

"Revelations of Conspiracy - The Three Plots," Pittsfield (MA) Sun, November 3, 1859

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From the Albany Atlas & Argus.

Revelations of Conspiracy—The Harper's Ferry Affair Plotted in 1858—Seward informed of its Ramifications—Speculation in Murder—Amos Lawrence & Co. offer \$7,000 for an Insurrection and a Rise in Cotton—The three Plots, Brown's, Forbes', and the Well-matured Plan.

Col. FORBES, as he is called, is a Scotchman who devoted himself to the Italian Cause, during the revolutionary era of 1848, and upon its failure was sent hither by MAZZINI; and helped stir up the agitation which GAVAZZI undertook, and of which the Nuncio BEDINI was one of the objects and nearly became the victim. He was transferred from the Italian Cause to that of Abolitionism, and became an associate of OSSAWATOMIE BROWN in the "Kansas work." He published a Manual of Insurrection, showing how to raise, and arm, and drill recruits. He became BROWN's military teacher. He was promised money and was cheated. The New England Societies that engaged his services repudiated the account when he called for means to support his wife and children, who were in Europe suffering abject misery.

It seems to have been agreed by the Kansas Aid Societies, and the leading Abolitionists, as early as January, 1858, that a movement should be made on the border of Maryland and Virginia, by a body of armed men under OSSAWATOMIE BROWN.

Forbes' plan was to organize "stampedes," that is the flight of parties of slaves, from 20 to 50, twice a month—twice a week, if need be—along the Northern border, so as to make slave property untenable, and irritate the pro-slaveryites into blunders.

Brown's plan was to organize a body of 25 to 50 men, black and white, well armed, and with spare arms for the slaves whom they were to call to their standard, to seize on the Armory at Harper's Ferry, and destroy what they could not carry off. The slave-quarters at other points to be beaten up for recruits, and the band to retreat to the Mountains, and hold out till a Northern Convention should be called to overthrow the Democratic administration. He had hope, too, of foreign intervention.

The well-matured plan was a mixture of the two, such as Brown endeavored to accomplish, and involved in this a speculation in cotton and in the rise of exchange on England. Brown told Forbes that Amos Lawrence had promised him \$7000, whenever actual hostilities should be commenced, the New England humanitarians intending to reimburse themselves by the rise in cotton and the sale of exchange on England.

Forbes became disgusted with the speculation of the spinners in cotton, and tried to arrest the scheme.

In an interview with Wm. H. Seward at Washington, May 1, 1858, Col. Forbes told Seward of their plans. Seward replied that he, being a Senator, should not have been told of them, but seems to have done nothing to prevent them.

Forbes, disgusted with the idea of speculating in insurrection for the sake of a rise in cotton, undertook to arrest the conspiracy, ere it went further. It is said that he informed the government at Washington of the affair, and so caused it to be postponed but not abandoned.

The letters published in the N. Y. Herald describe these facts; and they bear the evidence of genuineness. The first few addressed to Sauborn, Secretary of the Massachusetts Aid Society, relate to his personal grievances, and the sufferings of his wife and family occasioned by the fraudulent conduct of the Republican politicians in refusing him his pay.

Redpath, the emissary to Kansas and the promoter of Insurrection, in a letter to the Boston Atlas, after referring to the anonymous letter to Secretary Floyd, goes on to speak of Forbes and to hint the pretence of "insanity," by which to account for the exasperation of the man. We quote:—

But this anonymous letter, it is said, is not the first intimation that "our efficient Executive" has received of the designs of the insurrectionists. I was informed that they were betrayed by an eminent military author more than twelve months ago. His name I cannot now recall. He was a wealthy Englishman, and resided in Italy in 1848, when the revolution under Gen. Garibaldi broke out. He suddenly showed a marvellous genius for raising and drilling recruits. He published a manual for their use—adapted for guerilla warfare—which was reprinted by DeWitt & Davenport, of New York. He was the instructor in military science, of Brown and his men. Domestic bereavements, I believe, added to alarming pecuniary losses, suddenly rendered him insane. He went to Washington and betrayed the scheme. Brown and his men were forced to fly to Canada. The excursions in Kansas which Brown subsequently made were intended to increase the belief of the Government that the exposure was the result of the wild imagination of a madman.

Let us add, in illustration of that part of the scheme which connected this bloody business with Cotton speculation, that the N. Y. Independent, whose editor introduced Brown to Forbes, on announcing the insurrection, said:

It has been rumored that some speculators in cotton advanced money to incite the insurrection, with a view of profiting by the rise of cotton, which the intelligence of such an event would be likely to produce in this market.

We pronounced this a gross falsehood, when we read it, for we could not realize such a depth of depravity; but it turns out to be true.

"Why not let them make a little money? It will not hurt the cause," was the argument of the speculators in cotton and murder, the spinners of calico and of plots of insurrection. Forbes opposed the argument; but it carried the day. The defeat of Brown will probably be followed by the failure of some of the great speculators in New England, for the plot was nipped in the bud before it assumed a force to justify speculation.

Slave Stampedes on the Southern Borderlands

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