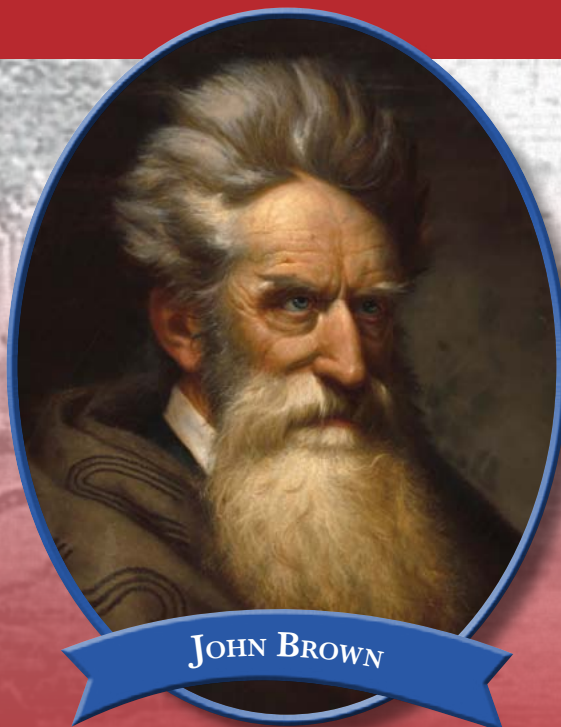


# The Father of American Terrorism

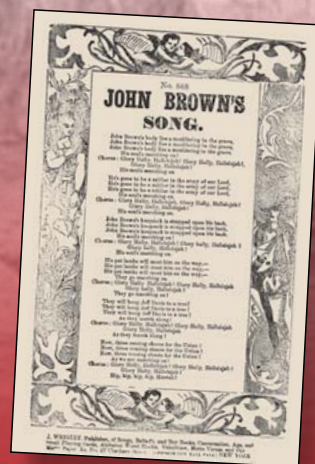
TWO HUNDRED YEARS AFTER HIS BIRTH, AMERICANS STILL REVERE HIM AS A MARTYR AND LOATHE HIM AS A FANATICAL MURDERER. WHAT WAS HE?



### The Insurrection

From the accounts given of the Harper's Ferry business, it would seem that it was concocted two months since at the Ohio State Fair, by Brown and other confederates, and that its object was to raise the slaves in that country, kill all persons interfering or in the way, and carry them off to freedom north of the Mason and Dixon's line. The number of whites directly concerned—only twenty-three—is small for the great preparations made in arms and ammunition. It is stated that recruits from the North were expected, but did not arrive in time, Brown having been precipitate in his movement. Three of the whites are said to have escaped with four hundred negroes.

As we anticipated, the affair, in its magnitude, was quite exaggerated, but it fully establishes the fact that there are at the North men ready to engage in adventures upon the peace and security of the southern people, however heinously and recklessly, and capable of planning and keeping secret their infernal designs. It is a warning profoundly symptomatic of the future of the Union with our sectional enemies.



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# The Father of American Terrorism

BY KEN CHOWDER

AMERICAN HERITAGE | FEB/MAR 2000 | VOLUME 51 | ISSUE 1

<http://www.americanheritage.com/content/father-american-terrorism>

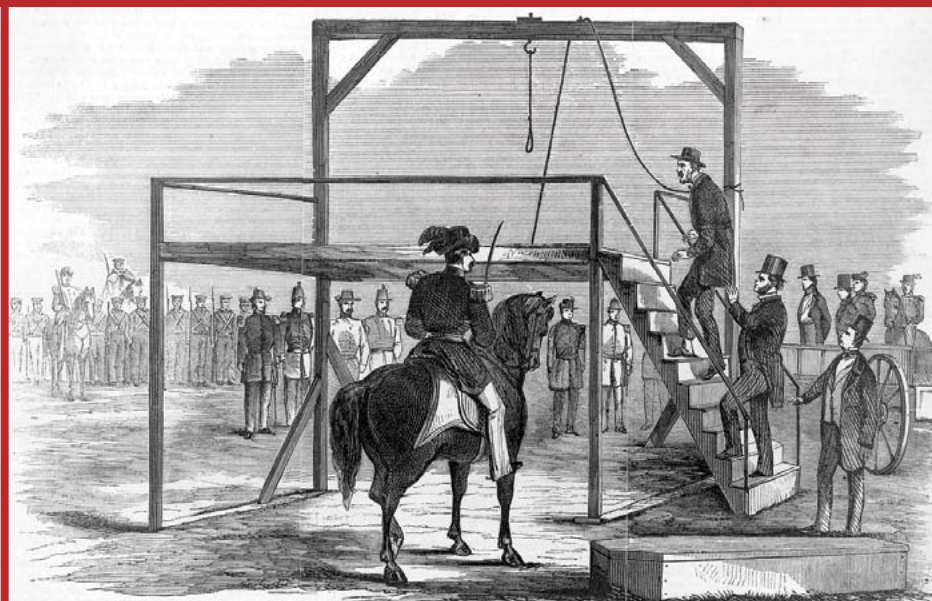
On December 2, 1859, a tall old man in a black coat, black pants, black vest, and black slouch hat climbed into a wagon and sat down on a black walnut box. The pants and coat were stained with blood; the box was his coffin; the old man was going to his execution. He had just handed a last note to his jailer: “I John Brown am now quite *certain* that the crimes of this *guilty, land*: will never be purged away; but with Blood. I had... vainly flattered myself that without *very much* bloodshed; it might be done.”

As he rode on his coffin, John Brown gazed out over the cornfields of Virginia. “This is a beautiful country,” he said. “I never had the pleasure of seeing it before.”

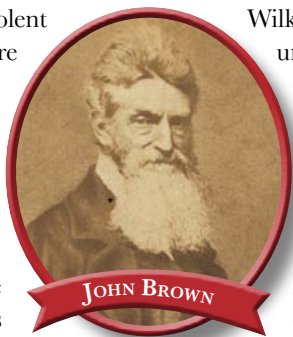
The United States in 1859 was a nation that harbored a ticking time bomb: the issue of slavery. And it was a place where an astonishing number of men were willing to die for their beliefs, certain they were following a higher law. John Brown was one of those God-fearing yet violent men. And he was already more than a man; he was a legend. In fact, there were two competing legends. To slaveholders he was utter evil—fanatic, murderer, liar, and lunatic, and horse thief to boot—while to abolitionists he had become the embodiment of all that was noble and courageous.

After a lifetime of failure John Brown had at last found a kind of success. He was now a symbol that divided the nation, and his story was no longer about one man; it was a prophecy. The United States, like John Brown, was heading toward a gallows—the gallows of war.

A scaffold had been built in a field outside Charlestown, Virginia. There were rumors of a rescue attempt, and fifteen hundred soldiers, commanded by Col. Robert E.



The execution of John Brown by artist David Hunter Strother.



Lee, massed in the open field. No civilians were allowed within hearing range, but an actor from Virginia borrowed a uniform so he could watch John Brown die. “I looked at the traitor and terrorizer,” said John

Wilkes Booth, “with unlimited, undeniable contempt.” Prof.

Thomas Jackson, who would in three years be known as Stonewall, was also watching: “The sheriff placed the rope around [Brown’s] neck, then threw a white cap over his head.... When the rope was cut by a single blow, Brown fell through.... There was very little

motion of his person for several moments, and soon the wind blew his lifeless body to and fro.”

A Virginia colonel named J. T. L. Preston chanted: “So perish all such enemies of Virginia! All such enemies of the Union! All such foes of the human race!”

But hanging was not the end of John Brown; it was the beginning. Northern churches’ bells tolled for him, and cannon boomed in salute. In Massachusetts, Henry

David Thoreau spoke: “Some eighteen hundred years ago, Christ was crucified; This morning, perchance, Captain Brown was hung.... He is not Old Brown any longer; he is an angel of light.”

John Brown’s soul was already marching on. But the flesh-and-blood John Brown—a

**The United States, like John Brown, was heading toward a gallows—the gallows of war.**

tanner, shepherd, and farmer, a simple and innocent man who could kill in cold blood, a mixture of opposite parts who mirrored the paradoxical America of his time—this John Brown had already vanished, and he would rarely appear again. His life instead became the subject for 140 years of spin. John Brown has been used rather than considered by history; even today we are still spinning his story.

As far as history is concerned, John Brown was genuinely nobody until he was fifty-six years old—that is, until he began

# The Father of American Terrorism

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to kill people. Not that his life was without incident. He grew up in the wilderness of Ohio (he was born in 1800, when places like Detroit, Chicago, and Cleveland were still frontier stockades). He married at twenty, lost his wife eleven years later, soon married again, and fathered a total of twenty children. Nine of them died before they reached adulthood.

At seventeen Brown left his father's tannery to start a competing one. "I acknowledge no master in human form," he would say, many years later, when he was wounded and in chains at Harpers Ferry. The young man soon mastered the rural arts of farming, tanning, surveying, home building, and animal husbandry, but his most conspicuous talent seemed to be one for profuse and painful failure.

In the 1830s, with a growing network of canals making barren land worth thousands, Brown borrowed deeply to speculate in real estate—just in time for the disastrous Panic of 1837. The historian James Brewer Stewart, author of *Holy Warriors*, says that "Brown was a typical story of someone who invested, as thousands did, and lost thousands, as thousands did as well. Brown was swept along in a current of default and collapse."

He tried breeding sheep, started another tannery, bought and sold cattle—each time a failure. When one venture lost money, Brown quietly appropriated funds from a partner in a new business and used it to pay the earlier loss. But in the end his farm tools, furniture, and sheep went on the auction block.

When his farm was sold, he seemed to snap. He refused to leave. With two sons and some old muskets, he barricaded himself in a cabin on the property. "I was making preparation for the commencement and vigorous prosecution of a tedious, distressing, wasteing, and long protracted war," Brown wrote. The sheriff got up a posse and briefly put him in the Akron jail. No shots were fired, but it

was an incident people would remember, years later, when the old man barricaded himself at Harpers Ferry.

Brown's misadventures in business have drawn widely varying interpretations. His defenders say he had a large family to support; small wonder he wanted badly to make money. But others have seen his financial dreams as an obsession, a kind of fever that gave him delusions of wealth and made him act dishonestly.

Perhaps it was this long string of failures that created the revolutionary who burst upon the American scene in 1856. By that time Brown had long nurtured a vague and protean plan: He imagined a great event in which he—the small-time farmer who had failed in everything he touched—would be God's messenger, a latter-day Moses who would lead his people from the accursed house of slavery. He had already, for years, been active in the Underground Railroad, hiding runaways and guiding them north toward Canada. In 1837 he stood up in the back of a church in Ohio and made his first public statement on human bondage, a single pungent sentence: "Here before God, in the presence of these witnesses, I consecrate my life to the destruction of slavery." For years, however, this vow seemed to mean relatively little; in the early 1850s, as anger over slavery began to boil up all over the North, the frustrated and humiliated Brown was going from courtroom to courtroom embroiled in his own private miseries.

Finally it happened. The John Brown we know was born in the place called Bloody Kansas. Slavery had long been barred from the territories of Kansas and Nebraska, but in 1854 the Kansas-Nebraska Act decreed that the settlers of these territories would decide

competition between the two systems that would become indistinguishable from war.

Settlers from both sides flooded into Kansas. Five of John Brown's sons made the long journey there from Ohio. But Brown himself did not go. He was in his mid-fifties, old by the actuarial tables of his day; he seemed broken.

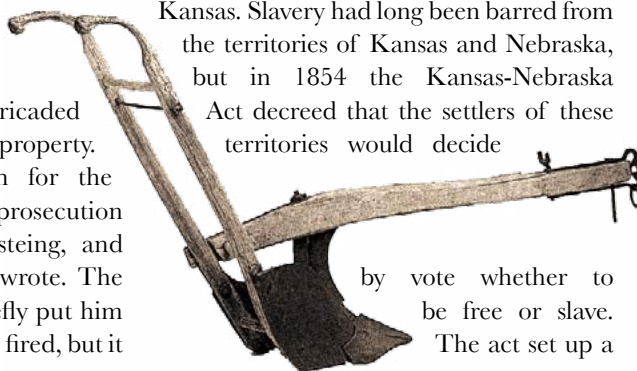
Five thousand proslavery  
Missourians—the  
hard-drinking, heavily  
armed "Border Ruffians"—  
rode into Kansas.

