

**VOICES FROM THE POLITICAL PRISONS OF KANSAS.**

**GREAT POLITICAL PRISON,  
Leecompton, Kansas, Oct. 19, 1856.**

*To the American People:*

It is well known to the whole civilized world, that, previous to the arrival of Governor Geary in Kansas, the Territory was ravaged by a most direful civil war. It is equally well known that in all that terrible drama the people of Kansas were alone the sufferers, and that organized bands of robbers and murderers from an adjoining State were almost the sole perpetrators. In the beginning, they had wrested our Government from us, and made our laws; but finding us, as should be every people who have once tasted the sweets of liberty, unwilling to fawn to their dictators and acknowledge them our lords, they used fire, starvation, and the sword, to bring us to submission. Having no other recourse, 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 1st of September, and was hailed as our deliverer. The much-lamented Major Hoyt, who had known Geary 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 assurances of 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, copies of which were brought down to Lawrence the 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 of September, Governor Geary, at the head of 400 United States troops, rode up to the fort on Capitol 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, saying, "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 were marching on Lawrence, for the purpose of destroying the town." Geary was then asked if he knew that 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 came." 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 to the brass cannon, "Sacramento," "I was at Franklin, and aided in the taking of that: I was also at Washington Creek, and at Titus's Fort. We found Titus the evening before engaged in robbing houses and stealing horses, [and, he might have continued, "making attempts upon the lives of our citizens."] If the destruction of such dens of murderers and plunderers is house-burning, then are the Free State men house-burners indeed." The Governor said that he must see that the laws (Territorial) be obeyed. Bickerton replied, that the Free State men could not do so, so long as they believed Slavery to be an evil, for they could not even 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 as to who were the constituted authorities of Lawrence, and being answered that there were no persons possessing that particular title, 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 citizens and other Kansas settlers, who have taken refuge in the place, the Governor assuring them in a speech that he intended to drive all lawless hands 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 "wiping out" of Lawrence. The day following, General Lane, who had not yet seen the Governor's proclamation, with between 50 and 100 men, happened to pass near Hickory Point, and at the unanimous demand of the citizens under him, led them to an attack upon the fortified ruffians; but having no artillery, he found himself unable to dislodge them without great loss, so withdrew, sending to Lawrence for re-enforcements. Lane's messenger arrived at Lawrence on the evening of the 13th. Many wished to obey the summons at once—others were in a quandary. 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 that they could defend their homes and friends with the approbation of high authority. A force of 120 was soon raised, and marched under the command of Col. Harvey. In the mean time, Lane received the Governor's Proclamation, so he withdrew from Hickory Point and afterward disbanded his men; but 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 the command of Captain Wood. Our forces numbered 101. No resistance was made to the troops. After being deprived of our arms, a strong guard was placed around us. About this time, the guide, a Pro Slavery man by the name of Grayson, fearing that Captain Wood might possibly arrest the other party also, as intimations were made to that effect, broke through the guard for the purpose of giving them warning. He was hailed by the sentinel, but did not stop, at the same time crying out, "Halt yourself, G—d d—n you!" At this the sentinel fired, but without effect. Grayson returned it, the ball taking effect in the sentinel's shoulder. Two other sentinels advanced and fired, one shot going through the heart of Grayson, killing him instantly. This is the only foundation for the story of a "great fight between the Abolitionists and the Government troops," so much circulated by certain parties.

The next day, we were marched to Leecompton, where we were for the first week under guard of the Federal troops. We were then marched 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 so soon as the time of their three months' enlistment under Geary is out. A number of other prisoners have been brought in since, charged with various offences. A number have escaped from this Gen. of horror, a few have been discharged, and one was released this morning 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 and again, the Governor has said that no action should be taken concerning political offences committed previous to the issuing of his Proclamation, yet more than once since has he furnished that portion of the Federal army under his command, to make seizures of persons so charged. We are all held, either against this promise, or for following the advice of one supposed to speak authoritatively. And in all this time, *not a Pro-Slavery man has been arrested*, although Gov. Geary and the U. S. Marshal cannot help but know of crimes and murders without number, committed by the leaders of that party. Even

Geary's militia, after the murdering of D. Buffum, passed through Leecompton under black flag, the emblem of pirates, no one daring to molest them. A large portion of number have families depending upon our earnings for support, and outstanding crops of value going to waste or suffering heavy loss. We come now, at last, to speak of a subject too immediate, too vital, to admit of our passing it unnoticed, yet too full of horror to dwell upon. We allude to our treatment and condition in our confinement here, any description of which must come far short of the terrible reality. Few of our guard will ever be remembered to us with emotions of the deepest gratitude to 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 either shoot or stab us, and not unfrequently have they attempted to carry out their base and hellish threats. Several nights have the guard amused themselves throughout their different watches, by cursing us, throwing stones at the house, breaking in glass, sash, &c. Two large cannon stand planted but a few yards from our prison, and two nights has the match been swung several hours in the hands of the gunners, with orders to discharge both, heavily loaded with shot and slugs, upon us, in case our friends should come in sufficient force to avenge our wrongs. 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 airy, yet small, and, without, surrounded with unearthly filth; within, all is crawling with vermin—all—everything—mixed with misery. When youths, 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 a sad, actual part of their counterpart! More than once have we prophesied to one another, that all would not leave this charnel house alive. Our assertions have been verified. Several have been dangerously sick, one has died. His name was Wm. Bowles, and formerly from St. Charles, Mo. He labored with us nobly for 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 1 o'clock. Before his death, we requested the officers 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. John P. Wood, who is also Judge of Probate and Commital Justice, 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 he "would not leave the game to save every G—d d—d Abolitionist in the Territory." Many thanks, however, are due to Mr. Caldwell—a Pro-Slavery man, and Marshal of the town of Leecompton—for the kind aid he 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 surround us; we can see nothing left 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 here made is known by many of us to be composed of actual facts, and all are satisfied of their truth. To the name of each subscriber is attached his former residence:

