

COLONEL HUGH FORBES TURNED UP AGAIN.

Piquant Letter from the Friend of the Colored Man and of John Brown—Reasons for Forbes' Withdrawal—The "Well Matured Plan"—Financial Affairs—That Six Hundred Dollars—Letter to Senator Mason—Forbes is Dumb as an Oyster, &c., &c.

LONDON, Feb. 20, 1860.

MY DEAR SIR—I have to thank you for yours, enclosing that from Senator Mason. In the present is a copy of my reply to Senator Mason, which has been sent for transmission to the American Consul.

From the moment I heard my name mixed up with those of Brown, Greeley, Howe, &c., in the Harper's Ferry folly, I resolved not to give any evidence if called upon to do so. I see no just motive for changing my opinion; but even were I now to think differently from what I formerly thought on that subject, it would be absolutely impossible for me to testify after money had been tendered to me. The reason why I refuse to be made a witness is simply because I do not choose to give evidence in answer to questions put to me by the pro-slavery enemy, not even on points which I have no objection fully to explain. There are, however, certain matters upon which I do not desire to enlighten inquisitive Southerners; for instance, What is the "well matured plan?" I never liked that method so well as the stampedes (see my letter to Dr. Howe, dated May 6, 1858), for the carrying off of slaves by well directed stampedes would, I believe, in a brief period of time, settle the question of slavery in the United States without the necessity of recurring to an insurrection. Nevertheless, should insurrection be unavoidable to procure liberty for the slaves, then the "well matured plan," with some little alteration, appears to me to be applicable to the case. A few modifications in the project would be advisable, since some things which then were easy have now become difficult, through the much to be regretted Harper's Ferry folly. The improved, or, as Capt. Brown termed it, "the well matured plan," I may observe, was determined upon by Capt. B. and myself, after much deliberation, and was to be a substitute for the Harper's Ferry folly—with the distinct understanding between us that the prelude should be a series of stampedes, and above all that a mixed committee of white and colored directors should be appointed without whose concurrence no step whatever in the plan itself should be taken. Brown's assent appeared to me as not very cordial, and in my letter to his son, dated New York, February 23, 1858, I wrote: "He next proposed a joint dictatorship of himself and myself; I held for the committee, and that was finally and most reluc-

tantly consented to—so reluctantly that I have always had misgivings as to some reconsideration of that point being yet brought before me." It was further agreed between us that none, except the committee to be hereafter appointed, should be informed of the full details of the "well matured plan." Whether Brown did afterwards confer with his friends in New England respecting the *modus operandi* in our "well-matured plan" I cannot say; I should think that he did not, because they clung so tenaciously to the Harper's Ferry folly, though this may be accounted for from the fact that some of his backers insisted upon a grand and sudden *eclat*, such as the seizure of the government arsenal, which, though held for only a short time, would produce an effect on the several exchanges, and enable those speculators previously in the secret to realize large sums of money.

I am desirous to know whether a little treatise on slave insurrections, headed, "Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might," has come to light. It commenced with the stampede of the Israelites out of Egypt, and ended with the triumph of San Domingo. Brown had a manuscript copy or two, and if it has been found and published I should like a copy of it to see whether it has been altered.

So that slavery be abolished I care not who may accomplish that desideratum; therefore no cross-questioning shall draw from me the details of the "well matured plan," respecting which I already have often been interrogated. Should, however, this same plan, or any other, be attempted by the religious, or political, or speculating New England repudiators, or by those amiable, prating impracticables, men in petticoats and women in breeches, who attend the spring anniversaries, I fear that it will prove a miserable failure.

I thank you heartily for having taken my part in my absence. Do not get yourself into hot water on my account, as that would greatly grieve me. I am thoroughly satisfied that throughout this affair I have acted rightly. I was right in consenting to go West for the service of humanity against the pro-slavery border ruffians. I was right in demanding from those who begged me to go a sufficiency for the maintenance and education of my children. I was right in estimating that sum at its minimum, instead of making a job of it—that sum being rather less than half of what I was then earning in New York. I was right in protesting energetically against the ill-treatment of my children. I was right in refusing the joint and irresponsible management with Brown, and insisting that the direction be left to a committee of management, connecting therewith a finance department so organized as to prevent any one from "helping themselves." I was right in objecting to certain speculations not legitimate and to the Harper's Ferry folly, and in proposing something more rational and honest. I was right in consulting two leading abolitionists at Washington when Brown, contrary to his compact with me, returned to the senseless, mischievous and suicidal Harper's Ferry project. I was right in disconnecting myself from the business as it then stood, and in leaving the whole in the hands of those influential anti-slavery men to whom Dr. Bailey had appealed. And I am right in refusing to become a witness before a pro-slavery committee of the United States Senate, or before any Uni-