Then, in March of 1855, five thousand proslavery Missourians—the hard-drinking, heavily armed "Border Ruffians"—rode into Kansas. "We came to vote, and we are going to vote or kill every God-damned abolitionist in the Territory," their leader declared. The Ruffians seized the polling places, voted in their own legislature, and passed their own laws. Prison now awaited anyone who spoke against slavery.

In May, John Junior wrote to his father begging for his help. The free-soilers needed arms, "more than we need bread," he said. "Now we want you to get for us these arms." The very next day, Brown began raising money and gathering weapons and in August the old man left for Kansas, continuing to collect arms as he went.

In May 1856 a proslavery army sacked the free-soil town of Lawrence; not a single abolitionist dared fire a gun. This infuriated Brown. He called for volunteers to go on "a secret mission." The old man, in his soiled straw hat, stuck a revolver in his belt and led a company of eight men down toward Pottawatomie Creek. Proslavery people lived in the cabins there.

Late on the night of May 23, 1856, one of the group, probably Brown, banged on the door of James Doyle's cabin. He



by vote whether to  
be free or slave.  
The act set up a

# The Father of American Terrorism

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ordered the men of the family outside at gunpoint, and Brown's followers set upon three Doyles with broadswords. They split open heads and cut off arms. John Brown watched his men work. When it was over, he put a single bullet into the head of James Doyle.

His party went to two more cabins, dragged out and killed two more men. At the end bodies

lay in the bushes and floated in the creek; the murderers had made off with horses, saddles, and a bowie knife.

What came to be called the Pottawatomie Massacre ignited all-out war in Kansas. John Brown, the aged outsider, became an abolitionist leader. In August some 250 Border Ruffians attacked the free-soil town of Osawatomie. Brown led thirty men in defending the town. He fought hard, but Osawatomie burned to the ground.

A few days later, when Brown rode into Lawrence on a gray horse, a crowd gathered to cheer "as if the President had come to town," one man said. The spinning of John Brown had already begun. A Scottish reporter named James Redpath had found Brown's men in their secret campsite, and "I left this sacred spot with a far higher respect for the Great Struggle than ever I had felt before." And what of Pottawatomie? Brown had nothing to do with it, Redpath wrote. John Brown himself even prepared an admiring account of the Battle of **Osawatomie** for Eastern newspapers. Less than two weeks after the fight, a drama called **Ossawatomie Brown** was celebrating him on Broadway.

That autumn, peace finally came to Kansas, but not to John Brown. For the next



Harper's Weekly illustration of US Marines attacking John Brown's "Fort".

three years he traveled the East, occasionally returning to Kansas, beseeching abolitionists for guns and money, money and guns. His plan evolved into this: One night he and a small company of men would capture the federal armory and arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia. The invaders would take the guns there and leave. Local slaves would rise up to join them, making an army; together they all would drive south, and the revolution would snowball through the kingdom of slavery.

On the rainy night of October 16, 1859, Brown led a determined little procession down the road to Harpers Ferry. Some twenty men were making a direct attack on the U.S. government; they would liberate four million souls from bondage. At first the raid went like clockwork. The armory was protected by just one man, and he quickly surrendered. The invaders cut telegraph lines and rounded up hostages on the street.

Then Brown's difficulties began. A local doctor rode out screaming, "Insurrection!," and by midmorning men in the heights behind town were taking potshots down at

*Cloudsplitter*, has an answer: "He stayed and he stayed, and it seems to me a deliberate, resigned act of martyrdom."

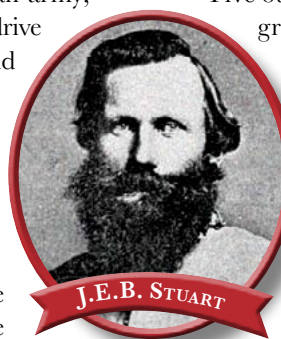
At noon a company of Virginia militia entered town, took the bridge, and closed the only true escape route. By the end of the day, John Brown's revolution was failing. Eight invaders were dead or dying.

Five others were cut off from the main group. Two had escaped across the river; two had been captured.

Only five raiders were still fit to fight. Brown gathered his men in a small brick building, the enginehouse, for the long, cold night.

The first light of October 18 showed Brown and his tiny band an armory yard lined with U.S. Marines, under the command

of Col. Robert E. Lee. A young lieutenant, J.E.B. Stuart, approached beneath a white flag and handed over a note asking the raiders to surrender. Brown refused. At that Stuart jumped aside, waved his cap, and the Marines stormed forward with a heavy ladder. The door gave way. Lt. Israel Green tried to run Brown through, but his blade struck the old man's belt buckle; God, for the moment, had saved John Brown.



# The Father of American Terrorism

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A few hours later, as he lay in a small room at the armory, bound and bleeding, Brown's real revolution began. Gov. Henry A. Wise of Virginia arrived with a retinue of reporters. Did Brown want the reporters removed? asked Robert E. Lee. Definitely not. "Brown said he was by no means annoyed," one reporter wrote. For the old man was now beginning a campaign that would win half of America. He told the reporters: "I wish to say ... that you had better—all you people of the South—prepare yourselves for a settlement of this question.... You may dispose of me very easily—I am nearly disposed of now; but this question is still to be settled—this negro question I mean; the end of that is not yet."

His crusade for acceptance would not be easy. At first he was no hero. Leaders of the Republican party organized anti-Brown protests; "John Brown was no Republican," Abraham Lincoln said. Even *The Liberator*, published by the staunch abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, called the raid "misguided, wild, and apparently insane."

In the South the initial reaction was derision—the *Richmond Dispatch* called the foray "miserably weak and contemptible"—but that soon changed to fear. Stuart's soldiers found a carpetbag crammed with letters from Brown's supporters; a number of prominent Northerners had financed the raid. It had been a conspiracy, a wide-ranging one. But how wide?

A reign of terror began in the South. A minister who spoke out against the treatment of slaves was publicly whipped; a man who spoke sympathetically about the raid found himself thrown in jail. Four state legislatures appropriated military funds. Georgia set aside seventy-five thousand dollars; Alabama, almost three times as much.



Death warrant of John Brown in his cell.

Brown's trial took just one week. As Virginia hurried toward a verdict, the Reverend Henry Ward Beecher preached, "Let no man pray that Brown be spared! Let Virginia make him a martyr!" John Brown read Beecher's words in his cell. He wrote "Good" beside them.

On November 2 the jury, after deliberating for forty-five minutes, reached its verdict. Guilty. Before he was



sentenced, Brown rose to address the court: "I see a book kissed here, ... the Bible.... [That] teaches me to 'remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them.' I endeavored to act up to that instruction. ...I believe that to have interfered...in behalf of His despised poor was not wrong, but right. Now, if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life ..., and mingle my blood further with the blood of my

children and with the blood of millions in this slave country whose rights are disregarded ... I say let it be done!"

For the next month the Charlestown jail cell was John Brown's pulpit. All over the North, Brown knew, people were reading his words. He wrote, "You know that Christ once armed Peter. So also in my case I think he put a sword into my hand, and there continued it so long as he saw best, and then kindly took it from me."

The author of the Pottawatomie Massacre was now comparing himself to Jesus Christ. And he was not alone. Even the temperate Ralph Waldo Emerson called him "the new Saint whose fate yet hangs in suspense but whose martyrdom if it shall be perfected, will make the gallows as glorious as the cross." There were rescue plans, but John Brown did not want to escape. "I am worth inconceivably more to hang than for any other purpose," he wrote.

He got that wish on December 2, and the mythologizing of the man began in earnest. Thoreau, Emerson, Victor Hugo, Herman Melville, and Walt Whitman all wrote essays or poems immortalizing him. James Redpath eagerly waited for the moment when "Old B was in heaven"; just a month after the execution, he published the first biography. Forty thousand copies of the book sold in a single month.

Less than a year and a half later, the guns began firing on Fort Sumter. If the country had been a tinder box, it seemed to many that John Brown had been the spark. "Did John Brown fail?" Frederick Douglass wrote. "... John Brown began the war that ended American slavery and made this a free Republic."

His reputation seemed secure, impermeable. The first biographies of the man James Redpath called the "warrior

# The Father of American Terrorism

— CONTINUED —

saint” all glorified him. But then, in 1910, Oswald Garrison Villard, grandson of the abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, wrote a massive and carefully researched book that pictured Brown as a muddled, pugnacious, bumbling, and homicidal madman. Nineteen years later Robert Penn Warren issued a similar (and derivative) study. Perhaps the most influential image of John Brown came, not surprisingly, from Hollywood: In *Santa Fe Trail* Raymond Massey portrayed him as a lunatic, pure and simple.

It wasn't until the 1970s that John Brown the hero re-emerged. Two excellent studies by Stephen B. Oates and Richard Owen Boyer captured the core of the conundrum: Brown was stubborn, monomaniacal, egotistical, self-righteous, and sometimes deceitful; yet he was, at certain times, a great man. Boyer, in particular, clearly admired him: At bottom Brown “was an American who gave his life that millions of other Americans might be free.”

Among African-Americans, Brown's heroism has never been in doubt. Frederick Douglass praised him in print; W.E.B. Du Bois published a four-hundred-page celebration of him in 1909; Malcolm X said he wouldn't mind being with white people if they were like John Brown; and Alice Walker, in a poem, even wondered if in an earlier incarnation she herself hadn't once been John Brown.

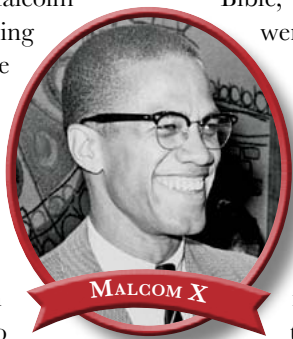
But, as Russell Banks points out, Brown's “acts mean completely different things to Americans depending upon their skin color.” And the image that most white people today have of John Brown is still of the wild-eyed, bloodthirsty madman. After all, he believed that God spoke to him; he killed people at Pottawatomie in cold blood; he launched an attack on the U.S. government at Harpers Ferry with not even two dozen men. How sane could he have been?

Let's look at those charges one by one. First: *He conversed with God*. Brown's religious principles, everyone agrees, were absolutely central to the man. As a child he learned virtually the entire Bible by heart. At sixteen he traveled to New England to study for the ministry. He gave up after a few months but remained deeply serious about his Calvinist beliefs. Brown had a great yearning for justice for all men, yet a rage for bloody revenge. These qualities may seem paradoxical to us, but they were ones that John Brown had in common with his deity. The angry God of the Old Testament punished evil: An eye cost exactly an eye.

If God spoke directly to John Brown, He also spoke to William Lloyd Garrison and to the slave revolutionary Nat Turner. To converse with God, in Brown's day, did not mean that you were eccentric. In fact, God was on everyone's side. John Brown saw the story of Moses setting the Israelites free as a mandate for emancipation, but at the same time, others used the Bible to justify slavery (Noah did, after all, set an everlasting curse on all the dark descendants of Ham). It was all in the Bible, and Americans on both sides went to war certain that they

Elijah Lovejoy was gunned down for speaking out against slavery. By the 1850s another distinguished clergyman, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, could lead a mob to the federal courthouse in Boston and attack the place with axes and guns. “I can only make my life worth living,” Higginson vowed, “by becoming a revolutionist.” During the struggle in Kansas Henry Ward Beecher's Plymouth Church in Brooklyn was blithely shipping Sharps rifles west; “there are times,” the famous preacher said, “when self-defense is a religious duty.” By the late fifties, writes the historian James Stewart, even Congress was “a place where fist fights became common...a place where people came armed...a place where people flashed Bowie knives.” On February 5, 1858, a brawl broke out between North and South in the House of Representatives; congressmen rolled on the floor, scratching and gouging each other.

Brown's Pottawatomie Massacre was directly connected to this national chaos. On the very day Brown heard about the sacking of Lawrence, another disturbing report reached him from Washington: A Southern congressman had attacked Sen. Charles Sumner, a fierce abolitionist, on the floor of Congress, caning him almost



Malcolm X said he wouldn't mind being with white people if they were like John Brown.

were doing God's bidding. So it is that John Brown believed that God had appointed him “a special agent of death,” “an instrument raised up by Providence to break the jaws of the wicked.”

