burton, who had reported that "Hooper [Utah's congressional delegate] is better." We thus get a rough sense of the circles of Mormon friends that Train had, and that in the East he could contact such Mormon agents as Burton and William H. Hooper.¹³

"Pulpit, party, and press" were against the Mormons, according to Train. In an effort to counteract the negative chorus, he sent a copy of these two letters (Young's to him and his own answer) to the New York *Globe*. George P. Bemis, Train's private secretary, in sending the clipping when it was published, wrote, "We will draw the fire of every fresh charge of the enemy in this quarter. Mr. Train fires too many guns for these Hypocritical Puritans. Have sent of 100 of the annexed cut only and pasted, with special note to 100 Editorial friends and with your publicity it is sure to roll!"¹⁴

Train saw himself as champion of the underdog Mormons—or at least this is the way he wanted the Mormons to see him. I do not know what he may have done behind the scenes as a lobbyist. He doesn't seem the type to work quietly. In any case when again visiting Salt Lake City in July 1870 he claimed that since his departure the previous September he had gone east to "spike the gentile guns and defeat the Cullom bill."¹⁵

Train's speech in the Salt Lake Theatre on Saturday, 23 July 1870, was full of braggadocio. After getting well worked up, he offered to speak on any subject of the audience's choosing for two minutes at a time. Their choices were the Cullom Bill, the Chinese question, the one-man power, the European War, and his

¹³Robert T. Burton, one of Mormonism's most colorful figures, had served in the militia during the Utah War. He also served as deputy territorial marshal and led the expedition that suppressed the Morrisites in 1862. During the period mentioned here he was a member of the Salt Lake City Council, a member of the Utah Territorial Legislature, and sheriff of Salt Lake County. Also a bishop, he left in 1869 to visit Washington, D.C., where he assisted territorial delegate William H. Hooper.

¹⁴Copy in Church Archives.

¹⁵*Deseret Evening News*, 26 July 1870.

proposed trip around the world. It was a wonder, he said, that he still had enough strength to lecture after the grueling schedule he had been following. But his strength was due to the fact that he never drank wine or liquor or chewed tobacco. "I never committed adultery; in fact I am almost a Mormon. No wonder they call me a crazy man!" Needless to say the audience loved it. Train seemed to be riding high. He concluded his talk by proclaiming "that all the efforts of the politicians could not prevent the people of the United States making him the occupant of the White House in 1872."¹⁶

The next day was Sunday. Train attended meeting in the Tabernacle and in the morning heard discourses by George A. Smith, George Q. Cannon, and Brigham Young. That afternoon he agreed to speak. His speech, which we have in a complete transcription, was typical of him. Train started by a tribute to Brigham Young, whose speech in the morning session "had worked me up to such a pitch of mental excitement that if I had got up after him nothing could have stopped me." Train continued:

I knew before hearing him this morning that he was a statesman; I knew he was a reformer and a writer, but I did not know that he was a born orator. It is time that this country understood that he has the sacred fire which few possess, the art divine, the magic power of speech, which enables him to hold an audience in breathless attention, which is possessed by so few in this world.

Train would know, for his own powers of speech had been acknowledged all across the country. On this subject he was an expert.

Train used humor, occasional sarcasm, and ebullient flattery to win his audience. He felt lost there, he said, for it didn't seem like a church. Where were the stained-glass windows, the gold-clasp prayer books, the magnificent robes? He was "astonished" that water was used in the sacrament and that it was also served to "a poor, miserable heathen outsider." He recited the litany of Mormon virtues. They owned their own homes; they returned good for evil by sending 500 men in the Mormon Battalion; their word was their bond; they refused to practice infanticide. The Mormons were a foil with which to attack American society at large.

Interestingly, Train chose to differ with his hosts on one point. Two of the sermons in the morning had recommended the virtue of humility. Taking this idea as a point of departure, Train said:

¹⁶Ibid.

