

FROM THE FREE STATE MEN IN PRISON IN KANSAS.

The Black Hole of Calcutta, and the Jersey Prison Ships Practiced.

TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.

GREAT POLITICAL PRISON, Lecompton, }
K. T. Sunday, Oct. 19, 1856. }

It is known well to the whole civilized world that previous to the arrival of Governor Geary in Kansas, this Territory was the scene of a most direful civil war. It is equally well known that in all that terrible drama the people of Kansas were along the sufferers, and that organized bands of robbers and murderers from the adjoining States were almost the sole perpetrators.— In the beginning they had wrested our government from us and made our laws, but finding us unwilling to fawn to their dictates and to acknowledge them as our lords (as people who had once tasted liberty should be) they used fire, starvation and the sword to bring us to submission. Having no other resource our people were at last compelled to resort to the stores of our enemies for the necessaries of life.

As we have said, such was the condition of things on the arrival of our new Governor. He appeared among us about the first of Sept., and was hailed as our deliverer. The much lamented Maj. Hoyt, who had known him in Pennsylvania, in Mexico, and in California, assured us that we might hope for justice and protection. Geary's course at Leavenworth City, and the assurance of a Mr. Adams, his confidential friend and adviser, together with our ardent hopes for peace and rest, led us to believe he would be our friend. All at least were willing to trust him, to act with him and under his advice. Nor was this confidence in his friendship shaken by his inaugural and proclamation which was issued on the 11th of Sept., copies of which were brought down to Lawrence that same evening by Mr. Adams, and read to the people. We therefore determined to take no offensive steps without his sanction.

At daybreak on the morning of the 12th Gov. Geary, at the head of four hundred United States troops, rode up to the fort on Capital Hill, near Lawrence, and asked who had command of the place, Captain Bickerton answered "I have the honor to command here at present." The Governor then advanced and said, "I am Governor Geary, of Kansas. I have come to prevent the effusion of blood. I have heard that a body of FIFTEEN HUNDRED men are marching upon Lawrence for the purpose of destroying the town." Geary was then asked if he knew this to be a fact, and replied that he had it "officially."— Captain Bickerton remarked that "if there are no more than fifteen hundred, they will go back faster than they come." With an appearance of astonishment, the Governor asked—"Don't you expect to be governed by the constitution?" Captain Bickerton responded that "the Free State men had always been governed by it."—"Well," said the Governor, "don't your people sometimes burn houses and commit other depredations?" "I should not wonder if by this time some have become so exasperated as to do so," returned Captain Bickerton, adding, as he pointed at the brass cannon "Sacramento," "I was at Franklin, and aided in the taking of that. I was also at Washington Creek and at Titus Fort.— We found Titus the evening before engaged in robbing houses and stealing horses"—(and he might have added with truth, "making attempts upon the lives of our citizens.") "If the destruction of such dens of murderers and plunderers is *houseburning*, then are the Free State men houseburners indeed." The Governor said that he must see that the laws (territorial) be obeyed. Bickerton replied that the Free State men would not obey the territorial laws so long as they believed slavery to be an evil, for they could not express sentiments in accordance with their belief without exposing themselves to the heaviest penalties. After some further conversation about the laws and their validity, the Governor inquired who were the constituted authorities of Lawrence, and on being told that Lawrence was not a corporate town, and that no person assumed any more authority than the rest, he offered to "treat" with Captain Bickerton. The Captain, however, declined, and sent the Governor into town, where he was warmly welcomed by a large number of its citizens and other Kansas settlers, who had taken refuge in the place. The Governor assured them, in a speech, that he intended to drive all lawless bands out of the territory, but for the present advised the *Free State men to remain under arms for their own protection, and not disband until he should first have accomplished his part.*

While Lawrence was being visited by the Governor, a band of Southern marauders, under the lead of one Robertson, made a descent upon the town of Grasshopper Falls, and after plundering the same, set fire to it, burning a considerable amount of property. They then retreated to Hickory Point, where they intended to remain fortified until called upon by the main body of the "law and order" army, to aid in the whipping out of Lawrence. The day following, Gen. Lane, who had not seen the Governor's proclamation, with about fifty and one hundred men, happened to pass near Hickory Point, and at the unanimous demand of the citizens under him, led to an attack upon the fortified ruffians, but having no artillery, he found himself unable to dislodge them without great loss. He, therefore, withdrew, and sent to Lawrence for reinforcement. Lane's message arrived at Lawrence on the night of the 13th. Many wished to obey the summons at once—others were in a quandry—Robertson's company would soon join the forces before Lawrence, and must be whipped then if not now. Which course should be taken? Mr. Adams, the friend of the Governor, and who remained in town after the departure of Geary, privately advised many to go, and publicly sanctioned the expedition, remarking that he would go himself if he only had a horse.

