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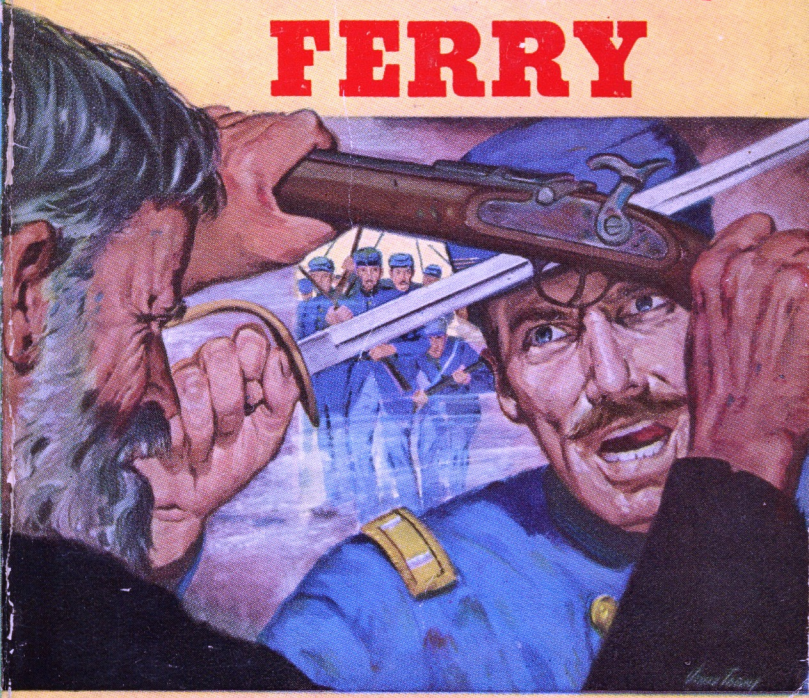
THUNDER at HARPER'S FERRY



A STIRRING HOUR-BY-HOUR ACCOUNT OF JOHN BROWN'S RAID—THE PRELUDE TO THE **CIVIL WAR!**

BY ALLAN KELLER

"A tale of high excitement, deep tragedy, incongruous comedy."

—Cleveland Plain Dealer

"There was an eye-opener to the Civil War, and in the language of Virginia and the South, it was spelled 'treason.'

"John Brown's raid on the arsenal of Harper's Ferry in 1859 brought to a focus all the fears and terrors of the South. Old Brown had decided the time was ripe for an uprising of the slaves in Virginia. He led his twenty-one zealous men to Harper's Ferry in October, 1859, in pious certainty that the Negroes, given arms, would join in a mass revolt . . .

"Allan Keller has done a thorough job of telling the fantastic story of that unbelievable attempt by one man to end human slavery in the United States . . . He has captured the incredible, almost weird, atmosphere of this prelude to the war to preserve the Union."

—Washington Star

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

FOR their untiring assistance and kindness in helping me bring this book to completion I wish to express particular thanks to Monroe Stearns of Prentice-Hall, Inc.; Miss Beatrice Kelly of the Ferguson Library, Stamford, Connecticut; Wade Doares, Librarian of the Graduate School of Journalism, Columbia University; W. H. Schmidt, Jr., and Lawrence W. Sagle, of the Public Relations Department of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad; and Mrs. Lauretta Ravenna and Matthew Redding, assistant librarian and librarian, respectively, of the *New York World-Telegram & Sun.*

A very special debt of appreciation is owed my daughters: Mrs. Gerald T. Dolan, for her unstinting support and enthusiasm from the outset, and Mrs. Roger A. Hood, for her equal optimism and careful preparation of the final manuscript. I cannot begin to measure the aid given me by my wife in checking the text, offering advice, and sustaining me by her unflagging encouragement.

ALLAN KELLER

Darien, Connecticut

Thunder At Harper's Ferry

by

ALLAN KELLER

ACE BOOKS, INC.
23 West 47th Street, New York 36, N. Y.

THUNDER AT HARPER'S FERRY

An Ace Book, by arrangement with Prentice-Hall, Inc.

To

I. E. K.

who never doubted

A few honest men are better than numbers. If you choose Godly, honest men to be Captains of horse, honest men will follow them.

—OLIVER CROMWELL

Printed in U.S.A.

CHAPTER 1

As THE eastbound express from Wheeling raced toward Baltimore, stark, unbridled terror rode in each car.

Women wept or held smelling salts to their noses, some trying not to faint, others wishing that they could. Conductor A. J. Phelps passed up and down the aisles of the coaches, trying his best to calm the passengers, but his own fear stood out like a shining garment around him, and he failed.

Suddenly a gray-faced man reached into his carpetbag, got paper and pencil, and dashed off a note. Opening the window a crack, he flung the note out as the train rattled through a Maryland crossroads town. Then he went about writing another. That message too went out of the window. Other passengers saw what he was doing, and within minutes men and women in all the brightly colored wooden coaches were scribbling notes and throwing them out to the countryside.

Drummers tore sheets from their order books. Women wrote on pages of their diaries and on the blank leaves from the front and back of novels they had taken aboard when they left Wheeling the day before.

None of these frantic messages is in existence today, but their writers, who knew what they had penned, told their contents later, when a nation, rocked to its roots, sponged up everything it could learn about a great, bearded man named John Brown.

For it was Brown, with a band of ardent anti-slavery adherents, who had swooped down upon Harper's Ferry the night before to seize the Federal arsenal there and to ignite a fuse he hoped would not burn out until there were no Negroes held in bondage.

To the panicky passengers in the night express it had been an ordeal they would never forget.

For almost five hours between one a.m. and the coming of the first false dawn they had huddled in the unlighted coaches or in the lobby of a small hotel at the station while armed men roamed the little junction town. They heard shots, and saw a man dying on the platform directly under their windows. Rumor worked overtime. Before they had been there an hour they knew, or thought they knew, that hundreds of white men and more than that many Negroes had started an armed rebellion against the slave-holding states.

Freed at last, they wrote feverishly, scattering their messages of terror in an effort to alarm the nation, and to put it on guard. Or they wrote them because it was the only thing they could do to release the emotion caged within their minds and hearts.

Up in the cab of the ancient locomotive, with its great balloon funnel, its cowcatcher protruding almost half its own length and a lamp as big as a trunk perched way out in front, the engineer, William McKay, knew he was nearing the station at Monocacy. He whistled a signal. The brakemen, on the open platforms of the coaches, started to turn the wheels of the hand brakes. McKay applied his own brake, which served the locomotive only, and the Wheeling-Baltimore night express ground to a stop.

Phelps dashed into the waiting room, wet the end of a pencil, and wrote out a message no one was to believe for hours—a message of armed insurrection, of the seizure of the United States Arsenal and Armory at Harper's Ferry and of murder and treason on the Potomac.

It was 7:05 a.m. when the stationmaster started beating out dots and dashes on his telegraph key.

Quickly Phelps told his story. He was a bad reporter and had not checked his facts. He was convinced that there were at least 150 armed insurrectionists on the loose in Harper's Ferry. They had shot and killed Shephard Hayward, the

Baltimore & Ohio baggagemaster at the Ferry. They were arming slaves and sending them off to the mountains.

He told of his interview with John Brown—although he didn't then know his name—and he quoted him as saying the raiders had come to free the slaves and were going to do it, no matter what the cost.

"The leader of those men," he wrote, as the telegrapher kept up with him on his clicking instrument, "requested me to say to you that this is the last train that shall pass the bridge either East or West. If it is attempted it will be at the peril of the lives of those having them in their charge. . . . It has been suggested you had better notify the Secretary of War at once. The telegraph wires are cut East and West of Harper's Ferry and this is the first station that I could send a dispatch from."

Having done his duty as he saw it, Phelps boarded his train and went on toward Baltimore.

In that city the message created no great stir—at least for several hours.

It was a gray, misty dawn in the busy city at the head of Chesapeake Bay. A few early travelers lounged in the waiting room of the Camden Station, which also served as head office of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. They warmed their hands at the big cannon stoves. It was October 17, 1859, and although not yet too cold, a dampness and chill from off the water made the warmth feel good.

In the station office the night telegrapher was dozing in his chair. He was not asleep, nor yet awake. He had a vague feeling of uneasiness because for several hours the wire at his elbow had been silent. Something was out of order somewhere on the Main Stem between the Ohio River and Baltimore, but he didn't report it. Like other men nearing the end of their hitch, he had decided to let the day man worry about it when he came in to relieve him.

He could justify his inaction if there were an inquiry because the telegraph, then still something of a novelty, had been in the habit of breaking down. This was probably more of the same.

Without advance warning the sounder on his receiver began to click. Automatically the agent looked up at the big Seth Thomas clock on the wall, noted it was 7:05 a.m., and grabbed a pen. He dipped it in the inkwell and started to write out the words on a sheet of telegraph paper as the dots and dashes came over the wire.

Conductor Phelps' message was addressed to William Prescott Smith, Master of Transportation for the B. & O., right-hand man to John W. Garrett, the line's president.

As he translated the Morse code into written English the agent came fully awake. The pen scratched noisily across the paper. He had to hurry because the agent at Monocacy, prodded on by Phelps' excitement, was sending at a furious rate. When he came to the end of the message he realized why his wire had been silent in the hours before dawn. It had been cut at the Ferry, where even now hell was raging.

After he signed off, the Baltimore agent roused a sleepy messenger boy, pressed the handwritten copy into his hand, and told him to take it to the home of Mr. Smith. There were no telephones in 1859. History had to rely on the legs of a boy only half-awake.

The Master of Transportation, about to eat a stout breakfast of bacon and eggs, Dutch fried potatoes, and coffee, saw no reason to get excited. He dispatched his meal, had a second cup of coffee, and then walked down to Camden Station. There he wrote out a reply. The day man, who had relieved the sleepy telegrapher, sent it off to Ellicott's Mills, where the east-bound Express was flagged down.

Phelps read the telegram in a towering rage.

"Your dispatch is evidently exaggerated and written under excitement," read the trainman who had only a few hours back been looking into the nasty little holes at the ends of Sharps rifles held uncomfortably close to his breast. "Why should our trains be stopped by Abolitionists, and how do you know they are such and that they numbered one hundred or more? What is their object? Let me know at once before we proceed to extremities."

Hot under the collar, Phelps laboriously composed an answer and handed it to the agent at Ellicott's Mills to forward to headquarters.

"My dispatch was not exaggerated," said his wire. "Neither was it written under excitement, as you suppose. I have not made it half as bad as it is. I will call at your office immediately on my arrival and tell you all."

Phelps must be excused for his little white lie. He *was* excited when he wrote the original dispatch. But he had every cause to be. And it was Smith, not Phelps, who must be blamed for waiting until eleven a.m. to take firm steps about the uprising in Harper's Ferry.

But the B. & O. president had not been as casual as his aide. Garrett, without awaiting the reply from Phelps at Ellicott's Mills, telegraphed the President of the United States at 10:30 a.m. Used to administrative command, the railroad executive didn't stop there. He wired the alarm to Governor Henry A. Wise of Virginia. (Harper's Ferry was then in Virginia. West Virginia had not yet been made a separate state.) He sent another dispatch to Major-General George H. Stewart, commanding the First Light Division, Maryland Volunteers.

To each he relayed the message of uprising and rebellion. He said whites and Negroes were involved in great numbers and he urged immediate action to keep the insurrection from spreading.

Once the news was spread, government leaders moved fast against the bearded man in Harper's Ferry. At Frederick a rifle company was mustered into readiness. In Richmond, Washington, and Charlestown the telegraph wires crackled with official orders.

Old John Brown, who had nursed a great dream for almost a decade, and who had finally struck the first blow for what he hoped would be the end of human slavery, didn't know it, as he dodged the bullets of outraged Harper's Ferry residents who had found courage and arms with the coming of daylight, but his enterprise was doomed. He would never get out of the ring of steel being forged at breakneck speed.

Everything was going wrong at the Ferry.

He had planned for this hour for years. But he had not planned well enough. His gossamer dreams were fading. His hopes were being shattered as one by one, his men were dying. He loathed the thought of human bondage with a holy hatred, but, alive, he was only a small, weak voice. He would go on battling until cut down and battered with a sword, even until a noose cut short his suffering. Dead, his voice would roll from mountain peak to prairie vale, in a chorus no man could quell.

Everything was going wrong, yes, but John Brown must have sensed, as few men did that day, that the fires were getting hot under the crucible of inevitable conflict—a crucible that was to give off the molten tragedy of Civil War.

CHAPTER 2

JOHN BROWN didn't set foot in the valley where his great adventure was staged until the morning before Independence Day in 1859.

It was a beautiful summer day, warm and clear, when the bearded patriarch, with his sons Owen and Oliver, and his faithful adherent, Jeremiah Anderson, trudged into town. They had come from Ohio, where conferences had been held to determine strategy, by way of Pittsburgh, Bedford Springs, Chambersburg and Hagerstown. At Hagerstown they quit the railroad and took to the dusty country roads.

Mockingbirds sang in the apple trees and turkey buzzards wheeled ominously symbolic—if the men had been in the mood to notice—in the cloud-flecked sky above them. Old Brown, as most persons called him, carried a surveyor's transit on one shoulder. The others had dry biscuits, a little cured meat and corn meal in their shoulder packs. They had fought for years

in Bloody Kansas, up and down the prairies in the blistering summer heat and winter blizzards. The Maryland countryside on this day was a pleasant change. They sweated a little as they walked, but the miles passed easily.

They reached Harper's Ferry about noon and passed through to the little riverbank town of Sandy Hook on the other side of the Potomac. There they found lodgings in a cheap boarding house. That night they slept peacefully, welcoming the quiet after the noise of the tavern in Hagerstown. That tavern, only three years later, was to be turned into an emergency hospital for the bloodied men brought in from the Sunken Road and the Dunker Church and the cornfield where Lee and McClellan fought one of the bitterest battles of the Civil War—Antietam.

If John Brown thought of war as an inevitable result of his action at Harper's Ferry, he said nothing of it to his sons. He claimed the power to see a little distance into the future, but he couldn't have dreamed how terrible war was to be when it finally came to this same pleasant valley at the edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

On the morning of the Fourth of July the four men walked into the hills above Sandy Hook. A farmer, John C. Unseld, met them on a lonely path and inquired if they were prospecting for gold or silver.

"No," said Old Brown, "we are not. We are out looking for land. We want to buy land. We have a little money, but we want to make it go as far as we can."

Unseld went on down to the Ferry, but he didn't believe the story. He had seen the surveyor's instrument, but he had also noticed a small hammer the old man carried, and he was convinced that the party of four men was actually looking for precious ores.

After he had finished his business in town Unseld started home. He met Brown and his companions again, and they talked for a time of farmland for sale. The local man told the strangers of a farm belonging to the heirs of a Dr. Booth Kennedy that lay only four miles away from where they then

stood. Brown mumbled something about the wisdom of renting first and buying later, refused an invitation to dinner, and went back to Sandy Hook.

He looked the farm over subsequently, went in to Sharpsburg to talk with the agent, and finally leased it for eight months for thirty-five dollars in gold. In this hideout, rented for a pittance, the raiders were to gather before marching down to seize the government arsenal and start the hoped-for chain reaction that would see millions of slaves take up arms and win their freedom.

For his thirty-five dollars Brown got a farmhouse with a half-basement kitchen and storeroom, a living room and two bedrooms on the second floor, and a small attic. Across the road was a much smaller cabin. The main house was three hundred yards from the dirt thoroughfare that connected the Ferry with Boonsborough. No one looking at the house would have dreamed that it could possibly serve as home for a group of men waiting to initiate one of the great adventures of history. It wasn't adequate, yet it had to do. Money was running low. There was no alternative.

One by one other members of Brown's force moved in—from New England, hot-bed of abolitionist feeling, Ohio, New York, and Canada, where Brown had held a constitutional convention, drawn up a body of laws for the "Provisional Government of the United States," and named himself Commander-in-Chief of its armed forces.

Old Brown sensed that so many men, living alone, would arouse suspicion, so he sent Oliver off to his home in faraway North Elba, in the Adirondack Mountains of New York, almost against the Canadian border, to ask his wife to join him.

Mrs. Brown, mother of thirteen children, vetoed the plan, but sent her daughter Anne and her daughter-in-law Martha, who was Oliver's wife. By the time they completed the long, arduous trip to Maryland, many of the men were already in residence or, more accurately, in hiding at the Kennedy farm.

Besides Oliver there were his brothers Owen and Watson Brown. William and Dauphin Thompson, neighbors from

North Elba, came in August. Straggling in afterwards were Charles Plummer Tidd, the woodsman from Maine, and Aaron D. Stevens, the fearless fighter from Norwich, Connecticut, who had struck terror to the pro-slavery Border Ruffians in Kansas while known under the nom-de-guerre of Colonel Whipple. Others drifted in singly or in twos or threes until the roster of John Brown and his twenty-one followers was complete.

The old man was right in assuming that Marylanders would be suspicious of so many men gathered in one place. One day Owen was accompanying a former slave, Shields Green, to the farm from Chambersburg. Some white men, guessing the Negro might be a runaway on the Underground Railway to freedom, took after them. The two men hid in a cornfield, but the pursuers saw their coats through the brambles of a thicket under which they were lying and Owen had to brandish his revolver to get the curious prowlers to leave them alone.

Owen and Green fled into the mountains, knowing the men would be back, eager for the bounty they could get for returning a runaway slave. All night they stumbled wearily from one glen to another, up one slope and down the other, while the voices and crashing footsteps of their enemies echoed behind them. They reached the farm safe, but exhausted, the next morning.

Martha Brown did the cooking. She used a wood stove in the living room upstairs because the basement kitchen and almost every other available space were packed with boxes of rifles, pistols and long handled pikes. Buying supplies for so many men, all strong and healthy, and all of them young except the leader, presented a real difficulty. The Brown brothers did most of it, stopping frequently at the small towns between Chambersburg and the farm, buying a little here and there, so as not to make the storekeepers suspicious.

Once in a while one of the men would go into Harper's Ferry to pick up the Baltimore *Sun*, to which Brown had subscribed under the name of Isaac Smith. But the old man was afraid to have his men seen too often in the place where he

planned his first blow, so most of the food was purchased elsewhere.

Owen once bought a barrel of eggs because he could get them at a bargain.

"We had potatoes, onions and bacon," Anne wrote to her mother in New York State. "Martha is an extra good 'light bread' maker."

The daughter-in-law dished up the victuals and the daughter served the men, but it was Anne's chief duty to act as lookout.

John Brown had impressed on his daughter the absolute necessity of warning the men so they could hide if anyone approached the farmhouse.

The nearest neighbor was Mrs. John Huffmaster, who lived with her four children on a farm down the road toward Boonsborough. Anne Brown was only sixteen, and it was all she could do to keep a civil tongue in her head when talking to the inquisitive neighbor-woman. Mrs. Huffmaster always went barefoot, as did her four youngsters, all of whom had dirty faces and runny noses. It seemed to Anne that the woman, like a clucking hen with her small chickens, was always coming out from behind a building or a clump of shrubbery.

The older woman had rented the garden on the Kennedy farm before John Brown leased the whole layout, and he let her continue to weed it and gather the vegetables. But it was a terrible worry for Anne, trying to shield the presence of so many healthy men from the nosey little woman.

Ordinarily the men did their own washing and the two girls spread the clothes on the grass or fence to dry, taking them in as soon as they dried to forestall the mother hen's clucking—but it didn't work out all the time.

One afternoon Martha and Anne washed the menfolk's shirts and strung them along the fence. Mrs. Huffmaster came by and noticed them.

"Your men folk have a right smart lot of shirts," she said.

Anne bit her tongue and mumbled something about doing them all at once.

Only the fact that the men were deeply devoted to their cause made it possible for that many healthy, strapping young fellows to stay holed up for the better part of three months. They slept in the garrets and usually stayed out of sight until nightfall. Often they sneaked into the kitchen to talk with Martha and relieve the monotony of waiting. Anne had to sit on the porch mending, or pretend to be taking a walk outside, so no one would get close enough to wonder why so many men were cooped up in one small Maryland farmhouse.

"Let others do the work," John Brown cautioned his daughter. "Don't let anything keep you from being watchful. We all are depending upon you."

She was a devoted daughter.

"When I washed the dishes I stood at the end of the table, where I could see out of the window and open door if any one approached the house," she wrote, years later, of her girlhood adventure. "I was constantly on the lookout while carrying the victuals across the porch, and while I was tidying and sweeping the rooms, and always at my post on the porch when the men were eating. My evenings were spent on the porch or sitting on the stairs, watching and listening."

Once or twice Mrs. Huffmaster gained access to the inside of the farmhouse, and so did an occasional visitor from Sharpsburg or Boonsborough. Always Anne managed to get the younger men upstairs and out of sight in time, but the large packing crates containing arms caused some of the visitors to arch their eyebrows.

Martha and Anne told the strangers that their mother was joining them soon and had shipped her furniture. Since she was very fussy about such things, they explained, they were not going to unpack the stuff until "Mrs. Smith" arrived.

Old John Brown, who was personally honest to a fault, hated the necessity for lying and disguise. He was aware, however, of the feeling in the nieghborhood and knew that absolute secrecy had to be maintained.

He had cut off most of his great flowing beard while en route to Maryland from Ohio. Hundreds of men had grown

familiar with the great appendage while he was leading anti-slavery forces in Kansas. He thought trimming it to an inch and a half in length would be a better disguise than if he shaved it off clean. But during the stay at the Kennedy Farm it grew somewhat long again, and whiter than when he first had used the scissors on it.

A woman who lived not far away came to the farm one day and asked for help. She had an infection on her neck that caused a considerable swelling, and she was afraid of blood poisoning. Instead of going on into town to seek professional aid she appealed to Brown.

He lanced the infection and was so sterile in his preparations and so careful in his post-operative treatment that the woman healed swiftly.

There was a quality about Brown that inspired people—even strangers. He hadn't been a resident at the Kennedy place two months before his neighbors sought his advice and guidance on many subjects, including animal husbandry, agriculture, and business. The strange irony of it all was that he himself had been a failure in virtually every undertaking he had turned to since boyhood.

Yet all who knew him had this strong, abiding faith in him.

He helped the younger, more spirited men to while away the days by initiating debates on religion, slavery, and the economics of the times. The men came down from the attic, sitting on the stairs or on the floor, ready to dash out of sight if Anne gave the signal.

William Leeman and Albert Hazlett were the hardest of the crowd to keep inside. Anne called the men her "invisibles" and said these two hated to be "caged up."

Often, against their leader's advice, they stalked off in broad daylight and went to visit John E. Cook, one of the band who lived in Harper's Ferry. At other times they roamed about in the woods, but luck was with them and the neighbors never became suspicious.

Rarely the old man drove in to the Ferry to see if any mail had come in from his northern supporters and backers. Even

more rarely he went to Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, where he had left John Henry Kagi, one of his most trusted lieutenants, to forward mail, guns, and what they called "express packages." These latter were occasional Negro volunteers, most of whom discussed joining Brown's forces but finally decided against doing so. Those who did stay on made the trip to the Kennedy farm in the covered wagon or in the dark of night.

It was a warm summer, this one of 1859, and the attic of the farmhouse was a miserable place to have to spend so many days. Men less devoted to a dream or vision would have broken under the strain.

But where John Brown was, there also was faith. He would start the day at the breakfast table with a reading from the Bible, and prayers. At eventide he read from the Bible again and often interpreted his own determination to free the slaves in terms chosen from the same pages. He knew the Bible well and believed that it was law, ordinance, and statute to be obeyed—even to the point of taking up arms to strike off the fetters of bondage from the slaves of the South.

Little by little the guns arrived. So too did the long-handled pikes made in Collinsville, Connecticut, with which Brown expected to arm the slaves as they rose against their masters and joined his band. The arms were cached under Martha's and Anne's beds, in the attic, and wherever there was room. Some of the medieval-style pikes were stored in the small cabin across the Boonsborough Road.

All through these months John Brown kept up a steady correspondence with abolitionists in New England, New York, and Ohio and even more regular correspondence with his wife in far-off North Elba. He used the name of Isaac Smith, and was so afraid that mail would be noticed because of its northern postmark that he set up a careful way of avoiding suspicion.

He instructed his wife to write to a John Henrie, care of General Delivery, in Chambersburg. John Henrie was John Henry Kagi. Inside the letter to Kagi she was to enclose an-

other addressed to I. Smith, Harper's Ferry, which Kagi forwarded. It was Brown's belief that mail from so close at hand would be less likely to arouse suspicion than letters from northern New York State.

One morning Brown was writing a letter in the kitchen with no one else around except Anne when two wrens that had a nest under the porch flew into the room. As the girl put down her sewing and the old man dropped his pen, the little birds fluttered and twittered about, flying toward the nest and then back into the room.

"What do you suppose is the matter with the birds?" asked Anne.

"Have you ever seen them behave like this before?" asked the tall, slightly stooped leader.

"Never," said Anne.

"Let us go and see what is going on," said Brown.

They went out and saw that a snake had crawled up a post and was about to devour the little fledglings in the nest. Brown killed the snake with a hoe. The mother and father wren sat on the railing, singing and trilling as if their small hearts would burst.

Back in the kitchen Brown mused for a while over the obvious way in which the little birds had sought human help.

"Do you think it a good omen of our ultimate success?" he asked his daughter.

Anne couldn't answer, but she got the impression her father thought of himself as a power for good stepping upon the neck of an evil tyrant.

To John Brown there was nothing strange about his ability to be kind and gentle toward those he loved, while readying himself to launch an attack that he feared would lead to bloodshed, death, and strife between brothers.

He was insistent on some degree of military training. Aaron D. Stevens, one of his older and more trusted adjutants, had charge of this. Despite the need for secrecy, the men drilled when they could, studied military tactics from a rough manual

of arms a supporter had prepared at Brown's insistence, and practiced with rifles and pistols.

In between times the members of the band sang, played checkers, read magazines, and told stories of life on the Kansas border.

Whenever a summer thunderstorm swept down over the Blue Ridge Mountains, with great thunderclaps beating against the peaks and echoing down the valley toward the Potomac, the boys were elated. They jumped about and shouted, releasing some of their pent-up energy, yahooing and bellowing in the belief that their neighbors couldn't hear them.

Old John Brown sat on a three-legged stool in the kitchen, not wanting to interfere with the fun, thinking that soon there might be little laughter, but rather sorrow and pain.

August was hot and oppressive. Crops were harvested by the neighbors, but the men in Brown's band were waiting for a greater, more momentous harvest, when, as they envisioned it, they would gather up slaves like sheaves from the fields and store them away in the overflowing granaries of freedom.

It was beautiful country, this farmland about Sharpsburg. The Potomac came down out of the mountains a fast-flowing, turbulent stream, but it levelled out above the junction with the Shenandoah and flowed on unhurried, making great loops as it changed its direction eventually toward the east. South of the Kennedy farm, Antietam creek—a smaller, sometimes copper-colored stream—lazily twisted its way southward before emptying into the Potomac.

Several country roads zig-zagged their way in the general direction of the Ferry, running between the pastures and plowed fields of prosperous, well-tended farms. Through the decades the wheels of ox carts and horse-drawn wagons had churned the roads into dust in the summer and into mud in the winter and spring. This abrasive action, and the sudden freshets that followed hard rainstorms had tended to eat away the roads so that in most places they ran a little below the level of the cornfields and meadows through which they cut.

Great elms, oaks, and beeches grew up by the roadsides, their roots often exposed by the washing away of the dirt. These roots made restful places to stop when travelers on foot wearied of the distances they had to cover.

September came to this peaceful countryside to find the conspirators growing eager to get on with their business. Red-shouldered hawks flew down out of the mountains with their young to teach them how to catch the field mice and rabbits suddenly shorn of their protective coverts when the scythes of the harvesters cut swaths across the fields.

It was almost an omen. Time was slipping out from under the pages of history, leaving the events to come an open field upon which to maneuver, where there would be no cover for the deeds of dedicated men. Northerners and Southerners alike must have sensed that there was a lull before a storm—a sort of peaceful prelude for a bloody, terrifying time to come.

In the farmhouse Stewart Taylor, the only member of the band who was truly a spiritualist, saw the days passing, one by one, and prophesied that his own were running out. He was convinced that he would never come out of the raid they were planning alive. Yet he was not ill at ease about it, and was content to let the events that were to come gather together like the long shadows of evening.

Dauphin Thompson and Barclay Coppoc, mere boys, were not yet old enough to vote, and had never shot a rifle in anger. Dauphin was a handsome lad, with a head of curly, golden hair, and the complexion of a schoolgirl. Barclay, not so light, was still extremely youthful in appearance. Albert Hazlett and Will Leeman, the restless ones, chided the two and said they should have served in Kansas to get "roughed up for the job ahead."

"They look more like good girls," said Leeman, "than they do like soldiers."

One of the two baby-faced boys was to die at the Ferry, along with both of their tormentors, striking a blow for equality and human dignity. But they had such utter faith in old John Brown that they didn't fear the future. To these

young men the leader was a patriarch from out of the Bible, sent to smite the Philistines. When he asked them to gird up their loins for battle they would do so with shouting and music in their hearts.

Late in September the old man drove to Harrisburg and took a train to Philadelphia to talk to several financial supporters. From there he wrote a letter back to the farmhouse, ordering the daughter and daughter-in-law to pack up and leave for North Elba. Events were rushing to a conclusion.

On September 29 Anne and Martha, with Oliver Brown, who was to accompany them to Troy, New York, left the Kennedy farm. As the covered wagon was tooled out of the lane and up the dusty pike toward Chambersburg, gaiety and lightheartedness seemed to pass with them from out of the hearts and minds of the little garrison.

On the next afternoon, standing on the station platform in Harrisburg, the two girls said their goodbyes for the last time to old John Brown. With Oliver, they boarded a train for Philadelphia and New York. The bearded leader, never stopping to wave or let his inner feelings show, got up into the wagon and turned the horses' heads toward the south. Theirs was to be a rendezvous with their mother and younger brothers and sisters, up against the far Canadian border. His was to be a rendezvous with history, a few short weeks before a later one with death.

Back at the farmhouse the band of armed interventionists, sobered by the girls' departure, turned with compulsive haste to the business of readying themselves for battle. They still didn't know what date was in John Brown's mind, but the leaves were turning, nights were growing crisp, and every man knew that the sand in the glass was running out.

They greased and polished the rifles and pistols, seeing that the mechanical parts worked flawlessly. Then they went about the chore of affixing a thousand hand-forged pike heads upon long shafts of ash. These were the weapons they thought a thousand black hands would seize to aid in open rebellion against slavery, unaware that less than a dozen—nay, less than

half a dozen—hands were ready to exchange slavery's shackles for a freeman's weapon. This greatest tragedy of all was beyond conjecture; the possibility of such a shattering misfire of their plans never crossed their minds.

On October 8 the grey-bearded leader wrote to his wife and family for the last time before he struck at Harper's Ferry:

> Oliver returned safe on Wednesday of this week. I want Belle and Martha both to feel that they have a home with you until we return. We shall do all in our power to provide for the wants of the whole as one family; till that time. If Martha and Anne had any money after getting home: I wish it to be used to make all as comfortable as may be; for the present. All are in usually good health. I expect John will send you some assistance soon. Write him all you want to say to us. God bless you all
>
> Your Affectionate Husband & Father.

From Chambersburg John Kagi sent word that no more volunteers could be expected to round out the ranks of the little band of insurrectionists. Plans to get hundreds of freed Negroes back from Canada to help the revolt had fallen apart. Even three of Brown's own sons failed to join up when the time to strike came around. They had dallied in Ohio or in the cities to the north supposedly to send on recruits.

The dreams and the planning and the hopes seemed to be shrinking into the form of ugly failure, yet not one of the more than a score of loyal fighters hesitated or lost courage.

"This is just the right time," wrote Kagi. "The year's crops have been good, and they are now perfectly housed and in the best condition for use. The moon is just right. Slaves are discontented at this season more than any other, the reasons for which reflection will show you. We can't live much longer without money,—we couldn't get along much longer without being exposed. A great religious revival is going on, and has its advantages. . . ."

So the die was cast.

The absolutes were not pleasant to contemplate: hunger on the one side, betrayal or discovery, with imprisonment or death, on the other.

It was at once one of the noblest blows ever to be struck for decency and right, and a fool's errand on which a score were going where ten thousand should have marched. But there was no turning back now. The faltering steps of mankind from darkness into the light—steps that may never find their ultimate goal—were to march with Brown and his men. It was their destiny there in the Kennedy farmhouse. Perhaps they sensed it. Perhaps they did not. But something was driving them, and their faces were turned toward Harper's Ferry.

CHAPTER 3

On the eve of his great adventure John Brown was essentially a contented man for the first time in his life. He was not satisfied with conditions in the world at large, nor yet with those of his own small band, but the waiting and the planning and the hoping were over. Ahead of him lay only decisive action, and it was this for which he had shaped his life.

There was nothing in his family background to indicate he was to be a man apart from the normal run of men. True, the Browns of New England were of old Pilgrim stock and every Pilgrim had a broad streak of independence, even rebelliousness, in him. His grandfather, Captain John Brown of the 18th Connecticut Infantry, was such a rebel, and he died fighting for his country's independence.

The grandson, born in Torrington, Connecticut, May 9, 1800, got his education on the wing, as it were, since his parents, like so many others of their era, struck west in quest of richer farmlands. His early years were spent in one town after another in New York, Ohio, and western Pennsylvania.

In between there were many stops along the banks of woodland streams or in the rough cabins of friendly settlers during long treks behind a yoke of oxen and a creaking wagon.

Young Brown read whatever he could get his hands on, but his daughter Mary, long afterward, indicated there was a great scarcity of decent reading matter on the frontier. John read the Bible over and over, and it was undeniably the greatest single influence on his life. In addition he read Ben Franklin's writings, Plutarch's *Lives*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, a life of Oliver Cromwell, and one of Napoleon and his marshals.

He took up tanning in his late teens in Ohio, but records show he returned to Connecticut, attended Morris Academy, and tried to enter Amherst College with a view to studying for the ministry. An inflammation of the eyes made this plan impossible, and he went back to Ohio, settling in Hudson.

It was there that the cause for which he would one day give his life first exerted its influence upon him. A runaway Negro boy knocked on his door, pleading for asylum. Brown took him in. Almost at once they heard the sound of horses and Brown told the boy to go out through a window and hide under the bushes nearby. It was a false alarm, the horsemen being neighbors, so Brown went out to find the fugitive.

"I found him behind a log," the good samaritan said later, "and I heard his heart thumping before I reached him. At that I vowed eternal enmity to slavery."

Brown married Dianthe Lusk almost a year before he became of age, and the girl, whom he himself described as "remarkably plain," bore him seven children. Before Dianthe had become accustomed to her new name she learned that her husband was a restless man, given to many business pursuits, none of them particularly successful.

They moved to Richmond, Pennsylvania, where he got an appointment as postmaster from President John Quincy Adams. He also carried the mail on a twenty-mile route each day. He switched to cattle breeding and then opened another tannery. He was instrumental in organizing a school, which

met in his own home for many months, and a Congregational Church.

Just when life seemed a little smoother, Dianthe Brown died in giving birth to an unnamed son who did not outlive her.

A year later the distraught father found he had grown fond of the sixteen-year-old daughter of the housekeeper he had hired to watch over the little children. She was a big girl, rather on the silent side, named Mary Anne Day. One day she was handed a letter in John Brown's handwriting, but she was so shy and upset she didn't have the courage to open it until the next morning.

It was a proposal of marriage.

When she took up her wooden buckets to go down to the spring for fresh water, she noticed that the writer of the letter was following her. At the edge of the pool, standing in the shadow of the great trees towering above the little house, she gave him an affirmative answer.

Neither business nor romance seemed to interfere with John Brown's deep-rooted concern with abolition. In the haymow of his barn at Richmond he built a secret hideout for slaves going North on the Underground Railway. It was cleverly arranged, with trap door and ventilation, yet constructed so that it would not be noticeable from the stable below or the hayloft above. Many a Negro slept there in the daytime, moving on with the coming of nightfall.

The years went by rapidly. Brown moved his family back to Ohio, took up sheep raising, shifted to cattle breeding, and then went into the wool business. He was not reckless, but he was a speculator, and his deals went sour more often than they prospered. There were suits for nonpayment of bills and for failure to repay banks for loans, and litigation over sales of farmland.

His correspondence during these years shows little bitterness. He was much more likely to write at length on his hatred of the South's "peculiar institution," as he called slavery, than to complain about financial reverses. He fought for women's rights, spending money he could have used to good advantage

at home, and traveled long distances to hear Lucretia Mott and Abby K. Foster speak.

Mary Anne Brown spent many a week alone with her children. Her husband drove cattle east to sell, and he bought wool and carted it to the Atlantic seaboard in search of a higher price.

After a while the business of trading in wool claimed all of his time, and the Browns moved to Springfield, Massachusetts, to be nearer the mills that bought it. But the mill-owners gave him a bad time, forming a sort of cartel to drive prices down. John Brown, always a foe of tyranny, whatever the brand, decided to try foreign markets. He sailed for Europe in 1849 and tried to interest weavers there. He won a medal for the excellence of the American wool he took with him, but had little luck selling it.

An English wool-merchant, amused by Brown's simple manners and his rustic garb, tried to play a trick on him at the World's Fair then being held in London. He handed Brown a small bit of what looked like wool and asked him if he thought he could use it.

"Gentlemen," replied the American instantly, "if you have any machinery that will work up dog's hair, I would advise you to put this into it."

His hands and fingers were so expert at handling wool, and he knew so well that sheep's wool has infinitesimal hooks on each fiber, that the Englishman's attempt at trickery didn't fool him. After the laughter died down the Londoner admitted that he had clipped a patch of hair from his pet poodle's coat.

Disaster struck when Brown returned home, bringing much of the unsold wool consigned to the firm of Perkins & Brown back with him. Bankruptcy came swiftly and lawsuits followed. Penniless, Brown looked for a new home.

Fortunately there was a windfall—not a very big one, but enough to save the family from want. Gerrit Smith, a Congressman from New York, and a staunch foe of slavery, donated several thousand acres of land in the northern Adirondacks as homestead sites for runaway and free Negroes.

The soil was poor, the climate rigorous, but Brown decided he would go there to live and serve as teacher and adviser to the Negroes.

So the Browns moved to North Elba, a little cross-roads on the shoulder of the mountain that rises above Lake Placid, where the granite ledges lay but a few inches beneath a thin overlay of soil. It was like going to the end of the world. In fact, so far distant did it appear to the early settlers they called the community Timbuctoo at first, after the city in the Sahara. Later it was changed to North Elba.

Helping the Negroes, working his own farm, raising fine Devon cattle, John Brown still did not find happiness. Several of his older sons had moved to Kansas Territory, partly in search of fortunes, partly to counter the efforts of pro-slavery men to make Kansas a slave state. Brown was a man of action as well as a dreamer, and the call from the distant prairie country was an alluring one.

The frame house in upper New York State was not quite completed. Crops were growing well and would need harvesting soon. But the appeal from Kansas would not brook delay. When his son John wrote, pleading for a few rifles with which to defend his homestead, his father could stand it no longer.

"We need them more than we need bread," wrote the young settler.

In mid-August John Brown kissed his devoted, understanding wife goodbye and set out with several of his sons to deliver at least a few guns to Kansas.

Grey-haired now, more stooped than ever, he turned his eyes and his feet toward Bloody Kansas, not as a homesteader eager to break up the sod clothed in buffalo grass and make a new home on the plains, but as a guerilla fighter. He would deliver the badly needed guns in person and the slave-holding forces would learn that they had aroused a fearless man.

Within a few months of his arrival the Border Ruffians, the militant arm of the pro-slavery forces, found that Captain John Brown of Osawatomie had shed the personalities of wool-merchant, farmer, cattle drover, tanner, and postmaster as a snake

sheds its skin. In their place arose a legend, built around a man whose rifle shot straight and whose heart seemed carved from iron.

"Did you ever see a Border Ruffian?" asked William A. Phillips, the Kansas correspondent of the New York *Tribune*, about this time in a dispatch to his paper. "Imagine a fellow, tall, slim, but athletic, with yellow complexion, hairy-faced, with a dirty flannel shirt, of red or blue, or green, a pair of commonplace, but dark-colored pants, tucked into an uncertain altitude by a leather belt, in which a dirty-handled bowie knife is stuck rather ostentatiously, an eye slightly whiskey-red, and teeth the color of a walnut. Such is your Border Ruffian. . . ."

Before he had been on the frontier three months John Brown had met and whipped scattered bands of these marauders. He was elected a leader of the free-state guerillas and had his work cut out for him. He and his followers won the battle of Black Jack against superior forces, then lost the battle of Osawatomie when the Ruffians brought up a small brass cannon and fired grapeshot at the free-soilers.

But as the months went by, more emigrants came in from New England, New York, and Ohio, and Brown's forces helped to maintain their settlements against the slavery men.

While he was fighting in Kansas, the hatred of men who kept slaves drove him to an experiment that had within it the seeds of his later attack on Harper's Ferry. In the middle of the night he rode across the border into Missouri, freed eleven slaves, and took them back to Kansas. Forming a party of armed men he loaded a wagon with provisions and set out for Canada, so that the slaves might become free. The party rode for weeks across Iowa and Illinois in the dead of winter, buffeted by blizzards and below-zero weather. When they reached Chicago, Allan Pinkerton, the famous detective, hid them away until funds could be raised to send them on to Detroit. Finally, John Brown stood on the bank of the river and watched as the men and women he had rescued from bondage rode a ferry over to Windsor and freedom.

The year before the raid, in Chatham, Ontario, fifty miles beyond Windsor, Old Brown had held a constitutional convention for the organization of his forces. There the rules and regulations for a free government, sworn to oust slavery, had been drawn up. There he had revealed to some of his closest backers that he had decided to quit Kansas for operations in the East.

From Chatham he sent John E. Cook to take up residence in Harper's Ferry as a scout and spy. There he gathered together most of the men who had followed him through the last year's fighting in the West and who had now joined him, drifting in by ones and twos to the Kennedy farmhouse in Maryland.

As he thought back over the years of labor and conflict, the old man was happy the morrow would bring decisive action. Kansas would have to wait. John Brown wanted his next blow to fall deep in the settled, civilized country far from the border wars. His hawk-like visage, his ice-blue eyes were now turned toward Harper's Ferry—a goal, a dream, and an ending, all in one.

CHAPTER 4

THE sun never broke through the mist on that Sabbath marked as the 16th of October, 1859. Instead a raw wind blew through the Potomac Valley, driving low, scudding clouds across the sky and sending occasional rain squalls sheeting down upon Harper's Ferry and the surrounding countryside. It was a somber, depressing day, fit for the events that were to etch it in history.

Twenty-one followers and John Brown ate their Sunday meal without much zest, sensing that some of them might never again put their legs under a table to eat. The old man read from the Bible—a little longer than usual, a Negro sup-

porter said later—and then silently attacked his fatback, potatoes, and cornbread.

Barclay Coppoc, he of the girlish complexion and mild manner, should have been in good spirits. He had been picked to stay behind and guard the arms with Captain Owen Brown and Frank J. Merriam, a recent recruit. But his brother Edwin was going on to the Ferry and this killed off any feeling of relief in the younger man's heart.

Mrs. Huffmaster had stopped being such a nuisance, now that the bulk of the vegetables in the garden patch had been harvested. It was a little cold to be walking about the fields without shoes anyway.

No one feared discovery on this last day. John E. Cook, who lived at the Ferry years before and had maintained a home there as the band gathered in the farmhouse, had shuttled back and forth between the two places. But this day he was with his leader.

So too was John Henry Kagi, who had closed up his small headquarters in Chambersburg after forwarding the last of the arms and the few adherents who had come in from scattered points in the North.

Oliver Brown was back from Troy, where he had said farewell to his wife Martha and his sister Anne.

Aaron Stevens, the drillmaster, read aloud from the manual of arms during the afternoon. Some of the men took out their Barlow knives, removed one shoe and held it sole upwards between their knees. They sprinkled a dust of fine sand on the leather sole and then rubbed the steel blades back and forth, honing them to a keen edge.

Outside, gusts of wind pelted the clapboards of the farmhouse with rain. The fire in the kitchen stove crackled merrily, the movement of the air around the house making a fine draft in the tall stone chimney.

In other farmhouses in nearby Virginia and Maryland husbandmen were resting as Genesis said they should do. They had been to church—most of them—and had returned and changed into linsey-woolsey shirts and overalls. They were

now taking it easy before starting the evening chores. It is unlikely that the thought of armed insurrection against the Government of the United States crossed the mind of a single man in either of those states.

Up in Boston and Worcester and New York State, men like Franklin Sanborn, Gerrit Smith, Dr. Samuel G. Howe, and Thomas Wentworth Higginson chafed under the doubt as to when John Brown would strike. They had helped with money, with written support, with sermons from the pulpit. The letters that went back and forth between them and Old Brown show how fully they supported the leader in the field. But they didn't know exactly when he planned to strike, and several didn't know where, except that it was not to be in Kansas this time, but much closer to the built-up East.

On the farm at North Elba, near Lake Placid, New York, Mary Anne Brown waited with strange stoicism for word from Maryland. She too did not know the exact day picked by her husband, but she knew from what Martha and Anne had told her, and from the last letters from Chambersburg, that the hour was nigh. This lion-hearted woman had never interposed a single objection to her husband's plans. She believed that when the Bible warned against holding men in bondage it was specifically pointing the way to ending slavery in the South. She saw in John Brown an avenging angel chosen by the Lord.

Mrs. Brown knew the blow was aimed at the Armory at the Ferry. Little Sarah Brown, one of the younger members of the family, also knew the goal of the little band. One day in the rough one-room schoolhouse at North Elba the teacher was discussing geography. The name Harper's Ferry popped up, and the little girl shook and shivered at the mere mention of the place.

Small as she was, she sensed that nothing must happen to reveal her father's secret. It was somehow typical of the crusading insurrectionist that he would let his small children in on the secret and yet not advise the ministers and businessmen who had collected and given him money for food and arms.

As the Sabbath day in the mist-shrouded farmhouse near Antietam wore on, gay companies of volunteer firemen polished their hose carts and engines in communities around New York City or rode with them into that metropolis for a great Firemen's Convention opening the next day. There were companies from Waterbury, Connecticut; Paterson and Newark and Perth Amboy, New Jersey; and from Westchester and Nassau Counties in New York. Some from Brooklyn, Flushing, Hoboken, and other nearby towns had already crossed the ferries and had been assigned to lodgings with various Manhattan fire companies.

In the Atlantic, just off Montauk Point, the bark *Golconda* shook herself down on the first day out of New Bedford on the way to the whaling waters of the South Pacific off the Antarctic ice barrier. Before she saw another sunset, the raid at Harper's Ferry would be underway, but the sailors would know nothing of it for two or three years. Nor would they know that their country was convulsed by civil war until they returned many long months later.

Down in Atlanta, Georgia, the toast of the American stage, Miss Ada Menken, rested in her hotel after an overnight trip from Augusta. The night before she had closed a brilliant two weeks run in the latter city and was now awaiting new conquests when the curtain rose the next evening in the Georgia capital.

The New York *Herald* carried an advertisement telling of an owner's desire to sell a mineral springs and resort hotel in a western Virginia mountain valley. The baths and the drinking water, said the announcement of sale, were famous for their medicinal and curative properties. As the establishment was reputedly bringing in a lucrative income, there was some question as to why it should be put on the market, but this was not answered in the advertisement.

In thousands of homes little boys and girls of better than average income families were practising on rosewood pianos, for which there was a ready sale.

In New York City men who had enjoyed a good dinner and

a good "seegar"—one could buy for four dollars a thousand of Havana, German, or domestic manufacture—found their Sunday papers offering business opportunities and good merchandise for sale at reasonable prices.

One paid notice revealed that "$300 will buy the lease, stock, good will and fixtures of a first class corner grocery in a populous part of Jersey City . . . a good location for an American or a German."

The same columns listed a brownstone house, three stories and basement, at Lexington Avenue and 38th St., for sale for $10,000. Very cocksurely it stated that this was "the best house on Murray Hill."

And another advertisement printed in behalf of an auctioneer told of the offer for sale of "a splendid pair of black Morgan horses, long tails, 5 and 6 years old, over 15 hands high, good travelers, and warranted sound, kind and free from vices; also a two-seated Phaeton, built by Lawrence the carriage-maker, and a set of double harness, silver trimmed."

Those, then, were a few of the varying facets of America on this Sabbath when John Brown waited serenely for the time to strike a blow against slavery. In the ramshackle barn behind the Kennedy farmhouse there was a rough wagon and a faithful work horse who would take him on the high road to glory at Harper's Ferry. If this animal had vices, history overlooked them. There was no silver ornamentation on the harness. Some uncouth wheelwright and carpenter had thrown the buckboard together. But it would hold guns and pikes and crowbars and axes as well as any vehicle built by Lawrence the carriage-maker. Probably much better.

