

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF



BUFFALO BILL

(WILLIAM FREDERICK CODY)

Illustrated by: **N.C. WYETH**

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[Illustration: BUFFALO BILL--COL. WILLIAM F. CODY]

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(COLONEL W.F. CODY)

ILLUSTRATED BY
N.C. WYETH

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Dedicated to My Nephew and Niece,
George Cody Goodman, Anna Bond Goodman,
and family.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Buffalo Bill--Col. William F. Cody. _Frontispiece_

He Shoved a Pistol in the Man's Face and Said: "I'm Calling the Hand
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Great White Brothers"

Winning My Name--"Buffalo Bill"

It Was No Time for Argument. I Fired and Killed Him

Pursued by Fifteen Bloodthirsty Indians, I Had a Running Fight of
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A Shower of Arrows Rained on Our Dead Mules from the Closing Circle of
Red-Men

Stage-Coach Driving Was Full of Hair-Raising Adventures

CHAPTER I

I am about to take the back-trail through the Old West--the West that I knew and loved. All my life it has been a pleasure to show its beauties, its marvels and its possibilities to those who, under my guidance, saw it for the first time.

Now, going back over the ground, looking at it through the eyes of memory, it will be a still greater pleasure to take with me the many readers of this book. And if, in following me through some of the exciting scenes of the old days, meeting some of the brave men who made its stirring history, and listening to my camp-fire tales of the buffalo, the Indian, the stage-coach and the pony-express, their interest in this vast land of my youth, should be awakened, I should feel richly repaid.

The Indian, tamed, educated and inspired with a taste for white collars and moving-pictures, is as numerous as ever, but not so picturesque. On the little tracts of his great inheritance allotted him by civilization he is working out his own manifest destiny.

The buffalo has gone. Gone also is the stagecoach whose progress his pilgrimages often used to interrupt. Gone is the pony express, whose marvelous efficiency could compete with the wind, but not with the harnessed lightning flashed over the telegraph wires. Gone are the very bone-gatherers who laboriously collected the bleaching relics of the great herds that once dotted the prairies.

But the West of the old times, with its strong characters, its stern battles and its tremendous stretches of loneliness, can never be blotted from my mind. Nor can it, I hope, be blotted from the memory of the American people, to whom it has now become a priceless possession.

It has been my privilege to spend my working years on the frontier. I have known and served with commanders like Sherman, Sheridan, Miles, Custer and A.A. Carr--men who would be leaders in any army in any age. I have known and helped to fight with many of the most notable of the Indian warriors.

Frontiersmen good and bad, gunmen as well as inspired prophets of the future, have been my camp companions. Thus, I know the country of which I am about to write as few men now living have known it.

Recently, in the hope of giving permanent form to the history of the Plains, I staged many of the Indian battles for the films. Through the courtesy of the War and Interior Departments I had the help of the soldiers and the Indians.

Now that this work has been done I am again in the saddle and at your service for what I trust will be a pleasant and perhaps instructive journey over the old trails. We shall omit the hazards and the hardships, but often we shall leave the iron roads over which the Pullman rolls and, back in the hills, see the painted Indians winding up the draws, or watch the more savage Mormon Danites swoop down on the wagon-train. In my later years I have brought the West to the

East--under a tent. Now I hope to bring the people of the East and of the New West to the Old West, and possibly here and there to supply new material for history.

I shall try to vary the journey, for frequent changes of scenes are grateful to travelers. I shall show you some of the humors as well as the excitements of the frontier. And our last halting-place will be at sunrise--the sunrise of the New West, with its waving grain-fields, fenced flocks and splendid cities, drawing upon the mountains for the water to make it fertile, and upon the whole world for men to make it rich.

I was born on a farm near Leclair, Scott County, Iowa, February 26, 1846. My father, Isaac Cody, had emigrated to what was then a frontier State. He and his people, as well as my mother, had all dwelt in Ohio. I remember that there were Indians all about us, looking savage enough as they slouched about the village streets or loped along the roads on their ponies. But they bore no hostility toward anything save work and soap and water.

We were comfortable and fairly prosperous on the little farm. My mother, whose maiden name was Mary Ann Leacock, took an active part in the life of the neighborhood. An education was scarce in those days. Even school teachers did not always possess it. Mother's education was far beyond the average, and the local school board used to require all applicants for teachers' position to be examined by her before they were entrusted with the tender intellects of the pioneer children.

