

Excerpt of a letter from Reverend Elijah Lovejoy to Brother Leavitt.
Sent from Alton, Illinois on 3 October 1837.

256

MEMOIR OF THE

On our arrival in Alton, as we were going to our

REV. E. P. LOVEJOY.

257

house, almost the first person we met in the street, was one of the very individuals who had first broken into the house at St. Charles. Mrs. L. instantly recognized him, and at once became greatly alarmed. There was the more reason for fear, inasmuch as the mob in St. Charles had repeatedly declared their determination to pursue me, and to have my life, and one of them, the fellow from Mississippi, boasted that he was chasing me about, and that he had assisted to destroy my press in Alton. This was the more readily believed, inasmuch as it was known that individuals from St. Louis, where this Mississippian now temporarily resides, were aiding in that work. The mobite from St. Charles also openly boasted here of their assault upon me in that place.

Upon these facts being made known to my friends, they deemed it advisable that our house should be guarded on Monday night. Indeed, this was necessary to quiet Mrs. L.'s fears. Though completely exhausted, as may well be supposed, from the scenes of the night before, she could not rest. The mob haunted her excited imagination, causing her continually to start from her moments of fitful slumber, with cries of alarm. This continued all the afternoon and evening of Monday, and I began to entertain serious apprehensions of the consequences. As soon, however, as our friends, to the number of ten arrived with arms in their hands, her fears subsided, and she sank into a comparatively silent sleep, which continued through most of the night. It is now Tuesday night. I am writing by the bedside of Mrs. L., whose excitement and fears have measurably returned with the darkness. She is constantly starting at every sound, while her mind is full of the horrible scenes through which she has so lately passed. What the final result will be for her I know not, but hope for the best. We have no

22*

258

MEMOIR OF THE

one with us to-night, except the members of our own family. A loaded musket is standing at my bed-side, while my two brothers, in an adjoining room, have three others, together with pistols, cartridges, &c. And this is the way we live in the city of Alton! I have had inexpressible reluctance to resort to this method of defence. But dear-bought experience has taught me that there is at present no safety for me, and no defence in this place, either in the laws or the protecting ægis of public sentiment. I feel that I do not walk the streets in safety, and every night when I lie down, it is with the deep settled conviction, that there are those near me and around me, who seek my life. I have resisted this conviction as long as I could, but it has been forced upon me. Even were I safe from my enemies in Alton, my proximity to Missouri exposes me to attack from that state. And now that it is known that I am to receive no protection here, the way is open for them to do with me what they please. Accordingly a party of them from St. Louis came up and assisted in destroying my press, the first time. This was well known. They came armed and stationed themselves behind a wall for the purpose of firing upon any one who might attempt to defend the office. Yet who of this city has rebuked this daring outrage on the part of citizens of our state and city, upon the rights and person of the citizens of another state and city? No one. I mean there has been no public expression of opinion on the subject. Our two political papers have been silent, or if speaking at all, have thrown the blame on me rather than on any one else. And if you go through the streets of Alton, or into stores and shops, where you hear one condemning these outrages upon me, you will find five approving them. This is true, both of professor and non-professor. I have no doubts that four-

REV. E. P. LOVEJOY.

259

fifths of the inhabitants of this city are glad that my press has been destroyed by a mob, both once and again. They hate mobs, it is true, but they hate Abolitionism a great deal more. Whether creditable to them or not, this is the state of public sentiment among our citizens. A leading member of the Presbyterian church here, disclosed to me, in the presence of fifteen or twenty persons, that if the "Observer" were re-established here, he would do nothing to protect it from a mob again. A leading merchant here, and a Methodist minister, said the same thing, at the same time. Most of our leading men, whether in church or state, lay the blame all on me.

So far from calling the acts of the mob outrages, they go about the streets, saying in the hearing of every body, "Mr. Lovejoy has no one to thank but himself." Of course the mob desire no better license than this.