CHAPTER 5

THE coming of evening on that Sabbath was like the unrolling of a great quilt, beginning at the pillows formed by the Blue Ridge Mountains and ending at the foot of the valley where the Potomac flowed drowsily past Harper's Ferry.

It was a raw, chill night; deathly quiet now that the winds had fallen off at twilight. In the Kennedy house the twenty-two members of the band could hear the last of the rain water dripping from the eaves and splashing in the gravelly ditch beneath the porch.

A little after eight o'clock John Brown called the men together for divine services. He read a dozen verses from the Bible and then asked one of the Negroes to lead them in prayer. This was a privilege he usually cherished for himself. Perhaps on this grim evening he thought it only right that a colored man should ask for heavenly intercession as they prepared to strike a blow for all the colored men in the land. We do not know which of the men it was, only his color; but it was the first symbolic step of many that marked the great adventure.

The old man's eyes wandered for an instant as he took in the scene in the warm little house. Then he stood tall, erasing the almost perpetual stoop that was his normal stance.

"Men, get on your arms," he said. "We will proceed to the Ferry."

There was a hustling and a bustling as big men moved quickly within a narrow confine. All through the final hours of the afternoon they had been waiting for this command. They buckled the pistol belts about them, emptied cartridges into their pockets and picked up their Sharps rifles. As they

left the kitchen they threw across their shoulders the heavy grey woolen shawls that served as overcoats. For some of them, these would serve also as winding sheets before another day was done.

Men brought the wagon from the barn, harnessed the horse, and backed him into the shafts. By the light of flickering lanterns others tossed a crowbar, a sledge-hammer, a bundle of the pikes, and a few extra rifles into the wagon. Then John Brown climbed on the seat, picked up the reins, and clucked to the horse. He looked up at the kitchen door where his son Owen Brown was silhouetted against the yellow light given off by a kerosene lamp. Owen, Barclay Coppoc, and F. J. Merriam were to stay behind, guarding the arms, until they were needed. The old man gave no signal, spoke no farewell. He tugged on the reins, and the horse moved slowly out of the lane to the lonely dirt road that led to the Potomac.

Two men, Captain John E. Cook and Captain Charles Plummer Tidd, stepped out in front of the wagon and led the way. The others, two by two, fell in behind their leader, walking easily as soon as their eyes became accustomed to the velvet darkness about them.

Tidd and Cook knew that their instructions called for them to seize any person they happened to meet, and to hold him so that he could not spread the alarm. Way at the end of the little procession two other men kept a watch to the rear, lest someone on horseback or in a wagon overtake them. The precautions were all unnecessary.

For six miles the abolitionists slogged through the darkness without being seen by a single person. They moved like avenging shadows, undetected, and there was no one to look in wild dismay upon the group, wondering why armed men were marching through a valley of such peaceful mien.

Once in a while one of Brown's lieutenants climbed up to the seat beside him to confer, but most of the way he rode alone, hunched forward with the gray shawl drooping from his shoulders across his knees.

When they were still a mile or so from the river they heard

the lonely whistle of the west-bound Baltimore & Ohio passenger train signaling for a clear passage through the covered bridge over the Potomac. By the time the raiders reached the lip of land above the stream and started down to the same bridge the train had discharged a few passengers and disappeared upriver toward Martinsburg.

Harper's Ferry lay at their feet, a drowsy little town of three thousand, all but a few of the residents asleep. Here and there, mostly in the vicinity of the bridge entrance and the railroad station, a few lights shone faintly through the mist.

Flowing past in front of them was the Potomac, its waters low, with huge boulders breaking the surface in many places. Coming in from the south was the smaller Shenandoah River, emerging from a narrow defile. Where Brown and his adherents stood was a great hill, called Maryland Heights, which permitted the men to look down upon the ancient town and see its every dimension. To their left at the east of the junction of the two rivers was another, only slightly less majestic hill, called Loudon Heights. This, like the village, was in Virginia. Rising precipitously up from the rear of the town was a third eminence, lower yet, known as Bolivar Heights.

Besides the covered bridge that carried the B. & O. tracks from Maryland into Virginia on their way toward the West, there was a second span, also covered, that bridged the Shenandoah. The ends of the bridges were only a few score feet apart on the corner of land formed by the confluence of the two rivers. The same distance away lay the railroad depot, and beyond that the buildings of the U. S. Arsenal and Armory.

More than a half century before the raiders stood gazing down upon the scene of their last adventure—one that was to make the name of Harper's Ferry famous beyond all of their imaginings—another man had gazed down upon the same site, but from a crag on Bolivar Heights. His name was Thomas Jefferson. In his notes on the State of Virginia he described the meeting of the waters:

> The passage of the Patowmac through the Blue Ridge is

perhaps one of the most stupendous scenes in nature. You stand on a very high point of land. On your right comes up the Shenandoah, having ranged along the foot of the mountain an hundred miles to seek a vent. On your left approaches the Patowmac, in quest of a passage also. In the moment of their junction they rush together against the mountain, rend it asunder, and pass off to the sea.

In this small cup, nestling within the crests of the Blue Ridge, lay John Brown's goal. It didn't matter that he could have chosen a hundred better places at which to attempt to pry the lock from slavery. It didn't matter that his "army" of righteous followers of the Lord was too small, too inept, and too starry-eyed. He stood on the edge of Maryland Heights, damp with rain and fog, and looked down upon the Ferry. Forgotten were the years of waiting and the years of fighting in Bloody Kansas. No one in the little town knew him, or much about him. His name was a shadow that had crossed the face of the sun on a western prairie. It had no fibre of reality in Maryland or Virginia. There were too many miles between Kansas and Maryland for it to mean anything. He alone, with his little band, was the link between past and present.

He waved his hand. Captain Tidd and Cook moved swiftly away toward the bridge. The wagon creaked as Brown slapped the horse's flank with the reins, and the little procession moved down the bluff. Ahead of them Tidd and Cook climbed a pole at the edge of the Chesapeake and Ohio canal under the northern abutment of the covered bridge, and cut the telegraph wires.

Far away in the almost deserted waiting room of Camden station in Baltimore, the night telegrapher stirred restlessly as he dozed.

Two by two, as though freshly risen from the grave, the marching men moved up and into the covered bridge. Death had come to join their ranks. With him also went futility,

treason, and false hope but even that was not all. There too went Glory.

It was now half past ten o'clock.

Kagi and Stevens went ahead of the others into the black maw of the covered bridge. They walked alongside the tracks on a board strip used by carriages and pedestrians, as the span served both the trains and other vehicles. At the far end the two men found William Williams, the night watchman, then on his way to turn the key in a time clock in the middle of the bridge. Every thirty minutes of the day and night a watchman had to perform this duty. It was easy work but the hours were miserable. He worked six hours, went home for six hours, and returned for another six-hour hitch. When Williams was asleep or resting, Patrick Higgins made the rounds. Each man earned a dollar a day for his labor.

Williams was not alarmed by the sudden appearance of Kagi and Stevens. Even when they told him he was under arrest he thought it a practical joke because by then he had caught a glimpse of John E. Cook, whom he had seen around the Ferry on and off for many months. Cook had even worked as a lock-tender on the canal for part of the preceding year.

Then Williams caught a glimpse of the Sharps rifles hanging from the men's shoulders under their long gray shawls. His jaw fell in dumfounded amazement. The leader detailed his son Watson, and Stewart Taylor, to guard the bridge. The balance of the party walked on to the Arsenal gates.

The town of Harper's Ferry had but a small business district —virtually all of it a stone's throw from the two bridges. In 1859 the tracks of the Baltimore & Ohio made a sharp turn to the right as they came off the span—much sharper than today's curve. This was because coaches and locomotives were much shorter than today's longer, heavier cars and engines. Straight ahead of the men as they came out of the bridge was the Arsenal, where the Federal Government stored the finished weapons. To the right was a relatively large structure that doubled as the railroad depot and the Wager Hotel. Beyond it a few rods down Potomac Street were the buildings of the

Armory, with a firehouse nearest to the hotel. Beyond these stretched a few stores and offices, and then began the neat rows of homes where the Arsenal employees lived. To the left of the raiders as they debouched from the dark throat of the span was a sprawling, one-story building that housed the Galt House, a typical saloon such as a traveler would find hard by the railroad station in any town large enough to be a train stop.

Almost a half mile down the bank of the Shenandoah on a small island was the third group of buildings that formed the industrial complex that had lured Brown to the Ferry. It was Hall's rifle works, where guns were turned out for the regular army.

These varied buildings and the open area between them and a few streets leading out of the center of the town constituted the main theater of operations for John Brown's raid.

No one was in the streets to see the party move swiftly to the Armory entrance. Brown's men strode through the darkness to where Daniel Whelan lounged beside the locked and heavily chained iron gate.

The horse and wagon rattled over the cobblestones, the reins tied to the whip socket and the animal guided by one of the men who had his hand on the bit strap.

Stevens put his gun to Whelan's breast.

"Open the gate," he said, "or give us the key."

Whelan's knees beat a tattoo against each other, but he remained faithful to his duty. He refused to open up or to surrender the key. Several of the raiders reached into the bed of the wagon, took out crowbars, and wrenched open the padlock. Within seconds the Armory was in their hands.

Later the night watchman told of his seizure.

"One fellow took me and they all gathered around me," he said. "They looked into my face. I was nearly scared to death for so many guns about. I did not know the minute nor the hour I should drop. They told me to be very quiet and still and make no noise or else they would put me to eternity."

With only the two night watchmen to hear, John Brown

explained his party's presence in Harper's Ferry. It was the first time anyone outside the little band itself had any inkling of the cause behind the event that was to rock the nation before another sunset.

"I came here from Kansas, and this is a slave state," said the bearded leader. "I want to free all the Negroes in this state. I have possession now of the United States Armory, and if the citizens interfere with me I must only burn the town and have blood."

Turning on his heel, Brown crossed the street and took possession of the arsenal, an operation in which he was unopposed. Albert Hazlett and Edwin Coppoc were detailed as the garrison and the others went back to the Armory.

Not a shot had been fired; hardly a sound had been made that could have disturbed the quietness of the autumn night.

The old man sent another son, Oliver, and William Thompson to guard the bridge across the Shenandoah. Then John Henry Kagi and John Copeland, a free colored man, set out for the rifle works, down Shenandoah Street.

It was a strange pairing off, this last one. John Kagi was probably the best educated man in the entire band. Of Swiss descent, but born in Ohio, he had taught school in Virginia until his sentiments against the institution of slavery became so marked he was ordered to leave the Old Dominion, never to return. Later he was admitted to the bar in Nebraska but spent most of the following years as a leader of the anti-slavery forces in Kansas.

In a fight with the famous pro-slavery leader, Judge Rush Elmore, Kagi nearly killed his attacker, who opened the battle by trying to brain him with a gold-headed cane. His own life was saved when a bullet from Judge Elmore's Colt revolver was deflected by a thick memorandum book carried in a shirt pocket over his heart.

John Anthony Copeland was born in Raleigh, North Carolina, of free Negro parents and was taken to Oberlin, Ohio, where he attended college. Long before the raid on Harper's Ferry the Negro had struck a blow against slavery by being

one of a band that rescued a fugitive slave, John Price. Held in prison for a time for his actions, Copeland was described by the judge as the prisoner "who impressed me best."

"He had been educated," said the judge, "and there was a dignity about him that I could not help liking. He was always manly."

These two men, white and black, strode through the strangely silent town, which was still peacefully unaware of what was going on in its streets, and took over the rifle factory beside the Shenandoah.

They captured several of the ordnance workers and held them at rifle point until Brown sent them reinforcements. Then the prisoners were taken to the Armory and put under guard with the earlier captives.

As the prisoners huddled disconsolately in the watch-house wondering open-mouthed at the events that were taking place in their sleepy little cross-roads town, Old Brown called Stevens to his side and told him to take men and seize the most prominent citizen of the entire area—Colonel Lewis W. Washington, a great-grandnephew of the first President, who lived on a large plantation five miles south of town on the road to Charlestown, the county seat of Jefferson County.

Before the men left the Armory grounds Brown specifically instructed Stevens to bring back with the Colonel two items of great psychological value. One was a pistol presented to General George Washington by Lafayette and the other a sword, reputedly given the Father of His Country by Frederick the Great of Prussia.

Cook, who had been not only a lock tender, but also a book salesman, selling a life of George Washington from door to door, had seen these weapons in Colonel Washington's home and had talked to Brown about them. The grizzled veteran of the Kansas fighting was enough of a public relations expert (although the term wasn't to be invented for more than a half century) to know the value of Colonel Washington as a hostage and of the famous sword.

With Stevens went Cook, Tidd, Osborn P. Anderson, Lewis

Sheridan Leary, and Shields Green, sometimes known as "Emperor." The three latter men were Negroes. They all must have walked at a breathtaking clip because it was just about midnight when Colonel Washington awoke to the noise of pounding on his bed-chamber door and the flickering of a great pine-knot torch held aloft by one of the raiders. Bluntly the men told him he was their prisoner, that his slaves were being set free, and that he should dress quickly and come along with them to the Ferry.

Colonel Washington won his military title because he was on the staff of the Governor of Virginia, Henry A. Wise, not because he had earned it on drill field or battle ground. But he was no coward. Although he was as surprised by this invasion of his pleasant plantation manse as he would have been if the Shenandoah had started flowing uphill, he went about obeying instructions without senseless objections or going to pieces emotionally. He even took time to hunt out and put on a pair of kid gloves.

While the Colonel was dressing, Stevens remembered a small but symbolic bit of pageantry that old John Brown had insisted upon when giving the smaller party its instructions for seizing their famous hostage. Stevens compelled Colonel Washington to hand the dress sword from Frederick the Great directly to a Negro, Osborn Anderson. What thoughts raced through the plantation owner's mind were never divulged, but Anderson, a free-born colored man from West Fallowfield, Pennsylvania, accepted the weapon carefully, even reverently, and carried it back to the town, where at last the insurrection was no longer being enacted as if by silent silhouettes against a background of darkness and utter quiet.

The bee hive had been kicked over. Bullets were flying in Harper's Ferry.

Right on the stroke of midnight Patrick Higgins, the second watchman who guarded the Potomac bridge, walked into the black mouth of the structure to see why his partner, William Williams, had not emerged to greet his relief.

Higgins was no brighter than he had to be, but he was

stubborn and he was brave. He walked clear across to the Maryland side where he found, not Williams, but Watson Brown and Stewart Taylor. They called on him to surrender. Balling his great Irish hand up into a fist, he caught Watson on the point of the chin, flooring him as a butcher floors a steer in a packing house. Then he turned back into the bridge and legged it for the Virginia side. Taylor yelled "Halt!" but Higgins kept on.

"I didn't know what 'Halt' mint then," said the watchman later. "I knew no more about the word than a hog knows about a holiday."

Either Brown or Taylor fired at the fleeing Higgins. The bullet cut a part through his scalp right at the hair line, but it only made him run faster. He burst into the lobby of the Wager Hotel and the alarm was finally given. His story and the crack of the Sharps rifle awoke the town to the fact that high treason was afoot in its midst.

A clerk at the inn went out on the station platform, saw or heard something suspicious, and fled back to the safety of the lobby. But he knew that the night express from the West would be along soon and he shivered inwardly, imagining that the bridge had been mined or weakened and that the train would crash into the Potomac. He talked with Higgins and they discussed what should be done. Then at 1:25 a.m. they heard the locomotive whistling for a crossing a mile or so upriver. The clerk mustered courage from some unknown source and, picking up a kerosene lantern, went out on the tracks and flagged the train down.

Conductor Phelps listened to the clerk's fears and then to Higgins' tale of armed men in the bridge. The conductor ordered the engineer, William McKay and the baggage master, Jacob Cromwell, to investigate. They took their lanterns and walked into the silent bridge. Almost at once they saw flashes of light and heard the report of rifles. Bullets buzzed past their heads and they raced back to the trainside. McKay climbed into the engine cab, shoved the throttle into reverse and backed down the track a hundred feet.

Cromwell was no sissy. After catching his breath he decided to go forward again to ferret out the danger. As he moved up the ties toward the bridge the station baggageman, a free Negro named Shephard Hayward, also headed for the bridge to see what had happened to the watchman Williams. Cromwell reached the span first and was confronted by two men who put rifles to his head and told him to stand. He became frightened and started to run. Rifles barked again but the baggagemaster dodged behind an abutment at the end of the bridge, waited until the raiders stopped to reload, and then reached safety at the hotel.

Hayward meanwhile walked forward and was also ordered to halt. He too turned to run, but a bullet caught him in the back, just beneath the heart, emerging through the nipple of his left breast, and he fell at the end of the station platform. Twelve hours later, after suffering horrible agony, Hayward died, the first victim of the raid—a raid planned to help the colored people of the South.

John Brown's first victim was a kind-hearted, soft-spoken Negro, not a tyrannical slave-holder, not a cruel overseer with lash and chains, but a colored man as well liked as any citizen of Harper's Ferry.

Passengers swarmed down from the train, frightened by the firing. They saw the mortally wounded Hayward, bleeding his life away on the platform, and their terror was unbounded.

Women fainted and were carried inside the Wager House. Then, their corsets loosened, they regained consciousness, only to sit in fear as the train crew debated the next move and an occasional raider passed outside, rifle in hand. Some went back into the train and sat huddled in the darkness because Conductor Phelps had ordered the coal-oil lamps, which swung in brackets from the ceilings, to be extinguished, lest they induced the insurrectionists to start firing at the train.

Lights came on at some of the windows around the open area behind the Armory, but most of them were put out quickly.

Luther Simpson, another baggage master on the Baltimore

& Ohio express, walked up to the bridge, was accosted and taken prisoner. His captors led him to the Armory where he talked with Brown for almost an hour. Then he was released and went back to the train swearing he had seen five or six hundred armed Negroes and half that many rifle-bearing whites in the government enclosure. He told Phelps that the leader's name was Captain Smith. It was now more than six hours after Brown had invaded the town, yet no one but his own followers knew who he was.

There was one merchant from Baltimore who grew restive at the delay on the train. His name was Logan. He was financially well off and not accustomed to being pushed around. Finally his impatience got the better of him and he started toward the bridge. A voice came from the darkness.

"Damn you, stop!" it said. "If you attempt to go an inch further I will blow your brains out."

Logan halted, but he started a conversation with the raider. He said he was from Ohio and was all in favor of the abolition of slavery. His apparent bravery and his profession of friendliness to the abolitionists kept them from harming him. They finally sent him back to the train to say that the express could leave in a short time. Logan was carrying $10,000 in cash in a money belt all the while he conversed with the raiders. When he told the story the next day he made much of this fact, as if he thought himself lucky not to have been robbed. He was completely unaware that whatever faults the band members had—and there were many—they would not have touched a single dollar of his hoard.

As the night wore on, Conductor Phelps talked several times with John Brown and with some of his lieutenants. About four a.m. he told the band that his train was carrying the United States mails and that he desired to take the train out of town and on to Baltimore.

Old Brown agreed that the train could leave, if it did so in five minutes, but Phelps refused. He was still afraid that the bridge had been tampered with and he wanted to wait until daylight.

The leader of the abolitionists turned away and strode past Hayward where he lay on the stone platform. He said nothing to the dying Negro. There wasn't anything to say now. It was too late for words. But the old man must have thought back to the hours in the Kennedy farmhouse where he waited for the moment to take the road for the Ferry.

"Let me impress one thing on your minds," he had warned his supporters. "You all know how dear life is to you, and how dear your lives are to your friends. Remembering that, consider that the lives of others are as dear to them as yours are to you. Do not, therefore, take the life of anyone if you can possibly avoid it, but if it is necessary to take life in order to save your own, then make sure work of it."

If the old man saw in the dying Negro a symbol of the ultimate failure of his enterprise, he gave no sign. He had the town in the palm of his hand. He was master of the situation at that hour and was as cool as any general who ever surveyed a battlefield after the first clash of skirmishers.

Time dragged for the men and women in the train. In the darkness everything seemed worse than it was. The memory of Hayward, suffering in the cold night air, did little to allay their fears. The men expected pillaging to start at any minute. After Simpson returned from the Armory with his wild, exaggerated stories of having seen hundreds of armed Negroes, they expected the worst. Women became hysterical, sure that colored men would soon attack the train, and them. Poor Phelps, the conductor, passed up and down the aisle, trying to reassure his passengers, but had little heart for it himself, since the situation seemed out of hand.

Finally the heavens to the east, beyond the bridge across the Shenandoah, began to lighten. It was still cloudy and misty and chill, but dawn came, bringing with it enough brightness for Phelps to inspect the bridge.

He told those travelers who had preferred the lobby of the Wager Hotel to the dark seats of the coaches to get aboard the express. Silently they filed out and into the train. Then the conductor walked ahead of the locomotive and into the cov-

ered bridge. The two men with rifles warned him to look neither to the right nor to the left, but they didn't molest him. He walked on the cross ties, slowly making his way to the Maryland exit. McKay let steam into the cylinders, the driving rods started to move and the wheels gradually began to turn. The eastbound night express, which had pulled out of Wheeling on the Ohio River the morning before, picked up speed. Phelps swung himself nimbly aboard, and the train rocketed off on the eighty-one mile stretch between the Ferry and Baltimore.

Out of danger, the passengers found their taut nerves had stood about all they could. Some women wept with happiness. Others who had held up when the pressure was on, collapsed. As it grew lighter they peered out at the rich farmland and woods through which the main line of the Baltimore & Ohio ran and wondered if other Negroes were taking up arms, if rebellion and insurrection lay all about them.

It was then that the man with the carpetbag wrote the first note and threw it out of the window. In no time at all other messages of terror and destruction were fluttering from the train like leaves kicked up by a passing autumn wind.

Back at the scene of John Brown's move to arouse the slaves and help them to free themselves the town was coming fully awake.

Outside the Galt House was a man who bore a charmed life all through the hours before dawn and even afterwards. He was Dr. John D. Starry, who lived close enough to the hotel and saloon so that he heard the first shot fired—the one that almost ended Patrick Higgins' days on earth—and who had watched from a distance as Hayward was wounded. Dr. Starry was a brave, cantankerous man. He tried to give the dying Negro assistance but did not dare to move him. He even talked to some of the raiders at the bridge entrance, but he was not arrested or threatened.

At four o'clock, while Phelps was still trying to decide whether to move the train or wait for daylight, Dr. Starry was hard by the gates of the Armory, in the shadows, trying to

learn who the armed men were and what were their aims. As he stood in the darkness, out of sight, he heard the sound of iron-tired wheels and horses' hooves on the cobblestones of the road leading up from the South. As he waited in the eerie darkness he saw Colonel Washington's great four-horse wagon clatter by, literally bulging with frightened prisoners and armed men.

Dr. Starry had no way of knowing it then, but after Cook, Stevens, and the others made the rich kinsman of the country's first president a prisoner, they had seized four or five of his Negro slaves. Forcing the latter to harness the horses and hitch up the wagon, they had quit the Washington plantation and headed back toward town. On the way, however, they made a second stop, at the fine home and rich farm of John H. Allstadt.

Instead of awaking, as his neighbor had done, to the glare of a torch, Allstadt was roused by shouts and the loud crash of his front door being broken in under the weight of a fence-rail used as a battering ram. His daughter, Lutie Allstadt, and a second cousin of the latter, Miss Hannah Hall, whom the family always called Aunt Hannah, ran to the windows and screamed "Murder!" The farmer's son, eighteen-year-old John Thomas Allstadt, hustled into his clothes and ran for the stairs, grabbing up his squirrel gun on the way.

"Aunt" Hannah Hall clung to the boy, peered down the stairs, and then whispered: "The men all have guns. Leave that behind or they will kill you, surely."

His cousin's entreaty made him drop the gun and he went down the stairs unarmed. His mother still lay in bed but his father was dressed. The armed men touched nothing, ignored the frightened girls upstairs, and left with the father and son.

Six of the Allstadt slaves—all men—were herded out with their masters and all told to get into the wagon where Colonel Washington sat on the seat with an equal number of his slaves behind him.

There was no further incident as the heavy wagon rumbled over the rough road into town and through the empty city streets up to the Armory gates.

Later the younger Allstadt told authorities what had happened.

"They led my father and me outside," he said. "There we saw Colonel Washington sitting in his own team. They put us, father and me, on the seat of the four-horse wagon. In the body behind us, our six Negroes and Colonel Washington's quota stood close packed. As we drove inside the Armory yard there stood an old man. 'This,' said Setvens, 'is John Brown.' 'Osawatomie Brown of Kansas,' added Brown. Then he handed out pikes to our Negroes, telling them to guard us carefully, to prevent our escape. 'Keep these white men inside,' he said."

Some of this Dr. Starry heard, as he hid in the shadows outside of the Armory entrance. He did not hear Brown's more personal greeting to Colonel Washington once the prisoners were herded inside the engine house.

"I think, after a while, possibly, I shall be enabled to release you," said the leader, "but only on the condition of getting your friends to send in a Negro man as a ransom. I shall be very attentive to you, sir, for I may get the worst of it in my first encounter, and if so, your life is worth as much as mine. I shall be very particular to pay attention to you. My particular reason for taking you first was that, as the aide to the Governor of Virginia, I knew you would endeavor to perform your duty, and perhaps you would have been a toublesome customer to me; and, apart from that, I wanted you particularly for the moral effect it would give our cause having one of your name as a prisoner."

Still enjoying his strange immunity from arrest or injury, Dr. Starry continued to move about the town. He was at the gate of the government grounds when it swung open to let Colonel Washington's big team and wagon out. On the seat of the wagon were Charles Tidd and John E. Cook. The owl-eyed physician followed along behind until he saw it pass into the bridge across the Potomac. It was the disappearance of this vehicle that gave rise to the rumor that Brown had sacked the government paymaster's office and made off with

the safe. The doctor didn't know that John Brown had sent the wagon to bring in more pikes to arm the slaves he fervently believed would rush to his banners with the coming of day. The wagon rolled off to the Kennedy farmhouse where Cook, Tidd, Owen Brown, Barclay Coppoc, Merriam and some of the slaves from the Washington and Allstadt plantations loaded boxes of rifles, ammunition, and bundles of pikes into the big conveyance.

Then it returned toward town, but stopped about halfway at a small one-room schoolhouse. By this time classes had taken up, and about thirty boys and girls from eight to fifteen years of age were studying and reciting.

The schoolmaster was a Scot named Lind F. Currie, who owned a farm not too far from Charlestown but who eked out his existence by teaching in the winter months.

Cook strode into the school and demanded its use for a storehouse. The dominie didn't think much of this plan but the raiders let him see they were well armed and there was nothing to do but give in.

Some of the girls, frightened by the ominous appearance of the men, started to cry. Currie suggested letting the school out but Cook objected.

"Keep the class in session," he said. "We'll put these boxes and crates in here without disturbing anyone."

It was obvious to the schoolmaster that Cook thought the continued activities of the class would serve as a blind for his own deeds.

But the smaller children settled things, as they so often do. They cried and carried on until it was decided to dismiss the class.

"I have one small boy, the son of a close friend of mine, in whom I have a special interest," Currie told Cook. "I would prefer to see him home myself."

Cook raised no objections, so the teacher dismissed the entire class. Later he went off with the little boy. It was a lonely road up which he lived and the school teacher thought of es-

caping. But as it dead-ended he decided he had better go back and see what was going on at the school.

When Currie reached it, Cook was alone with one Negro assistant. The dominie wasn't told he could not leave, but he felt Cook wouldn't approve of his going, so the three men sat there for several hours.

Then, worried because his mother was alone, Currie suggested he leave. Cook made him promise to divulge nothing. The schoolmaster agreed. Knowing that Harper's Ferry was no safe place to be at the moment, Currie crossed the river above town and so reached home that way.

None of the insurgents in the Armory enclosure, least of all John Brown himself, dreamed that they would have to battle their way through their great adventure with only the arms then in their possession. But it was true.

Not one pistol, carbine, or pike of all the hundreds in Maryland would get across the river. When Cook and Tidd drove off so unconcernedly in the pre-dawn hours everyone expected them to come back with unlimited arms. With things going as smoothly as they had been, the raiders had no thought of failure. Yet the strands of the net that would trap them all were already being woven by unseen hands.

Dr. Starry watched as the big wagon was swallowed up in the long covered bridge. He mulled things over and finally decided that it was up to him to play Paul Revere. He hurried home, saddled his horse, and rode off to the home of A. M. Kitzmiller, acting superintendent of the government arsenal. The clip-clop of the horse's hooves through the still relatively quiet streets of the town aroused no challenge from Brown's pickets. The physician burst in upon the sleep-eyed Kitzmiller and told him what had been going on in Harper's Ferry while he slept.

The arsenal official gathered other important employees around him and the physician repeated his alarming story. Then the harbinger of evil news mounted again and climbed through Bolivar Heights, rousing many of his friends and acquaintances. He stormed into the parsonage of the Lutheran

Church and urged the pastor to ring the bell. As he dashed on up the slope, yelling his alarm, the bell began to peal behind him. All through that quarter of town men jumped from their beds, pulled on their pants and shoes and ran out to see whose house was on fire.

Down in the valley below, the engineer on the night express blew his whistle. The sound came up the heights like a banshee wail. For many of those who heard it, it was a trumpet note of doom.

Dr. Starry overlooked few bets. He rode back to town, saw the armed men still in control of the arsenal and Armory, and decided to prepare and lead a counter-attack. He sent a messenger upriver to stop any other B. & O. trains coming from the west. Then he sent another friend to Charlestown, the county seat, eight miles away, to call out the militia. The physician visited several householders, trying to learn what arms could be gathered, but he was sorely disappointed. Only a few squirrel guns were to be found.

It was a strange bit of irony that in a town where the main business was the manufacture of guns, so few could be found in the homes of the gunsmiths. When Brown's party seized the government buildings they effectively bottled up the local supply, it was thought.

The doctor didn't want to leave anything to chance. Realizing that his friends didn't have enough arms among them to scare a determined fox, he put spurs to his horse and galloped down to Charlestown himself.

This important seat of local government was in a worse state of excitement than the town where the raid was actually in progress. Men were running back and forth between the courthouse, prison, Mayor's house, and Sheriff's office. Women were hanging out of windows, weeping, sure that tragedy indescribable was on its way to their doorsteps. Dr. Starry's messenger had told the men of the county seat that abolitionists were running wild in the streets of Harper's Ferry, firing at everyone and arming the slaves. To Charlestown residents this meant but one thing: It was another insurrection like the

infamous one led by Nat Turner twenty-eight years before.

Turner was a Negro preacher in a small Baptist church and a field hand in Southampton County, far across Virginia, down in the Tidewater country. He professed to see visions and hear voices from heaven when wandering alone under the stars. He told some of his friends and parishioners that one of the angelic voices had told him "the last shall be first" and he interpreted this to mean that the slaves should seize control from the slaveowners. A solar eclipse was taken as an omen to start an uprising on the Fourth of July. But Turner was ill and it was hurriedly postponed. Then in early August Turner thought the sun was turning a peculiar greenish blue and took it for a new signal. On the basis of calculations understood by no one but the rustic preacher, the night of August 21 was then selected.

After everyone was asleep on that night Turner and his supporters, who numbered more than fifty, struck their first blow. They killed Turner's master and all other whites in the house. Then they raced across the fields, killing landowners wherever they could be found. Before the dawn came, sixty whites—men, women, and children—had been murdered and the revolt seemed on the way to spreading throughout Southampton County.

But at noon the next day a band of hastily mustered white men found Turner and fought him at a country cross-roads. The Negroes were dispersed and the survivors fled. Regular army troops and Marines from Norfolk were sent after them, and they hunted them down relentlessly. On October 30, more than two months later, Nat Turner was captured deep in the Dismal Swamp.

In the years that followed, the stories of violence in Southampton County never suffered by the passage of time. In fact the Nat Turner rebellion became an ever greater cause for fearing another of the same caliber. Many a white Southerner awoke in the middle of the night, fearful lest a new outbreak had started. Men often rode the highways on patrol in outlying

districts to prevent surprise. Doors were double locked and pistols lay close to hand under the pillows.

It was no wonder, then, when Dr. Starry's frightened messenger dashed into Charlestown with the news of the uprising in Harper's Ferry, that the county seat's citizens feared the worst. When the physician himself rode into the town square, his horse lathered with sweat and breathing heavily, everyone expected to see abolitionists and slaves, armed to the teeth, race over the horizon behind him.

Bells tolled in every steeple. Outlying families gathered their valuables and fled to the courthouse and churches. Men on horseback galloped up and down the streets on a dozen errands and the telegraph wires to Richmond almost melted under the spate of urgent messages and appeals that the county officials sent to the state capital.

Yet, for all the terror, the men of Charlestown prepared to do their duty. The local militia was already lined up in the square when Dr. Starry rode out of the night. Known as the Jefferson Guards, they had fancy, colorful uniforms, but on this night most of them fell in just as they were, in hastily donned work clothes.

A little later, as the Harper's Ferry medical man watched in astonishment, another corps of home-town fighters lined up behind the Jefferson Guards. They were boys too young and men too old to enroll in the militia. They had an odd assortment of arms. Some had squirrel guns, a few had muskets and a very few had rifles.

They all had a few ball-cartridges in their pockets and some had bowie knives hanging from their belts or stuck in the top of their leather boots. Before breakfast they had decided to form an auxiliary fighting force, had gone through the democratic process of nominating and electing company officers and marched off to the station to wait for a train on the Winchester & Harper's Ferry Railroad that would take them to the scene of conflict.

This was the South. A frontier spirit still existed. Men still could spring to arms at the rataplan of drums or the clear

notes of a bugle. Some of these men would march with Lee and Jackson and Early and McLaws before they were three or four years older. Some would know the roads of the Shenandoah Valley as they knew the wrinkles and callouses of their own hands. John Brown, no mean fighter himself, and no coward, had stirred up "a mighty big passel of enemies" and more were gathering, some in the streets of Richmond and Washington, others in the glens of West Virginia, and still others in the fertile farming country of Maryland.

Once more Dr. Starry asked his valiant mount to hit the trail. He rode back to the Ferry down through Bolivar Heights, where it was said a man could get out of town by climbing up the lightning rod of the Episcopal Church to the graveyard and so on up the precipitous slope, and into the heart of the village. He found that some of his fellow-citizens had armed themselves with rifles that had been temporarily moved from the arsenal because of the fear of high water if the Potomac should flood again. It had gone out of its banks the spring before the raid and ruined much of the machinery in the Armory. Stored in a warehouse away from the center of town, the guns were out of Brown's reach and the men of the town had only to take what they needed to arm themselves.

While this was going on Tidd, Barclay Coppoc, Merriam, and Owen Brown, together with some of Colonel Washington's field-hands, descended upon the home of Terrence Byrne, a Maryland slave-owner who lived between the Kennedy farm and Sharpsburg.

Byrne was just riding out of the lane when he ran at full tilt into the armed raiders.

"Mr. Byrne, stop!" they shouted. Byrne reined in his horse and one of the men said:

"I'm very sorry to inform you that you are my prisoner."

"You are certainly joking," responded the farmer in amazement.

"I am not," said the leader of the small band, jerking back his shawl to disclose his rifle.

The raiders told him they were after his Negroes, but Byrne

said all of his workers had been in town late and had not yet returned from their Sunday in the Ferry. Not convinced he was telling the truth, the men directed the planter to accompany them to his house. As he crossed the porch to enter he passed his brother.

"Civil war!" whispered the farmer.

Inside, the armed men seated themselves about a table and started discussing what had happened at the Ferry. Mr. Byrne's sister became upset and he sent her upstairs to send down his cousin, an older woman with a fearless disposition and a sharp tongue.

She descended the stairs and looked over the situation, having heard some of the discussion from above.

"Why do you suffer these men to talk to you?" she asked. "Cowhide the scoundrels out of the house."

Byrne kept quiet, thinking it the better part of valor. Brown's men, who never harmed, insulted, or otherwise behaved in an ungentlemanly manner with women, ignored the lady's vituperative suggestion.

Instead they turned to the planter's brother.

"Mr. Byrne," said one of them, "we want your slaves."

"You must do as I do when I want them, then," said the farmer's brother. "Go hunt for them."

Persuaded that there were no slaves to be set free, the raiders went off with Terrence Byrne. At the schoolhouse they turned him over to William Thompson and the two made their way to the Ferry. Byrne was imprisoned along with Colonel Washington, the Allstadts, and the others.

At six o'clock James Darrell, the bell-ringer at the Armory, whose job it was to sound the call for the ordnance workers to start their day at lathe and bench, walked out of his house into the arms of two raiders.

Sparrows were twittering in the branches of the trees as Walter Kemp, better known as "Uncle Watty," shut the door of his home behind him and headed for the bar at the Wager Hotel, where he knew a few early risers would be waiting for

their eye-opening boilermakers or their ten-cent shots of undiluted bourbon. Plain "red-eye" cost only a nickel.

The bartender walked less than a block when his arms were pinioned by two brawny men armed with rifles and pistols. Like Darrell, he was dragged along to the enginehouse and incarcerated.

Out from the homes of the ordnance workers came gunsmiths in ones and twos. They walked through the morning haze toward the factories and were gobbled up by the raiders before they sensed that all was not normal in their home town. By breakfast time fifty or sixty men had been captured and imprisoned in the enginehouse, the watch-house next to it, and a large room of the Armory on Potomac Street.

Alexander Kelly heard or saw something that warned him of trouble. He armed himself with a shot gun and gingerly stepped out of his house, down High Street, toward the rifle works. As he rounded the corner to Shenandoah Street a bullet knocked his hat off. He decided against further warfare and repaired swiftly to his home.

Another townsman, Thomas Boerly, wasn't so lucky. A Herculean figure of a man, Boerly feared nothing. He loaded his gun and crept along the sidewalk of a side street leading into the open area by the Armory. When he came to the building on the corner he raised his gun and looked for a target at which to fire. He never found one. One of Brown's men saw the glint of steel, knelt for steady aim, and pulled the trigger. The bullet caught Boerly in the groin and he died a short time later. The men who had fought in Bloody Kansas were bad men to tangle with. They shot swiftly and surely.

Even in the midst of tragedy, as John Brown's high hopes for striking a paralyzing blow against the institution of slavery must have begun to fade a little, there came a bit of comic relief.

Joseph Barry walked into the midst of four or five of the insurrectionists and started to argue against being arrested. Brown himself came along and ordered him thrown into the temporary jail house. Barry wanted nothing to do with im-

prisonment. He took off like a startled deer and raced down a narrow alleyway that ran alongside one of the Armory buildings, between it and a row of small houses inhabited by Negroes.

Behind him he could hear the sound of the breeches on the Sharps carbines being flipped open. He could almost feel the bullets coming his way even before a trigger had been pulled.

As he dashed past the doorway of one of the small shanties a colored woman stepped bravely out into the alley between Barry and the pursuers and flung wide her arms. This courageous woman was known to the fugitive only as Hannah, a slave in the household of Mrs. Margaret Carroll. Her intervention gave the frightened Barry time enough to dodge down a side street and make good his escape.

It was the first of two acts of kindness performed by fearless women on that day of savagery, acts that helped a little to mitigate the tragedy.

One of the more prominent men in Harper's Ferry was Captain J. E. P. Daingerfield, paymaster for the Federal Government at the Armory. He left his home at the usual time to walk to his office, then just within the fenced yard of the factory grounds, and not more than a hundred yards from his house.

It was by now light enough for him to see fairly well and he was astonished to see a man come out of an alley, followed by another, and then another. They all walked toward him in what he thought was a menacing manner.

"What does all this mean?" asked the paymaster.

"Nothing, only we've taken possession of the government works," said one of the shadowy figures.

"You talk like a crazy man," said Daingerfield.

"Not so crazy as you think," said the three men, almost in unison. "You'll soon see."

Up to that moment Captain Daingerfield had seen no arms, but then the trio threw back the shawls from their shoulders and he saw that they all bore Sharps rifles, pistols, and big knives.

"I think I'll return home," said the official.

The three raiders raised their guns and levelled them.

"No," said one, "you're our prisoner."

Being unarmed himself, the paymaster tried to learn more by engaging the men in conversation. Then he again said he would go home. One of the men cocked his gun and stepped between him and his home.

"If you move," he said, "you'll be shot down."

Captain Daingerfield was told he was in no personal danger if he behaved himself and that he was to be taken to their leader, John Smith. They walked off together and reached the main gate of the yard.

"I saw what indeed looked like war," said the paymaster later. "There were Negroes armed with pikes, and sentinels with muskets all around."

John Brown stepped forward.

"Do you know Colonel Washington and Mr. Allstadt?" he asked.

Daingerfield said he did.

"Then, Sir," said the abolitionist, "you will find them there," motioning to the enginehouse.

The two men conversed and the prisoner asked Brown what his object was in seizing the Armory.

"To free the Negroes of Virginia," said the raider. "By noon there will be fifteen hundred men with us, ready armed."

By noon there were hundreds of men, all armed, converging on the Ferry or already there, but unfortunately for John Brown and his cause, they were not rallying to his cry of freedom for the slaves. They were under orders to quell an insurrection against the property and laws of the sovereign state of Virginia and the equally sovereign government of the United States of America.

But at that hour, a little after eight o'clock on Monday morning, there were only a few men with arms besides Brown's raiders, and while there was some infrequent firing after dawn the storm had still to break.

There was yet time for one more moment of opera bouffe before the curtain rose on tragedy.

The Cutshaw family, whose home was on High Street, had no intention of letting an insurrection or slave rebellion interfere with the normal routine of their existence. They arose and breakfasted, apparently with no thought to the sound of firing all about them. The bullet that knocked Alexander Kelly's hat off ricocheted up High Street, but it didn't disturb George W. Cutshaw.

After the family had finished its morning meal, Mr. Cutshaw and a lady guest who wanted to return to Washington, D. C., put on their street clothes, opened an umbrella, and went out into the town—a town now restless with the movement of armed men, the occasional crack of a carbine and the whine of bullets.

The gentleman and his fair companion walked sedately down High Street, around into Shenandoah Street, and into the plaza between the Armory, the station, and the bridge entrances. They walked past the swinging doors of the Galt House saloon, through which wary townsfolk were watching the doings at the government building, and into the covered bridge across the Potomac. They walked the nine hundred feet through the structure, still rather dark although the day was getting brighter outside, and to the dock on the bank of the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal. The lady boarded the canal boat and Mr. Cutshaw waited until the crew lazily cast off its lines and it started the long, slow trip down to the nation's capital.

Then, having performed his duty as a brave, nonchalant cavalier, Mr. Cutshaw started home. Perhaps the absence of the lady on his arm made a difference. Perhaps he had just been lucky before, but this time he had barely emerged from the bridge before some of the raiders clapped hands on him.

Without taking time to explain things, Brown's men took him along to the watch-house and pushed him in with the growing group of prisoners.

After this homely little interlude a lull seemed to settle temporarily over Harper's Ferry.

Old Brown summoned Uncle Watty Kemp to his side and instructed him to call upon the manager of the Wager Hotel for immediate delivery of breakfast for forty-five men. John Fouke, who owned the hotel, took a jaundiced view of the request. But his bartender pleaded with him, saying that his own life would be forfeited if the food was not forthcoming. Mr. Fouke appeared to cherish the food more than the welfare of his barkeep, but the threat implicit in the presence of the armed band just across the village square turned the trick. The innkeeper grudgingly gave orders in the kitchen, and meals were carried by colored servants across to the engine-house.

Captors and captives attacked the ham and eggs with alacrity—all but three, at least. John Brown, Colonel Washington, and Mr. Allstadt refused to taste the food, each one apparently fearing he might be poisoned.

Brown invited Colonel Washington to stand closer to the fire that was burning in a pot-bellied stove behind the fire engines.

"The day is chill," said the abolitionist. "You will find a fire in here, sir."

Up to that time Colonel Washington had been incarcerated in the watch-house section of the same building. The two rooms were under one roof but there was no connecting door and the men had to go outdoors to pass from one to the other. As the day wore on the more important hostages were all brought into the section with the fire engines.

Among the government employees who had been seized was Armistead Ball, master machinist at the Armory. After breakfast had been ordered from the reluctant owner of the hotel, and before it arrived, the bearded leader allowed Mr. Ball to go home for breakfast and to reassure his family that he was not in danger. An escort went with him, but as his wife had not prepared the meal, Ball returned to prison. The same thing happened with Captain Daingerfield.

Up to this moment none of the raiders had been shot or

killed. This may have explained the strange laxity in allowing some of the hostages to move about town as they did. But this atmosphere of gentlemanly courtesy and calm was not to last much longer.

Brown, whom everyone, including himself, called Old Brown, although he was only fifty-nine at the time of the raid, sent William Thompson over the river to the schoolhouse where Owen Brown and his two aids were hiding arms that had been stored in the farmhouse.

Thompson had but one chore to perform—to tell the leader's son that all was going well at the Ferry. It was a tragic untruth. From every sizable community around the Ferry units of militia were on the march or traveling by train to put down the insurrection. The messenger went back to the Armory without being challenged. Within an hour it would have been impossible.

By nine o'clock the situation was changing rapidly. The squirrels were still dashing up and down the tall trunks of the chestnut trees, carrying nuts to their hiding places for the coming winter; and a red-winged blackbird, which should have left for the rice marshes of Louisiana days before, still sang his lilting *Konk-a-ree* from a cattail stalk beside the Potomac. In a few minutes the whine of bullets would drown out the blackbird's carol.

Down from Bolivar Heights and out of the streets upriver from the Armory moved men who had armed themselves from the warehouse where the rifles had been stored to keep them out of high water. They were not very good shots, most of them, but they were eager, and they began a desultory fire in the general direction of the government buildings.

Over in Hall's rifle works John Henry Kagi fumed over his leader's delay in making a definite move. He talked the situation over with his two Negro companions-in-arms, Lewis Sheridan Leary and John A. Copeland. The alarm spread through town by Dr. Starry had resulted in a considerable number of armed men undertaking to fire at the raiders ensconced in the rifle factory, which was on an island just a

few feet offshore from the mainland along Shenandoah Street.

Kagi was one of the smartest of the band. He knew that the only successful sort of raid was a hit-and-run attack, and that had been the type of operation Brown had discussed all through the months in Kansas and Ohio and the weeks at the Kennedy farm.

Brown's very able lieutenant also knew that if armed men were prowling about before his place of entrenchment they were also crowding in about the bridges. As a matter of fact John Brown was already virtually in a trap, having put himself across the river from his base of supplies without insuring that the bridges could be held.

The early success of the raid, with the easy capture of the government arms factories seemed to have had a soporific effect on the old fighter. He had his captives and hostages. He seemed in no hurry to take any new decisive step.

Yet in the days when the raid was being planned, Brown had often discussed the basic steps the force should take. He was convinced that a highly mobile force, keeping to the mountains, could avoid pitched battles with the military and survive for a long period of time.

There had been two reasons for choosing Harper's Ferry in the first place. One was the existence of the ordnance plant with the finished rifles ready for the taking and the other was the location of the town in the hills that form part of the backbone of the eastern half of the nation. Again and again Brown had stated that slaves would rally to him and that the hills of Virginia, the Carolinas, and Tennessee would be to his forces what the Everglades were to the Seminole Indians—a refuge from which they could not be driven.

Ten years before he seized the government plant at Harper's Ferry John Brown had traveled on the Continent, where he spent many days inspecting some of the famous battlefields, including Waterloo and Austerlitz, where Napoleon had fought. He even made rough sketches of earthen redoubts and other devices planned to give small numbers of soldiery an advantage over larger numbers.

Yet when the biggest test of all came, that of October, 1859, he acted at times as if he had never done anything but sell yard goods behind a counter.

Kagi sent one or the other of his Negro companions to Brown several times in the early morning of Monday, urging him to withdraw with his hostages into the hills to wait for slaves to join up under his leadership.

For twelve hours Brown and his party held the Ferry in their absolute control. The old man was fearless, cool, and undisturbed by any of the events that occurred during the night or forenoon, but he seemed constitutionally unable to formulate a decisive plan of action.

He talked with his hostages at odd times about the possibility of arranging a cease-fire, but beyond that he seemed strangely insecure, tied to the Armory as if it somehow represented the key to ultimate success.

He acted almost as if Harper's Ferry existed in a vacuum. He should have been aware of the steps being taken against him, but he was as calm and as thoughtfully polite at this stage of the conflict as though no forces were gathering against him.

Actually the mustering of armed men was going forward at a frenzied pace.

From Charlestown two companies of militia were approaching the Ferry. Another company was coming down the mountain road out of Martinsburg and another from Shepherdstown. President James Buchanan in Washington had instructed his Secretary of War to start troops for the scene of the insurrection, and various guard units from Richmond, Baltimore, and Frederick were already putting on their arms.

Before another fifteen hours there would be thirty or forty men pitted against each one of the men who had dared to lift their hands against nation and state.

CHAPTER 6

JOHN B. FLOYD, Secretary of War in President Buchanan's cabinet, drove to his office through a light drizzle that had been falling in Washington since the evening before. His colored coachman helped him step down from the carriage and Mr. Floyd walked into the War building, stepping gingerly to avoid the puddles and to keep from splashing mud on his trousers.

