S. P. Hanscom to Sara Robinson

On Sunday, May 25, 1856, "at the request of Gov. Robinson," S. P. Hanscom writes Sara T. D. Robinson to assure her that her "esteemed and gallant husband" is well. This remarkably detailed letter describes the governor's captivity, the bogus charges filed against him, and circumstances that brought him to Leavenworth, Kansas Territory. Hanscom states that Robinson is receiving many visitors, including Congressman William A. Howard, chair of the congressional committee investigating the Kansas troubles.

Creator: Hanscom, S. P.

Date: May 25, 1856

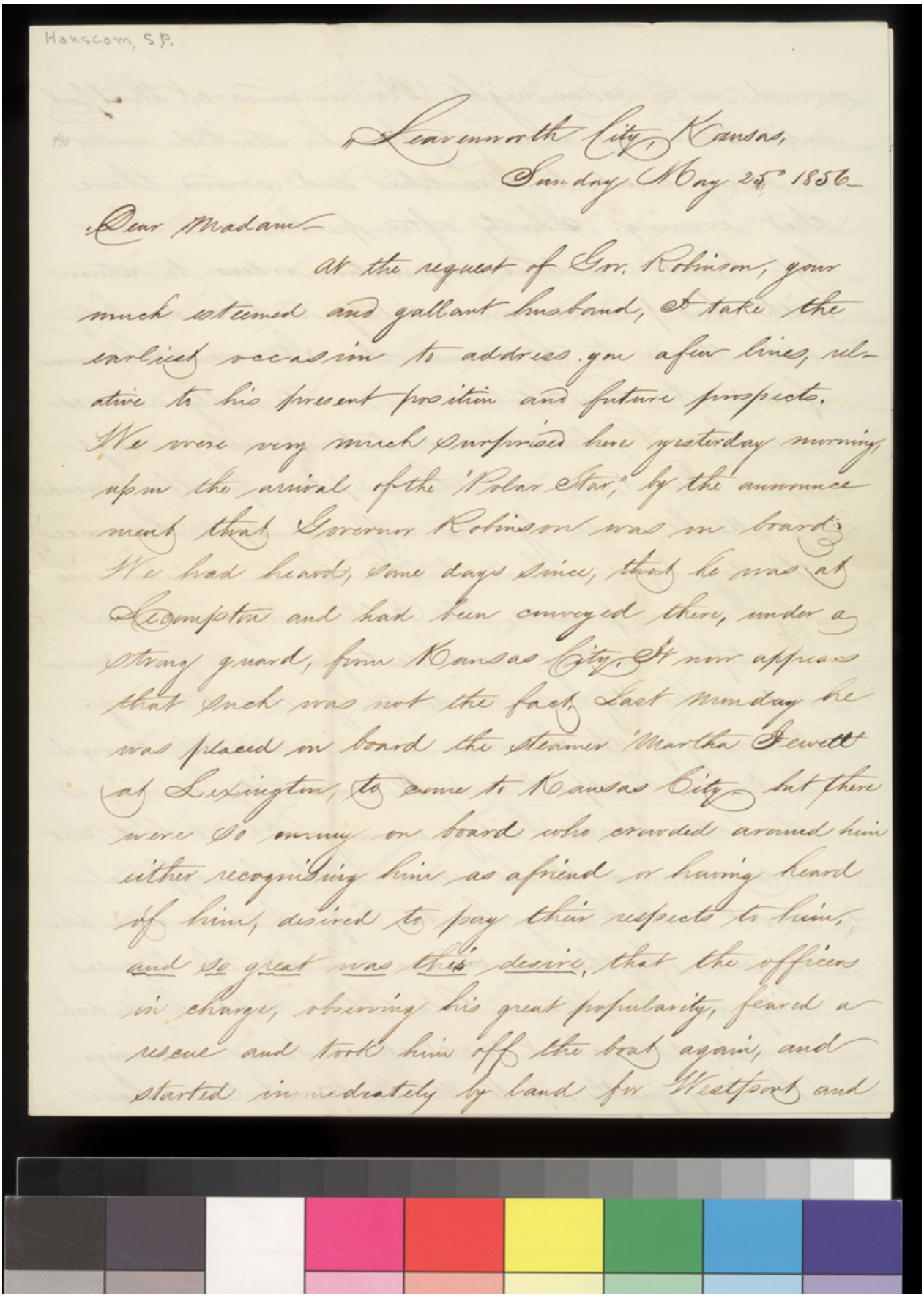
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S. P. Hanscom to Sara Robinson



