

“John Brown’s Last Visit to Tabor (Iowa)” from The Annals of Iowa, 1898 (Pg. 1)

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ANNALS OF IOWA.

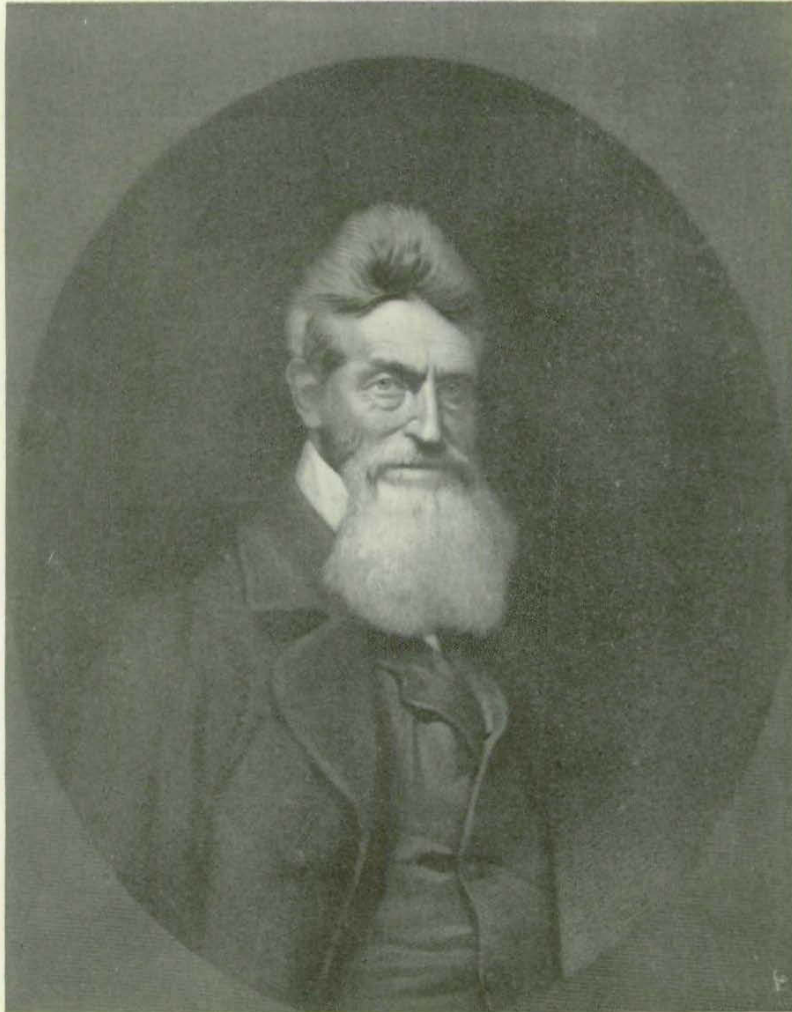
JOHN BROWN’S LAST VISIT TO TABOR.

BY PROF. J. E. TODD.

In reading recently Hon. I. B. Richman’s interesting historical sketch entitled “John Brown among the Quakers,” I came across a passage in which he refers to John Brown’s last visit to Tabor, Iowa. He says: “The story of Brown’s raid into Missouri, after his return to Kansas in 1858, is well known. Suffice it to say, that on this raid he took from their owners a dozen slaves with whom, aided by Kagi and Stephens, amid great peril he made good his escape into Nebraska, and thence to Tabor, Iowa. Here, contrary to his expectation and contrary to the whole former attitude of the people, he was not welcomed, but, at a public meeting called for the purpose, severely reprimanded as a disturber of the peace and safety of the village.”

The writer, having been a resident of Tabor at that time and present at the public meeting referred to, would offer the following correction which it seems to him ought to be made. The history of this visit is as follows: He is guided not only by his memory, but by the statements of his father, Rev. John Todd, in his “Reminiscences” which he printed a few years since, and which have been in that way submitted to the criticism of many who were familiar with the occurrences of that time. I first quote from these reminiscences: “Captain Brown with his company of eleven slaves arrived safely in Tabor with their escort in February, 1859. They came the latter part of the week and remained several days. A school-house was placed at their disposal during their stay. On the Sabbath following I was handed a paper to be read from the pulpit, saying—John Brown respectfully requested the church of Tabor to offer public thanksgiving to God on behalf of himself and his rescued captives, in particular for his gracious preservation of their lives and health and his signal deliverance of all out of the hand of the

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OLD JOHN BROWN.

