

JOHN BROWN'S INVASION.

FURTHER INTERESTING INCIDENTS OF THE EXECUTION.

From Our Special Correspondent.

CHARLESTOWN, Va., Dec. 5, 1859.

In looking over the note-book of my predecessor just as he was about leaving town, I observed that he had omitted certain matters which I will lay before you at this time. Certainly no one who witnessed the scene presented on the field of execution can obliterate it from his memory; for, setting aside the peculiarly memorable event which called it out, the grouping, marching, and deploying of the troops, seen in the bright sunlight, and with so grand a background, would insure its permanency.

The sun arose clear and bright, but was presently lost behind a haze which I thought augured badly for the day. By 9 o'clock, however, almost the entire expanse of the blue heavens was free of clouds, and the thermometer stood so high that, until late in the afternoon, the windows of houses were open, and all the world were sitting on their porches or promenading the streets. I walked out to the field of execution at an early hour to watch all the preliminaries, and secure as good a place as the fears of the military authorities would accord to a peaceful citizen from the North. The timber for the scaffold, all framed ready for erection, was hauled to the ground the evening previous, and at 7 o'clock, the carpenter and his assistants began putting it together. The scaffold was about six feet high from the ground, perhaps twelve feet wide, and fifteen or eighteen long. A hand-rail extended around three sides and down the flight of steps. On the other side, stout uprights, with a cross-beam which was supported by strong braces. In the center of the cross-beam was an iron hook from which the rope was suspended. The trap beneath was arranged to swing on hinges, attached to the platform so slightly, as to break it when the cord was cut that upheld the trap. The cord, knotted at the end, passed through a hole in the trap, through another hole in the cross-beam, over the corner and down the upright to a hook near the ground, to which it was tied. It will thus be seen, that the weight of the prisoner being upon it, the sheriff had only to cut the cord near the hook, and the trap would fall at once.

The rope used to strangle Brown was only three feet long. It was of hemp, made in Kentucky, and sent in a box to Sheriff Campbell by a planter for this express purpose. Other ropes had been sent from other sections. One made of South Carolina cotton, in Alexandria, has already been publicly noticed. This would have been preferred beyond all others, because of the eminent fitness of the moral it conveyed for the consideration of all sympathizers with this deluded Abolitionist! But Providence willed it otherwise; for it was found on trial unable to sustain a much less weight than that of a man's body. Another, almost as great a pet with our Charlestown friends, was of hemp, made in Missouri by the slaves of Mahala Doyle, and sent by her with a particular request that, for the sake of retributive justice, it might be used to hang the man whom she asserts murdered her husband and two sons. This was tried in the balance, but found wanting also. So the precious gift from Kentucky was applied to the purpose.

The rope was arranged so as to give the body a fall of just eighteen inches—scarcely enough it was thought by some, who expressed a desire that Brown might fall ten feet, so as to insure his death beyond a peradventure. On Thursday afternoon, a corporal and some of his guard went to the field with a wagon-load of white flags fixed on short stakes, which were stuck in the ground at twenty paces apart all around the lot, in two rows, the rows twenty paces apart. These were intended to mark the posts of the sentries. Other similar flags showed the positions for the Commander-in-Chief, with his staff, the several companies and troops, and a narrow strip on the town side, where worthy and well qualified citizens who came properly vouchered for, should be allotted positions. They need not have gone to this latter trouble, however, for when the time for the execution came, the people had been so warned, and bayoneted, and arrested, and scared, and hounded by the military, that they generally remained at home. There were not 400 civilians on the ground, and as to the poor country people, they might have been seen from the scaffold, away off on the roads and in fields, at least a mile off, and all under the watchful supervision of white troopers and foot soldiers.

By 9 o'clock the first of the troops came to do their tedious duty. The double line of sentries was arranged, and at the word of command each man in his turn right-faced and forward-marched, and went to pacing up and down his beat, for all the world as if mounted by machinery. Cavalry troopers clothed in scarlet jackets sat like statues on their horses at distances of fifty feet from each other, but the lapse of time bringing weariness, they relieved themselves by assuming sundry graceful postures of body, such as hanging a leg over their horse's neck or sitting side-wise like a woman.

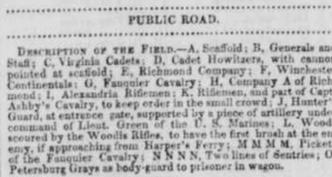
Then came an artillery company, with a brass cannon of large size and most approved pattern, which was skillfully pointed so that in the event of an attempted rescue the poor prisoner might be blown into shreds by the heavy charge of grape-shot that lay perdu in its cavernous depth. So you see the brave Virginians were determined to vindicate the majesty of the law in any event. This is no joke I assure you. The cannon was actually there, and actually loaded; for I saw it with my own eyes, and felt it with my own hands. This was not the only cannon in question, either, for Capt. Nichols' company had their guns pointed so as to sweep the jail and every approach to it, in case of need; which, considering that the fearful enemy was being quietly hanged at a little distance off, reminded me of dog Noble watching a certain hole after certain squirrel had run safely from it. I do not speak of the prisoners remaining in jail, for no one feels afraid of them. Brown is the head devil, and almost the only incense in their breasts.