I believe that humility is bad—a swindle. I believe in assumption, and for this reason, I see, as a general thing, that humility is assumed; but there is no mistake about assumption. Assume your position and there are certain natural laws that will keep you in your position. . . . I say that natural laws are so arranged that no man can get beyond his level. Big logs get over the small logs; big stones over the small stones. It is a stock idea of mine that if you put a lot of potatoes into a spring cart, and haul them over a rough road, the small ones go to the bottom. Had President Young been a small potato like General Grant, he would have gone down before today.

If Young praised humility, it was only “the humility of power.”

Train did not miss a chance to throw ideas into unexpected combinations. Young’s comment that there was much ignorance in the land prompted the visiting celebrity to make the following sally:

Lord Bacon is said to have made the remark “knowledge is power.” He never said so. Bacon was a trump, he had brains, and he would never make such a stupid remark as that; but if he ever did make it, it is false, because knowledge is not power. In this country ignorance is power. Ignorance in the White House, in the Cabinet, in the Senate, ignorance on the floors of Congress and in the pulpit; ignorance in the law school, in the medical college, and everywhere ignorance signs in and governs this magnificent Republic.

The grand sport of criticizing was being indulged in, and doubtless the audience enjoyed the colorful speaker.

He urged the Mormons to stand up and fight for their rights. Thomas L. Kane and George Francis Train were the only two men who defended them in public, “but seven out of every ten out of our cowardly, toady, flunkey people believe as we do, only they have not the manhood to say so.”¹⁷

The next day Train sent a telegram from Ogden, Utah, to “Brigham Young, Statesman, Reformer and President of the Latter-day Saints.” Expressing thanks for hospitality and offering to subscribe five hundred dollars towards a “new international hotel of strangers,” the telegram concluded, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Mormon.”¹⁸

Never content to remain idle or to lapse into middle-class respectability, Train had several exciting experiences during the 1870s. After leaving the Mormons he continued to lecture and make provocative pronouncements in various American cities; traveled to France, which was just then going through the throes of the Communist revolt in Paris, declared himself for the rebels, was thrown into prison and later expelled from the country; traveled

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Telegram, George Francis Train to Brigham Young, 25 July 1870, Church Archives.

around the world in eighty days (providing the basis for the Jules Verne novel); resumed his campaign for the American presidency, giving hundreds of speeches, but was not nominated at the Republican convention in 1872.

At the end of 1872 he became involved in an incident that brought another brief encounter with the Mormons. The headlines were filled with allegations of an improper relationship between the Reverend Henry Ward Beecher and Lib Tilton. Among those making charges in rather explicit language was Victoria Woodhull—feminist, rabble-rouser, a female George Francis Train. Woodhull was charged with "obscenity" by Anthony Comstock and imprisoned. Train leaped to her defense and published the most explicit passages of the Holy Bible in his own newspaper to challenge the interpretation of obscenity. He was thrown into the New York prison, the Tombs. His hope of being a test case on the charge of obscenity was frustrated, as he was eventually pronounced "Not guilty, on the ground of insanity." This official declaration of lunacy—with which many people might have agreed but which had no responsible medical diagnosis behind it—handicapped Train legally for the rest of his life, making it impossible, for example, for him to sell his extensive properties in Omaha, Nebraska.¹⁹

In the poem below an interesting passage indicates that a delegation of Mormons called on Train in the Tombs and offered to post bail. In the LDS Church Archives is a document hitherto unknown, a letter from Train to Brigham Young, dated 26 May 1873. Written on special stationery showing three owls deliberating and labeled "jure de Lunatico Inquierendo before Chief Justice Daly," the letter, in Train's strong, distinctive hand, reads:

The Tombs (6th month)
New York, May 26 73

Dear President Young

My gloomy abode here in the Tombs was full of sunshine today to see Brigham Junior, Cannon, and Richter drop in upon me with kind words from you. They assure me that you stand by Salt Lake and Utah and that your health was never better (thanks to my baths.) I want you by and by, by my side—so take good care of yourself. You've got fifteen years good work in you yet. Fearing that were going to cut loose from the old anchorage from Arizona I wrote the enclosed epigram. You should have seen the boys eyes sparkle as I recited it to them today in my cell. If you publish it in the *News*, send me two or three copies here at the Tombs. I shall win. My two delusions now are:—That I shall be dictator and some

¹⁹See various references in Train, *My Life, passim*.

day (although a land pauper now) will be the richest man in the world. You know we both agree in the one man power. Make my kind regards to your good wife Amelia whose acquaintance I remember with pleasure.