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wicked heretofore. ‘Oh, give thanks unto the Lord for He is good, for His mercy endureth forever.’” My father being called away by an appointment before the end of the Sabbath, was unable to be present at the public meeting which was appointed for the next day. The interest was so great in the community that at the time appointed the house was filled.

John Brown arrived promptly on time and had just begun to tell his story when a stranger came in, and John Brown quietly remarked that he was informed that one had just entered whom he would rather should not hear what he had to say; and he would, therefore, respectfully request him to withdraw. This man was a Dr. Brown of St. Joseph, Missouri, as I understand, a specialist who was treating some cases in town. He had heard the notice given upon the Sabbath and had arranged his work so as to be present. It was understood that he was a slave-holder, or at least a strong pro-slavery man; and therefore a knowledge by him of John Brown’s movements might have been prejudicial to the interests of the latter. Scarcely had John Brown made the request before one of the leading citizens of the place, who was unaccustomed to such stern measures, sprang to his feet and said that he hoped that nothing would be said there which all might not hear. John Brown very quietly remarked that if that man remained, he had nothing more to say, and soon after withdrew from the meeting. It was reported later that soon after he met some of his men and said they had better look to their arms, for they were not among friends yet. The withdrawal of John Brown did not break up the meeting. Very few withdrew. His men, several of whom were known by citizens of the place, remained; and several hours were spent in the discussion of the slavery question and what should be done for the slaves. In this Dr. Brown, from St. Joseph, took an active part. He had at his tongue’s end “Cursed be Canaan” and other passages from scripture used by the slave-holders to justify their position.

On the other hand, Brown’s men were equally ready with

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quotations from scripture as well as in arguments, and the occasion was a most interesting one. Incidentally, the main features of the story of John Brown's raid into Missouri and the rescue of the slaves at the cost of the life of one of the masters was brought out. I do not remember that any formal action was taken by the meeting, but the sentiments expressed by the prominent citizens of Tabor, both at the meeting and elsewhere, were simply in harmony with the position that they had always taken. As abolitionists they had frequently been charged with kidnapping negroes and helping them on to the Canadian border. This was explained by some of their enemies to be in order to obtain a premium, which they supposed Queen Victoria offered for every slave.

This ignorant suspicion had always been met by a denial of any attempt to take slaves from their masters, that they were law abiding citizens and would seek to overthrow slavery only by legal and legitimate means. They did not approve the action of John Brown in taking slaves from their masters by force or in an illegal and disorderly way. But instead of its being contrary to the whole former attitude of the people, I think any candid judge would say that it was the only consistent and honorable position for them to take under the circumstances.

John Brown was welcomed and treated kindly in every way as his stay of nearly a week at that place abundantly testified. The position taken by the citizens of Tabor at that time, was, I think, not different from that taken by the great majority of anti-slavery citizens of the United States throughout the land. There is little doubt that John Brown was much disappointed that the citizens of Tabor did not fully commend his step, but I do not know that he had any good reason for being disappointed.

We have referred to this stay at Tabor as his last visit, but his absolutely last appearance, which was only for a few hours, was about the first of September, 1859, less than two months before his capture at Harper's Ferry. He came to the residence of Mr. Jonas Jones on the Sabbath, where he stopped. When taking leave on the same day, he said in an

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impressive way, “Good-bye, Mr. Jones. I do not say where I am going, but you will hear from me. There has been enough said about leaving Kansas. I intend to make a bloody spot at another point, and carry the war into Africa.” The outbreak at Harper’s Ferry leaves no explanation necessary.

VERMILLION, S. D., Jan. 15, 1898.

