Correspondence of Bishop George Miller

With The Northern Islander

From his first acquaintance with Mormonism up to near the close of his life. Written by himself in the year 1855.

Every man in whose heart is the love of pure Mormonism will welcome and gladly read the Correspondence of Bishop George Miller, and preserve it among his treasures.

"Thou shalt preserve the memory of the chosen of God, who have been faithful in their ministry, and in the calling whereunto the Lord hath called them, fresh with thy children, and thy children's children."—Book of the Law of the Lord, chap. 1X:4.

"Let no man despise my servant George, for he shall honor me."—Deut. 18:15.

SAINT JAMES, MICH.

June 22, 1855.

DEAR BROTHER:—In accordance with your request, I now proceed to write you a series of letters, narrating some incidents of my life and experience since I have been a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

In the early part of November, 1838, the wolves being unusually destructive to my flock of sheep, and, to avoid the perplexity of having them daily killed, I resolved in my mind that I would reserve of my flock for family use a sufficiency, and take the residue (amounting to a little over five hundred) into the adjoining State of Missouri. I was then living in McDonough county, Ill., about five or six miles east by north of the village of Macomb, and there find a market for them.

Whilst I was ferrying my sheep over the Mississippi, at the town of Quincy, Ill., I met with a young man on the ferry boat, who had been in the town to get himself armed and equipped for the purpose of entering the Mormon war, as he pleased to call it. This declaration of the ignorant young man was indeed news to me. I had heard through the medium of the newspapers that a sect of religiousists had recently sprung up in north-eastern Ohio, but never took interest enough in the matter to read an entire article, thinking it all a humbug.

When I got to Mr. Merrill's (six miles from Quincy,) who lived in Marion County, Missouri, being a Campbellite preacher and tavern keeper, (where I put up my sheep for the night,) I found a crowd collected there, and much excitement and confusion prevailing.
little prattler, and for us to take a
to the farm, see our Mormon
friends, and dine with my sister
that lived adjoining my farm.

On our leaving our brother-in-
laws in the act of my handing
our little daughter to her mother,
in the carriage and putting up the
steps, I felt as if I had been shot
down, with no more use of my body
from the hips to the ends of my
toes than if I had not had such
parts. I would however persist in
going home, and was accordingly
bolstered up in the carriage and
got home at night, or rather sun
down, with much difficulty. Three
doctors were called in, and upon
consultation they opened the veins
in both my arms, and took a half
pint of blood every three quarters
of an hour. They pronounced my
disease tic-douloureux, and told
me frankly if I had any matters
to arrange in regard to my estate
I had better be about it, as I could
not possibly live.

On that afternoon elders Taylor
and Rigdon arrived at my house
for the purpose of filing the before
mentioned appointment. They
questioned me in regard to my
faith, and told me I need not lay
in bed another minute on account
of my sickness. I was instantly
healed, and had the use of my
limbs and entirely free from pain.
The entire village was in an uproar.
Those who were watching with me
at the time of this occurrence, fled
from me and left my house as if I
had been a hideous monster. The
word was circulated all over the
village that it had been a plan con-
cocted between me and the Mor-
mons, that I was to feign sickness
and pretend to be healed by the
Mormons, all for effect, to carry
out our imposition upon the cre-
dulity of the people.

Elders Rigdon and Taylor
preached as agreed upon to a full
house, who were there to find fault
rather than be profited by hearing
the truth. There were preachers
of different sects present, who,
when challenged by the Mormon
elders to defend their false doctrine
and erroneous religious tenets, not
one of them would take up the
glove when opportunity was given.

I was baptized by elder Taylor,
and here a new era of my life was
fully ushered in. I was now open-
ly persecuted for my religious be-
lief and profession. My cattle
were shot on the prairies, (but not
killed.) My fences laid down,
and the flocks and herds of the
prairies turned over my grain fields.
I was vexed by petty lawsuits.
Men that I never had had dealings
with would recover sums of money
from me, by bringing into the
Justice's court false witnesses, and
those that owed me would prove
payment, and it was openly avowed
by some that I had just as well
have the picking of my estate as
the damned Mormons and Joe
Smith, as they were all living off
of my effects.

I immediately began to arrange
my property matters, so that I put
them in shape to be available, and
acquainted the saints; which I
accomplished the ensuing spring.
In my next I will give an account
of other remarkable incidents in
my life.

Most truly and sincerely, etc.,
GEO. MILLER.
revelation appointing me to the office of Bishop, to organize an association to build the Nauvoo House, also the revelation to build a temple. Alpheus Cutler, Reynolds Caboon, and Elias Higby were appointed a Building Committee to superintend the building of the Temple.

In this commandment I was made one of the Committee of the Nauvoo House Association, and named by Joseph as its President. In the month of February I was ordained and set apart in the Bishopric, to which I was called in the revelation; and also as President of the Nauvoo House Association.

