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ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT AKRON, OHIO,

ON THE EVENING OF THE

EXECUTION OF JOHN BROWN,

DECEMBER 2, 1859.

BY GEN. L. V. BIERCE

"The people of the South had better prepare for a settlement of this question. It must come up sooner than they are prepared for it, and the sooner they commence that preparation the better for them."—JOHN BROWN to Gov. Wise.

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ADDRESS.

JOHN BROWN has this day perished on a scaffold, the first martyr in "the irrepressible conflict" of Liberty with Slavery. His blood has sanctified the gallows, and made it a fit emblem of Liberty.

The political fool, who has no opinions—and the political knave, who, having opinions, dare not avow them, may this day keep silence—and the political parasite, who lives, and moves, and holds his existence dependant on official favor, may cry "*Treason*"—but it is a day when *free-men* will think, and speak, regardless of official frowns, chains and gibbets.

I speak to-day, not as a party man—I am to-day, neither Democrat nor Republican—Whig nor tory, but a free American, an advocate of Universal Liberty—speaking my own thoughts, views, and sentiments, for which, no party, or man, save myself, is responsible.

I take, for my text, the Declaration of Independence—the great political Beacon, set up by the Fathers of the Revolution, as a guide to the haven of Liberty. It is not as has been traitorously charged "a glittering generality"—but the great paladium of human rights, the Heaven-born creed, defining the rights and duties of man. When that is stricken down, and trodden under foot, we might suppose the blood of our fathers, rising from the battlefields of Freedom, would cry out against us. When the Eternal Truth "that all men are created free and equal," enunciated by Jefferson—and for which Washington fought, and Warren died—is declared by the North, as it has been by the South, a mere figure of rhetoric, without any practical meaning—when there is substituted, in its place, as the American sentiment, that 4,000,000 of native born Americans have no rights that the others are bound to respect—when this is, as it has been declared by the highest Court in the land to be, the law of Liberty, and the basis of Free Institutions—our boasted land of liberty, the asylum for the oppressed of all nations, becomes, by judicial tyranny, the veriest despotism on the earth. No nation has sunk so low in servility—none raised so high in infamy. Our whole system is revolutionized, and, instead of being created, as the Fathers of the country in the Constitution declared, "to establish Justice, and secure the blessings of Liberty," it is an instrument to protect iniquity, and extend the curse of Slavery throughout the world.

To this point, we have long been drifting. John C. Calhoun boldly declared it as his policy—and it frightened even Southern Tyrants. Cass, with his "squatter sovereignty," would allow it—and it shook the nerves of the North. Douglas threw the doors wide open, but having greased the hinges, with "popular sovereignty," he thought their grating would not arouse the slumbers of the people. So soothing was the breeze of

“popular sovereignty” that entered through these portals of Slavery, that even then the people scarcely awoke. Everett, like an opiate, was called in to quiet them. “It is but an abstract idea,” said he; “the laws of Nature will forbid, and prevent Slavery from going North.” and all was quiet again.

Trusting to their success so far, and finding the North in a quiet slumber, Mason brought forth the “Fugitive Slave Act.” which, like the fabled goddess of old, converted men into dogs, to do the bidding of Tyrants. In the transmutation, the freemen of the North awoke, but found themselves unable to act like human beings, and could only bark as they were bid, and like dogs in all ages, worry those they saw in distress. But one hope remained—in the Judiciary—faint though it was, yet they clung to it like drowning men to straws. Kane, of Philadelphia, in the person of an honest Quaker, struck down that hope. Yes! when a daring act is to be performed, the South select a Northern man, whose nerves have become strong at the expense of his conscience. By his decision, the decision of an individual who had been a man, but by “the Fugitive Slave Law” had been changed to a dog, the Constitution, Laws, and sentiments of the Keystone State were overthrown, and she converted into Slave territory, where the blood-hounds of the South, with their more base allies of the North, could amuse themselves in hunting down, and shooting native born Americans.

