

1853

A PLEA FOR CAPTAIN JOHN BROWN

by Henry David Thoreau

I TRUST that you will pardon me for being here. I do not wish to my thoughts upon you, but I feel forced myself. Little as I know Captain Brown, I would fain do my part to correct the tone and statements of the newspapers, and of my countrymen generally, his character and actions. It costs us nothing to be. We can at least express our sympathy with, and admiration of, and his companions, and that is what I now propose to do. First, as to his history. I will endeavor to omit, as much as, what you have already read. I need not describe his person, for probably most of you have seen and will not soon forget. I am told that his grandfather, John Brown, was an officer in the; that he himself was born in Connecticut about the of this century, but early went with his father to Ohio. I him say that his father was a contractor who furnished beef to army there, in the War of 1812; that he accompanied him to the, and assisted him in that employment, seeing a good deal of life- more, perhaps, than if he had been a soldier; for he often present at the councils of the officers. Especially, he by experience how armies are supplied and maintained in the work which, he observed, requires at least as much experience skill as to lead them in battle. He said that few persons had conception of the cost, even the pecuniary cost, of firing a bullet in war. He saw enough, at any rate, to disgust him a military life; indeed, to excite in him a great abhorrence of; so much so, that though he was tempted by the offer of some office in the army, when he was about eighteen, he not only that, but he also refused to train when warned, and was fined it. He then resolved that he would never have anything to do any war, unless it were a war for liberty. When the troubles in Kansas began, he sent several of his son to strengthen the party of the Free State men, fitting them with such weapons as he had; telling them that if the troubles increase, and there should be need of him, he would follow, assist them with his hand and counsel. This, as you all know, he after did; and it was through his agency, far more than any's, that Kansas was made free. For a part of his life he was a surveyor, and at one time he was in wool-growing, and he went to Europe as an agent about business. There, as everywhere, he had his eyes about him, and many original observations. He said, for instance, that he saw the soil of England was so rich, and that of Germany (I think it) so poor, and he thought of writing to some of the crowned heads sit. It was because in England the peasantry live on the soil they cultivate, but in Germany they are gathered into villages night. It is a pity that

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he did not make a book of his. I should say that he was an old-fashioned man in his respect for the, and his faith in the permanence of this Union. Slavery deemed to be wholly opposed to these, and he was its determined. He was by descent and birth a New England farmer, a man of great sense, deliberate and practical as that class is, and tenfold so. He was like the best of those who stood at Concord Bridge, on Lexington Common, and on Bunker Hill, only he was firmer higher-principled than any that I have chanced to hear of as. It was no abolition lecturer that converted him. Ethan Allen Stark, with whom he may in some respects be compared, were rangers a lower and less important field. They could bravely face their's foes, but he had the courage to face his country herself she was in the wrong. A Western writer says, to account for his from so many perils, that he was concealed under a "rural"; as if, in that prairie land, a hero should, by good rights, a citizen's dress only. He did not go to the college called Harvard, good old Alma Mater she is. He was not fed on the pap that is there furnished. As he it, "I know no more of grammar than one of your calves." But went to the great university of the West, where he sedulously the study of Liberty, for which he had early betrayed a, and having taken many degrees, he finally commenced the practice of Humanity in Kansas, as you all know. Such were humanities, and not any study of grammar. He would have left accent slanting the wrong way, and righted up a falling man. He was one of that class of whom we hear a great deal, but, for most part, see nothing at all- the Puritans. It would be in vain kill him. He died lately in the time of Cromwell, but he reappeared. Why should he not? Some of the Puritan stock are said to have over and settled in New England. They were a class that did else than celebrate their forefathers' day, and eat corn in remembrance of that time. They were neither nor Republicans, but men of simple habits, straightforward; not thinking much of rulers who did not fear God, not many compromises, nor seeking after available candidates. "In his camp," as one has recently written, and as I have myself him state, "he permitted no profanity; no man of loose morals suffered to remain there, unless, indeed, as a prisoner of war. 'Rather,' said he, 'have the small-pox, yellow fever, and, all together in my camp, than a man without principle.... is a mistake, sir, that our people make, when they think that are the best fighters, or that they are the fit men to these Southerners. Give me men of good principles-fearing men- men who respect themselves, and with a dozen of I will oppose any hundred such men as these Buford ruffians.'" He that if one offered himself to be a soldier under him, who would tell what he could or would do if he could only get sight the enemy, he had but little confidence in him. He was never able to find more than a score or so of recruits whom would accept, and only about a dozen, among them his sons, in he had perfect faith. When he was here, some years ago, he showed a few a little manuscript book- his "orderly book" I think he it- containing the names of his company in Kansas, and the by which they bound themselves; and he stated that several of had already sealed the contract with their blood. When some one that, with the addition of a chaplain, it would have been a Cromwellian troop, he observed that he would have been glad to a chaplain to the list, if he could have found one who could that office worthily. It is easy enough to find one for the States Army. I believe that he had prayers in his camp and evening, nevertheless. He was a man of Spartan habits, and at sixty was scrupulous about diet at your table, excusing himself by saying that he must eat and fare hard, as became a soldier, or one who was fitting for difficult enterprises, a life of exposure. A man of rare common sense and directness of speech, as of action; above all,