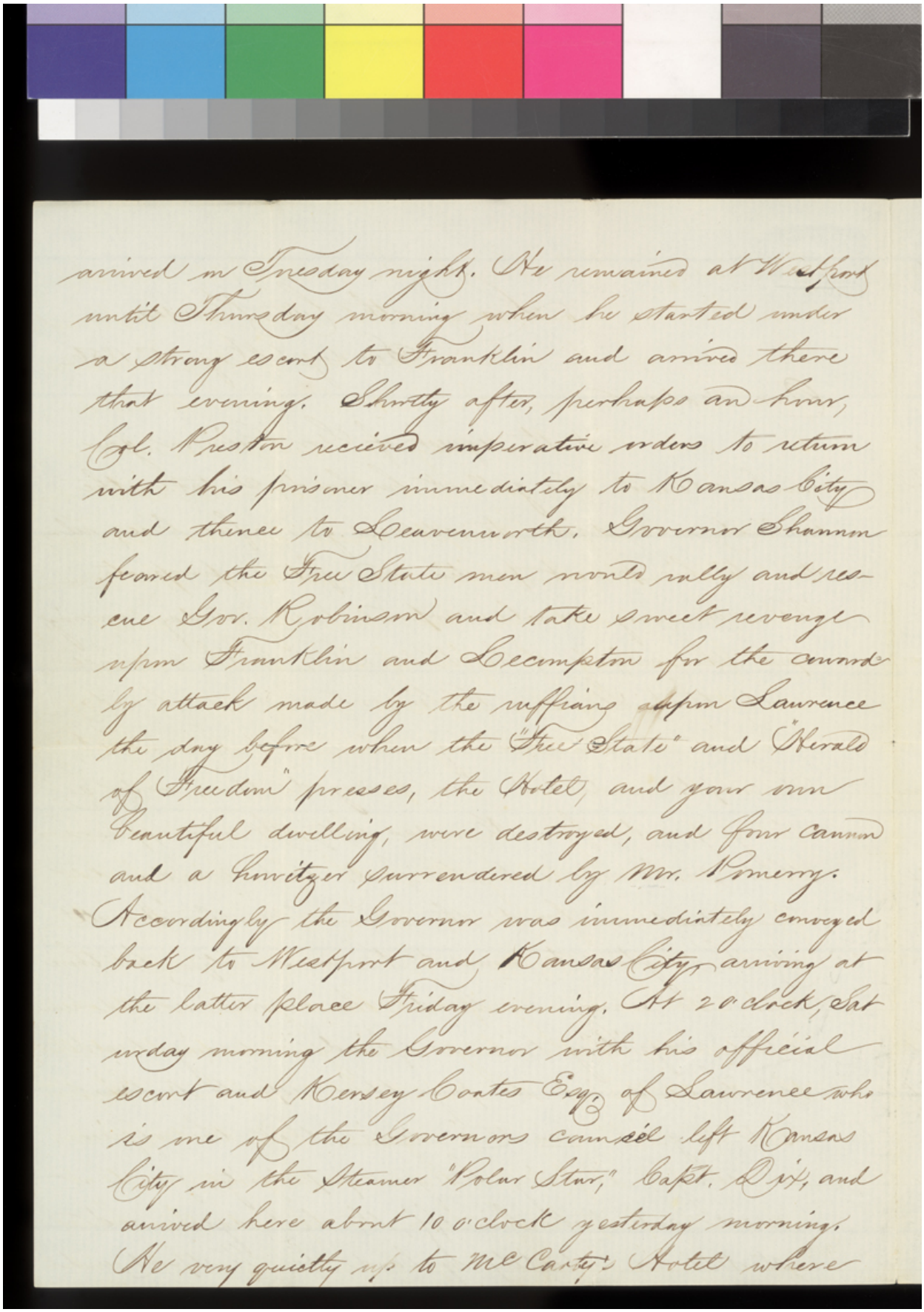
Hanscom, S.P.