McLean, of Ohio, was next called upon to do the brutal work of the South, and silence the North. To him was assigned the work of gagging those who dared tell a fugitive what the law was, and what were his rights under it. Under the decision of this servile Judge of the North, with Southern principles, a lawyer of Ohio was fined \$2,000 for telling a native born American, who inherited a black skin, that his jailors had no right to detain him, unless they had a warrant, issued by competent authority. By him was the freedom of the Bar of Ohio struck down, and Lawyers allowed to speak only honied phrases, selected and assorted by the dictators of the South.

The Bar being silenced, the next assault on the North was intrusted to Leavitt, whose caliber of talent, and conscience fitted him to do the work. He attacked the sovereignty of the whole State—and with the force of the General Government to back him, took forcible possession of prisoners charged with murder by the Grand Juries of Ohio, marched them from their own State, and delivered them over to persons claiming to own them in Kentucky—thus, holding that the laws of Slavery in Kentucky, were more binding, even in Ohio, than the Laws of Ohio against murder.

The way being now prepared, and all the dirty work done by the base minions of Slavery at the North, the South marched bravely to the assault—and Taney, who began life an Anti Slavery man, closes it with a decision, that, if submitted to, completes the humiliation of the North, by declaring “the Fugitive Slave Act,” Constitutional—that citizens of a free State may be taken with, or without a warrant, and carried into Slavery, and that 4,000,000 native born Americans, if their complexion is darker than the Slave-holder’s standard, “have no rights that a white man is bound to respect.”

The descendants of those negroes who fought so bravely for Liberty in the Revolutionary War, as well as the Slaves of the Cotton and Rice plantations, are thus struck down, and denied the rights of humanity.—Lust, and Brutality can now hold high carnival on the defenceless victims of oppression, and justify under the Laws of this free Republic,

“Once land of the free, now home of the Slave.”

The barriers being thus all thrown down, Slavery takes its course Northward, and claims Kansas as its own. Frank Pierce, as Senator Atchison declares, before he could receive the nomination for President, had to pledge himself to use his efforts to make it a Slave State. Then nothing was more easy than for him to get the nomination, and be elected President—but it was at the expense of his manhood.

It was said by a celebrated naturalist, when looking at what is called “the old man of the mountain,” in New Hampshire, that “God hung it out as a sign that he made *men* there”—but he surely forgot, or neglected his business when He made Frank Pierce. His every act was that of base truckling to Slavery. His *man*, if he ever possessed it, was swallowed up in his servility.

Douglas proclaimed “Popular Sovereignty”—that the will of the people should rule—the practical application of which was—provided the people *will* as the Slaveholders desire—if not, their will is Treason. To carry out this “Popular Sovereignty,” armed bands from Missouri, went over, and voted, and controlled every election in Kansas. If a Free State man avowed his sentiments, he was shot, his house burnt, and his property destroyed. If a newspaper dared utter free sentiments, it was torn down, and thrown into the river. If a landlord dared avow his abhorrence of such proceedings, his Tavern was indicted as a nuisance, and battered down with cannon, procured for the purpose, from the United States Arsenals. If a minister of the Gospel dared avow the doctrines of “the Golden Rule,” he was placed on a raft of logs, and sent down the river, at the mercy of the waves. If the people of Kansas dared to oppose these outrages, they were declared Rebels, and whoever killed them was rewarded with an office from the President.