There were some sidewalks in the nation's capital, but there were many spots where a rainstorm could transform the paths into elongated puddles. The way into the War office was one of them.

Mr. Floyd, whose middle name was Buchanan, but who was not related in any way to his chief, absent-mindedly accepted the salutes of sentinels and aids. He was having troubles in the department. He was aware of extravagances and even wondered if there were not some financial irregularities. A year later the President requested that he resign because of these irregularities, but a board of inquiry got the impression that Floyd's fault was one of extreme carelessness rather than any overt criminality.

These things were on the Virginia lawyer's mind as he sat down at his desk and attacked the morning mail and scanned the duplicate copies of the more important orders that had been issued throughout the army forts and installations since the morning before.

He signed some transfers and a few promotions. There were mighty few of the latter, though. In the years just prior to the outbreak of the Civil War officers spent long years in the same rank before winning promotions. It was nothing for a Major

or a Lieutenant-Colonel to wait fifteen years for the nod from the selection boards and the Secretary of War.

On this raw, overcast morning Secretary Floyd had barely finished his preliminary chores when his chief signal officer brought in a message from President Garrett of the B. & O. Railroad. It carried the astonishing news of an insurrection at Harper's Ferry, told of the stopping of trains, said armed men had control of the city and were inciting slaves to join them.

Floyd forgot about promotions and the cost of cavalry rations in the West, and sent telegraphic orders to Fort Monroe, in tidewater Virginia, for three companies of artillery to move on the next train. There were no regular army forces nearer Washington.

President Buchanan wanted swifter steps taken and so did the Secretary of War. Therefore it was decided to send a small detachment of marines based at the Washington Navy Yard. But who was to take command when the regular army units, marines, and the various militia companies being called to arms reached the Ferry?

Apparently there was no doubt in either the President's mind or that of his War Secretary. The man for the task was Lieutenant-Colonel Robert E. Lee.

Floyd called in Colonel Drinkard, chief clerk of the War Department, and told him to summon Colonel Lee. The aide whipped out a simple order for Colonel Lee to report forthwith at the War Office. Drinkard was passing through the anteroom of Mr. Floyd's office on the way to the duty officer's room to look for a messenger when he almost stumbled over a tall, handsome First Lieutenant of Cavalry. It was James Ewell Brown Stuart, even then known as Jeb Stuart, a man destined to earn a reputation as the greatest cavalry leader in American history.

Lieutenant Stuart had been cooling his heels waiting to see Secretary Floyd in the hope of interesting him in a new device for attaching a Cavalryman's sabre to his belt. Stuart had invented the gadget and wanted to sell the patent to the War Department.

Colonel Drinkard handed him the sealed note to Colonel Lee and asked Stuart to deliver it in person, without losing any time. Stuart, who liked action better than eating, forgot about the sword device, jumped on his horse and galloped across the Potomac and up the hill to the Lee mansion in Arlington. Colonel Lee had just returned from a tour of duty on a court martial in New York and was enjoying a few days' rest while he waited for his next assignment.

Stuart sensed something was up and asked the future Commander-in-Chief of the Confederate Armies for permission to go with him to the War Department. The latter graciously accepted the offer. Colonel Lee was in civilian clothes. Without waiting to change he rode over to Secretary Floyd's office, learned what headquarters could tell him about the insurrection, and then all three men, Lee, Floyd, and Stuart, went to the White House to talk with President Buchanan.

Rumors had been growing with each hour. The rebellious outbreak at the Ferry lost none of its impact with distance. Rather it became more alarming. So, preparing for the very worst, the President and the Secretary of War drew up a proclamation which could be used to declare martial law, and gave it to Colonel Lee to use at his discretion when he reached Harper's Ferry.

They discussed the best means of quelling the uprising but finally deferred to Colonel Lee's experience and commanding personality and gave him carte blanche.

Jeb Stuart again asked to go with Lee and the Virginian acquiesced, saying he would need an aide.

At 1:30 o'clock in the afternoon President Buchanan wired Garrett of the B. & O., telling him that the artillery had been ordered up from Old Point, that the marines, numbering ninety-three officers and men, were already marching to a train from the Navy Yard and that the United States had accepted proffered services of a company of militia from Frederick, Maryland.

Mr. Garrett, who had none of the *sang-froid* exhibited by his Chief of Transportation earlier that morning, sent a reply

to President Buchanan expressing distress at the smallness of the military forces. He said that word from out the Main Stem now indicated that at least seven hundred white and Negro insurrectionists were on the rampage. "It is a moment full of peril," Mr. Garrett told President Buchanan.

Secretary Floyd went back to his office, but found it difficult to pick up the threads of routine administration. As a Virginian he bridled at the thought of an attack on the Old Dominion. His feelings were all with the slave-owners. Two years later, when the drums of war began to sound through the land, Floyd was to accept a commission as Brigadier General in the Confederate Army. His first duty would take him to western Virginia, not far from Harper's Ferry.

His second tour of duty would be far less successful. He would find himself in command at Fort Donelson, besieged by Union forces under a General whose star was just beginning to rise, a man named Ulysses Simpson Grant. When resistance seemed pointless he would withdraw with some of his troops, leaving another officer to surrender.

Word from the beleaguered community up the Potomac came in dribs and drabs, mostly by circuitous routes. Railroad agents forwarded messages saying that mobs were patrolling the streets and threatening to burn the entire town.

Wild reports came from towns in the mountains beyond the Ferry indicating that other bodies of armed men were gathering up black supporters. Part of this was sheer hysteria and part of it was probably caused by the movement of militia as they went about encircling the area at the confluence of the Potomac and the Shenandoah.

Alerted by the frantic messages that had been pouring out of Charlestown ever since Dr. Starry stormed into that center with his news, authorities in Richmond were also moving fast to put down the rebellion.

At two p.m. the Adjutant General of Virginia, on Governor Wise's orders, wired a message to Colonel John Thomas Gibson at the Jefferson County seat. It was at least six hours late.

The men of Charlestown had not waited for formal instructions. But those left behind read it with amused interest.

"Sir," said the Adjutant General's order, "The Commander in Chief calls your attention to the provisions of the first section, Chapter 29 of the Code, and directs you to call out immediately a sufficient force from your regiment to put down the riots at Harper's Ferry."

A "sufficient force" was at that precise moment split in half, with one body marching to cut off the bridge and the other infiltrating the woods atop Bolivar Heights and working its way down through the residences toward the rear of John Brown's position in the Armory grounds.

In Washington word that Napoleon had risen from his grave and was marching at the head of his legions toward the capital could not have created more alarm or higher fevers. Residents fearfully watched the marines under command of Lieutenant Israel Green, the senior line officer present, and Major W. W. Russell, the paymaster, as they marched off in full dress uniform to the railroad station. With them went two twelve-pound howitzers and enough ammunition to blast every wall in the Armory.

Politicians, as usual, clamored obstreperously for the sending of more troops and simultaneously beseeched the War Department to take steps to protect the Congress, the President, and the people of Washington.

Secretary Floyd did the best he could with what forces he had. He ordered volunteer militia units to muster under arms at the armories in Washington and Alexandria, ready for any eventuality. Then as an added precaution a stand of two hundred muskets with accompanying rounds of ammunition was placed in the Washington City Hall for emergency issuance to police and local residents of good character.

Then, and only then, was it thought the United States government was ready to meet the menace of John Brown and his twenty-one men, most of whom were already hopelessly trapped in the little manufacturing center up the Potomac River.

CHAPTER 7

COLONEL GIBSON had not waited for orders from Richmond. Within a very short time after Dr. Starry spurred his weary mount toward the Ferry for the last time, the regular company of the Jefferson Guards, together with the rag, tag, and bobtail volunteer company, were on a train of the Winchester & Harper's Ferry Railroad steaming along the west bank of the Shenandoah in the direction of the line's junction with the Baltimore & Ohio.

Several miles out of town, however, Colonel Gibson stopped the train, fearing the tracks ahead might be torn up or mined, and divided his forces. He sent the regular company under Captain Rowan, a veteran of the Mexican War, in a wide sweep around the town to the west so that they came out on the bank of the Potomac about a mile above the Ferry. There they crossed the river out of sight of Brown and his men, and marched down the same road that the raiders had followed through the rain and darkness the night before.

Meanwhile the other company, of boys and old men, still had to be used to the best advantage. These forces were much like those in a unit turned over to the Duke of Wellington during his campaigns against Napoleon. The Duke, watching the new men, scathingly commented upon their martial ability. "They may not frighten the enemy," he said, "but, by God, they frighten me."

Colonel Gibson finally sent the second company down through the outskirts of the town from Bolivar Heights, with rather indefinite instructions to seek out the enemy and pin him down.

It turned out to be men from this catch-all company, to-

gether with a few of the townsmen who had taken rifles out of the storehouse on high ground, who first began to bring pressure on the insurrectionists. They went up into the attics of homes and the steeples of churches and opened a somewhat disorganized, but highly disconcerting fire upon the buildings of the Armory, the Arsenal, and Hall's rifle works.

As this was happening a young girl, Jennie Chambers, who lived in the woods atop Bolivar Heights, set out for school. To get to the Young Ladies' Seminary of Harper's Ferry she had to walk a mile downhill toward the main section of town. Before she reached the Seminary she saw some of the soldiers making their way down toward the Armory and she heard the sound of shooting in the valley.

Dropping her books, she legged it back up the hill, running, all out of breath, through the chestnuts, maples, and oaks, resplendent in their autumn coloring, to warn her mother. Mrs. Chambers told her daughter her father had left to see what was happening. The two waited on the porch, from where they could hear an occasional rifle crack.

Suddenly a team came rattling past the house with the driver giving his horses the whip.

"They've got Colonel Washington and John Allstadt," the driver yelled, not missing a stroke with the whip, "and they've got their niggers, and they're going to . . ."

The rest of his words were lost in the sound of the wheels rattling over stones and ruts.

Mrs. Chambers kept Jennie home from the Young Ladies' Seminary all of that day, and the next one too.

By ten o'clock there was a rather constant drumfire of shooting in downtown Harper's Ferry. Brown's men were still scattered, some guarding the bridges, a few on the streets and the others in the various buildings of the government ordnance factories.

Despite the firing, none of the raiders had been pinked.

John Brown himself was as cool as a cod on ice. He discussed slavery and the need for its abolition with the more articulate of his hostages. He moved about the Armory yard

with the sword Frederick the Great had given George Washington in his left hand, a carbine in the other one. If he was aware of the occasional bullets singing through the air from the high buildings to the south, he gave no sign. He told Colonel Washington, Mr. Allstadt, Mr. Ball, Captain Daingerfield, and the other captives that they could walk up and down outside the enginehouse if they were tired of their inactivity. The nasty whine of the bullets, however, discouraged this antidote for boredom.

No one thought about food. The meal supplied by the Wager Hotel was to be the last one eaten by the raiders and prisoners alike until the next day, when the raid would fizzle out.

While Old Brown waited for his enemies' next move, a Baltimore & Ohio train, westbound from Baltimore for the Ohio River, snorted to a stop at Sandy Hook, downriver a mile from the covered bridge. Walter Simpson, the baggage master, and a Mr. Trasher, a brakeman, went forward on foot to the Maryland end of the Potomac bridge. Watson Brown and Stewart Taylor took them in tow and led them to the Armory. There Brown talked with them, refusing categorically to allow that train or any other train to move through the junction. By this time several eastbound trains, following along behind Conductor Phelps', had stopped and were lying upstream west of the Ferry.

Reporters from Baltimore and Frederick were nearing the town in their quest of news. One of them got to a village down the river a few miles and found the corner store a scene of wild excitement. The storekeeper had just received a letter from a merchant friend in Harper's Ferry. It had been penned to the accompaniment of whistling bullets, and entrusted to the hands of two boys to deliver. The lads had dodged around the town, swum the river and thus made their way down to where the reporter was.

The letter said armed robbers had all the government works in their possession, had put most of the leading citizens in jail, and had killed several. It charged that the raiders had

taken money from the vaults, had forbidden anyone to leave town, and had taken possession of the powder house.

Actually Brown was patiently arguing with Colonel Washington and the others.

"If you knew me and understood my motives as well as I and others understand them," he reiterated, "you would not blame me for what I am doing. If you knew my heart and history you would not think evil of me."

John Brown was a stubborn man. He still believed, although he had witnessed no single act to reassure him, that colored men would rally to his support. This conviction had sustained him all through the long hours that had gone by since he put on his old Kansas cap and stepped up into the wagon. It would sustain him until the last shot was fired the next morning. But with this conviction was another. Brown firmly believed that when the Bible spoke of the evils of bondage it was giving him a mandate to take up arms to end existing bondage in the United States.

As the firing in town grew hotter, the leader of the raiders, his hawk-like nose quivering and his tight inflexible mouth drawn into a thin line that even his beard could not hide, walked up and down by the enginehouse, venturing once or twice as far as the end of the bridge, speaking words of comfort to his men.

"Hold on a little longer, boys," he said to the restless members of his band, "hold on until I get matters arranged."

Back in the little stone building where the fire engines and hose cart were kept, Brown told his prisoners that he expected reinforcements to arrive momentarily. Colonel Washington noted that the bearded abolitionist gave every outward sign of being certain of help.

"He appeared to me to be very strong, and to possess no doubt as to his ultimate success," said the Colonel later.

Over in the Wager Hotel a few men stood beside the pallet upon which Shephard Hayward lay. The station baggage agent, who was still lying in the drizzle when the eastbound express finally left for Baltimore, had been moved under cover

shortly afterward. Patrick Higgins had volunteered to help ease his agony and had brought water to him several times through the morning. Before riding to Charlestown Dr. Starry had found that the wound was beyond mending and then had been unable to get back to the hotel to administer any sedatives.

The large wall clock in the lobby of the hotel ticked ominously. The first victim of the assault upon the town, completely innocent of any wrong-doing, groaned in his delirium as the crack of rifles and the spatter of bullets against building walls revived the memory of another bullet's impact the night before.

At that moment some of the prisoners in the Armory saw men under arms marching down the road from the bluff on the Maryland side of the Potomac. As the men were not uniformed, the hostages fearfully assumed that these were the reinforcements of whom John Brown had spoken so convincingly.

They were not reinforcements. Old Brown was to get no succor nor relief. There would be no last-moment, dramatic arrival of help. This was the last battle, and it would be fought with the same men with whom he had set out the evening before from the Kennedy farmhouse.

Quickly the marching men swept down upon the far end of the Potomac bridge. Watson Brown and Stewart Taylor, with no hope of repelling the attackers, who were Captain Rowan's unit of the Jefferson Guards, fled the bridge and joined the others at the enginehouse.

Swiftly the Guards drove the raiders off the street and then took over the Wager Hotel as their base of operations. In the brisk exchange that followed their emergence from the covered bridge one of the guardsmen was seriously wounded by a slug from one of the Sharps rifles in the Armory yard.

These guns were fiendishly efficient weapons in the hands of real marksmen. They had helped make the overland routes to California passable despite bitter opposition from the Indians. In the hands of the Free-staters in Kansas Territory they had

helped the anti-slavery men stand up to the more numerous slave-owners and their mercenaries, the Border Ruffians. Henry Ward Beecher, the famous anti-slavery preacher in New York, had urged the abolitionists to defend themselves against the southern sympathizers in Kansas. Because of this the Sharps rifles became known as "Beecher's Bibles" and many stouthearted Christians, hating human bondage, relied more heavily on these weapons than they did upon the Good Book.

To Brown, his sons, Kagi, Stevens, Tidd, and the others the guns were almost household utensils. Most of them could get quail, wild turkey, or sage hen for dinner and not spoil the meat, shooting the birds' heads off. They could load and fire these carbines five times a minute. It was their uncanny prowess with the rifles that kept untold scores of armed men from risking a frontal attack on the raiders all through the hours of Monday, October 17.

While the Jefferson Guards created their diversion, the other company from Charlestown, under Captain Botts, finished their penetration of the residential district, charged down Shenandoah Street to seize the Galt saloon and then drove Brown's men out of the other bridge, the one across the Shenandoah.

By one p.m., therefore, John Brown was strategically embarrassed to the point of futility. At the farmhouse and in the cabin across the road from it were hundreds of rifles, and five hundred pikes. At the one-room schoolhouse halfway into the Ferry were more of the weapons, as well as Owen Brown, Barclay Coppoc, and Frank J. Merriam. But between these supplies and adherents and the main party in the enginehouse stood the militia from Jefferson County. There was now only one way out of the trap. If John Brown had ordered a fighting, rear-guard action type of retreat, through the Armory yard and the residential area upriver from the factory, the raiders might have broken out and into the Blue Ridge Mountains. As it was, he did nothing. He seemed incapable of deciding upon any course of action.

Within a few minutes, however, others began making decisions for him. Two of these men were Captain John Avis, the jailer at Charlestown, and Richard B. Washington, a resident of the county seat, who was not related to Colonel Lewis Washington. They were in command of a detachment of the Charlestown "irregulars."

They directed their men to begin a brisk fire from the houses overlooking the center of town. As they opened up, their companions in the second company of the Jefferson Guards were just coming through the covered span across the Shenandoah, driving Oliver Brown, William Thompson, and Dangerfield Newby ahead of them. As the three raiders dashed across the open space before the hotel and saloon, heading for the protection of the enginehouse, Washington raised his ancient muzzle-loading musket.

Not having the correct ammunition for his gun, Washington had loaded it with powder and paper wad, tamped it down well, then inserted a six-inch spike from which the head had been filed.

He took careful aim and pulled the trigger. Newby, a six-foot-two, yellow-complexioned mulatto, went down as if pole-axed, killed instantly. The huge spike had cut his throat from ear to ear. He was the first of the abolitionists to die.

Newby was the son of a Scottish father and a Virginia Negress. Taken by his white father to Ohio and made a free man, he had a wife and seven children, all of them in bondage. He had joined Brown in Cleveland, convinced that the only way he would be able to set his family free would be with rifle and bullet. All through the long weeks of enforced inactivity at the farmhouse in Maryland Dangerfield Newby had been one of the most patient of the little band. With so much at stake he didn't mind the small inconveniences. He would sit by an attic window, reading and rereading a tearful letter from his wife.

"Oh, Dear Dangerfield," wrote the broken-hearted woman, still held in slavery, "come this fall without fail, money or no money. I want to see you so much; that is the bright hope I

have before me. Buy me and the baby, that has just commenced to crawl, as soon as possible, for if you do not get me somebody else will."

Now the "bright hope" had been extinguished. No one would come to set the widow and seven children free.

As Newby's blood incarnadined the cobblestones in front of the Wager Hotel some of the Jefferson Guards who had taken up positions in that hostelry heard small noises coming from the anteroom where Shephard Hayward lay on his equally bloodied pallet. They bent over the baggage agent, just in time to hear him breathe his last. The colored man looked up at them in his delirium. His limbs shuddered. His head moved loosely sideways. Then he was dead, as dead as Dangerfield Newby.

John Brown now was penned up in the enginehouse with little chance of joining his outlying men or being joined by them. John Kagi, Lewis Sheridan Leary, and John Copeland were beyond help in the rifle works. Owen Brown, Merriam, and Barclay Coppoc were hopelessly cut off, as were John E. Cook and Charles Tidd, who had driven Colonel Washington's wagon after more arms. Two other men, Albert Hazlett and Osborn Anderson, were stationed in the Arsenal across the street. Strangely enough, no one in the forces pulling the drawstring tight about the raiders knew the two were there.

A number of the Jefferson Guards came out of the Wager Hotel and the Galt House and started toward the enginehouse. Brown ordered all of the hostages to stay away from the windows. He didn't want his prisoners harmed while they were his responsibility.

Just before the rush of the irregulars from the other side of the Shenandoah and the retreat of the raiders from the bridge over that river, Brown had separated his prisoners. He moved Colonel Washington, Mr. Allstadt and his son, Armistead Ball, Captain Daingerfield, Benjamin Mills, the master armorer, Terrence Byrne, and a few others into the room with the fire-fighting apparatus. Most of the remaining ordnance workers were left in the watchhouse. No guard was set over the sec-

ond group, and only the fact that they were safer under cover than trying to flee through the occasional hail of bullets kept them from escaping.

After withdrawing most of his men and his more prominent prisoners inside the enginehouse, Old Brown spoke to the latter:

"Gentlemen, perhaps you wonder why I have selected you from the others," he said. "It is because I believe you to be more influential; and I have only to say now, that you will have to share precisely the same fate that your friends extend to my men."

Casting aside the pall of indecision that had hung about him through the morning, the leader supervised the boarding up of the windows, the blocking of openings, and the cutting of portholes. He handed a pickaxe to Phil Lucker, one of Mr. Allstadt's slaves, and told him to punch firing holes through the brick. At that instant the Jefferson Guards fired a volley that splintered some of the shutters, and the Negro dropped the pick in panic.

"It's getting too hot for old Phil," cried the slave.

Brown picked it up and finished making further openings.

The militia became encouraged when the insurrectionists went inside. They approached rather close to the Armory gate and the old guerilla leader from Kansas decided to teach them a lesson. He stepped out with some of his men, waited until the opposing force came to within sixty yards of the heavy iron fencing and then shouted:

"Let go upon them."

The Sharps carbines cracked. Several of the Guards were wounded. Brown repeated the dose several times and the militiamen fled back to cover.

From then on, the volunteer soldiery seemed to have little taste for facing the raiders and their Beecher's Bibles. They fired from a distance and from behind buildings, or, in many cases, they stayed close to the bars in the Wager Hotel and the Galt House, building up false courage at ten cents a drink.

Brown was not fooled. He knew how serious his position

now was. He called for volunteers to carry a flag of truce to Colonel Gibson to ask for a cease-fire. Resin Cross, a prisoner, stepped forward, and William Thompson did the same for the raiders. They went into the street and walked toward the hotel. Before they had gone forty feet townsmen disregarding the white flag surrounded them, and captured Thompson. They took him proudly to the hotel and locked him in a room with several guards.

This treachery had a double-barreled effect. John Brown and his men were enraged and the old man in particular sensed that now the chips were down. For the prisoners it was almost as serious. They felt that their own lives hung by a slimmer thread if the Harper's Ferry citizens fought unfairly.

One of these captives was Mr. Kitzmiller, the acting superintendent of the Armory, who had been seized by Brown's men almost as soon as he left his home after being routed out by Dr. Starry. Kitzmiller offered to go out under another flag of truce in an effort to end the fighting. He figured that because he was so well known, and held such a prominent position, he was the prisoner best suited for the dangerous assignment. John Brown accepted the offer and asked his son Watson, and the courageous second in command, Aaron Stevens, to go with the government ordnance official.

Stevens fastened a piece of white cloth to a pike and at a nod from the others, the leader opened the enginehouse door. Out stepped the three men. They walked a few steps beyond the gates of the enclosure before anything happened. Then firing started up. Watson Brown went down, mortally wounded, but with enough strength left to drag himself painfully back to shelter in the enginehouse.

George W. Chambers, a saloon keeper, had been watching the battle from a second floor window of the Galt House. Either he didn't see the white flag, or he didn't know what it meant. He raised his gun and fired twice at Stevens, who fell, hideously wounded by the heavy lead slugs. Kitzmiller was not injured and made good his escape.

Among the prisoners in the room with the fire engines was

one whose bravery was matched only by his high humanitarian ideals. His name was Joseph A. Brewer.

During the first few hours after raiders and captives had shared breakfast together, Brewer had made several trips between the Armory and the larger of the hotels, pleading with the citizens to stop firing. He explained that it only endangered the lives of the forty or more hostages. He might just as well have been addressing his entreaties to the empty cavern of the covered bridge.

Through one of the embrasures in the brick wall Brewer witnessed the cowardly attack on the flag of truce party. He saw Kitzmiller dash for safety and witnessed Watson Brown's pathetic progress until he had reached the shelter of the enginehouse walls. Then there was only Stevens, bleeding profusely, with no one to aid him.

Brewer didn't hesitate. He strode out into the street, where Stevens lay, picked the wounded raider up in his arms as if he were a boy, and carried him into the Wager Hotel. His act of human kindness touched the hearts of even the most ornery of the citizens. No rifle spat; no bullet flew. Inside the hotel other tender-hearted men and women helped Stevens into bed. A physician was called to minister to him.

For a few minutes Brewer stood by the bedside to see that everything possible was done for Brown's first lieutenant.

Then, to the surprise and shock of every townsman who saw him, and of Brown's party as well, he stepped casually out of the hotel, walked slowly across the plaza between hotel and Armory, and surrendered himself again to the raiders. Many strange actions occurred while John Brown was making his bid in behalf of freedom for the slaves. But none was so bizarre, none so magnificently correct, as this one by Joseph Brewer.

While he was setting an example in chivalry and bravery, attention was diverted from other parts of the village. The brisk outburst of shooting at the white flag brought men running to the heart of town from their positions at the bridgeheads, in the attics and the steeples. It was just the moment

for which William H. Leeman, the "baby" of Brown's band, had been waiting.

Leeman was only twenty years old, a mite unpredictable, gay and good-looking. Born in Maine, he had left home early, as was common in those days, and worked for a time—he was then but fourteen—in a shoe factory in Haverhill, Massachusetts. Then he joined one of the "emigrant parties" that were formed and financed by anti-slavery societies and sent to seek homes in Kansas in order to tip the scales there in favor of freedom. When he was but seventeen he had already proved himself a good fighter at the battle of Osawatomie.

Anne Brown described him as "only a boy, who smoked a great deal and drank a little."

"But perhaps people would not think that so very wicked now," said John Brown's daughter. "He was very handsome and very attractive."

His leader's indecisiveness galled him. He had been one of those at the Kennedy farm who least liked being cooped up in the garrets. As the day wore on and more and more men took up arms against the invaders, Leeman grew more impatient. When all eyes seemed turned to the shooting of Watson Brown and Stevens and to Brewer's nonchalant act of bravery, the young raider decided to try escape.

He moved swiftly through the rearmost buildings in the Armory enclosure until he reached the one closest to the Potomac. He climbed the fence, dashed across the railroad tracks, and started to swim the river. Luck wasn't with him. Someone spotted him as he made for the Maryland shore. Militiamen and citizens took up the chase, dashed to the riverbank and peppered the river with bullets.

Leeman wasn't wounded but the hot fire led him to stop swimming and take refuge on a broad rock that stuck up above the surface of the stream. He stood there like a buck deer at bay as a few citizens made their way out to the rock. One of them, G. A. Schoppert, put his pistol to the boy's head and pulled the trigger.

In the years that followed some observers said Leeman had

surrendered before Schoppert pressed the trigger. Others said he was armed and still ready to fight for his life. Schoppert himself, decades later, signed an affidavit that Leeman had refused to surrender and had a pistol and knife when Schoppert killed him.

The mere fact that Schoppert felt it necessary to make such affidavit in the year 1900, forty-one years after the event, is an index to the public's interest in this tragic act in the drama at Harper's Ferry.

The gay, handsome, devil-may-care boy, who had had enough character to raise a hand against slavery, fell backwards, his body remaining half in the water and half on the rock.

All through the remainder of that day townsmen and members of the various volunteer legions encircling the Armory amused themselves by blazing away at the corpse.

The next day a reporter on the Baltimore *Sun*, who had come up-country to cover the raid, saw Leeman's body, still exposed to the attacks of the soldiery.

"About the middle of the stream of the broad Potomac," he wrote, "lies the body of one of the insurgents named Wm. H. Leeman, who was shot on Monday, while attempting to make his escape from the town. His black hair may just be seen floating upon the surface of the water and waving with every ripple. The visitors, upon discovering the body today, saluted it with a shower of balls, but the action was one of very questionable taste and propriety."

The "visitors" were militiamen who had come too late to do any fighting.

Some time after Leeman had been killed, a citizen of the town waded out and cut off the dead man's coat-tails to see what was in the pockets. When the contents were dried out it was found that one was Leeman's commission as a Captain in the provisional army set up by Brown and other anti-slavery men at the convention in Chatham, Canada.

This was the document:

HEAD-QUARTERS, WAR DEPARTMENT
Near Harper's Ferry, Md. / Whereas, W. H. Leeman has been nominated a captain in the army established under the *Provisional Constitution;* now, therefore, in pursuance of the authority vested in me by said constitution, we do hereby appoint and commission the said Wm. H. Leeman captain./ Given at the office of the Secretary of War, this day, 15th of October, 1859./ JOHN BROWN./ Commander in Chief./ H (KAGI), Secretary War.

Poor William Leeman. He died less than two days after being commissioned an officer in the mythical, mystical army of the Lord that John Brown believed in with all his heart. He never got to wear a uniform, nor the insignia of his high rank as captain. He died in a plain woolen suit, baggy at the knees, patched at the elbows, and drably undistinguished.

It was a good enough covering for the wounds that were yet to be inflicted. From about 1:30 p.m., when he made his bid to escape, until nightfall hid his corpse from view, and again the next day, whole companies of volunteer soldiers, men from Shepherdstown, from Martinsburg, Richmond, and Charlestown, used Leeman's body for target practice. Citizens of the town, not exactly eager to face the Sharps rifles always ready in the enginehouse, gathered on the bridge across the Potomac instead and plinked away at the gruesome target. They had a jolly time.

CHAPTER 8

INEXORABLY the pawns of the tragedy were being moved about the chessboard at Harper's Ferry. Shooting and killing seemed to beget hate and brutality. Savagery snow-balled under the impetus of hysteria.

The stuff the bartenders were pushing across the polished counters in the Wager Hotel and the Galt House gave some men the courage to fight. To others it was a corrosive agent that ate away decency and human dignity. These latter men, pitiful creatures beneath their rowdy, loud-mouthed exteriors, amused themselves by subjecting the body of Dangerfield Newby to unconscionable indignities. They shot at it and they kicked it, gathering additional bravery when they realized that their actions were not visible from the enginehouse.

Before the afternoon was half over poor white trash had stolen the dead man's heavy cowhide boots. To men who went barefooted they constituted a handsome prize.

But worse was yet to come. A group of shouting, cavorting citizens came roistering out of the Galt House saloon, made their way by a circuitous route that kept them out of the line of fire from the Armory fortress to where the body lay, and cut off the dead mulatto's ears for souvenirs.

Fortunately such men were in a minority. There were plenty of braver, more decent men taking part in the conflict.

Among the latter were the men from the freight trains at Martinsburg, the next big town west of the junction on the B. & O. Main Stem. They were called "tonnage men" because they worked on the freight trains that hauled coal out of the mountains, and the railroad was paid by the ton.

A couple of these trainmen had been on the sidelines almost from the first instant Brown stormed into town Sunday night. Their train was on a siding a few hundred feet down the track from the station, having been put "in the hole" to allow the eastbound night flyer from Wheeling to pass. When the express didn't move beyond the switch for nearly the entire night, the crew on the freight did a little investigating. One of the men was Evans Dorsey of Martinsburg. He talked with Conductor Phelps several times before finally making his way to his home town.

There he organized a volunteer company of railroad men with a few other workmen thrown in for good measure, and the hastily mustered company rode down to the outskirts of

Harper's Ferry on a small train made up of a steam engine and a few gondola cars. By noon these men had made their way through the riverfront section of town above the Armory and were adding their fire to that of the Charlestown irregulars.

At first this meant little or nothing to Brown and his men, but the significance of the arrival of the tonnage men couldn't be overlooked. They were the last lock on the door, the final snap of the trap. No longer could the insurrectionists retreat through the ordnance plant grounds and fight their way out of town toward the Blue Ridge Mountains.

With the Martinsburg men putting the cork in the bottle, Brown's chance of waging guerilla warfare in the Allegheny Mountains while Negro slaves flocked to his side went out the window. If he had time to think of it, the old crusader must have remembered his theories that mountain peoples are always the last to give up their freedoms. He had talked enthusiastically to his supporters, drawing maps in the dirt as he did so, about the Swiss, the Spaniards, and the Circassians who had fought in narrow defiles against larger forces that came up from the lowlands.

Today all was changed. What fighting had to be done would have to take place in the cramped confines of a few city streets and a few small buildings.

The colored men had not rallied to his banner. That was the first great blow. Now had come the second, penning him up in a tightening circle of steel. Once in North Elba a visitor to the Brown homestead discussed the head of the family with Watson Brown. "He has the look of an eagle," he said.

Now the eagle was in a cage. It could beat its wings against the bars and it could die bravely, but it could no longer soar away to the high summits of the Blue Ridge.

While some of the drunken militiamen were shouting in the saloons about what they would soon do to Brown and his men, a hard-bitten, rock-ribbed fighting man rode into town

to do something about these people who were disturbing the peace of Harper's Ferry.

He was George W. Turner, a gentleman farmer, who had studied war-making at West Point, having been graduated with the class of 1831. Commissioned a second lieutenant in the First Artillery, he remained in the service for exactly five years, seeing some fighting during the war with the Seminole Indians. He resigned to operate a large farm in Rippon, as far to the other side of Charlestown as the Ferry was to the north.

Turner got wind of the rioting when he went into the county seat. As he was armed—most men in those days and in those regions did go armed—he decided to continue, remembering the old military axiom that no man could make a mistake if he marched toward the sound of guns.

About two p.m. he reined his horse in as he came to the home of William Moore. Dismounting, he tied his steed and went to stand in the doorway of the Moore house. From there he could see some of John Brown's men moving about just inside the gates. He loaded his shotgun and rested it on a wooden partition or extension to steady it for better aiming.

He never pulled the trigger. Although the only exposed part of his body that could be seen from the enginehouse was his shoulder, one of the hawk-eyed raiders noticed the gun's menacing position, threw up his own rifle, and fired. The slug hit a bone in Turner's shoulder, was deflected, and entered his neck, killing him instantly.

It all happened so swiftly that no one other than the member of Brown's party knew whose bullet was the lethal one. Not far away from where Turner fell was Joseph C. Rosengarten, a director of the Pennsylvania Railroad, who happened to be in Harper's Ferry purely by chance. His train was one of the many halted outside of town. A curious man, he prowled about the place seemingly immune to bullets, and had reached the vicinity of the Moore home just as the former West Pointer fell dead.

Officials of the village, jittery but eager to do their duty,

grabbed Rosengarten and clapped him into the county jail at Charlestown, convinced that if he hadn't shot Turner himself, he was at least a suspicious character. No one in Harper's Ferry had ever seen him before, so he made a prime suspect. The poor railroad executive had to stay in the jailhouse until the next day when Governor Wise learned of his arrest. Wise knew him and had him freed at once.

The next victim of Harper's Ferry's thirty-two hours of anguish was its Major, Fontaine Beckham.

Twenty-five years before the raid the steel rails of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad reached the spot in the mountains where the Shenandoah and the Potomac join together. The tracks went on westward, first to Wheeling, and later to Parkersburg, as the young Republic reached westward for food, for wealth, for the mere joy of spreading beyond the borders of the original thirteen states.

When the officials of the pioneering railroad went looking for an agent for Harper's Ferry, everyone in town seemed eager to recommend Fontaine Beckham, then a lawyer and county magistrate. He was invited to join his fortunes with those of the young line and accepted. When Brown moved into the junction the Mayor had been the railroad's agent for twenty-five years.

Much of that time, also, he had been chief magistrate of the thriving manufacturing center. He had seen the town grow as ordnance workers and artificers migrated there from Hartford, Connecticut, from Springfield, Massachusetts, and from other New England arms and toolmaking centers. He had seen the output of the government gun factories rise until they were producing two thousand rifles a month.

On this day, October 17, 1859, he was the Mayor of a town caught in the cross-currents of the bitterest schism ever to divide the United States.

His last day on earth began inauspiciously. The shot that gave Shephard Hayward his mortal wound roused him from his bed in his home close to the station. Putting on his clothes, he hurried to the railroad station, never once thinking of his

own safety. W. W. Throckmorton, a clerk at the Wager Hotel, took him out to see the wounded baggage agent where he lay in a pool of blood on the platform.

The scene shocked the Mayor greatly, both because of the indication of the violence that existed in his community and because he had a deep affection for the dying colored man. Hayward was highly respected, had saved a little money, and had been Mr. Beckham's fellow employee on the railroad for a long time.

On and off, all through the morning hours before the firing became more widespread, the Mayor went back and forth between his office and the station platform to cheer the sometimes unconscious, sometimes lucid, baggage agent.

A little before noon John Brown asked Resin Cross to confer with the Mayor about the use of the railroad water tank as a roost for several sharpshooters who were pouring a very annoying fire down into the Armory yard. Brown told Cross to inform the Mayor that while the raiders were asking no favors for themselves, they wanted to point out the grave menace to the welfare of the prisoners if citizens continued to use the water tank.

This preyed on the Mayor's mind and, being something of a fuss-budget anyway, he kept checking on conditions. In his double role as Mayor and chief representative of the railroad he had plenty of responsibilities. Under the pressure of events they wore him down and he became exceedingly nervous.

Repeatedly he went out to the tracks to look things over, dodging around between buildings and freight cars. From the enginehouse his movements looked decidedly suspicious.

Edwin Coppoc, who was raised as a Quaker in a devout family, but who had taken up arms to end slavery, watched the Mayor's movements from a partially open door of the little fort.

Beckham went over to the water tank and began peering around the structure. Even to Mr. Allstadt, imprisoned in the little building with the insurgents, it looked as if the Mayor were seeking a place from which to take aim at someone.

"If he keeps on peeking," said Coppoc, "I'm going to shoot."

The Mayor stuck his head around the tank again and Coppoc pulled the trigger. The bullet missed its mark.

"Don't fire, man, for God's sake," screamed some of the prisoners. "They'll shoot in here and kill us all."

Edwin Coppoc went on reloading his Sharps. Some of the prisoners laughed hysterically, others cried out again. The Quaker from Springdale, Iowa, squeezed the trigger and the Mayor fell, killed instantly.

Almost at that instant it began to rain hard. It had been showering and drizzling on and off since the day before, but this was the first heavy downpour. It dampened the ardor of the citizens and the militia and kept them under cover for several minutes. Then the rain stopped and men began to move about more. In that fashion the word that Mayor Beckham had been killed went the rounds from mouth to mouth.

It was bad news for both sides. It lighted a fuse that burned on all afternoon, touching off one explosion after another. Angry residents threatened reprisals. The drunks in the saloons banged on the bars, cried noisily for blood, and fired their pistols out of the windows.

While the town riff-raff was gathering courage with liquor and was whetting its appetite for butchery, the little band in the enginehouse bided its time. The leader, still carrying the handsome gift sword that had belonged to the First President, noticed that Colonel Washington seemed worried about it.

"Do not worry, Sir," said Old Brown. "I will take especial care of it, and shall return it when you are released."

Despite the men who had fallen in action, and the evident bad temper of the community, the old insurrectionist still seemed to think that in some manner the conflict would be settled by a gentlemanly agreement.

He had but a few minutes to wait before another shock rocked him grievously. Watson Brown lay dying in one corner

behind a fire engine. He was past all earthly help. He knew it and his father knew it.

The other son who had marched into the Ferry with the old man the night before, Oliver, was on guard at the big door. He sat just inside where he could see the open area in front of the gates. The door stood open about six or eight inches.

Oliver was only a few months past his twentieth birthday. He was exceedingly handsome, with wavy hair and deeply set eyes. He looked a little like John Keats. Photographs taken at the time of his marriage, a year before the raid, show him as a dashing, romantic figure, with a flowered vest and a silk neckerchief.

His wife Martha, the "good light-bread maker" who had cooked at the Kennedy farm for the invisibles, had presented him with a child a few months before he left North Elba. So strong was John Brown's personality, and so implicitly did all in his family believe in the rightness of his cause, that even Oliver's girl-wife raised no objection to his enlisting for the dangerous enterprise. Like her mother-in-law, she would have taken up a rifle and fought against slavery if the men of the clan had permitted her.

Oliver sat in the open doorway from which Edwin Coppoc had shot the Mayor, watching the rowdies carousing in front of the Galt House. He was an embittered young man, with his older brother dying behind him, and the body of one of the raiders, Dangerfield Newby, still lying out in the area before the gates.

He looked across to the spot where the covered bridge from Maryland opened out on the same area and suddenly spotted a man aiming a rifle from behind the stone wall of a trestle. Oliver Brown threw up the carbine, took aim and fell over backwards, mortally wounded by the other's bullet before he could squeeze the trigger. The wound was a grievous one that caused excruciating pain throughout the remaining hours of the young fighter's life.

It was about three p.m. when Oliver was shot. With both

of his sons dying at his side, the old man still spoke courteously to his prisoners, threatened them not at all, and seemed intent on holding out as long as he could, as if by doing so some magic alteration in his fortunes would take place.

Frequently the leader discussed some sort of armistice with Colonel Washington. The insurgents' leader complained about the bad faith of the men who fired at the bearers of the flags of truce. He proposed that if a cease-fire could be arranged his party would cross the bridge to the Maryland side, taking the prominent hostages with them as far as the second lock upstream on the Chesapeake and Ohio canal. No one on either side was to fire until they had reached that point. From then on it would be a case of "every man for himself and the Devil take the hindmost."

Later he changed his proposal, but at this time he was willing to gamble on his ability to get away with a half mile start on his pursuers.

While this academic discussion was going on in the engine-house all hell was breaking loose in the town.

The word that Mayor Beckham had been killed finally penetrated the rum-soaked minds of some of the heaviest of the drinkers. It also gave other citizens, not drunk, what seemed like a motive for more bestiality. They had grown a little tired of kicking the body of the mulatto Newby around, and the excitement of firing slugs into the body of William Leeman on the rock in the river had also begun to wear off.

Now mob-rule demanded a new sacrifice. The howling vengeance-seekers poured out of the saloons and stormed into the Wager Hotel. Ever since the first flag of truce had gone out from the Armory, William Thompson had been held a prisoner in a room in that hostelry. If the authorities had done their duty he would have been safely incarcerated in the county jail at Charlestown by this hour, but instead he was handy to the aims of the unruly mob.

The ringleader of the mob was the same George Chambers who had fired at the second white flag, wounding Stevens so seriously. The saloon keeper, seconded by Harry Hunter,

a volunteer from Charlestown and grand-nephew of the dead Mayor, led the pack through the lobby and up to the room where Thompson was held.

In the hotel at this time was Christina Fouke, sister of the hotel owner, a young woman of tender heart but stern principles. She saw the maddened Chambers, pistol in his hand, heading for the steps, followed by a lot of slack-jawed admirers, many of them drunk.

Christina beat them to the stairs and reached Thompson's room ahead of them. Inside were several armed men who were guarding the prisoner. When Chambers and his gang appeared at the door they should have driven them off, but they were either afraid or had no concept of right and wrong.

Chambers and Hunter levelled their pistols at Thompson. The guards moved swiftly to get out of the line of fire.

But Christina moved even more quickly, throwing herself before the insurrectionist and facing Chambers and Hunter with eyes flashing disdain for their cowardice and brutality.

"Leave him alone," cried the young woman. "Let the law handle this man's case."

It was no use.

Christina Fouke was the sole representative of decency and justice in the room except for Thompson. The others were either evil, or drunk and evil. Hunter and Chambers brushed Christina aside, caught Thompson by the throat, and started to drag him outside.

"Though you may take my life," said Thompson, bravely, "eighty thousand will arise to avenge me and give liberty to the slaves."

The mob carried him from the hotel and across to the stone trestle at the end of the bridge, acting with the grim efficiency that so often marks the doings of men who go berserk. When he was far enough out on the span so that he was over water, Hunter and another—it may have been Chambers—put their pistols to the prisoner's head and pulled the triggers.

Thompson's body somersaulted from the bridge railing

and fell toward the water, but before it struck, a dozen more leaden slugs were buried in his body as the mob fired at the falling corpse.

A great roar came out of the cavernous reaches of the covered bridge. It echoed from the cliffs hanging like a bloodhound's dewlaps from Maryland Heights. Then it echoed again from Loudon Heights across the Shenandoah. Finally the reverberation came back from Bolivar Heights—weaker, softer, but frighteningly evil.

Their blood-lust unsatiated, the members of the mob moved back to the hotel, looking for another victim.

Hunter, in the lead this time, took his forces to Aaron Stevens' room. The deputy leader of the insurgents lay groaning from the pain of four great wounds. His clothes were soaked with blood. So was the bedding. Even Hunter was touched by the sight. The angry citizens and the drunks turned on their heels and filed out of the room, convinced that Stevens would be dead within a few hours.

Some of the rougher members of the mob, still claiming vengeance, went back to the bridge and emptied their guns into the body of William Thompson where it lay, face up, still mirroring its owner's death agony, in a shallow stretch of back-water.

The decent men of Harper's Ferry were sickened by this crime against the chivalry of Virginia.

Violence had taken Harper's Ferry by the throat. Killing followed killing so fast that it seemed as if the hour must be exceedingly late, yet it was but a little after 3:30 p.m. Mayor Beckham hadn't been dead an hour.

Although the anti-slavery band was penned up in the enginehouse and the rifle works and although enough militiamen were in town to insure order, trains were still not allowed to pass through the Ferry.

The westbound mail train that should have rumbled through the bridge about the time Thompson was being brutally murdered didn't get beyond Sandy Hook.

President Garrett received a telegram from Monocacy,

where the first real word of the insurrection had been dispatched early that morning.

"The mail agent on the westbound train has returned to Monocacy," it said, "and reports that the train was unable to get through. The town is in possession of Negroes who arrest anyone they can catch and imprison them. The agent came down on an empty engine."

Wild rumors were spreading and the picture of conditions at the Ferry which the outside world was getting was even more horrifying than the true events, bad as they were.

Just at this hour, in Washington, the detachment of Marines under Lieutenant Green and Major Russell was pulling out of the station on a train headed toward Baltimore. In those days the main line of the Baltimore & Ohio bypassed the nation's capital. A spur ran down to Washington from a station called the Relay House, a short distance out of Baltimore.

When the small body of regulars reached the Relay they transferred to an express headed west and took off for Harper's Ferry.

Colonel Lee and Lieutenant Stuart, having had to attend the briefing conference with President Buchanan, missed the 3:30 train the Marines were riding and took the five p.m. express instead. By the time they reached the Relay they missed that connection too and had to wait for another train. This didn't please Colonel Lee. It pleased President Garrett even less. He set the telegraph wires to humming and ordered a fast locomotive to the Relay junction to pick up the two Army officers.

While he waited, Colonel Lee telegraphed ahead instructions for the train bearing the Marines to halt this side of the Potomac at Sandy Hook and to remain there until he caught up with it.

Then the Virginian whose troops would many times make use of this same railroad in the war soon to come, sat down in the little station to await the arrival of the locomotive.

His patience was no more unusual than John Brown's.

The leader of the raiders was waiting for some change in

the battle that would improve his position, but he showed little sign of disappointment when none came. It is not clear whether the men in the enginehouse saw or knew about the death of their companion-in-arms, William Thompson. There were by now so many of the military around that they could do little except stay under cover in the thick-walled enginehouse and await events.

They didn't have long to wait this time.

Encouraged by the attention being drawn to the center of town by the foul misdeeds of the drunks and the rowdies, the Martinsburg company of tonnage men decided to launch an attack of its own. Captain E. G. Alburtis was nominally in command, but Evans Dorsey, the conductor of the freight train who had been instrumental in forming the company, was also issuing orders. Both men were energetic and both were absolutely fearless.

They decided that it was time for an all-out assault to be made directly upon the enginehouse. They had grown impatient as they learned of the flags of truce and they didn't approve of the behavior of the fair-weather soldiers who had been spending most of their time in saloons.

Dorsey and Alburtis knew the layout of the Armory buildings. They were convinced that their men could work their way through and around the structures in the rear of the enginehouse in such a way as to approach the little fortress unnoticed.

It wasn't a bad plan, but it overlooked one fact. Brown's men were unusually alert. They had no intention of being surprised from front or rear. They were now down to little more than a handful but they were men who gloried in a fight for a just cause. There was no doubt in any of their minds that their action in behalf of freeing the slaves was a worthy one.

The company from Martinsburg formed its skirmish line, and the men moved out, skirting open spaces when they could, passing through some buildings and going around others but getting ever closer to the raiders' refuge. From

a hundred yards away they launched their final attack. Some of the men fired while others dashed for the enginehouse.

The tonnage men were met by what seemed like a solid wall of bullets. It was a stout sermon that was being preached with the aid of Beecher's Bibles that afternoon in the Armory yard. Regulars would have hesitated to face such heavy firing. But the men from upriver reached the enginehouse to find that all the raiders were in the section with the fire fighting apparatus. The less important hostages were still crowded in the watch-house section, cowering in fear.

The tonnage men kicked in several windows.

"Are there any of Brown's men in here?" the younger Allstadt heard the volunteers shout.

"No," replied the prisoners, "they are all in the other part."

Prisoners spewed out of the windows and dashed off to safety as the Martinsburg volunteers covered them. But the position of the railroad men was too exposed. Evans Dorsey went down, killed by a bullet in his heart. Another conductor, George Richardson, was also seriously wounded.

Six or seven other men were shot and Captain Alburtis ordered a retreat. He had expected the other companies of militia to support his attack, but the Martinsburg men fought alone. They released between thirty and forty prisoners from the watch-house, all told, and then beat a hasty retreat to their jumping-off line, taking their wounded with them.

