

GO TO LIST OF PEOPLE INVOLVED IN HARPERS FERRY

HARPERS FERRY, VIRGINIA



"I know histhry isn't thru, Hinnissy, because it ain't like what I see ivry day in Halsted Street. If any wan comes along with a histhry iv Greece or Rome that'll show me th' people fightin', gettin' dhrunk, makin' love, gettin' married, owin' th' grocery man an' bein' without hard coal, I'll believe they was a Greece or Rome, but not befur."



— Dunne, Finley Peter,
OBSERVATIONS BY MR. DOOLEY,
New York, 1902



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1676

July 30, Sunday (Old Style): On the Virginia coast, the main force of the rebels under a farmer general consisted of some “four hundred English and Negroes in Armes” demanding “freedom from their [slavery](#).” Here is this day’s “Declaration of Nathaniel Bacon in the Name of the People of Virginia”:¹

For having, upon specious pretenses of public works, raised great unjust taxes upon the commonalty for the advancement of private favorites and other sinister ends, but no visible effects in any measure adequate; for not having, during this long time of his government, in any measure advanced this hopeful colony either by fortifications, towns, or trade.

For having abused and rendered contemptible the magistrates of justice by advancing to places of judicature scandalous and ignorant favorites.

For having wronged his Majesty's prerogative and interest by assuming monopoly of the beaver trade and for having in it unjust gain betrayed and sold his Majesty's country and the lives of his loyal subjects to the barbarous heathen.

For having protected, favored, and emboldened the Indians against his Majesty's loyal subjects, never contriving, requiring, or appointing any due or proper means of satisfaction for their many invasions, robberies, and murders committed upon us.

1. Per FOUNDATIONS OF COLONIAL AMERICA: A DOCUMENTARY HISTORY, SOUTHERN COLONIES, ed. Keith Kavenagh (NY: Chelsea House, 1973, pages 1783-4).

Edmund S. Morgan has asserted that the Southrons would be seeking to prevent a replay of Bacon’s Rebellion by “racism, to separate dangerous free whites from dangerous slave blacks by a screen of racial contempt,” in accordance with Sir Francis Bacon’s advice, that the wise ruler divides and breaks off “all factions and combinations that are adverse to the state, and setting them at a distance, or at least distrust among themselves.”

What this strategy would of course not contemplate would be that circumstances might be brought to occur, in which the black slaves could be divided away from the protection of their rich white owners, and then slaughtered by the poor whites in a spasm of genocide, bringing about the destruction not only of the black slaves which these poor whites had been trained so to contemn, but also their rich white owners who could not survive as such if divested of their investment in their chattel servants. —

Which is **very much what almost would be brought about** in consequence of Captain [John Brown](#)’s 1859 attempt to equip an army of escaping slaves with pikes at [Harpers Ferry](#).



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

For having, when the army of English was just upon the track of those Indians, who now in all places burn, spoil, murder and when we might with ease have destroyed them who then were in open hostility, for then having expressly countermanded and sent back our army by passing his word for the peaceable demeanor of the said Indians, who immediately prosecuted their evil intentions, committing horrid murders and robberies in all places, being protected by the said engagement and word past of him the said Sir William Berkeley, having ruined and laid desolate a great part of his Majesty's country, and have now drawn themselves into such obscure and remote places and are by their success so emboldened and confirmed by their confederacy so strengthened that the cries of blood are in all places, and the terror and consternation of the people so great, are now become not only difficult but a very formidable enemy who might at first with ease have been destroyed.

And lately, when, upon the loud outcries of blood, the assembly had, with all care, raised and framed an army for the preventing of further mischief and safeguard of this his Majesty's colony.

For having, with only the privacy of some few favorites without acquainting the people, only by the alteration of a figure, forged a commission, by we know not what hand, not only without but even against the consent of the people, for the raising and effecting civil war and destruction, which being happily and without bloodshed prevented; for having the second time attempted the same, thereby calling down our forces from the defense of the frontiers and most weakly exposed places.

For the prevention of civil mischief and ruin amongst ourselves while the barbarous enemy in all places did invade, murder, and spoil us, his Majesty's most faithful subjects.

Of this and the aforesaid articles we accuse Sir William Berkeley as guilty of each and every one of the same, and as one who has traitorously attempted, violated, and injured his Majesty's interest here by a loss of a great part of this his colony and many of his faithful loyal subjects by him betrayed and in a barbarous and shameful manner exposed to the incursions and murder of the heathen. And we do further declare these the ensuing persons in this list to have been his wicked and pernicious councilors, confederates, aiders, and assisters against the commonalty in these our civil commotions.

Sir Henry Chichley	Richard Whitacre
Lt. Col. Christopher Wormeley	Nicholas Spencer
Phillip Ludwell	Joseph Bridger
Robt. Beverley	William Claiburne, Jr.
Ri. Lee	Thomas Hawkins
Thomas Ballard	William Sherwood
William Cole	John Page Clerke
John West	John Clauffe Clerk
Hubert Farrell	Thomas Reade
Math. Kempe	



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

And we do further demand that the said Sir William Berkeley with all the persons in this list be forthwith delivered up or surrender themselves within four days after the notice hereof, or otherwise we declare as follows.

That in whatsoever place, house, or ship, any of the said persons shall reside, be hid, or protected, we declare the owners, masters, or inhabitants of the said places to be confederates and traitors to the people and the estates of them is also of all the aforesaid persons to be confiscated. And this we, the commons of Virginia, do declare, desiring a firm union amongst ourselves that we may jointly and with one accord defend ourselves against the common enemy. And let not the faults of the guilty be the reproach of the innocent, or the faults or crimes of the oppressors divide and separate us who have suffered by their oppressions.

These are, therefore, in his Majesty's name, to command you forthwith to seize the persons abovementioned as traitors to the King and country and them to bring to Middle Plantation and there to secure them until further order, and, in case of opposition, if you want any further assistance you are forthwith to demand it in the name of the people in all the counties of Virginia.

Nathaniel Bacon
General by Consent of the people.
William Sherwood



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1704

 Robert Beverley, in *HISTORY AND PRESENT STATE OF VIRGINIA*, published his memories of Nathaniel Bacon's 1676 test of self-government in Virginia. Beverley had sided with Governor Berkeley during this dispute and, although his later recounting of events was not wholly dispassionate, in it he demonstrated himself to be at the very least a shrewd and thoughtful observer.

[CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF ENGLISH AND AMERICAN LITERATURE](#)

HDT

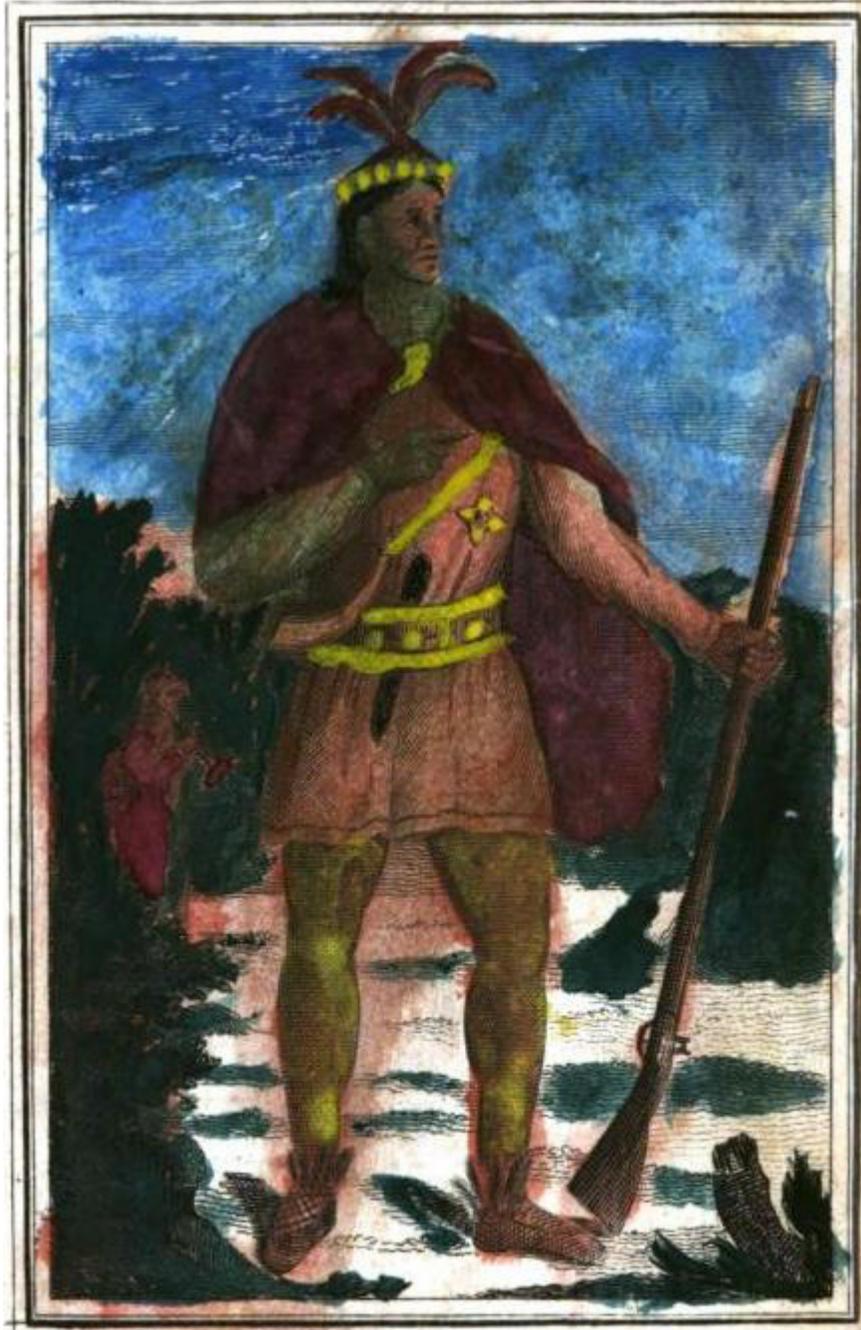
WHAT?

INDEX

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

KING PHILIP.



Published by S.G. Drake, Boston.



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

The occasion of this rebellion is not easy to be discovered: but 'tis certain there were many things that concurred towards it. For it cannot be imagined, that upon the instigation of two or three traders only, who aimed at a monopoly of the Indian trade, as some pretend to say, the whole country would have fallen into so much distraction; in which people did not only hazard their necks by rebellion, but endeavored to ruin a governor, whom they all entirely loved, and had unanimously chosen; a gentleman who had devoted his whole life and estate to the service of the country, and against whom in thirty-five years experience there had never been one single complaint. Neither can it be supposed, that upon so slight grounds, they would make choice of a leader they hardly knew, to oppose a gentleman that had been so long and so deservedly the darling of the people. So that in all probability there was something else in the wind, without which the body of the country had never been engaged in that insurrection.

Four things may be reckoned to have been the main ingredients towards this intestine commotion, viz., First, The extreme low price of [tobacco](#), and the ill usage of the planters in the exchange of goods for it, which the country, with all their earnest endeavors, could not remedy. Secondly, The splitting the colony into proprietaries, contrary to the original charters; and the extravagant taxes they were forced to undergo, to relieve themselves from those grants. Thirdly, The heavy restraints and burdens laid upon their trade by act of Parliament in England. Fourthly, The disturbance given by the Indians. Of all which in their order.

First, Of the low price of [tobacco](#), and the disappointment of all sort of remedy, I have spoken sufficiently before. Secondly, Of splitting the country into proprietaries.

King Charles the Second, to gratify some nobles about him, made two great grants out of that country. These grants were not of the uncultivated wood land only, but also of plantations, which for many years had been seated and improved, under the encouragement of several charters granted by his royal ancestors to that colony. Those grants were distinguished by the names of the Northern and Southern grants of Virginia, and the same men were concerned in both. They were kept dormant some years after they were made, and in the year 1674 begun to be put in execution. As soon as ever the country came to know this, they remonstrated against them; and the assembly drew up an humble address to his majesty, complaining of the said grants, as derogatory to the previous charters and privileges granted to that colony, by his majesty and his royal progenitors. They sent to England Mr. Secretary Ludwell and Colonel Park, as their agents to address the king, to vacate those grants. And the better to defray that charge, they laid a tax of fifty pounds of [tobacco](#) per poll, for two years together, over and above



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

all other taxes, which was an excessive burden. They likewise laid ameracements of seventy, fifty, or thirty pounds of [tobacco](#), as the cause was on every law case tried throughout the country. Besides all this, they applied the balance, remaining due upon account Of the two shilling per hoghead, and fort duties, to this use. Which taxes and ameracements fell heaviest on the poor people, the effect of whose labor would not clothe their wives and children. This made them desperately uneasy, especially when, after a whole year's patience under all these pressures, they had no encouragement from their agents in England, to hope for remedy; nor any certainty when they should be eased of those heavy impositions.

Thirdly, Upon the back of all these misfortunes came out the act of 25 Car. II. for better securing the plantation trade. By this act several duties were laid on the trade from one plantation to another. This was a new hardship, and the rather, because the revenue arising by this act was not applied to the use of the plantations wherein it was raised: but given clear away; nay, in that country it seemed to be of no other use, but to burden the trade, or create a good income to the officers; for the collector had half, the comptroller a quarter, and the remaining quarter was subdivided into salaries; till it was lost.

By the same act also very great duties were laid on the fisheries of the plantations, if manufactured by the English inhabitants there; while the people of England were absolutely free from all customs. Nay, though the oil, blubber and whale bone, which were made by the inhabitants of the plantations, were carried to England by Englishmen, and in English built ships, yet it was held to a considerable duty, more than the inhabitants of England paid.

These were the afflictions that country labored under when the fourth accident happened, viz., the disturbance offered by the Indians to the frontiers....

This addition of mischief to minds already full of discontent, made people ready to vent all their resentment against the poor Indians. There was nothing to be got by [tobacco](#); neither could they turn any other manufacture to advantage; so that most of the poorer sort were willing to quit their unprofitable employments, and go volunteers against the Indians.

At first they flocked together tumultuously, running in troops from one plantation to another without a head, till at last the seditious humor of Colonel Nathaniel Bacon led him to be of the party. This gentleman had been brought up at one of the Inns of court in England, and had a moderate fortune. He was young, bold, active, of an inviting aspect, and powerful elocution. In a word, he was every way qualified to head a giddy and unthinking multitude. Before he had been three years in the country, he was, for his extraordinary qualifications, made one of the council, and in great honor and esteem among the people. For this reason he no sooner gave countenance to this riotous mob, but they all presently fixed their eyes upon him for their general, and accordingly made their addresses to him. As soon as he found this, he harangued them publicly. He aggravated the Indian mischiefs, complaining that they were occasioned for want of a due regulation of their trade. He recounted particularly the other grievances and pressures they lay under, and pretended that he accepted of their command with no other intention but to do them and the country service, in which he was willing to encounter the greatest difficulties and dangers. He farther assured them he would never lay down his arms till he had revenged their sufferings upon the Indians, and redressed all their other grievances.



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

By these insinuations he wrought his men into so perfect an unanimity, that they were one and all at his devotion. He took care to exasperate them to the utmost, by representing all their misfortunes. After he had begun to muster them, he dispatched a messenger to the governor, by whom he aggravated the mischiefs done by the Indians, and desired a commission of general to go out against them. This gentleman was in so great esteem at that time with the council, that the governor did not think fit to give him a flat refusal; but sent him word he would consult the council, and return him a farther answer.

In the mean time Bacon was expeditious in his preparations, and having all things in readiness, began his march, depending on the authority the people had given him. He would not lose so much time as to stay for his commission; but dispatched several messengers to the governor to hasten it. On the other hand, the governor, instead of a commission, sent positive orders to him to disperse his men and come down in person to him, upon pain of being declared a rebel.

This unexpected order was a great surprise to Bacon, and not a little trouble to his men. However, he was resolved to prosecute his first intentions, depending upon his strength and interest with the people. Nevertheless, he intended to bait upon the governor, but not altogether defenceless. Pursuant to this resolution, he took about forty of his men down with him in a sloop to Jamestown VA, where the governor was with his council.

Matters did not succeed there to Mr. Bacon's satisfaction, wherefore he expressed himself a little too freely. For which, being suspended from the council, he went away again in a huff with his sloop and followers. The governor filled a long boat with men, and pursued the sloop so close, that Colonel Bacon moved into his boat to make more haste. But the governor had sent up by land to the ships at Sandy Point, where he was stopped and sent down again. Upon his return he was kindly received by the governor, who, knowing he had gone a step beyond his instructions in having suspended him, was glad to admit him again of the council; after which he hoped all things might be pacified.

Notwithstanding this, Colonel Bacon still insisted upon a commission to be general of the volunteers, and to go out against the Indians; from which the governor endeavored to dissuade him, but to no purpose, because he had some secret project in view. He had the luck to be countenanced in his importunities, by the news of fresh murder and robberies committed by the Indians. However, not being able to accomplish his ends by fair means, he stole privately out of town; and having put himself at the head of six hundred volunteers, marched directly to Jamestown, where the assembly was then sitting. He presented himself before the assembly, and drew up his men in battalia before the house wherein they sat. He urged to them his preparations; and alledged that if the commission had not been delayed so long, the war against the Indians might have been finished.

The governor resented this insolent usage worst of all, and now obstinately refused to grant him anything, offering his naked breast against the presented arms of his followers. But the assembly, fearing the fatal consequences of provoking a discontented multitude ready armed, who had the governor, council and assembly entirely in their power, addressed the governor to grant Bacon his request. They prepared themselves the commission, constituting him general of the forces of Virginia, and brought it to the governor to be signed.



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

With much reluctancy the governor signed it, and thereby put the power of war and peace into Bacon's hands. Upon this he marched away immediately, having gained his end, which was in effect a power to secure a monopoly of the Indian trade to himself and his friends.

As soon as General Bacon had marched to such a convenient distance from Jamestown VA that the assembly thought they might deliberate with safety, the governor, by their advice, issued a proclamation of rebellion against him, commanding his followers to surrender him, and forthwith disperse themselves, giving orders at the same time for raising the militia of the country against him.

The people being much exasperated, and General Bacon by his address and eloquence having gained an absolute dominion over their hearts, they unanimously resolved that not a hair of his head should be touched, much less that they should surrender him as a rebel. Therefore they kept to their arms, and instead of proceeding against the Indians they marched back to Jamestown, directing their fury against such of their friends and countrymen as should dare to oppose them....

By this time the governor had got together a small party to side with him. These he furnished with sloops, arms and ammunition, under command of Major Robert Beverley, in order to cross the bay and oppose the malcontents. By this means there happened some skirmishes, in which several were killed, and others taken prisoners. Thus they were going on by a civil war to destroy one another, and lay waste their infant country, when it pleased God, after some months' confusion, to put an end to their misfortunes, as well as to Bacon's designs, by his natural death. He died at Dr. Green's in Gloucester county. But where he was buried was never yet discovered, though afterward there was great inquiry made, with design expose his bones to public infamy.

In the meanwhile those disorders occasioned a general neglect of husbandry, and a great destruction of the stocks Of cattle, so that people had a dreadful prospect want and famine. But the malcontents being thus disunited by the loss of their general, in whom they all confided, they began to squabble among themselves, and every man's business was, how to make the best terms he could for himself.

Lieutenant General Ingram (whose true name was Johnson) and Major General Walklate, surrendered, condition of pardon for themselves and their followers though they were both forced to submit to an incapacity of bearing office in that country for the future.

Peace being thus restored, Sir William Berkeley returned to his former seat of government, and every man to his several habitation....

When this storm, occasioned by Bacon, was blown over, and all things quiet again, Sir William Berkeley called an assembly, for settling the affairs of the country, and for making reparation to such as had been oppressed After which a regiment of soldiers arrived from England, which were sent to suppress the insurrection; but they, coming after the business was over, had no occasion to exercise their courage....

With the regiment above mentioned arrived commissioners, to enquire into the occasion and authors of this rebellion; and Sir William Berkeley came to England: where from the time of his arrival, his sickness obliged him to keep his chamber till he died; so that he had no opportunity of kissing the king's hand. But his majesty declared himself well satisfied with his conduct in Virginia, and was very kind to him during his sickness, often enquiring after his health, and commanding him not to hazard it by too early an endeavor to come to court.



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

Edmund S. Morgan has asserted that the Southrons had sought to prevent a replay of Bacon's Rebellion by "racism, to separate dangerous free whites from dangerous slave blacks by a screen of racial contempt," in accordance with Sir [Francis Bacon](#)'s advice, that the wise ruler divides and breaks off "all factions and combinations that are adverse to the state, and setting them at a distance, or at least distrust among themselves."

Theodore W. Allen has commented on this strategy that:



[J]ust as the overthrow of the tenancy in the 1620s had cleared the way for the institution of chattel bond-servitude, so the defeat of Bacon's Rebellion cleared the way for the establishment of the system of lifelong hereditary chattel bond-servitude.

What this Southron strategy did not contemplate was that circumstances might be brought to occur, in which the Southern black slaves could be divided away from the protection of their rich white owners, and then slaughtered by the Southern poor whites in a spasm of genocide, bringing about the destruction not only of the black slaves which these poor whites had been trained so to condemn, but also their Southron rich white owners who could not survive as such if divested of their investment in their chattel servants. —Which is **very much what almost would be brought about** in consequence of Captain [John Brown](#)'s 1859 attempt to equip an army of escaping slaves with pikes at [Harpers Ferry](#)!

RACE

SLAVERY



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1718

November 1, Saturday (Old Style): [Robert Harper](#), who would found [Harpers Ferry](#), was born in Oxford Township near Philadelphia.



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1747

The Anglican [William Waters](#) erected “Belmont” in the center of an enormous farm occupying much of the land between present-day Olney and Brookeville in Maryland (he was among the earliest in an influx of Anglicans settling the Olney-Unity-Laytonsville area).

A group of [Quakers](#) engaged [Robert Harper](#), a Philadelphia builder and millwright, to construct their meetinghouse near the present site of Winchester, Virginia in the Shenandoah Valley. While crossing [Maryland](#) on his way to the valley of the Shenandoah River, Harper visited “The Hole” at the juncture of the Potomac River and the Shenandoah River and took note of the ample waterpower and transport opportunities of that site — a site which eventually would bear his name.

[HARPERS FERRY](#)

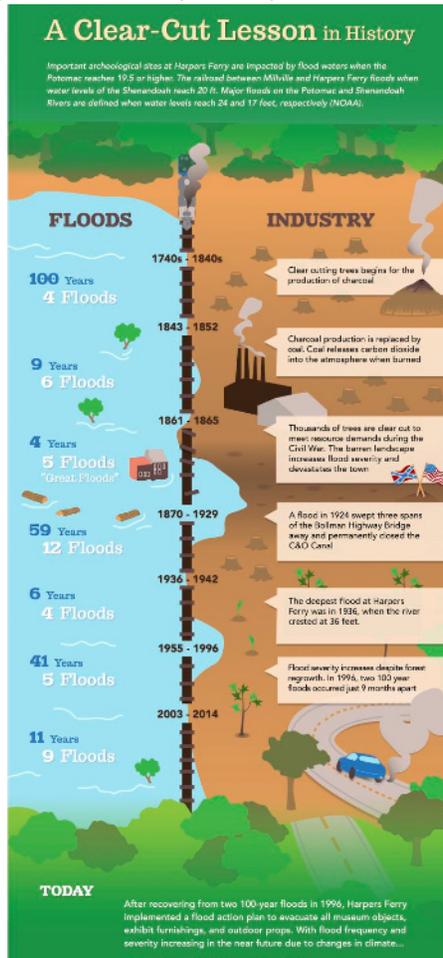
The charcoal industry had already begun its work in the region, resulting in clearcutting that would eventually make it almost impossible to maintain a human settlement at this juncture of rapidly flowing rivers due to



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

persistent extreme flooding (of course, nobody had any awareness of such things at the time).

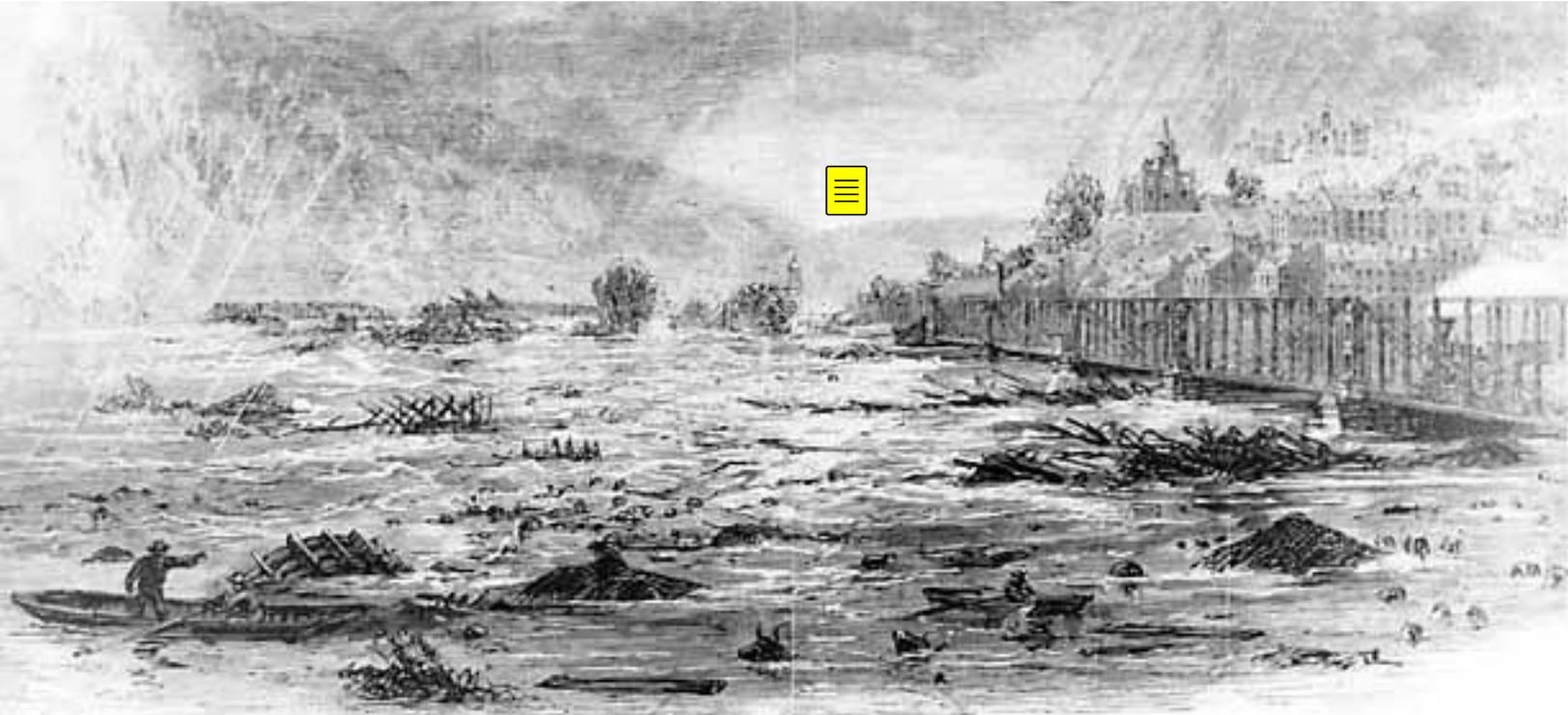


RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1748

According to [Harpers Ferry](#) legend, floodwaters drove [Robert Harper](#) from the log cabin he had acquired from Peter Stephens.





RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1751

[Robert Harper](#) obtained a patent for 125 acres near [Harpers Ferry](#).

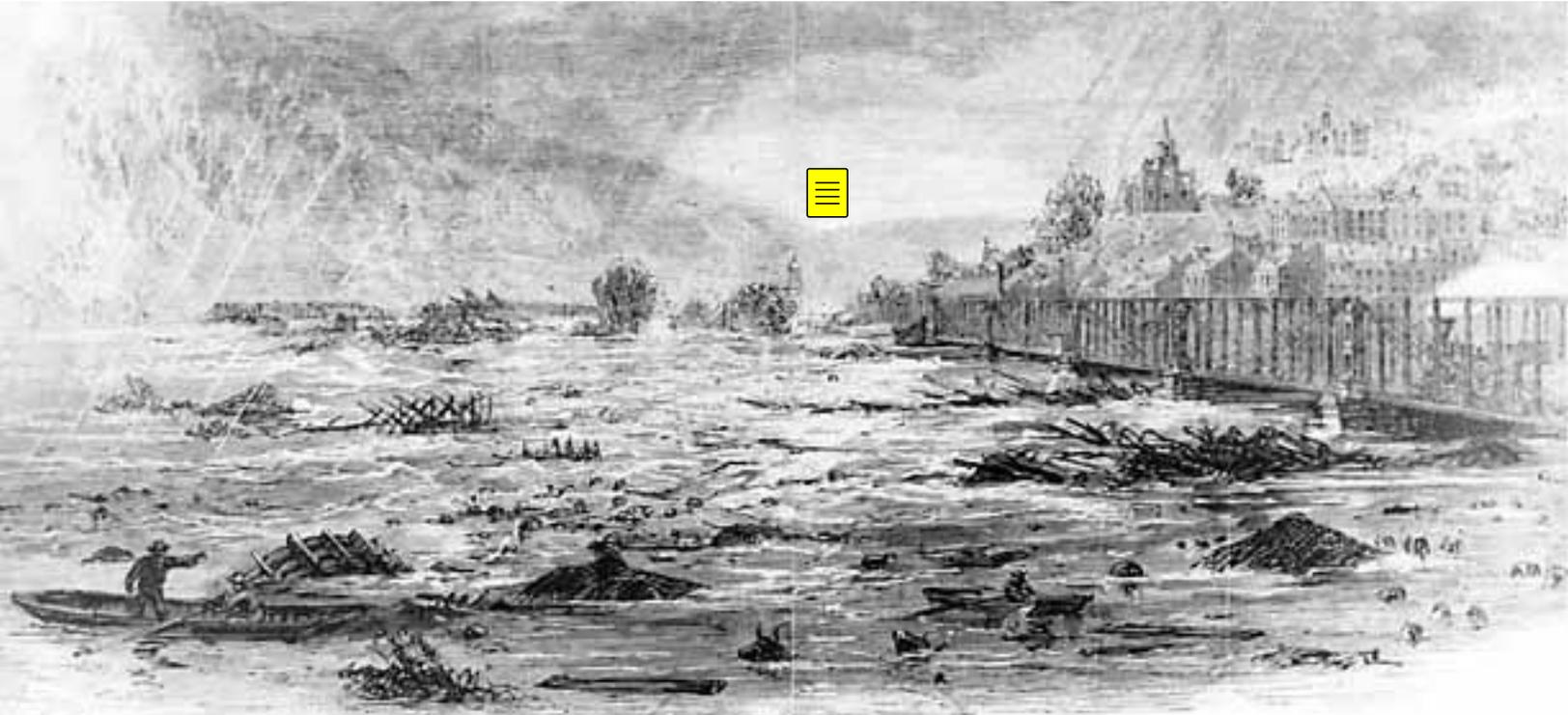
RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1753



“The Pumpkin Flood,” so named for the great numbers of pumpkins washed past [Harpers Ferry](#) from the gardens of upstream Indian villages.





RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1761

 [Robert Harper](#) established a river ferry, making his little community on the Potomac a major jumping off point for settlers seeking new lands in the Shenandoah Valley and points west. From this the community would derive its name.

[HARPERS FERRY](#)



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1763

The Virginia General Assembly established the town of “Shenandoah Falls at [Mr. Harper's Ferry](#).”

HARPERS FERRY



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1775

[Robert Harper](#) began to build his family a new home in the Lower Town at [Harpers Ferry](#).



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1782

[Robert Harper](#) completed the construction he had begun in 1775, of a new home for his family in the Lower Town at [Harpers Ferry, Virginia](#). He died, however, during this year, without having a chance to occupy the new house. (Now this Harper House is the oldest structure to survive floods, war, and fire in the Lower Town.)



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1783

October 25, Saturday: [Thomas Jefferson](#) clambered atop a wobbly stack of layers of shale to view the scenery of [Harpers Ferry](#).



He would register his impressions in NOTES ON THE STATE OF VIRGINIA in 1785:

READ JEFFERSON TEXT

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 a 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. The first glance of this scene hurries our senses into the opinion that this earth has been created in time, that the mountains were formed first, that the rivers began to flow afterwards, that in this place particularly they have been so dammed up by the Blue Ridge of mountains as to have formed an ocean which filled the whole valley; that, continuing to rise, they have at last broken over at this spot and have torn the mountain down from its summit to its base. The piles of rock on each hand, but particularly on the Shenandoah, the evident marks of their disruptions and avulsions from their beds by the most powerful agents in nature, corroborate the impression.

But the distant finishing which nature has given the picture is

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

of a very different character. It is a true contrast to the former. It is as placid and delightful as that is wild and tremendous. For the mountains being cloven asunder, she presents to your eye, through the cleft, a small catch of smooth blue horizon, at an infinite distance in that plain country, inviting you, as it were, from the riot and tumult roaring around to pass through the breach and participate in the calm below. Here the eye ultimately composes itself; and that way, too, the road happens actually to lead. You cross the Patowmac above the junction, pass along its side through the base of the mountain for three miles, the terrible precipice hanging in fragments over you, and within about 20 miles reach Fredericktown and the fine country around that. This scene is worth a voyage across the Atlantic.



(When an attempt would be made to escort President [Abraham Lincoln](#) to this vantage point, he would find the climb too exhausting and turn back.)



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1785

August 7, Sunday: Nancy Baker was born in Lincoln, 4th child of Jacob Baker, Jr. and Hannah Ball Baker.

[George Washington](#), as the 1st president of the Patowmack Company for making improvements such as bypass canals and sluices to the Potomac and its major tributaries, made some notes in his journal about his surveying activities in the vicinity of [Harpers Ferry](#):

Here we breakfasted [at Harpers Ferry]; after which we set out to explore the Falls below; & having but one Canoe, Colo. Gilpin, Mr. Rumsay (who joined us according to appointment last Night) and Myself, embarked in it, with intention to pass thro' what is called the Spout (less than half a mile below the ferry) but when we came to it, the Company on the shore on acct. of the smallness, and low sides of the Vessel, dissuaded us from the attempt, least the roughness of the Water, occasioned by the rocky bottom, should fill, & involve us in danger. To avoid the danger therefore we passed through a narrow channel on the left, near the Maryland Shore and continued in the Canoe to the lower end of Pains falls distant, according to estimation 3 Miles.



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1794

➔ [George Washington](#) recommended [Harpers Ferry](#) as the site for a new federal armory and arsenal. (The primary considerations in such a decision, of course, were transport, ease of defense, and power.)



1803

Spring: As the United States was in the process of purchased the Louisiana Territory from France, President Thomas Jefferson in the White House in Washington DC was preparing a plan to explore this newly acquired, uncharted western territory, territory that was expected to contain erupting volcanoes, mountains of salt, and in accordance with the biology of the time, unicorns, living mastodons and 7-foot-tall beavers (there would not be such, but there would indeed be abundant fossils of such).

THE SCIENCE OF 1803

PALEONTOLOGY

He appointed Meriwether Lewis to explore the purchase lands. Lewis went to the United States Army and Arsenal that George Washington had caused to be established at Harpers Ferry to select weapons and hardware for his transcontinental expedition. He obtained 15 rifles hopefully adequate to stop a mastodon, a unicorn, or a 7-foot beaver in its tracks, 15 powder horns, 30 bullet molds, 30 ball screws, extra rifle and musket locks, gunsmith's repair tools, several dozen tomahawks, 24 knives large enough and sharp enough to butcher a mastodon, a unicorn, or a 7-foot beaver, and a collapsible iron-framed canoe.



The rifles he obtained may well have looked like this standard Baker, then in use in the British Army:

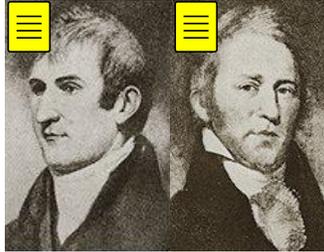




RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

He also went to Philadelphia to obtain the best available instruction in botany, zoology, celestial navigation, and medicine. He wrote to a former army comrade, William Clark, inviting him to share command of expedition. Clark wrote back, accepting.



The President wanted [William Bartram](#) to go along with the explorers, as Official Naturalist. His eyes, unfortunately, not to mention his legs, would not be up to this.

BOTANIZING

For the 1st time, in this crop year, the US would find itself exporting more cotton, a [slave](#)-labor-intensive commodity, than tobacco, a [slave](#)-labor-intensive commodity. In fact, as cotton became more profitable, and as the renewal of hostilities in Europe increased demand for US commodities, and the demand for field hands to tend and pick this cotton increased — South Carolina would be resuming importation of slaves!



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1812

 [Franklin Benjamin Sanborn](#) would record an autobiographical fragment written by [John Brown](#) in 1859 about how, in about this year at the age of 12, he had traveled through the Michigan wilderness to deliver a herd of cattle. He had been disgusted with what he heard of the [War of 1812](#), and for many years refused militia duty and paid instead the fine. He made himself familiar with every portion of the BIBLE. He never danced, and never knew one card from another. He lodged with a man who owned a boy [slave](#). Brown was treated well, but the slave was beaten before his eyes with a metal fire shovel, and seeing this boy so ill-treated made him into “a most determined abolitionist” and led him “to declare, or swear, eternal war with slavery.”

An incident of his boyhood may explain, in some measure, the intense abhorrence he felt to slavery. He had for some reason been sent into the States of [Kentucky](#), where he made the acquaintance of a slave boy, about his own age, of whom he became very fond. For some petty offense this boy was one day subjected to a brutal beating. The blows were dealt with an iron shovel and fell fast and furiously upon his slender body. Born in a free State and unaccustomed to such revolted at the shocking spectacle and at that early age he swore eternal hatred to slavery. After years never obliterated the impression, and he found in this early experience an argument against contempt for small things. It is true that the boy is the father of the man. From the acorn comes the oak. The impression of a horse's foot in the sand suggested the art of printing. The fall of an apple intimated the law of gravitation. A word dropped in the woods of Vincennes, by royal hunters, gave Europe and the world a “William the Silent,” and a thirty years' war. The beating of a Hebrew bondsman, by an Egyptian, created a Moses, and the infliction of a similar outrage on a helpless slave boy in our own land may have caused, forty years afterwards, a John Brown and [Harpers Ferry](#) Raid.

THE FALLACY OF MOMENTISM: THIS STARRY UNIVERSE DOES NOT CONSIST OF A SEQUENCE OF MOMENTS. THAT IS A FIGMENT, ONE WE HAVE RECOURSE TO IN ORDER TO PRIVILEGE TIME OVER CHANGE, A PRIVILEGING THAT MAKES CHANGE SEEM UNREAL, DERIVATIVE, A MERE APPEARANCE. IN FACT IT IS CHANGE AND ONLY CHANGE WHICH WE EXPERIENCE AS REALITY, TIME BEING BY WAY OF RADICAL CONTRAST UNEXPERIENCED — A MERE INTELLECTUAL CONSTRUCT. THERE EXISTS NO SUCH THING AS A MOMENT. NO “INSTANT” HAS EVER FOR AN INSTANT EXISTED.

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1819

 [John Hancock Hall](#)'s breech-loading [rifle and carbine](#) were 1st made at [Harpers Ferry, Virginia](#).

FIREARMS

HARPERS FERRY, FROM THE POTOMAC SIDE



HARPERS FERRY, FROM THE BLUE RIDGE





RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1820

 For the following two decades at the [Harpers Ferry Armory](#) in the mountains of Virginia, [John Hancock Hall](#) of Portland, Maine would be creating a “uniformity principle” of interchangeable manufacture. Referred to as “the American system of manufactures” by the British, this made use of special-purpose machines to produce parts so accurately sized that they were interchangeable on the battlefield. The military very much liked the idea that in the course of a battle a weapon could be field-assembled from salvageable parts of unusably damaged weapons!² Hall’s pioneering in mechanized arms production and the manufacture of interchangeable firearm components was to lay a solid foundation for America’s emerging factory system.

2. If only they could similarly field-assemble new operatives from the salvageable parts of unusably damaged operatives!



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1824

 November 4, Thursday: [Owen Brown](#), 3d of [John Brown](#)'s and [Dianthe Lusk Brown](#)'s sons and his stalwart aid both in Kansas and at Harpers Ferry, was born at Hudson, Ohio. With a withered arm, he would attempt to make a career of writing humor articles for newspapers, and would be 35 years of age at the time that he would escape from the aftermath the [Harpers Ferry](#) raid. He would complete his life as a grower of grapes in Ohio, and on a mountain near Pasadena, [California](#).



On the following screen is what [Harpers Ferry](#) looked like in this year:



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR



Leocadie, a drame lyrique by Daniel-Francois-Esprit Auber to words of Scribe and Melesville after Cervantes, was performed for the initial time, in Theatre Feydeau, Paris.

In [Newport, Rhode Island](#), Friend [Stephen Wanton Gould](#) wrote in his journal:

*5th day 4th of 11th M 1824 / This is our Quarterly Meeting day
at Somersett - my mind was much there while sitting in our*



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

Meeting today which was small - our fr Job Chaloner was there & spake a little to satisfaction -

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

[John Augustus Stone](#)'s play "Restoration; or, The Diamond Cross" was staged at the Chatham Garden Theater in [New-York](#). During this year the author himself was making appearances in supporting roles at this theater, as usual heavily made up as an old man.

NEVER READ AHEAD! TO APPRECIATE NOVEMBER 4TH, 1824 AT ALL ONE MUST APPRECIATE IT AS A TODAY (THE FOLLOWING DAY, TOMORROW, IS BUT A PORTION OF THE UNREALIZED FUTURE AND IFFY AT BEST).



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1830

 Summer: [Sam Houston](#) got married with Tiana Rogers in a Cherokee ceremony.

[John Edwin Cook](#) was born in a well-to-do family of Haddam, Connecticut. After being expelled from [Yale](#) on account of an indiscretion, he would become a law clerk in Brooklyn and Manhattan, and in 1855 would become a member of Charles Lenhart's guerrilla force operated out of Lawrence in the Kansas Territory. He would make himself into an excellent shot. He would be dispatched by [John Brown](#) to [Harpers Ferry](#) more than a year before the raid to work out the details on the ground, and would secure employment in the area as a lock tender on the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal, as a schoolteacher, and as a bookseller. He would marry a Chambersburg, Pennsylvania woman, Mary V. Kennedy, on April 18, 1859. After escaping by climbing into a tree and watching the fight after Brown had sent him out to collect weapons, and after evading capture for some months, against the advice of his comrades he would become reckless in his search for food, and be captured on October 25, 1859 eight miles from Chambersburg. As an incessant and compulsive communicator he had always been considered by the Brown operatives to be indiscreet, and in a confession which would be published as a pamphlet at Charles Town in the middle of November 1859 for the benefit of Samuel C. Young, a man who had been crippled for life in the fighting at Harper's Ferry, Cook would detail for his captors all his movements — from the point of his 1st meeting with Brown after the battle of Black Jack in June 1856 until after his capture. At the last moment Cook would seek to save his neck by representing that he had been deceived through false promises. For this revelation Cook would be severely censured at the time, being termed "Judas" by the friends of Brown. Despite his confession and despite his brother-in-law A.P. Willard being the governor of Indiana, he would in the end hang for the treason and murder at Harpers Ferry, one of the last to be taken to the gallows, on December 16th.





RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

 July 27, Tuesday: [Osborn Perry Anderson](#), “O.P. Anderson, or as we used to call him Chatham Anderson” – the only participant of color to survive the raid on [Harpers Ferry](#) and elude capture and hanging– was born free in West Fallowfield, Pennsylvania.



To get ahead of our story: He would learn the printing trade in Canada, where obviously he would pick up his nickname “Chatham,” and where he would meet [John Brown](#) in 1858. He would write of the fight at Harpers Ferry and his escape alive from it in A VOICE FROM HARPER’S FERRY IN 1860: “We were together eight days before [[John E. Cook](#) and [Albert Hazlett](#) were] captured, which was near Chambersburg, and the next night Meriam [[Francis Jackson Meriam](#)] left us and went to Shippensburg, and there took cars for Philadelphia. After that there were but three of us left [Brown’s son [Owen Brown](#), [Barclay Coppoc](#), and [Charles Plummer Tidd](#)], and we kept together, until we got to Centre County, Pa., where we bought a box and packed up all heavy luggage, such as rifles, blankets, etc., and after being together three or four weeks we separated....” Anderson, Coppoc, and Meriam would journey separately to safe exile in the area of St. Catharines, Canada. Anderson would enlist in the US Army in 1864, becoming a noncommissioned officer, and would muster out in [Washington DC](#) at the close of the war — to die a pauper of TB and lack of care in Washington on December 13, 1872.

Even by the day of his returning to [Paris](#) from Nimes, the fate of the [French](#) monarch Charles X had already been determined. A French court ruled that the monarch’s decree of July 25th was in direct contradiction to the 1814 Charter of Suffrage. [Professor François Pierre Guillaume Guizot](#) was called upon by his friends Casimir Perier, Jacques Laffitte, Villemain, and Dupin to draw up the protest of the liberal deputies against the royal ordinances of July, while he applied himself with them to control the revolutionary character of the late contest. Royal troops and Swiss guards circled the city. Barricades were set up and shots were fired. Revolutionaries reached the Hotel de Ville. In Monmartre, Franz Liszt rushed out of his rooms to see the fighting in the streets. He began composing a “Revolutionary Symphony” (of which he would complete only one movement). He would scribble in the margin, “27, 28, 29 July-Paris.” “Indignation, vengeance, terror, liberty! disorder, confused cries (Wave, strangeness) fury...refusal, march of the royal guard, doubt, uncertainty, parties at cross-purposes...attack, battle...march of the national guard — enthusiasm, enthusiasm, enthusiasm...”

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1832

➡ August 25, Saturday: A newspaper published an image of somebody standing atop the wobbly stack of layers of shale on which [Thomas Jefferson](#) had stood in 1783 to inspect the scenery of [Harpers Ferry](#):





RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1833

 August: [William Thompson](#) was born in New Hampshire, the son of Roswell Thompson.

(In Fall 1858 he would marry with a Mary Brown who was not related to the family of [John Brown](#). His sister Isabella M. Thompson would marry with [Watson Brown](#) and then his elder brother Henry Thompson would marry with [John Brown](#)'s daughter Ruth. He would start for Kansas in 1856 but upon meeting the Brown sons would return with them to [North Elba](#). He and his brother [Dauphin Adolphus Thompson](#) would take part in



Dauphin

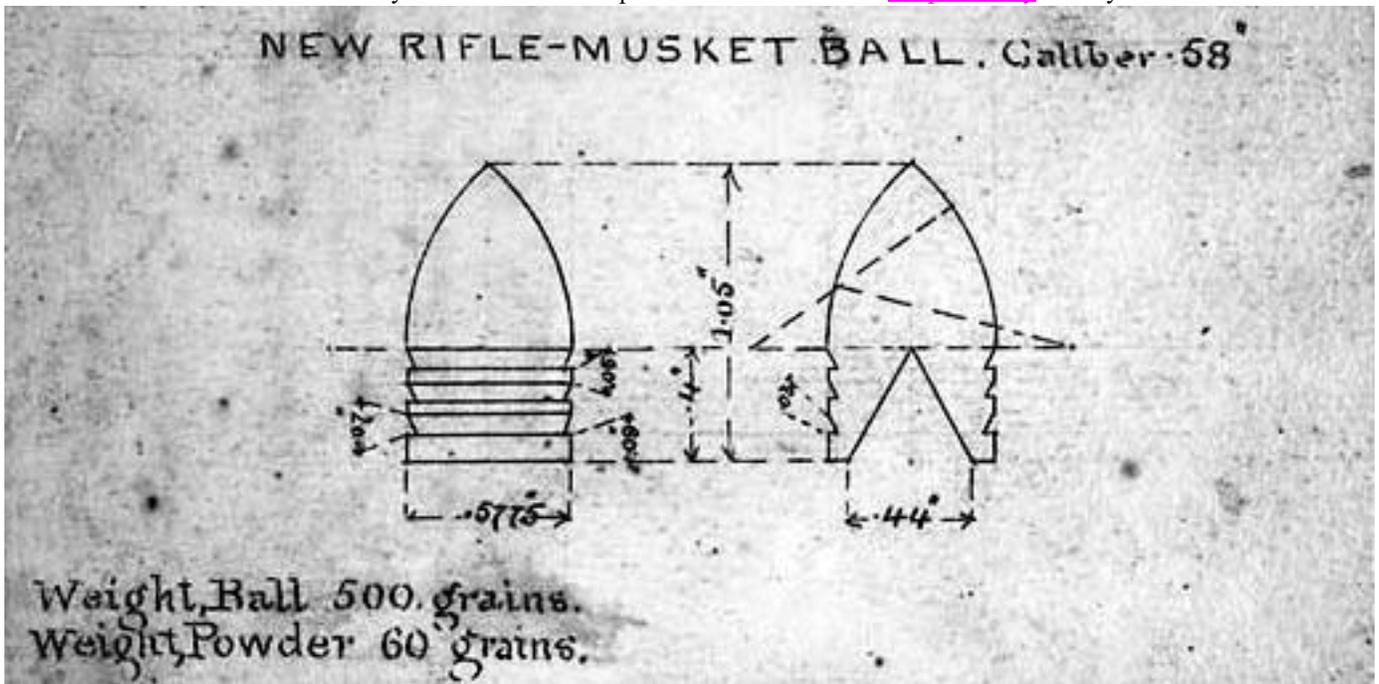


William

the raid on the federal arsenal at [Harpers Ferry](#) and both would be shot dead. When Captain Brown would send him out from the engine house to negotiate under flag of truce, the mob of citizens would place him under arrest, take him to the local hotel barroom, discussed what to do, drag him into the street, execute him by shooting him in the head, and dump his body into the Potomac River. An interesting fact about this case is that it just about got a young lady into serious trouble. According to a letter of explanation she would provide to the local paper, Miss C.C. Fouke was the daughter of the tavernkeeper at Harpers Ferry, operating at the local hotel. The story had gone around, after the fact, that on the 2d day of the raid in her father's saloon in the hotel she had thrown her body in front of Brown conspirator William Thompson while the mob was debating whether or not to off him. Rather than be classed with Pocahontas or with Florence Nightingale, Miss Fouke attempted to explain the rationale for her conduct to the public at large. She had indeed thrown her body between the mob and the captive, she freely confessed, but she had done so, she needed to point out, "without touching him," and she insisted also that her action was not motivated by any concern that this man William Thompson was about to be shot in the head, but rather because her sister-in-law was resting in the next room and should not be disturbed as she was ailing — and/or out of a conviction that Thompson before being offed should be tried by a court of law.)

1849

Captain Claude Minié introduced a conical soft-lead bullet with a hollow base, the virtue of which was that it would expand inside a rifled barrel to make a gas-tight seal with the rifling. By permitting this better fit, range and accuracy, and therefore killing power, was greatly increased, while lead fouling and jamming of barrels during rapid fire was greatly decreased. In addition, the bullet would fragment into shrapnel in a salutary manner as it made its way through your flesh, thus transforming all rather than merely a portion of its inertial moment into tissue damage. (And they say there is no such thing as progress! This invention would serve well during the period 1862-1865, a period during which a great many wrong people lived who deserved to die a horrible death. To assist even the slightly wounded in dying this horrible death, the little hollow in the base of this “Minnie” was frequently contaminated by the righteous rifleman with fresh human feces.) Here is how this deadly device would be implemented in 1855 at the [Harpers Ferry](#) armory:



FIREARMS

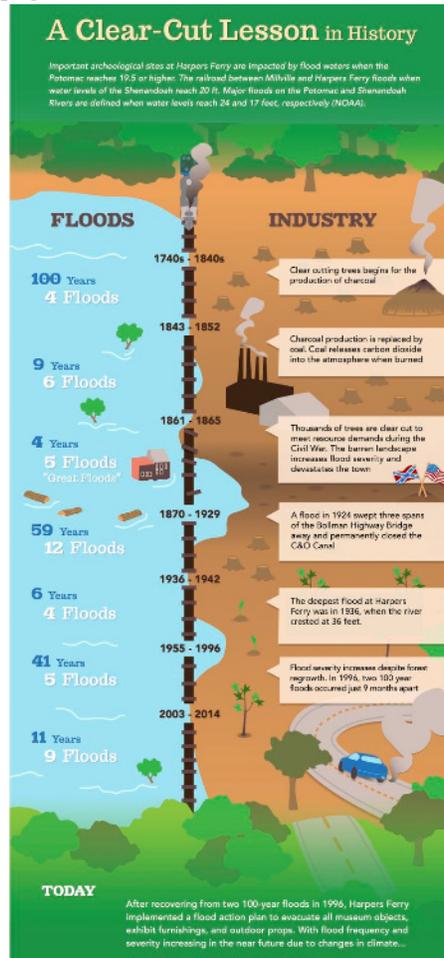
The federal arsenal was being beset by chronic flooding, but of course at the time no one had the slightest clue



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

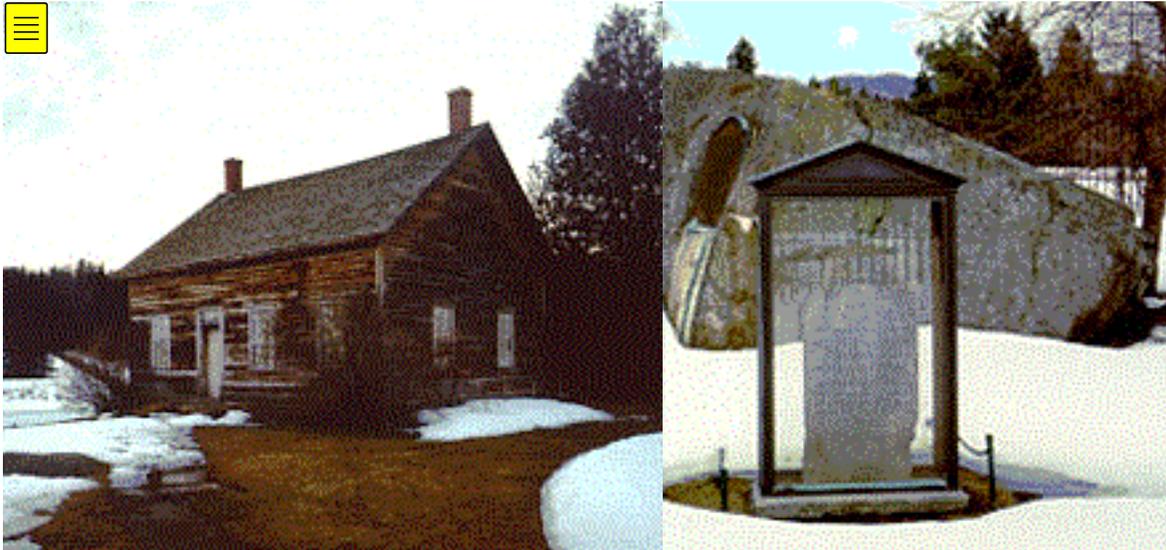
that this flooding was anthropogenic and would become more and more a chronic condition:



Beset by his second business failure, almost age 50, at this point [John Brown](#) made what was according to David Grimsted “his first sustained effort to help blacks,” by moving his family onto [Gerrit Smith](#)’s donation tract in the Adirondacks south of Lake Placid near [North Elba](#) where they could live near and give advice and counsel to black families. Grimsted charges that the folks who talk about Brown as committing his life to antislavery activism as of 1837 are placing too great emphasis upon mere pronouncements and intentions, “vague dreams” as Grimsted characterizes them — if these historians are indeed not committing the egregious error to be described as “remembering backward.” In fact although Brown had aided individuals on occasion prior to this move, and although he had opposed racial segregation in the churches attended by his family, this was the first real activism of his life.

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR



(I don't know whether the family of [John Brown](#) relocated to North Elba while he was still in Europe, or upon his return late in the year.)

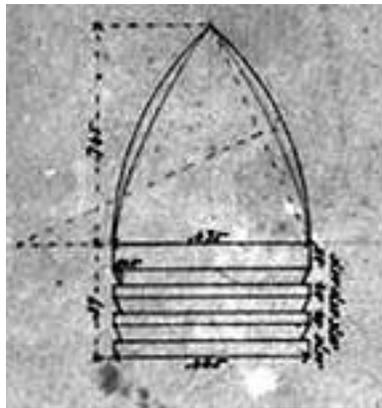


RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1850

March 18, Monday: Jas. H. Burton, the Acting Master Armorer at [Harpers Ferry](#), created a new type of lead pellet, optimized to expand and fit tightly inside a rifled barrel and thus obtain maximum spin, producing maximum directional stability.



(We can understand how it is that while some guys are lying awake at night thinking thoughts of how best to penetrate other people's bodies with their penises, other guys are lying awake at night thinking thoughts of how best to penetrate other people's bodies with their bullets. We've all been there, we've all done that, we've all got the T-shirt.)

FIREARMS

It has been said that “[a]n outstanding characteristic of small arms manufacture is its high annual wages.” As of 1850 the average annual wage of the adult male US wage worker (excluding, of course, not only the indicated women and children but also the unmentioned enslaved and indentured persons) was only around \$250 while the average annual wage of the US arms worker was at about \$325 — very substantially more. In a decade the average wage would be rising from this \$250 to \$300, up about 20%, but meanwhile the average wage of the arms worker would leap from this \$325 to \$415, up about 27%. It pays to lie awake nights thinking up stuff.

Documentation of the [international slave trade](#), per W.E. Burghardt Du Bois: “Report of the Secretary of the Navy, showing the annual number of deaths in the United States squadron on the coast of Africa, and the annual cost of that squadron.” —SENATE EXECUTIVE DOCUMENT, 31 Cong. 1 sess. X. No. 40.



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

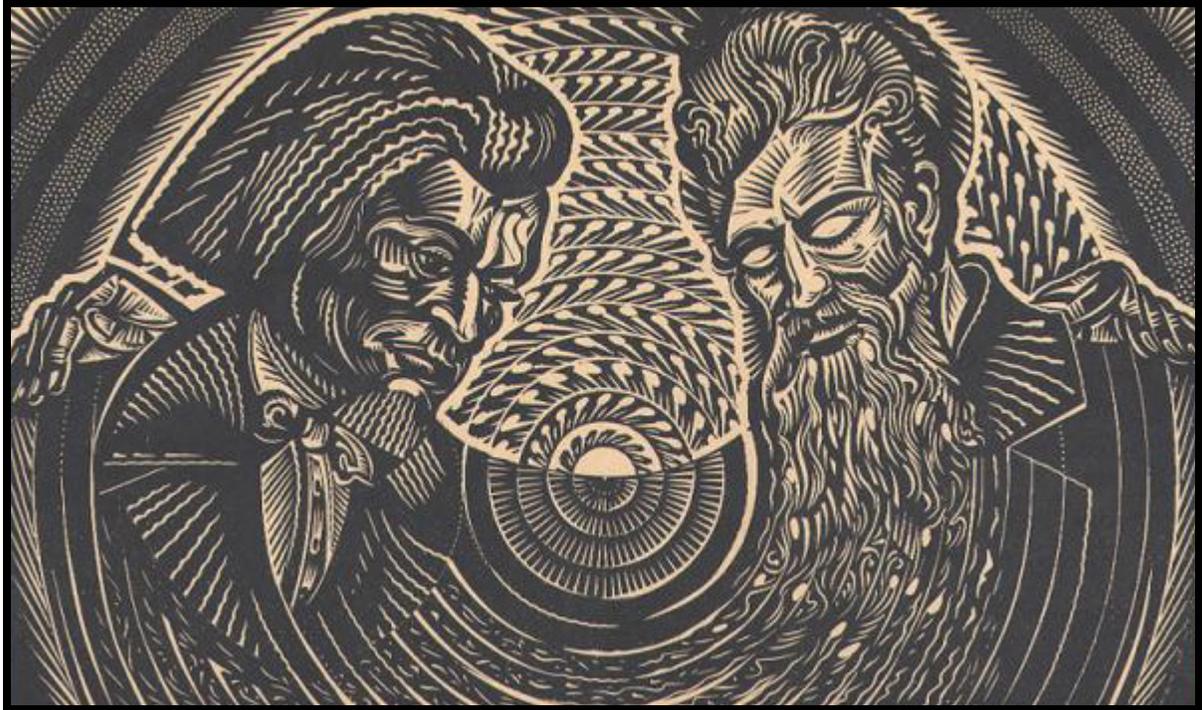
October 4, Friday: [Henry Thoreau](#) and [Ellery Channing](#) returned from [Canada](#):

We left Montreal Wednesday, the 2d of October [this can only be an inaccurate transcription from notes, for our pair of intrepid travelers had left Montréal **for Québec** on Wednesday the 2d, and they were leaving Montréal **for home** on **Friday the 4th**, and there is simply no way to reconstrue their reported travels and adventures into 8 days rather than 10], late in the afternoon. In the La Prairie cars the Yankees made themselves merry, imitating the cries of the charette-drivers to perfection, greatly to the amusement of some French-Canadian travellers, and they kept it up all the way to Boston. I saw one person on board the boat at St. John's, and one or two more elsewhere in Canada, wearing homespun gray great-coats, or capotes, with conical and comical hoods, which fell back between their shoulders like small bags, ready to be turned up over the head when occasion required, though a hat usurped that place now. They looked as if they would be convenient and proper enough as long as the coats were new and tidy, but would soon come to have a beggarly and unsightly look, akin to rags and dust-holes. We reached Burlington early in the morning, where the Yankees tried to pass off their Canada coppers, but the news-boys knew better. Returning through the Green Mountains, I was reminded that I had not seen in Canada such brilliant autumnal tints as I had previously seen in Vermont. Perhaps there was not yet so great and sudden a contrast with the summer heats in the former country as in these mountain valleys. As we were passing through Ashburnham, by a new white house which stood at some distance in a field, one passenger exclaimed, so that all in the car could hear him, "There, there's not so good a house as that in all Canada!" I did not much wonder at his remark, for there is a neatness, as well as evident prosperity, a certain elastic easiness of circumstances, so to speak, when not rich, about a New England house, as if the proprietor could at least afford to make repairs in the spring, which the Canadian houses do not suggest. Though of stone, they are not better constructed than a stone barn would be with us; the only building, except the château, and while every village here contains at least several gentlemen or "squires," *there* there is but one to a seignior.

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

It was [Frederick Douglass](#)'s speech at [Faneuil Hall](#) on this evening that prompted the formation of the Boston



Vigilance Committee, which eventually would spawn the [Secret "Six"](#) conspiracy in support of the activities of Captain [John Brown](#),³ with the Boston attorney [Richard Henry Dana, Jr.](#) providing it with legal counsel.



[Frederick Douglass](#) declared bravely, in accordance with the Southern code of honor which equated **willingness to abandon life** with **deservingness of freedom**,⁴ that "I should welcome the intelligence

3. (Of course, this was Captain Brown's conspiracy, since he was a white man and therefore a leader, and not [Frederick Douglass](#)'s conspiracy, since he was a black man and therefore a follower — despite the fact that while said conspiracy was being hatched [John Brown](#) was residing in the spare bedroom of Douglass's home in Rochester NY! :-)



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

tomorrow, should it come, that slaves had risen in the South, and that the sable arms which had been engaged in beautifying and adorning the South, were engaged in spreading death and devastation.”

(Of course, although the idea of the raid on [Harpers Ferry](#) happened to be hatched while Brown was residing in Douglass’s spare bedroom, the idea of the raid was obviously all the white man’s idea and obviously none of the colored man’s idea, since we all know that colored people are not either originative or possessed of leadership capabilities. ;-)



A Vigilance Committee was also forming on this day in Syracuse, New York. It was made up of:

- P.H. Agan
- George Barnes
- Abnr. Bates
- Lyman Clary
- C.W. Levenworth
- J.W. Loguen
- H. Putnam
- R.R. Raymond
- C.B. Sedgwick
- V.W. Smith
- John Thomas
- C.A. Wheaton
- John Wilkinson

4. Cf the slavemaster Patrick Henry’s often-quoted “patriotic” declaration before the Virginia House of Burgesses, “I know not what course others may take, but as for me, Give Me Liberty Or Give Me Death.”



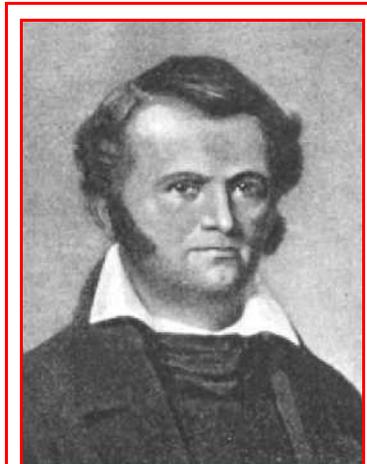
RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

Under the pressure of the Fugitive Slave Law, the “nonresistant” [Henry C. Wright](#) eventually came –surprise, surprise– to legitimate violence. No more Mr. Nice Guy:



Every man, who believes resistance to tyrants to be obedience to God, is bound by his **own principles** (not by mine) to arm himself with a pistol or a dirk, a bowie-knife, a rifle, or any deadly weapon, and inflict death with his own hand, on each and ever man who shall attempt to execute the recent law of Congress, or any other law, made with a view to re-capture and return to bondage fugitive slaves.



James Bowie



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1851

A revolution in railroad construction, the Bollman Bridge at [Harpers Ferry](#), an all-metal truss that should have

HDT

WHAT?

INDEX

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

HISTORY OF RR

been capable of supporting more than one ton of self-manumitting slaves per linear foot.



Harpers Ferry VA from Captain John Brown's overlook in Maryland

JOHN BROWN
BRIDGE DESIGN

HDT

WHAT?

INDEX

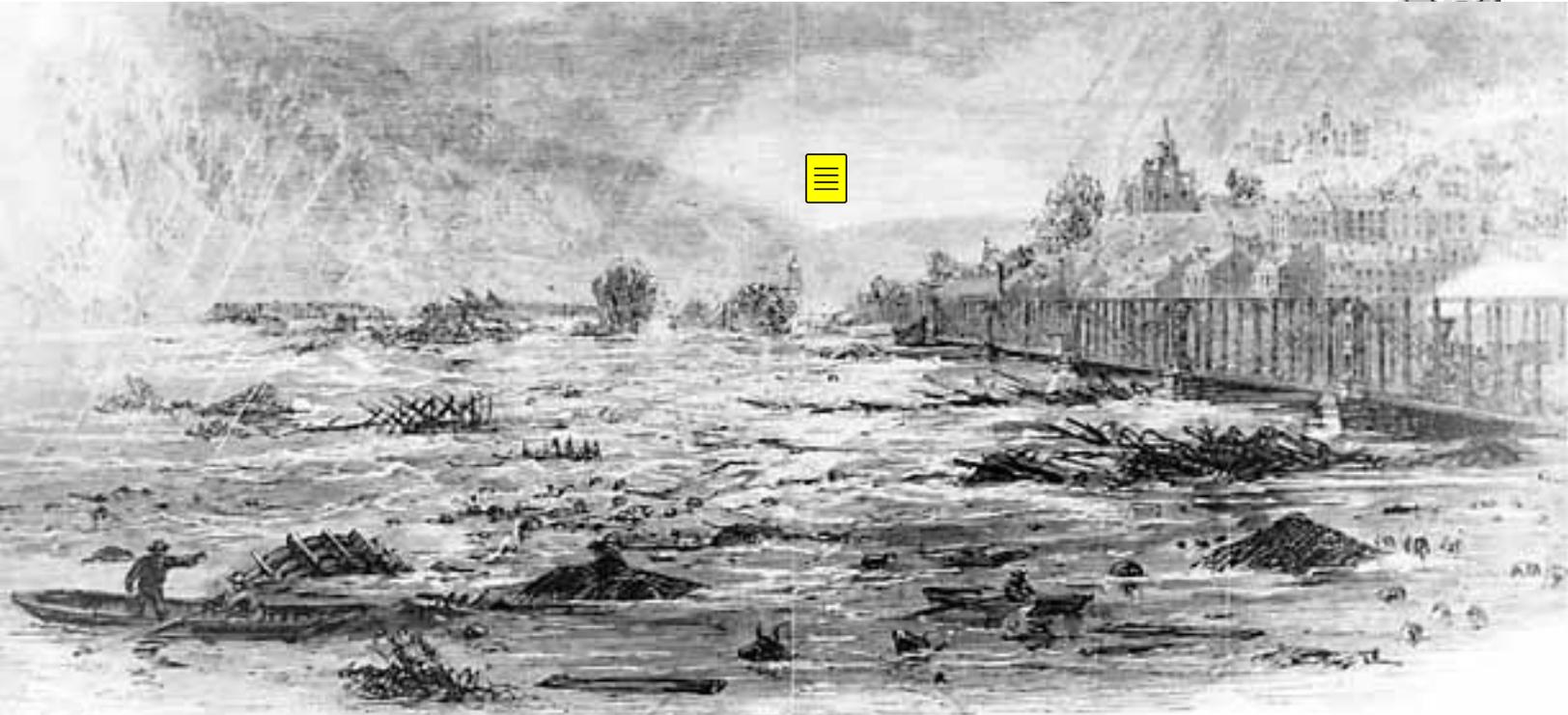
RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1852

[Richard Realf](#), the son of a British rural constable, put out a collection of poetry, GUESSES AT THE BEAUTIFUL.⁵

During the greatest flood since whites had settled at [Harpers Ferry](#), waterpower dams on the Potomac River and Shenandoah River suffered considerable damage.



5. In 1859 this English poet would be one of the participants in [John Brown](#)'s raid on [Harpers Ferry](#).



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1855

The New-York law clerk [John E. Cook](#) became a member of Charles Lenhart's guerrilla force operated out of Lawrence in the Kansas Territory. He would make himself into an excellent shot. He would be dispatched by [John Brown](#) to [Harpers Ferry](#) more than a year before the raid to work out the details on the ground, and would secure employment in the area as a lock tender on the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal, as a schoolteacher, and as a bookseller.



[Oliver Brown](#) went with his father [John Brown](#) to the Kansas Territory, meeting there 4 other of Brown's sons

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

who had already arrived, and settled at [Osawatomic](#).



(Oliver would return to [North Elba](#) in October 1856, where he would marry with Martha Evelyn Brewster

[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

([Martha Brewster Brown](#)) in 1858. She would be sent back north just before the raid on Harpers Ferry.)



A man who was converted to a life of violence by the violence of the [Thomas Simms \(Sims\)](#) case was the Reverend [Daniel Foster](#), the Concord minister who had attracted notice by praying on the dock in 1851 as Simms was being extradited from Boston to Savannah, Georgia. Leaving the Concord church, Foster would become Chaplain of the Massachusetts House of Representatives in 1857 and would be in attendance when Captain Brown spoke before a joint session of the House and Senate about the Kansas troubles. Almost immediately afterward Foster would quit his Chaplaincy and move to Kansas, “convinced that our cause must receive a baptism of blood before it can be victorious.”

I expect to serve in Capt. John Brown's company in the next Kansas war, which I hope is inevitable & near at hand.



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1856

[Elihu Burritt](#)'s A PLAN OF BROTHERLY CO-PARTNERSHIP OF THE NORTH AND SOUTH FOR THE PEACEFUL EXTINCTION OF SLAVERY (New York: Dayton and Burdick). Also, his THE YEAR-BOOK OF THE NATIONS, FOR 1856 (New York: D. Appleton & Co).

There was an attempt at a national crusade to abolish slavery by financial compensation of Southern slaveholders through sale of public lands: simply buy up all slaves, by right of eminent domain or whatever, and then issue them all their [manumission](#) papers. After the raid on the federal armory at [Harpers Ferry](#), [Elihu Burritt](#) would be forced to abandon this crusade as pointless, and when the Southern states actually would secede, Burritt and the Reverend [Adin Ballou](#) and Friend [John Greenleaf Whittier](#) would urge that the Southern whites be allowed peaceably to set up their own separate American nation — one in which they could all abuse one another relentlessly and generally go to hell whatever way they wanted.





RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1857

The mulatto [Lewis Sheridan Leary](#) went to [Oberlin, Ohio](#) to live.



(He would marry there and make the acquaintance of [John Brown](#) in Cleveland. To go to [Harpers Ferry](#), he would leave behind his wife with a 6-month-old child at Oberlin, she being in ignorance of the purpose of his trip. He was given funds to go from Oberlin to Chambersburg in the company of his nephew [John Anderson Copeland, Jr.](#), a student at [Oberlin College](#). He would get isolated along with his nephew and [John Henry Kagi](#)



in the armory called Hall's Rifle Works. When the three men would make a run for it, heading down to the Shenandoah River, they would get themselves caught in a crossfire, and after Kagi had been killed and Leary shot several times, he would be taken, his wounds so severe that he would die the following morning. He would be able to dictate messages to his family and is reported as saying "I am ready to die." The Leary child would subsequently be educated by [James Redpath](#) and [Wendell Phillips](#).)

[Charles Plummer Tidd](#) joined [John Brown](#)'s party at Tabor, Kansas.



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR



(He would become one of the followers of “Shubel Morgan” who would return to Kansas in 1858 to raid into Missouri. During the Winter 1857-1858 encampment of the Brown forces in the Iowa Territory, he would “ruin” a [Quaker](#) girl and the other members of the team would need to sneak him away from Springdale, Iowa during the night. Nevertheless, the group would obtain some recruits not overly impressed with the Peace Testimony of George Fox from among the residents of this town, such as the brothers [Barclay Coppoc](#) and [Edwin Coppoc](#).

THE QUAKER PEACE TESTIMONY

Tidd and [John E. Cook](#) would be particularly warm friends. He opposed the attack on [Harpers Ferry](#) but nevertheless took part both in the raid on the planter Washington’s home and on the federal arsenal itself, escaped, and made his way on foot toward the northwestern part of Pennsylvania. He and [John Brown](#)’s son [Owen Brown](#) would find work and safety, under assumed names, on an oil well in the vicinity of Crawford County, Pennsylvania. He would visit Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Canada and take part in the planning for the rescue of [Aaron D. Stevens](#) and [Albert Hazlett](#) while the Mason Commission of the Congress was presuming that he had been killed in the fighting at Harpers Ferry. On July 19, 1861 he would be able to enlist under the name “Charles Plummer” and would become a 1st Sergeant of the 21st Massachusetts Volunteers. On February 8, 1862 he would die of fever aboard the transport *Northerner* during the battle of Roanoke Island, a battle he had particularly wished to take part in because ex-Governor Henry A. Wise of Virginia, the nemesis of the Harpers Ferry raiders, was in command of the Confederates. [Charles Plummer Tidd](#)’s grave is #40 in the National Cemetery in New Berne, [North Carolina](#).)

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

Christian Sharps finally began to manufacture the breech-loading rifle in quantity, which he had invented back in 1848. The Lecompton Constitution was written by a pro-slave convention in the [Kansas](#) Territory. A free-

FIREARMS



JOHN BROWN

After they would take Captain John Brown's Sharps rifle away from him at Harpers Ferry, they would allow this little Southern boy to pose with it. — Grow up, son, and be a Christian like us: kill people, own slaves.

HARPERS FERRY

state-dominated territorial legislature was chosen in the fall elections. Emporia and Abilene were founded.



