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JOHN BROWN'S RAID

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Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen:—

I am going to talk this evening about William Hazlett, otherwise called Harrison, who was supposed to be one of John Brown's men. Before coming to Hazlett, I desire to say a few words about slavery and John Brown, one of whose men Hazlett was supposed to be.

I find that African slavery was introduced by the Dutch in 1620. In 1803 Louisiana Territory was purchased by the United States from France. It was as large as the 13 original states, and out of it have been made 13 states. Then, in 1821, after a long and bitter struggle between the pro slavery and anti slavery men, Missouri became a slave state, with the proviso that all the remainder of the Louisiana Purchase should be free. Kansas occupying the geographical center of the United States, was part of the Louisiana Purchase. In 1858 Buchanan recommended Congress to admit it as a slave state, (in violation of the Missouri Compromise,) under a Constitution framed at LeCompton, Kansas, by pro-slavery, men chiefly from Missouri, when, it was said, wanting names for voters to carry the Constitution, they voted a whole New York Directory. This action was followed by years of violence and bloodshed in Kansas between the pro slavery party and the Free Soil party, drawn from all parts of the north, but chiefly from New England. The Free Soil party finally triumph-

ed, and a Constitution prohibiting slavery was adopted.

Chief among those who battled for the freedom of Kansas was John Brown, born at Torrington, Conn., May 9th, 1800; he was educated for the ministry, but his eye sight failing him, he went to Ohio, in 1840, to New York, in 1849, and afterwards he went back to Ohio, where he worked at farming and other things. In 1855, with his four sons, he emigrated to Kansas, taking a prominent part, as an anti-slavery man in the fierce border war carried on there, and gained celebrity by his victory over the pro-slavery men, in the decisive battle of Ossawatimie.

On the 16th day of October, 1859, John Brown with 22 other well armed and resolute men seized the arsenal at Harpers Ferry, with the intention of liberating the slaves of Virginia, whom he expected to rise and join him. In this he was disappointed. He and his men were soon overpowered, and most of them captured by the State and National troops.

John Brown was no stranger at Harpers Ferry. He with his two sons had appeared there more than a year before the raid; then assuming the name of William Smith. He inquired about land in the vicinity, and made investigation about the probability of finding ores, and for some time boarded at Sandy Point, a mile east of the Ferry. After an absence of some months, they reappeared in the vicinity, and the elder Brown rented a farm on the Maryland side about four miles from the Ferry. They bought a large number of picks and shovels, and this confirmed the belief that they intended to search for ores.

On the 2nd day of December, 1859, Brown, with others, was hanged at Charlestown, West Virginia. A few of his

men had escaped, amongst them, Cook, his second in command, and as was believed the man William Hazlett, the chief subject of this talk.

On Sunday morning in October, 1859, I was coming up town, from where I then lived on South Hanover street; in coming around the corner, I passed the place where Squire Sponsler had his office, whom you elderly men remember well. I was attracted by a large crowd there. I crossed over to learn what it all meant. I went into the office, and there sat a tall raw-boned man and with him were Charlie Campbell and Bill Houser, of Chambersburg. I asked what was the matter, what they were doing. Houser said, "here is Cook, one of John Brown's men. He was in Chambersburg and slipped out, and came down here, and we followed him and arrested him up the railroad." I asked, "which is Cook?" They said, "that man back there." I said, "no, that cannot be Cook; I have never seen Cook, but he is described as being an effeminate looking man, with light hair and blue eyes. This is no such man, this tall raw-boned man with hard hands, which show him to be a laborer; this is not Cook." "Well," said Houser, "we don't care who he is; we are satisfied that he is one of John Brown's men." I said, "what are you doing with him here?" He said, "Squire Sponsler is writing us authority to take him down to Virginia." And I turned to the man and said to him, "do you know any lawyer here in Carlisle?" and he said, "no." He asked me, "are you a lawyer?" I said, "yes." "Well, will you see that I have justice done me?" "I will." And then I said to Squire Sponsler, "what are you writing there?" He said, "I am writing a committment." "Why, you have no right to do that; you cannot send a citizen of the