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ted States tribunal. Thus far I am perfectly tranquil in my mind, for no power, human or superhuman, can change right into wrong. The false prophet and the speculative humanitarians of that class may assent, and even may pretend to believe whatever tends to cast blame on me, as a means to divert public odium from themselves; but they cannot make truth become falsehood, and every effort to do so will assuredly recoil with terrible force upon the heads of those who may attempt such evil actions. Already have they felt a smart or two from recoil. The defrauding and maltreating my children gave rise to a correspondence distasteful and damaging to the repudiating humanitarians. The breaking of engagements with me induced Brown (most naturally) to conclude that he would be treated in a similar manner, whenever such a base abandonment might suit the humanitarians; consequently he took such measures as precluded the possibility of their throwing him overboard, and he carried with him, on his expedition, that "carpet bag" full of documentary evidence, implicating the repudiators in a manner there was no possibility of their repudiating. The discovery of this "carpet bag" quickly altered the tone of the *New York Tribune*, and the party organs of that stamp; the false prophet, also, unable to wipe from certain skirts the traces of Brown's fingers, ceased to treat him as crazy, and his silly plot as a mere Nat Turner outbreak. That Brown should have made his "carpet bag" a leading feature in his scheme was his own act. I did not counsel him to do so. Nor am I responsible if my trunk was by the innkeeper broken open, and my papers laid hold of, at 767 Broadway, where for three months I remained sick and helpless from an illness contracted in the service of the repudiating humanitarians.

Respecting the \$600 (six hundred dollars) mentioned by Mr. Callendar, (cashier of a Hartford bank, I believe,) that testimony corresponds in that particular with what I have repeatedly said and written. When John Brown came to me, for the first time, in March, 1857, he begged of me to name the conditions upon which I would go West. I was wholly taken by surprise at the proposal, and had no desire to go; yet feeling that I ought not to refuse to do such a service, I at once replied that as I could neither leave my daughter alone in New York or take her with me to the West, she must, at the expense of the anti-slavery humanitarians, be sent to her mother in Paris, and that a son of mine should come out to me in her stead; that I should for myself require clothes, &c., suitable for Western life; besides that I desired to complete some private business arrangements before leaving New York, which, were they to be neglected, would entail on me loss—to cover all which \$600, at the least, would be necessary. Further, I stipulated that the engagement should be for not less than one year; and that my family should have one hundred dollars per month—that being rather less than half of what I was then earning without deranging myself. Captain Brown left the city that same afternoon to consult his friends in New England, reappearing, however, at the end of April, calling upon me to fulfil my promise to go West, and tendering me at the same time the six hundred dollars, for what he termed "outfit." So little did I expect to have seen Brown again, that I had not spoken to my daughter about her return to Europe. Therefore I urged him to stay with me till the next day, which he declined to do, alleging that he had that evening an engagement at New Haven; also, that he feared being seized for some Kansas affair if he tarried in New York. He stated, however, that he would for some days leave the \$500 with the cashier of a Hartford bank (Mr. Callendar, I believe), so that I might draw for that sum if I determined upon going West. Regarding myself as in some degree bound by that half promise I had made to Brown in March, I concluded that I could not, with propriety, do other than go, and consequently, on the 2d or 3d of May, I draw for part of the \$600, and the remainder in a few

days later. Towards the middle of May I met Captain Brown at Peterboro', when he informed me that he could not be in Iowa for some six or eight weeks; therefore, at his request, and for the benefit of the Kansas free State men, I employed that time in printing the little pocket volume of "Extracts" from my large work, using in the service of the anti-slavery humanitarians so much of the \$600 that I was unable to complete the private business of my own above alluded to or to get my son from Europe; indeed I had considerable difficulty in reaching Tabor, in Iowa, where I arrived on the 9th of August, 1857—some thirty-six hours after Capt. B. Then I learned from him that he had been disappointed in the promises made to him by the humanitarians: I urged him to write energetically to them, which he seemed most reluctant to do, and he tried to persuade me not to be so anxious about my family in Paris, saying that "they would manage somehow." Respecting his own interests, he was not so negligent, for in reply to his reiterated remonstrances to his friends, he was eventually informed by letter from Mr. Sanborn that the purchase (by subscription) of a farm of some hundred and ten acres contiguous to his own, at North Elba, N. Y., had been completed, and that the property he coveted was at last his. The same Mr. Sanborn, in the name of the anti-slavery humanitarians, whom he had consulted, replied to the applications to fulfil the engagement towards my family by the laconic answer, "Hard times."