Leavenworth City, Kansas,
Sunday May 25th 1856

Dear Madam—

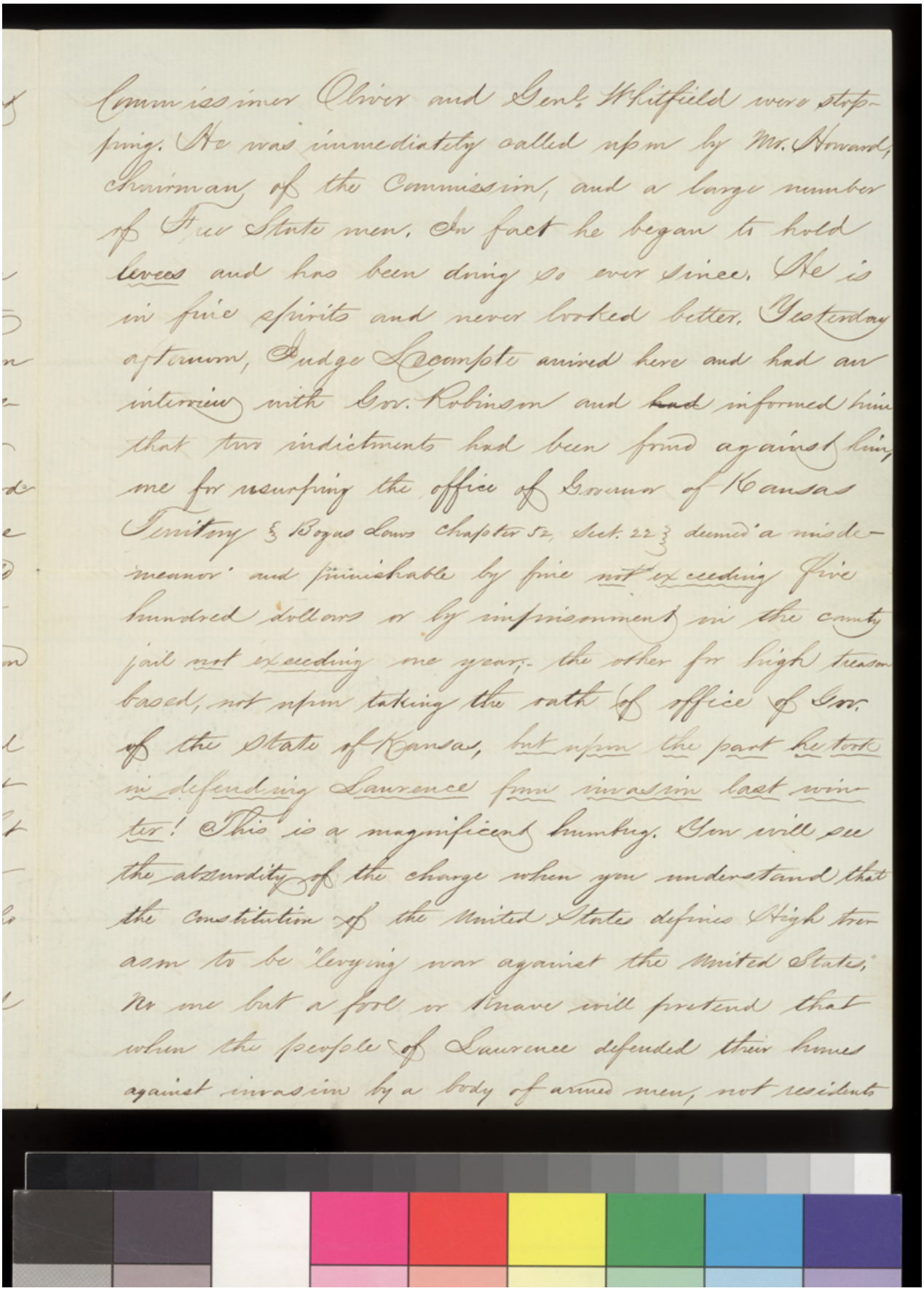
At the request of Gov. Robinson, your much esteemed and gallant husband, I take the earliest occasion to address you a few lines, relative to his present position and future prospects. We were very much surprised here yesterday morning, upon the arrival of the 'Polar Star,' by the announcement that Governor Robinson was on board. We had heard, some days since, that he was at Lecompton and had been conveyed there, under a strong guard, from Kansas City. It now appears that such was not the fact. Last Monday he was placed on board the steamer 'Martha Jewett' at Lexington, to come to Kansas City—but there were so many on board who crowded around him either recognizing him as a friend or having heard of him, desired to pay their respects to him, and so great was this desire, that the officers in charge, observing his great popularity, feared a rescue and took him off the boat again, and started immediately by land for Westport and