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a man of ideas and principles- that was distinguished him. Not yielding to a whim or transient impulse, carrying out the purpose of a life. I noticed that he did not anything, but spoke within bounds. I remember, particularly, in his speech here, he referred to what his family had suffered in Kansas, without ever giving the least vent to his pent-up fire. He was a volcano with an ordinary chimney-flue. Also referring to the deeds of certain Border Ruffians, he said, rapidly paring away his, like an experienced soldier, keeping a reserve of force and, "They had a perfect right to be hung." He was not in the rhetorician, was not talking to Buncombe or his constituents, had no need to invent anything but to tell the simple truth, communicate his own resolution; therefore he appeared incomparably, and eloquence in Congress and elsewhere seemed to me at a. It was like the speeches of Cromwell compared with those of an ordinary king. As for his tact and prudence, I will merely say, that at a time when a man from the Free States was able to reach Kansas by any route, at least without having his arms taken from him, he, with imperfect guns and other weapons he could collect, and slowly drove an ox-cart through Missouri, apparently in the of a surveyor, with his surveying compass exposed in it, so passed unsuspected, and had ample opportunity to learn the of the enemy. For some time after his arrival he still the same profession. When, for instance, he saw a knot of the on the prairie, discussing, of course, the single topic which occupied their minds, he would, perhaps, take his compass and one of his sons, and proceed to run an imaginary line right through the spot on which that conclave had assembled, and when he came up to, he would naturally pause and have some talk with them, their news, and, at last, all their plans perfectly; and thus completed his real survey he would resume his imaginary, and run on his line till he was out of sight. When I expressed surprise that he could live in Kansas at all, a price set upon his head, and so large a number, including the, exasperated against him, he accounted for it by saying, "It is perfectly well understood that I will not be taken." Much of time for some years he has had to skulk in swamps, suffering poverty, and from sickness which was the consequence of exposure, only by Indians and a few whites. But though it might be that he was lurking in a particular swamp, his foes commonly did care to go in after him. He could even come out into a town where there were more Border Ruffians than Free State men, and some business, without delaying long, and yet not be; for, said he, "no little handful of men were willing to it, and a large body could not be got together in season." As for his recent failure, we do not know the facts about it. It was far from being a wild and desperate attempt. His enemy Mr. is compelled to say that "it was among the best planned and executed conspiracies that ever failed." Not to mention his other successes, was it a failure, or did it show want of good management, to deliver from bondage a dozen human, and walk off with them by broad daylight, for weeks if not, at a leisurely pace, through one State after another, for half length of the North, conspicuous to all parties, with a price upon his head, going into a court-room on his way and telling what he had done, thus convincing Missouri that it was not profitable to hold slaves in his neighborhood?- and this, not because the menials were lenient, but because they were afraid of him. Yet he did not attribute his success, foolishly, to "his star," or any magic. He said, truly, that the reason why such great numbers quailed before him was, as one of his prisoners, because they lacked a cause- a kind of armor which he and party never lacked. When the time came, few men were found willing to lay down their lives in defence of what they knew to be wrong; they not like that this should be their last act in this world. But to make haste to his last act, and its effects. The

