

Lloyd, Jessie Georgina (1843 - 1885)

LLOYD, JESSIE GEORGINA (1843-1885), author, best known as 'Silverleaf', was born on 4 June 1843 at Longford Farm, near Launceston, Van Diemen's Land, and baptized Jessy Georgianna, daughter of Joseph William Bell, auctioneer, and his wife Georgiana, née Ford. On leaving school she had sole charge of a large family of brothers and sisters but found time to teach a Sunday school class and play the church organ on Sundays.

On 6 September 1866 at the Wesleyan Chapel, Glenorchy, Jessie married George Alfred, son of G. A. Lloyd. They went to New South Wales and their first child, a daughter, was born in Sydney on 12 October 1867. For some years George had managed Goolhi station near Gunnedah. He then bought a share in Terembone station, near Coonamble, probably in partnership with G. W. Allen, and the family moved into the slab and sawn timber homestead late in the 1860s. Their three sons were born there.

About 1878 Jessie began writing for Sydney periodicals under the name of 'Silverleaf'. From her earnings she was able to send her two elder children to boarding schools in Sydney. Her book, *The Wheel of Life: A Domestic Tale of Life in Australia*, was published in Sydney in 1880 and received favourable reviews. By then her short stories, essays and poems were appearing in the *Echo* and later in the monthly *Illustrated Sydney News* and the *Sydney Mail*. 'All Aboard. A Tale for Christmas' was serialized in the *Echo* in December 1879. In 1881-82 the 'Silverleaf Papers' appeared regularly in the *Illustrated Sydney News*, covering topics such as 'Glimpses of Station Life', 'Seasons of Drought', 'Town and Country House-keeping', 'Squatters versus Selectors', 'Christmas in the Bush' and 'Natives'. Short stories and poems appeared in the *Sydney Mail* in 1882-83. Her novel 'Retribution' was serialized in the *Illustrated Sydney News* in 1884-85 and at her death she left an unfinished story, 'On Turbulent Waters'. Without being very original or revolutionary in her sentiments, 'Silverleaf' was popular as a pleasant and cheerful narrator of outback life. A contemporary described her as a 'graphic and graceful writer, possessing the faculty of presenting her characters in a clear and unmistakeable light ... The tone of her novels is always high and moral'.

Besides writing, Jessie enjoyed gardening, sketching and music: she was a pianist 'much above the average' and had a sweet contralto voice. She was a good chess player and an entertaining conversationalist. On 30 July 1885, after an illness of six weeks, she died at Terembone. She was buried on the station according to Anglican rites and her memorial service on 16 August at St Barnabas's Church, Coonamble, drew a large and sympathetic congregation. She left an estate worth £625, including mining shares and life insurance, and at her request about eighty volumes from her private library were given to the local Mechanics' Institute and St Barnabas's Church Sunday school. Not long after her death her husband left Terembone; he married again in Sydney in 1887, raised a second family and died on 8 February 1921.

Select Bibliography

Echo (Sydney), 17 Jan 1880; *Coonamble Independent*, 22 Aug 1885; *Illustrated Sydney News*, 29 Aug 1885; private information.

Author: Sally O'Neill

Print Publication Details: Sally O'Neill, 'Lloyd, Jessie Georgina (1843 - 1885)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 5, Melbourne University Press, 1974, p. 97.

