

**A VOICE FROM HARPER'S FERRY: A  
NARRATIVE OF EVENTS AT HARPER'S  
FERRY: WITH INCIDENTS PRIOR AND  
SUBSEQUENT TO ITS CAPTURE BY  
CAPTAIN BROWN AND HIS MEN**

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A Voice from Harper's Ferry: A Narrative of Events at Harper's Ferry: with incidents prior and subsequent to its capture by Captain Brown and his men by Osborne P. Anderson

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**OSBORNE P. ANDERSON**

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BY

OSBORNE P. ANDERSON,

ONE OF THE NUMBER.

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BOSTON:  
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1861.

## P R E F A C E .

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My sole purpose in publishing the following Narrative is to save from oblivion the facts connected with one of the most important movements of this age, with reference to the overthrow of American slavery. My own personal experience in it, under the orders of Capt. Brown, on the 16th and 17th of October, 1859, as the only man alive who was at Harper's Ferry during the entire time—the unsuccessful groping after these facts, by individuals, impossible to be obtained, except from an actor in the scene—and the conviction that the cause of impartial liberty requires this duty at my hands—alone have been the motives for writing and circulating the little book herewith presented.

[I will not, under such circumstances, insult nor burden the intelligent with excuses for defects in composition, nor for the attempt to give the facts. A plain, unadorned, truthful story is wanted, and that by one who knows what he says, who is known to have been at the great encounter, and to have labored in shaping the same. My identity as a member of Capt. Brown's company cannot be questioned, successfully, by any who are bent upon suppressing the truth; neither will it be by any in Canada or the United States familiar with John Brown and his plans, as those know his men personally, or by reputation, who enjoyed his confidence sufficiently to know thoroughly his plans.]

The readers of this narrative will therefore keep steadily in view the main point—that they are perusing a story of events which have happened under the eye of the great Captain, or are incidental thereto, and

not a compendium of the "plans" of Capt. Brown; for as his plans were not consummated, and as their fulfilment is committed to the future, one to whom they are known will recklessly expose all of them to the public gaze. Much has been given as true that never happened; much has been omitted that should have been made known; many things have been left unsaid, because, up to within a short time, but two could do them; one of them has been offered up, a sacrifice to the Moloch, Slavery; being that other one, I propose to perform the duty, trusting to the opinion of the public who love the right for an appreciation of my endeavor.

O. P. A.

## A VOICE FROM HARPER'S FERRY.

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### CHAPTER I.

THE IDEA AND ITS EXPONENTS—JOHN BROWN ANOTHER MOSES.

THE idea underlying the outbreak at Harper's Ferry is not peculiar to that movement, but dates back to a period very far beyond the memory of the "oldest inhabitant," and emanated from a source much superior to the Wisers and Hunters, the Buchanans and Masons of to-day. It was the appointed work for life of an ancient patriarch spoken of in Exodus, chap. ii., and who, true to his great commission, failed not to trouble the conscience and to disturb the repose of the Pharaohs of Egypt with that inexorable, "Thus saith the Lord: Let my people go!" until even they were urgent upon the people in its behalf. Coming down through the nations, and regardless of national boundaries or peculiarities, it has been proclaimed and enforced by the patriarch and the warrior of the Old World, by the enfranchised freeman and the humble slave of the New. Its nationality is universal; its language every where understood by the haters of tyranny; and those that accept its mission, every where understand each other. There is an unbroken chain of sentiment and purpose from Moses of the Jews to John Brown of America; from Kossuth, and the liberators of France and Italy, to the untutored Gabriel, and the Denmark Vesseys, Nat Turners and Madison Washingtons of the Southern American States. The shaping and expressing of a thought for freedom takes