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

Here is how [Harpers Ferry](#) was being depicted, in this year, in Edward Beyer's ALBUM ON VIRGINIA:



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

New Years: According to Utagawa Hiroshige, foxes had gathered at an old hackberry tree in homage to the rice field god, for whom the fox serves as messenger, just before the New Year. The foxes had set a number of foxfires, which the rice farmers could count in order to anticipate their upcoming harvest:

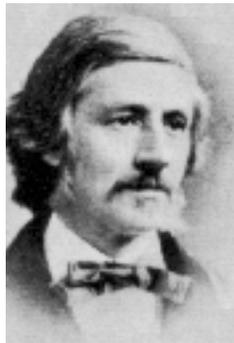




RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

A few days after New Year's in 1857 on a windy, bitter cold afternoon in Boston, a somber-faced man named [John Brown](#) appeared at the offices of the Massachusetts Kansas Committee. The gray-haired, fifty-six-year-old abolitionist had recently returned from the Kansas Territory, where for over a year he had helped lead the struggle against slavery. Brown believed that armed force had to be used to prevent a proslavery takeover in Kansas, and he had come east seeking funds to further free-state military efforts. After introducing himself and presenting this references, he was welcomed by the committee's newly appointed secretary, young [Franklin Benjamin Sanborn](#).



Their meeting began a three-year relationship, during which Sanborn and five prominent abolitionists—the Reverend [Theodore Parker](#), [Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe](#), the Reverend [Thomas Wentworth Higginson](#), [Gerrit Smith](#), and [George Luther Stearns](#)—would not only help Brown collect funds for Kansas, but would also form a secret committee to subsidize his [Harpers Ferry](#) raid. By March 1858, these six men had become engaged in a conspiracy to provide the cash, arms, and equipment for Brown's violent thrust at [slavery](#). They supported Brown's plan to "make a dash" south, incite a slave uprising, and retreat into the mountains of Virginia, where a fortress would be established and other similar attacks prepared.





RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

April 30, Thursday: Founding of what would become San Jose State Teachers College and then San Jose State University.

A letter in solicitation was making the rounds in Boston:

Albany N.Y. 28.th April, 1857.

My Dear Sir :

The Worcester Gun factory cannot supply me with Revolvers in time; but the Map, Arms, Co; whose Revolvers I have used; & which are much the same as Colts) offer to let me have what I need being 200 for \$1300, thirteen hundred dollars.

He did not want the thing to be made public. Now if Ben & Parker, & other good people of Boston, would make up that amount; I might at least be well armed. Please write them my best wishes to yourself and family. Very Respectfully Your Friend
John Brown

**JOHN BROWN
HARPERS FERRY**

[Henry Thoreau](#) surveyed Lincoln and Concord woodlots for George Heywood. These lots had been in the Heywood family since the 1700s, and Cyrus Hubbard had surveyed some of them before Thoreau. Thoreau also surveyed a woodlot near Goose Pond near George Heywood and Wyman lots which became [Waldo Emerson](#)'s. Willard T. Farrar, who was the grandson of Amos Wright and probably lived at the corner of Sudbury Road and Corne Road,⁶ paid \$2.⁷⁵ for the survey.



November: There was an Underground Railroad line, the “stations” of which were Salem in Southeastern Iowa, Tabor, Lewis, Des Moines, Grinnel, Iowa City, West Liberty, Springdale, Iowa, the [Quaker](#) community outside Iowa City, Tipton, Dewitt, and Clinton. During the early winter [John Brown](#) hiked crosscountry from Tabor to Springdale with his group (Brown’s son [Owen Brown](#), [John Edwin Cook](#), [John Henry Kagi](#), [William H. Leeman](#), [Charles Moffett](#), [Luke F. Parsons](#), [Richard Realf](#), [Richard Richardson](#), [Aaron D. Stevens](#), and [Charles Plummer Tidd](#), plus some runaway slaves). The trip had required 25 days. A [Quaker](#) elder is reported to have said to [Brown](#), “Thou art welcome to tarry among us but we have no use for thy guns.” Friend John Painter, later the founder of Pasadena, California, was the only local [Quaker](#) we now know to have had knowledge of the violence of [Brown](#)’s plan. He said, “Friend, I can’t give thee money to buy powder and lead but here’s \$20 toward thy expenses.”

THE QUAKER PEACE TESTIMONY

6. The Old Road To Nine Acre Corner.



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

William and Delilah Maxson of North Liberty, a community about three miles to the northeast of Springdale, who were not Quakers, agreed to provide board for the group in their substantial home at the rate of \$1.50 per week per person, not including laundry or extra candles, and to take payment not in cash but in the wagons and teams the group had been using to transport rifles and pikes. William Maxson was aware of the violence of Brown's plan, but not being a Quaker, he had no objection. The Maxsons and the escaped slaves slept in the large cellar, and John Brown had a room on the main floor for the short intervals during which he was in town that winter, and the white men with him slept in the garret. Maria Todd, who would become the wife of Elza Maxson, also slept in that cellar during that winter. The Maxsons and [Aaron D. Stevens](#) were spiritualists. A mock legislature was staged on Tuesdays and Thursdays in the big west room of the Maxson home until so many neighbors attended that they needed to convene at the community's brick schoolhouse. Parliamentary rules were enforced and the topics engaged with included war, partisan politics, human enslavement, political and civil rights for American blacks, college education and civil rights for women, banking laws, prohibitory liquor laws, mechanics, theology, natural philosophy, and, of course, spiritualism. During the winter the forenoons were spent in military studies and [Stevens](#), known as Colonel Whipple, led drills in which the men carried wooden swords and pikes and maneuvered on the front lawn. The evenings were given over to reading in books such as PLUTARCH'S LIVES, writing letters, and debating. [John Henry Kagi](#) offered instruction in shorthand. That winter, [Stevens](#) was a frequent visitor at the home of Moses Varney. His daughter, Anna Varney Phelps, would tell of sitting on Stephens' knee while, with tears rolling down his cheeks, he would sing in his beautiful tenor, "Will they miss me at home, Mother? Will they miss me?"

[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

November: During the winter encampment of [Captain Brown](#)'s forces in the Iowa Territory, [Charles Plummer Tidd](#) "ruined" a [Quaker](#) girl (something about which the local Quakers do not like to speak) and the other members of the team needed to sneak him away from Springdale, Iowa during the night. Nevertheless, the group was



able to obtain some recruits not overly impressed with the Peace Testimony of Friend [George Fox](#) from among the residents of this town, such as the brothers [Barclay Coppoc](#) and [Edwin Coppoc](#).



THE QUAKER PEACE TESTIMONY

([Charles Plummer Tidd](#) would become one of the followers of "Shubel Morgan" who would return to Kansas in 1858 to raid into Missouri. He and [John Edwin Cook](#) would be particularly warm friends. He opposed the attack on [Harpers Ferry](#) but nevertheless would take part both in the raid on the planter Washington's home and on the federal arsenal itself, escape, and make his way on foot toward the northwestern part of Pennsylvania. He and [Owen Brown](#) would find work and safety, under assumed names, on an oil well in the vicinity of Crawford County, Pennsylvania. He would visit Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Canada and take part in the planning for the rescue of [Aaron D. Stevens](#) and [Albert Hazlett](#) while the Mason Commission of the Congress was presuming that he had been killed in the fighting at Harpers Ferry. On July 19, 1861 he would be able to enlist under the name "Charles Plummer" and would become a 1st Sergeant of the 21st Massachusetts Volunteers. On February 8, 1862 he would die of fever aboard the transport *Northerner* during the battle of Roanoke Island, a battle he had particularly wished to take part in because ex-Governor Henry A. Wise of Virginia, the nemesis of the Harpers Ferry raiders, was in command of the Confederates.



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

You may view [Charles Plummer Tidd](#)'s grave as #40 in the National Cemetery in New Berne, [North Carolina](#).)

[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1858

[Charles Plummer Tidd](#) was one of the followers of “Shubel Morgan” who returned to the [Kansas Territory](#) to raid into Missouri. He and [John E. Cook](#) became particularly warm friends.



(He would oppose the attack on [Harpers Ferry](#) but nevertheless would take part both in the raid on the planter Washington’s home and on the federal arsenal itself, escape, and make his way on foot toward the northwestern part of Pennsylvania. He and [John Brown](#)’s son [Owen Brown](#) would find work and safety, under assumed names, on an oil well in the vicinity of Crawford County PA. He would visit Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Canada and take part in the planning for the rescue of [Aaron D. Stevens](#) and [Albert Hazlett](#) while the Mason Commission of the Congress was presuming that he had been killed in the fighting at Harpers Ferry. On July 19, 1861 he would be able to enlist under the name “Charles Plummer” and would become a 1st Sergeant of the 21st Massachusetts Volunteers. On February 8, 1862 he would die of fever aboard the transport *Northerner* during the battle of Roanoke Island, a battle he had particularly wished to take part in because ex-Governor [Henry A. Wise](#) of Virginia, the nemesis of the Harpers Ferry raiders, was in command of the Confederates. [Charles Plummer Tidd](#)’s grave is #40 in the National Cemetery in New Berne NC.)

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

During this year, in Beyer's ALBUM OF VIRGINIA: ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE OLD DOMINION, an illustration of [Harpers Ferry](#) as it appeared from Thomas Jefferson's rock was published:



[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

Spring: [Edwin Coppoc](#) migrated to the [Kansas Territory](#) as a settler, but, since he had been raised as an adopted child in a nonresistant-abolitionist [Quaker](#) farm family, would take no part in the fighting there.



(It would be during a visit to Springdale, Iowa in Fall 1858 that he would meet [John Brown](#). He would surrender with Captain Brown in the engine house at [Harpers Ferry](#), and would be tried by a jury of his white male peers immediately after the conclusion of the trial of Captain Brown while his brother [Barclay Coppoc](#) was eluding capture. He would be sentenced to death on November 2, 1859. From prison before his hanging, he would write to his adoptive mother that he was

“sorry to say that I was ever induced to raise a gun.”

He would be hung with [John E. Cook](#) on December 16, 1859. The body would be buried in Winona after a funeral attended by the entire town. Later the body would be reburied in Salem, Ohio.)



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

Fall: [Edwin Coppoc](#), who had migrated to Kansas as a settler, paid a visit to Springdale, Iowa and there met [John Brown](#).



(He would surrender with Captain Brown in the engine house at [Harpers Ferry](#), and would be tried by a jury of his white male peers immediately after the conclusion of the trial of Captain Brown while his brother [Barclay Coppoc](#) was eluding capture. He would be sentenced to death on November 2, 1859. From prison before his hanging, he would write to his adoptive mother, of a nonresistant-abolitionist [Quaker](#) farm family, that he was

“sorry to say that I was ever induced to raise a gun.”

He would be hung with [John E. Cook](#) on December 16, 1859. The body would be buried in Winona after a funeral attended by the entire town. Later the body would be reburied in Salem, Ohio.)



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1859

During this year the [Illinois](#) legislature chose Stephen A. Douglas for the US Senate over [Abraham Lincoln](#), by a vote of 54 to 46 — but this was not because the Illinois legislature was distressed at Lincoln’s racism.

There was a report from Arkansas that three white men there had been [hanged](#) when they had been found to have in their possession literature by the troublesome antislavery racist [Hinton Rowan Helper](#). In London, in this year, the US Minister was approached by a representative of Her Majesty’s government, on behalf of a visiting white Englishman who had been caught distributing Helperite materials in Virginia. The US Minister refused to intercede on behalf of Her Majesty’s government in the internal criminal affairs of the State of Virginia.

(Get this, just as it wasn’t enough to be a white man in the southern states of the United States of America, it also wasn’t enough to be a racist — being the **wrong kind** of white racist could get one into really big trouble in the fastest way.)

[William Still](#) started a press campaign to end racial discrimination on Philadelphia’s railroad cars. After [John Brown](#) and his insurrection at [Harpers Ferry](#) failed, Still would shelter some of his men and help them escape capture.

The slave Harriet Roberts Newby wrote 3 letters to her free mulatto husband [Dangerfield Newby](#) begging him to come and buy her and his children. The Virginia family that owned them was said to be in need of money, so the husband was traveling around Ohio asking for donations. The family of Dr. Jesse Jennings back in Warington [Warrenton?], Virginia, however, would reject Dangerfield Newby’s offer, so when he was killed while serving as a bridge sentinel at [Harpers Ferry](#), Dangerfield left an account amounting to \$742 (approximately \$13,000-\$19,000 in our turn-of-the-millennium dollars).



[James Redpath](#)’s THE ROVING EDITOR; OR, TALKS WITH SLAVES IN THE SOUTHERN STATES, an abolitionist book dedicated to [John Brown](#), was suggesting that slavery could be ended by inciting “a few scores of rattling insurrections ... and by a little wholesome slaughter to arouse the conscience of the people.” Redpath was giving no indication whether the aforesaid red path of slaughter ought to consist of the blood of white Americans killed by black, the blood of black Americans killed by white, or the blood of black and white

HDT

WHAT?

INDEX

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

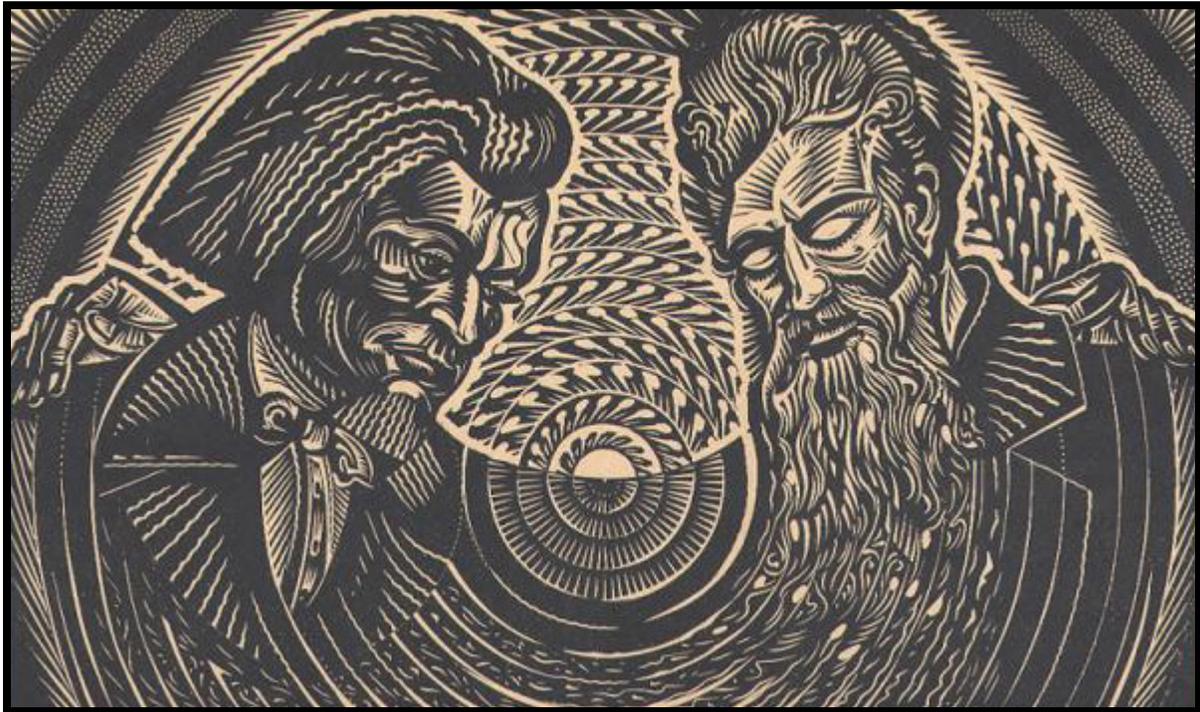
Americans indiscriminately intermingled.⁷



At some point during this year [Frederick Douglass](#) would meet secretly with Captain [John Brown](#) in an abandoned rock quarry near Chambersburg, Pennsylvania and be briefed on the progress of the plan to attack

7. [Francis Jackson Meriam](#) had helped [James Redpath](#) collect his materials for this book, in [Haiti](#) and across the American South.

the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia.



Douglass would opt out of the plot, which he considered too risky, and flee via [Canada](#) to England rather than himself personally participate. He would then remark humorously:

"I've always been more distinguished for running than for fighting."

(Note that in abandoning the struggle in this manner, Douglass was not doing anything that other folks were not doing. For instance, praising Brown's actions at Harpers Ferry but declaring that she could foresee a "crisis" which was going to be inevitable, the little lady [Harriet Beecher Stowe](#) who did more than anyone else to start America's biggest war would be withdrawing from all anti-slavery agitation and embarking in her swishy silk dress upon her 3d genteel tour of the grand hotels of the European subcontinent, paid for of course with the enormous extent of the ongoing royalties she was receiving from her writings — which had touched the pulse of the nation she was abandoning to its fate. Meanwhile another little lady, [Harriet Tubman](#), would be pleading to [John Brown](#) that she could not participate in his raid on the federal arsenal as she had become



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

ill — although I know of no historian who has ever attempted to check the trustworthiness of that excuse.)⁸

In [Harriet Beecher Stowe](#)'s new novel THE MINISTER'S WOOING set at the turn of the 18th Century, one of the characters, Candace the fat wife of Cato and slave of the Merwyns, was according to Nell Painter, "probably inspired in part by [Truth](#)" — despite the blunt reality that in Litchfield, Massachusetts the Beecher family's laundry had been done by a black woman, named Candace. When Mr. Merwyn tried to find out whether his slaves didn't really prefer the freedom from life's cares which sprang from their being so many pieces of property:

When General Washington was here, I hearn 'em read de Declaration ob Independence and Bill o' Rights; an' I tole Cato den, says I, "Ef dat ar' true, you an' I are as free as anybody." It stands to reason. Why, look at me — I a'n't a critter. ... I's a reasonable bein' —a woman, —as much a woman as anybody.

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

This character modeled upon Truth had ideas not only about racism but also about [feminism](#):

"I de weaker vessel?" said Candace, looking down from the tower of her ample corpulence ... "I de weaker vessel? Umph!"

And she had ideas about Calvinism and man's natural depravity as products of the Adam who fell into sin:

... nebber did eat dat ar' apple ... Don't tell me!

8. A practical woman, she mistrusted these white men to the point at which she had recurrent nightmares in which [John Brown](#) and his sons figured as serpents. On the day of the raid, [Harriet Tubman](#) had a premonition that this was a lost cause.

[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

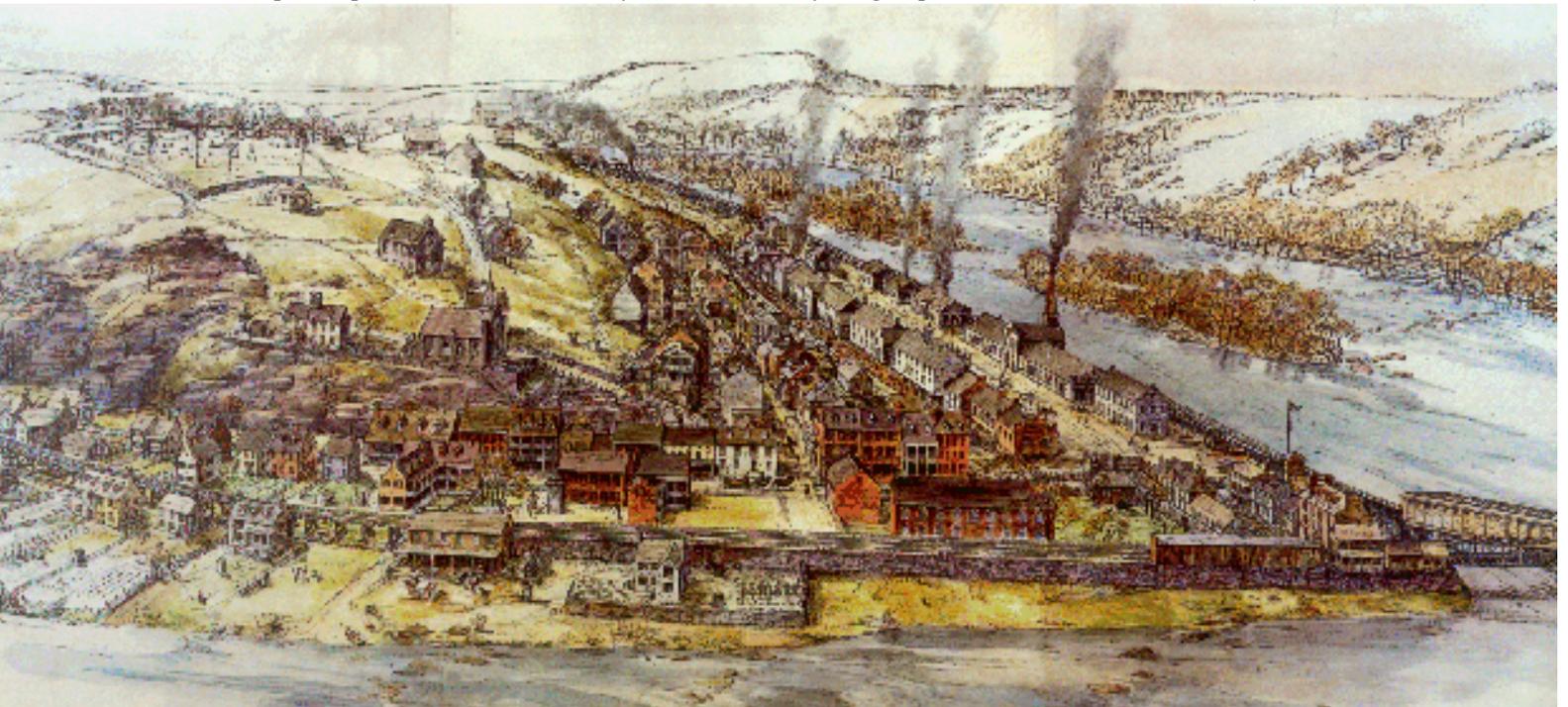
RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

January: [Lysander Spooner](#), who was well aware of [John Brown](#)'s plans for the raid on the federal arsenal at [Harpers Ferry](#), wrote to [Gerrit Smith](#) warning that Brown had neither the men nor the resources to succeed.



(Since this man was not a member of the [Secret "Six"](#), but was what we would ordinarily identify instead as a philosophical anarchist, obviously the secret held by the group was not that much of a secret!)



It was, for instance, no secret to the American business community, and had not been since his bankruptcy in 1842, that [John Brown](#)'s "wherewithal" was scanty:

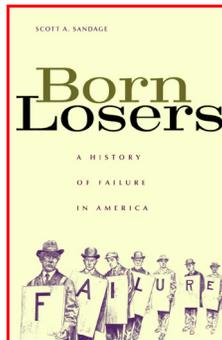
A failed surveyor, farmer, speculator, schoolteacher, tanner, and cattleman, he showed up as a wool dealer in an 1848 credit report: "his condition is questionable." Winter 1849: "may or may not be good." Summer 1850: "his means are equally obscure." Still in his forties, he looked sixty to credit reporters. The agency lost him when he switched lines of work yet again, only



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

to fail yet again. Like many another misfit who pushed a doomed venture too far, he quit when he had no other choice. Having grown whiskers for the first time, his craggy face looked still more ancient. Everyone had an opinion of this broken man. "Served him right." Overhearing such comments, Thoreau said he felt proud even to know him and questioned why people "talk as if a man's death were a failure, and his continued life, be it of whatever character, were a success." The bankrupt court had restored this loser's freedom in 1842. Now it was 1859, and no earthly court could save John Brown after his failure at Harpers Ferry.



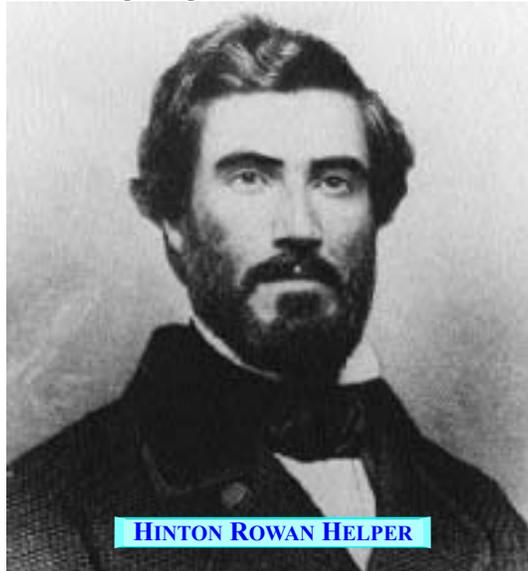


RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

May: That spring, 68 of the 92 Republicans in the US House of Representatives had fairly straightforwardly endorsed the straightforward doctrine of racial hatred contained in [Hinton Rowan Helper](#)'s THE IMPENDING CRISIS OF THE SOUTH: HOW TO MEET IT:

We, the undersigned, Members of the House of Representatives, do cordially endorse the opinion, and approve the enterprise, set forth in the foregoing circular.



HINTON ROWAN HELPER

In this month, Richard Owen was lecturing on the gorilla.

In this month, six months before the date of the postponed raid upon the federal arsenal at [Harpers Ferry](#), [James Redpath](#), an old friend of [John Brown](#) from the Kansas Territory, was publishing a book he had been secretly authoring on the basis of what he had been learned from the incautious Brown, entitled THE ROVING EDITOR; OR, TALKS WITH SLAVES IN THE SOUTHERN STATES (NY: A.B. Burdick). Redpath's book described a plan for a race war in the slave states with assistance by armed white raiders from free territory, and it was dedicated to Captain John Brown:

You, Old Hero! believe that the slave should be aided and urged to insurrection and hence do I lay this tribute at your feet.⁹





RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

Some of these Republicans who had endorsed Helper's racist book would later claim that they had not read it. Did no-one in the federal government read this book by Redpath, and on the basis of what they learned instigate a clandestine government investigation of the activities of the [Secret "Six"](#) conspiracy as so broadly hinted at therein?

Did not a single person in our federal government have the intelligence that God gave a great ape? –Or, might there perchance be some other explanation for these curious facts, some explanation involving a fully **intentional** obtuseness?

July: The [Weekly Anglo African Magazine](#) completed its weekly publication of the initial 25 installments of Martin Robison Delany's *BLAKE; OR, THE HUTS OF AMERICA: A TALE OF THE MISSISSIPPI VALLEY, THE SOUTHERN UNITED STATES, AND [CUBA](#)*, a novel involving black insurrectionism which, according to Floyd Miller, amounted to "the first novelistic offering of a black writer to be published in the United States," serialization of which had begun in January.

Choosing not to join up with Captain [John Brown](#) and his raiders at [Harpers Ferry](#), Dr. Delany departed for an investigation of the suitability of the shore of Africa for a colonization effort by American blacks.¹⁰



July 3, Sunday: [John Brown](#) relocated from Hagerstown, Pennsylvania and was at Sandy Hook, Maryland, near [Harpers Ferry](#). He rented a farmhouse using the name "Isaac Smith."

[Bronson Alcott](#) wrote about [Henry Thoreau](#) in his journal (JOURNALS. Boston MA: Little, Brown, 1938, page 318):

Thoreau comes and stays an hour or two. Students of Nature alike, our methods differ. He is an observer of Nature pure, and I discern her as exalted and mingled in Man. Her brute aspects and qualities interest him, and these he discriminates with a sagacity unsurpassed. He is less thinker than observer;

9. Joel Silbey has contended, in "The Civil War Synthesis in American History," that postbellum American historians have been misconstruing antebellum American politics by viewing them in conjunction with our knowledge of the bloodbath that followed. It is only after the fact that we can "know" that the US Civil War amounted to a sectional dispute, North versus South. We avoid learning that before the fact, it was undecided whether this conflict was going to shape up as a race conflict, a class conflict, or a sectional conflict. We avoid knowing that the raid on Harpers Ferry might have resulted in a race war, in which peoples of color would be exterminated in order to create an all-white America, or might have resulted in a class war, in which the laboring classes might have first destroyed the plantation owners' equity by killing his slaves, and then gone on to purge the nation of the white plantation owners themselves, with their privileged-class endowments.

10. Dr. Delany's treaty with the *Alake* of Abeokuta for land to establish this colony would be annulled by the middle of 1861, as it seems that tribal headmen did not really have authority for such alienation of tribal real estate.



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

a naturalist in tendency but of a mystic habit, and a genius for detecting the essence in the form and giving forth the soul of things seen. He knows more of Nature's secrets than any man I have known, and of Man as related to Nature. He thinks and sees for himself in way eminently original, and is formidably individual and persistent.



July 3: P.M. To Hubbard's Grove.

You see in rich moist mowing the yet slender, recurving unexpanded panicles or heads of the red-top (?), mixed with the upright, rigid herd's-grass. Much of it is out in dry places. *Glyceria fluitans* is very abundant in Depot Field Brook. *Hypeticum ellipticum* out.

I noticed the other day, I think the 30th, a large patch of *Agrostis scabra* in E. Hosmer's meadow,—the firmer ridges,—a very interesting purple with its fine waving top, mixed with blue-eyed grass.

The *Mitchella repens* [Partridgeberry *Mitchella repens*], so abundant now in the northwest part of Hubbard's Grove, emits a strong astringent cherry-like scent as I walk over it, now that it is so abundantly in bloom, which is agreeable to me,—spotting the ground with its downy-looking white flowers.

Eleocharis obtusa and *acicularis* are now apparently in prime at water's edge by Hubbard's Grove bridge path. Also *Juncus bufonius* is very abundant in path there, fresh quite, though some shows seed. *Juncus tenuis*, though quite fresh, is also as much gone to seed.



 Our national birthday, Monday the 4th of July: [Nathaniel Hawthorne](#)'s 55th birthday.



Because of its symbolic significance, this had been the day selected by [John Brown](#) for the raid on [Harpers Ferry](#). But that had been mere planning. [Harriet Tubman](#) hadn't shown up, and various items of supply had been delayed. The raid had had to be postponed.



CELEBRATING OUR B-DAY

In [Washington DC](#), a convict who was serving a sentence for murder was allowed to read the [Declaration of Independence](#) aloud for the benefit of the other prisoners. (That ought to have been instructive!)

In an oration delivered in Grahamville, South Carolina by Robert Barnwell Rhett, the creation of a Southern nation was proposed.



July 4: June 28th, I observed up the Assabet some exceedingly handsome amelanchier leaves, bright-crimson, regularly striped with green on the veins and with scattered yellow spots. The shrub probably dying. *Vide* some in press.

P.M. – To Fair Haven Pond, measuring depth of river.

As you walk beside a ditch or brook, you see the frogs which you alarm launching themselves from a considerable distance into the brook. They spring considerably upward, so as to clear all intervening obstacles, and seem to know pretty well where the brook is. Yet no doubt they often strike, to their chagrin and perhaps sorrow, on a pebbly shore or rock. Their noses must be peculiarly organized to resist accidents of this kind, and allow them to cast themselves thus heedlessly into the air, trusting to fall into the water, for they come down nose foremost. A frog reckons that he knows where the brook is. I shudder for them when I see their soft, unshielded proboscis falling thus heedlessly on whatever may be beneath.

I observe at Well Meadow Head that the fall has already come conspicuously to the hellebore, and they are mostly turned yellow, while their large green seed-vessels are ripening; but the skunk-cabbage is still green.



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

The front-rank polygonum, having been submerged by the unusually high water of the last fortnight, is a conspicuous red or purple color; and this is evidently the effect of the water alone, as, I think, it is the water which turns the early maples. [Both white and red, when the leaves are not half developed, long ago.] All the river's edge is now tinged with this purplish streak, yet they are healthy-looking leaves.

Johnswort is just fairly begun. *Hypericum ellipticum* and Jersey tea first observed.

The deepest place I find in the river to-day is off Bittern Cliff, answering to the bold shore. There is an uninterrupted deep and wide reach of the river from Fair Haven Pond to Nut Meadow Brook.



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

July 12, Tuesday: Martin Robison Delany arrived in Monrovia 300 miles from Cape Palmas to the west.



William Goodale of Massachusetts patented a machine for the manufacture of paper bags.¹¹

On approximately this date [John Brown](#) was moving to the Kennedy farm near [Harpers Ferry](#) (one of the

11. This was not the grocery bag familiar to us from our childhoods, but an earlier and somewhat less cost-effective version. That square-bottomed design would not be invented until 1870, by Luther Childs Crowell.

HDT

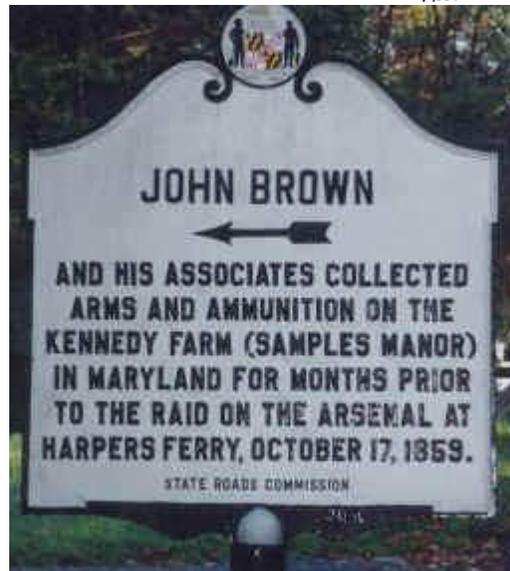
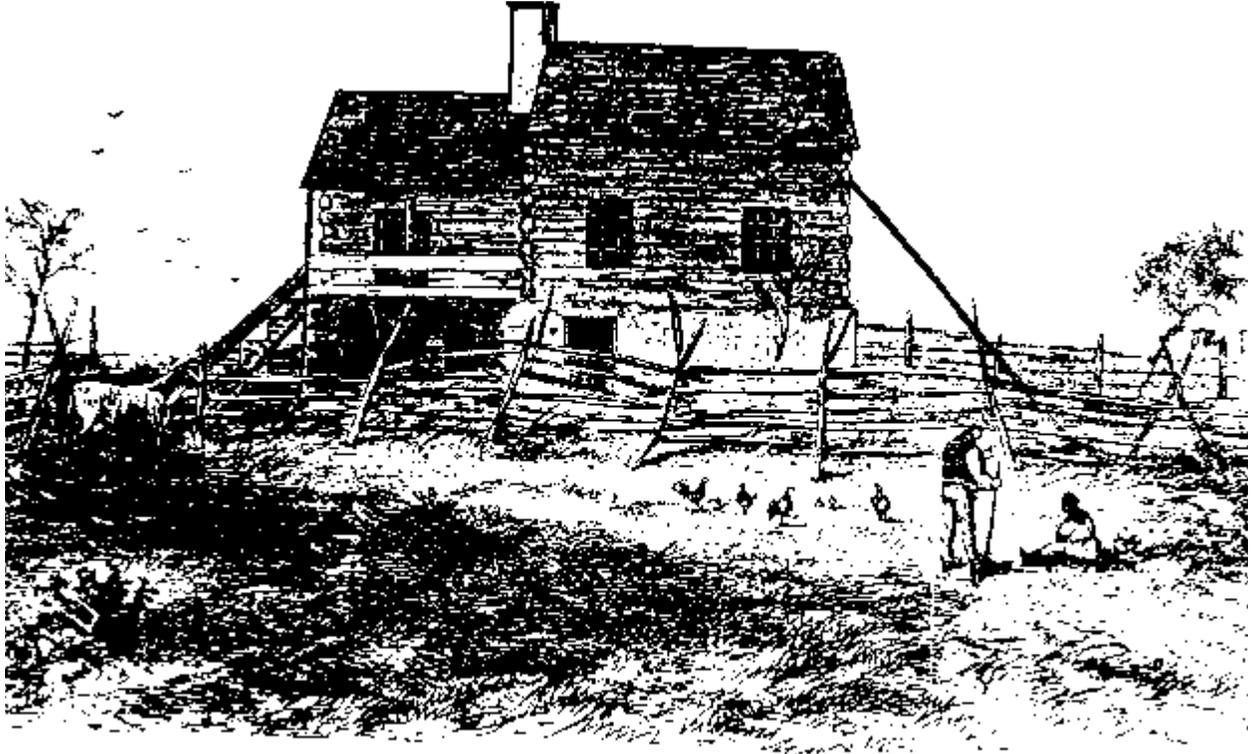
WHAT?

INDEX

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

conspirators had married a local woman named Kennedy).





RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

The Kennedy farmhouse was about 5 miles outside the town, in Maryland. He positioned his 15-year-old daughter [Anne Brown](#) and his 17-year-old daughter-in-law [Martha Brewster Brown](#) in the farmhouse, providing it a familial appearance in the eyes of neighbors. He obliged his raiders to remain hidden in the loft during the hours of daylight, allowing them downstairs at night when no-one would be expected to approach the premises.



July 12: Another hot day. 96° at mid-afternoon.

P.M. – To Assabet Bath.

The elm avenue above the Wheeler farm is one of the hottest places in the town; the heat is reflected from the dusty road. The grass by the roadside begins to have a dry, hot, dusty look. The melted ice is running almost in a stream from the countryman's covered wagon, containing butter, which is to be conveyed hard to Boston market. He stands on the wheel to relieve his horses at each shelf in the ascent of Colburn Hill.

I think I have distinguished our eriophorums now. There is the *E. vaginatum*, the earliest, out long ago; the *E. polystachyon*, well out June 19th; and to-day I see the *E. gracile*, which apparently has not been out quite so long as the last. Its leaves are channelled triangular. Saw yesterday the *E. Virginicum*, apparently in bloom, though very little woolly or reddish as yet, –a dense head.

The taller dark rhynchospora is well out.



In the evening, the moon being about full, I paddle up the river to see the moonlight and hear the bullfrogs. The toads and the pebbly *dont dont* are most common. There are fireworks in the village, –rockets, blue lights, etc. I am so far off that I do not hear the rush of the rocket till it has reached its highest point, so that it seems to be produced there. So the villagers entertain themselves this warm evening. Such are the[IR] aspirations.

I see at 9.30 P.M. a little brood of four or five barn swallows, which have quite recently left the nest, perched close together for the night on a dead willow twig in the shade of the tree, about four feet above the water. Their tails not yet much grown. When I passed up, the old bird twittered about them in alarm. I now float within four feet, and they do not move or give sign of awaking. I could take them all off with my hand. They have been hatched in the nearest barn or elsewhere, and have been led at once to roost here, for coolness and security. There is no cooler nor safer place for them. I observe that they take their broods to the telegraph-wire for an aerial perch, where they teach them to fly. They have gone to their beach.

August 16, Tuesday to August 21, Sunday: In Africa, Martin Robison Delany was returning to Cape Palmas to explore the Cavalla River.



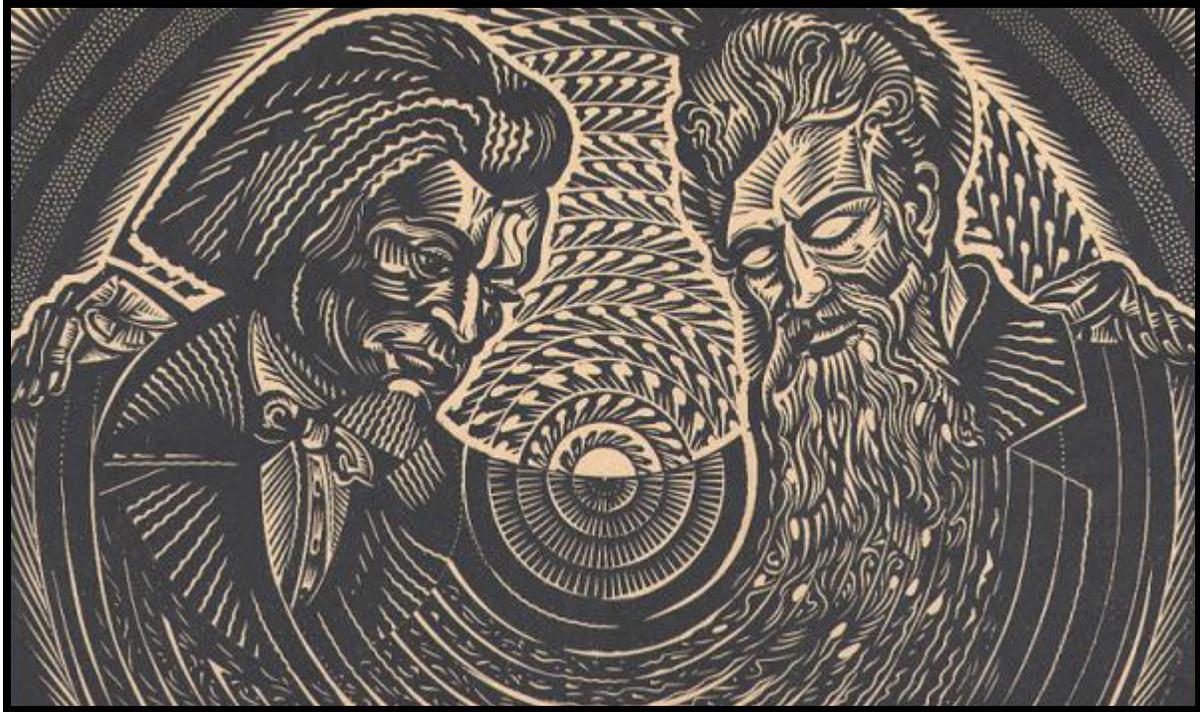
The [emancipation](#) paper of Elias Watkins Napier, in Connecticut:

The said Elias Watkins Napier is ten years of age. A light colored mulatto, with straight dark brown hair. Has a slight scar just over, and partly in his left eye brow, and a small dark mole under his left jaw, and has had the end of his middle finger and the end of his fourth finger on his left hand crushed, so that the nail has come off. He has no other special marks at this time. The said Elias Watkins Napier has heretofore owed service or labor to me, under the laws of the State of Tennessee, as a slave....

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

While in Chambersburg near [Harpers Ferry](#) as agent for the raiders, [John Brown](#)'s 2d-in-command, [John Henry Kagi](#), had been boarding with a Mrs. Mary Rittner. In this period Captain Brown met secretly at Chambersburg, Pennsylvania with [Frederick Douglass](#). The meeting was staged in an abandoned stone quarry.



One of these persons at that quarry was the head of a general conspiracy, and the other was acting as one of its





RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

agents: how can we now establish which was which?

Two weeks prior to the mediated attack, Capt. Brown summoned me to meet him in an old stone quarry on the Conocochequi river, near the town of Chambersburgh, Penn. His arms and ammunition were stored in that town and were to be moved on to Harpers Ferry. In company with Shields Green I obeyed the summons, and prompt to the hour we met the dear old man, with Kagi, his secretary, at the appointed place. Our meeting was in some sense a council of war. We spent the Saturday and succeeding Sunday in conference on the question, whether the desperate step should then taken, or the old plan as already described should be carried out. He was for boldly striking Harpers Ferry at once and running the risk of getting into the mountains afterwards. I was for avoiding Harpers Ferry altogether. Shields Green and Mr. Kagi remained silent listeners throughout. It is needless to repeat here what was said, after what has happened. Suffice it, that after all I could say, I saw that my old friend had resolved on his course and that it was idle to parley. I told him finally that it was impossible for me to join him. I could see Harpers Ferry only as a trap of steel, and ourselves in the wrong side of it. He regretted my decision and we parted.

Thus far, I have spoken exclusively of Capt. Brown. Let me say a word or two of his brave and devoted men, and first of Shields Green. He was a fugitive slave from Charleston, South Carolina, and had attested his love of liberty by escaping from slavery and making his way through many dangers to Rochester, where he had lived in my family, and where he met the man with whom he went to the scaffold. I said to him, as I was about to leave, "Now Shields, you have heard our discussion. If in view of it, you do not wish to stay, you have but to say so, and you can go back with me." He answered, "I b'l'ave I'll go wid de old man;" and go with him he did, into the fight, and to the gallows, and bore himself as grandly as any of the number. At the moment when Capt. Brown was surrounded, and all chance of escape was cut off, Green was in the mountains and could have made his escape as Osborne Anderson did, but when asked to do so, he made the same answer he did at Chambersburg, "I b'l'ave I'll go down wid de ole man." When in prison at Charlestown, and he was not allowed to see his old friend, his fidelity to him was in no wise weakened, and no complaint against Brown could be extorted from him by those who talked with him.

SHIELDS GREEN

JOHN HENRY KAGI

The wife of [Dangerfield Newby](#) wrote to him (a letter that would be found on his corpse at [Harpers Ferry](#)):

Dear Husband:

Your kind letter came duly to hand, and it gave me much pleasure to here from you, and especely to here you are better off [with]



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

your rhumatism, and hope when I here from you again, you may be entirely well. I want you to buy me as soon as possible, for if you do not get me some body else will.... Dear Husband you [know], not the trouble I see; the last two years has ben like a trouble dream to me.

It is said Master is in want of monney. If so, I know not what time he may sell me, an then all my bright hops of the futer are blasted, for their has ben one bright hope to cheer me in all my troubles, that is to be with you, for if I thought I should never see you this earth would have no charms for me....

It is positively known only that Harriet Newby and her children were sold to the “deep south.” All that has been found out about the Newby family is inferred from the three surviving letters found on Dangerfield’s corpse. The story of this husband’s desperate attempts to raise enough money to buy his wife and children is one that is difficult to read — when he managed to raise the specified amount, the slavemaster simply demanded more.



[THOREAU MADE NO ENTRY IN HIS JOURNAL FOR AUGUST 16th]

Second week of August: [John Brown, Jr.](#) traveled from Ohio to Syracuse, New York in order to invite [Frederick Douglass](#) to a secret rendezvous with his father in an abandoned quarry near Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, 50-odd miles to the north of [Harpers Ferry](#), and to pass him \$22 to cover the costs of this journey. Douglass brought with him a bodyguard, Shields Green, who had already met [John Brown](#) at Douglass’s home in January. When Douglass and his bodyguard arrived at the quarry, they found Captain Brown at a vantage point on a ledge halfway up the high rock wall where he could detect all approaching from a distance and verify that they were alone, with a rifle across his legs. The retreating admissions which were made in regard to this meeting, at a later date while culpability was being examined, were that although this was not the first Douglass had ever heard of the plan to start a race war, it was definitely the first he had heard that he was being selected as the black general who was to lead it. According to these retreating admissions, what Brown said was to the effect:

Come with me, Douglass. I want you for a special purpose. When I strike, the bees will begin to swarm, and I shall want you to help hive them.

According to these retreating admissions made after the fact,

Douglass, however, stood by his previously voiced reservations about Brown’s plan. Brown, Douglass was convinced, was doomed to both political and personal failure. Armed attack on the federal government would, argued Douglass, be a disaster. It would array the entire country against the abolition movement. His purpose in meeting Brown was not to allow himself to be recruited, but rather to try one last time to dissuade Brown from a course that would bode well for no one. Douglass said Harpers Ferry was a “perfect steel-trap.” “You will never get out alive,” Douglass told Brown. Virginia would blow him and any



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

hostages he might take sky-high, rather than he should hold Harpers Ferry one hour. Just as he had several months earlier, Brown shrugged off Douglass's doubts. Douglass left Brown in the quarry with his delusion of divinely assured success. He also left him with another soldier: Shields Green."¹²

Of course, this is not in any way similar to my own reading of what was going down in that meeting in the quarry. My own reading of what was going down was that [Frederick Douglass](#), who had been fomenting this entire affair ever since his meeting with [Waldo Emerson](#) in 1844, had been trying to make himself the Toussaint L'Ouverture of the North American continent ever since August of 1844 in Concord, was finally deciding that he needed to bail out of his own scheme and leave his fanatical white supporter [John Brown](#) to hold the bag and face the consequences. The reason for leaving his bodyguard Shields Green with the guerrilla force, at risk, would have been simply to continue to have intelligence of what this group was up to after he had cut himself loose from his creation.¹³

September 16, Thursday: [Henry Thoreau](#) surveyed some land on Bedford Road near P.J. Sexton and J.B. Moore (this would not be Jacob Bailey Moore of New Hampshire because he had died in San Francisco in 1853), for [Waldo Emerson](#). His fee was \$2.⁰⁰.



View [Henry Thoreau](#)'s personal working drafts of his surveys courtesy of AT&T and the Concord Free Public Library:

http://www.concordlibrary.org/scollect/Thoreau_Surveys/Thoreau_Surveys.htm

(The official copy of this survey of course had become the property of the person or persons who had hired this Concord town surveyor to do their surveying work during the 19th Century. Such materials have yet to be recovered.)

View this particular personal working draft of a survey in fine detail:

http://www.concordlibrary.org/scollect/Thoreau_Surveys/385.htm

12. Renahan, Edward J., Jr. THE SECRET SIX: THE TRUE TALE OF THE MEN WHO CONSPIRED WITH JOHN BROWN. NY: Crown Publishers, 1995, page 190. This is a modest work of investigative reporting, not what you would consider a peer-vetted scholarly monograph. For instance, Renahan describes the Civil War refrain "John Brown's Body" as "the marching song that commemorated Brown's bloody heroics" (actually it commemorated a diminutive NCO who drowned at a river crossing), indicates that the frontier territory of Kansas had "flower mills" (next door to the florist's shop?), depicts one of the conspirators as traveling to the island of "Santa Cruz" in the Caribbean (Saint Croix), has [Henry Thoreau](#) driving a carriage owned by [Waldo Emerson](#) in the evening rather than a covered wagon rented by Emerson in the morning, etc. Throughout, this book presumes that whenever one of these detected co-conspirators has made one or another retreating admission while under judicial challenge, that retreating admission needs to be regarded now as nothing less than the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Throughout, also, and more egregiously, this book presumes in accordance with 19th-Century conventions that only white men can instigate plots, and that [Frederick Douglass](#), rather than being the real leader and instigator of the entire scheme to create a race war, was merely the black boy which instigator [John Brown](#) was seeking to bring onto the stage at the last moment to hold aloft George Washington's sword.

13. Joel Silbey has contended, in "The Civil War Synthesis in American History," that postbellum American historians have been misconstruing antebellum American politics by viewing them in conjunction with our knowledge of the bloodbath that followed. It is only after the fact that we can "know" that the US Civil War amounted to a sectional dispute, North versus South. We avoid learning that before the fact, it was undecided whether this conflict was going to shape up as a race conflict, a class conflict, or a sectional conflict. We avoid knowing that the raid on Harpers Ferry might have resulted in a race war, in which peoples of color would be exterminated in order to create an all-white America, or might have resulted in a class war, in which the laboring classes might have first destroyed the plantation owners' equity by killing his slaves, and then gone on to purge the nation of the white plantation owners themselves, with their privileged-class endowments.



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR



September 16. Another and severer frost, which cut off all our vines, etc., lespedeza, corn, etc. P.M.– By the roadside, forty or fifty rods east of the South Acton station, I find the *Aster Novæ-Angliæ*, apparently past prime. I must call it a plant of this vicinity, then. I thought it “in prime or a little past” at Salem, September 21, 1858. I will venture to put it with the *A. puniceus*. Young Nealy says that there are blue-winged teal about now. Others are out after ducks. Nealy says he shot the first golden plover he has seen, this morning. [Does he know it?]¹⁴ How unpromising are promising men! Hardly any disgust me so much. I have no faith in them. They make gratuitous promises, and they break them gratuitously. When an Irishwoman tells me that she wouldn’t tell a lie for her life (because I appear to doubt her), it seems to me that she has already told a lie. She holds herself and the truth very cheap to say that so easily. What troubles men lay up for want of a little energy and precision! A man who steps quickly to his mark leaves a great deal of filth behind. There’s many a well-meaning fellow who thinks he has a hard time of it who will not put his shoulder to the wheel, being spell-bound, – who sits about, as if he were hatching his good intentions, and every now and then his friends get up a subscription for him, and he is cursed with the praise of being “a clever fellow.” It would really be worth his while to go straight to his master the devil, if he would only shake him up when he got there. Men who have not learned the value of time, or of anything else; for whom an infant school and a birchen rod is still and forever necessary. A man who is not prompt affects me as a creature covered with slime, crawling through mud and lying dormant a great part of the year. Think of the numbers –men and women– who want and *will* have and *do* have (how do they get it?!) what they will not earn! The non-producers. How many of these bloodsuckers there are fastened to every helpful man or woman in this world! They constitute this world. It is a world full of snivelling prayers, – whose very religion is a prayer! As if beggars were admirable, were respectable, to anybody! Again and again I am surprised to observe what an interval there is, in what is called civilized life, between the shell and the inhabitant of the shell, – what a disproportion there is between the life of man and his conveniences and luxuries. The house is neatly painted, has many apartments. You are shown into the sitting-room, where is a carpet and couch and mirror and splendidly bound Bible, daguerreotypes, ambrotypes, photographs of the whole family even, on the mantelpiece. One could live here more deliciously and improve his divine gifts better than in a cave surely. In the bright and costly saloon man will not be starving or freezing or contending with vermin surely, but he will be meditating a divine song or a heroic deed, or perfuming the atmosphere by the very breath of his natural and healthy existence. As the parlor is preferable to the cave, so will the life of its occupant be more godlike than that of the dweller in the cave. I called at such a house this afternoon, the house of one who in Europe would be called an operative. The woman was not in the third heavens, but in the third kitchen, as near the wood-shed or to outdoors and to the cave as she could instinctively get, for there she belonged, – a

14. This “Young Nealy” (Edward Nealy or Neally or Nealey), would eventually be buried beneath an Indian grindstone which he would allege he and Thoreau had found together. There seems, however, to be a lack of evidence as to said grindstone:





RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

coarse scullion or wench, not one whit superior, but in fact inferior, to the squaw in a wigwam, – and the master of the house, where was he? He was drunk somewhere, on some mow or behind some stack, and I could not see him. He had been having a spree. If he had been as sober as he may be to-morrow, it would have been essentially the same; for refinement is not in him, it is only in his house, – in the appliances which he did not invent. So is it in the Fifth Avenue and all over the civilized world. There is nothing but confusion in our New England life. The hogs are in the parlor. This man and his wife –and how many like them!– should have sucked their claws in some hole in a rock, or lurked like gypsies in the outbuildings of some diviner race. They've got into the wrong boxes; they rained down into these houses by mistake, as it is said to rain toads sometimes. They wear these advantages helter-skelter and without appreciating them, or to satisfy a vulgar taste, just as savages wear the dress of civilized men, just as that Indian chief walked the streets of New Orleans clad in nothing but a gaudy military coat which his Great Father had given him. Some philanthropists trust that the houses will civilize the inhabitants at last. The mass of men, just like savages, strive always after the outside, the clothes and finery of civilized life, the blue beads and tinsel and centre-tables. It is a wonder that any load ever gets moved, men are so prone to put the cart before the horse.

We do everything according to the fashion, just as the Flatheads flatten the heads of their children. We conform ourselves in a myriad ways and with infinite pains to the fashions of our time. We mourn for our lost relatives according to fashion, and as some nations hire professed mourners to howl, so we hire stone-masons to hammer and blast by the month and so express our grief. Or if a public character dies, we get up a regular wake with eating and drinking till midnight.

Grasshoppers have been very abundant in dry fields for two or three weeks. Sophia walked through the Depot Field a fortnight ago, and when she got home picked fifty or sixty from her skirts, – for she wore hoops and crinoline. Would not this be a good way to clear a field of them, – to send a bevy of fashionably dressed ladies across a field and leave them to clean their skirts when they get home? It would supplant anything at the patent office, and the motive power is cheap.

I am invited to take some party of ladies or gentlemen on an excursion, –to walk or sail, or the like,– but by all kinds of evasions I omit it, and am thought to be rude and unaccommodating therefore. They do not consider that the wood-path and the boat are my studio, where I maintain a sacred solitude and cannot admit promiscuous company. I will see them occasionally in an evening or at the table, however. They do not think of taking a child away from its school to go a-huckleberrying with them. Why should not I, then, have my school and school hours to be respected? Ask me for a certain number of dollars if you will, but do not ask me for my afternoons.

[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

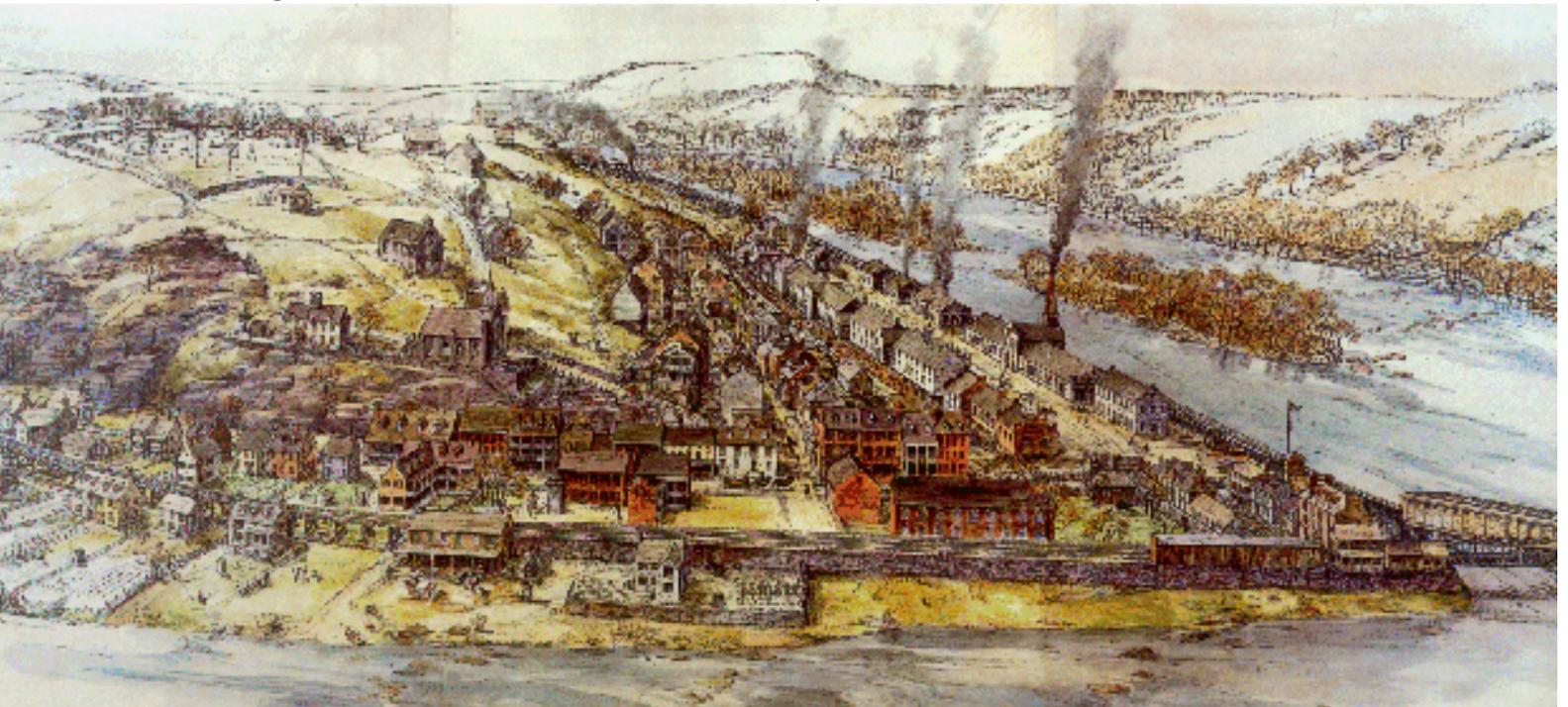
RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

At about this point in time (which is to say, mid-month), Martin Robison Delany was sailing along the coast of Africa toward Lagos. He would be spending five weeks there.



At about this point in time, also, the handsome [John E. Cook](#) was reconnoitering [Harpers Ferry](#) on behalf of Captain [John Brown](#)'s guerrillas, when he hailed the debonair local plantation owner and slavemaster Lewis W. Washington on the street: "I believe you have a great many interesting relics at your house; could I have permission to see them if I should walk out someday?"



Cook was of course aware, as everyone was aware, that this Washington was a descendant of the General/President [George Washington](#) as well as a special assistant to [Henry A. Wise](#), the Governor of Virginia. When Cook would visit the Washington plantation a few days later, he would be especially fascinated by the neat pistol presented to General Washington by the *Marquis de Lafayette* after the Revolution, enough so as to inquire whether it shot well, and by the neat ceremonial sword which had been presented to General

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

Washington by none other than Frederick the Great of Prussia.



← **George Washington's sword
(in the famous Leutze painting).**



Fall: Early in the fall season, [John Brown, Jr.](#) coordinated with [Frederick Douglass](#)¹⁵ and solicited the support of other black leaders in northern New York and in [Canada](#).

October 6, Thursday, night: Another piece of evidence that this conspiracy among an inordinately large group of bunglers and amateurs, that we now obtusely term the [Secret "Six"](#) rather than the "Secret 600," could not conceivably have been escaping the surveillance of our government:

Though all of the committee did not know all of the details of the attack (for instance, they were shocked when [John Brown](#) was trapped inside the [Harpers Ferry](#) arsenal, since he had assured them that his primary objective was to strike the arsenal quickly and capture the weapons housed there), at least 4 –

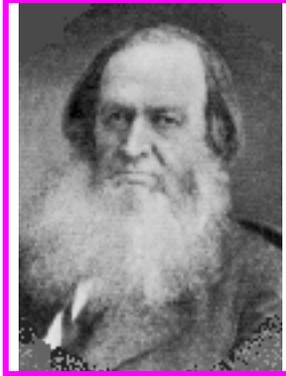
15. Sometime earlier during 1859, [John Brown](#) himself had secretly met with [Frederick Douglass](#) near Chambersburg, Pennsylvania and so the black leader definitely had advance warning of the attack the federal arsenal at [Harpers Ferry](#). Douglass had, however, at this point, sensed failure and flatly refused any further participation. Douglass did not go to the federal authorities and diss Brown — although in failing to do this Douglass did make himself essentially complicit in treason, which under the law of conspiracy of course requires the same capital punishment.



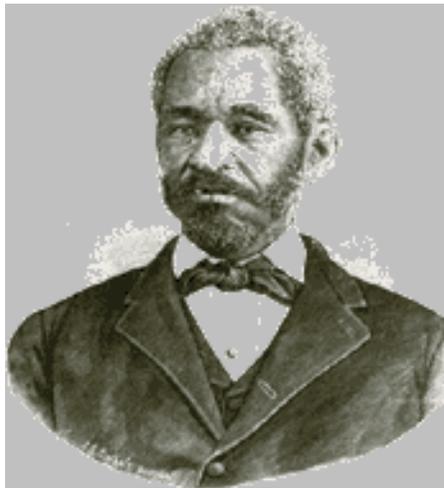
RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

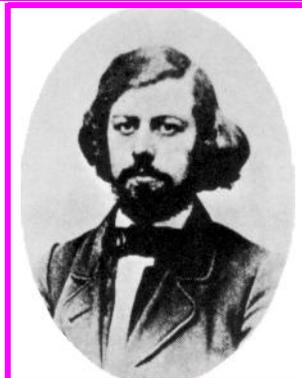
Franklin Benjamin Sanborn, George Luther Stearns, Gerrit Smith,



and Thomas Wentworth Higginson— certainly knew when, where, and how Brown intended to start his violent work. Ten days before the October assault, Sanborn, Stearns, and Lewis Hayden,



a leader of Boston's black community (who was not a formal member of the secret group but undoubtedly had intimate knowledge of its proceedings), stayed awake all night outlining the proposal to Francis Jackson Meriam, a young man who soon





RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

afterward joined Brown's insurrectionary cadre. In short, the factual record of the conspiracy can be accurately reconstructed despite the destruction of some sources.... Sanborn continued to search for funds. On October 6, the search ended when Sanborn met and interviewed young Meriam, the emotionally erratic nephew of the distinguished Boston abolitionist, [Francis Jackson](#). Meriam was obsessed with the thought of joining Brown and asked Sanborn to give him specific information about Brown's plans. He already knew a great deal about the scheme because of his friendship with [James Redpath](#). At first Sanborn balked. However, when Meriam offered to contribute \$600 [in gold] to the plan if he were allowed to participate in it, the committee secretary quickly reconsidered. Sanborn summoned Stearns and Hayden to [Concord](#) to assist him in making the decision. During the evening of October 6 and the early morning hours of October 7, all three men rigorously questioned Meriam about his motives for wanting to join with Brown and the personal qualifications he had for assisting the proposed raid. Meriam said he had traveled with Redpath in 1857 and 1858 as the journalist gathered information for his book TALKS WITH SLAVES. But in spite of these experiences, neither Sanborn, Stearns, nor Hayden was impressed with the unstable youth. Still, all of them knew of Brown's desperate need for cash. Meriam might not be qualified for the project, but the money he could contribute insured execution of the plan. Eventually, they all decided to send him to Chambersburg.... Within a few days Sanborn [would receive] a note from Meriam indicating that he had joined Brown, turned over the \$600, and was patiently awaiting the "business operation" that was soon to commence.  Sanborn was excited.... There was absolutely no reason to doubt Brown. The secretary met the Reverend Higginson's criticism of Meriam with a highly matured cynicism. Meriam had not been chosen because of any "great passion for Redpath" or belief in the youth's personal capacity. Sanborn agreed that Meriam was about "as fit to be in the enterprise as the Devil to keep a powder house." Meriam had been selected only because of the money he could contribute to the project. Sanborn reminded Higginson that "everything had its use and must be put to it if possible." Then, after informing Higginson that news could soon be expected from the site of Brown's activity, the secretary concluded his letter with a brief lecture on one of the most important lessons he had learned in the past few years. Sanborn told Higginson that he never expected much from anybody but believed there was "a grain of use in all persons and things." When "a plum" dropped in one's mouth, one shouldn't refuse to eat it because it wasn't "a peach or a pumpkin." Meriam might not be "Divine property," but he was a "plum" and had his use.

[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

October 15, Saturday: [Francis Jackson Meriam](#) arrived at [John Brown](#)'s camp near [Harpers Ferry](#), turned over his \$600 in gold coins, and settled down as well as he could to await the "business operation" that he had been told was soon to commence.



Just before the raid, perhaps on this day and perhaps not, [Martha Brewster Brown](#), the wife of [Oliver Brown](#), was sent back north.



October 15: P.M.—To Botrychium Swamp.

A cold northwest wind.

I see some black oak acorns on the trees still and in some places at least half the shrub oak acorns. The last are handsomer now that they have turned so much darker.

I go along the east edge of Poplar Hill. This very cold and windy day, now that so many leaves have fallen, I begin to notice the silveriness of willows blown up in the wind, — a November sight.

The hickories at Poplar Hill (and elsewhere, as far as I perceive) are all past prime now and most half-withered or bare, very different from last year. In warmer autumns, if I remember rightly, they last several weeks later than this in some localities, one succeeding another with its splendid glow, an evidence of the genialness of the season. In cool and moist places, in a genial year, some are preserved green after others have changed, and by their later change and glow they prolong the season of autumnal tints very agreeably.

This is a cold fall.



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

The larches in A. Heywood's swamp, though a yellower green than the white pines, are not yet sharply distinguished from them by their form, as they will be.

The oaks generally are very fair now at a distance. Standing on this hilltop this cold and blustering day, when dark and slate-colored clouds are flitting over the sky, the beauty of the scenery is enhanced by the contrast in the short intervals of sunshine. The whole surface of the country, both young woodlands and full-grown forests, whether they clothe sides of hills or their lit tops are seen over a ridge, – the birch phalanxes and huckleberry flocks [?], etc., – even to the horizon, is like a rug of many brilliant colors, with the towns in the more open and tawny spaces. The beauty or effect of the scene is enhanced, if, standing here, you see far in the horizon the red regiments of oaks alternately lit up by the sun and dimmed by the passing shadow of a cloud. As the shadows of these cold clouds flit across the landscape, the red banners of distant forests are lit up or disappear like the colors of a thousand regiments.

Pratt says that he planted a ground-nut in his garden in good soil, but they grew no bigger than a bean. He did not know but it would take more than one year, even if he planted the tuber.

The yellow birches are generally bare. Juniperus repens leaves have fallen, perhaps with red cedar. The ash trees I see to-day are quite bare, apparently several or some days.

The little leaves of the mitchella, with a whitish midrib and veins, lying generally flat on the mossy ground, perhaps about the base of a tree, with their bright-scarlet twin berries sprinkled over them, may properly be said to checker the ground. Now, particularly, they are noticed amid the fallen leaves.

The bayberry leaves have fallen, and all the berries are gone. I suppose the birds have eaten them. Mountain laurel leaves are fallen. The yellow birches are bare, revealing the fruit (the short, thick brown catkins) now ripe and ready to scale off. How full the trees are! About as thick as the leaves were. The fever-bush is for the most part bare, and I see no berries. Rhus radicans too is bare. The maidenhair is for the most part withered. It is not evergreen, then. The mountain sumach which I see is bare, and some smooth ditto.

That appears to be Aspidium cristatum which I find evergreen in swamps, but no fertile fronds now. It is broader and denser than the plate of the English one. It cannot be a described variety of spinulosum, for it is only once pinnate.

JENNY LIND

I think I see myrtle-birds on white birches, and that they are the birds I saw on them a week or two ago, – apparently, or probably, after the birch lice. See a Fringilla hyemalis. The chickadees sing as if at home. They are not travelling singers hired by any Barnum. Theirs is an honest, homely, heartfelt melody. Shall not the voice of man express as much content as the note of a bird?

Botrychium Lunaria has shed pollen, how long? The little larches in midst of Gowing's Swamp already changed, before others elsewhere.

Each town should have a park, or rather a primitive forest, of five hundred or a thousand acres, where a stick should never be cut for fuel, a common possession forever, for instruction and recreation. We hear of cow-commons and ministerial lots, but we want men-commons and lay lots, inalienable forever. Let us keep the New World new, preserve all the advantages of living in the country. There is meadow and pasture and wood-lot for the town's poor. Why not a forest and huckleberry-field for the town's rich? All Walden Wood might have been preserved for our park forever, with Walden in its midst, and the Easterbrooks Country, an unoccupied area of some four square miles, might have been our huckleberry-field. If any owners of these tracts are about to leave the world without natural heirs who need or deserve to be specially remembered, they will do wisely to abandon their possession to all, and not will them to some individual who perhaps has enough already. As some give to Harvard College or another institution, why might not another give a forest or huckleberry-field to Concord? A town is an institution which deserves to be remembered. We boast of our system of education, but why stop at schoolmasters and schoolhouses? We are all schoolmasters, and our schoolhouse is the universe. To attend chiefly to the desk or schoolhouse while we neglect the scenery in which it is placed is absurd. If we do not look out we shall find our fine schoolhouse standing in a cow-yard at last.

The Kalmia glauca, now falling, is quite a brilliant scarlet. In this case you have the fresh liquid-green leaves of this year above the brilliant scarlet ones of last year. Most other evergreens exhibit only a contrast of green with yellow or yellowish.

The balm-of-Gileads by Mrs. Ripley's bare. Those beyond Barrett's Bridge green and full of leaves. The spruce leaves have fallen, – how long? – and its seeds are falling. Larch seeds falling. Celtis berries ripe, how long? Solanum Dulcamara berries linger over water but mostly are shrivelled. Canoe birch is now at least half fallen or more, apparently with the small white; looks in color like an aspen.



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

October 16, Sunday-October 18, Tuesday: [Henry Thoreau](#) was working on his natural history materials.

ROSS/ADAMS COMMENTARY

The raid by the [John Brown](#) forces on the federal arsenal at [Harpers Ferry](#), Virginia involved 5 blacks and 13 whites. Of the five blacks, two died during the raid, [John Anderson Copeland, Jr.](#) and [Shields Green](#) were captured and would hang, and one managed to escape. That is to say, back from the West, Captain Brown committed the treason of attempting to free men and women from their rightful masters, by seizing the weapons at the federal arsenal, and of course the owners of these men and women, who had a perfect right to resist being deprived of the use of their property, of course resisted being deprived of the use of their property, and therefore of course there were deaths during his raid on this place where the government to which he owed loyalty was manufacturing weapons of murder. Although Brown did not effectively free the slaves of the sovereign state of Virginia –except of course that he freed those who listened to him and took up pikes and were gunned down– he was able effectively to sacrifice the lives of other people to his own enthusiasms. That has to count as a personal “win” of sorts! For instance, the first to be killed by the raiders at Harpers Ferry was

[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

Hayward Shepard, a free black who happened to be in harm's way because he was serving as the baggage handler between the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad terminal and the Winchester & Harpers Ferry Railroad Terminal. (The old man failed to respond appropriately to the raiders' orders.) There were 16 whites and 5 nonwhites with Brown in the raid, and of these 10 were killed outright, 5 were captured for trial and hanged, and 7 escaped, of which 2 were later captured and tried and hanged. Although the US government did effectively save the contents of their arsenal from the insurrectionaries, shortly thereafter these weapons were seized by the insurrectionary Governor of Virginia, Wise, who had as perfect a right to them, and he distributed these weapons to Confederate troops.

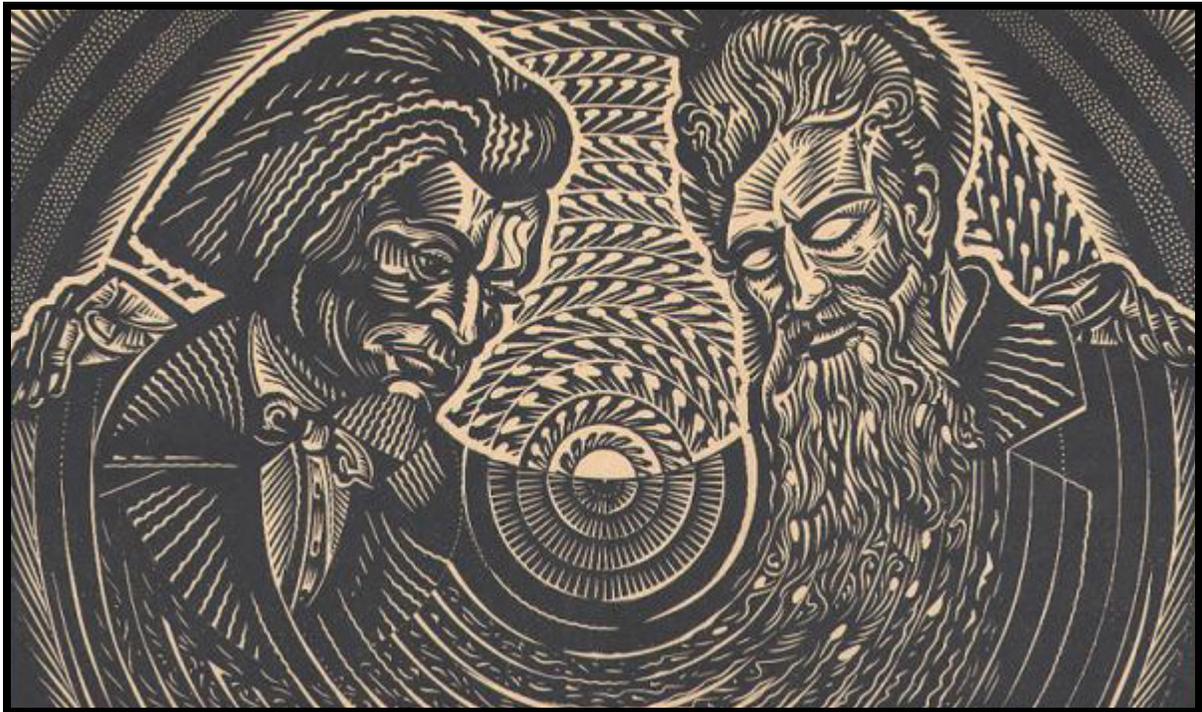


[NOTE: There was every reason to believe that if Governor Wise of Virginia could get his hands on [Frederick](#)

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

Douglass, the black leader would hang alongside the white leader.



