

L. Maria Child to R. J. Webb (Incomplete.)

Wayland, April 30th 1861

Dear Friend,

55- I am not in possession of any facts concerning John Brown, except those which have been published. Mrs. Brown gave Wendell Phillips a large package of private letters to deliver to me; but I never received them, and did not even hear of them until they had been a long time in Redpath's possession. I know not whether he ever made any use of them, or whether they are still in his possession. Mr. Phillips told me that several he looked over contained passages very characteristic of John Brown.

No person knows so much about Mrs. Brown's pecuniary affairs, as George L. Stearns. In the forenoon he is usually at his store, 129 Milk St.

Frederic Brown, brother of

the martyr told me he knew many particulars of his history, which had never been published. He offered to put me in possession of them, if I would write a new life of his brother, but as Redpath and the newspapers had presented all the principal facts to the public, I did not think a second book would have much of a sale. I have always thought it a pity that the Biography was hurried out, as it was. The motive was to make money out of public curiosity, but it always seemed to me that the catching of pennies was of far less consequence than John's Brown's character with posterity, and the sort of moral influence thereby exerted. After all, I believe the family did not receive much money from it. George Stearns can tell you.

You of course remembers the eleven slaves that John Brown helped off from Missouri. A baby was born on the way, and the parents, in honor of their deliverer, named him John Brown. From a letter received a year ago, I make the following extract, written by Henry P. Smith, of Cleveland, Ohio, who had just returned from a visit to Canada: "I took a walk, this morning down to the humble abode of the eleven fugitives from Missouri, whom the immortal John Brown delivered from the house of bondage, last Spring. The twelfth one, born on the way, is now a year old, and is thriving well. He is rightly named for his illustrious benefactor. When I rapped at the door, it was opened by a woman with sewing in ^{her} hand, who bade me welcome. A good supply of ^{smoked} hams and shoulders were hanging from the joists of their log-cabin. They all seem to be very industrious people. I went to see them three times. Once in fine autumn weather, once in the dead of winter,

when the thermometer stood eight degrees below zero, and lastly on this beautiful morning of Spring. On every occasion, I found them all hard at work. I wish you could hear this liberated eleven talk about Capt. Brown. It would do your heart good."

A young man in Kansas wrote me the following letter concerning the escape of those eleven slaves:

"On the 24th of January, 1859, Capt Brown came near to Lawrence, with his eleven emigrants, ^{from Missouri,} and I joined him. We travelled, by the way of Topeka, northward through Nebraska. About thirty seven miles from Topeka, we entered a vacant log-cabin, belonging to an excellent man, who was a warm friend of Capt. Brown. Our party consisted at this time only of the Captain, myself, and a man known by the name of Whipple in Kansas, but afterward as Stephens, at Harper's Ferry. Kagi and Tidd had staid behind at Topeka, to procure

provisions for our journey, and our teamster had been sent back to bring them along. While waiting for them to rejoin us, we found ourselves surrounded by a band of human blood-hounds, headed by the notorious Deputy Marshall of the U. S., J. N. O. P. Wood. I afterward learned that he was put on our track by a traitor from New Hampshire, named Flussey.

Mr. Whipple lived alone in a small empty cabin near the one we occupied. There had been heavy rains, which produced a freshet, and one day, he walked a short distance from the cabins, to ascertain whether the waters had subsided. Suddenly, eight of the Marshall's men came upon him, and asked him if he had seen any negroes thereabout. He told them, if they would come with him, he would show them some. He conducted them to his cabin, where he had left his rifle. He came out immediately, and pointed his rifle at the leader, commanding him to surrender, which he did at once. The other men put spurs

6

to their horses, and rode off as fast as possible. At that time, I was sole body-guard of ~~the~~ Captain Brown, ~~and~~ the eleven fugitives, and the prisoner, who had surrendered. ~~at~~ ~~Whipple~~ ~~kept~~ kept a sharp look-out, acting as our sentry. We were detained at this place about three days. At last, our provisions arrived, and we were joined by a band of Topeka boys, who had walked thirty seven miles in the night to aid us in our enterprise. We started on our journey. A short distance from our road was Muddy Creek. Marshall Wood, supposing our party must pass that way, stationed himself on the opposite side of the Creek with his eighty armed men. They had made careful preparations, well knowing that it was no joke to attack "old John Brown." Captain Brown had with him only twenty three white men, all told. He placed them in double file in front of the emigrant wagons, and said, "Now go straight at 'em,

7
boys! They'll be sure to run."

In obedience to this order, they marched toward the Creek, but scarcely had the foremost entered the water, when the valiant U. S. Marshall mounted his horse and rode off in hot haste. His men followed as fast as possible, but they were not all as lucky as he was in untying their horses from the stumps and bushes. The scene was ridiculous beyond description. Some horses were hastily mounted by two men. One man grabbed tight hold of the tail of a horse, trying to leap on from behind, while the rider was putting the spurs into his sides; so he went flying through the air, his feet touching the ground now and then. Those of our men who had horses followed them about six miles, and brought back with them four prisoners[†] and five horses. Meanwhile, Capt. Brown and the rest of his company succeeded in drawing the emigrant wagons through the

Creek by means of long ropes. This battle of Muddy Creek was known ever after, in Kansas, by the name of "The battle of the spurs."

¶ When we resumed our journey, the Captain did not think it prudent to allow the five prisoners to mount their horses, lest they should escape and bring a fresh party to attack us. So he told them they must walk; but, as he meant them no unkindness, he would walk with them. ¶ They went on together, he talking with them all the way concerning the wickedness of slavery and the meanness of slave-hunting. He kept them with us all night. In the morning, he told them they might make the best of their way home, on foot. Their horses were retained, from prudential motives, as it was obviously not for the safety of our colored emigrants to have them return *very* speedily. [They seemed to be much pleased with Capt. Brown, and said he was a good man, only he had a monomania on the subject of slavery.] The horses captured from