Second: *He killed in cold blood*. Brown was a violent man, but he lived in increasingly violent times. Slavery itself was of course a violent practice. In 1831 Nat Turner led seventy slaves to revolt; they killed fifty-seven white men, women, and children. A few years later a clergyman named

to death for insulting the South. When the news got to Brown's campsite, according to his son Salmon, “the men went crazy—*crazy*. It seemed to be the finishing, decisive touch.” Brown ordered his men to sharpen their broadswords and set off toward Pottawatomie, the creek whose name still stains his reputation.

So it is that “Brown is simply part of a very violent world,” according to the historian Paul Finkelman. At Pottawatomie, Finkelman says, “Brown was going after particular men who were dangerous to

# The Father of American Terrorism

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the very survival of the free-state settlers in the area.” But Dennis Frye has a less analytical (and less sympathetic) reaction: “Pottawatomie was cold-blooded murder. [It was] killing people up close based on anger and vengeance.”

To Bruce Olds, the author of *Raising Holy Hell*, a 1995 novel about Brown, Pottawatomie was an example of conscious political terrorism: “Those killings took place in the middle of the night, in the dark—that was on purpose. In his writings, [Brown] uses the word ‘terror’ and the word ‘shock.’ He intended to produce both of those, and he did.”

Maybe Pottawatomie was insane, and maybe it was not. But what about that Harpers Ferry plan—a tiny band attacking the U.S. government, hoping to concoct a revolution that would carry across the South? Clearly *that* was crazy.

Yes and no. If it was crazy, it was not unique. Dozens of people, often bearing arms, had gone South to rescue slaves. Secret military societies flourished on both sides, plotting to expand or destroy the system of slavery by force. Far from being the product of a singular cracked mind, the plan was similar to a number of others, including one by a Boston attorney named Lysander Spooner. James Horton, a leading African-American history scholar, offers an interesting scenario. “Was Brown crazy to assume he could encourage slave rebellion? ... Think about the possibility of

**It was perfectly rational and reasonable for John Brown to believe he could encourage slaves to rebel.**

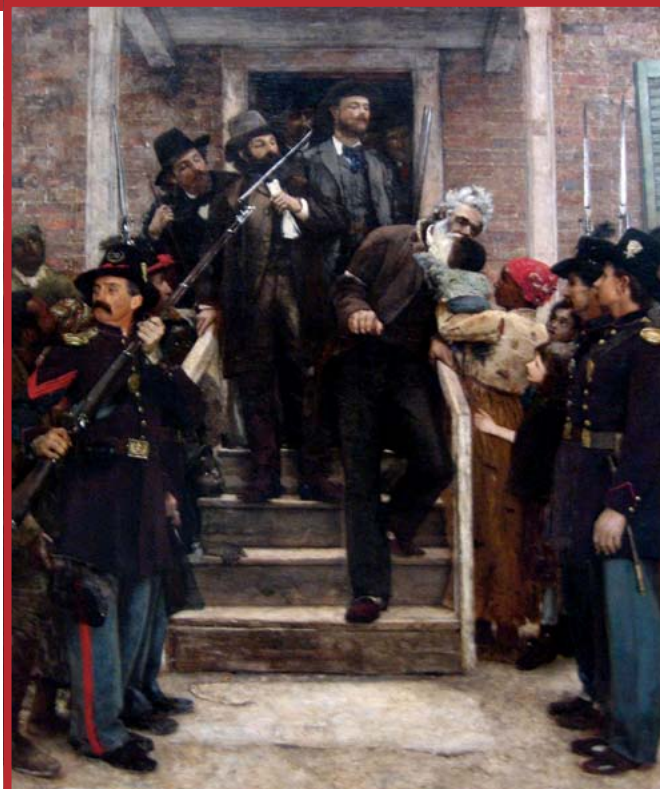
Nat Turner well-armed, well-equipped.... Nat Turner might have done some pretty amazing things,” Horton says. “It was perfectly rational and reasonable for John Brown to believe he could encourage slaves to rebel.”

But the question of Brown’s sanity still provokes dissension among experts. Was he crazy? “He was obsessed,” Bruce Olds says, “he was fanatical, he was monomaniacal, he was a zealot, and...psychologically unbalanced.” Paul Finkelman disagrees: Brown “is a bad tactician, he’s a bad strategist, he’s a bad planner, he’s not a very good general—but he’s not crazy.”

Some believe that there is a very particular reason why Brown’s reputation as a madman has clung to him. Russell Banks and James Horton make the same argument. “The reason white people think he was mad,” Banks says, “is because he was a white man and he was willing to sacrifice his life in order to liberate black Americans.” “We should be very careful,” Horton says, “about assuming that a white man who is willing to put his life on the line for black people is, of necessity, crazy.”

Perhaps it is reasonable to say this: A society where slavery exists is by nature one where human values are skewed. America before the Civil War was a violent society, twisted by slavery. Even sober and eminent people became firebrands. John Brown had many peculiarities of his own, but he was not outside his society; to a great degree, he represented it, in its many excesses.

The past, as always, continues to change, and the spinning of John Brown’s story goes on today. The same events—the raid on Harpers Ferry or the Pottawatomie Massacre—are still seen in totally different ways. What is perhaps most remarkable is that elements at both the left and right



The Last Days of John Brown by Thomas Hovenden.

ends of American society are at this moment vitally interested in the story of John Brown.

On the left is a group of historical writers and teachers called Allies for Freedom. This group believes that the truth about the Harpers Ferry raid has been buried by the conventions of history. Its informal leader, Jean Libby, author of *John Brown Mysteries*, says, “What we think is that John Brown was a black nationalist. His ultimate goal was the creation of an independent black nation.” The Allies for Freedom believes, too, that far from being the folly of a lunatic, Brown’s plan was not totally unworkable, that it came much closer to succeeding than historians have pictured. Libby thinks that many slaves and free blacks *did* join the uprising—perhaps as many as fifty. Why would history conceal the fact of active black participation in Harpers Ferry? “The South was anxious to cover up any indication that the raid might have been successful,” Libby says, “so slaves would never again be tempted to revolt.”

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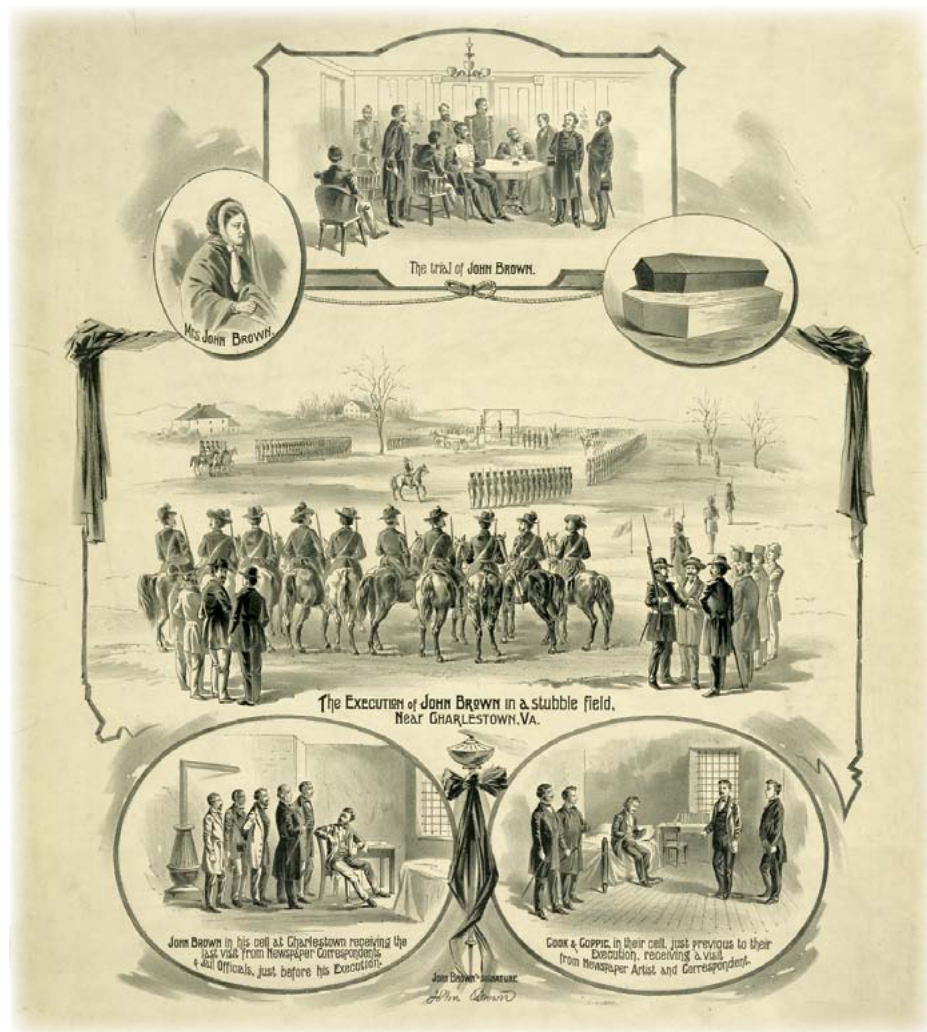
Go a good deal farther to the left, and there has long been admiration for John Brown. In 1975 the Weather Underground put out a journal called *Osawatimie*. In the late 1970s a group calling itself the John Brown Brigade engaged in pitched battles with the Ku Klux Klan; in one confrontation in Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1979, five members of the John Brown Brigade were shot and killed. Writers also continue to draw parallels between John Brown and virtually any leftist who uses political violence, including the Symbionese Liberation Army (the kidnapers of Patty Hearst in the 1970s), the Islamic terrorists who allegedly set off a bomb in the World Trade Center in Manhattan, and Ted Kaczynski, the Unabomber.

At the same time, John Brown is frequently compared to those at the far opposite end of the political spectrum. Right-to-life extremists have bombed abortion clinics and murdered doctors; they have, in short, killed for a cause they believed in, just as John Brown did. Paul Hill was convicted of murdering a doctor who performed abortions; it was, Hill said, the Lord's bidding: "There's no question in my mind that it was what the Lord wanted me to do, to shoot John Britton to prevent him from killing unborn children." If that sounds quite like John Brown, it was no accident. From death row Hill wrote to the historian Dan Stowell that Brown's "example has and continues to serve as a source of encouragement to me... Both of us looked to the scriptures for direction, [and] the providential similarities between the oppressive circumstances we faced and our general understandings of the appropriate means to deliver the oppressed have resulted in my being encouraged to pursue a path which is in many ways similar to his." Shortly before his execution

Hill wrote that "the political impact of Brown's actions continues to serve as a powerful paradigm in my understanding of the potential effects the use of defensive force may have for the unborn."

Nor was the murder Hill committed the only right-wing violence that has been compared to Brown's. The Oklahoma City bombing in 1995 was a frontal attack on a U.S. government building, just like the Harpers Ferry raid. Antiabortion murders, government bombings, anarchist bombs in the mail—nearly every time political violence surfaces, it gets described in the press as a part of a long American tradition of terrorism, with John Brown as a precursor and hero, a founding father of principled violence.

He gets compared to anarchists, leftist revolutionaries, and right-wing extremists. The spinning of John Brown, in short, is still going strong. But what does that make him? This much, at least, is certain: John Brown is a vital presence for all sorts of people today. In February PBS's *The American Experience* is broadcasting a ninety-minute documentary about him. Russell Banks's novel *Cloudsplitter* was a critical success and a bestseller as well. On the verge of his two hundredth birthday (this May 9), John Brown is oddly present. Perhaps there is one compelling reason for his revival in this new millennium: Perhaps the violent, excessive, morally torn society John Brown represents so aptly was not just his own antebellum America but this land, now. ★



*Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*  
wood engraving image of John Brown,  
Dec. 10, 1859, right.



# The Father of American Terrorism

## TRAGIC PRELUDE

JOHN STEUART CURRY

<http://www.kshs.org/p/kansas-state-capitol-online-tour-tragic-prelude/16595>



The Tragic Prelude by John Steuart Curry. (Mural, Kansas State Capitol.)

KANSAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*Curry's interpretation of John Brown and the antislavery movement in Kansas Territory before the Civil War, is considered one of his best murals. Rich in symbolism, the painting depicts John Brown as an important, albeit fanatic man who would kill for his beliefs. In 1859 Brown was hanged for treason after leading a raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia.*

*The tornado and prairie fires represent the storms of war that gathered and the fires of war that swept the land. The men on either side of Brown symbolize the brother against brother conflict of the Civil War. The two dead men at his feet represent the more than one million soldiers and civilians who were either killed or wounded during the war. Curry's critics disliked his color scheme and the overall menacing effect of the mural. ☆*

# The Father of American Terrorism

JOHN BROWN

CURRIER AND IVES, 1863

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003674588/>



## JOHN BROWN

Meeting the slave-mother and her Child on the steps of Charlestown jail on his way to execution. The Artist has represented Capt. Brown regarding with a look of compassion a Slave-mother and Child who obstructs the passage on his way to the Scaffold. — Capt. Brown stooped and kissed the Child — then met his fate.