- |                               |                              |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| ILLINOIS                      |                              |
| Thomas Franklin, Dover        | Isaac Geary, Chicago         |
| Abraham Ray, Linden           | Geo. South, Waukegan, Ill.   |
| Thos. Lee-on, Rock Island     | William H. Coll, Elizabeth   |
| J. C. Ketchum, Bloomington    | Adam Bauer, Schuyler Co.     |
| G. N. Neff, Bloomington       | William Chas. Peoria         |
| Abraham V. Vickers, Bath      | James Conley, Holt Day       |
| J. W. Jordan, Ogle County     | P. Stevens, Bloomington      |
| A. S. Gates, Hamilton         | A. M. Humphrey, Bristol      |
| J. W. White, Farm Road        | C. H. Oswego                 |
| Thomas J. Alif, Carlisle      | Jesse F. Pyle, Schuyler Co.  |
| Osbert Tower, Goodland        |                              |
| OHIO                          |                              |
| J. H. Kays, Bristolville      | F. W. Porterfield, an old sd |
| S. Vogelsong, Hanoverton      | dur under Jackson aged 22    |
| H. H. Easter, Island County   | William F. Ware, Lucas       |
| F. R. Eddy, Mount Gilead      | C. A. Sexton, Wellington     |
| Thos. Bowers, Chillicothe     | Levi's Cottingham, Eaton     |
| Joseph G. Fuller, Oberlin     | Calvin Smith, Delaware       |
| J. T. Yunker, Warren          | Albert F. Betts, Kirkland    |
| A. J. Payne, Cleveland        |                              |
| IOWA                          |                              |
| Jacob Fisher, Jefferson Co.   | O. Lanworthy, Grinnell       |
| Resolved Fuller, Wisconsin    | Giver C. Lewis, Davenport    |
| E. A. Jacobs, Okaloosa        | D. H. Mouton, Davenport      |
| G. A. Frazier, Muscatine      |                              |
| INDIANA                       |                              |
| A. G. Patrick, Greencastle    | J. Sayer, Richmond           |
| John Lawrence, White County   | John Ruelke, Franklin        |
| Samuel Dolman, Grant Co.      | Henry Hoover, Huntington     |
| Wm. T. Pollock, Fulton Co.    | N. Griffith, Hancock Co.     |
| Wm. G. Porter, Brookston      |                              |
| MASSACHUSETTS                 |                              |
| C. I. Preston, Worcester      | E. D. Lyman, Southbury       |
| E. D. Cole, Mass., South-west | John Luzzo, Springfield      |
| nearby Ward, Lowell           | Stafford J. Pratt, Boston    |
| Art. W. Dale, Fitchburg       | H. York, West Brookfield     |
| A. C. Soley, Worcester        | A. H. Parker, Clinton        |
| NEW YORK                      |                              |
| T. J. Dickinson, Newburgh     | H. N. Bent, New York         |
| C. J. Ashmun, Buffalo         | C. C. Hyde, Hornellsville    |
| H. N. Dunlap, Buffalo         | A. Cutler, Monroe County     |
| J. J. Howell, New Hartford    | J. R. White, Morrisania      |
| Jared Carter, Saratoga        | G. H. Powers, Oneida Co.     |
| RHODE ISLAND                  |                              |
| E. D. Appleby, Providence     |                              |
| PENNSYLVANIA                  |                              |
| T. P. Brown, Abernethy Co.    | Wm. Kerr, Cannonsburg        |
| Geo. R. Pinner, Rockdale      | J. B. Haines, Philadelphia   |
| Joseph J. Boyer, Coatsville   | Milton Kinzie, Lebanon       |
| MISSOURI                      |                              |
| Thos. Varner, Buchanan Co.    | M. J. Mitchell, Liberty      |
| David Patrick, Lexington      | Jas. H. York, Buchanan Co.   |
| N. G. C. Boyman, Cooper Co.   | Joseph Hicks, Buchanan Co.   |
| WISCONSIN                     |                              |
| C. S. Alderson, Albany        | E. Jenkins, Spring Prairie   |
| R. D. Nichols, Kosciusko      | William Butler, Sauk Co.     |
| Walter Florence, Rock Co.     |                              |
| MICHIGAN                      |                              |
| Samuel Stewart, Detroit       | Weswell Hutchins, Troy       |
| John W. Stone, Detroit        |                              |
| MAINE                         |                              |
| F. B. Smith, Brunswick        | C. H. Calkins, Hallowell     |
| Thos. Bickerton, Portland     |                              |
| VERMONT                       |                              |
| O. M. March, Woodstock        | John L. King, Brattleboro    |
| CONNECTICUT                   |                              |
| Alonzo Crossland, Union       |                              |