Douglass was at the moment in Philadelphia. The telegraph operator there would seek out Douglass and warn him, so that he would have three full hours in which to effect his escape — before the telegram ordering his arrest needed to be handed over to the local sheriff. Douglass, in fleeing went first to familiar haunts, the Hoboken, New Jersey lodgings of Otilie Assing, and only from there to Rochester and then to Ontario, and



England. On the dock in Rochester, embarking for Ontario, William Parker would press into Douglass's hand what was purported to be the pistol dropped by Gorsuch  when he had been shot dead in Christiana (actually, it seems that the man had been unarmed with anything more deadly than a curiously foolish moral courage).]

This sort of situation has been described many times, and you will forgive me if I here repeat one of the early descriptions of this sort of situation:

More weapons, more murder.
-Lao Tzu 

HDT

WHAT?

INDEX

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR



Harpers Ferry from Brown's overlook in Maryland

Brown's Sharps carbine, his "[Henry Ward Beecher's Bible](#)," was captured with him after the [Harpers Ferry](#)

HDT

WHAT?

INDEX

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

skirmish, along with that famous [George Washington](#) sword he had just stolen from



← **George Washington's sword
(in the famous Leutze painting).**

a plantation, and to which he had as much right as its current owner (or, for that matter, its original owner).



After they would take Captain John Brown's Sharps rifle away from him at Harpers Ferry, they would allow this little boy to pose with it. Grow up, son, and be a Christian like us: kill people, own slaves.



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

Although [Charles Plummer Tidd](#) opposed the attack on [Harpers Ferry](#), he nevertheless took part both in the



raid on the planter Washington's home and on the federal arsenal itself. He and [John Brown](#)'s son [Owen Brown](#) escaped, and made their way on foot toward the northwestern part of Pennsylvania.

(Tidd would visit Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Canada and take part in the planning for the rescue of [Aaron D. Stevens](#) and [Albert Hazlett](#) while the Mason Commission of the Congress was presuming that he had been killed in the fighting at Harpers Ferry. On July 19, 1861 he would be able to enlist under the name "Charles Plummer" and would become a 1st Sergeant of the 21st Massachusetts Volunteers. On February 8, 1862 he would die of fever aboard the transport *Northerner* during the battle of Roanoke Island, a battle he had particularly wished to take part in because ex-Governor Henry A. Wise of Virginia, the nemesis of the Harpers Ferry raiders, was in command of the Confederates. [Charles Plummer Tidd](#)'s grave is #40 in the National Cemetery in New Berne NC.)

[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

[Owen Brown](#) was 35 at the time of the [Harpers Ferry](#) raid. He escaped on foot toward the northwestern part of Pennsylvania. It was due largely to his psychological grit, and physical endurance despite a withered arm, that the little group of survivors of which he was the leader did reach safety. He and [Charles Plummer Tidd](#) would find work and safety under assumed names, on an oil well crew in Crawford County PA. After the civil war he would grow grapes for some time in Ohio in association with two of his brothers, before migrating to [California](#). He would be the only one of the five escaped raiders not to participate in the civil war, and would be the last of the raiders when he died on January 9, 1891 near Pasadena at his mountain home "Brown's Peak." He never married. A marble monument now marks his mountain grave.



[Oliver Brown](#), the youngest of [John Brown](#)'s sons to reach adulthood, was shot dead at the age of 20 while serving as a sentinel at the river bridge.

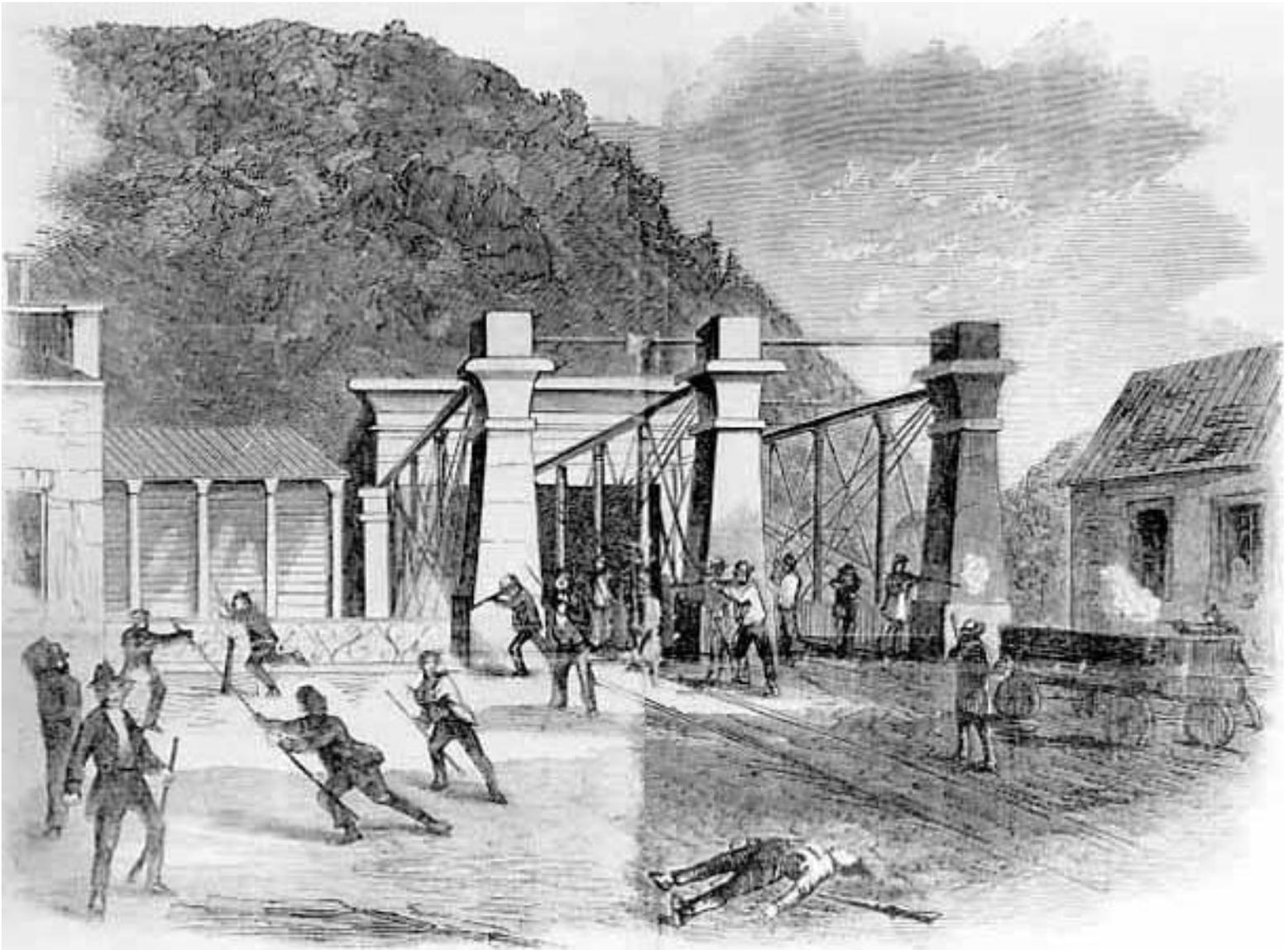


[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

Perhaps this white corpse is meant to be [Oliver Brown](#), usefully lying dead in the foreground of a contemporary news illustration? (This wouldn't have been a depiction of [Dangerfield Newby](#), also shot down at the bridge, since he was a very tall man with a splendid physique and since his mulatto body was abused by the attackers, who among other things snipped off its ears as trophies before they herded some hogs to root on it.)



[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

[John E. Cook](#) was sent out by Captain Brown to collect weapons, and instead climbed into a tree and observed the fight.



When [John Brown](#) sent his son [Watson Brown](#) out to negotiate, he was gunned down by the citizens of [Harpers Ferry](#).



(He would manage to crawl back to the shelter of the engine house and live on, groaning, his head cradled in [Edwin Coppoc](#)'s lap, for a considerable period. He would expire on October 18, 1859. His widow Isabella M. Thompson Brown would remarry with his brother [Salmon Brown](#).)

[John Henry Kagi](#) became trapped along with [John Anderson Copeland, Jr.](#) and [Lewis Sheridan Leary](#) in the armory called Hall's Rifle Works. When the three men made a run for it, heading down to the Shenandoah



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

River, they came under a crossfire and Kagi was the first killed, his body being left to float in the river.



A monument would be erected by the citizens of [Oberlin, Ohio](#) in honor of their three free citizens of color who had died in the raid or been hanged, [John Anderson Copeland, Jr.](#), [Lewis Sheridan Leary](#), and [Shields Green](#) (the 8-foot marble monument would be moved to Vine Street Park in 1971).

Captain [John Brown](#) sent [William Thompson](#) out from the engine house to negotiate under flag of truce, and the mob of citizens placed him under arrest, took him to the local hotel barroom, discussed what to do, dragged him into the street, executed him by shooting him in the head, and dumped his body into the Potomac River.¹⁶

16. An interesting fact about this case is that it just about got a young lady into serious trouble. According to a letter of explanation she would provide to the local paper, Miss C.C. Fouke was the daughter of the tavernkeeper at [Harpers Ferry](#), operating at the local hotel. The story had gone around, after the fact, that on the 2d day of the raid in her father's saloon in the hotel she had thrown her body in front of this Brown conspirator [William Thompson](#) while the mob was debating whether or not to off him. Rather than be classed with Pocahontas or with [Florence Nightingale](#), Miss Fouke attempted to explain the rationale for her conduct to the public at large. She had indeed thrown her body between the mob and the captive, she freely confessed, but she had done so, she needed to point out, "without touching him," and she insisted also that her action was not motivated by any concern that this man was about to be shot in the head, but rather because her sister-in-law was resting in the next room and should not be disturbed as she was ailing — and/or out of a conviction that the man before being offed should be tried by a court of law.

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

Thompson's brother [Dauphin Adolphus Thompson](#) also was shot dead during the raid.



Dauphin



William

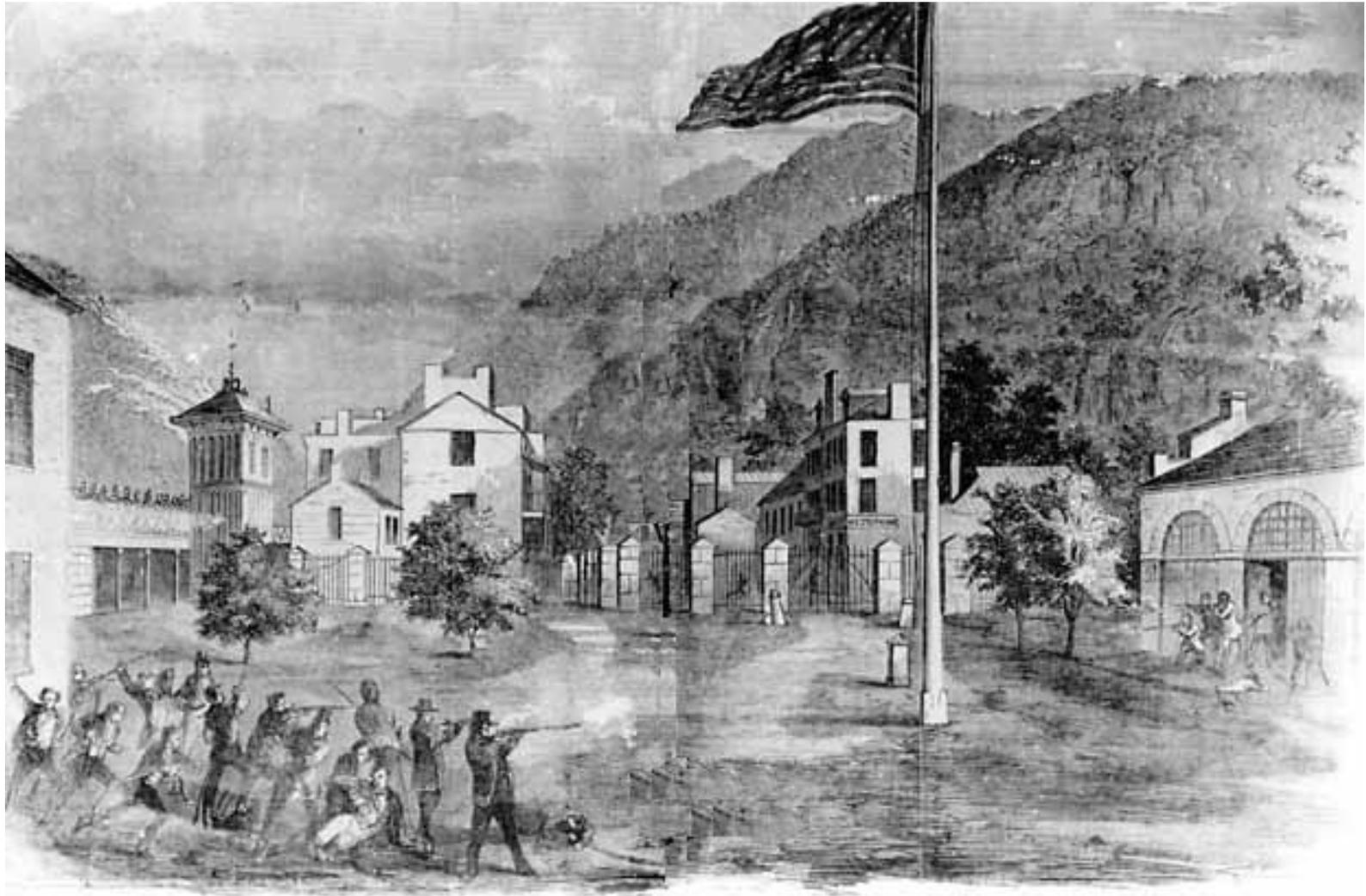
HDT

WHAT?

INDEX

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR



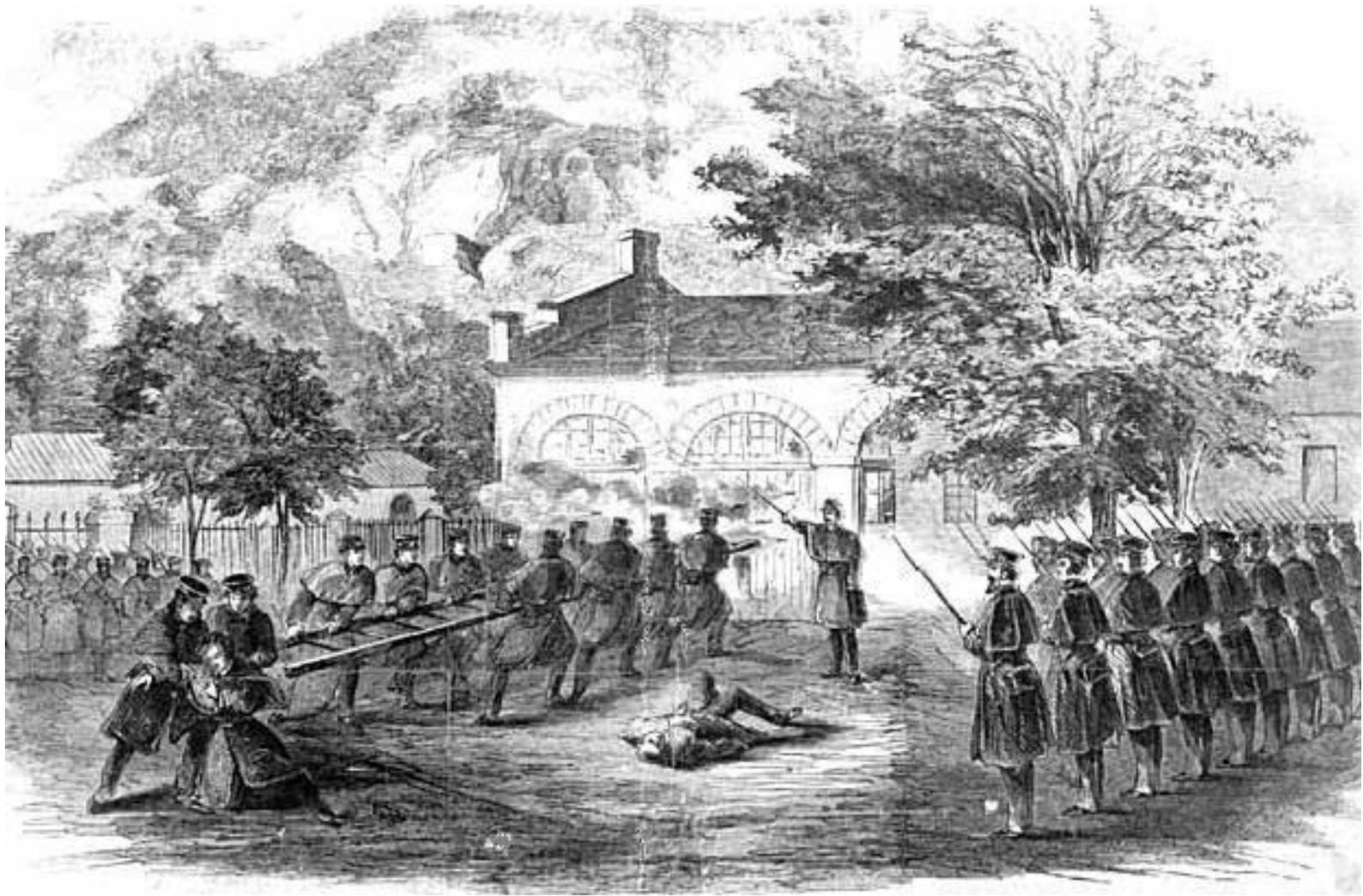
HDT

WHAT?

INDEX

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR



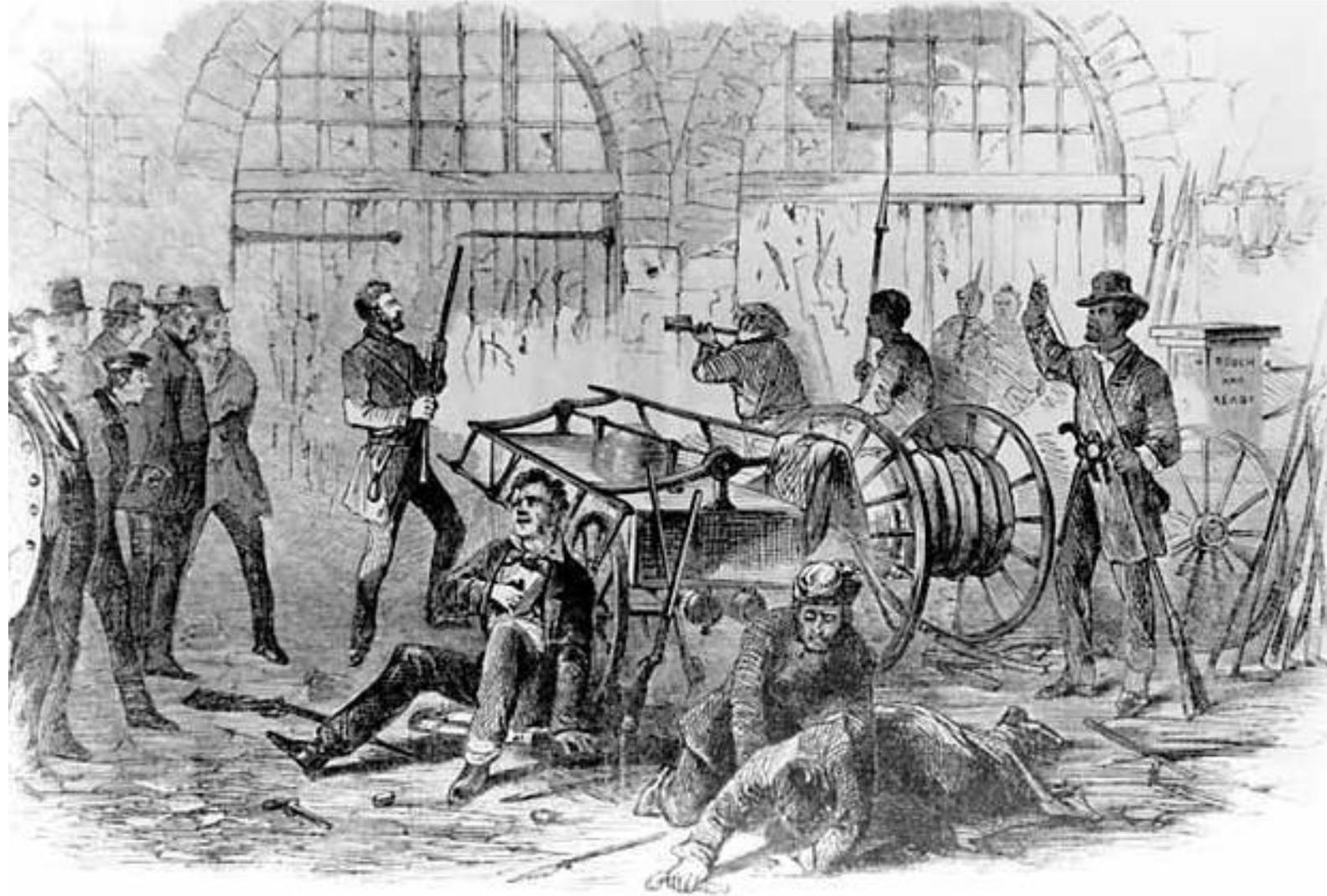
HDT

WHAT?

INDEX

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR



HDT

WHAT?

INDEX

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

[Jeremiah Goldsmith Anderson](#) was pinned against the wall by a bayonet-thrust of one of the Marines.



“One of the prisoners described Anderson as turning completely over against the wall in his dying agony. He lived a short time, stretched on the brick walk without, where he was subjected to savage brutalities, being kicked in body and face, while one brute of an armed farmer spat a huge quid of tobacco from his vile jaws into the mouth of the dying man, which he first forced open.”

In the engine house at Harpers Ferry, [Edwin Coppoc](#) surrendered with Captain [John Brown](#).



(He would be tried by a jury of his white male peers immediately after the conclusion of the trial of Captain Brown. He would be sentenced to death on November 2, 1859. From prison before his hanging, he would write to his adoptive mother, of a nonresistant-abolitionist [Quaker](#) farm family, that he was

“sorry to say that I was ever induced to raise a gun.”

He would be hung with [John E. Cook](#) on December 16, 1859. The body would be buried in Winona after a funeral attended by the entire town. Later the body would be reburied in Salem OH.)

You will remember that in July 1854,  when [Moncure Daniel Conway](#) graduated from



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

Harvard Theological School and was ordained, his classmate [William H. Leeman](#) of Hallowell ME had not graduated with him. This fellow had drunk some illicit alcohol Conway had smuggled onto campus and then refilled Conway's illicit bottles with water, and so student Conway had turned him in to the college administration. Leaman had been refused graduation on grounds of moral turpitude, and warned not to make any attempt to preach. At this point he reappears, or his mutilated body reappears — salvaged from the Potomac River after being used for target practice and thrown into the common pit at [Harpers Ferry](#) at midnight.¹⁷



[Barclay Coppoc](#) escaped from Harpers Ferry.



“We were together eight days before [[John E. Cook](#) and [Albert Hazlett](#) were] captured, which was near Chambersburg, and the next night Meriam [[Francis Jackson Meriam](#)] left us and went to Shippensburg, and there took cars for Philadelphia. After that there were but three of us left [[John Brown](#)'s son [Owen Brown](#), [Barclay Coppoc](#), and [Charles Plummer Tidd](#)], and we kept together, until we got to Centre County, Pennsylvania, where we bought a box and packed up all heavy luggage, such as rifles, blankets, etc., and after being together three or four weeks we separated and I went on through with the box to Ohio on the cars.” ([Osborn Perry Anderson](#), [Barclay Coppoc](#), and [Francis Jackson Meriam](#) would travel separately to safe exile in the area of St. Catharines, Canada. Barclay would go from there to Iowa, with Virginia agents in close

17. See pages 87-8 and 240-1 of d'Entremont, where this account of Leaman was put together for the first time.

[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

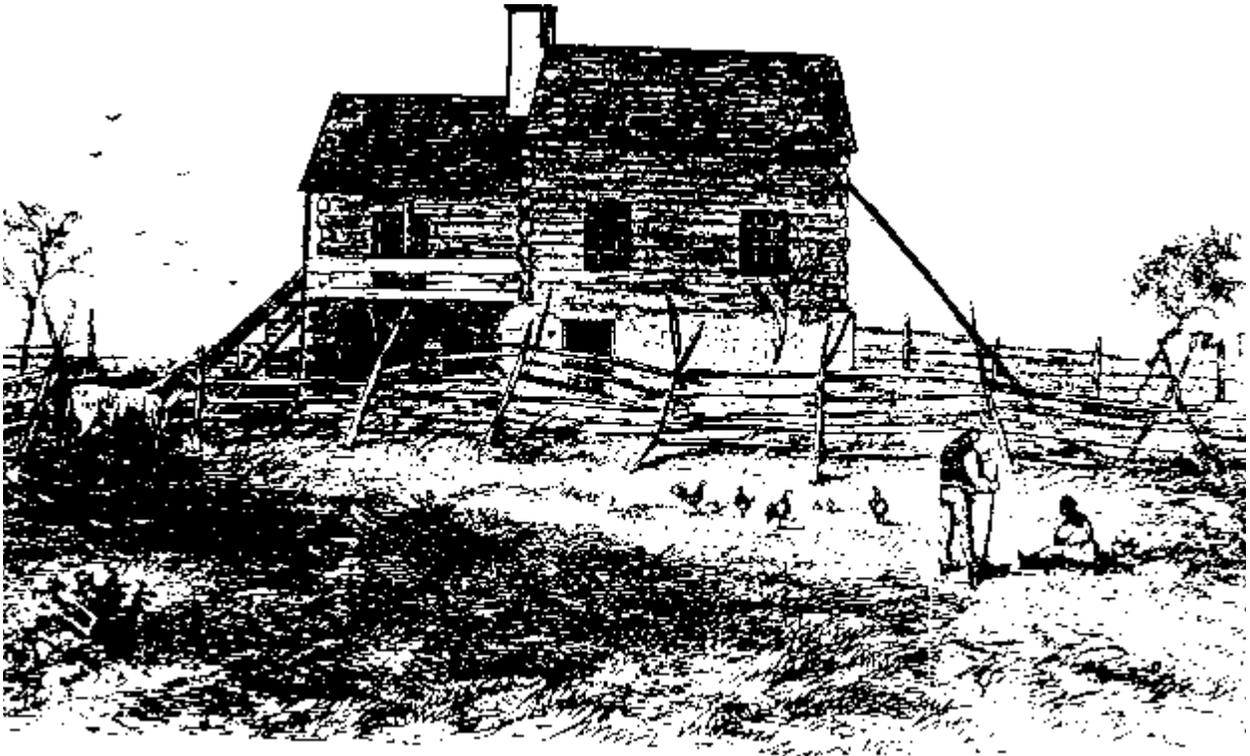
RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

pursuit. He would be back in Kansas in 1860, helping to run off some Missouri slaves, and would nearly lose his life in a second undertaking of this kind. On July 24, 1861 he would become a 1st Lieutenant in Colonel Montgomery's regiment, the 3d Kansas Infantry. Eventually he would be killed by the fall of a train into the Platte river from a trestle forty feet high, the supports of which had been burned away by Confederates.)



[Francis Jackson Meriam](#) was not killed or captured in the raid on [Harpers Ferry](#) because he had been left at the Kennedy farmhouse, in one of his fits of despair.



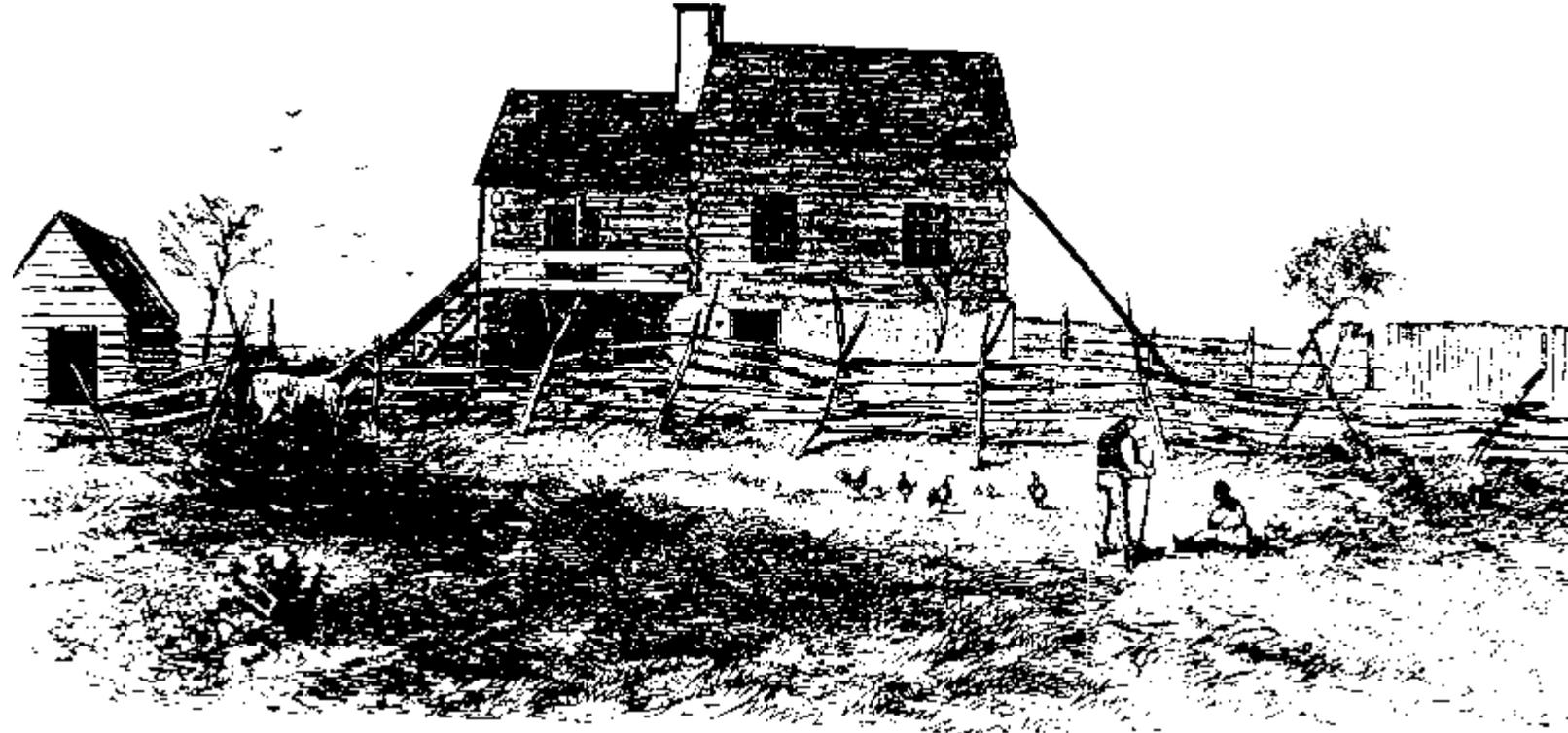
He was a great drag on the other escapees as they hiked through the woods as he needed to stop and rest every

[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

mile or so.



To the great relief of the others, Meriam boarded a train in the town of Shippensburg heading for Philadelphia. Eventually [Thoreau](#) would put him on a train headed for Canada.

By a week after the execution of John Brown, our nation would be teetering on the edge of civil war. The disruption, however, was not directly related to John Brown's raid upon the federal arsenal at [Harpers Ferry](#), but had to do instead with Helperism and its attitude of antislavery racism. The struggle was over the Speakership in the new US House of Representatives. Neither of the primary parties had the requisite 119 votes to win this position, and so a decision would be reachable only after there had been some considerable defection on one side or the other, from party discipline. The Republicans had proposed Representative John Sherman for this important position, and the Democrats were countering that no one who had endorsed Helperism, a concoction of recommended murder and treason, could possibly be considered for such a vital and influential role. If Representative Sherman got the job, the Southern states would be forced to withdraw their representatives from the halls of the US federal government. In endorsing [Hinton Rowan Helper](#)'s book during the spring of this year, the South's attitude was, Sherman had endorsed treason and murder.

By the 2d day of the debate over the speakership, a linkage was being suggested between Helper's ideas and [John Brown](#)'s actions. The illegality of the actions was coming to be considered to have been a direct expression of this strange belief system, according to which there was a "higher law" to which humans owed their primary obedience. The idea that there was a law higher than human law was considered an utterly presumptuous and iniquitous doctrine.



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR



October 16. Sunday. P.M.— Paddle to Puffer’s and thence walk to Ledum Swamp and Conant’s Wood. A cold, clear, Novemberish day. The wind goes down and we do not sail. The button-bushes are just bare, and the black willows partly so, and the mikania all fairly gray now. I see the button-bush balls reflected on each side, and each wool-grass head and recurved withered sedge or rush is also doubled by the reflection. The *Scirpus lacustris* is generally brown, the *Juncus militaris* greener. It is rather too cool to sit still in the boat unless in a sunny and sheltered place. I have not been on the river for some time, and it is the more novel to me this cool day.

When I get to Willow Bay I see the new musquash-houses erected, conspicuous on the now nearly leafless shores. To me this is an important and suggestive sight, as, perchance, in some countries new haystacks in the yards; as to the Esquimaux the erection of winter houses. I remember this phenomenon annually for thirty years. A more constant phenomenon here than the new haystacks in the yard, for they were erected here probably before man dwelt here and may still be erected here when man has departed. For thirty years I have annually observed, about this time or earlier, the freshly erected winter lodges of the musquash along the riverside, reminding us that, if we have no gypsies, we have a more indigenous race of furry, quadrupedal men maintaining their ground in our midst still. This may not be an annual phenomenon to you. It may not be in the Greenwich almanac or ephemeris, but it has an important place in my Kalendar. So surely as the sun appears to be in Libra or Scorpio, I see the conical winter lodges of the musquash rising above the withered pontederia and flags. There will be some reference to it, by way of parable or otherwise, in *my* New Testament. Surely, it is a defect in our Bible that it is not truly ours, but a Hebrew Bible. The most pertinent illustrations for us are to be drawn, not from Egypt or Babylonia, but from New England.

Talk about learning our *letters* and being *literate*! Why, the roots of *letters* are *things*. Natural objects and phenomena are the original symbols or types which express our thoughts and feelings, and yet American scholars, having little or no root in the soil, commonly strive with all their might to confine themselves to the imported symbols alone. All the true growth and experience, the living speech, they would fain reject as “Americanisms.” It is the old error, which the church, the state, the school ever commit, choosing darkness rather than light, holding fast to the old and to tradition. A more intimate knowledge, a deeper experience, will surely originate a word. When I really know that our river pursues a serpentine course to the Merrimack, shall I continue to describe it by referring to some other river no older than itself which is like it, and call it a *meander*? It is no more *meandering* than the Meander is *musketaquidding*. As well sing of the nightingale here as the Meander. What if there were a tariff on words, on language, for the encouragement of home manufactures? Have we not the genius to coin our own? Let the schoolmaster distinguish the true from the counterfeit.

They go on publishing the “chronological cycles” and “movable festivals of the Church” and the like from mere habit, but how insignificant are these compared with the annual phenomena of your life, which fall within your experience! The signs of the zodiac are not nearly of that significance to me that the sight of a dead sucker in the spring is. That is the occasion for an *immovable* festival in my church. Another kind of Lent then begins in my thoughts than you wot of. I am satisfied then to live on fish alone for a season.

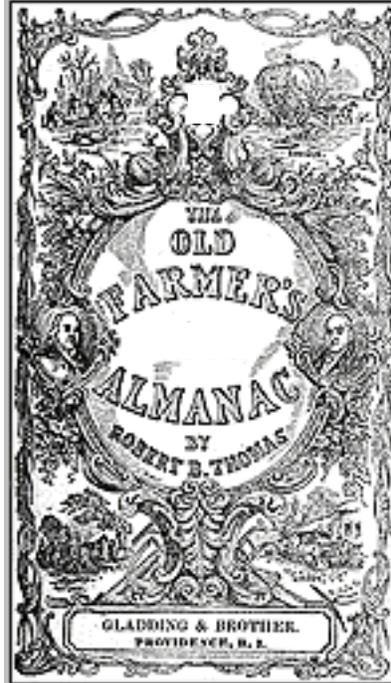
Men attach a false importance to celestial phenomena as compared with terrestrial, as if it were more respectable and elevating to watch your neighbors than to mind your own affairs. The nodes of the stars are not the knots



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

we have to untie. The phenomena of our year are one thing, those of the almanac another. For October, for



instance, instead of making the sun enter the sign of the scorpion, I would much sooner make him enter a musquash-house. Astronomy is a fashionable study, patronized by princes, but not fungi. "Royal Astronomer." The snapping turtle, too, must find a place among the constellations, though it may have to supplant some doubtful characters already there. If there is no place for him overhead, he can serve us bravely underneath, supporting the earth.

This clear, cold, Novemberish light is inspiring. Some twigs which are bare and weeds begin to glitter with hoary light. The very edge or outline of a tawny or russet hill has this hoary light on it. Your thoughts sparkle like the water surface and the downy twigs. From the shore you look back at the silver-plated river.

Every rain exposes new arrowheads. We stop at Clamshell and dabble for a moment in the relics of a departed race.

Where we landed in front of Puffer's, found a jug which the haymakers had left in the bushes. Hid our boat there in a clump of willows, and though the ends stuck out, being a pale green and whitish, they were not visible or distinguishable at a little distance.

Passed through the sandy potato-field at Witherell's cellar-hole. Potatoes not dug; looking late and neglected now; the very vines almost vanished on some sandier hills.

When we emerged from the pleasant footpath through the birches into Witherell Glade, looking along it toward the westering sun, the glittering white tufts of the *Andropogon scoparius*, lit up by the sun, were affectingly fair and cheering to behold. It was already a cheerful Novemberish scene. A narrow glade stretching east and west between a dense birch wood, now half bare, and a ruddy oak wood on the upper side, a ground covered with tawny stubble and fine withered grass and cistuses. Looking westward along it, your eye fell on these lit tufts of andropogon [Vide Nov. 8th.], their glowing half raised a foot or more above the ground, a lighter and more brilliant whiteness than the downiest cloud presents (though seen on one side they are grayish) [Vide (by chance) same date, or October 16th, 1858].

Even the lespedezas stand like frost-covered wands, and now hoary goldenrods and some bright-red blackberry vines amid the tawny grass are in harmony with the rest; and if you sharpen and rightly intend your eye you see the gleaming lines of gossamer (stretching from stubble to stubble over the whole surface) which you are breaking. How cheerful these cold but bright white waving tufts! They reflect all the sun's light without a particle of his heat, or yellow rays. A thousand such tufts now catch up the sun and send to us its light but not heat. His heat is being steadily withdrawn from us. Light without heat is getting to be the prevailing phenomenon of the day now. We economize all the warmth we get now.





RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

The frost of the 11th, which stiffened the ground, made new havoc with vegetation, as I perceive. Many plants have ceased to bloom, no doubt. Many *Diplopappus linariifolius* are gone to seed, and yellowish globes. Such are the stages in the year's decline. The flowers are at the mercy of the frosts. Places where *erecthites* grows, more or less bare, in sprout-lands, look quite black and white (black withered leaves and white down) and wintry.

At Ledum Swamp, feeling to find the *Vaccinium Oxycoccus* berries, I am struck with the coldness of the wet sphagnum, as if I put my hands into a moss in Labrador, – a sort of winter lingering the summer through there. To my surprise, now at 3.30 P.M., some of the sphagnum in the shade is still stiff with frost, and when I break it I see the glistening spiculae. This is the most startling evidence of winter as yet. For only on the morning of the 11th was there any stiffening of the ground elsewhere. Also in the high sedgy sprout-land south of this swamp, I see hoary or frost-like patches of sedge amid the rest, where all is dry; as if in such places (the lowest) the frost had completely bleached the grass so that it now looks like frost. I think that that is the case.

It is remarkable how, when a wood has been cut (perhaps where the soil was light) and frosts for a long while prevent a new wood from springing up there, that fine sedge (*Carex Pennsylvanica?*) will densely cover the ground amid the stumps and dead sprouts. It is the most hardy and native of grasses there. This is *the* grass of the sprout-lands and woods. It wants only the sun and a reasonably dry soil. Then there are the grasses and sedges of the meadows, but the cultivated fields and the pastures are commonly clothed with introduced grasses. The nesaea is all withered, also the woodwardia The ledum and *Andromeda Polifolia* leaves have fallen. The *Kalmia glauca* is still falling. The spruce, also, has fallen.

The ledum smells like a bee, – that peculiar scent they have. C., too, perceives it.

See a hairy woodpecker on a burnt pitch pine. He distinctly rests on his tail constantly. With what vigor he taps and bores the bark, making it fly far and wide, and then darts off with a sharp whistle!

I remark how still it is to-day, really Sabbath-like. This day, at least, we do not hear the rattle of cars nor the whistle. I cannot realize that the country was often as still as this twenty years ago.

Returning, the river is perfectly still and smooth. The broad, shallow water on each side, bathing the withered grass, looks as if it were ready to put on its veil of ice at any moment. It seems positively to invite the access of frost. I seem to hear already the creaking, shivering sound of ice there, broken by the undulations my boat makes. So near are we to winter. Then, nearer home, I hear two or three song sparrows on the button-bushes sing as in spring, – that memorable tinkle, – as if it would be last as it was first.

The few blackish leaves of *pontederia* rising above the water now resemble ducks at a distance, and so help to conceal them now that they are returning.

The weeds are dressed in their frost jackets, naked down to their close-fitting downy or flannel shirts. Like athletes they challenge the winter, these bare twigs. This cold refines and condenses us. Our spirits are strong, like that pint of cider in the middle of a frozen barrel.

The cool, placid, silver-plated waters at even coolly await the frost. The musquash is steadily adding to his winter lodge. There is no need of supposing a peculiar instinct telling him how high to build his cabin. He has had a longer experience in this river-valley than we. Evergreens, I should say, fall early, both the coniferous and the broad-leaved.

That election-cake fungus which is still growing (as for some months) appears to be a *Boletus*.

I love to get out of cultivated fields where I walk on an imported sod, on English grass, and walk in the fine sedge of woodland hollows, on an American sward. In the former case my thoughts are heavy and lumpish, as if I fed on turnips. In the other I nibble groundnuts.

Your hands begin to be cool, rowing, now. At many a place in sprout-lands, where the sedge is peculiarly flat and white or hoary, I put down my hand to feel if there is frost on it. It must be the *trace* of frost. Since the frost of the 11th, the grass and stubble has received another coat of tawny.

That *andropogon* bright feathery top may be put with the clematis seed and tail. Only this cold, clear sky can light them up thus.

The farmer begins to calculate how much longer he can safely leave his potatoes out.

Each ball of the button-bush reflected in the silvery water by the riverside appears to me as distinct and important as a star in the heavens viewed through "optic glass." This, too, deserves its Kepler and Galileo.

As nature generally, on the advent of frost, puts on a russet and tawny dress, so is not man clad more in harmony with nature in the fall in a tawny suit or the different hues of Vermont gray? I would fain see him glitter like a sweet-fern twig between me and the sun.

A few green yellow lily pads lie on the surface waiting to be frozen in. All the *Lycopodium complanatum* I see to-day has shed its pollen.

[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

October 16, Sunday, night: Senator [James Mason](#) was enjoying the federal Congress being out of session, at home with his family in Winchester, Virginia. This town was 20 easy miles away from [Harpers Ferry](#) along the Baltimore & Ohio RR tracks. Senator Mason would arrive in Harpers Ferry soon after Captain [John Brown](#)'s surrender, and interrogate the wounded old man in the presence of his mortally wounded son and in the presence of officer-in-charge [Robert E. Lee](#).



His idea of an investigation procedure was “Follow the money.” Mason would immediately begin to spread the necessary lie, that “**not a man, black or white, joined them** [emphasis his] after they came into Virginia, or gave them aid or assistance in any form.” The totality of the evidence he would be able to summon for the truth of this emphatic and utterly necessary assertion was that “The fact is undoubted.”¹⁸

Subsequent historians have of course dutifully followed his lead in copying from one textbook into the next textbook the assertion that no Virginia slaves had joined this sudden, unannounced, unexpected attempt at the creation of a servile insurrection. The thought has been just too utterly dangerous to contemplate — therefore the fact has had to correspond to the thought.

How to explain this? It is easily understood once one comes to recognize that the thing that really frosted sensible guys like Mason was not the prospect of race war, of a servile insurrection led by charismatics of the



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

likes of [Frederick Douglass](#) and [Harriet Tubman](#), but the prospect of class war.¹⁹ This guy had read [Hinton Rowan Helper](#)'s book THE IMPENDING CRISIS OF THE SOUTH: HOW TO MEET IT, and he knew very well who the real enemy was. The real enemy would be anyone who would use the race hatred of the poor whites of the South to set these poor whites against those rich whites of the South who were enjoying "ownership" over black Americans. Therefore the first question in the mind of a guy like Senator Mason would have been, not "Was Brown trying to key off a servile insurrection?" but a somewhat more complicated one, a question on the order of: "Was Brown's servile insurrection intended to key off a genocide in which all these armed poor

18. Jean Libby <jlibby@dvc.edu> of the Department of African American Studies at City College of San Francisco has had the following to offer in regard to the participation of local African Americans in the vicinity of Harpers Ferry during John Brown's raid. She uses [Osborn Perry Anderson](#)'s A VOICE FROM HARPER'S FERRY, written in 1860, as the basis of her research. The only specific deaths (the ultimate test of joining) of local slaves and free blacks are those in at least two primary sources. She published these in 1979 in BLACK VOICES FROM HARPERS FERRY. There is also "Mean To Be Free: John Brown's Black Nation Campaign," a videotape. These are referenced in FROM SLAVERY TO SALVATION: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF REV. THOMAS W. HENRY OF THE A.M.E. CHURCH," UP of Mississippi:

The local slaves –and the substantial free black population in the area– really did fight with and for Brown as asserted by Osborne Anderson and by Frederick Douglass, that was researched and published with new information in 1974 by Benjamin Quarles in ALLIES FOR FREEDOM. He cited the request for reparations from the slaveholder, William Fuller, who had hired Jim as a coachman to Lewis Washington (the famous sword of George Washington was surrendered to Osborne Anderson). He cited the denial of indemnity from the Commonwealth of Virginia because "he had joined the rebels with a good will" (page 100). He was armed, as was the free man of color who died with him, mentioned by Washington in his US Senate deposition as "a free man, visiting his wife," but otherwise unnamed – and described by him, of course, as an unwilling prisoner of Brown.

After the raid, the slaveholders of the area portrayed the local population as contented and fearful in order to contain further insurrection. The population distribution in the county, according to Stephen Oates in TO PURGE THIS LAND WITH BLOOD, was 9 whites to 1 black. To have fifty people participate, some die, some captured, some escape, and some melt back into the slave society was a strong indication of local support that would have grown had Brown not been surrounded.

When I began researching these fifty, inspired by Osborne Anderson's primary source account, the cover was cracked when I charted each local slave named in the indictment against Brown, who was convicted of conspiring with them to commit insurrection. Jim, Sam, Mason, and Catesby [the slaves of Lewis Washington]; Henry, Levi, Ben, Jerry, Phil, George, and Bill [the slaves of John Allstadt], and others unknown. These unknown I believe to have shown to be the slaves of George Turner, killed by Brown's army. Men of fighting age appear on the 1860 census as fugitive from his farm. He had probably come into Harpers Ferry to look for them. Their added numbers humanize the reported but unidentified dead on Brown's side, all in one area, in the Shenandoah River in a direct line to Turner's farm.

When names are placed with an historically anonymous group they can be found. Professor Quarles told me, when I asked him for advice in 1977, that there is always something new to be found.



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

whites who had been so carefully taught to hate the nigger, by the simple expedient of forming into mobs and suddenly slaughtering all the black property of the rich whites of the South, would be able at last to drag our proud and righteous slavemasters down into the gutter with them?"

19. Joel Silbey has contended, in "The Civil War Synthesis in American History," that postbellum American historians have been misconstruing antebellum American politics by viewing them in conjunction with our knowledge of the bloodbath that followed. It is only after the fact that we can "know" that the US Civil War amounted to a sectional dispute, North versus South. We avoid learning that before the fact, it was undecided whether this conflict was going to shape up as a race conflict, a class conflict, or a sectional conflict. We avoid knowing that the raid on Harpers Ferry might have resulted in a race war, in which peoples of color would be exterminated in order to create an all-white America, or might have resulted in a class war, in which the laboring classes might have first destroyed the plantation owners' equity by killing his slaves, and then gone on to purge the nation of the white plantation owners themselves, with their privileged-class endowments.

[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

October 17, Monday: Plantation owner Lewis W. Washington met [John E. Cook](#) again, when he, accompanied by [Aaron D. Stevens](#), [Stewart Taylor](#), and [Charles Plummer Tidd](#), appeared heavily armed at night at the door to his bedroom. Outside the mansion, [Shields Green](#), who had been [Frederick Douglass](#)'s bodyguard, was standing watch.



It turned out to be [Stevens](#) who was in charge of this looting and kidnapping party: "You are our prisoner." After collecting the pistol which the Marquis de Lafayette had presented to General Washington and the sword which Frederick the Great of Prussia had presented to him, the raiders also displayed an unseemly interest in Lewis's watch, of no historical relevance, and in any ready cash he might happen to have lying around his

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

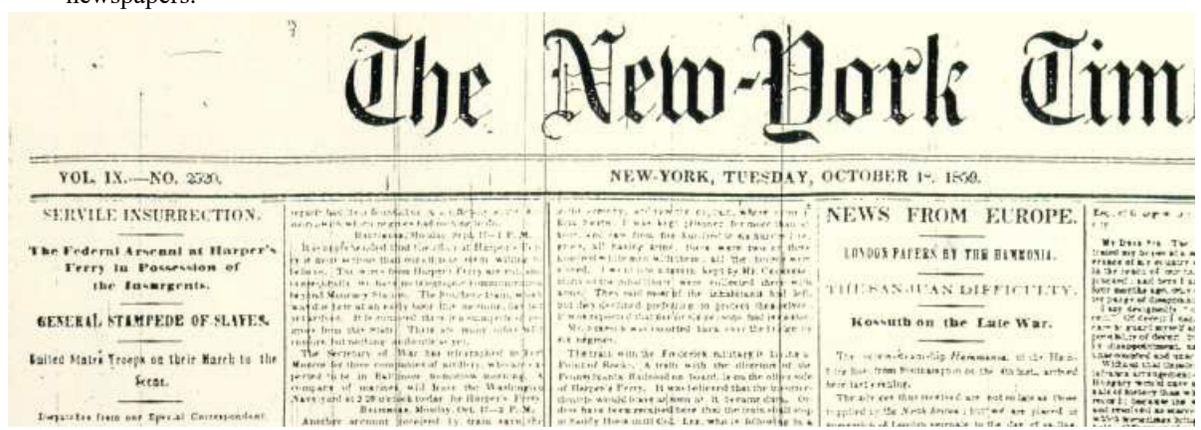
home.



← George Washington's sword (in the famous Leutze painting).



The news of the raid on the federal arsenal at [Harpers Ferry](#) was beginning at this point to appear in some newspapers.



While [Frederick Douglass](#) was lecturing at Philadelphia on the topic of "Self-Made Men," his oration was interrupted by arrival of the news of an abolitionist raid upon the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia. Within a week he would be forced to hurry to Canada to evade arrest on the very accurate charge of his having

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

been a [John Brown](#) accomplice with prior guilty knowledge of the treason.



A note from Governor [Henry A. Wise](#) in Richmond, Virginia to Colonel George W. Munford:



Richmond Va
 Oct[ober] 17th 1859
 To Col[onel]. Geo[rge]. W. Munford
 Dear Sir
 Called away by a sudden emergency, occasion may arise in reference to the service in and & other matters, for official signatures, & you are hereby authorized to act, by signing my name & doing all other acts necessary to be done in the office of Gov[ernor] in my absence.
 Y[ours] truly
 Henry A. Wise



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

Francisco has had the following to offer in regard to the participation of local African Americans in the vicinity of Harpers Ferry during John Brown's raid. She uses [Osborn Perry Anderson](#)'s A VOICE FROM HARPER'S FERRY, written in 1860, as the basis of her research. The only specific deaths (the ultimate test of joining) of local slaves and free blacks are those in at least two primary sources. She published these in 1979 in BLACK VOICES FROM HARPERS FERRY. There is also "Mean To Be Free: John Brown's Black Nation Campaign," a videotape. These are referenced in FROM SLAVERY TO SALVATION: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF REV. THOMAS W. HENRY OF THE A.M.E. CHURCH," UP of Mississippi:

The local slaves –and the substantial free black population in the area– really did fight with and for Brown as asserted by Osborne Anderson and by Frederick Douglass, that was researched and published with new information in 1974 by Benjamin Quarles in ALLIES FOR FREEDOM. He cited the request for reparations from the slaveholder, William Fuller, who had hired Jim as a coachman to Lewis Washington (the famous sword of George Washington was surrendered to Osborne Anderson). He cited the denial of indemnity from the Commonwealth of Virginia because "he had joined the rebels with a good will" (page 100). He was armed, as was the free man of color who died with him, mentioned by Washington in his US Senate deposition as "a free man, visiting his wife," but otherwise unnamed – and described by him, of course, as an unwilling prisoner of Brown.

After the raid, the slaveholders of the area portrayed the local population as contented and fearful in order to contain further insurrection. The population distribution in the county, according to Stephen Oates in TO PURGE THIS LAND WITH BLOOD, was 9 whites to 1 black. To have fifty people participate, some die, some captured, some escape, and some melt back into the slave society was a strong indication of local support that would have grown had Brown not been surrounded.

When I began researching these fifty, inspired by Osborne Anderson's primary source account, the cover was cracked when I charted each local slave named in the indictment against Brown, who was convicted of conspiring with them to commit insurrection. Jim, Sam, Mason, and Catesby [the slaves of Lewis Washington]; Henry, Levi, Ben, Jerry, Phil, George, and Bill [the slaves of John Allstadt], and others unknown. These unknown I believe to have shown to be the slaves of George Turner, killed by Brown's army. Men of fighting age appear on the 1860 census as fugitive from his farm. He had probably come into Harpers Ferry to look for them. Their added numbers humanize the reported but unidentified dead on Brown's side, all in one area, in the Shenandoah River in a direct line to Turner's farm.

When names are placed with an historically anonymous group they can be found. Professor Quarles told me, when I asked him for advice in 1977, that there is always something new to be found.

Harpers Ferry residents George Mauzy and Mary Mauzy wrote to their daughter Eugenia Mauzy Burton and son-in-law James H. Burton, who were then living in England (Burton had been a machinist, foreman, and Acting Master Armorer at the Harpers Ferry Armory between 1844-1854):

To Eugenia Burton, Enfield, England



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

October 17, 1859

Monday afternoon

4 o'clock

Oh my dear friend such a day as this. Heaven forbid that I should ever witness such another.

Last night a band of ruffians took possession of the town, took the keys of the armory and made Captive a great many of our Citizens. I cannot write the particulars for I am too Nervous. For such a sight as I have just beheld. Our men chased them in the river just below here and I saw them shot down like dogs. I saw one poor wretch [sic] rise above the water and some one strike him with a club he sank again and in a moment they dragged him out a Corpse. I do not know yet how many are shot but I shall never forget the sight. They just marched two wretches [sic] their Arms bound fast up to the jail. My dear husband shouldered his rifle and went to join our men May god protect him. Even while I write I hear the guns in the distance I heard they were fighting down the street.

I cannot write any more I must wait and see what the end will be. -M.E. Mauzy

Page 494 of Henry Mayer's ALL ON FIRE: On Monday evening, October 17, 1859, Wendell Phillips called at Dix Place and spent an entertaining hour with [William Lloyd Garrison](#) and his son Willie merrily going over the poor showing Henry Ward Beecher had made in his Tremont Temple lecture on "bargain-making" a few days previously. The mood changed abruptly, however, when someone came in with a bulletin about a slave uprising in Virginia. One question sprang into their minds simultaneously -"Osawatomie Brown?"- and they looked at each other with "foreboding," Willie remembered, as the answer came, "Very like." (Willie kept to himself his own worst suspicion that Francis Meriam was involved, but wrote in his diary that his friend was "just reckless enough" to have become mixed up in such a business.)



October 17: A smart frost this morning. Ground stiffened. Hear of ice in a tub.

P. M.-To Gowing's Swamp.

The water standing over the road at Moore's Swamp, I see the sand spotted black with many thousands of little snails with a shell, and two feelers out, slowly dragging themselves over the bottom. They reminded me by their color, number, and form of the young tadpoles.

I look for *Vaccinium Oxycoccus* in the swamp. The uneven surface of the sphagnum in which the slender vine grows comes up to my idea of a mountainous country better than many actual mountains that I have seen. Labrador mountains these are at least. The higher patches of sphagnum are changed to a dark purple, which shows a crude green where you crack it by your weight. The lower parts are yet yellowish-green merely. These interesting little cranberries are quite scarce, the vine bearing (this year, at least) only amid the higher and drier sphagnous mountains amid the lowest bushes about the edge of the open swamp. There the dark-red berries (quite ripe) now rest, on the shelves and in the recesses of the red sphagnum. There is only enough of these



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

THANKSGIVING

berries for sauce to a botanist's Thanksgiving dinner.

What I put into my pocket, whether berry or apple, generally has to keep company with an arrowhead or two. I hear the latter chinking against a key as I walk. These are the perennial crop of Concord fields. If they were sure it would pay, we should see farmers raking the fields for them.

The rain drives me from my berrying and we take shelter under a tree. It is worth the while to sit under the lee of an apple tree trunk in the rain, if only to study the bark and its inhabitants. I do not disturb the father-long-legs which to avoid the storm has merely got round to the lee side, or under the shelter of an excrescence. Thus easily insects find their roof ready for them. Man's very size compels him to build a house. Caves and recesses big enough are too rare.

Why should we not stay at home? This is the land and we are the inhabitants so many travellers come to see. Why should we suffer ourselves to drift outside and lose all our advantages? They were bold navigators once who merely sighted these shores. We were born and bred further in the land than Captain John Smith got.

I hear that ten geese went over New Bedford some days ago.

When La Mountain and Haddock dropped down in the Canada wilderness the other day, they came near starving, or dying of cold and wet and fatigue, not knowing where to look for food nor how to shelter themselves. Thus far we have wandered from a simple and independent life. I think that a wise and independent, self-reliant man will have a complete list of the edibles to be found in a primitive country or wilderness, a bill of fare, in his waistcoat pocket at least, to say nothing of matches and warm clothing, so that he can commence a systematic search for them without loss of time. They might have had several frogs apiece if they had known how to find them. Talk about tariffs and protection of home industry, so as to be prepared for wars and hard times!! Here we are, deriving our breadstuffs from the West, our butter stuffs from Vermont, and our tea and coffee and sugar stuffs, and much more with which we stuff ourselves, from the other side of the globe. Why, a truly prudent man will carry such a list as the above, in his mind at least, even though he walk through Broadway or Quincy Market. He will know what are the permanent resources of the land and be prepared for the hardest of times. He will go behind cities and their police; he will see through them. Is not the wilderness of mould and dry-rot forever invading and threatening them? They are but a camp abundantly supplied today, but gnawing their old shoes to-morrow. [Why, a philosopher who soars higher than usual in his thoughts from time to time drops down into what is just such a wilderness to him as that was to La Mountain and Haddock, where he finds hardly one little frog gone into winter quarters to sustain him and runs screaming toward the climes of the sun.] I see all the farmers' old coats spread over the few squashes and pumpkins still left out in a pile. The arbor-vitae sheds seeds; how long?



RACE WAR,

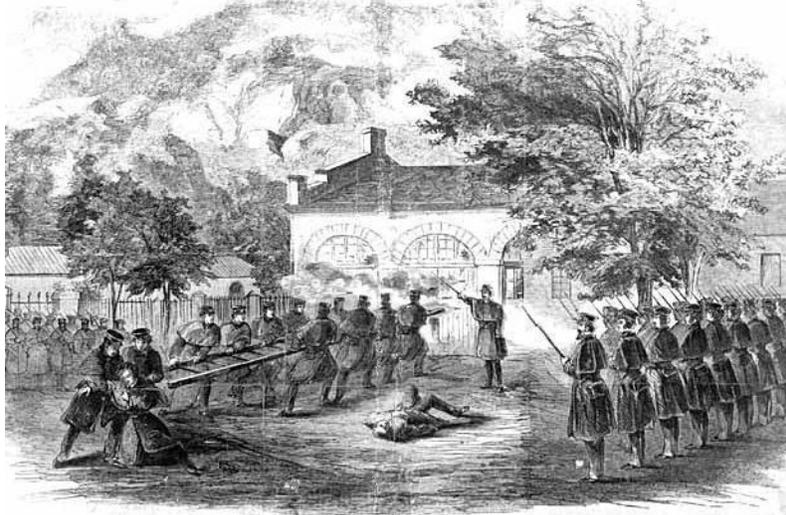
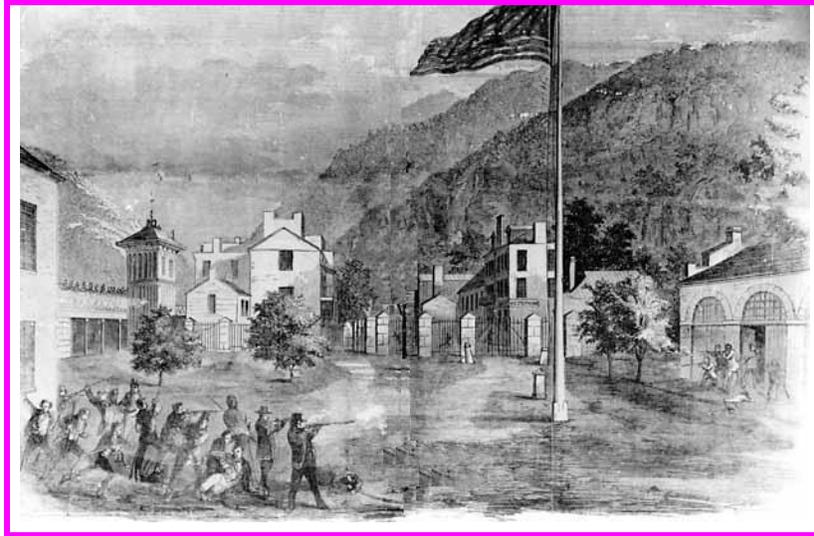
NOT CIVIL WAR

October 18, Tuesday: At break of day, [John Brown](#) surrendered to the 86 US Marines under the command of 1st Lieutenant Israel Green, USMC, and Lieutenant-Colonel [Robert E. Lee](#), USA. He had sent his son [Watson](#).

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

[Brown](#) out to negotiate and the son had been gunned down by the citizens of [Harpers Ferry](#).



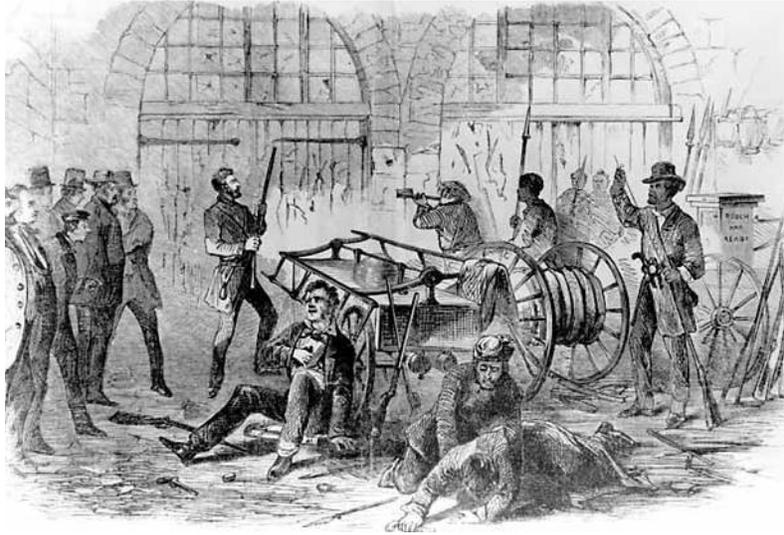
HDT

WHAT?

INDEX

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR





RACE WAR,

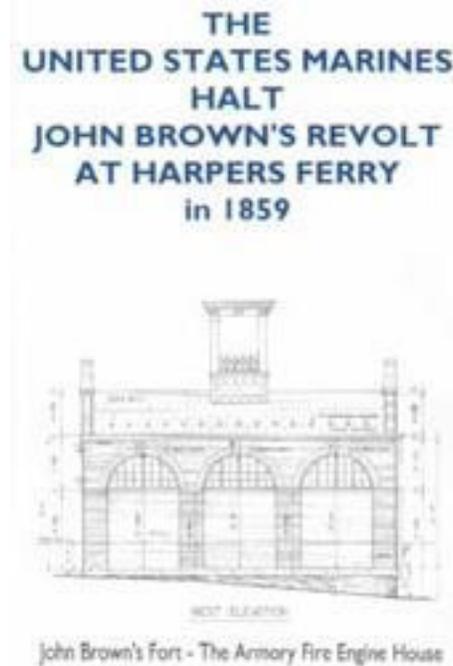
NOT CIVIL WAR

He had managed to crawl back to the shelter of the engine house and live on, groaning, his head cradled in [Edwin Coppoc](#)'s lap, but would soon expire.



(His widow Isabella M. Thompson Brown would remarry with his brother [Salmon Brown](#).)

Eventually, the USMC would be putting out an official historical pamphlet about this capture:



The New-York [Herald](#)'s article on this day cut straight to the primal white fear, of an “Extensive Negro



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

Conspiracy in Virginia and [Maryland](#)”:

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.**  
~~~~~  
**Arms Taken and Sent into the
Interior.**
~~~~~  
**The Bridge Fortified and Defended  
by Cannon.**  
~~~~~  
Trains Fired into and Stopped---Several Per-
sons Killed---Telegraph Wires Cut---
Contributions Levied on the Citizens.
~~~~~  
Troops Despatched Against the Insurgents  
from Washington and Baltimore,  
**&c.,            &c.,            &c.**



Lest we suppose this “[servile insurrection](#)” thingie to have been a phenomenon confined to the tabloid press,



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

here is the comparison front-page headline of the New-York Times:



The news of the raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry was in all newspapers by this day's edition.

Town residents George Mauzy and Mary Mauzy wrote again to their daughter Eugenia Mauzy Burton and son-in-law James H. Burton, who were then living in England (Burton had been a machinist, foreman, and Acting Master Armorer at the Harpers Ferry Armory between 1844-1854):

To Eugenia Burton, Enfield, England

October 18, 1859

This has been one of the saddest days that Harper's Ferry ever experienced. This morning, when the armorers went to the shops to go to work, lo and behold, the shops had been taken possession of by a set of abolitionists and the doors were guarded by Negroes with rifles. —George Mauzy

Henry Thoreau was written a commercial letter:

*Cambridge Aug 18  
Mr Thoreau  
Dear Sir  
Inclosed  
please find \$15 00 for  
which send us 10 #s  
Blacklead by return of  
express—directed as  
usual  
Yours truly  
Welch, Bigelow, & C<sup>o</sup>*



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

*Aug 18.*



October 18. Rains till 3 P. M., but is warmer.

P. M.—To Assabet, front of Tarbell's.

Going by Dennis Swamp on railroad, the sour scent of decaying ferns is now very strong there. *Rhus venenata* is bare, and maples and some other shrubs, and more are very thin-leaved, as alder and birches, so that the swamp, with so many fallen leaves and migrating sparrows, etc., flitting through it, has a very late look.

For falling, put the canoe birch with the small white. The beach plum is almost quite bare. The leaves of a chinquapin oak have not fallen. The long, curved, yellowish buds of the *Salix discolor* begin to show, the leaves falling; even the down has peeped out from under some.

In the ditch along the west side of Dennis Swamp I see half a dozen yellow-spot turtles moving about. Probably they are preparing to go into winter quarters.

I see one of the smaller thrushes to-day.

Saw a tree-toad on the ground in a sandy wood-path. It did not offer to hop away, may have been chilled by the rain (?). It is marked on the back with black, somewhat in the form of the hylodes.

Why can we not oftener refresh one another with original thoughts? If the fragrance of the *dicksonia* fern is so grateful and suggestive to us, how much more refreshing and encouraging—re-creating—would be fresh and fragrant thoughts communicated to us fresh from a man's experience and life! I want none of his pity, nor sympathy, in the common sense, but that he should emit and communicate to me his essential fragrance, that he should not be forever repenting and going to church (when not otherwise sinning), but, as it were, going a-huckleberrying in the fields of thought, and enrich all the world with his visions and his joys.

Why do you flee so soon, sir, to the theatres, lecture-rooms, and museums of the city? If you will stay here awhile I will promise you strange sights. You shall walk on water; all these brooks and rivers and ponds shall be your highway. You shall see the whole earth covered a foot or more deep with purest white crystals, in which you slump or over which you glide, and all the trees and stubble glittering in icy armor.



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

October 19, Wednesday: Wilhelm Tempel discovered a diffuse nebula around the Pleid star Merope.

[John Brown](#) was being taken from [Harpers Ferry](#) to the nearby Charles Town jail. (Brown's white jailer there, John Avis, it seems, had been a childhood friend of Dr. [Martin Robison Delany](#).) Full reports of the event at Harpers Ferry were appearing in this day's newspapers.

[Henry Thoreau](#) and [Bronson Alcott](#) were visiting [Waldo Emerson](#) when the news was brought in, of Captain [John Brown](#)'s raid at [Harpers Ferry](#). Thoreau immediately began working over his materials about Brown.



"If [Christ](#) should appear on earth he would on all hands be denounced as a mistaken, misguided man, insane and crazed."



-Thoreau, October 19, 1859

JOURNAL :

**Here comes Jesus again**

**mistaken, misguided**

**insane and crazed**

When [Julia Ward Howe](#) read in the Boston [Transcript](#) about the raid upon the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, her husband [Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe](#) would casually remarked to her "Brown has got to work." The newspapers were beginning to carry an account of an intriguing set of papers that had been discovered where Brown had unaccountably left them behind, when he had gone off on the morning of the 16th to launch his raid on the Harpers Ferry arsenal. Among the papers, in addition to an envelope from Dr. Howe incriminatingly addressed to Brown, were a note from [Gerrit Smith](#) and two letters from [Franklin Benjamin Sanborn](#).

The Reverend [Thomas Wentworth Higginson](#) began to plan a rescue of Brown from the jail cell in Charles Town. He actually would succeed in raising aid for the Brown family. He would opinion, much later in life, after having had a chance to compare and contrast his ineffectiveness as a member of the [Secret "Six"](#) with the effectiveness of the revolutionary terror organized by the Communist Party in Russia, that:

The Russian revolutionists, who were so efficient in making the tyrant Tsar Alexander II explode, have much to teach us about practical terror.

[Thoreau](#) was being written to by Theophilus Brown in Worcester.

*Worcester Oct 19  
Friend Thoreau— The book  
came duly to hand, and  
as it was not for me,*



HDT

WHAT?

INDEX

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR



*I intend to send <sup>you</sup> the money  
for it in this note—  
Blake must speak for him  
-self and not for me when  
speaking of that mountain  
walk of ours. I enjoyed it  
well enough, and ought to  
be ashamed of myself that  
I did, perhaps, since it  
yielded me so little.  
Our Cape Cod walk salts  
down better with me, & yet  
there was 'nt much salt  
in that,—enough to save*



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

*it perhaps, but not <sup>^</sup>enough of the  
sea & sand & sky. The good  
things I got in it were rather  
incidental—[&]did not belong  
to the sea. But I did get*

Page 2

*some glimpses of the sea.  
I remember a smoke we  
had on a little <sup>^</sup>barren knoll where  
we heard the plover, in North  
Dennis, in the twilight after  
a long & hot days walk.  
We heard the pounding of the  
surf against a shore  
twenty miles off[,—(]so said  
the man at whose house  
we passed the night,—)—and  
we were expecting to arrive  
there the next day.  
I have been in the habit of  
thinking our journey culmin  
-ated in that smoke, if it  
did 'nt end there, for, though  
we arrived at the beach the  
next day according to programme  
& found the thirty miles stretch  
of it, with its accompaniments  
too large to complain of,  
yet—our anticipations  
were immense. But now*

Page 3

*in thinking of it the actual  
sea & sky loom up larger,  
while our smoke & dreams  
—hold their own pretty  
well—  
Your friend  
Theo<sup>s</sup> Brown*

[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

October 20, Thursday: Fragmentary news of the raid upon the federal arsenal at [Harpers Ferry](#) was appearing in the [Brooklyn Eagle](#):

### **Who is Responsible ?**

[From the Journal of Commerce.]

No wonder that some of the leading organs of Republicans write under the disclosures of the insurrection at Harper's Ferry. The first accounts were ambiguous. They were not such as to connect the outrages of Ossawatimie Brown and his associates with their former well-known confederates in the North. But the evidence deepens, and each hour adds new testimony. Letters and remittances have been found among the effects of the insurgents, from Gerrit Smith and Frederick Douglass. Other documents are in possession of Governor Wise, of Virginia, the purport of which is not yet known to us. No wonder that the *Evening Post*, *Tribune*, and other journals of the same class, would fain palliate the enormities which have sent such a thrill of horror through the land. Well do they know that the sanguinary scenes of Harper's Ferry were but the carrying out of the principles inculcated by such journals. Well do they remember the proceedings at the North Church, New Haven, on the 21st of March, 1856, when Silliman, Kill'ern & Co., subscribed rifles wherewith to arm their fellow-citizens who

Also:

Yesterday various documents forming part of the insurrectionary scheme were transmitted to Washington. They are in cypher, and are supposed to be of the highest importance. Harpers Ferry remains in the hands of Federal troops. Capt. Cook with his fugitives have still eluded pursuit, though the chase is hotly urged.

THE PRISONERS.—It is now stated by telegraph from Harper's Ferry, that "Ossawatimie Brown," Commander-in-Chief of all the Abolition forces, is likely to recover, although shockingly wounded. His two sons are dead. One was killed in Kansas. So he has lost three sons in his battles for freedom, as he would probably call them, and will probably lose his own life by the halter. He and the other prisoners are to be tried for murder by the Courts of Virginia, while the United States Courts will try them for treason. According to the telegraph, Gov. Wise told U. S. District Attorney Ould that "he had no objection to the General Government proceeding against the prisoners; that is, what will be left of them by the time the Virginia authorities have done with them."

