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LIFE OF JOHN BROWN.

JAMES W. HARNER.

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— — LIFE OF JOHN BROWN . — —
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James W. Harner.

John Brown's ancestors on his father's side came over from England in the Mayflower. They were characterized by having large families, and living to be very old; some of them reaching one hundred years. On his mother's side, the family came from England at an early date. Both families produced warriors who fought in the War of 1812. Some of them were at one time members of the legislature of the state in which they lived, and also held other offices of responsibility. They were always respected, law abiding citizens.

Captain John Brown, the son of Owen and Ruth Brown, was born in Farmington, Litchfield County, Connecticut, May 9, 1800. When he was five years old, his father moved to Ohio. His father learned the art of tanning, then he began raising sheep and cattle for a living. John was sent to a friend of his father's to be taught, but when he was nearly ready to enter college, his eyes were so weakened by hard study that he was compelled to give up all school work. He had early been taught at home to fear God and to treat man and beast with the utmost kindness. He frequently went on long journeys with droves of cattle, driving them alone. It was during one of these journeys that he saw a slave misused, and he then and there declared eternal war against slavery. When he was fifteen years old he went into the tanning business under his father. It is said that he would not sell the leather until it was entirely dry for fear of selling water as leather.

Brown was a man of good habits. He was an early riser and a hard worker; dressed neatly but plainly, was extremely modest, always holding

himself in the background and pushing others forward. He never ate butter or cheese, and only learned to use tea and coffee because it annoyed the housewife to have him drink water.

Brown was twice married. His first wife and he were married at Hudson, Ohio, June 21, 1820. To his second, May Day, at Meadsville, Pennsylvania, in 1833. He had twenty children. Eight of them grew up, one was killed in Kansas and three were killed at Harper's Ferry.

In 1835, Brown became an abolitionist. He had seen the rights of humanity trodden on by slavery until he could stand it no longer. He saw no way of freeing the slaves but that they should strike the blow. This was impossible as they were closely watched, had no arms, and regarded every white man as their enemy. They also needed a leader. He determined to lead them to liberty.

In 1846 Brown moved to Springfield, Massachusetts, and went into partnership with a Mr. Perkins. They sold large quantities of wool on commission, and were making money, when the eastern manufactures began to operate against him and drove him out of business.

In 1851 he moved to North Elbe, New York, where his family made their future home. Four years later his four sons determined to go to Kansas. They sold their property and started in the spring, driving their stock before them. As they crossed Missouri they were insulted and ordered to stop. During their journey they were plundered by border ruffians, and roughly treated. They had no way of protecting themselves, as they had brought no arms with them. Their object was to settle in Kansas. They settled at Ossawatimie, then wrote a letter to their father, telling him how they had been treated, and asking him to get them arms and bring them to Kansas himself.

In 1855, an abolitionist meeting was held in New York. Brown addressed the meeting, telling the audience he had four sons in Kansas, and three more wanting to go. They could not go without arms, and he was too

poor to buy them. The money was raised on the spot and Brown and his three sons went to Kansas.

Brown had two objects in view in going to Kansas. First, to fight against slavery. Second, he was familiar with frontier life, and thought he could be of benefit to his children if he was there. On leaving his friends for Kansas he said, "If it is so painful for us to part with the hope of meeting again, how dreadful must the separation be for the lives of hundreds of slaves."

Before Brown reached Kansas, four thousand nine hundred and eighty Missourians invaded the state. They controlled all but one precinct, and elected men who did not live in Kansas. They passed the most unjust and unlicensed laws against the abolitionists. The free state men raised an army, and had its head quarters at Lawrence. About this time, Brown and his three sons arrived in a small wagon. They were heavily armed. A small company was organized with Brown as captain. He disobeyed his superior officer and tried to persuade the men to go against the pro-slavery men, who were encamped at Frankland. Peace was finally restored without blood shed.

The free state men now adopted a constitution, and held a legislature at Topeka. The President declared it illegal. The Southerners, with the aid of United States troops, drove them out, and plundered the town. A United States Marshall with eight hundred men marched into Lawrence, destroyed the buildings and stole all the live stock, under the protection of the law.

Brown's first victory was at Black Jack. He had twenty-six men and the Missourians had sixty-eight under the command of Captain Bete. After a three hour's fight, the Missourians surrendered. When the news reached Missouri a large force of men was raised to capture Brown and drive out the free state men. A Federal officer called Brown to his camp, and told him he was a prisoner, as a deputy had a warrant for his arrest. Brown

replied that if the deputy undertook to arrest him, he would be shot dead on the spot. This so scared the cowardly deputy that he did not make the arrest, and was severely denounced by the officer for his cowardice. The pro-slavery men were marched on Ossawatimie, and killed one of Brown's sons. They were opposed by thirty-six free state men, who killed seventy of the enemy. News came to Lawrence that a large body of pro-slavery men were coming to destroy the town. They sent word to a federal officer about ten miles away to come and protect them. Meanwhile Brown organized a company and fortified the town as best he could. At five o'clock, five hundred of the advance guard were seen approaching. Brown picked forty men with short rifles, and went forward to meet them. After a sharp skirmish, the Missouri-ans retreated. The Federal officer and troops came up five hours later, after the Missourians had retreated.

Brown now started for the East, carrying with him a fugitive in the bottom of the wagon. He crossed the Nebraska line just in time to prevent being captured. From there, he continued east, stopping and addressing free state societies in Chicago, Cleaveland and Albany, telling them of the condition of things in Kansas, and how the free state men were treated, and urging them to send men and money. During his stay in the east, he traveled about, making speeches and raising money to aid in driving out the Missourians. He preferred men of good character and good principles, as these, he knew, could be depended upon.

