Engd by J.C.Buttre
Farewell God bless you
Your Friend
John Brown

THE

# PUBLIC LIFE

OF

# CAPT. JOHN BROWN,

BY

## JAMES REDPATH,

WITH AN

## AUTO-BIOGRAPHY

OF HIS

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH.

BOSTON:
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JAMES REDPATH,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the District of Massachusetts.

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# DEDICATION.

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TO

## WENDELL PHILLIPS, RALPH WALDO EMERSON, AND HENRY D. THOREAU,

**DEFENDERS OF THE FAITHFUL,**

WHO, WHEN THE MOB SHOUTED, "MADMAN!" SAID, "SAINT!"

I HUMBLY AND GRATEFULLY

Dedicate this Work.

JAMES REDPATH.

"The Saint, whose fate yet hangs in suspense, but whose martyrdom, if it shall be perfected, will make the gallows glorious like the Cross." — *Ralph Waldo Emerson.*

"He was one who recognized no unjust human laws, but resisted them as he was bid. No man in America has ever stood up so persistently for the dignity of human nature, knowing himself for man, and the equal of any and all governments. He could not have been tried by his peers, for his peers did not exist." — *Henry D. Thoreau.*

"God makes him the text, and all he asks of our comparatively cowardly lips is to preach the sermon, and say to the American people that, whether that old man succeeded in a worldly sense or not, he stood a representative of law, of government, of right, of justice, of religion, and they were pirates that gathered about him, and sought to wreak vengeance by taking his life. The banks of the Potomac, doubly dear now to History and to Man! The dust of Washington rests there; and History will see forever on that river side the brave old man on his pallet, whose dust, when God calls him hence, the Father of his Country would be proud to make room for beside his own." — *Wendell Phillips.*

# Publishers' Card.

In presenting this work, the publishers deem it proper to congratulate themselves and the public on having secured as the biographer of Captain John Brown, a gentleman so well qualified, both by personal knowledge and literary ability, for the task, and whose previous life has been so identified in feeling and character with the career of the sainted hero, as to enable him to do that justice to his motives and acts which a less friendly pen would fail to render.

They would also call the attention of the public to the fact that a large percentage on each copy sold is secured by contract to the family of Captain John Brown, and every purchaser thereby becomes a contributor to a charitable object, which appeals to all freemen with a force that is irresistible.

The publishers would remind the public, and especially the press, that the work is copyrighted, and any reprinting of the *Autobiography*, or the chapter entitled "The Father of the Man," will be prosecuted as an infringement, as it is the desire of the friends who contribute

it that it should appear exclusively in this volume, for the benefit of the family.

The work is published with the sanction and approval of the family of Captain Brown, as may be seen by the following letters:

NORTH ELBA, Dec., 1859.

*Messrs. Thayer & Eldridge.*

Dear Friends: I am satisfied that Mr. Redpath is THE man to write the life of my beloved husband, as he was personally acquainted with him, and I think will do him justice. . . . I think that the portrait is a very good one.

Yours respectfully,
MARY A. BROWN.

NORTH ELBA, Dec., 1859.

*Messrs. Thayer & Eldridge.*

Dear Sirs: I was somewhat acquainted with James Redpath in Kansas. I am also familiar with his writings, and I consider him an able biographer, and THE MAN ABOVE ALL OTHERS to write the life of my beloved father. I believe him to be a man of undoubted veracity, and fully believe he will do justice to the work he has undertaken.

Yours respectfully,
SALMON BROWN.