State of Pennsylvania down to Virginia to be hanged. You have no right to do it. Well, he thought he had, and Houser and Campbell thought he had, but I insisted that he had not; whereupon he sent for Mr. Penrose, his lawyer. They called me into the back room and Penrose asked what was the matter. "Why, those Chambersburg men have a man here alleged to be one of John Brown's men, and the Squire is writing, he tells me, authority for them to take him to Virginia, and I have told him he cannot do that." Then Penrose said to him, "no Squire, you cannot send a citizen out of the state of Pennsylvania." Houser said it didn't make any difference whether he gave them the authority or not, "we brought him here," he said, "and we will take him away." I said, "I don't believe you will." In the meantime I had sent for Sheriff McCartney, to come up with his deputy, and when they came up I went out and told them to stand against the wall to the right of Squire Sponsler's door. I then went into the office; they were preparing to take that man away. I said to Houser, "if you take this man out of this office against his will, you will be put to jail for kidnapping." He said, "I guess not." "That is what will be done," I said, "I have the sheriff out there for that purpose." He looked out of the door and he saw sheriff McCartney whom he knew, he asked him what he was doing there, and sheriff McCartney says, "we are waiting for you and Campbell." I had told McCartney that if they took that man out to arrest them and put them to jail, and I would make information against them for kidnapping. Mr. McCartney says "if you will promise to stand by me, I will do it," and I said, "I will stand by you." They didn't take him

away, but of course Squire Sponsler had the right to put him to jail, which he did. Mr. Sharp and Mr. Miller were concerned with me, and we had a Habeas Corpus proceeding. I presented a petition for habeas corpus; it was heard on the afternoon of October——. Judge Watts at the hearing presented a warrant from the Governor of Pennsylvania, issued upon the requisition of the Governor of Virginia, for the delivery of a fugitive named Albert Hazlett, but as there was no positive evidence of the identity of the prisoner, he was remanded to the custody of the sheriff until Saturday afternoon, to afford time to procure witnesses from Harpers Ferry.

On Saturday, October 29th, the prisoner was brought up for a second hearing, when Messrs. Shearer, Sharp and Miller (quoting from the record) appeared for the prisoner and claimed his discharge on the ground that his name was not Albert Hazlett, but Wm. Harrison. After hearing the evidence the prisoner was discharged on the commitment issued by Justice Sponsler, but upon the evidence adduced at the hearing, the prisoner was committed for a re-hearing with notice that the case could not be heard until after the November term.

Among the witnesses from Harpers Ferry were Mr. Copeland and Mr. Collis, and although both these men swore to the identity of the prisoner at the bar, they had failed to recognise him previously when visiting the jail for that purpose.

Then my efforts to prevent him being sent abroad.

A party came up from Virginia to take him down with them. Sheriff McCartney sent me word one morning, that two or three men from Virginia were there to

take this man Hazlett or Harrison back to Virginia. I said to him, "have they seen the man yet?" "No, they are over there at the hotel smoking their after-breakfast cigars, and then they are coming over." "Well," I said to him, "you are the sheriff. It is your business to keep the prisoner, and not to deliver him to anyone, unless they identify him; but I am this man's counsel and I warn you not to spot him, you have no right to pick him out for them. If they want him they ought to know him." "All right," said the sheriff, "I will not pick him out." I asked, "how many men have you here in jail?" He said, "about 100." "Turn them all loose here in the corridor, and let them pick him out." After they had finished their cigars, they came over and said, "now, sheriff, we have come for Hazlett." "Very well," said he. "Where is he?" McCartney said, "in there." "Where, which is he?" "Oh, I have been warned by his counsel that I must not spot him for you. He says you ought to know the man. Look in there, he is there," and they looked in. They said, "we do not know him." Then they left. Within a short time afterwards another party came up, and sheriff McCartney sent me word that another party was there who professed to be able to identify him. I said to him, "how many men have you in prison now?" He said, "I have only six or eight." "Well," I asked, "do you know any man in Carlisle who looks like this man Hazlett?" "Yes, I know of a man that looks exactly like him." "Well, get that man to come to jail, let him be put in the same cell with Hazlett, let them exchange clothes, and when the man comes here let Hazlett look him squarely in the eye, and when he looks at the other man let him throw down his head." And they did that, and the man as