After the artillery, more cavalry and infantry, and so on until all but the escort were on the ground. The field contains about forty acres, I should say, part of it in corn stubble, but the greater part in grass. The surface is undulating, and a broad hollow near the public road was selected as the site for the gallows, because it would afford the distant spectators a fair view, and place the prisoner so high that if compelled to fire upon him, the soldiers need not shoot each other or the civilians. The field was bounded on the south by the road, on the north by a pretty bit of woodland, and on the remaining two sides by inclosed fields.

The sun shone with great splendor as the prisoner's escort came up, and afar off could be seen the bright-glancing muskets and bayonets of his body-guard, hedging him in, in close ranks, all about. On the field the several companies glistened with the same sparkle of gaudy and trappings, and the gay colors of their uniforms, made more intense in the glare, came out into strong relief with the dead tints of sod and woods. Away off to the East and South, the splendid mass of the Blue Ridge loomed against the sky, and shut in the horizon. Over the woods, toward the North-east, long, thin stripes of clouds had gradually accumulated, and foreboded the storm that came in due time; while, looking toward the South, the eye took in an undulating fertile country, stretching out to the distant mountains. All Nature seemed at peace, and the shadow of the approaching solemnity seemed to have been cast over the soldiers, for there was not a sound to be heard as the column came slowly up the road. There was no band of musicians to lighten the effect of the scene by playing the march of the dead but with solemn tread the heavy footfalls came, as I those of one man. Thus they passed their station on the easterly side of the scaffold, and the old man calmly descended from the wagon, mounted the gallows stairs with unflinching step, and was led to his place on the fatal trap. His unwavering courage is well illustrated in the fact that, when the Sheriff took hold of him to lead him forward under

the cross-beam, there was no trembling of body to be noticed, nor anything which would show a weakness at the very brink of the precipice from which he was about to leap. There he stood, in his dark clothes and blood-red slippers, and with his white hood drawn over his head, for eight minutes, that seemed ages—over his head, for eight minutes, that seemed ages—the cyroser of his God into the black and sluggish pool of slavery; while, ebbing from him in fast-widening circles of sentries and pickets and mounted scouts that surrounded the place for fifteen miles off, went the ripples that he had caused on his bosom.

The following diagram will perhaps convey an idea of the military precautions adopted to insure the death of John Brown; but it must be remembered that the sentries and scouts were formed in cordons around the place for fifteen miles out, and that reserves of troops were ready in barracks to march at a moment's notice to any point:



DESCRIPTION OF THE FIELD.—A, Scaffold; B, General and Staff; C, Virginia Cavalry; D, Cavalry; E, Winchester Contingents; F, Cavalry; G, Company A of Richmond; H, Cavalry; I, Cavalry; J, Cavalry; K, Cavalry; L, Cavalry; M, Cavalry.

The field is not more than a half mile from the jail, from the windows of his cell in the second story of which Cook had an unobstructed view of the whole proceedings. He watched his old Captain until the trap fell and his body swung into mid-air, when he turned away and gave vent to his feelings. The cord cut a finger's depth into Brown's neck, and a considerable distortion of countenance is said to have been produced. This will doubtless decrease as the muscles relax and fall to their natural places again. Brown's hold on life was strong. He did not die easily, judging from appearances, and the testimony of experienced men. The animal heat remained in his body so long, that although it was to have left under escort of a detachment of the Richmond Grays at 5 o'clock, the physicians detained it an hour and a half longer to cool. I heard it suggested by a Captain that a good dose of arsenic should be administered to the corpse to make sure work, and many others wished that at least the head might be cut off and retained by them, since the body was to be embalmed, and, on gorgeous catafalques, carried in procession through Northern cities. This amiable bloodthirstiness is on a par with that of the students at the Winchester Medical College, who have skinned the body of one of Brown's sons, separated the nervous and muscular and venous systems, dried and varnished them, and have the whole hung up as a nice anatomical illustration. Some of the students wished to stuff the skin, others to make it into game pouches. They had better not stuff it, for if the occupant gave them so bad a scare that it requires nearly three thousand troops to quiet them, the very dried skin stuffed with straw would keep them at least in a perpetual tremor.

If there are cowards and blusters in this part of the country, do not set down all Virginians as such, for I am well assured that there are thousands of stout hearts and strong arms ready at this moment to fight for her soil. No one but a natural fool can see such gray-haired men in arms as are occasionally met in the streets of Charlestown, alongside as brave boys as ever looked into a cannon's mouth, without being sensible of the spirit which actuates some of the troops. There is a great feeling of exasperation in Jefferson County against Gov. Wise, for two reasons: First, his expressions of contempt for their defeat and imprisonment at Harper's Ferry; and secondly, for sending so much larger force to protect them than was necessary, and thus instituting a military despotism far more stringent than that of France or Russia. Things have got to such a pass that old citizens cannot go from their houses to their stores without danger of several arrests. Farmers wishing to sell produce in town, or purchase necessities for their families are stopped on the highway at the point of the bayonet. The usual form is this: "Halt!" "Who comes there?" "A friend, with the counterpane." "Advance, friend, and give the counterpane." "Trenton." "Pass friend." But the poor friend has to go through this ordeal perhaps every quarter or half mile, and it becomes miserably tiresome before the dozen of eggs are sold or the pound of candles purchased. Gov. Wise's Jefferson-County vote, in case of his nomination, will be infinitesimally small. The village, torn where you will, presents every appearance of a besieged town, what with cannon in the streets, troops marching and parading, sentries pacing to and fro, orderlies hurrying hither and thither, public buildings, offices, churches, and private houses turned into barracks, and around them all the cooking, cleaning of accoutrements, and the thousand other accessories of soldiers' quarters.