# Preface.

When the news of the arrest of John Brown reached Boston, I could neither work nor sleep; for I loved and reverenced the noble old man, and had perfect confidence in his plan of emancipation. I knew him to be one of earth's worthiest souls — the last of the Puritans; and yet I heard, on every side, people calling him a madman, and sneering at his "crazy scheme." Now, or never, was the time to defend my friend, when no voice, however faint, was heard to praise him. An opportunity offered; I indorsed John Brown. A few years hence this will seem absurd; as ridiculous, now, as an indorsement of Warren; but necessary in October last — and pronounced insane! I heard of no one man who fully approved my doctrines or defence when my first article appeared; but, before the series that I had contemplated was finished, I turned again to other work — for already the highest talent of the nation was marshalling to the rescue of the conquering prisoner of Charlestown Jail. Like Samson, in a single day, if not with the jawbone of an ass, yet with the help of that of a Member of Congress, the mighty man of valor had smitten his enemies, hip and thigh, "from Dan even unto Beersheba, and all the region round about." Now

that the most skilful trained soldiers of Freedom were in the field to encounter the reserve forces of the enemy, I withdrew myself from the conflict for a time — for, a guerilla skirmisher only, unfitted both by habit and nature for a place in any regular army, I did not care to fight under any General, or to fire except where I wanted to kill.

A publisher of New York asked me to write a Life of John Brown. He wanted it as a Republican campaign document. I declined. I would not help to light cigars from the fire above the altar. The publishers of this book made a nobler request; they believed in John Brown; they wished to do him justice; and they desired to assist his destitute family. This volume is the result of their request.

I have written this book, because I could not resist it. Equally at war with the cant of conservatism, of politics, and of non-resistance, and a firm believer in the faith that made Bunker Hill classic, I think that John Brown did right in invading Virginia and attempting to liberate her slaves. I hold God in infinitely greater reverence than Congress, and His holy laws than its enactments. I would as soon think of vindicating Washington for resisting the British Government to the death, as to apologize for John Brown in assailing the Slave Power with the only weapons that it fears.

Therefore, reader, if you think that white makes right, or might makes right, or if the opposite doctrine is abhorrent to you, lay this volume aside at once, for I will not promise that I shall try to avoid giving you offence.

I have no apology to make for this book; not because I am unconscious of its defects, but because it is the best that I could write in the allotted time, and because nowhere else can so correct a biography of John Brown be found. It is compiled from hundreds of sources — newspapers, books, correspondence, and conversations. Much of it, also, is the record of my personal knowledge. Materials came to me from all quarters; and not always in the order of time. Thus, the third chapter of the first book was written two weeks after the account of his execution; the history of his Kansas exploits before I obtained the autobiographical sketch of his childhood and youth. Hence, if there be occasional repetitions, whether of fact or idea, the just or generous reader will overlook this defect. I do not think that there are such iterations; but it is a possibility that I desire to explain in advance.

Writing in this way, the volume grew faster than I foresaw. I had intended to write the Life of John Brown, private and public, and biographies of his men, also. But Kansas, and Harper's Ferry, and Charlestown, and an unexpected gift of materials from North Elba, compelled me to defer the biographies of John Brown's men, as well as a minuter record of his own private life and correspondence. For, on the return of my wife from the home of John Brown, I found myself in possession, in trust, of hundreds of private letters, — every one that has been preserved, — written during the long and active career of the illustrious Liberator, which exhibit his daily life in its every relation, and the exceeding beauty of the religion which inspired its actions. These records, with other

memorials of him, will be published, in due time, in a supplementary volume.

The latest telegraphic news makes one correction necessary. I have spoken of Richard Realf as dead. I thought that he died a natural death on the ocean. It appears that he still lives in the body; but dead to honor, the voice of conscience, and the cries of the poor. He has chosen the part of Judas, and promises to play it well.

I am indebted to several friends for valuable aid in the preparation of this volume — first, to every one whom I have mentioned in the notes, or text, or whose letters I have quoted; and to Dr. Thomas H. Webb, of Boston, Richard J. Hinton, of Kansas, and, lastly, but not least among them, to "a nearer one still and a dearer one" for her visit to North Elba and its results.

I still desire information, (whether anecdotes, letters, or conversational remarks,) respecting John Brown and his heroic associates, and will be greatly obliged for all such contributions.

How unworthy soever this book may be, I shall not regard it as a useless work, if, in the minds of its destined readers, it shall arouse the inquiries:

How far, as men, have we strayed from the Mount where Jesus taught? and

How far, as citizens, have we wandered from the Hill where Warren fell?

MALDEN, MASS., *December* 25, 1859.