Alburtis was furious and accused the other companies of rank cowardice. The plain truth of the matter was the militia, for the most part, just didn't relish the idea of making a frontal attack as long as there were two to three men with Sharps rifles ready and willing to use them in the enginehouse.

There were at least two hundred men under arms in Harper's Ferry at that moment. They had expended hundreds of shells, had made a lot of noise and had killed one man in cold blood. By shooting at men carrying flags of truce they had mortally wounded one man and gravely wounded an-

other. They had killed another man fleeing across the Potomac, shooting him down in cold blood.

They had shot and killed Dangerfield Newby in fair fight, and had wounded Oliver Brown, but both men were the victims of sharpshooters sniping from concealed positions.

All day long, until the men from the freight trains assaulted the enginehouse, no one had shown any inclination to storm the little fortress.

Strangely enough, the most effective of all the groups mustered to do battle with the insurgents were the two which had been formed that very day, and which had never trained together under arms. These were the catch-all company of boys and old men from Charlestown, and the railroad workers from Martinsburg. There were companies from Shepherdstown and from Frederick and later on from Winchester, Baltimore, and Richmond, but none of them displayed any appetite for an open charge against Brown's sharpshooters.

In justice to these men it has to be admitted that their commanding officers, for the most part, were like an opera troupe composed entirely of prima donnas. Each man wanted to issue the orders. No one wanted to take any. Long before the dawn of history soldiers, armed only with sticks and stones, had learned that this is no way to win battles.

CHAPTER 9

ALL through this tragic day of October 17, 1859, three of Brown's men fought their battle for life without support, without hope of any support, and with a feeling of utter futility.

They were John Henry Kagi, John A. Copeland, and Lewis Sheridan Leary—one white man and two Negroes. Kagi and

Copeland were installed as the garrison for Hall's rifle works as soon as it was seized during the small hours of the morning. Leary was ordered to reinforce them later in the forenoon. If he had stayed at the enginehouse with the main party, he might have survived, but his chances on the Shenandoah were many times less favorable.

Leary was descended from an Irishman who had not yet dropped the O' and who fought against the British in the Carolinas and Georgia under General Nathanael Greene. The war over, the soldier married a woman of mixed breed, part Negro and part Indian. The Indian strain was that of the Croatan tribe which inhabited the shores of North Carolina and the outer banks, those slim spits of sand that guard the mainland from the Atlantic storms off Hatteras.

Lewis Leary was a harness maker in Oberlin who joined John Brown when the abolitionist came east from Kansas to start preparations for the Harper's Ferry attack. He was twenty-five when he died. With the blood of two downtrodden races in his veins, he represented a joint hope for a better life for each.

These three men, perhaps because they were more isolated, or because Kagi, with a legal man's trained mind, could see the way events were bound to work out, repeatedly had begged their leader to retreat to the hills. He dallied, both to protect his hostages and because he had a feeling that his every movement was foreordained by God. Whatever the reason, he waited too long and escape was cut off.

Kagi, Leary, and Copeland could have fled up Bolivar Heights or crossed the Shenandoah to safety at any time up to ten or eleven o'clock in the morning. It never entered their heads. John Brown had instructed them to hold the rifle works and they intended to obey.

An hour or so before noon the irregulars from Charlestown came pouring down the hill south of town and took up positions in buildings on Shenandoah Street or behind boulders and trees on the river bank. Between then and about three p.m. they kept up a desultory fire into the rifle factory

buildings. It didn't injure the three raiders, but it pinned them down.

In the middle of the afternoon things moved swiftly to a climax. Behind the change in situation was a man already responsible for many of the decisions made and steps taken since the first shots were fired.

He was Dr. Starry.

After his early activity in the role of Paul Revere, the indefatigable physician temporarily ceased to be an important member of the tragedy's cast of characters, and was in eclipse for four or five hours. History does not record his movements during this period. He may have felt exhausted and taken a noonday nap. At any rate, when he next stepped out on the stage at Harper's Ferry it was with renewed vigor and enthusiasm.

Dr. Starry never lost sight of the broad, over-all picture. The bloody business in the center of town did not make him forget that there were other raiders in Hall's rifle works and that a spirited attack might drive them out.

He talked it over with some of his fellow townsmen. Having developed a distaste for the behavior of the militia companies, which he shared with many others, he organized a group of citizens from the town and asked a young man named Irwin to take command. Then he suggested that they surround the rifle factory and open a general assault on all three land sides.

At the arms plant the citizens' party was joined by several of the Charlestown irregulars who had been spending a feckless four hours doing little except occasionally firing a few shots at the factory. They had no plan, lacked enthusiasm, and had no appetite for an aggressive assault.

In the houses on High Street, and along Shenandoah Street opposite the plant, men and women hung from the windows or peeked from doorways to watch the battle. A little of the terror that had swept over the town earlier abated as word passed from home to home that the raiders were fairly well bottled up.

Now it looked as if they might be in on one of the final scenes of the drama.

Irwin and his men could not be sure how many men were opposing them from inside the rifle works. The seizure of that outpost had been completed before dawn and the prisoners taken then were still in the Armory enclosure, or scattered to their homes, joyful to be away from the center of excitement after their long stay in the watch-house. There was no one to give the attackers a true picture of the defending force's composition.

Out from behind the rocks and trees and from behind the nearby houses moved the attackers. They numbered by now more than two score men. They fired at windows whether they saw anything or not. Once in a while a rifle inside barked back defiantly.

The fight was too one-sided. Kagi and his two men could not hope to man all the windows or keep up a fire from all three sides that would stop the assault. The three men were hungry. They hadn't eaten since their last meal at the farmhouse. Worse than that, they were dispirited. Their appeals to John Brown to cut short the raid and take to the hills had fallen on deaf ears and they felt that they were more or less abandoned to their fate.

Kagi ordered a brisk fire on all sides and then a quick retreat to the building nearest the river. In smaller quarters he thought he could put up a better defense. After a while the men in Irwin's force got into the other buildings, found them deserted, and then centered their attack on the one by the edge of the island.

When Brown's men crossed the Potomac the night before, each man had a minimum of forty rounds of ammunition on his person. This was considered sufficient until more was brought up from the farm or schoolhouse. But Cook and Tidd, who had gone off so confidently in Colonel Washington's wagon for more supplies, never came back. Before they could re-enter town the militia had blocked the bridges.

Kagi and Leary and Copeland nursed their cartidges, mak-

ing each shot tell. But they knew it was a hopeless gesture.

About a half hour after Irwin's men, spurred on by the ubiquitous Dr. Starry, took possession of most of the buildings, they opened a particularly heavy fire on the defenders. All Kagi and his men could do was to hide behind machinery and hazard an occasional shot or two in reply.

Under cover of this fusillade, which raked the raider's stronghold like a summer hailstorm, two or three men who knew the layout of the grounds crawled along the river bank, under the wall where they could not be spotted and so to the outer end of a mill-race where the water that turned the mill-wheel flowed back into the stream. By this unsuspected route they gained access to Kagi's last asylum.

There was a sudden volley from inside the building which told Kagi his position was hopelessly breached. The three men leaped out of a window and started to swim across the Shenandoah.

This was the moment for which hundreds of less courageous men had been waiting. They had taken up their posts on both banks of the river, waiting patiently while braver men went in like ferrets to flush the raiders into the open. The instant Kagi and the two colored men jumped into the stream the enemy opened fire. Lead slugs fell about them like icy rain at sea. They headed for a flat rock that stuck up out of the Shenandoah like a farmer's stone boat. Kagi reached out a hand to help himself onto the rock but was riddled with bullets before he clawed his way two feet out of the water. Without a sign of a struggle, the insurgent's body slipped off the shoulder of the stone, and he died, floating face down in the stream.

Leary tried to reach another haven of safety. He headed for a small dam that extended part way into the river to divert water into the sluiceway leading to the mill-wheel. It was upstream from the rock perhaps fifty feet. It was too far. Rifle slugs struck him as he swam, and he floated, mortally wounded, down upon an outcropping of smaller rocks. The man in whose veins flowed blood inherited from an

Irishman, a Negro, and a Croatan Indian had lost his gambit in behalf of the downtrodden.

Only Copeland was left. There seemed no bullet with his name on it that afternoon. They fell all about him but he was untouched. When he saw the far bank of the Shenandoah swarming with armed men, he turned back and climbed upon the rock where Kagi had died. The shooting slackened, and James H. Holt, a resident of the town swam out to capture the surviving member of the rifle works garrison.

He didn't keep his rifle dry, however, and this saved Copeland's life. At least it saved it for the hangman, a few brief weeks later. Holt clubbed his gun when it wouldn't fire and made as if to beat Copeland to his knees but Copeland, realizing he was a lone gladiator in the middle of a great arena with every spectator armed, surrendered.

Other men rushed out like well-trained retrievers, and brought Copeland in to shore.

Men cried "Lynch him! Lynch him!" and others started off in search of a rope. A few even started to tie their handkerchiefs together, so breathless were they for their own type of justice to be administered.

But these men had not considered Dr. Starry in their hasty reckoning. The physician was a stalwart upholder of the law. He had no use for the raiders, that was sure. From the instant he heard the first shot the night before he had done everything he could to strike them down. He was a veritable one-man company of militia. But he was neither craven, nor unjust, nor easy to stampede.

And his noble horse, which had galloped far and hard that day, had one last, proud duty to perform.

The physician spurred the steed between the shivering, drenched Copeland and the threatening mob. The horse stood steady as a granite statue. Dr. Starry warned against taking the law into their own hands and staved off action long enough for a policeman to arrive. The officer took Copeland off to a hiding place and the mob thinned out and drifted away.

A few kinder-hearted men made their way out to where Leary lay in midstream and brought the gravely wounded man ashore. There he lay on the bank, unattended. But at least no one mistreated him until he died, alone, in the dark of the night.

By now the ridges behind the town were casting long shadows down upon the Armory, the enginehouse, and the covered bridges.

Women busied themselves tearing linens and bed-clothing into strips for bandages. There were more than a dozen men whose wounds needed tending. George Richardson, the conductor injured in the Martinsburg company's assault on the enginehouse, died of his injuries at 4:30 p.m. In the Wager Hotel mercifully kind women bound the great wounds that threatened Aaron Stevens' life.

Outside, the rifles still spat and bullets still knocked chips of stone and mortar from the walls of the insurgents' bastion. Yet not one of the prisoners had been injured.

Albert Hazlett and Osborn Anderson, hidden in the Arsenal, were still undiscovered. They were the only two men inside the trap who were not in the enginehouse. Biding their time, they were waiting for nightfall.

Into town walked several reporters from Baltimore who had ridden the mail train to Sandy Hook and made the balance of the trip on foot. An occasional bullet singing through the twilight shadows persuaded them that they should avoid the stronghold where the abolitionists held out. Instead they visited the room where Stevens lay. The bedchamber was still crowded with many armed men, who seemed to have nothing better to do than to watch the prisoner, a veritable Samson of a man, groaning and twisting in agony.

Stevens told the reporters that the sole purpose of the raid was to free slaves—that John Brown and his men had no other ambition. He revealed to the newspapermen that the entire "army of the Lord" consisted of only twenty-two men —seventeen white men and five Negroes.

A little later they made their way to the spot on the bank

of the Shenandoah where Lewis Leary lay, bleeding his life away. He too told the same story of Brown's aims and the actual size of the puny force with which John Brown had seized the town.

There came now one of those peculiar lulls that so often mark the greatest events in history, battles, disasters, or storms.

Dr. Starry went home, content to take up pipe and don slippers, after his hectic day.

Colonel Gibson, highest ranking militia officer at the Ferry, went into the Wager Hotel's dining room and put away a stout supper.

The reporters went off to write and telegraph their stories back to Baltimore and Washington.

Housewives who had cowered with their children behind barred doors, or down in their cellars along with their canned vegetables, fruit, and jams, prepared their evening meals, many of them wondering where their husbands were, and praying that they were safe.

A pot-valiant soldier staggered out of the Galt House and made his uneven way across the open area to where the body of Dangerfield Newby still lay. The militiaman saw shapes moving about in the twilight and started to flee back toward the swinging doors of the saloon. Then the truth penetrated his sozzled brain and he went back. The mysterious shapes were hogs, rooting around the dead mulatto's body.

Tipsy as he was, the soldier's sense of right and wrong was shaken by the sight and he heaved a stone at the grunting animals.

Feeling better for his deed, the soldier lurched off to the saloon. No sooner had he passed inside than the hogs returned. On and off through the evening passers-by, keeping out of range of the rifles in the enginehouse, heard the dirty animals as they finally went to sleep for the night beside Newby's corpse.

Before the light became too weak there was one last flurry of excitement. The soldiers who had taken up sentry

posts in a rough circle around the raider's fortress heard a shot from far off and heard the bullet as it zipped along the cobblestones near their feet. They looked to see where it had come from and saw a flash on the heights across the Potomac. The second slug sang past them and went "plop" against the trunk of a tree.

Without waiting for orders the militia fired at the clump of trees from which the bullet had come. They peppered the hillside until no answering shots disturbed the peaceful patrolling of the sentries. None of the soldiers felt an urge to cross the bridge to seek out the mysterious rifleman. It was fast growing dark and everyone felt safer in town.

The rifleman was John E. Cook.

Early in the forenoon, with Charles Plummer Tidd and a few Negro supporters who had decided to go along with Brown's men, Cook had driven Colonel Washington's wagon across the bridge and out to the schoolhouse. Before the men in the little rear-guard could do much about sending supplies into the Ferry it became obvious that it was too late. Owen Brown, Coppoc, Merriam, Tidd, and the Negroes went off to the farmhouse, unsure of what they should do. Cook, because of his residence at the Ferry, knew the surroundings well. He went down to the bank of the Potomac, ostensibly to see what he could do to help his brothers-in-arms. With him he took one of the slaves from the Washington or Allstadt plantations.

Their first stop was at the home of George Hardy, one of the lock-tenders on the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. As Cook had held a similar job for several months, he was well known. Hardy had been one of the many prisoners in the watch-house and had not yet reached home, but Mrs. Hardy was there, and had as a guest Mrs. Elizabeth Read.

The three talked for a time. All the while they could hear the occasional crack of rifle or carbine. Mrs. Read told Cook that she had walked the mile in to the end of the covered bridge and had learned that the survivors of Brown's little

army were all corralled in the enginehouse. Many of the men, she reported, had been killed or wounded.

Cook said he was going to see what he could do to aid his leader and Mrs. Hardy asked him to intervene in order to release the lock-tender if he were not yet free. Mrs. Read, on the other hand, having no husband in danger, pleaded with Cook to stay away from town, saying he would be shot if he went there.

Brown's lieutenant bade the women goodbye, whistled to the slave who had remained in the bushes, and started off down the road toward town. On the way he met two small boys whom he recognized. They told him that the militia from Charlestown, Martinsburg, Hagerstown, and Shepherdstown had bottled Brown's party up so completely that they had no hope of escaping.

Either the boys had misunderstood orders they had heard in town, or they thought they'd have a little fun at Cook's expense, so they told him soldiers had been instructed to look for him, and were even now not far behind them.

The slave became hysterical at this news. Figuring he would be useless in such a blue funk, Cook sent the man off to report on conditions to Tidd at the schoolhouse. Then he went on down the river road until he was almost opposite the covered bridge. There he left the highway and climbed up the face of the bluff, from where he could look right down into the center of the little village. He saw soldiers on sentry-go, noted other armed men on the streets around the enginehouse, and could tell from the way the militia behaved that Brown and his retainers were holding out in that building.

For a long period Cook pondered what his next move should be. He was amazed at the number of armed men who had arrived in town since he drove so nonchalantly away from the Ferry that morning.

As he cudgelled his brain for a wise course of action, he saw a number of militiamen on High Street firing down from their eminence in the direction of the enginehouse. This

enraged Cook. He climbed into a tree, took careful aim, and fired at the soldiers. He pulled the trigger several times before he saw that the enemy was returning his fire.

One of the soldiers' bullets cut through a branch to which Cook was holding, slicing it off as neatly as a pruning shears. Cook lost his grip and went tumbling to the ground fifteen feet below. He was cut and bruised but not hurt.

When none of the armed men came after him, the raider descended the mountain. It was just starting to get dark when he stopped at the home of another lock-tender, William McGreg. The canal employee told Cook how several of his companions had been shot trying to swim the river and urged him to get out of town. McGreg was motivated by the desire to have Cook leave before anyone saw him and jumped to a conclusion that McGreg also was one of Brown's men. He had no humanitarian hope that Cook would get away safely.

Cook was getting hungry. He hadn't eaten any more than his companions on the other side of the Potomac. So he risked one more stop, this time at the home of an Irish acquaintance at the foot of the road up Maryland Heights. They gave him coffee and a snack and a report that was completely unfounded, but which went far toward making up Cook's mind for him. They said John Brown had been shot in midafternoon and had died of his wound.

Disheartened, Captain Cook climbed up to the schoolhouse, seeking his remaining companions. He found the building shuttered and dark. Thinking Owen Brown and the others might be inside, he cocked his rifle and kicked the door open. The supplies piled in the schoolroom looked a little like shawled figures and he almost pulled the trigger. Instead, remembering that a bullet fired into the ammunition might cause havoc, Cook lighted a match and saw that the room was empty of men.

He closed the door, went into the pine woods nearby and whistled a signal, thinking the other men might have sought safety in the forest when they heard him coming up the road from the river. There was no answer.

Dejected, cold and without much hope, Cook strode off through the darkness, following the Boonsborough road toward the Kennedy farmhouse.

Twilight faded into darkness. John Brown, too, had little reason to feel chipper.

Colonel Gibson, the commanding officer of the Jefferson Guards, whose swift reaction to the alarm spread by Dr. Starry and whose excellent strategy had cut off Brown's escape early in the day, was no longer in general charge at the Ferry. On instructions from Governor Wise, Colonel Robert W. Baylor had superseded Gibson soon after the arrival of new reinforcements. These latter included the Hamtramck Guards and the Shepherdstown Troop. The Shepherdstown Troop, a cavalry unit, had arrived by train and, since it was dismounted, was deployed as infantry.

Next, up from Frederick, Maryland, came three companies of infantry under Colonel Shriver. The latter officer, jealous of his rank and prestige, didn't put his men directly under Colonel Baylor's command, but said they would be "available" to aid the citizens of Harper's Ferry.

With all these soldiers in town Baylor decided it was time for another effort to end the insurrection by peaceful means. He sent a demand for surrender to Brown, using an aged citizen, Samuel Strider, as his emissary. Strider tied a white kerchief to an umbrella and walked boldly up to the door of the enginehouse. He handed the bearded chief the written demand and waited for the reply, apparently not in the least afraid of being injured or captured. He had a higher regard for the raiders' sense of honor than Brown and his men had for the townsmen's, and with every justification.

After a short delay Brown handed Strider a reply to the surrender demand. This is what the old gentleman carried back to the Colonel:

Capt. John Brown answers

In consideration of all my men, whether living or dead, or wounded, being soon safely in and delivered up to me at

this point with all their arms and ammunition, we will then take our prisoners and cross the Potomac Bridge, a little beyond which we will set them at liberty; after which we can negotiate about Government property as may be best. Also we require the delivery of our horse and harness at the hotel.

John Brown.

Obviously the bearded insurgent felt that he should be given a chance to get away in return for not harming a single one of the hostages. The desultory firing, the weakness of his own position, the approaching death of his two sons, and the apparent realization that Kagi and his men had been defeated —all these depressed the old man.

Colonel Baylor's reply didn't help any.

Sir: The terms you proposed I cannot accept. Under no consideration will I consent to a removal of our citizens across the river. The only negotiations upon which I will consent to treat are those which have been previously proposed to you.

Robert W. Baylor, Col. Commandant,
3rd Regiment Cavalry.

In the homes of Harper's Ferry men, women and children went about their ordinary chores even though their nerves were frayed and some had suffered loss of loved ones or knew neighbors who had.

Housewives scoured the kitchen tables with fine sand and soapsuds. In some homes the children drew tallow candles from the molds into which their mothers had hung the wicks and poured melted fat, and shaved them smooth. Girls buffed their French calf dress boots with liquid polish. Youngsters who were unable to sleep after the day's noise and excitement were given Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup for Children, a concoction guaranteed to "allay all pain," which cost but twenty-five cents for a full-sized family bottle.

In the dining rooms of the Wager Hotel and the Galt House, men wolfed down green turtle soup, steaks as big as their two hands, apple pie, and coffee, for which they paid fifty cents. No one left a tip.

As the men in the enginehouse waited uneasily for what the night might bring, and as the soldiers took turns eating so the investment of the little citadel could be maintained, two men seized the opportunity to escape. They were Albert Hazlett and Osborn P. Anderson.

Their survival is one of the mysteries still unsolved, after nearly a century. Assigned to garrison duty in the Arsenal, across the street from the Armory, and outside of the fenced enclosure in which the latter was situated, they escaped detection all through the daylight hours. With soldiers taking positions in many buildings in order to pour their fire down upon the enginehouse, it is more than strange that none climbed the stairs to the second floor of the Arsenal. Perhaps it was a little too close to the stronghold of the insurgents, and the citizen-soldiers didn't like the idea of drawing fire upon themselves from such close quarters.

Hazlett and Anderson were no brighter than any of the others. Perhaps they were just more lucky.

The white man was a native of Pennsylvania who had gone to Kansas as soon as he was old enough. He fought for the free-staters and was in the company led by Captain James Montgomery, one of the most famous of the anti-slavery leaders in the territory.

Anderson was also a native of Pennsylvania. He had emigrated to Canada and there learned to be a printer. It was when Brown and his men crossed into Ontario from Detroit and held their convention at Chatham that the Negro and the insurgent leader met. He had known Brown only a year before the raid but had followed him gladly from Ontario to Ohio to Maryland and so to the Ferry.

The two isolated men must have figured that the best time to try escape would be as soon as darkness came. In the daylight hours before that it would have been suicide for them

to emerge in the midst of all the militia and townsfolk. If they waited much after early evening there would be not only the danger of detection by a search party, but the greater one that the surrender of their comrades might lead to the disclosure of their hideout.

All in all, it seemed a propitious time for them to sneak out of their refuge and try to escape. New men were joining the forces encircling the Armory and two new faces would not necessarily be noticed. There was a noticeable psychological letdown, now that the only known survivors were cooped up in one building. And there was still one more, even more cogent, reason why this was a good moment for the attempt. The town was getting noisy and unruly. There may have been a short supply of good firearms. Colonel Baylor later said that one of his officers told him that out of one hundred and thirty-five men on duty from his company not more than thirty had pieces that would fire with any effect. There may have been a short supply of ammunition, but there was plenty of bonded Bourbon whisky, barrels of corn liquor, and barrels of cheap red-eye.

Boozy men were everywhere, shouting, singing ribald songs, staggering about, and shooting their pistols into the rainy night air. In their befuddlement they got in the way of the sober soldiers, made a tight patrol all but impossible, and drove the decent citizens inside their homes behind locked doors. To some of the Harper's Ferry residents the raddled volunteers were a worse menace than the earnest, God-fearing men who had come into town to strike a blow against the institution of human slavery.

Out into the miserably wet night crept Hazlett and Anderson. They found no one close to the Arsenal, obviously, and walked swiftly away from the little building that was the magnet for all eyes—the enginehouse. After a few minutes they found themselves on Shenandoah Street. They walked south, toward Bolivar Heights. Just about the time that they went past Hall's rifle works, trying to be inconspicuous in the darkness that was broken only by an occasional light from a

doorway, their fellow raider Lewis Sheridan Leary breathed his last on the bank of the river. He had been left there, untended and forgotten, when the men who had overcome Kagi's squad went back to the center of town.

With the night so dark, Hazlett and Anderson could not have seen the wretched Leary. They had no way of knowing that he was there, only a few feet away from them, as they hurried by, seeking safety from the very men who had struck the Negro down.

Halfway up the slope of Bolivar Heights, not far from the craggy outcropping known as Jefferson's Rock, from which the famous Virginian had viewed the wedding of the two rivers so long before, Hazlett and Anderson crawled under some bushes. They waited there for three hours. No one came near them. They felt reasonably safe, but they were on the wrong side of town, and on the wrong side of the Potomac and of the Mason-Dixon Line. Their only hope of ultimate safety lay in flight into Pennsylvania.

Their eyes accustomed to the night, and their fears driving them on, the two fugitives made their way back into town. They worked along the river bank until they stumbled upon a flat-bottomed john-boat in which, fortunately, the owner had left his oars. Hazlett and Anderson cast off, rowing carefully to avoid catching crabs and making a noise, and in a few minutes they reached the far side, between the covered bridge and Sandy Hook. Then they walked along the Boonsborough Road, past the Kennedy farmhouse, and bedded down for the day in the woods behind the familiar hideout. The next night, refreshed and bolder, they trudged on northwards. Just before the second dawn they crossed the line into Pennsylvania.

No one in Harper's Ferry missed them; no one dreamed that two raiders could escape in a community bulging at the seams with armed men. They got away, one for good and the other for a few days only.

There was still one more of the men who walked out of the farmhouse on the Sabbath evening, convinced that only by

battle could slavery be ended, who had to die before this sad, unfortunate day slipped into history.

He was Stewart Taylor.

Taylor was a quiet, unassuming, but extremely devoted member of John Brown's little company. He wasn't an American, having been born and lived most of his life in Canada. But he hated slavery with a corrosive bitterness. He gave up his trade as a wagonmaker in Uxbridge to go to Kansas and battle the Border Ruffians who were trying to "shoot" Kansas into the column of slave states. He was a spiritualist, believing in signs and portents.

Before Anne Brown left the farmhouse to return to North Elba, Taylor had told her he did not expect to come out of the raid alive. He spoke of his expected death as casually as most men discuss the weather.

When the raiders took over the Potomac bridge from Williams and Higgins, the watchmen, Taylor was assigned to guard duty there with Watson Brown. They were the first of the insurgents to be driven in from the periphery of the battleground, having to retreat before the Jefferson Guards.

From then on, all through the afternoon and early evening, Taylor manned a porthole or guarded the partly open door of the enginehouse. Colonel Washington and Mr. Allstadt found him a pleasant, but quiet, member of the little band. He left the debating of the slavery issue up to his leader. He was happy enough just to be one of the band. He had lost touch with Old Brown after the Chatham Convention and for several weeks was sick at heart, fearing he had missed the opportunity to take part in the descent upon Harper's Ferry. He didn't want to be left out.

He wasn't.

Not long after old Samuel Strider had ambled off to the hotel with John Brown's refusal to surrender to Colonel Baylor, the bearded leader assigned the Canadian wagonmaker to guard the main door. He squatted down cross-legged just inside, and peered out into the velvet blackness through a

crack made by holding the door about four inches from the jamb.

Some of the soldiers who had been swilling red-eye at the Galt House lurched out into the street to get a little fresh air. More in jest than anything else they fired their rifles in the direction of the enginehouse. But these were men who tracked down deer in the laurel glens of Virginia or shot mallards out of the sky along the open reaches of the Potomac. They had the old frontiersman's love of a rifle, and most of them were good shots. Even drunk, they could shoot with surprising accuracy.

One of them looked along the barrel of his rifle, caught the far sight over the notch of the near one, lined them up on the darker shadow where the door was open, and pulled the trigger. The slug went true, striking Taylor in the heart. He fell back, killed instantly, but it was a long time before the others noticed that the normally silent, taciturn raider would never speak again.

CHAPTER 10

Across the way, in the lobby and bar of the Wager Hotel, men behaved as though on a holiday.

The public rooms of the inn were bright with sputtering candles. Reflecting the light from the tapers were white linen tablecloths and the burnished, highly glossed walnut of the long bar. Huge French plate-glass mirrors behind the bar served to double the candlepower and make the room gayer.

John Fouke set a good table at the Wager Hotel. No one ever left his dining room hungry unless he was a sick man to begin with. One might choose from Lynnhaven oysters, mountain mutton, saddle or chops, summer duck with olives, country ham, pork, roast beef, steak, or venison, and often

rarer treats such as buffalo tongue, bear steaks, and wild turkey.

Cavalrymen in boots and spurs, artillerymen, infantrymen, and local men in flowered vests, cutaway coats, and beaver hats took the napkins out of their collars, wiped their beards after eating and repaired to the bar for something to top off the meal. There were a few fancy bottles on the back bar but they went untouched. In western Virginia in 1859 men wanted whisky—rich, red, and raw.

Slaves lugged huge logs into the public rooms for the fireplaces. To the men, many of whom had been on the picket line in the rain and whose uniforms were wet, the blaze was mighty pleasant. As they downed their whisky the heat from within and without combined to give them a real glow.

Many expressed their contentment in song.

A dragoon from Shepherdstown sang a popular tune of the era which ended with a catchy two-line chorus:

I danced all night wid a gal wid a hole in her stockin'
An' her heel kep' a-rockin', an' her heel kep' a-rockin'

Each time he came to the refrain the others joined in, singing loudly if not harmoniously.

Another song they united on might better have been sung by the raiders. At least Brown's men, for the most part, had been in Missouri. The words went like this:

My name is Joe Bowers, I've got a brother Ike;
I came from old Missouri, all the way from Pike;
I'll tell you why I left thar, and why I came to roam,
And leave my poor old mammy so far away from home.

With each passing minute the whooping and hollering grew noisier and the crowd more unruly. Many of the men stormed out into the rain, firing into the air, and dropped in at the Galt House saloon to see other friends and change their brand of red-eye.

The three Colonels—Baylor, Gibson, and Shriver—ordered the Captains in command of the various militia companies to get their men under control. But this was a rough corner of the state and the men were all strong-willed individualists. They'd sing if they wanted to, fight if they wanted to. As long as the Bourbon and red-eye held out they'd be the rootin-tootin-est bully boys west of Baltimore.

The shooting and the shouting from the street did nothing to lower the fever of the wounded men lying in the homes of the women who had taken them in and nursed their injuries. To the gravely wounded Aaron Stevens, still a prisoner on the floor above the bar room, the noise was a torture.

In the enginehouse night brought no surcease. The chamber was in absolute darkness. Brown ordered the big doors shut fast and dropped two-by-fours into place behind them. Then he and his men rigged ropes, normally used to haul the hose cart, in such a way that if the doors were hit they would spring back resiliently, as if held in place by giant rubber bands.

Hostages and Negro slaves alike lay on the floor or sat hunched in the corners, trying to keep out of the way of bullets that penetrated the shuttered windows. It was damp and it was cold. No one complained, knowing how futile such complaint would be.

Young Oliver Brown, the handsome, debonair son of the leader, suffered horribly from his wound. Again and again in his agony he begged his father to shoot him. John Brown refused.

"You will get over it," said the bearded chieftain.

Although it was too dark for anyone to aim, the firing kept up all through the first half of the night. Drunken soldiers kept up a spasmodic tattoo against the walls of the enginehouse and once in a great while one of the insurrectionists fired back at the flashes. For the most part, however, Brown and his men saved their dwindling supply of powder and balls.

During the early hours of the night there was a strange in-

terlude which changed nothing, yet showed that there were still men with fine, decent natures, even in the midst of the rowdies and drunks.

One of these men was Captain Sinn, whose euphonious name fitted him not at all. He had come up from Frederick with one of the three companies under Colonel Shriver. After he had been in the village a few hours he learned enough about the behavior of the raiders to lead him to believe he could serve as an emissary of peace.

While some of his companions were enjoying themselves in the hotels and bars, he went over to the Armory and approached the enginehouse, announcing himself and assuring the men inside that it was no ruse. Old Brown unshuttered the door and invited the man from Frederick inside. It took a stout brand of courage on the part of both men. The insurgent couldn't be positive it wasn't a trick, and Captain Sinn didn't know whether he'd be shot before he could prove his good intentions.

For the better part of an hour Sinn and Brown talked of slavery, of the right and wrong of taking up arms against the government, and of other matters growing out of the raid.

John Brown was angriest of all at the citizens who ignored the flags of truce. He pointed out to the officer that his own men had a score of opportunities to shoot down defenseless men and women in the forenoon and early afternoon.

"Not one unarmed man has been shot by my men," said Brown.

"That isn't quite correct," replied Captain Sinn. "Mayor Beckham had no arms on when he was shot."

"Then I can only say I am most saddened to hear it," said the insurgent leader.

With the sword of Frederick the Great hanging from his belt, the abolitionist, who believed that the time had come to take up that symbolic weapon in behalf of the slaves, said that the citizenry had been most unethical in its behavior toward the prisoners.

"Men who take up arms against the government," coun-

tered the soldier from Frederick, "have to expect to be shot down like dogs."

"For many hours," said the white-haired raider, "I held this community in the palm of my hand. I could have massacred the inhabitants. I could have put the whole town to the torch. That I did not is ample justification for me to think that I deserve the cease-fire terms I have offered."

Naturally there could be no real agreement or meeting of the minds between the gentlemanly, educated citizen-soldier from Frederick and the almost fanatical, smite-them-hip-and-thigh abolitionist. Yet they conducted themselves correctly and Captain Sinn left with a vastly clearer, and probably much deeper, understanding of and regard for the old fighter.

The militiaman had not been gone more than a half hour when he returned with Dr. Taylor, the surgeon attached to the Frederick volunteers. Dr. Taylor dressed Watson Brown's wounds. He looked at Oliver Brown and made him easier on his rough bed of folded blankets. But there was nothing he could do for the younger son.

After the officer and the surgeon left, Oliver again asked his father to put him out of his agony with a pistol bullet. But the old man refused again.

"If you must die," he said, "die like a man."

The last hours were ghastly ones for the twenty-year-old boy.

Each minute the room seemed to get colder. There was no light for fear of drawing a bullet. Outside there was the sound of drunken revelry, the occasional spang of bullets against the stone walls and the sound of marching feet as the sentries kept up a shambling, unmilitary sort of patrol around the little citadel.

Even the woolen blankets could not keep out the chill that came up from the dank, cold bricks with which the floor was paved.

The hostages and the slaves didn't feel any warmer, but they bore no fatal wounds. They huddled together for warmth, watching Brown and the other raiders as they peered

through the openings to prevent surprise. Colonel Washington, a game, courageous man himself, marvelled at Old Brown's staying powers. The leader had not closed his eyes since early Sunday morning and he had eaten nothing since the Sabbath evening, yet he moved about the interior of the little fortress, urging his men to stay alert, asking if they saw any ominous movements outside.

They didn't see the most ominous of all, for it was an action that took place out of sight. It was the arrival of the United States Marines—the men who would be too strong to defeat on the morrow.

After waiting through the late afternoon in the station at the Relay, Colonel Lee saw a locomotive coming from the direction of Baltimore. He and Lieutenant Stuart climbed aboard, standing in the cab between the engineer and the fireman. Every now and then they had to move to allow the fireman to throw coal in the firebox. Still smarting under the last-minute instructions of president Garrett, the engineer drove the roaring locomotive at full speed. It bucked and rocked and staggered as only an engine without cars behind it can. It pounded through the Maryland countryside, belching sparks and a great feathery plume of steam, the whistle moaning at crossroads and villages.

About ten p.m. the future Commander of the Confederate Armies, his civilian clothes dusty with soot, and his eyes smarting from cinders, stepped down from the hissing locomotive at Sandy Hook. Behind him came the dashing young cavalryman. They were met by Lieutenant Green and Major Russell, from whom they learned the true picture of conditions in Harper's Ferry. Green told Lee that the militia had mastered the situation, although at considerable cost to themselves, and now had the survivors of Brown's party surrounded in the enginehouse. Even from across the Potomac Colonel Lee could hear the sound of sporadic, half-hearted firing.

Sure that the Marines were strong enough to storm the stronghold, and that the many companies of militia now on

the scene could give him ample reinforcement, Colonel Lee telegraphed back to Baltimore and instructed the commanding officer of the troops from Fort Monroe that they were not needed. The man who thus played no role in the capture of Brown was Captain E. O. Cord, who rose to rank of General in the Union Army and gave Lee many a headache in the last months of the Civil War.

An hour later Colonel Lee took the Marines across the covered bridge into town and sent them into the Armory enclosure to stand guard with the militia. He would have liked to attack at once, but although he was to become known as the most masterful gambler of the Civil War, he refused to expose the hostages to the danger of a battle fought in the dark.

Instead he made a careful survey of the area to familiarize himself with what might be a small but bloody battlefield, and then went off to pen a demand for surrender.

As his new commander made his plans, Captain Sinn stopped in at the Wager Hotel to confer with his company officers. A noise attracted his attention to the floor above the public rooms, reminding him that Aaron Stevens still lay there, under guard. The Maryland officer climbed the stairs and elbowed his way through a small crowd at the door of Stevens' room.

He saw several half-tipsy rowdies who had been spending too much time at the bar, taunting Stevens and threatening him with drawn pistols. Stevens, barely able to stand the agony of his wounds, was not intimidated. He gazed at his tormentors without batting an eye.

Captain Sinn was furious.

"If this man could stand on his feet with a pistol in his hand," he said scornfully, "you would all jump out of the window. Now get out of here."

He drove the cowards from the second floor and went back downstairs. Captain Sinn, like Joseph Brewer, demonstrated that chivalry was not dead in the Blue Ridge, but the lesson

was lost on most of the riff-raff drawn to town by John Brown's invasion.

Captain Sinn's action proved that Colonel Lee was a good judge of conditions in the town. The man in command of the Federal troops, and the militia as well, saw no reason to issue the proclamation drawn up by President Buchanan that morning. If a single officer like Captain Sinn put a whole roomful of rowdies to flight, there was little need to declare martial law.

Midnight came, unnoticed by raider and soldier alike. Colonel Lee and Lieutenant Stuart made plans for an attack on the enginehouse the next morning. In house after house the lights went out. Drunken soldiers fell asleep in the corners of the saloons or in the halls of the hotels, not even bothering to take off their boots. The rain slackened, and in its place came a river fog that dropped over the town like a badly worn blanket. In some streets the mist was thick but in others there were only frayed wisps of haze.

The town had quieted down, although now and again a rifle would bark, or a soldier who hated the thought of sleep would stagger through the downtown section, yahooing and baying like a hound treeing a 'coon.

These noises filtered faintly into the enginehouse.

Unable to sleep because of the chill permeating the small room, Captain Daingerfield and Colonel Washington entered into a fitful debate over slavery with John Brown. The Allstadt boy, cold to his marrow, sat in a corner listening to the men talking.

He heard Oliver Brown groan but no one moved, as if all knew that nothing man could do would help the wounded raider.

After a while the talk languished and Old Brown called out to his son. There was no answer.

"I guess he is dead," said the father.

He went over, felt the boy's pulse and then took off his cartridge belt and straightened out his limbs.

"This is the third son I have lost in this cause," he said, turning to Captain Daingerfield.

It was as if he knew that Watson also had but a few hours left to live.

"You are as brave a man as I know, and as sensible on all other subjects as any," said Captain Daingerfield to the leader, "but I cannot go along with your feeling on the blacks."

Brown told the hostages who were awake that he had been determined to strike a blow against the institution of slavery for more than a decade. He told them how, when he lived in Springfield, Ohio, he had not furnished his parlor, leaving it totally bare, so that he could use that money to aid slaves making their way to Canada on the Underground Railroad.

The bearded abolitionist also reminisced about his life in North Elba and said that he was farming there when the Fugitive Slave Law was passed. He told the Virginians he had urged runaway Negroes to resist all attempts to send them back to their chains in the South.

Brown spoke without bitterness or venom. The hostages noted that often during the night their captor shivered a little as from the cold. It was an ague or malarial fever that hung on from his days in the field in Kansas. Yet he did not allude to it, nor complain at any time of his own discomfort.

After a while there was only stillness.

The old man, red-eyed from lack of sleep, grimy with powder stains, but mentally alert, stood against one of the fire engines, his Beecher's Bible in his hand and the beautifully engraved sword of Frederick the Great hanging incongruously at his side.

It was an hour for dreams, an hour for memories.

Foremost in the old campaigner's mind was the recollection of the death of his first son lost to the cause of freedom. He could remember, as if it were only the week before, how members of his band had come to him in the sod and aspen cabin by the creek called Osawatomie and informed him of Frederick Brown's murder.

It had been one of those sultry, suffocating weeks in August

when the sun's noonday incandescence set the prairies to shimmering and quivering. On this evil day pro-slavery troops, seeking to avenge victories won by Brown and Captain Montgomery, rode north from their stronghold and reached the little settlement by the Osawatomie before the sun came up out of the mists of the east.

Riding "point" for the irregulars was a malignant, un-Christian, cowardly preacher, the Reverend Martin White. His burning hatred for the free-soil men led him to offer to serve as guide and scout, since he knew that section of Kansas very well. Followed by two other outriders, the parson jogged down the dusty road toward a farm where Frederick had been stabling his horses. As they crested a small rise they came full upon John Brown's son, trudging along the highway.

"Halt!" cried the pickets.

The young settler kept on walking.

"Why, I know you," he said, and stepped closer to the horsemen.

The clergyman shifted his pistol, steadied his horse for better aim, and pulled the trigger. Frederick fell, shot through the heart.

To John Brown this was a memory that gnawed at the raw ends of his nerves and the old man hated it. Now another son was dead, and still a third would be gone within a few hours. Yet his losses did not alter in any perceptible manner the deep devotion he felt to the cause of freedom for the black man. If he sensed that this final adventure was a morose failure—a tragedy that had to be played out although everyone knew the lines and the outcome, he gave no sign in the little stone and mortar enginehouse within the Armory yard.

"Men," he called, "are you awake?"

He passed from one post to another, peering out into the night, his grey-blue eyes, under the bushy eyebrows, half closed by squinting.

He knew the Marines had come. Captain Sinn had told him of their arrival when the surgeon came to treat Watson's wounds. He must have guessed that the regulars would be-

have differently from the militiamen, yet if he quailed at the thought of the morrow, no one in the fort saw any evidence of it.

He was quiet but he was alert. He was broken-hearted at his personal losses, but he was monolithic in his determination. He was, in short, John Brown, avenging angel of the Lord.

Robert E. Lee and J. E. B. Stuart were just as wide awake.

The officer selected by President Buchanan and Secretary Floyd to handle the outbreak in Harper's Ferry had but one worry. He knew, with the veteran campaigner's astuteness, that he could crush Brown like a bantam's egg. But he also knew that in any assault the safety, the very life of the prisoners was the crux of the problem.

Because of this he determined to make a demand for surrender. If the insurgents' leader turned it down, he would send the Marines in with the bayonet, to avoid any chance of stray bullets killing the hostages. Colonel Lee told the young cavalryman that he was the one who would deliver the surrender demand and they discussed the best time to open the negotiations. It was decided to wait only until there was enough light for the soldiers to distinguish between the armed abolitionists and the unarmed prisoners.

That done, there was little for the officers to do but wait for the dawn.

As Lee and Stuart conferred, the newspaper presses in the big eastern cities were turning out editions giving the first news of the insurrection at Harper's Ferry.

For those times, the headlines were big and flaming.

New Yorkers who were up late, or very early, bought the first copies of the *Herald.* In horror they read these black, ugly words:

FEARFUL AND EXCITING INTELLIGENCE
NEGRO INSURRECTION AT HARPER'S FERRY
EXTENSIVE NEGRO CONSPIRACY IN

VIRGINIA AND MARYLAND SEIZURE OF THE UNITED STATES ARSENAL BY THE INSURRECTIONISTS

The story that followed was blood-chilling in its import. Hundreds of men were under arms, it said; Negroes were accosting and arresting innocent persons on every street in town, lights were out, fires were burning and terror stalked the town unhindered.

It described the stopping of the train, and almost every other word was "shoot," "murder," "arson," or "rebellion."

The National Intelligencer in Washington got off to a slightly slower start, but built up to a fevered style as the reports came in from the mountains. It's first story looked like this:

REPORTED INSURRECTION AND CAPTURE OF THE ARSENAL AT HARPER'S FERRY

BALTIMORE, OCT. 17—The following despatch has just been received from Frederick, but, as it seems very improbable, it should be received with great caution until confirmed:

FREDERICK, OCT. 17, A.M.—There is an insurrection at Harper's Ferry. A band of armed Abolitionists have full possession of the United States Arsenal. The express train was fired into twice, and one of the railroad hands—a Negro—killed while trying to get the train through the town. The insurgents arrested two men who came into town with a load of wheat, took the wagon, loaded it with rifles, and sent them into Maryland. The band is composed of a gang of about two hundred and fifty whites, followed by a band of Negroes, who are now fighting.

Second Despatch

BALTIMORE, OCT. 17, 10 A.M.—A despatch received at

the railroad office says the affair is greatly exaggerated, and has its foundation in a difficulty at the armory; also, that the Negroes have nothing to do with it.

Third Despatch

BALTIMORE, 12:30—It is apprehended that the affair at Harper's Ferry is more serious than people here are willing to believe. The telegraph wires are cut from Harper's Ferry; consequently we have no communication beyond Monocacy. The reported stampede of Negroes is from Maryland. The train due here early this morning has not arrived. There are many wild rumors here, but nothing authentic yet.

Fourth Despatch

BALTIMORE, 2 P.M.—The mail agent on the westward-bound train has returned to Monocacy and reports that the train was unable to get through. He states that the town of Harper's Ferry is in possession of the Negroes, who arrest everyone they can catch and imprison them. The train due here at three this afternoon could not get through the town, and the agent came down on an empty engine.

Another account by train says that the bridge across the Potomac was filled with insurgents, all armed, and that every light in the town last night was extinguished. The hotels were all closed, and all the streets were in possession of the mob, and every road and lane leading into the town were barricaded and guarded. Men were seen in every quarter with muskets and bayonets, who arrested every citizen and pressed them into their service, including many Negroes. This being done, the United States Arsenal and Government Pay Office, in which was said to be a large amount of money, together with all the public works, were seized by the mob. Some persons were of the opinion that the object of the insurgents is to plunder and rob the Gov-

ernment of the funds deposited there on Saturday. During the night a demand was made on the Wager Hotel for provisions, and the demand enforced by a body of armed men. The citizens are in a terrible state of alarm, the insurgents having threatened to burn the town.

The facts were hardly accurate and the grammar was atrocious at times, but the account frightened the people of Washington out of their wits. Hysteria spread like a contagious disease in homes and in the corridors of the Capitol, and from Washington to other cities across the land.

The account in the New York *Herald* was more accurate in many ways. The greatest fault was the incredible exaggeration of the size of the insurgent group. This was understandable. The first news emanated from those on the Baltimore & Ohio night express. Terrified passengers were poor reporters. Simpson, the baggageman, who had been held by Brown for an hour, and should have known better, swore he had seen hundreds of Negroes under arms.

The *Herald* story ran more than three columns—almost unheard of in those days of agate and nonpareil type. But someone on the paper had enough news judgment to dilute the terror near the end of the recounting.

"There are any number of rumors," said the writer, "but nothing is certain."

In a postscript added to the main account, the *Herald* showed that already some order was emerging from chaos.

"Colonel Lee declined further troops," the addition stated, "and the fact Brown was the leader was revealed. By this time too, it was known that the raiders were entrenched in the Armory enginehouse."

But of all the thousands of words, the most reassuring were those at the very end:

"No attempt was made to pillage the town or insult the females."

If there had been more "fearful intelligence" from Virginia the *Herald* would have carried it. There was room. Almost

two full pages of the same morning edition were devoted to the doings of the fire companies at the big convention. It told of the parade, made up of engines, hose carriages, visiting companies and martial music, that extended for more than three and a half miles. There had been parties, dinners, and balls at the hotels. Everyone of social prominence was either in the uniform of a volunteer fireman or was entertaining some one who was. A city built largely of frame dwellings with many wooden stores, warehouses, and other structures took the fire fighters seriously. Nothing was too good for the boys who raced to put out blazes.

For that matter, nothing was too good for the people of New York City. Or any other large metropolis of the time.

According to the very issue of the *Herald* which carried the shocking news from Harper's Ferry, there were many fashionable dancing academies which offered separate courses and classes for ladies and gentlemen, but which, on occasion, gave joint classes, "in all the fashionable dances and calisthenics."

Any man about town who was embarrassed by the loss of his hair could buy a wig for only eight dollars. If he still had hair but didn't like the way it was turning gray, he could handle that contretemps nicely with a bottle of Hill's Hair Dye, which cost half a dollar.

The business man who feared for the safety of his records, especially because of the many fires, could select from a raft of different types of safes.

For the restless sleeper there was the "State Fair" bed, which had elliptic bed springs (the Howes patent), a five and six dollar winner.

Life was pleasant for some, not so pleasant for others.

Miss Laura Keene was opening that night in *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* and at Barnum's Museum, "the new, touching and lifelike moral drama, 'Out of the Depths, or Woman's Love and Life,'" was in its third week. Admittance was only twenty-five cents (children under ten, thirteen cents), which entitled the playgoer "to visit the Arab Giant, 7½ feet tall, yet only 21 yrs old," and to stay for a "Soiree Dansante Brilliante."

