

WILL MRS. SIMPSON GO THROUGH WITH THE MARRIAGE?
by Helen Worden

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A woman with dark hair styled in waves is sitting on a white sofa. She is wearing a light-colored, possibly white, two-piece outfit with a thin purple waistband and a large, vibrant red kimono with wide sleeves. She is looking towards the viewer with a slight smile. In the background, there is a white curtain and a small table with a blue teapot and a cup.

IF
YOU WANT
TO PLAY
TENNIS RIGHT
by
Helen Wills Moody

POLYGAMY ON THE
SANTA FE TRAIL
Revelation of a Strange
Social Problem
by Edward Doherty

Polygamy ON THE SANTA FE TRAIL

BY EDWARD DOHERTY

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ALBIN HENNING

READING TIME • 19 MINUTES 40 SECONDS

SOME years ago, as the governor of Arizona was touring the northern part of the state, his car stalled in the deep sands near Lees Ferry. He couldn't make it go forward or backward. He could get out and walk, or spend the night in the car. He hadn't time for either alternative. There were pressing matters of state across the Colorado River. He must hurry.

Into this emergency strolled Price Johnson, his three wives, and his numerous children.

"Help!" shouted the governor.

"Comin' up," said Johnson.

"Comin' up," cried the children, boys and girls with blue eyes and sandy hair; tanned, healthy children who all looked alike.

They hurried away, all of them, and hurried back, carrying slabs of wood, branches of piñon trees, and bunches of rosinweed in their arms. Johnson had a shovel.

The man and the boys went to work, Johnson shoveling away the sand to clear the wheels, the boys spreading the branches and the weeds and the wood slabs behind and in front of the tires.

"There she be," said Johnson proudly. "You got a clear passage now, sir."

"Thanks to you," the governor said. "Do I—can I give the children a little money?"

Johnson shook his head. "Glad to help."

The big car rolled on its way to the ferry. "Did you know that was Price Johnson, a notorious polygamist?" one of the governor's friends asked him later. "He has three wives living with him there at Lees Ferry. You ought to do something about that."

"Do something!" the governor said. "Any man who is willing to live at Lees Ferry can have all the wives who are willing to marry him, so far as the State of Arizona is concerned."

Today, at Lees Ferry, at Moccasin, at Pipe Spring, at Short Creek, at Fredonia, and at other spots in and near the so-called Strip Country of Arizona and Utah, there are little colonies of polygamists.

For that matter, there are thousands of polygamists all over the West—so many that monogamous citizens are demanding a federal investigation.

There are more polygamists today, they declare, than there ever were. They abound in Utah and the six states around it, and in parts of California. And their numbers increase and multiply with the years.

Polygamy came into Utah in the covered wagon. It came singing in the deserts, fighting the Indians on the plains. It conquered a wilderness. It peopled a great state. It drew thousands from all over the world, who came across the continent of North America as the first settlers came, in covered wagons drawn by horses, oxen, and mules; and other thousands who came on foot, pushing handcarts. Banjo On My Knee might as well have been written for them as for those bound for the gold fields of California.

Polygamy thrived. And then, overnight, it died. Long ago it was killed—but it has never been buried, and it flourishes today as though it had never known death.

Leaders rose up here and there to preach the doctrine. There was, in later days, Moses Gudmunson, who insti-



A revelation for America!—a strange social problem rears its head again



tuted a system of polygamy called "sacrifice of wives"—a free-love cult wherein old wives were traded for new. When the scandalous doings of his colony at Manti were learned, he and his followers were publicly disavowed.

During the World War, Nathaniel Baldwin claimed he had received a revelation which enabled him to construct a radio receiving set far superior to any on the market. He built a factory, and required all his employees to marry additional wives. The community on East Mill Creek grew rapidly. Baldwin made a million dollars, and was sent to the penitentiary, convicted of using the mails to defraud. He was cast out. He was ruined. His employees were impoverished. Some of them remain in East Mill Creek, and are said to be still married to their plural wives.

Lorin C. Wooley founded the "Sanhedrin," which openly and boldly practiced and taught the doctrine of plural marriage. He too was cast out—though, when he died in 1933, he was buried with full honors.

Wooley's work was carried on by J. B. Broadbent, John Y. Barlow, J. W. Musser, and others, all polygamists. They conducted themselves quietly; but their people were poor, and that brought on the trouble. One of the Sanhedrin disciples had four wives and thirty-some children. His income was forty dollars a month. His wives and children cried for government relief. Federal investigators began to ask questions. There was imminent danger of prosecution.

The Sanhedrin had to get out of Salt Lake City. One of its leaders remembered the story of Price Johnson and the governor's car.

"We'll go to Arizona," he said. "We'll go to the Strip Country. We'll be safe there."

