

cent hunting trip. It was the first of the kind I had ever seen. It was almost semi-translucent and would cut down like cheese, seeming to have little or no grain like other flesh. It proved to be very, very palatable indeed.

My visit with David Clark and his wife as a very pleasant one, and I went from their home leaving a sincere blessing with them.

The Lott Sisters

By appointment I went to the home of Mrs. Willis at ten o'clock on the Tuesday following our meeting in the Music Hall. As I have already stated in connection with this woman, she was a daughter of Cornelius P. Lott, a man who had come to Nauvoo from the East, his family consisting of wife, sons John and baby Peter, and daughters Melissa, Martha, Mary, and Alzina. They lived in a house on the farm belonging to Father, just east of the city, and I knew them all in a general way. I was fairly well acquainted with Melissa and with her history and movements up to the time of their departure from Nauvoo, when they all emigrated to Utah.

Melissa married Ira Willis, as I have related—a kind, shrewd Yankee and most excellent man. I had heard that they had had two sons, but when I went to call on her she was living alone. One son had died as he approached manhood, and the husband and the other son had together met death in an accident occurring when they were coming down from the mountains with a load of wood. So she was left a widow and childless at the same time.

Her home was a one-room cottage, and when bidden to enter I found her sitting by the fireside preparing things for the midday meal. It was an old-fashioned fireplace such as I was used to seeing, with broad hearth and wide-throated chimney in which were the traditional hooks to support the kettles swung over the fire, the big dogs on which the logs rested, and nearby the fireshovel, tongs, and poker. Ira Willis had always been a thrifty and handy man-of-all-work and loved to make and provide many conveniences and accessories for his home.

I have told how Ira Willis once released my tongue from a frosty axe by pouring warm water on the imprisoned member. He had a hearty laugh at my expense, and for several hours I nursed an extra mouthful of swollen tongue. Mother too had laughed at the occurrence when she heard of it and told me it would be well for me if I could learn some things without trying too many experiments for myself! I have never forgotten that instance and even today, as I retell the story, my stenographer and I have had a hearty laugh over the predicament of an excited boy rushing into the house with his tongue glued to a frosted axe!

I was well received by Mrs. Willis whom I knew by the old familiar name

of Melissa. I told her I had a great desire to talk with her for I had been informed she knew things I would not dare to question her about. I said I wanted to know the truth, whatever it was, and believed that in answer to my questions she would be willing to tell me what she knew.

She answered that she would be glad to grant the interview, but explained that some unexpected company was coming for lunch and she would prefer if I could call in the afternoon instead, when she would be more at liberty and with leisure for a conversation. Of course this was agreeable to me, and after exchanging a few reminiscences I left her.

Returning in the afternoon I found her guests had gone, and she was ready for a chat, willing, as she said, to answer any question I would ask about conditions in Nauvoo of which she had any knowledge. I began by asking:

"Did you know of the teaching of plural marriage or polygamy at Nauvoo?"

"I had heard of it in private but not publicly."

"Did you know of any woman having been married to my father and living with him as his wife, besides my mother?"

"No; and nothing of the kind occurred to my knowledge."

"Do you have any reason to believe such a thing took place and that my mother knew of there being another woman besides herself who was wife to my father?"

"No," quite emphatically, "I am sure she did not."

"Now, Melissa, I have been told that there were women, other than my mother, who were married to my father and lived with him as his wife, and that my mother knew it. How about it?"

She answered rather tremulously, "If there was anything of that kind going on you may be sure that your mother knew nothing about it."

I then asked her what was her opinion of my mother's character for truth and veracity. She replied that she considered my mother one of the noblest women in the world, and that she had known her well and knew her to be as good and truthful a woman as ever lived.

"Then you think I would be justified in believing what my mother told me?"

"Yes, indeed, for she would not lie to you."

"Well, Melissa, my mother told me that my father had never had any wife other than herself, had never had any connection with any other woman as a wife, and was never married to any woman other than herself, with her consent or knowledge, or in any manner whatsoever. Do you consider I am justified in believing her?"

Without hesitation she answered, "If your mother told you any such thing as that you may depend upon what she

said and feel sure she was telling the truth, and that she knew nothing about any such state of affairs. Yes, you would be entirely justified in believing her."

Our conversation continued for some time. Finally I asked, plainly, "Melissa, will you tell me just what was your relation to my father, if any?"

She arose, went to a shelf, and returned with a Bible which she opened at the family record pages and showed me a line written there in a scrawling handwriting:

"Married my daughter Melissa to Prophet Joseph Smith—" giving the date, which I seem to remember as late in 1843.

I looked closely at the handwriting and examined the book and other entries carefully. Then I asked:

"Who were present when this marriage took place—if marriage it may be called?"

"No one but your father and myself."

"Was my mother there?"

"No, sir."

"Was there no witness there?"

"No, sir."

"Where did it occur?"

"At the house on the farm."

"And my mother knew nothing about it, before or after?"

"No, sir."

"Did you ever live with my father as his wife, in the Mansion House in Nauvoo, as has been claimed?"

"No, sir."

"Did you ever live with him as his wife anywhere?" I persisted.

At this point she began to cry, and said, "No, I never did; but you have no business asking me such questions. I had a great regard and respect for both your father and your mother. I do not like to talk about these things."

"Well, Melissa, I have repeatedly been told that you have stated that you were married to my father and lived with him as his wife and that my mother knew of it. Now you tell me you never did live with him as his wife although claiming to have been married to him. You tell me there was no one present at that purported marriage except the three of you and that my mother knew nothing about such an alliance. Frankly, I am at a loss to know just what you would have me believe about you."

I was about to make still closer inquiries in order to find out if she ever had any relations of any sort with my father other than the ordinary relations that may properly exist between such persons under the usual conditions of social procedure, when just then there came a rap on the door, and in walked her sisters Mary and Alzina.

Alzina lived rather near Melissa, but Mary, the older, was living some twenty-five or thirty miles away. Hearing I was in Lehi she had hitched up her team and come to see me, stopping at Alzina's on the way and bringing her along.

(To be continued)