

From J. Locke Hardeman to George R. Smith

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Saline Co.

10th June 1855

Genl. G.R. Smith

Georgetown

Dear Sir[,]

Your letter dated 31st May is to hand accompanied by a no. of "Jeff. Inquirer" containing your letter to the Editor of South West Democrat. I had seen it before in the Boonville Observer and Lexington Express, as published by your request.

Having set yourself right before the public in the communication referred to I presume that you desire my individual opinion on the Kansas question, and the duty of the citizens of Missouri. Unhappily you & I differ very widely in the latter case.

When Missourians have seen her citizens robbed of their property, and themselves insulted and imprisoned for merely appealing to the laws of the land that professed to guarantee the rights of property:--when they have

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seen the officers of the law shot down while in the discharge of their duty:--have seen a Legislative Assembly "address" a faith sworn magistrate out of office because he would not violate his oath of office:--Legislative charters to Aid Societies, whose avowed object was to colonise our frontier with those whose only object was to enact the same scenes of robbery and murder in our midst;--What should Missourians do? Shall they hear first the cries of murdered citizens, the public declaration of war upon our legal rights;--see the marshaling of the forces;--witness their march through our very midst; who are neutral territory because of the law. Yet they not respecting the rights of these neutrals; but aid in speeding away our slaves:--finally, see them take up a commanding position, fortify it, unfurl their banner--and "let slip the dogs of war"? Shall we, like babes, cry for kindness, sympathy and protection of the devouring tiger, that knows no mercy, as we who have appealed to violated laws, before those who know no legal restraints? or shall we "like men who know their rights, and knowing

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[text stricken through] dare to maintain them," meet *[text stricken through]* the former upon their own ground and act rash; dispute every inch of the way, & if necessary, raze their fortifications to the ground.

"In peace there's nothing so becomes a man
As modest stillness and humility;
But when the blast of war blows in our ears
Then imitate the action of the tiger"

The only question, then, is have we peace or war? for war obliterates all treaties--and obligations of law between belligerents. I think that war does exist. That the most dangerous foe we have are those who having a common interest with us yet give moral aid to those who are preparing to destroy us and lay our country in waste, crying "peace, peace! when there is no peace." nor are they to be prevailed on to keep quiet; but, as if they were real emissaries, "still attribute the tramp of the advancing enemy to the wind" and would lull us into a fatal security. I can not see why any man loyal to the institutions of his country should do so. If under peculiar legal restraints: if his oath of office [requires?] him to keep

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let him do it: but not interfere to paralyze the efforts of those who would protect his and their rights by a manly effort, and without fraud.

By the Nebraska Bill every man who happened to inhabit the territory at the time of the election was a qualified voter. No man was ever sworn that he would not go away. Then our men stood behind the law, as [securely?] as [those?] who march through our midst, but to open fire upon us when they have sufficiently chosen their ground of attack.

In conclusion, I would respectfully ask If Kansas be settled by Abolitionists, can Missouri remain a slave state? If Missouri goes by the board what will become of Kentucky? Maryland, Virginia? and with these lost, what will be the end of all this, and the consequences to the south? If the end must be disunion a civil, and servile war, is it not better to strike the blow now while the South is less awakened and there yet remains some love of country [as?] the North? Perhaps this once Glorious Union may survive the shock of civil war!--This! God in his providence only knows--I know that Abolition & Union can not stand together[.]

Your obt[.] svt. & friend,
J. Locke Hardeman

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P.S.

In the foregoing you have a rather free and perhaps loose expression of my views on some of the points touched upon in your letter. You farther refer to D[.]R[.] Atchison's course, and speak of conservatives. You know my course in the legislature has been made the subject of comment, I did then as I thought was right, and still think so. Yet I think that we of Missouri should never let Massachusetts colonize our frontier with the worst of her citizens who are no lovers of the Union, and if war must come let the consequences be upon the heads of those who force it upon us.

I, however, do not expect a public war. I expect that blood will flow, must flow freely before that conservative apathy will be overcome which you invoke. Individual, and popular outbreaks will occur. The North will see then that the demon of Nullification sits at her door to rob her children of her inheritance, of peace and prosperity. It is impossible to Abolish slavery and save the Union, and both the north and south must suppress unheard of evils in the contest. With the

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fall of the Union will be heard the knell [of] liberty, and the experiment of republican governments be proven to be a failure. Thrones, now tottering, will become firm while we, having lost our liberty, will have to struggle through centuries of border wars, and at last find peace like France, in despotism.

War makes way for ignorance, then superstition, and Roman Catholicism, itself a despotism of the souls & consciences of men. Happily for you & I, our better days have been spent in the [MS. illegible] days of the model Republic, the like of which the world never saw before, nor ever will again.

Take away the slave products of the nation and we are commercially poor. Poverty begets dependence, and ignorance follows in its train, with all its evils.

Excuse the freedom of my style. In private and friendly letters, amendments and erasures are out of place.

Yours Truly
J. Locke Hardeman

[written sideways in left margin of page 1]

[P.S.] You will please present me respectfully to your lady, and Miss Bettie[.] JLH