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newspapers seem to ignore, or perhaps are really ignorant, of the fact that there are at least as many as two or three individuals in a town throughout the North who think much as the present speaker about him and his enterprise. I do not hesitate to say that it is an important and growing party. We aspire to be something more than stupid and timid chattels, pretending to read history and Bibles, but desecrating every house and every day we breathe in. Anxious politicians may prove that only seventeen white men and five negroes were concerned in the late enterprise; but their very attempt to prove this might suggest to themselves that all is not. Why do they still dodge the truth? They are so anxious because of a dim consciousness of the fact, which they did not distinctly, that at least a million of the free inhabitants of the United States would have rejoiced if it had succeeded. They at most only thought of the tactics. Though we wear no crape, the thought of that's position and probable fate is spoiling many a man's day here in the North for other thinking. If any one who has seen him here pursue successfully any other train of thought, I do not know what is made of. If there is any such who gets his usual allowance of, I will warrant him to fatten easily under any circumstances do not touch his body or purse. I put a piece of paper and a under my pillow, and when I could not sleep I wrote in the. On the whole, my respect for my fellow-men, except as one may a million, is not being increased these days. I have the cold-blooded way in which newspaper writers and men speak of this event, as if an ordinary malefactor, though of unusual "pluck"- as the Governor of Virginia is reported to have said, using the language of the cockpit, "the gamest man besaw"- had been caught, and were about to be hung. He was not of his foes when the governor thought he looked so brave. Turns what sweetness I have to gall, to hear, or hear of, the of some of my neighbors. When we heard at first that he was, one of my townsmen observed that "he died as the fool dieth";, pardon me, for an instant suggested a likeness in him dying my neighbor living. Others, craven-hearted, said disparagingly, "he threw his life away," because he resisted the government. Way have they thrown their lives, pray?- such as would praise a man for attacking singly an ordinary band of thieves or murderers. I another ask, Yankee-like, "What will he gain by it?" as if he to fill his pockets by this enterprise. Such a one has no gain but in this worldly sense. If it does not lead to a 'surprise' party, if he does not get a new pair of boots, or a vote of, it must be a failure. "But he won't gain anything by it.", no, I don't suppose he could get four-and-sixpence a day for hung, take the year round; but then he stands a chance to save apart of his soul-and such a soul!- when you do not. No you can get more in your market for a quart of milk than for a of blood, but that is not the market that heroes carry their to. Such do not know that like the seed is the fruit, and that, in the world, when good seed is planted, good fruit is inevitable, does not depend on our watering and cultivating; that when you, or bury, a hero in his field, a crop of heroes is sure to up. This is a seed of such force and vitality, that it does not our leave to germinate. The momentary charge at Balaklava, in obedience to a blundering, proving what a perfect machine the soldier is, has, enough, been celebrated by a poet laureate; but the steady, for the most part successful, charge of this man, for some, against the legions of Slavery, in obedience to an infinitely command, is as much more memorable than that as an and conscientious man is superior to a machine. Do you that that will go unsung? "Served him right"- "A dangerous man"- "He is undoubtedly insane." they proceed to live their sane, and wise, and altogether admirable, reading their Plutarch a little, but chiefly pausing at that of Putnam, who was let down into a wolf's den; and in this wise nourish themselves for brave and patriotic deeds

some time or. The Tract Society could afford to print that story of Putnam. might open the district schools with the reading of it, foris nothing about Slavery or the Church in it; unless it occursthe reader that some pastors are wolves in sheep's clothing. "TheBoard of Commissioners for Foreign Missions," even, mightto protest against that wolf. I have heard of boards, and ofboards, but it chances that I never heard of thislumber till lately. And yet I hear of Northern men, and, and children, by families, buying a "life-membership" in suchas these. A life-membership in the grave! You can get buriedthan that. Our foes are in our midst and all about us. There is hardly abut is divided against itself, for our foe is the all butwoodenness of both head and heart, the want of vitality in, which is the effect of our vice; and hence are begotten fear,, bigotry, persecution, and slavery of all kinds. We arefigure-heads upon a bulk, with livers in the place of hearts. Theis the worship of idols, which at length changes theinto a stone image himself; and the New Englander is justmuch an idolater as the Hindoo. This man was an exception, for henot set up even a political graven image between him and his God. A church that can never have done with excommunicating Christit exists! Away with your broad and flat churches, and yourand tall churches! Take a step forward, and invent a newof out-houses. Invent a salt that will save you, and defendnostrils. The modern Christian is a man who has consented to say all thein the liturgy, provided you will let him go straight to bedsleep quietly afterward. All his prayers begin with "Now I laydown to sleep," and he is forever looking forward to the timehe shall go to his "long rest." He has consented to performold-established charities, too, after a fashion, but he doeswish to hear of any new-fangled ones; he doesn't wish to have supplementary articles added to the contract, to fit it to thetime. He shows the whites of his eyes on the Sabbath, andblacks all the rest of the week. The evil is not merely aof blood, but a stagnation of spirit. Many, no doubt, aredisposed, but sluggish by constitution and by habit, and theyconceive of a man who is actuated by higher motives than they. Accordingly they pronounce this man insane, for they know thatcould never act as he does, as long as they are themselves. We dream of foreign countries, of other times and races of men,them at a distance in history or space; but let someevent like the present occur in our midst, and we, often, this distance and this strangeness between us and ourneighbors. They are our Austrias, and Chinas, and South Sea. Our crowded society becomes well spaced all at once, cleanhandsome to the eye- a city of magnificent distances. Wewhy it was that we never got beyond compliments andwith them before; we become aware of as many versts betweenand them as there are between a wandering Tartar and a Chinese. The thoughtful man becomes a hermit in the thoroughfares ofmarket-place. Impassable seas suddenly find their level between, or dumb steppes stretch themselves out there. It is the differenceconstitution, of intelligence, and faith, and not streams and, that make the true and impassable boundaries betweenand between states. None but the like-minded can cometo our court. I read all the newspapers I could get within a week after this, and I do not remember in them a single expression of sympathythese men. I have since seen one noble statement, in a Boston, not editorial. Some voluminous sheets decided not to printfull report of Brown's words to the exclusion of other matter.was as if a publisher should reject the manuscript of the New, and print Wilson's last speech. The same journal whichthis pregnant news was chiefly filled, in parallel, with the reports of the political conventions that were being. But the descent to them was too steep. They should have beenthis contrast- been printed in an extra, at least.