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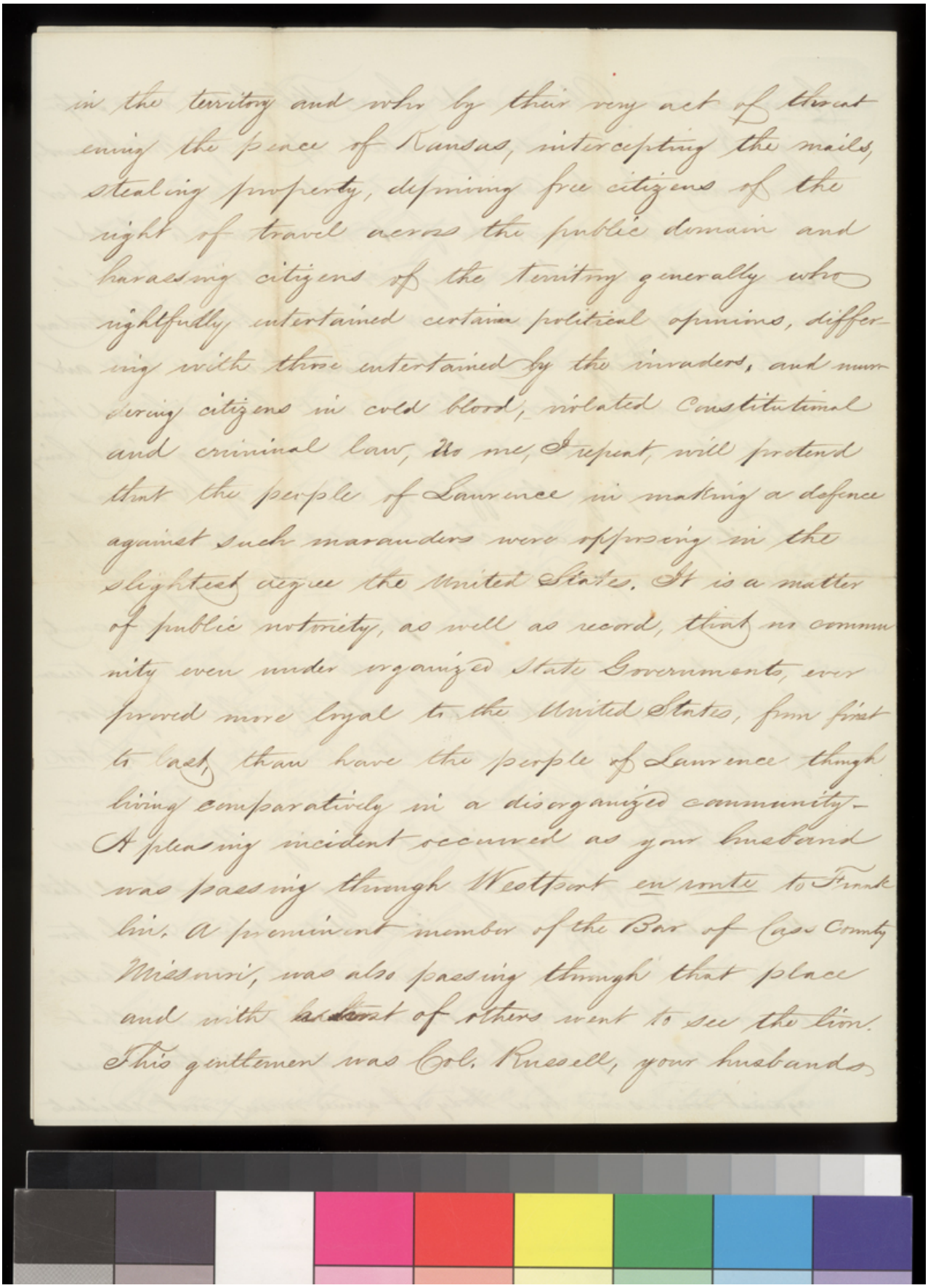
arrived on Tuesday night. He remained at Westport until Thursday morning when he started under a strong escort to Franklin and arrived there that evening. Shortly after, perhaps an hour, Col. Preston received imperative orders to return with his prisoner immediately to Kansas City and thence to Leavenworth. Governor Shannon feared the Free State men would rally and rescue Gov. Robinson and take sweet revenge upon Franklin and Lecompton for the cowardly attack made by the ruffians upon Lawrence the day before when the "Free State" and "Herald of Freedom" presses, the Hotel, and your own beautiful dwelling, were destroyed, and four cannon and a howitzer surrendered by Mr. Pomeroy. Accordingly the Governor was immediately conveyed back to Westport and Kansas City, arriving at the latter place Friday evening. At 2 o'clock, Saturday morning the Governor with his official escort and Kersey Coates Esq. of Lawrence who is one of the Governors counsel left Kansas City in the Steamer "Polar Star," Capt. Dix, and arrived here about 10 o'clock yesterday morning. He very quietly went to McCarty's Hotel where

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Commissioner Oliver and Genl. Whitfield were stopping. He was immediately called upon by Mr. Howard, Chairman of the Commission, and a large number of Free State men. In fact he began to hold levees and has been doing so ever since. He is in fine spirits and never looked better. Yesterday afternoon, Judge Lecompte arrived here and had an interview with Gov. Robinson and had informed him that two indictments had been found against him, one for usurping the office of Governor of Kansas Territory & Bogus Laws chapter 52, Sect. 22 3 deemed a misdemeanor and punishable by fine not exceeding five hundred dollars or by imprisonment in the county jail not exceeding one year. the other for high treason based, not upon taking the oath of office of Gov. of the State of Kansas, but upon the part he took in defending Lawrence from invasion last winter! This is a magnificent humbug. You will see the absurdity of the charge when you understand that the Constitution of the United States defines High treason to be "levying war against the United States," No one but a fool or knave will pretend that when the people of Lawrence defended their homes against invasion by a body of armed men, not residents