But the love of adventure was in father's blood. The railroad--the only one I had ever seen--extended as far as Port Byron, Illinois, just across the Mississippi. When the discovery of gold in California in 1849 set the whole country wild, this railroad began to bring the Argonauts, bound for the long overland wagon journey across the Plains. Naturally father caught the excitement. In 1850 he made a start, but it was abandoned--why I never knew. But after that he was not content with Iowa. In 1853 our farm and most of our goods and chattels were converted into money. And in 1854 we all set out for Kansas, which was soon to be opened for settlers as a Territory.

Two wagons carried our household goods. A carriage was provided for my mother and sisters. Father had a trading-wagon built, and stocked it with red blankets, beads, and other goods with which to tempt the Indians. My only brother had been killed by a fall from a horse, so I was second in command, and proud I was of the job.

My uncle Elijah kept a general store at Weston, Missouri, just across the Kansas line. He was a large exporter of hemp as well as a trader. Also he was a slave-owner.

Weston was our first objective. Father had determined to take up a claim in Kansas and to begin a new life in this stirring country. Had he foreseen the dreadful consequences to himself and to his family of this decision we might have remained in Iowa, in which case perhaps I might have grown up an Iowa farmer, though that now seems impossible.

Thirty days of a journey that was a constant delight to me brought us

to Weston, where we left the freight-wagons and mother and my sisters in the care of my uncle.

To my great joy father took me with him on his first trip into Kansas--where he was to pick out his claim and incidentally to trade with the Indians from our wagon. I shall never forget the thrill that ran through me when father, pointing to the block-house at Fort Leavenworth, said:

"Son, you now see a real military fort for the first time in your life." And a real fort it was. Cavalry--or dragoons as they called them then--were engaged in saber drill, their swords flashing in the sunlight. Artillery was rumbling over the parade ground. Infantry was marching and wheeling. About the Post were men dressed all in buckskin with coonskin caps or broad-brimmed slouch hats--real Westerners of whom I had dreamed. Indians of all sorts were loafing about--all friendly, but a new and different kind of Indians from any I had seen--Kickapoos, Possawatomies, Delawares, Choctaws, and other tribes, of which I had often heard. Everything I saw fascinated me.

These drills at the Fort were no fancy dress-parades. They meant business. A thousand miles to the west the Mormons were running things in Utah with a high hand. No one at Fort Leavenworth doubted that these very troops would soon be on their way to determine whether Brigham Young or the United States Government should be supreme there.

To the north and west the hostile Indians, constantly irritated by the encroachments of the white man, had become a growing menace. The block-houses I beheld were evidences of preparedness against this danger. And in that day the rumblings of the coming struggle over slavery could already be heard. Kansas--very soon afterward "Bleeding Kansas"--was destined to be an early battleground. And we were soon to know something of its tragedies.

Free-soil men and pro-slavery men were then ready to rush across the border the minute it was opened for settlement. Father was a Free-soil man. His brother Elijah who, as I have said, was a slave-owner, was a believer in the extension of slavery into the new territory.

Knowing that the soldiers I saw today might next week be on their way to battle made my eyes big with excitement. I could have stayed there forever. But father had other plans, and we were soon on our way. With our trading-wagon we climbed a hill--later named Sheridan's Ridge for General Philip Sheridan. From its summit we had a view of Salt Creek Valley, the most beautiful valley I have ever seen. In this valley lay our future home.

The hill was very steep, and I remember we had to "lock" or chain the wagon-wheels as we descended. We made camp in the valley. The next day father began trading with the Indians, who were so pleased with the bargains he had to offer that they sent their friends back to us when they departed. One of the first trades he made was for a little pony for me--a four-year-old--which I was told I should have to break myself. I named him Prince. I had a couple of hard falls, but I made up my mind I was going to ride that pony or bust, and--I did not bust.

The next evening, looking over toward the west, I saw a truly frontier sight--a line of trappers winding down the hillside with their pack animals. My mother had often told me of the trappers searching the distant mountains for fur-bearing animals and living a life of fascinating adventure. Here they were in reality.

While some of the men prepared the skins, others built a fire and began to get a meal. I watched them cook the dried venison, and was filled with wonder at their method of making bread, which was to wrap the dough about a stick and hold it over the coals till it was ready to eat. You can imagine my rapture when one of them--a pleasant-faced youth--looked up, and catching sight of me, invited me to share the meal.

