

John Brown, Jr. to Jason Brown and Others

[Lecompton, Kansas], 16 and 19 August 1856.

Autograph letter signed, 4 pages.

Camp of U.S. Cavalry near Lecompton Kansas

August 16th 1856

Dear Brother Jason & others

Agreeably with my promise to write often, I have sent you lately not less than four letters one or two by private hands the others by Mail. Events of the most stirring character are now passing within hearing distance I should think more that 200 shots have been fired within the past half hour, and within a mile of our Camp. Have just learned that some 80 of our free state men have “pitched in” to a pro-slavery Camp this side of Lecompton which was commanded by a notorious pro slavery scoundrel named Titus one of the Buford party from Alabama. A dense volume of smoke is now rising in the vicinity of his house – The firing has ceased and we are most impatient to learn the result. During the past month the Ruffians have been actively at work and had made not less than 5 entrenched Camps where they had in different parts of the Territory established themselves in armed bands, well provided with Camps they sally out, steal horses and rob free state settlers; in several cases murdering them, and then [2] slip back into their Camps with their plunder

Last week a body of our men made a descent upon Franklin and after a skirmishing fight of about 3 hours took their barracks and recovered some sixty guns and a Cannon of which our men had been robbed some months since on the road from Westport. Our loss was one man killed and two severely wounded, but it is thought they will recover. The enemy were in a log building from which they kept up a sharp fire while they themselves were quite unexposed. Our men then had recourse to a system of Tactics not laid down in Scott. They procured a wagon loaded with hay and running it down against the building set it on fire, when the rascals immediately surrendered. Yesterday our men had invested another of their fortified Camps on Washington Creek a south branch of the Wakarusa, and it was expected that an attack would be made upon it last night –

Hurrah for our side! A messenger has just come in stating that on the approach of our men some 250 or 300 in number at Washington Creek yesterday towards evening the enemy broke and fled, leaving behind to fall into the hands of our men, a lot of provisions and a hundred stand of arms. But this is not all [3] The notorious Co¹ Titus who only a day or two since was headed to declare “that Free State men had only two weeks longer to remain in Kansas” went out last night on a marauding expedition in which he took six prisoners and a lot of horses – this morning our men followed him closely and fell upon his camp killed two of his men, liberated the prisoners he had taken, took him and ten others prisoners, set fire to his house and with a lot of arms tents prisoners &c returned,

only
having in the fight had ^ one of our men seriously wounded –

Aug 19th –

The affair last mentioned was conducted with such expedition that the U.S. troops
our men
located about a mile off had not time to reach the scene before it was all over and ~~they~~ ^ were on their return marching in good order

Our men numbered 400 had the Cannon which they had taken at Franklin. With this, they fired six ball out of seven shots through Col. Titus house before his gang surrendered This series of victories has caused the greatest fear among the proslavery men. While the firing was going on the citizens at Lecompton fled across the river in the greatest consternation. Great numbers are leaving for Missouri. Col. Titus was severely wounded by a Sharps Rifle Ball passing through his hand lodging in his shoulder too deep to be reached. It is thought the wound will prove fatal. Day before yesterday Gov. Shannon & Maj Sedgwick of the Army went to Lawrence to obtain the prisoners our men had taken. But our men would [4] consent to give them up only on condition that they on the other side should give up the prisoners that had been taken on Warrants at Franklin the next day after the battle there & for participating in it, and as a further condition that they should give up the Cannon which had been taken from Lawrence at the time it was sacked, and still further agree to do all in their power to break up the Camps of armed desperados as well as prevent their coming in from Missouri. These terms were complied with and yesterday the prisoners were exchanged and the Cannon at Lecompton given up to our men and it is now once more in Lawrence. Thus you see they have themselves set their own laws

at nought by that exchange of prisoners which they had taken on Warrants for those we had taken by the might of the people.

Lanes men were on hand and did good service – The Chicago company that had been turned back on the M^o River were on hand and in the thickest of the fight. Some say Col. Lane was in it himself. – (F-r) returned with the overland emigrants leaving in Nebraska (Hy) (On) (Sn) (Fk) & (Or) much improved in health. He was in the fight at Franklin and also aided in routing the gang on Washington Creek as well as in the Capture of Titus and his crew. By this time he is in Iowa or some other distant region –He is an omnipresent dread to the Ruffians. I see by the Missouri papers they regard him as the most terrible foe they have to encounter. He stands very high with the free State men who will fight and the great majority of these have made up their minds that nothing short of war to the death can save us from extermination. Say to the men at Osawatomie to become thoroughly prepared for at any time their lives may depend upon their efficiency and vigilance, that military organization is needed for something else than “Amusement”. – Have not yet learned of any definite action of Congress in regard to us prisoners But we doubtless shall in a few days Wealthy continues to have the chills & fever almost every day – Write often

Ever your affectionate brother John –

[Note written vertically at top of 1]

Dont fail to urge the enrollment of every able bodied free state man and place yourselves in a position to act both offensively or defensively in the most efficient manner – Stringfellow and Atchison are said to be again raising a force to come in from Missouri to carry out their long cherished plan to drive out or exterminate our people. If our men are wide awake we shall gain the day. The prospect for Kansas becoming a free state never looked brighter now is the time to prepare and continue prepared