

ference.

ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF THE PLOT.

LETTER FROM COL. FORBES.

SATURDAY, Oct. 29, 1859.

To the Editor of the New-York Times:

Having by several persons been requested to make a simple statement of fact, that the public might be enabled to comprehend what appears a chaos, I have determined to do so, as far as my own knowledge enables me to do it. In consequence of the accusation in the columns of the *Tribune*, I had resolved to adopt this course after the trial of Capt. Brown was over, but the publication of my notice to this (dated Oct. 25,) having precipitated the production of documents which are already before the public, with names and circumstances which I could willingly have withheld, there is no motive for further delay. All my letters would doubtless have seen the light ere long, because a copy of each was transmitted by me to Capt. Brown, as well as to his backers, and even some of them may likewise have sent him other copies, so that in the *carpet-bag*, and among the papers scattered about his house, an abundant supply of my correspondence may have been procured. Allow me, therefore, to ask for a space in your journal.

About the 20th of March, 1857, Capt. Brown, bearing an ordinary letter of introduction, applied to me, in the name of some Kansas Committees and private citizens, to go west to organize and instruct a certain energetic portion of the Free State men. My reply was, that so far as the purpose went, that was good, but was not far enough to induce me to move; but finding that his intention was to act against Slavery itself, I acquiesced in his demand, provided he could so manage as to send, for at least one year, to my family in Europe, each month, the *half of what I was at that time making*, and would further send my daughter to her mother in Europe, for I could not leave her in New-York all alone, and could get a son out here, instead of the child I sent home, which, with certain other preliminary expenses, would amount to six hundred dollars, besides my traveling and other expenses.

Capt. B. being wholly unknown to me, I inquired concerning him, and the gentleman who had furnished him with the introduction assured me that though he had no means of his own to enter into engagements with me, yet he was backed by substantial men: That appeared to me as sufficient. Capt. B. returned to the East to consult his friends, and he reappeared with \$600 about the end of April, 1857. Mr. GREELEY led me to hope that I could have my family brought over here instead of sending home my daughter, but that was not done. The preliminary expenses, not on my account, but that of Capt. B.'s, exceeded the \$600, so that I could not manage to get my son from Europe, nor did he join me for upwards of a year—indeed I had difficulties in getting to Tabor to find Capt. B.

Captain Brown having been delayed in the Eastern and Central States, was unable to reach Tabor earlier than Aug. 7, instead of earlier in June, as had been anticipated. I joined him there on the 9th of August. The Border Ruffians having just at that period spread a report that they had abandoned Kansas, the New-England managers allowed Capt. B. and myself to stay at Tabor without funds, and did not send the promised remittances to my family, because a great number of subscribers did not contribute their respective quotas. During this interval of suspense, Capt. B. advocated the adoption of his plan, and I supported mine of stampedes. The conclusion arrived at was that he renounced his Harper's Ferry project, and I consented to cooperate in stampedes in Virginia and Maryland instead of the part of the country I indicated as the most suitable. I perceived, however, that his mind constantly wandered back to Harper's Ferry, and it was not till it had been definitely settled that neither of us should do any thing unless under the direction or with the consent of a committee, that I felt easy in my mind respecting his curious notions of Harper's Ferry. He was very pious, and had been deeply impressed for many years with the *Bible Story of Gideon*, believing that he with a handful of men could strike down Slavery. The device to put an end to Slavery was desirable, but it required to be judiciously directed, or it may become an absurdity. Indeed, it would have been just as easy, and could have produced more eclat, if, instead of barricading themselves in the engine-house of the arsenal, the twenty-three had made in the night a descent on the White House and carried off the President to parts unknown before the marines could have had time to open their eyes.

On the 2d of November I embarked on board a Missouri steamer for St. Louis, and from there went to Ohio, where I received letters from my family, depicting their deplorable condition, which gave me no very kind feelings towards the Humanitarians. With difficulty, and very ill, I reached New-York early in December, 1857, and I went immediately to see Mr. HORACE GREELEY and Mr. THADEUS HYATT. I expected from them a kind reception, but that proved a delusion—no one was responsible; neither could either remember anything about the circumstances of my leaving, though Mr. HYATT had by telegraph authorized me to draw on him for fifty dollars, as I was on my road to Tabor, which fifty I had not drawn for, and Mr. GREELEY, with whom I had dined at Mr. HYATT's two days prior to my leaving New-York, walked with me for some time in the evening, impressing upon me not to neglect to let him know everything, especially if there was to be any fighting, because, in that case, he was resolved to be present. I confess that when he professed this I grew skeptical, though he repeated it over and over again. The reception I met with from Mr. GREELEY on my return in a dilapidated condition, has already been depicted in the letter to Mr. SANBORN, dated January, 1858. Being, through a tumor on the knee, unable to continue my journey to Boston, I wrote to Senator SUMNER, asking him, if his health permitted it, to see Mr. SANBORN. Mr. SUMNER was so kind as to see Dr. HOWE, who transmitted to Mr. SANBORN my letter to himself, upon which Mr. SANBORN wrote to me, and the two letters from New-York, written in January, were sent, which letters have been already published. I next wrote two letters (not published) to young JOHN BROWN, the same who the *Tribune* represented as having died of fever in Kansas, but who is actually farming in Ashtabula County, Ohio. Copies were sent to his father, complaining of the treatment I had received, and insisting that he put things right for me with his Boston friends. Having had offered to me the occupation of attending to a patent case at Washington, I seized hold of the first employment which presented itself to me, and I left for that city about the 3d of March, 1858. The very day of my departure I learned that Capt. B. had just come from the East, and that he was going to put his plan into execution. I saw clearly that the project which I supposed was dead had only slumbered.

