

LAWRENCE, KANZAS, Oct. 1, 1856

THE CAPTIVITY OF THE REV. MR. NUTE.

Friend Haskell: I have desired to give you a full narration of my capture by the ruffians and treatment while their prisoner, but thus far have found no time that I could so appropriate with a clear conscience. In the meantime the swift tide of events in Kansas has left this an old story, and the general begira of our people towards the East has probably made you acquainted with most of the particulars that are of public interest. But I wish to correct publicly some of the misstatements concerning this affair which I see have got into print.

First: Our party was not captured in Leavenworth, but about six miles this side, and but three miles from where our escort left us.

Second: We, i. e., Mr. Wilder and myself, were not "well treated on the whole," while in captivity. The company into whose hands we first fell did show us a civility that was quite remarkable, considering the cause in which they were enlisted and the conduct of some of their associates. But whenever we passed out of their immediate custody we suffered abuse, and our lives were put in peril. Thrice I was released and thrice retaken by the interference of Capt. Emory's men to deliver me from ill usage and threatened death. First, I was set free entirely on condition that I should go down the river; then seized with violence and murderous threats as I was setting foot on the plank of the boat with my sister-in-law, the widowed Mrs. Hopps. I was warned against being seen any more in the streets, and next morning forbidden to leave the hotel. The night after I was taken out of town to the camp of the company by whom we were first captured.

No explanations were given me as to whether I was to be taken, or for what purpose. I was only told that a guard waited for me to mount a horse furnished for my conveyance out of town. I had then good reason to believe that I was to be taken out to my death. One of the prisoners arrested in our party, a young German, who rode in my wagon from Lawrence, had been shot by one of this company the day of the capture, in broad daylight, in one of the most public streets of the town, and a report had but a few hours before been brought in by some who belonged to this same "militia of the territory," of the hanging of a man who had that morning been taken from his claim in the vicinity, for no crime but that of being opposed to slavery in Kansas. Several men of each party came to me as I was about to start and expressed as openly as they dared their friendly interest; warned me "to be prepared for the worst," and offered to take my last messages to my friends.

But the alarm was needless. On reaching the camp I found a civil reception, and the worst of my experience there for the next week, was an exposure to the roughness of camp life, for which, in my condition of health, I found myself poorly prepared. At this camp I found my friend and fellow-captive, Mr. Wilker, who had been separated from the rest of the party at the time of the capture. From that time to our release, ten days after, we enjoyed the privilege of being kept together.

Next day the company moved into Leavenworth for the work of ridding the town of all who would not join them in what they called "the defence against the abolitionists," but what proved to be a work of pillage and murder on an enlarged scale. This was the culmination of the reign of terror in that town, and its horrors have been related by some of those who fled for their lives on that dark and bloody Monday, Sept. 1. Two of the company, who lived near the place of encampment, remained and took us to their homes. Here, for the next three days, we were treated as honored guests. Here I found those who seemed athirst for Christian instruction, and with whom I am happy to believe myself united by a community of interest in some of those things which belong to the life of the soul.

After this, we were taken back to town with the encouragement that we should soon be exchanged for some prisoners then held in Lawrence. That night, at our request, we were permitted under close guard to resume our quarters at the hotel. Next morning began a series of persecutions which made the next two days the dark period of our captivity. We were waited upon by a man who informed us that one of his sons had been killed at some time by an abolitionist in Missouri, and that another was then a prisoner in Lawrence, then receiving cruel treatment: that he feared his life would be taken; that he was determined full retaliation should be visited on us, and that we were in his power for that purpose. The whole manner of the man showed a spirit superlatively brutal. At his request I wrote a letter to Col. Lane proposing an exchange of prisoners, and asking that the young man in his hands should be kindly dealt with for our sakes. Not that I had any fear of anything otherwise. Just after this we were seized, and without a word of explanation, were locked up with thirteen others in a foul dungeon—a place which deserves commemoration with the Bastille and the Black Hole of Calcutta. For the credit of the community by whom it was built, it should have a faithful description. Its walls are of stone, two feet thick, inclosing a space 10 feet by 15 and about 10 feet high. The door is of solid iron. The light and ventilation furnished by four apertures near the top, 5 inches by 18, in which are set iron bars so as to fill up about three quarters of the space. The stone floor was covered with rubbish and offal of the filthiest kind. The foulness of the air in such a place during one of the most sultry of dog-days may be conceived of without further description.