The following extracts, explanatory of the above, are taken from my correspondence:—Extract from a letter to John Brown, Jr., dated New York, Feb. 23, 1858, a copy

of which was handed to Captain Brown on the 21 of March:—"Your father, a few days after I reached Tabor, asked me whether I would be willing to regard as an equivalent for the derangement of my occupations and affairs the \$600 a ready paid me, and my expenses back to this city, since he had been disappointed in the promises made to him. I emphatically answered no. The \$600 had, as stipulated, been applied to other purposes." Again, in the same letter:—"And after thus acting with generosity, fidelity and zeal, I find myself not merely at the loss of that portion of the \$600 which I expended in the service of the cause, but I am defrauded out of the monthly pittance which I stipulated for my family." Extract from my communication to the London Anti Slavery Society, 30th Jan., 1858:—"About the end of April Capt. B. came again to me, from New England, saying that he was ready to agree to my terms, viz: \$600 besides my expenses, and \$100 per month to send home to my family in Paris." In the *HERALD and Times* of New York, 27th or 28th of October last, can be found similar statements respecting the \$600; also in my letter to Dr. Howe, 19th April, 1858, in reply to that of Dr. H., in which he had named \$900. Though the testimony of Mr. Callendar—to the effect that he paid me \$600—is correct substantially, the humanitarians, with their usual fairness of dealing, seem to try to distort the transaction, with a view to produce an impression different from the truth. Yet what else could follow when one has to deal with sleek, canting hypocritical, repudiating speculators, each having his own private interest to forward, some enjoying snug situations, as secretaries, others as treasurers or lecturers, or collectors of funds, or intriguers for political influence and place. Such men would regret were slavery to cease, for then their occupations would vanish. As to the sincere but simple contributors, they are completely ruled by the managers; therefore they are powerless for any good, and the only practical result of

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their sacrifices is to fatten the wolves which feed upon the sheep.

The firm stand I took in opposing the stupid and corrupt Harper's Ferry scheme ought to have procured for me the lasting gratitude of all sincere abolitionists. That feeling should have increased in its intensity when I refused to give my testimony to the United States Senate and courts of justice, though by that refusal I injured (perhaps beyond remedy) my private affairs, which were just then getting into a prosperous condition, for the first time since the anti-slavery humanitarians cheated me in 1857. Yet, although so much was due to me by the New Englanders, who profess an antipathy to slavery, their debt was, as usual, repudiated, and I was allowed to quit America last November, on board the John Bright, with a steerage passage furnished me by the St. George's Society, in the name of White. That trifling discomfort, however, I care little about.

But I must close this letter ere it becomes a volume, so I will merely quote what I wrote on a former occasion: "If I be again mistaken; if every abolitionist in America, even if every abolitionist in the world, were to turn rascal, that would not alter my opinion as to the great principle of right contained in abolitionism." H. FORBES.

COPY OF MY REPLY TO THE LETTER OF SENATOR MASON.

LONDON, Feb. 12, 1860.

SIR—Though it may, perhaps, be an irregularity, I take the liberty of myself replying to your letter to Mr. Kenney of the 26th January last concerning me.

Had I remained in the United States and been forcibly carried to Washington or elsewhere, as a witness in the Harper's Ferry folly, I should have refused to have testified, and should consequently have been committed to prison for contempt. Therefore, as my perpetual imprisonment could serve no useful purpose, I thought it better to cross the Atlantic. In evading the summons of the United States authorities I was not actuated by any fear of mob violence or of prosecution, as an accomplice of Captain Brown. Had I decided upon giving my testimony, I should have disregarded any risks I might have incurred. After the treacherous and atrocious conduct (towards me) of Brown's bankers, whom I unfortunately mistook for friends, there is nothing which the false humanitarians do not deserve at my hands. Nevertheless, I will not on any consideration open my mouth to testify for the pro-slavery enemy. Having, therefore, on the one hand the rascals, and on the other hand the enemy, I am resolved to have nothing to do with either party.

Respecting your observations in a former letter to Mr. Kenney, to the effect that I need apprehend no prosecution, since I disapproved of and endeavored to stop Brown's Harper's Ferry project, I once more plainly and openly declare that I did so merely because many of those who urged him forward lacked integrity of purpose, and the whole scheme was stupid, and could not fail to prove injurious to abolitionism and to the free colored people. Had any plan of giving liberty to the slaves been decided upon, based on common sense and common honesty, I should certainly have approved and probably have participated in it.

Lastly, respecting the pecuniary compensation offered me, should I return and give evidence, I beg to inform the United States Senate and its Select Committee, that although the corrupt, repudiating and speculating American humanitarians have brought me into extreme financial difficulties, I am not for sale. H. FORBES.

To the Honorable J. M. MASON, Chairman of the Select Committee on Harper's Ferry, Washington, D. C.

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