

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,—To-day, a solemn question has been asked this nation. The Pilate of Providence has asked America—‘Whom will you that I deliver unto you—the Barabbas of Slavery, or the John Brown of Freedom?’ And, intimidated by the false majesty of despotic enactments, which have usurped the place of Christianity, corrupted by a false policy, and stung to phrenzy by the insinuations of our political high priests, we have cried out, as a nation—‘Release unto us the Barabbas of slavery, and destroy John Brown.’ And, true to this horrible, this atrocious request, John Brown has been offered up. Thank God, he said, ‘I am ready to be offered up’!

Men say that his life was ‘a failure.’ I remember the story of one of the world’s moral heroes, whose life was just such a ‘failure.’ I remember one who, having retired to the deserts of Judea, to wring from the hard, stony life of those deserts the qualifications of a moral hero, by living an ascetic life, had subjugated the lower desires of his nature, and who, with all those qualifications, and with all this purity, was brought into a corrupt and voluptuous court. I remember, too, that in that court, notwithstanding he was its favorite, notwithstanding the corruption and luxury of the times, he preserved himself the same stern man, and said to the King—‘It is not lawful for you to live with your brother Philip’s wife.’ These were the stern words of John the Baptist, and it seems to me that a beautiful parallel may be drawn between these two men—John the Baptist and John Brown—for John Brown, like John the Baptist, retired into the hard and stony desert of Kansas,

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and there, by the weapons of heroism, by the principles of freedom, and the undaunted courage of a man, wrung from that bloody soil the highest encomiums of Freedom, and the most base acknowledgments of slavery, that the one was right and the other wrong. (Applause.) I know that John Brown, in thus rebuking our public sin, in thus facing the monarch[,] has had to bear just what John the Baptist bore. His head to-day, by Virginia,—that guilty maid of a more guilty mother, the American Government, (cheers, mingled with a few hisses, which were at once drowned in an outburst of vehement applause)—has been cut off, and it has been presented to the ferocious and insatiable hunger, the terrible and inhuman appetite, of this corrupt government. To-day, by the telegraph, we have received the intelligence that John Brown has forfeited his life—all this honesty, all this straight-forwardness, all this self-sacrifice, which has been manifested in Harper's Ferry.

My friends, his life was just such a 'failure' as all great movements have been. The physical failure has been the death of the seed, externally, which has given life to the germ, which has sprung forth to spread its moral boughs all over this corrupt nation. (Applause.) I have not the slightest doubt that this will be the result. His life was a 'failure,' but it was such a failure, (and I care not though the *Boston Courier* take offence at the comparison as irreverent,) and History will place it in the same category with the failure of the Cross, where Jesus died, and moral life came forth to the world. (Applause.) John Brown has died, but the life of Freedom, from his death, shall flow forth to this nation.

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I know that there is some quibbling, some querulousness, some fear, in reference to an out-and-out endorsement of his course. Men of peace principles object to it, in consequence of their religious conviction; politicians in the North object to it, because they are afraid that it will injure their party; pro-slavery men in the South object to it, because it has touched their dearest idol; but I am prepared, my friends, (and, permit me to say, this is not the language of rage,) I am prepared, in the light of all human history, to approve of the *means*; in the light of all Christian principle, to approve of the *end*. (Applause.) I say this is not the language of rage, because I remember that our Fourth-of-July orators sanction the same thing; because I remember that Concord, and Bunker Hill, and every historic battlefield in this country, and the celebration of those events, all go to approve the means that John Brown has used; the only difference being, that in our battles, in America, means have been used for *white* men, and that John Brown has used his means for *black* men. (Applause.) And I say, that so far as principle is concerned, so far as the sanctions of the Gospel are concerned, I am prepared to endorse his *end*; and I endorse it because God Almighty has told us that we should feel with them that are in bonds as being bound with them. I endorse his end, because every single instinct of our nature rises and tells us that it is right. I find an endorsement of John Brown's course in the large assembly gathered here this evening; I find an endorsement of the principles that governed him in going to Virginia, in the presence of the men and wo-

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men who have come here to listen to his eulogy, and sympathize with his suffering family. I know that all have not come for that purpose, but I know there are seven thousand still in Israel who have not bowed the knee to the political Baal. (Loud applause.)

