



Mission House

First Dwelling Built in Salem, Capitol of Oregon, 1842

Heroines.

FIRST ANGLO-SAXON MARRIAGE ON THE PACIFIC COAST.

From "McLoughlin and Old Oregon."

Again a salute resounded at the gates of Fort Vancouver. The porter crawled out of his lodge in his night cap. To the impatient knockers outside a heavy step sounded and a gruff voice demanded "Who's there?" "Strangers from the States on the brig Diana." The great key turned, the gate swung creaking on its hinges. This time several men entered with their wives, followed by three damsels half revealed by the light of the moon.

The porter led the shadowy figures up to Dr. McLoughlin's door. "Who is it?" inquired the doctor, in dressing gown and slippers, holding a candle above his head.

"A reinforcement to Jason Lee's missionaries."

"More missionaries!" laughed the doctor. "Well, well!"

Before daylight Dr. McLoughlin called, "Money Coon!" An Indian rolled out of his blankets in the barracks. "Get the dispatch boat. Take these papers to Jason Lee quick as you can."

Forty-eight hours later McLoughlin, glass in hand, descried two canoes laboring up the billowy Columbia in a tempest of wind. "See, he even comes in a storm."

All turned to banter the maiden, who now was to behold her future husband.

The little company sat with Dr. McLaughlin in a room facing the gate, when it swung back and a tall, broad-shouldered man past thirty approached at the rate of seventy-five strides a minute.

Anna Maria raised her eyes, and at a glance took in the Yankee make-up, the Puritan face, with its long, light hair, spiritual eyes and prominent nose. Anywhere it was a face to be remembered, but to her poetic mind a certain halo glowed about that high, retreating forehead.

A pale pink suffused Miss Pittman's neck and brow under Jason Lee's scrutinizing gaze.

"It was a lovely May morning when the governor's guests started up the Willamette. Bloom and verdure and songs of birds, blue rippling waters and distant peaks of snow smiled on the scene. Governor McLoughlin and the whole household of the fort accompanied them down to the water's edge. With gay farewells and good wishes the canoes shot off, bearing, in addition to other baggage, a great Indian basket of provisions from the bountiful larder of Fort Vancouver.

By the conniving of their companions, Jason Lee and Miss Pittman were seated last, in a boat alone, with a crew of Indians, not one of whom could speak a word of English.

With a bold sweep Jason Lee sent his canoe far ahead. Anna Maria's hair rippled from her comb, her cheeks glowed, her eye sparkled. Little, dappled gray seals, with large, round, gentle eyes, swam on either side, following the boat like mastiffs, now leaping in the water, and now catching some unlucky salmon as it bumped its nose in its headlong course up stream.

At sunset the party camped in an oak orchard grove, where now

the City of Portland stretches its stately avenues and rears its palatial homes. The next day they encountered shoals of salmon, literally millions, leaping and curvetting and climbing the foamy falls of the Willamette. On the third day Jason Lee and his assistants landed where the moss grown cottages of Champoeg dotted French Prairie. Exchanging the canoe for the saddle, the mission party galloped across French Prairie knee deep in flowers. The larks flew up and sung.

It was not a princely mansion, that humble log mission, 20 by 30, with chimney of stick and clay. Jason Lee had swung the broadaxe that hewed the logs; Daniel Lee had calked the crevices with moss; there were Indian mats on the hewn-fir floors, home-made stools and tables. The hearth was of baked clay and ashes, the batten doors hung on leather hinges and clicked with wooden latches. Four small windows let in the light through squares of dried deerskin set in sashes carved by the jack-knife of Jason Lee. Just now every door and window framed a group of copper faces, every eye intent on the flowing garb and satin cheeks of the strange, fair white woman.

Jason Lee never talked unless he had something to say. He simply waved his hand and bade them welcome to the humble edifice that marked the beginning of the Capital of Oregon and Willamette University.

The rough table, with its battered tin plates and knives and forks, had venison from the hills, bread from their own wheat crushed in the cast-iron corn cracker. The cattle driven over the plains furnished butter and cheese and cream; glossy cups of leaves held the strawberries that reddened on every knoll.

The front of the mission, historic now, became the Sabbath temple. Thither repaired the missionaries with their pupils, neatly dressed in English costume. Thither came the Canadians, with their native wives and half-cast children, all in holiday garb, and gathered in the background came the dark Willamettes, picturesque, statuesque, almost classic with their slender bows and belts of haïqua. The hymn of worship rang through the forest aisles. Under the umbrageous firs all knelt in prayer.

The July zephyr fanned the drooping cheek and downcast lid. Every Indian knelt in imitation of the white men. When Jason Lee arose every eye was fixed on his flushed face and speaking glance. He spoke briefly, then, to the astonishment of all, walked hurriedly to his congregation, took Miss Pittman by the hand, and led her to the front. Daniel Lee came forward, and there, under the fragrant firs, pronounced the solemn service of the first Anglo-Saxon marriage on the Pacific Coast. There was a wedding trip up the valley and across the Coast Range to the sea; there were strolls on the level beach, clambakes and surf baths, a fashion that Oregon lovers have followed ever since.

LETTER OF ANNA MARIA PITTMAN TO HER BROTHER.

Mission House, Wallamette, October 26, 1837.

Dear Brother George:

Another opportunity presents itself for sending letters home, which I hasten to improve. * * *

Well, you are married, and I am glad of it. I hope you will settle down now and commence the world anew. * * *

Now is the time to perform your vows to God. How often you have promised that when you married you would become pious. * *

In my last communication, which I sent by way of England, I have given you a history of my marriage.

George, I hope you are as happy with your wife as I am with my husband. * * *

I have a large family to attend to, the care of which comes upon me. I find myself much engaged with domestic concerns. I have just been baking an oven full of pumpkin pies and ginger bread. I wish you had a piece, they are good.

We have a good vegetable garden. We cooked a beet that weighed eleven pounds. What do you think of that?

We have but a few young apple trees. We occasionally get some fruit from the fort. We are not deprived of comforts here in this respect, but by being industrious we may eat of the good of the land. Beef is scarce, and all the cattle that the settlers here have used belong to the fort. They would not sell, but lend as many as any person wishes to use. A cattle company was established by the people in the vicinity in which Mr. Lee became a stockholder for the mission. They were sent to California and returned by land with 700 head of cattle. They purchased them very low, but they have had losses and dangers to encounter. Mr. Lee is a man of business, I assure you; he is pressed down with cares. We will have eighty head of cattle—we will have plenty of milk and butter in the future. I have made twelve pounds of butter a week since I have been here, but our cows seem to fail now. We cannot make soap on account of not having fat and have been obliged to pay fifteen cents a pound at the fort; vinegar 12 shillings a gallon; the best loaf sugar for 15 cents a pound. Some things may be obtained at a moderate price. Money here is of no use—beaver skins are the money here. They are taken to Vancouver and sold for two dollars and twenty cents, and perhaps at home would bring ten dollars—that is the way the traders get rich. * * *

I send this by a gentleman who crossed the mountains with Mr. Lee, and has resided there ever since. * * *

Well, what more shall I say, than to tell you to be good, do good and get good. * * * May the Lord bless and prosper you and give you that better part which shall never be taken from you.

So prays your sister in the bonds of nature and love.

ANNA MARIA LEE.

G. W. Pittman.