This decided the course of the people. They thought for once they could defend their homes and friends with the approbation of high authority. A force of one hundred and twenty was raised and marched under the command of Col. Harvey.

In the meantime Lane received the Governor's proclamation, withdrew from Hickory Point, and afterwards disbanded his men. This did not deter Harvey from making an attack upon the fortified position, which he did, completely routing the enemy, killing one of their number and wounding many others. Such at least is the charge against his men. On our return, we encamped five miles from the scene of action, where we were all taken prisoners that night, by a detachment of United States dragoons, under command of Captain Word. Our forces numbered one hundred and one. No resistance was made by the troops. After being deprived of our arms, a strong guard was placed upon us. About this time the guide, (of the dragoons,) a pro-slavery man, named Grayson, fearing that Captain Word might very possibly arrest the other party also—as intimations were made to that effect—broke through the guard, for the purpose doubtless, of warning them of such a result. He was hailed by the sentinel, but did not stop, at the same time crying out, "Halt yourself, G—d—n you. The sentinel fired but without effect. Grayson returned the fire, his shot taking effect in the sentinel's shoulder. Two other sentinels then advanced and fired, one ball going through Grayson's heart, killing him instantly. This is the only foundation for the story of a "great fight" between the abolitionists and the Government forces, so much circulated by certain parties.

The next day we were marched to Lecompton, where we were for the first week, under guard of the Federal troops. We were then taken to the prison house, where we now are, guarded by the territorial militia, nine-tenths of whom are non-residents, and intend leaving the territory as soon as the time of their three months enlistment under Geary shall have expired. A number of other prisoners have been brought in since, charged with various offences. A number have escaped from this den of horror, a few have been discharged and one was released by the Great Deliverer. Our number is now ninety-eight, eighty-seven of whom are held on the Hickory Point charge. The remaining eleven are suspected of having been engaged in feeding their starving families with bread forcibly taken from those who were endeavoring to destroy them.

Time after time has Gov. Geary said that no action should be taken concerning political offenses committed previous to the issue of his proclamation, yet more than once since, has he used that portion of the Federal army under his command, to make seizures of persons so charged.— We were all held either against this promise, or for following the advice of one supposed to speak from high authority, and during all this time not a pro-slavery man has been arrested, although Gov. Geary and the U. S. Marshal, cannot help knowing that murders and other crimes without number, have been committed by the leaders of that party. Even Geary's militia, after the murder of David Buffus, passed through Lecompton under a black flag, the emblem of pirates, no one daring to molest them.

A portion of our number have families depending on our earnings for support. We have also many of us, outstanding crops of great value going to waste, or suffering heavy loss.

We come now to speak of a subject too vital to admit of our passing it unnoticed, yet too full of horror to dwell upon. We allude to our treatment and condition since our confinement here, any description of which must come far short of the terrible reality. A few of our guard will ever be remembered by us with emotions of the deepest gratitude for their kindness, but the greatest portion of them are drunken, brawling demons, too vile and wicked for portrayal. Times without number have they threatened to shoot us or stab us, and not unfrequently have they attempted to carry out their helish threats. Several nights have the guards amused themselves throughout their different watches by cursing us, throwing stones at the house, and breaking glass and sash. Two large cannon stand planted but a few yards from our prison, and two nights was the match been swung several hours in the hands of the gunners, with orders to fire both cannon (loaded with shot and slugs) upon us, in case our friends should come in sufficient force to avenge our wrong. These, however, are only slight, compared with other insults and sufferings heaped upon us daily. *Most of us are poorly clad—few have any bedding—our prison is open and exposed, and is surrounded with filth. Within all is covered with vermin, and everything is mixed with misery. In childhood we listened with doubt to the dark stories of the Jersey prison ships and the Black Hole of Calcutta, never dreaming that we should at last be once prisoners in their counterpart.* More than once have we prophesied to each other that all would not leave this charnel house alive. Our assertions have been verified. Several have been sick—very sick—one has died. His name was William Bowles, formerly from Saint Charles, Missouri. He labored with us nobly in defending our God-given rights, and it was with feelings of unutterable sorrow that we parted with him. After an illness of two days he left his sufferings this morning at one o'clock. Before his death we requested the officer of the guard to have him removed to a place of quiet. We talked and became tired, yet nothing was done. Last night all the physicians in town were sent for, and each refused to come. Dr. J. P. Wood, who is a justice of the Peace and a Judge of Probate, could not come "because he was sick;" yet he was seen that evening, as well as the following morning, doing hard labor. Others had reasons, we know not what. Dr. Brooks was sent for five times, but as he was at a card table playing *poker* he swore that he "would not leave the game to save every G—d—d abolitionist in the Territory." Many thanks are due, however, to Mr. Caldwell, a pro-slavery man, and Mr. Marshal of the town of Lecompton for the kind aid they gave us.