An advertisement for the French Theater on Broadway opposite the Metropolitan Hotel bore this simple, direct, and effective though somewhat repetitive message:

English Opera
English Opera
English Opera
English Opera
English Opera
English Opera

To show that all was not rosy, the want ads carried such items as these:

WANTED: A boy, about 16 years of age, to attend a bar, one who has had no experience in the business preferred.
WANTED: A lad about 16 years old for a retail oil and lamp store. One who resides with his parents preferred.

Those needs were easily understandable, as was the one inserted by "a respectable married woman who wants a baby to wet nurse at her own residence." But this one wasn't quite so clear, and even hinted at coquetry:

WANTED: A gentleman, to teach a lady to write the angular hand.

Brady's photographic gallery, a notice disclosed, had moved from 350 Broadway to Number 643 of the same street, showing that the inevitable movement uptown was already under way on Manhattan Island. By moving, the gallery was enabled to supply its customers with an even larger assortment of photographs, Ambrotypes, and Daguerreotypes.

An enlightening sign of the times, showing that life on the border was not the plush thing it was in New York, were advertisements like this one:

CAST-OFF CLOTHING—WANTED TO SEND TO THE WEST

Ladies and Gentlemen having same can receive a fair cash price and no humbug at Harris's, Seventh Avenue near 20th Street.

A rival down the avenue was more direct. He came right out and said he'd pay $2 to $10 for old coats, and $1 to $4 for old pants.

The commercial notices and advertising columns were not without their teasing little mysteries, even in 1859.

One eye catcher read like this:

Brooklyn Beauties—Photographs, cameotypes and Daguerreotypes

Such were the everyday needs, pleasures, and goings-on in the young nation's largest city on this final day of John Brown's armed challenge to the United States and the State of Virginia.

But trivia was by no means all a reader could find after the flaming headlines had been digested and the advertisements studied. There was also the editorial page. This morning the *Herald's* expert drove straight to the crux of the problem epitomized by the outbreak on the upper Potomac.

"Is the insurrection part of that 'Irrepressible Conflict' which is so dear to the heart of Wm. H. Seward" pondered the lead editorial. "And is it intended to affect the next Presidential contest? Time will show . . . but one thing appears certain . . . that the outbreak has assumed startling proportions, and may prove the first act of a terrible drama."

Never did an editorial writer strike closer to the truth.

CHAPTER 11

A CHILL wind blew down off the Blue Ridge Mountains as Colonel Lee and Lieutenant Stuart completed their plans for a dawn attack. It drove most of the militia, not actively on duty, off the streets. Some of them were content to be inside where it was warm.. Others, of better stuff, felt a little ashamed of themselves, remembering how a dozen or so men had staved off the warlike actions of a couple hundred militiamen.

It rankled in their breasts. No one could feel very proud, neither the men nor their officers. A few fearless men, with sharp eyes and deadly-accurate carbines, had set at naught the vaunted prowess of half a dozen different companies of citizen-soldiers.

The same moisture-laden wind swept across Washington County, Maryland, where the remaining free members of John Brown's little army waited out the hours still left to their leader and their companions in the enginehouse.

It hadn't been pleasant for them. Cook had made his one-man diversionary attempt, and it had failed to lure even one soldier out of the iron ring that encircled the men in the Armory.

The efforts of the others had been equally ineffectual. Owen Brown, Charles Plummer Tidd, Barclay Coppoc, Frank Merriam and the slaves from across the river had spent hours shifting arms from the farmhouse to Mr. Currie's little schoolhouse. They might as well have left them in the house—or in New England where they had been manufactured. The arms had been paid for out of the savings of hundreds of Northerners who wanted slavery abolished, even if it meant blood-

shed. They had been transported secretively to the farm house by way of the Ferry and Chambersburg. Then they had been transferred to the schoolhouse—all to no avail.

Not one bullet was fired from the guns, not one slashing, valiant stroke for liberty had been struck with a pike.

In the late afternoon Owen Brown, who could hear the sound of firing at the Ferry, was urged by a Negro who drove up from the town, to go to the aid of his father's party. The son was loath to act on an unknown messenger's word, and equally reluctant to leave the hoard of weapons.

But as it grew dark, he left the farm for the schoolhouse. With him went Merriam, Barclay Coppoc, and the Negro.

On the way they ran into Charles Plummer Tidd, who had been guarding the schoolhouse. He had heard from passing Negroes that conditions were deteriorating rapidly at the Ferry.

"They're hemmed-in in the Armory," he told Owen. "Many of them are dead. The fact is, boys, we are used up. The best thing we can do is to get away from here as quick as we can."

"We mustn't desert our friends," retorted Owen. "Let's go on to the schoolhouse, collect up the slaves there, and then cross the ravine to the forest and on to the point of rocks on the mountain opposite the Ferry. With our long-range guns we may be able to divert or frighten away the enemy and let our people escape."

"It's hopeless," said Tidd, "but I'll go with you."

It was raining again and the dispirited men slogged along toward the school. They had gone about a mile when they saw an armed man coming toward them.

"Halt," commanded Owen Brown.

"Halt yourselves," replied the shadowy figure. At once they recognized John Cook's voice.

Cook's report was even grimmer than Tidd's had been.

"Our men are all killed but seven," said Cook. He put his hand on Owen's shoulder. "Your father was killed at four

o'clock this afternoon. I don't know whether Watson and Oliver are alive or dead."

He told the others what he had gleaned from the lock-tenders and the boys he had met on his one-man sortie.

The men went on to the school building. While most of them hid themselves in a thicket, Owen and Tidd levelled their carbines and kicked in the door. It was as empty as it had been when Cook had scouted the place earlier. Owen lighted a tallow candle. The men gathered around, discussed their plans, and then armed themselves to the teeth with whatever they needed from the supplies.

In one corner was a barrel full of biscuits that Owen himself had baked as emergency rations. The raiders thrust biscuits into their pockets and Owen also took a sack of sugar. He knew they would not dare to light a fire as they fled north for safety in Pennsylvania, yet they might need energy. That explained his seemingly strange selection of a twenty-pound sack of sugar for marching rations.

Shutting the door carefully behind them, even taking time to drop a wooden peg through a hasp, the remnants of Brown's army of the Lord went out to rejoin the slaves and start north.

The Negroes were gone. The five white men whistled and called, but no reply came through the sound of soft rain falling on the dying leaves and the sere grass.

As they stood there in the darkness, wondering where the colored men they had "liberated" from Colonel Washington and John Allstadt had gone, their ears could catch the occasional sound of rifle shots far down across the Potomac. It was a sad, sad sound. Owen Brown was close to tears as he turned toward the Kennedy farm. The others, who had followed old John Brown for differing periods, some during many years of fighting in bloody Kansas, were equally melancholy.

But the occasional faint sound of musketry in Harper's Ferry was not so agonizing as the utter stillness that followed their calls to the missing Negroes. That silence meant only

one thing: the bold invasion made to show slaves how they could cast off their fetters had failed. One by one the colored men had drifted off. They wanted no more violence. Hungry for the security of their own homes, eager even for a return to bondage, the slaves threw away the ash-handled, hand-forged pikes fashioned for them in far off Collinsville, Connecticut. Wanting no reminders of their few short hours of freedom the Negroes made their way unarmed through the rain and the night. Late the next morning they were found in their quarters, out behind the big mansions.

The men who had risked so much to open a path to liberty for the colored men made their way to the farm house.

In the kitchen where dreams had been as much a part of the daily fare as food, the men ate a hurried supper.

Then hastily gathering up their India-rubber blankets, a few extra shawls, and other garments, they went off into the woods on the side of the mountain behind the house. They spent the night there, occasionally hearing bursts of firing in the distance. They felt the urge to flee, but they were motivated even more strongly by the conviction that if they lingered near the Kennedy place they might be able to help one of their own men.

Two other men did come by—Albert Hazlett and Osborn Anderson—but they were too late. The five who had waited didn't wait long enough. They moved north, keeping in the woods soon after the coming of dawn. Not more than two hours later Hazlett and Anderson found the house deserted and went off into the hills to sleep.

It almost seemed as if fate was dealing unfairly with each and every member of John Brown's band.

For John Brown himself, and his handful of men in the enginehouse, the decisive hour was close at hand.

All through the night, while Hazlett and Anderson were escaping across the Potomac, and while his only uninjured son and the others made their unsuccessful start at raising the siege, only to be turned back without firing a single shot, the old man had fought fatigue and disappointment.

With the odds arrayed against him, it really didn't matter. Tired or alert, weak or strong, nothing counted now but the hour. And it was fourteen hours too late.

The candles flickered in Colonel Lee's temporary headquarters. Lieutenant Stuart set the little flames to wavering by fanning the ink on a piece of paper his superior had just penned.

It was the demand to be made on John Brown as soon as daylight came. This is what Jeb Stuart read:

Headquarters, Harper's Ferry
October 18, 1859.

Colonel Lee, United States Army, commanding the troops sent by the President of the United States to suppress the insurrection at this place, demands the surrender of the persons in the armory buildings.

If they will peaceably surrender themselves and restore the pillaged property, they shall be kept in safety to await the orders of the President. Colonel Lee represents to them, in all frankness, that it is impossible for them to escape; that the armory is surrounded on all sides by troops; and that if he is compelled to take them by force he cannot answer for their safety.

R. E. Lee
Colonel Commanding United States Troops

Colonel Lee told Stuart to hold on to the demand until ordered to submit it to the armed insurgents. The soldier who was to stave off defeat for the Confederacy for four years against vastly superior manpower and the greater industrial potential and wealth of the North went over each detail with meticulous care.

He told Stuart that he was certain John Brown would not accept his terms. He also outlined the grave danger that would then ensue for the hostages if the insurgents tried to

use the prisoners as a shield in a break-out attempt, or if they shot them down in cold blood because of anger over not being allowed to leave the town on their own terms.

Robert E. Lee knew virtually nothing of the character and motives of John Brown. He revealed in his planning that he had been given exceedingly poor intelligence reports by the various militia commanders. They could have informed him that Brown's men had not behaved irresponsibly, that they had fired only in furtherance of their basic aim and only if someone behaved suspiciously or shot at them.

Nothing of this had been told Colonel Lee. He had to assume he was dealing with dangerous personalities capable of any trick. That is why he laid his plans for a lightning-like assault.

He told Stuart that the surest way to save the lives of the hostages would be to attack the very instant the demand for surrender was turned down, before the raiders had time to take any other action.

With all this clear in his own mind and his aide's mind, the Army commander closed his eyes to rest, but did not go to sleep.

Outside the rain fell, making the soldiers miserable and cold. It cascaded off the roofs of the buildings, spattering on the sidewalks, splashing the occasional men who still moved about the town. Once in a while a "country volunteer," imbued with a sense of his own importance, or in his cups, fired his rifle in the general direction of the enginehouse. The smell of gunpowder hung in the streets, held captive by the falling rain. The residents of the town slept poorly, waking fitfully when the guns went off.

A score of Baltimore ruffiians, known to reporters from that city as the "Roughs," had come into town on one of the last trains. They had come on from where the cars stopped at Sandy Hook and had spent a great deal of time in the various saloons.

Each one had a rifle or a musket and at about four o'clock in the morning they emerged from one of the bar-rooms and

started for the enginehouse, as if to launch an attack of their own. Fortunately for them, and possibly also for the hostages, one of the wiser militia officers intervened and ordered them away from the government enclosure. Grumbling, they obeyed, but only when they found themselves looking at the business end of an entire company's armament.

After this incident silence descended again, broken but once more before the assault. A dragoon from the Shepherdstown Troop, who had drunk enough to stay mellow all night, but not enough to fall asleep, came out of the Galt House and wended his way down the street to the railroad depot. As he walked in the rain he hummed a little tune that had been sung many times that night:

I danced all night wid a gal wid a hole in her stockin'
An' her heel kep' a-rockin', an' her heel kep' a-rockin'

It was an incongruous prelude to the final action of John Brown's invasion.

CHAPTER 12

ROBERT E. LEE arose from the chair in which he had rested for several hours. He had not slept. Neither had Jeb Stuart. It is not easy for fighting men to sleep on the eve of battle. It is even harder for those in whose hands rest the responsibility for life and death.

The two officers stepped out into the town before false dawn. It was still dark, still drizzling, and still raw. Other men were moving about, too. They were the officers of militia companies, some of them going to get their troops in position for the assault, others waiting for instructions. There was the clatter of rifles being inspected from the Armory yard and from the vicinity of the Wager Hotel.

Colonel Lee walked to a point about forty feet away from the enginehouse where a slight elevation gave him a good view of the area within the iron fence. He was still in the civilian clothes he was wearing when Stuart burst in upon him at Arlington with the War Department order.

Stuart had done his duty well, carrying out the instructions and passing along the orders of his commanding officer. In response to these orders most of the militia companies were drawn up about the government property in such a way that it was encircled by a line of armed soldiery.

There came the sound of well-drilled men, their hobnailed boots striking the brick sidewalks in unison, and around a corner came the U.S. Marines. They made a pretty picture, even in the morning mist. Ninety men and two officers, they had the *esprit de corps* for which the service was already famous, and their appearance was all the more noticeable because of the contrast with most of the militia companies.

They were wearing their dress uniform. This was not according to the book but when Chief Clerk Walsh of the Navy Department passed on the orders that had emanated originally from President Buchanan, someone figured full-dress uniform was called for.

All Walsh had specified was that they be "furnished with a proper number of ball-cartridges, ammunition, and rations . . . and two howitzers and shrapnel."

When they turned out at the barracks in the Washington Navy Yard they had on their best bibs and tuckers.

As they came smartly to a halt and stood at ease behind Colonel Lee they were every inch an elite body. They wore dark blue frock coats, sky-blue trousers and chalk-white belts. Their cartridge cases of patent leather were buffed until they shone and the long rifles, with bayonets, glistened from the oiling and rubbing the Marines had given them.

Lieutenant Israel Green, the senior line officer present, carried only a dress sword, since he too had been under the impression that there would be more parading than fighting when he left the capital. With him was Major W. W. Russell,

the paymaster. Being a staff officer, rather than a line officer, the Major could not exercise command, but the detail was his and he wanted to partake of its activities. His only weapon was a small rattan switch.

At six o'clock the eastern skies began to lighten. The night's blackness was dissipated by a pale grayness, and that in turn faded before the brighter light that heralds the coming of the sun, long before the sun itself crests the horizon. This morning, however, there would be no visible sunrise. It had stopped raining a short time before but grey mists swirled in from the Potomac and the Shenandoah, making the air heavy with moisture.

The sound of marching feet and the staccato bark of military commands had not gone unnoticed in the town. Men, women, and children, in ones and twos and threes, then in scores and hundreds, left their homes and gathered in the downtown section of town near the depot.

They crowded every rise of land, hung from windows, and stood on housetops and the stone trestle-work of the bridges. Some of them found good vantage points on the roofs of freight cars standing on the siding near the Baltimore & Ohio water tank.

In many ways the scene resembled the half-hour before the harness races start at a county fair, with families gathering from hither and yon, moving impatiently to get good seats in the stands before the judges call for the first trot. If any resident of Harper's Ferry was absent, it was only because of urgent reasons. After the affair was over Lieutenant Stuart told his mother that two thousand persons watched the assault.

The first thing they witnessed, although they didn't sense what was happening, made the faces of Virginians and Marylanders blush for many a year after.

Colonel Lee asked Colonel Shriver of the Maryland volunteers to join him. The regular Army officer had thought the matter over carefully during the hours when he was resting in the armchair with eyes closed. He felt certain that the raid was directed more at the state than at the Federal

government. For this reason he believed the state troops should have the privilege of expunging the stain. He offered the men from Maryland the honor of the opening attack.

But Colonel Shriver thought differently.

"These men of mine," he told Lee, "have wives and children at home. I will not expose them to such risks. You are paid for doing this kind of work.

The commander-in-chief bowed, hiding the mortification he must have felt, and sent for Colonel Baylor, the ranking officer of the Virginia militia. Lee made the same offer to his fellow Virginian but Baylor, too, expressed unwillingness to send his men against the enginehouse, deferring to the Marines, whom he called "the mercenaries."

It was not a moment to add lustre to the escutcheons of the volunteer forces. There were only five uninjured raiders left in the little stone fortress. Besides the Marines there were at least two hundred men under arms, but the officers of the state troops refused to send them into battle. Much of the bravado and gasconading of the preceding afternoon and evening had disappeared, along with the alcoholic vapors.

Colonel Lee then asked Lieutenant Green if he wished "the honor of taking those men out." Green lifted his cap and accepted happily.

At once steps were taken to begin the assault. Lee ordered the volunteer companies paraded on the lines assigned them outside the armory enclosure. He instructed Green to form a storming party of twelve marines, with another dozen in reserve, close at hand. Then three other marines were issued sledge hammers with which to beat down the door of the raiders' stronghold.

Patiently Colonel Lee told the members of the storming party to use the bayonet only, in order to avoid wounding or killing any of the hostages. He told them how to distinguish between Brown's men and the prisoners and to ignore any Negroes unless they showed signs of fight.

It had been 6:30 o'clock when the commanding officer first

invited the volunteer companies to make the assault. Now it was seven o'clock.

In his smart Army blues, with cavalry spurs jingling and the plume in his hat dancing in the soft morning breeze, Lieutenant Stuart, accompanied by a flag of truce, walked boldly up to the double door of the enginehouse. He called out for a *pourparler* and the door cracked open a few inches. Stuart saw a tall, powder-begrimed old man appear in the opening, with a carbine in one hand. He recognized him as Brown, whom he had known while on duty in Kansas. Prior to that instant, so poor had been the reports given Lee by the militia, neither of the regular Army officers was sure who commanded the raiders in the Armory.

Old Brown looked gaunt and haggard. He had been without food for two nights and one day, and without sleep for two days and two nights. He placed his body in the opening in such a way that Stuart could not see inside with any degree of clarity.

As the two thousand citizens and the soldiers looked on, Lieutenant Stuart handed Brown Colonel Lee's surrender demand. The old man read it carefully, then shook his head determinedly. He started to argue. He made proposal after proposal. The men in uniform became impatient. Even the prisoners, aware that bloody conflict might be but a few minutes away, pleaded with Stuart to call Colonel Lee into the conference. Stuart refused, saying Lee would stand on his terms.

Brown insisted he had the right to go free, and proposed that he be allowed to cross the bridge to Maryland, taking his captives with him, and that no one should pursue him until he had gone a mile or so up the road and had released the hostages.

Stuart was in a tough situation. Lee had told him not to get involved with the raiders, wanting them to have no time to injure the hostages or to use them as shields. But Brown talked on and on and the prisoners offered various compromise suggestions.

Finally Stuart sensed that the parley was going to be completely fruitless.

He stepped back from the big door, swept off his plumed hat and waved it. It was the signal for which Green and the Marines in the storming party had been waiting. At the double the twelve men reached the doors just as Old Brown slammed it shut, dropped the bar in place and tightened the ropes.

The three Marines with the sledges attacked the doors. It was no use. The two-by-four splintered, but the ropes held. Each time a door was struck it sprang back, undamaged.

Inside the enginehouse John Brown took off the sword of Frederick the Great and laid it on one of the fire engines, not wanting it damaged. He cheered his few men on, telling them to stand firm.

Stuart stood between the two large doors, against the stone abutment. Bullets flashed past from inside as the hammer blows of the sledges beat their futile tattoo.

Colonel Lee, his face calm, stood fearlessly on the little rise of ground. He heard a voice inside the fort cry out "Don't mind us. Fire!" It was Colonel Washington.

Lee knew the general's kinsman well and recognized the voice.

"The old revolutionary blood does tell," he said.

As he spoke he saw the storming party hurry away from the doors, drop the sledges, and pick up a heavy ladder that happened to be lying near the watchhouse. Using it as a battering ram they charged the door. The first blow failed.

The second one splintered the big door near the base, leaving an aperture not much larger than the opening in a doghouse. But it was all brave men needed.

Green, armed only with his light ceremonial sword, darted through the break. Major Russell, equally brave, with only his rattan switch, followed hard on Green's heels. The rifles inside cracked and the next marine, Private Luke Quinn, went down, mortally wounded. The fourth man to reach the door went down also, his face blasted at close range. That was the

last casualty the Marines suffered. By then Lieutenant Green was attacking the men inside so forcefully that none of them thought to go on firing.

In the comparative darkness of the interior, John Brown stood cool and fearless. He had fired as the ladder shattered the door. Stopping to reload, he gave Green and Russell enough time to enter unharmed. Firing again, the old raider may have injured the two privates behind them, although others of his men were also firing.

But that was the end of the shooting. Green, getting to his feet, raced around to the rear of the nearest fire engine. Colonel Washington, who knew the Marine officer, greeted him and turned toward Old Brown, saying: "This is Osawatomie."

Brown clubbed his rifle, but Green was young and fresh and agile. He lunged at the raiders' leader and bore him to his knees. The light dress sword missed Brown's head but cut him wickedly in the neck and shoulder.

At the next thrust, aimed at the heart, the flimsy sword struck its point on the leather harness of Brown's ammunition belt and bent almost double. Green struck again and again, showering the old man with blows which would have killed him if the sword had been heavier.

Behind him, charging in like mad bulls, came the storming party. Jeremiah Anderson, who had walked through the fragrant fields of Maryland with his leader on that day in July when Brown first reached the scene of his exploit, was firing from beneath one of the fire engines, the better to see through the small aperture in the door. A bayonet caught him, then another, and he was down, dying without a word on the cold brick floor.

Dauphin Thompson, the neighbor boy from North Elba, the curly-haired blond whom Leeman and Hazlett had called "more like a good girl than a soldier," braced himself against the wall to meet the on-coming bayonets. It was a brave, but futile, gesture. The Marines hurled themselves upon him. Steel blades flashed in the powder-filled room, and Dauphin

Thompson, too, was dead, his body pinned tight to the wooden door.

John Brown was down, unconscious, bleeding profusely. Thompson and Anderson were dead. Watson Brown, fevered and in a coma, knew nothing of the battle that had raged about him so furiously. Edwin Coppoc, raised a Quaker at his mother's knee and taught in his early years not to wage war, but who wanted to fight against slavery; and Shields Green, born a slave, were the only two uninjured survivors of the enginehouse defenders.

Outside, Robert E. Lee looked at his big gold watch and noted that exactly three minutes had elapsed from the instant Jeb Stuart waved his ostrich-plumed hat.

The Marines had worked with fierce efficiency and careless bravery. The invasion of Harper's Ferry was over. There were not enough left free to carry on the ill-advised, but noble, crusade against slavery. Other men, two and three and four years from this 18th day of October, 1859, would have to pick up the banner. When they fought it would be called the suppression of secession, a holy conflict to keep the Union whole.

Old Brown's crusade, at least the shooting and the killing, was over. Now he had nothing left but words. How could he guess, lying bloody and beaten, that they were ten thousand times ten thousand more powerful than the crack of his Sharps carbines?

CHAPTER 13

COLONEL LEWIS WASHINGTON was the last man to leave the enginehouse. First the Marines took John Brown and his son Watson out and laid them on the grass. Then they took out the bodies of Thompson, Anderson, Oliver Brown, and

Taylor. Behind these corpses marched Edwin Coppoc and Shields Green, their arms gripped by brawny soldiers.

Shivering and shaking in terror, the slaves who had been seized at the plantations the morning before crept out into the yard, avoiding the vicinity of the wounded men and the dead raiders. Then the hostages emerged, grimy with powder smoke, their faces haggard from hunger and fear. There were the Allstadts, Armistead Ball, Captain Daingerfield, Joseph Brewer, the quiet hero, and the other armorers.

For a moment it was feared that Colonel Washington had been wounded. There seemed no other explanation for his nonappearance. Then he emerged, his soulders thrown back, a smile on his lips. He had held back to wipe his face with his handkerchief and to pull on his gloves so that the people of Harper's Ferry would not see his soiled hands.

The threats of lynching, the cheap talk of violence that had been heard on every side the day before had died out with the excitement of the assault. There must have come the realization, even to the toss-pots and carousers, that they had just witnessed true bravery. The courage of the Marines, as well as that of the hopelessly outnumbered insurgents, put a damper on the noisy mouthings of the riff-raff.

Even if there had been a desire for lynching it could not have taken place. Colonel Lee placed the Marine detachment about the prisoners to protect them. He gave specific instructions that Brown and his surviving men were to be treated with kindness and decency. Blankets were placed over the wounded, and physicians were called to minister to them.

In the crowd that had watched the storming of the engine-house was a reporter on the Baltimore *Sun* named C. W. Tayleure. He was a South Carolinian, and had a Carolinian's views on slavery and the prejudices of the deep South. As he moved about among the prisoners he was most deeply affected by the condition of Watson Brown. It may have been because he was a young man, more nearly the reporter's own age, or it may have been his handsome features, now pale from heavy and continued bleeding.

A half hour after the fighting was over, Tayleure went into the Wager Hotel and brought out a glass of water, which he held to Watson Brown's lips. Then he arranged a somewhat better bed for him by placing him on a bench, with two pair of overalls from the Armory for a pillow.

"What brought you here?" the reporter asked.

"Duty, sir," said Watson, quietly.

"Is it then your idea of duty to shoot men down upon their own hearthstones for defending their rights?"

"I am dying," replied the handsome son of the abolitionist. "I cannot discuss the question. I did my duty as I saw it."

So touched by this conversation was the reporter that he filed a story to his newspaper describing the serenity, the calm courage, and the devotion to duty manifested by John Brown, his son, and his other followers during the fight and after it.

After the gunpowder fumes had blown away, after the hostages had been reunited with their distraught families, there were still a dozen tag-ends to pick up and tie.

Aware that an ominous sky, alternately marked by heavy mists or low, scudding clouds, made a poor roof for seriously wounded men, Colonel Lee had John Brown and Watson moved inside the paymaster's office in the watchhouse—the other section of the little fortress in which they had fought their last battle. Then volunteer soldiers shifted Brown's chief lieutenant, Aaron Stevens, from his prison-room at the Wager to the watchhouse beside his leader.

Townspeople gathered around to gawk through the windows at the bearded man who had panicked the village for thirty-two hours. The holiday spirit still persisted and no one seemed eager to go to work, whether in the Armory, the stores, the hotels, the harness shops, or the depot.

Even tragedy as deep as John Brown's, with his bolt shot and his hopes blasted, sometimes has a humorous facet, as if the gods send comic relief when pathos and evil have held sway too long. Buffoonery was now to have its short hour on the boards at Harper's Ferry.

The first actor on stage was John Unseld, the farmer who had tried so hard to pry out of John Brown just what the newcomer's plans were when they met on the Boonsborough Road that morning before the Fourth of July.

In the intervening months, Unseld had visited the Kennedy place several times. He often thought the "Smith" family rather unsociable but he never became suspicious of them. Not until his small son came running home from Mr. Currie's school did the farmer realize that he was living on the edge of tragedy.

An hour or so after the Marines restored order in the village Unseld walked across the covered bridge from Maryland and went looking for an officer. The first one he found was Captain Butler of the Hamtramck Guards.

"The rest of Brown's men are in a school house just across the river," said the excited farmer. "Send some men over and you can capture them."

"My company is dismissed," said Butler, turning on his heel.

Next, Unseld met Captain Rowan of the Jefferson Guards.

"Mr. Rowan," said the planter, forgetting his military manners, "take your company and go over to the school house. That is where the danger is. They are over there."

"I will, if John will," said Captain Rowan, pointing to Captain Avis, who would be John Brown's jailer. "What do you say, John?"

"Well," said the deputy Sheriff, "I will see about it directly."

None of this satisfied Mr. Unseld.

He soon ran across Captain Rhinehart, a cavalry commander from Jefferson County. The same request was made.

"My company is dismissed," said the cavalryman, and walked away.

Colonel Baylor came into the depot where Unseld had gone in his fruitless search.

"Colonel," said the frantic farmer, "send a company over to Maryland to the school house."

"I have no right to send a company to Maryland," said Baylor.

"The devil you have not, I would send them anywhere at a time like this."

"I will not do it," said the Viriginian, and walked out.

Unseld was told by a friend that Colonel Lee had sent a company across the river.

"What company was it?" asked Unseld.

"The Baltimore Greys," was the reply.

"Well, now, they have not gone at all. I have just seen the captain go up Camp Hill to get his breakfast."

Finally Unseld was able to see Colonel Lee. The commander-in-chief assured him the Greys had gone about two hours ago.

"No, Colonel," said the farmer, "they have not gone. I have just come from there."

Lee walked out, found a Lieutenant of the Baltimore company, and asked why the unit had not obeyed orders. The officer said the order had been countermanded. Then along came the Captain.

"My men were hungry," he told Colonel Lee, "and I thought a short time would not make any difference so we went on Camp Hill to get breakfast."

Lee, the perfect soldier, the devoted professional fighting man, shuddered at the manner in which the militia had made a burlesque out of their activities.

"Now," he said patiently, "I want you to get your company and go with this man, who says he will pilot you there."

Finally Unseld, backed by the grumbling volunteers, reached the school, but Brown's men were gone. Hazlett and Anderson had passed by hours before.

The Baltimore Greys opened some of the boxes and distributed the guns to members of the company and to any others who happened to be around. The rest of the arms were taken to the Arsenal.

Unseld went back to ask another favor of Colonel Lee.

"That company you gave me has left," said the Maryland

planter. "I want another to go with me to Brown's house."

Lee ordered Lieutenant Green and a few Marines to go. Unseld piloted them. When they reached the Kennedy place, neighbors and visitors were swarming about it like bees at a sorghum-cooking party. There were boxes of counterpanes left, two cast-iron hominy mills that were too heavy to move easily and the bundles of pikes. To the farmers the ash handles looked mighty appealing and they asked the Marines for some.

"Break open a window," Lieutenant Green told Unseld, "and toss some out."

Unseld threw out the heavy bundles until he grew tired and then Marines took over the chore.

"You can have as many as you want," said the Marine officer to the farmers flocking around. "At least you can have five apiece."

A little later he upped it to ten apiece and finally to fifty apiece. The rest were put into the wagon. Everything that wasn't given away was taken to the Ferry and turned over to Mr. Kitzmiller.

Then John Unseld crossed the Potomac for the last time that day, proud of himself.

The comedy was over.

In the paymaster's office more serious affairs were afoot.

Just after midday a party of prominent personages arrived from Richmond. Headed by Governor Wise, it included U. S. Senator James Murray Mason of Virginia, Representative C. L. Vallandigham of Ohio, and Representative Charles Faulkner of Virginia.

They filed into the office with Colonel Lee, Colonel Lewis Washington, and Lieutenant Stuart. A reporter on the New York *Herald* noted that John Brown and Stevens lay on "miserable shakedowns, covered with some old bedding."

Colonel Lee, always the gentleman, bent over the bearded raider and told him that he was personally responsible for his detention, but also for his welfare, and that he would order

every visitor out of the room if they caused Brown any suffering or annoyed him.

"I am very glad to make myself and my motives clearly understood," said Brown.

So the drum-head inquiry began—a three-hour-long session that ranks with the most dramatic in the nation's history.

There was Old Brown, his hair and beard matted with blood, weak from bleeding; and near him Stevens, suffering silently for the most part but occasionally emitting a deep groan. The defeated leader was neither afraid, dispirited, nor uneasy.

"He was," Governor Wise said later, "a broken-winged hawk, lying on his back, with a fearless eye, and his talons set for further fight, if need be."

And there about him, looking down upon him as if he were a messenger from another world, were Senator Mason, Colonel Lee, Lieutenant Stuart, Governor Wise, the two Congressmen, Andrew Hunter, who would prosecute him at his trial, and Colonel Washington, great grandnephew of the first President.

Newspapermen were present all through the session. One from the New York *Herald* said of Brown: "He converses freely, fluently and cheerfully."

The man from the Baltimore *American* marvelled at his courage. "In the midst of his enemies, whose home he had invaded;" this man wrote, "wounded and a prisoner, surrounded by a small army of officials, and a more desperate army of angry men; with the gallows staring him full in the face, he lay on the floor, and, in reply to every question, gave answers that betokened the spirit that animated him."

Senator Mason plunged directly into the question of who supplied the money for the insurgents. John Brown refused to implicate any of his backers, saying he had raised much of the money himself. Then he explained, at least in part, why he had not listened to Kagi's urgings the morning of the second day and beat a retreat from the town.

"I should have gone away," said the wounded leader, "but

I had thirty-odd prisoners, whose wives and daughters were in tears for their safety, and I felt for them. Besides, I wanted to allay the fears of those who believed we came here to burn and kill. For this reason I allowed the train to cross the bridge and gave them full liberty to pass on."

"But you killed some people passing along the streets quietly," said the Virginia Senator.

"Well, sir," spoke up Brown, "if there was anything of that kind done, it was without my knowledge. Your own citizens, who were my prisoners, will tell you that all possible means were taken to prevent it. I did not allow my men to fire, nor even to return a fire, when there was danger of killing those we regarded as innocent persons, if I could help it. They will tell you that we allowed ourselves to be fired at repeatedly and did not return it."

"What was your object in coming?" asked Mason.

"We came to free the slaves, and only that."

His interrogator asked the wounded man how he justified his acts. Looking straight up into the eyes of the Senator, Brown answered:

"I think, my friend, you are guilty of a great wrong against God and humanity—I say it without wishing to be offensive—and it would be perfectly right in anyone to interfere with you so far as to free those you wilfully and wickedly hold in bondage. I do not say this insultingly."

This was John Brown's credo. He had preached it in the meeting houses of New England, New York, Ohio, and Canada. He had fought for it in Kansas and Missouri. He had invaded Virginia to make it come truly to life. His answer was the first arrow from a quiver of words that would make people forget the bullets from the carbines and belt-pistols. The fighting was over, his enemies thought. In truth it was just beginning.

The Senator said he understood Brown meant no personal insult.

"I think I did right," continued Brown, "and that others will do right to interfere with you at any time and all times.

I hold that the Golden Rule, 'Do unto others as you would that others should do unto you,' applies to all who would help others to gain their liberty."

A bystander asked the prisoner if he considered his movement a religious one.

"It is, in my opinion," said the old man, "the greatest service a man can render to God."

"Do you consider yourself an instrument in the hands of Providence?" asked the same man.

"I do."

"Upon what principle do you justify your acts?"

"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."

Brown told another bystander that he had no faith in moral suasion as a way of getting the South to end slavery.

"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," said Brown.

There it was, out in the open . . . Brown knew that force would be the only weapon. If his listeners too had had the gift of divination, they would have heard the bugles blowing, the rifles barking and flags snapping, even the groans, the cries, and the hurrying feet of the stretcher bearers at the Bloody Lane, the Stone Wall, and the hill called Cemetery Ridge.

The Ohio Congressman asked Brown if he had expected to hold possession of Harper's Ferry for any considerable time.

"I do not know whether I ought to reveal my plans," said the injured man. "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 [Brown obviously meant Sunday night], and up to that 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."

A local physician, Dr. Biggs, was allowed to interrogate the prisoner. The inquiry was as informal as a ball-game, with everyone giving the umpire advice.

"Who lanced that woman's neck on the hill?" Dr. Biggs asked.

"I did," replied Brown. "I have sometimes practiced in surgery when I thought it a matter of humanity and necessity and there was no one else to do it, but I have not studied surgery."

"Well," said the physician, "it was done very well and scientifically."

The reporter from the New York *Herald* was the next one to assume the role of catechist.

"I do not wish to annoy you," he said, "but if you have anything further you would like to say, I will report it."

"I have nothing to say," said Brown, "only that I will claim to be here in carrying out a measure I believe to be perfectly justifiable and not to act the part of an incendiary or ruffian, but to aid those suffering great wrong. . . . You had better—all you people of the South—prepare yourselves for a settlement sooner than you are prepared for it. 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."

Hundreds of other questions were asked and answered all through the long afternoon. Toward the end Governor Wise did a little moralizing, and told Brown he should think about eternity.

"Governor," replied Brown quickly. "I have, from all appearances, not more than fifteen or twenty years the start of you in the journey to that eternity of which you so kindly warn me; and whether my tenure here shall be fifteen months, or fifteen days or fifteen hours, I am equally prepared to go. There is an eternity behind and an eternity before, and the

little speck in the center, however long, is but comparatively a minute. The difference between your tenure and mine is trifling and I want to therefore tell *you* to be prepared. I am prepared. You all [slaveholders] have a heavy responsibility, and it behooves you to prepare more than it does me."

Finally the inquisitors talked themselves out and went away. As they left, Governor Wise made one last comment, overheard by one of the reporters:

"He is the gamest man I ever saw."

Robert E. Lee knew this was so, and he knew that his responsibilities would not be ended until Brown was in jail. He telegraphed to the Secretary of War for instructions and was told to turn the prisoners over to the joint custody of the United States Marshal and the Sheriff of Jefferson County, both of whom had their offices in Charlestown. But until the transfer was made, Lee kept the Marines on guard over the captives.

It was probably a good decision, for Harper's Ferry was not an orderly town.

All afternoon, while the questioning of Brown was going on, the militia and many of the residents celebrated the end of the invasion. Those who had sobered up from the debauchery of the night before set about getting drunk again. Those who had abstained through fear or sense of military discipline, joined them.

The authorities were too busy to bother with enforcing law and order. They sent details to the rifle works and brought in the body of Lewis Leary. Then they visited the local jail and picked up the Negro, John Copeland, who was Leary's nephew.

All through the period when the guns were barking the birds had been silent. Most of them flew off into the woods outside of town. Then when the fighting was over the sparrows twittered again in the trees and eavespouts. Turkey buzzards came back from the mountains. Someone saw them circling gruesomely over the river, upstream from the bridge, and was reminded of the preceding day's brutality. The body

of young Leeman was still sprawled across the rock where he had fallen. Under the bridge William Thompson's body had floated up into the cattails where the red-winged blackbirds nested.

Soldiers were detailed to get the bodies and add them to those laid out in a row beside the enginehouse.

Rumors of armed men still loose in the hills sent bands of militia off in all directions. Governor Wise offered a reward of $1,000 for the capture of John Cook, dead or alive, and many a man who wouldn't see that much "cash-money" in five years took up his gun and stalked off into the mountains after the raider who had lived among them for months peddling the *Life of Washington.*

When darkness came the town became even rowdier. Sightseers arrived as the trains started running through the junction again. Others came in wagons and buggies or on horseback.

The red-eye flowed in a never-ending Niagara at the Wager Hotel and the Galt House bars. Tipsy men caroused about the village, shooting at Negroes they mistakenly thought had been in Brown's band. Militiamen, just as muddled as the others, squabbled and fought with one another over which volunteer company was the bravest, forgetting in their befuddlement that only two of the many units had deported themselves with any distinction.

For more than an hour Governor Wise stood on the porch of the larger hotel, trying to deliver a tub-thumping oration on the glories of Virginia's way of life, the loyalty of the slaves who refused to turn against their masters and the evil machinations of Northerners who would send a man like Brown to disturb their tranquil existence.

It might have been an excellent speech, but most of his audience never heard it. The shouting and turmoil drowned out his words, and the shots fired into the air punctuated his remarks at the wrong times. At last, discouraged and tired from his busy day, the state's chief executive repaired to the

lobby of the Wager Hotel to listen to the reading of letters found at the Kennedy House.

The scene, said Mr. Rosengarten, the Pennsylvania Railroad director who had been freed from jail and brought along by the Governor on his way through the county seat, was unbelievable.

The Governor and his staff were huddled together at a table illuminated by tallow candles guttering and smoking. The Richmond Greys were scattered about the room looking for "soft planks" on which to sleep in the absence of regular beds.

As the letters, newspaper clippings, and other documents, most of them pitifully innocent in nature, were read they were misconstrued and altered in their meaning to make it appear they proved the connivance of the entire North with Brown's purposes.

So as that day ended, and night came on apace to put an end to drinking and politicking alike, it seemed as if there was little to choose between the bibulous sots who couldn't handle their liquor, and the officials so busy looking for Northern burglars under Virginia's bed that they couldn't handle their facts.

Before he had essayed the slightly foolish task of making a speech to a crowd well along in its cups, Governor Wise issued a strange order impressing all horses in Harper's Ferry for the duration of a period called the emergency. As a result many of the volunteer militiamen had to make their way home on foot. Most of these set out as soon as they saw that Colonel Lee had things well in hand.

By the next forenoon most of the remaining state troops had followed their companions, leaving but one local company on duty. This could have led to trouble when Brown and his men were removed to Charlestown if it hadn't been for the Marines.

Colonel Lee told Lieutenant Green to keep a close guard over the prisoners. Brown and Stevens were carried on mattresses from the paymaster's office to the coach of the Win-

chester railroad. They rode in a large wagon inside a marching square of Marines. Like small boys at a circus parade, Governor Wise, Senator Mason, and other dignitaries marched behind the wagon, and ahead of Copeland, Coppoc, and Shields Green, who brought up the rear, also under heavy guard.

Just as the wounded men were about to be moved into the coach of the train some of the hangers-on who had gathered for the event and some of the hundreds who had marched along behind the procession started to yell.

"Lynch them. Lynch them," they cried.

But the Marines paid no attention, closed up their ranks about the prisoners, and the crowd dispersed as the train steamed off up the Shenandoah to Charlestown.

Robert E. Lee's chores seemed finished for the time being. He began his official report to the War Department and to finish what had to be done to transfer the Marines back to the Navy Yard at Washington.

He was in the midst of writing out the document when a sentry broke in upon him, accompanied by a man named Moore from Pleasant Valley, Maryland, a little hamlet five miles out of town. It was then about nine o'clock at night. Moore told him that after sunset a body of armed men had descended from the hills, invaded the home of a Mr. Gennett, and terrified the family.

From the great excitement, the cries of "murder," and the screams of women and children Mr. Moore assumed that the residents of the entire valley were being massacred.

Hard on Moore's heels came families from Sandy Hook, streaming into town for protection.

Colonel Lee frankly discounted the chance of more raiders being in the vicinity but with the tumult and the shouting getting worse instead of better, he acted swiftly. With Stuart, Green, and twenty-five Marines, Lee set off post-haste for Pleasant Valley. His party encountered no disturbing elements in Sandy Hook or on the road. When it reached the supposed

site of the massacre all was peaceful. The Gennett family was not only unharmed; it was fast asleep.

Colonel Lee and his men marched back to Harper's Ferry, where he completed his report to include the incident of the wild-goose chase, and then watched as the Marine detachment boarded the express to the East. His own assignment having been completed he took advantage of the same train to report in person to the Secretary of War.

The train was the Wheeling-Baltimore night express, the very one that had been held up on Sunday night. Everything was now in order. The Baltimore & Ohio was back on schedule, thanks in large part to the somewhat tired, sleepy man who boarded the train just before it pulled out of the depot and crossed the Potomac through the long, covered bridge.

Robert E. Lee slept all the way to the Relay House.

CHAPTER 14

JOHN AVIS ran a good jail. It was small, because there was not much crime in western Virginia in 1859. Next to it was the guard house, where soldiers were already bivouacked to prevent a jail-break, and beyond that, across the street, was the courthouse.

Charlestown was an old Southern community, even though it was within forty miles of Pennsylvania. Pleasant houses with carefully fenced lawns surrounded the central square, their ranks broken here and there by churches. As the county seat of a busy section, where iron furnaces, coal mines, and rich farms were plentiful, it had law offices, banks, general stores, and feed mills, but its tempo was much slower than that of Harper's Ferry, just eight miles away.

Part of this was due to differences in the residents. At the Ferry there were hundreds of families that had migrated there

soon after the Armory started to experiment with interchangeable parts in manufacturing guns. Other arms plants in Springfield, Massachusetts, and Middletown, Connecticut, had pioneered this infant beginning for assembly-line construction. Soon after 1815 their men had been invited by the government to introduce the system in Virginia, and many artisans had accepted. This explained why the speech was clipped and the pace much faster on the bank of the Potomac than in the town up the Shenandoah valley. There was a definite Yankee influence. At Charlestown the agricultural life was still supreme. Men operated plantations on the outskirts, grew tobacco, and had hundreds of slaves who chopped cotton from spring to late summer.

Life was a little more genteel, a little slower, in the small center where John Brown was to spend his last days on earth. Through the bars of his cell he could see fine carriages passing in the wide street before the jail. There were Negro men at the reins, and colored boys to help the ladies in and out so that their hoop skirts wouldn't rub against the wheels.

Men traveled and did their errands on horseback. Hitching posts, cast of iron in the likeness of small Negro boys, were everywhere.

Society meant something in Charlestown. The prominent families entertained and were entertained, attended balls, arranged garden parties for the ladies, cotillions to introduce the young debutantes, and parades and stag parties for the young bucks in the militia.

In a setting such as that, the deputy Sheriff, who was also the jailer, would be obliged to maintain a strong bastille. John Avis thought his prison adequate for any contingency, but Governor Wise had other feelings. Virginia's chief magistrate feared that the North would never let Brown remain in durance vile if it could help it and was determined there would be no jail delivery.

He ordered about half the militia of the county to stand guard under arms. They marched up and down the streets, overflowed the guardhouse, and even stood guard in the jail

corridors. Governor Wise's faith in the volunteer soldiers had been badly shaken at the Ferry, but he figured they would be a valuable aid to Captain Avis in keeping the wounded Brown and his four men under tight lock.

Not until the great iron door of the jail clanged shut behind the insurrectionists did the Governor feel safe to leave for Richmond. By then Charlestown was an armed camp—just what the highly nervous Chief Magistrate wanted.

He had no more than returned to the state capital before he let fly at the citizen-soldiers. Speaking in Richmond, he admitted that the volunteers' apprehensions about harming the hostages in the enginehouse had been the reason why such large numbers of armed troops had not subjugated Brown's group at an early hour. But his opinion of their behavior Tuesday morning would have singed polite ears.

"On Monday night the gallant Virginia Colonel, Robert E. Lee, worthy of any service on earth, arrived with his regular corps of Marines," the Governor told his astonished audience. "He waited only for the light, then tendered the assault, in State pride, to the Virginia volunteers who were there. Their feelings for the prisoners made them decline the risk of slaying their own friends, and Lee could not delay a moment to retake the Arsenal. . . . His Gallantry was mortified that the task was so easy. He saw a United States Arsenal in possession of bandits . . . and he felt the regular Army and his native State were alike dishonored. With mortification and chagrin inexpressible, he picked twelve Marines and took the enginehouse, in ten minutes, with the loss of one Marine killed and one wounded, without hurting a hair of one of the prisoners. And now I say to you that I would have given my arm to its shoulder, for that feat to have been performed by the Volunteers of Virginia on Monday before the Marines arrived there. . . . I was ready to weep when I found that the whole force overcome was only some 12 or 15 men and the Virginia volunteers had not captured them before Colonel Lee arrived."

The Governor wasn't the only one in his family who evinced displeasure with the behavior of the militia.

His son, O. Jennings Wise, perferred charges against Colonel Baylor. When a court of inquiry was convened later, young Wise alleged that Baylor had assumed command on Monday without authorization, had acted without orders, and was guilty of cowardice in not storming the enginehouse. Moreover, charged the Governor's son, Baylor had behaved in a manner unbecoming an officer by assigning "a false, cowardly and insulting reason for not leading the attack on the enginehouse."

The court of inquiry, as so often happens, failed to get its teeth into the true matter in dispute and nothing of importance came out of the hassle.

With the Wise family having such a jaundiced opinion of the militia, it seemed strange that the Governor called out so many companies to assist the regular sheriff's deputies and the town constables to keep John Brown in custody. The main reason was obvious. The raid was the first overt action taken against slavery in the older part of the country. The preachers and thinkers and poets, in New England particularly, had written bitter jeremiads against the institution of slavery. But no one had taken forceful steps to fight it, beyond sending immigrant bands to populate Kansas Territory in a hope of outnumbering the pro-slavery settlers.

Southern speakers and journals had accused the abolitionists of being "nigger-loving flap-jaws" who didn't have guts enough to back up their fancy words.

Now overnight, it seemed, the North had proved it had spunk. Armed men had crossed the Mason-Dixon line; yea, even marched across the border state of Maryland and into the Old Dominion itself to offer the slaves a road to freedom.

With slave-holders everywhere uneasy, Governor Wise used all the forces at hand to insure that Brown would not escape. He would set an example for the slaves and the North at the same time. And by assuring Brown protection against both Southern lynch-law and Northern jail delivery, he would make it virtually impossible for the federal government to

intervene and claim the right to try the ague-ridden, bloody, but undaunted insurrectionist.

All this explained why young men in the fancy uniforms of various Jefferson County militia units—they had had time by now to don their full dress costumes—were everywhere to be seen on the streets and in the public buildings of Charlestown.

While Old Brown made slow progress at recovering from the battering he had received from Lieutenant Green, the newspapers of the nation grew hysterical in his support, or damned him and his supporters.

The Southern journals called him a dirty old man, a fanatic, an insane man ruled by monomania, a ruffian from the border wars and a low character who would gladly see white womanhood in the slave states exposed to insult, rape, and murder.

Those Northern papers which were anti-Republican jumped into the fray with quivering pens and overflowing type-fonts of invective. They attacked Brown, but even more they used the opportunity to hurl lances at Senator William H. Seward, who had used the rallying slogan of "the irrepressible conflict," Horace Greeley, the Republicans' greatest editorial writer, and the abolitionists of New England.