THE Strip, lying between the deep impassable canyons of the Colorado to the south and the Virgin River to the north, is the real hell-roaring West—a land of towering ridges that burn with glory at the rising of the sun, of jagged peaks, of forests, of gorges, of sagebrush and cactus and rattlesnakes. There are few more isolated regions in the world, few more majestic.

The Kaibab Forest is close by; the Grand Canyon, Boulder Dam, the Petrified Forest, and Zion National Park are not far away. These are tourist spots—but tourists never go into the Strip. The few roads are clogged with dirt and sand in summer, and piled with snow in winter.

Some of the Sanhedrin "brethren" settled in Short Creek, which takes its name from an anemic stream that trickles out of a canyon and loses itself in the desert. The place has only twenty-five or thirty homes, little cedar-log cabins chinked with mud. The floors are noth-

ing but dirt and sand. The fuel that heats them is wood burned in grates. Only one building boasts of paint. That's the schoolhouse. There is no gas, no electricity, no plumbing.

J. M. Lauritzen, the first settler and now the justice of peace, had visions of building a dam to impound flood waters; but the dam was never built. Nearly every house has its little patch of garden, however, irrigated from wells operated by windmills.

With the exception of three families, all the residents of Short Creek are polygamists. And all are on relief. They felt they could "make a go of it," raise what food they needed, sell what they didn't need, become independent. But it was impossible. The Strip is not located in agricultural country.

There were reports last winter that the colonists, snowed in, were on the verge of starvation.

Even before their first winter set in, the colonists knew hunger and desperation. They called on the government for help. Pitiful letters came into the office of John Cunningham and Howard Roarke of the FERA:

"I am a plural wife with fifteen children. For God's sake send us help."

"I have two wives and thirty children. I can't support them. They need everything."

"I've had three babies by my three wives last month. I can't feed them, nor the other children."

"I have wives in Mesa, Phoenix, Mount Trumbull, St. George, and Las Vegas, all in need."

Letters like that.

The government agents did what they could to help, and wondered.

"There was a family in California that never could afford a baby until they went on relief," one of them commented; "but here are families that keep on having babies, whether they can afford them or not, and plenty of babies too. What are we going to do?"

At the same time letters of protest began pouring in on E. Elmo Bollinger, Mohave County attorney, at Kingman, Arizona, four hundred miles away:

"The polygamists in the Strip are increasing every day. The people at Short Creek say they'll have 500 families from California soon. Must Arizona feed them too? Why don't you do something?"

Letters like that.

Bollinger thought that inasmuch as Uncle Sam was feeding the colonists, Uncle Sam should be the one to investigate their morals. He queried Washington, and was told that investigation and prosecution was the duty of the county attorney.

He searched the letters asking for relief, hoping to find evidence that would enable him to prosecute. The application of Price Johnson and his wife Esther interested him. They had married at St. George, Utah, in 1914. They had nine children. There was another in the household, they said—Helen Hull.

BOLLINGER found a letter from Helen Hull: "I am a plural wife with three children to support. My husband was able to take care of us before the depression, but now he cannot do so. Can you give me work, and clothing for my children?"

Bollinger found evidence against others in the Strip. He went to the region to complete his investigation. He called on Justice Lauritzen. The justice was apathetic. So was his wife.

"My grandfather had nine wives," Mrs. Lauritzen said, "and he was a righteous man."

Bollinger visited nearly every home in Short Creek. There were numerous children on every doorstep. There were several women in nearly every home. One of these women would be introduced as the wife, the others as sisters and cousins.

Price Johnson was living in one of the houses with Helen Hull. Esther, it seemed, had left him and taken her children. His other wives? No one would say what had become of them.

Johnson, four other men, and one woman were arrested on Bollinger's complaints. Preliminary trial was held on September 6, 1935, before Justice Lauritzen. The charge was unlawful cohabitation. J. W. Musser volun-



teered to represent the defendants. He was not needed. Justice Lauritzen held the complaints were defective and discharged the defendants. Bollinger prepared new complaints, and had them ready to serve within ten minutes after the justice had spoken. But in those ten minutes the defendants had all disappeared.

Not until a week later were any of them found. Then Johnson and Isaac Spencer and Sylvia Allred were discovered in a mountain cave. They had lived there seven days on dried corn. They were willing to go to trial, as martyrs to their belief.

Bollinger had their cases transferred to the superior court at Kingman. Judge J. W. Faulkner presided at the trial. Spencer and Johnson were convicted and sentenced to eighteen months each in the Arizona penitentiary. Sylvia Allred, Spencer's "plural" wife, was placed on probation in order that she might take care of her children.

John Y. Barlow, "bishop of Short Creek," who had just concluded a campaign "to combat the breakdown of marriage by those selfish egotists who favor only one wife for each man," testified for the defendants, pleading their right to practice polygamy on the grounds of religious freedom.