Boys are always hungry, but I was especially hungry for such a meal as that. After it was over I hurried to camp and told my father all that had passed. At his request I brought the young trapper who had been so kind to me over to our camp, and there he had a long talk with father, telling him of his adventures by land and sea in all parts of the world.

He said that he looked forward with great interest to his arrival in Weston, as he expected to meet an uncle, Elijah Cody. He had seen none of his people for many years.

"If Elijah Cody is your uncle, I am too," said my father. "You must be the long-lost Horace Billings."

Father had guessed right. Horace had wandered long ago from the Ohio home and none of his family knew of his whereabouts. He had been to South America and to California, joining a band of trappers on the Columbia River and coming with them back across the Plains.

When I showed him my pony he offered to help break him for me. With very little trouble he rode the peppery little creature this way and that, and at last when he circled back to camp I found the animal had been mastered.

In the days that followed Horace gave me many useful lessons as a horseman. He was the prettiest rider I had ever seen. There had been a stampede of horses from the Fort, and a reward of ten dollars a head had been offered for all animals brought in. That was easy money for Horace. I would gallop along at his side as he chased the fugitive horses. He had a long, plaited lariat which settled surely over the neck of the brute he was after. Then, putting a "della walt" on the pommel of his saddle, he would check his own mount and bring his captive to a sudden standstill. He caught and brought in five horses the first day, and must have captured twenty-five within the next few days, earning a sum of money which was almost a small fortune in that time.

Meanwhile the Territory had been opened for settlement. Our claim, over which the Great Salt Lake trail for California passed, had been taken up, and as soon as father and I, assisted by men he hired, could get our log cabin up, the family came on from Weston. The cabin was a primitive affair. There was no floor at first. But gradually we built a

floor and partitions, and made it habitable. I spent all my spare time picking up the Kickapoo tongue from the Indian children in the neighborhood, and listening with both ears to the tales of the wide plains beyond.

The great freighting firm of Russell, Majors & Waddell was then sending its twenty-five wagon trains out from the Plains to carry supplies to the soldiers at the frontier forts. Leavenworth was the firm's headquarters. Russell stayed on the books, and Majors was the operating man on the Plains. The trains were wonderful to me, each wagon with its six yoke of oxen, wagon-masters, extra hands, assistants, bull-whackers and cavayard driver following with herds of extra oxen. I began at once making the acquaintance of the men, and by the end of 1854 I knew them all.

Up to this time, while bad blood existed between the Free-soilers and the pro-slavery men, it had not become a killing game. The pro-slavery Missourians were in the great majority. They harassed the Free-soilers considerably and committed many petty persecutions, but no blood was shed. Father's brother, Elijah, who kept the store at Weston, was known to be a pro-slavery man, and for a time it was taken for granted that father held the same views. But he was never at any pains to hide his own opinions, being a man who was afraid of nothing. John Brown of Ossawatimie, later hanged, for the Harper's Ferry raid, at Charlestown, Va., was his friend. So were Colonel Jim Lane and many other Abolitionists. He went to their houses openly, and they came to his. He worked hard with the men he had hired, cutting the wild hay and cordwood to sell to the Fort, and planting sod corn under the newly turned sod of the farm. He also made a garden, plowing and harrowing the soil and breaking up the sods by hitching horses to branching trees and drawing them over the ground. He minded his own business and avoided all the factional disputes with which the neighborhood abounded.

In June, 1856, when I was ten years old, father went to the Fort to collect his pay for hay and wood he had sold there. I accompanied him on my pony. On our return we saw a crowd of drunken horsemen in front of Riveley's trading-post--as stores were called on the frontier. There were many men in the crowd and they were all drunk, yelling and shooting their pistols in the air. They caught sight of us immediately and a few of them advanced toward us as we rode up. Father expected trouble, but he was not a man to turn back. We rode quietly up to them, and were about to continue on past when one of them yelled:

"There's that abolition cuss now. Git him up here and make him declar' hisself!"

"Git off that hoss, Cody!" shouted another.

By this time more than a dozen men were crowding about father, cursing and abusing him. Soon they tore him from his horse. One of them rolled a drygoods box from the store.

"Now," he said, "git up on that thar box, and tell us whar' ye stand."