In November, Brown returned to Kansas and enlisted his men, who were all anti-slavery. He then unfolded to them his scheme of Harper's Ferry, and told them, that if any of them did not want to go, now was the time to make it known. He now went to Iowa, where he spent the winter drilling his men. His scheme was most elaborate and complete in every detail. It was to organize a small band of men to go to Harper's Ferry and view the situation. Then with the assistance

of such slaves as they could induce to join them, and bands from Canada, to sieze Harper's Ferry, but not keep it, and to carry off the arms to the mountains. They had a definite region extending from Virginia to Mississippi, passing thru the counties where the slave population was the thickest. It was intended to start operations in Virginia, and gain the confidence of the slaves; then to extend the operations along the line indicated, gradually drawing the slaves to the mountains, and in this way get them free with as little blood shed as possible.

The attack was to be made in the spring, when the planters were busy and the slaves most needed. The rail-road and the telegraph lines were to be destroyed. As fast as possible, bands were to be organized in the mountains. Rifles were to be given those who could use them, the others were to be armed with spikes and shot guns.

Part of Brown's plan having been betrayed, he returned to southern Kansas and built Fort Bain. He now determined to stop the invasions of the Missourians by invading their territory. He succeeded in liberating ten slaves, and proceeded to Canada. Although the Governor of Missouri offered three thousand dollars reward for Brown, such was his reputation as a warrior in Kansas as that he was not molested. While in Canada he made out his scheme and many promised to join him. After they had captured Harper's Ferry they drew up a constitution and Brown was made commander-in-chief of all the forces.

On July third, Brown rented a farm in Maryland, six miles from Harper's Ferry. There he was known as Smith. He was regarded with curiosity by the people there, as his people prowled round Harper's Ferry, and went on hunting expeditions over the mountains, but never brought back any game. They received many boxes which they said were farm implements. Brown had planned an attack to be made October twenty-fourth; but owing to suspicion of a trader in camp, he made

the attack on the seventeenth. It was unfortunate for him , as there were men from Canada and Kansas coming to join him. The negroes of the neighborhood were also to help him, but as soon as the capture took place they were closely watched and kept down.

They began the attack by first putting out the lights, and capturing the policemen. Then they took the armory and bridge. During the day, all men who appeared on the street were captured. They could have their liberty by leaving a slave in their place.

A train leaving for Washington in the morning, scattered the news that Harper's Ferry was in the hands of the abolitionists. At noon, one hundred militia came over from Charleston, commanded by their colonel, who organized two companies of citizens, and took all bridges to prevent the escape of abolitionists. Other troops arrived; an attack was made on the armory, but was repulsed. the fight was kept up until night. One half of Brown's men were killed, some of them were murdered while bearing the flag of truce; he himself was wounded. The next morning the armory was taken by storm there being only four men left. Brown was severely beaten over the head and stabbed. They were then dragged to the guard house, where they lay on the ground for three days among the flies. They were questioned by numerous spectators, all of Brown's answers go to prove that he was perfectly sane. On the nineteenth of October they were lodged in jail, in Charlston, where they were kindly treated, and waited for their trial.

Brown was tried by the state of Virginia, and without the slightest show of justice, was sentenced to be hanged for murder and treason on December second. He was then taken back to jail and spent most of his time writing letters. During this time, he was visited by many. He told them his only object had been to free the slaves.

On the morning of his execution, Brown was cheerful. As he was led to his doom, he remarked as to the beauty of the country.

He never faltered in word or action. After bidding his friends good bye, he awaited his fate.

Thus died one of America's truest patriots. Altho at first denounced as a traitor and fanatic by his country-men, time has shown him in the true light. His body was taken to North Elbe, and buried by the side of his two sons.

Much sympathy was expressed thruout the north for Brown. The Liberator had a colum of eulogy. The American Anti-slavery Society designated a period in their calander, "The John Brown Year".

Jefferson Davis called the mision a scheme of the abolitionists to arouse several insurrections for the purpose of murdering the helpless women and children. He said that Stewart's "irrepressible conflict" speech contained the germ of the bloody fruit.

Douglass called Brown a horse thief and said that he was a notorious man who had suffered death on the gallows for his crime, and gave it as his opinion that the Harper's Ferry crime was the inevitable result of the Republican doctrine.

Lincoln said that it was not an insurrection but the attempt of a white man to get the slaves to revolt in which the slaves refused to take part, as they saw it would be useless. He said similar cases had occurred in history, as the assassination where the assassin had brooded over it so long that he fancied that he was commissioned from Heaven to liberate the people.

The words of the poets more nearly express the feelings of the people. Emmerson wrote of Brown as a hero, and expressed a wish that people could learn to know virtue when they saw it; and spoke of the gallows as being glorious, like the cross.

Victor Hugo spoke of the event as interesting France and England; and declared that if the South hung Brown, they would commit a crime that would take a place in the calamities of history and that a rupture of the union would follow.

The affair did not seem to help or injure the Republican party. John A. Anderson who had presided at a John Brown meeting and was elected Governor of Massachusetts, giving his view of the invasion, said, "Be it wise or foolish, John Brown is right". It is certain that Lincoln would have been elected President and the south would have succeeded, if Brown had never lived. Altho the raid did furnish an instrument of the South against the North.