Old Horace Greeley thundered back, pulling out every stop in the pipe-organ of journalistic fury.

"It will drive the slave power to new outrages," he wrote. "It presses on 'the irrepressible conflict' and I think the end of slavery in Virginia and the union is ten years nearer than it seemed a few weeks ago."

Not everyone was as courageous as the editor of the New York *Tribune*.

Gerrit Smith, the former Congressman from New York, who had supported Brown, became so upset by the news from Harper's Ferry and by fear that he had been responsible in part for murder, pillage, and treason against the government that he grew incoherent and distraught. Finally he had to be removed to the Utica Asylum for the Insane.

Franklin B. Sanborn, another who was privy to Brown's plans, although he probably didn't know where the fighter

was going to strike, left Concord, Massachusetts, for Canada before Brown had even become accustomed to his jail cell. He had moved fast to get out of reach of Federal subpoenas, but Frederick Douglass, another who had aided Brown, beat him over the border from Rochester by a day, getting there the day John Brown was moved from the Ferry to Charlestown. Two other supporters, George L. Stearns, who had bought guns for the raiders, and Dr. Samuel G. Howe followed the others out of the country and into the Dominion to the north within a few days.

But Dr. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, the militant pastor of the Free Church in Worcester, Massachusetts, refused to be stampeded. It didn't matter to him that some of his fellow members in the various anti-slavery societies had suddenly decided that Canada's climate—even with winter coming on—was particularly salubrious.

Higginson wore his collar backwards but he was a doughty fighter. He was going to do something for John Brown if he could. He had already done more than most Northerners to supply funds for the Kansas expeditions. Turning his pulpit into a mountain-top from which to hurl anathema at the South for holding three million slaves in bondage, he stirred things up with a big spoon.

The clergyman was no stranger to rough-and-tumble fighting for the principles in which he believed. Five years before John Brown and his men crossed into Virginia to strike their blow, he had struck one.

A runaway slave, Anthony Burns, had been captured in eastern Massachusetts and arraigned in a Boston courthouse. Fearing mob violence, the authorities locked the doors and stationed extra sheriff's deputies in and around the building. Leading a band of angry abolitionists, Dr. Higginson helped break down the door of the court and was the first one inside. Shots rang out and a deputy fell dead, his heart pierced. Nothing came of it, however, for the government escorted Burns from the court to the dock-side with a company of

soldiers, and put him aboard a ship that would return him to his master.

Word that Brown was now locked tight in the Charlestown jail was a flaming challenge to the preacher. It affected another friend the same way. John W. LeBarnes of Boston talked the plan over with the minister and then asked a young lawyer, George H. Hoyt, of Athol, Massachusetts, to hasten to Virginia and defend Brown. Actually Hoyt was to do more than defend the insurgent leader in court. He was to be a spy.

Hoyt was an ideal man for the task. He was only twenty-one but didn't look more than nineteen and was almost sickly in appearance. He took the train to Harper's Ferry, got there while excitement was still at fever pitch, and went on to the county seat.

But Higginson and LeBarnes had counted their chickens before the eggs were hatched. They had overlooked the chance that Virginia herself might have sly, intelligent officials who were anticipating just such moves by the Northern abolitionists.

Andrew Hunter, whom Governor Wise had named special prosecutor to try Brown, became suspicious before Hoyt had been in town an hour. Hunter figured that the anti-slavery men of New England would pick the ablest legal talent available to defend Brown and not send such a tyro to break lances in the joustings with the best the South could offer.

Hunter dashed off a hasty message to the Governor.

"A beardless boy came into town last night as Brown's counsel," said Hunter. "I think he is a spy. There are divers other strangers here. . . . They are being watched closely."

If the special prosecutor had had his way, Hoyt would have been thrown out of court and probably escorted across the border, but Judge Richard Parker was not so frightened by the youth from New England. He permitted the visitor to stay on.

So the North outwitted the South after all. Hoyt conferred with Brown as attorneys and clients are allowed to, and Hoyt told the raider that plans were afoot to attempt a rescue.

If Hoyt expected to electrify the old man by telling him he was in truth a spy, he was sorely disappointed.

Brown looked up from his cot in the jail-room and shook his head severely. In firm, deep tones the wounded man made it clear that he would not take part in an attempt at a jail-delivery and would refuse to leave the jail even if friends unlocked the door.

The youthful lawyer said he understood but went on doing what he had been paid to do by LeBarnes. In the course of the next few days he sketched a scale map of the jail, its environs, and the layout of the cells and corridors inside the building. This went off in an early mail to LeBarnes and Higginson.

It was not easy to make the map.

By this time the town had become a Mecca for Southerners who wanted to see the terrible fiend who had struck against their security. The Winchester and Harper's Ferry Railroad did a thriving business carrying visitors from Winchester or the Ferry. Other sight-seers rolled into town in carriages and wagons or trotted in on horseback.

Hill people came down out of the Blue Ridge to see the "doin's" in the county seat. They were armed with rifles and belt-pistols and in their saddle-bags or under the seats of the wagons were demijohns of corn-squeezin's. Society folk came up from Richmond, the men dressed in rich broadcloth, frock coats, fancy vests, and black, wide-brimmed, planter's hats. The women wore crinolines, brocaded velvet, beautifully woven shawls, and pert little bonnets, some of them even imported from Paris.

At the end of October it could honestly be said that a visit to Charlestown was "a must" for the smart set. Militiamen by the hundreds marched through the streets, turning it into an armed camp. Pretty girls made eyes at the men in their fancy uniforms and danced with them at parties arranged on the spur of the moment to take advantage of the presence in town of so many important persons.

The saloons and hotel bars boomed with unexpected busi-

ness. They tried to take up where the Wager Hotel and the Galt House had left off when Brown was taken out of Harper's Ferry. Gamblers and pickpockets moved into town, drawn, as always, by the prospect of taking money from excited rustics. Fancy ladies from Baltimore and Richmond drifted into the village and managed to rent rooms above the bars even after decent persons with legitimate business in town had been turned away.

Reporters from all the big eastern cities and many of the smaller communities of the South and Maryland moved into town, eager to relay the news to their readers. The eyes of the entire country were upon Charlestown. There was nothing going on in New York, Washington, New Orleans, or Kansas Territory that could hold a candle to the story developing in the Shenandoah Valley.

And through the remainder of the week that had started on Sunday evening in the Kennedy farmhouse, old John Brown lay on his cot in the jail house, his flesh wounds healing slowly but a searing pain in his left kidney making many of his hours miserable. He knew what was going on. Much of it he could see from his cell window. What he didn't see he learned from Sheriff Avis, a friendly, affable man who found himself growing inordinately fond of the man he had helped to capture as co-captain of the Jefferson "irregulars."

John Avis provided the prisoner with a Bible in answer to the old man's first request. The Sheriff and the deputies were amazed to see the captive reading the word of God without glasses at the age of fifty-nine. They might have guessed, however, that the gray-blue eyes, trained by years of fighting in Kansas, had been sharpened and strengthened in the incandescent sunlight of the prairies.

Then too, Old Brown had only to read a few words in most parts of the Bible to remember the rest. He knew the more familiar books and verses as well as he knew his own name, although paradoxically enough, he had quit studying for the ministry when in his late teens because of an eye infection. Denied the chance to satisfy this ambition, he had turned to

the Bible as a friend and knew it better than many an uneducated circuit rider of his time.

No man in all of Charlestown slept better of nights, or seemed calmer than John Brown.

He had told Governor Wise he had no idea whether he had fifteen months, days, or hours to live and he still had no very clear idea of how the wheels of justice were grinding, but he showed neither fear nor concern.

The authorities were not so placid.

Wise, Hunter, Senator Mason, the regular commonwealth's attorney, Charles Harding, and the other dignitaries wanted to move at breakneck speed. They felt that the people of the South, and of Virginia in particular, were whetted to a fine edge of mass hysteria. They were afraid that any delay would bring the public's wrath down upon them. Secretly Governor Wise, at least, was scared that if Virginia seemed slow to move, the United States Government would intercede, stealing thunder away from the Old Dominion and the pro-slavery interests.

Something of the eagerness to put Brown on a gibbet was expressed by Hunter, who said he wanted the prisoner "arraigned, tried, found guilty, sentenced and hung, all within ten days."

He wrote of his wish for speed to the Governor:

"The Judge is for observing all the judicial decencies; so am I, but at double quick time. . . . Stevens will hardly be fit for trial. He will probably die of his wounds if we don't hang him promptly."

Hunter was a dynamo.

He didn't intend to see Brown or any of the other prisoners escape what he felt was just retribution. Governor Wise had named him as special prosecutor because he couldn't trust Harding. The regular attorney for Jefferson County was one of those men with a fine background, a good education, and good blood in his veins who found life more pleasant if viewed perpetually through the rosy fog of drunkenness. He was a

broken wreck of a man when the biggest trial in Jefferson County's entire history took place.

Even the physiques of the two men stressed the disparity between them. Hunter was a tall, handsome man, proud of his Southern reputation and one whose words would be listened to anywhere. Harding was a dissipated little man, a tragic shadow of what he might have been.

CHAPTER 15

IT WAS lucky for the nerves of Virginians in particular, and Southerners generally, that the Jefferson County Grand Jury was sitting just when John Brown was jailed. Under the laws of the Old Dominion it was the custom to try defendants in the very next term of the proper court then sitting for the felony involved. In Brown's case, not only was the Grand Jury in session, but so was the semi-annual term of the Circuit Court. Thus it was virtually mandatory that he be tried before that court, rather than during the next session, half a year away.

This meant, of course, that Old Brown would have a bare minimum of time to gather lawyers and prepare a defense, but he himself never raised a murmur of protest.

His friends felt differently.

Northern newspapers wrote vitriolic editorials against Virginia for what they called inhuman haste. They pointed out that Brown was still weak from his unhealed wounds and deserved time in which to recover before being put on trial for his life. Governor Wise, Hunter, Harding, and the other officials were pilloried as cowards and un-Christian barbarians. Actually the wounds were nowhere near so serious as the Northerners believed them to be, and they disturbed Brown less than they did some of the preachers and essayists in the Abolitionist circles of the North.

The Grand Jury met in the courthouse that had been built in the 1790's. It stood at the northeast corner of George and Washington Streets, catty-corner from the jailhouse. Of red brick and stone, it was a Georgian-Colonial building, set on a rather high stone foundation, making a broad flight of steps necessary for access to the main floor from the street. It was set back from the street by a small yard, surrounded by an iron fence. Four large white Doric columns marched across the front portico, and just over the main door was a small iron balcony, ideal for the reading of public statements or the delivery of speeches.

By the 25th of October, exactly a week after Brown was captured, the Grand Jury was ready to hear the evidence. But first came the hearing before the examining board of magistrates.

Out of the jail marched the prisoners. Brown and Edward Coppoc were manacled together. So were Shields Green and Copeland. But Aaron Stevens, so seriously wounded that he could barely walk, was supported by deputies, and staggered along in the middle of the procession between long lanes of militia.

It was like running the gauntlet, except that no blows were struck. Hatred was on every Virginian's face. Yet so wretched was the appearance of Stevens, and so haggard did Brown look, that even in the bitterly rabid throng there was some evidence of pity. Here and there a woman shuddered at the import of the scene. Negroes, standing well back out of the white folk's way, gazed upon the bearded prisoner and his men, wondering what their deeds could mean to them, or their death.

Inside the courtroom, unswept, dirty, poorly lighted, with the rancid odor of tobacco smoke and unwashed bodies, the five prisoners were led before the eight magistrates. It was all cut and dried. Colonel Washington, Mr. Allstadt, Captain Ball, and a few other witnesses told their stories. The telling took but a few hours. When it was done, the court of inquiry

ruled that there was ample evidence to justify action by the Grand Jury.

Who these eight magistrates were who thus held Brown for a trial has been forgotten. But they performed one act that permitted the insurrectionist to voice the first of several ringing speeches that electrified the North.

They asked the old man if he needed attorneys.

His gaunt face lined with pain, his great white beard still matted with blood, Brown pulled himself to his feet, and gazed upon the court with the ice-cold eyes that knew no fear.

"Virginians," he said, "I did not ask for any quarter at the time I was taken. I did not ask to have my life spared. The Governor of the State of Virginia tendered me his assurance that I should have a fair trial; but under no circumstances whatever will I be able to have a fair trial. If you seek my blood, you can have it at any moment, without this mockery of a trial. I have had no counsel; I have not been able to advise with anyone. I know nothing of the feelings of my fellow prisoners, and am utterly unable to attend in any way to my own defense. My memory don't serve me; my health is insufficient, although improving. There are mitigating circumstances that I would urge in our favor, if a fair trial is to be allowed us: but if we are to be forced with a mere form —a trial for execution—you might spare yourselves that trouble. I am ready for my fate. I do not ask a trial. I beg for no mockery of a trial—no insult—nothing but that which conscience gives, or cowardice would drive you to practice. I ask again to be excused from the mockery of a trial. I do not even know what the special design of this examination is. I do not know what is to be the benefit of it to the Commonwealth. I have now little further to ask, other than that I may not be foolishly insulted as only cowardly barbarians insult those who fall into their power."

Five hundred Virginians, crowded into the courtroom, stood mute as the old man spoke. With emotions all tangled, they watched as Brown, Coppoc, Stevens, Green, and Cope-

land filed out of the hearing room, out into the bright afternoon sunlight and back between the serried rows of militiamen to the little jail.

There was a cold slab of meat, a slice or two of bread, and a cup of coffee for each prisoner when the steel doors banged shut behind them. Before they had finished their rough repast, the Grand Jury was listening to the same witnesses telling the same stories of the insurrection at Harper's Ferry.

Perhaps the citizens of Jefferson County who had been called to serve on the Grand Jury took their duties more seriously than the eight magistrates, or perhaps they were slower to see where the legal verities were hidden. At any rate they retired for the night without their minds being made up. But by noon of the next day they had done their duty.

Brown and his men were indicted for treason to the commonwealth, conspiring with slaves to commit treason, and murder. Andrew Hunter may have dictated the final form of the indictment, or Charles Harding, fighting his way out of an alcoholic stupor, may have been moved to pick the words signed by the grand jurors. They sound as if selected by a revival preacher on a hot July afternoon, when he could almost see the jaws of Hell gaping wide.

"Evil-minded and traitorous persons," the document described the five prisoners, "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."

Again the five raiders were ordered out of their cells and into the courthouse. But this time Brown and Stevens refused to walk. Deputy Sheriff Avis called in enough men from the military forces outside to carry the two wounded men, Brown on an army cot and Stevens on a mattress. They were transported across the main intersection of the town and into the courtroom. There they were put down in the well in front of the jurors' box, between the lawyers' tables and the Judge's bench. All through the preliminaries Stevens

groaned audibly, and many of the Charlestown residents watching the proceedings figured that Stevens, at least, would never last to be hanged on a gallows.

Old Brown had stern stuff in him. He pulled himself erect from the cot and faced Judge Richard Parker. He asked for a very short delay, citing the agony caused by his kidney wound and a temporary loss of hearing due to the beating he had taken from Lieutenant Green's dress sword.

The Judge had on his desk, however, a report from the prison physician, saying that Brown was fit to stand trial, and so the court denied the request for delay. After all, Virginia was becoming daily more nervous as there coursed about the land rumors of jail deliveries, of armed bands gathering to strike for the prisoners' release, and of servile insurrections that seemed on the verge of erupting everywhere, but somehow never came off.

So a jury was picked. If Judge Parker, Sheriff Avis, and County Attorney Harding had prowled the hills and vales of the lower Shenandoah for weeks, they could not have found twelve men without prejudice in the matter before the circuit court. Yet twenty-four men were finally found who swore they had not made up their minds as to the guilt or innocence of Brown and his men. Brown's lawyers challenged eight peremptorily, but finally a dozen men were sworn in—a dozen men who said they could give John Brown a fair trial. Northern newspapers stormed for at least a change of venue, but just at that time in Virginia's history, no one in the Old Dominion was paying much attention to advice from north of the Mason-Dixon Line.

Judge Parker appointed Charles J. Faulkner and Lawson Botts as defense counsel for John Brown. Faulkner begged off, not because he didn't respect the honor, but because he had served with the Jefferson Guards and had taken part in the fighting at the Ferry. After the raiders had been captured, he made known throughout Charlestown his opinion that the insurgents were guilty of murder. In view of this attitude, he said, he did not believe he could decently and fairly defend

the leader of the very men he had denounced so vociferously.

At this juncture Judge Parker asked Thomas C. Green, the Mayor of Charlestown, to step into the case, and he accepted. Botts was the grandson of the man who had defended Aaron Burr. On his mother's side he was related to George Washington. Between them, the two attorneys represented the best the prisoners could hope for. They were honest men, fair and devoted to the precept that any man is entitled to the best defense possible, no matter what his crime. They agreed to do their utmost for the insurrectionists, and took their places at the defense table.

Then to the consternation of almost everyone, into the courtroom stepped the "beardless boy" from Massachusetts, the man who was really a spy for the militant abolitionists. Hoyt said he did not intend at that time to take an active part in the trial. The special prosecutor raised the roof with objections, even declaring that there was no proof Hoyt was authorized to appear at the bar of justice. Mayor Green, however had information showing that the youth was in fact a lawyer, and Judge Parker permitted him to enter the ranks of the defense.

That night, three miles out of town, a haystack caught fire and burned to the ground, taking with it several outbuildings. Even before the embers were gray, rumor-mongers said that it was the work of nefarious forces who were gathering to rescue John Brown and his men.

Fear was settling like a great miasma over all of Jefferson County. Men quit going out alone after dark. Women were ordered to stay inside behind locked doors and windows. Children were scared into restless sleep by mothers who whispered wild hints of Old John Brown and his bloodthirsty men from Kansas.

All through this period Brown himself slept like a baby in the big room John Avis had converted into a cell for Brown and Aaron Stevens. The action of the Grand Jury, the nearness of the trial for murder—none of these things made the grizzled old leader the least bit uneasy. He read from his

Bible, said his prayers, and bade his followers be stout of heart.

Memories might have been the undoing of weaker men. They had no apparent effect on Old Brown. Yet as he lay on his cot on these early winter nights in the jail he must have harked back to the balmy May evening in 1856—just a little more than three years before—when he had seen fit to kill five men on the banks of the Pottawatomie in Kansas as a warning to the pro-slavery forces in that territory.

These killings lie athwart the history of John Brown like a bar sinister. His closest defenders found it hard to justify his acts. His enemies cried to heaven that here was a man evil beyond all measure.

If John Brown did ponder his deeds as he lay in the jail, it was probably against the background of corruption, brutality, and pillage that had marked the conflict in Kansas.

In that spring of 1856 the Border Ruffians and the hired killers from the deep South had driven free-soilers from their homesteads, burned crops and buildings, and made the state one vast battleground. Then one day a messenger on a foam-lathered horse reached Brown's Station near the Marais Des Cygnes creek and told the startled jayhawkers that the Ruffians had marched into Lawrence, chief city of the free-staters, and were even then burning it to the ground. This seemed a blow too great to go unrequited.

"Something must be done," said John Brown grimly, "to show these barbarians that we, too, have rights."

The old man chose four of his sons—Owen, Frederick, Salmon, and Oliver—and Henry Thompson, James Townsley, and Theodore Weiner. He borrowed a wagon, and then spent the balance of the afternoon sharpening a number of strangely shaped cutlasses that had been sent west by abolitionist supporters in Ohio to help arm the free-soilers.

The history of these weapons is a strange one. They had been made originally for a secret band of men in northern Ohio who called themselves the Grand Eagles. Their leader was a man named Lucius V. Bierce, who picked up the title

General by being leader of this undercover society. Whatever it was the Grand Eagles were supposed to do—some rumors said they intended at one time to invade Canada and join it to the United States—they never accomplished. The broadswords they had had forged, with eagles burned into the blades and hilts, gathered dust for years. Then when the bitter fighting in Kansas broke out, "General" Bierce sent the weapons out to John Brown and his fellow settlers.

While his sons alternated turning the handle of the big grindstone, John Brown made his plans. One of the settlers went to him and pleaded with him to use caution.

"Caution? Caution, sir?" he answered. "I am eternally tired of hearing that word caution. It is nothing but a word of cowardice."

Some of the men got into the wagon, others mounted their horses, and the party took off for the Pottowatomie.

They had been traveling across the freshening prairie, where the melted snows had made possible the growth of a good catch of buffalo grass, when they saw a rider spurring a jaded horse toward them from the direction of Lawrence. It was a man they knew, named Gardner. He took off his boot, extracted a message, and handed it to the free-state guerilla.

It was news of the caning of Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts on the floor of Congress by Congressman Preston "Bully" Brooks of South Carolina. A short time before, the advocate of abolition had delivered a scathing denunciation of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, one of the authors of which was a relative of Brooks. Much younger than the Senator from New England, Brooks had beaten Sumner over the head with his walking stick until he fell unconscious.

It was brutality of the worst sort, and revealed how paper thin had grown the tempers in Congress over the question of slavery. Together with the sacking and burning of Lawrence, this latest action by the pro-slavery men was all that was needed to put steel into John Brown's heart.

Brown and his men drove on until they reached a woods a

mile or so above Dutch Henry's Crossing—a settlement beside a ford with a store and a tavern. It was one of the main crossings of the Pottowatomie on the way down to the Santa Fe trail. Three brothers named Sherman, of German descent, lived in the vicinity and each had the same nickname. They were Dutch Henry, Dutch Bill, and Dutch Pete. They were drunken, evil, thieving men, who stole from settlers passing through, caused cattle to stray from herds that were being driven into the new territory, and made life on the border a miserable thing for decent women.

Brown and his men waited for nightfall, sure that they would find their quarry in then. Townsley argued against the proposed attacks on pro-slavery men, but he was outnumbered. He could have left the party but he stayed on, and no force was used to keep him.

After a while the darkness was a blanket that obscured the whole prairie. At ten o'clock Brown and his men marched off to Mosquito Creek above the ford where lived William and Mahala Doyle and their three sons. Two fierce bulldogs came after the armed men but were cut down by the big swords before they could spring at the intruders. Then the men knocked at the door of the rough wood and sod cabin. They asked if John Wilkinson was inside. The older Doyle opened the door, saying no one was present except his family.

Doyle and his older sons, William and Drury, were ordered outside. Mrs. Doyle pleaded with the free-soil men to spare her youngest son, John, clasping him closely to her under the quilts of her rough shakedown bed.

Down the road a hundred yards from the house Brown and his party turned on their prisoners and killed them, hacking them terribly with the ugly cutlasses. The bodies were left where they fell.

Then the armed men walked a mile or more to the sod house of John Wilkinson. His wife was ill with the measles and, being awake, heard the sounds of the approaching men. She alerted her husband just as the men outside demanded he open the door. There was talk as to how Wilkinson felt

on the subject of slavery. The sick woman pleaded with Brown's party not to harm her husband, but to no avail.

Wilkinson was ordered out into the night. The next morning his wife found his body lying under a clump of bushes one hundred and fifty feet down the path toward the river.

The fifth and last victim of that night of unbridled horror was Dutch Bill Sherman.

Brown and his men went to the home of James Harris, who had as guests three men who had been caught by nightfall when much too far from home. They had asked for shelter, and in the tradition of the frontier had been given the privilege of spending the night bedded down on the floor of the main room. They were Dutch Bill Sherman, John S. Whiteman, and a third man whose name is lost to history.

There was the usual discussion of how the men in the cabin felt on the subject of slavery. Then Harris and Whiteman were taken outside and questioned, one after the other. These men returned and Sherman was taken out. The terrified people inside the house heard a pistol shot, and then quiet descended on the open prairie.

The next morning the two guests and Harris went looking for Dutch Bill and found his body in the creek behind the barn.

Old John Brown was satisfied.

There were five dead men along the Pottowatomie, their frightfully slashed bodies a warning to other Border Ruffians not to make war on the free-soilers. They were evil men, as such things were recorded in Kansas in the 1850's. But they had been unarmed; indeed some had even been torn from the arms of their wives. Their death was justified in Brown's mind because of the suffering the decent anti-slavery settlers had undergone at the hand of their enemies.

"Better that a score of bad men should die than that one man who came here to make Kansas a Free State should be driven out," John Brown said to Townsley as the wagon, filled with the men who had taken upon themselves the duty of executioners, bumped along over the open prairie.

When they crossed the creek near Dutch Henry's they left the wagon long enough to wash the gory cutlasses in the swiftly moving waters of the Pottowatomie. Then they gave the horses the whip and drove off to their homes.

Evil had outdone itself this bloody night. Justice had been blindfolded, and more. She had been ravished by the very men who cried loudest for her protection against the inroads of lawless men seeking to make Kansas another slave state.

Old Brown, according to his sons and his own words to his wife, did not himself pull the trigger of a pistol or swing the heavy blade of a Grand Eagle cutlass. But he it was who decided which men should die and he it was who decided when the slaughter should stop. He was accessory before, during, and after the act. More important, he approved of it, convinced that the Old Testament is right in saying an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

In the minds of many free-state settlers, the deed was an infamous one. For days the Browns were not welcome anywhere, but by midsummer the evil doings of pro-slavery men up and down the territory became so marked that even the most decent of the settlers came to feel that the only thing that had kept them from being driven out of northeastern Kansas was the warning of that May night on the banks of the Pottowatomie.

Old Brown himself reiterated the Biblical doctrine that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin." It was not the best excuse for cutting down five men and boys in the dark of the night. It wasn't, to be exact, an excuse at all. But the abolitionist believed it himself, and that is the only justification he ever claimed.

To the man in the cell in Charlestown, three winters and four summers later, the memories of Bloody Kansas brought no sense of guilt. Events had gone forward too fast. Everything he had done since he first went out to the frontier had been part and parcel of his own broad plan to end slavery. He hated human bondage and any steps he took to end it seemed utterly correct.

That he had failed at Harper's Ferry was the will of God. He would not question it. Already, even before the trial itself opened, he realized with a clairvoyance that was almost supernatural, that he would be a more potent factor in the struggle against slavery when he was dead, than while alive. And, lying on his rough cot, or watching the excited thronging of the crowds outside the window, he knew his string was about paid out to its full, pitiful, length.

But if John Brown was peaceful, Jefferson County and Virginia were not.

The fires on the outskirts of town and in the farming area beyond were bad enough, but the rumors of armed invasion were worse.

Smith Crane, a merchant of Charlestown, returned to the now panic-stricken county seat from Kansas with a tale that five hundred fierce jayhawkers were already on the way east to save John Brown from the gibbet. These men, said Crane, had fought beside Brown at Black Jack and Osawatomie. They would never, he was sure, let him be hanged without a blood bath on Virginia soil. Moreover, on the way home, while taking the ferry at Bellair, Ohio, he had overheard other sinister-looking men discussing the imminent passage through town of these very Kansas marauders.

Just when everyone's blood pressure had been pushed skyward by this report, a letter came in for the special prosecutor, Andrew Hunter, from the United States Marshal in Cleveland. This official declared that he had positive evidence that a thousand men had gathered arms in the Ohio city for a liberation march on Charlestown.

If there were calm men in Virginia who did not believe these tales—who believed that Brown had expended all his power for evil in the thirty-two hours of conflict at Harper's Ferry—they were given no support by their chief executive.

Governor Wise saw shadows everywhere. If he had had his way, he would have sent a million armed men to Jefferson County to keep Brown in chains until he was hanged.

He wrote to his militia officers, stirring them from any leth-

argy into which they might have fallen once the insurgents were in jail. He demanded they be alert for the unexpected. He wrote to Captain Avis instructing him to make full use of the military if he believed there was any reason to believe Brown could escape.

Finally he penned a letter to Andrew Hunter that came close to being a gibbering, hysterical tirade straight out of a madhouse:

> Information from every quarter leads to the conviction that there is an organized plan to harrass our whole slave-border at every point. Day is the very time to commit arson with the best chance against detection. No light shines, nor smoke shows in daylight before the flame is off and up past putting out. The rascal too escapes best by day; he sees best whether he is not seen, and best how to avoid persons pursuing. I tell you those Devils are trained in all the Indian arts of predatory war. They come, one by one, two by two, in open day, and make you stare that the thing be attempted as it was done.
>
> But on the days of execution what is to become of the borders? Have you thought of that? 5 or 10,000 people flock into Charlestown and leave homesteads unguarded. When then but most burnings to take place? To prevent this you must get all your papers in Jeff: Berk: & Fredk & Morgan & Hamp: to beg the people to stay at home and keep guard. [His abbreviations stood for Jefferson, Berkeley, Frederick, Morgan, and Hampshire Counties.]
>
> Again a promiscous crowd of women and children would hinder troops terribly if an emeute of rescue be made; and if our own people will only shoulder arms that day and keep thus distinct from strangers the guards may be prompt to arrest and punish any attempt. I have ordered 200 minie muskets to be sent to Charlestown at once with fixed ammunition and the Colonels of Berkeley, Jeff & Fred; to order regiments to be ready at a moment. I shall order 400 men under arms. Then, ought there to be more than

one day of execution? Judge P. ought to have thought of this, but he didn't. If the Court of Appeals don't decide before 2nd December I'll hang Brown. Another question. Ought I to be there? It might possibly be necessary in order to proclaim Military law. Say to Col. Davis that I have ordered him to act as Commissary General for all the troops in Jefferson and he must remain and act until we are all through. The Government may pay out of contingent fund and I gave Mr. Brown the forms of U. S. Army t'other day, shall of course call on General Assembly for an appropriation the first week. The guards must be kept up until 16th Dec. Watch Harper's Ferry people. Watch, I say, and I thought watch when there. Gerrit Smith is a stark madman, no doubt. Gods, what a moral, what a lesson. Whom the Gods wish to make mad they first set to setting others to destroying. . . .

The spelling was strange, the punctuation even stranger, and the thinking behind the letter, if not frenetic, at least muddled. One thing was definite. Henry Wise was frightened to death and he intended to let no stone go unturned to keep John Brown from going free. If he had to call out every able-bodied man in the Old Dominion he intended to preserve order until Brown was executed for his temerity in taking up arms against Virginia.

So militiamen were scattered through Charlestown like chaff on a barn floor. They were stationed in jailhouse, courthouse, and barracks. They paraded the streets, guarded the railroad station and rode the trains from Winchester to the Ferry.

A circle of guards was thrown about the center of town, another necklace of armed men formed a larger circle outside the first one and still other sentries were mounted at every road and dirt path leading into town. Every person was stopped and checked. Sometimes it took several hours and a visit to militia headquarters for a resident of the town to get from one part of Charlestown to another. Farmers lost so

much time getting through the lines that their tempers flared up and they refused to bring produce into the county seat. For a time there was danger of a shortage of vegetables and fresh meat, but Colonel Davis worked out a system that satisfied the rustics and produce once again came through the picket lines.

Business on the Winchester and Harper's Ferry Railroad was brisker than it had been since the first steam engine had huffed and puffed its way through the Shenandoah Valley. Hawkers and peddlers gravitated to the scene of the trial like flies about an overturned honey pot. Romany gypsies, with their finely made hand-carved and illuminated house vans, moved in from off the roads to set up fortune-telling tents and to mend copper pots and wash-boilers. They picked the pockets of stupid yokels or tricked them out of their savings with rigged card games or tricks.

The days were blue and clear, but the nights were growing crisp. At sundown campfires sprang up wherever the militiamen were on sentry-go. Other blazes showed where visitors who could not get lodgings in town were trying to keep warm under blankets in the open or where the gypsies had drawn their gay wagons in a circle about their cooking fires.

The night of October 26, the eve of the opening of the trial, a fire broke out on the road to Winchester. Haycocks burned to the ground, a stable was consumed, and burned horses galloped about, neighing in pain and terror until soldiers shot them to end their misery.

This same night, down at Harper's Ferry, terror turned that town into an armed camp where rumor and fear paced together in double harness, dragging behind them an overflowing load of panic.

Mr. Kitzmiller at the Arsenal received what he believed to be authentic advices of an attempt to seize his buildings again so that arms could be obtained for a rescue attempt in Charlestown. Men from New York and Pennsylvania were supposedly gathering somewhere in the hills across the Potomac, ready to swoop down on the government reservation.

This upset John Work Garrett, the B. & O. president, so grievously that he took upon himself powers never granted to a railroad executive. He ordered out on duty the United Guards of Frederick, a company of Maryland militia numbering fifteen men. He sent them on one of his trains to the Ferry to join other volunteers called up when the rumor reached the county seat.

All these Maryland soldiers did was to annoy Garrett's own Master of Transportation who was in Harper's Ferry at the time.

"There is a strong guard on duty," wired Mr. Smith, as if his chief didn't know a thing about it. "I am ordered to halt at all points as I move about in the storm and the darkness."

Despite the excitement and confusion, John Brown went on trial on the morning of October 27 before a crowd of at least six hundred men and women. Sight-seers were packed into the courtroom. The air was hot and stifling. No one seemed comfortable except the man on trial for his life. Since all five of the raiders had asked for separate trials, Virginia moved to try Brown first. He was brought over from the jail on his cot, a counterpane thrown over him, and left lying in the well before the bench.

He lay for the most part with his eyes closed, as if asleep, and sometimes his only sign of life showed when a gaunt hand reached out, pulled up the cover, and tucked it more firmly under his chin. The mumbo-jumbo that always marks the opening of a trial interested him not at all. He stared up at the huge candle-burning chandelier that hung from the ceiling above him, or he lay peacefully quiescent, his chest rising and falling rhythmically under the old counterpane.

At the very outset, however, Lawson Botts threw a bombshell into the proceedings—one that upset Brown even more than it did the prosecution.

The defense attorney read from a letter he had only just received from Akron, Ohio, where Brown had lived several years and was well known. It stated flat-footedly that insanity was a curse that ran through the Brown family. The writer

said that an aunt, a cousin, and two other close relatives had all been either mentally disturbed or actually under restraint in lunatic asylums. Botts offered the letter as justification for halting the proceedings and declaring the prisoner innocent because of insanity.

Old Brown threw back the counterpane, rose to his feet and stood gazing angrily at judge and jury. His ice-blue eyes were no kinder when they turned to Lawson Botts.

"I look upon it as a miserable artifice and pretext," he said. "I view it with contempt more than otherwise. As I remarked to Mr. Green, insane persons, so far as my experience goes, have but little ability to judge of their own sanity; and if I am insane, of course I should think I know more than all the rest of the world. But I do not think so. I am perfectly unconscious of insanity, and reject, so far as I am capable, any attempt to interfere in my behalf on that score."

That ended the matter. Old Brown intended to let events move inexorably on, without seeking refuge in a technicality.

Governor Wise, who was struggling to be eminently fair, wrote a letter to a Dr. Stribling, director of the Lunatic Asylum of Staunton, Virginia, one of the foremost men in the field at the time, ordering him to proceed to Charlestown and examine Brown. Dr. Stribling, who would be called a psychiatrist today, never executed the assignment, however, because the Governor suddenly had a change of heart and didn't mail the letter he had written. Almost a century of dispute and surmise might have been avoided if the stamp had been put on the envelope and the message mailed.

Colonel Lewis Washington was the first witness. By this time he must have been a little tired of reciting the details of his seizure, virtually in his nightshirt, and his hours of danger as a captive in the enginehouse. But he went over the facts, without coloring them in any way, until the whole story was told.

Then followed Kitzmiller, the acting superintendent of the Armory, Armistead Ball, John Allstadt, and Joseph Brewer,

that stout-hearted, chivalrous resident of the Ferry who had shown his neighbors what it is to be utterly fearless.

Old Brown reclined on his cot, listening to the witnesses with no more concern than he would give to the buzzing of wasps in the summertime. He never winced as the prosecutor hammered at the accusations of insurrection, treason, and murder. His eyes were swollen and blackened as a result of his wounds, but he showed no sign of suffering. He did show signs of fleeting pleasure, though, when Colonel Washington testified that the raiders had never been rude or insulting to him or his fellow prisoners and that Brown had urged them to seek out the safest spots in the little fortress to avoid the occasional bullets that penetrated the shuttered windows and loopholes.

During one of the recesses there was a flutter of excitement among the officials. Finally Brown learned what had caused it. Word had come from Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, that John Cook had been captured. The old man shook his head but made no comment.

That night after the first full day's session, the story was pieced together.

Cook, Tidd, Owen Brown, Merriam, and Barclay Coppoc had had no easy time fleeing from the Kennedy farm when the battle was lost at the Ferry. They had kept to the uplands, walking along the ridges, to avoid towns and farms. The sugar and biscuits that Owen Brown had taken from the schoolhouse gave out on the second or third day, and hunger slowed their footsteps. Merriam, a rich man's son, used to city life, could barely keep up with the others. Every hour he had to rest, slowing the party badly.

In the daytime they slept in the woods, posting sentinels to avoid surprise. When dusk came they ventured down into the valleys seeking food near lonely farmhouses. Dogs bayed at them, even chased them on occasions, and they grew weaker and weaker for lack of provisions. They rooted for leftover vegetables in the fields and gnawed raw potatoes and carrots.

Several times hunters stumbled upon them, and as word of the invasion spread from the Potomac other men went into the hills to hunt them down. Tidd, the lumberman from Maine, did his best to lead them to safety, but the countryside became more dangerous with each passing day. Owen Brown and Tidd pleaded with the others to be stout of heart, to keep going toward the North and safety. The fleeing raiders knew that tentative plans had been made to establish a sort of field headquarters in Harrisburg, the state capital. There was nothing definite, but in some of the correspondence that had passed between John Brown and his supporters, especially those in Massachusetts, there had been discussion of the wisdom of such a move. Dr. Higginson thought an office should be set up nearer the scene of the raid, and at different times some of the financial backers had traveled there to talk to Brown.

This was a slim sort of basis upon which to go, but since the men who had escaped death or capture by being on the Maryland side of the Potomac when the Marines stormed the enginehouse had nothing better to fall back upon, they kept on to the north.

Uneasy days followed nights of terror and weary marching for a week. Then John Cook, the brilliant, but eccentric lieutenant, could stand it no longer. He told his companions he, for one, was not going to go hungry any longer. He figured, since they had reached the hills near Chambersburg, that it was safe enough to risk the purchase of food in some sleepy crossroads store.

Tidd and the younger Brown argued with him, but without success. Cook struck off on his own, saying he would bring back provisions for all if he met with success. They never saw him again.

Cook strode down off the wooded ridges and walked into a little hamlet about eight miles from Chambersburg. He didn't have a chance. Armed men, as hungry for the one thousand dollars reward offered by Governor Wise for any raider caught alive as Cook was for a square meal, saw the

roughly dressed man, guessed at his identity, and got the drop on him. He surrendered meekly and was taken into Chambersburg. There he was lodged in jail. Governor Wise called on Governor Packer of Pennsylvania to deliver the prisoner to Virginia. The Pennsylvanian saw fit to honor the requisition from the Old Dominion, and Cook was doomed.

Owen Brown, Tidd, Merriam, and Barclay Coppoc, made of sterner stuff, or luckier, tightened their belts, ate chestnuts and butternuts which could be shaken out of the many trees on the slopes of the mountains, and struggled on northwards, putting more and more miles between themselves and the Mason and Dixon Line.

After a while they got far enough so that the feelings of the residents were more favorable to Brown and his excursion, and they made good their escape.

Strangely enough, Albert Hazlett and Osborn Anderson, although almost a day behind the other fugitives when they set out from the Potomac, made better time than their companions in arms. This was partly because Merriam slowed the larger group down so badly, and partly because the two men kept to a more direct route, stopping less often to scavenge for food.

The white man and the mulatto were not spied crossing Maryland and made their way around Chambersburg without incident. When they reached the next town of any size, Carlisle, they separated. Anderson found temporary refuge in the home of Negro farm hands and then started for New York State.

Hazlett assumed the alias of William Harrison and went looking for work to get money enough to eat and buy train passage to freedom. But there were suspicious men in Carlisle, too, and the raider was seized and questioned. His success in out-distancing his friends did him no good, for by the late afternoon of October 22 he was under arrest and behind bars in the Carlisle jail. He too was surrendered to Virginia who sent deputies to get him and Captain Cook at the same time. Anderson, with heavier odds against him because of his color,

kept to the back roads and finally crossed the border into Canada, from which he had ventured when John Brown raised the banner of intervention in behalf of colored men in bondage.

On the second day of the trial, in the late afternoon, when Old Brown was marched back to his cell, he learned that Cook and Hazlett were in nearby cells. He thought fast, passed the word by some secret grapevine telegraph to his followers who had been indicted with him, and acted as if Hazlett were a total stranger.

Brown and the others knew that Cook had been fairly well known at Harper's Ferry before the raid and that there was no question of his correct identification as one of the insurgents, even though captured in Pennsylvania. But, by the same reasoning, Old Brown figured that no one at the Ferry had seen Hazlett in the daytime. Since he and Osborn Anderson had remained holed up in the Arsenal through the long day of bitter fighting there was a good chance that the state of Virginia would be unable to prove his participation in the raid.

All through the days and weeks that followed, right up to the steps of the gallows, none of the other raiders ever gave a sign that he knew Hazlett. It was a noble gesture and a brave evidence of gallantry. That the scheme failed to save the swashbuckling, troublesome young man Annie Brown had called one of her most difficult "invisibles," detracts not a whit from the nobility of the effort.

By the morning of the second day of Old Brown's trial the authorities were satisfied—for the time being—that no force from the North could rescue the prisoner. They had made one final arrangement, foolish and fantastic, of which they were inordinately proud.

Cannon, loaded with canister, were emplaced on all four sides of the courthouse, trained not on the streets leading to the building but on the building itself. Artillerymen stood to the guns all day long, under orders to fire if any rescuers tried to steal the prisoners away from Virginia justice. No one

seemed to consider that if the cannon were fired more loyal southerners would be slaughtered than northerners. It was a glaring evidence of the hysteria that held Charlestown in its grip.

More militiamen were ordered to duty and since there were so many already on watch in the town the additional troops were posted on the outskirts. It took an hour and a half for the company commanders to change the guard, so far from the barracks were the posts of these sentries.

But these arrangements satisfied Governor Wise and the special prosecutor. The former made speeches warning northern governors not to allow armed bands to be mustered in their states and the latter got on with the business of convicting the wounded insurrectionist.

Mayor Green, valiantly trying his best to provide a stout defense for Brown, argued for a delay so that northern attorneys to whom Brown had written might have time to join the defense staff. Judge Parker denied the request when Andrew Hunter claimed that delay might somehow foster further servile rebellions.

A new request for a delay on the grounds that the old man was too weak to stand trial was also made this second morning. The prison physician reiterated his opinion that Brown was well enough for the ordeal. Then Captain Avis was sworn. The kind-hearted jailer, who had already grown strangely fond of the prisoner, said that in all fairness he had heard the raider's leader complain that his mind was confused and that his hearing was affected. But the Deputy Sheriff said he felt unable to state whether or not his unwilling guest was actually fit for trial.

The court refused a postponement again.

As the witnesses from Harper's Ferry told their stories of the raid, the old man wrote a note to his counsel advising them of steps to take in his behalf:

> We gave to numerous prisoners perfect liberty.
> Get all their names.

We allowed numerous other prisoners to visit their families to quiet their fears.

Get all their names.

We allowed the conductor to pass his train over the bridge with all his passengers, I myself crossing the bridge with him, and assuring all the passengers of their perfect safety.

Get that conductor's name, and the names of the passengers, so far as may be.

We treated all our prisoners with the utmost kindness and humanity.

Get all their names, so far as may be.

Our orders, from the first and throughout, were, that no unarmed person should be injured, under any circumstances whatever.

Prove that by ALL the prisoners.

We committed no destruction or waste of property.

Prove that.

When the state started its parade of witnesses many of the very men Brown had wanted brought in to testify appeared against him, yet very few of them seemed to harbor any malice. Colonel Washington's story was factual and so was that of the conductor from the night express, Phelps. Phelps was a colorful man on the stand, making the whole story of the train's delay live again. Both Colonel Washington and the conductor agreed that Brown had been neither rude nor ruthless.

John Allstadt was less friendly to the man who had ordered him seized and held a prisoner. The plantation owner said Brown kept his rifle cocked all the time in the engine-house and expressed the opinion that it was the defendant who shot and killed Luke Quin, the Marine who followed Lieutenant Green and Major Russell through the shattered door into the fort.

All through the morning and afternoon session the wounded prisoner lay on the cot, staring at the ceiling or appearing to

sleep. If ever a man seemed unconcerned over his own fate, it was this defendant in the old courthouse in Charlestown. Reporters wired thousands of words to their distant papers about his fearlessness. Visitors fought for standing room in the crowded courtroom and most of them watched the recumbent figure with the same hypnotic interest a songbird shows as a snake slithers along a branch toward its fledglings.

When the session ended the old man walked with labored steps out into the late afternoon sunlight and through the double line of soldiers to the jail. There were no cries for vengeance; no angry voices lifted against him. It was as if he cast a spell upon the onlookers.

"His confinement," wired the correspondent of the New York *Herald,* "has not at all tamed the daring of his spirit."

That night another haystack caught fire and burned to the ground. Down the road to Winchester shots were fired at fleeing figures by nervous militiamen. Nerves were getting edgy. Residents of the valley looked askance at every strange face. Householders added bolts and new locks to their doors and purchased extra ammunition for their squirrel guns and pistols. By the third day of the trial the hardware and supply stores were sold out of everything that could make a home more secure, and the only ammunition to be had was that in the militia's barracks.

But in the jail, with its scores of inside and outside guards, old John Brown lay down and slept as though the twelve men who held his fate in their hands had already voted him innocent.

The next day, however, things did not go so smoothly for the old man.

Harry Hunter, son of the special prosecutor, and the man who had dragged William Thompson out of the Wager Hotel to be shot by the mob on the Potomac River bridge, was called as a witness. He was a tall, raw-boned young man, neither so intelligent nor so urbane as his father. When he started his story of the events at the Ferry he behaved as if he had been the central figure in the whole episode. He was

conceited, brash, and utterly unaware that his testimony was tearing at his father's heart.

Proudly he told the jury and judge that he had reached Harper's Ferry with the Jefferson Guards but left them to "go off fighting on my own hook." He said he had gone with friends—he didn't call it a mob—to the room where Thompson was held prisoner. The fact that Thompson had been seized while carrying a white flag meant nothing to him at the time, said the witness.

John Brown, for the first time in the trial, lost control of himself. Rising from the cot and looking at the witness with his agate-like eyes, the prisoner cried:

"Tell us the details. Hold nothing back."

Andrew Hunter looked at his son with shame and pity, but he added his voice to that of the defendant.

"Tell us what happened in detail," ordered the father. "Leave nothing out."

Then, while his father listened, sick at heart, the boy told how he and George Chambers had led other men to the quarry.

"I am related to Mayor Beckham," he said, as if that somehow made all understandable. "When he was shot I became enraged. I started with Chambers to the room where Thompson was confined."

John Brown rose to one elbow, throwing back the counterpane, and stared at the younger Hunter. Hatred and loathing were etched upon his weatherbeaten countenance.

"We levelled our guns at him," Hunter continued. "But then Mrs. Fouke's sister threw herself before him, and begged us to leave him to the law."

As he told how they had brushed Christine Fouke aside and caught Thompson by the throat, Old Brown groaned. Harry Hunter looked at the prisoner and then looked away. He hurried his recital, as if suddenly aware that his story was an evil, unclean thing.

He told how the unflinching raider had been dragged to the bridge and how, as he and Chambers aimed their guns

in a moment of "wild exasperation, a dozen more balls were buried" in the unarmed man's body.

"Then we threw his body off the trestle," said the witness.

John Brown groaned again, and covered his head with the counterpane.

"We started after others to shoot all we could find," said Hunter, braver now that the old man's accusing eyes were hidden under the cover. "I felt justified in shooting any that I could find. I felt it my duty, and I have no regrets."

So he left the stand, and his father turned away as the son walked past him, suffering as only a parent can suffer over the sins of his offspring.

This gruesome recital of the murder of William Thompson upset the defendant. After several other minor witnesses were called and had testified, he interrupted the trial.

"May it please the court," he said, "I discover that notwithstanding all the assurances I have received of a fair trial, nothing like a fair trial is to be given to me."

He told of witnesses he had asked to be subpoenaed and how they had not appeared. No longer did he have any faith in his counsel, he said.

"I have nobody to do any errands," he continued, "for all my money was taken when I was sacked and stabbed, and I have not a dime. I had two hundred and fifty or sixty dollars in gold and silver taken from my pocket, and now I have no possible means of getting anybody to go my errands for me."

He lay down again, drew his blanket over him and closed his eyes, sinking into what seemed like undisturbed sleep.

Brown's denunciation of his appointed counsel came as a thunderclap to the courtroom. The beardless boy, Hoyt, stepped forward and suggested an adjournment. Green and Botts tendered their resignations. The session broke up in turmoil, and Brown was carried back to jail on his cot.

That night Lawson Botts stayed up the entire night, turning over his notes to the young attorney from Massachusetts, letting him use his law office, in fact doing everything possible

to show that he held no grudge for being discarded by the old guerilla leader.