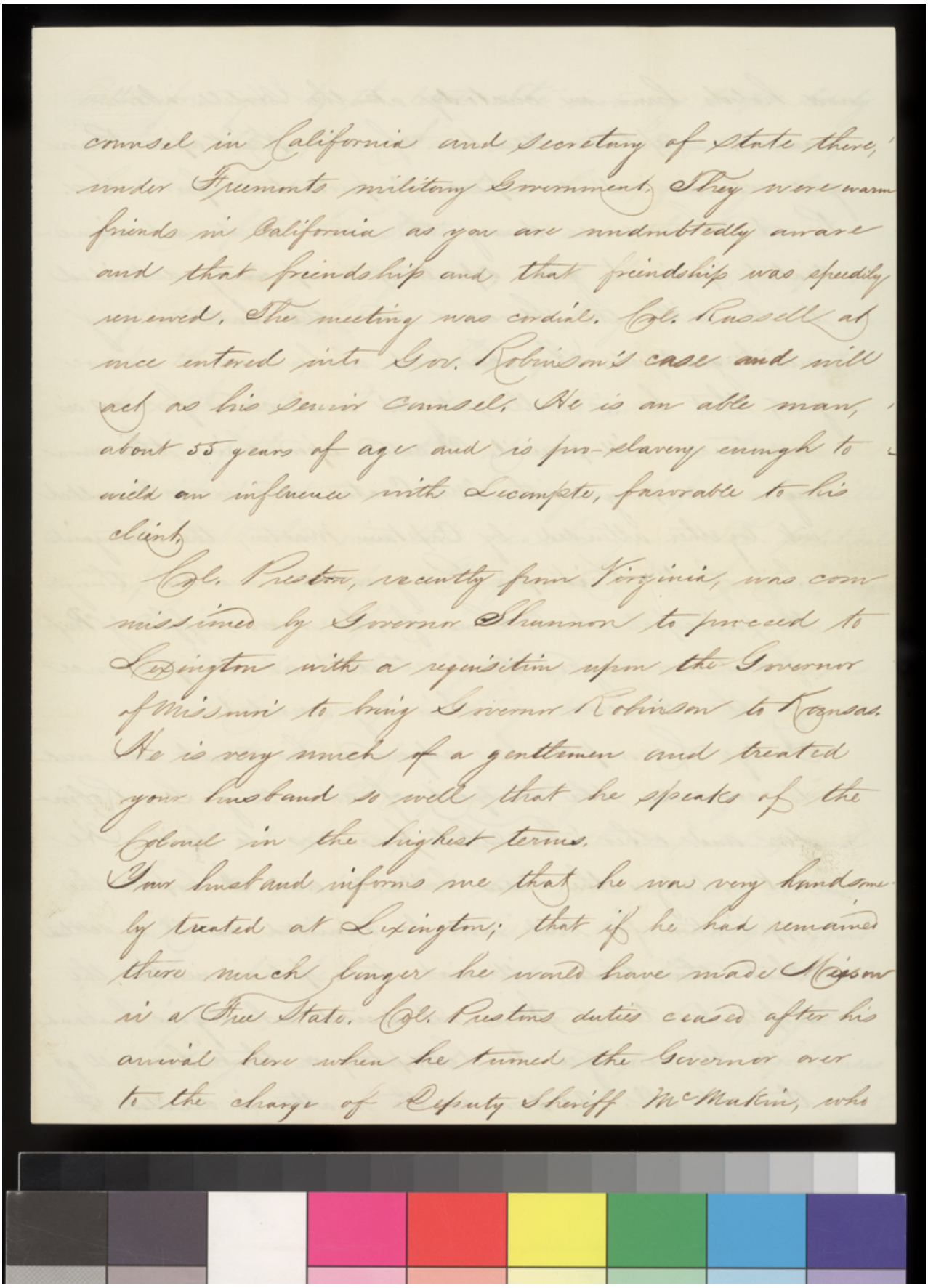
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in the territory and who by their very act of threatening the peace of Kansas, intercepting the mails, stealing property, depriving free citizens of the right of travel across the public domain and harassing citizens of the territory generally who rightfully entertained certain political opinions, differing with those entertained by the invaders, and murdering citizens in cold blood, violated Constitutional and criminal law, No one, I repeat, will pretend that the people of Lawrence in making a defence against such marauders were opposing in the slightest degree the United States. It is a matter of public notoriety, as well as record, that no community even under organized State Governments, ever proved more loyal to the United States, from first to last, than have the people of Lawrence though living comparatively in a disorganized community—

A pleasing incident occurred as your husband was passing through Westport en route to Franklin. A prominent member of the Bar of Cass County Missouri, was also passing through that place and with a number of others went to see the lion. This gentlemen was Col. Russell, your husbands

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counsel in California and Secretary of State there, under Fremonts military Government. They were warm friends in California as you are undoubtedly aware and that friendship and that friendship was speedily renewed. The meeting was cordial. Col. Russell at once entered into Gov. Robinson's case and will act as his Senior Counsel. He is an able man, about 55 years of age and is pro-slavery enough to wield an influence with Lecompte, favorable to his client.