That was the only defense entered—that a man must live up to his conscience, must practice his religion, no matter what that religion may be, no matter what the laws of men decree against it.

Johnson and Spencer went to jail. Bollinger went back to the Strip—and found that polygamous conditions were worse than before. So many new converts had now joined the colony that they couldn't find shelter. Most of them cooked and slept in the open desert.

A community center had been built just over the Utah line. The main building was partitioned into small rooms—where plural wives could sleep, if need be. Raiding Arizona officers would find the husbands in Arizona, the wives in Utah. What could they do?

I talked to Bollinger recently in his new—and amazing—office in Kingman. It's a one-story structure built of great stones. It contains two rooms and a bath. Inside it glitters with great chunks of gold and silver ore, tungsten, molybdenum, copper, and other minerals, inlaid at intervals in the walls. Over the fireplace is a tiny rock broken off the great red cliffs that look down on Short Creek.

"It's like the Blarney Stone," Bollinger said. "Only it's different. Whoever kisses the Blarney Stone will have a facile and nimble tongue. Whoever rubs his nose on my red rock will have at least two wives."

"I understand," I said, "that the trial of Johnson and Spencer made numerous converts to polygamy."

"Something in that, maybe," Bollinger answered. "But not at Short Creek. Plenty of people went there after the trial. Transients, most of them—people of no substance. They didn't last long, couldn't endure the savage country, the scorching sun, the red dust blowing, the gritty, sandy soil that'll raise nothing but cactus and sage. Families can live there, of course, and have supplies trucked down from St. George. But it isn't much of a life; and people who aren't backed up by a stern sense of religion won't sacrifice themselves to it."

NO, we're not afraid of any great number of polygamists coming into Arizona and putting an extra burden on the taxpayers. Yet there should be a thorough investigation of these polygamists, and only the United States government can make such an investigation. How can the state act? A man lives in Arizona, say; but his wives live in Utah, or Nevada, or California. Polygamy is an interstate condition.

"If the United States should investigate it would send more men to jail for polygamy than the jails could accommodate. All these long-underwear people—"

I asked Bollinger what he meant.

"All true polygamists," he said, "wear long underwear—always. They never take it off. I don't know why, unless it's because the nights are always cold here. But if you search for a polygamist—man or woman—look at the ankles for evidence of woolly underwear."

Newspapermen and others in Phoenix, Arizona, con-

firmed Mr. Bollinger. There are many polygamists in Arizona. By their underwear you will know them.

This underwear is bestowed on a couple when they are married, or "sealed." It must never be taken entirely off. Some part of it must remain on the body even when the wearer is taking a bath.

From other sources in Phoenix, Kingman, Ashfork, Los Vegas, and Salt Lake City, from men and women, I learned a few more details regarding long underwear—and the sealing and marrying ceremonies as practiced by the brethren of the Sanhedrin and other cults.

These people, I was told, believe that a woman can be saved to everlasting glory only through a man. They hold that every man is the savior of his wives. The more women he has saved by marrying them, the more children—"little keys to heaven"—he has, the higher he will go in the hereafter.

A man with only one wife may get to heaven, though he's more likely to be damned. But men with two wives will outrank him. His bliss and his glory will be as nothing to theirs.

They believe, also, that even a concubine will have her rightful place in glory—provided she be faithful. But a virgin? That's very, very doubtful.

THEY believe a woman must be "sealed" to a man—for time and all eternity; or, if she be a widow and already sealed for eternity, she must be sealed "for time only" to her second husband.

"What do you mean by sealing?" I asked the question dozens of times; and each time received a slightly different answer.

"It depends on who does the sealing," said an Arizona lawyer who has made a deep study of the subject. "And it depends on where the ceremonies are held. In a temple, now, the candidates for sealing would first be thoroughly washed and anointed. Then they would be clothed in these woolen garments and led into an anteroom representing the Garden of Eden.

"A troupe of officials would enact the story of Adam and Eve and the serpent and the angel with the fiery sword. Then the place would be plunged into darkness, and the candidates would be led through a doorway or a veil of some kind. The man would pull his woman after him—signifying thus that he was saving her soul from damnation.

"Then, before an altar on which were the figures of a ram and a bull, the two would be married, and sealed to each other.

"All wives must be sealed, in some communities. In other parts of the country the first wife isn't sealed. The second wife is only a helpmate for the first, and usually



isn't sealed. But the third and all succeeding wives must be sealed.

"Sometimes children are sealed to their fathers. To seal a woman to a man is to insure that man's happiness with her in heaven.

"In some places the man is naked when he pulls his bride-to-be through the veil. And so is she. Neither is 'sewed up' until after the marriage, or sealing, has been accomplished.

