

From Samuel Ayres to Lyman Langdon

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Centreville Lynn Co. K.T.

Jan[.] 7th [18]59

[*text stricken through*] Lyman Langdon

Dear Sir[.]

From what my Daughter wrote me last summer I conclude you would like to know something of our troubles and there causes in this (Lynn) and Bourbon Counties. I should have written to you before this were it not that I feel inadquate to the task[.]

But as our troubles still continue and various reports are in circulation relative to the cause I thought I should send you a copy of a letter published in the Lawrence Republican of Dec[.] 30th [18]58[.] which letter presents the subject in a clearer light than would be possible for me to. The statements mad in that letter I fully endorse exceptingg in one or two particulars which I will notice in copying.

(Who is Responsible?)

(The following letter is from a gentleman formerly a resident of the city, and of the highest respectability.)

Correspondence of the Lawrence Republican.

Moneka, Dec. 20, 1858

It is insinuated by some, and charged openly by others, that the Free-State men are the agitators, and the cause of the disturbances in the south part of the Territory. In the sense in which this is charged[.] it is all a mistake. We are simply in favor of justice -- of protection to the innocent and punishment of the guilty. The government which does this has our most cordial support. It is known by the world that the Free State settlers of Lynn and Bourbon counties, were in 1856 driven from their homes, [*text stricken through*] robbed of their property, and in many instances worse outrages were inflicted upon them. In 57 they returned and [*text stricken through*] claimed their property, and also justice at the [*text stricken through*] hands of the law. The people of Kansas know that the law was in the hands of the pro-slavery party, alias the Democratic party, and no Free-State man could obtain redress. The courts took the position that the Free-State men were in a state of rebllion, and no crime could be committed against them, because they were out[laws]

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[out]laws. In vain have they appealed to the government for protection; in vain have they appealed to the courts for justice. The government was corrupt and the courts partizan. All of peace and protection from proper quarters had fled.

The people, then, in their sovereign capacity took up the subject, and resolved that all those who had been guilty of murder, robbery or arson, or had taken up arms to expel the Free-

State settlers of 1836, should leave the Territory. This, to an impartial person, looks like a very mild punishment for crimes of so high a grade -- crimes usually punished with death.

Capt[.] Montgomery has the credit of being the leader, in southern Kansas, of the active operators. His practice has been to warn an offender to leave in a given time, with liberty to take his property[.] If he does not leave at that time, a company of men called "jayhawkers" goes and takes a part of this property, (this is some times at the first warning) and other wise frightens him, this compelling him to leave. This is called "jay-hawking."

This past summer, things had become [*text stricken through*] quiet. The Democrats had, under the advice of Gov[.] Denver and Judge Williams, concluded not to prosecute the Free-State men any more for resisting and harassing their oppressors, but to let "by gones be by gones". Thus everything was settling down quietly, till Robert [MS. illegible] Mitchell, of Lynn County, persuaded some of the old murderers and robbers of '56 to return, under the promis of protection (If I am rightly informed[.] Dr[.] Weaver was likewis concerned in this invitation). Simultaneously with their return an attempt was mad to murder Capt[.] Montgomery at (or near) midnight, in his own house, and in the midst of his family.

The fact is notorious in Lynn County[.] being confessed to and talked of openly by the parties implicated; and especially those recently in from Missouri. To save himself and his party from the odium naturally attached to so bad an act, this Mitchell (I am told that the paper was drawn up by Dr. Weaver, though at the time it was accredited to Mitchel[;] in fact I thought so myself) drew up a paper, and obtained the signatures of his neighbors to it, throwing his credit on Mountgomery, and on his statement concerning the attack; but being found true, it rather implicates him than otherwise.

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It is stated on the best authority that not one person has been disturbed in Lynn County by the Free-State men, who was not guilty of harassing them in '56, or who has not been active against them, and in favor of their enemies. The same is true, undoubtedly, of Bourbon County. Two men were recently arrested and taken to Fort-Scott, for jay-hawking. They were examined and acquitted. One of them whose name was Rice, was detained as a prisoner, being recognized as a member of Montgomery's company last spring.

Under an old indictment he was taken into the garret of the hotel, heavily [MS. illegible] and strictly guarded, and thretened with instant death if an attempt was made to rescue him. As soon as this was known, a company of Free-State men rallied under Montgomery, and went to his release. So far as we have heard, two of the liberating party wer shot (wounds verry slight) and one of the opposition (killed)[.] But Mr[.] Rice was released.

Now all this disturbance, which keeps not only the Territory, but the whole country, in a state of feverish anxiety, is chargeable to those unprincipled demagogues who affinitize with the proslavery party, called Democrats. We call attention to the fact, that when Capt. Montgomery was attacked at midnight, and an attempt was mad to assassinate him, not one Democratic or pro-slavery press spoke of the deed with disapprobation.

Again, when these midnight assassins are discovered and disarmed, and means of further mischief taken from them, all these presses are in a howl. So they want the assassins arrested and punished? No! not a word of it. Montgomery must be arrested! Montgomery must be punished! for the simple reason we presume, that he was not killed, and now it will be dangerous to make another attack [*text stricken through*] upon him. But the attempt must be made.

Under the Democratic leaders of Linn County, about 150 men were ordered out with provisions for three days, to take him. they assembled, ma[r]ched on Montgomery two different days, but did not venture an attack: all this on the expence of the county, to gratify the malice of a few leaders. The people of the county then rallied, and held a general meeting at Sugar Mound. The questions propounded were "shall the bogus laws be obaid?" and "shall the pro-slavery men who aided in expelling the Free-State men in '56 1856, be allowed to live in the county?"

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[*text stricken through*] Mitchell in the affirmative, Montgomery in the negative. After lisning to the [*text stricken through*] speeches the people voted to sustain Montgomery, with but one dissenting voice. So matters are a gain quiet, and will remain so, untill some indiscreet partizan again rakes them up.

Linn County

In the above article it is implyd, if not directly stated, that the cause of our late difficulties grew out of the attack on Capt[.] Montgomery. But I think that attack was only a secondary cause. The primary caus I think is to be found in the determination of a certain sett of demagoges who[,] wishing to make what political capital they could by violating the termes of amnesty entered into by Gov[.] Denver and Capt[.] Montgomery[,] proceeded to enter complaints befor the Grand jury and obtain indightments a gainst some of the boys in the company of Capt[.] M[blank in MS.][.] In the brief statement mad in this letter many things are necessarilly omitted[,] which if mentioned wound [would] render the account more clear[.]

The compromis spoken of in the a bove piece[,] which was made & entered into at Sugar-Mound is being violated by the same party that violated the Denver & Montgomery amnesty by getting a dept[.] Marshall to come in with a possa [posse] and many of them from Missouri for the purpose of aresting Capt[.] Brown and Montgomery and their men[,] and as I have been informed to day to put the county of Lynn under martial law[.] If these measures are forced upon us it will lead to a conflict. What right has a U.S. Martiall to go into Missouri to get a possa [posse] to arest citizans of Kansas[?]

But I must close. I should like to hear in what light our affairs are viewed in that section of country and whether if we nead it we may expect any aid from Defiance & Wms. counties or from the north [*text stricken through*] and east. Pleas write me soon[.] For give my misstater in writing &c[.]

Truly Yours

Samual Ayers

[P.S.] Lyman Langdon[.]
address Centreville Lynn Co[.] K.T.