Clark and Gardner, two of these “Popular Sovereignty” heroes, shot a boy of eighteen years, as he rode along the highway, because he dared to think differently from them on the subject of Slavery. Clark was, at the time of the murder, Indian Agent under the Government, but his bravery, in shooting this boy, proved him worthy of a more honorable station, and he was made Purser in the Navy—and Gardner Postmaster at Lawrence. Jones, Postmaster at Westport in Missouri, who led the party that battered down the Free State Hotel at Lawrence—destroyed the free Presses, and murdered the inhabitants, was made Collector of Customs, by the President. Murphy, who took his rifle, and went out, declaring that he would have the scalp of a Free State man, and shot Hopps, an unoffending man, scalped him and brought in his scalp, openly boasting of what he had done, was appointed, by the President, Indian Agent. Emery, who murdered Phillips, was appointed by the President, Receiver of a land office. Gibson, who hewed down E. P. Brown, while he was a prisoner, and unarmed, and to complete his brutality, spit tobacco in his eyes while dying, was made Deputy United States

Marshal. John Brown, Jr., and Jason, two of the sons of the Old Hero of Ossawatimie, were chained together, their ankles and wrists manacled, and driven thirty miles, on foot, in a burning sun—the iron wearing into the flesh—in consequence of which, John became a raving lunatic.

Because John Brown, the Father, dare to resist such barbarity on his children, the President offered a reward for his head.

Buford, and his Carolina ruffians were sent there to enforce "Popular Sovereignty," and compel the people to submit to a Government that, we are told, was of their own choice. The United States Arsenal at Liberty, Missouri, was seized, the commandant imprisoned, the cannon, guns and ammunition carried away, to batter down Lawrence, without any resistance by the United States forces, or prosecution by the civil power, though the actors were well known—but when the people of the North dared to aid the Free State Men with arms, the President was ready with a Proclamation to denounce them as traitors, and the army was sent to put them down.

When a pretended Constitution was formed by Slavery propagandists, without the consent of the people, the President was for recognizing it, and receiving Kansas as a Slave State. But when the people formed a free Constitution, and their Legislature assembled under it, Colonel Sumner was sent, with the United States Dragoons, to disperse them.

Pursued by the blood hounds of Slavery at home, and abroad—a reward offered for his head by the Government that should have sustained him—his sons butchered in cold blood, and their murderers rewarded with office—is it strange that John Brown turned on his pursuers? He labored in the cause of freedom in Kansas, and few sympathized with him. Those who should have done so looked coldly on, because the President declared him an outlaw. Thank God! I furnished him arms—as did others in Akron—and right good use did he make of them: and, to-day freedom in Kansas is more indebted to John Brown of Ossawatimie, than to all others.

Religious in belief, conscientious in action, he believed himself predestined to overthrow the power of slavery—and whether with a dozen, or alone, this faith sustained him. In his camp, he allowed no profanity, and no unprincipled Soldier, however brave. "I would rather," said he, "have small pox, yellow fever, and the cholera, altogether in my camp, than a man without principle." With one hand on his rifle, and the other raised to Heaven, he devoutly asked a blessing on his rations, and offered up prayer, morning and evening, in his camp. "Give me," said he, "men of good principles, God fearing men, men who respect themselves—and, with a dozen I will fight a hundred ruffians." With the bravery of a Caesar, he had the piety of a Cromwell. The one taught him to trust in God, the other to look well to his arms and ammunition.

He was an abolitionist, and for many years had cherished the idea, that he was the Moses, predestined of God, to lead "the children of bondage," in America, to freedom. It was, with him, a religious conviction, that had grown with his growth, and strengthened with his strength, until it had become a part of his being. With this idea predominant, he left his wife, and home, and with his sons, went to Kansas, to commence

his mission. With no preparation, without even an acquaintance there, he burst upon the Slavery advocates like Jove in thunder. Whether with a dozen men, or alone, he never declined the combat. He was for action. "Talking," said he, "does no good to the Slave—it is an excuse for weak men, with tender consciences, who are too timid to fight, and too honest to be silent." But he conscientiously believed it to be *his* duty to act. His faith was based in "Human Brotherhood and the God of Battles." He honored merit wherever found, and believed Nat Turner an equal in merit, with Washington—and could not see the reason why one was honored for creating an insurrection against a lawful Government, and the other hung as a Traitor.