[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

Also:

**It is the preachers of treason that should be got at; the men who preach insurrection and supply rifles and money to carry it out. The present crop of these incendiaries have put their heads into a noose; let it be drawn tight enough and we shall hear no more of the irrepressible conflict for some time to come.**

**The Republican press has no word of condemnation for this outbreak, and openly avow their sympathy with it. The *Evening Post* urges that the precedent of incendiarism has been set by the border-ruffians of Kansas and the filibusters of Nicaragua; and that nobody can be greatly sure he was crazy, and has long been so; he is no more crazy than those by whom he has so long been encouraged in his bloody career.**

**It is not our intention to say that all, or even a large part, of those who abetted Brown in his course in Kansas, would distinctly approve of his conduct at Harper's Ferry. They would at least say that he should have managed the matter better. Many of them, we trust, would denounce the whole movement, from beginning to end. And yet they may be in a measure responsible for it. For while teaching the doctrine of "irrepressible conflict" between the Slave and Free States, and furnishing material aid for operations in one quarter, their disciples, less discreet, have made it available for service in what they deemed the same cause, in another locality. It is easy to trace the connection between cause and effect—between the teachings of the leading spirits of Republicanism, and the practice of their willing instruments, in carrying out the spirit of the doctrines thus inculcated. If the latter are less prudent than their leaders, it is by no means certain that they are more responsible before the bar of public opinion.**

During this morning the conspirators [George Luther Stearns](#) and [Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe](#) of the [Secret "Six"](#) conspiracy were consulting with their Boston lawyer of recourse, John Andrew (Boston lawyer [Richard Henry Dana, Jr.](#), the chairperson of their conspiracy, being at the moment conveniently on a vacation trip around the world), and were being heartily reassured that in his considered initial opinion they would be quite safe from any prosecution: "A man cannot be held guilty of an overt act of levying war who was not present at the overt act of war; who participated in none of the transactions of the principal actors at the scene and did not, in any manner, render assistance, or attempt to do so, or put himself in a position where he might do so, if occasion offered at the time.... Still, if one joins in a conspiracy to levy war, and war is, afterward, in fact levied, and he performs any act, which in the case of a felony, would render one an accessory, he thereby renders himself a principal to the treason, since, in treason all who are guilty at all are principals. Thus — if he gives arms, ammunition, horses or what not, to aid the war, pursuant to the conspiracy, such acts, when the war has been



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

actually levied, will doubtless be deemed overt acts of treason, in themselves; but the party committing them can only be tried in the District where they were committed. A man who gave a cannon in Maine to the service of the cause of treason could not be tried for it in Texas, merely because it was in Texas that other men, afterward, fired it.”

Ruth Weaver to Governor [Henry A. Wise](#):



Gov[erno]r of V[irgini]a  
Smyrna 10t Mo 20th 1859  
Chenango Co Ny

*In the stillness and depth of night I have arose from my sleepless bed to write to thee (in the fear and dread of the Majesty of Heaven and also in a measure of his love which breaths "peace on earth and good will to men") a warning not to suffer anything done to those late prisoners in a hasty or harsh manner although they have committed an high offence against thier country and also in the sight of the great Creator and Judge of all the earth but Oh! let justice and judgment go forth in His spirit seek his to know His will, and remember the example of Him our Lord and Saviour when nailed to the cross how He prayed for his murderers and now friend who art chosen to fill the Chiefest seat in thy States government if thou and thy people will let a measure of this spirit of divine love rule your hearts in proceding against those poor crimanals if you inflict death it will be in a mild and easy way for even that is a great responsibility to take that from our fellow men that which we cannot is impossible for us again to restore; but O beware of in the heat of excitement of giving away to heathinsh examples of inflicting cruel and terrible deaths upon their prisoners and captives in their power and thus provoke the Majesty of heaven who hath said "vengence is mine I will repay saith the Lord" for we all shall have to stand beffre the judgment-seat of Christ, from a lover of truth & righteousness*

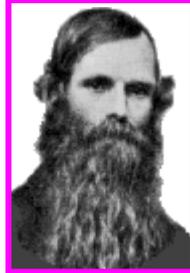
Ruth Weaver



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

October 26, Wednesday: [Franklin Benjamin Sanborn](#) and [George Luther Stearns](#) of the [Secret "Six"](#) conspiracy



determined that they needed to return from their temporary panicky refuge in [Québec](#), in part due to a note they had just received from [Waldo Emerson](#) assuring them that legal opinion had it that he was safe from prosecution for treason due to the opinion rendered by Boston attorney John Andrew, "I see no possible way in which any one can have done anything in Massachusetts for which he can be carried to any other state. I know nothing for which you could be tried even here."

[John E. Cook](#), who had escaped from Harpers Ferry to climb a tree and watch the carnage, was arrested in Pennsylvania along with [Albert Hazlett](#), who had not participated in the fighting.

The [Valley Spirit](#) expressed editorial dismay at learning that the town of Chambersburg PA had apparently been useful to the raiders of the federal arsenal at [Harpers Ferry](#), as a staging area.

Amos A. Laurence to Governor [Henry A. Wise](#) of Virginia:



*Boston. Oct. 26. 59.*

*Dear Sir*

*From the Telegrhic. Report of the trial of Capt. Brown it appears to be uncertain whether he will have a trial in the usual form. Permit one who loves the whole country as much as yourself to urge on you the necessity of securing this. Brown is a Puritan, whose mind has become disordered by hardship & illness. He has the qualities wh. endear him to our people & his sudden execution would send a thrill of horror through the whole North. From his blood would spring an army of martyrs all eager to die in the cause of human liberty. I am sure that I express the ~~opinion~~ desire of all conservative men here when I beg you to insist on a fair trial.*

*Respectfully utmly*

*Yr obt serv*

*Amos A. Laurence*

*His Excellly*

*Gov. Wise*

[Lydia Maria Child](#) wrote to Governor [Henry A. Wise](#) of Virginia, enclosing a note from her to [John Brown](#)



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

which she asked him to read and then to deliver:

*Dear Capt Brown, Though personally unknown to you, you will recognize in my name an earnest friend of Kansas.... Believing in peace principles, I cannot sympathize with the method you chose to advance the cause of freedom. But I honor your generous intentions, I admire your courage, moral and physical, I reverence you for the humanity which tempered your zeal. I sympathize with your cruel bereavements, your suffering, and your wrongs. In brief, I love you and bless you. Thousands of hearts are throbbing with sympathy as warm as mine. I think of you night and day, bleeding in prison, surrounded by hostile faces, sustained only by trust in God and your own strong heart. I long to nurse you, to speak to you sisterly words of sympathy and consolation. I have asked permission of Gov. Wise to do so. If the request is not granted, I cherish the hope that these few words may, at least, reach your hands, and afford you some little solace. May you be strengthened by the conviction that no honest man ever sheds his blood for freedom in vain, however much he may be mistaken in his efforts. May God sustain you, and carry you through whatsoever may be in store for you! Yours with heartfelt respect, sympathy, and affection.*

*L. Maria Child*



**[THOREAU MADE NO ENTRY IN HIS JOURNAL FOR OCTOBER 26th]**

October 27, Thursday: The trial of [John Brown](#) for treason and murder, before a jury of twelve white male citizens of [Harpers Ferry](#), began.

At about this point of time, in Africa, Martin Robison Delany was traveling inland into Yoruba along the Ogun River, as far as the Egba capital of Abbeokuta where he was meeting with his expeditions' fund-raiser in England, Robert Campbell, who had come from there.



**[THOREAU MADE NO ENTRY IN HIS JOURNAL FOR OCTOBER 27th]**

October 30, late at night: Minot Pratt wrote to Mrs. Minot Pratt after attending [Henry Thoreau](#)'s impassioned lecture about [Harpers Ferry](#) and [John Brown](#):

*I have just returned, (most 10 o'clock,) from hearing a sort of lecture from Henry Thoreau, on the subject of the affair at Harper's Ferry, or rather on the character of Capt. Brown. Henry spoke of him in terms of the most unqualified eulogy. I never heard him before speak so much in praise of any man, and did not know that his sympathies were so strong in favor of the*



**RACE WAR,**

**NOT CIVIL WAR**

*poor slave. He thinks Capt. Brown has displayed heroic qualities that will cause him to be remembered wherever and whenever true heroism is admired. The lecture was full of Henry's quaint and strong expressions: hitting the politicians in the hardest manner, and showing but little of that veneration which is due to our beloved President and all the government officials, who are laboring so hard and so disinterestedly for the welfare of the dear people. The church also, as a body, came in for a share of whipping, and it was laid on right earnestly. In the course of his remarks on Capt. Brown's heroic character, and actions in the service of freedom and the probability of his being killed therefor, he said he had been very strongly impressed with the possibility of a man's dying - very few men can die - they never lived, how then can they die! The life they lived was not life - that constant endeavor after selfgratification, with no high aspiration and effort for the race, was too mean an existence to be called life. Brown was a man of ideas and action; whatever he saw to be right, that he endeavored to do with energy, without counting the cost to himself. Such a real, live man could die. The lecture was full of noble, manly ideas, though, perhaps, a little extravagant in its eulogy of Capt. Brown.*

[Bronson Alcott](#) was also writing that night about the reception of [Thoreau](#)'s lecture (JOURNALS. Boston MA: Little, Brown, 1938, page 320):

*Thoreau reads a paper of his on John Brown, his virtues, spirit, and deeds, at the Vestry this evening, and to the delight of his company I am told - the best that could be gathered on short notice, and among them Emerson. I am not informed in season, and have my meeting at the same time. I doubt not of his excellence and eloquence, and wish he may have opportunities of reading it elsewhere.*

## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

October 30, Sunday: The trial of [John Brown](#) concluded, with a finding of guilt. The separate trials of the others indicted, [John Anderson Copeland, Jr.](#), [Edwin Coppoc](#), [Shields Green](#), and [Aaron D. Stevens](#), would begin, and would come to their conclusions, shortly.



Green

Copeland

Haslitt

[Henry Thoreau](#) notified [Concord](#) town officials that he would speak that evening on “The character of [John Brown](#), now in the clutches of the slaveholder.”



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

## KILLED OR WOUNDED BY THE INSURGENTS AT HARPERS FERRY

|                  |                                                 |         |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Heywood Shepherd | black railroad porter                           | Killed  |
| Fontaine Beckham | white railroad agent and mayor of Harpers Ferry | Killed  |
| G.W. Turner      | white resident of Jefferson County VA           | Killed  |
| Thomas Boerly    | white resident of Harpers Ferry                 | Killed  |
| Quinn            | white Marine Corps private                      | Killed  |
| Rupert           | white Marine Corps private                      | Wounded |
| Murphy           | white resident in vicinity of Harpers Ferry     | Wounded |
| Young            | white resident in vicinity of Harpers Ferry     | Wounded |
| Richardson       | white resident in vicinity of Harpers Ferry     | Wounded |
| Hammond          | white resident in vicinity of Harpers Ferry     | Wounded |
| McCabe           | white resident in vicinity of Harpers Ferry     | Wounded |
| Dorsey           | white resident in vicinity of Harpers Ferry     | Wounded |
| Hooper           | white resident in vicinity of Harpers Ferry     | Wounded |
| Woollet          | white resident in vicinity of Harpers Ferry     | Wounded |



That evening, [Thoreau](#) delivered “A PLEA FOR CAPTAIN JOHN BROWN” in the vestry of the First Parish Meetinghouse in Concord. Emerson was present, and would report to Charles Wesley Slack in Boston that “He read it with great force & effect, & though the audience was of widely different parties, it was heard without a murmur of dissent.” In regard to Thoreau’s impassioned oration, this is what I have to offer. Take it for granite, Thoreau always knows what he is saying. Speaking not only of [John Brown](#)’s sharp tongue

HDT

WHAT?

INDEX

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

but also of his carbine bought and paid for, one of the things Henry said on the evening of October 30, 1859 was

*The tools were in the hands of one who could use them.*



This is now on page 133 of REFORM PAPERS. **But what I need to get you to understand is that it means exactly what it means, not what you maybe thought it would mean were it you who had said it.** The thing I need you to notice is that Thoreau's remark is an implicit reference to [Miguel de Cervantes's](#)

*En manos eftâ el pandero que le fabra bien tañer, refpondio Sancho Pança.*



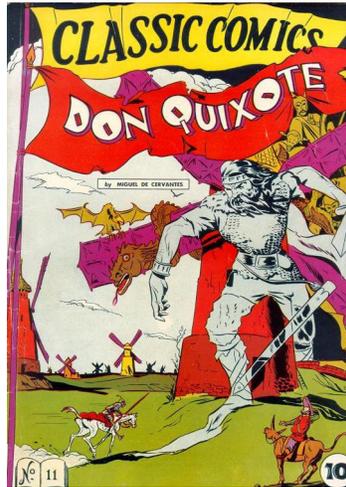
This is an aphorism from Part II, Chapter 22 of *EL INGENIOSO HIDALGO DON QUIJOTE DE LA MANCHA*.



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

In current Spanish: *En manos está el pandero que le sabrán bien tañer*, or “In hands is the drum that it they know well to beat” or, rather, “The drum is in the hands of one who well knows how to thump it.” Thus Thoreau’s remark about the *rat-a-tat-tat* of Brown’s sharp tongue and Christian carbine is also an implicit reference to the most-quoted passage in WALDEN by far, the passage in which an obscure metaphor is drawn apparently on the basis of the drummer-boy *rat-a-tat-tatting* away on [Concord](#) common during the annual militia training!



What is happening in that passage of Cervantes’s book is that Sancho Panza was lowering Don Quijote into the Montecinos cave by a rope. And he was using this old Spanish proverb to say don’t worry, I know how to handle this rope, I won’t let you fall. He was practicality incarnate, all means and no end, while Don Quijote was impracticality ensouled, on his way to make his central attempt to define the relationship between reality and illusion, all end and no means.

We may well ask ourselves in what way a reference to Don Quijote might be seen as appropriate in this context of Thoreau’s defense of Brown. I can think of several right off.

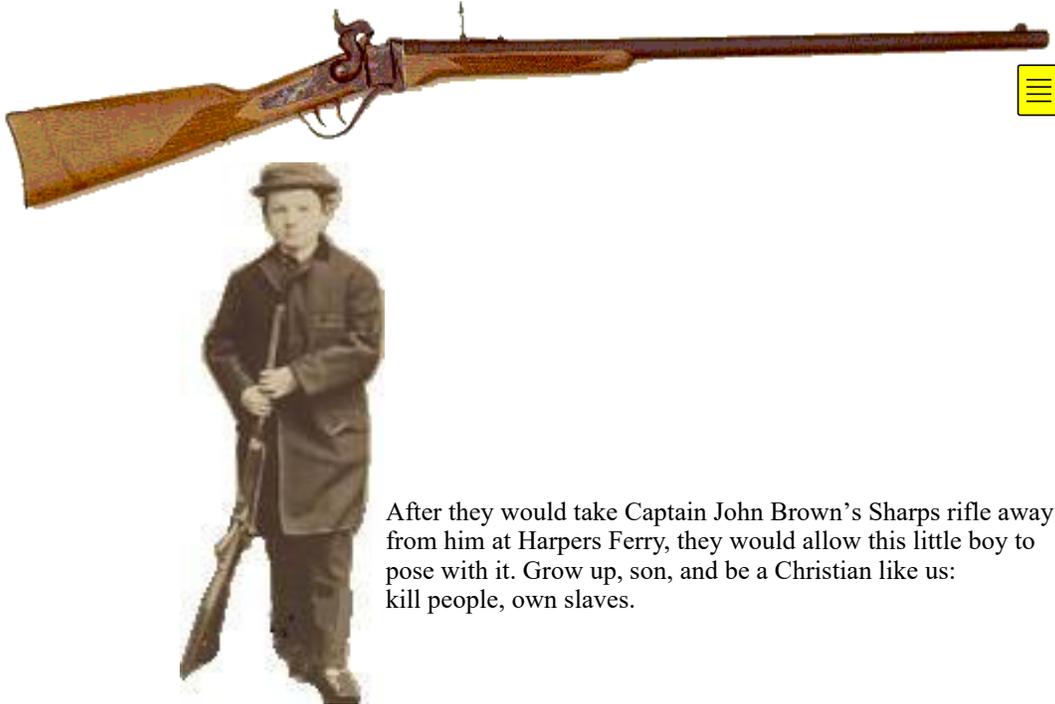
1st, many scholars would insist to us that a study of the work of Cervantes is central to any consideration of the manner in which our representations of the world can, and cannot, modify the contexts in which our lives are embedded. That Sharps rifle was supposed to be the lever by which Brown was rearranging reality, but in actuality in that world of men at arms such a stick was of influence primarily as a symbol, while Brown’s primary lever for rearranging the reality of American race relations was –as Thoreau was emphasizing– his sharp tongue. Holding that Sharps rifle in his hand only served to draw attention to that tongue of his, attention that his sharp tongue deserved. We can say Thoreau’s problem essentially was, in the case of Brown, that he had decided he could not be satisfied with reality. Refusing to repeat the gestures that custom, tradition, and

[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

instinct make so easy, Thoreau was insisting on the coming into being of our myth of equality and fraternity.



After they would take Captain John Brown's Sharps rifle away from him at Harpers Ferry, they would allow this little boy to pose with it. Grow up, son, and be a Christian like us: kill people, own slaves.

2d, Don Quijote was *un hombre exageradamente grave y serio o puntilloso*, and this is a fine and accurate description not only of Concord's own knight of the woebegone countenance, [Bronson Alcott](#), but also of [John Brown](#). If Alcott could be said to have been a Quijote whose favorite reading was the New Testament, Brown was a Quijote whose favorite reading was the Old. Don Quijote said

These saints and knights were of the same profession as myself, which is the calling of arms. Only there is this difference between them and me, that they were saints, and fought with divine weapons, and I am a sinner and fight with human ones.

3d, there is the problem of the ridiculous mismatch of means and objectives about which Brown commented in his note on the morning of his [hanging](#). Brown wanted a world of justice and peace and dignity so he set about enthusiastically to kill us until we got his idea, which is a fine way to get someone's attention but is inherently self-defeating.

4th, in associating Brown with Don Quijote, [Thoreau](#) was making an implicit reference to the freeing of slaves as a knightly suspension of the ethical — for Don Quijote's pity, compassion, and love came to outweigh the rigor of justice in that knight's liberating of the galley slaves, and in the declaration he made to the guards of



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

the slaves, and in his comments to Sancho and the priest. He said

It is not right that honorable men should be executioners of others.

Finally, this “tool” aphorism extracted from the episode in which Don Quijote descended on a rope into the cave of Montecinos is central to the story’s process of *sanchificación* of the knight’s spirituality and *quijotización* of the squire’s carnality. By virtue of their shared adventures, the righteously indignant northern white American and the desperately indignant southern white American needed to figure out a way to rid themselves of a society based on shackles: they needed to sanchify and quijotize each other. That’d be preferred to our northern Quijotes and southern Panzas using their efficient tools to kill each other standing in rows, which was otherwise the obvious prospect. When Don Quijote emerged from the cave of Montecinos he said to Sancho Panza

Everything that offers some difficulty seems impossible to you.

But he added

Time will pass.

In this writing I will not only attempt to salvage Thoreau’s talk about Christian carbines and sharp tongues by linking it (via its implicit referent in Cervantes’s *rub-a-dub-dub* text about the foolishness of desperate acts of chivalry) to its implicit referent in Thoreau’s *rat-a-tat-tat* text about the foolishness of a life of quiet desperation.

I will also demonstrate that this sound metaphor of Thoreau’s –the distant different drummer– is, itself, an implicit reference to a [Quaker](#) non-violent metaphor of the inner light in common usage among members of the [Religious Society of Friends](#), particularly those of the liberal faction including Friend [Elias Hicks](#) and his student Friend [Lucretia Mott](#), and that such a metaphor cannot be bent –as it is commonly now bent by the unspirited– to sponsor the path of violence. Thoreau left himself an escape hatch and, in his appeal for sympathy for Captain Brown after that man’s desperate attempt to set free the despairing slaves of America, neither explicitly nor implicitly sanctioned any of [John Brown](#)’s violent means. I would maintain that Thoreau’s deportment and his words subsequent to the ill-advised [Harpers Ferry](#) raid in 1859 were precisely



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

parallel to Friend Lucretia's deportment and her words after the ill-advised "Christiana Riot" in 1851.



Thoreau said in public, in regard to American slavery, that he did not wish to kill nor to be killed, but could foresee circumstances in which both these things would be by him unavoidable (REFORM PAPERS 133). Playing to his audience, our author elided the vast difference between killing and dying precisely as Richardson elided Charles Baudelaire. It was only in Thoreau's private notes during his lifetime—to his Journal that is, and although as he says there was no lock on the door of his cabin there was in fact a lock on the desk in which he kept his Journal—that he was able to say plainly that **when he said “both these things” he meant precisely “both these things,”** not one and, if he turned out to be a lucky and competent killer, not the other, that if it came to the sacrificing of others to his own principles, this would necessarily involve his own simultaneous self-sacrifice for his principles, that he meant he might decide to not be alive rather than continue to be alive in a world that also included slavery.<sup>20</sup> Now, Søren Aabye Kierkegaard pointed out in a writing that,

---

20. There is a phrase “noble army of Martyrs” in the BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER that came into use in 1549 that may explain [Thoreau](#)'s remark about becoming willing to kill, or to die, to end enslavement. The phrase may have come into the BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER from the *TE DEUM*, quite a bit older.



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

although it dates to the same year of 1859, was unavailable to [Thoreau](#),<sup>21</sup> that

Assuming then that a person is the victim of an illusion, and that in order to communicate the truth to him the first task, rightly understood, is to remove the illusion – if I do not begin by deceiving him, I must begin with direct communication. But direct communication presupposes that the receiver's ability to receive is undisturbed. But here such is not the case; an illusion stands in the way. That is to say, one must first of all use the caustic fluid. But this caustic means is negativity, and negativity understood in relation to the communication of the truth is precisely the same as deception. What then does it mean "to deceive"? It means that one does not begin **directly** with the matter one wants to communicate, but begins by accepting the other man's illusion as good money.



I am not saying Thoreau was wrong to elide in this way in that place at that time, for he was doing his level best to communicate with a bunch of people who were getting ready to line up and shoot each other down in windows, and also I was not there and also I have great respect for his judgment, but I am saying that if there was a time for this sort of elision, it is now past. If not then, at least now, we should face the issue squarely. But unfortunately, as I said, the issue is not being faced squarely. For instance, on the night of July 10th in the Center Galleria of Worcester, an actor employed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, David Barto, sponsored in part by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management, re-enacted Thoreau's lecture "A Plea for Capt. John Brown."

Worcester's Mechanics Hall where the lecture was originally delivered was under restoration, but every effort was made for verisimilitude and Barto was able to lean on the wooden lectern that Thoreau had used on November 3, 1859 at Mechanics Hall. My impression is that Barto makes a Thoreau who is entirely too belligerent, for instance humorously threatening to beat children with his walking stick should they ask questions at the wrong times, humorously inviting one fellow to join him outside for a fight after the talk should he fail to follow Thoreau's rules, etc. Therefore, in the question and answer period, I raised my hand

---

21. Søren Aabye Kierkegaard. THE POINT OF VIEW FOR MY WORK AS AN AUTHOR. NY: Harper & Row, 1962, pages 25-6.



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

and posed the following question to Barto in his rôle as [Thoreau](#):

I have heard you, and am troubled, troubled by what would seem to be a studied ambiguity on an issue of the greatest relevance. Tell me, in the dark of the night when you could not sleep, and you scratched these lines frantically across scraps of paper with your pencil - can you recollect that frame of mind?- what was your intention? If it came to kill or be killed, for those are two very different things, if it came to the taking of the life of another for liberty, or giving your own for liberty -for these are two very different things- if it came to continuing your life but as a murderer- if it came to the point of doing evil so that good will come- what, sir, was your secret intention as you scratched out your draft of this speech? Is it your intention to teach us, by your life, how and when to **die** or how and when to **kill**?

In response Barto feigned anger and told me I had no right to inquire as to his private musings. He was unable or unwilling to address the question as posed. Need I mention that this might have got him in trouble with his employer, an agency which also employs a number of armed men in blue and a number of armed men in green, and instructs these armed employees in the fine art of when and how to kill in the name of their employer?

#### “A PLEA FOR CAPTAIN JOHN BROWN”

This topic of elision is an interesting topic for those of us who find this sort of topic interesting. While [Thoreau](#) was delivering his “A PLEA FOR CAPTAIN JOHN BROWN” at the Concord Town Hall, the Reverend [Henry Ward Beecher](#) was delivering a sermon in his Plymouth Church in Brooklyn. Later on he would revise this sermon for publication, so we can credit it with some seriousness of preparation, and yet in the sermon he was portraying the raid on [Harpers Ferry](#) as having been perpetrated by 17 white men who had gone South without any black sponsorship or involvement and, in their whiteness, had created a race panic: “Seventeen white men surrounded two thousand, and held them in duress.”

A black newspaper would need to comment upon this elision, as of course it had been the noticing of men of mixed race among the members of that invading party which had set off the pronounced race panic: “Mr. Beecher must have read the papers, must have read that there were twenty-two invaders, seventeen white and five black. Why does he omit all mention of the latter? Were they not men?”<sup>22</sup>

---

22. It is very clear from several other things that the Reverend [Henry Ward Beecher](#) had written, that had he been forced to respond to this “Were they not men?” rhetorical question, he would easily have responded that indeed they were men — inasmuch as they were all of mixed race rather than being in that “low animal condition” (his category, his words) of pure blackness.

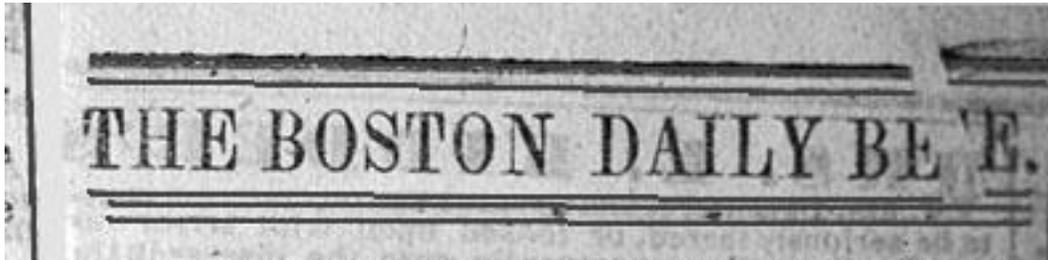


**RACE WAR,**

**NOT CIVIL WAR**

November 2, Wednesday: On the very day that [John Brown](#), having been found guilty of treason and murder, was being condemned to be hanged, a printed circular was being posted in Boston, asking for help in covering his legal expenses. The circular was signed by the Reverend [Thomas Wentworth Higginson](#) of the [Secret "Six"](#) conspiracy, [Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe](#), [Samuel Eliot Sewall](#), and [Waldo Emerson](#). Not only would the attorneys Samuel Chilton and Hiram Griswold need to be satisfied, but soon the others accused, [John Anderson Copeland, Jr.](#), [Edwin Coppoc](#), [Shields Green](#), and [Aaron D. Stevens](#), who were still being represented by attorneys George Sennott and George H. Hoyt, were inevitably going to be condemned to be hanged.

The Boston [Atlas and Daily Bee](#) carried a report of [Henry Thoreau](#)'s lecture on [John Brown](#).



This would be the courthouse in what would become Charles Town, West Virginia at which [John Brown](#) was tried, as of the Year Of Our Lord 1900:



The wounded [John Brown](#) lay on his cot and addressed this court in this building on this day in Charles Town, Virginia:

I have, may it please the court, a few words to say.  
In the first place, I deny everything but what I have all along admitted, — the design on my part to free slaves. I intended certainly to have made a clean thing of that matter, as I did last winter, when I went into Missouri and 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 do 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 excite or 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 (for I admire the truthfulness and candor of the greater portion of the witnesses who have testified in this case), —had I so interfered in behalf of the rich, the powerful, the intelligent, the so-called great, or in behalf of any of their friends —either



**RACE WAR,**

**NOT CIVIL WAR**

father, mother, 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 this court would have deemed it an act worthy of reward rather than punishment. The court acknowledges, as I suppose, the validity of the law of God. 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 that men should do to me, I should do even so to them. It teaches me further to "remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them." I endeavored to act up to that instruction. I say, I am too young to understand that God is any respecter of persons. I believe that to have interfered as I have done -as I have always freely admitted I have done- in behalf of His despised poor, was not 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 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 all the circumstances, it has been more generous than I expected. I feel no consciousness of my guilt. I have stated from the first what was my intention, and what was not. I never had any design against the life of any person, nor any disposition to commit treason, or excite slaves to rebel, or make any general insurrection. I never encouraged any man to do so, but always discouraged any idea of any kind.

Let me say also, a word in regard to the statements made by some to those connected with me. I hear it has been said 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.

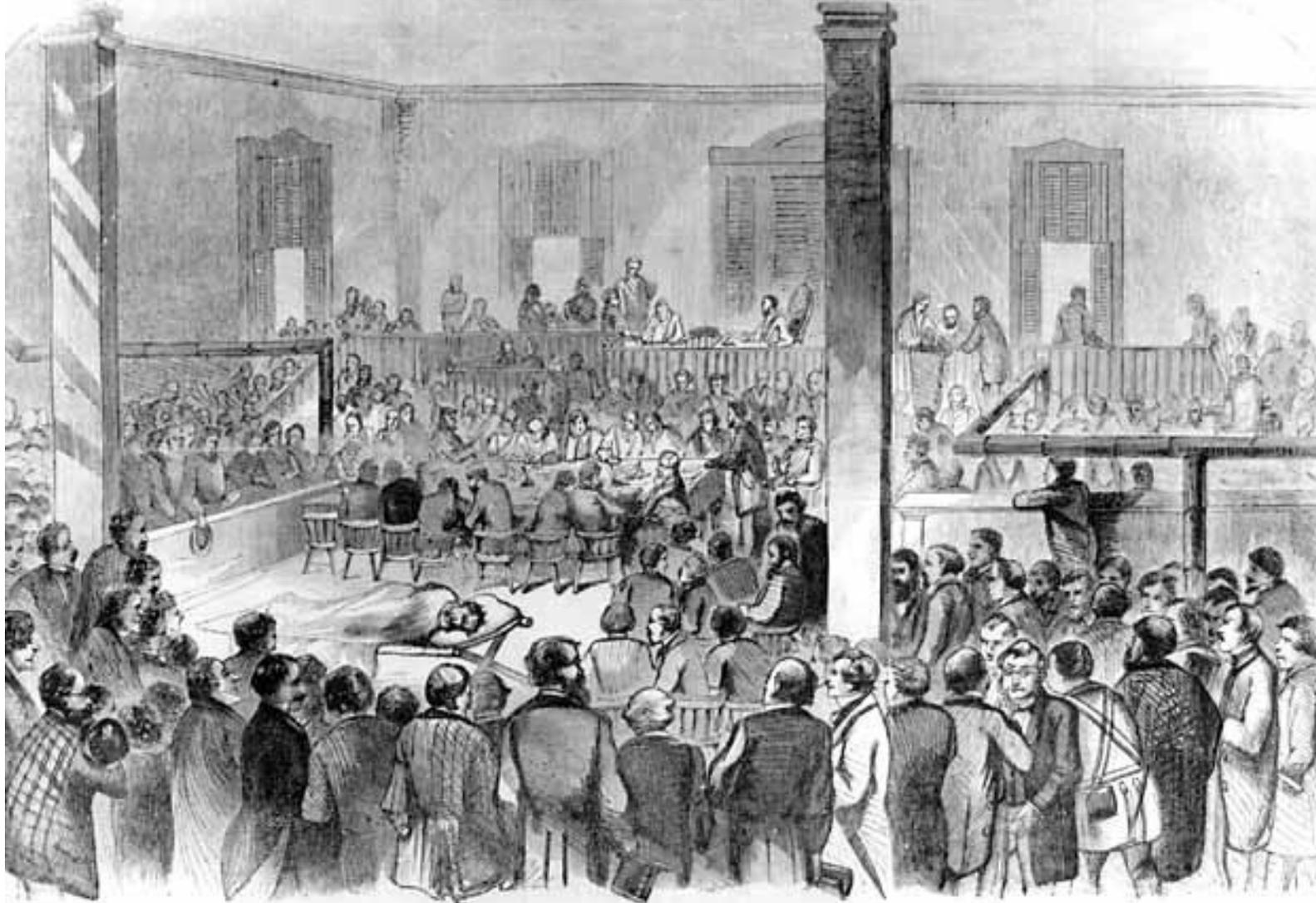
Now I have done.

[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

“Porte Crayon,” which is to say, the illustrator David Strother, was depicting the scene inside the courthouse for the benefit of a news-eager nation. This is what we might have seen had one entire wall of the building been cut away as is done routinely now for interior scenes on the sound stages of Hollywood:

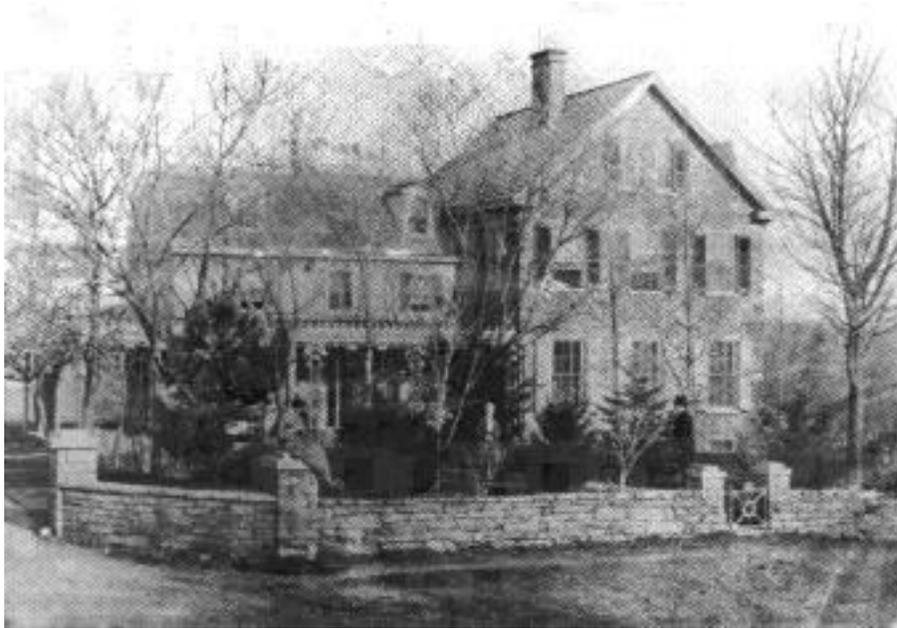


[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

After the week-long trial it took 45 minutes of deliberation for the Virginia jury to find this unrepentant Captain [John Brown](#) guilty of murder, treason, and inciting a [slave](#) insurrection and to sentence him to be hanged by the neck until he be dead. Later, from his cell, the condemned man wrote his wife Mrs. [Mary Ann Day Brown](#) at "Roadside" near Philadelphia:



*I was sentenced to be hanged on Dec. 2<sup>nd</sup> next. Do not grieve on my account. I am still quite cheerful. God bless you all.*



His speech was promptly printed as a broadside by C.C. Mead in Boston: ADDRESS OF JOHN BROWN ...



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

SENTENCE OF DEATH; FOR HIS HEROIC ATTEMPT AT HARPERS FERRY...:



[Edwin Coppoc](#) was tried by a jury of his white male peers immediately after the sentence was handed down in the case of Captain [John Brown](#).



He was sentenced to be hanged. (His brother [Barclay Coppoc](#) was still eluding capture. From prison before his hanging, he would write to his adoptive mother, of a nonresistant-abolitionist [Quaker](#) farm family, that he was

*“sorry to say that I was ever induced to raise a gun.”*

He would be hung with [John E. Cook](#) on December 16, 1859. The body would be buried in Winona after a funeral attended by the entire town. Later the body would be reburied in Salem, Ohio.)

The weekly [Valley Spirit](#) contained a number of articles linking the [Harpers Ferry](#) raid with Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. One article described [John E. Cook](#) and [Albert Hazlett](#)'s capture, detailing the papers found on

[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

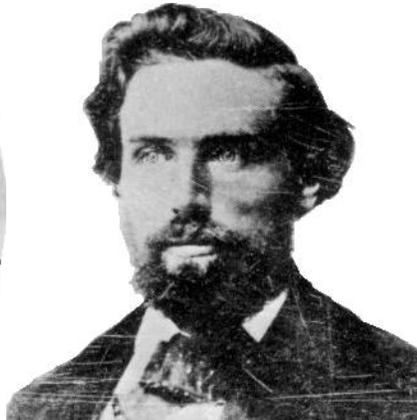
RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

Cook's person, while another reported on the transfer of the prisoners to Charlestown.



In "Capt. Kagi," the editors express doubt that [John Henry Kagi](#), a former Chambersburg resident, and [Charles Plummer Tidd](#) had actually been killed during the raid. Local fears were not assuaged by the discovery of rifles, ammunition, books and bandages in Beatty's Woods.



[THOREAU MADE NO ENTRY IN HIS JOURNAL FOR NOVEMBER 2d]



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

November 3, Thursday: The letter of response from Governor [Henry A. Wise](#) of Virginia arrived with [Lydia Maria Child](#). All the blame for what had happened at [Harpers Ferry](#) was assignable to her and her fellow abolitionists. A few days later, a letter would arrive from [John Brown](#) himself, alerting Child to the possibility that if she or some notorious abolitionist like her were to arrive in Charlestown, and the general public become aware of this, he and everyone associated with him might simply be taken out of the jail and lynched in order to make certain that there would be no rescue.



[Henry Thoreau](#) delivered his lecture "A Plea for Captain John Brown" at Washburn Hall in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Off Nova Scotia on his voyage from England to the US, the Reverend [Samuel Joseph May](#) was made aware of the raid upon the Harpers Ferry arsenal.



Charles Ulrich of Hartford, Connecticut wrote to Governor [Henry A. Wise](#) of Virginia:

*Hartford, November 3 1859*

*Hon Henry A. Wise*

*Dear Sir*

*I hope you will excuse me for troubling you at a time when I presume you are very much engaged with more important matters than mine But I should be very much obliged to you if you would have the kindness to get for me "John Brown's" autograph*

*Yours most respectfully*

*Chas. Ulrich*

*Box 551*

*Hartford Conn.*

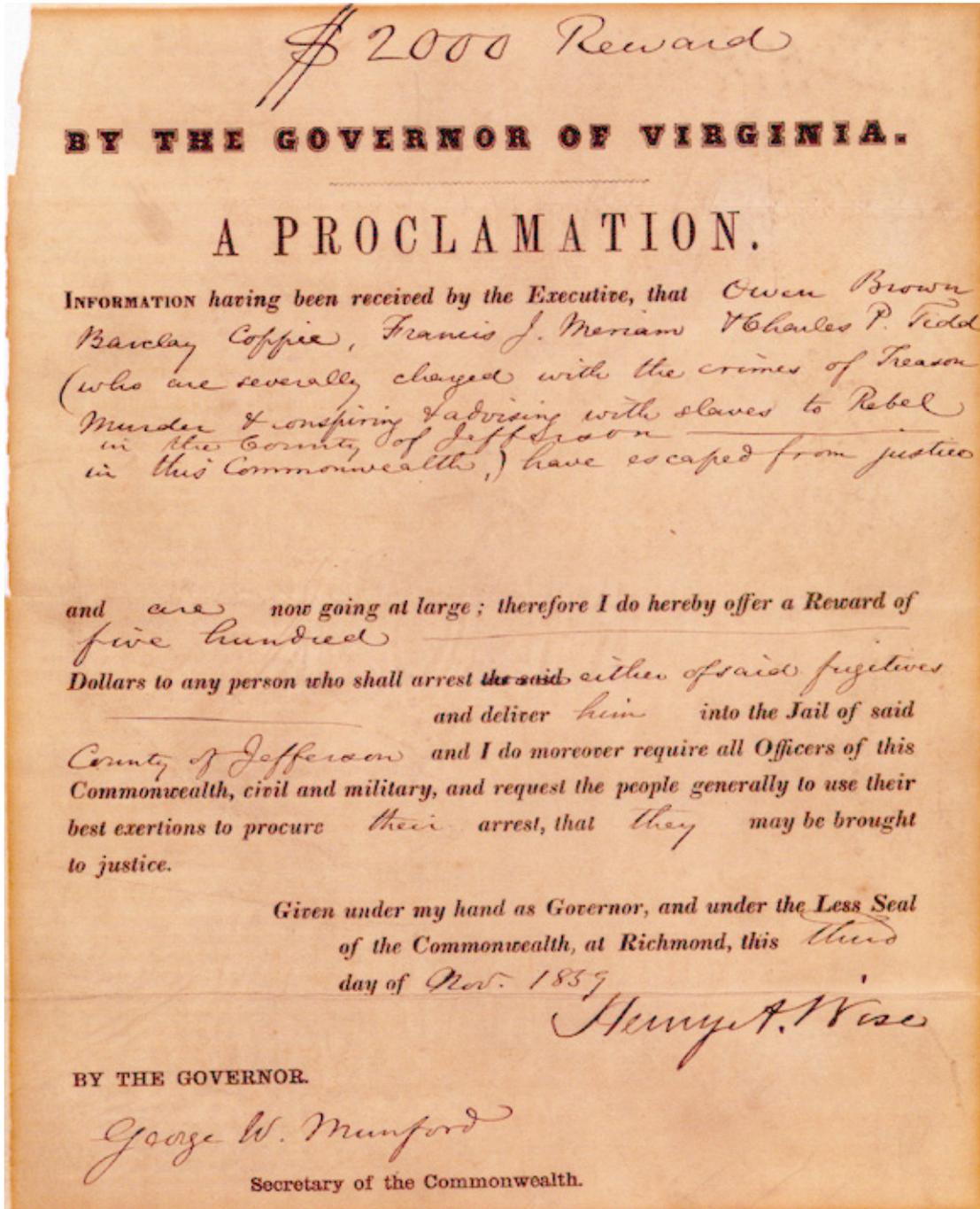
HDT

WHAT?

INDEX

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR





RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR



[THOREAU MADE NO ENTRY IN HIS JOURNAL FOR NOVEMBER 3d]

December 2, Friday: The spirit of [John Brown](#), allegedly, to Governor [Henry A. Wise](#):



*First Hevan Dec 2*

*Friend Wise*

*I got here this Morning at 11 1/2 o'clock Set Peter was at the Door. he said welcom John Brown you are the first man that come here from Virginia in 20 years and I am afraid you will Be the last excep Cook and his friends*

*Youres &ca*

*John Brown*

*P.S. Write soon and send your letter By Cook as that will Be the Last canse you ever will get*

*J.B*

The Reverend [Henry Highland Garnet](#) announced at a service in New-York's Shiloh Church that henceforward "the Second day of December will be called **Martyr's Day.**"



**"There can be no redemption of sin**

**without the shedding of blood."**

We may now allow ourselves to notice what for a long time has not been awarded an adequate commentary, that for this commemorative service which coincided with the hanging of [John Brown](#) for treason, [Henry Thoreau](#), [Waldo Emerson](#), and the other "speakers" delivered nothing of their own thoughts. (A local lad named Frank Pierce would later have occasion to recall that he had helped his dad move some sort of heavy musical instrument, a piano or organ, into the hall for this occasion. ) The speakers merely took the podium in their turn to read entirely innocuous stuff out of Andrew Marvell, and out of Sir [Walter Raleigh](#), and out of Tacitus. Why were they doing this upon such an occasion? It must have been like drinking Polynesian Double Mai-Tais at a wake. Well, one reason might have been that enflamed Concord townspeople were

nearby, counting down the minutes as the traitor rode atop his own coffin out to the hanging ground,



until the traitor would swing at the stroke of noon — and as he swung, igniting a hanging effigy of the traitor. These local patriots did not want their world turned upside down, but instead, they wanted that all respect and consideration continue to be accorded to worthy people. They were not ready to begin to accord respect and consideration also to unworthy people, such as coloreds, and criminals. Such patriots constituted an obvious and unpredictable, although local and temporary, hazard. We have the testimony of one participant in this classics-reading, however, that something else, a more permanent and extensive threat, was on the minds of the participants and their audience. What if, as a result of this meeting, they were arrested by officials of the federal government and charged with high treason? In a trial, they would need to be able to defend themselves in some manner, and this would enable to defend themselves on the grounds that actually this meeting had been for the simple and straightforward and entirely innocuous purpose of reading of the classic authors. Not a word had they spoken about this traitor Brown who, coincidentally, was being hanged in another state at that hour. Well, does this make you think less of Henry David Thoreau, that such considerations would have been borne in mind under the uncertainties of the moment? How would you yourself have conducted yourself in the face of such uncertainties? You will please to note that there was all the difference in the world between defending Brown in public while he was merely an accused citizen before a court-martial panel of military officers,



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

before he had been found to have committed the capital crime of treason, of having attempted by force and violence to overthrow the government of the United States of America, and defending him in public after that finding of guilt. It may well be that, in critical times, with martial law a very real possibility, one who attempts to give aid and comfort to treason is himself a traitor, and may well anticipate being treated as one. While people have begun hanging people, who can be sure where this spate of hanging is going to stop?

Friday, December 2, 1859, broke clear and summerlike over a nation solemn and awed by the grim business taking place in Virginia. Southerners put up a facade of business-as-usual, but in the free states church bells tolled morning, noon, and night from Cape Cod to Kansas. In Concord, Thoreau argued with the narrow-minded selectmen who refused to endorse the ringing and threatened to fire off the town's minute guns as a countermeasure, but in Albany the council authorized a one-hundred-gun salute in tribute to Brown and in Syracuse the great fire bell in City Hall rang mournfully all through the day.

The above, from page 500 of Mayer's ALL ON FIRE makes it sound as if Thoreau was threatening to fire off Concord's minute-guns because narrow-minded selectmen were refusing permission to knell the 1st Parish bell. No. What Thoreau recorded was that local **opponents** to the commemoration service threatened that if mourners knelled the 1st Parish bell in honor of [John Brown](#)'s passing, **they** would fire off the town's minute-guns in **celebration** of the traitor's execution.



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

Upon expecting that the federal captive John Brown had probably been put to death in Charlestown, Virginia, [Friend Daniel Ricketson](#) mused on how his sympathy for Brown's determined endeavor related to the qualms he had as to episodically violent manner in which Brown had conducted himself in response to the constant violence that was the institution of slavery:



*To-day at 12 M. John Brown was probably executed at Charlestown, Va., for a noble but apparently ineffectual attempt to emancipate slaves. My sympathy for the brave and self-sacrificing old man has been deeply aroused. His sufferings are now probably all over, and his body rests in peace, the bloody requisitions of the law having been satisfied.... Feeling sad at the mournful close of poor John Brown's life, now I trust with his Father and his God beyond the reach of the tyrant slaveholder. Cloudy this afternoon, and all nature affected with a general gloom, as it were at the loss of the brave old philanthropic hero now lying dead and cold in the hands of his enemies and the enemies of humanity.*

*John Brown cannot die; his body may perish, but that which was the most himself, his noble, self-sacrificing spirit, will survive, and that object to which he so heartily devoted himself and for which he has died, will be hastened to its accomplishment by his cruel and untimely death, untimely so far as the means used to effect it on the part of his tyrannical captors.*

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

The Reverend [Samuel Joseph May](#) organized a crowd to gather at the Syracuse NY city hall to do honor to



him who had honored in “spirit and letter the great holy doctrine of the [Declaration of Independence](#).”



The reverend termed the action “ill-advised,” condemned its violence, and then repeated the sentiment of [John Brown](#)’s closing speech at his trial — that had he acted on behalf of the rich and well-born, the government would be glorifying him rather than killing him, and that therefore the true reason why the courts martial panel was condemning him to death had nothing to do with the nature of his actions in and of themselves, and had everything to do with the fact that he had performed these actions on behalf of the humble people of this world.<sup>23</sup> When the appointed time arrived for the federal government to kill its captive, the minister intoned “The day has come, it is slavery or liberty, compromises are at an end,” and the sexton tolled the bell of the city hall 63 times.

Upon the request of [Franklin Benjamin Sanborn](#), [Thoreau](#) borrowed [Emerson](#)’s covered wagon and mare and delivered a distressed young man at sunrise past the railroad depot in Concord to the railroad depot next down the line, in South Acton. No questions asked or answered, Thoreau simply did as his friends needed. The young man sat in the back seat and talked continuously, insisted that his driver was Mr. Emerson, and at one point

---

23. Which, of course, was an excellent point, and one which needed to be made.

# RACE WAR,

# NOT CIVIL WAR

attempted to dismount and walk back to Concord. The “Mr. Lockwood” whom Thoreau escorted was [Francis Jackson Meriam](#), a young manic-depressive with but one good eye, one of the culprits of the [Harpers Ferry](#) fiasco, the last-recruited agent of the [Secret “Six”](#), and it is an open question what would have happened to Thoreau, had anyone seen through “Mr. Lockwood’s” assumed identity and had Henry been captured while assisting such an escaping “traitor.”



(Meriam had been in Boston coming from Canada, and finally had been induced by friends to head back toward area of St. Catharines, Canada; he eventually would settle in Illinois and marry with Minerva Caldwell of Galena, Illinois and obtain a position as a captain in the 3rd South Carolina Colored Infantry. Erratic and unbalanced, he would often urge wild schemes upon his superiors, and sometimes attempt them. In an engagement under General Grant he would be severely wounded in the leg. In 1865 he would die suddenly in New-York.)



Then Thoreau drove back to Concord from South Acton, returned the wagon, and delivered “The Martyrdom of John Brown” at Concord Town Hall. This was the noon of Brown’s hanging and other residents of Concord, down the street, were hanging Brown in effigy.



While the condemned man was being [hanged](#), the Reverend [Adin Ballou](#) stayed at home and wrote an editorial asking “Are Non-Resistants for Murder?” He had not been much impressed with Brown’s reliance upon pikes,

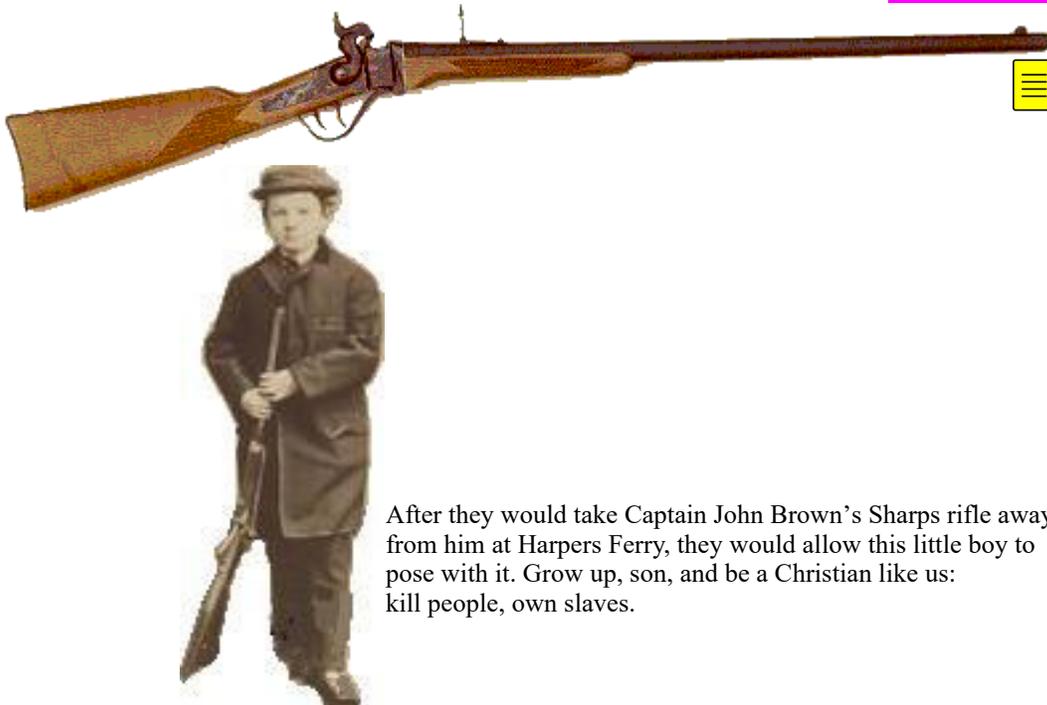
[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

# RACE WAR,

# NOT CIVIL WAR

or reliance on the readings of the “Beecher’s Bible” (Sharps rifle, ten “verses” per minute).

NON-RESISTANCE



After they would take Captain John Brown’s Sharps rifle away from him at Harpers Ferry, they would allow this little boy to pose with it. Grow up, son, and be a Christian like us: kill people, own slaves.

Down South, just before noon, as Brown was being taken from his cell to sit on his own coffin in a wagon and ride away in the midst of the troops, a guard handed him a slip of paper and a quarter, requesting an autograph. Brown wrote hurriedly on the slip of paper.<sup>24</sup>

Charlestown, Va. 2<sup>d</sup> 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

We may notice in passing that what [John Brown](#) was repeating here was the idea of the Reverend Henry Highland Garnet, that Brown had himself caused to be published and distributed. In a speech to a national

---

24. He handed the man back his quarter.



**RACE WAR,**

**NOT CIVIL WAR**

black convention in 1843, the Reverend Garnet had declared that



**“There can be no redemption of sin**

**without the shedding of blood.”**

We understand how such a speech, determinedly ignoring (*à la* Robert D. Richardson, Jr.) the vast difference between shedding one’s own blood in the furtherance of one’s agenda and shedding the blood of another, could fit right into a desperate man’s desperate agenda — for Brown had printed and distributed this speech.

**Be sure you grok the logic here:  
The logic is not “A black minister said it  
and therefore we should pay attention.”  
The logic is: “They should die for their sins and set us free;  
therefore by becoming murderers we will set ourselves free.”**

Also, on December 2nd, several hundred medical students from Virginia marched through the streets of Philadelphia, with red ribbons on their coats, shouting out how many niggers they owned.

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

As [John Brown](#) was being led down the corridor in the prison, he kissed the warder John Avis's young son.<sup>25</sup>



Currier & Ives would record this as the kissing of a black baby:



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

---

25. The warder's family, a white family named Avis, lived at the front of the prison. This, plus the fact that Brown had spoken of how desirable it would be to have black people in attendance during his hanging, evidently led to the disgusting and inflammatory and utterly unfounded and unwarranted report in the popular newspapers, that the child he had kissed was **black**.

John Brown of Ossawatomie spake on his dying day:  
'I will not have to shrive my soul a priest in Slavery's pay;  
But let some poor slave-mother whom I have striven to free,  
With her children, from the gallows-stair put up a prayer for me!'  
John Brown of Ossawatomie, they led him out to die;  
And lo! a poor slave-mother with her little child pressed nigh:  
Then the bold, blue eye grew tender, and the old harsh face grew mild,  
As he stooped between the jeering ranks and kissed the negro's child!  
The shadows of his stormy life that moment fell apart,  
And they who blamed the bloody hand forgave the loving heart;  
That kiss from all its guilty means redeemed the good intent,  
And round the grisly fighter's hair the martyr's aureole bent!  
Perish with him the folly that seeks through evil good!  
Long live the generous purpose unstained with human blood!  
Not the raid of midnight terror, but the thought which underlies;  
Not the borderer's pride of daring, but the Christian's sacrifice.  
Nevermore may yon Blue Ridges the Northern rifle hear,  
Nor see the light of blazing homes flash on the negro's spear;  
But let the free-winged angel Truth their guarded passes scale,  
To teach that right is more than might, and justice more than mail!  
So vainly shall Virginia set her battle in array;  
In vain her trampling squadrons knead the winter snow with clay!  
She may strike the pouncing eagle, but she dares not harm the dove;  
And every gate she bars to Hate shall open wide to Love!

— Friend [John Greenleaf Whittier](#)

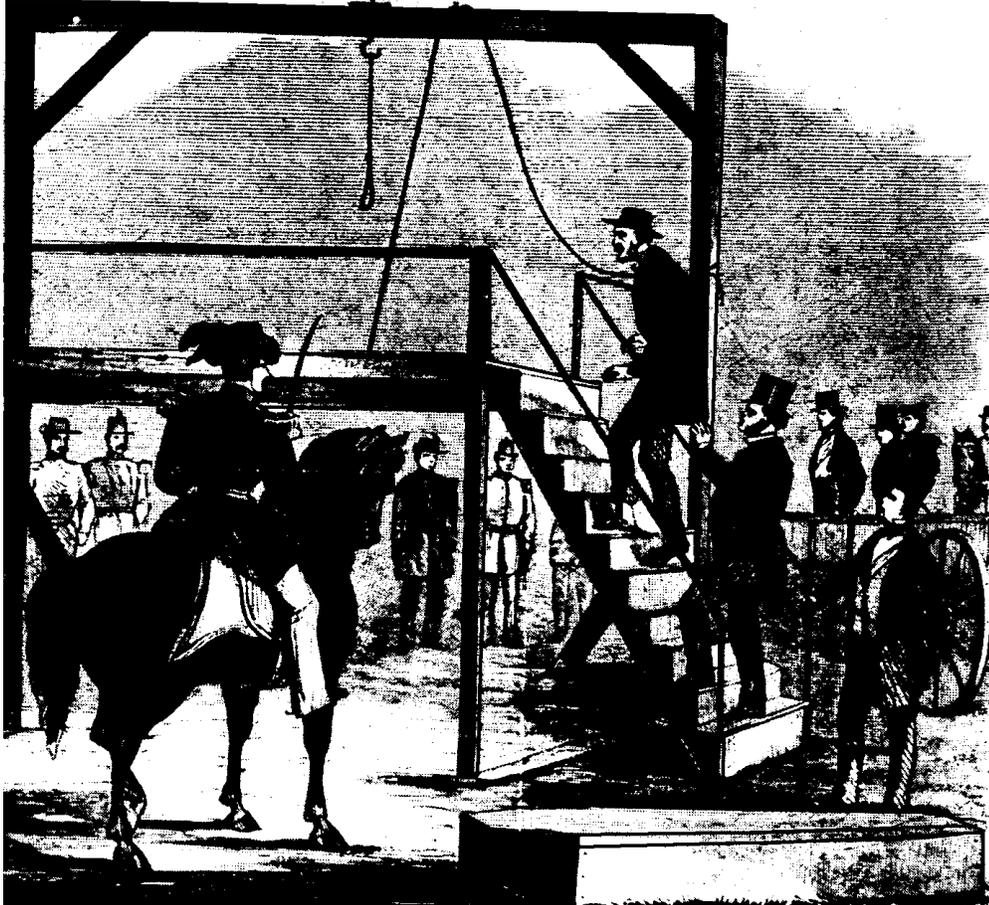
HDT

WHAT?

INDEX

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR



**It was high noon on 2 Dec 1859 and time for the military ceremony.  
If anyone did, John Brown had a perfect right to dance:  
After giving the lives of a number of *other* people for what *he* believed,  
he had somewhat belatedly gotten the idea of sacrifice  
that Angelina Grimké had tried to explain in 1835:**

*It is my deep, solemn, deliberate conviction that this  
is a cause worth dying for.... YES! LET IT COME – let  
us suffer, rather than insurrections should arise.*

**—and offered his *own* life rather than *somebody else's* life for what *he* believed.  
Then the death roll of the drums of Robert E. Lee's marching band, snares  
loosened, purposefully drowned out John Brown's last words from the**

HDT

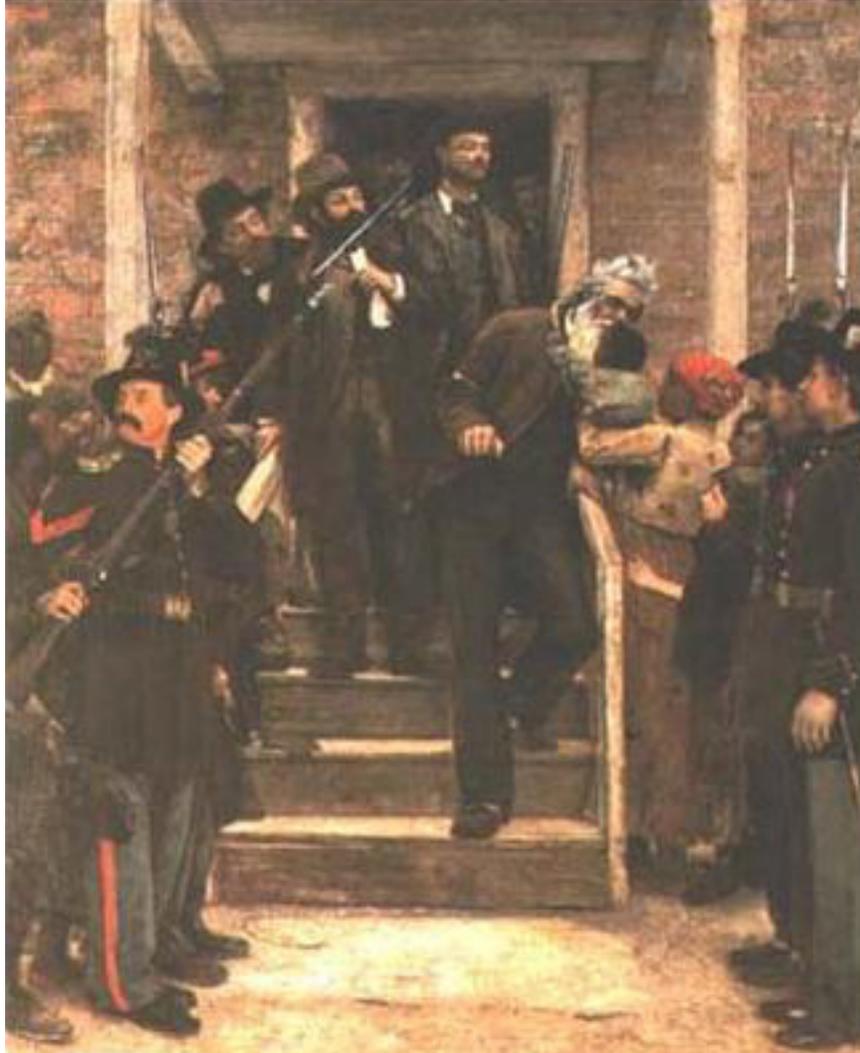
WHAT?

INDEX

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

In 1884, Thomas Hovenden would prepare a painting depicting the famous falsehood, what supposedly had



taken place at the door of the Charlestown jail while [John Brown](#) was being led to his execution, and would do at least as good a job of it as Currier & Ives had done at the time.

At least this Thomas Hovenden, by following the imagination of the Currier & Ives Sketcher, would get the backdrop for his sentimental picture reasonably accurate, for this would be the Charlestown jail as it would

[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

RACE WAR,

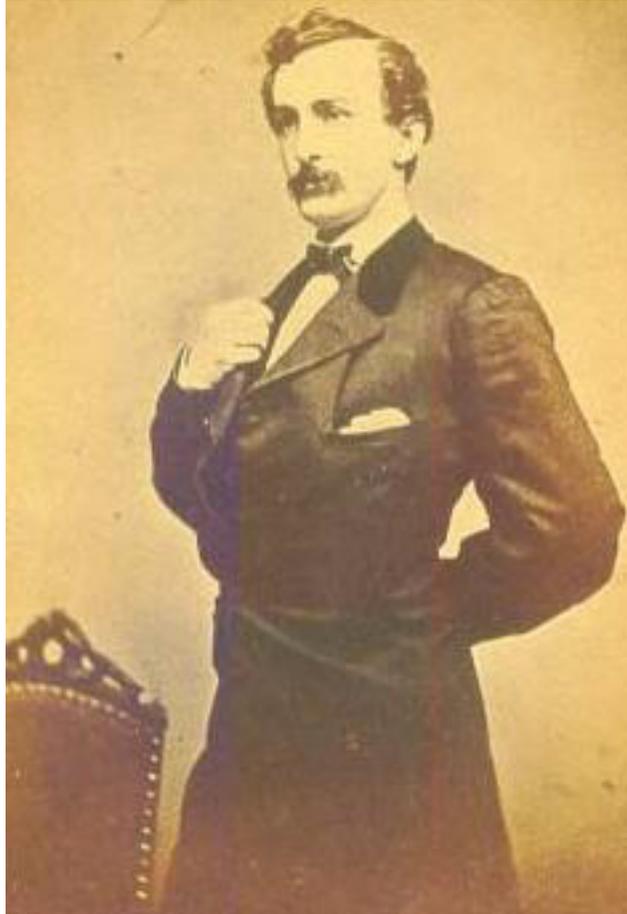
NOT CIVIL WAR

appear in the year 1900:



Assorted companies of horse soldiers went into formation about the wagon as three infantry companies were ordered to hold their regular files. A total of 1,500 troops had been amassed to take up formation in the stubble field around the scaffold. "I had no idea Governor Wise considered my execution so important," [John Brown](#) commented as he was seating himself atop his coffin in the wagon drawn by a team of white horses, in loose-fitting clothes, carpet slippers, and a hat. One of the Governor's sons was there to be a voyeur, as was a

militiaman from Company F of Richmond, [John Wilkes Booth](#).<sup>26</sup> Virginia Military Institute cadets were in



formation behind the scaffold with the commander they called Stonewall Jackson. It was noon and time for the execution when Brown commented “This is a beautiful country — I never before had the pleasure of seeing

---

26. [John Wilkes Booth](#) would lie to his sister, and then to the general public, alleging that he had rushed to [Harpers Ferry](#) to aid in suppressing the raiders. The truth was that he had merely ventured from the Richmond, Virginia stage to Charlestown, as a voyeur.

[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

it.”



He dropped his hat to the ground as the hood and then the noose were lowered over his head. “I can’t see, gentlemen,” he commented, “you must lead me.” When the sheriff asked him if he would like to have some kind of private signal just before the drop, he responded “It does not matter to me — I only want that everyone should not keep me waiting so long.” Then a hatchet was used to chop through the rope that was holding the



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

trap door of the platform shut.

A READY RECKONER FOR HANGMEN.

*RULE.*—Take the weight of the Client in Stones and look down the column of weights until you reach the figures nearest to 24 cwt., and the figure in the left-hand column will be the Drop. See page 167 of this Handbook.

| Distance falling in feet. Zero. | 8 Stone | 9 Stone | 10 Stone | 11 Stone | 12 Stone | 13 Stone | 14 Stone | 15 Stone | 16 Stone | 17 Stone | 18 Stone | 19 Stone |
|---------------------------------|---------|---------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 1 ft.                           | 8 0 0   | 9 0 0   | 10 0 0   | 11 0 0   | 12 0 0   | 13 0 0   | 14 0 0   | 15 0 0   | 16 0 0   | 17 0 0   | 18 0 0   | 19 0 0   |
| 2 ft.                           | 15 2 1  | 16 2 3  | 17 2 4   | 18 2 5   | 19 2 6   | 20 2 7   | 21 2 8   | 22 2 9   | 23 2 10  | 24 2 11  | 25 2 12  | 26 2 13  |
| 3 ft.                           | 13 3 16 | 15 2 15 | 17 1 14  | 19 0 12  | 20 3 11  | 22 2 9   | 24 1 8   | 26 0 7   | 27 3 5   | 29 2 4   | 31 1 2   | 33 0 1   |
| 4 ft.                           | 16 0 0  | 18 0 0  | 20 0 0   | 22 0 0   | 24 0 0   | 26 0 0   | 28 0 0   | 30 0 0   | 32 0 0   | 34 0 0   | 36 0 0   | 38 0 0   |
| 5 ft.                           | 17 2 11 | 19 3 5  | 22 0 0   | 24 0 22  | 26 1 16  | 28 2 11  | 30 3 5   | 33 0 0   | 35 0 22  | 37 0 16  | 39 2 11  | 41 3 15  |
| 6 ft.                           | 19 2 11 | 22 0 5  | 24 2 0   | 26 3 22  | 29 0 16  | 31 3 11  | 34 1 5   | 36 3 0   | 39 0 22  | 41 2 16  | 44 0 11  | 46 2 5   |
| 7 ft.                           | 21 0 22 | 23 3 11 | 26 2 0   | 29 0 16  | 31 3 5   | 34 1 22  | 37 0 11  | 39 3 0   | 42 1 16  | 45 0 5   | 47 2 22  | 50 1 11  |
| 8 ft.                           | 22 2 22 | 25 2 4  | 28 1 14  | 31 0 23  | 34 0 5   | 36 3 15  | 39 2 25  | 42 2 7   | 45 1 16  | 48 0 26  | 51 0 8   | 53 3 18  |
| 9 ft.                           | 24 0 11 | 27 0 12 | 30 0 14  | 33 0 23  | 36 0 16  | 39 0 18  | 42 0 19  | 45 0 21  | 48 0 22  | 51 0 23  | 54 0 25  | 57 0 26  |
| 10 ft.                          | 25 1 5  | 28 1 23 | 31 2 14  | 34 3 4   | 37 3 22  | 41 0 12  | 44 1 2   | 47 1 21  | 50 2 11  | 53 3 1   | 56 3 19  | 60 0 9   |

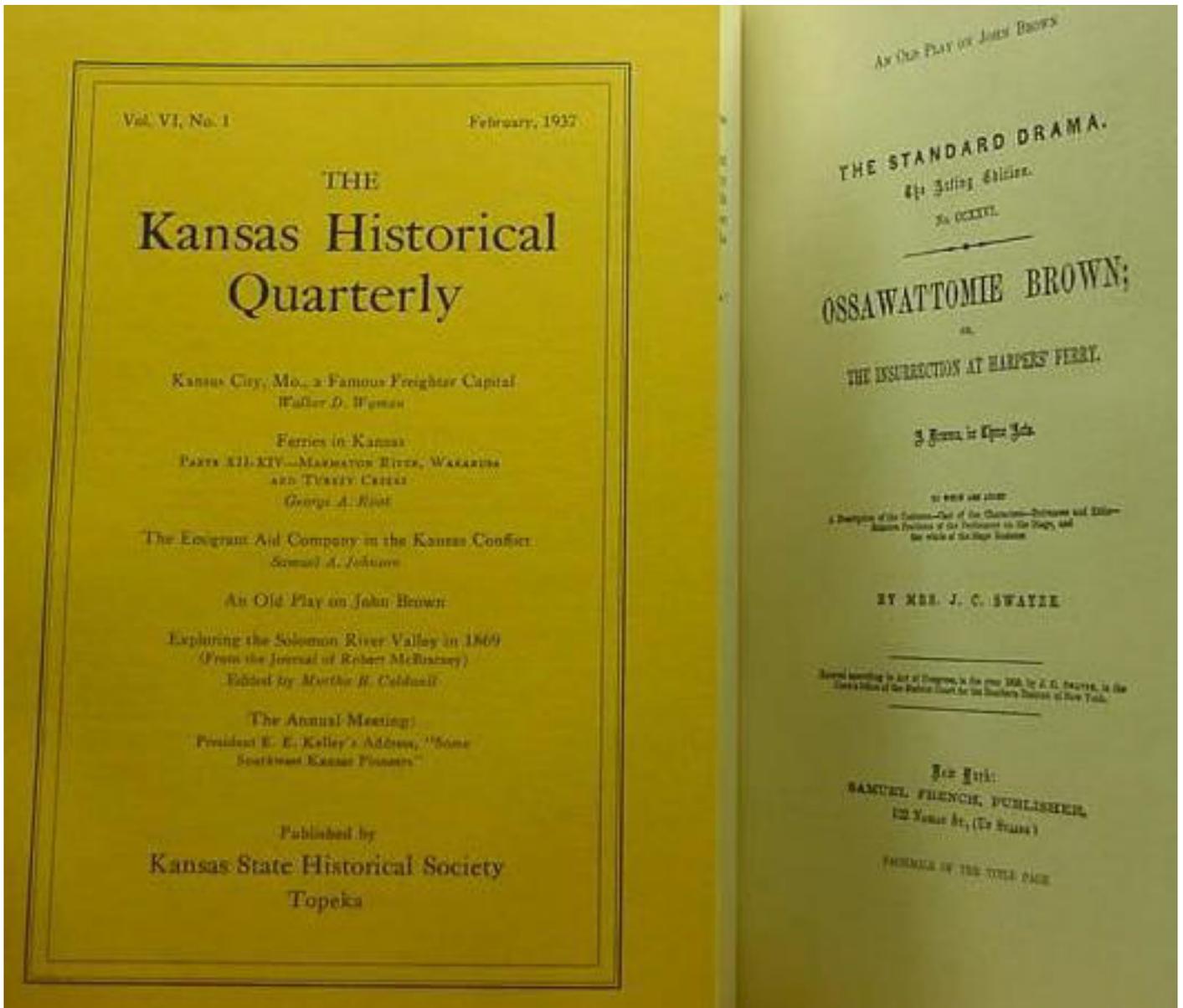
"Dislocation of the neck is the ideal aimed at ..."  
 - British Medical Journal, 1817



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

This sad material would even, within this same year, become subject matter for a play by Kate Lucy Edwards, “Ossawattomie Brown, or, The Insurrection at Harpers’ Ferry,” at the Bowery Theater in New-York:<sup>27</sup> Eventually, certified hairs from Brown’s head, or, who knows, from his beard, would be being chopped



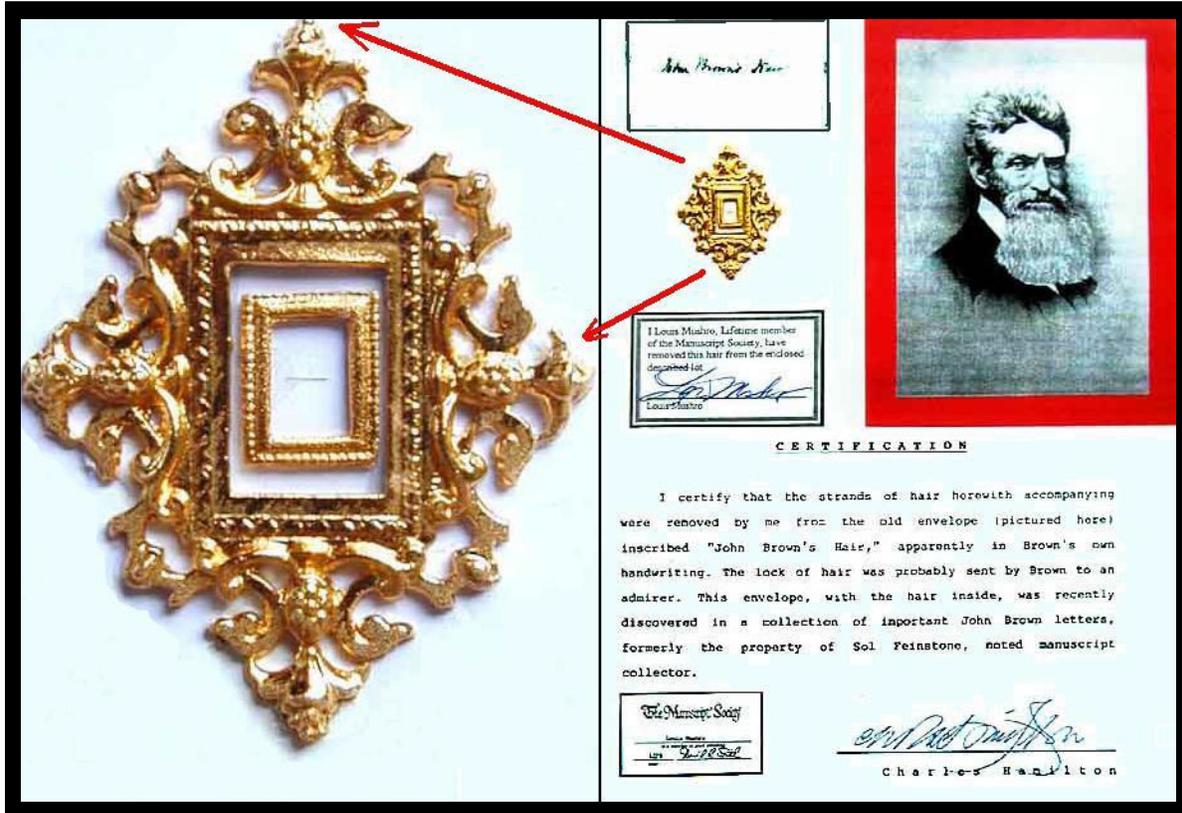
OSAWATTOMIE

27. This 3-act play would be published in the Kansas Historical Quarterly in February 1937, complete not only with the original script, but also with the cast of characters with their entrances and exits, and descriptions of their costumes.