The next morning, when Brown again was taken into court, there were three new attorneys; Hoyt, Samuel Chilton of Washington, and Hiram Griswold of Cleveland. The two latter men had just arrived and took their places at the defense table without an opportunity for the briefest of consultations with Hoyt or Brown himself.

The twenty-one-year-old youth who thus found himself chief counsel in one of the most famous trials in history was dead on his feet. He had remained awake all night, working with his predecessor, until he fell unconscious from exhaustion. He told the court he had had but ten hours' sleep in the past five days.

But help was at hand, from a source no one expected. Brown himself began to ask questions on cross-examination and strangely enough Judge Parker raised no objections. Andrew Hunter and Charles Harding watched askance as the old man put his questions from the cot in the center of the courtroom, but they did not defy the judge.

On the fourth day, in the afternoon—it was Saturday—Brown was surprised to hear the name of Captain Sinn of Frederick, who had urged him to surrender the night before Colonel Lee arrived, and who had saved the life of Aaron Stevens by shaming the mob members who wanted to shoot him while he lay bleeding in his bed.

Captain Sinn told his story with military precision. He said he had urged surrender mainly to avoid further needless bloodshed but that the raiders had refused on the grounds they would have no promise of a chance to escape.

"I have no sympathy for the acts of the prisoner or of his movement," said the militia officer bluntly, "but I regard Captain Brown as a brave man. As a Southern man I came here to state the facts about the case, so that Northern men would have no opportunity of saying that Southern men were unwilling to appear as witnesses in behalf of one whose principles they abhorred."

It was just what would have been expected of the man from Maryland.

There was further testimony from other witnesses. Then the trial was adjourned over the Sabbath. Brown walked back to the jail this time, his head high, his step remarkably firm.

Over the weekend excitement mounted. The story had been told, the witnesses had paraded before the watchful eyes of the six hundred who daily pressed themselves into the confines of the small county courtroom. Now there was only the legalistic feinting to come as each side summed up, and then the jury would be given the case to decide.

Sunday morning the churches of Charlestown were packed to the doors. The preachers prayed that justice be done and that no man shirk his duty. The sermons, for the most part, were Southern in their slant but even so the Lord was asked to see that Old Brown was given every chance to repent, if not to go free.

Captain Avis served good, stout meals in his jail. John Brown ate his with relish and then spent the rest of the Sunday afternoon reading the Bible. In all Charlestown there was probably no man with an easier conscience.

CHAPTER 16

LATE Sunday evening, after completing his plans for the next day's activities in court, George Hoyt, the youthful chief counsel, dashed off a quick report to the man in Massachusetts who had sent him South to defend Brown.

"Brown is well pleased with what has transpired," he wrote. "I confess I did not know which most to admire, the thorough honor and admirable qualities of the brave old border soldier, or the uncontaminated simplicity of the man. My friend John Brown is an astonishing character. The people about here, while determined to have him die for his alleged offenses,

generally concede and applaud the conscientiousness, the honor, and the supreme bravery of the man."

Court reconvened at nine o'clock Monday morning. The Sabbath rest had done the defendant much apparent good. He looked healthier and more refreshed as he marched from jail to courthouse. Once in court, however, he stretched out upon his cot and listened attentively as the fine legal points of the trial were debated by prosecution and defense.

Griswold contended that Brown, not being a citizen of Virginia, could not be guilty of treason and he scoffed at the contention that Brown's men had levied war against the Old Dominion. He said that because Brown and his men had invaded the state to help slaves win their freedom it did not follow he was waging war. When men died during the battles at Harper's Ferry, said the lawyer, it did not make the raid a war any more than a bank robbery, that resulted in deaths, could constitute a war.

It was smart thinking but the faces of the jurors remained set and dour.

When Griswold took up the final count—that Brown had conspired with the slaves—the defense counsel was in somewhat deeper and hotter water. He maintained that Brown never urged the slaves to undertake murder, arson, rapine, or destruction of their masters' lives and property; hence there could be no conspiracy and no rebellion.

Chilton took over the chore and pointed out that as a native Virginian, he had no liking for what Brown had done, but he too argued that rebellion and conspiracy and war were crimes that Brown had not committed in his attempt to get the blacks to run away. Murder he ruled out on the ground that Brown returned the fire of others and killed in self-defense without any premeditation.

Old Brown lay quiescent, staring at the ceiling, and took no part in the arguments. Even when the special prosecutor began his summation the old man appeared lost in reverie.

Hunter charged that the raiders entered Virginia intent upon provoking armed conflict, that they even took up resi-

dence for a time in Virginia, before moving to the Kennedy farm in Maryland. The state's attorney said that the fatal shooting of Shephard Hayward and the unarmed Mayor, Fontaine Beckham, constituted murder beyond the chance of doubt.

Turning to the jury, Andrew Hunter pleaded with the twelve men to render true justice.

"Administer it according to your law—acquit the prisoner if you can; but if justice requires you by your verdict to take his life, stand by that column [of justice] uprightly, but strongly, and let retributive justice, if he is guilty, send him before that Maker who will settle the question forever and ever."

The jury filed out to deliberate. John Brown remained on his cot, the counterpane drawn up around his throat, ignoring the whispered words of his counsel and the muted conversations of the spectators. If he had any emotions they were hidden behind the wrinkled, weather-worn face framed by a great shock of white hair and the full, flowing beard.

Forty-five minutes later, as the six hundred spectators waited in hushed expectancy, the jurors filed back into the jury box. The foreman was asked if they had reached a verdict. He said they had.

Old Brown threw back the cover and sat up in bed, focusing his ice-blue eyes on the foreman. His gaze was one neither of fear nor threat nor defiance.

"The jury find the prisoner guilty of treason in advising and conspiring with slaves and others to rebel, and of murder in the first degree."

The foreman's voice was flat, almost toneless. He looked at Judge Parker as he pronounced the words of doom.

The man who had devoted the last fifteen years of his life to the cause of fighting slavery made no sound, uttered no word. He lay back down upon the cot, a strangely silent figure in a strangely silent courtroom. In all the crowded chamber there was nothing but the muffled murmur of heavy breathing.

The old man went back to his cell for the remainder of the

afternoon and the court busied itself with arraigning the next defendant, Edwin Coppoc, and picking a jury to try him.

Word of the leader's conviction spread about the town like fire through dry prairie grass. In the saloons and the stores and on the sidewalks Virginians expressed a subdued pleasure in the turn of events. There was no element of surprise. Anyone with a third grade education could have guessed, even before the trial began, what the result would be.

The next day, the second of November, dawned clear and crisp. When the bearded insurrectionist made his way through the throng to the court he walked with his customary stoop, but with a firm step to which much of the accustomed springiness had returned. Men and women standing behind the double lines of soldiers marvelled that the manacled prisoner gave no indication of being defeated. A Baltimore newspaperman commented that the doomed man bore an air of contentment, almost of accomplishment, now that he was virtually assured of a martyr's role.

For the last time the old man stretched out full length upon his pallet. His attorneys moved for an arrest of judgment—a legalistic formality under the circumstances—and it was denied. So too were other technical motions as to the insufficiency of the state's proof of the crime of treason and as to the form of the verdict rendered by the twelve jurors.

The clerk of the court turned to the prisoner.

"Is there any reason," he asked, "why sentence should not now be passed upon you?"

Brown's counsel looked at the judge in surprise. They had not expected this. They had assumed that another day or two would be given them before Judge Parker pronounced the penalty. Perhaps they thought that Edwin Coppoc's arraignment had prevented the court from preparing any words to utter before sentencing their client. As a matter of fact Judge Parker had lingered at his desk long into the night writing down his reasons for overruling the objections of the defense. But when court reconvened, the jury that was to try Coppoc were in the box, and the judge feared that his opinions might

unduly influence the twelve men. So he refrained from all comment and instructed the clerk to take the necessary steps so that he could pronounce sentence.

Spectators in the crowded room were a-tingle with excitement and the attorneys were no less upset, but John Brown himself could not have been less concerned.

He threw off the counterpane, rose beside the cot and stood there, erect and unflinching, his hawk's gaze bent straight upon the judge.

"I have, may it please the Court, a few words to say."

His voice was steady, deep and resonant.

"In the first place, I deny everything but what I have all along admitted, of a design on my part to free slaves. I intended certainly to have made a clear thing of that matter, as I did when I went last winter 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 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, . . . had I so interfered on behalf of the rich and powerful, the intelligent, the so-called great, or in behalf of any of their friends, either father or mother, brother or 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 the Court would have deemed it an act worthy of reward, rather than punishment."

The words came from John Brown's lips almost as if he had memorized them. They were ringing, challenging, noble words, yet he had not known he was to be sentenced, and he had scribbled no notes, thought out no speech in advance. He spoke from his heart and a whole world listened, a world on the eve of civil conflict that would not end until that

against which the ancient idealist had fought so ardently had been swept away.

He looked about at judge, lawyers, and spectators. It was almost as if he sensed that the words he spoke would go singing across thousands of miles of telegraph wires, into hundreds of newspaper offices and thousands of homes—almost as if he could hear the words of a song not yet written—"John Brown's body lies a-mouldering in the grave; but his soul goes marching on."

"This Court acknowledged too, as I suppose, the validity of the law of God," he continued. "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 men should do to me I should do even so to them.' It teaches me, further, to 'remember them that are in bonds as bonded with them.' I endeavored to act up to those instructions. 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, in behalf of His despised poor, was no 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 the 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 the circumstances, it has been more generous than I expected, but I feel no consciousness of guilt. I have stated from the first what was my intention and what was not. I have never had any design against the life of any person, nor any disposition to commit treason or excite the 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 fear that 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."

In the crowded courtroom not a sound could be heard. It was a mixed audience. There were judges and lawyers and educated men. There were politicians and officers and soldiers. There were sheriff's deputies, bailiffs, and clerks. And there were townsfolk, farmers, armorers from the Ferry, reporters from distant cities, and men who had come down out of the coves of the Blue Ridge, drawn as by a magnet.

Stunned they were by the majesty of John Brown's words. Most of them were religious, with the deep-grained sincerity of an unsophisticated era. When the old man quoted the Bible he was speaking a language they understood. His faith in those words, his sincere reliance upon their teaching could not help giving the listeners pause. They were coals of holy fire he had hurled at them and there was no one who did not feel the scorching heat of his accusations.

So they stood silent, not even stirring in their places.

After what seemed a long period of waiting Judge Parker began to speak. He said he could find no reason in his mind or in his heart to support a reasonable doubt as to the prisoner's guilt.

Solemnly he spoke the words sentencing the bearded old man "to be hung in public, on Friday, the 2nd of December."

With granite-like composure John Brown heard the words of doom but there was nothing to hint of fear in the border fighter's behavior. He turned and sat down upon the edge of his cot. Then, and only then, did anyone mar the strict decorum of the scene. A man clapped his hands; a man strange to Jefferson County, and all his fellows looked at him as if he had done an evil thing. A bailiff led him outside and warned him to come back no more.

Captain Avis, warned by the Judge that sentence would be imposed that day, had doubled the number of bailiffs inside the courthouse. He suggested the use of soldiers, but Judge Parker forbade it, having a true democrat's distaste for "armed men in a court of justice." Rumors had been spread that the people who had crowded into Charlestown for the trial "would tear Brown to pieces before he could be taken from the building," but like most rumors, it was the empty mouthing of some blatherskite. The prisoner was marched off to jail between rows of silent watchers. Not one man lifted his voice to jeer.

The telegraph wires were crowded that evening with the reports filed by newspapermen from Boston to Atlanta. Most of the stories out of the Jefferson County seat were partisan and slanted to fit the sympathies of sectional readers in the different corners of the nation. Yet hardly a reporter failed to quote Brown's words, sensing that they were the warp and woof of history, aware that they bore the inevitable stamp of immortality.

With Brown sentenced to die in exactly one month, the excitement might have been expected to die down. It grew more explosive. Northern writers, editors, and clergymen heaped accusations of murder on the slave states, particularly Virginia. Southern men returned the vitriol.

A small paper, *The Yeoman*, of Frankfort, Kentucky, appeared with a scorching indictment of what occurred in the ancient courthouse in Virginia:

> If old John Brown is executed, there will be thousands to dip their handkerchiefs in his blood: relics of the martyr will be paraded through the North . . . and Governor Wise would be compared to Julian the Apostate or to Graham of Claverhouse. . . . Think of the shame that must rest upon the commonwealth of Virginia . . . if her security demands and receives the blood of one old brave bad man.

Letters poured in upon Governor Wise and Andrew Hunter.

They threatened, implored, cajoled, warned, pleaded.

Governor Wise replied to one, sent by New York City's sorry Mayor, Fernando Wood, asking him if he had the "nerve" not to hang Brown, but to commit him to prison for life.

"Yes," said the Virginian in reply, "if I didn't think he ought to be hung . . . I could do it without flinching, without a quiver of a muscle against a universal clamor for his life. . . . And I therefore say to you firmly that I have precisely the nerve enough to let him be executed as the law sentences him, and his body shall be delivered over to surgeons, and await the resurrection without a grave in our soil. I have shown him all the mercy which humanity can claim."

This was written in passion, and the awful threat at the end of the missive was of course not carried out. What changed the Governor's mind may have been the shabby letter he received from a professor of anatomy at the University of Virginia medical school.

"We desire," wrote the physician, "if Brown and his coadjutors are executed, to add their heads to the collection in our museum. If the transference of the bodies will not exceed a cost of five dollars each, we should also be glad to have them. . . . Attention to this request will confer a great favor."

There were other letters of all shades and varieties, revealing, if nothing else, the strange channels in which the minds of men can run.

Old Brown himself was showered with mail. Each letter was carefully studied by the prosecutors, the Sheriff, or his deputies. They were still afraid that attempts would be made to free their famous prisoner and were seeking clues to his potential deliverers.

One of the strangest came over the signature of Mahala Doyle, the woman who had seen her husband and two sons dragged from their cabin on the bank of the Pottowatomie and murdered in that insane bloodbath the Kansas guerillas had deemed necessary for the safety of their people:

Although vengeance is not mine, I confess that I do feel

grateful to hear that you were stopped in your fiendish career at Harper's Ferry. With the loss of your two sons you can now appreciate my distress in Kansas when you, then and there, entered my house at midnight and arrested my husband and two boys, and took them out of the yard and in cold blood shot them dead in my hearing. You can't say you did it to free our slaves. We had none and never expected to own one. It has only made me a poor disconsolate widow, with helpless children. While I feel for your folly, I do hope and trust that you will meet your just reward. Oh! how it pained my heart to hear the dying groans of my husband and children. If this scrawl gives you any consolation you are welcome to it.

N.B. My son, John Doyle, whose life I begged of you, is now grown up, and is very desirous to be in Charlestown on the day of your execution, and would certainly be there if his means would permit it that he might adjust the rope around your neck.

Mahala Doyle did not pen the letter herself. She didn't know how to write, as was proved by various documents in Kansas archives to which she had appended a cross as "her mark." But no one doubted that she had inspired the bitter message. Andrew Hunter, the special prosecutor, copied it before handing it to the prisoner, and released it for publication to the representative of the New York *Express*.

In what seemed like cold-blooded haste the State of Virginia tried Edwin Coppoc, Shields Green, John Copeland, and John E. Cook. The court arguments were mere echoes of John Brown's trial, but they helped to keep the pot of emotionalism boiling furiously.

Early in Edwin Coppoc's trial it became evident that some of the bloodlust was dying out. Many persons, more tenderhearted about a boy than they had been about the old guerilla, urged some form of leniency. But Virginia was moving fast to try all the raiders and the appeals did no good at the time.

Judge Parker also presided over the Frederick County Circuit Court, which was due to open soon, so there was considerable pressure to close out the term in Jefferson County.

In rapid succession John Cook, Edwin Coppoc, John Copeland, and Shields Green were also found guilty.

A day or so after the last of the secondary trials, Sheriff Avis had the four men delivered for sentencing. Cook and Coppoc were manacled together and the mulatto and the Negro were handcuffed to each other. Even at such moments, the Old Dominion rigidly upheld the theory of segregation.

There was no opinion from the bench, no reading of legal justification for not setting aside evidence or verdict. Judge Parker looked at the quartet in irons, half in pity, half in hatred, and spoke the works that killed all hope.

"The sentence of the law," he said, "is that you, and each one of you, . . . be hanged by the neck until you be dead—and that execution of this judgment be made and done . . . on Friday, the sixteenth of December next, upon you Shields Green and John Copeland, between the hours of eight in the forenoon and twelve of that day; and upon you, John E. Cook and Edwin Coppoc, between the hours of twelve noon and five in the afternoon of the same day . . . and may God have mercy upon the soul of each one of you."

Judge Parker left for Frederick County, and those kinder Virginians who had listened to Edwin Coppoc's trial began to exert pressure for some sort of diminution of penalty for the blond-haired, good-looking boy from Iowa. They appealed to the authorities at Richmond and to their own legislative representatives.

Governor Wise was impressed. He talked to his advisors, read the letters from Charlestown and decided to act. He showed his Christian leanings by going before the legislative committees on jurisprudence and the courts. He expressed his willingness to commute the young Quaker's sentence to life imprisonment.

But the boy himself, unwittingly, had sealed his doom. In a letter written from prison to his leader's wife, unselfishly commiserating with her over the gallant way Watson and Oliver Brown had given their lives in the cause of abolition, he referred to the men of Harper's Ferry as "the enemy." Politicians got hold of the word, worried it as dogs worry a bone, and finally the sentence had to stand.

Charlestown remained in a fever of excitement. Another fire broke out on the farm of Walter Shirley, who had been one of the jurors at John Brown's trial. Before it could be extinguished, the barn, stables, outbuildings, and winter's hay were destroyed at a loss of $4,000.

It was coincidence, of course, but the authorities sent militiamen scurrying after nonexistent clues to the evil-doers they supposed were seeking revenge.

A few nights later George H. Tate, another of the original jurors, watched his outbuildings go up in flames, and soon after that a third of Brown's "twelve peers" lost everything but his house.

Terror gripped the town. It was panic such as the community had experienced that morning when Dr. Starry spurred his jaded horse into the square with word of the insurrection at Harper's Ferry.

Men went to bed fearfully, afraid of what might happen before the dawn came. Others mounted guard with their sons and relatives, marching like sentries all through the night hours, guarding barns, stables, chicken coops, and haymows.

A local magistrate, Judge Lucas, lost his haystack in a fire. A few nights later someone fired a shot beneath the window of his bedchamber. That was all that was needed to plunge the town into renewed dismay. The militia dashed off in all directions. Men looked askance at neighbors they had known all their lives and many a cry of "Wolf! Wolf!" spread the contagion of fear.

Mayor Green, who had seemed calm enough at the outset of Brown's trial, when he was acting as a state-appointed defense attorney, issued orders that every stranger in Charlestown who couldn't give a satisfactory explanation of his presence must get out of town.

The "beardless spy," George Hoyt, who had led Brown's defense, was ushered to the station and put aboard a train for the Ferry. A reporter for *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Magazine,* who had committed no offense, but who was suspected of being a correspondent for the hated New York *Tribune,* also had to pack his bag and quit Charlestown.

The soldiers manning the cannon that had been trained

upon the courthouse, turned their muzzles so that they commanded the main streets leading into the central square.

Colonel J. Lucius Davis, a West Point graduate with a long flowing beard and an excitable temper, ordered the soldiers to do more drilling, convinced that before Brown could be hanged hundreds of armed men from the North would swoop down upon the county seat. But he bristled with unnecessary courage as he swore he was eager to do battle.

"We are ready for them," he telegraphed authorities in Richmond. "If attack be made, the prisoners will be shot by the inside guards."

Many of the fidgety, faint-hearted residents appealed for declaration of martial law, but wiser heads intervened, thinking perhaps of the guffaws that would rock the North, and it was not proclaimed.

But, as a Baltimore *American* reporter told his paper, the unfortunate people of Charlestown were exposed to every rigor but martial law.

"Even the citizens of the town cannot pass through the suburbs without being arrested and carried off to headquarters," he reported. "Persons coming into the town have to be detained an hour or more, and then marched by an armed guard to the presence of the military authorities to give an account of themselves. On leaving they have to obtain a pass, and run the gauntlet of a dozen sentinels to return to their homes again.

"Yesterday, as I entered town, I saw the venerable Edward Ruffin, the famous Virginia agriculturist, with his flowing locks, being marched to headquarters between two armed guards, and even the Hon. Andrew Hunter has been subjected to the same species of military discipline. On entering the cars at Harper's Ferry we were fortunate in meeting the chief of police at Charlestown, who accompanied us and passed us through the line of military that surrounded the depot awaiting the arrival of the train. No one was allowed to leave the cars unless vouched for by somebody in authority; and those who were not so fortunate were marched to headquarters to give an account of themselves."

Charlestown did not suffer alone. Citizens of Harper's

Ferry trembled like aspen leaves. In response to alarms from the scene of Brown's raid, Governor Wise wired to Petersburg for troops. He obtained others in the capital city and sent them all off—four hundred strong—to the little town at the confluence of the Shenandoah and Potomac. On the next train he dashed off to take command himself and fluttered back and forth between the Ferry and the county seat, trying to make up his mind where rumored bands of armed men would strike first.

The harassed chief magistrate was at the Ferry when the bearded Colonel Davis appealed to him by telegraph.

"Send me five hundred men armed and equipped instanter," pleaded the officer. "A large body are approaching from Wheeling armed with pikes and revolvers. Pardon Haste."

This stuck even in Governor Wise's throat.

"Be cautious," he wired back. "Commit no mistake tonight. Men will march tomorrow morning."

A few days later 150 more militiamen, accoutered with pistols, rifles, and with supporting artillery, descended on the Ferry.

Then the Governor's fever abated, and that very night the contingents of armed men were sent to barracks in other parts of the state. Colonel Davis was replaced in command of all the troops in western Virginia by Major General William B. Taliaferro soon after and, although it couldn't be proved, it looked as if the Governor wanted a steadier seneschal on the Potomac marches.

For all their vigilance, the Governor, Andrew Hunter, Captain Avis, and the military authorities failed to draw tight the strings of their protective cordon at Charlestown.

A few days after Old Brown was incarcerated a man stepped off the train at the depot, made his way through the crowd, and obtained a job in a printing office. He talked loudly and bitterly against all abolitionists, and particularly against Brown and his raiders. When the nervous officials ordered more guards hired to support Captain Avis and his regular deputies, this man easily obtained an appointment as a guard inside the jail.

No one knew him—no one, except Brown and some of his

fellow prisoners. He was Charles Lenhart, a Kansas jayhawker, who had led a band of fourteen men on many a foray into pro-slavery territory and whose fame was second only to that of Brown and Captain James Montgomery.

On his own initiative Lenhart had obtained the very post he desired, one where he could talk with the insurrectionists, spy on the jailers, and attempt to free the prisoners. He tried to convince John Brown that flight could be successful, but the man who wanted to free the slaves from bondage now seemed happy in his own chains.

Lenhart refused to be discouraged and went on with his duties while a thousand armed men outside the jail stormed up and down the countryside seeking suspicious characters. He never understood why John Brown looked ahead to the gibbet, not with trepidation, but with what seemed a holy zeal.

A reporter asked the wounded guerilla about the rumors of liberating forces that appeared headed for his place of imprisonment.

"I do not know that I ought to encourage any attempt to save my life," said the old man. "I am not sure that it would not be better for me to die at this time."

This sense of fatalism had colored a letter he penned to his wife and children a short time before he was sentenced, but which was not mailed until after that event.

In this letter he had told of the fight at Harper's Ferry, the death of their two sons, and his subsequent trial and conviction.

> Under all these terrible calamities, I feel quite cheerful in the assurance that God reigns; & will overrule all for his glory; & the best possible good. I feel no consciousness of guilt in the matter: nor even mortifycation on account of my imprisonment; & I feel perfectly sure that very soon no member of my family will feel any possible disposition to 'blush on my account'. Already dear friends at a distance with kindest sympathy are cheering me with the assurance that posterity at least will do me justice. . . . Never forget the poor nor think anything you bestow on them to be lost to you even though they may be as black as Ebedmelch the

Ethiopian eunuch who cared for Jeremiah in the pit of the dungeon; or as black as the one to whom Phillip preached Christ. Be sure to entertain strangers . . . 'Remember them that are in bonds as bound with them'. I am in charge of a jailor like the one who took charge of Paul & Silas; and you may rest assured that both kind hearts & kind faces are more or less about me; whilst thousands are thirsting for my blood. . . . My wounds are doing well. . . .

Your affectionate Husband & Father,
John Brown.

P.S. Yesterday, Nov 2nd I was sentenced to be hanged on Decem 2nd next. Do not grieve on my account. I am still quite cheerful. God bless you all.

Yours ever
J. Brown.

The heavy frosts had come to the farm at North Elba. The leaves had fallen and each morning for more than a fortnight the water in the horse trough, the duck pond and in the ruts that made the rough road a treacherous thoroughfare had frozen over. But the chill sweeping down from Canada to the northern slopes of the Adirondacks was nothing to the icy fear that gripped Mary Anne Brown, mother of thirteen of John Brown's children. Until the words of doom had been spoken in far away western Virginia she had pushed back the shadowy image of death. But now the newspapers that made their slow way to the Brown place above Lake Placid bore the evil news in each edition. Hardly a paper in all America went to press in November of 1859 without word of the insurrectionist and his men in the jail at Charlestown.

Mrs. Brown, devoted and deeply religious, wanted more than anything else to hurry to her husband's side.

But the old man feared for his mate's safety. In his first letters to her he asked her to remain at the farm, assuring her of his love but hinting at the experiences she might face in such hostile territory as Virginia and Maryland.

If you feel sure that you can endure the trials and the

shock, which will be unavoidable (if you come), I should be most glad to see you *once more;* but when I think of your being insulted on the road, and perhaps while here, and of only seeing your wretchedness made complete, I shrink from it. Your composure and fortitude of mind may be quite equal to it all; but I am in dreadful doubt of it. If you do come, defer your journey till about the 27th or 28th of this month. The scenes which you will have to pass through on coming here will be anything but those you now pass, with tender, kindhearted friends, and kind faces to meet you everywhere. Do consider the matter well before you make the plunge.

Mrs. Brown obeyed her husband. She always had. So had his children and so had his followers. He was that sort of leader.

The first half of November he wrote many letters, most of them to Northerners who saw in the man in chains in Virginia the symbol of the cause to which they had devoted so much time and ardor. Even to those who supported slavery and wrote to him he replied with an absolute lack of bitterness. As a matter of fact only one man aroused the prisoner's ire, and he, strangely enough, was a man of the cloth.

The Reverend Mr. Norval Wilson was a southern Methodist from a nearby parish. He visited the prison and offered to pray with the old man.

"Mr. Wilson," asked Brown, "do you believe in slavery?"

"I do," replied the minister, "under the present circumstances."

"Then," said Brown, showing the preacher to the cell door, "I do not want your prayers. I don't want the prayers of any man that believes in slavery. You can pray to your Father that heareth in secret."

The editor of the local weekly paper was another of the hundreds of men who called upon the condemned man. The newspaperman asked Brown if he was ready to die.

"I am entirely ready," said the prisoner. "I feel no shame on account of my doom. Jesus of Nazareth was doomed in like manner. Why should not I be?"

Tender-hearted women traveled from New England and Ohio to give him courage. A Boston sculptor, Edwin A. Brackett, sat outside the cell door for hours sketching the old man's shaggy head for posterity. Governor Wise, drawn to the prisoner by a power even he couldn't fathom, spent hours in the jail with the man he considered an arch enemy. Each new company of soldiery sent to the beleaguered town was more curious about the prisoner than about its duties, and squads of ten and fifteen men at a time were admitted to the jail corridors to stare at the inmates.

Yet nothing seemed to disturb the calmness and assurance of the man who had held Harper's Ferry in his hands for almost a night and a day.

Unable to wait longer after the expiration of the period her husband had mentioned in his letter, Mrs. Brown made her way to Troy by wagon, changed to the train and rode to Baltimore. There she was dissuaded by friends from continuing, and went to stay with a woman in Perth Amboy.

Later in another home in Philadelphia, she wrote to Governor Wise, beseeching his permission to gather up the "mortal remains of my husband and his sons" so that she could bury them with Christian services.

The Governor replied quickly:

> I am happy, Madam, that you seem to have the wisdom and virtue to appreciate my position of duty. Would to God that 'public considerations could avert his doom,' for The Omniscient knows that I take not the slightest pleasure in the execution of any whom the laws condemn. May He have mercy on the erring and the afflicted.
>
> Enclosed is an order to Major Genl. Wm. B. Taliaferro, in command at Charlestown, Va., to deliver to your order the mortal remains of your husband 'when all shall be over,' to be delivered to your agent at Harper's Ferry; and if you attend the reception in person, to guard you sacredly in your solemn mission.
>
> With tenderness and truth, I am
> Very respectfully your humble servant.
> Henry A. Wise.

Despite the harsh words of many Northerners, chivalry was not dead in Virginia.

CHAPTER 17

In at least two sections of the country, men rallied to the cause of attempting to free John Brown and his men. The highly educated, yet militant, abolitionists of Massachusetts joined hands with the rough and ready frontiersmen in Kansas Territory who were more experienced in the arts of daring and fighting.

George Stearns of Boston wrote to Charles Jennison and James Stewart, two hard-fisted jayhawkers, pleading with them to plan a jail delivery. He told them he would gladly permit them to draw against his funds for any expenses they might incur.

Nothing came of this one effort. But there were other plans made, some foolish, some involved, which appeared excellent in the talking stage, even though they never materialized.

One of the most hare-brained of all involved a courageous, beautiful girl named Mary Partridge, whose brother George was killed while warring against the Border Ruffians with John Brown during the outbreak along the Osawatomie.

The old guerilla leader's friends in Kansas cooked up a scheme calling for Mary to make her way to Charlestown as one of the many curious sight-seers who descended on that town once Brown was caught. She was to make contact with Charles Lenhart, the guard in the jail, and other friends who were to make their way into town under one pretext or another. When they had figured out a way of snatching the prisoner from his keepers it was to be the Partridge girl's job to tell him of the details.

She was to throw her arms about him in a most excited and affectionate manner, as if a close relative, and while embracing him thus was to manage to slip into his mouth a capsule in which the plan was outlined. Mary Partridge was willing

and eager to undertake the assignment, but like so many others that never reached the action stage, this one fell apart, mostly for a lack of funds.

Time and again it appeared that the bulk of Brown's troubles and those of his followers and supporters revolved about a shortage of money. With only a very few exceptions, the enemies of slavery were men who could not themselves have afforded to keep a single servant.

In 1848, eleven years before the attack on Harper's Ferry, thousands of Germans with strong anti-monarchical feeling had fled their fatherland and sought refuge in the United States. Many of the men were young, at the age when they would have had to leave their homes and serve long terms on duty in the various armies then storming up and down the face of Europe as their leaders sought to establish larger kingdoms.

These men were not cowards trying to avoid military duty, but they hated the undemocratic systems into which they had been born. With their strong sense of tolerance and their love of individual liberty they were attracted at once to the cause which John Brown espoused.

They heard the rumored news that John Brown, Jr., was mustering men in Ohio to lead an attack on Charlestown. They sent emissaries to Higginson, Le Barnes, Stearns, and the other abolitionist leaders in Boston saying that they were ready to put more than a hundred men in the field to march on Virginia if the younger Brown led his force east and if Kansas sent a contingent of prairie fighters.

To the men in Boston this seemed like one of the most hopeful of the schemes yet broached to free the man condemned to the Charlestown gallows.

Excitement mounted in Massachusetts. Driven by the knout of passing time, the plotters hurried the drawing up of campaign orders. It was decided to gather the force, quietly and clandestinely, somewhere near Harrisburg and then to send the men, singly and in twos and threes, by back roads to a rallying point in the Blue Ridge mountains back of Charlestown.

On the given day they were to swoop down on the county

seat, overwhelm the by-now bored and careless militia, and seize the center of town. With the canister-loaded cannon in their hands, they could prevent other troops from approaching and either force the jailers to surrender the prisoners, or blast the authorities into submission.

Once they had freed the five prisoners they were to seize the mounts of the cavalry company from Shepherdstown and make their escape before General Taliaferro could counter-attack with superior forces.

It was an audacious, hot-blooded scheme. Since men on foot could not hope to take artillery into a heavily-guarded territory without detection, it was planned that the men would carry what were known as Orsini bombs, invented in the European wars for independence. With these weapons they could overcome vastly superior numbers of men armed only with rifles and side arms, giving them time to drive the artillerymen from the guns so they could use them for themselves.

There were plenty of loopholes in the plan. The men would have difficulty in reaching their rendezvous without being apprehended. It would not be easy to break through the picket lines that by now extended far beyond the outskirts of the county seat. If there was too much fighting and consequent delay on the perimeter of the town's defenses, the men at the heart of the position would have time to gather around the jail.

If the dragoons from Shepherdstown were on the picket lines themselves, or away from the center of Charlestown on detached duty, the rescuers would be left on foot in an almost hopeless situation.

On the other hand, such bravura might have surprised the citizen soldiers of the militia companies, struck terror to the untrained defenders and permitted invaders to carry out their derring-do successfully. Smaller bodies of fearless devoted men have done equally incredible feats of arms.

But alas for John Brown and his men. The scheme fell apart because there was not enough money to meet the demands of the German volunteers. These men rightly believed they should be paid something for the risk involved and each one

wanted a hundred dollars. They also wanted the backers in New England to guarantee that the widows and children of any who lost their lives on the expedition would not suffer want.

This stymied the high command in Boston. There just wasn't that much money available. But even that was not what finally led to the abandonment of the adventure. There was worse news, much worse. George Hoyt, who had not lost interest in Brown's welfare although driven out of town by Mayor Green when the lid was clamped more tightly on Charlestown, went to Ohio as a liaison officer to see how John Brown, Jr., and the Buckeye regiments were faring.

To his horror he discovered that the large band of valiant men reputedly ready to march on Virginia was a nonexistent force. The younger Brown had dilly-dallied. Men talked gravely but didn't want to risk their necks. Here, too, a lack of funds hampered recruiting.

Hoyt reported to Franklin Sanborn, and the latter sent off a tearful note to the warlike preacher in Worcester, Thomas Higginson.

"I suppose," he wrote, "that we must give up all hope of saving our old friend."

Sanborn could not have been farther from the truth.

John Brown's friends were not ready to give up, even though the days of grace were being stricken from the calendar at what seemed breakneck speed.

There was one Boston man who hated slavery with a corrosive loathing. In his veins ran the same sort of blood that coursed through the men who dumped British tea into his hometown harbor and who stood on the crest of Bunker Hill waiting until they could see the whites of the redcoats' eyes.

His name was Lysander Spooner, and he concocted the most improbable, yet imaginative, scheme of all those aimed at saving Old John Brown from the noose.

His proposal called for the kidnaping of Governor Wise.

Higginson, LeBarnes, and the others listened as he expounded the plan. The Virginia executive was to be removed under cover of darkness to a vessel on the James River. Before the hue and cry could close all avenues of escape, the craft

would make its way down the stream and out to the open sea through Hampton Roads. Once on the high seas the plotters would steer north past the Maryland shoreline and, once off the Delaware capes, could either run up that river to Philadelphia or continue on outside for a voyage to New York or Boston.

With the Governor in their hands the abolitionists could bargain for the lives of the Harper's Ferry raiders. Spooner had no doubts that Virginians would arrange an exchange to get their chief executive back alive.

This bombshell of a plan excited the abolitionists even more than had the ill-fated scheme of the German patriots. This was something straight out of fiction. Its lunacy was equalled only by the eagerness of Brown's friends to do anything to save him.

They met at the homes of the leaders in the dark of night, afraid that word of the plot might leak out to pro-slavery ears. Men from churches, countinghouses and staid old law offices went about like Sicilian desperadoes. Even their wives had no inkling of the lengths to which their highly respected spouses were ready to go in seeking revenge upon equally respectable men in Virginia who had doomed Brown to death.

Higginson was the key man in this zany enterprise. The preacher was part-owner of a yacht, the *Flirt*, which had been kept ready at sea and used on many an occasion to help fugitive slaves in their break for freedom.

The *Flirt* was a sound craft, capable of weathering the winter storms that might be expected between Hampton Roads and a northern haven. If the kidnaping of another state's Governor, in a time of peace, aroused too great a storm of protest to risk bringing their prisoner ashore, the conspirators could stay at sea on the yacht until negotiations for the exchange were completed. Around the parlor tables behind the curtained windows of the men in Massachusetts, hopes rose as Spooner outlined the details of his plans. There were many stumbling blocks. One of the worst was fear that a yacht would be a poor craft for operation on the James River. In the narrow channel it would be hard to handle and if there

were no wind—or wind from the wrong direction—it would be worthless.

A steam tug would be the obvious answer. But one would have to be hired and the crew would have to be willing to run great risks. They might be shot at by pursuers and they might have to run a gauntlet between gun emplacements or forts down the river from Richmond and in Hampton Roads.

LeBarnes moved in and asked one of his business agents to handle the arrangements for getting a tug. This man said it could be arranged but that it would be expensive.

The tug would cost from five thousand to seven thousand dollars, he notified his principals. With good luck the crew might volunteer, in which case it would cost less, but if a crew had to be hired for the dangerous undertaking it would be much more expensive. The agent said there would have to be about ten thousand dollars on the line at the very outset. The sale of the boat after the need for it was over might reimburse the backers for some of their expenses as there was a growing need for such craft in the South.

There it was again, that problem of money.

When the agent reported in person to LeBarnes, the adventure seemed even more worth while. He said the tug he had in mind could steam at fifteen to eighteen knots without difficulty. There was one gunboat—a federal vessel—that patrolled the waters in the vicinity. It could be expected to show up anywhere—in Chesapeake Bay, at the mouths of the Potomac, the York, the Rappahanock, and the James or in the roads off Norfolk and Old Point.

"But," said the agent, "the gunboat can make but thirteen knots at best, giving us plenty of leeway to make good our escape, even if apprehended. The pilot can find his way anywhere in Virginia."

When it became apparent that the kidnaping plan was wrecked on the shoals of poverty, some of the leaders wept unashamedly. They could almost see, in their imagination, the consternation that would have swept through Richmond when Governor Wise was seized. The inhabitants would be like one big gaggle of geese when a killer dog runs into the barnyard. With the bulk of the militia on duty in the western part of the

state no one would feel safe. Even the oldest of the conspirators could see themselves in the role of beau sabreurs, snatching the prisoner out from under the very dome of the Capitol and steaming at full draught down the James as jumbled command decisions and inaction delayed any pursuit.

It was a bitter pill for the friends of John Brown. When daydreaming ended, reality showed how hopeless was the old man's cause. There was brave talk a-plenty, schemes both daring and fanciful, but there was never enough money and there were never enough men with the devil-may-care brand of courage to face death against great odds and with no insurance policy or pension rights to spur them on.

Yet later events proved that a little more spirit, a dash more of courage and risk, might have led to Old Brown's freedom.

A week or more after John Brown's death, Lenhart, the spy in Captain Avis' employ, came within a whisker of saving the lives of both Cook and Coppoc.

He whispered to them that on the night of December 14, two days before they were to be hanged, he would be on duty at the corner of the wall farthest away from the brightly illuminated town square.

A prison guard was asked for a knife and Cook conveniently forgot to give it back. Such a request would be a tipoff today, but in the more casual era before the Civil War nothing was thought of it. Then Shields Green managed to get hold of a broken knife blade and lent it to Cook. As their third "weapon" they removed a long screw from the iron bedstead on which Cook slept and patched together a crude handle for it, making it into a rough pick.

Patiently they dug and scraped at the mortar in between the bricks at the rear of their cell. It was back-breaking work, and nerve-wracking because it had to be done at night in the darkness, when every click of steel against brick sounded to the prisoners like the spilling of a barrel of glass. Yet the guards paid no attention, each one apparently feeling sure that with so many others on duty there was no need for any one man to be particularly alert.

For a week Cook, who had never worked with his hands,

and Edwin Coppoc, the tender-hearted boy whose mother had warned him against going off to the wars with John Brown, dug at the mortar. Each night, just before dawn, they hurriedly mixed the chips and mortar with water from their toilet bucket and put the mixture back in the cracks around the bricks so that the guards would not become aware of their nocturnal activities.

Nights were becoming cold. Campfires burned in the streets and on the walks of the central square. Sentries walked their posts until the cold penetrated their clothing; then they repaired to the blazes to get warmed. This may have explained why no one outside the jail heard the tap, tap, tap of the little tools, or the scraping of steel against cement.

Finally Cook and Coppoc loosened enough bricks to give them room to escape. It looked as if they had a chance. Outside the aperture in the wall there was only a slight drop to the ground, as their cell was on the bottom floor of the jail. Then there were but a few yards to cross, and a fifteen-foot wall to scale. Lenhart told them he would be on guard and would provide some device that would permit them to get over the wall.

The days went by until shortly before the date set for their execution. The two men cut notches in the better knife with the blade of the other one and thus converted it into a crude hacksaw. Laboriously they filed away at their shackles, cutting through the metal until only a tiny bit was left to fool the guards. When the hour for escape came they could snap the portion left and be free of their fetters.

Finally Lenhart told them the attempt would have to be made on the 14th if he was to be of any help.

But the bad luck that had dogged John Brown was still in evidence.

On the morning of the day Cook and Coppoc were supposed to make their break the former's sister and brother-in-law arrived in Charlestown to bid him farewell. The brother-in-law was Governor of Indiana.

Cook wrestled with his conscience all day long. Finally he told Coppoc that he would not essay the escape that night for fear the authorities would assume that the Indiana executive

had had a hand in the delivery. He said he would wait another day and try for freedom on the very eve of the day set for his hanging. By then his relatives would be safely out of town and back in northern territory.

John Cook was an eccentric man, more flighty in temperament, more quixotic than the other stolid, straightforward men who had formed Brown's little army. He was probably better educated than any other except John Kagi, and he had on many occasions differed strongly with his leader on questions of policy and strategy. He believed, as did John Brown, in the Golden Rule, so it was entirely natural that he should urge his young cellmate to make the escape attempt alone, rather than be penalized by the need to wait another day for him.

Edwin Coppoc too was made of stern stuff. The Quaker training he had received in Iowa at his mother's knee led him now to refuse to flee alone, knowing that Cook would have no chance if he himself got away. The whole escape route would be revealed and Cook would be doomed.

So the two men shook hands solemnly and agreed to wait another twenty-four hours, risking everything on the last night. The gesture was noble, but the little seed of human kindness never germinated.

On the night of the 14th Charles Lenhart patrolled his post on the wall near where the loosened bricks of the jail were to be removed by the men inside. He had managed to collect several timbers from the gallows built for John Brown which could be leaned against the inside of the fifteen-foot high barrier to serve as a rough ladder or inclined ramp.

The night was dark, ideal for the attempt. No one was on the street who could find shelter inside. Over the wall there was almost no activity, since men, being essentially gregarious, prefer the cheer of blazing fires and lighted streets. Almost all of the extra guards hired to prevent escape were toasting their shins before the campfires and the street bonfires. If Cook and Coppoc had made the break, they might well have dropped over the wall and been away from the center of town within a few minutes.

Impatiently the Kansas jayhawker who had traveled all the

way east from the prairies just to aid his friends and fellow soldiers in the war against slavery marched up and down. He listened for the sound of bricks being removed, strained to see if shadows were approaching his post from the direction of the jail. He knew nothing of the decision the prisoners had made as they had been unable to communicate with him before he went on duty.

Slowly the hours dragged by. He knew he dared not leave his post, or questions would be asked that would be embarrassing to him and to the two prisoners as well. Back and forth he patrolled wondering what had happened. Then he heard voices as the officers prepared to change the guard. His relief stepped out of the darkness, spoke of the cold winds and the nasty tour of duty he faced, and Lenhart had to leave to report to his superiors before going off watch.

It had been a golden opportunity. The most macabre touch of all had been the happenstance that authorities had decided to store the lumber from the gibbet in the jail yard. Had Cook and Coppoc gone over the wall with the help of the knocked down lumber it would have been the oddest stroke of fate in all the strange story of John Brown's raid.

But opportunity did not strike twice.

The next night, adhering to the original plan, the two prisoners carefully picked out the soft paste made from the broken mortar, removed the loose bricks and stepped out into the velvet darkness of the jail yard.

As soon as their eyes became accustomed to the night they saw the pieces of wood from the gallows. They picked up two two-by-fours and leaned them against the outer wall. Their fetters broken, the two men started up the timbers, Cook leading the way. Quietly, to avoid rousing the guard; slowly, because of cramped and unused muscles, they went up the makeshift ladder. If Lenhart was on duty they would have only to drop the fifteen feet to the street beyond and they would be on their way to freedom.

But Lenhart had been assigned to other duties. A native Virginian patrolled the wall in his stead. He saw Cook silhouetted against the night sky and fired at once, missing the prisoner in his haste. Cook and Coppoc prepared to jump,

but the unfriendly guard shouted he would bayonet them with cold steel if they tried it. Shocked by the turn of events, dispirited to find that Lenhart was not where they had hoped he would be, the two men walked back into the jail and surrendered to Captain Avis, who was unquestionably the most surprised man in all of Charlestown that night.

The next day, a little after high noon, they died upon another gallows. The disjointed timbers of John Brown's gibbet were still resting in a pile against the wall of the jailhouse yard.

The fact that Cook and Coppoc came so close to getting away after their leader had died upon the scaffold does not necessarily mean that Brown himself could have escaped. By then the tension had died down somewhat. But while Old Brown himself was alive, Virginia overlooked few measures to keep him secure until the hour of his execution.

Could the men of the North have done more to save the old man? History can hardly answer. But there was another scheme, carried well along, that was set in motion even later than the one that almost saved Cook and Coppoc, and it might have been successful.

In some ways it was the most resourceful and dramatic of all those planned or attempted.

It was born while the leader of the Harper's Ferry insurgents was still alive, but it didn't become an active exploit until long weeks after he was dead and buried. Like the others, it started in Massachusetts, but it involved two men from Kansas, stout of heart, carelessly brave, and clever enough to fool almost anyone.

Captain James Montgomery was urged by telegraph to come east to take the leadership of a last ditch attempt to save at least some of the condemned men in Charlestown. He did not start at once, not because of cowardice, but because events in Bloody Kansas seemed to make it mandatory for him to stay on the prairies at the head of his company of jayhawkers.

John Brown was hanged before the abolitionist leaders in New England could convince the Kansan that the needs in

Virginia outweighed those beyond the Mississippi. Then, before Montgomery could delegate authority and turn over his command, Cook, Coppoc, Green, and Copeland had died at the end of a rope. Only Aaron Stevens, the lion-hearted, handsome, but fatalistic lieutenant, and Albert Hazlett, whose hunger had led to his capture, were left of the men who did not get away from the Ferry.

Stevens by then had virtually recovered from his horrible wounds. He was a favorite of the guards, partly because he was such a perfect specimen of a man, towering above the heads of the deputies, partly because he remained so cheerful, even in the face of death. He read a lot, talked about spiritualism, and sang hymns and ballads in a rich baritone voice that could be heard well outside the jailhouse walls.

Even the most loyal of Virginia women found their hearts fluttering romantically when they saw him—and they saw him often because John Avis allowed visitors to stream through the corridor outside the cells whenever they wanted to. Many a feminine tear was shed when the visiting ladies left the jail. Hazlett was a simple country lad, one who would not inspire overly much affection or sympathy, but Stevens could have been a matinee idol—or better yet, a hero out of the Waverly novels or the Tales of the Round Table.

These were the two survivors whom Captain Montgomery was urged to rescue.

He arrived by train at Harrisburg under an assumed name but was always referred to in the secret negotiations between the Boston abolitionists and himself as "the master machinist."

The leaders had not been idle, even if completely ineffectual, in their attempt to snatch someone from the Virginia prison. One of John Brown's devoted friends from Kansas, James Redpath, had thrown together an extremely partisan biography of the dead guerilla, and the publishers donated eight hundred dollars of the profits they had made to a fund to aid Montgomery. Other friends went to the farm in North Elba and obtained permission from Mary Brown to use some of the money donated for the support of her husband's family and dependents. Wendell Phillips, the preacher, donated a hundred dollars, and Brackett, who had sketched Brown so

that he might later sculpt a bust, doubled that contribution.

Some of the money was taken by a messenger to Harrisburg. On the way he stayed overnight in the Astor House in New York, sleeping badly because a stranger shared his room and he was afraid of being robbed.

By hook or by crook one thousand seven hundred and twenty-one dollars was finally sent to the Pennsylvania capital to ease Captain Montgomery's task. By then eight other "machines"—the code word for men ready to make the attempt to free Stevens and Hazlett—had joined the Kansas free-soiler in Harrisburg. Hard on their heels, from Boston, arrived the militant preacher, Thomas Higginson, who refused to give up hope.