NAVIGATION OF CEDAR RIVER.—From an advertisement in another column, it will be seen that *The Maid of Iowa*, will ascend the Cedar river as far as Washington Ferry, leaving Burlington on the 15th inst., which will afford our farmers convenient to that stream an excellent opportunity for shipping whatever of surplus produce they may have on hand. Within the last few days she has made one trip between that point and Nauvoo, laden with produce, and we learn that she passed Overman’s a day or two since, on her second trip. She has, so far, we understand, met with no serious obstacles to the successful navigation of that river. Should the stage of that river, in subsequent seasons prove as favorable as the past and present, it will be of incalculable advantage to a large district of as fine farming country as is to be found in any part of the west.—*Bloomington Herald*, August 2, 1844.

THE GREAT BEAUTY OF LOCATION and surrounding scenery at Iowa City, are not the only favors bestowed upon it by nature, as is every day becoming more evident. When we read the account of the arrival there of the first steamer, we thought some mysterious spirit had been hovering over that city, and inspired the pen of him whose good fortune it was to first proclaim to the world the navigation of Iowa river, and we are now confirmed in the opinion that there is a mysterious something thereabouts, which inspires those whom it pleases, with thoughts beautiful, sublime beyond conception.—*Bloomington Herald*, August 2, 1844.

"Execution of Capt. John Brown" Broadside, 1859

EXECUTION OF CAPT. JOHN BROWN.

At a meeting of the Executive Committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society, held in Boston, November 1st, the following Resolution was adopted :—

Resolved, That it is recommended to the friends of impartial freedom throughout the Free States, in case of the execution of Capt. JOHN BROWN, now on trial for his life in Virginia, to observe that tragical event, ON THE DAY OF ITS OCCURRENCE, in such manner as by them may be deemed most appropriate in their various localities, — whether by public meetings and addresses, the adoption of resolutions, private conferences, or any other justifiable mode of action, — for the furtherance of the Anti-Slavery cause, and renewedly to consecrate themselves to the patriotic and Christian work of effecting the abolition of that most dangerous, unnatural, cruel, and impious system of Slavery, which is the fruitful source of all our sectional heart-burnings and conflicts, which powerfully and increasingly tends to promote servile insurrections and civil war, which cannot be more truly or more comprehensively described than as "THE SUM OF ALL VILLANIES," which is a burning disgrace and fearful curse to the whole country, and by the speedy extinction of which, alone, can the land be saved from violence, blood, and utter demoralization.

In behalf of the Executive Committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society,

WM. LLOYD GARRISON, *President*.

WENDELL PHILLIPS, }
CHARLES C. BURLEIGH, } *Secretaries*.

No suggestion more timely and important than this could be made; and now that Sentence of Death has been pronounced against the brave martyr to his principles, let the day of his execution — FRIDAY, December 2d, — be the occasion of such a public moral demonstration against the bloody and merciless Slave system as the land has never witnessed. Friends of Freedom *everywhere!* begin at once to make the necessary arrangements. The appeal is made to you all, without regard to sect or party, or different shades of opinion. Let it be a memorable day in the history of the United States. In all the Cities and Towns of the North, let there be some suitable and expressive form of manifestation. Among other things, let there be a tolling of the bells for one hour.

As a postponement of the execution may take place, on account of the application by Mr. BROWN's Counsel to the Virginia Court of Appeals, it may be necessary to hold the commemoration on another day. Friends! be vigilant!


And it is further suggested that, at all these meetings, contributions should be taken up in behalf of the Widow and Family of Capt. JOHN BROWN.

“Heroes of the Colored Race,” 1881



Hoover, J., "Heroes of the Colored Race," Philadelphia, 1881. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

"John Brown's Body" Song, 1861



C. Magnus 12 Frankfort St. N.Y.

JOHN BROWN SONG.

John Brown's body lies a mouldering in the grave,
John Brown's body lies a mouldering in the grave,
John Brown's body lies a mouldering in the grave.
His soul's marching on!

Chorus.
Glory Hally, Hallelujah! Glory Hally, Hallelujah! Glory
Hally, Hallelujah!
His soul's marching on!