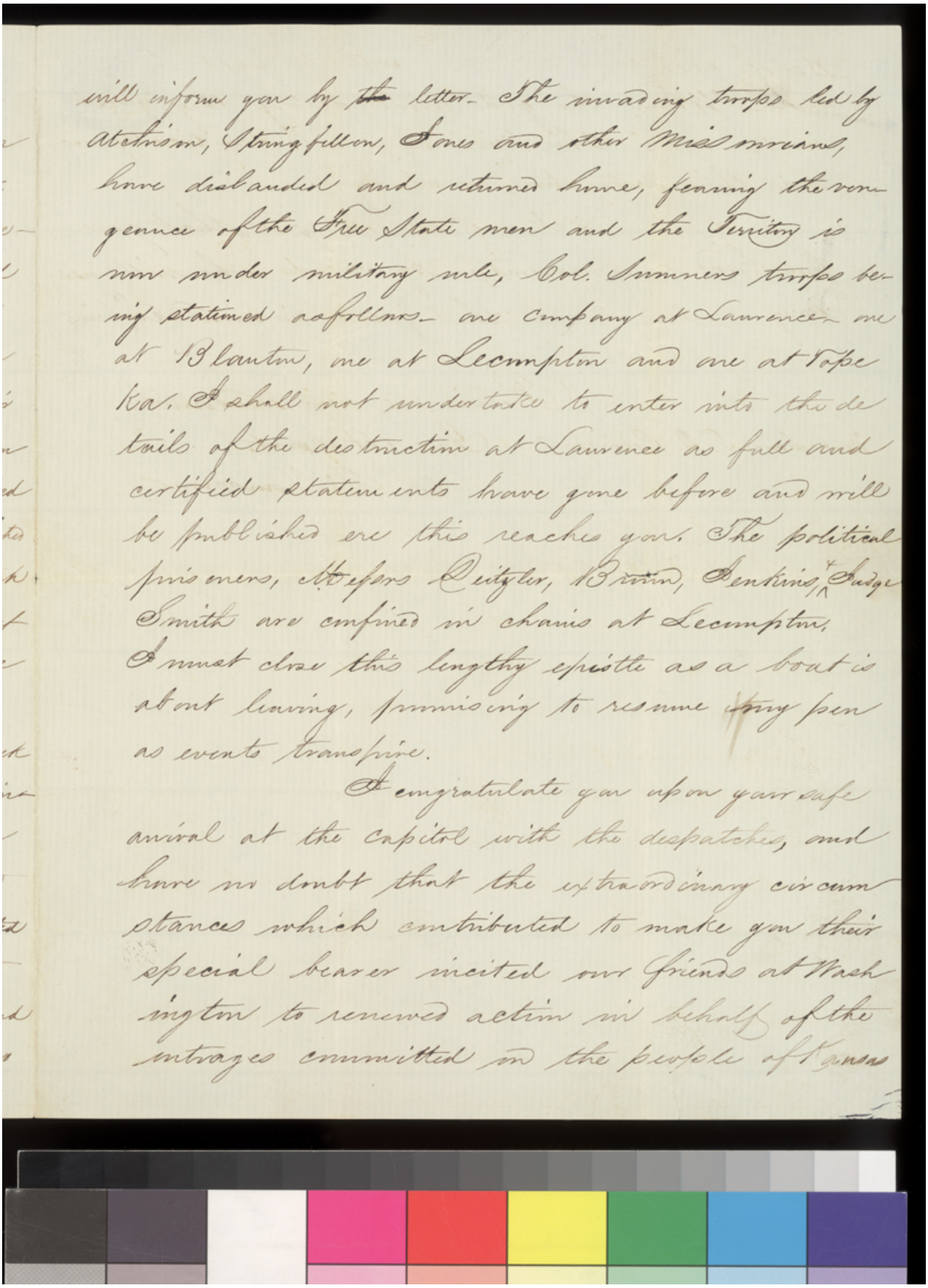
Col. Preston, recently from Virginia, was commissioned by Governor Shannon to proceed to Lexington with a requisition upon the Governor of Missouri to bring Governor Robinson to Kansas. He is very much of a gentlemen and treated your husband so well that he speaks of the Colonel in the highest terms.

Your husband informs me that he was very handsomely treated at Lexington; that if he had remained there much longer he would have made Missouri a Free State. Col. Prestons duties ceased after his arrival here when he turned the Governor over to the charge of Deputy Sheriff McMakin, who

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now holds him in custody at the Hotel above named. Captain Martin of the Kickapoo Rangers who received some personal protection from Gov. R at Lawrence during the recent excitement immediately prior to your departure, is specially detailed to be with the Governor and the latter is very much gratified. Your husband wishes me to assure you, that he is well situated and cared for as circumstances will permit. I called upon him, this morning in company with Mr. Coates and we all walked out together attended by Captain Martin, the distinguished chief of the Kickapoo Rangers. We walked through the principal streets. Some of the more suffiently Buffoons were a good deal startled at the presence of the Governor in their very midst.

