

From Frederick Starr to My Dear Father

[page 1]

Weston

Feb[.] 22nd 1855

Dear Father,

When I had disposed of the Rev[.] McIrish, I drew back in order to give the citizens of Weston & Platte County a few blows. I remarked that all that could be expected, all they had a right to demand from a northern man was, that if he came into a state to reside where slavery existed, that he should be obedient to the laws and desist from agitation of a question so dangerous to the safety of property & life. That if he did this, he did all they had any right to ask as was a good citizen.

I came to this state, not to be an abolitionist, nor a pro slavery man. I came with my own opinions of the whole subject and not one of them have changed in the least[.] I came to bless if possible the souls of both masters and slaves. The relation itself I have nothing to do with[.] I leave the master to settle all that with his God as best he can.

You will wish to know what I think about slavery[.] I consider slavery a moral and a political evil. A demoralizer of the morals of the country where it exists, and the only wedge of contention which disturbs & threatens to divide the Union. I am a Colonizationist. I believe the nation would be richer[,] happier[,] *[text stricken through]* purer & firmer without it than with it. It is a society commenced by southern men who sought to bless our country and the slave, men of Great minds and good hearts. I am a life member of this society under the hand writing of its president the Hon[.] Henry Clay of Ky. It is the only society with which I sympathize or to which I contribute. This society does not interfere with masters and slaves, it merely stands ready to work and says, If any master through love, justice or duty, sees fit to free his slave, we will conduct that slave to a better country than this where away from the competition of the Anglo Saxon race he may become in every sense of the word a man.

I have been a colonizationist years before I came to this country, and I thank the persons who have for years in this community

[page 2]

been pronouncing me an abolitionist. And here let me say a few plain things in reference to this persecution of peaceable quiet citizens. The man who will do that thing in the dark that he is ashamed to do in the light is a coward, the man who will say that a man is an abolitionist behind his back but dare not & will not say it to his face is a coward, and every man today who heard me call on men to say why they had called me an abolitionist, and who dare not say the word to me are cowards, and any man who will afterward behind my back go and call Mr[.] Starr an abolitionist & who dared not do it here I pronounce a paltry coward, and more[.] The man who has ever called Mr[.] Starr an abolitionist is a thief and the man who shall ever do it in the future will be a thief. You consider that an awful & base man who will come and run off your negroes, you consider it worse than adultery[,] infanticide or murder. And yet you look upon your negro as a part of your property, which ministers to your success & comfort in life.

Now I say the man who calls me an abolitionist is a worse man and a worse thief than any negro stealer or abolitionist. He steals your property, when you call me an abolitionist you steal not only my property but my comfort, my friendships[,] my domestic quietude[,] my influence, respect and good name. You can advertize for your negro or run after him and can catch him, but the thief who thus robs me takes that which I can never retake but which is lost forever. If a nigger stealer is a mean, dishonorable, wicked man, the slanderer who would fain brand innocent men as abolitionists and negro stealers is a thousand times viler & baser than the other, and further still[.]

The man who tells that which is not true tells a lie & is a liar. And every man who has ever said Mr[.] Starr is an abolitionist told that which was untrue & was a liar. I will not say that every one knew it was false and that they lied purposely & willfully. But men should remember that they have no right to say that which defames another unless they know what they say is true. That Mr[.] So or Mr[.] So & so said he was an abolitionist is no ground for your repeating it. he may have heard Mr[.] Somebody say it and all of them may have been repeating but a lie. It is not enough for you to say it because the man was born in the north or because you so wish to hear yourselves talk largely that it gives you pleasure

[page 3]

to say it. All this does not help the truthfulness or falsehood of the thing. And once for all let me say, and I can speak better than any one else in reference to the matter. The man who has ever called me an abolitionist told a lie. I will grant to some of them that it was thoughtlessly or ignorantly but from this hour the man who uses those words I pronounce a deliberate & willful liar. Yes gentleman a Coward a theif & a liar.

In reference to Kansas, I am not only a Colonizationist as regards slavery in slave states, but in reference to territory now free, I am a free soiler. I am in favor of keeping it free, and if I go to Kansas & live there, there will be one vote cast in favor of Kansas a free state.

And finally I do not know as it becomes a culprit to give advice to his judges, but if you will pardon me in a single suggestion, I would say, If you can make Kansas a slave state well & good you gain your wish, but let me advise you to take such temperate & judicious measures that if you should fail you will not have 100,000 bitter foes there willing to do you every injury in your power. Use such a course of honor & fairness that even should you fail in your desire, & it should become a free state you will have there 100,000 friends instead of 100,000 enemies.["]

I had been on the floor more than two hours. When I sat down Dr[.] Bayliss got up and introduced his two resolutions for the armed invasion of Kansas, which I send and which have been again & again published in the northern papers. Dr[.] Bayliss made a speech, "He was not much of a fighter but he would go along to act as surgeon & look after the dead & wounded &c[.]" "He hoped the association would hear on this subject from their distinguished Secretary Gen[.] B.F. Stringfellow." Many called [""]Stringfellow, Stringfellow[""] & he rose. He called me by name 7 times in the most odious and ungentlemanly manner and every instant growing more and more excited[,], urging the Missourians to go over and cut the throats & hang the men from the North until about the 12th [minute?] when he came to a spot where he said "free states & slave states[.]" No said he that is not right. The slave states are the truly free states and the free states are the slave states. He then

[page 4]

went into the most wholesale, lying abuse of the north that any man ever attempted. He declared every man who works for his living a slave, and every poor white working woman a whore. The north had no gentlemen & no intelligence, the country was carried forward by southern intelligence and capital alone, & c. That every southern man was expected to be honorable & honest when he went north while every man from the north to the south was taken of a scoundrel & a rascal until he proved himself honest &c.

When my speech was ended nearly 150 persons left the house[;] about 150 remained & heard this gem of truth & eloquence. they passed the resolutions with hellish stamping & cherish, and the meeting adjourned.

Stringfellow's speech was the universal topic of conversation as soon as the people were in the street. The next morning with revolver & bowie knife he was hunting after some man whom he could scare who had said he had said things stated above. He met two or three who told him he did[;] he met one or two others who said they did not hear him and then hunted up H.M. Moore[,], that young bull head lawyer that studied with C[.]M[.] Lee. Moore did not stand up to him directly as he was unarmed

and the persons present were Stringbellows abettors. A conversation however passed which Stringfellow misrepresented which called out an article in the paper by Moore, which led to a couple of circulars in which it is admitted by the people in this country that Moore gave him a decided drubbing. I enclose the Bayliss "armed invasion" resolutions[,] also Moores statement and the two circulars.

We are quite well. There has been much scarlet fever among children here, for 4 or 5 weeks[.] I have been away from home or very busy lecturing on temperance or at St[.] Joseph preaching every night in a big meeting almost two weeks. Helen & babies send to you all love & kisses.

Your aff[.] Son[,]
Frederick.