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

into pieces and offered for sale on Ebay:



There would also be an anonymous journalistic publication, reprinted here in full, bearing the title THE LIFE, TRIAL AND EXECUTION OF CAPTAIN JOHN BROWN KNOWN AS "OLD BROWN OF OSSAWATOMIE," WITH A FULL ACCOUNT OF THE ATTEMPTED INSURRECTION AT HARPER'S FERRY. COMPILED FROM OFFICIAL AND AUTHENTIC SOURCES. INCLUDING COOKE'S CONFESSION, AND ALL THE INCIDENTS OF THE EXECUTION, printed in New-York by the Robert M. De Witt firm of 161 & 162 Nassau Street:

**READ ME**



**RACE WAR,**

**NOT CIVIL WAR**

**THE  
LIFE, TRIAL AND EXECUTION  
OF  
CAPTAIN JOHN BROWN  
KNOWN AS  
“OLD BROWN OF OSSAWATOMIE,”  
WITH A FULL ACCOUNT OF THE ATTEMPTED  
INSURRECTION AT HARPER’S FERRY.**

**COMPILED FROM OFFICIAL AND AUTHENTIC SOURCES.**

**INCLUDING COOKE’S CONFESSION, AND ALL THE INCIDENTS OF  
THE EXECUTION.**

**READ ME**

**NEW YORK.  
ROBERT M. DE WITT, PUBLISHER.**

**161 & 162 NASSAU STREET.**



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

December 3, Saturday: [Harpers Ferry](#) residents George Mauzy and Mary Mauzy wrote again to their daughter Eugenia Mauzy Burton and son-in-law James H. Burton, who were then living in England (Burton had been a machinist, foreman, and Acting Master Armorer at the Harpers Ferry Armory between 1844-1854):

To Mr. & Mrs. James H. Burton

December 3, 1859

My dear Children:

Well the great agony is over. "Old Osawatomie Brown" was executed yesterday at noon - his wife came here the day before, & paid him a short visit, after which she returned here under an escort, where she and her company remained until the body came down from Charlestown, in the evening, after which she took charge of it and went home.

This has been one of the most remarkable circumstances that ever occurred in this country, this old fanatic made no confession whatever, nor concession that he was wrong, but contended that he was right in everything he done, that he done great service to God, would not let a minister of any denomination come near or say anything to him, but what else could be expected from him, or anyone else who are imbued with "Freeloveism, Socialism, Spiritualism," and all the other isms that were ever devised by man or devil.

There is an immense concourse of military at Charlestown, not less than 2000 men are quartered there, the Courthouse, all the churches & all the Lawyers offices are occupied. We have upwards of 300 regulars & 75 or 80 Montgomery Guards. These men were all sent here by the Sec. of War & Gov. Wise to prevent a rescue of Brown & his party by northern infidels and fanatics: of which they boasted loudly, but their courage must have oozed out of their finger ends, as none made their appearance. We are keeping nightly watch, all are vigilant, partys of 10 men out every night, quite a number of incendiary fires have taken place in this vicinity & County, such as grain stacks, barns & other out-buildings. -George Mauzy

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR





**RACE WAR,**

**NOT CIVIL WAR**

Upon learning that [John Brown](#) had indeed been executed, [Friend Daniel Ricketson](#) continued his musing in

HDT

WHAT?

INDEX

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

his journal:

HANGING

*Learned that John Brown was hanged in Charlestown, Virginia, yesterday, between 11 and 12 A.M., - a martyr to the cause of the oppressed slave, - meeting death with the dignity and composure of a Christian martyr, as he undoubtedly was, although I do not think he took the wisest or best way to effect his noble object, - that of liberating the slaves of this professed republic. Peace to his memory. Good men will bless his name, and his memory will be venerated by the wise and good.*



*His death must prove the destruction of the blood-cemented union of this nation.*

*Mark this record, whosoever may at some future day read this page. I would make this record with due humility, and with a tender solicitude for the best interests of my countrymen. I wish not the blood of the tyrant, but that he may become abashed and conscience-stricken before God. My soul truly yearneth for peace and prosperity to all mankind, but cruelty and slavery must cease.*





RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

[Mary Ann Day Brown](#) would be granted the corpse of her [hanged](#) husband, but not those of her two sons.



The widow Brown would continue to bear the year of *Jubilee* as best she could.

The Reverend [Thomas Wentworth Higginson](#) would visit her and then write A VISIT TO JOHN BROWN'S HOUSEHOLD IN 1859, and Edmund Wilson has commented, in regard to this (page 247), that Higginson interviewed the "widow in her bleak little Adirondack farm with a piety that could not have been more reverent if Mrs. Brown had been the widow of Emerson."

On this morning [Francis Jackson Meriam](#) had come out from Boston to Concord on the train, and made an appearance on the doorstep of [Secret "Six" conspirator Franklin Benjamin Sanborn](#). Sanborn wondered whether the man was being activated by a "wish for suicide," and sicked his inconvenient fugitive on his friend [Henry Thoreau](#) under the name "Mr. Lockwood." They got [Waldo Emerson](#) to rent a horse and covered wagon so Thoreau could drop him off at the train station in South Acton in the morning, where he would be less likely to be noticed as he boarded the train (toward Boston, although Sanborn was presuming toward Canada).

[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

Thoreau referred to Meriam in his journal as “X” and noted: “Rode with a man this forenoon who said that if



he did not clean his teeth when he got up, it made him sick all the rest of the day, but he found by late experience that when he had not cleaned his teeth for several days they cleaned themselves. I assured him that such was the general rule, —that when from any cause we were prevented from doing what we had commonly thought indispensable for us to do, things cleaned or took care of themselves. X was betrayed by his eyes, which had a glaring film over them and no serene depth into which you could look. Inquired particularly the way to Emerson’s and the distance, and when I told him, said he knew it as well as if he saw it. Wished to turn and proceed to his house. Told me one or two things which he asked me not to tell S. Said, “I know I am insane,” — and I knew it too. Also called it “nervous excitement.” At length, when I made a certain remark, he said, “I don’t know but you are Emerson; are you? You look somewhat like him.” He said as much two or three times, and added once, “But then Emerson would n’t lie.” Finally put his questions to me, of Fate, etc., etc., as if I were Emerson. Getting to the woods, I remarked upon them, and he mentioned my name, but never to the end suspected who his companion was. Then “proceeded to business,” — “since the time was short,” — and put to me the questions he was going to put to Emerson. His insanity exhibited itself chiefly by his incessant excited talk, scarcely allowing me to interrupt him, but once or twice apologizing for his behavior. What he said was for the most part connected and sensible enough.” [Francis Jackson Meriam](#) made it safely to Boston without being identified and arrested, and would be hid out for several days in the home of his namesake grandfather on Hollis Street, the Garrisonian abolitionist and Boston historian Francis Jackson.



December 3: Suddenly quite cold, and freezes in the house.

Rode with a man this forenoon who said that if he did not clean his teeth when he got up, it made him sick all the rest of the day, but he had found by late experience that when he had not cleaned his teeth for several days



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

they cleaned themselves. I assured him that such was the general rule,—that when from any cause we were prevented from doing what we had commonly thought indispensable for us to do, things cleaned or took care of themselves.

X was betrayed by his eyes, which had a glaring film over them and no serene depth into which you could look. Inquired particularly the way to Emerson's and the distance, and when I told him, said he knew it as well as if he saw it. Wished to turn and proceed to his house. Told me one or two things which he asked me not to tell S. [SANBORN]. Said, "I know I am insane,"—and I knew it too. Also called it "nervous excitement." At length, when I made a certain remark, he said, "I don't know but you are Emerson; are you? You look somewhat like him." He said as much two or three times, and added once, "But then Emerson wouldn't lie." Finally put his questions to me, of Fate, etc., etc., as if I were Emerson. Getting to the woods, I remarked upon them, and he mentioned my name, but never to the end suspected who his companion was. Then "proceeded to business,"—"since the time was short,"—and put to me the questions he was going to put to Emerson. His insanity exhibited itself chiefly by his incessant excited talk, scarcely allowing me to interrupt him, but once or twice apologizing for his behavior. What he said was for the most part connected and sensible enough.

When I hear of John Brown and his wife weeping at length, it is as if the rocks sweated.

According to the Elwood Free Press for this date, this had been candidate [Abraham Lincoln](#)'s speech at Elwood in "[Bleeding Kansas](#)," a speech that must have been delivered on or about November 30th:

Mr. Lincoln was received with great enthusiasm. He stated the reasons why he was unable to make a speech this evening. He could only say a few words to us who had come out to meet him the first time he had placed his foot upon the soil of Kansas. Mr. Lincoln said that it was possible that we had local questions in regard to Railroads, Land Grants and internal improvements which were matters of deeper interest to us than the questions arising out of national politics, but of these local interests he knew nothing and should say nothing. We had, however, just adopted a State Constitution, and it was probable, that, under that Constitution, we should soon cease our Territorial existence, and come forward to take our place in the brotherhood of States, and act our parts as a member of the confederation. Kansas would be Free, but the same questions we had had here in regard to Freedom or Slavery would arise in regard to other Territories and we should have to take our part in deciding them. People often ask, "why make such a fuss about a few niggers?" I answer the question by asking what will you do to dispose of this question? The Slaves constitute one seventh of our entire population. Wherever there is an element of this magnitude in a government it will be talked about. The general feeling in regard to Slavery had changed entirely since the early days of the Republic. You may examine the debates under the Confederation, in the Convention that framed the Constitution and in the first session of Congress and you will not find a single man saying that Slavery is a good thing. They all believed it was an evil. They made the Northwest Territory—the only Territory then belonging to the government— forever free. They prohibited the African Slave trade. Having thus prevented its extension and cut off the supply, the Fathers of the Republic believed Slavery must soon disappear. There are only three clauses in the Constitution which refer to Slavery, and in neither of them is the word Slave or Slavery mentioned. The word is not used in the clause prohibiting the African Slave trade;



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

it is not used in the clause which makes Slaves a basis of representation; it is not used in the clause requiring the return of fugitive Slaves. And yet in all the debates in the Convention the question was discussed and Slaves and Slavery talked about. Now why was this word kept out of that instrument and so carefully kept out that a European, be he ever so intelligent, if not familiar with our institutions, might read the Constitution over and over again and never learn that Slavery existed in the United States. The reason is this. The Framers of the Organic Law believed that the Constitution would outlast Slavery and they did not want a word there to tell future generations that Slavery had ever been legalized in America. Your Territory has had a marked history – no other Territory has ever had such a history. There had been strife and bloodshed here, both parties had been guilty of outrages; he had his opinions as to the relative guilt of the parties, but he would not say who had been most to blame. One fact was certain – there had been loss of life, destruction of property; our material interests had been retarded. Was this desirable? There is a peaceful way of settling these questions – the way adopted by government until a recent period. The bloody code has grown out of the new policy in regard to the government of Territories. Mr. Lincoln in conclusion adverted briefly to the [Harpers Ferry](#) Affair.<sup>28</sup> He believed the attack of [Brown](#) wrong for two reasons. It was a violation of law and it was, as all such attacks must be, futile as far as any effect it might have on the extinction of a great evil.

We have a means provided for the expression of our belief in regard to Slavery – it is through the ballot box – the peaceful method provided by the Constitution. John Brown has shown great courage, rare unselfishness, as even Gov. [[Henry A. Wise](#) of Virginia] testifies. But no man, North or South, can approve of violence or crime. Mr. Lincoln closed his brief speech by wishing all to go out to the election on Tuesday and to vote as became the Freemen of Kansas.

On this evening candidate [Abraham Lincoln](#) was speaking in Stockton Hall at Leavenworth, Kansas. This is how his speech would be reported in the newspaper:

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: You are, as yet, the people of a Territory; but you probably soon will be the people of a State of the Union. Then you will be in possession of new privileges, and new duties will be upon you. You will have to bear a part in all that pertains to the administration of the National Government. That government, from the beginning, has had, has now, and must continue to have a policy in relation to domestic slavery. It cannot, if it would, be without a policy upon that subject. And that policy must, of necessity, take one of two directions. It must deal with the institution as being wrong or as not being wrong.

---

28. October 16-18, 1859. This is apparently [Abraham Lincoln](#)'s 1st reference to [John Brown](#), whose execution scheduled for December 2, 1859, undoubtedly placed him in the forefront of conversational topics among his former friends and enemies in Kansas.



**RACE WAR,**

**NOT CIVIL WAR**

Mr. Lincoln then stated, somewhat in detail, the early action of the General Government upon the question – in relation to the foreign slave trade, the basis of Federal representation, and the prohibition of slavery in the Federal territories; the Fugitive Slave clause in the Constitution, and insisted that, plainly that early policy, was based on the idea of slavery being wrong; and tolerating it so far, and only so far, as the necessity of its actual presence required.

He then took up the policy of the Kansas-Nebraska act, which he argued was based on opposite ideas – that is, the idea that slavery is not wrong. He said:

You, the people of Kansas, furnish the example of the first application of this new policy. At the end of about five years, after having almost continual struggles, fire and bloodshed, over this very question, and after having framed several State Constitutions, you have, at last, secured a Free State Constitution, under which you will probably be admitted into the Union. You have, at last, at the end of all this difficulty, attained what we, in the old North-western Territory, attained without any difficulty at all. Compare, or rather contrast, the actual working of this new policy with that of the old, and say whether, after all, the old way – the way adopted by Washington and his compeers – was not the better way.

Mr. Lincoln argued that the new policy had proven false to all its promises – that its promise to the Nation was to speedily end the slavery agitation, which it had not done, but directly the contrary – that its promises to the people of the Territories was to give them greater control of their own affairs than the people of former Territories had had; while, by the actual experiment, they had had less control of their own affairs, and had been more bedeviled by outside interference than the people of any other Territory ever had.

He insisted that it was deceitful in its expressed wish to confer additional privileges upon the people; else it would have conferred upon them the privilege of choosing their own officers. That if there be any just reason why all the privileges of a State should not be conferred on the people of a Territory at once, it only could be the smallness of numbers; and that if while their number was small, they were fit to do some things, and unfit to do others, it could only be because those they were unfit to do, were the larger and more important things – that, in this case, the allowing the people of Kansas to plant their soil with slavery, and not allowing them to choose their own Governor, could only be justified on the idea that the planting a new State with slavery was a very small matter, and the election of Governor a very much greater matter. "Now," said he, "compare these two matters and decide which is really the greater. You have already had, I think, five Governors, and yet, although their doings, in their respective days, were of some



**RACE WAR,**

**NOT CIVIL WAR**

little interest to you, it is doubtful whether you now, even remember the names of half of them. They are gone (all but the last) without leaving a trace upon your soil, or having done a single act which can, in the least degree, help or hurt you, in all the indefinite future before you. This is the size of the Governor question. Now, how is it with the slavery question? If your first settlers had so far decided in favor of slavery, as to have got five thousand slaves planted on your soil, you could, by no moral possibility, have adopted a Free State Constitution. Their owners would be influential voters among you as good men as the rest of you, and, by their greater wealth, and consequent, greater capacity, to assist the more needy, perhaps the most influential among you. You could not wish to destroy, or injuriously interfere with their property. You would not know what to do with the slaves after you had made them free. You would not wish to keep them as underlings; nor yet to elevate them to social and political equality. You could not send them away. The slave States would not let you send them there; and the free States would not let you send them there. All the rest of your property would not pay for sending them to Liberia. In one word, you could not have made a free State, if the first half of your own numbers had got five thousand slaves fixed upon the soil. You could have disposed of, not merely five, but five hundred Governors easier. There they would have stuck, in spite of you, to plague you and your children, and your children's children, indefinitely. Which is the greater, this, or the Governor question? Which could the more safely be intrusted to the first few people who settle a Territory? Is it that which, at most, can be but temporary and brief in its effects? or that which being done by the first few, can scarcely ever be undone by the succeeding many?"

He insisted that, little as was Popular Sovereignty at first, the Dred Scott decision, which is indorsed by the author of Popular Sovereignty, has reduced it to still smaller proportions, if it has not entirely crushed it out. That, in fact, all it lacks of being crushed out entirely by that decision, is the lawyer's technical distinction between decision and dictum. That the Court has already said a Territorial government cannot exclude slavery; but because they did not say it in a case where a Territorial government had tried to exclude slavery, the lawyers hold that saying of the Court to be dictum and not decision. "But," said Mr. Lincoln, "is it not certain that the Court will make a decision of it, the first time a Territorial government tries to exclude slavery?"

Mr. Lincoln argued that the doctrine of Popular Sovereignty, carried out, renews the African Slave Trade. Said he: "Who can show that one people have a better right to carry slaves to where they have never been, than another people have to buy slaves wherever they please, even in Africa?"

He also argued that the advocates of Popular Sovereignty, by their efforts to brutalize the negro in the public mind – denying



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

him any share in the [Declaration of Independence](#), and comparing him to the crocodile – were beyond what avowed pro-slavery men ever do, and really did as much, or more than they, toward making the institution national and perpetual.

He said many of the Popular Sovereignty advocates were “as much opposed to slavery as any one;” but that they could never find any proper time or place to oppose it. In their view, it must not be opposed in politics, because that is agitation; nor in the pulpit, because it is not religion; nor in the Free States, because it is not there; nor in the Slave States, because it is there. These gentlemen, however, are never offended by hearing Slavery supported in any of these places. Still, they are “as much opposed to Slavery as anybody.” One would suppose that it would exactly suit them if the people of the Slave States would themselves adopt emancipation; but when Frank Blair tried this last year, in Missouri, and was beaten, every one of them threw up his hat and shouted “Hurrah for the Democracy!”

Mr. Lincoln argued that those who thought Slavery right ought to unite on a policy which should deal with it as being right; that they should go for a revival of the Slave Trade; for carrying the institution everywhere, into Free States as well as Territories; and for a surrender of fugitive slaves in Canada, or war with Great Britain. Said he, “all shades of Democracy, popular sovereign as well as the rest, are fully agreed that slaves are property, and only property. If Canada now had as many horses as she has slaves belonging to Americans, I should think it just cause of war if she did not surrender them on demand.

“On the other hand, all those who believe slavery is wrong should unite on a policy, dealing with it as a wrong. They should be deluded into no deceitful contrivances, pretending indifference, but really working for that to which they are opposed.” He urged this at considerable length.

He then took up some of the objections to Republicans. They were accused of being sectional. He denied it. What was the proof? “Why, that they have no existence, get no votes in the South. But that depends on the South, and not on us. It is their volition, not ours; and if there be fault in it, it is primarily theirs, and remains so, unless they show that we repeal them by some wrong principle. If they attempt this, they will find us holding no principle, other than those held and acted upon by the men who gave us the government under which we live. They will find that the charge of sectionalism will not stop at us, but will extend to the very men who gave us the liberty we enjoy. But if the mere fact that we get no votes in the slave states makes us sectional, whenever we shall get votes in those states, we shall cease to be sectional; and we are sure to get votes, and a good many of them too, in these states next year.

You claim that you are conservative; and we are not. We deny it. What is conservatism? Preserving the old against the new. And yet you are conservative in



**RACE WAR,**

**NOT CIVIL WAR**

struggling for the new, and we are destructive in trying to maintain the old. Possibly you mean you are conservative in trying to maintain the existing institution of slavery. Very well; we are not trying to destroy it. The peace of society, and the structure of our government both require that we should let it alone, and we insist on letting it alone. If I might advise my Republican friends here, I would say to them, leave your Missouri neighbors alone. Have nothing whatever to do with their slaves. Have nothing whatever to do with the white people, save in a friendly way. Drop past differences, and so conduct yourselves that if you cannot be at peace with them, the fault shall be wholly theirs.

You say we have made the question more prominent than heretofore. We deny it. It is more prominent; but we did not make it so. Despite of us, you would have a change of policy; we resist the change, and in the struggle, the greater prominence is given to the question. Who is responsible for that, you or we? If you would have the question reduced to its old proportions go back to the old policy. That will effect it.

But you are for the Union; and you greatly fear the success of the Republicans would destroy the Union. Why? Do the Republicans declare against the Union? Nothing like it. Your own statement of it is, that if the Black Republicans elect a President, you won't stand it. You will break up the Union. That will be your act, not ours. To justify it, you must show that our policy gives you just cause for such desperate action. Can you do that? When you attempt it, you will find that our policy is exactly the policy of the men who made the Union. Nothing more and nothing less. Do you really think you are justified to break up the government rather than have it administered by Washington, and other good and great men who made it, and first administered it? If you do you are very unreasonable; and more reasonable men cannot and will not submit to you. While you elect [the] President, we submit, neither breaking nor attempting to break up the Union. If we shall constitutionally elect a President, it will be our duty to see that you submit. Old [John Brown](#) has just been executed for treason against a state. We cannot object, even though he agreed with us in thinking slavery wrong. That cannot excuse violence, bloodshed, and treason. It could avail him nothing that he might think himself right. So, if constitutionally we elect a President, and therefore you undertake to destroy the Union, it will be our duty to deal with you as old John Brown has been dealt with. We shall try to do our duty. We hope and believe that in no section will a majority so act as to render such



**RACE WAR,**

**NOT CIVIL WAR**

extreme measures necessary.

Mr. Lincoln closed by an appeal to all -opponents as well as friends- to think soberly and maturely, and never fail to cast their vote, insisting that it was not a privilege only, but a duty to do so.



December 4: Awake to winter, and snow two or three inches deep, the first of any consequence.

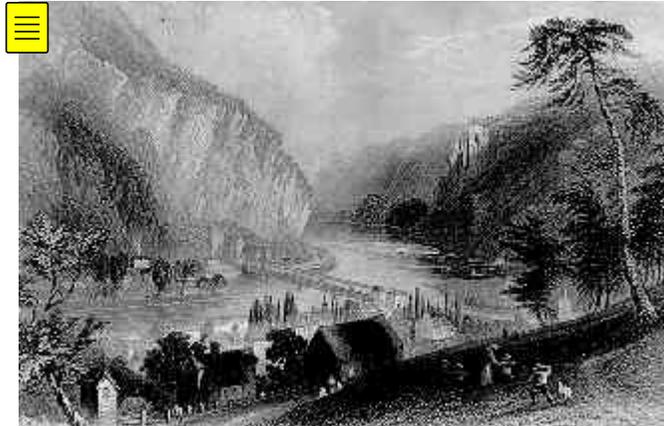
# RACE WAR,

# NOT CIVIL WAR

December 5, Monday: [Senator Jefferson Davis](#) arrived in Washington DC from Mississippi as the federal Congress convened.

When the 1st session of the new senate began, Senator [James Mason](#) of Virginia, the senator who had written the Fugitive Slave Law, rose and announced that he was sponsoring a resolution to inquire into the gesture that had been made toward servile insurrection by the guerrillas of Captain [John Brown](#) in the shape of a raid upon the federal arsenal at [Harpers Ferry](#).

**HARPERS FERRY, FROM THE POTOMAC SIDE**



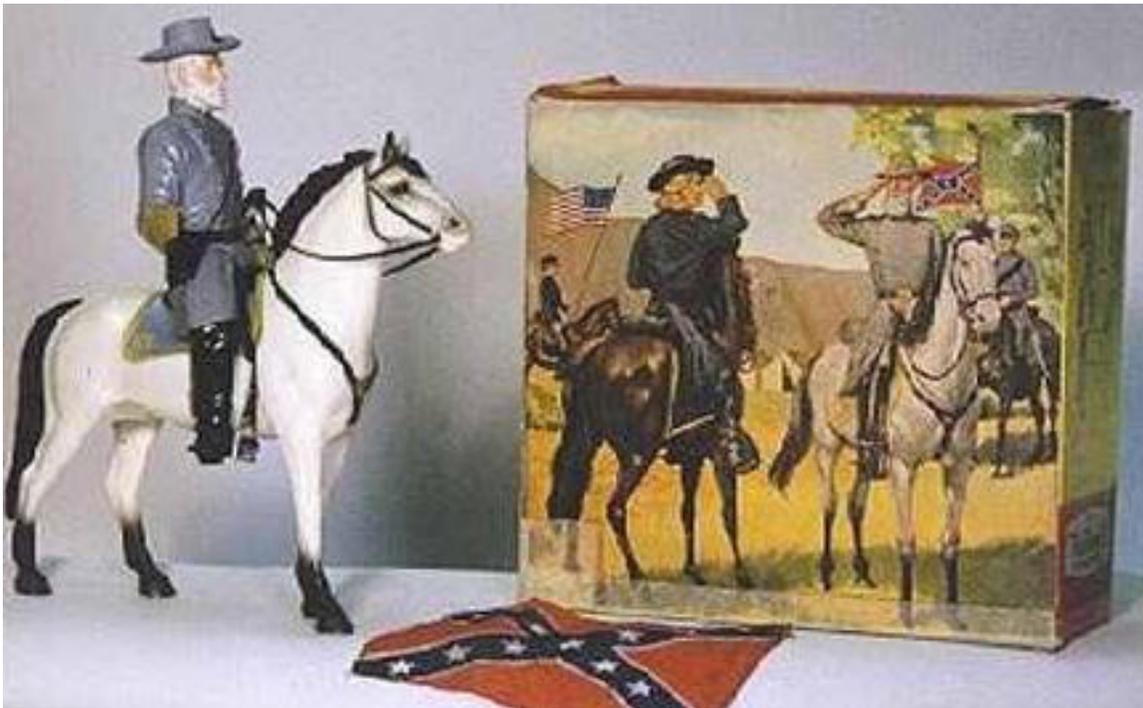
**HARPERS FERRY, FROM THE BLUE RIDGE**



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

He asserted that all he wanted was the facts. Where did the money for this come from? Had they received any of their aid and comfort out of collusion from officials of the federal government? He was willing to speculate that New England would be discovered by this Select Committee on the Invasion of Harpers Ferry to have been behind this, and that its ideological foundation had been in [Hinton Rowan Helper](#)'s "vile, false, truthless" *THE IMPENDING CRISIS OF THE SOUTH: HOW TO MEET IT*, an appeal to class warfare arraying the Southern poor white trash against the rich Southern slavemasters. Fortunately, Helper had failed, for the reason that, Mason suggested, the poor white trash of Virginia actually loved and admired their state in the same way that the black slaves of Virginia loved and admired their owners. The black slaves had proved this by not joining Brown, and the poor white trash had proved this by uniting under the leadership of [Colonel Robert E. Lee](#) to capture Brown.



The Senate unanimously approved Mason's inquiry into the [Secret "Six"](#) conspiracy.



December 5: P.M.—Down Turnpike to Smith's Hill.

Rather hard walking in the snow. There is a slight mist in the air and accordingly some glaze on the twigs and leaves, and thus suddenly we have passed from Indian summer to winter. The perfect silence, as if the whispering and creaking earth were muffled (her axle), and the stillness (motionlessness) of the twigs and of the very weeds and withered grasses, as if they were sculptured out of marble, are striking. It is as if you had stepped from a withered garden into the yard of a sculptor or worker in marble, crowded with delicate works, rich and rare. I remark, half a mile off, a tall and slender pitch pine against the dull-gray mist, peculiarly monumental. I noticed also several small white oak trees full of leaves by the roadside, strangely interesting and beautiful. Their stiffened leaves were very long and deeply cut, and the lighter and glazed under sides being almost uniformly turned vertically toward the northwest, as a traveller turns his back to the storm, though enough of the redder and warmer sides were seen to contrast with them, it looked like an artificial tree hung with many-fingered gauntlets. Such was the disposition of the leaves, often nearly in the same plane, that it looked like a brown arbor-vitae.

See four quails running across the Turnpike. How they must be affected by this change from warm weather and



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

bare ground to cold and universal snow!

Returning from the post-office at early candle-light, I noticed for the first time this season the peculiar effect of lights in offices and shops seen over the snowy streets, suggesting how withdrawn and inward the life in the former, how exposed and outward in the latter.

His late career—these six weeks, I mean—has been meteor-like, flashing through the darkness in which we live. I know of nothing more miraculous in all history.

Nothing could his enemies do but it redounded to his infinite advantage, the advantage of his cause. They did not hang him at once; they reserved him to preach to them. And here is another great blunder: they have not hung his four followers with him; that scene is still to come, and so his victory is prolonged.

No theatrical manager could have arranged things so wisely to give effect to his behavior and words. And who, think you, was the Manager? Who placed the slave-woman and her child between his prison and the gallows? The preachers, the Bible men, they who talk about principle and doing to others as you would that they should do unto you,—how could they fail to recognize him, by far the greatest preacher of them all, with the Bible on his lips, and in his acts, the embodiment of principle, who actually carried out the golden rule? All whose moral sense is aroused, who have a calling from on high to preach, have sided with him. It may prove the occasion, if it has not proved it already, of a new sect of Brownites being formed in our midst.

I see now, as he saw, that he was not to be pardoned or rescued by men. That would have been to disarm him, to restore to him a material weapon, a Sharp's rifle, when he had taken up the sword of the spirit,—the sword with which he has really won his greatest and most memorable victories. Now he has not laid aside the sword of the spirit. He is pure spirit himself, and his sword is pure spirit also.

On the day of his translation, I heard, to be sure, that he was hung, but I did not know what that meant,—and I felt no sorrow on his account; but not for a day or two did I even hear that he was dead, and not after any number of days shall I believe it. Of all the men who are said to be my contemporaries, it seems to me that John Brown is the only one who has not died. I meet him at every turn. He is more alive than ever he was. He is not confined to North Elba nor to Kansas. He is no longer working in secret only. John Brown has earned immortality.

Men have been hung in the South before for attempting to rescue slaves, and the North was not much stirred by it. Whence, then, this wonderful difference? We were not so sure of their devotion to principle. We have made a subtle distinction, have forgotten human laws, and do homage to an idea. The North is suddenly all Transcendental. It goes behind the human law, it goes behind the apparent failure, and recognizes eternal justice and glory.

It is more generous than the spirit which actuated our forefathers, for it is a revolution in behalf of another, and an oppressed, people.

December 10, Saturday: From his cell in Charles Town, [John Anderson Copeland, Jr.](#), who had remained entirely silent throughout his trial, wrote to his brother:

*Charlestown, Va.*

*Dec. 10, 1859:*

*MY DEAR BROTHER:—*

*I now take my pen to write you a few lines to let you know how I am, and in answer to your kind letter of the 5th instant. Dear Brother, I am, it is true, so situated at present as scarcely to know how to commence writing; not that my mind is filled with fear or that it has become shattered in view of my near approach to death. Not that I am terrified by the gallows which I see staring me in the face, and upon which I am so soon to stand and suffer death for doing what George Washington, the so-called father of his great but slavery-cursed country, was made a hero for doing, while he lived, and when dead his name was immortalized, and his great and noble deeds in behalf of freedom taught by parents to their children. And now, brother, for having lent my [faith?] to a General no less brave, and engaged in a cause no less honorable and glorious, I am to suffer death. Washington entered the field to fight for the freedom of the*



**RACE WAR,**

**NOT CIVIL WAR**

*American people- not for the white men alone, but for both black and white. Nor were they white men alone who fought for the freedom of this country. The blood of black men flowed as freely as that of white men. Yes, the very first blood that was spilt was that of a negro. It was the blood of that heroic man, (though black he was,) Crispus Attucks. And some of the very last blood shed was that of black men. To the truth of this, history, though prejudiced is compelled to attest. It is true that black men did an equal share of the fighting for American Independence, and they were assured by the whites that they should share equal benefits for so doing. But after having performed their part honorably, they were by the whites most treacherously deceived- they refusing to fulfill their part of the contract. But this you know as well as I do, and I will therefore make no more in reference to the claims which we, as colored men, have on the American people. It was a sense of the wrongs which we have suffered that prompted the noble but unfortunate Captain Brown and his associates to attempt to give freedom to a small number, at least of those who are now held by cruel and unusual laws, and by no less cruel and unjust men. To this freedom they were entitled by every known principal of justice and humanity, and for the enjoyment of it God created them. And how dear brother, could I die in a more noble cause? Could I, brother die in a manner and for a cause which would induce true and honest men more to honor me and angels more readily to receive me to their happy home of everlasting joy above? I imagine that I hear you and all of you mother, father, sisters and brothers, say- "No there is not a cause for which we with less sorrow, could see you die." Believe me when I tell you, that though shut up in prison and under sentence of death, I have spent some very happy hours here. And were it not that I know that the heart of those to whom I am attached by the nearest and most endearing ties of blood relationship- yea, by the closest and strongest ties that God has instituted- will be filled with sorrow, I would almost as [unintelligible] die now as at any time, for I feel that I am now prepared to meet my Maker. Dear brother, I want you and all of you to meet me in Heaven. Prepare your soul for death. Be ready to meet your God at any moment, and then, though we meet no more on earth, we shall meet in Heaven where parting is no more. Dear William and Fred, be good boys- mind your mother and father- love and honor them- grow up to be good men, and feat the Lord your God. Now, I want you, dear brothers, to take this advice and follow it; remember, it comes from your own brother, and is written under most peculiar circumstances. Remember it is my dying advice to you, and I hope you will, from that love you have for me, receive it. You may think I have been treated very harshly since I have been here, but it is not so. I have been treated exceedingly well- far better than I expected to be. My jailor is a most kind-hearted man, and has done all he could, consistent with duty, to make me and the rest of the prisoners comfortable. Capt. John Avis is a gentle man who has*

[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

*a heart in his bosom as brave as any other. He met us at the Ferry and fought us as a brave man would do. But since we have been in his power has protected us from insults and abuse which cowards would have heaped upon us. He has done as a brave man and gentleman only would do. Also one of his aids, Mr. John Sheats, has been very kind to us and has done all he could to serve us. And now, Henry, if fortune should ever throw either of them in your way, and you can confer the least favor on them, do it for my sake. Give my love to all my family, and now my dear brothers, one and all, I pray to God we may meet in Heaven. Good bye. I am now, and shall remain, your affectionate brother,  
John Copeland*

OBERLIN COLLEGE



[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

A depiction of “Emperor” [Shields Green](#) appeared in Leslie’s Weekly:



During the specific uproar over the [John Brown](#) raid on [Harpers Ferry](#), a public crisis of sorts had broken out in our general discussions about how to achieve progress in our nation. This public crisis had to do with the materials contained in [Hinton Rowan Helper](#)’s polemical compilation of census data published in Baltimore in 1857, titled THE IMPENDING CRISIS OF THE SOUTH: HOW TO MEET IT. This admirer of the thought processes of [Waldo Emerson](#) was an egregious case of what we might term an Antislavery Racist. —Which is to say, he was a Southern white man, from North Carolina, who owned no slaves, whose fixation was that of the victim. It wasn’t the blacks who were being harmed by slavery, it was real decent folks like him who were being harmed by slavery. All these slaves, who belonged to other people, were impacting his life! He hated the nigger who was doing him wrong, He hated the slavemaster who was doing him wrong. What he needed most urgently was a lily-white, pure America of which he could be proud, where he could stand tall. Slavery was a tainted and archaic social system that was standing in the way of white people’s cultural and material progress. Blacks were a tainted and inferior group who had no business being here in our New World in the first place.<sup>29</sup>

---

29. This interesting book has been republished in Cambridge MA in 1968. For more on this guy and his not-all-that-novel conceit that the victims were victimizing him and needed to be trumped, see Bailey, Hugh C. HINTON ROWAN HELPER: ABOLITIONIST-RACIST (University AL: 1965).



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR



"History, among its many ironies, often places enemies in life into various positions of posthumous conjunction."



— Stephen Jay Gould

Here is how Peter Wallenstein has parsed the situation in his article "Incendiaries All":



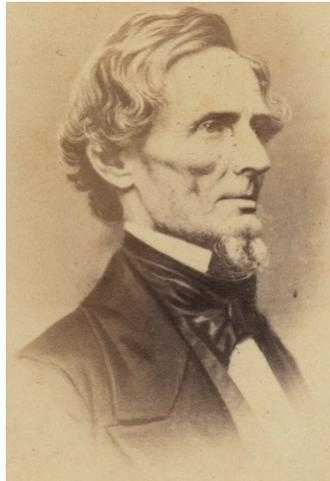
Different as they were, then, *THE IMPENDING CRISIS* and Harpers Ferry brought similar messages to proslavery Southerners. Regardless of whether either Brown or Helper in fact spoke for mainstream Northern public opinion, each appeared to garner widespread approval across the North, and each had declared war on slavery in the South. Each represented, at least in part, the dreaded triple threat against slavery – from nonslaveholding whites in the South, from the slaves themselves, and from outside forces. Each, too, pointed up the need and offered the opportunity to unify white Southerners against all such threats, an observation that could come from a variety of perspectives. Thus, as a letter from one Southern slaveholder [a Southern Whig, to Congressman John Sherman] put the matter in December [10] 1859, "John Brown and Helper may do more to build up the Democratic party than anything that has happened for years."



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

December 14, Wednesday: Democratic Senator [James Mason](#) of Virginia became the chair of the senatorial investigatory Select Committee on the Invasion of [Harpers Ferry](#) that he had sponsored, which was charged to look into the circumstances surrounding the raid made by the guerrillas of [John Brown](#) on the federal arsenal. Democratic Senator [Jefferson Davis](#) of Mississippi became its principal investigator.



A 3d Democrat, Indiana's Senator Graham N. Fitch, would ensure that the Democrats always had the majority on this committee. Two Republicans were added, Wisconsin's Senator James R. Doolittle and Vermont's Senator Jacob Collamer, so that the committee would have a dominated minority. The committee would summon, in all, 32 witnesses in this investigation of the [Secret "Six"](#) conspiracy.

At the Concord Lyceum, [Caroline H. Dall](#) spoke on the topic "Lives of Noted Women," focusing attention on woman's claim to education as illustrated in the cases of [Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin](#) and [Margaret Fuller](#). Both [Henry Thoreau](#) and [Waldo Emerson](#) attended.<sup>30</sup>

Wednesday - Concord. Mass. Dec. 14. 1859. I took the Omnibus a little before 7 AM. & rode to the Fitchburg depot. At the Concord depot Mr Brown & his wife<sup>31</sup> & Mr Surette<sup>32</sup> met me. Mrs Brown kindly carried me to Mrs Alcott's where I passed a pleasant morning, talking to her and the girls,<sup>33</sup> and deciding which lecture I would read. After a vegetable dinner, I went back to Mrs Brown's in her sleigh. The sewing circle took tea there, and having done the agreeable as well as I could, I dressed and was taken down to the Town Hall where I was to speak. A heavy snow storm had increased since morning to a drifting gale. The driving cold was so painful on my cheeks, that I was faint & dizzy with the reaction. Mr Brown, said, You need not expect anybody tonight - but there were about four hundred persons.

---

30. Bronson Alcott would jot in his diary "Hear Mrs. Dall's lecture. She gave us accounts of the principal incidents in the lives of Mary Wollstonecraft, Harriet Martineau, Lady Morgan, Mrs. Jameson, Margaret Fuller & others. It was a well considered performance, and gave pleasure to our people generally."

31. Simon Brown and Ann Brown, friends of [Caroline H. Dall](#)'s from her year in Washington and Georgetown.

32. Concord merchant and member of Corinthian Lodge of Masons of Concord, [Louis A. Surette](#) (1819-1897).

33. Abigail May Alcott, the future "Marmee" of Little Women, and her surviving three daughters, Anna Bronson Alcott, Louisa May Alcott, and Abby May Alcott.



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

Mr Reynolds<sup>34</sup> who introduced me, Mr Alcott, Thoreau Frank Sanborn,<sup>35</sup> Mrs Emerson & others, paid me compliments with that dignified reserve that such persons do. But Edith Emerson<sup>36</sup> said a few words to Mrs Brown, worth them all. "I cannot often keep awake," she said, "during the best lectures, but I heard every word of this, she was so *earnest*."



December 14. At 2 P. M. begins to snow again. I walk to Walden.

Snow-storms might be classified. This is a fine, dry snow, drifting nearly horizontally from the north, so that it is quite blinding to face, almost as much so as sand. It is cold also. It is drifting but not accumulating fast. I can see the woods about a quarter of a mile distant through it. That of the 11th was a still storm, of large flakes falling gently in the quiet air, like so many white feathers descending in different directions when seen against a wood-side,—the regular snow-storm such as is painted. A myriad falling flakes weaving a coarse garment by which the eye is amused. The snow was a little moist and the weather rather mild. Also I remember the perfectly crystalline or star snows, when each flake is a perfect six (?) -rayed wheel. This must be the chef-d'oeuvre of the Genius of the storm. Also there is the pellet or shot snow, which consists of little dry spherical pellets the size of robin-shot. This, I think, belongs to cold weather. Probably never have much of it. Also there is sleet, which is half snow, half rain.

The *Juncus tenuis*, with its conspicuous acheniums, is very noticeable now, rising above the snow in the wood-paths, commonly aslant.

---

34. Grindall Reynolds (1822-1894) was minister to the Unitarian Church in Concord, 1858-1894 (pastor emeritus after 1881) and secretary of the American Unitarian Association, 1881-1894.

35. Franklin Benjamin Sanborn.

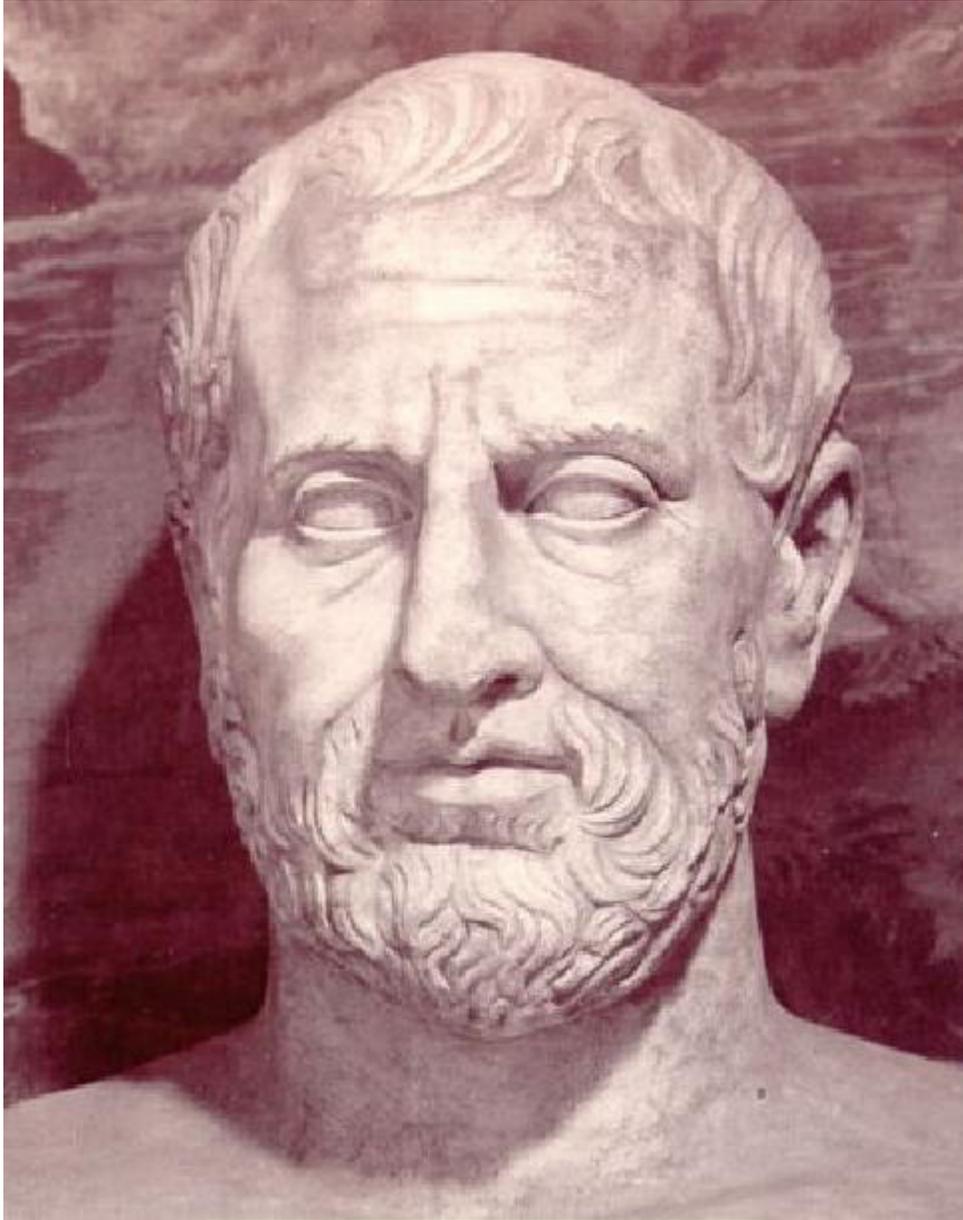
36. Edith Emerson (1841-1929) married in 1865 William H. Forbes.

[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

December 16, Friday: [Henry Thoreau](#) checked out, from [Harvard Library](#), the 2d volume of a 5-volume set prepared 1818-1821 (*THEOPHRASTI ERESII QVAE SUPERSUNT OPERA: ET EXCERPTA LIBRORUM* by [Theophrastus of Eresus](#) (circa 372-circa 287BCE), JOHANN GOTTLLOB SCHNEIDER, HEINRICH FRIEDRICH LINK. Lipsiae: Sumtibus Frid. Christ. Guil. Vogelii) of ΘΕΟΠΗΡΑΣΤΥΣ ΕΡΕΣΙΩΝ ΤΑ ΣΟΟΛΟΜΕΝΑ.



**THEOPHRASTUS**

He also checked out the two volumes of [Aristotle](#)'s *HISTOIRE DES ANIMAUX D'ARISTOTE* in Greek and in the

HDT

WHAT?

INDEX

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

French translation by M. Camus (Paris: Chez la veuve Desaint, 1783).



**HISTOIRE DES ANIMAUX I**

**HISTOIRE DES ANIMAUX II**

HDT

WHAT?

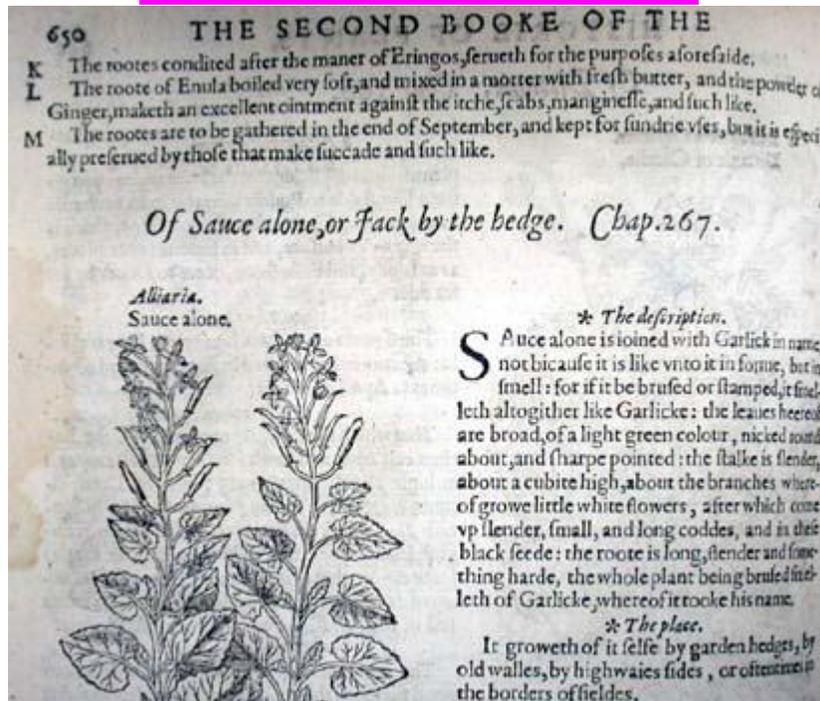
INDEX

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

While at the [Harvard Library](#), [Thoreau](#) read from but did not check out [John Gerard](#)'s 1597 [botanical](#) resource, THE HERBALL OR GENERALL HISTORIE OF PLANTES:

## GREAT HERBALL OF 1597



## INTERNET COMMENTARY



December 16, 1859: A.M.—To Cambridge, where I read in [Gerard](#)'s Herbal. [Vide extracts from preface made in October 1859.] His admirable though quaint descriptions are, to my mind, greatly superior to the modern more scientific ones. He describes not according to rule but to his natural delight in the plants. He brings them vividly before you, as one who has seen and delighted in them. It is almost as good as to see the plants themselves. It suggests that we cannot too often get rid of the barren assumption that is in our science. His leaves are leaves; his flowers, flowers; his fruit, fruit. They are green and colored and fragrant. It is a man's knowledge added to a child's delight. Modern botanical descriptions approach ever nearer to the dryness of an algebraic formula, as if  $c + y$  were = to a love-letter. It is the keen joy and discrimination of the child who has just seen a flower for the first time and comes running in with it to its friends. How much better to describe your object in fresh English words rather than in these conventional Latinisms! He has really seen, and smelt, and tasted, and reports his sensations.

Bought a book at Little & Brown's, paying a nine-pence more on a volume than it was offered me for elsewhere. The customer thus pays for the more elegant style of the store.

BOTANY



**RACE WAR,**

**NOT CIVIL WAR**

The Select Committee on the Invasion of [Harpers Ferry](#) created by Democratic Senator [James Mason](#) of Virginia held its first meeting in regard to the [John Brown](#) affair and its [Secret "Six"](#) conspiracy. The committee would be in existence for six months before delivering its final report and would summon, in all, 32 witnesses.

[Edwin Coppoc](#) and [John E. Cook](#) were [hanged](#) in Charlestown, Virginia.<sup>37</sup> Edwin's body would be buried in Winona after a funeral attended by the entire town. Later his body would be reburied in Salem, Ohio.



(Edwin had written from the prison to his adoptive mother, of a nonresistant-abolitionist [Quaker](#) farm family, that he was

*"sorry to say that I was ever induced to raise a gun."*

---

37. I have been advised that according to THE QUAKERS OF IOWA by Louis Thomas Jones, a scholarly work published under the auspices of the State Historical Iowa at Iowa City, Iowa in 1914 (I haven't myself actually seen this book), prior to their deaths the Coppoc brothers were disowned by the Red Cedar Monthly Meeting of Friends in the West Branch/Springdale area.



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

Edwin's brother [Barclay Coppoc](#) was still eluding capture.)

[John E. Cook](#) had made a full confession of his activities with the raiders and at the last moment had sought to save his neck by representing that he had been deceived through false promises, but this had not saved him, nor had the fact that his brother-in-law A.P. Willard was Governor of Indiana.

When it came the turn of [John Anderson Copeland, Jr.](#) to be [hanged](#), too short a drop was used. He strangled slowly.



Just before being taken from his cell to the execution field that morning, he had completed a last letter to his family:

*Charlestown Jail, Va.,  
Dec. 16, '59*

*Dear Father, Mother, Brothers Henry, William and Freddy, and  
Sisters Sarah and Mary:*

*The last Sabbath with me on earth has passed away. The last  
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday that I shall ever see  
on this earth have now passed by God's glorious sun, which he  
has placed in the heavens to illuminate this earth- whose  
refulgent beams are watched for by this poor invalid, to enter  
& make as it were in heaven of the room in which he is confined-  
I have seen declining behind the western mountains for the last  
time. Last night for the last time, I beheld the soft bright  
moon as it rose, casting its mellow light into my felons cell,  
dissipating the darkness and filling it with that soft pleasant  
light which causes such thrills of joy to all those in like  
circumstance with myself. This morning for the last time, I  
beheld the glorious sun of yesterday rising in the far-off East,  
away off in the country where our Lord Jesus Christ first  
proclaimed salvation to man, and now as he rises higher and his*



**RACE WAR,**

**NOT CIVIL WAR**

*bright light takes the place of the pale, soft moonlight, I will take my pen, for the last time, to write you who are bound to me by those strong ties (yea, the strongest that God ever instituted,) the ties of blood and relationship. I am well, both in body and in mind. And now, dear ones, if it were not that I know your hearts will be filled with sorrow at my fate, I could pass from this earth without a regret. Why should you sorrow? Why should your hearts be racked with grief? Have I not everything to gain and nothing to lose by the change? I fully believe that not only myself but also all three of my poor comrades who are to ascend the same scaffold- (a scaffold already made sacred to the cause of freedom, by the death of that great champion of human freedom, Capt. JOHN BROWN) are prepared to meet our God. I am only leaving a world filled with sorrow and woe to enter one in which there is but one lasting day of happiness and bliss. I feel that God in his mercy has spoken peace to my soul, and that all my numerous sins are now forgiven me. Dear parents, brothers and sisters, it is true that I am now in a few hours to start on a journey from which no traveler returns. Yes, long before this reaches you, I shall as I sincerely hope, have met our brother and sister who have for years been worshiping God around his throne - singing praises to him, and thanking him that he gave his Son to die that they might have eternal life. I pray daily and hourly that I may be fitted to have my home with them, and that you, one and all, may prepare your souls to meet your God, that so, in the end, though we meet no more on earth, we shall meet in Heaven, where we shall not be parted by the demands of the cruel and unjust monster Slavery. But think not that I am complaining, for I feel reconciled to meet my fate. I pray God that his will be done; not mine. Let me tell you that it is not the mere act of having to meet death, which I should regret, (if I should express regret I mean,) but that such an unjust institution should exist as the one which demands my life; and not my life only, but the lives of those to whom my life bears but the relative value of zero to the infinite. I beg of you one and all that you will not grieve about me, but that you will thank God that he spared me time to make my peace with Him. And now, dear ones, attach no blame to anyone for my coming here for not any person but myself is to blame. I have no antipathy against anyone, I have freed my mind of all hard feelings against every living being, and I ask all who have any thing against me to do the same. And now dear parents, Brothers and sisters, I must bid you to serve your God and meet me in heaven. I must with a few words, close my correspondence with those who are the most near and dear to me: but I hope, in the end, we may again commune, never to cease. Dear ones, he who writes this will, in a few hours, be in this world no longer. Yes, these fingers which hold the pen with which this is written will, before to-day's sun has reached his meridian have laid it aside forever, and this poor soul have taken its flight to meet its God. And now dear ones I must bid*



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

*you that last, long, sad farewell. Good-day, Father, Mother,  
Henry, William, and Freddy, Sarah and Mary, serve your God and  
meet me in heaven.  
Your Son and Brother to eternity,  
[John A. Copeland](#).*

**OBERLIN COLLEGE**

Is it that [Aaron D. Stevens](#), and 10 of Captain Brown's black supporters, having been duly found guilty of treason and murder by a jury of their white male peers, were [hanged](#) on this date?



Or is it that the other surrendered survivors of the raid on Harpers Ferry, [John Anderson Copeland, Jr.](#), [Shields Green](#), and [Aaron D. Stevens](#), having been duly found guilty of treason and murder by a jury of their white male peers, were [hanged](#) on this date?<sup>38</sup>

A monument would be erected by the citizens of [Oberlin, Ohio](#) in honor of their three free citizens of color who had died in the raid or been [hanged](#), [Shields Green](#), [John Anderson Copeland, Jr.](#), and [Lewis Sheridan Leary](#) (the 8-foot marble monument would be moved to Vine Street Park in 1971).

**WHAT I'M WRITING IS TRUE BUT NEVER MIND  
YOU CAN ALWAYS LIE TO YOURSELF**

December 17, Saturday: [Oberlin College](#) Professor [James Monroe](#) set off from [Oberlin, Ohio](#) to retrieve the corpse of [John Anderson Copeland, Jr.](#) from Virginia authorities.

Precious opportunity! [Lydia Maria Child](#) responded to the indignant letter she had received from the slaveholding wife of Senator [James Mason](#):

Wayland, Mass., Dec. 17th, 1859.

Not Civil War

"Stack of the Artist of Kouroo" Project



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

Prolonged absence from home has prevented my answering your letter so soon as I intended. I have no disposition to retort upon you the "two-fold damnation" to which you consign me. On the Contrary, I sincerely wish you well, both in this world and the next. If the anathema proved a safety valve to your own boiling spirit, it did some good to you, while it fell harmless upon me. Fortunately for all of us, the Heavenly Father rules His universe by laws, which the passions or the prejudices of mortals have no power to change.

As for John Brown, his reputation may be safely trusted to the impartial pen of History; and his motives will be righteously judged by Him who knoweth the secrets of all hearts. Men, however great they may be, are of small consequence in comparison with principles; and the principle for which John Brown died is the question issue between us.

You refer me to the Bible, from which you quote the favorite text of slaveholders:—

"Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the forward."  
— 1 PETER, 2:18.

Abolitionists also have favorite texts, to some of which I would

---

38. In *THE CAPTURE AND EXECUTION OF JOHN BROWN: A TALE OF MARTYRDOM*, BY ELIJAH AVEY, EYE WITNESS, WITH THIRTY ILLUSTRATIONS, dated 1906, we have on page 45 an assertion that the white men [John E. Cook](#) and [Edwin Coppoc](#), and then the black men [John Anderson Copeland, Jr.](#) and [Shields Green](#), were [hanged](#) on December 16th, 1859. The reference says that, the gallows being not large enough, the 2 black men Copeland and Green were forced to stand and watch the 2 white men Cook and Coppoc being hanged before themselves ascending the scaffold. But I have from another reference this assertion that it was one surrendered surviving white man, [Aaron D. Stevens](#), who was hanged on the 16th along with 10 black supporters of Captain [John Brown](#), and that Cook actually would be among the last hanged. Which account would be correct — and why is there such a glaring discrepancy between these various accounts?

The book *SECRET SIX* treats each retreating admission of each of the co-conspirators in treason as if it were holy writ. No attempt has been made to discern, behind this haze of post-facto explanations and justifications, what the brags of these participants might have been had their plot been successful in initiating the race war they contemplated and had this race war been completed, as it would certainly have been completed, by a historic genocide against black Americans. (Joel Silbey has contended, in "The Civil War Synthesis in American History," that postbellum American historians have been misconstruing antebellum American politics by viewing them in conjunction with our knowledge of the bloodbath that followed. It is only after the fact that we can "know" that the US Civil War amounted to a sectional dispute, North versus South. We avoid learning that before the fact, it was undecided whether this conflict was going to shape up as a race conflict, a class conflict, or a sectional conflict. We avoid knowing that the raid on Harpers Ferry might have resulted in a race war, in which peoples of color would be exterminated in order to create an all-white America, or might have resulted in a class war, in which the laboring classes might have first destroyed the plantation owners' equity by killing their slaves, and then gone on to purge the nation of the white plantation owners themselves, with their privileged-class endowments.) Also, according to the endmatter, the *SECRET SIX* study had obtained its material on [Frederick Douglass](#) basically from McFeely's *FREDERICK DOUGLASS* of 1991, and its material on [Thoreau](#) from Sanborn's *HENRY DAVID THOREAU* of 1917, neither of which were the last word on the subject when the book was prepared. In addition, this work provides no reference whatever for the Emerson life: evidently he was simply presumed not to be of even marginal pertinence. There is no consideration to be found anywhere in this volume of the comparison event: the other American struggle for freedom, the one which had taken place in [Haiti](#) under General [Toussaint Louverture](#).

For these reasons, the study is, fundamentally, incompetent. It is as if O.J. Simpson and his Dream Team had been allowed to control what would appear in our social history texts. Or, it is as if the White House staff had been allowed to define once and for all the extent of President [Richard Milhouse Nixon](#)'s involvement in the Watergate break-in, with, after their initial defensive testimony, after their establishment of the official consensus "truth," all explanations accepted at their putative face value — with no further questioning tolerated.

**SECRET "SIX"**



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

call your attention:—

“Remember those that are in bonds as bound with them.” — HEBREWS 13:3.

“Hide the outcasts. Betray not him that wandereth. Let mine outcasts dwell with thee. Be thou a convert to them from the face of the spoiler.” — ISAIAH 16: 3, 4.

“Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee. He shall dwell with thee where it liketh him best. Thou shalt not oppress him.” — DEUTERONOMY 23: 15, 16.

“Open thy mouth for the dumb, in the cause of all such are appointed to destruction. Open thy mouth judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy.” — PROVERBS 29: 8,9.

“Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.” — ISAIAH 58: 1.

I would especially commend to slaveholders the following portions of that volume, wherein you say God has revealed the duty of masters:—

“Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.” — COLOSSIANS 4:1.

“Neither be ye called masters; for one is your master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.” — MATTHEW 23: 8, 10.

“Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them.” — MATTHEW 7: 12.

“Is not this the fast that I have chosen, to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?” — ISAIAH 58: 6.

“They have given a boy for a harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink.” — JOEL 3: 3.

“He that oppressteth the poor, reproacheth his Maker.” — PROVERBS 14: 31.

“Rob not the poor, because he is poor; neither oppress the afflicted. For the Lord will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those who spoiled them.” — PROVERBS 22: 22, 23.

“Woe unto him that useth his neighbor’s service without wages, and giveth him not for his work.” — JEREMIAH 22: 13.

“Let him that stole, steal no more, but rather let him labor, working with his hands.” — EPHESIANS 4: 28.

“Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed; to turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless.” — ISAIAH 10: 1, 2.

“If I did despise the cause of my man-servant or my maid-servant, when they contend with me, what then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer Him?” — JOB 31: 13, 14.

“Thou hast sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless have been broken. Therefore snares are round about thee, and sudden fear troubleth thee; and darkness, that thou canst not see.” — JOB 22: 9, 10, 11.

“Behold, the hire of your laborers, who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabbath. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourishes your hearts as in a day of slaughter; ye have condemned and killed the just.” — JAMES 5: 4.

If the appropriateness of these texts is not apparent, I will try to make it so, by evidence drawn entirely from Southern sources. The Abolitionists are not such an ignorant set of



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

fanatics as you suppose. They know whereof they affirm. They are familiar with the laws of the Slave States, which are alone sufficient to inspire abhorrence in any humane heart or reflecting mind not perverted by the prejudices of education and custom. I might fill many letters with significant extracts from your statue-books; but I have space only to glance at a few, which indicate the leading features of the system you cherish so tenaciously.

The universal rule of the slave State is, that "the child follows the condition of its mother." This is an index to many things. Marriages between white and colored people are forbidden by law; yet a very large number of the slaves are brown or yellow. When Lafayette visited this country in his old age, he said he was very much struck by the great change in the colored population of Virginia; that in the time of the Revolution, nearly all the household slaves were black, but when he returned to America, he found very few of them black. The advertisements in Southern newspapers often describe runaway slaves that "pass themselves for white men." Sometimes they are described as having straight, light hair blue eyes, and clear complexion." This could not be, unless their fathers, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers had been white men. But as their mothers were slaves, the law pronounces them slaves, subject to be sold on the auction-block whenever the necessities or convenience of their masters or mistresses required it. The sale of one's own children, brother, or sisters, has an ugly aspect to those who are unaccustomed to it; and, obviously, it cannot have a good moral influence, that law and custom should render licentiousness a profitable vice. Throughout the Slave States, the testimony of no colored person, bond or free, can be received against a white man. You have some laws, which, on the face of them, would seem to restrain inhuman men from murdering or mutilating slaves; but they are rendered nearly null by the law I have cited. Any drunken master, overseer, or patrol, may go into the negro cabins, and commit what outrages he pleases, with perfect impunity, if no white person is present who chooses to witness against him. North Carolina and Georgia leave a large loophole for escape, even if white persons present, when murder is committed. A law to punish persons for "maliciously killing a slave" has this remarkable qualification: "Always provided that this act shall not extend to any dying of moderate correction." We at the North find it difficult to understand how moderate punishment can cause death. I have read several of your law books attentively, and I find no cases of punishment for the murder of a slave, except by fines paid to the owner, to indemnify him for the loss of his property: the same as if his horse or cow had been killed.

In South Carolina Reports is a case where the State had indicated Guy Raines for the murder of slave Isaac. It was proved that William Gray, the owner of Isaac, had given him a thousand lashes. The poor creature made his escape, but was caught, and delivered to the custody of Raines, to be carried to the county



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

jail. Because he refused to go, Raines gave him five hundred lashes, and he died soon after. The counsel for Raines proposed that he should be allowed to acquit himself by his own oath. The Court decided against it, because white witnesses had testified; but the Court of afterward decided he ought to have been exculpated by his own oath, and he was acquitted. Small indeed is the chance for justice to a slave, when his own color are not allowed to testify, if they see him maimed or his children murdered; when he has slaveholders for Judges and Jurors; when the murderer can exculpate himself by his own oath; and when the law provides that it is no murder to kill a slave by "moderate correction"!

Your laws uniformly declare that "slave shall be deemed a chattel personal in the hands of his master, to all intents, constrictions, and purposes whatsoever." This, of course, involves the right to sell his children, as if they were pigs; also, to take his wife from him "for any intent or purpose whatsoever." Your laws also make it death for him to resist a white man, however brutally he may be treated, or however much his family may be outraged before his eyes. If he attempts to run away, your laws allow any man to shoot him.

By your laws, all a slave's earnings belong to his master. He can neither receive donations or transmit property. If his master allows him some hours to work for himself, and by great energy and perseverance he earns enough to buy his own bones and sinews, his master may make him pay two or three times over, and he has no redress. Three such cases have come within my knowledge. Even a written promise from his master has no legal value, because slave can make no contracts.

Your laws also systematically aim at keeping the minds of the colored people in the most abject state of ignorance. If white people attempt to teach them to read or write, they are punished by imprisonment or fines; if they attempt to teach each other, they are punished with from twenty to thirty-nine lashes each. It cannot be said that the anti-slavery agitation produced such laws, for they date much further back; many of them when we were Provinces. They are the necessities of the system, which, being itself an outrage upon human nature, can be sustained only by perpetual outrages.

The next reliable source of information is the advertisements in the Southern papers. In the North Carolina (Raleigh) Standard, Mr. Mieajah Ricks advertises, "Runaway, a negro woman and her two children. A few days before went off, I burned her with a hot iron on the left side of her face. I tried to make the letter M." in the Natchez Courier, Mr. J.P. Ashford advertises a runaway negro girl, with "a good many teeth missing, and the letter A branded on her cheek and forehead." In the Lexington (Ky.) Observer, Mr. William Overstreet advertises a runaway negro with "his left eye out, scars from a dirk on his left arm, and much scarred with the whip." I might quote from hundreds of such advertisements, offering rewards for



**RACE WAR,**

**NOT CIVIL WAR**

runaways, "dead or alive," and describing them with "ears cut off," "jaws broken," scarred by rifle-balls," &c.

Another source of information is afforded by your "Fugitives from Injustice," with many of whom I have conversed freely. I have seen scars of the whip and marks of the branding-iron, and I have listened to their heart-breaking sobs, while they told of "piccaninnies" torn from their arms and sold.

Another source of information is furnished by emancipated slaveholders [Sarah Moore Grimké](#), daughter of the late Judge Grimké, of the Supreme Court of South Carolina, testifies as follows: "As I left my native State on account of Slavery, and deserted the home of my fathers to escape the sound of the lash and the shrieks of tortured victims, I would gladly bury in oblivion the recollection of those scenes with which I have been familiar. But this cannot be.

They come over my memory like gory sceptres, and implore me, with resistless power, in the name of a God of mercy, in the name of a crucified Saviour, in the name of humanity, for the sake of the slaveholder, as well as the slave, to bear witness to the horrors of the Southern prison-house." She proceeds to describe dreadful tragedies, the actors in which she says were "men and women of the families in South Carolina;" and that their cruelties did not, in the slightest degree, affect their standing in society. Her sister, [Angelina Emily Grimké Weld](#), declared: "While I live, and Slavery lives, I must testify against it. Not merely for the sake of my poor brothers and sisters in bonds; for even were Slavery no curse to its victims, the exercise of arbitrary power works such fearful ruin upon the hearts of slaveholders, that I should feel impelled to labor and pray for its overthrow with my latest breath." Among the horrible barbarities she enumerates is the case of a girl thirteen years old, who was flogged to death by her master. She says: "I asked a prominent lawyer, who belonged to one of the first families in the State, whether the murderer of this helpless child could not be indicted, and he coolly replied that the slave was Mr. ----'s property, and if he chose to suffer the loss, no one else had any thing to do with it." She proceeds to say: "I felt there could be for me no rest in the midst of such outrages and pollutions. Yet I saw nothing of Slavery in its most vulgar and repulsive forms. I saw it in the city, among the fashionable and the honorable, where it was garnished by refinement and decked out for show. It is my deep, solemn, deliberate conviction, but this is a cause worth dying for. I say so from what I have seen, and heard, and known, in a land of Slavery, whereon rest the darkness of Egypt and the sin of Sodom." I once asked Miss Angelina if she thought Abolitionists exaggerated the horrors of Slavery. She replied, with earnest emphasis: "They cannot be exaggerated. It is impossible for imagination to go beyond the fact." To a lady who observed that the time had not yet come for agitating the subject, she answered: "I apprehend if thou wert a slave, toiling in the



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

fields of Carolina, thou wouldst think the time had fully come." Mr. Thome, of [Kentucky](#), in the course of his eloquent lectures on this subject, said: "I breathed my first breath in an atmosphere of Slavery. But though I am heir to a slave inheritance, I am bold to denounce the whole system as an outrage, a complication of crimes, and wrongs, and cruelties, that make angels weep."

Mr. Allen of Alabama, in a discussion with the students at Lane Theological Seminary in 1834, had told of a slave who was tied up and beaten all day, with a paddle full of holes. "At night, his flesh was literally pounded to a jelly. The punishment was inflicted within hearing of the Academy and the Public Green. But no one took any notice of it. No one thought any wrong was done. At our house, it is so common to hear screams from a neighboring plantation, that we think nothing of it. Lest any one should think that the slaves are generally well treated, and that the cases I have mentioned are exceptions, let me be distinctly understood that cruelty is the rule, and kindness is the exception."

In the same discussion, a student from Virginia, after relating cases of great cruelty, had related: "Such things are common all over Virginia; at least, so far as I am acquainted. But the planters generally avoid punishing their slaves before strangers."

Miss Mattie Griffith, of [Kentucky](#), whose entire property consisted in slaves, emancipated them all. The noble-hearted girl wrote to me: "I shall go forth into the world penniless; but I shall work with a heart, and, best of all, I shall live with an easy conscience." Previous to this generous resolution, she had never read any Abolition document, and entertained the common Southern prejudice against them. But her own observation so deeply impressed her with the enormities of Slavery, that she was impelled to publish a book, called "The Autobiography of a Female Slave." I read it with thrilling interest; but some of the scenes made my nerves quiver so painfully, that told her I hoped they were too highly colored. She shook her head sadly, and replied: "I am sorry to say that every incident in the book has come within my own knowledge."

St. George Tucker, Judge and Professor of Law in Virginia, speaking of the legalized murder of runaways, said: "Such are the cruelties to which a state of Slavery gives birth – such the horrors to which the human mind is capable of being reconciled by its adoption." Alluding to our struggle in '76, he said: "While we proclaimed our resolution to live free or die, we imposed on our fellow-men, of different complexion, a Slavery ten thousand times worse than the utmost extremity of the oppressions of which we complained."

Governor Giles, in a Message to the Legislature of Virginia, referring to the custom of selling free colored people into Slavery, as a punishment for offences not capital, said: "Slavery must be admitted to be a punishment of the highest



**RACE WAR,**

**NOT CIVIL WAR**

order; and, according to the just rule for the apportionment of punishment to crimes, it ought to be applied only to crimes of the highest order. The most distressing reflection in the application of this punishment to female offenders, is that it extends to their offspring; and the innocent are thus punished with the guilty." Yet one hundred and twenty thousand innocent babies in this country are annually subjected to a punishment which your Governor declared "ought to be applied only to crimes of the highest order."

Jefferson said: "One day of American Slavery is worse than a thousand years of that which we rose in arms to oppose." Alluding to insurrections, he said: "The Almighty has no attribute that can take side with us in such a contest."

John Randolph declared: "Every planter is a sentinel at his own door. Every Southern mother, when she hears an alarm of fire in the night, instinctively presses her infant closer to her bosom."

Looking at the system of slavery in the light of all this evidence, do you candidly think we deserve "two-fold damnation" for detesting it? Can you not believe that we may hate the system, and yet be truly your friends? I make allowance for the excited state of your mind, and for the prejudices induced by education. I do not care to change your opinion of me; but I so wish you could be persuaded to examine this subject dispassionately, for the sake of the prosperity of Virginia, and the welfare of unborn generations, both white and colored. For thirty years, Abolitionists have been trying to reason with slaveholders, through the press, and in the halls of Congress. Their efforts, though directed to the masters only, have been met with violence and abuse almost equal to that poured on head of John Brown. Yet surely we, as a portion of the Union, involved in the expense, the degeneracy, the danger, and the disgrace, of the iniquitous and fatal system, have a right to speak about it, and a right to be heard also. At the North, we willingly publish pro-slavery arguments, and ask only a fair field and no favor for the other side. But you will not even allow your own citizens a chance to examine this important subject. Your letter to me is published in Northern papers, as well as Southern; my reply will not be allowed to appear in any Southern paper. The despotic measures you take to silence investigation, and shut out the light from your own white population, prove how little reliance you have on the strength of your cause. In this enlightened age, all despotisms ought to come to an end by the agency of moral and rational means. But if they resist such agencies, it is in the order of Providence that they must come to an end by violence. History is full of such lessons.

Would that the evil of prejudice could be removed from your eyes. If you would candidly examine the statements of Governor Hincks of the British West Indies, and of the Rev. Mr. Bleby, long time a Missionary in those Islands, both before and after emancipation, you could not fail to be convinced that Cash is a



**RACE WAR,**

**NOT CIVIL WAR**

more powerful incentive to labor than the Lash, and far safer also. One fact in relation to those Islands is very significant. While the working people were slaves, it was always necessary to order out the military during the Christmas holidays; but since emancipation, not a soldier is to be seen. A hundred John Browns might land there, without exciting the slightest alarm. To the personal questions you ask me, I will reply in the name of all the women of New England. It would be extremely difficult to find any woman in our villages who does not sew for the poor, and watch with the sick, whenever occasion requires. We pay our domestic generous wages, with which they can purchase as many Christmas gowns as they please; a process far better for their characters, as well as our own, than to receive their clothing as a charity, after being deprived of just payment for their labor. I have never known an instance where the "pangs of maternity" did not meet with requisite assistance; and here at the North, after we have helped the mothers, we do not sell the babies.

I readily believe what you state concerning the kindness of many Virginia matrons. It is creditable to their hearts: but after all, the best that can be done in that way is a poor equivalent for the perpetual wrong done to the slaves, and the terrible liabilities to which they are always subject. Kind masters and mistresses among you are merely lucky accidents.

If any one chooses to be a brutal despot, your laws and customs give him complete power to do so. And the lot of those slaves who have the kindest masters is exceedingly precarious. In case of death, or pecuniary difficulties, or marriages in the family, they may at any time be suddenly transferred from protection and indulgence to personal degradation, or extreme severity; and if they should try to escape from such sufferings, any body is authorized to shoot them down like dogs.