Soon after reaching Washington I saw Mr. SUMNER, who was so obliging as to write and endeavor to get his Boston friends to make amends for their misconduct towards me. Other gentlemen did the same, but to no purpose. Every day I was expecting to hear of Capt. Brown at Harper's Ferry; the impression I had was let him try, it's his own business. But on mature reflection I thought differently. I saw a considerable force of Marines in the barracks with railway communication and telegraph to Harper's Ferry, all which convinced me that Brown's plan must end disastrously, and I, consequently, consulted two Abolitionists of very high standing, and one of them, Dr. BAILEY, of the *Era*, became alarmed at the mischief which B. would bring upon Abolitionism and himself. Dr. B. consulted others, who urged on me to stop Brown. My reply was, I cannot stop him, for I have no influence with his backers; stop him yourselves. How are we to stop him? was the natural question. Oblige his backers to take their arms from him, was my reply, (for the arms were theirs not his,) and then his pet scheme must drop.

In a letter (not published) from myself to his Boston backers, written 28th April, 1858, with the approval of those Abolitionists already alluded to, I dwell especially on the certainty of Brown's failure, the consequence to the free colored people, and to Abolitionism. No words could be plainer than the following: "Therefore I exact that the arms, other materials, and means be taken from John Brown."

That the impression of my earnestness might be more felt, I sent copies to all the parties concerned, and by hammering and hammering on the same spot I did stop them in their career of folly. Who besides Dr. BAILEY aided me in this work I am not very sure, except that one was a gentleman of great influence Eastward, and with whom I had two or three interviews. To him Dr. BAILEY communicated the matter; I did not tell him.

And the *Tribune*, with a herd of little barkers at its heels, has the impudence to tell me I am a beggarman, because I ask for the pittance of which the humanitarians defrauded my family, and that my services were worth nothing. I went to organize and instruct the "cream of the Free-State men," at the request of JOHN BROWN, who came to me in the name of, and at the instance of, the Committees.

It was their place to collect the men, mine to in-

struct them. If they neglected their business, I could not perform my part, and it was a small thing to save them and their agent, John Brown, from making a fool of himself and each of them, to stop "the sword of the Lord and of Gideon" once and again a second time, and I should again a third time have stopped it if I had not supposed that it had been dead and buried long ago.

Those men who have plundered, betrayed, and calumniated me, ought to have felt the profoundest gratitude; but some minds are so constituted as to be incapable of such a sentiment. They know that they have wronged me, and they hate me from that very knowledge; let them enjoy their feelings if they can. And who are they who have this day resuscitated this wild scheme; I know not. But if they are the same men whom I saved twice, then must I say with the proverb: "Though thou shouldst bray a fool in a mortar, among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him."—Prov. xxvii., 22.

Some may agree that no man should be stopped in any foolish project. When the project is hopeless, or the man incapable of accomplishing it; and when a failure would involve others in ruin, or would jeopardize a great cause, then it is the duty of every friend to consult the best heads in that cause, and act in unison with them. Had I not consulted leading Abolitionists in 1858, and had I not interfered in unison with them to stop the "sword of the Lord and of Gideon" from committing suicide at Harper's Ferry, or unnecessarily and unprofitably risking the lives of such superior men as Kagi, then I should have been blameable. As it is, I did my duty, and I do not choose to be made the scapegoat of the *Tribune*.

And how did I stop them from doing an act of folly? Not, as the *Tribune* basely and maliciously stated, by betraying the plot to the Secretary of War, but by appealing to the good sense of influential men of the Abolition cause. In that I did my duty. Did Mr. GREELEY do his?

I have been basely plundered, betrayed and calumniated; I will condescend to make no reply beyond this present one, knowing that I have done right; I care not a straw for the opinions or threats of any or all of them. I leave now lest I be taken by the State as a witness; not but that those who have so barbarously ill-used my family and have persecuted me do not richly deserve all that I might do against them, yet to punish them for that I should have to attack them on another matter, and it is repugnant for me to testify in such a case, even against those who are vile; therefore do I put myself to the ruinous inconvenience of quitting New-York, just as I find my affairs recovering from the shock which they sustained through the perfidy of the humanitarians.

As to the slaves obtaining their liberty, they are justified in so doing, wherever and howsoever they can, whether by evasion, stampede, or open insurrection. Though some pretended humanitarians have behaved very ill by pillaging others, though every Abolitionist and humanitarian in the world were to turn rascals, that would not make the cause of Abolitionism less true. I hope they may always and everywhere succeed; but to obtain success, I caution them not to count for aid upon impracticable poets and chatterers, nor scheming politicians, cheating speculators, or those animals of neuter gender, men in petticoats, and women in breeches, or even in men who expect the Lord will do all for them. Heaven helps those only who help themselves; and all true men should cooperate with those who try to burst their bonds asunder. Only let the mode of operation be practical, and not poetical. A day sooner or a day later, the irrepressible conflict between Liberty and Slavery must commence.

Respectfully yours,
H. FORBES.