

**A FEW ACTS AND ACTORS  
IN THE TRAGEDY  
OF THE CIVIL WAR  
IN THE UNITED STATES**

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A Few Acts and Actors in the Tragedy of the Civil War in the United States by William Bender Wilson

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**WILLIAM BENDER WILSON**

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TRAGEDY OF THE CIVIL WAR

IN THE

UNITED STATES.

BY

WILLIAM BENDER WILSON,

MILITARY TELEGRAPHER IN WAR TIMES.

PHILADELPHIA.

PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR.

1862.

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TO MY WIFE AND CHILDREN :

There are periods which come to all when the noise of the world's activities seems to cease for a moment to allow us the time to turn our thoughts inward for the purpose of reviewing life with its hopes, its failures and its possibilities.

Such reviews must necessarily place on the tablets of memory many pictures taken from the world's ever-moving panorama, which by producing in words, or on canvas, may be profitable to our kind.

One of these periods recently came to me, and the review covered in point of time five-sevenths of the allotted years of man, for when the bells in the birth-day tower next chime for me I will have completed the cycle of a half of a century of life existence with its varied experiences and recollections.

I have taken a number of pictures from memory's tablets as they came up in the review and now grouping them together under the title of "A Few Acts and Actors in the Tragedy of the Civil War in the United States," lovingly dedicate their publication to you.

WILLIAM BENDER WILSON.

"WALDON," HOLMESBURG,  
Philadelphia.

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## NOTES ON THE CIVIL WAR.

### I.

JOHN BROWN.

JOHN BROWN'S acts at Harper's Ferry constituted the hand-writing on the national wall which warned the world of the coming of that great struggle of which those acts were but a forerunner.

In the light of constitutional government and its preservation, the movement upon Harper's Ferry can only be viewed with condemnation, for it was a movement wherein liberty degenerated into license and lawlessness. There was, however, something bordering upon the sublime in the bearing and motives of the prompter and chief actor in the movement that must command the admiration of all fair-minded people, and it is from this point of view that this sketch is drawn: Condemnation for the methods pursued—recognition of the bearing and motives of the man.

It was on a bright June day in 1859, whilst standing at the railroad station in Harrisburg, I saw John Brown as he stepped on board a train on the Cumberland Valley Railroad preparatory to his going to Harper's Ferry and his fate. I had seen him before, but I little dreamed as I looked upon him that day that he was taking a step that was only the initiative to a tremendous fraternal strife so soon to follow, or that as he crossed the Susquehanna he would never return, or that his ebb would be a stream of blood reaching to the banks of that river.

John Brown sprung from the humblest walks of life, passed through scenes of bloodshed, attracted the eye and commanded the attention of the world.

There was an air of nobleness and dignity about his person. He was grand and majestic in proclaiming what he esteemed the truth, and strong and mighty in the execution of its behests. As free as the air of his native Connecticut, he was outspoken in according the same freedom to others and dauntless in aiding them to maintain it.

The terrible curse of slavery was on this country. The Christian Church, mistaking its mission, either openly advocated slavery, or by its silence consented to it; the Government sustained and supported it, statesmen coquetted with it, while the populace were

more than prepared to denounce, or, if their passions were aroused, to mete out violence to the man or men who would dare to intimate its abolition. Knowing this, yet believing in the divine right of all persons to enjoy personal liberty under the restraints of Divine law only, John Brown did not hesitate to pronounce in favor of the abolition of slavery. He believed that the Americans, the mightiest as well as the wisest of people, should rise to the height of the duties of the hour and decide the question upon the grounds of consistent justice. That America's mission was not simply to elevate the liberties of those colorless people who were so fortunate as to dwell within her borders, but that she had the higher, nobler one of obliterating the color line and of giving to the inhabitants of the Universe a system of government whose sole basis should be the consent of the governed.

He recognized what an element of strength to the enemies of popular government was the cry of American inconsistency, as well as the fact that that inconsistency could not be disproved so long as we held up our idea as one of equality of all men, and at the same time practiced the binding on of shackles to men, women and children.

Believing this, John Brown was not one to hide himself behind high-sounding theories of government and shirk the duties that one man owes to another.