"In still other places the marriage must be consummated in public before the garments are bestowed. I mean, some of the high priests, and the immediate families of the man and the girl—she usually is a girl of sixteen or seventeen—must witness the consummation to make the sealing 'orthodox.' Orthodox, that is, in the eyes of the cultists."

"I don't believe it," I said. "It's fantastic."

"Granted," the attorney answered. "Nevertheless, I know it's true. There are other rites that last from five days to a week before this marriage ceremony—rites intended to lash the girl into a religious frenzy, to whip her emotions into such a state that she's not only willing to sacrifice her modesty, but even eager. Afterward—well, many a girl goes crazy.

"These consummation ceremonies are usually held late at night in some isolated barn or shed, a place that is as carefully guarded as the scene of a fanatical voodoo sacrifice."

Further revelations concerning the present-day prevalence of polygamy in parts of the West will be made by Mr. Doherty in an early issue.

In Salt Lake City I met Charles Kelly, author of a number of books on related subjects.

"The sacrosanct garment," he said, "may be cut to knee-length. Its sleeves may be shortened. It needn't be of wool. It may be made of cotton or rayon. But the old-time garment is still popular, especially with those who believe in polygamy and practice it.

"Plural wives, when they come to some of our maternity hospitals, absolutely refuse to undress. Nurses have to give them ether to get their underwear off them. And there's always a terrible scene when such a patient wakes to find her garment gone. She feels irreparably damned without it.

"About the sealing ceremonies I've heard the same stories you have. I can't vouch for them. I never met anybody who would swear he had witnessed such a ceremony. But I do know that women are being sealed to men, with all sorts of rites and ceremonies, in all sorts of out-of-the-way buildings, all over the West."

JOHN CUNNINGHAM, federal relief administrator in the Strip Country, asked by Helen Starr, Los Angeles author, how "plural" wives differed from "sealed" wives, made this reply:

"Plural wives are married in barns late at night. Sealed wives are added to the family flock at the end of five-day ceremonies. An audience of legal and plural wives and priests witness the rites to sanction the new union. I have heard that some of these sealed wives are young girls. Worn to frenzy by the five-day ceremonies, they sometimes go insane."

J. W. Musser, one of the leaders of the Sanhedrin cult, publishes a magazine called *Truth*. In this magazine he advocates the principles of plural marriage. He openly preaches that a man should have from two to half a dozen wives and from five to thirty children. But he does not discuss the matter of sealing. He champions the women of Short Creek. They do not engage in birth control, he says. They have no immoral sisters among them, no childless wives, no social disease.

"Their only offense," he asserts, "is to make sexual virtue a crowning point in their lives." But regarding the secret rites that make them plural wives the editor of *Truth* is silent.

Nobody at Short Creek would discuss the sealing of women, though Mr. Lauritzen did explain that when a man wanted to marry it was necessary for him to get his wife's consent.

"He always asks his wife, or his wives," he said, "before he takes another woman into the family. If his wives do not like the girl they let him know about it. Be sure of that. And while he may be a lovesick swain for a time, he eventually forgets her. That makes for congeniality in the family."

But there's a rule that takes care of the man's interest, too; for the Sanhedrin cult is nothing if not male. If the wife, or wives, refuse unreasonably to give their consent, they can be damned to everlasting fire and the man may marry the unwanted woman anyhow.

Many a wife has seen her man come home with his hand in that of a younger, prettier, healthier woman. Many a wife has heard her lord and master say, "Darling, I have brought you a new sister; I shall marry her soon, with your consent."

Many a wife has rebelled. Many a wife has been thrown out of her house because she cried that her heart was broken, because she was jealous at seeing her husband married to another, because she was old and ugly with work and childbearing.

Life in the bosom of a plural family is not always serene. That's why so many polygamists marry sisters when they can. Sisters will get along together better than strangers.

PRICE JOHNSON didn't ask any of his wives if he might marry Helen Hull. She was sixteen when he brought her to his first wife's home in Lees Ferry. Esther objected strenuously. So, apparently, did the other two wives. Johnson had to establish his new wife in a shack three miles away.

Two wives left him before he went to Short Creek with Esther and Helen. They left him, or they died. People in the Strip speak of these two women vaguely, as though they knew nothing of them.

At any rate, Johnson had only Esther and Helen with him in Short Creek. He built a home on the main street for Esther. Helen and her children had to live in a hut outside the town.

Esther left her husband, perhaps because of Helen, and took her children with her. She's living with her brother, a cattleman in Moccasin, Arizona.

In order to avoid arrest, Helen had to flee with her children into Utah.

Price Johnson didn't have a wife to his name when he went to jail. Now that he's free again—

"I'll obey all the laws, within reason," he says. "But I'll obey my own conscience too. I'll live according to my religion. And I'll worship God in the way in which I believe."

THE END

