

and best tomahawks; they fed him when he was hungry, and helped to outfit him when he went to the war.

When California's gold fever began to push long waggon trains across the country the mormons saw what the result would be unless they could stop the rush. Left to themselves the savages would no doubt have attacked in every case where there was hope of success, but not one person would have been killed where ten yielded up their lives but for the assistance of the accursed Danites. These were the "good men and true" of the mormon church—the enthusiasts and fanatics who could be depended upon to carry out any order and preserve the secrets of the church with their last breath.

They knew the country, the trails, the streams, the ravines and valleys, from Council Bluffs or St. Joseph to their own doors in Salt Lake City. They were strung out all along the overland trail, and in constant communication with the Indians. They acted as guides—were elected as captains of trains—sought every position which would enable them to play into the hands of their allies and work the destruction of trains. This was not even suspected, however, until they had worked fearful slaughter among the gold-seekers. No living man will ever be able to give figures on the train people murdered during the years in which the overland trail was in daily use.

The first train I went out with, consisted of fifteen waggons and fifty men, women, and children. Of these twenty-two were full-grown men and well armed, and each one fully realized the perils which beset the route. It would seem the height of folly for a husband to invest his all in a span of horses and waggon and set out for California with a sickly wife and three or four children, but plenty of men did so. Indeed there was no train without its women and children, and their presence always increased the dangers.

Previous to leaving St. Joe we had to elect a captain of the train, a "boss," whose word should be law until we reached the end of our journey. This position naturally fell to some veteran—some hunter, scout, or Indian fighter, who was posted as to the route and the ways of the Indians. Some such man was always going out with a train. In our case the choice lay between two—one an old trapper of many years' experience, who looked honest and seemed to have had plenty of experience, and a man who was a stranger to all, but who was loud in his boasts of how many Indians he had killed and what a brave, careful man he was.

I disliked him at first sight, as I know he did me, but though I did all I could to defeat him, he was elected to the position of captain. He was a fellow with an ugly, sulkily look to his face, eyes which were constantly roving about and could never look you square in the face; and in my heart I believed he meant us ill. I found one or two others who entirely agreed with me, but the majority were perfectly satisfied that he was all right, and it would not be prudent for us to say anything until we had a better foundation than mere suspicion. It would have been rebellion to speak against him or refuse to obey his orders, as he had the power to disarm us and put us under guard.

At that date, the train which progressed one hundred miles into Kansas was sure to find the advance guard of the Indians. On the fourth day out we sighted some at a distance, and I narrowly watched our captain. He closed the train up in good order, stationed the defenders where they could do the most good, and exhibited such nerve and caution that I began to feel ashamed of myself for having suspected his loyalty.

But for one circumstance I should have banished all suspicion. We saw the first Indians about two hours before sundown. None of them came nearer than half a mile, seeming to be content with an inspection of our

strength. An hour later, and when within two miles of the spot where we proposed to camp, the captain, whose name I have neglected to state was Baker, ran up a green flag on one of the waggons. This flag, as we afterward concluded, he must have secreted about his person.

He explained that if we ran up a flag the Indians would conclude that there were soldiers with the train and haul off, and no one—no one but me—questioned the truth or policy of the proceeding. It struck me that he raised the flag for a signal, and when I stated my suspicions to two others of the band, they agreed with me that he could have no other object. From that time we watched his every movement with the eyes of a fox, but he made no further sign for many hours. When we went into camp he took all the precautions the most timid could suggest, and I do not believe he slept two hours between dark and dawn.

The night passed without an alarm, and it was after noon the next day before we saw Indians again. We had been travelling for an hour after the noon halt when we came to a singular bit of ground. It was a ridge about fifty feet wide, with heavy washouts or dry ravines on each side of it. This place could be avoided by turning to either the right or the left, but Baker, who was mounted, as most of the rest of us were, led the way right along this ridge. I was watching him, and I saw that he was farther ahead than usual. I also saw him make a curious sign. He raised his right arm or a line with his ear, bent the forearm across his head, and held it thus for a few seconds with the palm opened and toward his horse's head. Looking ahead and to the left I thought I caught a brief glimpse of a dark object—something like a black head peering above the bank of the ravine. I was close to the head waggon, and I asked the man to halt, and in twenty words made him understand that I firmly believed the Indians had prepared an ambuscade for us. I had made him understand this when Baker halted and turned to us with the query:

"What's the matter now?"

"The route looks dangerous," I answered.

"The route is all right, bring your waggons."

"Why can't we go to the left or right," I asked.

"Look here," he began, as he rode back, "is this train under my orders or yours?"

"Yours, sir."

"Then you be careful. If you attempt to interfere with me I'll order you under arrest. Come on with the waggons."

He turned and galloped forward. As he did so I rode to the right, and a companion to the left, to reach a point where we could see into the ravines. We both saw the same thing—the dry ditch crowded with Indians, and we both cried out together:

"Shoot the villain! He has led us into an ambuscade."

I don't know who killed him. Five or six of us fired together, just as he had put his horse on a gallop, and he toppled from his saddle and fell to the earth. The Indians, seeing that they were discovered, sprung up and made a dash at us on foot. Although without a leader, we did just the right thing. Every man rushed to the front, leaving the rear of the train to take care of itself, and we gave the savages a volley which broke them up and left nine of their number dead on the ridge.

The living sought cover, ran down the ditches behind a rise where their ponies were concealed, and made off without firing another shot, although there were eighty-four of them in the band. Had we got the train strung out on that ridge every soul in the train would have been murdered within ten minutes. Baker was, I found out several years later, an active Danite, and had led more than one hundred emigrants to slaughter.