

Who Pointed the Way to John Brown?

[Correspondence of the N. Y. Evening Post.]

The Virginians are consternated at the audacity of John Brown's scheme for running off negroes to the free States; they insist that he has levied war upon the Old Dominion, and that the upshot of his scheme, if carried into effect, would be anarchy and civil war. We do not believe that John Brown had any such objects in view. As an ardent sympathizer with the slaves, he desired their emancipation, but the method in which he proposed to bring it about was by a general stampede along the frontier, and not by a bloody insurrection.

But let us suppose the worst motives which the Virginians themselves ascribe to the enthusiast; let us suppose that he really contemplated an armed rising of the servile classes; that he intended hostilities against the sovereignty of the State, and to involve the inhabitants in all the horrors of domestic war; was he in that view any the worse than the present Governor of Virginia, Mr. Wise, who, in 1856, proposed to accomplish in respect to the Federal Government what John Brown is alleged to have undertaken against the State Government? Our readers will recall the vehement harangues which Mr. Wise then made against the election of Fremont, the threats of disunion which he uttered in case of Fremont's success, and the precise plans of levying war which he described. Nor were these plans confined to the crazy noddle of Wise himself; they were part of a general scheme; no less than twenty thousand men were said to be ready to engage in them, and all the particulars of the rendezvous and of the march upon Washington were agreed upon. Harper's Ferry, if we remember rightly, the very place selected by John Brown was to be the place of meeting, and the seizure of the armory there the signal for the onset.

We exposed this scheme at the time; but we have now additional evidence of it in the confessions of some of the conspirators. Mr. Corry, of Ohio, to whom we refer elsewhere, has published a narrative of his interviews with various Democrats in 1856, and among the rest with a distinguished Richmond editor, now the ardent supporter of Gov. Wise, who spoke familiarly of that politician's sanguinary and seditious plans. Let us repeat here the detailed statement of Mr. Corry:

"There was another matter discussed on Mr. Banks' motion. He told us the South would have dissolved the Union if Fremont had been elected President of the United States; that Gov. Wise and the Virginia leaders were ready to take the field—march on Washington, take the treasury, archives, buildings, grounds, &c., declare the Confederation de facto overthrown, and the District to have reverted to Virginia, the purpose for which she had conceived it having failed. He said the Union would have been easy. There were 30,000 men ready, 20,000 cavalry, sets of accoutrements, &c., &c. That the public mind was sufficiently excited to overcome all domestic resistance, and that they could whip the North in the fight. He seemed to be perfectly

cool and abstract in these declarations, and without doubt implicitly believed what he said."

What an enormity was this! Because the people of the nation, acting in a constitutional manner, might prefer a candidate for the Presidency who did not happen to suit the whims of these southern dictators, the whole country was to be deluged in blood. Twenty or thirty thousand southerners were to band together, to seize the arsenal at Harper's Ferry, march upon Washington, take possession of the United States Treasury, prevent the inauguration of the new government, and provoke the whole country to war. Nothing in the history of Mexico or the South American States is more atrocious than this proposal. In those unhappy victims of anarchy, where they maintain a semblance of free government, but where elections are revolutions, and each leader puts arms in the hands of his partisans to carry his points, such counsels would have been in character; but in this country of constitutional forms and peaceful procedures they were only infamous. If Gov. Wise had been a Miramon, an Alvarez, or Santa Anna, he could not have proposed a course more likely to introduce into this great northern republic the spirit and license which prevail in the turbulent republics of the South.

When Brown's plot was disclosed a terrible noise was made about it all over the South, although the worst that he conceived was a mere flea-bite of iniquity to the gigantic wickedness which Wise had in his head. Brown, moreover, was animated by the noblest purposes of philanthropy, even if they were mistaken, while Wise was animated by the lowest spirit of demagoguism and partisanship. Brown only designed to set the negroes of northern Virginia on the run, while Wise designed to stir up the entire nation. The robbery of property was the extreme of Brown's crimes, while Wise intended not merely to rob the public buildings, but to arrest the federal authorities, shoot down innocent citizens, and arm the mob against the agents of law and order. Yet nothing was said in denunciation of this infamous plan of Governor Wise. Thirty thousand men, in fact, stood ready to execute it, and even after it had been peacefully defeated by the election of Mr. Buchanan, his adherents boasted of their determination and ability to put it into execution.

What wonder that Brown, who doubtless read the addresses of the Governor, and made himself familiar with the details of his proposed military operations, should have treasured the knowledge in his mind, should have remembered that Harper's Ferry was to be the first point of attack, the seizure of the arsenal the first *coup d' main*, and then, such other proceedings as circumstances might prompt? The old man of Osawatamie has been only the disciple of the Governor who is now charged with his hanging, and it would be but a fair requital, when his aged limbs stand under the fatal noose, if he should read to the people of Virginia "the bloody instructions" which he had learned from the mouth of their own Governor.

Slave Stampedes on the Southern Borderlands