soon, as he saw him throw his head down said, "Sheriff, that is my man." And sheriff McCartney said, "why that man was born and reared in Carlisle, and has never been out of Carlisle; and they didn't get him. And then I suppose a week passed before another detachment came for him. Mr. McCartney says, "come down to the jail; there is a man here who professes to know him," and I went into the jail with this man from Harpers Ferry, and as soon as he saw him he said, "yes, that is Hazlett," I saw him at Harpers Ferry; I saw him shoot a Captain Washington, on the railroad bridge." Well that settled it.

Mr. Miller went down with me the last night to spend a short time with him before he would be taken to Virginia, and we sat and talked with him until 10 o'clock in the jail. He was with John Brown in Kansas, and he told us about the fight there, and he told us especially about the great battle of Ossawatimie. He said the free statesmen were along the road that led along a ridge in Kansas, and the Missourians, as they called them then, had a large body of men and they were following these John Brown men, and when they got within a mile or so of each other John Brown's men went off the hill on which the road ran, and went down into the long grass, as tall as rye, down along the road, and you know that a man in the rye can see you but you can't see him. So when the Missourians came along this rise these John Brown men just picked them off like flies. That was the great battle of Ossawatimie, which had more to do with, if it was not the final thing, that gained the freedom of Kansas. Mr. Miller, as you all know, was a rather phlegmatic man. He was not excitable, he was a man with no

imagination, but I never saw anybody so carried away by the simple tale of this man Hazlett, as Mr. Miller was. After telling us about the battle of Ossawatimie, Mr. Miller said to me "Oh, that the angels would come down and take this man away." When we left him, he said to me, Mr. Shearer, I wish you would tell the sheriff that I would like to have a plug of tobacco. Now it is remarkable on what small matters one's life may depend. Asking for that plug of tobacco cost that man his life. As I passed out of the jail with Mr. Miller, I said to Sheriff McCartney, Mr. Hazlett said I should ask you to give him a plug of tobacco. Well, why he did it I don't know, but he went back and examined this man's cell, and found the whole back of the cell out. A blanket was hung against it, out of which he could walk when ever he wanted to do so, and Mark Scott, of Carlisle, a colored barber whom you elderly gentlemen knew, was sent here by Redpath, of Kansas notoriety, with a horse and buggy, and a rope ladder to help him over the wall and take him away, but McCartney went and examined his cell and finding it open in that way he put him in another cell, and that cost him his life. Why sheriff McCartney did that I could never understand. The only way that I can account for it is, that Mr. McCartney thought Hazlett had not asked for tobacco, and that I only asked him this to warn him not to let this man escape, as if I, his counsel, had to do anything of the kind. I know that he wanted him to escape, that is why I could never fully understand why he went and took him out of that cell. The reason I know he wanted him to escape is, that one day, the time of the hearing of the habeas corpus, it was late at night. I was

down at the jail the next morning and McCartney said to me, Mr. Shearer, that client of yours is the most stupid man I ever saw in my life. He says you know when I was sent down with him it was very dark, as dark as midnight under those trees in front of Judge Hepburn's and if he had just given me a little push I would have fallen over in the gutter and hollowed murder, and he could have been out in the North Mountains in a short time. So I knew that Sheriff McCartney was not taken by surprise. I am satisfied that he knew all the time that the man was getting out, and that he wanted him to go, but my asking for the tobacco excited his suspicions, and that he gave as a reason for changing his place. Mark Scott didn't get him; he was taken to Virginia; and the next thing was to get counsel for him. Redpath, whose letter I have, wanted to get Chilton, an eminent lawyer, but he wanted a thousand dollars and they couldn't raise a thousand dollars. I didn't know to whom to turn. They exhausted their efforts trying to get some men from the North. I doubted the propriety of getting northern men, and when they failed to get a northern man I employed Botts & Green, eminent lawyers of Virginia, to defend him. One of them was mayor of Charlestown. The friends of Mr. Hazlett were very much put out with my employing two Rebel lawyers, and said they won't try to have him acquitted. I said always depend upon a lawyer, who ever else may desert you and prove false to you, a lawyer will not. (You know that Mr. Miller.) Well, I got Botts and Green and they made a noble defense. I furnished them with a little testimony that was of assistance to them. When this man was captured he had one of