With regard to your declaration that "no Southerner ought henceforth to read a line of my composition," I reply that I have great satisfaction in the consciousness of having nothing to loose in that quarter. Twenty-seven years ago, I published a book called "An Appeal in behalf of that class of Americans called Africans." It influenced the minds of several young men, afterward conspicuous in public life, through whose agency the cause was better served than it could have been by me. From that time to this, I have labored too earnestly for the slave to be agreeable to slaveholders. Literary popularity was never a paramount object with me, even in my youth; and, now that I am old, I am utterly indifferent to it. But, if I cared for the exclusion you threaten I should at least have the consolation of being exiled with honorable company. Dr. Channing's writings, mild and candid as they are, breathe what you would call arrant treason. William C. Bryant, in his capacity of editor, is openly on our side. The inspired muse of Whittier has incessantly sounded the trumpet for moral warfare with your iniquitous institution; and his stirring tones have been answered, more or



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

less loudly, by Pierpont, Lowell, and Longfellow. Emerson, the Plato of America, leaves the scholastic seclusion he love so well, and disliking noise with all his poetic soul, bravely takes his stand among the trumpeters. George W. Curtis, the brilliant wealth of his talent on the altar of Freedom, and makes common cause with rough-shod reformers. The genius of Mrs. Stowe carried the outworks of your institution at one dash, and left the citadel open to besiegers, who are pouring in amain. In the church, on the ultra-liberal side, it is assailed by the powerful battering-ram of Theodore Parker's eloquence. On the extreme orthodox side is set a huge fire, kindled by the burning words of Dr. [George Barrell?] Cheever. Between them is Henry Ward Beecher, sending a shower of keen arrows into your entrenchments; and with him ride a troop of sharp-shooters from all sects. If you turn to the literature of England or France, you will find your institution treated with as little favor. The fact is, the whole civilized world proclaims Slavery an outlaw, and the best intellect of the age is active in hunting it down.

*L. MARIA CHILD.*

### **THE TOUCHSTONE.**

**BY WILLIAM ALLENGHAME.**

A man there came, whence none could tell,  
Bearing a touchstone in his hand,  
And tested all things in the land  
By its unerring spell.  
A thousand transformations rose,  
From fair to foul, from foul to fair;  
The golden crown he did not share,  
Nor scorn the beggar's clothes.  
Of heirloom jewels, prized so much,  
Were many changed to chips and clods,  
And even statues of the gods  
Crumbled beneath its touch.  
Then angrily the people cried,  
"The loss outweighs the profit far,  
Our goods suffice us as they are,  
We will not have them tried."  
But since they could not so avail  
To check his unrelenting quest,  
They seized him, saying, "Let him test  
How real is our jail."  
But though they slew him with their swords,  
And in the fire the touchstone burned,  
Its doings could not be o'erturned,  
Its undoings restored.  
And when, to stop all future harm,  
They strewed his ashes to the breeze,  
They little guessed each grain of these  
Conveyed the perfect charm.



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

After escaping from the raid on [Harpers Ferry Barclay Coppoc](#) appeared on this day at the family home in Cedar County, Iowa. A most unusual situation developed there: despite its [Quaker](#) status, during his presence the Coppoc house would be surrounded at night by men waiting in the dark with firearms, to protect him in his rest if the occasion arose, from capture by federal agents!

On March 6, 1857 [Edwin Coppoc](#) had been [disowned](#) by the Red Cedar Monthly Meeting of the [Religious Society of Friends](#) in the West Branch/Springdale area. During April 1857 [Barclay Coppoc](#) had been disciplined by the Quakers for using profane language and for striking a man in anger. Several months after his return from Harpers Ferry, [Barclay Coppoc](#) would be [disowned](#) for absenting himself from meetings for worship and for bearing arms. The following is from chapters entitled "The Iowa Quakers and the Negroes" and "The Springdale Quakers and Old John Brown" in Louis Thomas Jones's THE QUAKERS OF IOWA (Iowa City: Iowa State Historical Society, 1914, pages 195-7):

Haggard and worn with his long flight, with a price upon his head, and hunted by an official with a requisition from Governor Wise of Virginia upon Governor Kirkwood of Iowa for his immediate rendition to justice, [Barclay Coppoc](#) reached his home in Iowa on December 17th [1859]. On the day before, his brother Edwin, loaded with chains and shackles, had yielded up his life upon a Virginia scaffold. Thus the mother's parting prophecy had been fulfilled. [According to this source, when the two departed the mother had said to them: "When you get the halters around your necks, will you think of me?"]

For the sake of accurate history, it now seems necessary to make plain the real relation which the much-eulogized Coppoc boys bore to the Society of Friends at the time of the events in question. Early in life both of the boys developed wayward tendencies, discomfiting to their mother and to the church. Edwin took to dancing, and though repeatedly dealt with in the "spirit of restoring love" by the Monthly Meeting, he spurned all advice, refused to "condemn his course," and was in consequence duly [disowned](#) from membership in the Society on March 6, 1857. Barclay, also, about the same time gave the Springdale Friends grave concern. Fresh from the stirring scenes in Kansas, he had engaged in a fight soon after reaching home, and a month after his brother's [disownment](#) the complaint was entered on the records of the Monthly Meeting that "Barclay Coppoc has used profane language, and struck a man in anger." "Coppoc gave the proper satisfaction for this first offense. and the meeting "passed it by." But immediately upon his return from [Harpers Ferry](#) his conduct called for new attention. With the officers close upon his heels Coppoc sought his home in Cedar County; and upon his arrival there a large number of the young men in the vicinity united as a military guard to prevent his capture, while he himself went heavily armed. His presence of course attracted wide attention, and the Overseers of the Preparative Meeting called upon him. Action was made to the [Red Cedar] Monthly Meeting that "Barclay Coppoc has neglected attendance at our religious meetings & is in the practice of



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

bearing arms." The usual care was extended to him, but with no avail. Two months later Barclay, like his brother, was formally disowned; and thus came to a close this interesting episode in the history of the Iowa Friends.

December 24, Saturday: [Oberlin College](#) Professor James Monroe returned empty-handed that Christmas Eve to [Oberlin, Ohio](#), having failed to retrieve [John Anderson Copeland, Jr.](#)'s body from Virginia authorities.

The Reverend [Samuel Joseph May](#) had written to the Reverend [Theodore Parker](#) — who had gone off to Rome in part for his health and in part because he knew what was going to happen at [Harpers Ferry](#) and very well understood that he would pay for his part in this were he captured by the federal government. Now a belligerent letter arrived from Parker in Italy characterizing [John Brown](#) as “an upright & a downright man, who took his life in his hand & said ‘Slavery **shall** go down.’”

[NOTE THAT FRIEND [JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER](#), WHEN OFFERED ONE OF THE PIKES WHICH HAD BEEN INTENDED FOR DISTRIBUTION TO REBELLING SLAVES FOR HIS INSPECTION, WOULD DECLINE WITH THE COMMENT “IT LOOKS TOO MUCH LIKE MURDER,” AND THAT THE REVEREND [ADIN BALLOU](#) HAD JUST INSISTED THAT TO CHARACTERIZE SUCH A MAN AS [JOHN BROWN](#), A MERE “MILITARY ADVENTURER,” AS A “SELF-SACRIFICING REDEEMER” ON THE MODEL OF JESUS WOULD BE “UNTRUTHFUL, UNJUST, AND UTTERLY ABSURD.”]



December 24: P.M.—To Flint's Pond.

A strong and very cold northwest wind. I think that the cold winds are oftenest not northwest, but northwest by west. There is, in all, an acre or two in Walden not yet frozen, though half of it has been frozen more than a week. I measure the blueberry bush on Flint's Pond Island. The five stems are united at the ground, so as to make one round and solid trunk thirty-one inches in circumference, but probably they have grown together there, for they become separate at about six inches above. They may have sprung from different seeds of one berry. At three feet from the ground they measure eleven inches, eleven, eleven and a half, eight, and six and a half, or, on an average, nine and a half. I climbed up and found a comfortable seat with my feet four feet above the ground, and there was room for three or four more there, but unfortunately this was not the season for berries.

There were several other clumps of large ones there. One clump close by the former contained twenty-three stems within a diameter of three feet, and their average diameter at three feet from the ground was about two inches. These had not been cut, because they stood on this small island which has little wood beside, and therefore had grown the larger. The two prevailing lichens on them were *Parmelia caperata* and *saxatilis*, extending quite around their trunks; also a little of a parmelia more glaucous than the last one, and a little green usnea and a little ramalina. [*Vide* specimens in drawer.]

This island appears to be a mere stony ridge three or four feet high, with a very low wet shore on each side, even as if the water and ice had shoved it up, as at the other end of the pond.

I saw the tracks of a partridge [[Ruffed Grouse](#)  [Bonasa umbellus](#) (Partridge)] more than half an inch deep in the ice, extending from this island to the shore, she having walked there in the slush. They were quite perfect and reminded me of bird-tracks in stone. She may have gone there to bud on these blueberry trees. I saw where she spent the night at the bottom of that largest clump, in the snow.

Perhaps yet larger ones were seen here before we came to cut off the trees. Judging from those whose rings I have counted, the largest of those stems must be about sixty years old. The stems rise up in a winding and zigzag manner, one sometimes resting in the forks of its neighbor. There were many more clumps of large ones there.





RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1860

[Barclay Coppoc](#), who had escaped from the raid on [Harpers Ferry](#) through Pennsylvania and Ohio into Canada, had at this point ventured back into Iowa with Virginia agents in close pursuit — and had eluded them and gone on to [“Bleeding Kansas”](#).



At this point, in Kansas, he was helping to run off some Missouri slaves, and nearly lost his life. (On July 24, 1861 he would become a 1st Lieutenant in Colonel Montgomery’s regiment, the 3d Kansas Infantry. Soon he would be killed by the fall of a train into the Platte river from a trestle 40 feet high, the supports of which had been burned away by Confederates.)

In Fairfield, South Carolina in the fall of 1843,  one John L. Brown had been sentenced “to hang by the neck until your body be dead” for having aided a South Carolinian who was trying to escape from enslavement in South Carolina. But this had not been the famous enslaver of [Providence, Rhode Island, John Brown](#), nor had it been the businessman [John Brown](#) of Newburyport, nor had it been the businessman [John Brown](#) of [Concord](#), nor had it been the northern interloper of 1859, Captain [John Brown](#) — this had been a Maine man. The national and international petitions for clemency in this case, landing on the desk of Governor James Henry Hammond (1810-1864), had caused the governor to commute the sentence of death and then to respond at length in defense of the institution of chattel slavery and in opposition to the practice of slave stealing, and the Charleston SC [Mercury](#) had subsequently put his thoughts out in the form of pamphlets, and then they had been republished as PRO-SLAVERY ARGUMENT,  and in this year this Southern gentleman’s responses received additional general publication as COTTON IS KING AND PRO-SLAVERY ARGUMENTS.



COTTON  
UNDERGROUND RAILROAD



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

William Still went into the stove business. Later he branched out into the coal business.

[Oberlin, Ohio](#)'s population of 2,115 including 422 black Americans, which would work out to be 20%. A monument was erected in honor of the town's three free men of color who had died in the raid on [Harpers Ferry](#) or been hanged for treason, [John Anderson Copeland, Jr.](#), his uncle [Lewis Sheridan Leary](#), and "Emperor" [Shields Green](#) (the 8-foot marble monument would be moved to Martin Luther King, Jr. Park on Vine Street in 1971).

There was severe drouth in Kansas and 30,000 disillusioned white settlers abandoned the state.

**"BLEEDING KANSAS"**

In this year eleven young scholars were graduated from the [Quaker Yearly Meeting School](#) in [Providence, Rhode Island](#).<sup>39</sup> The "Smiley Administration" began at that school. According to Friend Eric Kristensen's "An Outline of Moses Brown School's History," prepared for the Ad Hoc Subcommittee of the Permanent Board on Financing Moses Brown School Renovations, this is what the "Smiley Administration" amounted to:

1860-1879: Smiley administration. Albert K. (from Oak Grove in Vassalboro) was principal, his twin brother Alfred H. was Associate Principal for much of this time. A sister, Rebecca H. was head of the girls' department from 1863-1879. The strict regulations of the early days were further relaxed; attendance increased, the debt decreased, and a number of new buildings were built. After the Civil War, attendance often reached 200; in 1875 a record 222 students enrolled. The averages for the period were 103 boys and 69 girls for a total of 172. The contract system remained from the Cartland days, whereby the Principal received a salary; after his and all other salaries and operating expenses were paid he received one half of the annual profit. This allowed the Principal to realize a considerable amount in some years, and the School Committee was assured of sound business practices which eliminated accumulated debt, reduced the deficit and provided a balance for improving the school plant. The School was commonly called the "Quaker Jail" by students of this period. After Moses Brown, the brothers opened the famous Mohonk Mountain House outside of New Palz NY. (page 6)<sup>40</sup>

---

39. Of the first 23 graduates, 19 were female.



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

After due consideration, the Orthodox [Friends](#) of Philadelphia issued their advice to black Christians, as to how they should conduct themselves while subjected to slavery. **They should act exactly as white Quakers would act should they be unjustly subjected to such a condition of slavery.** Which is to say, they should



endeavor to serve with patience and fidelity while in bondage, to fulfill their Christian duties with propriety, and to commit their cause into the hands of a merciful and omnipotent Father in Heaven.

One of the people who disagreed with these Orthodox Quakers of Philadelphia, [Frederick Douglass](#), informed of the death of his daughter Annie, age 10, returned to the United States from England, risking possible arrest and execution for treasonous complicity in the raid on [Harpers Ferry](#) for having neglected to betray a white friend to the federal authorities.

---

40. This matter referred to above, the re-engagement of the school's principals on "a contract system" in 1855, deserves some comment. As a historian, to do a good job, I should be able to establish the crossover point, at which the school transited from being a religious school, a school offering a religious education to young members of a religion — to being the sort of hoighty-toighty Ivy League preparatory academy for all and sundry families of the Providence rising classes which as we are all profoundly aware, it has by now become. For the first five years or so of my investigation of the records of this school, I had been presuming that probably I was going to discover this crossover point at which Quakerism became mere lip service to Quakerism to have been reached just prior to the middle of the 20th Century, as this institution made its transition from being a boarding school attracting Quaker youth from all over New England, into being a day school catering to the middleclass families of Providence's toney East Side (plus, incidentally, whatever few Quaker youth happened to reside within daily commuting distance who could afford the high fees or could secure a scholarship). When I discovered, in the records of the school, however, these records of incentive compensation for its headmasters, this caused me to recognize that the crossover into disingenuity may have already been well in the past, by that late point at which the boarding-school aspect of the school's function had disintegrated beyond repair. Incentive compensation is utterly incompatible with charter — one simply cannot allow a person to run an institution and divert half its annual surplus into his own pocket, and anticipate that that person will behave in any manner other than to maximize the income flowing into his own pocket. This is the sort of situation which is described, in economics, and described quite properly, as "moral hazard." At this point, the school's charter to provide an environment guarded from the lay world in which a Quaker education might best be conveyed to Quaker youth, was inevitably abandoned — abandoned because the headmaster's incentive compensation was henceforth to be based not upon fulfilling that charge, but instead upon implementing a contrary agenda of puffing up the school's enrollment and the school's charges and the school's cash flow, while holding down expenditures, in such manner as to maximize a flow into his own pocket. Under such a "contract system" the eventual result, that after a period of evolutionary adjustment and accommodation this Quaker school would be effectively a lay school, and that this Quaker endowment would no longer be being used for Quaker education, should have been anticipatable. For it has always been well understood that:

<sup>24</sup> No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

— [MATTHEW 6:24](#)



**RACE WAR,**

**NOT CIVIL WAR**

January 11, Wednesday: [Richard Henry Dana, Jr.](#) sailed off across the Pacific Ocean, bound for the Orient.

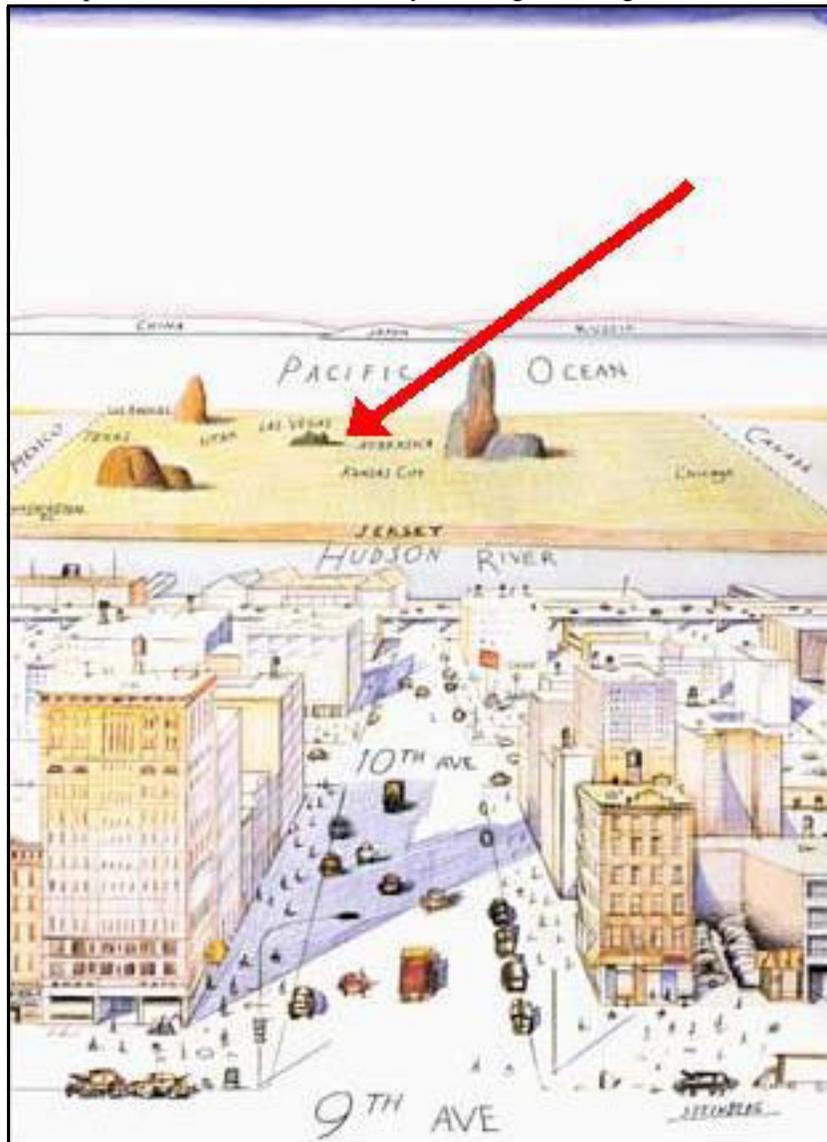
**AND NOW, FOR SOMETHING ENTIRELY DIFFERENT, A REPORT FROM OUR SAILOR:**

On the morning of the 11th January, 1860, I passed, for the eighth time, through the Golden Gate, on my way across the delightful Pacific to the Oriental world, with its civilization three thousand years older than that I was leaving behind. As the shores of California faded in the distance, and the summits of the Coast Range sank under the blue horizon, I bade farewell— yes, I do not doubt, forever— to those scenes which, however changed or unchanged, must always possess an ineffable interest for me.

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

Senator [James Mason](#)'s committee to investigate the raid upon the federal arsenal at [Harpers Ferry](#) issued summonses for the [Secret "Six"](#) conspirators [Franklin Benjamin Sanborn](#), [Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe](#), and [Gerrit Smith](#). A summons for their co-conspirator [George Luther Stearns](#) was overlooked but would follow in due course. The committee would learn that Stearns and Dr. Howe, like Boston attorney [Richard Henry Dana, Jr.](#), had fled to [California](#), but eventually the Reverend Stearns would appear and testify that he believed John Brown to be the representative man of this century as George Washington had been of the previous one.



On this date [Bronson Alcott](#) made the following entry in his journal:

Emerson, Alcott, Thoreau, Channing, Wasson, Sanborn, and Hawthorn, which comes to 7 persons. Opened once a week for conversations, without form, and from 7 to 10



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

in the evening, at private houses.

WALDO EMERSON  
HENRY THOREAU  
ELLERY CHANNING  
NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE



[THOREAU MADE NO ENTRY IN HIS JOURNAL FOR JANUARY 11th]

January 13, Friday: Breitkopf and Härtel completed publication of [Richard Wagner's \*Tristan und Isolde\*](#).

**LISTEN TO IT NOW**

[Barclay Coppoc](#), having unlike his brother [Edwin Coppoc](#) escaped from [Harpers Ferry](#), and then having eluded capture, wrote to [Franklin Benjamin Sanborn](#) of the [Secret "Six"](#) conspiracy to bring him up to date on developments: "but five of our little band now away and safe, namely Owen [[Owen Brown](#)], Tidd [[Charles Plummer Tidd](#)], Meriam [[Francis Jackson Meriam](#)], O.P. Anderson [[Osborn Perry Anderson](#)], or as we used to call him Chatham Anderson, and myself. . . . We were together eight days before [[John E. Cook](#) and [Albert Hazlett](#) were] captured, which was near Chambersburg, and the next night Meriam left us and went to Shippensburg, and there took cars for Philadelphia. After that there were but three of us left, and we kept together, until we got to Centre County, Pa., where we bought a box and packed up all heavy luggage, such as rifles, blankets, etc., and after being together three or four weeks we separated and I went on through with the box to Ohio on the cars. Owen [[Owen Brown](#)] and Tidd [[Charles Plummer Tidd](#)] went on foot towards the north-western part of Penn." [Osborn Perry Anderson](#), [Barclay Coppoc](#), and [Francis Jackson Meriam](#), traveling separately, would eventually find safe exile in the area of St. Catharines, Canada. [Owen Brown](#) and [Charles Plummer Tidd](#) would find work and safety, under assumed names, on an oil well in the vicinity of Crawford County, Pennsylvania.

During this month, in Iowa, at his monthly meeting of the [Religious Society of Friends](#), [Friend Barclay Coppoc](#) was being [disowned](#) on account of his failure to adhere to the Peace Testimony.

**THE QUAKER PEACE TESTIMONY**



January 13. Tuttle was saying to-day that he did remember a certain man's living with him once, from something that occurred. It was this: The man was about starting for Boston market for Tuttle, and Mrs. Tuttle had been telling him what to get for her. The man inquired if that was all, and Mrs. Tuttle said no, she wanted some [nutmegs](#). "How many," he asked. Tuttle, coming along just then, said, "Get a bushel." When the man came home he said that he had had a good deal of trouble about the nutmegs. He could not find so many as were wanted, and, besides, they told him that they did not sell them by the bushel. But he said that he would take a bushel by the weight. Finally he made out to get a peck of them, which he brought home. It chanced that nutmegs were very high just then, so Tuttle, after selecting a few for his own use, brought the remainder up to town and succeeded in disposing of them at the stores for just what he gave for them. One man at the post-office said that a crow would drive a fox. He had seen three crows pursue a fox that was crossing the Great Meadows, and he fairly ran from [them] and took refuge in the woods. Farmer says that he remembers his father's saying that as he stood in a field once, he saw a hawk [soaring](#) above and eying something on the ground. Looking round, he saw a weasel there eying the hawk. Just then the hawk stooped, and the weasel at the same instant sprang upon him, and up went the hawk with the weasel; but by and by the hawk began to come down as fast as he went up, rolling over and over, till he struck the ground. His father, going up, raised him up, when out hopped the weasel from under his wing and ran off none the worse



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

for his fall.

The surface of the snow, now that the sun has shone on it so long, is not so light and downy, almost impalpable, as it was yesterday, but is somewhat flattened down and looks even as if [IT] had had a skim-coat of some whitewash. I can see sparkles on it, but they are finer than at first and therefore less dazzling.

The thin ice of the Mill Brook sides at the Turnpike bridge is sprinkled over with large crystals which look like asbestos or a coarse grain. This is no doubt the vapor of last evening crystallized. I see vapor rising from and curling along the open brook and also rising from the end of a plank in the sun, which is wet with melted snow, though the thermometer was 16° only when I left the house.

I see in low grounds numerous heads of bidens, with their seeds still.

I see under some sizable white pines in E. Hubbard's wood, where red squirrels have run about much since this snow. They have run chiefly, perhaps, under the surface of the snow, so that it is very much undermined by their paths under these trees, and every now and then they have come to the surface, or the surface has fallen into their gallery. They seem to burrow under the snow about as readily as a meadow mouse. There are also paths raying out on every side from the base of the trees. And you see many holes through the snow into the ground where they now are, and other holes where they have probed for cones and nuts. The scales of the white pine cones are scattered about here and there. They seek a dry place to open them, — a fallen limb that rises above the snow, or often a lower dead stub projecting from the trunk of the tree.

February: In a course of lectures on the “Social Destiny of Man” delivered at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC, Dr. Albert T. Bledsoe, professor of mathematics at the University of Virginia and a published proslavery ideologue, critiqued the excessive individualism of abolitionists as constituting a threat to the Union and projected that [secession](#) might be expected as the result of their efforts.

At about this time [John Brown, Jr.](#), [James Redpath](#), [Thaddeus Hyatt](#), and [Lewis Hayden](#) were being summoned before Senator [James Mason](#)'s special investigatory committee of the US Senate to be interrogated about the details of the [Harpers Ferry](#) conspiracy, and Brown, Jr., in hiding in Ohio, was refusing to respond. When the committee was made aware that they had summoned a person of color to incriminate himself before them, they backtracked and rescinded their warrant on Hayden,<sup>41</sup> and warrants were made out only in the names of Brown, Jr., Redpath, and Hyatt. Of these, only Hyatt would actually come before the committee in chains, and he, upon refusing to testify, would be remanded to the District of Columbia's prison.

John C. Rutherford, a legislator from Virginia, ventured to mention the explicit linkage which was being made between the [Secret “Six”](#) supporters of Northern white abolitionists such as [John Brown](#) and the supporters of Southern white abolitionist racists such as [Hinton Rowan Helper](#), by referring to them in a pot category “admirers of Brown and endorsers of Helper.” The author of the incendiary THE IMPENDING CRISIS OF THE SOUTH: HOW TO MEET IT, which offered a commonality of interest between the poor white man of the North and the poor white man of the South against the interests of the rich white man of the South with his substantial investment in his African chattels, was perhaps the most dangerous man, from their point of view, in our nation — more dangerous by far than any mere deluded idealist such as Brown could ever hope to

---

41. This would count as another of the many evidences that the business of the committee was the suppression of information as to the nature of the conspiracy, rather than any public disclosure of its real extent or purpose. Had they been intent on finding out anything, when they discovered that [Hayden](#) was a black man they would have had him tortured to death!



**RACE WAR,**

**NOT CIVIL WAR**

become.

Helper had, of course, fled his native South to avoid assassination by indignant rich white men, seeking the shelter afforded by New-York.

[Henry Thoreau](#)'s "A Plea for Captain John Brown" and "The Martyrdom of John Brown" were published in [James Redpath](#), ed., ECHOES OF HARPER'S FERRY. Clearly, Henry was attempting to find some way to spin the treason situation by reconstructing Captain Brown as a sort of hero of [civil disobedience](#) along the lines of Sir [Thomas More](#) or [Friend Mary Dyer](#):





**RACE WAR,**

**NOT CIVIL WAR**

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

## I.

## LECTURE BY HENRY D. THOREAU.\*

I TRUST that you will pardon me for being here. I do not wish to force my thoughts upon you, but I feel forced myself. Little as I know of Captain Brown, I would fain do my part to correct the tone and the statements of the newspapers, and of my countrymen generally, respecting his character and actions. It costs us nothing to be just. We can at least express our sympathy with, and admiration of, him and his companions, and that is what I now propose to do.

First, as to his history. I will endeavor to omit, as much as possible, what you have already read. I need not describe his person to you, for probably most of you have seen and will not soon forget him. I am told that his grandfather, John Brown, was an officer in the Revolution; that he himself was born in Connecticut about the beginning of this century, but early went with his father to Ohio. I heard him say that his father was a contractor who furnished beef to the army there, in the war of 1812; that he accompanied him to the camp, and assisted him in that employment, seeing a good deal of military life, more, perhaps, than if he had been a soldier, for he was often present at the councils of the officers. Especially, he learned by experience how armies are supplied and maintained in the field — a work which, he observed, re-

\* A Plea for Captain John Brown: read to the citizens of Concord, Mass., Sunday evening, October 30, 1859; also as the Fifth Lecture of the Fraternity Course, in Boston, November 1.



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

ONE COULD BE ELSEWHERE, AS ELSEWHERE DOES EXIST.  
ONE CANNOT BE ELSEWHEN SINCE ELSEWHEN DOES NOT.  
(TO THE WILLING MANY THINGS CAN BE EXPLAINED,  
THAT FOR THE UNWILLING WILL REMAIN FOREVER MYSTERIOUS.)

February 2, Thursday: Senator [Jefferson Davis](#) introduced resolutions on the relations of the sovereign states.

A South Carolina spokesperson for slavery and for [secession](#) explained the situation on the ground in the South, when he declared “I mistrust our own people more than I fear all the efforts of the Abolitionists.” He was referring to the threat represented by the attitude of Southern whites too poor to own slaves. If these people had been able to seize an occasion offered by a successful army of black fugitives armed with rifles and pikes after the raid on the federal arsenal at [Harpers Ferry](#) in order to act, in pogrom, against the institution of slavery that was harming them as well as the slave by interfering with their livelihoods, a genocide against all the unprotected black Americans of the South would most likely have ensued. As Peter Wallenstein has succinctly explained the political situation in the South:

 Even if a successful attack by nonslaveholding whites against slavery appeared improbable at the voting booths or in the legislatures, other kinds of threats could not be so readily dismissed. Some whites disliked slavery out of a sense of companionship, or for religious or other reasons. Some disliked it because it drove down their own pay and limited rather than fostered their prospects; some who might have supported slavery turned against it when their chances of becoming slaveholders themselves seemed to fade. For some whites in the South, in short, slavery was a threat or an abomination, whether because of what it did to whites or because of what it did to blacks. Proslavery forces would do what they could to cow or cajole fellow whites into following their lead.

(Actually, I offer that Wallenstein has not here adequately represented the position of the white people for whom it was distressing that any of these inferior people of color were present on the soil of the New World, who were abolitionists because they desired that all members of the black race be either elsewhere, or dead, and who considered that whichever one of those two options was implemented didn't much matter to them. This was certainly a prevalent attitude in the North —as indicated by [Waldo Emerson](#)'s reference on May 1, 1859  to Americans of color as “putrid Black Vomit,” which is to say, as a disease —“[black vomit](#)” was one of the names used in this period for the dreaded deadly “[yellow fever](#)”— and I would have supposed it would have been at least as prevalent in the South.)<sup>42</sup>

**RACE POLITICS**

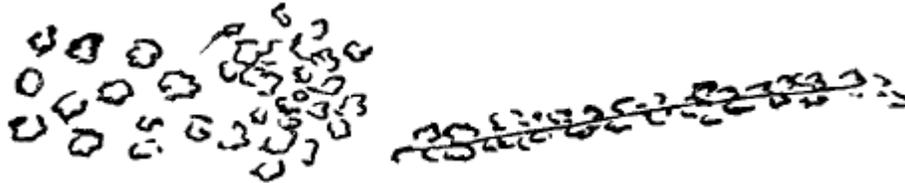


Feb. 2.6° below at about 8 A.M.  
Clock has stopped. Teams squeak.  
2 P.M.—To Fair Haven Pond.

Not Civil War

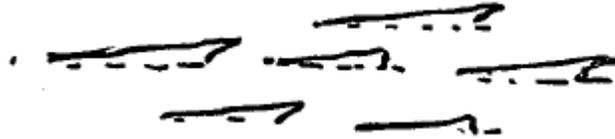
“Stack of the Artist of Kouroo” Project

The river, which was breaking up, is frozen over again. The new ice over the channel is of a yellow tinge, and is covered with handsome rosettes two or three inches in diameter where the vapor which rose through froze and crystallized. This new ice for forty rods together is thickly covered with these rosettes, often as thick as snow, an inch deep, and sometimes in ridges like frozen froth three inches high.



Sometimes they are in a straight line along a crack. The frozen breath of the river at a myriad breathing-holes. A thaw began the 7th of January, and it was mild and thawing most of the time for the rest of that month; but with February we have genuine winter again. Almost all the openings in the river are closed again, and the new ice is covered with rosettes.

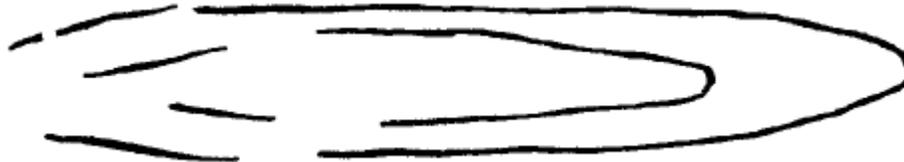
It blew considerably yesterday, though it is very still to-day, and the light, dry snow, especially on the meadow ice and the river, was remarkably plowed and drifted by it, and now presents a very wild and arctic scene. Indeed, no part of our scenery is ever more arctic than the river and its meadows now, though the snow was only some three inches deep on a level. It is cold and perfectly still, and you walk over a level snowy tract. It is a sea of white waves of nearly uniform shape and size. Each drift is a low, sharp promontory directed toward the northwest, and showing which way the wind blew with occasional small patches of bare ice amid them.



It is exactly as if you walked over a solid sea where the waves rose about two feet high. These promontories have a general resemblance to one another. Many of them are perfect tongues of snow more or less curving and sharp.



Commonly the wind has made a little hollow in the snow directly behind this tongue, it may be to the ice, spoon-shaped or like a tray,—if small, a cradle in the snow. Again it is a complete canoe, the tongue being its bows.



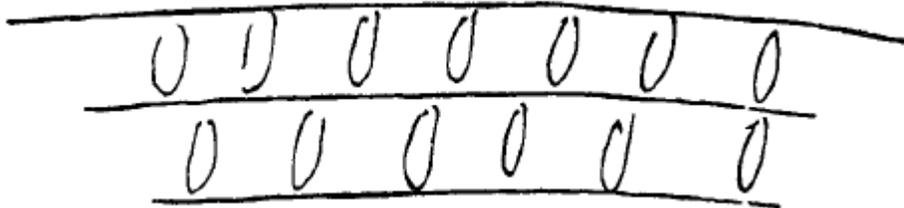
The many distinct firm ridges on a slope of the drift—as if the edges of so many distinct layers cropped out—form undulating parallel lines of great interest. Sometimes yet smaller hollows or cradles, not reaching to the ice and at right angles with the low ridges of the drift, remind you of panelling. Again these oval hollows

42. Upon the [secession](#) of South Carolina from the federal union, [William Elliott](#), who up to that point had been a political opponent of nullification, would opt to side with the Confederacy. He had been an opponent of secession only because he was fearful that the economy of the South would be inadequate to sustain independence — his had never been a principled opposition to secession, for he had never had the slightest qualm about race [slavery](#), believing that the South’s peculiar institution was “sanctioned by religion, conducive to good morals, and useful, nay indispensable.”

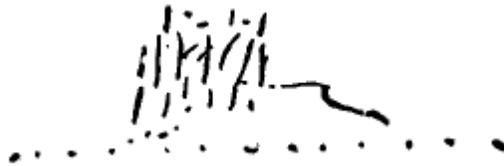
RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

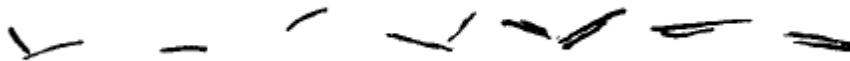
produce a regular reticulation.



One hour you have bare ice; the next, a level counterpane of snow; and the next, the wind has tossed and sculptured it into these endless and varied forms. It is such a scene as Boothia Felix may present,—if that is any wilder than Concord. I go sliding over the few bare spots, getting a foothold for my run on the very thin sloping and ridged snow. The snow is not thus drifted in fields and meadows generally, but chiefly where there was an icy foundation on which it slid readily. The whole of the snow has evidently shifted, perhaps several times, and you cannot tell whether some slight ridges an inch high are the foundation of a drift just laid or the relics of one removed. Behind a tuft of bushes it is collected deep, thus:



I forgot to say that all the ice between the rosettes was thinly sprinkled with very slender grain-like spiculae, sometimes two together.



The sky was all overcast, but the sun's place quite distinct. The cloud about the sun had a cold, dry, windy look, as if the cloud, elsewhere homogeneous cold slaty, were there electrified and arranged like iron-filings about the sun, its fibres, so to speak, more or less raying from the sun as a centre.

About 3 P.M. I noticed a distinct fragment of rainbow, about as long as wide, on each side of the sun, one north and the [other] south and at the same height above the horizon with the sun, all in a line parallel with the horizon; and, as I thought, there was a slight appearance of a bow.



The sun-dogs, if that is their name, were not so distinctly bright as an ordinary rainbow, but were plainly orange-yellow and a peculiar light violet-blue, the last color looking like a hole in the cloud, or a thinness through which you saw the sky. This lasted perhaps half an hour, and then a bow about the sun became quite distinct, but only those parts where the sun-dogs were were distinctly rainbow-tinted, the rest being merely reddish-brown and the clouds within finely raying from the sun more or less. But higher up, so that its centre would have been in

the zenith or apparently about in the zenith, was an arc of a distinct rainbow.



A rainbow right overhead. Is this what is called a parhelion?

It is remarkable that the straw-colored sedge of the meadows, which in the fall is one of the least noticeable colors, should, now that the landscape is mostly covered with snow, be perhaps the most noticeable of all objects in it for its color, and an agreeable contrast to the snow.

I frequently see where oak leaves, absorbing the heat of the sun, have sunk into the ice an inch in depth and afterward been blown out, leaving a perfect type of the leaf with its petiole and lobes sharply cut, with perfectly upright sides, so that I can easily tell the species of oak that made it. Sometimes these moulds have been evenly filled with snow while the ice is dark, and you have the figure of the leaf in white.

I see where some meadow mouse—if not mole—just came to the surface of the snow enough to break it with his back for three or four inches, then put his head out and at once withdrew it.

We walked, as usual, on the fresh track of a fox, peculiarly pointed, and sometimes the mark of two toenails in front separate from the track of the foot in very thin snow.



And as we were kindling a fire on the pond by the side of the island, we saw the fox himself at the inlet of the river. He was busily examining along the sides of the pond by the button-bushes and willows, smelling in the snow. Not appearing to regard us much, he slowly explored along the shore of the pond thus, half-way round it; at Pleasant Meadow, evidently looking for mice (or moles ?) in the grass of the bank, smelling in the shallow snow there amid the stubble, often retracing his steps and pausing at particular spots. He was eagerly searching for food, intent on finding some mouse to help fill his empty stomach. He had a blackish tail and blackish feet. Looked lean and stood high. The tail peculiarly large for any creature to carry round. He stepped daintily about, softly, and is more to the manor born than a dog. It was a very arctic scene this cold day, and I suppose he would hardly have ventured out in a warm one.

The fox seems to get his living by industry and perseverance. He runs smelling for miles along the most favorable routes, especially the edge of rivers and ponds, until he smells the track of a mouse beneath the snow or the fresh track of a partridge, and then follows it till he comes upon his game. After exploring thus a great many quarters, after hours of fruitless search, he succeeds. There may be a dozen partridges resting in the snow within a square mile, and his work is simply to find them with the aid of his nose. Compared with the dog, he affects me as high-bred, unmixed. There is nothing of the mongrel in him. He belongs to a noble family which has seen its best days,—a younger son. Now and then he starts, and turns and doubles on his track, as if he heard or scented danger. (I watch him through my glass.) He does not mind us at the distance of only sixty rods. I have myself seen one place where a mouse came to the surface to-day in the snow. Probably he has smelt out many such galleries. Perhaps he seizes them through the snow.

I had a transient vision of one mouse this winter, and that the first for a number of years.

I have seen a good many of those snails left on the ice during the late thaw, as the caterpillars, etc., were.





RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

April 23, Monday: A relative of Stewart Taylor, Jacob L. Taylor of Pine Orchard, Canada West, wrote to Richard J. Hinton that Stewart had been “heart and soul in the anti-slavery cause. An excellent debater and very fond of studying history. He stayed at home, in Canada, for the winter of 1858-1859, and then went to [Chicago](#), thence to Bloomington, [Illinois](#), and thence to [Harpers Ferry](#). He was a very good phonographer [stenographer], rapid and accurate. He was overcome with distress when, getting out of communication with the [John Brown](#) movement, he thought for a time that he was to be left out.”



### [THOREAU MADE NO ENTRY IN HIS JOURNAL FOR APRIL 23d]

May 9, Wednesday: The New-York [Tribune](#) had an advert for [James Redpath](#)'s ECHOES OF HARPER'S FERRY, a volume about the raid by Captain [John Brown](#) on [Harpers Ferry](#) which contained [Henry Thoreau](#)'s “A Plea for Captain John Brown” and his “Remarks at Concord on the Day of the Execution of John Brown.”

J(ames) M(atthew) Barrie was born in Kirriemuir, [Scotland](#).

Samuel Griswold Goodrich, best known under the pen name “Peter Parley,” died in New-York.

[Sarah Rotch Arnold](#) died at [New Bedford](#), Massachusetts.

[Thoreau](#) was being written to by L.L. & C.H. Smith in New-York, for a large supply of plumbago.

*New York May 9<sup>th</sup>/60  
Mr H. D. Thorreau  
Dear Sir  
Please*



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

*send as soon as possible*  
*One Hundred pounds*  
*of Black Lead.*  
*Yours Truly,*  
*L.L. & C. H. Smith*  
*Late L. [J.] Smith*



May 9. River five and three fourths inches below summer level.

I think I heard a bobolink this forenoon.

A boy brought me what I take to be a very red *Rana sylvatica*, caught on the leaves the 6th.

Have had no fire for more than a fortnight, and no greatcoat since April 19th.

Fir balsam bloom. Sugar maple blossoms are now a tender yellow; in prime, say 11th. Thousands of dandelions along the meadow by the Mill Brook, behind R. W. E.'s, in prime, say 10th. [By the 18th are much concealed by grass.]

P.M. — To Flint's Pond.

It is a still, cloudy, thoughtful day.

Oven-bird, how long? In Ebby Hubbard's wood, I climb to a hole in a dead white pine, a dozen feet up, and see by the gray fur about the edge of the hole that it probably has been used by the gray squirrel. Maryland yellow-throat.

We sit by the shore of Goose Pond. The tapping of a woodpecker sounds distinct and hollow this still cloudy day, as not before for a long time, and so do the notes of birds, as if heard against a background for a relief, e.g. the cackle of the pigeon woodpecker, the note of the jay, the scratching in the dry leaves of three or four chewinks near us (for they are not shy), about the pond, under the blueberry bushes. The water is smooth. After sitting there a little while, I count the noses of twenty frogs within a couple of rods, which have ventured to come to the surface again, — so quietly that I did not see one come up. At the fox-hole by Britton's Hollow there are some three cart-buck-loads of sand cast out.

That large pine-tree moss that makes beds on the ground, now fruiting, when I brush my hand over its fruit is surprisingly stiff and elastic like wires.

Yellow lily pads begun to spread out on some pools, but hardly yet on the river; say 10th on river.

Golden robin.

The wall by the road at the bars north of Cyrus Smith's chestnut grove is very firmly bound together by the *Rhus Toxicodendron* which has overrun it, for twenty feet in length. Would it not be worth the while to encourage its growth for this purpose, if you are not afraid of being poisoned? It runs up by small root-like stems, which cling close and flat to the wall, and which intertwine and seem to take a new start from the top of the wall (as from the ground), where the stems are generally larger than below, so that it is in fact a row of this rhus growing on the top of the wall to some three or four feet above it, and by its rooty stems binding the stones very firmly together. How much better this than sods on a wall!

Of that early *sedge* in Everett's meadow, [*Carex stricta*.] the top-most spikes are already effete; say a week, then. I see a second amelanchier with a distinct pink or rosaceous tinge like an apple blossom. Elm seed has begun to fall.

Cattle going up country for ten days past. [Yes, and the 14th.] You must keep your gate shut.



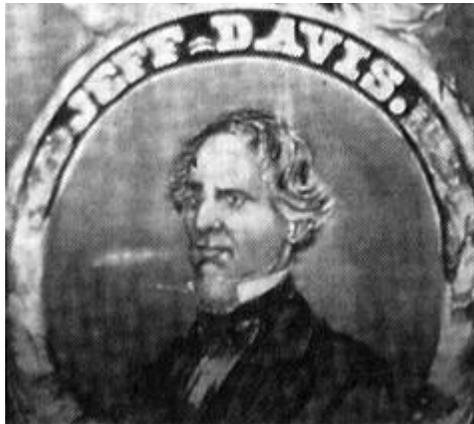
## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

June 15, Friday: Missouri state Governor Jackson, and other southern sympathizers, evacuated Jefferson City, the Missouri state capital.

The select investigatory committee of the [Secret "Six"](#) affair, chaired by Virginia Democratic Senator [James Mason](#) submitted its final report to the US Senate, and this report was recorded in the [Congressional Globe](#) of the 36th Congress, 1st Session, Part IV, beginning on page 3,006.

Senators [James Mason](#), [Jefferson Davis](#), and Graham N. Fitch, constituting the majority, reported that:



“The invasion (to call it so) by [John Brown](#) and his followers at [Harpers Ferry](#) was in no sense of that character. It was simply the act of lawless ruffians, under the sanction of no public or political authority distinguishable only from ordinary companies by the ulterior ends in contemplation by them, and by the fact that the money to maintain the expedition, and the large armament they brought with them, had been contributed and furnished by the citizens of other states of the union, under circumstances that must continue to jeopardy the safety and peace of the southern states, and against which congress has no power to legislate. If the several states, whether from motives of policy or a desire to preserve the peace of the union, if not from fraternal feeling, do not hold it incumbent on them, after the experience of the country, to guard in future by appropriate legislation against occurrences similar to the one here inquired into, the committee can find no guarantee elsewhere for the security of peace between the states of the union.”

The report may seem anticlimactic, if one presumes that the Senator had been intent on fixing the blame for an attempt to begin a servile insurrection. However, if one presumes instead that the agenda of the Senator had been to reassure himself that the [John Brown](#) raid on the federal arsenal at [Harpers Ferry](#) had been **merely intended to key a futile servile insurrection**, a race war between whites and non-whites which of course the whites would win in short order with minimal disruption (since they had an all-white federal army and all-white state militia units at their disposal, with artillery and training and funding), and that there had been no direct federal involvement, to reassure himself **that the raid had not been intended to set off another class war of poor whites against rich whites**, a repeat of the immensely dangerous Bacon’s Rebellion of the 17th Century, and that the federal government had not been an instigator of this — then the reassuring report of this Select Committee on the Invasion of Harpers Ferry does not seem at all anticlimactic.<sup>43</sup>

This final report might as well have been exceedingly brief, “Don’t ask and we won’t have to know,” except that a report that was uncharacteristically brief might have aroused suspicion.<sup>44</sup>



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR



June 15. 2 P.M.—River four and one half above summer level.

For some time I have not heard toads by day, [But rarely.] and not for a long time in numbers; yet they still ring at night. Perhaps it is entirely a matter of temperature,—that in June and maybe the latter half of May (?) they require the coolness of the evening to arouse them. The hylodes appear to have done. I paddle to Clamshell.

Notice the down of the white willow near the bridge, twenty rods off, whitening Sassafras Shore for two or three rods like a dense white foam. It is all full of little seeds not sprouted, is as dense as fur, and has first blown fifteen rods overland. This is a late willow to ripen, but the black willow shows no down yet, *as I notice*. It is very conspicuously white along the shore, a foot or two wide,—a dense downy coat or fleece on the water. Has blown northeast.

See froth about the base of some grass in a meadow. The large early wool-grass of the meadows will shed pollen in a day or two—can see stamens—on Hosmer's Flat shore. This it is grows in circles.

As I stood there I heard that peculiar hawk-like (for rhythm) but more resonant or clanging kind of scream which I may have heard before this year, plover-like, indefinitely far,—over the Clamshell plain. After proceeding half a dozen rods toward the hill, I heard the familiar willet note of the upland plover [**Upland Sandpiper** ■ *Bartramia longicauda*] and, looking up, saw one standing erect—like a large tell-tale, or chicken with its head stretched up—on the rail fence. After a while it flew off southwest and low, then wheeled and went a little higher down the river. Of pigeon size, but quick quivering wings. Finally rose higher and flew more or less zigzag, as if uncertain where it would alight, and at last, when almost out of sight, it pitched down into a field near Cyrus Hubbard's. It was the same note I heard so well on Cape Cod in July, '55, and probably the same I heard in the Shawsheen valley, May 15, 1858. I suspect, then, that it breeds here.

---

43. Joel Silbey has contended, in "The Civil War Synthesis in American History," that postbellum American historians have been misconstruing antebellum American politics by viewing them in conjunction with our knowledge of the bloodbath that followed. It is only after the fact that we can "know" that the US Civil War amounted to a sectional dispute, North versus South. We avoid learning that before the fact, it was undecided whether this conflict was going to shape up as a race conflict, a class conflict, or a sectional conflict. We avoid knowing that the raid on Harpers Ferry might have resulted in a race war, in which peoples of color would be exterminated in order to create an all-white America, or might have resulted in a class war, in which the laboring classes might have first destroyed the plantation owners' equity by killing his slaves, and then gone on to purge the nation of the white plantation owners themselves, with their privileged-class endowments.

44. The report as it exists seems, unlike the Warren Report, never to have raised anyone's suspicions, despite the fact that it is inherently more dubious than any bullet theory the Warren Commission came up with in their foreordained determination to discover and proclaim that no foreign government had been involved in the assassination of JFK. Strange, huh? See Keith A. Sutherland's "The Senate Investigates Harpers Ferry," *Prologue* 8 (Winter 1996):192-207 and "Senate. Select Committee on the Harpers Ferry Invasion." *MASS VIOLENCE IN AMERICA: INVASION AT HARPERS FERRY* (reprint NY: Arno Press, 1969).

[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

The button-bush is now fairly green.



The *Carex stricta* tufts are now as large as ever, and, the culms falling over, they are like great long-haired heads, now drooping around the great tussocks. I know of no other sedge that make so massive and conspicuous a tussock, yet with a slender leaf. This the one that reflects the peculiar glaucous sheen from its bent surfaces.

The turtles are apparently now in the midst of their laying. I go looking for them, to see where they have left the water for this purpose. See a snapping turtle whose shell is about ten inches long making her hole on the top of the sand-bank at the steam-mill site, within four rods of the road. She pauses warily at sound of my boat, but I should have mistaken her for a dark stone if she had [not] lifted her snout above her shell. I went to her as she lay and hissed by the hole at 4 P. M. It was about three and a half inches across, and not perpendicular but chiefly on one side; say five inches deep (as yet), and four plus inches wide beneath, but only about one inch of the bottom exposed when you looked straight down,—in short, like the common *Emys picta*'s hole. She had copiously wet the ground before or while digging, as the *picta* does. Saw two or three similar holes made by her afterward. There was her broad track (some ten inches wide) up the sandy or gravelly bank, and I saw where she had before dug, or begun to dig, within a rod of this, but had retreated to the river. I withdrew to the bridge to observe her (not having touched her), but she took the occasion to hasten to the river.

A thunder-shower in the north goes down the Merrimack.

We have had warmer weather for several days, say since 12th. A new season begun,—daily baths, thin coat, etc. [Heat probably about 85° at 2 P.M. Vide (below).]

The bullfrogs now *commonly* trump at night, and the mosquitoes are now really troublesome.



→ Our national birthday, Wednesday the 4th of July: [Nathaniel Hawthorne](#)'s 56th birthday.



[Henry Thoreau](#) had been invited to speak at the [John Brown](#) Memorial Celebration in [North Elba, New York](#) on the 1st anniversary of the symbolic day on which the raid on the federal arsenal at [Harpers Ferry](#) had been intended to go down. (The secretary of the meeting, [Richard J. Hinton](#), had stopped off in Concord on his way in order to pick up a copy of something that Thoreau had written for the occasion, so it could be read *in absentia* at the meeting.)

On an entirely appropriate day for a bloodthirsty and inspired patriot citizen, [John Brown](#) was therefore being celebrated *in absentia* in North Elba NY, and Thoreau's "The Last Days of John Brown" was being read *in absentia* by R.J. Hinton.



But now there is Charles Joyner's "'Guilty of Holiest Crime': The Passion of John Brown" in Paul Finkelman, ed. HIS SOUL GOES MARCHING ON: RESPONSES TO JOHN BROWN AND THE HARPERS FERRY RAID (Charlottesville VA: UP of Virginia, 1995, pages 296-334, page 324): Relying upon the Bradford Torrey and Franklin B. Sanborn edition of THE WRITINGS OF HENRY DAVID THOREAU published in 1894 and 1895 and reprinted in 1906, Volume X, pages 237-48, Joyner writes:



On Independence Day, Henry David Thoreau spoke at Brown's burial place. "The North, I mean the LIVING North, was suddenly all transcendental," he noted. "It went beyond the human law, it went beyond the apparent failure, and recognized eternal justice and glory." Thoreau echoed Emerson's disparagement of those who



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

failed to see Brown's nobility. "When a noble deed is done, who is likely to appreciate it? Those who are noble themselves," he declared. "How can a man behold the light who has no inward light?" Thoreau asked. Brown's detractors, he charged, could not even **recite** poetry, let alone write it. "Show me a man who feels bitterly towards John Brown, and let me hear what noble verse he can repeat. He'll be as dumb as if his lips were stone."

The Alexandria, Virginia Gazette published a chronology of notable 4th-of-July events occurring in that town from 1800 to 1860. (I haven't seen this list, but presumably, the last item on this list would have been: "In 1860, the Alexandria, Virginia Gazette published a chronology of notable 4th-of-July events occurring in that town from 1800 to 1860.")

In Jamestown, New York, the Museum Society, made up of children between the ages of ten and fifteen, took charge of the celebration because most of the town adults were off in Randolph, New York, celebrating.

### CELEBRATING OUR B-DAY



July 4. Gentle rain in the night (last).

The white pine shoot which on the 19th of June had grown sixteen and a quarter inches and on the 27th twenty and three quarters is now twenty-three and an eighth inches long.

2 P.M.—Look at springs toward Dugan's and White Pond.

Standing on J.P. Brown's land, south side, I observed his rich and luxuriant uncut grass-lands northward, now waving under the easterly wind. It is a beautiful Camilla, sweeping like waves of light and shade over the whole breadth of his land, like a low steam curling over it, imparting wonderful life to the landscape, like the light and shade of a changeable garment, waves of light and shade pursuing each other over the whole breadth of the landscape like waves hastening to break on a shore. It is an interesting feature, very easily overlooked, and suggests that we are wading and navigating at present in a sort of sea of grass, which yields and undulates under the wind like water; and so, perchance, the forest is seen to do from a favorable position.

None of his fields is cut yet.

Early, there was that flashing light of waving pine in the horizon; now, the Camilla on grass and grain.

Juncus bufonius, probably several days in some places.

The sedgy hollows, table-lands, and frosty places in the woods now most beautiful, the sedge most fresh and yellowish-green, a soft, dry bed to recline on. For example, that place south of Ledum Swamp, the sedge, especially in the old path, falling every way like cowlicks on an unkempt head. When we enter it from the west, with the sun shining between thundery clouds, it is all lit with a blaze of yellow light, like a pasture on Mt. Washington, nearer the sun than usual.

How beautiful the dark-green oak leaves now! How dark the chincapin oak leaves! Now the pines are almost indistinguishable by color amid the deciduous trees.

The large johnswort now begins to be noticed generally,—a July yellow.

Scared up a young bobolink, which flies a couple of rods only.

A few toads still ring at evening, and I still notice, on the rocks at White Pond, the pine pollen yellowing them, though it fell some time ago.

7 P.M., river is one and three eighths above summer level.

[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1861

In Boston, [Mary Ann Shadd Cary](#) published A VOICE FROM HARPER'S FERRY: A NARRATIVE OF EVENTS AT HARPER'S FERRY; WITH INCIDENTS PRIOR AND SUBSEQUENT TO ITS CAPTURE BY CAPTAIN BROWN AND HIS MEN, BY [OSBORN P. ANDERSON](#).



There is evidence that she began a “fancy goods” store in Boston in about this period, a store that would be in existence at least until 1871.

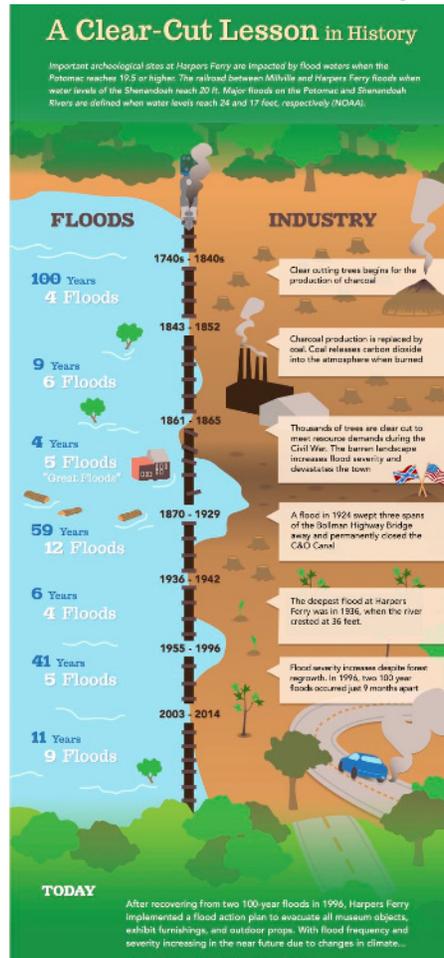
The problem of flooding at [Harpers Ferry](#) was becoming more and more chronic, but of course no one as yet



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

had any notion that the problem was human-caused, or that it was going to become more and more persistent:



# RACE WAR,

# NOT CIVIL WAR

To destroy an invasion route between South and North, the bridge at [Harpers Ferry](#) was blown up and burned:



[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1862

September: Union General McClellan defeated Confederate [General Robert E. Lee](#) at South Mountain and Crampton's Gap, but did not move quickly enough to save [Harpers Ferry](#) — which fell to Confederate General Jackson at mid-month along with a great number of men and a large body of supplies.



The family of the Reverend [Moncure Daniel Conway](#) purchased the former home of the deceased Reverend Barzillai Frost near the railroad depot in Concord MA. The home, which is now 235 Main Street, is described as “a large two-story, four-thousand-dollar home.” Conway would commute daily on the Boston/Fitchburg line through Concord to the offices of his [Commonwealth](#) newspaper in Boston.

September 12, Friday: Confederate General Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson began a sudden 51-mile troop movement by which he would capture the federal garrison at [Harpers Ferry](#). They would bag thousands of troops and tons of supplies.



US CIVIL WAR



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

September 15, Monday: The 12,000 Federal soldiers in the garrison at [Harpers Ferry](#) surrendered to the Confederates. The Rebels would be able to round up hundreds of “contrabands” who had gathered under the protection of this Union garrison, and promptly march them back south and back into slavery.

[Charles Wilkes](#) received an appointment as an acting Rear Admiral.

**US CIVIL WAR**

October 1/2: Following the Battle of Antietam, President [Abraham Lincoln](#) reviewed the federal troops and fortifications at [Harpers Ferry](#). He spent the night at the “Commanding Officer’s Quarters” on Camp Hill – the former residence of the Armory superintendent – and the next morning traveled over to [Maryland Heights](#).

Brigadier General John Finegan established a battery on St. John’s Bluff near Jacksonville, [Florida](#) to stop the movement of Federal ships up the St. Johns River. Brigadier General John M. had Brannan embarked on September 30th with about 1,500 infantry aboard the transports *Boston*, *Ben DeFord*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Neptune* at Hilton Head SC. The flotilla arrived at the mouth of the St. John’s River on October 1st, where Commander Charles Steedman’s gunboats –*Paul Jones*, *Cimarron*, *Uncas*, *Patroon*, *Hale*, and *Water Witch*– joined them. By midday, the gunboats approached the bluff, while Brannan began landing troops at Mayport Mills. Another infantry force landed at Mount Pleasant Creek, about five miles in the rear of the Confederate battery, and on the 2nd began marching overland. Outmaneuvered, Lieutenant Colonel Charles F. Hopkins abandoned the position after dark. When the gunboats would approach the bluff the next day, the 3rd of October, its guns would be silent.





**RACE WAR,**

**NOT CIVIL WAR**

**1867**

October 2, Wednesday: At the end of the civil war the US federal government had disposed of what was left of its [Harpers Ferry](#) armory and arsenal and other property. Efforts to rebuild the commercial base of the town had been disrupted by frequent and severe flooding. However, the Reverend Dr. Nathan Cook Brackett had established a Freewill Baptist primary school in the Lockwood House on Camp Hill, as a school for freedmen. When at this point John Storer of Sanford, Maine provided \$10,000 toward the establishment of a school in the South that would be open to all regardless of sex, race, or religion, this freedmen's school was unleashed to evolve into a small, church-owned school for black Americans, renamed "Storer Normal School." Meanwhile the upper, dryer portion of the town would be benefiting from a growing tourism: by the turn of the century up to 28 trainloads per day of day-trippers would be visiting, to review the famously titilating history of that place.

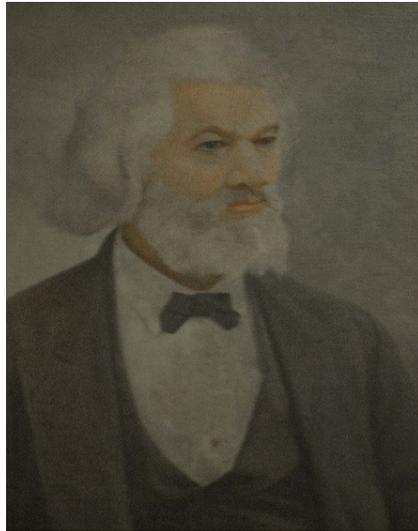


RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1869

December: The US federal government formally conveyed the Lockwood House at [Harpers Ferry](#) and 3 other still-extant Armory residences on high-and-dry Camp Hill to the trustees of Storer Normal School. [Frederick Douglass](#) would serve as a trustee of Storer College and in 1881 would deliver a memorable oration there about [John Brown](#).



[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

# RACE WAR,

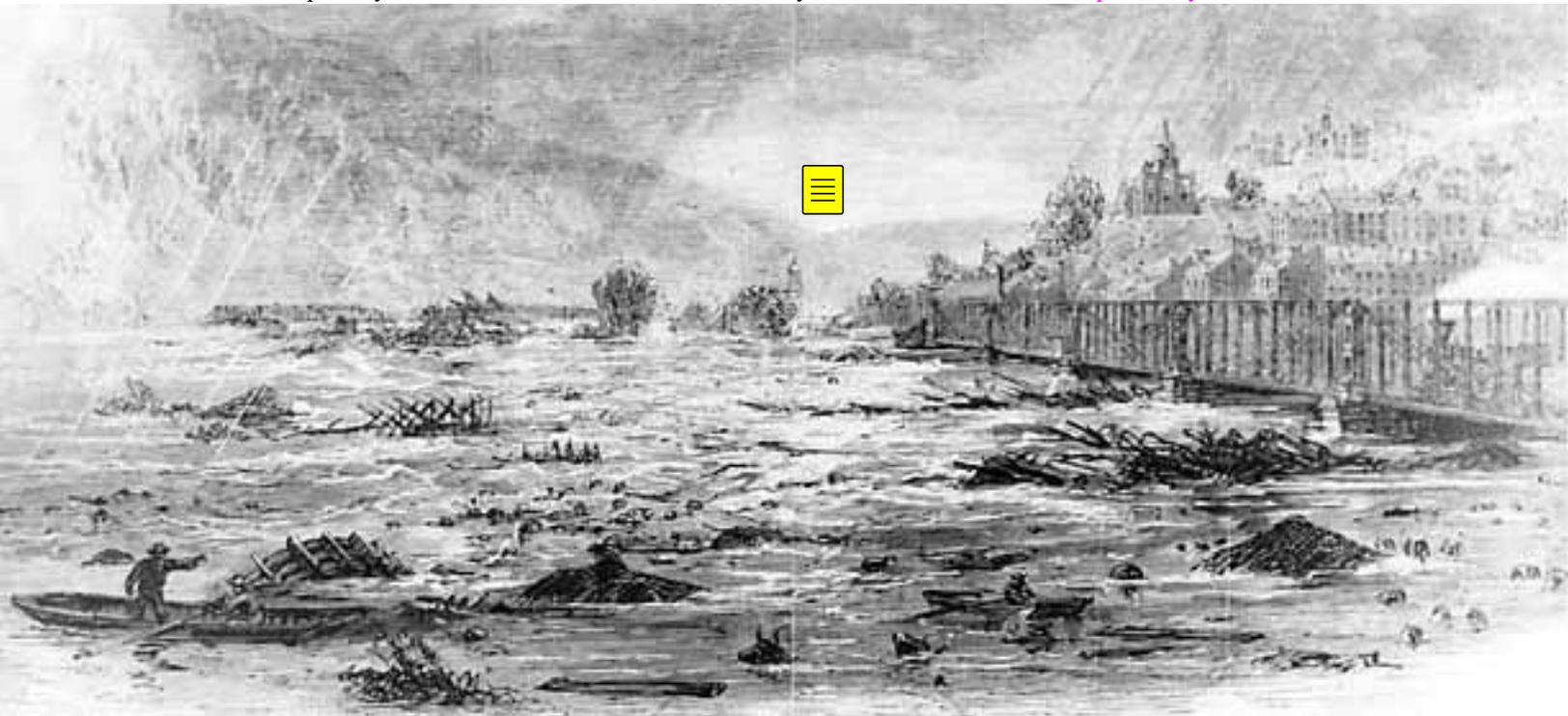
# NOT CIVIL WAR

## 1870

September 30, Friday: Hugo Wolf began piano lessons at the school of the Styrian Musical Association, Graz. His teacher was Johann Buwa.

Giuseppe Verdi wrote to his friend Countess Clarina Maffei of the current conflict, “This disaster to France fills my heart, as it does yours, with desolation. It was true that the blague, the impertinence, the presumption of the French were and were, despite all their misfortunes, unbearable: but after all France gave liberty and civilization to the modern world. And if she falls, let us not deceive ourselves, all our liberties and civilizations will fall. Let our literary men, and our politicians sing as they will the praises of the knowledge, the sciences and even (God forgive them) the arts of these victors; but if they looked a bit more closely, they would see that in their veins the old Gothic blood still flows; that they were of boundless pride, hard, intolerant, contemptuous of all that was not Germanic, and of a rapacity without limit. Men of head, but without heart; a strong race, but not civilized.”

The Shenandoah River was rising so rapidly that residents were trapped on Virginius Island. Floodwaters swept away much of the island’s homes and industry and claimed 42 lives at [Harpers Ferry](#).



(One wonders if this had anything to do with the supremely deadly hurricane that is known to have struck [Cuba](#) on October 7/8, in which although only 136 are known to have died, in which perhaps a total of 2,000 may

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

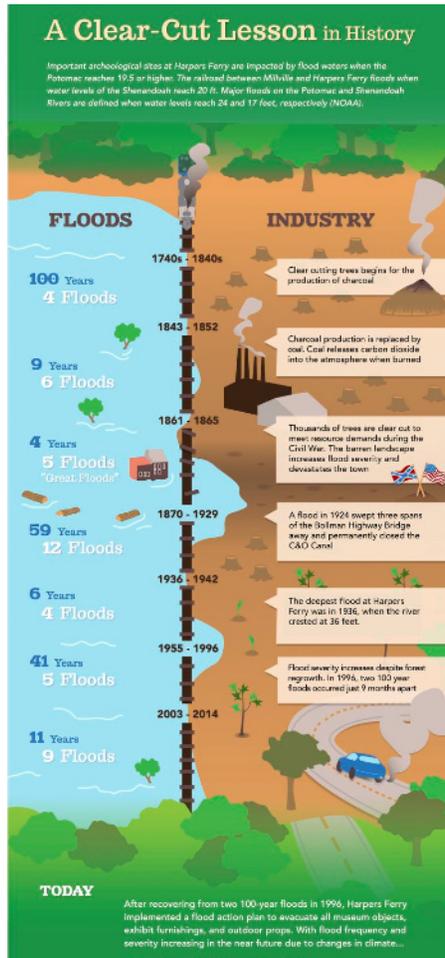
actually have died.)

HURRICANES



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR





RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1872

July: During this month [Franklin Benjamin Sanborn](#) had an article “John Brown and His Friends” in [The Atlantic Monthly](#) about the [Harpers Ferry](#) raid:

At the beginning of the year 1858, nobody in Massachusetts, except here and there a fugitive slave perhaps, had heard of [John Brown](#)'s plan for the invasion of Virginia though he had made much progress toward its execution. He had enlisted men and engaged the English Garibaldian, [Hugh Forbes](#), to drill them; but this engagement was quite unknown to [John Brown](#)'s Massachusetts friends, who had never seen [Hugh Forbes](#), and only heard of him casually and incidentally. They had never been consulted by [John Brown](#) in regard to paying [Hugh Forbes](#), nor, of course, had [John Brown](#) given [Hugh Forbes](#) any assurances that they would pay him the salary stipulated, between [Hugh Forbes](#) and [John Brown](#); of which in fact, they knew nothing whatever. It was therefore with much surprise and mystification that, about Christmas-time, 1857, Dr. S.G. Howe and Mr. Sanborn began to receive passionate and denunciatory letters, written by [Hugh Forbes](#), complaining of ill-treatment at their hands, and assuming to hold them responsible for the termination of his engagement with [John Brown](#), by which, he said, he had been reduced to poverty, and his family in Paris, deprived of pecuniary aid from him, had suffered great hardship. Two of these letters were addressed to Senator Sumner, and were forwarded by him to Dr. Howe and Mr. Sanborn, who in great ignorance as to what such abusive epistles meant, answered them with some curtness and severity. This correspondence temporarily closed in January, 1858, and the substance of it was communicated to [John Brown](#), then in Kansas, with the request that he would explain the meaning of [Hugh Forbes](#)'s anger, and state what their real relations with each other were. Before replying to this request, which probably was not received till weeks afterward, [John Brown](#) suddenly left Kansas without the knowledge of his friends there, and appeared, in the beginning of February, 1858, at the house of [Frederick Douglass](#) in Rochester, New York. From there he wrote, February 2, to Theodore Parker, George L. Stearns, F.B. Sanborn, and Thomas Wentworth Higginson, asking them to aid him in raising a small sum of money to carry out “an important measure in which the world has a deep interest.” This, he tells Mr. Parker, is his only errand at the East, and he goes on: “I have written some of our mutual friends in regard to it, but none of them understand my views so well as you do, and I cannot explain without their committing themselves more than I know of their doing. I have heard that Parker Pillsbury, and some others, in your quarter, hold out ideas similar to those on which I act, but I have no personal acquaintance with them, and know nothing of their influence or means. Do you think any of our Garrisonian



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

friends, either at Boston, Worcester, or in any other place, can be induced to supply a little 'straw,' if I will absolutely make 'bricks'? I must beg of you to consider this communication strictly confidential, unless you know of parties who will feel and act and hold their peace."<sup>45</sup>

[John Brown](#)'s letters of the same date and for a few weeks after, to Colonel Higginson and Mr. Sanborn, were of a similar tenor, though rather more explicit, but they conveyed no distinct intimation of his plans. He wrote to Higginson, February 2, from Rochester: "I am here, concealing my whereabouts for good reasons (as I think), not, however, from any anxiety about my personal safety. I have been told that you are both a true *man* and a true *abolitionist*, and I partly believe the whole story. Last fall I undertook to raise from five hundred to one thousand dollars for *secret service*, and succeeded in getting five hundred dollars. I now want to get, for the perfecting of *by far* the most important undertaking of my whole life, from five hundred to eight hundred dollars within the next sixty days. I have written Rev. Theodore Parker, George L. Stearns, and F.B. Sanborn, Esquires, on the subject, but do not know as either Mr. Stearns or Mr. Sanborn are abolitionists. I suppose they are." On the 12th of February he wrote again in response to a remark in Higginson's reply about the Underground Railroad in Kansas: "Railroad business on a somewhat extended scale is the identical object for which I am trying to get means. I have been connected with that business, *as commonly conducted*, from my boyhood, and never let an opportunity slip. I have been operating to some purpose the past season, but I now have a measure on foot that I feel sure would awaken in you something more than a common interest, if you could understand it. I have just written my friends G.L. Stearns and F.B. Sanborn, asking them to meet me for consultation at ----. I am very anxious to have you come along, certain as I feel that you will never regret having been one of the council." It was inconvenient for any of the persons addressed to take the long journey proposed, and on the 13th Mr. Sanborn wrote for himself and Mr. Stearns, inviting [John Brown](#) to visit Boston, and offering to pay his travelling expenses. To this request [John Brown](#) replied, February 17th: "It would be almost impossible for me to pass through Albany, Springfield MA, or any of those parts, on my way to Boston, and not have it known; and my reasons for keeping quiet are such that, when I left Kansas, I kept it from every friend there; and I suppose it is still understood that I am hiding somewhere in the Territory; and such will be the idea until it comes to be generally known that I am in these parts. I want to continue that impression as long as I can, or for the present. I want very much to see Mr. Stearns, and also Mr. Parker, and it may be that I can before long; but I must decline accepting your kind offer at present, and, sorry as I am to do so, ask you both

---

45. Weiss's LIFE OF THEODORE PARKER, Vol. II. pp. 163,164.



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

to meet me by the middle of next week at the furthest. I wrote Mr. Higginson of Worcester to meet me also. It may be he would come on with you. My reasons for keeping still are sufficient to keep me from seeing my wife and children, much as I long to do so. I will endeavor to explain when I see you." This letter was written from Rochester.

There was no doubt in the mind of Mr. Sanborn that the promised explanation would clear up the mystery of [Hugh Forbes](#)'s letters, which had grieved as well as annoyed him and the few friends of [John Brown](#) in Boston who had seen them. Therefore, when Mr. Stearns was still unable to accept this second and pressing request from [John Brown](#) for a meeting in Central New York, Mr. Sanborn determined to go, and invited Colonel Higginson to join him at Worcester on the 20th, but in fact he made the journey alone, and reached the place of meeting on the evening of Washington's birthday, February 22d. A few friends of [John Brown](#) were there gathered, among them another Massachusetts man, Mr. Edwin Morton of Plymouth, now of Boston, but then residing in the family of Mr. [Gerrit Smith](#) as tutor and private secretary.<sup>46</sup> In the long winter evening which followed, the whole outline of [John Brown](#)'s campaign in Virginia was laid before the little council, to the astonishment and almost the dismay of all present. The constitution which he had drawn up for the government of his men, and such territory as they might occupy, and which was found among his papers at the Kennedy Farm, was exhibited by [John Brown](#), its provisions recited and explained, the proposed movements of his men indicated, and the middle of May was named as the time of the attack. To begin this hazardous adventure he asked for but eight hundred dollars, and would think himself rich with a thousand. Being questioned and opposed by his friends, he laid before them in detail his methods of organization and fortification; of settlement in the South, if that were possible, and of retreat through the North, if necessary; and his theory of the way in which such an invasion would be received in the country at large. He desired from his Massachusetts friends a patient hearing of his statements, a candid opinion concerning them, and, if that were favorable, then that they should co-operate with him and persuade others to do so. This was the important business which he had to communicate on the anniversary of Washington's birthday.