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To turn from voices and deeds of earnest men to the cackling of political! Office-seekers and speech-makers, who do not so much as an honest egg, but wear their breasts bare upon an egg of chalk! great game is the game of straws, or rather that universal game of the platter, at which the Indians cried hub, bub! the reports of religious and political conventions, and the words of a living man. But I object not so much to what they have omitted as to what they inserted. Even the Liberator called it "a misguided, wild, and insane-effort." As for the herd of newspapers and, I do not chance to know an editor in the country who will print anything which he knows will ultimately and reduce the number of his subscribers. They do not that it would be expedient. How then can they print truth? we do not say pleasant things, they argue, nobody will attend to. And so they do like some travelling auctioneers, who sing a song, in order to draw a crowd around them. Republican, obliged to get their sentences ready for the morning edition, accustomed to look at everything by the twilight of politics, no admiration, nor true sorrow even, but call these men "deluded fanatics" - "mistaken men" - "insane," or "crazed." It suggests a sane set of editors we are blessed with, not "mistaken men"; know very well on which side their bread is buttered, at least. A man does a brave and humane deed, and at once, on all sides, we people and parties declaring, "I didn't do it, nor countenance to do it, in any conceivable way. It can't be fairly inferred from past career." I, for one, am not interested to hear you define your. I don't know that I ever was or ever shall be. I think it is egotism, or impertinent at this time. Ye needn't take so much to wash your skirts of him. No intelligent man will ever bethat he was any creature of yours. He went and came, as he informs us, "under the auspices of John Brown and nobody." The Republican Party does not perceive how many his failure make to vote more correctly than they would have them. They counted the votes of Pennsylvania & Co., but they have not counted Captain Brown's vote. He has taken the wind out of sails- the little wind they had- and they may as well lie to and. What though he did not belong to your clique! Though you may not of his method or his principles, recognize his magnanimity. you not like to claim kindredship with him in that, though in nothing he is like, or likely, to you? Do you think that you would your reputation so? What you lost at the spile, you would gain at bung. If they do not mean all this, then they do not speak the truth, say what they mean. They are simply at their old tricks still. "It was always conceded to him," says one who calls him crazy, "that he was a conscientious man, very modest in his demeanor, inoffensive, until the subject of Slavery was introduced, he would exhibit a feeling of indignation unparalleled." The slave-ship is on her way, crowded with its dying victims; new are being added in mid-ocean; a small crew of slaveholders, by a large body of passengers, is smothering four under the hatches, and yet the politician asserts that the proper way by which deliverance is to be obtained is by "the diffusion of the sentiments of humanity," without any "outbreak." As if the sentiments of humanity were ever found by its deeds, and you could disperse them, all to order, the pure article, as easily as water with a pot, and so lay the dust. What is that that I hear cast? The bodies of the dead that have found deliverance. That is way we are "diffusing" humanity, and its sentiments with it. Prominent and influential editors, accustomed to deal with, men of an infinitely lower grade, say, in their, that he acted "on the principle of revenge." They do not the man. They must enlarge themselves to conceive of him. In no doubt that the time will come when they will begin to see as he was. They have got to conceive of a man of faith and of principle, and not a politician or an Indian; of a