There is great want of system in the military arrangements, and in the event of a combined attack at different points, dire confusion would ensue. If my military experience does not go for naught, I must believe that, with the present disposition of the several bodies of troops, a general alarm would result in great slaughter of the soldiers by their own friends. But, fortunately, there will be no occasion to test practically the value of my observation, for no foe will, or probably ever has intended to, attack the troops. It is possible, but not, in my opinion, probable, that if precautions had not been taken, a small band of Brown's comrades might have attempted to carry him off by stratagem. That is all out of the question now, however, for he will disturb no more Virginians, except as his memory may incite to a reputation of his folly.

The newspapers that I have seen at this place make no mention of the fact that, owing to either the stupidity or inexperience of the cavalry escort, they did not fall into position about the gallows for so long a time that the commanding officer, impatient at the delay, and not wishing to keep Brown standing on the trap while the noise about his neck, gave the signal when eight minutes had expired, and the poor man swung off while the troop was passing within a few feet of him. As the trap fell his limbs gave a wailing sound of woe that could be heard at every point on the field. Was this symbolic of the wall of grief that went up at the moment from thousands of friends to the cause of emancipation throughout the land? In the dead stillness of the hour it went to my heart like the wail for the departed that may be heard in some highland glen.

The body once in its coffin and on its way back to the jail, the field was quickly deserted; the cannon limbered up again, rumbled away, and the companies of infantry and troops of cavalry, in solid column, marched away. The body had not left the field before the carpenters began to take the scaffold to pieces, that it might be stored up against the 16th proximo, when it will be used to hang Cook and Coppick together. A separate gallows will be built for the two negroes. In the direction of Harper's Ferry a mysterious light, as of a Roman candle, or a ball of fire shot high up in air, is to be seen every evening at about 7 or 7 1/2 o'clock. As I was coming down the main street to-night, I distinctly saw it, and on watching for about half an hour, noticed it twice more. The officer with

when I was walking, said the authorities could not discover any cause for it, although strict search had been made. There is a prevailing belief that Abolitionists hovering near—and burn the town, in retaliation for the execution of Brown, while others are fearful of every box or parcel coming by railway, lest it contain some hand-grenade, or other infernal machine. The night after the execution has set in dark and stormy. The south wind has brought up a violent storm of rain and sleet, and the prospects are that we shall have to suffer for our last three pleasant days. The poor sentries out in the open fields are having a piteous time of it, and, I have no doubt, think by this time that soldiering in practice is not *couleur de rose* as drill-room muster or street parade.

The up-express train brought, last evening, a package of H. Clay Page's pamphlet on John Brown and matters connected with the battle of Black Jack, which is intended to vindicate his own character for personal bravery. This document, which for mean backguardism and scurrilous language is a model of its kind, deserves a special notice. Mr. Page, with the view of getting Brown and Cook to testify before witnesses in regard to his (Page's) courage, went to visit them in jail, accompanied by two friends and Capt. Avis. He met the prisoners in a most friendly manner, shaking them heartily by the hand, and appearing to commiserate their imprisonment. Under this guise of amity, this flag of truce as it were, he got them to acknowledge that he had shown personal bravery in their several conflicts. His end once secured, he leaves for the North, and publishes a pamphlet, in which he loads them with every opprobrious epithet that his malice can suggest, calling Brown a greater liar than hell ever belied, and Cook a white-livered scoundrel, and other choice appellations. If Mr. H. Clay Page thinks to establish a renown by such cowardly conduct, he is greatly mistaken; for I have heard only Southern men protest against this mean kicking of the dead lion in emphatic terms.

JOHN BROWN'S BODY IN PHILADELPHIA. From The Philadelphia Sunday Telegraph. The body of John Brown was taken through the city yesterday afternoon. It arrived by the Baltimore train, and was met at the depot by a large concourse of people, principally colored. The body came in charge of Mrs. Brown, the widow of the deceased, accompanied by Miller McKim and Messrs. Hector and Tyndall of this city. These gentlemen went to Harper's Ferry, and was met at the depot by a large concourse of people, principally colored. The body came in charge of Mrs. Brown, the widow of the deceased, accompanied by Miller McKim and Messrs. Hector and Tyndall of this city. These gentlemen went to Harper's Ferry, and was met at the depot by a large concourse of people, principally colored. The body came in charge of Mrs. Brown, the widow of the deceased, accompanied by Miller McKim and Messrs. Hector and Tyndall of this city. 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