---

46. [Edwin Morton](#) and [Sanborn](#) had been classmates at [Harvard College](#), where they graduated in 1855, and have ever since been intimate friends and correspondents. Much of the subsequent correspondence with [John Brown](#) and his friends passed through their hands, and it is probable they may have the key to anything that is still unexplained in the movements of Captain [John Brown](#), during the twenty months that followed the February conference about to be described. Both were young men, Sanborn being twenty-six and Morton a year younger; and both had been abolitionists from boyhood. Both also were of unmixed New England descent, as [John Brown](#) was; Morton being descended from a kinsman of Nathaniel Morton, the first secretary of Plymouth Colony, and his friend from the founder and first minister of the old New Hampshire plantation of Hampton. The other Massachusetts members of [John Brown](#)'s secret committee, Parker, Higginson, Stearns, and Howe were of the same Puritan ancestry; and it may be worth mentioning that while Higginson's earliest American ancestor was the first minister of Salem, Sanborn's ancestor, Rev. Stephen Bachiler, was the first minister of Lynn, and probably had among his parishioners there, in 1635-36, Thomas Parker, the first American ancestor of Theodore Parker.



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

After what has passed in the last ten years, no one can picture to himself the startling effect of such a plan, heard for the first time in the dismal days of Buchanan's administration, when Floyd was Secretary of War, and [Jefferson Davis](#) and Senator Mason omnipotent in Congress. Those who listened to Captain [John Brown](#) had been familiar with the bold plots and counter-plots of the Kansas border, and had aided the escape of slaves in various parts of the South. But to strike at once at the existence of slavery, by an organized force, acting for years, if need be, on the dubious principles of guerilla warfare, and exposed, perhaps, to the whole power of the country, was something they had never contemplated. That was the long-meditated plan of a poor, obscure, old man, uncertain at best of another ten years' lease of life, and yet calmly proposing an enterprise which, if successful, might require a whole generation to accomplish. His friends listened until late at night, proposing objections and raising difficulties, but nothing shook the purpose of the old Puritan. To every objection he had an answer; every difficulty had been foreseen and provided for; the great difficulty of all, the apparent hopelessness of undertaking anything so vast with such slender means, he met with the words of Scripture, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" and "Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."

To all suggestions of delay until a more favorable time, he would reply, "I am nearly sixty years old; I have desired to do this work for many years; if I do not begin soon, it will be too late for me." He had made nearly all his arrangements; he had so many hundred weapons, so many men enlisted, all that he wanted was the small sum of money. With that he would open his campaign with the spring, and he did not doubt that his enterprise would pay. But those who heard him, while they looked upon the success of [John Brown](#)'s undertaking as a great blessing and relief to the country, felt also that to fail, contending against such odds, might hazard for many years the cause of freedom and union. They had not yet fully attained the sublime faith of [John Brown](#) when he said, "A few men in the right, and knowing they are right, can overturn a king. Twenty men in the Alleghanies could break slavery to pieces in two years."

On the 23d of February the discussion was renewed, and, as usually happened when he had time enough, Captain [John Brown](#) began to prevail over the objections of his friends. At any rate, they saw that they must either stand by him, or, leave him to dash himself in pieces alone against the fortress which he was determined to assault. To withhold aid would only delay him, not prevent him; nothing, short of betraying him to the enemy would do that. As the sun was setting over the snowy hills of the region where they met, the Massachusetts delegate walked for an hour with the principal person in the little council of war, leaving Captain [John Brown](#) to discuss religion with an old captain of Wellington's army who, by chance, was a guest in the



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

house. The elder of the two, of equal age with [John Brown](#) and for many years a devoted abolitionist, said, "You see how it is; our old friend has made up his mind to this course of action and cannot be turned from it. We cannot give him up to die alone; we must stand by him. I will raise so many hundred dollars for him; you must lay the case before your friends in Massachusetts and see if they will do the same. I see no other way." The same conclusion had been reached by his younger companion, for himself, and he engaged to bring the scheme at once to the attention of the three Massachusetts men to whom [John Brown](#) had written, and also of Dr. S. G. Howe, who had sometimes favored action almost as extreme as this proposed by [John Brown](#).

Sanborn returned to Boston on the 25th of February, and on the same day communicated the enterprise to Theodore Parker and Colonel Higginson. At the suggestion of Parker, [John Brown](#), who had gone to Brooklyn, New York, was invited to visit Boston secretly, and did so early in March, taking a room at the American House, in Hanover Street. He registered himself as "J. Brown," instead of writing out the customary "John" in full, and remained for the most part in his room (No. 126) during the four days of his stay. Parker was one of the first persons to call on him, and promised aid at once. He was deeply interested in the project, but not very sanguine of its success; he wished to see it tried, however, and gave [John Brown](#) substantial proof of his interest and support; while [John Brown](#) in return gave him the fullest confidence in respect to the whole movement. Parker left the country, never to return, early in the following year; but he was kept informed in a general way of the progress of the affair, and as late as September 29, 1859, three weeks before the outbreak at Harper's Ferry, he wrote to inquire what Captain [John Brown](#) was doing, and said: "I wish I had something now to drop into the hat for the same end. Tell me how our little speculation in wool goes on, and what dividend accrues therefrom."

Two years after the death of Parker, in 1860, one of his executors found among his papers this letter of [John Brown's](#), which has never been printed, written just before his visit to Boston, in March, 1858. It was not addressed to Mr. Parker, but had been sent to him by the person who received it.

-- N. Y. 24th Feb'y, 1858

MY DEAR FRIEND: -- Mr. X. has taken the liberty of saying to me that you felt half inclined to make a common cause with me. I *greatly rejoice* at this for I believe when you come to look at the *ample field* I labor in, and the rich harvest which (not only this entire country, but) the whole world during the present and future generations *may reap* from its successful cultivation, you will feel that you are out of your element, until you find you are in it, an entire unit. What an inconceivable amount of good you might so effect, by your *counsel*, your *example*, your *encouragement*, your *natural and acquired ability* for active



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

service. And then, how very little we can possibly lose? Certainly the cause is enough to *live* for, if not to ---- for. I have only had *this one* opportunity in a life of nearly sixty years; and could I be continued ten times as long again, I might not again have another equal opportunity. God has honored but comparatively a *very small* part of mankind with any possible chance for such mighty and soul-satisfying rewards. But, my dear friend, if you should make up your mind to do so, I trust it will be wholly from the promptings of your own spirit, after having *thoroughly counted* the cost. I would *flatter no man* into such a measure, if I could do it ever so easily.

I *expect nothing* but to "endure hardness," but I expect to effect a mighty conquest, even though it be like the last victory of Samson. I felt for a number of years *in earlier life*, a steady, strong desire to *die*, but since I saw any prospect of becoming a "reaper" in the great harvest, I have not only felt quite willing to *live*, but have enjoyed life much; and am now rather anxious to live for a *few* years more.

Your sincere Friend,

JOHN BROWN.<sup>47</sup>

In a collection of [John Brown's](#) letters, this would rank among the first for the light it sheds on his life and character. The reference to his longing for death in his youth is one of the few revelations made by him of his early mental struggles, and, no doubt, means that he was unfortunate in love, and in other ways found the world a melancholy place. His early religious experiences, occurring at the same period, must have deepened the sadness which sprang from disappointed affection; but the strength of his religious faith finally overcame it, and gave him peace of mind. The allusion to the last victory of Samson is repeated in one of his letters from prison, in November, 1859, when he wrote to his old schoolmaster, Rev. H. L. Vaill, "Had Samson kept to his determination of not telling Delilah wherein his great strength lay, he would probably have never overturned the house." This comparison of himself to Samson was not from vanity, but under a profound sense of a divine mission, like that of the Hebrew champion; and he never entered upon his dangerous expeditions in Kansas or elsewhere, without thoughts to which Milton has given utterance in his "Samson Agonistes":

--

"Happen what may, of me expect to hear  
Nothing dishonorable, impure, unworthy  
Our God, our law, my nation or myself, --  
The last of me or no I cannot warrant."

Captain [John Brown](#) reached Boston Thursday, March 4, 1858, and

---

47. The original of this letter is now in the possession of Mrs. Mary E. Stearns of Medford, the wife of George L. Stearns, who, not less than her lamented husband, was a generous and true friend of [John Brown](#). To her we are indebted for Brackett's noble bust of [John Brown](#), which stands in her house.



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

left it Monday, the 8th, for Philadelphia. On Friday and Saturday, in Boston, he had seen at his hotel Theodore Parker, Dr. Howe, Messrs Sanborn, Stearns, and Higginson, and perhaps one or two other persons. He kept himself private, however, and did not, as when he was in Boston a year before, go to the Sunday-evening reception at Mr. Parker's in Exeter Place, where he had met Mr. Garrison, Wendell Phillips, and other antislavery leaders in 1857. He therefore communicated with Parker on Sunday, March 7th, by letter; and this letter, an unusually long one for [John Brown](#), is printed in Weiss's "Life of Parker."<sup>48</sup> He begins by an apology for writing letters on Sunday, and goes on to ask Parker to draw up for him an address to the officers and soldiers of the United States Army, whom he soon expected to meet as opponents, as he had in Kansas. Such an address had been prepared six months before by [Hugh Forbes](#), and a copy sent to Parker; but [John Brown](#) was not satisfied with this, and in this letter gives directions for composing a better address, and also another paper "intended for all persons, old and young, male and female, slaveholding and non-slaveholding"; and a third tract "for every male and female" prisoner on being set at liberty, and to be read by them during confinement." It does not appear that Parker ever tried his hand at these papers, or that they were prepared by any person. It may be worth mentioning, however, that Parker sent [John Brown](#) from his library on this Sunday the report of McClellan on the European armies, which was then a new book, and was thought likely to be of service to [John Brown](#). At the same time [John Brown](#) praised Plutarch's Lives as a book he had read with great profit for its military and moral lessons, and particularly mentioned the life of Sertorius, the Roman commander who so long carried on a partisan warfare in Spain. He wished to get a few copies of Plutarch for his men to read in camp, and inquired particularly about the best edition.

Although [John Brown](#) communicated freely to the persons above named his plans of attack and defence in Virginia, it is not known that he spoke to more than one person in Boston of his purpose of surprising the arsenal and town of Harper's Ferry. Both Dr. Howe and Mr. Stearns testified before Mason's committee, in 1860, that they were ignorant of [John Brown](#)'s plan of attack, which was true so far as the place and manner of beginning the campaign were concerned. It is probable that in 1858 [John Brown](#) had not definitely resolved to seize Harper's Ferry, since, when he spoke of it to the person referred to, he put it as a question, and did not seem to have made up his mind to a course of action so immediately hazardous. He then argued that it would strike great terror into the whole slaveholding class to find that an armed force had strength enough to capture a place so important and so near Washington; and it was to inspire terror, rather than to possess himself of the arms

---

48. Vol. II p. 164. The "address you saw last season," mentioned in this letter, is the same spoken of in the letter of September 11, 1857, on page 162.



**RACE WAR,**

**NOT CIVIL WAR**

there, that he then proposed to capture the arsenal. It is believed that Theodore Parker was aware of this half-formed plan of [John Brown](#)'s, but it was not communicated to his men until a year and a half later, or just before the attack was actually made. Charles Plummer Tidd, one of [John Brown](#)'s men, who escaped from Harper's Ferry, afterwards enlisted in a Massachusetts regiment under the name of Plummer, and died under Burnside in North Carolina, is authority for this statement. He said that when [John Brown](#) called his small company together in October, 1859, on the Maryland shore of the Potomac, and disclosed to them his plan for the capture of the town, they all declared that it would be fatal to attempt it, and refused to take part in it; even his own sons, except Owen, being unwilling to follow their father to what they said would be certain defeat and death. But [John Brown](#) had now decided upon his course, and adhered to it inflexibly; he would make the attack with a single man, if only one man would obey him. His sons, finding their father so determined, and knowing how impossible it was to change his purpose, first gave in their adhesion; they believed it to be a fatal scheme, but they would not desert him. Gradually all the others came round to the same opinion, and the attack was made with precisely the result that [John Brown](#)'s followers had predicted. We have no reason to doubt that Tidd's statement was true in substance.

On the departure of [John Brown](#) from Boston in March, 1858, the five persons mentioned -- Parker, Howe, Higginson, Sanborn, and Stearns -- formed themselves into a secret committee to raise for him the money (now set at \$1,000) which it was agreed should be raised in New England. Each of the five was to raise \$100, and as much more as he could, Dr. Howe having hopes of securing a larger subscription from his friend Mr. George R. Russell. Mr. Stearns was made treasurer of the committee, and ten days after [John Brown](#)'s departure \$250 had been paid in. By the 1st of April \$375 had been collected, and on the 20th of April \$410, Of which Stearns, Parker, and Higginson had each paid \$100, Sanborn \$60, and Howe \$50. Stearns pledged \$200 more, and [John Brown](#) had collected \$260 outside of New England; so that the small sum judged necessary for beginning the enterprise was nearly made up, either in money or pledges, before the 1st of May, at which time [John Brown](#) was on his way from Iowa to Ohio, with the arms that had been stored in Iowa, and with some of his men. He was to enlist others in Canada about May 8th, and to strike his first blow in the latter part of the same month. On the 28th of April [John Brown](#) was in [Chicago](#); on the 2d of May at Chatham, in Canada. But, meanwhile, a formidable obstacle had appeared. [Hugh Forbes](#) interposed again, writing from Washington, and threatened to disclose the whole plan to the Republican leaders, and even to the government.

[Hugh Forbes](#)'s letters, as before, were addressed to Howe and Sanborn, neither of whom had yet seen him, but who both knew now, from [John Brown](#), what the relation had been between [Hugh](#)



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

Forbes and himself. In these letters of April and May Hugh Forbes insisted that John Brown's enterprise should stop, that John Brown himself should be dismissed as the leader of the movement, and Hugh Forbes be put in his place; and these demands were accompanied by a threat of making public the whole transaction, so far as it had gone. To increase the difficulties of the situation, Hugh Forbes had evidently learned, from some quarter, of the countenance given to John Brown, since the 1st of March, by his Boston committee. On the 2d of May these letters were submitted to this committee, Howe, Parker, Sanborn, and Stearns being present, and Higginson being informed of them by mail. Parker, Sanborn, and Stearns at once said that the blow must be deferred till another year, and in this opinion Howe partially coincided. Higginson thought otherwise, and so did John Brown, who declared that he would go forward, in spite of Hugh Forbes and his threats, if the money promised him should be furnished. Here, however, another difficulty sprang up. Hugh Forbes, early in May, carried out his threat so far as to inform, Senators Hale, Seward, and Wilson and Dr. Bailey, in general terms, of John Brown's purposes, and Wilson wrote to Dr. Howe, earnestly protesting against any such demonstration. As the rifles which had been purchased by the Massachusetts Kansas Committee and intrusted to John Brown by them were still, so far as Senator Wilson and the public knew, the property of that committee (though really, as has been explained, the personal property of Mr. Stearns, the chairman), it would expose the Kansas Committee, who were ignorant of John Brown's later plans, to suspicions of bad faith, if those arms were used by him in any expedition to Virginia. This awkward complication seems to have decided Dr. Howe in favor of postponing the attack, and both he and Mr. Stearns, as members of the Kansas Committee, wrote to John Brown that the arms must not be used for the present, except for the defence of Kansas.<sup>49</sup> John Brown saw that nothing further could then be done, and yielded, though with regret, to the postponement. About the 20th of May Mr. Stearns met John Brown in New York, and arranged that hereafter the custody of the Kansas rifles should be John Brown's, as the agent of Stearns, the real owner, and not of the nominal owners, the Kansas Committee. On the 24th of May a meeting of the Boston secret committee, with one of the principal friends of John Brown's plan outside of New England, took place at the Revere House in Boston, -- Parker, Howe, Sanborn, and Stearns being present, as before; and it was agreed that the execution of the plan should be postponed till the spring of 1859. In the mean time a larger sum of money -- from two to three thousand dollars -- was to be raised, and John Brown was to throw Hugh Forbes off his track by returning to Kansas and engaging in the defence of the Free-State men on the border; the alleged property of the Kansas Committee was to be so transferred as to relieve that committee

---

49. The letters on this subject are printed in Senator Mason's Report (36th Cong. Senate Rep. Com No. 278), pp. 176, 177.



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

of all responsibility, and the secret committee were, in future, to know nothing in detail of [John Brown](#)'s plans. [John Brown](#) was not himself present at this Revere House meeting, but came to Boston the next week, and was at the American House May 31st. Here he met all the committee, Higginson included; and, in the two or three days that he stayed, the Revere House arrangement was completed. He received the sole custody of the arms which had belonged to the Kansas Committee, and five hundred dollars beside; was to go to Kansas at once, but after that to use his own discretion; and, though still believing the postponement unwise, he left New England in good spirits the first week in June. He reached Kansas June 26th, with about ten men, and in a week or two after was on the border, near the scene of the Marais des Cygnes murders of May 11th. Remaining in that vicinity, guarding the Free-State settlers for about two months, most of that time he was himself ill with ague. On the 10th of September he was at [Osawatomie](#), whence he wrote, "I have often met the 'notorious' Montgomery,<sup>50</sup> and think very favorably of him."



He was associated with Montgomery in the border warfare of the autumn and winter of 1858, and finally just before Christmas, made his famous incursion into Missouri, and brought away a party of slaves, with whom he travelled in January and February, 1859, from the border of Southern Kansas, through Nebraska, Iowa, Illinois, and Michigan, to Detroit, where he arrived March 12th, and landed his fugitives safely in Canada. In the latter part of March, 1859, he was at Cleveland, where he sold publicly the horses he had brought from Missouri. In April he visited his family at [North Elba](#), and in the early part of May was in Boston, where he remained for more than three weeks, visiting his friends in the city and its vicinity, and making final

---

50. This was James Montgomery of Kansas, a brave partisan, afterwards colonel of a colored regiment in South Carolina. He has lately died in Kansas.



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

arrangements for his Virginia expedition. Before leaving Boston for the last time, Wednesday, June 1, 1859, the sum of \$2,000, which had been promised him at the Revere House meeting a year before, was made up and placed to his credit. More than half this sum - \$1,200- was the gift of George L. Stearns, who must have furnished the old hero, first and last, at least \$10,000 in money and arms. Of the other \$800, half was raised in Massachusetts, by private subscription or at public meetings, of which he held several during this visit. He spoke in the Town Hall at [Concord](#) (where he spent a portion of his last birthday<sup>51</sup>)



on Sunday evening, May 8th, to a large audience, hastily gathered; for he had arrived in town unexpectedly the night before, from [North Elba](#). The fame of his last exploit in Kansas had preceded him everywhere, and there was much eagerness to hear what he would say about it. He described briefly his expedition into Missouri, and the way in which he had brought off the party of slaves; but when he went on to assert that it was right to repeat such incursions, and to take property, or even life, in forcibly setting slaves free, his audience winced under it. They applauded his successful deed, but were not ready to encourage its repetition. Some agreed with him, however, and a small contribution was raised at the meeting. He left Concord at noon the next day, -- his birthday, -- and never returned thither.

[John Brown](#) also spoke at one of the Boston Anniversary meetings in Tremont Temple, the last week in this same May, and was present on Saturday, May 28th, at the weekly dinner of the "Bird Club," which then met at the [Parker House](#). The late Governor Andrew was a member of this club, as were Dr. Howe and Mr. Sanborn, and Mr. Stearns joined it on this particular day, having gone there to meet or escort his friend [John Brown](#). Governor Andrew was not present at this meeting of the club, but it was probably on the following Sunday evening that he met [John](#)

---

51. [John Brown](#) was born May 9, 1800, and was in his 60th year at his death.



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

[Brown](#) for the first and last time, at a friend's house. In his testimony before Senator Mason's committee, in February, 1860, Mr. Andrew made this statement respecting his own contribution to [John Brown's](#) fund:<sup>52</sup> -

"After having met Captain Brown one Sunday evening at a lady's house, where I made a social call with my wife, I sent him twenty-five dollars as a present. I did it because I felt ashamed, after I had seen the old man and talked with him, and come within the reach of the personal impression which I find he very generally made on people, that I had never contributed anything direct towards his assistance, as one who I thought had sacrificed and suffered so much for the cause of freedom and of good order and good government in the Territory of Kansas. He was, if I may be allowed to use that expression, a very magnetic person, and I felt very much impressed by him. I confess I did not know how to understand the old gentleman fully, because when I hear a man talk upon great themes, touching, which I think he must have deep feeling, in a tone perfectly level, without emphasis and without any exhibition of feeling, I am always ready to suspect that there is something wrong in the man's brain. I noticed that the old gentleman, in conversation, scarcely regarded other people, was entirely self-poised, self-possessed, sufficient to himself, and appeared to have no emotion of any sort, but to be entirely absorbed in an idea which preoccupied him and seemed to put him in a position transcending an ordinary emotion and ordinary reason. In parting with him, as I heard he was a poor man, I expressed my gratitude to him for having fought for a great cause with earnestness, fidelity, and conscientiousness, while I had been quietly at home, earning my money and supporting my family in Boston, under my own vine and fig-tree, with nobody to molest or make me afraid.... I am constitutionally peaceable, and by opinion very much of a peace man, and I have very little faith in deeds of violence, and very little sympathy with them, except as the extremest and direst necessity. My sympathy, so, far as I sympathized with Captain Brown, was on account of what I believed to be heroic and disinterested services in defence of a good and just cause, and in support of the rights of persons who were treated with unjust aggression."

This is a statement truly characteristic, not only of Governor Andrew, but of [John Brown](#) as he was viewed by many people in Massachusetts; and such small sums as were given him in 1858 and 1859, by persons not acquainted with his plans, were mostly given under such impressions as are here so generously described. The whole amount of these contributions, however, did not exceed five hundred dollars in Massachusetts, and probably were less than half that sum. Out of a little more than four thousand dollars in money which passed through the hands of the

---

52. Senate Rep. Com., No. 278, 36th Congress, page 192.



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

secret committee, in aid of his Virginia enterprise, or was known to them as contributed, at least thirty-eight hundred dollars were given with a clear knowledge of the use to which it would be put. The gifts of arms made by Mr. Stearns amounted in value to twice as much perhaps, and these also were contributed with a full understanding that they might be used as they were.<sup>53</sup>

[John Brown](#)'s hotel, during his last visit to Boston, was the United States House. He was attended, generally, in his movements about the city and its neighborhood, by a faithful henchman, Jerry Anderson, a youth from Indiana who was shot at Harper's Ferry. Both were in rustic dress, but [John Brown](#), from his marked aspect and his flowing gray beard (which he first began to wear in Kansas in the summer of 1858), attracted much attention in the streets. He has been described by Judge Hoar (who had seen him in Concord, and perhaps had contributed to his fund from the same motives as Governor Andrew), in one of these street rambles, as calmly walking up Court Street in the midst of the hurrying throng, with his jack-knife in one hand and an apple in the other, which he was peeling and eating, quite unconscious of observation, while his young henchman, less accustomed to cities, walked a little behind him, gazing up at the signs and windows. Another remembers him plodding his way to the Providence Railroad Station, burdened with a heavy carpet-bag, and still escorted by his body-guard. At this time he always went heavily armed, being proclaimed an outlaw by President Buchanan, who offered three thousand dollars for his arrest, and by the governor of Missouri, who offered two hundred and fifty dollars more. When this fact was mentioned to [John Brown](#), he sometimes said, in his dry way, that he would pay two dollars and fifty cents to anybody who would safely lodge James Buchanan in any jail in the free States. He moved about in Massachusetts entirely without fear or precaution, except his pistols and his henchman, and at this time always went by his own name. It is believed that no effort to arrest him was made outside of Kansas.

In course of his stay in Boston he spent an evening at the house of a gentleman where William Hunt, the painter, was also a guest, and an appointment was made with [John Brown](#) that he should give Hunt a sitting for his portrait. It is unfortunate that this sitting never took place, for his portrait by Hunt would now be the best representation of him in his last year. Brackett the sculptor, whose fine bust of him has already been mentioned, also met him at this time; but the studies and measurements for his bust were made in a brief visit to [John Brown](#) in his cell at Charlestown in the following November. [John Brown](#) sat for his photograph to a Boston artist named Heywood, and it is from this

---

53. The biographer of George Stearns, when his LIFE shall be written, should not omit the list of his contributions to [John Brown](#) and his cause.



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

picture, a half-length standing figure, with the hands behind the back, and the face turned a little aside from a front view, that all the common portraits of him are taken. It was used by Brackett in modelling his bust, in which, however, the features are somewhat idealized. The suit in which this picture was taken is the same that he wore in Boston two years before, and he was wearing a portion of it when captured at Harper's Ferry. The attitude chosen was a common one with him, and some of our readers may remember him pacing a ball, a prairie, or a hotel corridor with his hands thus clasped behind him.

Leaving Boston on the first day of June, 1859, [John Brown](#) went to Collinsville in Connecticut, where he arrived June 3d, and renewed his old contract for a thousand pikes, which were made by Charles Blair of that town, and forwarded in August and September, to Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, whence they were taken to the neighborhood of Harper's Ferry. In the interval between June and September [John Brown](#) had moved his men and arms from Canada and Ohio to Chambersburg, and thence to the Kennedy Farm, on the Maryland side of the Potomac, about five miles from Harper's Ferry. This farm was rented by [John Brown](#) early in July, and its two farm-houses were occupied by him and his men for the three months preceding his attack, October 16th. During this time [John Brown](#) was frequently absent, often in Chambersburg, to which place all his letters were sent. About a month after he took possession of the Kennedy Farm his supply of money gave out, and he wrote earnestly to his Boston committee for three hundred dollars, with which he could begin his campaign. He made no further communication of his plans, nor was it known to any of his Massachusetts friends exactly where he was or what he was doing. The money asked for was raised by Howe, Stearns, Sanborn, and Higginson, and sent to Chambersburg in small drafts, as requested, the last of it reaching [John Brown](#) about the 20th of September. In the mean time he had been visited at Chambersburg by [Frederick Douglass](#), who was previously acquainted with the general plan of action, but does not seem to have been wholly satisfied with what [John Brown](#) communicated to him at their last interview. The time for striking the blow was still delayed, more from want of money than for any other reason; and it might have been postponed till the spring of 1860, perhaps, but for another remittance from Massachusetts under circumstances so singular as to be regarded by [John Brown's](#) friends as providential.

There was then in Boston a young man, who afterwards died as a soldier in the Union Army, a grandson of Francis Jackson, the famous antislavery leader. He was named for his grandfather, Francis Jackson Merriam. His father was dead, and he had inherited a small property, which he was eager to devote to some practical enterprise for freeing the slaves. He was at this time twenty-two years old, enthusiastic and resolute, but with little judgment, and in feeble health; altogether, one would say, a very unfit person to take part actively in [John Brown's](#)



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

enterprise. He had heard something of this from [James Redpath](#), with whom he had travelled in Hayti, and was fully determined to join [John Brown](#)'s party. Early in October, having learned in some way that [John Brown](#) was to be seen at Chambersburg, young Merriam called upon Sanborn, who had never seen him before, though acquainted with his family, and declared his purpose of visiting [John Brown](#), offering himself and his little fortune for his cause. Sanborn tried in vain to dissuade him from going, and suggested that he should first invest a portion of his money, and be guided by circumstances as to the future. This good advice Merriam declined, and insisted that he should start at once to find [John Brown](#), which he did, leaving Boston on the 7th of October. By Sanborn's advice, he called to see Colonel Higginson at Worcester, on his way, and was still more unfavorably received by that gentleman, who strongly opposed his wild scheme. He went on, however, met [John Brown](#) at Chambersburg about a week before the attack was made, gave him six hundred dollars in gold, and joined the little band at Kennedy's. His money reached [John Brown](#) but a day or two before the attack, and was probably nearly all that the military chest of the invaders of Virginia contained when they crossed the Potomac on Sunday evening October 16, 1859, to capture the town of Harper's Ferry. Merriam himself was not in the attacking party, but remained to guard the arms, with Cook, Tidd, Owen Brown, Barclay Coppoc, and O.P. Anderson, at the school-house on the Maryland side. He escaped with his companions, all of whom, except Cook, got safely away.

Merriam, after many adventures, reached Canada safely; but the scenes he had witnessed, and the fate of his leader and comrades, unsettled his mind completely. He planned another raid into the slave States, and at the risk of his life, if captured, he returned to Boston early in December to urge [John Brown](#)'s friends there to aid him in the mad enterprise. It so happened that he reached Boston at the very time of [John Brown](#)'s execution. He took refuge with his physician, Dr. David Thayer, and sent for his uncle, James Jackson, Mr. Wendell Phillips, and Mr. Sanborn to call and see him. They found him full of his new scheme, and very unwilling to obey their earnest injunctions to return at once to Canada. He finally consented to do so, and went to the Fitchburg Railroad station to take the night express train for Montreal. But, in his distracted state of mind, he took the wrong train and was left at Concord early in the evening, where he must pass the night. He had presence of mind enough to go to Sanborn's house, where he was sheltered and provided for; but his host, out of regard for the young man's safety, refused to see him, or to recognize him by any name but that of Lockwood, which he had assumed. He passed the night in Concord, and early in the morning was driven in a friend's carriage by [Henry Thoreau](#) to the neighboring railroad station of South Acton, where he took the first train for Montreal, and safely arrived there. Mr. Thoreau only knew his companion as



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

"Lockwood," and, though suspecting him to be one of the Harper's Ferry fugitives, was cautious not to inquire his true name of any person, until shortly before his own death in 1862, when the story was told him.

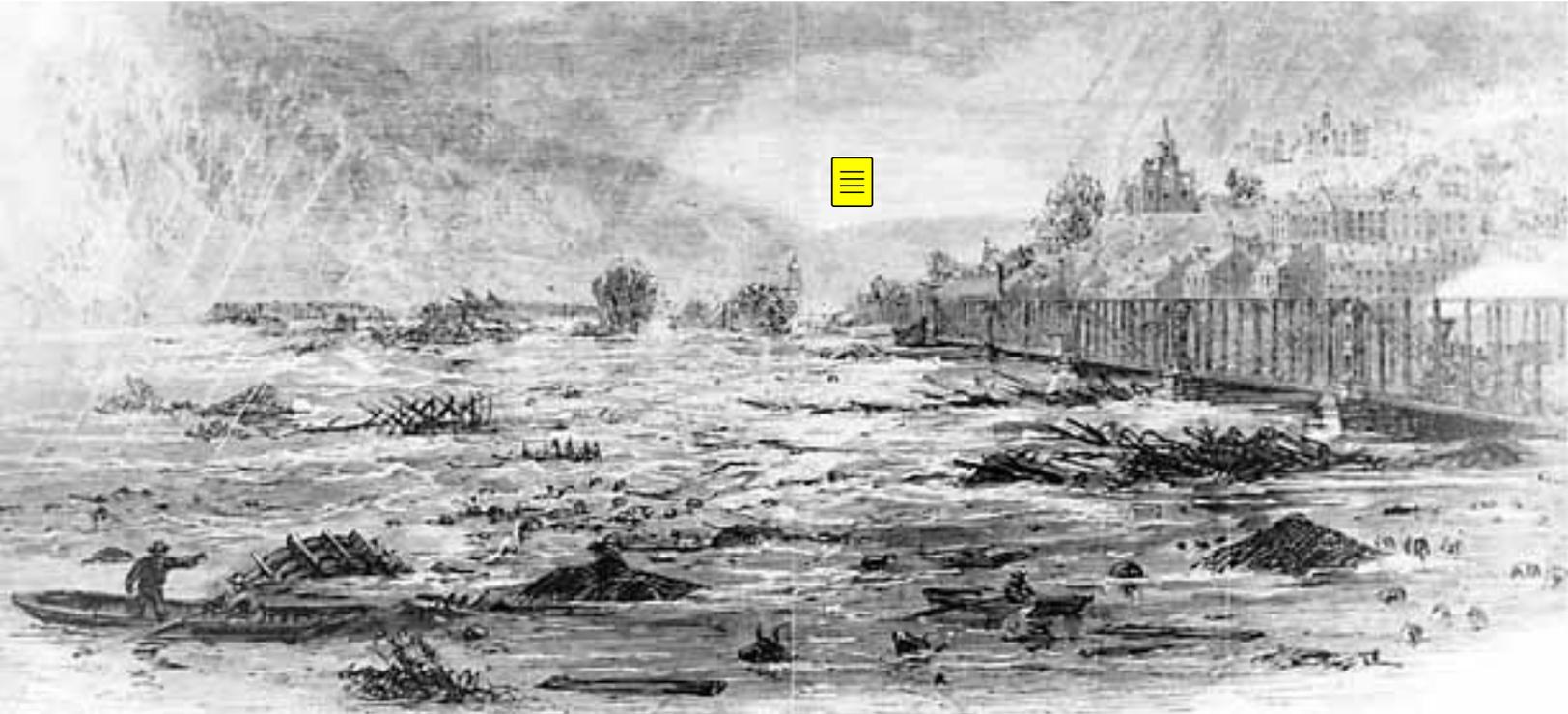
It is unnecessary to speak here of the events at Harper's Ferry, or the subsequent history of the affair. Our purpose has been simply to put on record a few facts which have come to our knowledge concerning the origin and progress of the plan of attack there made, and the relation which a few persons, living or dead, bore to [John Brown](#) and his great enterprise. We have shown it to be exclusively his own, carried out by him with the help of a few men and women whom his strong purpose and magnetic personality attracted to his assistance. It is not known that any of these friends regret or blush for the aid they were able to render to a hero as undaunted, as patient, and as completely under Divine guidance as any whom history or romance describes. Those who are dead did not; those who are still living need not. But if an imagined regard for the reputation of the living or the dead should tempt kinsmen or friends to forget or disown the share of any man in this mysterious affair, let them remember what Sir Kenelm Digby says of his father's connection with the Gunpowder plot of Guy Fawkes. "All men know," pleads the fair Stelliana, in Sir Kenelm's Private Memoirs, "that it was no malicious intent or ambitious desires that brought Sir Everard Digby into that conspiracy, but his too inviolable faith to his friend that had trusted him with so dangerous a secret, and his zeal to his country's ancient liberties."

**WHAT I'M WRITING IS TRUE BUT NEVER MIND  
YOU CAN ALWAYS LIE TO YOURSELF**

1877



November 25, Sunday: At [Harpers Ferry](#), high water caused considerable damage to the [C&O Canal](#) and closed the old [Shenandoah Canal](#) for good. The flood crest was 29.2 feet.



[Abigail May Alcott](#) died. The body would be placed in Concord's Sleepy Hollow Cemetery near the grave of Elizabeth Sewall Alcott (died March 14, 1858 from the aftereffects of scarlet fever).

ALCOTT FAMILY

CHANGE IS ETERNITY, STASIS A FIGMENT

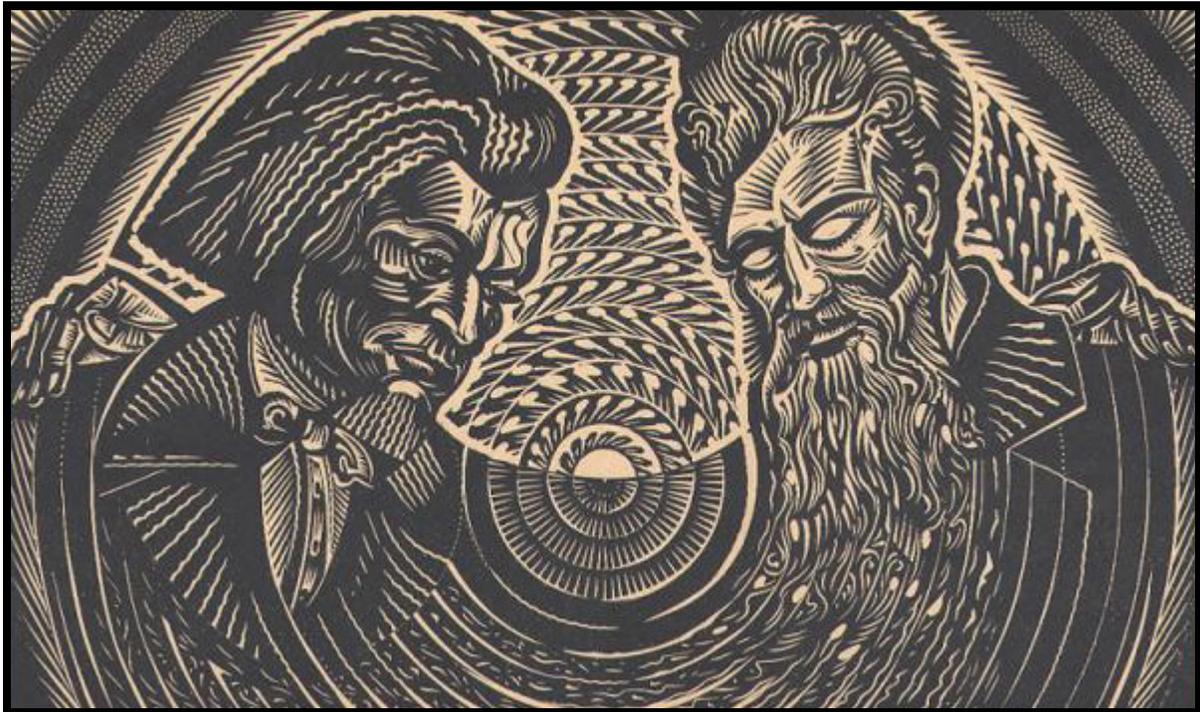
[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1881

May 30, Monday: [Frederick Douglass](#), a trustee of Storer College, [Harpers Ferry](#), West Virginia, delivered, as the Decoration Day address upon the institution's 14th anniversary, a speech entitled simply "[John Brown](#)."



Among the guests on the platform was Andrew Hunter, who had while Douglass had been fleeing to Canada and then England been the District Attorney of Charles Town, participating in the prosecution and conviction of [Captain Brown](#) for murder and treason. Imagine what he must have been thinking!

HDT

WHAT?

INDEX

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

**HARPERS FERRY, FROM THE POTOMAC SIDE**



**HARPERS FERRY, FROM THE BLUE RIDGE**





RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

## INTRODUCTION.

In substance, this address, now for the first time published, was prepared several years ago, and has been delivered in many parts of the North. Its publication now in pamphlet form is due to its delivery at [Harpers Ferry, West Virginia](#), on Decoration day, 1881, and to the fact that the proceeds from the sale of it are to be used toward the endowment of a John Brown Professorship in Storer College, Harpers Ferry — an institution mainly devoted to the education of colored youth.

That such an address could be delivered at such a place, as such a time, is strikingly significant, and illustrates the rapid, vast and wonderful changes through which the American people have been passing since 1859. Twenty years ago Frederick Douglass and others were mobbed in the city of Boston, and driven from Tremont Temple for uttering sentiments concerning [John Brown](#) similar to those contained in this address. Yet now he goes freely to the very spot where John Brown committed the offense which caused all Virginia to clamor for his life, and without reserve or qualification, commends him as a hero and martyr in the cause of liberty. This incident is rendered all the more significant by the fact that Hon. Andrew Hunter, of Charlestown, — the District Attorney who prosecuted John Brown and secured his execution, — sat on the platform directly behind Mr. Douglass during the delivery of the entire address and at the close of it shook hands with him, and congratulated him, and invited him to Charlestown (where John Brown was hanged), adding that if Robert E. Lee were living, he would give him his hand also.

## ADDRESS.

Not to fan the flame of sectional animosity now happily in the process of rapid and I hope permanent extinction; not to revive and keep alive a sense of shame and remorse for a great national crime, which has brought own punishment, in loss of treasure, tears and blood; not to recount the long list of wrongs, inflicted on my race during more than two hundred years of merciless bondage; nor yet to draw, from the labyrinths of far-off centuries, incidents and achievements wherewith to rouse your passions, and enkindle your enthusiasm, but to pay a just debt long due, to vindicate in some degree a great historical character, of our own time and country, one with whom I was myself well acquainted, and whose friendship and confidence it was my good fortune to share, and to give you such recollections, impressions and facts, as I can, of a grand, brave and good old man, and especially to promote a better understanding of the raid upon Harpers Ferry of which he was the chief, is the object of this address.

In all the thirty years' conflict with slavery, if we except the late tremendous war, there is no subject which in its interest and importance will be remembered longer, or will form a more thrilling chapter in American history than this strange, wild, bloody and mournful drama. The story of it is still fresh in the minds of many who now hear me, but for the sake of those who may have forgotten its details, and in order to have our subject in its entire range more fully and clearly before us at the outset, I will briefly state the facts in that extraordinary transaction.

On the night of the 16th of October, 1859,  there appeared near the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers, a party of nineteen men — fourteen white and five colored. They were not only armed themselves, but had brought with them a large supply of arms for such persons as might join them. These men invaded Harpers Ferry, disarmed the watchman, took possession of the arsenal, rifle-factory, armory and other government property at that place, arrested and made prisoners nearly all the prominent citizens of the neighborhood, collected about fifty slaves, put bayonets into the hands of such as were able and willing to fight for their liberty, killed three men, proclaimed general [emancipation](#), held the ground more than thirty hours, were subsequently overpowered and nearly all killed, wounded or captured, by a body of United States troops, under command of Colonel [Robert E. Lee](#), since famous as the rebel Gen. Lee. Three out of the nineteen invaders were captured whilst fighting, and one of these was Captain John Brown, the man who originated, planned and commanded the expedition. At the time of his capture Capt. Brown was supposed to be mortally



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

wounded as he had several ugly gashes and bayonet wounds on his head and body; and apprehending that he might speedily die, or that he might be rescued by his friends, and thus the opportunity of making him a signal example of slave-holding vengeance would be lost, his captors hurried him to Charlestown two miles further within the border of Virginia, placed him in prison strongly guarded by troops, and before his wounds were healed he was brought into court, subjected to a nominal trial, convicted of high treason and inciting slaves to insurrection, and was executed. His corpse was given to his woe-stricken widow, and she, assisted by Antislavery friends, caused it to be borne to [North Elba, Essex County, N.Y.](#), and there his dust now reposes amid the silent, solemn and snowy grandeur of the Adirondacks.

Such is the story; with no line softened or hardened to my inclining. It certainly is not a story to please, but to pain. It is not a story to increase our sense of social safety and security, but to fill the imagination with wild and troubled fancies of doubt and danger. It was a sudden and startling surprise to the people of [Harpers Ferry](#), and it is not easy to conceive of a situation more abundant in all the elements of horror and consternation.

They had retired as usual to rest, with no suspicion that an enemy lurked in the surrounding darkness. They had quietly and trustingly given themselves up to “tired Nature’s sweet restorer, balmy sleep,” and while thus all unconscious of danger, they were roused from their peaceful slumbers by the sharp crack of the invader’s rifle, and felt the keen-edged sword of war at their throats, three of their numbers being already slain.

Every feeling of the human heart was naturally outraged at this occurrence, and hence at the moment the air was full of denunciation and execration. So intense was this feeling, that few ventured to whisper a word of apology. But happily reason has her voice as well as feeling, and though slower in deciding, her judgments are broader, deeper, clearer and more enduring. It is not easy to reconcile human feeling to the shedding of blood for any purpose, unless indeed in the excitement which the shedding of blood itself occasions. The knife is to feeling always an offence. Even when in the hands of a skillful surgeon, it refuses consent to the operation long after reason has demonstrated its necessity. It even pleads the cause of the known murderer on the day of his execution, and calls society half criminal when, in cold blood, it takes life as a protection of itself from crime. Let no word be said against this holy feeling; more than to law and government are we indebted to this tender sentiment of regard for human life for the safety with which we walk the streets by day and sleep secure in our beds at night. It is nature’s grand police, vigilant and faithful, sentineled in the soul, guarding against violence to peace and life. But whilst so much is freely accorded to feeling in the economy of human welfare, something more than feeling is necessary to grapple with a fact so grim and significant as was this raid. Viewed apart and alone, as a transaction separate and distinct from its antecedents and bearings, it takes rank with the most cold-blooded and atrocious wrongs ever perpetrated; but just here is the trouble — this raid on Harpers Ferry, no more than Sherman’s march to the sea can consent to be thus viewed alone.

There is, in the world’s government, a force which has in all ages been recognized, sometimes as Nemesis, sometimes as the judgment of God and sometimes as retributive justice; but under whatever name, all history attests the wisdom and beneficence of its chastisements, and men become reconciled to the agents through whom it operates, and have extolled them as heroes, benefactors and demigods.

To the broad vision of a true philosophy, nothing in this world stands alone. Everything is a necessary part of everything else. The margin of chance is narrowed by every extension of reason and knowledge, and nothing comes unbidden to the feast of human experience. The universe, of which we are a part, is continually proving itself a stupendous whole, a system of law and order, eternal and perfect. Every seed bears fruit after its kind, and nothing is reaped which was not sowed. The distance between seed time and harvest, in the moral world, may not be quite so well defined or as clearly intelligible as in the physical, but there is a seed time, and there is a harvest time, and though ages may intervene, and neither he who ploughed nor he who sowed may reap in person, yet the harvest nevertheless will surely come; and as in the physical world there are century plants, so it may be in the moral world, and their fruitage is as certain in the one as in the other. The bloody harvest of Harpers Ferry was ripened by the heat and moisture of merciless bondage of more than two hundred years. That startling cry of alarm on the bank of the Potomac was but the answering back of the avenging angel to



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

the midnight invasions of Christian slave-traders on the sleeping hamlets of Africa. The history of the African slave-trade furnishes many illustrations far more cruel and bloody.

Viewed thus broadly our subject is worthy of thoughtful and dispassionate consideration. It invites the study of the poet, scholar, philosopher and statesman. What the masters in natural science have done for man in the physical world, the masters of social science may yet do for him in the moral world. Science now tells us when storms are in the sky, and when and where their violence will be most felt. Why may we not yet know with equal certainty when storms are in the moral sky, and how to avoid their desolating force? But I can invite you to no such profound discussions. I am not the man, nor is this the occasion for such philosophical enquiry.

Mine is the word of grateful memory to an old friend; to tell you what I knew of him –what I knew of his inner life –of what he did and what he attempted, and thus if possible to make the mainspring of his actions manifest and thereby give you a clearer view of his character and services.

It is said that next in value to the performance of great deeds ourselves, is the capacity to appreciate such when performed by others; to more than this I do not presume. Allow me one other personal word before I proceed. In the minds of some of the American people I was myself credited with an important agency in the John Brown raid. Governor [Henry A. Wise](#) was manifestly of that opinion. He was at the pains of having Mr. Buchanan send his Marshals to Rochester to invite me to accompany them to Virginia. Fortunately I left town several hours previous to their arrival.

What ground there was for this distinguished consideration shall duly appear in the natural course of this lecture. I wish however to say just here that there was no foundation whatever for the charge that I in any wise urged or instigated John Brown to his dangerous work. I rejoice that it is my good fortune to have seen, not only the end of slavery, but to see the day when the whole truth can be told about this matter without prejudice to either the living or the dead. I shall however allow myself little prominence in these disclosures. Your interests, like mine, are in the all-commanding figure of the story, and to him I consecrate the hour.

His zeal in the cause of my race was far greater than mine –it was as the burning sun to my taper light– mine was bounded by time, his stretched away to the boundless shores of eternity. I could live for the slave, but he could die for him. The crown of martyrdom is high, far beyond the reach of ordinary mortals, and yet happily no special greatness or superior moral excellence is necessary to discern and in some measure appreciate a truly great soul. Cold, calculating and unspiritual as most of us are, we are not wholly insensible to real greatness; and when we are brought in contact with a man of commanding mold, towering high and alone above the millions, free from all conventional fetters, true to his own moral convictions, a “law unto himself,” ready to suffer misconstruction, ignoring torture and death for what he believes to be right, we are compelled to do him homage.

In the stately shadow, in the sublime presence of such a soul I find myself standing to-night; and how to do it reverence, how to do it justice, how to honor the dead with due regard to the living, has been a matter of anxious solicitude.

Much has been said of John Brown, much that is wise and beautiful, but in looking over what may be called the John Brown literature, I have been little assisted with material, and even less encouraged with any hope of success in treating the subject. Scholarship, genius and devotion have hastened with poetry and eloquence, story and song to this simple altar of human virtue, and have retired dissatisfied and distressed with the thinness and poverty of their offerings, as I shall with mine.

The difficulty in doing justice to the life and character of such a man is not altogether due to the quality of the zeal, or of the ability brought to the work, nor yet to any imperfections in the qualities of the man himself; the state of the moral atmosphere about us has much to do with it. The fault is not in our eyes, nor yet in the object, if under a a murky sky we fail to discover the object. Wonderfully tenacious is the taint of a great wrong.

The evil, as well as “the good that men do, lives after them.” Slavery is indeed gone; but its long, black shadow yet falls broad and large over the face of the whole country. It is the old truth oft repeated, and never more fitly than now, “a prophet is without honor in his own country and among his own people.” Though more than



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

twenty years have rolled between us and the [Harpers Ferry](#) raid, though since then the armies of the nation have found it necessary to do on a large scale what John Brown attempted to do on small one, and the great captain who fought his way through slavery has filled with honor the Presidential chair, we yet stand too near the days of slavery, and the life and times of John Brown, to see clearly the true martyr and hero that he was and rightly to estimate the value of the man and his works. Like the great and good of all ages –the men born in advance of their times, the men whose bleeding footprints attest the immense cost of reform, and show us the long and dreary spaces, between the luminous points in the progress of mankind,– this our noblest American hero must wait the polishing wheels of after-coming centuries to make his glory more manifest, and his worth more generally acknowledged. Such instances are abundant and familiar. If we go back four and twenty centuries, to the stately city of Athens, and search among her architectural splendor and her miracles of art for the Socrates of today, and as he stands in history, we shall find ourselves perplexed and disappointed. In Jerusalem Jesus himself was only the “carpenter’s son” –a young man wonderfully destitute of worldly prudence –pestilent fellow, “inexcusably and perpetually interfering in the world’s business,” –“upsetting the tables of the money-changers” –preaching sedition, opposing the good old religion –“making himself greater than Abraham,” and at the same time “keeping company” with very low people; but behold the change! He was a great miracle-worker, in his day, but time has worked for him a greater miracle than all his miracles, for now his name stands for all that is desirable in government, noble in life, orderly and beautiful in society. That which time has done for other great men of his class, that will time certainly do for John Brown. The brightest gems shine at first with subdued light, and the strongest characters are subject to the same limitations. Under the influence of adverse education and hereditary bias, few things are more difficult than to render impartial justice. Men hold up their hands to Heaven, and swear they will do justice, but what oaths against prejudice and against inclination! In the face of high-sounding professions and affirmations we know well how hard it is for a Turk to do justice to a Christian, or for a Christian to do justice to a Jew. How hard for an Englishman to do justice to an Irishman, for an Irishman to do justice to an Englishman, harder still for an American tainted by slavery to do justice to the Negro or the Negro’s friends. “John Brown,” said the late Wm. H. Seward, “was justly hanged.” “John Brown,” said the late John A. Andrew, “was right.” It is easy to perceive the sources of these two opposite judgments: the one was the verdict of slave-holding and panic-stricken Virginia, the other was the verdict of the best heart and brain of free old Massachusetts. One was the heated judgment of the passing and passionate hour, and the other was the calm, clear, unimpeachable judgment of the broad, illimitable future.

There is, however, one aspect of the present subject quite worthy of notice, for it makes the hero of [Harpers Ferry](#) in some degree an exception to the general rules to which I have just now adverted. Despite the hold which slavery had at time on the country, despite the popular prejudice against the Negro, despite the shock which the first alarm occasioned, almost from the first John Brown received a large measure of sympathy and appreciation. New England recognized in him the spirit which brought the pilgrims to Plymouth rock and hailed him as a martyr and saint. True he had broken the law, true he had struck for a despised people, true he had crept upon his foe stealthily, like a wolf upon the fold, and had dealt his blow in the dark whilst his enemy slept, but with all this and more to disturb the moral sense, men discerned in him the greatest and best qualities known to human nature, and pronounced him “good.” Many consented to his death, and then went home and taught their children to sing his praise as one whose “soul is marching on” through the realms of endless bliss. One element in explanation of this somewhat anomalous circumstance will probably be found in the troubled times which immediately succeeded, for “when judgments are abroad in the world, men learn righteousness.” The country had before this learned the value of Brown’s heroic character. He had shown boundless courage and skill in dealing with the enemies of liberty in Kansas. With men so few, and means so small, and odds against him so great, no captain ever surpassed him in achievements, some of which seem almost beyond belief. With only eight men in that bitter war, he met, fought and captured Henry Clay Pate, with twenty-five well armed and mounted men.  In this memorable encounter, he selected his ground so wisely, handled



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

his men so skillfully, and attacked the enemy so vigorously, that they could neither run nor fight, and were therefore compelled to surrender to a force less than one-third their own. With just thirty men on another important occasion during the same border war, he met and vanquished four hundred Missourians under the command of Gen. Read. These men had come into the territory under an oath never to return to their homes till they had stamped out the last vestige of free State spirit in Kansas; but a brush with old Brown took this high conceit out of them, and they were glad to get off upon any terms, without stopping to stipulate.  With less than one hundred men to defend the town of Lawrence, he offered to lead them and give battle to fourteen hundred men on the banks of the Waukerusia river, and was much vexed when his offer was refused by Gen. Jim Lane and others to whom the defense of the town was confided.  Before leaving Kansas, he went into the border of Missouri, and liberated a dozen slaves in a single night, and, in spite of slave laws and marshals, he brought these people through a half dozen States, and landed them safely in Canada. With eighteen men this man shook the whole social fabric of Virginia. With eighteen men he overpowered a town of nearly three thousand souls. With these eighteen men he held that large community firmly in his grasp for thirty long hours. With these eighteen men he rallied in a single night fifty slaves to his standard, and made prisoners of an equal number of the slave-holding class. With these eighteen men he defied the power and bravery of a dozen of the best militia companies that Virginia could send against him. Now, when slavery struck, as it certainly did strike, at the life of the country, it was not the fault of John Brown that our rulers did not at first know how to deal with it. He had already shown us the weak side of the rebellion, had shown us where to strike and how. It was not from lack of native courage that Virginia submitted for thirty long hours and at last was relieved only by Federal troops; but because the attack was made on the side of her conscience and thus armed her against herself. She beheld at her side the sullen brow of a black Ireland. When John Brown proclaimed [emancipation](#) to the slaves of [Maryland](#) and Virginia he added to his war power the force of a moral earthquake. Virginia felt all her strong-ribbed mountains to shake under the heavy tread of armed insurgents. Of his army of nineteen her conscience made an army of nineteen hundred.

Another feature of the times, worthy of notice, was the effect of this blow upon the country at large. At the first moment we were stunned and bewildered. Slavery had so benumbed the moral sense of the nation, that it never suspected the possibility of an explosion like this, and it was difficult for Captain Brown to get himself taken for what he really was. Few could seem to comprehend that freedom to the slaves was his only object. If you will go back with me to that time you will find that the most curious and contradictory versions of the affair were industriously circulated, and those which were the least rational and true seemed to command the readiest belief. In the view of some, it assumed tremendous proportions. To such it was nothing less than a wide-sweeping rebellion to overthrow the existing government, and construct another upon its ruins, with Brown for its President and Commander-in-Chief; the proof of this was found in the old man's carpet-bag in the shape of a constitution for a new Republic, an instrument which in reality had been executed to govern the conduct of his men in the mountains. Smaller and meaner natures saw in it nothing higher than a purpose to plunder. To them John Brown and his men were a gang of desperate robbers, who had learned by some means that government had sent a large sum of money to [Harpers Ferry](#) to pay off the workmen in its employ there, and they had gone thence to fill their pockets from this money. The fact is, that outside of a few friends, scattered in different parts of the country, and the slave-holders of Virginia, few persons understood the significance of the hour. That a man might do something very audacious and desperate for money, power or fame, was to the general apprehension quite possible; but, in face of plainly-written law, in face of constitutional guarantees protecting each State against domestic violence, in face of a nation of forty million of people, that nineteen men could invade a great State to liberate a despised and hated race, was to the average intellect and conscience, too monstrous for belief. In this respect the vision of Virginia was clearer than that of the nation. Conscious of her guilt and therefore full of suspicion, sleeping on pistols for pillows, startled at every unusual sound, constantly fearing and expecting a repetition of the Nat. Turner insurrection, she at once understood the meaning, if not the magnitude of the affair. It was this understanding which caused her to raise the lusty and



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

implored a cry to the Federal government for help, and it was not till he who struck the blow had fully explained his motives and object, that the incredulous nation in any wise comprehended the true spirit of the raid, or of its commander. Fortunate for his memory, fortunate for the brave men associated with him, fortunate for the truth of history, John Brown survived the saber gashes, bayonet wounds and bullet holes, and was able, though covered with blood, to tell his own story and make his own defense. Had he with all his men, as might have been the case, gone down in the shock of battle, the world would have had no true basis for its judgment, and one of the most heroic efforts ever witnessed in behalf of liberty would have been confounded with base and selfish purposes. When, like savages, the Wises, the Vallandinghames, the Washingtons, the Stuarts and others stood around the fallen and bleeding hero, and sought by torturing questions to wring from his supposed dying lips some word by which to soil the sublime undertaking, by implicating [Gerrit Smith](#), [Joshua Reed Giddings](#), [Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe](#), [George Luther Stearns](#), [Edwin Morton](#), [Franklin Benjamin Sanborn](#), and other prominent Anti-slavery men, the brave old man, not only avowed his object to be the [emancipation](#) of the slaves, but serenely and proudly announced himself as solely responsible for all that had happened. Though some thought of his own life might at such a moment have seemed natural and excusable, he showed none, and scornfully rejected the idea that he acted as the agent or instrument of any man or set of men. He admitted that he had friends and sympathizers, but to his own head he invited all the bolts of slave-holding wrath and fury, and welcomed them to do their worst. His manly courage and self-forgetful nobleness were not lost upon the crowd about him, nor upon the country. They drew applause from his bitterest enemies. Said [Henry A. Wise](#), "He is the gamest man I ever met." "He was kind and humane to his prisoners," said Col. Lewis Washington.

To the outward eye of men, John Brown was a criminal, but to their inward eye he was a just man and true. His deeds might be disowned, but the spirit which made those deeds possible was worthy highest honor. It has been often asked, why did not Virginia spare the life of this man? why did she not avail herself of this grand opportunity to add to her other glory that of a lofty magnanimity? Had they spared the good old man's life — had they said to him, "you see we have you in our power, and could easily take your life, but we have no desire to hurt you in any way; you have committed a terrible crime against society; you have invaded us at midnight and attacked a sleeping community, but we recognize you as a fanatic, and in some sense instigated by others; and on this ground and others, we release you. Go about your business, and tell those who sent you that we can afford to be magnanimous to our enemies." I say, had Virginia held some such language as this to John Brown, she would have inflicted a heavy blow on the whole Northern abolition movement, one which only the omnipotence of truth and the force of truth could have overcome. I have no doubt Gov. Wise would have done so gladly, but, alas, he was the executive of a State which thought she could not afford such magnanimity. She had that within her bosom which could more safely tolerate the presence of a criminal than a saint, a highway robber than a moral hero. All her hills and valleys were studded with material for a disastrous conflagration, and one spark of the dauntless spirit of Brown might set the whole State in flames. A sense of this appalling liability put an end to every noble consideration. His death was a foregone conclusion, and his trial was simply one of form.

Honor to the brave young Col. Hoyt who hastened from Massachusetts to defend his friend's life at the peril of his own; but there would have been no hope of success had he been allowed to plead the case. He might have surpassed Choate or Webster in power — a thousand physicians might have sworn that Capt. Brown was insane, it would have been all to no purpose; neither eloquence nor testimony could have prevailed.

Slavery was the idol of Virginia, and pardon and life to Brown meant condemnation and death to slavery. He had practically illustrated a truth stranger than fiction, — a truth higher than Virginia had ever known, — a truth more noble and beautiful than Jefferson ever wrote. He had evinced a conception of the sacredness and value of liberty which transcended in sublimity that of her own [Patrick Henry](#) and made even his fire-flashing sentiment of "Liberty or Death" seem dark and tame and selfish. Henry loved liberty for himself, but this man loved liberty for all men, and for those most despised and scorned, as well as for those most esteemed and



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

honored. Just here was the true glory of John Brown's mission. It was not for his own freedom that he was thus ready to lay down his life, for with Paul he could say, "I was born free." No chain had bound his ankle,



no yoke had galled his neck. History has no better illustration of pure, disinterested benevolence. It was not Caucasian for Caucasian —white man for white man; not rich man for rich man, but Caucasian for Ethiopian —white man for black man —rich man for poor man —the man admitted and respected, for the man despised and rejected. "I want you to understand, gentlemen," he said to his persecutors, "that I respect the rights of the poorest and weakest of the colored people, oppressed by the slave system, as I do those of the most wealthy and powerful." In this we have the key to the whole life and career of the man. Than in this sentiment humanity has nothing more touching, reason nothing more noble, imagination nothing more sublime; and if we could reduce all the religions of the world to one essence we could find in it nothing more divine. It is much to be regretted that some great artist, in sympathy with the spirit of the occasion, had not been present when these and similar words were spoken. The situation was thrilling. An old man in the center of an excited and angry crowd, far away from home, in an enemy's country —with no friend near —overpowered, defeated, wounded, bleeding —covered with reproaches —his brave companions nearly all dead —his two faithful sons stark and cold by his side —reading his death-warrant in his fast —oozing blood and increasing weakness as in the faces of all around him —yet calm, collected, brave, with a heart for any fate —using his supposed dying moments to explain his course and vindicate his cause: such a subject would have been at once an inspiration and a power for one of the grandest historical pictures ever painted....

With John Brown, as with every other man fit to die for a cause, the hour of his physical weakness was the hour of his moral strength —the hour of his defeat was the hour of his triumph —the moment of his capture was the crowning victory of his life. With the Allegheny mountains for his pulpit, the country for his church and the whole civilized world for his audience, he was a thousand times more effective as a preacher than as a warrior, and the consciousness of this fact was the secret of his amazing complacency. Might with the sword of steel, he was mightier with the sword of the truth, and with this sword he literally swept the horizon. He was more than a match for all the Wises, Masons, Vallandinghams and Washingtons, who could rise against him. They could kill him, but they could not answer him.

In studying the character and works of a great man, it is always desirable to learn in what he is distinguished from others, and what have been the causes of this difference. Such men as he whom we are now considering, come on to the theater of life only at long intervals. It is not always easy to explain the exact and logical causes that produce them, or the subtle influences which sustain them, at the immense heights where we sometimes find them; but we know that the hour and the man are seldom far apart, and that here, as elsewhere, the demand may in some mysterious way, regulate the supply. A great iniquity, hoary with age, proud and defiant, tainting the whole moral atmosphere of the country, subjecting both church and state to its control, demanded the startling shock which John Brown seemed especially inspired to give it.

Apart from this mission there was nothing very remarkable about him. He was a wool-dealer, and a good judge of wool, as a wool-dealer ought to be. In all visible respects he was a man like unto other men. No outward sign of Kansas or [Harpers Ferry](#) was about him. As I knew him, he was an even-tempered man, neither morose, malicious nor misanthropic, but kind, amiable, courteous, and gentle in his intercourse with men. His words were few, well chosen and forcible. He was a good business man, and a good husband and father: a man



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

apparently in every way calculated to make a smooth and pleasant path for himself through the world. He loved society, he loved little children, he liked music, and was fond of animals. To no one was the world more beautiful or life more sweet. How then as I have said shall we explain his apparent indifference to life? I can find but one answer, and that is, his intense hatred to oppression. I have talked with many men, but I remember none, who seemed so deeply excited upon the subject of slavery as he. He would walk the room in agitation at mention of the word. He saw the evil through no mist or haze, but in a light of infinite brightness, which left no line of its ten thousand horrors out of sight. Law, religion, learning, were interposed in its behalf in vain. His law in regard to it was that which Lord Henry Peter Brougham described, as “the law above all the enactments of human codes, the same in all time, the same throughout the world — the law unchangeable and eternal—the law written by the finger of God on the human heart—that law by which property in man is, and ever must remain, a wild and guilty phantasy.”

Against truth and right, legislative enactments were to his mind mere cobwebs —the pompous emptiness of human pride —the pitiful outbreathings of human nothingness. He used to say “whenever there is a right thing to be done, there is a ‘thus said the Lord’ that it shall be done.”

It must be admitted that Brown assumed tremendous responsibility in making war upon the peaceful people of Harpers Ferry, but it must be remembered also that in his eye a slave-holding community could not be peaceable, but was, in the nature of the case, in one incessant state of war. To him such a community was not more sacred than a band of robbers: it was the right of any one to assault it by day or night. He saw no hope that slavery would ever be abolished by moral or political means: “he knew,” he said, “the proud and hard hearts of the slave-holders, and that they never would consent to give up their slaves, till they felt a big stick about their heads.”

It was five years before this event at Harpers Ferry, while the conflict between freedom and slavery was waxing hotter and hotter with every hour, that the blundering statesmanship of the National Government repealed the Missouri compromise,  and thus launched the territory of Kansas as a prize to be battled for between the North and South. The remarkable part taken in this contest by Brown has been already referred to, and it doubtless helped to prepare him for the final tragedy, and though it did not by means originate the plan, it confirmed him in it and hastened its execution.

During his four years’ service in Kansas it was my good fortune to see him often. On his trips to and from the territory he sometimes stopped several days at my house, and at one time several weeks. It was on this last occasion that liberty had been victorious in Kansas, and he felt that he must hereafter devote himself to what he considered his larger work. It was the theme of all his conversation, filling his nights with dreams and his days with visions. An incident of his boyhood may explain, in some measure, the intense abhorrence he felt to slavery. He had for some reason been sent into the States of [Kentucky](#), where he made the acquaintance of a slave boy, about his own age, of whom he became very fond. For some petty offense this boy was one day subjected to a brutal beating. The blows were dealt with an iron shovel and fell fast and furiously upon his slender body. Born in a free State and unaccustomed to such revolted at the shocking spectacle and at that early age he swore eternal hatred to slavery.  After years never obliterated the impression, and he found in this early experience an argument against contempt for small things. It is true that the boy is the father of the man. From the acorn comes the oak. The impression of a horse’s foot in the sand suggested the art of printing. The fall of an apple intimated the law of gravitation. A word dropped in the woods of Vincennes, by royal hunters, gave Europe and the world a “William the Silent,” and a thirty years’ war. The beating of a Hebrew bondsman, by an Egyptian, created a Moses, and the infliction of a similar outrage on a helpless slave boy in our own land may have caused, forty years afterwards, a John Brown and Harpers Ferry Raid. Most of us can remember some event or incident which has at some time come to us, and made itself a permanent part of our lives. Such an incident came to me in the year 1847.  I had then the honor of spending a day and night under the roof of a man, whose character and conversation made a very deep impression on my mind and heart; and as the circumstance does not lie entirely out of our present observations, you will pardon for a moment a



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

seeming digression. The name of the person alluded to had been several times mentioned to me, in a tone that made me curious to see him and to make his acquaintance. He was a merchant, and our first meeting was at his store — a substantial brick building, giving evidence of a flourishing business. After a few minutes' detention here, long enough for me to observe the neatness and order of the places, I was conducted by him to his residence where I was kindly received by his family as an expected guest. I was a little disappointed at the appearance of this man's house, for after seeing his fine store, I was prepared to see a fine residence; but this logic was entirely contradicted by the facts. The house was a small, wooden one, on a black street in a neighborhood of laboring men and mechanics, respectable enough, but not just the spot where one would expect enough, but not just the spot where one would expect to find the home of a successful merchant. Plain as was the outside, the inside was plainer. Its furniture might have pleased a Spartan. It would take longer to tell what was not in it, than what was; no sofas, no cushions, no curtains, no carpets, no easy rocking chairs inviting to enervation of rest or repose. My first meal passed under the misnomer of tea. It was none of your tea and toast sort, but potatoes and cabbage, and beef soup; such a meal as a man might relish after following the plough all day, or after performing a forced march of a dozen miles over rough ground in frosty weather. Innocent of paint, veneering, varnish or tablecloth, the table announced itself unmistakably and honestly pine and of the plainest workmanship. No hired help passed from kitchen to dining room, staring in amazement at the colored man at the white man's table. The mother, daughters and sons did the serving, and did it well. I heard no apology for doing their own work; they went through it as if used to it, untouched by any thought of degradation or impropriety. Supper over, the boys helped to clear the table and wash the dishes. This style of housekeeping struck me as a little odd. I mention it because household management is worthy of thought. A house is more than brick and mortar, wood or paint; this to me at least was. In its plainness it was a truthful reflection of its inmates: no disguises, no illusions, no make-believe here, but stern truth and solid, purpose breathed in all its arrangements. I was not long in company with the master of this house before I discovered that he was indeed the master of it, and likely to become mine too, if I staid long with him. He fulfilled St. Paul's idea of the head of the family — his wives believe in him, and his children observed him with reverence. Whenever he spoke, his words commanded earnest attention. His arguments which I ventured at some points to oppose, seemed to convince all, his appeals touched all, and his will impressed all. Certainly I never felt myself in the presence of a stronger religious influence than while in this house. "God and duty, God and duty," run like a thread of gold through all his utterances, and his family supplied a ready "Amen." In person he was lean and sinewy, of the best New England mould, built for times of trouble, fitted to grapple with the flintiest hardships. Clad in plain American woolen, shod in boots of cowhide leather, and wearing a cravat of the same substantial material, under six feet high, less than one hundred and fifty lbs. in weight, aged about fifty, he presented a figure straight and symmetrical as a mountain pine. His bearing was singularly impressive. His head was not large, but compact and high. His hair was coarse, strong, slightly gray and closely trimmed and grew close to his forehead. His face was smoothly shaved and revealed a strong square mouth, supported by a broad and prominent chin. His eyes were clear and grew, and in conversation they alternated with tears and fire. When on the street, he moved with a long springing, race-horse step, absorbed by his own reflections, neither seeking nor shunning observation. Such was the man whose name I heard uttered in whispers — such was the house in which he lived — such were family and household management — and such was Captain John Brown.

He said to me at this meeting, that he had invited me to his house for the especial purpose of laying before me his plan for the speedy [emancipation](#) of my race. He seemed to apprehend opposition on my part as he opened the subject and touched my vanity by saying, that he had observed my course at home and abroad, and wanted my co-operation. He said he had been for the last thirty years looking for colored men to whom he could safely reveal his secret, and had almost despaired, at times, of finding such, but that now he was encouraged for he saw heads rising up in all directions, to whom he thought he could with safety impart his plan. As this plan then lay in his mind it was very simple, and had much to commend it. It did not, as was supposed by many,



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

contemplate a general rising among the slaves, and a general slaughter of the slave masters (an insurrection he thought would only defeat the object), but it did contemplate the creating of an armed force which should act in the very heart of the South. He was not averse to the shedding of blood, and thought the practice of carrying arms would be a good one for the colored people to adopt, as it would give them a sense of manhood.

No people he said could have self-respect or be respected who would not fight for their freedom. He called my attention to a large map of the U. States, and pointed out to me the far-reaching Alleghanies, stretching away from the borders of New York into the Southern States. "These mountains," he said, "are the basis of my plan. God has given the strength of these hills to freedom; they were placed here to aid the [emancipation](#) of your race; they are full of natural forts, where one man for defense would be equal to a hundred for attack; they are also full of good hiding places where a large number of men could be concealed and baffle and elude pursuit for a long time. I know these mountains well and could take a body of men into them and keep them there in spite of all the efforts of Virginia to dislodge me, and drive me out. I would take at first about twenty-five picked men and begin on a small scale, supply them arms and ammunition, post them in squads of fives on a line of gathering recruits from the surrounding farms, seeking and selecting the most restless and daring."

He saw that in this part of the work the utmost care must be used to guard against treachery and disclosure; only the most conscientious and skillful should be sent on this perilous duty. With care and enterprise he thought he could soon gather a force of one hundred hardy men, men who would be content to lead the free and adventurous life to which he proposed to train them. When once properly drilled and each had found the place for which he was best suited, they would begin work in earnest; they would run off the slaves in large numbers, retain the strong and brave ones in the mountains, and send the weak and timid ones to the North by the underground Rail-road; his operations would be enlarged with increasing numbers and would not be confined to one locality. Slave-holders should in some cases be approached at midnight and told to give up their slaves and to let them have their best horses to ride away upon. Slavery was a state of war, he said, to which the slaves were unwilling parties and consequently they had a right to anything necessary to their peace and freedom. He would shed no blood and would avoid a fight except in self-defense, when he would of course do his best. He believed this movement would weaken slavery in two ways—first by making slave property insecure, it would become undesirable; and secondly it would keep the anti-slavery agitation alive and public attention fixed upon it, and thus lead to the adoption of measures to abolish the evil altogether. He held that there was need of something startling to prevent the agitation of the question from dying out; that slavery had come near being abolished in Virginia by the Nat. Turner insurrection, and he thought his method would speedily put an end to it, both in [Maryland](#) and Virginia. The trouble was to get the right men to start with and money enough to equip them. He had adopted the simple and economical mode of living to which I have referred with a view to save money for this purpose. This was said in no boastful tone, for he felt that he had delayed already too long and had no room to boast either his zeal or his self-denial.

From 8 o'clock in the evening till 3 in the morning, Capt. Brown and I sat face to face, he arguing in favor of his plan, and I finding all the objections I could against it. Now mark! this meeting of ours was full twelve years before the strike at [Harpers Ferry](#). He had been watching and waiting all that time for suitable heads to rise or "pop up" as he said among the sable millions in whom he could confide; hence forty years had passed between his thought and his act. Forty years, though not a long time in the life of a nation, is a long time in the life of a man; and here forty long years, this man was struggling with this one idea; like Moses he was forty years in the wilderness. Youth, manhood, middle age had come and gone; two marriages had been consummated, twenty children had called him father; and through all the storms and vicissitudes of busy life, this one thought, like the angel in the burning bush, had confronted him with its blazing light, bidding him on to his work. Like Moses he had made excuses, and as with Moses his excuses were overruled. Nothing should postpone further what was to him his only apology for existence. He often said to me, though life was sweet to him, he would willingly lay it down for the freedom of my people; and on one occasion he added, that he had already lived about as long as most men, since he had slept less, and if he should now lay down his life

[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

the loss would not be great, for in fact he knew no better use for it. During his last visit to us in Rochester there appeared in the newspapers a touching story connected with the horrors of the Sepoy War in British India.

 A Scotch missionary and his family were in the hands of the enemy, and were to be massacred the next morning. During the night, when they had given up every hope of rescue, suddenly the wife insisted that relief would come. Placing her ear close to the ground she declared she heard the Slogan — the Scotch war song. For long hours in the night no member of the family could hear the advancing music but herself. “Dinna ye hear it? Dinna ye hear it?” she would say, but they could not hear it. As the morning slowly dawned a Scotch regiment was found encamped indeed about them, and they were saved from the threatened slaughter.



This circumstance, coming at such a time, gave Capt. Brown a new word of cheer. He would come to the table in the morning his countenance fairly illuminated, saying that he had heard the Slogan, and he would add, “Dinna ye hear it? Dinna ye hear it?” Alas! like the Scotch missionary I was obliged to say “No.” Two weeks prior to the mediated attack, Capt. Brown summoned me to meet him in an old stone quarry on the



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

Conecochequi river, near the town of Chambersburgh, Penn.  His arms and ammunition were stored in that town and were to be moved on to [Harpers Ferry](#). In company with [Shields Green](#) I obeyed the summons, and prompt to the hour we met the dear old man, with [John Henry Kagi](#), his secretary, at the appointed place. Our meeting was in some sense a council of war. We spent the Saturday and succeeding Sunday in conference on the question, whether the desperate step should then taken, or the old plan as already described should be carried out. He was for boldly striking Harpers Ferry at once and running the risk of getting into the mountains afterwards. I was for avoiding Harpers Ferry altogether. Shields Green and Mr. Kagi remained silent listeners throughout. It is needless to repeat here what was said, after what has happened. Suffice it, that after all I could say, I saw that my old friend had resolved on his course and that it was idle to parley. I told him finally that it was impossible for me to join him. I could see Harpers Ferry only as a trap of steel, and ourselves in the wrong side of it. He regretted my decision and we parted.