He's gone to be a soldier in the army of our Lord,
He's gone to be a soldier in the army of our Lord,
He's gone to be a soldier in the army of our Lord.
His soul's marching on!

Chorus: Glory Hally, Hallelujah! Glory Hally, Hallelujah!
Glory Hally, Hallelujah!
His soul's marching on!

John Brown's knapsack is strapped upon his back,
John Brown's knapsack is strapped upon his back,
John Brown's knapsack is strapped upon his back,
His soul's marching on!

Chorus: Glory Hally, Hallelujah! Glory Hallelujah!
Glory Hally, Hallelujah!
His soul's marching on!

His pet lamps will meet him on the way, —
His pet lamps will meet him on the way, —
His pet lamps will meet him on the way, —
They go marching on!

Chorus: Glory Hally, Hallelujah! Glory Hally Hallelujah!
Glory Hally, Hallelujah!
They go marching on!

They will hang Jeff Davis to a tree!
They will hang Jeff Davis to a tree!
They will hang Jeff Davis to a tree!
As they march along!

Chorus: Glory Hally, Hallelujah! Glory Hally, Hallelujah
Glory Hally, Hallelujah!
As they march along!

Now, three rousing cheers for the Union!
Now, three rousing cheers for the Union!
Now, three rousing cheers for the Union!
As we are marching on!

Chorus: Glory Hally, Hallelujah! Glory Hally, Hallelujah!
Glory Hally, Hallelujah!
Hip, hip, hip, hip, Hurrah!

500 Illustrated Ballads lithographed and printed by
CHARLES MAGNUS, No. 12 Frankfort Street, New York.
Branch Office: No. 520 7th St., Washington, D. C.

Document: "John Brown's Body," 1861. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

Audio: J. Weldon Norris Chorale, "John Brown's Body," Washington, D.C., 2003. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

Illustration of "Old John Brown's Career," 1860



Queen, J. F. & Pilliner, F. J., "Old John Brown's career illustrated," E.S. Dean Publisher & Proprietor, Philadelphia, 1860. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

John Brown's Address to the Virginia Court, 1859

ADDRESS OF JOHN BROWN

To the Virginia Court, when about to receive the

SENTENCE OF DEATH,

For his heroic attempt at Harper's Ferry, to

Give deliverance to the captives, and to let the oppressed go free.

[Mr. Brown, upon inquiry whether he had anything to say why sentence should not be pronounced upon him, in a clear, distinct voice, replied :]

I have, may it please the Court, a few words to say.

In the first place, I deny every thing but what I have already admitted, of a 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 there took Slaves, without the snapping of a gun on either side, moving them through the country, and finally leaving them in Canada. I desired to have done the same thing again, on a much 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, that it is *unjust* that I should suffer such a penalty. Had I interfered in the manner, 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 father, mother, brother, 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*. Every man in this Court would have deemed it an act worthy a reward, rather than a punishment.

This Court acknowledges too, as I suppose, the validity of the LAW OF GOD. I saw a book kissed, which I suppose to be the BIBLE, or at least the NEW TESTAMENT, which 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 yet too young to understand that God is any *respector 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*, I have done no wrong, but RIGHT.

Now, if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life, for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and MINGLE MY BLOOD FURTHER WITH THE BLOOD OF MY CHILDREN, and with the blood of millions in this Slave country, whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel, and unjust enactments,—I say, LET IT BE DONE.

