

**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.

Create/Published: New York, R. M. DeWitt [c1859]

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/lst.021/?sp=61>

## Page 59

At 12 o'clock the Court reassembled.

The Grand Jury reported a true bill against the prisoners, and were discharged.

Charles B. Harding, assisted by Andrew Hunter, represents the Commonwealth; and Lawson Botts and his assistant Mr. Green, are counsel for the prisoners.

A true bill was read against each prisoner: . . .

- *First:* For conspiring with negroes to produce insurrection. . . .

The indictment was as follows:

*Judicial Circuit of Virginia, Jefferson County, to wit.*--The Jurors of the Commonwealth of Virginia, in and for the body of the County of Jefferson, . . . upon their oaths do present that John Brown, Aaron C. Stephens, alias Aaron D. Stephens, and Edwin Coppie, white men, and Shields Green and John Copland, free negroes, together with divers other evil-minded and traitorous persons to the Jurors unknown, not having the fear of God before their eyes, but being moved and seduced by the false and malignant counsel of other evil and traitorous persons and the instigations of the devil, did, severally, on the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth days of the month of October, in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and fifty-nine, and on divers other days before and after that time, . . .

feloniously and Traitorously make rebellion and levy war against the said Commonwealth of Virginia, . . . and to effect, carry out, and fulfill their said wicked and treasonable ends and purposes did, then and there, as a band of organized soldiers, attack, seize, and hold a certain part and place within the county and State aforesaid, and within the jurisdiction aforesaid, known and called by the name of Harper's Ferry,

and then and there did forcibly capture, make prisoners of, and detain divers good and loyal citizens of said Commonwealth, to wit: Lewis W. Washington, John M. Allstadt, Archibald M. Kitzmiller, Benjamin J. Mills. John E. P. Dangerfield, Armstead Ball, John Donoho, and did then and there slay and murder, by shooting with firearms, called Sharpe's rifles, divers good and loyal citizens of said Commonwealth, to wit: Thomas Boerly, George W. Turner, Fontaine Beckham, together with Luke Quinn, a soldier of the United States, and Hayward Sheppard, a free negro, and did then and there, in manner aforesaid, wound divers other good and loyal citizens of said Commonwealth, . . .

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and did then and there feloniously and traitorously establish and set up, without authority of the Legislature of the Commonwealth of Virginia, a Government, separate from, and hostile to, the existing Government of said Commonwealth;

and did then and there hold and exercise divers offices under said usurped Government, to wit: the said John Brown as Commander-in-Chief of the military threes, the said Aaron C. Stephens, alias Aaron D. Stephens, as Captain; the said Edwin Coppie, as Lieutenant, and the said Shields Green and John Copland as soldiers;

and did then and there require and compel obedience to said officers;

and then there did hold and profess allegiance and fidelity to said usurped Government;

and under color of the usurped authority aforesaid, did then and there resist forcibly and with warlike arms, the execution of the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia, and with firearms did wound and maim divers other good and loyal citizens of said Commonwealth, to the Jurors unknown, when attempting, with lawful authority, to uphold and maintain said Constitution and laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia, and for the purpose, end, and aim of overthrowing and abolishing the Constitution and laws of said Commonwealth, and establishing in the place thereof, another and different government, and constitution and laws hostile thereto,

did then and there feloniously and traitorously, and in military array Join in open battle and deadly warfare with the civil officers and soldiers in the lawful service of the said Commonwealth of Virginia.

and did then and there show and discharge

**Page 60**

divers guns and pistols, charged with gunpowder and leaden bullets, against and upon divers parties of the militia and volunteers embodied and acting under the command of Colonel Robert W. Baylor, and of Colonel John Thomas Gibson, and other officers of said Commonwealth, with lawful authority to quell and subdue the said John Brown, Aaron C. Stephens, alias Aaron D. Stephens, Edwin Coppie. Shields Green, and John Copland, and other rebels and traitors assembled, organized, and acting with them, as aforesaid, to the evil example of all others in like case offending, and against the peace and dignity of the Commonwealth.

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A true bill was read against each prisoner: . . .

- *Second:* For treason in the Commonwealth; and, . . .

