

# DESERT NEWS.

TRUTH AND LIBERTY.

No. 22.

FILLMORE CITY, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 4, 1858.

VOL. VIII.

## HISTORY

OF  
WILFORD WOODRUFF.  
(FROM HIS OWN PEN.)

[CONTINUED.]

## CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS.

[Written at Great Salt Lake City, February, 1858.]

VARIED and diverse are the lives and fortunes of men; while the paths of some are strewn with flowers and ease from the cradle to the grave, with naught to disturb their peace; others are marked victims of varied misfortunes, accidents and dangers. The last named class is the one in whose ranks I have stood, through my infancy, childhood, youth and manhood, up to the present time, so much so that it has seemed as though some invisible power or fate was watching my foot steps in order to find some opportunity to take my life from the earth. I can only attribute the continuation of my life to the present time to a merciful God, whose hand has been stretched out and rescued me from death in the midst of the many dangers and hair breadth escapes, I have passed through; some of which I will here mention.

When three years of age, I fell into a caldron of boiling water, was instantly caught out, but was so badly scalded, that it was nine months before I was considered out of danger.

At five years of age, I fell from the great beam of a barn, striking my face upon the floor, which came near breaking my neck.

Three months afterwards, I broke one of my arms, by falling down stairs. I soon after broke my other arm by falling out of a high stoop, upon a pile of timber.

When six years of age, I came near being killed by a surly bull. My father and I were feeding pumpkins to the cattle; a surly bull drove my cow away from the one she was eating. I took the pumpkin he had left, upon which he pitched at me. My father told me to throw down the pumpkin and run. I ran down a steep hill, and took the pumpkin with me, being determined that the cow should have her rights. The bull pursued; as he was about to overtake me, I stepped into a post hole and fell; the bull leaped over me, after the pumpkin, and tore it to pieces with his horns, and would have served me in the same way, had I not fallen.

During the same year I went into my father's saw mill, with several others; I got upon the head-block to take a ride while the carriage was running back, not anticipating any danger; my leg was caught between the head-block and the fender-post, and broke both bones of my leg below the knee. I was taken to the house, and lay nine hours before my bones were set, suffering severe pain; but being young, my bones soon knit together and I was upon my feet again; during my confinement by this lameness, my bro. Thompson was also confined in the same room with the typhus fever.

When seven years of age, I was riding on the top of a load of hay, which my uncle, Ozon Woodruff, was driving to the barn; he turned the load over upon me; I was nearly suffocated for the want of air, before the hay was removed.

At eight years old, I was riding in a one horse wagon with several others; the horse took fright, ran down a steep hill, and turned the wagon over upon us; but again while in the midst of danger, my life was preserved; none of us were seriously injured.

When nine years old, I climbed into an elm tree to obtain bark. I stepped upon a dry limb, which broke, and I fell about fifteen feet upon my back, which beat the breath out of my body. A cousin ran and told my parents I was dead; before they arrived at the spot, I came to my senses, and met them.

When twelve years of age, I was drowned in Farmington river, and sunk in 30 ft. of water, and after carrying one person to the bottom with me, I was miraculously saved by a young man, named Bacon, diving to the

bottom, and carrying with him a large stone to hold him down until he obtained my body, not expecting to save me alive; I suffered much in being restored to life.

At thirteen years of age, while passing through Farmington meadows, in the depth of winter, the roads were drifted with snow; and in an exceedingly blustering day, I became so chilled and overcome with cold that I could not travel. I crawled into the hollow of a large apple tree. A man in the distance, seeing me go in, hastened to my rescue, realizing my danger more fully than I did: when he arrived at the spot, I had fallen asleep, and was nearly insensible; he had much difficulty in arousing me to a sense of my situation. He procured means to carry me to my father's house, and through a kind providence, my life was again preserved.

At fourteen years of age, I split my left instep open with an ax, which went nearly through my foot: it was nine months getting well.

At fifteen years of age, I was bitten in my left hand by a mad dog in the last stage of hydrophobia; he dented my hand with his teeth, but did not draw blood, and I was again preserved, through the mercies of God, from an awful death.