Thus far, I have spoken exclusively of Capt. Brown. Let me say a word or two of his brave and devoted men, and first of Shields Green. He was a fugitive slave from Charleston, South Carolina, and had attested his love of liberty by escaping from slavery and making his way through many dangers to Rochester, where he had lived in my family, and where he met the man with whom he went to the scaffold. I said to him, as I was about to leave, "Now Shields, you have heard our discussion. If in view of it, you do not wish to stay, you have but to say so, and you can go back with me." He answered, "I b'l'ëve I'll go wid de old man;" and go with him he did, into the fight, and to the gallows, and bore himself as grandly as any of the number. At the moment when Capt. Brown was surrounded, and all chance of escape was cut off, Green was in the mountains and could have made his escape as [Osborn Perry Anderson](#) did, but when asked to do so, he made the same answer he did at Chambersburg, "I b'l'ëve I'll go down wid de ole man." When in prison at Charlestown, and he was not allowed to see his old friend, his fidelity to him was in no wise weakened, and no complaint against Brown could be extorted from him by those who talked with him.

If a monument should be erected to the memory of John Brown, as there ought to be, the form and name of Shields Green should have a conspicuous place upon it. It is a remarkable fact, that in this small company of men. but one showed any sign of weakness or regret for what he did or attempted to do. Poor [John Edwin Cook](#) broke down and sought to save his life by representing that he had been deceived, and allured by false promises. But [Aaron D. Stevens](#), [Albert Hazlett](#) and Green went to their doom like the heroes they were, without a murmur, without a regret, believing alike in their captain and their cause.

For the disastrous termination of this invasion, several causes have been assigned. It has been said that Capt. Brown found it necessary to strike before he was ready; that men had promised to join him from the North who failed to arrive; that the cowardly negroes did not rally to his support as he expected, but the true cause as stated by himself, contradicts all these theories, and from his statement there is no appeal. Among the questions put to him by Mr. Vallandigham after his capture were the following: "Did you expect a general uprising of the slaves in case of your success?" To this he answered, "No, sir, nor did I wish it. I expected to gather strength from time to time and then to set them free." "Did you expect to hold possession here until then?" Answer, "Well, probably I had quite a different idea. I do not know as I ought to reveal my plans.

I am here wounded and a prisoner because I foolishly permitted myself to be so. You overstate your strength when you suppose I could have been taken if I had not allowed it. I was too tardy after commencing the open attack in delaying my movements through Monday night and up to the time of the arrival of government troops. It was all because of my desire to spare the feelings of my prisoners and their families."

But the question is, Did John Brown fail? He certainly did fail to get out of [Harpers Ferry](#) before being beaten down by United States soldiers; he did fail to save his own life, and to lead a liberating army into the mountains of Virginia. But he did not go to Harpers Ferry to save his life. The true question is, Did John Brown draw his sword against slavery and thereby lose his life in vain? and to this I answer ten thousand times, No! No man fails, or can fail who so grandly gives himself and all he has to a righteous cause. No man, who in his hour of extremest need, when on his way to meet an ignominious death, could so forget himself as to stop and kiss a



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

little child, one of the hated race for whom he was about to die, could by any possibility fail. Did John Brown fail? Ask [Henry A. Wise](#) in whose house less than two years after, a school for the emancipated slaves was taught. Did John Brown fail? Ask [James M. Mason](#), the author of the inhuman fugitive slave bill, who was cooped up in Fort Warren, as a traitor less than two years from the time that he stood over the prostrate body of John Brown. Did John Brown fail? Ask Clement C. Vallandigham, one other of the inquisitorial party; for he too went down in the tremendous whirlpool created by the powerful hand of this bold invader. If John Brown did not end the war that ended slavery, he did at least begin the war that ended slavery. If we look over the dates, places and men, for which this honor is claimed, we shall find that not Carolina, but Virginia—not Fort Sumter, but Harpers Ferry and the arsenal—not Col. Anderson, but John Brown, began the war that ended American slavery and made this a free Republic. Until this blow was struck, the prospect for freedom was dim, shadowy and uncertain. The irrepressible conflict was one of words, votes and compromises. When John Brown stretched forth his arm the sky was cleared. The time for compromises was gone—the armed hosts of freedom stood face to face over the chasm of a broken Union—and the clash of arms was at hand. The South staked all upon getting possession of the Federal Government, and failing to do that, drew the sword of rebellion and thus made her own, and not Brown's, the lost cause of the century.





RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1883

July: [Antonio Maceo](#) resigned his posts in Honduras and declared,



Our enslaved [Cuba](#) demands that its sons fight for its freedom.

[Franklin Benjamin Sanborn](#)'s "Comment by a radical Abolitionist" appeared in the [Century Magazine](#), commenting upon the article immediately preceding it, by Alexander R. Boteler, entitled "Recollections of the John Brown Raid by a Virginian Who Witnessed the Fight" (Volume 26, pages 411-15, 399-411):

It is hard -nay, impossible- to carry the reader of these pages in 1883 back in memory to that period of our country's history when [John Brown](#) captured the town and arsenal at [Harpers Ferry](#), or make real to ourselves the despotism which a few slaveholders then exercised over the rest of mankind in this country. Though a meager minority in their own South, they absolutely controlled there not only four millions of slaves, but six millions of white people, nominally free, while they directed the policy and the opinions of more than half the free people of the non-slaveholding States. They had dictated the nomination and secured the election of James Buchanan as President, - the most complete servant of the slave power who ever held that office; they had not only refused to terminate the slave-trade (as by treaty we were bound to assist in doing), but they had induced the importation of a few cargoes of slaves into Carolina and Georgia; they had broken down the Missouri compromise of 1820 (imposed by themselves on the unwilling North), and had done their best to extend slavery over the new territories of the nation, and to legalize its existence in all the Free States. Through the mouth of Chief-Justice Roger Brooke Taney, who simply uttered the decrees of the slave-holding oligarchy, they had made the Supreme Court declare that four million Americans, of African descent, had practically "no rights which a white man was bound to respect"; and they exerted themselves in every way to give due effect to that dictum. The Dred Scott decision was given by Taney in 1857, and it led at once to the execution of John Brown's long-cherished purpose of striking a blow at slavery in its own Virginian stronghold. That decision flashed into the minds of Northern men the conviction which John Quincy Adams had long before formulated and expressed - that "the preservation, propagation, and perpetuation of slavery was the



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

vital and animating spirit of the national Government." It was this conviction that led to the election of [Abraham Lincoln](#) in 1860, as it had led John Brown and his small band of followers to form their conspiracy and begin their campaign in 1858-'59. While the unpaid labor of the slaves was believed by the slaveholders to be the real source of our national prosperity, it was the merit and the fate of John Brown first to see and act upon the sad knowledge that slavery and our national existence were incompatible. Thirty years before he died for the blacks in Virginia, he chose the side of the nation against slavery; and in less than ten years after his death the whole people followed in the path he had marked out – the straight and thorny road of emancipation by force.

It is in this broad way that the Harpers Ferry raid must be looked at, – not as a midnight foray of robbers and murderers. It was an act of war, and was accepted by the South as a sure omen that war was at hand. Brown told the slave-holders this in his famous conversation with [James Mason](#) of Virginia and Vallandigham of Ohio. "I claim to be here," he said, "carrying out a measure I believe to be perfectly justifiable, and not to be acting the part of an incendiary or ruffian; on the contrary, I am here to aid those suffering under a great wrong. I wish to say, furthermore, that you had better –all you people of the South– prepare yourselves for a settlement of this question. It must come up for settlement sooner than you are prepared for it, and the sooner you commence that preparation the better for you. 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." This was a veritable "Thus saith the Lord" – as his hearers and the whole world soon found out. But to such as then doubted the message of the prophet Brown condescended to verify his credentials in that wonderfully eloquent speech to the court that sentenced him to the gallows:

This court acknowledges, as I suppose, the validity of the Law of God. 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 that men should do unto me, I should do even so to them." It teaches me further, to "remember them that are in bonds as bound with them." I endeavored to act up to that instruction. 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 –as I have always freely admitted I have done– in behalf of His despised poor, was not wrong but right.

There was John Brown's authority for the capture of Harpers Ferry, – the same which Ethan Allen alleged, with less reason, a Ticonderoga, where he commanded surrender "in the name of the great Jehovah." Brown "had gone to be a soldier in the army of the Lord" long before his death, and the song of the people marching to avenge that death were but the public proclamation



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

of his commission from above. Since the details of that strange conversation with Mason of Virginia have faded from the popular memory, let me quote another passage in which Brown pursues the same line of reasoning he afterward held in court.

SENATOR MASON: How do you justify your acts?

CAPTAIN BROWN: 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 for any one to interfere with you so far as to free those you willfully and wickedly hold in bondage. I do not say this insultingly.

SENATOR MASON: I understand that.

CAPTAIN BROWN: I think I did right, and that others will do right who 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.

LIEUTENANT STUART: But you don't believe in the BIBLE?

CAPTAIN BROWN: Certainly I do.

\* \* \*

I want you to understand, gentlemen, that I respect the rights of the poorest and weakest of the colored people, oppressed by the slave system, just as much as I do those of the most wealthy and powerful. That is the idea that has moved me, and that alone. We expected no reward except the satisfaction of endeavoring to do for those in distress -the greatly oppressed- as we would be done by. The cry of distress of the oppressed is my reason, and the only thing that prompted me to come here.

Brown's plan of action in Virginia was wholly his own, as he more than once declared; and it was not until he had long formed and matured it that he made it known (so far as an attack on slavery in Virginia was concerned) to the few friends who shared his confidence in that matter. I cannot say how numerous these were; but beyond his own family and the armed followers who accompanied him, I have never supposed that his Virginia plan was known to fifty persons. Even to those few it was not fully communicated, though they knew that he meant to fortify himself somewhere in the mountains of Virginia or Tennessee, and from that fastness, with his band of soldiers, sally out and liberate slaves by force. His plan to this extent was known, early in 1858, by [Frederick Douglass](#), [Gerrit Smith](#) (at whose house and in whose presence I first heard Brown declare it), [Theodore Parker](#), [Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe](#), [George Luther Stearns](#), [Thomas Wentworth Higginson](#), and myself, and we all raised money to aid Brown in carrying this plan forward.

I know this, because some of the money and nearly all the correspondence relating to the contributions passed through my



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR

hands in 1858-9. I talked more than once in those years with all the persons above named, concerning Brown's Virginia plans and had letters from all except Douglass in regard to it. Brown's general purpose of attacking slavery by force, in Missouri or elsewhere, was known in 1857-8-9 to [Waldo Emerson](#), A. [Bronson Alcott](#), [Henry Thoreau](#), [Wendell Phillips](#), [Thomas Russell](#), [John Albion Andrew](#), and others of the anti-slavery men of Massachusetts, none of whom discountenanced it, while most of them, in my hearing, distinctly approved it, generally, however, as a last resort or a measure of retaliation for the outrages of the slave-holders and their allies. Had these gentlemen known of the Virginia plan, most of them would have strongly disapproved it as premature or impracticable. Such, also, it seemed at first, and generally afterward, to those of us who contributed money to aid Brown in it. I speak particularly of Gerrit Smith, Theodore Parker, George L. Stearns, Dr. Howe, Col. Higginson, and myself. But we all felt, as Governor Andrew afterward said, that whatever the old worthy might plan or do, "John Brown himself was right," and upon that feeling we acted, in spite of doubts and many misgivings. The end has justified our instinctive sentiment; and it has more than justified, it has glorified Brown. I do not wonder that Virginians cannot all see this yet; but the world sees it, and Brown has become, to the world in general, one of the immortal champions of liberty—historical or mythical—among whom we reckon Leonidas, Maccabeus, Tell, Winkelried, Wallace, Hofer, and Marco Bozzaris. I knew John Brown well. He was often a my house and at the houses of my friends and I traveled with him for days. He was what all his speeches, letters, and actions avouch him—a simple, brave, heroic person incapable of anything selfish or base. The higher elements of his character are well seen in the portrait which accompanies these pages. There were darker and sterner traits which fitted him for the grim work he had to do and which are better shown in his bearded portraits, and in some which I possess, taken in the year 1857. But the face that here looks out upon us bespeaks that warm love for God's despised poor which was his deepest trait, and that noble disregard of everything but justice which distinguished his every action. But above and beyond these personal qualities he was what we may best term a historic character; that is, he had, like Cromwell and [Spartacus](#), a certain predestined relation to the political crisis of his time, for which his character fitted him and which, had he striven against it, he could not avoid. Like Cromwell and all the great Calvinists, he was an unquestioning believer in God's fore-ordination and the divine guidance of human affairs; but he was free from the taint of guile that disfigured Cromwell's greatness. Of course, he could not rank with Cromwell or with many inferior men in leadership; but in this God-appointed, inflexible devotion to his object in life he was inferior to no man, and he rose in fame far above more gifted persons because of this very fixedness and simplicity of



**RACE WAR,**

**NOT CIVIL WAR**

character. His renown is secure, and the artless (I must think prejudiced) narrative of Mr. Boteler does but increase it for those who read understandingly. As Tennyson said of the great Duke, we may say of Brown:

Whatever record leap to light,  
He never shall be shamed.

Young men never knew, perhaps, and some old men have forgotten, that we once had statesmen (so called) who loudly declared that negro slavery was the basis not only of our national greatness, but of the white man's freedom. This groveling doctrine found favor in Virginia in John Brown's time, and it was his work, as much as any man's, to overthrow it. A hundred years ago one of the great Virginians, a statesman indeed by nature and by training, said:

With what execration should that statesman be loaded who, permitting one-half the citizens to trample on the rights of the other, transforms those into despots and these into enemies? Can the liberties of a nation be deemed secure when we have removed their only firm basis — a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are the gift of God, that they are not to be violated without his wrath? Indeed, I tremble for my country (Virginia) when I reflect that God is just, that His justice cannot sleep forever; that, considering numbers, nature, and natural means only, a revolution of the wheel of fortune is among possible events; that it may become probable by supernatural interference. The Almighty has no attribute that can take sides with us in such a contest.

This was the language of Jefferson in his "Notes on Virginia," written in 1783, and it was in the county of Jefferson that Brown made his foray in 1859. He harbored in the county of Washington, in [Maryland](#), for three months. He descended upon Jefferson County in Virginia at the end of that time; and when the astonished successors of Washington and Jefferson saw him first, he held in his hand Washington's sword, and was enacting Jefferson's [Declaration of Independence](#) in favor of the slaves of Colonel Washington, — that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. And they were fulfilled to the utmost in the years of war and ruin that followed.

At the critical period of that [Civil War](#) when its issue was still undecided save in the councils of heaven, — at the close of the year 1862 Abraham Lincoln put forth his first edict of emancipation, and followed it up, January 1, 1863, with the final proclamation that the slaves in the rebellious States were from that day free. John Brown had been in his woodland grave among the Adirondack Mountains but little more than three years when we saw this triumph of his hopes, this crown of his toil and martyrdom. His friends gathered to celebrate so happy an event at the house of one of the most faithful and active of his



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

supporters in the Virginia campaign, George Stearns, of Medford, in Massachusetts. It was one of the last of those meetings in which the old anti-slavery men and women came together with hearts united, and rejoiced together face to face. Garrison and Phillips were there, [Waldo Emerson](#) and [Bronson Alcott](#) ([Thoreau](#) had died eight months before), [Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe](#) and his poetic wife, Mrs. Child, Moncure Conway, Martin Conway of Kansas, and many others now dead or widely sundered. The host and his wife, Mrs. Mary Stearns, who also had been an enthusiastic friend of John Brown, could give their guests not only the graceful hospitalities of a house always open to the friends of freedom, but what was then a new sight, Brackett's marble bust of Brown, standing crowned with flowers in the wide hall. This is the only bust of Brown for which the sculptor studied the hero's own features, and it was made after a visit by Brackett to Brown in prison at Charlestown. Though not, in all respects, a portrait, it has the air of Brown, with a majesty that made Charles Sumner exclaim, when he first saw it: "This is like the Moses of Michael Angelo." And when a sibylline negress, a fugitive from [Maryland](#), saw it in my house, she went into an ecstasy of grief and adoration, declaring that Brown was not a mere man, but the Messiah of her people.

"In a great age," says Cousin, speaking of Pascal, "everything is great." John Brown came to prominence in an age by no means grand or noble; but such was his own heroic character that he conferred importance on events in themselves trivial. His petty conflicts in Kansas and the details of his two days' campaign in Virginia will be remembered when a hundred battles of our [Civil War](#) are forgotten. He was one of ten thousand, and, as Thoreau said, could not be tried by a jury of his peers, because his peers did not exist; yet so much was he in accord with what is best in the American character that he will stand in history for one type of our people, as Franklin and Lincoln do, but with a difference. He embodied the distinctive qualities of the Puritan, but with a strong tincture of the more humane sentiments of later times. No man could be more sincere in his faith toward God, more earnest in love for man; his belief in fore-ordination was absolute, his courage not less so. The emotion of fear seemed to be quite unknown to him, except in the form of diffidence, — if that were not rather a sort of pride. He was diffident of his power in speech or writing, yet who, of all his countrymen, has uttered more effective or immortal words?

Part of the service he rendered to his country was by this heroic impersonation of traits that all mankind recognize as noble. The cause of the poor slave had need of all the charm that romantic courage could give it; his defenders were treated with the contempt which attached to himself. They were looked upon with aversion by patriots; they were odious to trade, distasteful to fashion and learning, impious in the sight of the Church. At the single stroke of Brown, all this was changed; the cause that had



**RACE WAR,**

**NOT CIVIL WAR**

been despised suddenly became hated, feared, and respected; and out of this new fear and hatred our national safety was born. Ten years more of disgraceful security, and the nation might have been lost; but the rash and frantic efforts of the South to defend its barbarous system brought on the revolution that has regenerated us politically. No doubt the affair at Harpers Ferry hastened our political crisis by at least ten years, – and what fatal years they might have been but for John Brown! One evening in January, 1860, as I sat in Emerson's study at Concord, talking of this old friend of ours, for whose widow and orphans we were then raising a fund, I spoke to Emerson about a



speech of his at Salem, a few weeks earlier, in which the poet-philosopher had renewed his homage to the memory of Brown. He went to one of the cabinets in which his manuscripts were kept, took out the half-dozen pages on which his remarks had been written down, and gave them to me for publication. I have ever since cherished the manuscript, in which, with bold strokes of his quill, Emerson had written these words at the close:

It would be nearer the truth to say that all people, in proportion to their sensibility and self-respect, sympathize with John Brown. For it is impossible to see courage and disinterestedness and the love that casts out fear, without sympathy. All gentlemen, of course are on his side. I do not mean by "gentlemen" people of scented hair and perfumed handkerchiefs, but men of gentle blood and generosity, "fulfilled with all nobleness"; who, like the Cid, give the outcast leper a share of their bed – like the dying Sidney, pass the cup of cold water to the wounded soldier who needs it more. For what is the oath of gentle blood and knighthood? What but to protect the weak and lowly against the strong oppressor?

\* \* \*

Who makes the abolitionist? The slave-holder. The sentiment of mercy is the natural recoil which the laws of the universe provide to protect mankind from destruction by savage passions. The arch-abolitionist, older than Brown, and older than the Shenandoah Mountains, is Love, whose other name is Justice, – which was before Alfred, before Lycurgus, before Slavery and will be after it.

The generous, immortal traits which these words portray in Brown



**RACE WAR,**

**NOT CIVIL WAR**

and bespeak in Emerson, are those which the artist has caught in the remarkable engraving of my old friend in this number of THE CENTURY.

F.B. Sanborn

**SECRET "SIX"**

[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1887

A photo was snapped during this year that would eventually be useful for a postcard sold to tourists at [Harpers Ferry](#), marking it with an **X** to reveal the point of greatest tourist attraction:



[JOHN BROWN](#)

Here we come to an utterly embarrassing episode in post-Civil War mythmaking: In his Abolition novel *PINE AND PALM* (NY: Holt, 1887, page 531), the Reverend [Moncure Daniel Conway](#) depicted an American mob preparing to lynch a black man: “Just then from a remote corner stepped forward a quaint little man, with large luminous eyes, whom few even of the antislavery men recognized as Thoreau, and placed himself in front of the rush, so quietly—as if he did not see it—that the crowd was surprised into momentary stillness. ‘Doubtless,’ he said, ‘you all remember that fine passage in the Bhagavatgita where Krishna says to Arjuna, Thou and I have met many times.’ The mob was breathless. ‘I may now say that you and I have met in various ages of the world.’ Here somebody exploded in a laugh, which made the crowd laugh. The mob that laughs is lost. The ringleaders vainly tried to rally their forces. Thoreau was heard to the end of his estimate of how many births

the mob and the abolitionists had gone through.”<sup>54</sup>



**READ THE FULL TEXT**

54. [Moncure Daniel Conway](#). PINE AND PALM: A NOVEL. By Moncure D. Conway. In two volumes. 1887. London: Chatto & Windus.

**READ THE FULL TEXT**



**RACE WAR,**

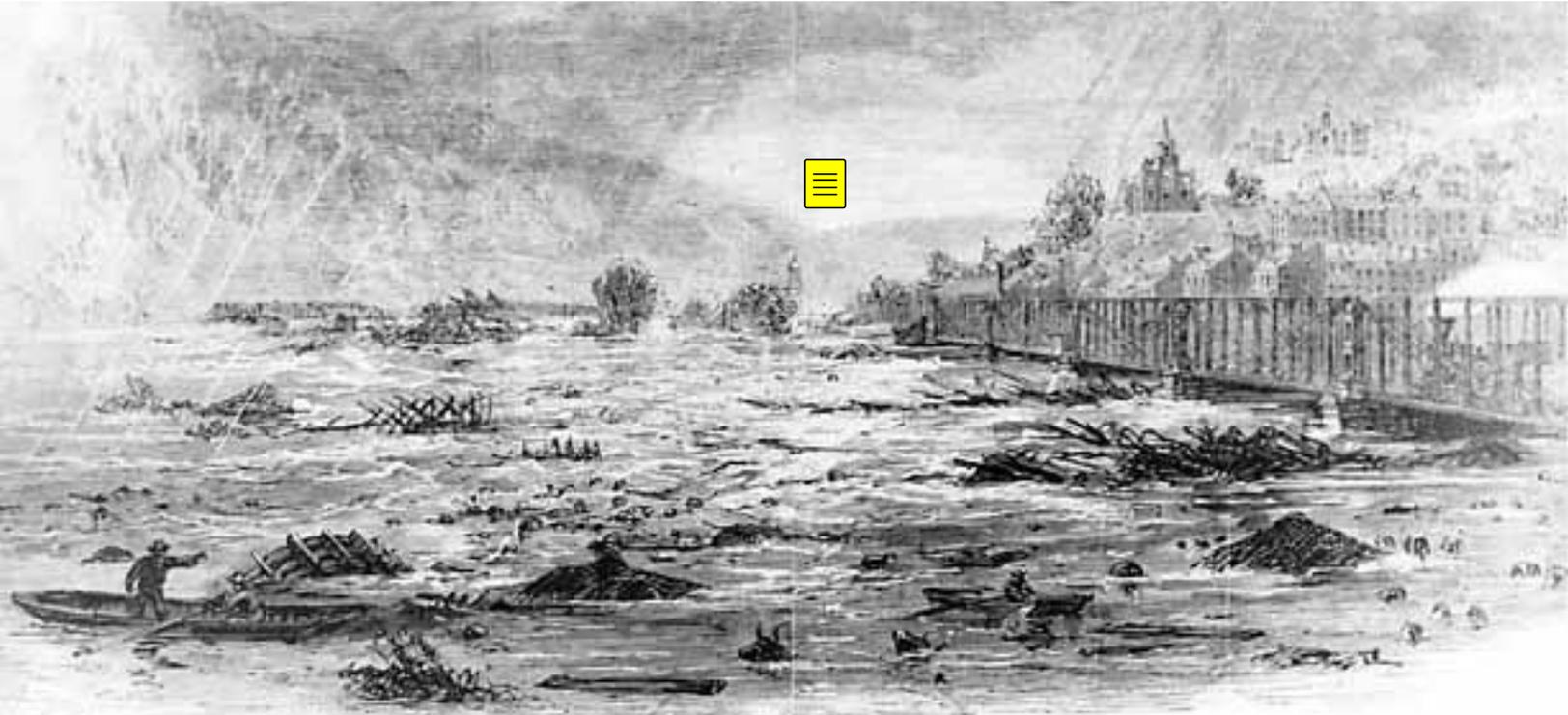
**NOT CIVIL WAR**

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1889

June 1, Saturday: The rivers rose to a record height at [Harpers Ferry](#) – 34.8 feet – destroying the Shenandoah wagon bridge and forcing the Child & McCreight flour mill on Virginius Island to close for good.





**RACE WAR,**

**NOT CIVIL WAR**

**1890**

The Belford Company published [Varina Davis](#)'s 2-volume [JEFFERSON DAVIS, A MEMOIR](#).

During the 1890s civil rights leaders would be convening at a small, church-owned school for African-Americans, Storer College in [Harpers Ferry](#), in their effort to create a new, national organization that would fight for the rights of blacks (this would lead eventually to the creation of the NAACP).

1896

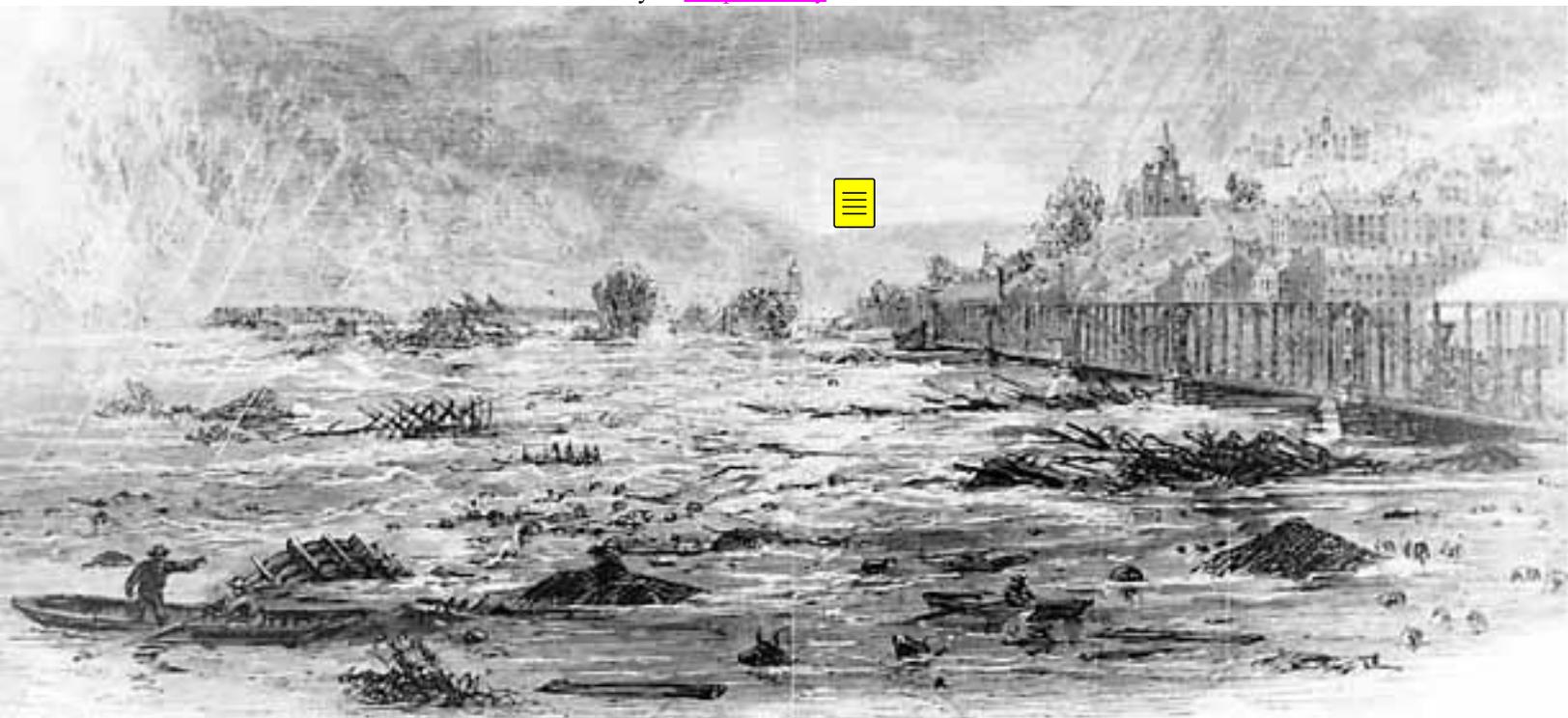
October 1, Thursday: Max Reger was drafted into the [German](#) army.

Richard Strauss was promoted to *Hofkapellmeister* in München.

At Ceja del Negro, [Cuba](#), [Antonio Maceo](#)'s troops found themselves trapped by 3 Spanish columns. After 3 days of fighting the rebels would be victorious but would have suffered 277 casualties, and Maceo would be left with but 200 effective fighters.



One of the worst floods in the history of [Harpers Ferry](#). The rivers crested at 33.0 feet.





RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1906

[Ezra Pound](#) was awarded the degree of M.A. at the University of Pennsylvania.

[Harry S Truman](#) moved from his boardinghouse in Kansas City to the 600-acre family farm near Grandview, Missouri to help his parents, and his brother Vivian, manage and operate it.

By the end of the 19th century the American South was overwhelmed in [Jim Crow](#) laws and legal segregation. Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois and others had created a “Niagara Movement,” a forerunner of the NAACP, which in this year held its 2d conference on the campus of Storer College at [Harpers Ferry](#).

Under the “Indians not taxed” exclusion of the civil rights act, members of the native American “domestic dependent nations” (tribes) had needed to get along somehow without any civil rights. In this year the United States of America enabled these people to pay taxes and provide their young men for military service exactly as if they were white, by extending “dual citizenship” to its “wards.” (This granted a few civil rights, but, don’t think that this gave them the right to visit a polling station on election day: to vote you must not only be a citizen of the USA but also a citizen of the state in which you reside — and such natives were definitively still not citizens of the states in which they resided.)



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1920

[Professor Bliss Perry](#)'s THE AMERICAN SPIRIT IN LITERATURE:

[O]ur literature has no more curious story than the evolution of this local crank [[Thoreau](#)] into his rightful place of mastership.



[Professor Perry](#) offered, in regard to the raid on [Harpers Ferry](#), that:<sup>55</sup>

Once, toward the close of his too brief life, [Thoreau](#) "signed on" again to an American ideal, and no man could have signed more nobly.



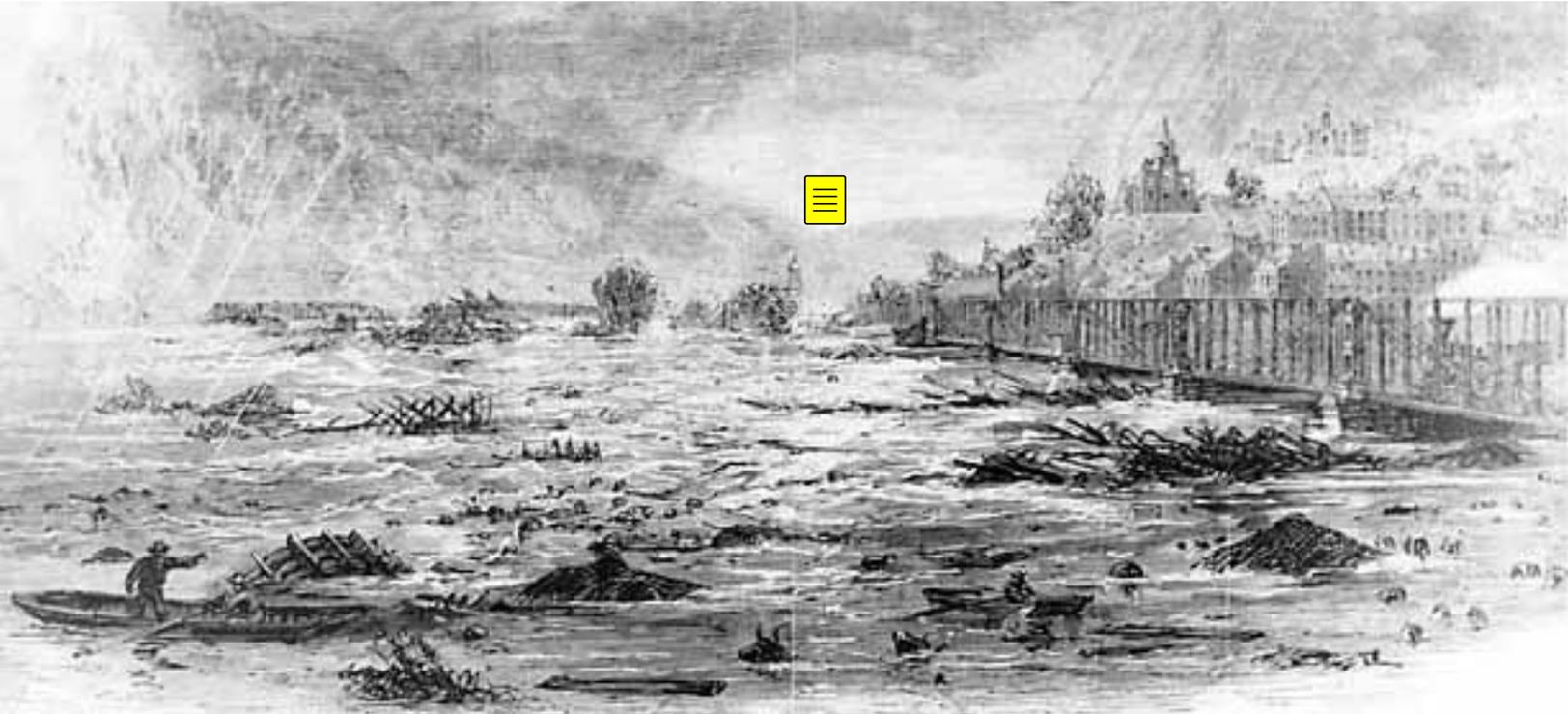
---

55. Somebody really ought to make a study of the tie-in between the search for the dominant author in belletristic pursuits during interwar periods, which expresses itself in the establishment of a dominant "canon," and the quest for the dominant authority as it is found in times of belligerence, which expresses itself, often, in the placement of rows of cannon. For sure, as we can see here, [Professor Perry](#) had something like that going in his mind!

1924



May 3, Saturday: At [Harpers Ferry](#), floodwaters swept away 3 spans from the Bollman highway bridge across the Potomac River and permanently closed the C&O Canal. The rivers rose to 27.6 feet.





**RACE WAR,**

**NOT CIVIL WAR**

**1936**

March 18, Wednesday/19, Thursday: The crest of the flood at [Harpers Ferry](#) was 36½ feet – an all-time record. The Bollman highway bridge and Shenandoah bridge were swept away for good, while many businesses in the

HDT

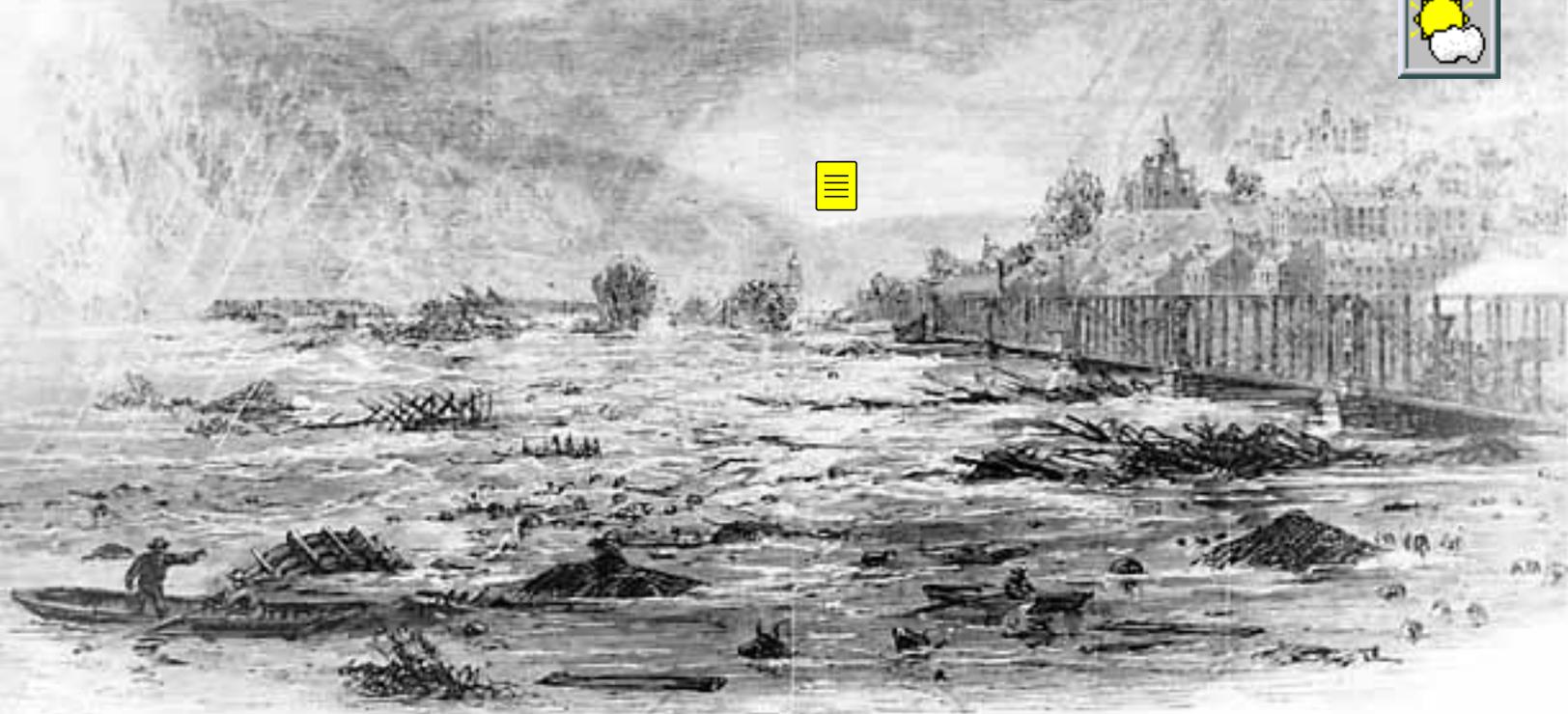
WHAT?

INDEX

RACE WAR,

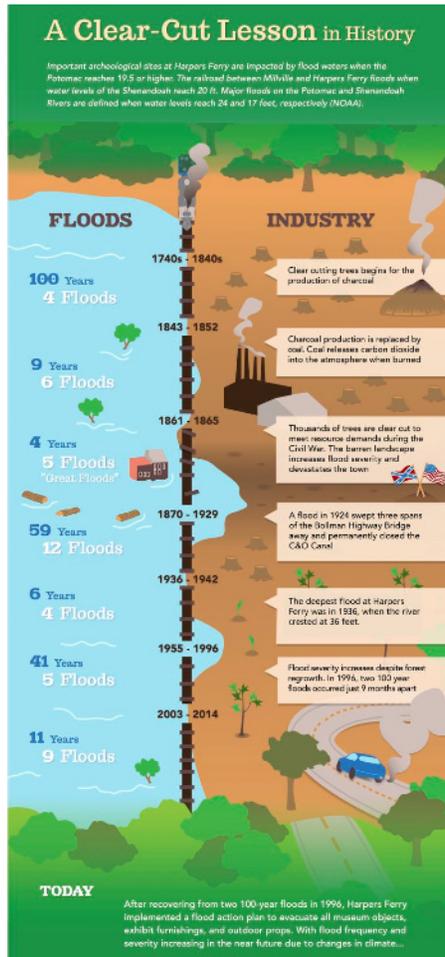
NOT CIVIL WAR

Lower Town were left in ruins.



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR





RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1942

October 16, Friday: Coastal Command, a film with music by Ralph Vaughan Williams, was shown for the initial time, in the Plaza Cinema, Piccadilly Circus, London.

Rodeo, a ballet by Aaron Copland to a scenario by De Mille, was performed for the initial time, at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York. This was a glittering sold out event and a great success. In the audience, Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II decide to hire Agnes de Mille to choreograph their next project, Oklahoma!

The second of 18 patriotic fanfares for brass and percussion commissioned by Eugene Goossens and the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, A Fanfare for Russia by Deems Taylor, was performed for the initial time, in Cincinnati.

A two-day cyclone over the state of Bengal, [India](#) killed 40,000 people.

British troops captured Ambositra, Madagascar, 225 kilometers south of Tananarive (Antananarivo).

50 Polish communists were publicly [hanged](#) in Warsaw and their bodies displayed as a warning.

Carrier task force (Rear Admiral G.D. Murray) struck [Japanese](#) troops on Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands, and enemy seaplanes at Rekata Bay, Santa Isabel, Solomon Islands.

The US Submarine *Thresher* (SS-200) laid mines in northern Gulf of Siam.

United States Seaplane Tender *McFarland* (AVD-14) was damaged by dive bombers in the Solomon Islands, 9 degrees 24 minutes South, 160 degrees 2 minutes East.

# RACE WAR,

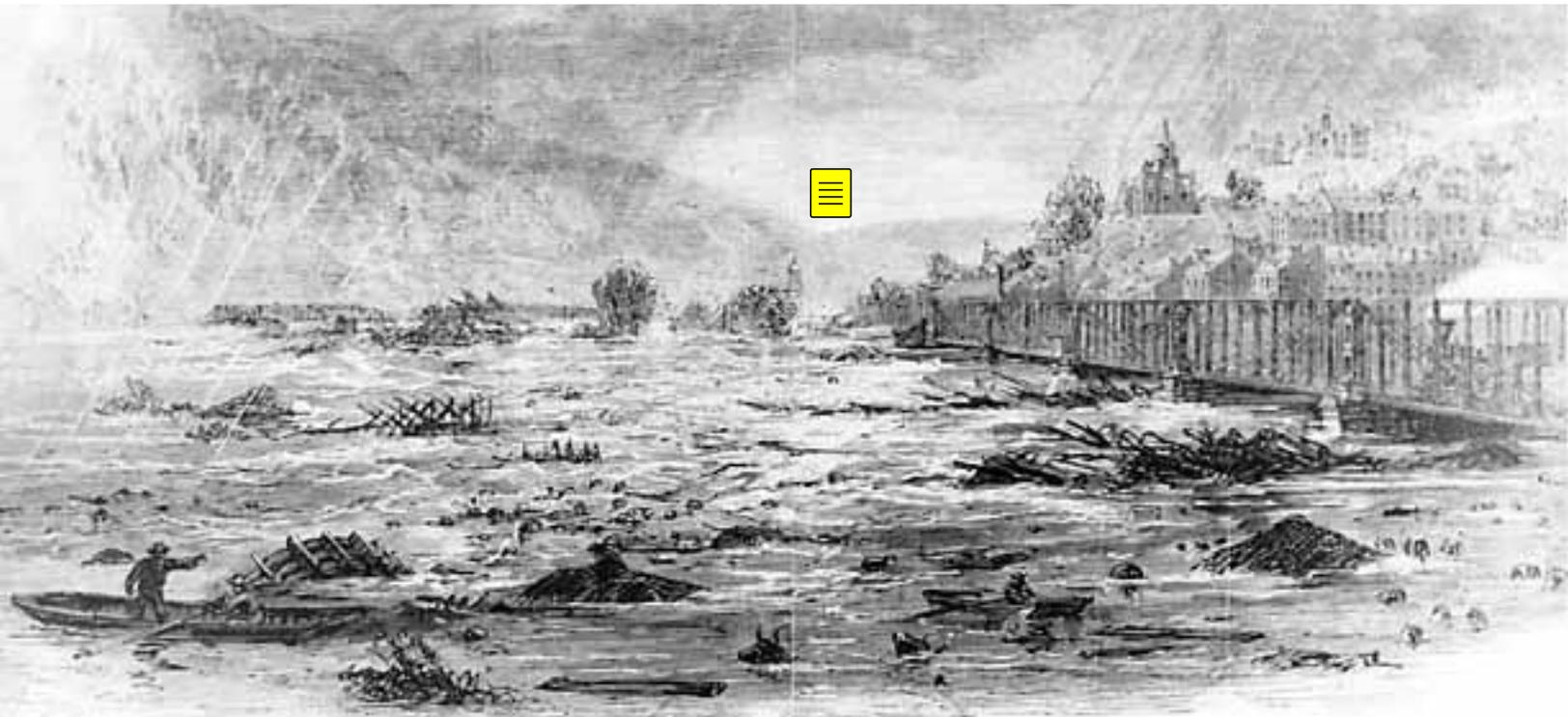
# NOT CIVIL WAR

[Japanese](#) Destroyer *Oboro* was sunk by US Army aircraft in the vicinity of the Aleutian Islands.

[WORLD WAR II](#)



An all-time record river crest for the Shenandoah Valley. In the Lower Town of [Harpers Ferry](#), floodwaters reached 33.8 feet.





RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

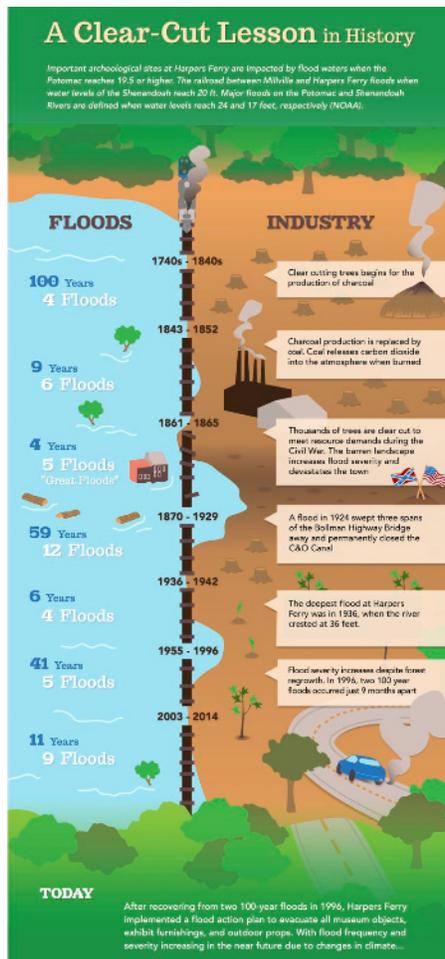
1955

In 1954 legal segregation of public school facilities had been disrupted by the landmark school desegregation decision handed down by the Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education*. This had brought to an end all federal and state funding for Storer College in [Harpers Ferry](#), established as a school for freedmen, and in this year, because it of course could not attract white students, and because the state of West Virginia defunded it and other black schools as superfluous in this new era of integrated education, it was forced to close its doors. In Charleston, South Carolina a baseball team of 11/12-year-old “All Stars” won the city championship, and then in Greenville, South Carolina they won the state championship, and then in Rome, Georgia they won the southern regional championship. When they went on to Williamsport, Pennsylvania, to play in the Little League World Series, they were disqualified to compete for the national title. You see, this was an all-black baseball team, that had been attempting to play against all-white teams. Each of these earlier championships had been won by forfeit, because the white boys had been refusing to compete against them on the baseball diamond. In the pages of the Charleston [Post and Courier](#), the boys on the team, and their parents, were publicly condemned as attempting “to force the colored team into the league” where they “weren’t wanted.” Enough was enough: Little League World Series officials, faced with the need to allow them to award themselves the national title by yet another forfeit, had bit the bullet and simply disqualified them from competing against the all-white teams.



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR





**RACE WAR,**

**NOT CIVIL WAR**

**1962**

January 11, Thursday: During his State of the Union address, [President John Fitzgerald Kennedy](#) averred that “Few generations in all of history have been granted the role of being the great defender of freedom in its maximum hour of danger.” He went on to characterize this as “our good fortune.”<sup>56</sup>

**VIETNAM**



The US Marines issued a 20-page pamphlet in praise of guess-who for having in 1859 stopped the raid by Captain [John Brown](#) on the federal arsenal at [Harpers Ferry](#):

**THE UNITED STATES MARINES**

**AT**

**HARPER’S FERRY, 1859**

**Historical Branch, G-3 Division**

**Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps**

**Washington, D. C.**

**DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY**

**HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS**

**WASHINGTON 25, D. C.**

---

56. The special Washington terminology that describes such head-up-your-own-ass assertions is “spin.”



**RACE WAR,**

**NOT CIVIL WAR**

**REVIEWED AND APPROVED 11 JAN 1962**

**H. W. BUSE, JR.**

**Brigadier General, U. S. Marine Corps**

**Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3<sup>57</sup>**

Brevet Colonel the detachment of Marines [Robert E. Lee](#), from his report to the Adjutant General of the suppression of John Brown's Raid.

James Ewell Brown Stuart, First Lieutenant, U.S. Cavalry, was enjoying six months' leave from his frontier post at Fort Riley, Kansas Territory. Yet, the joys of coming home to Virginia had not made him forget that he was a cavalryman by profession. On the rainy morning of 17 October 1859 he had ridden over the muddy streets of Washington to the office of the War Department, and now he sat waiting to speak with Secretary of War John B. Floyd. Jeb Stuart had an idea for a new type strap to fasten a cavalryman's sabre to his belt. While the young lieutenant was rehearsing in his mind for the coming interview, the Secretary himself was face to face with the spectre of a slave insurrection.

John B. Floyd was a poor administrator, a failing which almost resulted in his removal from office; but on this day there was no need for paper shuffling. Word had come by way of Baltimore that an insurrection had broken out at Harper's Ferry. A band of armed men had captured the United States arsenal there and was fomenting a slave rebellion. A native of Virginia, the Secretary must have heard the oft-told tales of the Haitians revolt against their French masters with all its barbarism. Nor had any son of the Old Dominion forgotten Nat Turner's Rebellion, a slave uprising which occurred a generation before and claimed the lives of 55 whites in a single bloody night.

Swinging at once into action, Floyd fired off a telegram to Fort Monroe; and by noon Captain Edward O.C. Ord with 150 coast artillerymen was on his way toward Baltimore on the first leg of the journey to Harper's Ferry. There was no question as to who would command operations against the insurgents. Floyd called for his chief clerk and set him to writing orders summoning to the War Department Brevet Colonel Robert E. Lee,

---

57. This 20-page booklet is a reprint of "At All Times Ready..." by Bernard C. Nalty, describing how in 1859 the USMC squashed the takeover of the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia by the forces of Captain John Brown.



**RACE WAR,**

**NOT CIVIL WAR**

then on leave at his estate, Arlington, just across the Potomac from the Capital.

Message in hand, the harassed aide came dashing out of the office, only to halt when he spied the forgotten cavalry officer. Stuart, by now thoroughly bored, was easily persuaded to deliver the sealed envelope. Even as this message was speeding toward its destination, President James Buchanan called upon Secretary Floyd to move even faster a demand which was to bring the Marine Corps into the picture.

Since there were no troops nearer the scene of the uprising than those en route from Fort Monroe, Floyd was powerless to comply; but Secretary of the Navy Isaac Toucey quickly offered a solution to his dilemma. About noon Charles W. Welsh, chief clerk of the Navy Department, came riding through the main gate of the Washington Navy Yard. He sought out First Lieutenant Israel Greene, temporarily in command of Marine Barracks, Washington, and asked how many Leathernecks were available for duty. Greene estimated that he could round up some 90 men from both his barracks and the small Navy Yard detachment. He then asked Welsh what was wrong. The civilian told him all he knew—that the armory at Harper's Ferry had been seized by a group of abolitionists and that state and federal troops already were on the march....

Learning that the militiamen, whatever their faults, had at least forced the insurgents to barricade themselves in a single small building on the armory grounds—the Engine House—Lee decided to attack as quickly as possible. Because of the danger to the hostages, a night assault was out of the question, so the colonel, his aide, and the Marines crossed the river to await the dawn.

About 2300 on the night of 17 October, Greene led his men across the covered bridge and into the armory yard...



**RACE WAR,**

**NOT CIVIL WAR**

**1971**

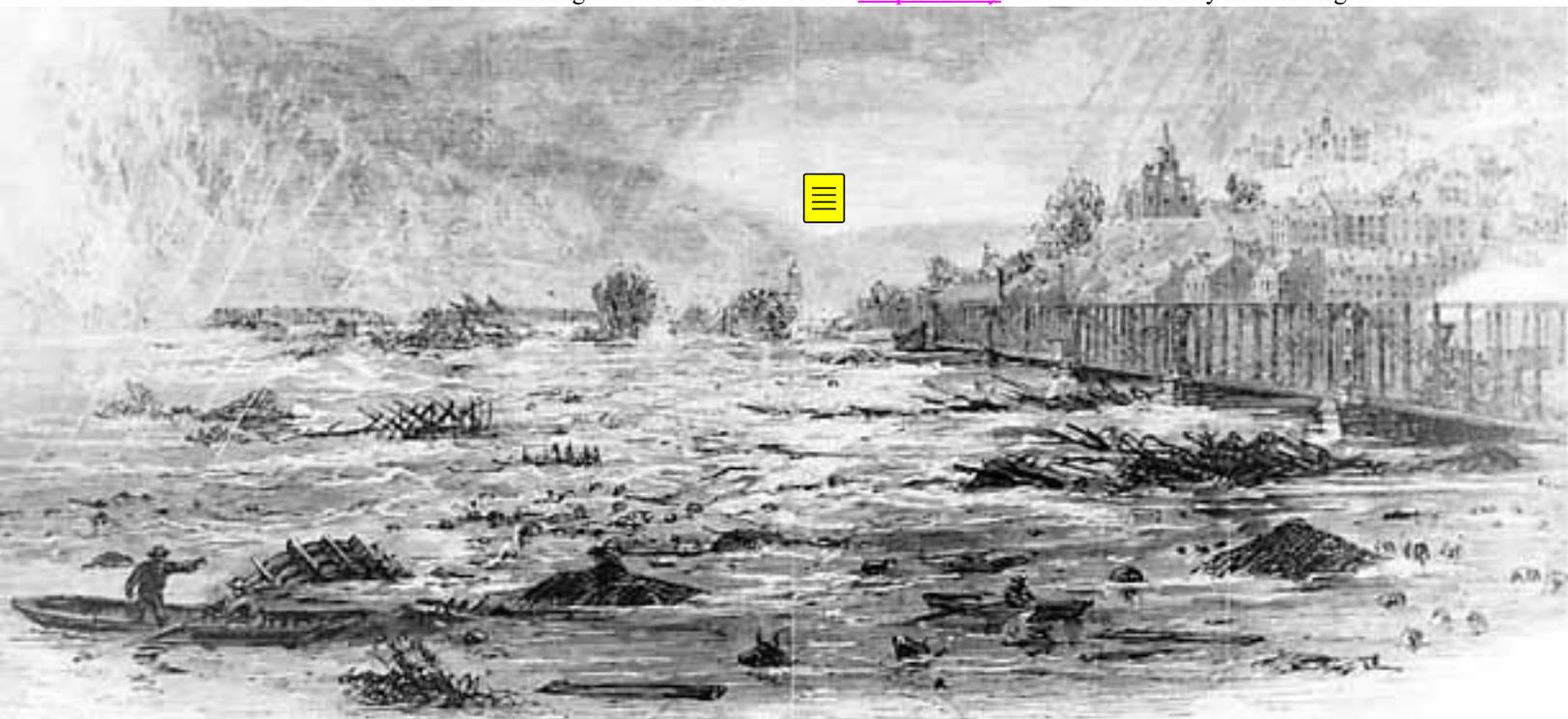
A monument had been erected by the citizens of [Oberlin, Ohio](#) in honor of their 3 free citizens of color who had died during the raid on the federal arsenal at [Harpers Ferry](#) before the [US Civil War](#), or been hanged afterward in Charles Town, Virginia: [Shields Green](#), [John Anderson Copeland, Jr.](#), and [Lewis Sheridan Leary](#). At this point the 8-foot marble monument was moved to Vine Street Park.

1972

June 23, Friday: In the [White House](#), President [Richard Milhous Nixon](#) and his Chief of Staff H.R. Haldeman discussed a plan to use the CIA to obstruct the [FBI](#)'s [Watergate](#) investigation (revelation of the tape recording of this "smoking gun" conversation would be what would spark our President's resignation in 1974).



Floodwater from Hurricane Agnes swelled to 29.7 feet at [Harpers Ferry](#) but caused relatively little damage.



HDT

WHAT?

INDEX

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1985

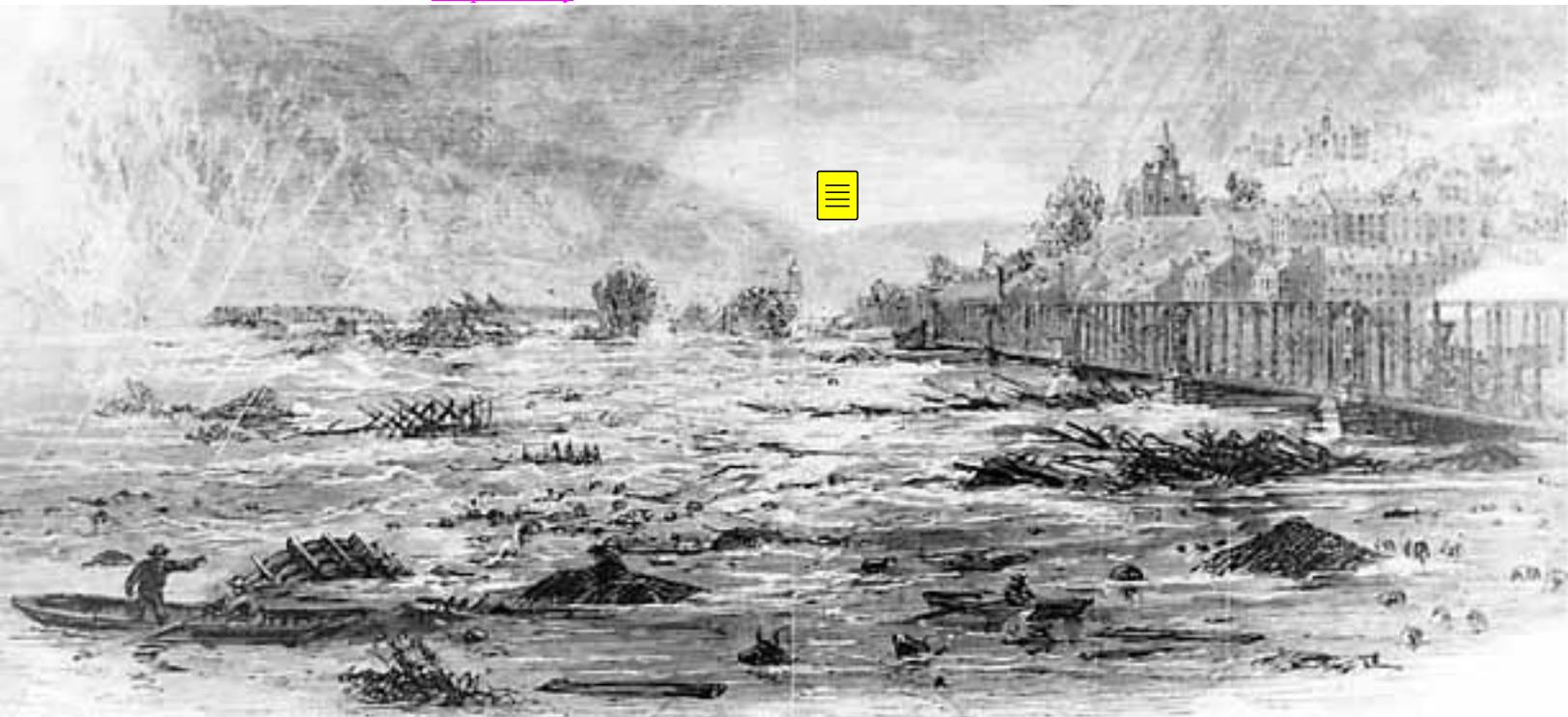
November 5, Tuesday: Symphony in Two Movements (Symphony no.2) by Tan Dun was performed for the initial time, in Beijing.

Adonai Malach for cantor, horn, piccolo, oboe and clarinet by Shulamit Ran to words of the Psalms was performed for the initial time.

Ali Hassan Mwinyi replaced Julius Nyerere as President of Tanzania. He named Joseph S. Warioba as prime minister.

On this day and the following one, the troops of General Augusto Pinochet, US-backed dictator of Chile, would be killing 4 citizens.

On this day and the following one, the Potomac River and Shenandoah River would crest at 29.8 feet in the Lower Town of [Harpers Ferry](#). The flood would leave behind it several inches of mud.





RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1988

In this year Terry Bisson created a piece of science fiction or alternate history, a novel FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN. Thoreau appears in this novel. The synopsis of this alternate history is that Captain [John Brown](#) and his men are able to adhere to their original schedule and conduct their raid on the federal arsenal at [Harpers Ferry](#), Virginia on the symbolic 4th of July 1859. In this version [Harriet Tubman](#) does not claim at the last moment that she has “gotten sick” and cannot come (as in real life she claimed, after having a prophesy dream foretelling doom) and became a general for them. They succeed in getting away from the federal arsenal with weapons, up into the mountains, and General Tubman attracts an army of runaways. The result, however, in this alternative history, is not the sort of genocide or racial pogrom which I myself fear would actually have been the resultant of a temporary “success,” but a 2nd Revolutionary War between American blacks and American whites in which our one nation splits permanently rather than temporarily into two. Clearly, this author Terry Bisson was struggling to use the form of science fiction and the form of the alternative-history novel to create a disruptive story in which Harpers Ferry is not the initiating event of the [US Civil War](#) which freed the slaves through the benevolence of The White People Who Want To Do What Is Right, but the initiating event of a 2nd American Revolution in which the American slaves free themselves from the whites precisely as the whites had previously freed themselves from the crown. [Abraham Lincoln](#), in this novel, becomes just another racist white cracker determined to hold the United States of America together as one nation indivisible; in order to achieve this grand objective he is determined to off all the black Americans — whom he disdains (just like in real life) as subhumans. [Frederick Douglass](#), in this novel, rather than running away to England (as he did in real life), upon seeing the initial success of the raid, thinks better of abandoning the cause, and puts himself forward as a political leader for it. In the course of the novel the Douglass character has an opportunity to deliver a truly awesome speech — every bit as good as ones he actually did deliver in real life. Walt Whitman, instead of becoming a male nurse in Washington-area war hospitals (as he did in real life), joins the rebel forces in the mountains. [Giuseppe Garibaldi](#) of the red shirt, instead of disdaining the war (as he did in real life, when the northern government would not promise him that it would eventually free the slaves), comes over from Italy and raises an army of liberators in [Mexico](#) that invades north to assist the black rebels.



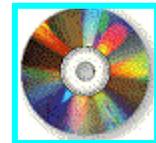
“Lincoln must be seen as the embodiment, not the transcendence, of the American tradition of racism.”

— Lerone Bennett, Jr.,

FORCED INTO GLORY:

[ABRAHAM LINCOLN](#)'S WHITE DREAM

(Johnson Publishing, 1999)



On page 147 of Terry Bisson’s alternate-history FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN, in Concord, Massachusetts, [Waldo Emerson](#) and [Henry Thoreau](#) are having their own little Civil War with one another, a war of words with Henry apparently taking the side of Douglass, Tubman, and the black freedom fighters and with Waldo —but of course— taking the side of the established white-supremacist crackers under General Lincoln.



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR



"History is the how of now."

— Austin Meredith



*no credit*

HDT

WHAT?

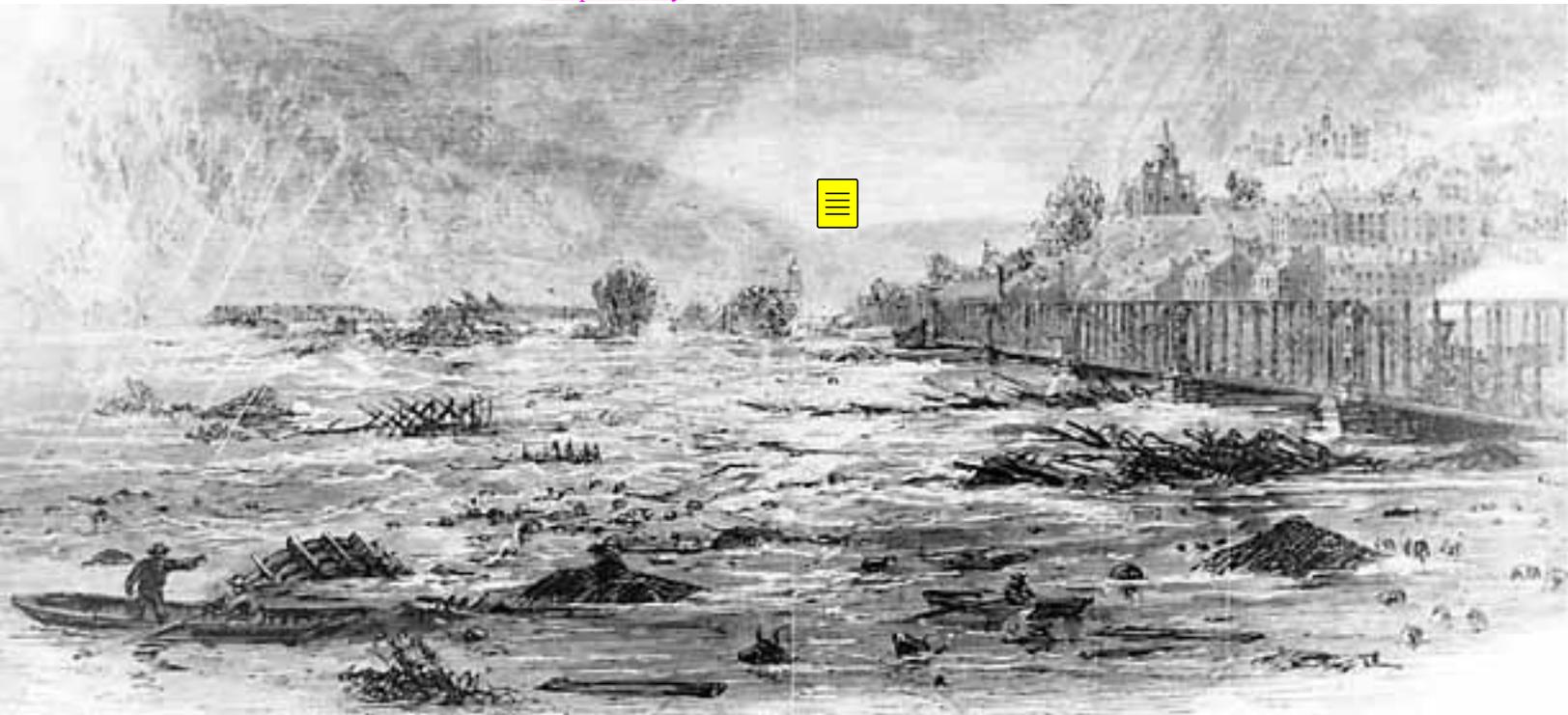
INDEX

RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

1996

January 21, Sunday: Rain and snowmelt from the record Blizzard of January 1996 –which had dumped more than 2 feet of snow in the valleys of the Potomac River and Shenandoah River– had caused those rivers to rise to 29.4 feet in the Lower Town of [Harpers Ferry](#).



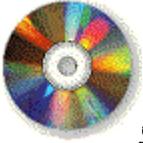
When the ferry *Gurita*, considerably overloaded, sank off the coast of northern Sumatra, 340 perished.

**WALDEN:** If we read of one man robbed, or murdered, or killed by accident, or one house burned, or one vessel wrecked, or one steamboat blown up, or one cow run over on the Western Railroad, or one mad dog killed, or one lot of grasshoppers in the winter, –we never need read of another. One is enough.



## RACE WAR,

## NOT CIVIL WAR



“The only lesson of history is that there are no lessons of history.”  
— A.J.P. Taylor

TIMELINE



S



**RACE WAR,**

**NOT CIVIL WAR**

September 8, Sunday: Devastating rains from the remnants of Hurricane Fran fell across the Shenandoah and Potomac river basins.



The rivers rose to 29.8 feet, marking the first time in the history of [Harpers Ferry](#) that 2 floods in excess of 29

HDT

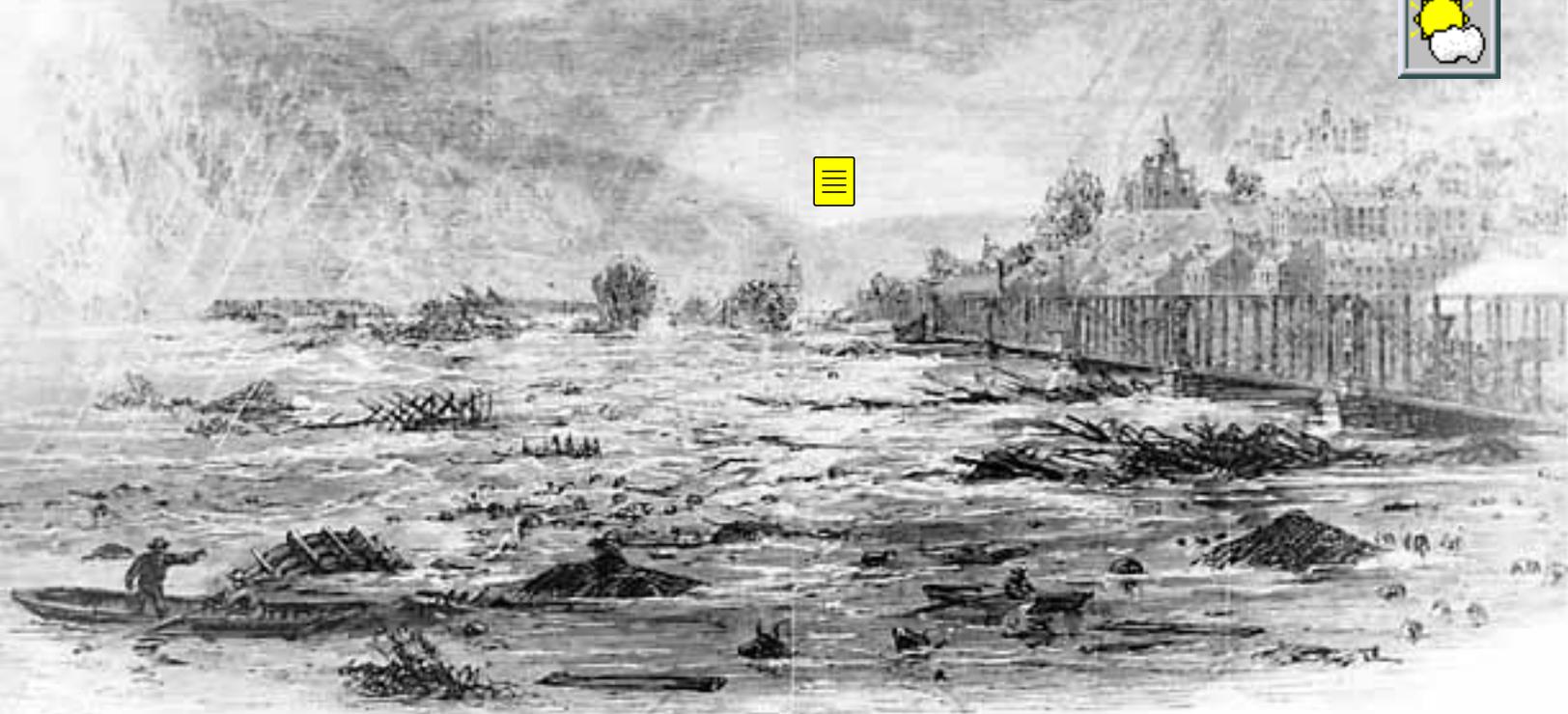
WHAT?

INDEX

RACE WAR,

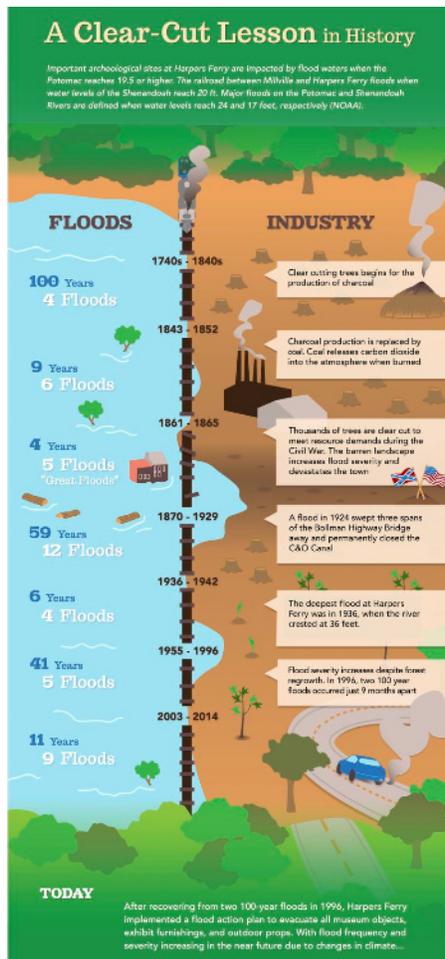
NOT CIVIL WAR

feet have occurred in the same year.



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR





RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

COPYRIGHT NOTICE: In addition to the property of others, such as extensive quotations and reproductions of images, this "read-only" computer file contains a great deal of special work product of Austin Meredith, copyright ©2016. Access to these interim materials will eventually be offered for a fee in order to recoup some of the costs of preparation. My hypercontext button invention which, instead of creating a hypertext leap through hyperspace -resulting in navigation problems- allows for an utter alteration of the context within which one is experiencing a specific content already being viewed, is claimed as proprietary to Austin Meredith - and therefore freely available for use by all. Limited permission to copy such files, or any material from such files, must be obtained in advance in writing from the "Stack of the Artist of Kouroo" Project, 833 Berkeley St., Durham NC 27705. Please contact the project at <Kouroo@kouroo.info>.



"It's all now you see. Yesterday won't be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago."

- Remark by character "Garin Stevens"  
in William Faulkner's INTRUDER IN THE DUST



Prepared: August 24, 2016



RACE WAR,

NOT CIVIL WAR

*ARRGH AUTOMATED RESearch REPORT*

*GENERATION HOTLINE*



This stuff presumably looks to you as if it were generated by a human. Such is not the case. Instead, someone has requested that we pull it out of the hat of a pirate who has grown out of the shoulder of our pet parrot "Laura" (as above). What these chronological lists are: they are research reports compiled by ARRGH algorithms out of a database of modules which we term the Kouroo Contexture (this is data mining). To respond to such a



**RACE WAR,**

**NOT CIVIL WAR**

request for information we merely push a button.

Commonly, the first output of the algorithm has obvious deficiencies and we need to go back into the modules stored in the contexture and do a minor amount of tweaking, and then we need to punch that button again and recompile the chronology – but there is nothing here that remotely resembles the ordinary “writerly” process you know and love. As the contents of this originating contexture improve, and as the programming improves, and as funding becomes available (to date no funding whatever has been needed in the creation of this facility, the entire operation being run out of pocket change) we expect a diminished need to do such tweaking and recompiling, and we fully expect to achieve a simulation of a generous and untiring robotic research librarian. Onward and upward in this brave new world.

First come first serve. There is no charge.  
Place requests with <Kouroo@kouroo.info>. Arrgh.