FROM THE ORIGINAL PAINTING BY LOUIS BARRON.

Issued in the North during the Civil War, the melodramatic portrayal of an apocryphal incident from the life of John Brown must have had unmistakable propagandistic overtones. In actuality a violent antislavery fanatic, Brown was convicted in 1859 of treason, inciting slave rebellion, and murder in his abortive attempt to seize the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry and ignite an armed slave insurrection in the South. Yet through his trial and execution at Charles Town, Virginia, in December 1859, Brown became for many Northerners a martyr of the abolitionist cause. Here the artist shows Brown calmly descending the steps of the Charles Town jail, hands tied behind his back. “Regarding with a look of compassion a Slave-mother and Child who obstructed the passage on his way to the Scaffold. —Capt. Brown stooped and kissed the Child—then met his fate.” The strikingly madonna-like slave woman is seated on a stone railing, holding an equally Christ-like infant. One of Brown’s guards reaches forward, about to push her away. In the foreground a mustachioed and elegantly uniformed soldier waits impatiently, hand on his sword hilt. Behind Brown a figure from the American Revolution, wearing a tricornered hat emblazoned “76,” watches with concern. The flag of the state of Virginia with the motto “Sic semper tyrannis” flies prominently above Brown’s head. A statue of Justice, with its arms and scales broken, stands forgotten behind the railing at left. ★

**TEXT, left:** *Meeting the slave-mother and her child on the steps of the Charlestown Jail on the way to execution; the Artist has represented Capt Brown regarding with a look of compassion a Slave-mother and Child who obstructs the passage on his way to the Scaffold,—Capt Brown stooped and kissed the Child—then met his fate.*

# The Father of American Terrorism

## JOHN BROWN'S SPEECH TO THE COURT AT HIS TRIAL

NOVEMBER 2, 1859 | UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI | KANSAS CITY SCHOOL OF LAW

<http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/johnbrown/brownaddress.html>

I have, may it please the court, a few words to say. In the first place, I deny everything but what I have all along admitted—the design on my part to free the slaves. I intended certainly to have made a clean thing of that matter, as I did last winter when I went into Missouri and there took slaves without the snapping of a gun on either side, moved them through the country, and finally left them in Canada. I designed to have done the same thing again on a larger scale. That was all I intended. I never did intend murder, or treason, or the destruction of property, or to excite or incite slaves to rebellion, or to make insurrection.

I have another objection; and that is, it is unjust that I should suffer such a penalty. Had I interfered in the manner which I admit, and which I admit has been fairly proved (for I admire the truthfulness and candor of the greater portion of the witnesses who have testified in this case)—had I so interfered in behalf of the rich, the powerful, the intelligent, the so-called great, or in behalf of any of their friends—either father, mother, brother, sister, wife, or children, or any of that class—and suffered and sacrificed what I have in this interference, it would have been all right; and every man in this court would have deemed it an act worthy of reward rather than punishment.

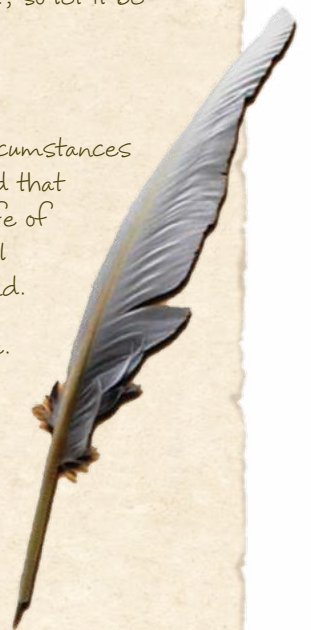
This court acknowledges, as I suppose, the validity of the law of God. I see a book kissed here which I suppose to be the Bible, or at least the New Testament. That teaches me that all things whatsoever I would that men should do to me, I should do even so to them. It teaches me, further, to “remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them.” I endeavored to act up to that instruction. I say I am yet too young to understand that God is any respecter of persons. I believe that to have interfered as I have done—as I have always freely admitted I have done—in behalf of His despised poor was not wrong, but right. Now, if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and mingle my blood further with the blood of my children and with the blood of millions in this slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel, and unjust enactments—I submit; so let it be done!

Let me say one word further.

I feel entirely satisfied with the treatment I have received on my trial. Considering all the circumstances it has been more generous than I expected. But I feel no consciousness of guilt. I have stated that from the first what was my intention and what was not. I never had any design against the life of any person, nor any disposition to commit treason, or excite slaves to rebel, or make any general insurrection. I never encouraged any man to do so, but always discouraged any idea of that kind.

Let me say also a word in regard to the statements made by some of those connected with me. I hear it has been stated by some of them that I have induced them to join me. But the contrary is true. I do not say this to injure them, but as regretting their weakness. There is not one of them but joined me of his own accord, and the greater part of them at their own expense. A number of them I never saw, and never had a word of conversation with till the day they came to me; and that was for the purpose I have stated.

Now I have done.

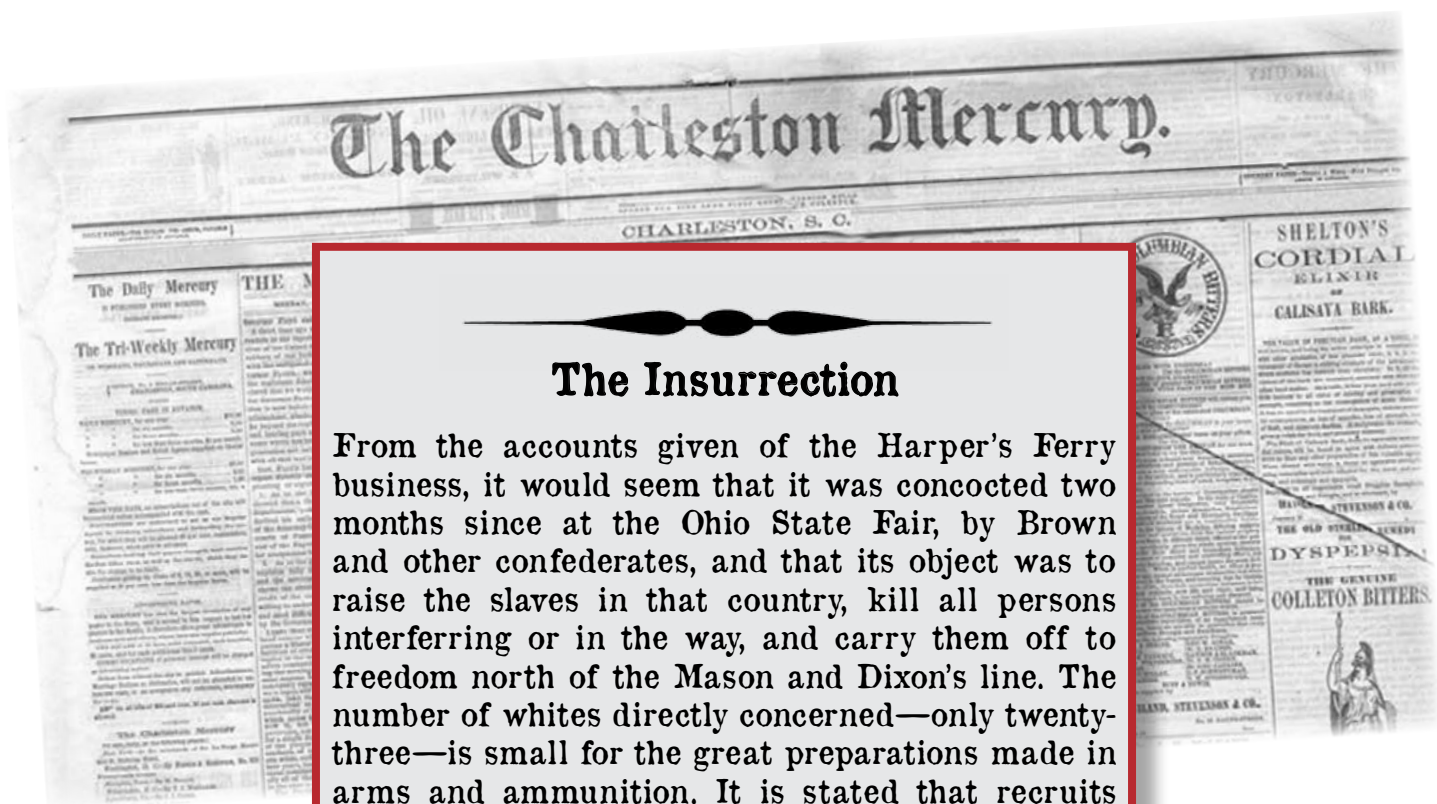


# The Father of American Terrorism

## THE INSURRECTION

MERCURY | CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA | OCTOBER 21, 1859

<http://history.furman.edu/editorials/see.py?sequence=jbmenu&location=%20John%20Brown%27s%20Raid%20on%20Harper%27s%20Ferry&code=sccmjb591021a>



### The Insurrection

From the accounts given of the Harper's Ferry business, it would seem that it was concocted two months since at the Ohio State Fair, by Brown and other confederates, and that its object was to raise the slaves in that country, kill all persons interfering or in the way, and carry them off to freedom north of the Mason and Dixon's line. The number of whites directly concerned—only twenty-three—is small for the great preparations made in arms and ammunition. It is stated that recruits from the North were expected, but did not arrive in time, Brown having been precipitate in his movement. Three of the whites are said to have escaped with four hundred negroes.

As we anticipated, the affair, in its magnitude, was quite exaggerated; but it fully establishes the fact that there are at the North men ready to engage in adventures upon the peace and security of the southern people, however heinously and recklessly, and capable of planning and keeping secret their infernal designs. It is a warning profoundly symptomatic of the future of the Union with our sectional enemies.

# The Father of American Terrorism

## DID JOHN BROWN FAIL?

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

ADDRESS DELIVERED IN HARPER'S FERRY, WEST VIRGINIA AT THE  
14<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF STORER COLLEGE | MAY 30, 1881

<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/did-john-brown-fail/>

Not to fan the flame of sectional animosity now happily in the process of rapid and I hope permanent extinction; not to revive and keep alive a sense of shame and remorse for a great national crime, which has brought its own punishment, in loss of treasure, tears and blood; not to recount the long list of wrongs, inflicted on my race during more than two hundred years of merciless bondage; nor yet to draw, from the labyrinths of far-off centuries, incidents and achievements wherewith to rouse your passions, and enkindle your enthusiasm, but to pay a just debt long due, to vindicate in some degree a great historical character, of our own time and country, one with whom I was myself well acquainted, and whose friendship and confidence it was my good fortune to share, and to give you such recollections, impressions and facts, as I can, of a grand, brave and good old man, and especially to promote a better understanding of the raid upon Harper's Ferry of which he was the chief, is the object of this address.

In all the thirty years' conflict with slavery, if we expect the late tremendous war, there is no subject which in its interest and importance will be remembered longer, or will form a more thrilling chapter in American history than this strange, wild, bloody and mournful drama. The story of it is still fresh in the minds of many who now hear me, but for the sake of those who may have forgotten its details, and in order to have our subject in its entire range more fully and clearly before us at the outset, I will briefly state the facts in that extraordinary transaction.