Geo. Francis Train
The Coming Dictator²⁰

Attached to the letter was a small photograph of Train. On one side he had written "From the Tombs" and on the other "To the Asylum," referring to his being judged insane.

There is some confusion about who made up the visiting delegation. The 1877 poem identifies the visitors as George Q. Cannon, Brigham Young, Jr., and Amos Milton Musser, while the letter written the day of the visit mentions Cannon, Young, and "Richter." I do not know how to explain this difference. Perhaps he established the correct identity later on, or perhaps his memory failed him. The diary of Brigham Young, Jr., is not of much help; it locates its author in New York City on 26 May but says nothing about a visit to the Tombs. Nothing is said in the letter about bail, which is mentioned in the poem four years later. We know enough about the case to realize that Train did not want to be out on bail; what he wanted was to be tried on the charge of obscenity. It does not seem implausible to think that the Mormon visitors told him they could help raise bail if he wanted them to. At least in 1877 he remembered them offering "Mormon bail."

George Francis Train did not do much during the remainder of his life. His 1873 letter to Brigham Young said that he was a "land pauper" and that he would be the richest man in the world. The first part of the statement was true. Unsuccessful in winning a court judgment that would allow him to take possession of his holdings without a guardian, he moved into the Mills Hotel in New York, talked to no one except children, except from the podium, for he did continue to lecture. In 1902, when his autobiography was published, he began by explaining, "I have been silent for thirty years. . . . For many years I have been a silent recluse, remote from the world in my little corner in the Mills Hotel, thinking and waiting patiently."²¹

As far as the Mormons were concerned, one interruption of his long silence occurred in 1877, when he published the following "epigram obituary":

²⁰George Francis Train to Brigham Young, 26 May 1873, Church Archives.

²¹Train, *My Life*, preface.

THE DEATH OF BRIGHAM YOUNG

When ten thousand columns of ink
Announce a great man's death! alas,
Tis apt to make all nations think
A great event has come to pass!
Not Emperor! King! Mikado! Shah!
Nor Sultan! Khedive! Pope or Czar!
Not Vanderbilt! Steward! Astor!²²
Nor fire! deluge! rail disaster!
No! Something greater. That great event
Is the death of Utah's President.
Against great odds, the brave old lion,
Died in his lair, as head of Zion!

Now Mormon land is wrapt in grief,
Mourning for its beloved old chief—
I cannot be the last to send
A cypress wreath to my old friend!
You know his friendship in the past,
I held as warmly to the last,
And also know I stood by him
Through good and ill—through thick and thin.

The first gold piece coined in Salt Lake,
You remember, he made me take,
It seems to me but yesterday
That I received his friendly note,
Writing in his generous way
The kindest words man ever wrote.²³
He was a King among his peers,
A King for three and thirty years!
Twelve thousand friends around his bier,
Shows how the Mormons loved their seer.
While other prophets have been cursed.
In this case the proverb is reversed.
This prophet stands out all alone
Honored alike in house and home.

THE MORMON EXODUS

His Winter march across the plains,
Like May Flower's voyage o'er the sea,
So far ahead of railway trains,
Was landmark in our history!
To plant his hundred thousand homes,
He paved the way with Mormon bones!
Cholera! ague! and Western fever,

²²Prominent millionaires whose names were household words in the 1870s were Cornelius Vanderbilt, John Jacob Astor, and A. T. Steward. Train had had dealings with such wealthy capitalists in his own railroad enterprises.

²³This note from Brigham Young to George Francis Train has not been found.

