

Who are the Ruffians in Kansas?

We publish the following letter, as the most effectual and conclusive answer that can be given to the momentous question that stands at the head of this article. The writer is well known in this State as a gentleman of honor and unimpeachable integrity, and his statements can be relied upon with unhesitating confidence. If the startling facts which he narrates do not startle those who are aiding and abetting treason and civil war, then we are nearer a frightful abyss than we had imagined.— We commend what follows to the careful consideration of every patriot in the land:

INDEPENDENCE, Mo., August 27, 1856.

DEAR SIR:—I arrived here yesterday *en route* for New Mexico; and having leisure on my hands, will give some account of the existing difficulties in Kansas. This unfortunate Territory had remained in a state of comparative quiet until the entrance of Lane and his regiment, when disorder and civil war were again renewed.

The first that was known of these free booters, or their conduct shows them to be such, was noticed in the Chicago papers near a month ago to that effect: and they were next heard of at Fort Les Moines, in Iowa; thence they marched for the Missouri river, which they struck in the vicinity of St. Joseph. When they arrived at the latter point, they were said to be in quite a starving condition, much dissatisfied, and that they were disbanding rapidly, and not much attention was paid to them; but it is now thought they placed those reports in circulation to deceive the inhabitants of the Territory as to their true object. They numbered from five hundred to six hundred men, and were well armed. Before they entered the Territory they sent word to the Governor that they wished to enter as *bona fide* settlers, and not as an armed force after which they came into the Territory, and marched to Lawrence in parties of twenty and thirty men, where they organized. Their first act was to take a hasty enumeration of the inhabitants of the counties of Douglas and Franklin, to see how they stood upon the question of slavery; after which Lane's men went to the farms and houses of the settlers, and told the Pro-Slavery and conservative men that they must declare themselves in favor of Free State measures or leave the Territory. They immediately commenced committing outrages upon those who refused to comply with their demands, such as driving the families from their homes, stealing their horses and guns, and sometimes money. Among others, they drove a settler, named Davis, from his home, near the town of Franklin, who was overtaken on the road with his family by a party of some twenty-five of Lane's men, who made a young man, in company with Davis dismount from his horse, which they took and rode away. They overtook another settler, named Muir, when they took the horses from his wagon, leaving himself, wife and children in the road, with no means of reaching their friends, except on foot.— One family had to fly from their house in the night, naked, in which condition they sought safety and shelter in Missouri.

Their next aggressive movement was upon the settlers at Hickory Point, whom they drove away, and burnt some houses, not more than two or three. They then moved upon Franklin, which they attacked early in the morning. There were only twenty-five or thirty men in the place, who defended themselves for three hours, and until the enemy were bringing a piece of cannon to bear upon them, when they retreated with the loss of six Free State men killed and one or two wounded. They burnt two or three houses, took all the arms they could find, including a piece of cannon taken at Lawrence last spring. They then attacked the house of Col. Titus, where some twenty settlers had assembled for mutual defence, who defended themselves until the Free State men brought their cannon to bear upon them, when they surrendered with the loss of one man killed and another wounded. A small party of Lane's men missed their way, and were captured by some of the settlers from Leecompton, whom the Governor exchanged for those taken at Col. Titus' house, and the piece of cannon. The Free State men now moved upon Leecompton and told the inhabitants that after they should get through at Topeka, whither they marched, they would come back and regulate them; but they did not return, nor can I learn of their doing any damage at Topeka.

Lane's whole force numbers near fifteen hundred men, whom he has distributed as follows: Between two and three hundred, under Brown, are at Ossawatimie, or Sugar Grove, where they have surrounded 65 pro-slavery men; and when Brown told that he had come down expressly to regulate that portion of the Territory, one of the pro-slavery men attempted to escape, and come into Missouri, when they took his horse, and thus cut off his retreat except on foot. Brown is a man of notorious bad character, and is said to have been a robber in his day. He was formerly from Illinois, but of late hails from Missouri. The main body of the Free State men is under Lane, at Lawrence, and number near a thousand strong, and are entrenching themselves. He has also stationed three small parties at as many points on the Missouri river, in Iowa, to keep open their communication for provisions and men, and also to assist them in case of retreat.

Yesterday the acting Governor of Kansas issued his proclamation, declaring the Territory in a state of insurrection, and calling upon the militia to turn out in defence of life and property. He also requested assistance from Forts Riley and Leavenworth, which will probably not be rendered under existing orders. The militia of the Territory have turned out in considerable numbers, and a detachment under Richardson have marched to the lower line, to intercept any reinforcements that may be coming in, and also to disperse the parties left on the river. The flying settlers of Kansas have appealed to their fathers, sons and brothers, in Missouri, to come to their rescue, and protect them from the Free State freebooters; and they have responded in considerable numbers. At this time about fifteen hundred men under Atchison, Doniphan, Reed, Major, and others, are encamped at New Santa Fe, on the western frontier of Missouri, twenty miles from this place. It is their present intention to cut off the retreat of Brown, when the main body will move down upon him, at Sugar Grove, and give him fight—after which a force of some two thousand men will march upon Lawrence. The Free State men at Lawrence are said to be almost in a starving condition, and that they made application to Gen. Smith for provisions, who refused to supply them.

I have learned, while writing, that the settlers on Potawattamie creek, some sixty-five in number, who had assembled together for mutual protection, were attacked to-day by Brown, when several were killed and about forty cut off, but it is not known what has become of them. The settlers from that region are all coming in, and some of them are almost naked, having to make their escape in the night. I have no time for comment. The above items you may rely upon as correct, as I have obtained them from men of undoubted responsibility, and who have never been engaged in the difficulties in Kansas. I will write again before I leave. W. H. W. D.