Sharp's rifles such as used at Harper's Ferry, and it had never been fired off. These rifles were so nicely burnished that if they were discharged once the discoloring made by the powder could never be removed unless it went through the makers hands again, and I called attention to the fact that this man's gun had never been fired. They made a grand, a noble defense for him, and the jury was out all night and they wrote me that they had confidently expected an acquittal or a disagreement of the jury, but that they were hounded into convicting him. When they were out until midnight citizens gathered below and howled "Hang him or we will hang you." In that way they succeeded in extorting the verdict of guilty from them. Hazlett was convicted and sentenced to be hanged, and he wrote me a number of letters thanking me for what I had done and tried to do for him, and telling me how zealously and faithfully Botts and Green had defended him. He said I had been more than a brother to him and he would never forget me until his dying day, which was not very far ahead. I had written him asking as a favor, that now as my profession had failed to save him, he had better turn to the ministers and have them prepare him for the death that he was to die. He replied thanking me for my advice, but telling me that they were Spiritualists. John Brown was not the brains of that gathering, it was that Englishman, Stevens. He said he would like to oblige me but he couldn't, and he signed himself in the conclusion of the letter, Your friend through endless eternity, William L. Harrison. That is the name by which he went.

Now, John Brown need not have been captured. Cook had warned him to leave

when he heard that the Marines were coming, but he would not leave. The people down there were terribly frightened. Bradley T. Johnson, whom you remember as one the generals of the Southern Army was here in Carlisle when they came up to prosecute McCartney for catching Meyers over beyond the Maryland line, at Westminster.

A man in Virginia, or Maryland, had manumitted his slaves, whereupon they came north, some to this county, but his son and son in-law managed to bankrupt his estate, and the result was an order of sale was obtained for the sale of these slaves to pay the debts, as by their law a man could not manumit his slaves without paying his debts. They got a man named Meyers, who lived at Westminster, to come over here and get these slaves. He came over and got, I believe, three. Well then the next thing was to catch Meyers, and how to do that? Mr. McCartney devised the plan. This man Meyers, it seems, lived just over the Maryland line at Westminster, and the stage went from Carlisle to Baltimore daily and Sheriff McCartney took passage in that stage one day with his deputy. They went on beyond where this man Meyers lived, to the next stopping place, there they waited until the stage came back, or another one came, and took passage in the same. This man Meyers was accustomed to get his mail from the stage driver who went by his house. Mr. McCartney instructed the stage driver when he came opposite his house, to hold up his mail, to show him that he had it, but not to stop his horses until they got into Pennsylvania. He did so, and while Meyers was on one side getting his mail, McCartney and his deputy came around the other side and captured

him, and brought him to Carlisle, after which he was tried for kidnapping.

Then this man Johnson came up to help try McCartney. But I was going to tell about Johnson. He was one of the heroes of Harper's Ferry, and while here told us many interesting things. He said they were told 5000 Abolitionists had taken Harper's Ferry, and they were called on to turn out; their company was not very well armed he said, some had flint locks, some had cap locks and some had no locks on at all, but they marched towards Harper's Ferry. Before they had gone very far the captain called a halt; he got up on a stump along the way side, and commenced haranguing them something like this, "My fellow citizens of the South, the day has at last come, so anxiously desired by every true southern heart, when you can meet these northern abolitionists face to face." Then he waited to be cheered, but they didn't cheer, no cheering at all; then they marched on silently until they got near Harper's Ferry to a rock over-hanging the road, on which they had learned Cook was stationed, and had been shooting at people. Johnson said when he came opposite the rock he looked up at it to see if there was anybody there to shoot, and he was very much surprised to find that everybody else was looking up too. Then they came to the bridge. They knew of course that these five thousand Abolitionists were waiting for them there, and that that would be the last of them. He said as they stepped onto the bridge every man drew a long breath, and marched over in silence, and as they emerged from the other end, each man gave expression to his relief by going—Oh.