Now, I bring this question down to the simple test of the Gospel; and, agreeing with those men who say the sword should not be used, agreeing with them in that principle, and recognizing its binding obligation upon us all, yet I believe in that homoeopathic principle which operates by mercury when mercury is in the system, and that that which is supported by the sword should be overthrown by the sword. I look at this question as a peace man. I say, in accordance with the principles of peace, that I do not believe the sword should be unsheathed, I do not believe the dagger should be drawn, until there is in the system to be assailed such terrible evidences of its corruption, that it becomes the *dernier resort*. And, my friends, we are not to blame the application of the instrument, we are to blame the disease itself. When a physician cuts out a cancer from my face, I am not to blame the physician for the use of the knife; but the impure blood, the obstructed veins, the disordered system, that have caused the cancer, and rendered the use of the instrument necessary. The physician has but chosen the least of two evils. So John Brown chose the least of two evils. To save the country, he went down to cut off the Virginia cancer. (Applause.)

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critic, this was one of the faults of his plan. In not shedding blood, he left the slaves uncertain how to act; so that the North has said that the negroes there are cowards. They are not cowards, but great diplomats. When they saw their masters in the possession of John Brown, in bonds like themselves, they would have been perfect fools had they demonstrated any willingness to join him. They have got sense enough to know, that until there is a perfect demonstration that the white man is their friend—a demonstration bathed in blood—it is all foolishness to co-operate with them. They have learned this much from the treachery of white men at the North, and the cruelty of the white men at the South, that they cannot trust the white man, even when he comes to deliver them. So it was not their cowardice, nor their craven selfishness, but it was their caution, that prevented them from joining Brown. I say this because I think it is necessary to vindicate the character of the negro for courage. I know very well that in this country, the white people have said that the negroes will not fight; but I know also, that when the country's honor has been at stake, and the dire prejudice that excludes the colored man from all positions of honor, and all opportunities for advancement, has not interfered to exclude him from the military, he was gone with the army, and there displayed as much courage as his white brother.

To some extent, I sympathize with the suggestions of the *Boston Journal*, that we should consider the state of excitement among the people of Virginia; for I know what that state of excitement is. I know that if a rat should happen to strike his tail against the

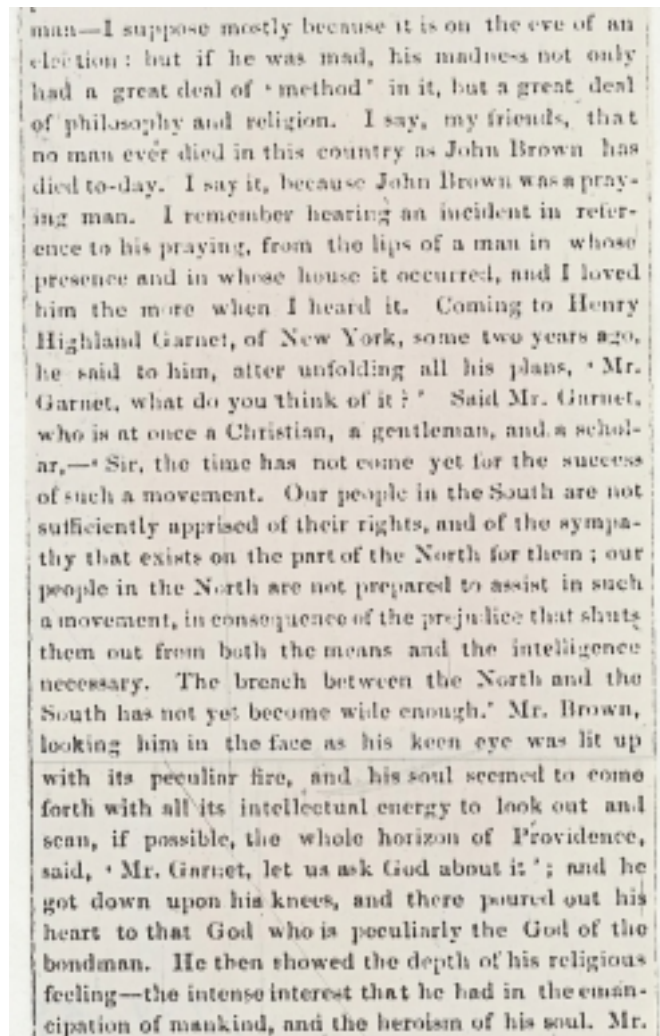
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lathes, they would be all up, looking through the house—taking good care always to make a negro go before. (Laughter.) I am ready to say, if he has violated the law, if he has taken an improper course, if he has been the traitor that the South brands him as having been, and the madman that the North says he has been, John Brown is not to be blamed. I say that the system which violates the sacredness of conjugal love, the system that robs the cradle of its innocent treasure—the system that goes into the temple of manhood, and writes upon the altar its hellish hieroglyphics of slavery—the system that takes away every God-given right, and tramples religion under foot,—I say that that system is responsible for every single crime committed within the borders where it exists. (Applause.) It is the system, my friends. I hold that that is a false logic which talks about *good* slaveholders. I hold that it is folly on the part of the slaveholder himself when he attempts to keep his slaves by mild means. The more a man learns, the more kindly he is treated, the more he aspires for liberty, the more restive he becomes under the yoke.—Hence it is not an accident, but a necessity of the system of slavery, that it should be cruel; and all its devilish instrumentality, and enginery, and paraphernalia must be cruel also. It is folly for us to talk about the slaveholders being kind. Cruelty is part and parcel of the system. If slavery is right at all, then all its terrors and horrors,—the whip, the manacle, the thumb-screw, the paddle, the stake, the gibbet—are right also; if it is not right, then all these are wrong. The people of the North have said John Brown was a mad-