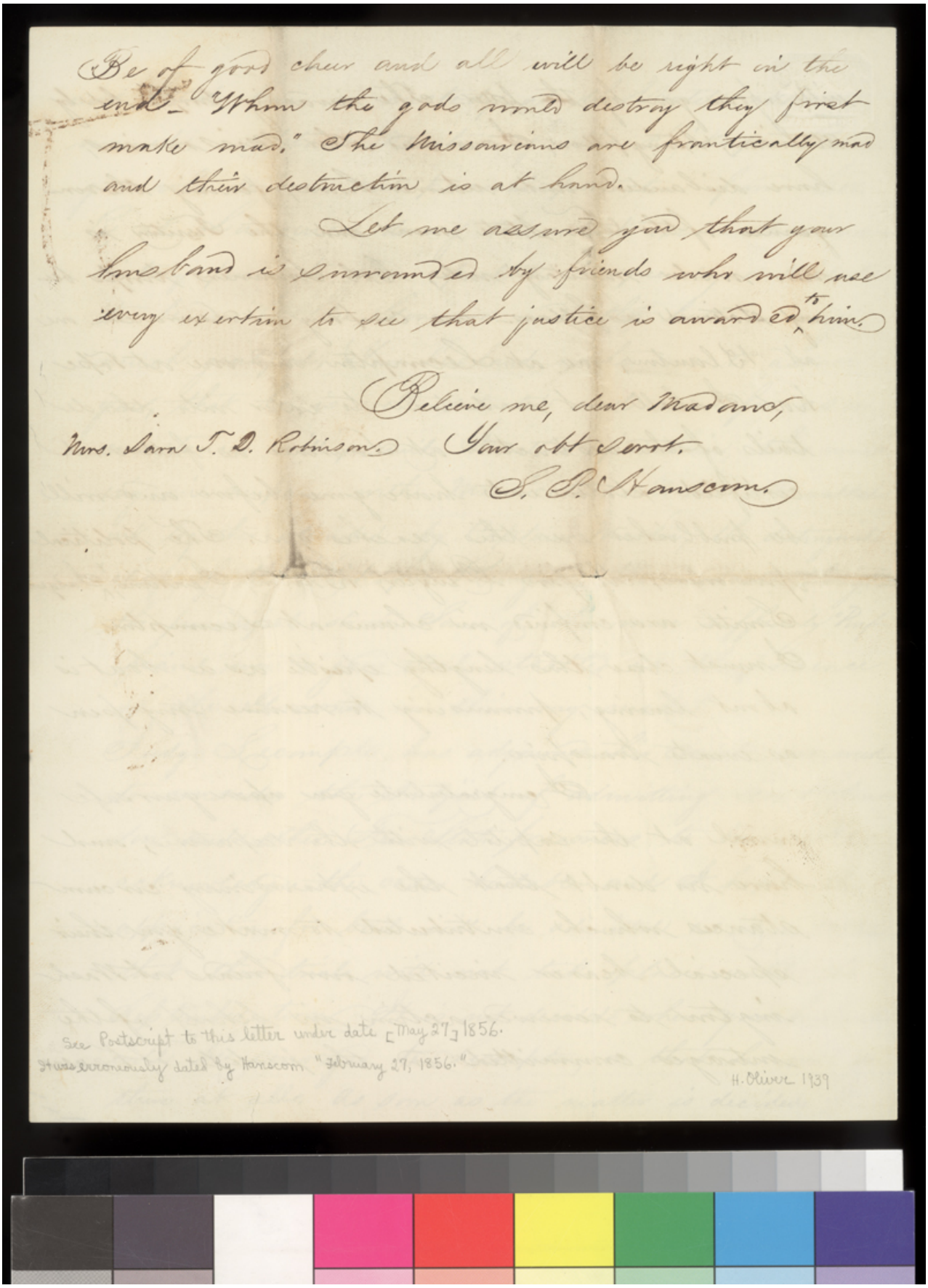
Judge Lecompte has adjourned his Court one week to consider the Subject of admitting Gov. Robinson and other Free State prisoners to bail. He acknowledges the cases bailable and I hope the application for bail will be admitted as it is settled that their trials will not take place until the September term. It is not decided when your husband will be conveyed to Lecompton, or that he will go there at all. As soon as the matter is decided I



will inform you by the letter. The invading troops led by Atchison, Stringfellow, Jones and other Missourians, have disbanded and returned home, fearing the vengeance of the Free State men and the Territory is now under military rule, Col. Sumners troops being stationed as follows. one Company at Lawrence. one at Blanton, one at Lecompton and one at Topeka. I shall not undertake to enter into the details of the destruction at Lawrence as full and certified statements have gone before and will be published ere this reaches you. The political prisoners, Messrs Deitzler, Brown, Perkins, & Judge Smith are confined in chains at Lecompton. I must close this lengthy epistle as a boat is about leaving, promising to resume my pen as events transpire.

I congratulate you upon your safe arrival at the capitol with the despatches, and have no doubt that the extraordinary circumstances which contributed to make you their special bearer incited our friends at Washington to renewed action in behalf of the outrages committed on the people of Kansas

S. P. Hanscom to Sara Robinson



Be of good cheer and all will be right in the end. "Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad." The Missourians are frantically mad and their destruction is at hand.