I immediately entered on the duties of the stupendous work before me, and a scene of activity peculiarly complicated and diversified in every feature, involving responsibility and manifold labors, hitherto unknown to me. Early this spring the English emigrants (late converts of the Apostles and the Elders in the vineyard) began to come in, in apparent poverty and in considerable numbers. Besides these, they were crowding in from the States, all poor, as the rich did not generally respond to the proclamation of the Prophet to come with their effects, and assist in building the Temple and Nauvoo House. The poor had to be cared for, and labor created that they might at least earn part of their subsistence, there not being one in ten persons that could set themselves to work, to earn those indispensable things for the comfort of their families.

My brethren of the Committee of the Nauvoo House Association, and the Committee of the Temple, all bore a part in the employment of laborers, and the providing food for them, but I had a burden aside from theirs that rested heavily upon me, growing out of my Bishopric. The poor, the blind, the lame, the widow, and the fatherless all looked to me for their daily wants; and but for the fact of some private property I had on hand, they must have starved; for I could not possibly, by soliciting gratuitous contributions to bury the dead, obtain them, let alone feeding the living. I was here thrown into straits unlooked for. No tithing in store, the rich amongst us pretended to be too poor to barely feed themselves and nurse their operations which they were more or less engaged in, and those that were really poor could not help themselves.

I was now in the midst of a sickly season, filled with anxiety for the suffering. Multiplied labors crowded upon me, and hundreds of mouths to feed. My days were filled with toil and care, and my nights were not spent with the giddy and the mirthful, but with sleepless anxiety in waiting on the suffering poor and sick of the city. Perhaps I am saying too much. But I praise the God of heaven that he gave me shoulders to bear, and patience to endure the burdens placed upon me.

In a Conference of the Building Committee, Joseph and Hyrum Smith presiding, called at my suggestion, to deliberate on the best plan of operations for procuring lumber for the building of the Temple and Nauvoo House, the result of our deliberations was, that we should buy a mill in the piniery of the firm of Crane and Kirtz, situated on Black River, a tributary of the Mississippi, which they were holding for sale at fifteen hundred dollars.

Crane and Kirtz were sent for, (their residence twenty miles off.) They came. The bargain was made upon the representation of Crane and Kirtz, and Peter Haws, of the Nauvoo House Committee, and Alpheus Cutler of the Temple Committee, were appointed to take immediate possession of the mills, and take a company of laborers, with nine months provisions and clothing, and enter into the business of lumbering, for the joint benefit of both buildings, each furnishing an equal proportion of the accruing expenses. The outfit was provided for a large company, (I do not remember the precise number,) and they all forthwith set out on their undertaking.

The residue of the summer and fall were taken up with providing the means for feeding and paying the wages of the laborers engaged on the Temple and Nauvoo House, which was done abundantly for the time being, mainly by the exertions of Lyman Wight and myself, for both houses. The workmen were kept all winter, as we necessarily had to feed them whether we discharged them from the work or not; they having no means of buying their winter's food without our aid.

At the close in of winter Joseph advised me to go to Kentucky on a preaching excursion, and sell some property I had, to obtain means for the early spring operations; and Lyman Wight to Ohio, and the eastern States, and visit those who would not gather up to Nauvoo, get what tithing he could, and sell what stock in the Nauvoo House he could, and return early in the spring.

We severally set out. Lyman to the North East, and I to Kentucky. My labors were prospered. I returned in the ensuing April with a hundred head of cattle, some horses and other effects.

I will now take a retrospective notice of the progress of our operations in the piniery. Haws and Butler returned with a raft of hewed timber at the close of navigation, and twelve of the men. They left a man in charge at the piniery. They remodeled, or rather almost made anew the mill, but made but little or no lumber, and left the men to get logs ready for spring sawing.

This summer I was almost overwhelmed by the amount of business crowding upon me, having the burden to bear almost alone.

John C. Bennett, one of the most corrupt of corrupted men, having been severely reproved for his corruptions and false teachings, set out to get revenge for being so harshly dealt by. He wrote and published a series of exposures of Mormon corruptions, as he was pleased to call them, and by his falsehoods procured another accusation by the Governor of Missouri, upon the Governor of Illinois, for the excommunication of Joseph Smith, as accessory before the fact, to an attempt to commit murder on the body of Ex. Governor Lilburn W. Boggs.

I was delegated to go to Missouri and see Governor Reynolds in person. E. H. Derby went with me, and for the time being the blow was warded off, and all was peace again. Soon after this Joseph wrote two letters of reveala-
venient to leave them and go by my-
self.

I soon became convinced that Ly-
man Wight had become so addicted to
drinking that he would, if permitted, in-
destroy himself, and bring ruin upon
his community. He had also misled
them by false teaching in regard to
lineage and the laws of matrimony,
and many other things.

I took the liberty of speaking to
Lyman Wight; and some few of his
adherents in regard to the corruption
and errors they were running into, not
doubting but I could convince him
without getting their ill will; but I
soon found my mistake, and had it
made doubly manifest to me that by a
multitude of transgressions of the
laws that God has given for the puri-
fying and guidance of his people, the
transgressors will lose the spirit that
directs the mind to all truth, and be-
come wholly darkened, and will in-
variably persecute those that point out
to them their errors with the most bit-
ter feelings.