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man—I suppose mostly because it is on the eve of an election: but if he was mad, his madness not only had a great deal of ‘method’ in it, but a great deal of philosophy and religion. I say, my friends, that no man ever died in this country as John Brown has died to-day. I say it, because John Brown was a praying man. I remember hearing an incident in reference to his praying, from the lips of a man in whose presence and in whose house it occurred, and I loved him the more when I heard it. Coming to Henry Highland Garnet, of New York, some two years ago, he said to him, after unfolding all his plans, ‘Mr. Garnet, what do you think of it?’ Said Mr. Garnet, who is at once a Christian, a gentleman, and a scholar,—‘Sir, the time has not come yet for the success of such a movement. Our people in the South are not sufficiently apprised of their rights, and of the sympathy that exists on the part of the North for them; our people in the North are not prepared to assist in such a movement, in consequence of the prejudice that shuts them out from both the means and the intelligence necessary. The breach between the North and the South has not yet become wide enough.’ Mr. Brown, looking him in the face as his keen eye was lit up with its peculiar fire, and his soul seemed to come forth with all its intellectual energy to look out and scan, if possible, the whole horizon of Providence, said, ‘Mr. Garnet, let us ask God about it’; and he got down upon his knees, and there poured out his heart to that God who is peculiarly the God of the bondman. He then showed the depth of his religious feeling—the intense interest that he had in the emancipation of mankind, and the heroism of his soul. Mr.



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Garnet says that never in his life has he been so moved by a prayer as he was by that prayer of John Brown's. When such a man as this dies as he has died to-day, with the prayers of five millions of people going up to Heaven in his behalf—for I know that at least that number of Christians have prayed for him—when such a man dies, I am sure that his death under such circumstances affords us a great, an almost demonstrable evidence of the success of the movement that he has inaugurated, and of the final accomplishment of the great object of his soul. (Applause.) I say that no man has ever died in this country as John Brown has died. While his soul has gone up to God, and his body has been taken down a lifeless corpse, thank God! all over the country, meetings are being held to-night to give expression to that great feeling of sympathy which is to swell the great tornado.— Let Virginia thank herself for it! In her guilty planting she has sown the wind; let her thank herself if in her terrible harvest she reaps the whirlwind of destruction. (Applause.)

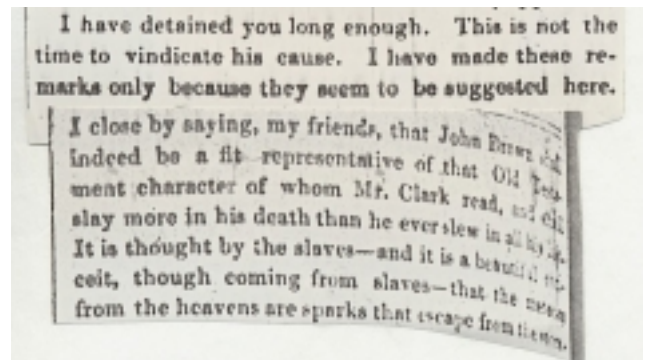
Go down to Virginia, and see that firm old man as he comes out from his prison, leaning upon the arm of the sheriff, and with his head erect, ascends the dreadful steps of the gibbet. We see him as he goes his way to the top, and every step he takes seems to be inspired with that feeling which the poet Longfellow describes as animating the heart of the young man climbing to the top of the mountain—'*Excelsior!*'—until planting himself on the top, he is ready for his martyrdom. Though his body falls, the spirit of slavery and despotism falls with it, while John Brown goes up to heaven. Thank God! thank God! (Applause.)