On the night of the 16th of October, 1859, there appeared near the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers, a party of nineteen men—fourteen white and five colored. They were not only

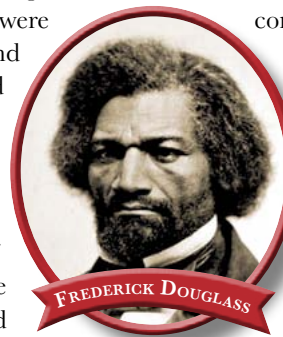
armed themselves, but had brought with them a large supply of arms for such persons as might join them. These men invaded Harper's Ferry, disarmed the watchman, took possession of the arsenal, rifle-factory, armory and other government property at that place, arrested and made prisoners nearly all the prominent citizens of the neighborhood, collected about fifty slaves, put bayonets into the hands of such as were able and willing to fight for their liberty, killed three men, proclaimed general emancipation, held the ground more than thirty hours, were subsequently overpowered and nearly all killed, wounded or captured, by a body of United States troops, under command of Colonel Robert E. Lee, since famous as the rebel Gen. Lee. Three out of the nineteen invaders were captured whilst fighting, and one of these was Captain John Brown, the man who originated, planned and commanded the expedition. At the time of his capture Capt. Brown was supposed to be mortally wounded, as he had several ugly gashes and bayonet wounds on his head and body; and apprehending that he might speedily die, or that he might be rescued by his friends, and thus the opportunity of making him a signal example of slave-holding vengeance would be lost, his captors hurried him to Charlestown two miles further within the border of Virginia, placed him in prison strongly guarded by troops, and before his wounds were healed, he was brought into court, subjected to a nominal trial, convicted of high treason and inciting slaves to insurrection, and was executed. His corpse was given to his woe-stricken widow, and she, assisted by Anti-slavery friends, caused it to be borne to North Elba,

Essex County, N.Y., and there his dust now reposes, amid the silent, solemn and snowy grandeur of the Adirondacks.

Such is the story; with no lines softened or hardened to my inclining. It is certainly not a story to please, but to pain. It is not a story to increase our sense of social safety and security, but to fill the imagination with wild and troubled fancies of doubt and danger. It was a sudden and startling surprise to the people of Harper's Ferry, and it is not easy to conceive of a situation more abundant

in all the elements of horror and consternation. They had retired as usual to rest, with no suspicion that an enemy lurked in the surrounding darkness. They had quietly and trustingly given themselves up to "tired Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep," and while thus all unconscious of danger, they were roused from their peaceful slumbers by the sharp crack of the invader's rifle, and felt the keen-edged sword of war at their throats, three of their number being already slain.

Every feeling of the human heart was naturally outraged at this occurrence, and hence at the moment the air was full of denunciation and execration. So intense was this feeling, that few ventured to whisper a word of apology. But happily reason has her voice as well as feeling, and though slower in deciding, her judgements are broader, deeper, clearer and more enduring. It is not easy to reconcile human feeling to the shedding of blood for any purpose, unless indeed in the excitement which the shedding of blood itself occasions. The knife is to feeling always an offence. Even when in the hands of a skillful surgeon, it refuses consent to the operation long after reason has demonstrated its necessity. It even pleads the cause of the known murderer on



# The Father of American Terrorism

## DID JOHN BROWN FAIL?

— CONTINUED —

the day of his execution, and calls society half criminal when, in cold blood, it takes life as a protection of itself from crime. Let no word be said against this holy feeling; more than to law and government are we indebted to this tender sentiment of regard for human life for the safety with which we walk the streets by day and sleep secure in our beds at night. It is nature's grand police, vigilant and faithful, sentinelled in the soul, guarding against violence to peace and life. But whilst so much is freely accorded to feeling in the economy of human welfare, something more than feeling is necessary to grapple with a fact so grim and significant as was this raid. Viewed apart and alone, as a transaction separate and distinct from its antecedents and bearings, it takes rank with the most cold-blooded and atrocious wrongs ever perpetrated; but just here is the trouble—this raid on Harper's Ferry, no more than Sherman's march to the sea can consent to be thus viewed alone.

There is, in the world's government, a force which has in all ages been recognized, sometimes as Nemesis, sometimes as the judgment of God and sometimes as retributive justice; but under whatever name, all history attests the wisdom and beneficence of its chastisements, and men become reconciled to the agents through whom it operates, and have extolled them as heroes, benefactors and demigods.

To the broad vision of a true philosophy, nothing in this world stands alone. Everything is a necessary part of everything else. The margin of chance is narrowed by every extension of reason and knowledge, and nothing comes unbidden to the feast of human experience. The universe, of which we are part, is continually proving itself a stupendous whole, a system of law and order, eternal and perfect.

Every seed bears fruit after its kind, and nothing is reaped which was not sowed. The distance between seed time and harvest, in the moral world, may not be quite so well defined or as clearly intelligible as in the physical, but there is a

seed time, and there is a harvest time, and though ages may intervene, and neither he who ploughed nor he who sowed may reap in person, yet the harvest nevertheless will surely come; and as in the physical world there are century plants, so it may be in the moral world, and their fruitage is as certain

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*The bloody harvest of Harper's Ferry was ripened by the heat and moisture of merciless bondage of more than two hundred years.*

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in the one as in the other. The bloody harvest of Harper's Ferry was ripened by the heat and moisture of merciless bondage of more than two hundred years. That startling cry of alarm on the banks of the Potomac was but the answering back of the avenging angel to the midnight invasions of Christian slavetraders on the sleeping hamlets of Africa. The history of the African slavetrade furnishes many illustrations far more cruel and bloody.

Viewed thus broadly our subject is worthy of thoughtful and dispassionate



consideration. It invites the study of the poet, scholar, philosopher and statesman. What the masters in natural science have done for man in the physical world, the masters of social science may yet do for him in the moral world. Science now tells us when storms are in the sky, and when and where their violence will be most felt. Why may we not yet know with equal certainty when storms are in the moral sky, and how to avoid their desolating force? But I can invite you to no such profound discussions. I am not the man, nor is this the occasion for such philosophical enquiry. Mine is the word of grateful memory to an old friend; to tell you what I knew of him—what I knew of his inner life—of what he did and what he attempted, and thus if possible to make the mainspring of his actions manifest and thereby give you a clearer view of his character and services.

It is said that next in value to the performance of great deeds ourselves, is the capacity to appreciate such when performed by others; to more than this I do not presume. Allow me one other personal word before I proceed. In the minds of some of the American people I was myself credited with an important agency in the John Brown raid. Governor Henry A. Wise was manifestly of that opinion. He was at the pains of having Mr. Buchanan send his Marshals to Rochester to invite me to accompany them to Virginia. Fortunately I left town several hours previous to their arrival.

What ground there was for this distinguished consideration shall duly appear in the natural course of this lecture. I wish however to say just here that there was no foundation whatever for the charge that I in any wise urged or instigated John Brown to his dangerous work. I rejoice that it is my good fortune to have seen, not only the end of slavery, but to see the day

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*This photograph of a former slave displaying scars from his overseer's whippings, was widely reproduced as evidence of slavery's cruelty.*

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## DID JOHN BROWN FAIL?

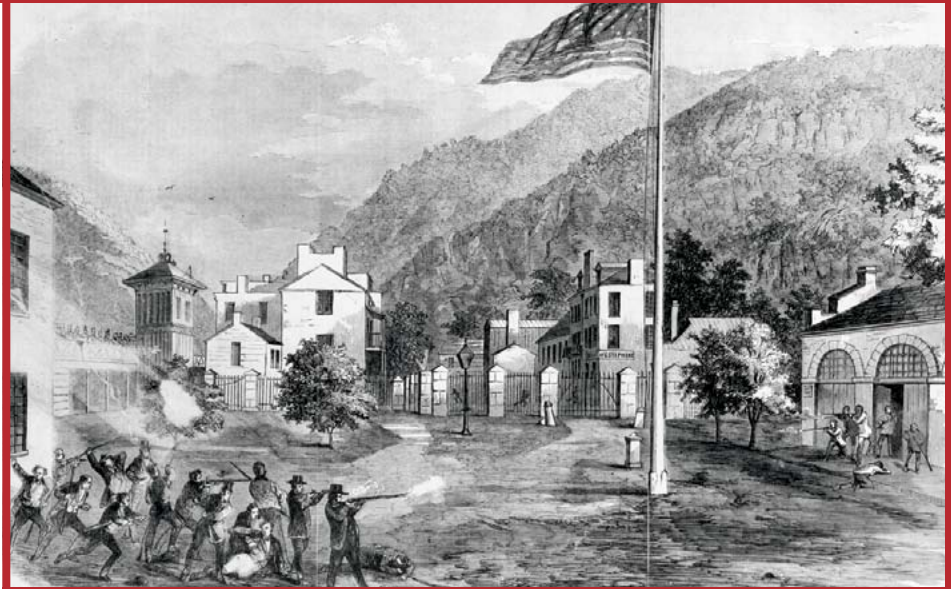
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when the whole truth can be told about this matter without prejudice to either the living or the dead. I shall however allow myself little prominence in these disclosures. Your interests, like mine, are in the all-commanding figure of the story, and to him I consecrate the hour. His zeal in the cause of my race was far greater than mine—it was as the burning sun to my taper light—mine was bounded by time, his stretched away to the boundless shores of eternity. I could live for the slave, but he could die for him. The crown of martyrdom is high, far beyond the reach of ordinary mortals, and yet happily no special greatness or superior mortal excellence is necessary to discern and in some measure appreciate a truly great soul. Cold, calculating and unspiritual as most of us are, we are not wholly insensible to real greatness; and when we are brought in contact with a man of commanding mold, towering high and alone above the millions, free from all conventional fetters, true to his own moral convictions, a “law unto himself,” ready to suffer misconstruction, ignoring torture and death for what he believes to be right, we are compelled to do him homage.

In the stately shadow, in the sublime presence of such a soul I find myself standing to-night; and how to do it reverence, how to do it justice, how to honor the dead with due regard to the living, has been a matter of most anxious solicitude.

Much has been said of John Brown, much that is wise and beautiful, but in looking over what may be called the John Brown literature, I have been little assisted with material, and even less encouraged with any hope of success in treating the subject. Scholarship, genius and devotion have hastened with poetry and eloquence, story and song to this simple altar of human virtue, and have retired dissatisfied and distressed with the thinness and poverty of their offerings, as I shall with mine.

The difficulty in doing justice to the life and character of such a man is not altogether due to the quality of the zeal,



Harper's Ferry insurrection—the battle ground—Captain Alberts' party attacking the insurgents—view of the railroad bridge, the engine house and the village.

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people.” Though more than twenty years have rolled between us and the Harper's Ferry raid, though since then the armies of the nation have found it necessary to do on a large scale what John Brown attempted to do on a small one, and the great captain who fought his way through slavery has filled with honor the Presidential chair, we yet stand too near the days of slavery, and the life and times of John Brown, to see clearly the true martyr and hero that he was and rightly to estimate the value of the man and his works. Like the great and good of all ages—the men born in advance of their times, the men whose bleeding footprints attest the immense cost of reform, and show us the long and dreary spaces, between the luminous points in the progress of mankind,—this our noblest American hero must wait the polishing wheels of after-coming centuries to make his glory more manifest, and his worth more generally acknowledged. Such instances are abundant and familiar. If we go back four and twenty centuries, to the stately city of Athens, and search among her architectural splendor and her miracles of art for the Socrates of today, and as he stands in history, we shall find ourselves perplexed and

government, noble in life, orderly and beautiful in society. That which time has done for other great men of his class, that will time certainly do for John Brown. The brightest gems shine at first with subdued light, and the strongest characters are subject to the same limitations. Under the influence of adverse education and hereditary bias, few things are more difficult than to render impartial justice. Men hold up their hands to Heaven, and swear they will do justice, but what are oaths against prejudice and against inclination! In the face of high-sounding professions and affirmations we know well how hard it is for a Turk to do justice to a Christian, or for a Christian to do justice to a Jew. How hard for an Englishman to do justice to an Irishman, for an Irishman to do justice to an Englishman, harder still for an American tainted by slavery to do justice to the Negro or the Negro's friends. “John Brown,” said the late John A. Andrew, “was right.” It is easy to perceive the sources of these two opposite judgements: the one was the verdict of slave-holding and panic-stricken Virginia, the other was the verdict of the best heart and brain of free old Massachusetts. One was the heated judgement of the passing

# The Father of American Terrorism

## DID JOHN BROWN FAIL?

— CONTINUED —

and passionate hour, and the other was the calm, clear, unimpeachable judgement of the broad, illimitable future.

There is, however, one aspect of the present subject quite worthy of notice, for it makes the hero of Harper's Ferry in some degree an exception to the general rules to which I have just now adverted. Despite the hold which slavery had at that time on the country, despite the popular prejudice against the Negro, despite the shock which the first alarm occasioned, almost from the first John Brown received a large measure of sympathy and appreciation. New England recognized in him the spirit which brought the pilgrims to Plymouth rock and hailed him as a martyr and saint. True he had broken the law, true he had struck for a despised people, true he had crept upon his foe stealthily, like a wolf upon the fold, and had dealt his blow in the dark whilst his enemy slept, but with all this and more to disturb the moral sense, men discerned in him the greatest and best qualities known to human nature, and pronounced him "good." Many consented to his death, and then went home and taught their children to sing his praise as one whose "soul is marching on" through the realms of endless bliss. One element in explanation of this somewhat anomalous circumstance will probably be found in the troubled times which immediately succeeded, for "when judgements are abroad in the world, men learn righteousness."

