

Snake River, August 11, 1862

Mrs. Bronson,  
My Dear Friend:

On the 8th of this month I wrote you and sent the letter by a Mormon to Chandler Co., Salt Lake to be mailed.

That was the first opportunity I got of sending a letter since the upper crossing of the Platt. I little thot when I wrote you on the 8th that an occurance was to take place next day and the day following, and which will long impress itself upon my mind, and that we were in the midst of a great danger and seemed to be almost entirely unconscious of it. I will relate what happened as near as I can: On Saturday about 5 p.m. I was riding ahead of the train a mile or so, in search of grass and a camping place at which we might remain over Sunday. On looking up the road ahead of me I saw a horseman coming toward me in a hasty manner.

This was a rare thing to see any person coming eastward, and especially in so hasty a manner. On his approaching me I discovered that it was a man belonging to our wagon, and who had left us on the day previous to overtake a friend of his who he learned was in a train two days ahead of us. The first thing he said to me was, "My God, John, the Indians have massacred a train and robbed them of all they had, and they are only a short distance from us". I at once became conscious of our extreme danger and turned back to inform the train and bring up the wagons which were lagging behind and I expected an attack to be made at any moment. Learning that two ox trains were ahead of us and going to camp at or near the battlefield we pushed on to overtake them.

In an hours' driving we came to the place where the horrible scene took place, but found the Indians had run off the stock, taking the provisions, clothing, etc., of the train, but left the wagons, which the ox trains ahead of us had taken and gone on, in pursuit of grass. I found quite a quantity of blood, and fragments of such things as immigrants usually carry with them, and it was evident that the Indians had done their hellish deeds in a hasty manner and left.

The place selected by them for the attack was the best on the road and not far distant from the road which turns down to Salt Lake, which I learned is 175 miles south of us. Here we pushed on endeavoring to overtake them, but only got a short distance on account of the darkness, and were obliged to camp on the very ground where the Indians had, a few hours previous made a ring

Matter collection

with their pandemonium like shouts, and red with the blood of innocent men and women. We at once put out a strong picket guard on the surrounding hills, got a hasty supper in the dark, staked out mules in the sage brush and hoped the night would be a short one. Nothing happening, we pushed in at daybreak for the ox teams and grass, which we found in a camp five miles distant, and here we camped during the day.

I here found three men killed and several wounded, one woman mortally wounded, and the wagons which the Indians had left. Two of the men killed were from Iowa City, A.J. Winter and an Italian whose name I did not learn. The other man was from New York City, Bulwinkle was his name and it is said had some \$6000 which was taken from him. All were buried here but the affair did not end here.

Some thirty men from the two ox trains and the trains attacked the previous day, started out in pursuit of the Indians and their stock. After traveling some seven miles in the direction in which the Indians went they came suddenly upon them and a fight immediately commenced. At the first fire three fourths of the white man ran and the red men pursued, and after a running fight of some three miles the Indians ceased their pursuit.

In this fight three of the whites were killed and five severely wounded, one I think mortally. After we learned the fate of the last party the greatest excitement prevailed in camp and a small party went to their assistance to recover the dead and wounded, one of which was not found and one had been scalped, the first scalped man I ever saw. Late in the evening both parties returned and two more ox trains came into camp, making now some two hundred wagons and 400 men and three hundred women and children.

This morning we all started together after burying the dead, and came thirteen miles to Raft River, where we are all encamped for the day, and where I am writing this. Here the road forks, one for Oregon and Washington, and the other for California.

Truly your friend  
John C. Hilman.

P.S.- The Indians I have alluded to were Snakes, and it is thought were in large force.

The above letter was written by John C. Hilman to a friend in St. Louis, and is quite an accurate description of the Indian trouble.