His ardent spirit, under a cold exterior was like the seething volcano under a mountain of external snow—strong in contrast—ever burning and tumultuous—bound down by surrounding matter—but ever ready to burst forth and consume its bands. "He was grand, gloomy, and peculiar." He moved in society of which he hardly formed a part, with his eyes ever fixed on the ultimato of his mission. His wrongs in Kansas had roused the sleeping lion, and he believed himself the Agent of God, to carry out the principle of "Human Brotherhood," "to do unto others as he would have others do unto him." He looked at the wrongs of the slave as a wrong to God, and Humanity, and that it was right for any one to interfere so far as to free those wickedly held in bonds—that it was the greatest service a man could render to God. "I respect," said he, "the rights of the poorest, and weakest of the colored people, oppressed by the slave system, as much as I do those of the wealthy and most powerful. The cry of distress, and of the distressed, is my reason, and the only one that impelled me." He believed it was folly to attempt to strike the shackles off the slaves by force of moral suasion, or legal agitation—that the people of the slave States would never consider the subject of slavery in its true light, until some other argument is resorted to than moral suasion.

These sentiments, so openly and honorably avowed in his extraordinary examination by the Father of "the Fugitive Slave Law," aided by the commandant of the military forces that guarded him—and the scullion of Ohio servility, show his true motives, honorable and frankly expressed—and rather would I have the fame which will be bestowed by after ages on John Brown for those noble sentiments, than that of Governor Wise, or President Buchanan, who with all the chivalry of Virginia and Maryland at their heels, could not capture the Old Hero, strong in the right, and moral power, until the little band lay weltering in their gore; enriching the soil with blood that will hereafter produce heroes.

Talk about the North sending Brown on that expedition! He required no sending. He was far in advance of the age in which he lived—so far, indeed, that he could hear no orders from any one. When asked if he went to Kansas under the auspices of the Emigrant Aid Society—"No Sir," was his emphatic reply, "I went under the auspices of Old John Brown, and nobody else"—self-reliant and self-possessed, he acknowledged no leader but God, no orders but those based in right and dictated by his own conscience. The idea that he was the instrument in the hands of God to break the chains of the oppressed, and set the bondman

free, was the mainspring of his every action. On this principle he would fight the slave propagandist in Kansas, and go fearlessly, into Missouri and release slaves, and take them to Canada, or open their jails and release Doy and his son, imprisoned captives, whose only crime was a love of Freedom. It was this idea that haunted his couch by night, and was ever present in his day visions. The clanking of chains on the slaves ever reminded him of his own manacled sons, whose raving cries for help ever sounded in his ears. He could not resist it. He risked his all, and fell. Yes, noble Hero! there was not spirit enough in the North to aid him—He risked his life in defence of right and justice—was defeated and fell—but like the mighty Sampson, whom the Philistines derided, in his fall he will draw down the pillars of the mighty temple of injustice and slavery, and his enemies will perish in the same catastrophe.

Many who applaud Washington because he was successful in opposing an unrighteous Government, are ready to condemn John Brown because he failed. But did not Warren fail and fall at Bunker Hill, amid defeat? His blood was the seed from which thousands of heroes have sprung up to avenge his death, and to contend for liberty. So Brown has fallen at a political Bunker Hill—but a York-Town is yet to come. Said the noble old Hero to the cowardly Virginians who were exulting over him, "the people of the South had better prepare themselves for a settlement of this question. It must come up sooner than they are prepared for it; and the sooner they commence that preparation the better it will be for them." This question; the end of it—is not yet.

Thus the Old Hero bearded the Southern Lion in his den. In the midst of enemies whose homes he had invaded, and whose cherished institution he had attacked—himself wounded and a prisoner—surrounded by an army of officials, and a more desperate array of angry men—with the gallows staring him in the face—he spoke like a man, like a hero. He even excited the admiration of his bitterest foes. Said the proud Governor of Virginia, "He is the best bundle of nerves I ever saw. Cut, and thrust, and bleeding, and in bonds.—he is a man of clear head, of courage, fortitude, and of simple ingenuousness. He is cool, collected, and indomitable, and he inspired me with great trust in his integrity as a man of truth. He is a fanatic; vain and garrulous, but firm, truthful, and intelligent. With one son dead by his side, and another shot through—he felt the pulse of his dying son with one hand, held his rifle in the other, and commanded his men with the utmost composure."