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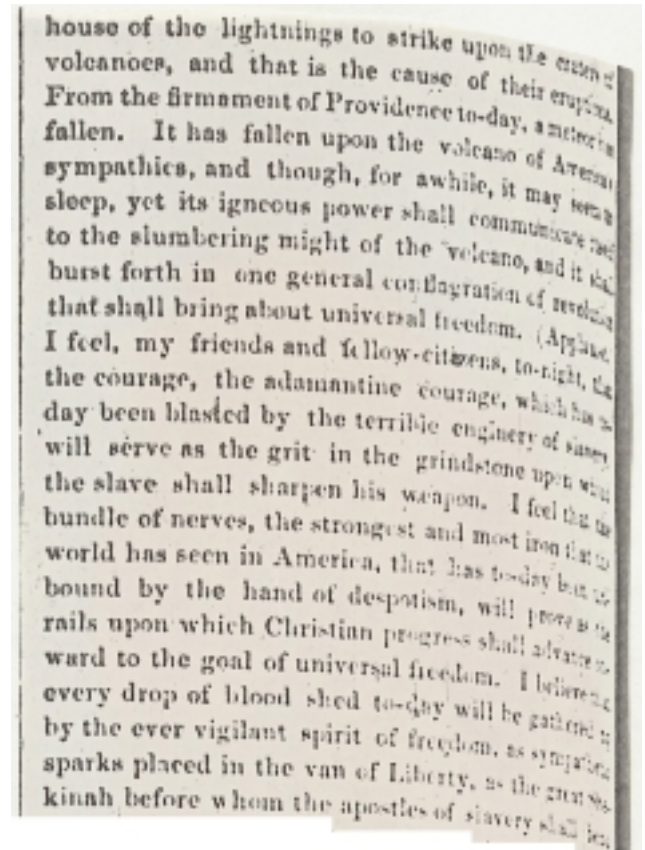
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I have detained you long enough. This is not the time to vindicate his cause. I have made these remarks only because they seem to be suggested here. I close by saying, my friends, that John Brown [shall] indeed be a fit representative of that Old [Testament] character of whom Mr. Clark read, and [shall] slay more in his death than he ever slew in all his life. It is thought by the slaves—and it is a beautiful [con]ceit, though coming from slaves—that the [mean] from the heavens are sparks that escape from the [...] house of the lightnings to strike upon the craters of volcanoes, and that is the cause of their eruption[s]. From the firmament of Providence to-day, a meteor has fallen. It has fallen upon the volcano of America[n] sympathics, and though, for awhile, it may seem to sleep, yet its igneous power shall communicate [...] to the slumbering might of the volcano, and it [shall] burst forth in one general conflagration of revol[...] that shall bring about universal freedom. (Applause.) I feel, my friends and fellow-citizens, to-night, [that] the courage, the adamantine courage, which has [to-day] been blasted by the terrible enginery of slavery will serve as the grit in the grindstone upon [which] the slave shall sharpen his weapon. I feel that [the] bundle of nerves, the strongest and most iron that [the] world has seen in America, that has to-day been [un]bound by the hand of despotism, will prove [as the] rails upon which Christian progress shall advance [on]ward to the goal of universal freedom. I believe [that] every drop of blood shed to-day will be gathered [up] by the ever vigilant spirit of freedom, as [sympathy] sparks placed in the van of Liberty, as the great [Shekinah] before whom the apostles of slavery shall [bend]



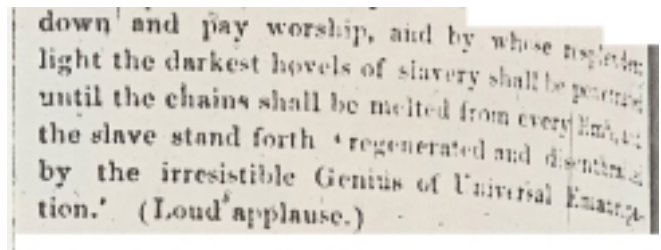
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