The country had before this learned the value of Brown's heroic character. He had shown boundless courage and skill in dealing with the enemies of liberty in Kansas. With men so few, and means so small, and odds against him so great, no captain ever surpassed him in achievements, some of which seem almost beyond belief. With only eight men in that bitter war, he met, fought and captured Henry Clay Pate, with twenty-five well armed and mounted men. In this memorable encounter, he selected his ground so wisely, handled his men so skillfully, and attacked the enemy

so vigorously, that they could neither run nor fight, and were therefore compelled to surrender to a force less than one-third their own. With just thirty men on another important occasion during the same border war, he met and vanquished four hundred Missourians under the command of Gen. Read. These men had come into the territory under an oath never to return to their homes till they had stamped out the last vestige of free State spirit in Kansas; but a brush with old Brown took this high conceit out of them, and they were glad to get off upon any terms, without stopping to stipulate. With less than one hundred men to defend the town of Lawrence, he offered to lead them and give battle to fourteen hundred men on the banks of the Waukerusia river, and was much vexed when his offer was refused by Gen. Jim Lane and others to whom the

*With these eighteen men,  
Brown held that large  
community firmly in his  
grasp for thirty long hours.*

defense of the town was confided. Before leaving Kansas, he went into the border of Missouri, and liberated a dozen slaves in a single night, and, in spite of slave laws and marshals, he brought these people through a half dozen States, and landed them safely in Canada. With eighteen men this man shook the whole social fabric of Virginia. With eighteen men he overpowered a town of nearly three thousand souls.

With these eighteen men he held that large community firmly in his grasp for thirty long hours. With these eighteen men he rallied in a single night fifty slaves to his standard, and made prisoners of an equal number of the slave-holding class. With these eighteen men he defied the power and bravery of a dozen of the best militia companies that Virginia could send against him. Now, when slavery struck, as it certainly did strike, at the life of the country, it was

not the fault of John Brown that our rulers did not at first know how to deal with it. He had already shown us the weak side of the rebellion, had shown us where to strike and how. It was not from lack of native courage that Virginia submitted for thirty long hours and at last was relieved only by Federal troops; but because the attack was made on the side of her conscience and thus armed her against herself. She beheld at her side the sullen brow of a black Ireland. When John Brown proclaimed emancipation to the slaves of Maryland and Virginia he added to his war power the force of a moral earthquake. Virginia felt all her strong-ribbed mountains to shake under the heavy tread of armed insurgents. Of his army of nineteen her conscience made an army of nineteen hundred.

Another feature of the times, worthy of notice, was the effect of this blow upon the country at large. At the first moment we were stunned and bewildered. Slavery had so benumbed the moral sense of the nation, that it never suspected the possibility of an explosion like this, and it was difficult for Captain Brown to get himself taken for what he really was. Few could seem to comprehend that freedom to the slaves was his only object. If you will go back with me to that time you will find that the most curious and contradictory versions of the affair were industriously circulated, and those which were the least rational and true seemed to command the readiest belief. In the view of some, it assumed tremendous proportions. To such it was nothing less than a wide-sweeping rebellion to overthrow the existing government, and construct another upon its ruins, with Brown for its President and Commander-in-Chief; the proof of this was found in the old man's carpet-bag in the shape of a constitution for a new Republic, an instrument which in reality had been executed to govern the conduct of his men in the mountains. Smaller and meaner natures saw in it nothing higher than a purpose to plunder. To them John Brown and his men were a gang of



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## DID JOHN BROWN FAIL?

— CONTINUED —

desperate robbers, who had learned by some means that [the] government had sent a large sum of money to Harper's Ferry to pay off the workmen in its employ there, and they had gone thence to fill their pockets from this money. The fact is, that outside of a few friends, scattered in different parts of the country, and the slaveholders of Virginia, few persons understood the significance of the hour. That a man might do something very audacious and desperate for money, power or fame, was to the general apprehension quite possible; but, in face of plainly-written law, in face of constitutional guarantees protecting each State against domestic violence, in face of a nation of forty million of people, that nineteen men could invade a great State to liberate a despised and hated race, was to the average intellect and conscience, too monstrous for belief. In this respect the vision of Virginia was clearer than that of the nation. Conscious of her guilt and therefore full of suspicion, sleeping on pistols for pillows, startled at every unusual sound, constantly fearing and expecting a repetition of the Nat Turner insurrection, she at once understood the meaning, if not the magnitude of the affair.

It was this understanding which caused her to raise the lusty and imploring cry to the Federal government for help, and it was not till he who struck the blow had fully explained his motives and object, that the incredulous nation in any wise comprehended the true spirit of the raid, or of its commander. Fortunate for his memory, fortunate for the brave men associated with him, fortunate for the truth of history, John Brown survived the saber gashes, bayonet wounds and bullet holes, and was able, though covered with blood, to tell his own story and make his own defense. Had he with all his men, as might have been the case, gone down in the shock of battle, the world would have had no true basis for its judgement, and one of the most heroic efforts ever witnessed in behalf of liberty would have been confounded

with base and selfish purposes. When, like savages, the Wises, the Vallandingham, the Washingtons, the Stuarts and others stood around the fallen and bleeding hero, and sought by torturing questions to wring from his supposed dying lips some word by which to soil the sublime undertaking, by implicating Gerrit Smith, Joshua R. Giddings, Dr. S.G. Howe, G.L. Stearns, Edwin Morton, Frank Sanborn, and other prominent Anti-slavery men, the brave old man, not only avowed his object to be the emancipation of the slaves, but serenely and proudly announced himself as solely

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responsible for all that had happened. Though some thought of his own life might at such a moment have seemed natural and excusable, he showed none, and scornfully rejected the idea that he acted as the agent or instrument of any man or set of men. He admitted that he had friends and sympathizers, but to his own head he invited all the bolts of slave-holding wrath and fury, and welcomed them to do their worst. His manly courage and self-forgetful nobleness were not lost upon the crowd about him, nor upon the country. They drew applause from his bitterest enemies.

Said Henry A. Wise, "He is the gamest man I ever met." "He was kind and humane to his prisoners," said Col. Lewis Washington.

To the outward eye of men, John Brown was a criminal, but to their inward eye he was a just man and true. His deeds might be disowned, but the spirit which made those deeds possible was worthy highest honor. It has been often asked, why did not Virginia spare the life of this man? why did she not avail herself of this grand opportunity to add to her other glory that of a lofty magnanimity? Had they spared the good old man's life—had they said to him, "You see we have you in our power, and could easily take your life, but we have no desire to hurt you in any way; you have committed a terrible crime against society; you have invaded us at midnight and attacked a sleeping community, but we recognize you as a fanatic, and in some sense instigated by others; and on this ground and others, we release you. Go about your business, and tell those who sent you that we can afford to be magnanimous to our enemies." I say, had Virginia held some such language as this to John Brown, she would have inflicted a heavy blow on the whole Northern abolition movement, one which only the omnipotence of truth and the force of truth would have overcome. I have no doubt Gov. Wise would have done so gladly, but, alas, he was the executive of a State which thought she could not afford such magnanimity. She had that within her bosom which could more safely tolerate the presence of a criminal than a saint, a highway robber than a moral hero. All her hills and valleys were studded with material for a disastrous conflagration, and one spark of the dauntless spirit of Brown might set the whole State in flames. A sense of this appalling liability put an end to every noble consideration. His death was a foregone conclusion, and his trial was simply one of form.

Honor to the brave young Col. Hoyt who hastened from Massachusetts to defend his friend's life at the peril of his own; but there

# The Father of American Terrorism

## DID JOHN BROWN FAIL?

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would have been no hope of success had he been allowed to plead the case. He might have surpassed Choate or Webster in power—a thousand physicians might have sworn that Capt. Brown was insane, it would have been all to no purpose; neither eloquence nor testimony could have prevailed. Slavery was the idol of Virginia, and pardon and life to Brown meant condemnation and death to slavery. He had practically illustrated a truth stranger than fiction, —a truth higher than Virginia had ever known, —a truth more noble and beautiful than Jefferson ever wrote. He had evinced a conception of the sacredness and value of liberty which transcended in sublimity that of her own Patrick Henry and made even his fire-flashing sentiment of “Liberty or Death” seem dark and tame and selfish. Henry loved liberty for himself, but this man loved liberty for all men, and for those most despised and scorned, as well as for those most esteemed and honored. Just here was the true glory of John Brown’s mission. It was not for his own freedom that he was thus ready to lay down his life, for with Paul he could say, “I was born free.” No chain had bound his ankle, no yoke had galled his neck. History has no better illustration of pure, disinterested benevolence. It was not Caucasian for Caucasian—white man for white man; not rich man for rich man, but Caucasian for Ethiopian—white man for black man—rich man for poor man—the man admitted and respected, for the man despised and rejected. “I want you to understand, gentlemen,” he said to his persecutors, “that I respect the rights of the poorest and weakest of the colored people, oppressed by the slave system, as I do those of the most wealthy and powerful.” In this we have the key to the whole life and career of the man. Than in this sentiment humanity has nothing more touching, reason nothing more noble, imagination nothing more sublime; and if we could reduce all the religions of the world to one essence we could find in it nothing more divine. It is much to be regretted

that some great artist, in sympathy with the spirit of the occasion, had not been present when these and similar words were spoken. The situation was thrilling. An old man in the center of an excited and angry crowd, far away from home, in an enemy’s country—with no friend near—overpowered, defeated, wounded, bleeding—covered with reproaches—his brave companions nearly all dead—his two faithful sons stark and cold by his side—reading his death-warrant in his fast-oozing blood and increasing weakness as in the faces of all around him—yet calm, collected, brave, with a heart for any fate—using his supposed dying moments to explain his course and vindicate his cause: such a subject would have been at once an inspiration and a power for one of the grandest historical pictures ever painted.

Apart from his mission  
there was nothing  
remarkable about  
John Brown.

With John Brown, as with every other man fit to die for a cause, the hour of his physical weakness was the hour of his moral strength—the hour of his defeat was the hour of his triumph—the moment of his capture was the crowning victory of his life. With the Alleghany mountains for his pulpit, the country for his church and the whole civilized world for his audience, he was a thousand times more effective as a preacher than as a warrior, and the consciousness of this fact was the secret of his amazing complacency. Mighty with the sword of steel, he was mightier with the sword of the truth, and with this sword he literally swept the horizon. He was more than a match for all the Wises, Masons, Vallandinghams and Washingtons, who could rise against him. They could kill him, but they could not answer him.

In studying the character and works of a great man, it is always desirable to

learn in what he is distinguished from others, and what have been the causes of this difference. Such men as he whom we are now considering, come on to the theater of life only at long intervals. It is not always easy to explain the exact and logical causes that produce them, or the subtle influences which sustain them, at the immense heights where we sometimes find them; but we know that the hour and the man are seldom far apart, and that here, as elsewhere, the demand may, in some mysterious way, regulate the supply. A great iniquity, hoary with age, proud and defiant, tainting the whole moral atmosphere of the country, subjecting both church and state to its control, demanded the startling shock which John Brown seemed especially inspired to give it.

Apart from this mission there was nothing very remarkable about him. He was a wool-dealer, and a good judge of wool, as a wool-dealer ought to be. In all visible respects he was a man like unto other men. No outward sign of Kansas or Harper’s Ferry was about him. As I knew him, he was an even-tempered man, neither morose, malicious nor misanthropic, but kind, amiable, courteous, and gentle in his intercourse with men. His words were very few, well chosen and forcible. He was a good business man, and a good neighbor. A good friend, a good citizen, a good husband and father: a man apparently in every way calculated to make a smooth and pleasant path for himself through the world. He loved society, he loved little children, he liked music, and was fond of animals. To no one was the world more beautiful or life more sweet. How then as I have said shall we explain his apparent indifference to life? I can find but one answer, and that is, his intense hatred to oppression. I have talked with many men, but I remember none, who seemed so deeply excited upon the subject of slavery as he. He would walk the room in agitation at mention of the word. He saw the evil through no mist or haze, but in a light of infinite brightness, which left no line of its ten thousand

# The Father of American Terrorism

## DID JOHN BROWN FAIL?

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horrors out of sight. Law, religion, learning, were interposed in its behalf in vain. His law in regard to it was that which Lord Brougham described, as “the law above all the enactments of human codes, the same in all time, the same throughout the world—the law unchangeable and eternal—the law written by the finger of God on the human heart—that law by which property in man is, and ever must remain, a wild and guilty phantasy.”