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man who not wait till he was personally interfered with or thwarted in harmless business before he gave his life to the cause of the. If Walker may be considered the representative of the South, I could say that Brown was the representative of the North. He a superior man. He did not value his bodily life in comparison to ideal things. He did not recognize unjust human laws, but them as he was bid. For once we are lifted out of the dust of politics into the region of truth and manhood. A man in America has ever stood up so persistently and effectively for the dignity of human nature, knowing himself for a man, and not for any and all governments. In that sense he was the most of us all. He needed no babbling lawyer, making false issues, defend him. He was more than a match for all the judges that voters, or office-holders of whatever grade, can create. He has not been tried by a jury of his peers, because his peers do not exist. When a man stands up serenely against the vengeance of mankind, rising above them literally a whole body- even though he were of late the vilest murderer, has settled that matter with himself- the spectacle is a sublime. Didn't ye know it, ye Liberators, ye Tribunes, ye Republicans?- we become criminal in comparison. Do yourselves the honor to him. He needs none of your respect. As for the Democratic journals, they are not human enough to me at all. I do not feel indignation at anything they may say. I am aware that I anticipate a little- that he was still, at the accounts, alive in the hands of his foes; but that being the, I have all along found myself thinking and speaking of him as dead. I do not believe in erecting statues to those who still live in hearts, whose bones have not yet crumbled in the earth around, but I would rather see the statue of Captain Brown in the State-House yard than that of any other man whom I know. Rejoice that I live in this age, that I am his contemporary. What a contrast, when we turn to that political party which is so shuffling him and his plot out of its way, and looking for some available slaveholder, perhaps, to be its candidate, least for one who will execute the Fugitive Slave Law, and all other unjust laws which he took up arms to annul! Insane! A father and six sons, and one son-in-law, and several men besides- as many at least as twelve disciples- all struck insane at once; while the same tyrant holds with a firmer gripe over his four millions of slaves, and a thousand sane editors, abettors, are saving their country and their bacon! just as insane his efforts in Kansas. Ask the tyrant who is his most dangerous, the sane man or the insane? Do the thousands who know him best, have rejoiced at his deeds in Kansas, and have afforded him aid there, think him insane? Such a use of this word is at once with most who persist in using it, and I have no doubt that of the rest have already in silence retracted their words. Read his admirable answers to Mason and others. How they are dwarfed and defeated by the contrast! On the one side, half-brutish, timid questioning; on the other, truth, clear as lightning, into their obscene temples. They are made to stand with, and Gessler, and the Inquisition. How ineffectual their speech action! and what a void their silence! They are but helpless tools in this great work. It was no human power that gathered them about preacher. What have Massachusetts and the North sent a few sane to Congress for, of late years?- to declare with what kind of sentiments? All their speeches put together and down- and probably they themselves will confess it- do not for manly directness and force, and for simple truth, the few remarks of crazy John Brown on the floor of the Harper's engine-house- that man whom you are about to hang, to send to other world, though not to represent you there. No, he was not our in any sense. He was too fair a specimen of a man to the like of us. Who, then, were his constituents? If you his words understandingly you will find out. In his