## Page 60

Second Count.--And the Jurors aforesaid, upon their oaths aforesaid, do further present that the said John Brown, Aaron C. Stephens, alias Aaron D. Stephens, Edwin Coppie, Shields Green, and John Copland, severally, on the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth days of October, in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and fifty-nine, in the said County of Jefferson, and Commonwealth of Virginia, and within the jurisdiction of this Court, not having the fear of God before their eyes, but moved and seduced by the false and malignant counsels of others, and the instigations of the devil, did each severally, maliciously, and feloniously conspire with each other, and with a certain John E. Cook, John Kagi, Charles Tidd, and others to the jurors unknown, to induce certain slaves, to wit:--Jim, Sam, Mason, and Catesby. . . . . the slaves, and property of Lewis W. Washington, and Henry, Levi, Ben, Jerry, Phil, George, and Bill, the slaves and property of John H. Allstadt, and other slaves to the Jurors unknown, to rebel and make insurrection against their masters and owners, and against the Government and the Constitution and laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia:

and then and there did maliciously and feloniously advise said slaves, and other slaves to the Jurors unknown, to rebel and make insurrection against their masters and owners, and against the Government, the Constitution and laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia to the evil example of all others in like cases offending and against the peace and dignity of the Commonwealth.

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A true bill was read against each prisoner: . . .

- *Third:* For murder. . . .

The indictment was as follows: . . .

### Page 60

Third Count.--And the Jurors aforesaid, upon their oaths aforesaid, further present that the said John Brown, Aaron C. Stephens, alias Aaron D. Stephens, Edwin Coppie, Shields Green, and John Copland, severally, on the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth days of October, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and fifty-nine, . . . in and upon the bodies of Thomas Boerly, George W. Turner, Fontaine Beckham, Luke Quinn, white persons, and Hayward Sheppard, a free negro, in the peace of the Commonwealth then and there being, feloniously, willfully, and of their malice aforethought, did make an assault, and with firearms called Sharpe's rifles, and other deadly weapons to the Jurors unknown, then and there, charged with gunpowder and leaden bullets,

did then and there feloniously, willfully, and of their malice aforethought, shoot and discharge the same against the bodies severally and respectively of the said Thomas Boerly, George W. Turner, Fontaine Beckham, Luke Quinn, and Hayward Sbeppard; and that the said John Brown, Aaron C. Stephens, alias Aaron D. Stephens, Edwin Coppie, Shields Green, and John Copland, with the leaden bullets aforesaid, out of the firearms called Sharpe's rifles, aforesaid, shot and discharged as aforesaid,

and with the other deadly weapons to the jurors unknown, as aforesaid, then and there feloniously, willfully, and of their malice aforethought did strike, penetrate and wound the said Thomas Boerly, George W. Turner, Fontaine Beckham, Luke Quinn, Hayward Sheppard, each severally; to wit: the said Thomas Boerly in and upon the left side; the said George W. Turner in and upon the left shoulder; the said Fontaine Beckham in and upon the right breast; the said Luke Quinn in and upon the abdomen, and the said Hayward Sheppard in and upon the back and side, giving to the said Thomas Boerly, George W. Turner, Fontaine Beckham, Luke Quinn, Hayward Sheppard, then and there with the leaden bullets, so as aforesaid shot and discharged by them, severally and respectively out of the Sharpe's rifles aforesaid. and with the other deadly weapons to the Jurors unknown, as aforesaid, each one mortal wound, of which said mortal wounds they the said Thomas Boerly, George W. Turner, Fontaine Beckham, Luke Quinn, and Hayward Sheppard each died;

and so the Jurors aforesaid, upon their oaths aforesaid, do say that the said John Brown, Aaron O. Stephens, alias Aaron D. Stephens, Edwin Coppie, Shields Green, and John Copland, then and there, them the said Thomas Boerly, George W. Turner, Fontaine Beckham, Luke Quinn, and Hayward Sheppard, in the manner aforesaid, and by the means aforesaid, feloniously, willfully, and of their, and each of their malice aforethought, did kill and murder, against the peace and dignity of the Commonwealth.

**JOHN BROWN: AN ADDRESS BY FREDERICK DOUGLASS, AT THE FOURTEENTH ANNIVERSARY OF STORER COLLEGE, HARPER'S FERRY, WEST VIRGINIA, MAY 30, 1881**

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/lcbrmrp.t2309/?sp=7>

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 Antislavery 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.

**Bibliographic information**

Source created/published: Dover, N.H., Morning star job printing house, 1881.

Summary: Douglass, in a highly personal speech, praises John Brown as a real hero of the abolitionist cause and seeks to promote a better understanding of the raid upon Harper's Ferry. Ends with a few words about Brown's companions in the raid.

Notes: Presented by the author to Storer College, the proceeds to go to the endowment of a John Brown professorship.