Standing on the box, father looked at the ringleaders with no sign of

fear.

"I am not ashamed of my views," he said, quietly. "I am not an Abolitionist, and never have been. I think it is better to let slavery alone in the States where it is now. But I am not at all afraid to tell you that I am opposed to its extension, and that I believe that it should be kept out of Kansas."

His speech was followed by a wild yell of derision. Men began crowding around him, cursing and shaking their fists. One of them, whom I recognized as Charlie Dunn, an employee of my Uncle Elijah, worked his way through the crowd, and jumped up on the box directly behind father. I saw the gleam of a knife. The next instant, without a groan, father fell forward stabbed in the back. Somehow I got off my pony and ran to his assistance, catching him as he fell. His weight overbore me but I eased him as he came to the ground.

Dunn was still standing, knife in hand, seeking a chance for another thrust.

"Look out, ye'll stab the kid!" somebody yelled. Another man, with a vestige of decency, restrained the murderer. Riveley came out of the store. There was a little breaking up of the crowd. Dunn was got away. What happened to him later I shall tell you in another chapter.

With the help of a friend I got father into a wagon, when the crowd had gone. I held his head in my lap during the ride home. I believed he was mortally wounded. He had been stabbed down through the kidneys, leaving an ugly wound. But he did not die of it--then. Mother nursed him carefully and had he been spared further persecution, he might have survived. But this was only the beginning.

The pro-slavers waited a few days, and finding there was no move to molest them, grew bold. They announced that they were coming to our house to finish their work.

One night we heard that a party was organized to carry out this purpose. As quietly as possible mother helped take father out into the sod corn, which then grew tall and thick close about the cabin. She put a shawl round him and a sun-bonnet on his head to disguise him as he was taken out.

There in the sod corn we made him a bed of hay and blankets and there we kept him for days, carrying food to him by night. These were anxious days for my mother and her little family. My first real work as a scout began then, for I had to keep constantly on the watch for raids by the ruffians, who had now sworn that father must die.

As soon as he was able to walk we decided that he must be got away. Twenty-five miles distant, at Grasshopper Falls, were a party of his friends. There he hoped one day to plant a colony. With the help of a few friends we moved him thither one night, but word of his whereabouts soon reached his enemies.

I kept constantly on the alert, and, hearing that a party had set out to murder him at the Falls, I got into the saddle and sped out to warn

him.

At a ford on the way I ran into the gang, who had stopped to water their horses.

As I galloped past, one of them yelled: "There's Cody's kid now on his way to warn his father. Stop, you, and tell us where your old man is."

A pistol shot, to terrify me into obedience, accompanied the command. I may have been terrified, but it was not into obedience. I got out of there like a shot, and though they rode hard on my trail my pony was too fast for them. My warning was in time.

We got father as quickly as we could to Lawrence, which was an abolition stronghold, and where he was safe for the time being. He gradually got back a part of his strength, enough of it at any rate to enable him to take part in the repulse of a raid of Missourians who came over to burn Lawrence and lynch the Abolitionists. They were driven back across the Missouri River by the Lawrence men, who trapped them into an ambush and so frightened them that for the present they rode on their raids no more.

When father returned to Salt Creek Valley the persecutions began again. The gangsters drove off all our stock and killed all our pigs and even the chickens. One night Judge Sharpe, a disreputable old alcoholic who had been elected a justice of the peace, came to the house and demanded a meal. Mother, trembling for the safety of her husband, who lay sick upstairs, hastened to get it for him. As the old scoundrel sat waiting he caught sight of me.

"Look yere, kid," he shouted, "ye see this knife?"

He drew a long, wicked bowie. "Well, I'm going to sharpen that to finish up the job that Charlie Dunn began the other day." And scowling horribly at me he began whetting the knife on a stone he picked up from the table.

Now, I knew something about a gun, and there was a gun handy. It was upstairs, and I lost no time in getting it. Sitting on the stairs I cocked it and held it across my knees. I am sure that I should have shot him had he attempted to come up those stairs.

He didn't test my shooting ability, however. He got even with me by taking my beloved pony, Prince, when he left. Mother pleaded with him to leave it, for it was the only animal we had, but she might as well have pleaded with a wildcat.