Such was John Brown, as described by his enemies, in the day of battle—nor was he less a hero when, in the miscalled court of Justice, he was on his way to execution. Said he to the Judge—"If I am to be hurried to execution, all the trouble and expense can be saved. I feel that it is a matter of very little account to me. I did not ask for quarters at the time I was taken. I did not ask to have my life spared. If you ask my blood, you can have it at any moment without the mockery of a trial. I am ready for my fate. I beg for no mockery of a trial to insult me—nothing but that which conscience gives, or cowardice would drive you to practice. I have little to ask other than that I be not foolishly insulted, as cowardly barbarians insult those who fall into their power."

Brave old man! he was talking to Virginians who knew not how to appreciate such noble ideas. He had elements of character as noble as Leonidas, as brave as Cæsar, as pious as Cromwell. Like Napoleon, he had a self-sustaining confidence in his destiny, and his iron will, and unbending purpose, were equal to his zeal. His religious enthusiasm, and sense of duty were earnest, and sincere, and no danger could alarm or disturb him. Though his whole nature was subject to, and almost constantly pervaded by the deepest excitement, his exterior was always calm, cool and undisturbed. His manners, though stern, were gentle and courteous. He could with equally unmoved nerves, point a rifle in battle, and play with the child of his jailor in prison.

A wanton or cruel act was never charged upon him. Even mercy was his weakness. To spare the feelings of the wives and daughters, and friends of his prisoners, they were permitted to enter his little fortress, and administer to their wants. In all his relations he was scrupulously honest, moral, and temperate—and never gave utterance to a boast.

How unlike, in all particulars, the southern tyrants, who are continually frightening northern doughfaces with threats of a dissolution of the Union—a southern army—and northern annihilation! With his seventeen whites, and five negroes he captured a town of two thousand inhabitants, in fifteen minutes—and held it for two days—and when the three hundred chivalry of the ancient Dominion, with burnished steel, and waving plume, and all the pomp and circumstance of war arrived, they dare not attack him until a company of marines arrived and battered down the impregnable fortress with the end of a ladder. Then shone forth the chivalry! The dead, of Brown's army, lay unburied, and the citizen soldiery exhibited their feats of valor on the dead bodies. The head of one seen floating in the Potomac, drew a general fire from a Volunteer Company of the "first families," exhibiting a surplus of heroism conclusively proving that they feared no foe more than three days after he was dead. Never, since General Ross, with the British army, marched through their State, and with eight hundred men sacked the City of Washington, and retired as peacefully as on a muster day, has the valor of Virginia been so aroused or shown so conspicuously. Thompson, the son-in-law of Brown, wounded, bleeding, and dying, was taken from the arms of a brave and heroic girl, who, trying to save the honor of Virginia from cowardly murder, threw herself between the rifles of the assassins and their victim, and shot in her presence. A Pocahontas could save a victim from the savages of 1608, but the entreaties of such an advocate was lost on the savages of this enlightened age.

But not only is Virginia aroused, but the President is also nerved for battle. He could look coldly on and see the Free State men of Kansas murdered—printing presses destroyed—hotels battered down, and rewarded the ruffians with office. He could send the troops of the United States to Kansas to aid the slave extensionists in forcing slavery on the people, but here, when an old man of three-score years and three, stung to madness by the murder of his sons, and the wrongs of his countrymen attempts to set the bondman free, martial law is proclaimed, and the troops are ordered to pursue the fugitive friends of Freedom "into any locality where they may have fled." The United States courts and mar-

shals, with "the Fugitive slave law" to back them, will ordinarily answer the purpose of putting down and stifling freedom of speech and action at the north, and overawe millions who ought to stand to the right regardless of bonds or gibbets—but when Old Brown, with seventeen white men, and five negroes, with a schoolmaster at their head, invades Virginia, the land of Presidents, martial law must be added, and the United States Marines must be advanced to the support of the military of that chivalrous State. But the worst cut of all is, the United States Attorney is ordered by the President, to proceed forthwith to Harpers Ferry, to take charge of the legal proceedings against the few live prisoners "and bring them to trial"—as if the President doubted whether the legal ability, and efficacy of the chivalry would be more efficacious than their military prowess.

