

Mormon Bibliography: 1970

CHAD J. FLAKE*

With the beginning of the new year, the demise of some old and venerated friends, *The Improvement Era*, *The Children's Friend*, *The Instructor*, *The Relief Society Magazine*, and *The Millennial Star*, has been accomplished. It has been explained (and for the present accepted) that it is an expeditious move and will result in better periodicals for the total Church membership. However, it is not without some sorrow that one closes out the runs of the old magazines.

The Children's Friend, begun in 1902, and changed to its present format in 1924, is probably the least affected by the change. *The Instructor*, long a house organ of the Sunday School, gives us more sorrow, not as it is now published (as a house organ it has had a limited appeal for some time), but for its colorful past. Begun as *The Juvenile Instructor* in 1866, it was a large, awkward folio volume. It changed to a regular quarto in 1867, an octavo in 1908, smaller octavo in 1944, and back to quarto in 1950; its name was changed in 1930. During the latter part of the 19th century it served as the literary and music periodical for the membership of the Church. During one period the rage for pseudonyms made its reading a delight. George D. Watt became "Uncle George," the staid J. L. Barefoot became "Beta" or "Beth," and Evan Stephens published music under the non-de-plume of "A flat." The text was equally charming. One issue told of a young girl who chewed gum so much that her mouth wouldn't stop despite all medicine could do; an example of what would happen if one pursued this distasteful practice.

*Professor Flake is Special Collections Librarian at Brigham Young University. He also edits *Mormon Americana*.

The Relief Society Magazine, I suspect, will be the most missed by current members of the Church. Begun in 1914 as *The Relief Society Bulletin*, a rather unpretentious publication, it was changed in 1915 to *The Relief Society Magazine*, heir of the prodigious magazine of woman's rights, *The Woman's Exponent* which had ceased publication in 1914, and assumed its present format at that time. It now contains, in addition to regular articles, the lessons for the Relief Society, which undoubtedly will now have to be published for the first time in manual form.

The history of *The Improvement Era* is more complex. Begun in 1897, as the organ of the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association, it succeeded the long defunct *Contributor*, which stopped publication in 1886. In 1908 it became the organ of the seventies and the YMMIA; in 1909 the priesthood quorums and the YMMIA; in 1917 it added the schools of the Church; in 1925 it listed the Music Committee; and finally in 1929 it added the Young Ladies' [Woman's] Mutual Improvement Association after the demise of the *Young Woman's Journal* and changed its format. In 1970 it was listed as the official organ of the Priesthood Quorums, Mutual Improvement Associations, Home Teaching Committee, Music Committee, Church School System, and other agencies.

For the sentimental, however, it is the death of *The Millennial Star* which is the saddest. True, in the last years it has lacked the luster it had in the 19th century, but one must remember that it is the oldest Church magazine, beginning in Manchester, in 1840. Compare its continuous publishing history with other Church magazines of the period: *Times and Seasons* 6v., *Evening and Morning Star* 2v., *Messenger and Advocate* 3v., *Elder's Journal* 4 issues, *L'Etoile du Deseret* 1v., *Le Reflecteur* 1v., etc. Through the turbulent years of Illinois and 19th century Utah, it not only survived but was most distinguished as one can readily see by the list of its early editors and the worth of the material printed; also by the difficulty one encounters in trying to secure a set of them today.

Progress is progress, and we presume good. But it is always hard to tell old friends good-by.

As in the past, for the compilation of the *Mormon Bibliography*, I have relied heavily on *Mormon Americana*, Vol. 11, 1970.

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