

From George Lewis to Mrs. Fitch

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Mrs. Fitch

Lawrence Kansas Territory

January 14th, 1857

Madam[,]

Your son handed me a coat and shirt, few weeks ago, which you sent to him to give to some needy minister in Kansas, the coat was a wedding coat of George Harrington who was drowned in the Mississippi River at New Orleans. When your son presented the above article to me, he requested me to write a letter giving a history of myself and the prospects which I have before me in Kansas: when you have read my letter you can judge then how appropriate those articles were to my condition.

I was born and brought up in South Wales, Great Brittain, I was instructed in the Christian religion among the denomination called Congregationalists. I united with the Congregational Church, and was invited to preach, when I was 28 years of age. I emigrated to the United States in 1841 when I was 32 years old. I was married in 1842 to a young lady that had emigrated from the same country. I have since labored among the Welsh Congregationalists in Ohio, Illinois and Iowa, as a Missionary of the American Home Missionary Society. In the month of July 1855 I emigrated to this territory, I have labored since among my own countrymen in this vicinity. I have not received any pecuniary compensation for my labors since I have been in Kansas, I have been exposed to outrages and insults from Proslavery men who call themselves the law and order party in this Territory, but if we judge of them by their deeds we might give them the name of Band of Robbers and Murderers for murders and robberies followed their track.

On Sunday morning August 31st they put my fence down and drove in for melons, they helped themselves to all the melons they wished. They left the field exposed, and cattle crowded in and destroyed my corn where I expected to realize 300 bushels of corn. I did not obtain a bushel of sound corn. On Monday evening September 1st, my house with three other houses were burned to ashes. I was not at home at the time, it was not safe for anyone to remain at home, had I been at home they would have taken me prisoner, or murdered me; because they could not have pressed me into the service in the ranks. My family left the night before, and went to the United States camp among the troops. When they learned of the threats to burn the house, they took on the waggon, what they could with them, came back next morning after another load, and after that they did venture to come about. I had many pamphlets and periodicals destroyed. After the house was consumed we had to live in a tent for some six weeks, during that time we had a storm of rain in which every thing we had got dripping wet, and many of my most valuable books were almost destroyed in consequence of being without a house, but the above act of Outrage. Myself and wife, and six children, were made houseless and homeless and without anything to support ourselves this winter. Many have lost more

property than I have; but I contend that few if any met with more of a loss than I have, for I lost near all I had.

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With regard to my prospects. I beg to state that my prospects are rather gloomy. I have a claim with no house on but I obtained a hundred dollar to assist me in building a house, where the money is to come from to pay for the claim I cannot tell, in a new country like this it is very difficult to maintain a family and spare some money for something else. I know not what we would have done this winter had it not been for the charities and contributions of friends in the east. We are thankful for the sympathizing aid we have already had but we need more. That much for temporal prospects.

I will now say few words of the prospects of religion. The disturbances that have occurred, the outrages that have been committed, and the distracted state of affairs that have been witnessed in this territory have had a bad tendency, and have operated unfavorably against religion: but we must continue to sow the good seed looking to God for the outpouring of his Spirit to convert sinners from the errors of their ways, and bring sinners to the fold of Christ. We hope for a bright future in Kansas. The proslavery party is busy at work, devising ways and means to make this a slave state: but it is too late in the day. There is a majority of Free State men in the territory four or five to one and when the question will be submitted to the people there will be an overwhelming majority in favor of a Free State. It must be made a Free State. It shall be a Free State. The bogus legislature is now in session at Lecompton, and when the proceedings thereof shall be reported we will have another development of the legislation of men under the influence of King alcohol. There is a better market for whiskey at Lecompton than any thing else, the proslavery assemblage there is a scene of intemperance and uproar.

Thanks a thousand times to you for your kindness. May the blessing of him that maketh rich be yours, and may you and we be qualified for usefulness here, and at last find a seat around the throne of Jehovah, where sin and sorrow will not annoy us, where 'Border Ruffians' will not demolish our habitations or devour our comforts. Is the prayer of your brother in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.

George Lewis