At the age of seventeen, I was riding a very ill-tempered horse that I was not acquainted with; and while going down a very steep rocky hill, the horse taking advantage of the ground, suddenly leaped from the road, and ran down the steep, amid the rocks, at full speed, and commenced kicking up, and attempted to throw me over his head upon the rocks; but I lodged upon the top of his head, grasped hold of each ear as with a death grip, expecting every moment to be dashed to pieces against the rocks. While in this position, sitting astride of his neck, with no bridle to guide him but his ears, he plunged down the hill under full speed, until he ran against a rock and was dashed to the ground. I went over both his head and the rock, about one rod, and struck the ground square on my feet, being the only thing visible that saved my life; for had I struck upon any other part of my body, it must have killed me instantly; as it was, my bones crushed from under me, as though they were reeds. It broke my left leg in two places, and put out both my ankles in a shocking manner, and the horse came near rolling over me in his struggles to get up. My uncle, Titus Woodruff, saw me fall, got assistance and carried me to his house. I lay from 2 p.m. till 10, without medical aid; then my father arrived, bringing Dr. Swift, of Farmington, with him, who set my bones, boxed up my limbs, and carried me in his carriage eight miles that night, to my father's. My sufferings were very great; I had good attention, however, and in eight weeks I was out doors upon my crutches.

In 1827, while attempting to clear the ice out of a water-wheel, standing upon the wheel with one arm around the shaft, a man hoisted the gate, and let a full head of water upon it; as soon as the water struck the wheel, it started; my feet slipped into the wheel, but I immediately plunged head foremost over the rim into about three feet of water, and my weight drew my legs out of the wheel, or I should have been drawn under a shaft and crushed to death.

In 1831, while having charge of the flouring mill in Collinsville, Connecticut, I was standing inside of a breast wheel, 20 feet in diameter, upon one of the arms near the top, clearing out the ice, when a full head of water was let on to it. The wheel immediately started; but I dropped my ax, and leaped through it to the bottom, by the shaft and arms about twenty feet; as I struck the bottom of the wheel, I was rolled out against a ragged stone wall with only about two feet clearance between it and the wheel; the wheel caught me and rolled me out into the water below, where I found myself without any bones broken, but with some bruises and much fright.

During the winter of 1831, while in New Hartford, Ct., I passed through a severe course of lung fever.

In 1833, the day I was baptized, one of my horses, newly sharp shod, kicked my hat off my head, and had he struck two inches lower would probably have killed me instantly; in ten minutes afterwards, while driving the same team down a hill on a sleigh without any box, the bottom boards slipped forward under the roller and caught the ground, turned endwise, and fell on the horses' backs, throwing me between the horses; they ran to the bottom of the hill, dragging me with the lines, head foremost, with the sleigh on top of me, about twenty rods over a smooth snow path: I escaped unharmed, however, in the midst of both dangers.

In 1834, while traveling in Zion's Camp in Missouri, a rifle was accidentally discharged, and the ball passed through three tents, with about twelve men in each, and lodged in a wagon axle-tree, while a man was standing behind it, and injured no one; it passed within a few inches of my breast, and many others escaped as narrowly as myself.

A few months afterwards, a musket, heavily loaded with buckshot, was accidentally snapped within a few feet of me, with the muzzle pointed at my breast; it had a good flint and was well primed, but it missed fire, and my life was again preserved.

In April, 1839, in Rochester, Illinois, I was riding upon the running gears of a wagon without a box, sitting upon the forward axletree, when the bolt, fastening the coupling pole, came out, which left the hind wheels; and my weight on the forward bolster and tongue, turned the coupling pole over on to the horses, turning the stakes upside down, and shut me up fast between the bolster and tongue, but in such a manner that my head and shoulders dragged on the ground; my horses took fright, and ran out into an open prairie and dragged me in this position for about half a mile. I managed to guide them with my left hand, so as to run them into a corner of a high worm fence, where we landed in a pile together. I was considerably bruised, but escaped without any broken bones.

July 23, 1842.—Prest. Joseph Smith sent me from Nauvoo to St. Louis to procure a stock of paper. I went down upon a steamboat; was six days on the way, during which time I was severely attacked with bilious fever. The day I made my purchase the fever was so high I was scarcely sensible of what I was doing. As soon as I made my purchase and got my freight on board, I took my berth and lay there until I arrived at Nauvoo on the 10th of Aug. I was confined to my bed forty days, and passed through the most severe fit of sickness I ever endured; my life was despaired of by many of my friends. I was administered to by Prest. Smith and the Twelve: my life was preserved by the power of God. I took a relapse twice after I began to recover; once while in council with the Presidency and Twelve; my strength left me, my breath stopped, and I felt as though I was struck with death.