But the chivalry have Brown, and the others in their hands—five poor wounded, bleeding remains only of what had been Heroes—not *their* captives but the captives of the marines—stabbed, hacked, shot, and supposed to be dying, they can no longer offer resistance, and the chivalry become brave. Gov. Wise refused to give them up to the President, and says he will not obey his order to do so, but sends the President a spear, taken from this formidable army, after its owners were slain, and the mighty President, of this mighty Republic, like a squalling child with a rattle, is pacified.

But it is said, "Old Brown was crazy"—would to God that we had millions of such crazy men at the North, who were ready to peril life for right, and universal liberty. "The Fugitive Slave Law" is nothing but an invasion of the North, and Northern rights, under the forms of law. It is of almost daily occurrence that the slave catchers of the South, aided by the miserable and meaner allies of the North, are stealing our citizens and carrying them into slavery. Our courts are unrecognized; our lawyers gagged; our Constitution nullified; our territory, made free by the glorious ordinance of '87, converted into a hunting ground on which the tyrants of the South may take whom they please, and covert them into chattels. With, or without a warrant, they seize whom they please, and resistance becomes treason. Northern Senators who dare complain, are excluded from all committees, as not belonging to healthy organizations; club-law is introduced into the Senate by the chivalry of the South, to silence arguments they cannot answer; the Senate, under the lash of the South dare not disapprove the act, and the South glories in it; and, having sold the bones of Washington, as no longer representing their principles, they make the assassin their hero, and raise him a monument? These are the men so clamorous for Brown's blood, as a traitor to liberty and free institutions! Rather would I have the honor of Brown's death on a gibbet, for his glorious principles, than a monument erected by slaveholders with the price of human blood.

When the time comes, as come it will, in which the North will say to the southern tyranny, "thus far you have come, but no further shall you come"—when the soil of the North shall cease to bring forth and nurture dough-faces—when man shall act upon the great truth that "all are created free and equal," and "the golden rule" shall cease to be a dead letter, then will John Brown take his place among the heroes of the

world. If the sovereignty of the States; the Declaration of Independence; the principles of the Constitution—and the comity between the States are to be destroyed—invasion and war justified to extend human slavery, and citizens of the free States are refused the protection of their own laws, and regarded as the spoil of any traitor in human flesh; our Government ceases its protection, and has no claim to allegiance. We then say “resistance to tyrants is obedience to God”—and *our* duty should be as plain to us as Brown’s was to him. For myself I say, I care not whether the order comes from a Judge, or Commissioner, or a President, if it is to transport a citizen of this to a slave state, without the laws of his own—I *say resist it*, and let the South and her base, servile minions of the North know that she sleeps on a magazine that a spark from the North can at any moment explode.

“This tragedy of Brown’s is freighted with awful lessons, and consequences. It is like the clock striking the fatal hour that begins a new era in the conflict with slavery. Men like Brown, may die, but their acts and principles will live forever. Call it fanaticism, folly, madness, wickedness,” but until virtue becomes fanaticism, Divine Wisdom folly, obedience to God madness, and piety wickedness, John Brown, inspired with these high and holy teachings, will rise up before the world with his calm, marble features, more terrible in death, and defeat, than in life and victory. It is one of those acts of madness which History cherishes and Poetry loves forever to adorn with her choicest wreaths of laurel.”

“Truth forever on the scaffold—wrong forever on the throne,
Yet that scaffold sways the future, and behind the dim unknown
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own.”