Against truth and right, legislative enactments were to his mind mere cobwebs—the pompous emptiness of human pride—the pitiful outbreathings of human nothingness. He used to say “whenever there is a right thing to be done, there is a ‘thus saith the lord’ that it shall be done.” It must be admitted that Brown assumed tremendous responsibility in making war upon the peaceful people of Harper’s Ferry, but it must be remembered also that in his eye a slave-holding community could not be peaceable, but was, in the nature of the case, in one incessant state of war. To him such a community was not more sacred than a band of robbers: it was the right of any one to assault it by day or night. He saw no hope that slavery would ever be abolished by moral or political means: “he knew,” he said, “the proud and hard hearts of the slave-holders, and that they never would consent to give up their slaves, till they felt a big stick about their heads.”

It was five years before this event at Harper’s Ferry, while the conflict between freedom and slavery was waxing hotter and hotter with every hour, that the blundering statesmanship of the National Government repealed the Missouri compromise, and thus launched the territory of Kansas as a prize to be battled for between the North and the South. The remarkable part taken in this contest by Brown has been already referred to, and it doubtless helped to prepare him for the final tragedy, and though it did not by any means originate the plan, it confirmed him in it and hastened its execution.

During his four years’ service in Kansas it was my good fortune to see him often. On his trips to and from the territory he sometimes stopped several days at my house, and at one time several weeks. It was on this last occasion that liberty had been victorious in Kansas, and he felt that he must hereafter devote himself to what he considered his larger work. It was the theme of all his conversation, filling his nights with dreams and his days with visions. An incident of his boyhood may explain, in some measure, the intense abhorrence he felt to slavery. He had for some reason been sent into the State of Kentucky, where he made the acquaintance of a slave boy, about his own age, of whom he became very fond. For some petty offense this boy was one day subjected to a brutal beating. The blows

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were dealt with an iron shovel and fell fast and furiously upon his slender body. Born in a free State and unaccustomed to such scenes of cruelty, young Brown’s pure and sensitive soul revolted at the shocking spectacle and at that early age he swore eternal hatred to slavery. After years never obliterated the impression, and he found in this early experience an argument against contempt for small things. It is true that the boy is the father of the man. From the acorn comes the oak. The impression of a horse’s foot in the sand suggested that art of printing. The fall of an apple intimated the law of gravitation. A word dropped in the woods of Vincennes, by royal hunters, gave Europe and the world a “William the Silent,” and a thirty years’ war. The beating of a Hebrew bondsman,

by an Egyptian, created a Moses, and the infliction of a similar outrage on a helpless slave boy in our own land may have caused, forty years afterward, a John Brown and a Harper’s Ferry Raid.

Most of us can remember some event or incident which has at some time come to us, and made itself a permanent part of our lives. Such an incident came to me in the year 1847. I had then the honor of spending a day and a night under the roof of a man, whose character and conversation made a very deep impression on my mind and heart; and as the circumstance does not lie entirely out of the range of our present observations, you will pardon for a moment a seeming digression. The name of the person alluded to had been several times mentioned to me, in a tone that made me curious to see him and to make his acquaintance. He was a merchant, and our first meeting was at his store—a substantial brick building, giving evidence of a flourishing business. After a few minutes’ detention here, long enough for me to observe the neatness and order of the place, I was conducted by him to his residence where I was kindly received by his family as an expected guest. I was a little disappointed at the appearance of this man’s house, for after seeing his fine store, I was prepared to see a fine residence; but this logic was entirely contradicted by the facts. The house was a small, wooden one, on a black street in a neighborhood of laboring men and mechanics, respectable enough, but not just the spot where one would expect to find the home of a successful merchant. Plain as was the outside, the inside was plainer. Its furniture might have pleased a Spartan. It would take longer to tell what was not in it, than what was; no sofas, no cushions, no curtains, no caprets, no easy rocking chairs inviting to enervation or rest or repose. My first meal passed under the misnomer of tea. It was none of your tea and toast sort, but potatoes and cabbage, and beef soup; such a meal as a man might

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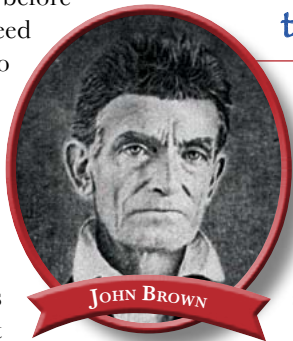
## DID JOHN BROWN FAIL?

— CONTINUED —

relish after following the plough all day, or after performing a forced march of a dozen miles [ov]er rough ground in frosty weather. Innocent of paint, veneering, varnish or tablecloth, the table announced itself unmistakably and honestly pine and of the plainest workmanship. No hired help passed from kitchen to dining room, staring in amazement at the colored man at the white man's table. The mother, daughters and sons did the serving, and did it well. I heard no apology for doing their own work; they went through it as if used to it, untouched by any thought of degradation or impropriety. Supper over, the boys helped to clear the table and wash the dishes. This style of housekeeping struck me as a little odd. I mention it because household management is worthy of thought. A house is more than brick and mortar, wood or paint; this to me at least was. In its plainness it was a truthful reflection of its inmates; no disguises, no illusions, no make-believes here, but stern truth and solid purpose breathed in all its arrangements. I was not long in company with the master of this house before I discovered that he was indeed the master of it, and likely to become mine too, if I staid long with him. He fulfilled St. Paul's idea of the head of the family—his wife believed in him, and his children observed him with reverence. Whenever he spoke, his words commanded earnest attention. His arguments which I ventured at some points to oppose, seemed to convince all, his appeals touched all, and his will impressed all. Certainly I never felt myself in the presence of a stronger religious influence than while in this house. "God and duty, God and duty," run like a thread of gold through all his utterances, and his family supplied a ready "Amen." In person he was lean and sinewy, of the best New England mould, built for times of trouble, fitted to

grapple with the flintiest hardships. Clad in plain American woolen, shod in boots of cowhide leather, and wearing a cravat of the same substantial material, under six feet high, less than one hundred and fifty lbs. in weight, aged about fifty, he presented a figure straight and symmetrical as a mountain pine. His bearing was singularly impressive. His head was not large, but compact and high. His hair was coarse, strong, slightly gray and closely trimmed and grew close to his forehead. His face was smoothly shaved and revealed a strong square mouth, supported by a broad and prominent chin. His eyes were clear and grey, and in conversation they alternated with tears and fire. When on the street, he moved with a long springing, race-horse step, absorbed by his own reflections, neither seeking nor shunning observation.

His eyes were clear  
and grey, and in  
conversation they  
alternated with  
tears and fire.



Such was the man whose name I heard uttered in whispers—such was the house in which he lived—such were his family and household management—and such was Captain John Brown.

He said to me at this meeting, that he had invited me to his house for the especial purpose of laying before me his plan for the speedy emancipation of my race. He seemed to apprehend opposition on my part as he opened the subject and touched my vanity by saying, that he had observed my course at home and abroad, and wanted my cooperation. He said he had been for the last thirty years looking for colored men to whom he could safely reveal his secret, and had almost despaired, at times, of finding such,

but that now he was encouraged for he saw heads rising up in all directions, to whom he thought **hecould** with safety impart his plan. As this plan then lay in his mind it was very simple, and had much to commend it. It did not, as was supposed by many, contemplate a general rising among the slaves, and a general slaughter of the slave masters (an insurrection he thought would only defeat the object), but it did contemplate the creating of an armed force which should act in the very heart of the South. He was **notaverse** to the shedding of blood, and thought the practice of carrying arms would be a good one for the colored people to adopt, as it would give them a sense of manhood. No people he said could have self-respect or be respected who would not fight for their freedom. He called my attention to a large map of the U. States, and pointed out to me the far-reaching Alleghanies, stretching away from the borders of New York into the Southern States. "These mountains," he said, "are the basis of my plan. God has given the strength of these hills to freedom; they were placed here to aid the **emancipationof** your race; they are full of natural forts, where one man for defense would be equal to a hundred for attack; they are also full of good hiding places where a large number of men could be concealed **andbaffle** and elude pursuit for a long time. I know these mountains well and could take a body of men into them and keep them there in spite of all the efforts of Virginia to dislodge me, and drive me out. I would take at first about twenty-five picked men and begin on a small scale, supply them arms and ammunition, post them in squads of fives on a line of twenty-five miles, these squads to bust themselves for a time **ingathering** recruits from the surrounding farms, seeking and selecting the most restless and daring." He saw that in this part of the work the utmost care must be used to guard against treachery **anddisclosure**; only the most conscientious and skillful should be sent on this perilous duty. With care and enterprise he thought he could soon gather a force of

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## DID JOHN BROWN FAIL?

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one hundred hardy men, men who would be **contentto** lead the free and adventurous life to which he proposed to train them. When once properly drilled, and each had found the place for which he was best suited, they would begin work in earnest; they **wouldrun** off the slaves in large numbers, retain the strong and brave ones in the mountains, and send the weak and timid ones to the North by the underground Railroad; his operations would be enlarged with increasing numbers and would not be confined to one locality. Slave-holders should in some cases be approached at midnight and told to give up their slaves and to let them have their best horses to ride **awayupon**. Slavery was a state of war, he said, to which the slaves were unwilling parties and consequently they had a right to anything necessary to their peace and freedom. He would shed no blood and **wouldavoid** a fight except in self-defense, when he would of course do his best. He believed this movement would weaken slavery in two ways—first by making slave property insecure, it would **becomeundesireable**; and secondly it would keep the anti-slavery agitation alive and public attention fixed upon it, and thus lead to the adoption of measures to abolish the evil altogether. He held that there was need of something startling to prevent the agitation of the question from dying out; that slavery had come near being abolished in Virginia by the Nat. Turner insurrection, and he thought his method would speedily put an end to it, both in Maryland and Virginia. The trouble was to get the right men to start with and money enough to equip them. He had adopted the simple and economical mode of living to which I have referred with a view to save money for this purpose. This was said in no boastful tone, for he felt that he had delayed already too long and had no room to boast either his zeal or his self-denial.

From 8 o'clock in the evening till 3 in the morning, Capt. Brown and I sat face to face, he arguing in favor of his plan, and I finding all the objections I could against

it. Now mark! this meeting **ofours** was full twelve years before the strike at Harper's Ferry. He had been watching and waiting all that time for suitable heads to rise or "pop up" as he said among the sable millions **inwhom** he could confide; hence forty years had passed between his thought and his act. Forty years, though not a long time in the life of a nation, is a long time in the life of a man; and here forty long years, this man was struggling with this one idea; like Moses he was forty years in the wilderness. Youth, manhood, middle age had come and gone; two marriages had been consummated, twenty children had called him father; and through all the storms and vicissitudes of busy life, this one thought, like the angel in the burning bush, had confronted him with its blazing light, bidding him on to his work. Like Moses he had made excuses, and as

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with Moses his excuses were overruled. Nothing should postpone further what was to him a divine command, the performance of which seemed to him his only apology for existence. He **oftensaid** to me, though life was sweet to him, he would willingly lay it down for the freedom of my people; and on one occasion he added, that he had already lived about as long as most men, since he had sleptless, and if he should now lay down his life the loss would not be great, for in fact he knew no better use for it. During his last visit to us in Rochester there appeared in the newspapers a touching story connected with the horrors of the Sepoy War in British India. A Scotch missionary and his family were in the hands of the enemy, and were to be massacred the next morning. During the night, when they had given up every hope of rescue,

suddenly the wife insisted that relief would come. Placing her ear close to the ground she declared she heard the Slogan—the Scotch war song. For long hours in the night no member of the family could hear the advancing music but herself. "Dinna ye hear it? Dinna ye hear it?" she would say, but they could not hear it. As the morning slowly dawned a **Scotchregiment** was found encamped indeed about them, and they were saved from the threatened slaughter. This circumstance, coming at such a time, gave Capt. Brown a new word of cheer. He would come to the table in the morning his countenance fairly illuminated, saying that he had heard the Slogan, and he would add, "Dinna ye hear it? Dinna ye hear it?" Alas! like the Scotch missionary I was obliged to say "No." Two weeks prior to the meditated attack, Capt. Brown summoned me to meet him in an old stone quarry on the Conocochequi river, near the town of Chambersburgh, Penn. His arms and ammunition were stored in that town and were to be moved on to Harper's Ferry. In company with Shields Green I obeyed the summons, and prompt to the hour we met the dear old man, with Kagi, his secretary, at the appointed place. Our meeting was in some sense a council of war. We spent the Saturday and succeeding Sunday in conference on the question, whether the desperate step should then be taken, or the old plan as already described should be carried out. He was for boldly striking at Harper's Ferry at once and running the risk of getting into the mountains afterwards. I was for avoiding Harper's Ferry altogether. Shields Green and Mr. Kagi remained silent listeners throughout. It is needless to repeat here what was said, after what has happened. Suffice it, that after all I could say, I saw that my old friend had resolved on his own course and that it was idle to parley. I told him finally that it was impossible for me to join him. I could see Harper's Ferry only as a trap of steel, and ourselves in the wrong side of it. He regretted my decision and we parted.