Let me assure you that your husband is surrounded by friends who will use every exertion to see that justice is awarded to him.

Believe me, dear Madam,

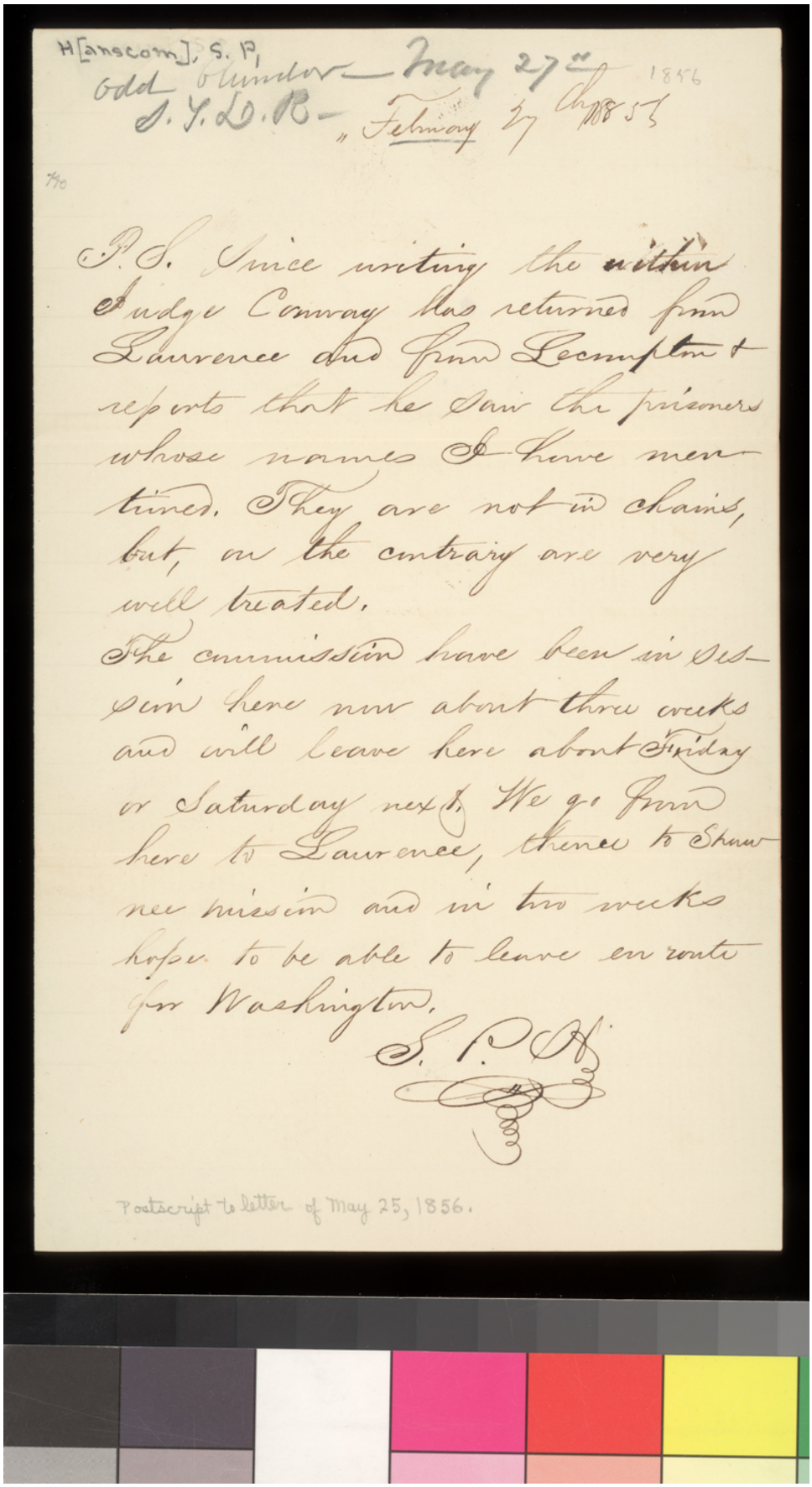
Mrs. Sara T. D. Robinson Your obt Servt.

S. P. Hanscom

See Postscript to this letter under date [May 27] 1856.
It was erroneously dated by Hanscom "February 27, 1856."

H. Oliver 1939

S. P. Hanscom to Sara Robinson



H[anscom], S. P.
Odd Blunder — May 27th 1856
S. Y. L. R. — " February 27 1855

P. S. Since writing the within Judge Conway has returned from Lawrence and from Lecompton & reports that he saw the prisoners whose names I have mentioned. They are not in chains, but, on the contrary are very well treated.
The commission have been in session here now about three weeks and will leave here about Friday or Saturday next. We go from here to Lawrence, thence to Shawnee mission and in two weeks hope to be able to leave en route for Washington.

S. P. H.

Postscript to letter of May 25, 1856.