the same consistence with the colored American—whether he be an independent citizen of the Haytian nation, a proscribed but humble nominally free colored man, a patient, toiling, but hopeful slave—as with the proudest or noblest representative of European or American civilization and Christianity. Lafayette, the exponent of French honor and political integrity, and John Brown, foremost among the men of the New World in high moral and religious principle and magnanimous bravery, embrace as brothers of the same mother, in harmony upon the grand mission of liberty; but, while the Frenchman entered the lists in obedience to a desire to aid, and by invitation from the Adamases and Hamiltons, and thus pushed on the political fortunes of those able to help themselves, John Brown, the liberator of Kansas, the projector and commander of the Harper's Ferry expedition, saw in the most degraded slave a man and a brother, whose appeal for his God-ordained rights no one should disregard; in the toddling slave child, a captive whose release is as imperative, and whose prerogative is as weighty, as the most famous in the land. When the Egyptian pressed hard upon the Hebrew, Moses slew him; and when the spirit of slavery invaded the fair Territory of Kansas, causing the Free-State settlers to cry out because of persecution, old John Brown, famous among the men of God for ever, though then but little known to his fellow-men, called together his sons and went over, a did Abraham, to the unequal contest, but on the side of the oppressed white men of Kansas that were, and the black men that were to be. To-day, Kansas is free, and the verdict of impartial men is, that to John Brown, more than any other man, Kansas owes her present position.

I am not the biographer of John Brown, but I can be indulged in giving here the opinion common among my people of one so eminently worthy of the highest veneration. Close observation of him, during many weeks, and under his

orders at his Kennedy-Farm fireside, also, satisfies me that in comparing the noble old man to Moses, and other men of piety and renown, who were chosen by God to his great work, none have been more faithful, none have given a brighter record.

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## CHAPTER II.

PRELIMINARIES TO INSURRECTION—WHAT MAY BE TOLD AND WHAT NOT—JOHN BROWN'S FIRST VISIT TO CHATHAM—SOME OF THE SECRETS FROM THE "CARPET-BAG."

To go into particulars, and to detail reports current more than a year before the outbreak, among the many in the United States and Canada who had an inkling of some "practical work" to be done by "Osawattomie Brown," when there should be nothing to do in Kansas,—to give facts in that connection, would only forestall future action, without really benefitting the slave, or winning over to that sort of work the anti-slavery men who do not favor physical resistance to slavery. Slaveholders alone might reap benefits; and for one, I shall throw none in their way, by any indiscreet avowals; they already enjoy more than their share; but to a clear understanding of all the facts to be here published, it may be well to say, that preliminary arrangements were made in a number of places,—plans proposed, discussed and decided upon, numbers invited to participate in the movement, and the list of adherents increased. Nine insurrections is the number given by some as the true list of outbreaks since slavery was planted in America; whether correct or not, it is certain that preliminaries to each are unquestionable. Gabriel, Vesey, Nat Turner, all had conference meetings; all

had their plans; but they differ from the Harper's Ferry insurrection in the fact that neither leader nor men, in the latter, divulged ours, when in the most trying of situations. Hark and another met Nat Turner in secret places, after the fatigues of a toilsome day were ended; Gabriel promulgated his treason in the silence of the dense forest; but John Brown reasoned of liberty and equality in broad daylight, in a modernized building, in conventions with closed doors, in meetings governed by the elaborate regulations laid down by Jefferson, and used as their guides by Congresses and Legislatures; or he made known the weighty theme, and his comprehensive plans resulting from it, by the cosy fireside, at familiar social gatherings of chosen ones, or better, in the carefully arranged junto of earnest, practical men. Vague hints, careful blinds, are Nat Turner's entire make-up to save detection; the telegraph, the post-office, the railway, all were made to aid the new outbreak. By this, it will be seen that Insurrection has its progressive side, and has been elevated by John Brown from the skulking, fearing cabal, when in the hands of a brave but despairing few, to the highly organized, formidable, and to very many, indispensable institution for the security of freedom, when guided by intelligence.

So much as relates to prior movements may safely be said above; but who met—when they met—where they met—how many yet await the propitious moment—upon whom the mantle of John Brown has fallen to lead on the future army—the certain, terribly certain, many who must follow up the work, forgetting not to gather up the blood of the hero and his slain, to the humble bondman there offered—these may not, must not be told! Of the many meetings in various places, before the work commenced, I shall speak just here of the one, the minutes of which were dragged forth by marauding Virginians from the "archives" at Kennedy Farm not forgetting, however, for their comfort, that the Conventi-