The Governor paid us a visit yesterday morning, which is the third since our incarceration. We showed him young Bowles, and told him we feared this was the beginning of an epidemic which would prove fatal to not a few. We showed him our scanty clothing. He said that the grand jury, which was in session all last week, would probably finish its business by night; that all against whom no bills were found would be immediately released, and that, although he was going away, and should be absent several days, yet he should leave orders that all those retained should be provided with every comfort that could be procured. But the grand jury has not ended its examination, and none can tell when it will. Sickness and death of the most horrid forms are in our midst—the scrapings of pandemonium around us. We can see nothing let us but an appeal to the last tribunal, with God as our Judge, and our Jury the great American people. We are willing to suffer, if necessary, for the cause of Liberty and of Kansas, but is it necessary? Will you answer to God, and let us hear your decision?

[NOTE.—Of course, every prisoner whose name is here attached is not personally knowing to every individual statement, but every statement herein made is known by many of us to be actual facts, and ALL are satisfied of their truth. To the name of each subscriber is attached his former place of residence.]

- Thomas Hawkins, Dover, Ill.
- Aaron C. Roy, Linden, Ia.
- Thomas Leeson, Rock Island, Ill.
- Justice G. Ketcham, Bloomington, do
- G. N. Neff
- A. V. Vickers, Bath, do
- J. W. Jordan, Ayle co., Ill.
- A. S. Gates, Hamilton, Ill.
- John W. White, Farm Ridge, Ill.
- Thomas J. Alliff, Carlisle, Ill.
- G. Tower, Goodall, Ill.
- Isaac Gray, Chicago, Ill.
- Geo. Smith, Wilmington co., Ill.
- W. H. Gill, Elizabeth, Ill.
- William Cline, Peoria, Ill.
- James Conlay, Half Day, Ill.
- D. Stevens, Bloomingdale, Ill.
- A. M. Humphrey, Bristol, Ill.
- C. Hay, Oswego, Ill.
- J. H. Kagi, Bristolville, O.
- S. Voglesong, Hanoverton, O.
- H. H. Easton, Island co., O.
- E. R. Falley, Mt. Gilead, O.
- Thomas Bowers, Chillicothe, O.
- J. G. Fuller, Oberlin, O.
- J. T. Yunker, Warsaw, O.
- Thos. W. Porterfield, of Ohio, an old Soldier under General Jackson, aged seventy-two years.
- A. J. Payne, Cleveland, O.
- W. S. Ware, Eaton, O.
- C. A. Sereton, Wilmington, O.
- E. Cottingham, Eaton, O.
- Giles Smith, Delaware, O.
- A. F. Bercaw, Kirkland, G.
- J. Fisher, Jefferson co., Io.
- R. Fuller, Wiscotta, Iowa.
- A. E. Jacobs, Oskaloosa, Io.
- G. A. Eberhart, Muscatine, Io.
- Oliver Langworthy, Grinnell, Io.
- O. E. Lewis, Davenport, Io.
- D. H. Montagur, do do.
- A. J. Patrick, Greencastle, Ind.
- John Laurie, White co. Ind.
- S. Dolman, Grant, co. Ind.
- Wm. Undergraff, Fulton co., Ind.
- Wm. G. Porter, Brookston, Ind.
- John Linex, Richmond, Ind.
- John Ritchey, Franklin, Ind.
- H. Hoover, Huntington, Ind.
- N. Griffith, Hancock co., Ind.
- C. L. Preston, Worcester, Massachusetts.
- A. C. Soley, "
- L. D. Coleman, Southampton, "
- E. D. Lyman, " "
- Henry Hurd, Lowell, "
- A. W. Dole, Fitchburg, "
- G. Lugrue, Springfield, "
- S. Pratt, Boston, "
- H. York, West Brookfield, "
- A. H. Parker, Clinton, "
- T. J. Parkinson, Newburg, New York.
- C. J. Auchinoolle, Buffalo, "
- H. N. Dunlapp, " "
- J. J. Howell, N. Hartford, "
- Jared Carter, Saratoga, "
- H. N. Bent, New York, "
- C. C. Hyde, Hornellsville, "
- A. Cutler, Monroe co. "
- J. B. White, Morrisiana, "
- G. H. Powers, Oneida co. "
- E. D. Whipple, Providence, R. I.
- I. P. Brown, Alleghany county, Penn.
- G. R. Pinney, Rockdale, "
- J. J. Boyer, Coatsville, "
- Wm. Kerr, Canonsburg, "
- Jos. B. Haines, Philadelphia, "
- Milton Kinzie, Lebanon, "
- Thos. Varner, Buchanan county, Maine.