Could not daunt this true believer!
Greatest of American pioneers,
This argonaut beat all the seers.
In republic's heart his kingdom built
A kingly name not stained with guilt,
His greatest enemies all agree,
The *Herald's* slanders all died with Lee!
And yet this journalistic knave
Keeps up its lies and kicks his grave.²⁴
This "Prophet" "Revelator," "Seer,"
In life no longer lingers here,
But leading figure of his age,
His life is stamped on Utah's page.
His cotton factories and his farms,
His lands, his silk-worms and his barns!
His workshops and his business plan,
Proved him no ordinary man!
He builds his mills; he makes his clothes
And bats and boots; his wheat he sows.
He makes canals, bridges, streets and roads,
Where gophers lived, and snakes and toads,
Are vineyards, orchards, gardens, fields,
Filled with fruit and grain, rich Nature yields.
From foreign lands he brought his flocks
To these wild sands and wilder rocks.
This painter, glazier, Vermont farmer
Was just the man for nature's charmer.
His *Via Dolorosa* march and stand,
To victory, was something grand.
Village to town; town to city grew,
Where soil was old and man was new.
His railroads, telegraphs and mines,
His people free from frauds and crimes.
His bold and independent course,
Shows how a man can use his force.
Wher'er the Mormon sunflower grows
The desert blossoms as the rose.

I, with psychologic vision see
How sad the Tabernacle must be.
The Twelve Apostles will bear the pall,
The band will dirge the "March of Saul."²⁵
Bishops, high priests, elders will stand
As mourners round their Mormon band.
In a rosewood coffin, free from crape,
Without display he lies in state!²⁶

²⁴The New York *Herald* had reveled in the alleged complicity of Brigham Young in the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Although that tragedy had occurred in 1857, it continued in the public consciousness and was perhaps the most common event associated with Mormonism in the 1870s, when John D. Lee was arrested, tried twice, convicted, and executed. That should be the end of the matter, Train is saying, but yellow journalists continued to try to implicate Brigham Young.

²⁵Famous funeral dirge by George Frederick Handel.

²⁶Brigham Young's actual coffin, as provided in his will, was to be "made of plump 1 1/4 inch boards, not scrimped in length, but two inches longer than I would measure, and from two to three

Unlike the old Egyptian Jew,
This Mosaic leader was always true.
His promised land was real money
That really flowed with milk and honey.²⁷
In the heart of a continent
This eagle built his eagle nest,
And took a coffin in his tent
So large that he could turn and rest!

THE PACIFIC RAILROAD

He got his first dispatch from me,
December, eighteen sixty-three.
I wanted him to lay a brick
When I broke ground with spade and pick,
Well knowing that the house would stand
If Brigham gave a helping hand.
I made him Director in the road
To help me pull the mighty load,²⁸
And always found him broad and fair
With all his dealings on the square.
Let no one with his pen and tongue
Hurl lies and sneers at Brigham Young!
He hath his faults, and who has not?
But should his virtues be forgot?

The symbols of his industry
Were the lion and the working bee.
He was the church; the active lion,
The bees the people that build up Zion!
No Pasha, Sheik, Viceroy, Tycoon,
From Pio Nono to Moses,
Ever attained such power so soon.
As the Mormon faith disposes.
When Cannon, Musser, and his son
Came to the Tombs with Utah bail,
I could but feel that Brigham done
What I would do were he in jail.²⁹

inches wider than is commonly made for a person of my breadth and size, and deep enough to place me on a little comfortable cotton bed, with a good suitable pillow for size and quality; ... and to have the appearance that if I wanted to turn a little to the right or to the left, I should have plenty of room to do so. The lid can be made crowning." As cited in Richard H. Cracroft and Neal E. Lambert, *A Believing People: Literature of the Latter-day Saints* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1974), pp. 110-11.

²⁷Moses led the children of Israel from Egypt, but for forty years they wandered in the wilderness. Young brought them safely home to the Great Basin. Train may even be thinking in literal terms about the milk and honey.

²⁸See above, p._____. Young had been a director of the Union Pacific Railroad, had arranged for the Mormons to assist in the construction of the track, and had then been unsuccessful in collecting the promised payment for the Mormon building crews. Train is implying that whereas the scoundrels who were refusing to pay the Mormons were not honest in their dealings, Brigham Young was.