We had now been reduced to utter destitution. Our only food was what rabbits and birds I could trap and catch with the help of our faithful old dog Turk, and the sod corn which we grated into flour. Father could be of no service to us. His presence, in fact, was merely a menace. So, with the help of Brown, Jim Lane and other Free-soilers, he made his way back to Ohio and began recruiting for his Grasshopper Falls colony.

He returned to us in the spring of '57 mortally ill. The wound inflicted by Dunn had at last fulfilled the murderer's purpose. Father

died in the little log-house, the first man to shed his blood in the fight against the extension of slavery into the Northern Territories.

I was eleven years old, and the only man of the family. I made up my mind to be a breadwinner.

At that time the Fort was full of warlike preparations. A great number of troops were being assembled to send against the Mormons. Trouble had been long expected. United States Judges and Federal officers sent to the Territory of Utah had been flouted. Some of them never dared take their seats. Those who did asked assistance. Congress at last decided to give it to them. General Harney was to command the expedition. Col. Albert Sidney Johnston, afterward killed at Shiloh, where he fought on the Confederate side, was in charge of the expedition to which the earliest trains were to be sent.

Many of the soldiers had already pushed on ahead. Russell, Majors & Waddell were awarded the contract for taking them supplies and beef cattle. The supplies were forwarded in the long trains of twenty-five wagons, of which I have told you. The cattle were driven after the soldiers, the herds often falling many miles behind them.

I watched these great preparations eagerly, and it occurred to me that I ought to have a share in them. I went to Mr. Majors, whom I always called Uncle Aleck, and asked him for a job. I told him of our situation, and that I needed it very badly for the support of my mother and family.

"But you're only a boy, Billy," he objected. "What can you do?"

"I can ride as well as a man," I said. "I could drive cavayard, couldn't I?" Driving cavayard is herding the extra cattle that follow the wagon train.

Mr. Majors agreed that I could do this, and consented to employ me. I was to receive a man's wages, forty dollars a month and food, and the wages were to be paid to my mother while I was gone. With forty dollars a month she would be able to support her daughters and my baby brother in comfort. Before I was allowed to go to work Uncle Aleck handed me the oath which every one of his employees must sign. I did my best to live up to its provisions, but I am afraid that the profanity clause at least was occasionally violated by some of the bull-whackers. Here is the oath:

"We, the undersigned wagon-masters, assistants, teamsters and all other employees of the firm of Russell, Majors & Waddell, do hereby sign that we will not swear, drink whisky, play cards or be cruel to dumb beasts in any way, shape or form.

his
(Signed) "WILLIAM FREDERICK X CODY."
mark

I signed it with my mark, for I could not write then. After administering this ironclad oath Mr. Majors gave each man a Testament.

My first job was that of accompanying a herd of cattle destined for beef for the troops that had gone on ahead. Bill McCarthy, boss of the outfit, was a typical Westerner, rough but courageous, and with plenty of experience on the frontier.

We progressed peacefully enough till we made Plum Creek, thirty-six miles west of Fort Kearney, on the South Platte. The trip had been full of excitement for me. The camp life was rough, the bacon often rusty and the flour moldy, but the hard work gave us big appetites. Plainsmen learn not to be particular.

I remember that on some of our trips we obtained such "luxuries" as dried apples and beans as part of our supplies. We could only have these once every two or three days, and their presence in the mess was always a glad occasion.

We were nooning at Plum Creek, the cattle spread out over the prairie to graze in charge of two herders. Suddenly there was a sharp Bang! Bang! Bang! and a thunder of hoofs.

"Indians! They've shot the herders and stampeded the cattle!" cried McCarthy. "Get under the banks of the river, boys--use 'em for a breastwork!"

We obeyed orders quickly. The Platte, a wide, shallow, muddy stream, flows under banks which vary from five to thirty feet in height. Behind them we were in much the position of European soldiers in a trench. We had our guns, and if the Indians showed over the bank could have made it hot for them.

McCarthy told us to keep together and to make our way down the river to Fort Kearney, the nearest refuge. It was a long and wearying journey, but our lives depended on keeping along the river bed. Often we would have to wade the stream which, while knee-deep to the men, was well-nigh waist-deep to me. Gradually I fell behind, and when night came I was dragging one weary step after another--dog-tired but still clinging to my old Mississippi Yaeger rifle, a short muzzle-loader which carried a ball and two buckshot.