On inquiry, we found that most of our fellow-prisoners had been taken, the day before, from their homes near town, without any charge or pretext. Several were arrested on their way from different parts of the territory, intending to go down the river.

On first entering this dark, damp, foul cellar, a deathly faintness came over us, and our whole company were soon forced to sit down on the floor. After about two hours we heard the hum of voices near by; then comes the sound of moving timbers. The thought of a gallows building for our execution rises at once to our mind, but for some time each one keeps the horrible suggestion to himself. Another hour passes, and to my ear, sitting close to the door, come distinctly these words: "Have them all brought out together."

Then first I broke the silence on the subject of our impending fate, and spoke freely of what seemed to have been in every mind, the strong probability amounting in my own almost to a feeling of certainty that we were about to be led out to the sacrifice. Some time after this the key was turned in the lock; the door swung back; I arose and instinctively essayed to step out for one more breath of the pure air. I was thrust back with the harsh "fall back, there," and two more were added to our number.

We remonstrated against the continuance of this barbarity, and asked for the charges against us, and of the disposal to be made of us, but no word of explanation was granted, only "you'll know soon," and again the door shut with a dismal clang. After another hour, it was again opened by another man, who announced himself as "the officer of the day for the city." We had been turned over to his charge by Col. Clarkson, of the militia, who had left town for his camp. This man came to take an inventory of his prisoners. After counting us, he began to ply us with the same questions for which we wanted the answer: "What are you shut up here for? What do they intend to do with you?" Finding us unable to define our positions as clearly as we wished ourselves, he confesses himself puzzled, goes off, and returns with his verdict. We must be kept here until Clarkson's return, which may be sometime tomorrow. We beg for water, for food, for a few moments to breathe the fresh air. He goes off, promising to be back soon with a dinner. Two more long hours, and he came with a guard to give us a brief respite, and a chance to take some hard bread and muddy coffee for our refreshment.

I again remonstrated against the inhumanity

of again shutting us up in that dungeon. But no; back we must go. He is responsible for our safe keeping, live or die, there for the next 16 hours at least. Just then I recognized an officer of Captain Emory's company on horseback at a distance, hailed him, and appealed to that seemingly doubtful quality just then in men in general, his humanity, to interfere for our deliverance from ill-treatment. He responded to the appeal, showed some indignation, insisted on his company resuming their charge over us two, and finally took us away to their quarters, promising to give us up when Clarkson should call for us. Here we found again our acquaintance of the morning, the old man, seeking retaliation for the loss of his sons. Then came to light the mystery of our barbarous treatment. A report had come in of the hanging of this man's son at Lawrence, and thus he had begun to take his revenge. He had then begun to doubt the story, but still continued to dog us at every step.

That night, while we lay on the floor of the drinking saloon in which the company was quartered, he was seen lurking about, as though seeking the opportunity to get near us. We did not know it at the time; but noticed that the officer who had befriended us was up most of the night, going in and out, and toward morning came in and lay down by my side, entering into a long conversation, in which he showed great anxiety to keep me awake, and to draw out some kind of a justification on scripture authority for breaking a promise for the sake of humanity. We afterwards learned that he had been watching for a boat, intending to get us off if one came along.

To make an end of a story already too long, I will only add, that after two days more, during which we were again given up and again retaken by this company, we were finally released on "parole of honor," at the camp, some six miles out from Leavenworth.

One more correction I must add, which to me is by far the most important. *It is not my purpose or wish to have Kansas for the East.*

E. NUTE, JR.