case there is idle eloquence, no made, nor maiden speech, no compliments to the. Truth is his inspirer, and earnestness the polisher of sentences. He could afford to lose his Sharp's rifles, while he his faculty of speech- a Sharp's rifle of infinitely surer longer range. And the New York Herald reports the conversation verbatim! It does know of what undying words it is made the vehicle. I have no respect for the penetration of any man who can read the of that conversation and still call the principal in it insane. has the ring of a saner sanity than an ordinary discipline and of life, than an ordinary organization, secure. Take any of it- "Any questions that I can honorably answer, I will; otherwise. So far as I am myself concerned, I have told everything. I value my word, sir." The few who talk about his spirit, while they really admire his heroism, have no by which to detect a noble man, no amalgam to combine with his gold. They mix their own dross with it. It is a relief to turn from these slanders to the testimony of his truthful, but frightened jailers and hangmen. Governor Wise far more justly and appreciatingly of him than any Northern, or politician, or public personage, that I chance to have from. I know that you can afford to hear him again on this. He says: "They are themselves mistaken who take him to be a.... He is cool, collected, and indomitable, and it is but to him to say that he was humane to his prisoners.... And he with great trust in his integrity as a man of truth. He is fanatic, vain and garrulous" (I leave that part to Mr. Wise), "but, truthful, and intelligent. His men, too, who survive, are like.... Colonel Washington says that he was the coolest and firmest he ever saw in defying danger and death. With one son dead by side, and another shot through, he felt the pulse of his dying son one hand, and held his rifle with the other, and commanded his with the utmost composure, encouraging them to be firm, and to their lives as dear as they could. Of the three white, Brown, Stevens, and Coppoc, it was hard to say which was firm." Almost the first Northern men whom the slaveholder has learned to! The testimony of Mr. Vallandigham, though less valuable, is of the purport, that "it is vain to underrate either the man or his.... He is the farthest possible removed from the ordinary, fanatic, or madman." "All is quiet at Harper's Ferry," say the journals. What is the of that calm which follows when the law and the prevail? I regard this event as a touchstone designed to out, with glaring distinctness, the character of this. We needed to be thus assisted to see it by the light of. It needed to see itself. When a government puts forth its on the side of injustice, as ours to maintain slavery and the liberators of the slave, it reveals itself a merely brute, or worse, a demoniacal force. It is the head of the Ugliers. It is more manifest than ever that tyranny rules. I see government to be effectually allied with France and Austria in mankind. There sits a tyrant holding fettered four millions slaves; here comes their heroic liberator. This most hypocritical diabolical government looks up from its seat on the gasping four, and inquires with an assumption of innocence: "What do you me for? Am I not an honest man? Cease agitation on this, or I will make a slave of you, too, or else hang you." We talk about a representative government; but what a monster of a is that where the noblest faculties of the mind, and the heart, are not represented! A semi-human tiger or ox, stalking the earth, with its heart taken out and the top of its brain shot. Heroes have fought well on their stumps when their legs were off, but I never heard of any good done by such a government as. The only government that I recognize- and it matters not how few are the head of it, or how small its army- is that power that justice in the land, never that which establishes. What shall we think of a government to which all the brave and just men in the land are enemies, standing

betweenand those whom it oppresses? A government that pretends to beand crucifies a million Christs every day! Treason! Where does such treason take its rise? I cannot helpof you as you deserve, ye governments. Can you dry up theof thought? High treason, when it is resistance to tyrannybelow, has its origin in, and is first committed by, the powermakes and forever re-creates man. When you have caught and hungthese human rebels, you have accomplished nothing but your own, for you have not struck at the fountain-head. You presume towith a foe against whom West Point cadets and rifled cannonnot. Can all the art of the cannon-founder tempt matter toagainst its maker? Is the form in which the founder thinks heit more essential than the constitution of it and of himself? The United States have a coffle of four millions of slaves. They areto keep them in this condition; and Massachusetts is one ofconfederated overseers to prevent their escape. Such are not allinhabitants of Massachusetts, but such are they who rule and arehere. It was Massachusetts, as well as Virginia, that putthis insurrection at Harper's Ferry. She sent the marines, and she will have to pay the penalty of her sin. Suppose that there is a society in this State that out of its ownand magnanimity saves all the fugitive slaves that run to us,protects our colored fellow-citizens, and leaves the other work togovernment, so called. Is not that government fast losing its, and becoming contemptible to mankind? If private men areto perform the offices of government, to protect the weakdispense justice, then the government becomes only a hired man, or, to perform menial or indifferent services. Of course, that isthe shadow of a government whose existence necessitates a Vigilant. What should we think of the Oriental Cadi even, behind whomin secret a Vigilant Committee? But such is the character ofNorthern States generally; each has its Vigilant Committee. And,a certain extent, these crazy governments recognize and accept this. They say, virtually, "We'll be glad to work for you on these, only don't make a noise about it." And thus the government, itsbeing insured, withdraws into the back shop, taking thewith it, and bestows most of its labor on repairing that.I hear it at work sometimes, as I go by, it reminds me, at, of those farmers who in winter contrive to turn a penny bythe cooping business. And what kind of spirit is theirmade to hold? They speculate in stocks, and bore holes in, but they are not competent to lay out even a decent. The only free road, the Underground Railroad, is owned andby the Vigilant Committee. They have tunnelled under the wholeof the land. Such a government is losing its power andas surely as water runs out of a leaky vessel, and isby one that can contain it. I hear many condemn these men because they were so few. When weregood and the brave ever in a majority? Would you have had him waitthat time came?- till you and I came over to him? The very facthe had no rabble or troop of hirelings about him would alonehim from ordinary heroes. His company was small indeed,few could be found worthy to pass muster. Each one who theredown his life for the poor and oppressed was a picked man, culledof many thousands, if not millions; apparently a man of principle,rare courage, and devoted humanity; ready to sacrifice his lifeany moment for the benefit of his fellow-man. It may be doubtedthere were as many more their equals in these respects in all theI speak of his followers only- for their leader, no doubt,the land far and wide, seeking to swell his troop. These aloneready to step between the oppressor and the oppressed. Surelywere the very best men you could select to be hung. That wasgreatest compliment which this country could pay them. They werefor her gallows. She has tried a long time, she has hung a good, but never found the right one before. When I think of him, and his six sons, and his son-in-law, not tothe