²⁹Who visited Train in his cell in the Tombs? According to this poem it was George Q. Cannon, Amos Milton Musser, and Brigham Young, Jr. The letter, dated from the Tombs, 26 May 1873, says: "My gloomy abode here in the Tombs was full of sunshine today to see Brigham Junior,

I'm sorry he did not live to see
The destiny in wait for me!

Though my hot-air bath prolonged his breath,
Holding my power on life and death,
I could for years have stopped life's chill
Had he surrendered to me his will!
That ruddy cheek, that clear blue eye,
Firm mouth and robust frame
Had too much force so soon to die,
Had I been there to cure his pain.
*The dying world some day will know
The power I hold to check Death's blow!*³⁰

THE BOOK OF MORMON

Am I a Mormon? No! Why ask?
I never wore a cowl or mask.
I'm what I am, and nothing more,
A stormy Petrel on sea and shore.
What do I think of Mormonism?
I never think of any schism!
Knowing no future and no past,
All bigot thought I long since cast!
I look upon religious creeds
As reptiles and as poisonous weeds,
That rack mankind with deadly pain,
And choke and kill the nobler grain!

This creed covers all lands and races,
All dogmas, forms, sects and faces!
Christians, Buddhists, Moslems, Voudoos,
Protestants, Catholics, Spiritualists,
In all their phases, and thus enlists,
From Ann Eliza to Edith Gorman,
Wide interest in the Book of Mormon!³¹
No greater action was ever done
Than this absorption by Brigham Young!
The difference 'twixt Brigham and Beecher,

Cannon, and Richter drop in upon me with kind words from you." Train to Young, 26 May 1873, Church Archives. The letter says nothing about bail, but the visiting Mormons must have made an offer. Perhaps W. W. Riter was in the little Mormon delegation. More likely Train later found out that the third member was A. M. Musser.

³⁰One of Train's enthusiasms was health. He had a so-called "psychologic" system, with special baths or water cures a central ingredient. In 1870 Brigham Young wrote to Train saying, "As an item of news I may inform you that a Turkish bath house is in course of erection in this city under the superintendence of an active, energetic agent who has taken pains to acquaint himself thoroughly with the *modus operandi*." *New York Globe*, 18 January 1870, clipping in Church Archives. This was in response to an earlier statement of Train's: "Brigham adopts my advice and orders Clawson to build a Turkish Bath. If he does he will live a quarter of a century, otherwise he will die, and a great ground swell of ambitious spirits will strike for the succession...." *Deseret News* (Semi-weekly), 11 September 1869.

³¹Train is praising the comprehensiveness of Mormonism. "Our religion embraces every truth pertaining to mortal life—there is nothing outside the pale of it," said Brigham Young in 1853. *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1855-86), 1:44.

The Mormon prophet and Christian preacher,
Was, Brigham to his wives was true,
While Beecher on other households grew!
One turned Polygamy to Monogamy
The other, Monogamy to Polygamy!
Beecher, one wife, with others free,
Brigham, many, but no adultery!³²

EDEN'S MORMON GARDEN

Where courts, rumshops, brothels are naught
Except where Gentiles their customs brought.
Where priests and lawyers receive their pay
In hoeing corn and mowing hay.
Where water instead of wine is sent
To administer the sacrament!
Where home-made clothes are ever worn,
And bastard babes are never born!
Where thieves and blacklegs never go
And tramps and bummers have no show!
Where idlers all men dislike
And where the workmen never strike!
Where bad diseases are not known
And Restelism has never grown!
Where every workman has house and barn
And every farmer owns his farm.
Where all the children go to school
And where you cannot find a fool!
Where banks don't break and Ring intrigues
Are not as thick as Union Leagues!
Where Grants, Tildens, Hayeses and Tweeds
Are not corrupted by Thurlow Weeds!
Where robbers, through a syndicate,
The people's stamps don't dissipate.
Where Belknaps, Babcocks and Beecher bees
Are not as thick as rats and flees!
Where no Spencers, Darlings, Furbers steal
The bread that makes the workman's meal!
Where women as well as men are sent
When Mormons elect their President!
Where no drunkard murders his bride
And ends his life by suicide!
Where reform don't mean a prison
The flag that floats is Mormonism.³³

³²Henry Ward Beecher, the eminent divine, had been implicated in a love affair with Lib Tilton, wife of the distinguished editor, Theodore Tilton. Fairly or unfairly, Beecher became a symbol of lechery and hypocrisy in the public media. See Gary L. Bunker and Davis Bitton, "Henry Ward Beecher and the Mormons," paper submitted for publication.