It was so with Lyman Wight and a
number of his followers. From this
time forward Lyman would, by inu-
endo, allude to the facts that I had
in a friendly way advised them to ab-
stain from. I plainly saw the hand-
writing on the wall, and fully discov-
ered that the war was on.

And in the early part of the month
of August I began to make arrange-
ments to go by myself. And upon
naming my intention to Wight, he
stated to me that I could not have a
particle of my property; that when-
ever any one apostatized from the
church (as he called himself and fol-
lowers) that they should go out empty.

I told him that I had not joined
his association, which he very well
knew and that I would have the things
I had brought there, less the expense
of the teams to move me up to his
place. He said he would call a meet-
ing to take the matter under advis-
ment. In the result of their delibera-
tions they decided that if I left them
I should go away empty. My son John,
who had married Wight’s daughter,
siding with them.

I told them I was going if I walked
and carried my family on my back, and
I then warned them that I would have
every dime’s worth that they were now
combining to rob me of; that if I had
covenanted or agreed to join their as-
sociation, I would not draw back; but
as I had not, I wanted them to distinct-
ly understand that I was after them
with warm clothes and hot blocks and
sharp sticks, until I got the last cent.
They defied me, and urged me to go
ahead.

I went to the Dutch colony and hired
teams to haul my family, as I had very
little of anything else to haul. I learn-
ed that Lyman Wight, lest I might
bring evil upon them, had sent some
men after me to waylay and assas-
inate me on the way, urging that it was
better for one man to die than a whole
community to be mobbed and suffer;
and one man preceded me to Austin,
to advertise the people against me as a
rebel. But I, however, went ahead, not knowing where I should
stop. I had promised the teamsters
that I would pay them in corn; and
in the city of Austin I ascertained that
I could buy corn of a Mr. Glasscock,
if I would dig in a millrace by the
yard to pay for it, at a very low price.
But I could do no better, therefore
went on a distance of twenty-five or
thirty miles and commenced opera-
tions, thereby paying the teamsters
for hauling me down, or rather across
the country to this place.

I now again resorted to living in
tents—had no wagons or anything else
to help myself with. But in a short
time Wight sent me an inferior light
wagon and a span of mules to help my-
self with; and after two or three months of the most excessive labor
by myself and boys, we accumulated a
little stock of provisions and three or
four cows and calves, and cutting mill
race sufficient to pay for hauling my
family to this place and pay for the
stock I had on hand, and fifteen dol-
ars over. I told my employer that on
account of the sickness of my son
Joshua and nephew, that I would have
to seek other employment.

He told me that he calculated on my
finishing all his digging, amounting
to four or five hundred dollars, and that he
would not have employed me at all
if he had not supposed that I would
finish the job. He told him that I had
taken no definite amount of yards to
cut; that I had been cutting his mill
race by the yard at the rate of nine
cents the cubic yard, and that he had
paid me for the most part I had done,
as we had agreed, and the expense of
my family and their ill health would
not permit me to prosecute his work
any further.

He said I could get a house in the
neighborhood to shelter my family and
if I abandoned his work he would
prosecute me for damages. I told him
I had no one to work but myself and
it took all my time to take care of my
sick, and therefore could work for him
no longer.

I therefore moved off twenty-five
miles to a place where I expected to
raise a crop the ensuing year, and
adopt some mode of living without the
load of digging in a mill race for my
daily bread. But my tyrant employer
made good his word, and attached my
wagon and team to secure the dam-
gages.

I went to see a lawyer, who inform-
ed me that the whole matter was il-
legal, and that he would bind himself
to set it all aside for the fee of fifty
dollars, if I would secure him in the
payment of his fee; that Glasscock
was a rich man, and had great in-
fluence, and although he might recover
damages for me he would have to fight
for it to the last bat’s end, and that he
could not work for nothing, and as the
property attached was worth only
about a hundred dollars, together with
the fifteen dollars he owed me on my
work. Glasscock told me that Wight
had cautioned him to watch me, and
he was bound to do it.

I abandoned the whole concern, as I
could get no security to aid me in the
prosecution of my suit. Glasscock a-
fterwards sent me about ten or fifteen
dollars’ worth of groceries.

I now had shanties or cabins to
build to shelter me from the weather,
as the rainy season had fully set in,
and my tents worn out; and to aug-
ment my perplexity, I had no team to
aid me, only as I hired it. And if
ever a man had suffering and privation
I think a large share fell to my lot.

In the month of February, about the
time of planting my corn, my wife
Mary had a stroke of palsy, that made
her as helpless as an infant, all at-
tributable to Lyman Wight’s cruelty
towards me. I sent my son Joshua after
my son John, who had married Wight’s
daughter, a distance of a hundred and
twenty miles, to come and see his
mother, as she wished to see him, and
did not expect to survive the shock of
her then sickness.

But John did not come, on account
of some preventing cause. In about a
week from this time I came to the con-
clusion to go to the city of Austin and
seek employment as a builder, and
therefore employed team to haul my
family and effects down to the city;