Secretly the men conferred as to the best way to effect the rescue. Finally Higginson drafted a plan and put it down on paper, so that its weak points could be studied and offset. What had to be done, the document made clear, was to:

1. Traverse a mountainous country at 10 miles a night, carrying arms, ammunition & blankets & provisions for a week—with certain necessity of turning around and retreating the instant of discovery, & of such discovery causing death to our friends: and this in a country daily traversed by hunters. Also the certainty of retreat or detection in case of a tracking snow wh. may come any time. Being out 5 nights at mildest, possibly 10. Includ'g crossing Potomac, a rapid stream where there may be no fords or boats.

2. Charge on a build'g defended by 2 sentinels outside & 25 men inside a wall 14 feet high. Several men inside prison besides, & a determined jailer. Certainty of rousing town & impossibility of having more than 15 men.

3. Retreat with prisoners & wounded probably after daylight—and No. 1 repeated.

The parson signed his name to the document, having no more fear of being identified as a conspirator than John Hancock had when he boldly affixed his signature to the Declaration of Independence.

Dr. Higginson had shaved one foot off the actual height of the jail's outer wall, but aside from that he had certainly not underestimated the titanic obstacles that would confront Montgomery and his band. Probably he felt that by spelling it out so fulsomely the conspirators would look the task in the eye and go on unafraid.

But first Captain Montgomery decided it would be wiser for one or two men to scout out the situation south of the Mason and Dixon Line before committing all of the men to the hazardous assignment. Higginson agreed and the leader selected Silas Soulé, who, besides being a fearless guerilla fighter, was a born actor and mimic, who had often brightened the campfires of Kansas expeditions by his impersonations of an Irishman with a brogue straight out of County Kildare.

Montgomery was a Kentuckian by birth and his soft Southern accent made it easy for him to appear what he was not—a lone hunter looking for game in the Blue Ridge Mountains.

The two men set off on foot from Chambersburg, after driving that far in a wagon. Even before they left the capital city it had begun to snow and by the time they passed through Carlisle and Shippensburg they knew they were in for a real storm. At Chambersburg they put on high boots and struck off for the Maryland line. Only men inured to the cold that sweeps down across the Kansas plains from the high Rockies and Canada would have undertaken such an expedition in the middle of a winter blizzard. They followed the main highway until they crossed the Potomac, then cut off into the foothills between Harper's Ferry and Martinsburg.

As they struggled on southwards the snows became deeper, and they were nearly exhausted when, several days later, they neared the town where Stevens and Hazlett lay in irons. Thy holed up in a barn until rested. Then they separated, each one making his way into Charlestown by different routes and at different hours.

Captain Montgomery had no trouble studying the layout of the jail. His Southern drawl and quiet manner were a perfect disguise. But he noted the large number of soldiers still on

guard and the thought of attacking the stronghold and fighting back out again with two jail-weary prisoners seemed utterly impossible. Finally the Kansas fighter made his way back to the rendezvous in Harrisburg.

Soulé had better luck because of his dramatic ability. He reached the center of town and at once began to act drunker than a lord. He sang Irish songs, caroused in several saloons, and generally made such a nuisance of himself that he was arrested and flung into jail in a cell within whispering distance of Brown's two men.

That night, when the town had quieted down and the jailers had repaired to the office of Captain Avis, Soulé made known his true identity to Stevens and Hazlett. He told them that eight of their old companions-in-arms from Kansas were ready to try a rescue and that the jayhawkers would be aided by enough men from Massachusetts, together with a hard core of German patriots from New York, to form a band of at least twenty-two men. He told them that Captain Montgomery, with whom they had fought on the Osawatomie, and whom they admired greatly, was even then just outside the prison walls studying the best ways to manage the raid.

To his dismay Stevens and Hazlett were as unwilling to cause further bloodshed as John Brown had been, weeks before. The two men marshalled the facts against the success of the attempt. They told Soulé that eighty men were constantly on guard in addition to the regular sheriff's deputies and inside turnkeys.

One of the most convincing arguments dealt with Captain Avis. The jailer, the prisoners said, had been unbelievably kind to them. As he was absolutely fearless, they pointed out, he would fight to prevent a jail delivery and would have to be killed. Stevens and Hazlett told Soulé that they did not want other deaths on their conscience, particularly that of their head keeper.

There was a tone of complete acceptance of their fate in their voices and this, as much as anything else, convinced Soulé that an attempt to save them would be carnage without purpose. He stayed awake virtually all night, trying to

change their minds, but his heart was not in it, knowing how his friends felt.

Just before dawn the two doomed men composed messages for the man supposedly sleeping off intoxication to deliver to various relatives and friends. There was complete composure on their faces when they thanked him and bid him farewell.

After breakfast Soulé was taken off to the home of a justice of the peace for arraignment. Still portraying the role of a carefree, feckless Irishman, the Kansas guerilla fighter listened as the justice lectured him on the evils of over-drinking and especially on the foolishness of getting drunk and roistering about in a town, which, while not under martial law, was so crowded with soldiery and so tense with sectional, warlike feelings that a drunken stranger might meet a much worse fate than a night in a warm jail.

Soulé nodded meekly when warned to mend his ways, and was then discharged with the warning to get out of Charlestown and stay out. Laughing to himself, he made his way cross-country to Harrisburg, arriving a day or so after Captain Montgomery.

The conspirators met for a last, tearful session in the Drover's Tavern, a slightly down-at-the-heels inn on a side street in the Pennsylvania city. First Soulé told his companions of the way Stevens and Hazlett felt about further armed intervention in Virginia. He made it plain that any move toward rescuing them would be counter to the prisoners' wishes and pleas.

If Captain Montgomery had reported that chances for success were good, the abolitionists would probably have overridden these objections. But the Kansas fighter did not. He told his friends that the entire countryside from Harrisburg to Charlestown was in a state of alarm. Again and again he had barely missed being apprehended by armed parties Governor Wise had urged to seek out suspicious characters who might be scouting for a band of desperate Northern sympathizers.

Deep snow, bitter cold, and the distances involved made a raid unwise, he said. No matter how brave or reckless the

members of their party might be, many would be killed and wounded in a fight with the soldiers on duty in the county seat. Montgomery had heard enough in Charlestown and seen enough there and in the country between the Shenandoah Valley and Chambersburg to convince him that a party encumbered by its wounded would never survive a retreat through the snow-filled Blue Ridge.

Sorrowfully the meeting broke up. Higginson, the cleric who later commanded the first Negro regiment formed in the North to fight in the Civil War, accepted the judgment of the veteran prairie campaigner. Some of the younger, hot-blooded men from the West were willing to risk everything, but their enthusiasm wore itself out against the rock-like wisdom of their leader.

One by one the men shook hands with Montgomery and Higginson, never putting into words their realization that they were unwillingly sealing Stevens' and Hazlett's doom. Then they went out into the storm that was still swirling down out of the Alleghenies.

If the thought and effort and daring that went into the attempt to save Cook and Coppoc, so nearly successful, and Stevens and Hazlett, which never was undertaken, had been invested in a bold expedition to free John Brown it might have been crowned with triumph.

Or it might have led only to bloodshed—and there had been enough of that at Harper's Ferry.

CHAPTER 18

FAR away from the cell where John Brown waited out his numbered days on earth, Henry Ward Beecher poured balm on the wounded hearts of all those who wished he could be spirited out of the hands of his jailers.

"Seventeen men, white men, without a military base, without artillery . . . attacked a State, and undertook to release and lead away an enslaved race," he told his congregation

from the pulpit of old Plymouth Church in Brooklyn. "Seventeen white men surrounded two thousand, and held them in duress. [They] over-awed a town of two thousand brave Virginians, and held them captives until the sun had gone, laughing, twice round the globe!

"Let no man pray that Brown be spared. Let Virginia make him a martyr. Now, he has only blundered. His soul was noble; his work miserable. But a cord and a gibbet would redeem all that, and round up Brown's failure with a heroic success. . . ."

They were making him a martyr in the North, before he was dead. They could hear, in the silence of their safe, secure homes, the clanking of his chains. Abolition needed a martyr, a symbol, a sacred rallying note—and John Brown was all of these. Dred Scott had failed to fire the enemies of slavery. The Kansas-Nebraska act was a thing of laws and paper and wax seals. But the bearded man who had gone down into the very land of his foes to strike his blow for the black man was already—to many a Northerner—clad in saintly garments.

To those who guarded or visited the old fighter it seemed that he himself had an inner consciousness of what death would mean. He told a friend from Kansas, "I am worth now infinitely more to die than to live."

Sitting at a desk which the kind-hearted John Avis had provided, Brown found it easy to put his own fate above the level of ordinary misfortune. In a letter to his wife and family he said they should always remember "that Jesus of Nazareth suffered a most excruciating death on the cross as a fellon; under the most agravating circumstances. Think also of the prophets, & Apostles, & Christians of former days; who went through greater tribulations. . . ."

If he thought of his adventure at Harper's Ferry as a failure he could rationalize it by quoting from the Scriptures. In another letter to his wife he wrote:

"Although the fig tree shall not blossom; neither shall fruit be in the vines: the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat: the flock shall be cut off from the fold and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will joy in the God of my salvation."

In Springfield, Massachusetts, the daily *Republican* made editorial mention of his Cromwellian spirit:

"He is a Presbyterian in his faith and feels that it is for this purpose that God reared him up. This is evident in the answers given in his catechism, as he lay chained and bloody, with fierce eyes against him and hearts thirsting for his blood. His perfect coolness and self-possession, his evident truthfulness and transparent sincerity and the utter absence of fear in his manner, commanded the respect of all about him."

William Herndon, Abraham Lincoln's law partner, used no more purple language than that of many of his contemporaries when he said John Brown "would live amidst the world's gods and heroes through all the infinite ages."

To Mary Anne Brown, the man in Charlestown prison may have had God-like qualities, but he was, first of all, the man who was enshrined in her heart. The words of the preacher, the lines of the editorials, the convictions of militant abolitionists were each in their way reassuring, but the woman who would have to don widow's weeds in but a few days longed to feel her husband's hand in hers.

She was with friends, first in Perth Amboy and then in Philadelphia. One of her companions, Mrs. Rebecca Spring, journeyed to western Virginia to minister to Brown. On her return she brought renewed assurance of love, but a second appeal that the wife wait until nearer the end to visit him in jail.

About the time of Mrs. Spring's visit new panicky fears arose to torture the little town in the Shenandoah valley. Governor Wise, disturbed by the steady rataplan of rumors, hurried to the county seat with four hundred additional soldiers. By the time of his arrival lodgings could not be obtained for love or money. Private homes were overflowing, the boarding houses and inns had been filled—and overfilled —for weeks.

In despair the new troops were put up in churches, in schools, and in the courthouse itself. Anyone passing through the town, unaware of what was going on, would have thought the town in a state of siege.

Militiamen, dressed in a motley of uniforms, since each man designed his own, drilled in the main streets. They messed in the jail, the courthouse, and the schools, and they sometimes cooked over open fires that burned all day long and far into the night. Even the cemetery was not sacred. Soldiers' washing was hung out to dry on the iron fence that enclosed the graves or on lines strung between branches above the headstones.

The Governor called on his famous prisoner for one last time. Later he wrote down his reason for the visit in these words:

> I especially desired to ascertain whether he had any communication to make to me other than he had already made. He repeated mostly the same information, expressed his personal regard and respect for me, thanked me for my kindness in protecting him from all violence and in providing for his comfort. He complained of some disease of the kidneys, and I tendered him the best aid of physician and surgeon, which he declined, for the reason that he was accustomed to an habitual treatment, which he had already provided for himself. He talked with me freely and I offered to be the depositary of any confidential request consistent with my honor and duty; and when we parted he cordially gave me his blessing, wishing me every return for the attentions to him as a prisoner.

Governor Wise was not reassured, either by the calm behavior of John Brown, or the presence of the greatest number of soldiers gathered in Virginia since Cornwallis surrendered to Washington at Yorktown. He went back to his office at Richmond and set about planning new moves to prevent a rescue or any violation of his state's soil.

On the eighth day before the one set for the hanging Major General Taliaferro received another message from the harried, self-persecuted chief executive.

". . . Keep full guard on the line of frontier from Martinsburg to Harper's Ferry, on the day of 2d Dec." the telegram ordered. "Warn the inhabitants to arm and keep guard and

patrol on that day and for days beforehand. These orders are necessary to prevent seizure of hostages."

The Governor would have expired, probably, had he known that he himself had been marked as such a hostage, and that if money had not been so hard to come by in Massachusetts, he might even then have been a captive on the *Flirt*, somewhere on the broad Atlantic.

His order continued:

> Warn the inhabitants to stay away and especially to keep the women and children at home. Prevent all strangers, and particularly all parties of strangers from proceeding to Charlestown on 2nd Dec. To this end station a guard at Harper's Ferry sufficient to control crowds on the cars from East and West. Let mounted men, except one or two companies, remain on guard at the outposts, and keep one or two for the purpose of keeping the crowd clear of the military on the day of execution. Form two concentric squares around the gallows, and have strong guard at the jail and for escort to execution. Let no crowd be near enough to the prisoner to hear any speech he may attempt. Allow no more visitors to be admitted into the jail.

Other orders went to the Superintendent of the Virginia Military Institute at Lexington, instructing him to muster the older classes under arms, with accompanying artillery, and to put them aboard the cars for duty at Charlestown.

As the last days of November dragged by, the Governor was seized by a mania that compelled him to seek even more soldiery to send to Jefferson County.

He importuned President Buchanan to send Federal troops to his aid, saying he had reliable information indicating armed men were on Virginia's border waiting to rescue Brown or to seize hostages for vengeance if the prisoner was executed. He was convinced, he told the President, that Northern states were doing nothing to prevent the gathering of desperate men and the placing of arms in depots secreted in the mountains the other side of the Potomac.

President Buchanan was considerably less upset than the

old Cavalier in Richmond. He notified Wise that he would send Colonel Lee back to the Ferry with men to protect the United States property at the Arsenal and Armory, but no other Federal troops could be expected.

The irascible president of the Baltimore & Ohio was by this time in almost as excited a state as was Governor Wise. He issued a blizzard of orders to the men who operated the railroad. All excursions and special trips on the main stem were to be forbidden just before execution day. Ticket agents were instructed to sell no tickets for local traffic in and around the Ferry and Charlestown for that period unless they themselves knew the persons who wished to ride the cars.

Passengers were advised to travel on another day than December 1 and 2, and those who insisted on their right to use a public means of transportation were warned that if they even attempted to leave the trains at either Martinsburg or Harper's Ferry they faced arrest and jail.

John Work Garrett was so convinced the worst danger would materialize from the West that he telegraphed the division superintendent at Wheeling, on the bank of the Ohio, not to issue tickets to anyone coming east at the time of the hanging unless that person were provided with a certificate of honorable intentions and excellent personal character. To make the likelihood of a band of rescuers riding the trains even less of a risk, only sixty of these good conduct passes were to be issued.

When a Boston entrepreneur, Josiah Perham, with a broad streak of P. T. Barnum in him, asked the B. & O. for permission to move several thousand sight-seers to the scene of the execution—at reduced rates, he hoped—Mr. Garrett turned thumbs down on the venture, even though he could have used the money at that time of unbridled expansion. Andrew Hunter, the special prosecutor, also advised against the transporting of all these persons from the North, convinced by now that all men above the Mason and Dixon Line were suspect.

Garrett's Master or Transportation, W. P. Smith, who had been so phlegmatic when Conductor Phelps sent in the first news of armed rebellion from the end of the telegraph wire at

Monocacy, had by now become infected by his superior's fever.

He sent a telegram to J. P. Jackson, the vice-president of the New Jersey Railroad Company, urging the latter to be most circumspect.

"Great alarm exists here from expectations of large forces of desperadoes from North, East and West, to attempt rescue of Virginia prisoners," he said. "Will you favor us by promptly despatching any information you may have respecting parties who may be of this character taking your trains for the South, and also advise us personally if any unusual party of unknown men start for this direction."

Wise, Hunter, Garrett, Smith, and many others who were concerned with enforcing Judge Parker's sentence were convinced that the only law-abiding men left in the United States were Southerners. Anyone "from North, East and West" was under suspicion.

On the morning of November 25 a detachment of eighty-five cadets from the Virginia Military Institute marched out of the dormitory and boarded stage coaches supplied free of charge by the firm of Harman & Co. as a patriotic gesture. There were sixty-four boys in the infantry unit under Major William Gilham, and twenty-one cadets in the artillery unit commanded by Major Thomas J. Jackson, a tall, dark, somber man soon to win the sobriquet of "Stonewall" on a battlefield not far away.

There was a little trouble loading two brass howitzers into freight wagons, but after a spell it was accomplished, and the vehicles lumbered off on the road to Staunton. That night the cadets entrained on the Virginia Central Railroad for Washington, forced to take the long route around Robin Hood's barn because of the lack of a through track in the Shenandoah Valley. Only a few years later Stonewall Jackson urged the Confederate government to link Staunton and New Market to make possible the rapid deployment of his troops, but the iron and ties and men were needed elsewhere and the missing stretch was never bridged.

The boys breakfasted at Tarleton's refectory in the Washington Depot. Then Gilham with his infantry went on to the

Relay and Harper's Ferry and thus down to Charlestown. But Major Jackson was having trouble with his howitzers, and the artillery unit stayed over at a hotel.

Bright and early the next morning the artillery contingent formed up and started down Pennsylvania Avenue toward the depot. It had marched but a few blocks when Major Jackson called for a halt, told the cadets to stand at ease and legged it back to the hotel.

It was his custom, fellow instructors at V.M.I. said, to remove his money from his uniform pockets, place it in his socks and squirrel them away under his pillow while he slept. This morning he had forgotten both socks and money. He retrieved them, rejoined his men, and marched on down the avenue to the depot. Stonewall Jackson arrived at Charlestown one day behind the other men from V.M.I. It was one of the very rare occasions on which he arrived anywhere late. Usually it was the other way around, and many a Confederate victory was won because Old Jack and his troops were on the scene just before the psychological moment.

On the next morning, as soon as the orders of the day had been read to the cadets and the guard mounted, Major Jackson retired to his quarters and wrote his wife Mary Anna a short note.

"I arrived here last night in good health and spirits," he said. "Seven of us slept in the same room. I am much more pleased than I expected to be. The people appear to be very kind. There are about 1,000 troops here and everything is quiet so far. We don't expect any trouble. The excitement is confined to more distant points. Do not give yourself any concern about me. I am comfortable, for a temporary military post."

There are two obvious points of interest concerning this brief note. He said nothing about the near loss of his money. And his wife, a very intelligent woman, could easily read between the lines and guess that the remark about the excitement being confined to distant points referred to the agitation that consumed Governor Wise in Richmond.

Two days later Colonel Robert E. Lee and four companies from Fort Monroe arrived pursuant to President Buchanan's

direction at Harper's Ferry. His orders called for the prevention of any disorders, specifically for maintaining a watch so that no armed bands could pass south to Charlestown.

"I arrived here, dearest Mary, yesterday about noon," Colonel Lee wrote his wife, "with four companies from Fort Monroe and was busy all the evening and night getting accommodation for the men, etc., and posting sentinels and piquets to insure timely notice of the approach of the enemy. . . ."

Lee did not go to Charlestown. The execution was a state affair, and he saw no reason to intrude. His orders were to guard the government factories and to stand watch on the Potomac. He would execute them punctiliously.

Even before the Federal troops had bivouacked at the Ferry, new contingents of militia had mustered in their home towns and entrained for Jefferson's county seat.

In Richmond the cream of that city's society turned out to cheer the Richmond Greys and Company F as they marched to the trains. Within a few years many of the gay blades in those units would be dead on the battlefields of Manassas Junction, Gaines' Mill, and the White Oaks Swamp. But there was one who would die less honorably—perhaps as the most hated man in the history of the United States.

Marching debonnairely in the rear ranks of Company F was a private whose slightly bowed legs stood out more than usual in the tight uniform trousers. His crow-black hair and mustache had been slicked with pomade and his equally black eyes sparkled as a few friends waved at him. No one else took special note of his presence.

His name was John Wilkes Booth.

When these companies reached Charlestown they found many other gaily arrayed military units ahead of them. There were the Dragoons of the Shepherdstown Troop, the Baltimore Greys, the Montgomery Guard, the Virginia Rifles, the Young Guard, the Blues, the Jefferson Guards, the Jefferson volunteer company, the Richmond Howitzer Company, and companies from Winchester, Hampton, Frederick, and half a score of other towns.

Down out of the hills had come a small troop of unat-

tached dragoons commanded by Captain Turner Ashby, one of the best cavalry officers ever to lift a sabre in a land that produced so many superlative cavalrymen.

He was dark as an Arab, with a great beard and fierce mustache that some said made him look like a Corsican brigand. He was neither tall nor short, but lithe and wiry, with eyes at once soft and pensive. His mount was a snow-white stallion which he rode as if his muscles and his sinews were one with those of the easy-gaited, strong-limbed horse.

In the war that John Brown helped to make inevitable, Turner Ashby won a General's stars as Stonewall Jackson's chief of horse. Southern women, naturally romantic, found it hard to name a favorite between Jeb Stuart and Turner Ashby. Each man played his role in the drama of Old Brown's last days. Stuart helped to capture the raider; Ashby was present at his execution. Each went on to die bravely for a cause without hope.

Governor Wise debated attending the hanging, but decided against it, knowing that his son Jennings, a member of the Richmond Greys, would be there and could report it in detail.

On the last day of November General Taliaferro and his staff participated in Grand Rounds, an unexpected series of inspections to check on the military bearing and efficiency of the many units under arms in Charlestown.

He wasn't too well pleased with what he saw. Most of the militia were rugged individualists. They dressed according to their individual whim, were armed as they wished, and had had much more experience dancing the Lancers at fancy dress balls than they had on drill ground and firing range.

Of them all, the cadets from V.M.I. stood out most favorably.

Each day since they had arrived their behavior had been perfect. Even the most frolicsome of the youngsters remembered the words of the Superintendent as they marched away from Lexington:

"The eye of the State is turned with peculiar interest to every act and movement of the cadets."

If there was any latent desire to erupt in boyish lack of discipline there was always the professor of Natural and Ex-

perimental Philosophy and Instructor in Artillery Tactics, Major T. J. Jackson, to make them toe the line. He had only to say "Gentlemen!" and each young man remembered that his commission would read "Officer and Gentleman."

Their schedule was strict. It called for reveille at 6 a.m.; breakfast, 7:30 a.m.; guard mounting, 8:30 a.m.; dinner, 2 p.m.; dress parade, 3:30 p.m.; and retreat, 6 p.m. No cadet was permitted to be absent from quarters after retreat.

By the 30th of November the last social function had been held. There was only grim business ahead.

In Philadelphia a tall, gray-haired woman, with sad eyes set deep in a weather-beaten face, put on a black dress, tied a black bonnet upon her head, and drove to the railroad depot with three friends. Mary Anne Brown was through with waiting. Her companions on the long, nerve-wracking ride to Harper's Ferry were J. Miller McKim, a leader in the Abolitionist movement, Mrs. McKim, and Hector Tyndale, a young Philadelphia lawyer, who would return to the Ferry only a few years later as Captain in a Pennsylvania regiment, to put the town to the torch after Stonewall Jackson had removed everything the Confederate Army could use.

The coach on the B. & O. was cold at the ends near the vestibule doors but warmer in the middle near the little round-bellied cannon stove. After a few stops Mrs. Brown and her companions worked their way closer to the fire. It was more pleasant, but nothing could warm her despairing heart.

When they reached the Ferry they were met by state officials assigned for the purpose by Governor Wise. With them they carried a telegram from the chief executive of the state granting Mrs. Brown permission to visit her husband the next day, on two conditions. She was to go alone, under guard, and she must return to Harper's Ferry that same evening.

The despondent woman and her friends took rooms in the Wager Hotel close to the one where Aaron Stevens had been threatened and the one in which Christine Fouke had tried so valiantly to save William Thompson from the bloodthirsty mob.

As the wife of the doomed man moved through the little town, residents watched her with mingled feelings. Some hated her. Others pitied her. But there were no demonstrations. Colonel Lee was too good an officer. Nothing could get out of hand while he was in command.

The night was cold, and once the travelers had dined, they stayed inside the hotel, mixing comfort with good sense.

Nine miles to the South, in his jailhouse cell, John Brown seated himself at his desk to write a last letter—a letter of farewell to his wife, his sons, and his daughters.

> As I now begin what is probably the last letter I shall ever write to any of you; I conclude to write you all at the same time. . . . I am waiting the hour of my public *murder* with great composure of mind, & cheerfulness: feeling the strongest assurance that in no other possible way could I be used to so much advance the cause of God; & of humanity: & that nothing that either I or my family have sacrifised or suffered: will be lost. . . . I have now no doubt that our seeming *disaster* will ultimately result in the most *Glorious success*. So my dear shattered and broken family be of good cheer & believe & trust in God; with all your heart & all your soul. . . . Do not feel ashamed on my account; nor for one moment despair of the cause; or grow weary of well doing. I bless God; I never felt stronger confidence in the certain and near approach of a bright Morning & a glorious day. . . .
>
> Your Affectionate Husband & Father
> John Brown.

He wrote a few other messages to friends that same night and then slept peacefully, after praying on his knees at the side of the rough prison cot. The letter to his family was not mailed until two days later. He kept it with him, thinking there might be an addendum.

By the first light of the next day, the 1st of December, carpenters were at work in a large field on the southeast edge of town, erecting the gallows. Small boys gathered as soon as

they had wolfed down their ham and grits, lured by the sound of whining saws and pounding hammers. Some of the braver ones collected the long shavings that fell like curls from the carpenters' planes. They held them to their baby-smooth chins like false beards and ran around shouting, "John Brown! John Brown! They're goin' to hang Old John Brown!"

After a while the carpenters, already queasy at their unfamiliar task, drove the boys from the field.

By early afternoon the gibbet had been finished. It stood on the crest of a small hill. From the platform the workmen could look westward toward the Blue Ridge across the housetops of Charlestown. Somewhere in the center of the cluster of buildings they knew the jailhouse stood. Thinking of the man incarcerated there, they brushed the sawdust from their overalls and went home, not looking behind them to see their handiwork.

Almost at that precise hour a carriage drove up before the front entrance of the Wager Hotel in Harper's Ferry. A captain of the Fauquier Calvary, in full uniform, stepped out and went inside to fetch Mrs. Brown. She came out a minute later on his arm, and he helped her up between the wheels. He joined her on the same seat and spoke to the driver. They waited as a few loungers stood slack-jawed on the sidewalk, and then a sergeant and eight troopers from the same cavalry unit cantered around the corner and took position in front and to the rear of the carriage. The sergeant barked "forward!" and the solemn little cortege started on the nine mile drive to Charlestown.

At half past three o'clock, dusty and tired from the arduous ride up the Shenandoah valley, Mrs. Brown reached the prison. Captain Avis met her at the curb, helped her alight, and ushered her directly to her husband's cell. As the kindly sheriff turned away he saw the old guerilla fighter take his wife in his arms, but he heard no greeting. After all the days of waiting at the North Elba farm and in the little jailhouse cell, neither of them could find words to match their love.

They sat together talking of what a man and wife must talk about when death stands on the doorstep. Old Brown had done a lot of thinking and he told his wife about his wishes

for herself, the children, the farm, and the education of the younger sons and daughters. He knew that the best his family could expect was a life of near-want. Neither his business ventures nor his crusading against slavery had put any money in the bank. The farm above Lake Placid was a stony, barren acreage and the future could be only a dismal one.

But, the old man said, happiness lay within their hearts. Scripture taught them, he told his wife, that worldly stores were naught beside the wealth of heavenly esteem. He urged her to rely on God, who, he was sure, would not forsake the dependents of one who had labored valiantly in His vineyard.

Inevitably they talked of the morrow. The woman who had suffered the agony of childbirth thirteen times without complaint, who had grubbed in the garden and toiled in the kitchen to feed and clothe their children, happy in her duties, had to fight back the tears. She tried to understand when her husband pointed out that all men must die, and that many do before they reach almost three score years, but even his statement that he was ready to return "like a prodigal son to his Father" did not still her anguish.

Faith can rule the mind, Mary Anne Brown knew. But it cannot pour balm upon an aching heart.

When evening came John Avis invited Old Brown and his wife to dine with him and his family in their quarters, which were a part of the prison. It was a surpassingly fine thing for the jailer to do. It broke the tension, but even more, it enabled the prisoner to live again for an hour as a part—if withal a fleeting one—of a family group. He loved children and he was never happier than when his own were with him around the dinner table.

After coffee the old man and his wife had a few minutes to themselves in his cell. As Mary Brown turned to leave when the jailer knocked, the fearless old fighter broke down for the one and only time since he had put on his arms and marched down from the hills into Harper's Ferry. He pleaded with Captain Avis to allow his wife to spend his last night on earth with him. Tears came to his eyes and crept down his furrowed countenance, losing themselves in the great flowing beard, but there was nothing Captain Avis could do. The orders from

Governor Wise were specific. After a moment or two the prisoner regained his composure and kissed his wife goodbye. As she stepped unsteadily out of the jail and up into the carriage beside the waiting cavalryman she could hear John Brown's voice sending his blessing after her.

All through the long ride back to the Ferry Mary Brown sat silent, listening to the sound of the troopers' horses as their shoes struck stones in the rough dirt road; watching the sinister shadows cast by the lantern as it swayed from the rear axle of the carriage.

CHAPTER 19

THE rural quiet of Jefferson County, Virginia, was not duplicated in the cities and hamlets of the North. On that last night of John Brown's life the churches were open from dusk to dawn, filled to overflowing, in many instances, with men and women kneeling at their prayers. Across the serried rooftops of Boston, Providence, Hartford, and Albany; the bare, brown, harvested fields of Ohio; and the drifted snow of Vermont there was a great sound of church bells pealing.

To thousands of Northerners this was a night of mourning. They wept unashamedly for the man who was about to mount the gallows, alone, in Charlestown. Only on the brink of civil war could there have been such opposing points of view as existed on that night, in Virginia, where a hated foe was about to be hanged, and in New England, where slavery haters were about to lose a leader.

Writing in his diary the day of the execution, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow spoke for his neighbors when he put down these words:

"The second of December, 1859. This will be a great day in our history; the date of a new Revolution,—quite as much needed as the old one. Even as I now write, they are leading old John Brown to execution in Virginia for attempting to

rescue slaves! This is sowing the wind to reap the whirlwind, which will soon come."

But if untold thousands of Northerners could not sleep that night, the man for whom they prayed was not similarly troubled. He slept the whole night through, perhaps more tired than usual because of the emotional strain born of his farewell visit with his wife.

Sparrows, twittering in the gutters outside, awoke the old man on the day he was to die.

Almost at once he was conscious that the jailers and their aides were moving about more quietly than usual. They stepped softly as mourners do when entering a house where someone lies dead. He read several passages from his Bible, the ones he loved best, and then took up a pen to write one last message to his wife. It was exceedingly brief, and had several notes he had written long before inserted in the envelope. It bore the date of December 2nd, and the fact he would never write one on a later day did not alter the strong hand:

My Dear Wife,

I have time to enclose the within: & the above: which I forgot yesterday: & to bid you another Farewell: be of good cheer and God Allmighty bless, save, comfort, guide & keep; you, to the end.

Your Affectionate Husband
John Brown.

These were the enclosures:

To be inscribed on the old Family Monument at North Elba.

Oliver Brown born 1839 was killed at Harpers ferry Va Nov 17th 1859.

Watson Brown born 1835 was wounded at

Harpers ferry Nov 17th and died Nov 19th 1859.*
(My Wife can) supply blank dates to above.
John Brown born May 9th 1800 was executed at Charlestown Va, December 2d 1859

and

Charlestown, Jefferson Co., Va, 2d Decem 1859. It is my desire that my Wife have all my personal property not previously disposed of by me; & the entire use of all my landed property during her natural life; & that after her death the proceeds of such land be equally divided between all my then living Children: & that what would be a Childs share be given to the Children of each of my two sons; who fell at Harpers ferry, Va: & that a Childs share be divided among the children of any of my now living Children who may die before their Mother (my present much beloved Wife.) No formal will: can be of use when my expressed wishes: are made known to my dutiful; and dearly beloved family.

John Brown.

As always, the spelling was sometimes strange and the punctuation in a style uniquely his, but the tender affection he felt for his family shone through for all to see. This letter he put with the long one he had written two days before, and gave them to Captain Avis for mailing. Then he ate his breakfast with apparent relish.

Beyond the quiet confines of the jail there was a great stirring of uniformed men. Before the first light of dawn had come, the militia companies had breakfasted and policed their equipment. By eight o'clock most of them had marched to the field where the gibbet stood. No bugles blew, no drums rolled. There was only the sound of shuffling feet and an occasional muffled word of command.

Directly to the rear of the gallows the V.M.I. cadets stood

* The old man probably was upset when he wrote the November dates; actually, both boys died in October.

at ease, their red flannel shirts, grey trousers, and white belts giving them what one of their officers later called "a gay, dashing, Zouave look." Major Jackson stationed his artillery unit in two sections, one at each end of the line of cadet infantry. One howitzer stood at each of the two rear corners of the scaffold platform, aimed directly at the gallows.

Standing in the second row of infantrymen, with a cadet's greatcoat only partially hiding his civilian clothes, was the Honorable Edmund Ruffin, the ancient agricultural expert who had only a few days before been seized by sentries and taken to headquarters to be identified. Greatly worried over the raid at Harper's Ferry and its possible effect upon the agrarian economy of the South, he begged permission to watch the execution. Strangely enough, it was granted, and he joined the cadets at reveille and stayed with them all through the day until retreat.

A frosty wind was blowing up the valley. It kicked up dust from the dirt roads and set old Edmund Ruffin's long white locks to waving. But the sixty-six-year-old veteran of the War of 1812 minded it not at all. No one who saw him standing in the ranks of youthful cadets could have guessed that two years later, serving as a private in the Palmetto Guards of Charleston, South Carolina, the venerable but bellicose old campaigner would yank the lanyard that fired the first shot at Fort Sumter—the shot that ushered in the Civil War.

Flanking the cadets from Lexington at oblique angles, were the Richmond Greys and Company F from the Virginia capital. Completing the hollow square, which surrounded the gibbet at a distance of a hundred feet were companies from Petersburg, Charlestown, and Winchester.

Another, necessarily larger, hollow square of infantrymen stood another hundred feet outside of the inner one. Beyond them again were dragoons from Shepherdstown, Captain Ashby's troop, and other mounted militia. At the edges of the field were still more cavalrymen, sentries and guards. In all, eight hundred men stood ready inside the snake-rail fence. Beyond it, along the route from the jail, and on duty at the prison were many more, so that Major General Taliaferro had

fifteen hundred soldiers to see that Old John Brown was properly executed.

While infantrymen stood at ease and cavalry officers cantered to and fro on skittish horses, the prisoner was busying himself with small, last-minute chores.

He gave his Bible to a confectioner who, motivated by a strange impulse to befriend the bearded guerilla, had brought in pastries and delicacies from his shop across the square. From the little pile of books the more tender-hearted ladies of the town had given him the old man presented a volume to each of the guards who had watched over him. These men, who had hated him when he was brought, bloody and weak, from Harper's Ferry, took the gifts tenderly, turning quickly away before he could see the tears that came to their eyes.

In the last will and testament that Andrew Hunter, his pitiless prosecutor, helped him draw up, he bequeathed his Sharps carbine and his belt pistol to Captain Avis. Now, knowing that he would never have to mark the slow measured march of time again, he called in the jailer and presented to him his old silver hunting case watch.

As time ran out in the jailhouse the old man's wife, nine miles away at Harper's Ferry, where a dream had come to naught in a ragged burst of musketry, received a visitor.

Colonel Lee stopped by the Wager Hotel and courteously inquired as to her comfort. In language chosen to temper the impact of his words, the soldier told Mrs. Brown the details of his duties later that evening when her husband's mortal remains were brought up from Charlestown.

He explained to her that he would have to ask her to be present when the coffin was opened so that she could identify the body and satisfy herself that there had been no substitution and that the coffin was not empty.

Then the man who would soon put off his army blues for the butternut grey of the Confederacy bowed and went out to see that his troops were on the alert and that pickets had been posted along the banks of the Potomac.

There was nothing now for Mary Anne Brown to do but fold her hands in prayer and wait for news she did not want to hear from the field where the gallows stood waiting.

Along the valley of the Shenandoah the mists of morning were being burned away as the sun climbed higher in the sky. The wind softened a bit, and smoke from the houses of Charlestown ascended in wavering columns until it too, like the mist, was dissipated. Men and women left their homes and walked out from town to where the soldiers waited, perspiring in their capes and greatcoats. They talked in low voices, complaining that they were not allowed nearer the gallows.

But Colonel F. H. Smith, Superintendent of V.M.I., who had been placed in direct charge of the execution by Governor Wise, was adamant. No civilian was to be allowed close enough to the scaffold to hear anything if Brown made an inflammatory speech. Already the Virginia authorities had learned that John Brown's pen and voice were far more dangerous than his sword. Like ancient physicians ignorant of germs and viruses, they foolishly believed that a few hundred feet or more of distance on a grassy field in western Virginia could isolate all mankind from the message one old man had lifted from the Holy Bible.

The old man himself was saying farewell to the raiders who had fought with him in Kansas and come with him on a quiet Sabbath evening into Virginia. In a few short years mighty armies would have to complete their errand.

He passed along the corridor before the cells in which the other raiders stood waiting at the barred gates. Reaching into the pocket of his ill-fitting old suit, he brought out several quarters—all the money he had left in the jail—and gave one to each man. There was one for the handsome, courageous Stevens, one for Edwin Coppoc, the youthful Quaker, one for John Copeland, the mulatto, and one for Shields Green, the Negro.

"God bless you, my men," he said. "May we all meet in Heaven."

There was no twenty-five cent piece for John Cook because the leader believed Cook had twisted the truth too far in his statements in court.

The doomed man didn't even approach the door to Hazlett's cell. To the very end the others denied knowing this one

man who had been captured on the very doorstep of freedom outside Chambersburg.

Stevens wept unashamedly as he fondled the little silver coin in his strong, capable hand, and the two colored men turned away to hide their tears from the old border fighter. Coppoc tried to say goodbye, choked on the words, and went over to his cot, dry-eyed and miserable.

More composed than any of his followers, John Brown returned to his own cell, knelt down beside the bed and prayed for the last time. When he was done he called out to Captain Avis and said he was ready to go.

Before he went out, however, he took a little folded note from the desk and slipped it into the jailer's hand. He had written it by the first light of dawn. Captain Avis stepped to a window and read these words:

Charlestown, Va., 2d December, 1859;

I John Brown am now quite certain that the crimes of this guilty land: will never be purged away; but with Blood. I had as I now think: vainly flattered myself that without very much bloodshed it might be done.

The jailer said nothing, but the prophesy was there, written in bold letters for the world to see. It was as if the old man had written it in blood.

Together the two men went out into the bright sunlight and stood side by side on the steps of the jail, waiting for the soldiers to get into position.

Blinking a bit in the glare, the one about to die looked up toward the open sky. Then he gazed out upon the massing soldiery.

"I had no idea that Governor Wise considered my execution so important," he said, standing quietly as his arms were pinioned behind him with a rope at the elbows.

It lacked but an hour of noon.

The streets were full of soldiers, afoot and mounted, and the sound of their heavy boots and the horses' hooves on the cobblestones echoed back and forth between the brick walls

of the tidy little houses lining the route to the edge of town.

High Sheriff John W. Campbell joined his deputy and the prisoner just as a wagon, drawn by two white farm horses, drew up in front of the jail porch. Brown looked down into the bed of the wagon and saw a plain box of poplar, fashioned the day before in the same shape as the black walnut coffin that reposed inside. His eyes didn't even flicker.

The Sheriff took one arm and the jailer the other, and the prisoner walked down the steps and got up over the tailgate into the wagon. He sat down on the forward end of the coffin. His two companions stood beside him, not wanting to join him on his awesome seat.

Ahead and behind officers barked commands, horses pranced uneasily, and the driver of the wagon touched the nigh horse on the flank. The big animals strained against their collars, and the vehicle lurched off down the narrow street.

At the head of the cortege rode General Taliaferro and his staff, all mounted on superb Virginia steeds. Then three companies of infantry, rifles on shoulders, preceded the lumbering farm vehicle. Closing in behind were two more companies of militia on foot, and after them, bringing up the rear, was a company of volunteer horsemen.

With the chief prisoner no longer in the jail, the artillerymen who had manned the guns by the courthouse whipped their horses and set out for the execution site. The harness tangled and the lead and swing drivers had to dismount and straighten out the lines. Then with a great clattering and banging the grim-looking guns, with limbers and caissons filled with enough ammunition to fight a sharp engagement, rolled after the fast-disappearing column.

By the time General Taliaferro turned into the open field the sun had come out brightly and the wind sweeping down off the hills to the west had blown most of the clouds away. It was one of those days so beloved by the men of the Shenandoah Valley who went afield in search of fresh game for the dinner table. The air was crisp with the hint of winter, but the warmth of the sun and the smell of wood burning on the hearths were balm to their hearts and perfume to their nostrils.

The wagon carrying the prisoner to the gallows left the dusty road and rolled onto the field, little rivulets of powdery dirt cascading onto the grass from the wheels.

The pageantry stirred the old man strangely, and the perfect weather did not go unmarked.

"This is a beautiful country," he said. "I never had the pleasure of seeing it before."

He spoke truly. All about him, except for the cluster of houses that formed Charlestown, were verdant pastures. The land sloped down from the Blue Ridge in undulating ridges and depressions so that a man standing on the shoulder of the mountains saw them as restless combers on a distant sea. Fields that had been harvested were brown and sere, cut up and separated by groves of maples, oaks, and chestnuts. From the slight eminence on which the gallows stood the countryside resembled a crazy quilt fashioned in warm, muted colors. Thick stands of birch marched along the Shenandoah where the soil was rich and damp.

Blue jays scolded from the branches overhead as soldiers with bayonets kept back the crowd of civilians, almost a quarter of a mile from the gibbet. Turkey buzzards wheeled in effortless circles high above the field so tightly packed with soldiery.

On the edge of the field the undertaker, Mr. Sadler, joined the cortege, walking alongside the wagon where Brown rode.

"You are a game man, Captain," he said.

"Yes, I was so trained," responded the prisoner. "It was one of the lessons of my mother, but it is hard to part from friends, though newly made."

As the wagon rolled on between the files of soldiers the old man looked about him with the hawklike gaze his followers knew so well.

He saw the faces of Andrew Hunter and Mayor Green in a little group of officials near the scaffold. He bowed to them, saying in a voice steady and unfaltering, "Gentlemen, goodbye."

Officers moved about inside the hollow square of infantry, restless and a little unsure of their duties, but finally Captain Avis asked the condemned man to step down. Brown's arms,

tied as they were, made it difficult for him to move with his natural agility, and the old red felt slippers he was wearing instead of the usual stout boots didn't help, but he managed it without falling, jumping off the tail gate onto the grass.

Without hesitation he mounted the crude steps to the platform and walked across it to where the hempen noose swayed idly in the wind. Standing thus above the heads of the men in uniform, he looked rather incongruous in a black suit badly in need of pressing and a white shirt without a tie. He bent his head far down so that he could reach his black slouch hat with a hand and dropped it on the fresh pine boards at his feet.

The High Sheriff of Jefferson County and the jailer mounted after him to find him looking off to the blue hills, so bright against the midday sky.

"A man couldn't have asked for prettier weather," said the prisoner. The two officials nodded but didn't speak.

Major J. T. L. Preston, Quartermaster at V.M.I., thought there was a quality of wildness in the old man's gaze, and said so later in a long letter he wrote his wife describing the execution. Major Jackson also wrote a long letter to his wife after the day was over, but he mentioned an apparent cheerfulness in the prisoner's expression. Both officers agreed that they could detect no sign of fear on the insurrectionist's countenance.

"He behaved with unflinching firmness," wrote Jackson.

Major Jackson had not yet acquired Little Sorrel, the mount that carried him so faithfully through the Valley campaigns, at the bitter fighting around the Wilderness and up through Maryland to Antietam. His horse this day was nervous, and its rider had to trot up and down before the cadets a few times to quiet him down.

Across from the cadets General Taliaferro on a big black, and the dashing Turner Ashby on his magnificent white steed, were having much the same trouble.

Not long before Brown and his men moved into the Kennedy farmhouse Turner Ashby had bought a home high in the Blue Ridge country of Virginia. He called it Wolf's Crag, and there he organized the troop of mounted men known as

the Mountain Rangers. These were the troopers he brought down to Charlestown at Governor Wise's insistence.

His white stallion, of Arabian ancestry, carried him through the early years of the Civil War and gave his life to save the cavalryman's on a day when Union troops rode down this same valley to catch Jackson. The Mountain Rangers were serving as a rear guard, fighting and riding all day long. Once, cut off from his men, Ashby, by then a Colonel, was fired on by Union scouts. The horse was badly wounded but carried the Confederate raider off the field to where his men were waiting. Then the noble stallion died, while Turner Ashby held its head upon his knees.

John Brown, who had raised prize cattle and knew good horseflesh, watched as the different officers quieted their mounts. It was a stirring scene, even for a man on the brink of eternity, but he was to see no more of it.

Sheriff Campbell stepped up and placed a white cap over the prisoner's head and adjusted the noose about his neck. The sheriff said something in his ear in a voice no one could hear, probably asking him to step over upon the trap door cut in the platform flooring.

"I can't see," said the old man. "You must lead me."

The sheriff and Captain Avis guided him to the trap, which was hinged on one side and held level with the floor on the other side by a length of rope.

Just when all should have been calm and orderly, some of the green, undisciplined officers barked orders at their men and there was a great shuffling of feet and marching and countermarching. Sheriff Campbell asked the hooded figure if he wished to have a private signal just before the fatal moment.

"It doesn't matter to me," replied Old Brown, "if only they don't keep me waiting too long."

That was the instant, when, in all human decency, the hatchet should have severed the rope. But the troops were out of position and the companies stumbled about in noisy confusion. Only the young cadets from V.M.I., under the stern eye of Major Jackson, stood rigidly at attention.

All through the ten or twelve minutes it took to reform the

two hollow squares of troops the old man stood upon the trap door, motionless and unafraid. There was no minister at hand, although the authorities had offered to assign one to be at the guerilla leader's side. Brown had refused churchly support, saying no preacher from a slave-holding state could give him spiritual comfort.

Major Preston thought he saw the old man's knees trembling but realized in an instant that it was only the wind riffling the cloth of the prisoner's trousers.

Each man who watched the hooded figure on the scaffold harbored thoughts no other man could sense. Some put them down in later years. Others never spoke of them, pushing them back in their memories like evil dreams.

Major Preston found himself—a strong foe of emancipation—admiring the raw courage of this fifty-nine-year-old man standing unafraid in the midst of his enemies.

What passed through the minds of the boys from V.M.I. no one knows. They were too young to be bloodthirsty, but almost old enough to take up arms for a desperate cause. Among them there were many embryo Colonels and Majors, even Generals, who would have to fight for the cause Brown hated.

Among the men of Company F, John Wilkes Booth studied the scene before him with an actor's concern for drama.

The same wind that fingered old Edmund Ruffin's locks and tugged at John Brown's baggy trousers kept the state flags and regimental colors fluttering as the green troops jostled back into position.

Major Jackson was irritated by the clumsiness of the militia. But more compelling than his annoyance was his awareness of the solemnity of the scene. A devout man, the thought that John Brown was about to face his Maker unshriven was a terrifying one.

The bearded Professor of Tactics bowed his head and sent up a petition to Heaven that Brown's soul might be saved.

"I feared," he wrote his wife that very evening, "that this man about to die might receive the sentence, 'Depart, ye wicked into the everlasting fire.' "

As Major Jackson spoke his silent prayer, the troops ceased

their countermarching and a sudden silence, unbroken by shuffling feet or jingling harness, fell upon the field.

A guard stepped to the edge of the scaffold and handed Sheriff Campbell a hatchet, its blade so sharp it reflected the sunlight like a mirror. Captain Avis whispered in the doomed man's ear, perhaps a word of courage, perhaps a warning that the end was at hand.

The hooded figure nodded and spoke for the last time.

"Be quick, Avis."

The words could be heard by the men in the outer square of soldiers. It was, strangely enough, not so much a request as a command.

Colonel Smith turned to the Sheriff.

"We are all ready, Mr. Campbell," he said.

The sheriff did not hear him, or hearing, did not sense the officer's meaning.

"We are all ready, Mr. Campbell," repeated the Colonel, his voice much louder.

Sheriff Campbell lifted the hatchet, brought it down in a short arc, and severed the rope holding the trap door level with the floor.

The man who had marched into Harper's Ferry with his band but a short month and a half ago, fell until the hempen rope grew taut. His knees were even with the scaffold flooring upon which he had been standing seconds before. The pinioned arms flew up until nearly horizontal, with the strong hands clenched.

Slowly the arms sank lower and the fingers opened. Then the spasms ended and the body hung lank and straight, swaying gently in the wind blowing down from the Blue Ridge.

It was all over now. John Brown's soul was marching on.

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