³³The allusions in this stanza would have been readily recognized by readers in 1877. The names in the first part were in the newspapers; they were politicians, bosses, and capitalists. Train had personal reasons for condemning places where reform meant a prison, and obviously he had been favorably impressed at conferences to see the Mormon women vote along with the men.

And now a word with you, my friend,
A friendly word that may cement,
Where'er you may your footprints bend,
My friendship for the President!
Strange things have happened far and near,
Since you and I held converse here,
Though you and I, in many lands,
Have crossed our palms in friendships bands,
And though too *Young* to miss the *Train*
We never shall shake hands again!
Tell my Utah friends to Hold the Fort
And I will guarantee support.
I'm asked the good of Mormon leaven?
Why doubling up one year in seven!
The territory will soon be let
To the noble State of Deseret!
With *Young* and *Cannon*, perhaps the choice,
In the Senate Chamber of Utah's voice.³⁵
Polygamy itself, no doubt,
In course of time may Peter out,
But Brigham's church will stand and grow
Where're the Mormon legions go!
In accordance with Mormon Law
Taylor succeeds to wage the war!
Please give to all my Utah friends
The courtesy good will extends.
Stand firm around that great salt sea,
I stick by those who stick by me.
The Physologic power I hold
Is greater than the power of gold.
For gold is but the power of wealth,
While I have power to give you health,
The power to alleviate distress
And organize true happiness!

G.F.T.

There is an epilogue to the story. In January 1903, one year before Train's death, he wrote a letter to the *Deseret News*. He recalled his original contact with Brigham Young at the time of building the railroad, his complaint about too much light when he lectured in the Salt Lake Theater, his memorable trip to Ogden when Brigham Young bought popcorn. He proclaimed, "I was always the Mormon's friend!"

³⁴John W. Young, one of Brigham's sons, was an experienced railroad builder and investor and had done extensive lobbying in the East.

"When Utah becomes a state and is entitled to two senators, Train is speculating, two likely choices would be George Q. Cannon and Young. The latter could be Brigham Young, Jr., but more probably here, given the heading of the section, Train is thinking of John W. Young.

During the difficult years when the Mormons suffered from bad press, one of the few people willing to speak up for them was George Francis Train. Since he did have an audience and was able to reach many people through statements to the press, through his writings, and especially through his lectures, he was, from the Mormons' point of view, a friend not to be despised. And there was a bond between Train and Young that was more than simple superficial interest. Both had risen from poverty to become figures of prominence; both were somewhat quixotic and yet, despite projects that may have seemed unrealistic, had achieved much; both slightly scandalized the public, which nevertheless was anxious to read about them; both were critical of many of the false values of the Eastern Establishment. Train's praise of Young and the Mormons, however extravagant it appeared, was not necessarily insincere.

From the Mormon side it would have been easy to have been taken in completely. The evidence is that they liked Train, were amused by him, enjoyed his flattery, and tried to help him when they could. But they knew his limitations. "Brilliant but erratic," was the phrase used by the Church newspaper in 1903. And in 1877 the long tribute to Brigham Young was introduced by the following statement:

Whatever may be said of the eccentricities of this singular genius who has stored away in his capacious brain, a most immense fund of information, his sympathies are ever with the abused, maligned and oppressed, and he has always been a consistent defender of the people of this Territory and a profound admirer of their great leader, now departed, whom he recognized as one of the leading minds of his age and race. We copy the epigram obituary; without assuming any responsibility for the view presented, although we cannot deny that it contains a great deal of condensed truth if hurried and sometimes inelegantly expressed.³⁶

³⁶*Deseret News*, 17 October 1877.