# The Father of American Terrorism

## DID JOHN BROWN FAIL?

— CONTINUED —

Thus far, I have spoken exclusively of Capt. Brown. Let me say a word or two of his brave and devoted men, and first of Shields Green. He was a fugitive slave from Charleston, South Carolina, and had attested his love of liberty by escaping from slavery and making his way through many dangers to Rochester, where he had lived in my family, and where he met the man with whom he went to the scaffold. **Isaid** to him, as I was about to leave, “Now Shields, you have heard our discussion. If in view of it, you do not wish to stay, you have but to say so, and you can go back with me.” He answered, **“Ib’l’ev**e I’ll go down wid de old man;” and go with him he did, into the fight, and to the gallows, and bore himself as grandly as any of the number. At the moment when Capt. Brown was surrounded, and all made his escape as Osborne Anderson did, but when asked to do so, he made the same answer he did at Chambersburg, “I b’l’ev I’ll go down wid de ole man.” When in prison at Charlestown, and he was not allowed to see his old friend, his fidelity to him was in no wise weakened, and no complaint against Brown could be extorted from him by those who talked with him.

If a monument should be erected to the memory of John Brown, as there ought to be, the form and name of Shields Green should have a conspicuous place upon it. It is a remarkable fact, that in this **small company** of men, but one showed any sign of weakness or regret for what he did or attempted to do. Poor Cook broke down and sought to save his life by representing that he had been deceived, and allured by false promises. But Stephens, Hazlett and Green went to their doom like the heroes they were, without a murmur, without a regret, believing alike in their captain and their cause.

For the disastrous termination of this invasion, several causes have been assigned. It has been said that Capt. Brown found it necessary to strike before he was ready; that men had promised to join him from the North who failed to arrive; that the cowardly negro did not rally to his

support as he expected, but the true cause as stated by himself, contradicts all these theories, and from his statement there is **no appeal**. Among the questions put to him by Mr. Vallandigham after his capture were the following: “Did you expect a general uprising of the slaves in case of your success?” To this he answered, “No, sir, nor did I wish it. I expected to gather strength from time to time and then to set them free.” “Did you expect to hold possession here until then?” Answer, **“Well, probably** I had quite a different idea. I do not know as I ought to reveal my plans. I am here wounded and a prisoner because I foolishly permitted myself to be so. You overstate your strength when **you suppose** I could have been taken if I had not allowed it. I was too tardy after commencing the open attack in delaying my movements through Monday night and up to the time of the arrival of **government troops**. It was all because of my desire to spare the feelings of my prisoners and their families.”

But the question is, Did John Brown fail? He certainly did fail to get out of Harper’s Ferry before being beaten down by United States soldiers; he did fail to save his own life, and to lead a **liberating army** into the mountains of Virginia. But he did not go to Harper’s Ferry to save his life. The true question is, Did John Brown draw his sword against slavery and thereby lose his life in vain? and to this **I answer** ten thousand times, No! No man fails, or can fail who so grandly gives himself and all he has to a righteous cause. No man, who in his hour of extremest need, when on his way to meet an **ignominious death**, could so forget himself as to stop and kiss a little child, one of the hated race for whom he was about to die, could by any possibility fail. Did John Brown fail? Ask Henry A. Wise in whose house



Shields Green (center) awaiting his 1859 trial after the Harpers Ferry raid.

**less than** two years after, a school for the emancipated slaves was taught. Did John Brown fail? Ask James M. Mason, the author of the inhuman fugitive slave bill, who was cooped up in Fort Warren, as a traitorless man two years from the time that he stood over the prostrate body of John Brown. Did John Brown fail? Ask Clement C. Vallandigham, one other of the inquisitorial party; for he too went down in **the tremendous** whirlpool created by the powerful hand of this bold invader. If John Brown did not end the war that ended slavery, he did at least begin the war that ended slavery. If we look over the dates, **places and** men, for which this honor is claimed, we shall find that not Carolina, but Virginia—not Fort Sumter, but Harper’s Ferry and the arsenal—not Col. Anderson, but John Brown, began the war that ended American slavery and made this a free Republic. Until this blow was struck, the prospect for freedom was dim, shadowy and uncertain. The irrepressible conflict was one of words, votes **and compromises**. When John Brown stretched forth his arm the sky was cleared. The time for compromises was gone—the armed hosts of freedom stood face to face over the chasm of a broken Union—and the clash of arms was at hand. The South staked all upon getting possession of the Federal Government, and failing to do that, drew the sword of rebellion and thus made her own, and not Brown’s, the lost cause of the century. ★

# The Father of American Terrorism

## GLORY HALLY, HALLELUJAH! OR THE JOHN BROWN SONG

H. DE MARSAN

54 CHATHAM STREET, N. Y. [N. D.]

<http://memory.loc.gov/rbc/amss/as2/as201870/001a.tif>

### JOHN BROWN'S SONG

John Brown's body lies a mouldering in the grave,  
John Brown's body lies a mouldering in the grave,  
John Brown's body lies a mouldering in the grave.  
His soul's marching on!

#### CHORUS:

Glory Hally, Hallelujah! Glory Hally, Hallelujah!  
Glory Hally, Hallelujah!  
His soul's marching on!

He's gone to be a soldier in the army of our Lord,  
He's gone to be a soldier in the army of our Lord.  
He's gone to be a soldier in the army of our Lord.  
His soul's marching on!

#### CHORUS:

Glory Hally, Hallelujah! Glory Hally, Hallelujah!  
Glory Hally, Hallelujah!  
His soul's marching on!

John Brown's knapsack is  
strapped upon his back,  
John Brown's knapsack is  
strapped upon his back,  
John Brown's knapsack is  
strapped upon his back,  
His soul's marching on!

#### CHORUS:

Glory Hally, Hallelujah! Glory Hallelujah!  
Glory Hally, Hallelujah!  
His soul's marching on!

His pet lambs will meet him on the way, -  
His pet lambs will meet him on the way, -  
His pet lambs will meet him on the way. -  
They go marching on!

#### CHORUS:

Glory Hally, Hallelujah! Glory Hally Hallelujah!  
Glory Hally, Hallelujah!  
They go marching on!

They will hang Jeff Davis to a tree!  
They will hang Jeff Davis to a tree!  
They will hang Jeff Davis to a tree!  
As they march along!

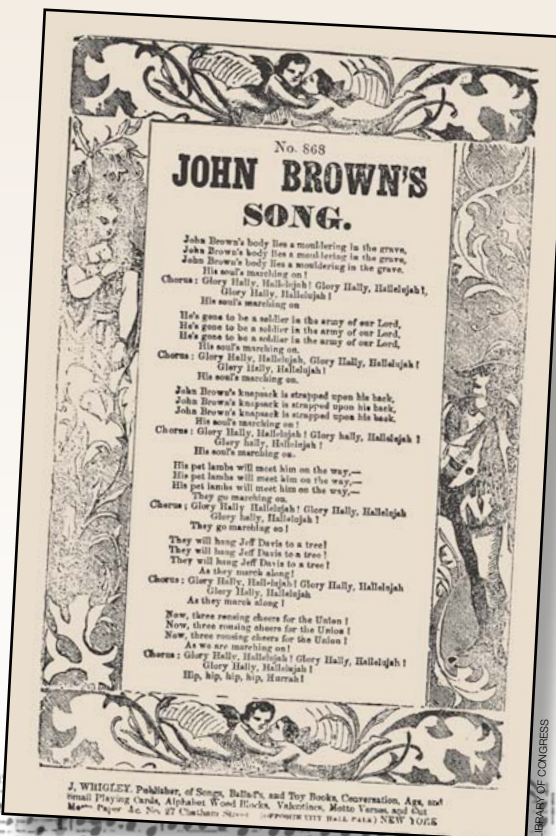
#### CHORUS:

Glory Hally, Hallelujah! Glory Hally, Hallelujah  
Glory Hally, Hallelujah!  
As they march along!

Now, three rousing cheers for the Union!  
Now, three rousing cheers for the Union!  
Now, three rousing cheers for the Union!  
As we are marching on!

#### CHORUS:

Glory Hally, Hallelujah! Glory Hally, Hallelujah!  
Glory Hally, Hallelujah!  
Hip, hip, hip, hip Hurrah!



# The Father of American Terrorism

## JOHN BROWN'S ENTRANCE INTO HELL (LYRICS)

BALT. | MARCH 1863 | C.T.A. PRINTER

<http://memory.loc.gov/rbc/amss/as1/as106730/001a.tif>

### JOHN BROWN'S ENTRANCE INTO HELL

Come gentle muse and touch a strain,  
'Twill echo back the sound again—  
On scenes that pass'd we now must dwell,  
When old John Brown arrived in Hell.

When Pluto heard old Brown was hung  
Old Tophet with Hosannas rung;  
For well they knew the lying thief,  
Would make for them an honored chief.

Brown to receive they now prepare,  
All eager in the joy to share;  
Old Satan from his throne came down  
And left his seat for Old John Brown

Not long, indeed, for him they wait,  
For soon he thunder'd at the gate.  
"Come in," says Pluto, "Quickly come,  
You're welcome to your fiery home."

Three cheers roll'd forth in accents brief  
To hail the Abolition chief—  
Old John chim'd in, and thank the Fates—  
He'd safely passed the pearly gates.

While Arnold held him by the hand.  
Old Satan took the Speaker's stand—  
"Silence," cried he, "Now all sit down,  
And hear me welcome brother Brown."

"You're welcome, John, to your reward,  
You've cheated Riddle and the Lord—  
Though pearly gates wide open flow,  
They did not catch my servant true.

As oft you've murdered, lied and stole,  
It did rejoice my burning soul;  
You've run your length in earth's career,  
And we are pleased to see you here.

You'll take your seat at my left hand,  
Why I do this you'll understand;  
not surprised, when I tell you,  
Old Abraham is coming too.

on my right, that vacant chair,  
since for him I did prepare—  
soon I know that he will come—  
rece is almost run.

John at my left, Abe at my right,  
We'll give the heavenly hosts a fight;  
A triune group we then shall be,  
Yes, three in one and one in three.

Abe's Cabinet, 'tis very true,  
Will soon knock here as loud as you—  
In short, the negroizing clan,  
Are traveling here unto a man.

I shall protest, most long and loud,  
'Gainst taking in the motley crowd—  
For well I know they'd me dethrone,  
And swear that Tophet was their own.

Let Sumner, Stevens, and their host,  
When they on earth give up the ghost—  
Unto a lower hell appear;  
We have no room for them up here.

The Clergy, too, I much do fear.  
Attraction's law will draw them here—  
Their earthly teachings—though I tell,  
Are doctrines long since preached, In hell.

They, too, must find a lower home,  
For hither sure they shall not come—  
We are crowded now in every spot,  
Save here and there a vacant lot.

These I've reserved through all our fights,;  
For those who have pre-emption rights;  
That corner lot's for Backbone Tod,  
A renegade accursed of God.

The traitor here from his own place  
Can view the scenes at Fortress Chase—  
Laugh at the woes of his old friends,  
Till his curs'd life in horror ends.

There's other traitors I could tell,  
They are too mean to come to hell—  
So let each go and hunt his hole,  
For green backs here won't pay their toll.

And now, O! John, on earth oppress'd,  
You are with us a welcome guest;  
On earth you played our part full well,  
So now with us forever dwell.

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Mass., stetch, 1855.

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C. T. A., Printer.