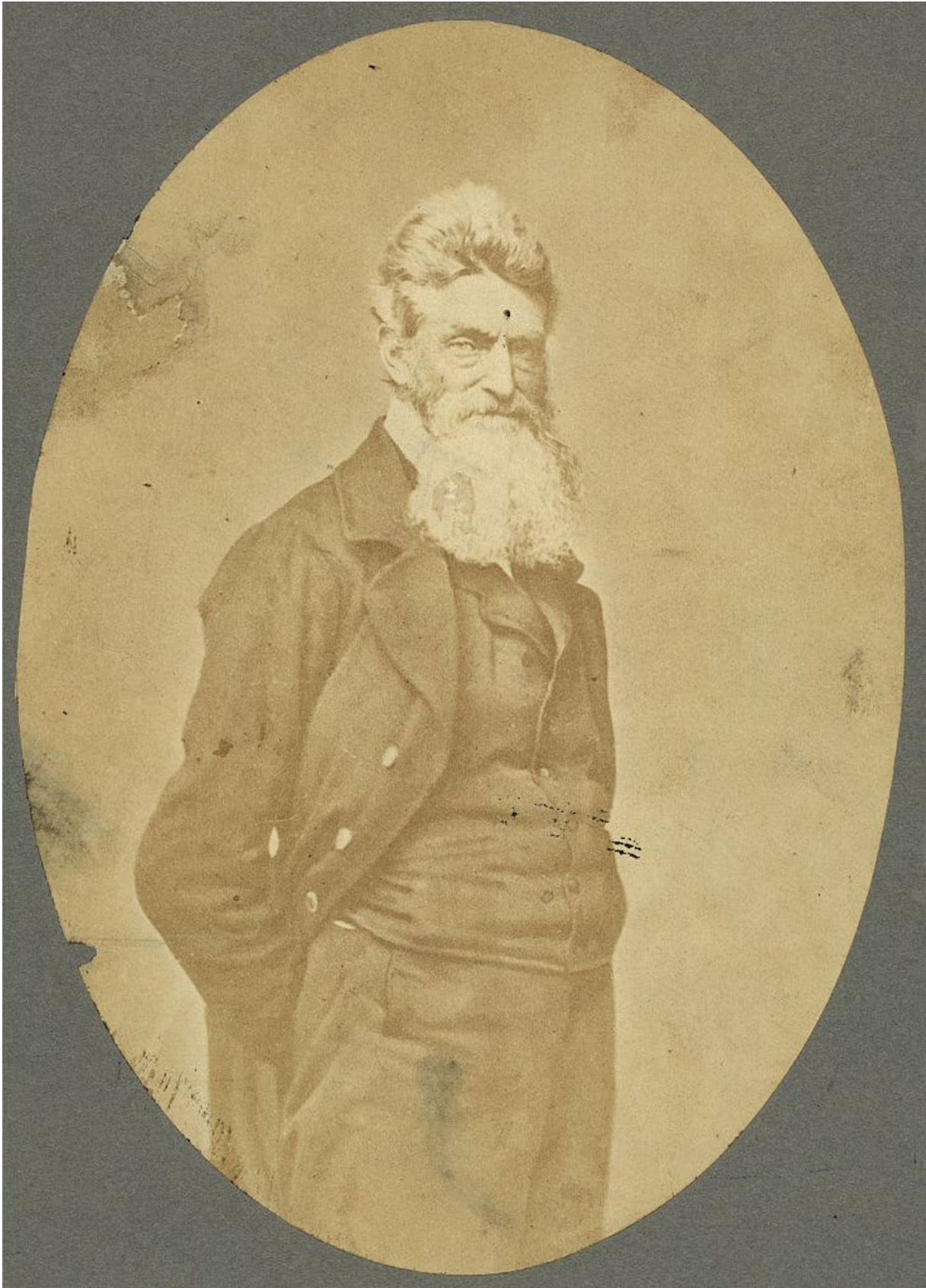
Let me say one word further: I feel entirely satisfied with the treatment I have received on my trial. Considering all the circumstances, it has been more generous than I expected; but I feel no consciousness of guilt. I have stated from the first what was my *intention*, and what was not. I never had any design against the liberty 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 that kind.

Let me say something, also, in regard to the statements made by some of those who were connected with me. I hear that it has been stated by some of them, that I have induced them to join me; but the contrary is true. I do not say this to injure them, but as regarding their weakness. Not one but joined me of his own accord, and the greater part 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.

John Brown

Printed by C. C. Mead, 91 Washington Street, and for Sale at the LIBERATOR Office, 21 Cornhill, Boston.

Portrait of John Brown, December 12, 1859



Black, James Wallace, and Martin M. Lawrence, Black & Batchelder, 12 December 1859. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)