Darkness came, and I still toiled along. The men ahead were almost out of hearing. Presently the moon rose, dead ahead of me. And painted boldly across its face was the black figure of an Indian. There could be no mistaking him for a white man. He wore the war-bonnet of the Sioux, and at his shoulder was a rifle, pointed at someone in the bottom below him. I knew well enough that in another second he would drop one of my friends. So I raised my Yaeger and fired. I saw the figure collapse, and heard it come tumbling thirty feet down the bank, landing with a splash in the water.

McCarthy and the rest of the party, hearing the shot, came back in a hurry.

"What is it?" asked McCarthy, when he came up to me.

"I don't know," I said. "Whatever it is, it is down there in the water."

McCarthy ran over to the brave. "Hi!" he cried. "Little Billy's killed an Indian all by himself!"

Not caring to meet any of this gentleman's friends we pushed on still faster toward Fort Kearney, which we reached about daylight. We were given food and sent to bed, while the soldiers set out to look for our slain comrades and to try to recover our cattle.

Soldiers from Fort Leavenworth found the herders, killed and mutilated in the Indian fashion. But the cattle had been stampeded among the buffalo and it was impossible to recover a single head.

We were taken back to Leavenworth on one of the returning freight wagon-trains. The news of my exploit was noised about and made me the envy of all the boys of the neighborhood. The Leavenworth *_Times_*, published by D.B. Anthony, sent a reporter to get the story of the adventure, and in it my name was printed for the first time as the youngest Indian slayer of the Plains.

I was persuaded now that I was destined to lead a life on the Plains. The two months that our ill-fated expedition had consumed had not discouraged me. Once more I applied to Mr. Majors for a job.

"You seem to have a reputation as a frontiersman, Billy," he said; "I guess I'll have to give you another chance." He turned me over to Lew Simpson, who was boss of a twenty-five wagon-train just starting with supplies for General Albert Sidney Johnston's army, which was then on its way to Great Salt Lake to fight the Mormons, whose Destroying Angels, or Danites, were engaged in many outrages on Gentile immigrants.

Simpson appeared to be glad to have me. "We need Indian fighters, Billy," he told me, and giving me a mule to ride assigned me to a job as cavayard driver.

Our long train, twenty-five wagons in a line, each with its six yoke of oxen, rolled slowly out of Leavenworth over the western trail. Wagon-master assistants, bull-whackers--thirty men in all not to mention the cavayard driver--it was an imposing sight. This was to be a long journey, clear to the Utah country, and I eagerly looked forward to new adventures.

The first of these came suddenly. We were strung out over the trail near the Platte, about twenty miles from the scene of the Indian attack on McCarthy's outfit, watching the buffalo scattered to right and left of us, when we heard two or three shots, fired in rapid succession.

Before we could find out who fired them, down upon us came a herd of buffalo, charging in a furious stampede. There was no time to do anything but jump behind our wagons. The light mess-wagon was drawn by six yoke of Texas steers which instantly became part of the stampede, tearing away over the prairie with the buffalo, our wagon following along behind. The other wagons were too heavy for the steers to gallop away with; otherwise the whole outfit would have gone.

I remember that one big bull came galloping down between two yoke of oxen, tearing away the gooseneck and the heavy chain with each lowered horn. I can still see him as he rushed away with these remarkable decorations dangling from either side. Whether or not his new ornaments excited the admiration of his fellows when the herd came to a stand later in the day, I can only guess.

The descent of the buffalo upon us lasted only a few minutes, but so much damage was done that three days were required to repair it before we could move on. We managed to secure our mess-wagon, again, which was lucky, for it contained all our provender.

We learned afterward that the stampede had been caused by a returning party of California gold-seekers, whose shots into the herd had been our first warning of what was coming. Twice before we neared the Mormon country we were attacked by Indians. The army was so far ahead that they had become bold. We beat off the attacks, but lost two men.

It was white men, however, not Indians, who were to prove our most dangerous enemies. Arriving near Green River we were nooning on a ridge about a mile and a half from a little creek, Halm's Fork, where the stock were driven to water. This was a hundred and fifteen miles east of Salt Lake City, and well within the limits of the Mormon country.

Most of the outfit had driven the cattle to the creek, a mile and a half distant, and were returning slowly, while the animals grazed along the way back to camp. I was with them. We were out of sight of the wagons.

As we rose the hill a big bearded man, mounted and surrounded by a party of armed followers, rode up to our wagon-master.

