

"The Harper's Ferry Conspiracy and Its Concoctors,"

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THE HARPER'S FERRY CONSPIRACY AND ITS CONCOCTORS.—Some very singular revelations in regard to the Harper's Ferry insurrection have just been made to the public through the letters of Capt. Forbes, a former companion of Garibaldi, who fled to the United States, and who, it appears, being possessed of some military knowledge, was chosen as the person who could best organize the plan for operating upon various Southern States, with a view to insurrection among the slaves. Capt. Brown, it appears, was introduced by letter from the Rev. Joshua Leavitt, of the New York Independent, to Capt. Forbes, for the purpose of arranging the matter, Forbes being given to understand that Brown, though without means himself, would be backed up by good and responsible men.

Forbes' plan was to organize a series of stampedes of slaves, fifty at a time, and run them off to Canada. Any disaster which would happen a single stampede would compromise those only who are engaged in it. Brown proposed to invite the slaves to rise. He argued that were he pressed by the United States troops, which after a few days might concentrate, he could easily maintain himself in the Alleghanies, and that his New England partisans would, in the meantime, call a Northern Convention to restore tranquillity and overthrow the pro-slavery administration. He also hinted at foreign intervention. Forbes could not agree with Brown, but the New England conspirators, it appears, did, and withheld the aid to Forbes they had promised. He began to get indignant, and his family to be hard pressed for means of subsistence. He tells the agent of the New England abettors that all the endeavors of the Humanitarians were to relieve themselves of the responsibility and not the relief of Forbes' family. Forbes' application to Horace Greeley for relief, procured only the answer that he had no legal claim. His success with Hon. J. P. Hale was not much better. Sanborn did not provide the means. Dr. Howe was close-fisted. On the 1st of May, Forbes says he was introduced to Hon. W. H. Seward, by letter, from Dr. Bailey, of the "Era," and to the U. S. Senator the whole plan was unfolded. Mr. Seward, instead of publicly denouncing the scheme, as he ought to have done, contented himself with expressing to Forbes his regret that he had been informed of it on account of his position. The "Humanitarians," as Forbes calls them, did not comply with their engagements, but left him and his family to be turned out into the streets, because they could not pay their board bill.

The operations were not simply for the emancipation of the slaves, but a little New England shrewdness as well as New England anti-slavery feeling mingled in the transaction, and suggested that a nice little speculation could also be made in the advance in the price of cotton, as soon as the regular supply would be cut off by the troubles and disasters which would follow the outbreak. Mr. Amos Lawrence's name is mentioned in this connection. Brown had told Forbes that Lawrence subscribed \$7,000. Forbes' pecuniary difficulties seem to have sharpened his mental and moral reason, for he says, in a letter to Dr. Howe, of Boston: "This iniquitous speculation in hu-

man blood for the mere greediness of dollars shall somehow be stopped—though you coolly tell me that if I stop it I betray, because I will not let certain persons betray. To the abolitionists I say—You must yourselves unite together and stop it; and to the colored people I say—If you rise at the call of New England humanitarians, you will shed your blood for the sole benefit of New England speculators, and the free colored people may very likely be re-enslaved."

It seems that the plan of Brown recommended itself best to the New England abolitionists because of its safety to them. They argued that if it failed, Brown only would be sacrificed, whereas, if he succeeded, all they desired, the emancipation of the slaves and the increase in the price of cotton, would be attained. Forbes, in a letter to F. B. Sanborn, dated April, 1859, gives his views upon the subject, as follows:

"An abolitionist, whom I need not name, though he is known to you, and is very intimately acquainted with Dr. Howe, remarked to me that if Brown were to try his plan, and were to fail, he alone would suffer; whereas if he were to succeed in raising an insurrection, the great object of emancipation would be attained, and such was also my impression at the first instant; therefore, as you must perceive, I refrained from interfering with him. But more mature reflection, and the earnest representation of some abolitionists here, induced me to regard that as an optimist rather than a sound practical view of the case. Slave insurrections are very peculiar—they differ considerably from other revolutions, in which men of highly cultivated minds and of experience, as well as information, abound. If B. get from the slaves no response, or only a feeble one, to his invitation to rise, then the arms and means placed at his disposal by the humanitarian (or speculating) committees will be wasted, the lives of many compromised with Brown will be needlessly sacrificed, and the cause will be thrown back, far back. If, on the other hand, a great rising take place which leaps beyond his unskilled direction, sweeping, like a prairie fire, from Mason & Dixon's line to the Gulf of Mexico, must not such an unorganized mass be easily subdued, and will not that be equivalent to a failure, unless it be a money speculation for the rise in cotton on the Exchange?"

"Were I addressing certain persons, I should say to them—See that Brown be not permitted to put into execution his own plan; let the 'well matured plan,' or mine, or some other better one be substituted; see that a proper committee of management be put at the head, and that leading men be sought different from Brown in their humanity, integrity, truthfulness and capacity. But addressing persons who have implicit faith in Brown, persons who have treated brutally my innocent children, destroying their health and may be also their lives, as a recompense to me for reposing confidence in New England good faith—as I am addressing such men, I say—I insist that

all the arms and means confided to John Brown be instantly withdrawn from his hands, and that they be deposited in such custody as shall insure their not being applied to speculating or merely ambitious purposes. If you ask by what right I so insist, I reply, I do this by the right of common sense, and because a great humanitarian cause, on which depend the lives and liberties of millions, must not be entrusted to the mismanagement of incompetent and inhuman persons."

Slave Stampedes on the Southern Borderlands

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