Sept. 12, 1843.—At five o'clock p.m., I left Boston on the express train for Portland. While passing through Chesterwoods, six miles south of Kennebunk, after dark, and while going at full speed, we struck one of the rails which some persons had raised by rolling a log under it, and landed in a pile; three cars were filled with passengers, and their lives were saved by having a long train of freight between the passenger cars and the engine; all of them were mashed to pieces; the engineer was killed, some of the passengers had bones broken; I escaped unhurt.

On the 5th of Oct., 1846, while with the camp of Israel building up Winter Quarters, on the west side of the Missouri river, (then Indian country) I passed through one of the most painful and serious misfortunes of my life. I took my axe and went two and a half miles on to the bluffs to cut some shingle timber to cover my cabin; I was accompanied by

two men. While the third tree was falling, which was an oak, over two feet in diameter, I stepped behind it some ten feet, and also to one side the same distance, where I thought I would be entirely out of danger; but when the tree fell, there being a crook in the body of it, which struck a knoll on the ground, the whole body shot endwise back of the stump and bounded, and the butt of the tree struck me on the breast and knocked me several feet into the air against a standing oak, and the falling tree followed me in its bound and caught me against the standing tree, and I came down between them; before reaching the earth, however, I was liberated from them, and struck the ground upon my feet in a badly bruised condition. My left thigh, the whole length of it, and my hip and left arm were much bruised; my breast bone and three ribs on my left side were broken; my lungs, vitals and left side were also bruised in a shocking manner. After the accident I sat upon a log until Mr. John Garrison went a quarter of a mile to get my horse. Notwithstanding I was so badly hurt, I mounted my horse, and rode two and a half miles over a very rough road, dismounting twice in consequence of my place; my breast and vitals were so badly torn to pieces, that at each step of the horse the pain went through me like an arrow. I continued on horseback until I arrived at Turkey creek, on the north side of Winter Quarters. I then became exhausted, and was taken off my horse and carried to my wagon in a chair. I was met in the street by Prests. Brigham Young, H. C. Kimball and W. Richards and others, who assisted in carrying me to my family. Before laying me upon my bed, the Presidency laid hands upon me, rebuked my suffering and distress in the name of the Lord, and said I should live and not die. I was then laid upon my bed in my wagon, and as the Apostles prophesied upon my head, so it came to pass. I employed no physician on this occasion, but was administered to by the Elders of Israel and nursed by my wife. I lay upon my bed unable to move until my breast bone began to knit together, which commenced on the ninth day. I began to walk about in twenty days; in thirty days from the time I was hurt I again commenced to do hard labor.

July 5, 1848.—While on a mission to the Eastern States, I drove my carriage, containing myself and family into the door yard of br. James Williams in Iowa, to camp for the night. I tied my mules to a large oak tree several rods from the carriage. As we were about to lay down in the carriage for the night, I was strongly impressed to go and move my mules from the oak tree, and also to move my carriage. I followed the dictates of the Spirit, and removed my mules to a small hickory grove, also moved my carriage several rods, and retired to rest.

In a short time a heavy rain storm came on, which broke the tree near the ground, and laid it prostrate where my carriage had stood. As it was, the top struck the hind end of the carriage; the tree was two feet in diameter. Thus, by obeying the whisperings of the Spirit, myself and family were preserved.

On the 21st day of April, 1856, while assisting to remove an ox that had died from poison and had been skinned, I inoculated my arm with poison, and mortification ensued. The poison worked through my system for seven days before it showed itself outwardly. On the 28th my arm began to swell, was in great pain and showed signs of mortification. I showed it to Prest. Young, who advised me to cleanse my stomach immediately, and put on onion poultices, and anything that would draw the poison from my system into my arm, which counsel I immediately put in execution. The 29th was another trying day to my life; the poison had so thoroughly penetrated my whole system, that my strength left me; I could not stand, I was led to my bed, my bowels and stomach ceased to act, my speech was like that of a drunken man. Prest. Young called, in company with Dr. Sprague, and laid hands upon me, and rebuked the disease and the