others, enlisted for this fight, proceeding coolly,, humanely to work, for months if not years, sleeping and upon it, summering and wintering the thought, without expecting reward but a good conscience, while almost all America stood on the other side- I say again that it affects me as a spectacle. If he had had any journal advocating "his cause," organ, as the phrase is, monotonously and wearisomely playing some old tune, and then passing round the hat, it would have been fatal to his efficiency. If he had acted in any way so as to be alone by the government, he might have been suspected. It was a fact that the tyrant must give place to him, or he to the, that distinguished him from all the reformers of the day I know. It was his peculiar doctrine that a man has a perfect right to by force with the slaveholder, in order to rescue the slave. agree with him. They who are continually shocked by slavery have right to be shocked by the violent death of the slaveholder, no others. Such will be more shocked by his life than by his. I shall not be forward to think him mistaken in his method. quickest succeeds to liberate the slave. I speak for the slave I say that I prefer the philanthropy of Captain Brown to that which neither shoots me nor liberates me. At any rate, do not think it is quite sane for one to spend his whole life in or writing about this matter, unless he is continuously, and I have not done so. A man may have other affairs to do. I do not wish to kill nor to be killed, but I can foresee in which both these things would be by me unavoidable. preserve the so-called peace of our community by deeds of petty every day. Look at the policeman's billy and handcuffs! at the jail! Look at the gallows! Look at the chaplain of the! We are hoping only to live safely on the outskirts of this army. So we defend ourselves and our hen-roosts, and slavery. I know that the mass of my countrymen think that the righteous use that can be made of Sharp's rifles and revolvers is fight duels with them, when we are insulted by other nations, or to Indians, or shoot fugitive slaves with them, or the like. I think for once the Sharp's rifles and the revolvers were employed in righteous cause. The tools were in the hands of one who could use. The same indignation that is said to have cleared the temple once clear it again. The question is not about the weapon, but then which you use it. No man has appeared in America, as yet, loved his fellow-man so well, and treated him so tenderly. He for him. He took up his life and he laid it down for him. What of violence is that which is encouraged, not by soldiers, but peaceable citizens, not so much by laymen as by ministers of the, not so much by the fighting sects as by the Quakers, and not much by Quaker men as by Quaker women? This event advertises me that there is such a fact as death- the of a man's dying. It seems as if no man had ever died in before; for in order to die you must first have lived. I don't in the hearses, and palls, and funerals that they have had. was no death in the case, because there had been no life; they rotted or sloughed off, pretty much as they had rotted or along. No temple's veil was rent, only a hole dug. Let the dead bury their dead. The best of them fairly ran like a clock. Franklin- Washington- they were let off without; they were merely missing one day. I hear a good many pretend they are going to die; or that they have died, for aught that I. Nonsense! I'll defy them to do it. They haven't got life in them. They'll deliquesce like fungi, and keep a hundred mopping the spot where they left off. Only half a dozen or have died since the world began. Do you think that you are going to, sir? No! there's no hope of you. You haven't got your lesson yet. 've got to stay after school. We make a needless ado about punishment- taking lives, when there is no life to take. mori! We don't understand that sublime sentence which some got sculptured on his gravestone once. We've interpreted it a grovelling and snivelling sense; we've wholly

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forgotten how to. But be sure you do die nevertheless. Do your work, and finish it. If you know how to begin, you will know when to end. These men, in teaching us how to die, have at the same time taught how to live. If this man's acts and words do not create a, it will be the severest possible satire on the acts and words. It is the best news that America has ever heard. It has quickened the feeble pulse of the North, and infused more generous blood into her veins and heart than any number of what is called commercial and political prosperity could. How a man who was lately contemplating suicide has now something to for! One writer says that Brown's peculiar monomania made him to be "dreaded by the Missourians as a supernatural being." Sure enough, ain the midst of us cowards is always so dreaded. He is just thing. He shows himself superior to nature. He has a spark of fire in him.