"Throw up your hands, Simpson!" said the leader, who knew Simpson's name and his position.

Simpson was a brave man, but the strangers had the drop and up went his hands. At the same time we saw that the wagons were surrounded by several hundred men, all mounted and armed, and the teamsters all rounded up in a bunch. We knew that we had fallen into the hands of the Mormon Danites, or Destroying Angels, the ruffians who perpetrated the dreadful Mountain Meadows Massacre of the same year. The leader was Lot Smith, one of the bravest and most determined of the whole crowd.

"Now, Simpson," he said, "we are going to be kind to you. You can have one wagon with the cattle to draw it. Get into it all the provisions and blankets you can carry, and turn right round and go back to the Missouri River. You're headed in the wrong direction."

"Can we have our guns?" asked Simpson.

"Not a gun."

"Six-shooters?"

"Not a six-shooter. Nothing but food and blankets."

"How are we going to protect ourselves on the way?"

"That's your business. We're doing you a favor to spare your lives."

All Simpson's protests were in vain. There were thirty of us against several hundred of them. Mormons stood over us while we loaded a wagon till it sagged with provisions, clothing and blankets. They had taken away every rifle and every pistol we possessed. Ordering us to hike for the East, and informing us that we would be shot down if we attempted to turn back, they watched us depart.

When we had moved a little way off we saw a blaze against the sky behind us, and knew that our wagon-train had been fired. The greasy bacon made thick black smoke and a bright-red flame, and for a long time the fire burned, till nothing was left but the iron bolts and axles and tires.

Smith's party, which had been sent out to keep all supplies from reaching Johnston's army, had burned two other wagon-trains that same day, as we afterward learned. The wagons were all completely consumed, and for the next few years the Mormons would ride out to the scenes to get the iron that was left in the ashes.

Turned adrift on the desert with not a weapon to defend ourselves was hardly a pleasant prospect. It meant a walk of a thousand miles home to Leavenworth. The wagon was loaded to its full capacity. There was nothing to do but walk. I was not yet twelve years old, but I had to walk with the rest the full thousand miles, and we made nearly thirty miles a day.

Fortunately we were not molested by Indians. From passing wagon-trains we got a few rifles, all they could spare, and with these we were able to kill game for fresh meat. I wore out three pairs of moccasins on that journey, and learned then that the thicker are the soles of your shoes, the easier are your feet on a long walk over rough ground.

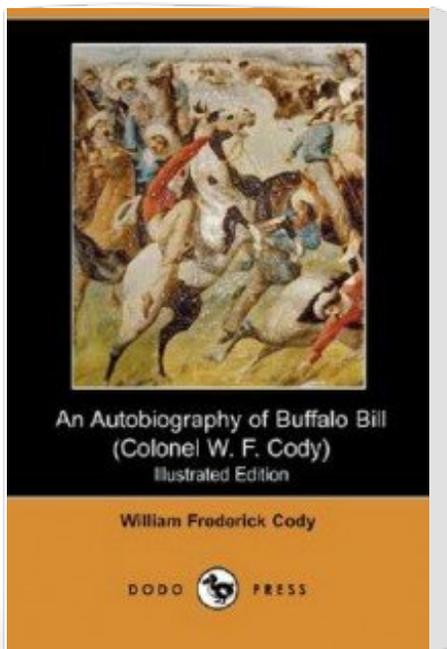
After a month of hard travel we reached Leavenworth. I set out at once for the log-cabin home, whistling as I walked, and the first to welcome me was my old dog Turk, who came tearing toward me and almost knocked me down in his eagerness. I am sure my mother and sisters were mighty glad to see me. They had feared that I might never return.

My next journey over the Plains was begun under what, to me, were very exciting circumstances. I spent the winter of '57-'58 at school. My mother was anxious about my education. But the master of the frontier school wore out several armfuls of hazel switches in a vain effort to interest me in the "three R's."

I kept thinking of my short but adventurous past. And as soon as another opportunity offered to return to it I seized it eagerly.

That spring my former boss, Lew Simpson, was busily organizing a "lightning bull team" for his employers, Russell, Majors & Waddell. Albert Sidney Johnston's soldiers, then moving West, needed supplies, and needed them in a hurry. Thus far the mule was the reindeer of draft animals, and mule trains were forming to hurry the needful supplies to

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