

From Mary Savage to Jane Simpson

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Extract from a letter written by Mary Savage to Jane Simpson.
Lawrence, Nov 29th 1863.

But I intended to have told you something about the raid of the rebels into Lawrence. Just before sunrise of the (Aug) I heard the tread of hundreds of horsemen coming in the road above the house and looking out saw the road filled with them and the advance guard stopped at the gate and one of them rode up to the house and knocked at the door and hulled but as it was not opened he rode off. He had his pistol in his hand and doubtless would have fired it if Joseph had opened the door. We did not know what they were till they reached town when they commenced firing as fast as they could and we heard the cries of the frightened people running in every direction to make their

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escape as they shot right into the houses and at every man they could find. In a few minutes the fires began to burst out all over town and we thought it was best to be leaving. We live about a half mile out of town and we expected to have to take it on their return but they went back by another way so our house was saved. They set fire to nearly every house in town, and on their road as they left for miles was one continuous line of fire and smoke. The houses in town that were caved were put out by the women many of whom were very heroic, drawing water and putting out fires with those fiends threatening to kill them if they did. And many of the men owe their lives to the coolness and exertions of their wives who concealed them in the houses and then kept them from burning. But I only meant to give you our own experience when I commenced,

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so I will proceed with it. We harnessed up as quickly as possible and started for Uncle Forests, about four miles from town. We had not gone more than a mile when we saw one of our neighbors and a member of the same church running from his house and two of the bushwackers after him. They were just taking aim at him as we drove up. Joseph comprehended the whole thing in a moment and jumping from the buggy was over the fence and into the cornfield in a second, while I sat almost stupefied with horror at the scene before me. They shot Mr Langly three times and I can never efface from my memory the look and cry of anguish that he gave as he fell, the blood running in streams from his wounds. Joseph came to the edge of the corn and told me to turn round and go back and I did so, but they fired after me and cursing told me to come back. I did so and they

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said they were not killing women and children (Daphne was with us) but that they were going to kill the man (our hired man) who was with us. They told him to get out of the buggy. They accused him of having been in the militia, but I assured them that he had not and that he was sick and they let him go. They threatened me in hopes to get money but I assured them I had none, and told them to examine my pocket, at which they were quite indignant, telling me that they would make me give it to them. I then stood up and told them to examine the buggy if they did

not believe me. They did so and taking Joseph's new silver horn, which I had taken to save it, and carried it off with them. They also took a halter from one of my horses, and bidding me go on they started for the next house. They found the horn too large to carry, so they smashed it on the fense and left it there and we recovered it and sent it back to Boston to be made over.

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When they were talking with me, the one told the other to go in and see to the fires in the house. (a nice brick one) so when they had gone I went in and found both the straw beds burning and put them out drawing water from the well to do so with. But first I went to Mr Langly and turning him on his side found he was not yet dead and spoke to him, but he could not speak having been shot through the throat, but he opened his eyes and looked at me. A woman came at this time with a baby in her arms and I asked her if she would get some water and bathe the blood from his face and stay by him till help came as I did not dare to stay on Joseph's account. I was afraid he would come to me and they might see him as their horses were hitched to the fense at the [MS. illegible] house, in plain sight, and if they saw our buggy still there

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they would know I was putting out the fire and come back as they did in many other places and set it over again[.] The wife of the murdered man had taken some valuables and gone out of the back door and through the cornfield to a neighbors not thinking they would kill her husband but that they only wanted plunder. She did not know that her husband was shot till she returned soon after. He died the next morning. We then drove on to Forests' and stayed there till the rebels left town. Joseph went round through cornfields till he got near town just as they left it, and was busy till after dark helping to take care of the wounded and dead. I can give you no idea of the scene which presented itself after they left. The business part of town a heap of ashes, and the smell of burning flesh and the wail of the bereaved, all [MS. illegible] together

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as they would discover the remains of their dear ones in the burning embers[.] But I have written to much of this already and hope you will excuse me for it as I don't know where to stop.