"Unless above himself he can

Erect himself, how poor a thing is man!" Newspaper editors argue also that it is a proof of his insanity that thought he was appointed to do this work which he did- that he not suspect himself for a moment! They talk as if it were that a man could be "divinely appointed" in these days to any work whatever; as if vows and religion were out of date as with any man's daily work; as if the agent to abolish could only be somebody appointed by the President, or by political party. They talk as if a man's death were a failure, his continued life, be it of whatever character, were a success. When I reflect to what a cause this man devoted himself, and how, and then reflect to what cause his judges and all who him so angrily and fluently devote themselves, I see that they as far apart as the heavens and earth are asunder. The amount of it is, our "leading men" are a harmless kind of, and they know well enough that they were not divinely appointed, elected by the votes of their party. Who is it whose safety requires that Captain Brown be hung? Is it to any

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Northern man? Is there no resource but to castman also to the Minotaur? If you do not wish it, say so. While these things are being done, beauty stands veiledmusic is a screeching lie. Think of him- of his rare!- such a man as it takes ages to make, and ages to; no mock hero, nor the representative of any party. A manas the sun may not rise upon again in this benighted land. Tomaking went the costliest material, the finest adamant; sentbe the redeemer of those in captivity; and the only use to whichcan put him is to hang him at the end of a rope! You who pretendcare for Christ crucified, consider what you are about to do to himoffered himself to be the saviour of four millions of men. Any man knows when he is justified, and all the wits in the worldenlighten him on that point. The murderer always knows thatis justly punished; but when a government takes the life of a manthe consent of his conscience, it is an audacious, and is taking a step towards its own dissolution. Is itpossible that an individual may be right and a government wrong?laws to be enforced simply because they were made? or declaredany number of men to be good, if they are not good? Is there anyfor a man's being a tool to perform a deed of which hisnature disapproves? Is it the intention of law-makers that goodshall be hung ever? Are judges to interpret the law according toletter, and not the spirit? What right have you to enter into awith yourself that you will do thus or so, against the lightyou? Is it for you to make up your mind- to form any resolutionand not accept the convictions that are forced upon you, andever pass your understanding? I do not believe in lawyers, inmode of attacking or defending a man, because you descend to meetjudge on his own ground, and, in cases of the highest, it is of no consequence whether a man breaks a human lawnot. Let lawyers decide trivial cases. Business men may arrangeamong themselves. If they were the interpreters of thelaws which rightfully bind man, that would be another. A counterfeiting law-factory, standing half in a slave land andin a free! What kind of laws for free men can you expect from? I am here to plead his cause with you. I plead not for his life, buthis character- his immortal life; and so it becomes your cause, and is not his in the least. Some eighteen hundred years agowas crucified; this morning, perchance, Captain Brown was hung.are the two ends of a chain which is not without its links. Henot Old Brown any longer; he is an angel of light. I see now that it was necessary that the bravest and humanest man inthe country should be hung. Perhaps he saw it himself. I almostthat I may yet hear of his deliverance, doubting if a prolonged, if any life, can do as much good as his death. "Misguided!" "Garrulous!" "Insane!" "Vindictive!" So ye write ineasy-chairs, and thus he wounded responds from the floor of the, clear as a cloudless sky, true as the voice of nature is:"No man sent me here; it was my own prompting and that of my Maker.acknowledge no master in human form." And in what a sweet and noble strain he proceeds, addressing his, who stand over him: "I think, my friends, you are guilty of awrong against God and humanity, and it would be perfectlyfor any one to interfere with you, so far as to free those youand wickedly hold in bondage." And, referring to his movement: "It is, in my opinion, theservice a man can render to God." "I pity the poor in bondage that have none to help them; that is whyam here; not to gratify any personal animosity, revenge, orspirit. It is my sympathy with the oppressed and the, that are as good as you, and as precious in the sight of." You don't know your testament when you see it. "I want you to understand that I respect the rights of the poorestweakest of colored people, oppressed by the slave power, just asas I do those of the most wealthy and powerful." "I wish to say, furthermore, that you had better, all you peoplethe South,

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prepare yourselves for a settlement of that question, must come up for settlement sooner than you are prepared for. The sooner you are prepared the better. You may dispose of me very. I am nearly disposed of now; but this question is still to be settled- this negro question, I mean; the end of that is not yet." I foresee the time when the painter will paint that scene, no longer to Rome for a subject; the poet will sing it; the historian; and, with the Landing of the Pilgrims and the Declaration of Independence, it will be the ornament of some future national, when at least the present form of slavery shall be no more. We shall then be at liberty to weep for Captain Brown. Then, and till then, we will take our revenge.

THE END