

EXCERPTS from: THE LIFE, TRIAL AND EXECUTION OF CAPTAIN JOHN BROWN KNOWN AS "OLD BROWN OF OSSAWATOMIE," WITH A FULL ACCOUNT OF THE ATTEMPTED INSURRECTION AT HARPER'S FERRY.

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One of that ubiquitous class of persevering inquirers known as Reporters visited Harper's Ferry on the 18th and 19th of October, and was present at an interview between Senator Mason, Congressman Vallandigham, and the prisoner, Brown. The Reporter writes as follows: . . .

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Mr. Vallandigham--Will you answer this: Did you talk with Giddings about your expedition here?

Mr. Brown--No, I won't answer that; because a denial of it I would not make, and to make any affirmation of it I should be a great dunce.

Mr. Vallandigham--Have you had any correspondence with parties at the North on the subject of this movement?

Mr. Brown--I have had correspondence.

A Bystander--Do you consider this a religious movement?

Mr. Brown--It is, in my opinion, the greatest service a man can render to God.

Bystander--Do you consider yourself an instrument in the hands of Providence?

Mr. Brown--I do.

Bystander--Upon what principle do you justify your acts?

Mr. Brown--Upon the golden rule. I pity the poor in bondage that have none to help them; that is why I am here; not to gratify any personal animosity, revenge or vindictive spirit. It is my sympathy with the oppressed and the wronged, that are as good as you and as precious in the sight of God. . . .

Bystander--Certainly. But why take the slaves against their will?

Mr. Brown--I never did.

Bystander--You did in one instance, at least.

[Reporter] Stephens, the other wounded prisoner, here said, in ?rm, clear voice--"You are right. In one case, I know the negro wanted to go back." . . .

Mr. Vallandigham (to Mr. Brown)--Who are your advisers in this movement?

Mr. Brown--I cannot answer that. I have numerous sympathizers throughout the entire North.

Mr. Vallandigham--In northern Ohio?

Mr. Brown--No more there than anywhere else; in all the free States.

Mr. Vallandigham--But you are not personally acquainted in southern Ohio?

Mr. Brown--Not very much.

Mr. Vallandigham (to Stephens)--Were you at the Convention last June?

Stephens--I was.

Mr. Vallandigham (to Brown)--You made a speech there?

Mr. Brown--I did.

A Bystander--Did you ever live in Washington city?

Mr. Brown--I did not. I want you to understand, gentlemen--(and, to the reporter of the "Herald ") you may report that--I want you to understand that I respect the rights of the poorest and weakest of colored people, oppressed by the slave system, just as much as I do those of the most wealthy and powerful. That is the idea that has moved me, and that alone. We expect no reward, except the satisfaction of endeavoring to do for those in distress and greatly oppressed, as we would be done by. The cry of distress of the oppressed is my reason, and the only thing that prompted me to come here.

A Bystander--Why did you do it secretly?

Mr. Brown--Because I thought that necessary to success; no other reason.

Bystander--And you think that honorable? Have you read Gerritt Smith's last letter?

Mr. Brown--What letter do you mean?

Bystander--The "New York Herald" of yesterday, in speaking of this affair, mentions a letter in this way:--"Apropos of this exciting news, we recollect a very significant passage in one of Gerritt Smith's letters, published a month or two ago, in which he speaks of the folly of attempting to strike the shackles off the slaves by the force of moral suasion or legal agitation, and predicts that the next movement made in the direction of negro emancipation would be an insurrection in the South."

Mr. Brown--I have not seen the "New York Herald" for some days past; but I presume, from your remark about the gist of the letter, that I should concur with it. I agree with Mr. Smith that moral suasion is hopeless. I don't think the people of the slave States will ever consider the subject of slavery in its true light till some other argument is resorted to than moral suasion.

Mr. Vallandigham--Did you expect a general rising of the slaves in case of your success?

Mr. Brown--No, sir; nor did I wish it. I expected to gather them up from time to time and set them free.

Mr. Vallandigham--Did you expect to hold possession here till then?

Mr. Brown--Well, probably I had quite a different idea. I do not know that I ought to reveal my plans. I am here a prisoner and wounded, because I foolishly allowed myself to be so. You overrate

your strength in supposing 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 I was attacked by the government troops. It was all occasioned by my desire to spare the feelings of my prisoners and their families and the community at large. I had no knowledge of the shooting of the negro (Hayward). . . .

Reporter of The Herald--I do not wish to annoy you; but if you have anything further you would like to say I will report it.

Mr. Brown--I have nothing to say. only that I claim to be here in carrying out a measure I believe perfectly justifiable, and not to act the part of an incendiary or ruffian, but to aid those suffering great wrong. I wish to say, furthermore, that you had better--all you people at the South--prepare yourselves for a settlement of that question that must come up for settlement sooner than you are prepared for. The sooner you are prepared the better. 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. these wounds were inflicted upon me--both sabre cuts on my head and bayonet stabs in different parts of my body--some minutes after I had ceased fighting and had consented to a surrender, for the benefit of others, not for my own. (This statement was vehemently denied by all around.) I believe the major (meaning Lieut. J. B. Stuart, of the United States cavalry), would not have been alive; I could have killed him just as easy as a mosquito when he came in, but I supposed he came in only to receive our surrender. There had been loud and long calls of "surrender" from us--as loud as men could yell--but in the confusion and excitement I suppose we were not heard. I do not think the major, or any one, meant to butcher us after we had surrendered.

[Reporter] An **Officer** here stated that the order to the marines were not to shoot anybody; but when they were fired upon by Brown's men and one of them killed, they were obliged to return the compliment.

[Reporter] **Mr. Brown** insisted that the marines fired first.

An Officer--Why did not you surrender before the attack?

Mr. Brown--I did not think it was my duty or interest to do so. We assured the prisoners that we did not wish to harm them, and they should be set at liberty. I exercised my best judgment, not believing the people would wantonly sacrifice their own fellow-citizens, when we offered to let them go on condition of being allowed to change our position about a quarter of a mile. The prisoners agreed by vote among themselves to pass across the bridge with us. We wanted them only as a sort of guaranty of our own safety; that we should not be fired into. We took them in the first place as hostages and to

keep them from doing any harm. We did kill some men in defending ourselves, but I saw no one fire except directly in self-defence. Our orders were strict not to harm any one not in arms against us.

Q. Brown, suppose you had every nigger in the United States, what would you do with them?

A. Set them free.

Q. Your intention was to carry them off and free them?

A. Not at all.

A Bystander--To set them free would sacrifice the life of every man in this community.

Mr. Brown--I do not think so.

Bystander--I know it. I think you are fanatical.

Mr. Brown--And I think you are fanatical. "Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad," and you are mad.

Q. Was it your only object to free the negroes?

A. Absolutely our only object.

Q. But you demanded and took Col. Washington's silver and watch?

A. Yes; *we intended freely to appropriate the property of slaveholders to carry out our object.* It was for that, and only that, and with no design to enrich ourselves with any plunder whatever.

Q. Did you know Sherrod in Kansas? I understand you killed him.

A. I killed no man except in fair fight; I fought at Black Jack Point and Ossawatomie, and if I killed anybody it was at one of those places.

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