

MESSAGE

FROM THE

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

TO THE

TWO HOUSES OF CONGRESS

AT THE

COMMENCEMENT OF THE FIRST SESSION

OF THE THIRTY-SIXTH CONGRESS.

DECEMBER 27, 1859.—Read. Motion to print submitted by Mr. BRIGHT.

JANUARY 5, 1860.—Motion to print referred to the Committee on Printing.

JANUARY 19, 1860.—Report in favor of printing the usual number of the message with the accompanying documents submitted, considered and agreed to

VOLUME II.

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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR.

WAR DEPARTMENT, *December 1, 1859.*

The recent conspiracy and effort at insurrection and plunder attempted at Harper's Ferry constitutes altogether one of the most surprising and startling episodes in the history of our country. A fanatical man, stimulated to recklessness and desperation by the constant teachings and intemperate appeals of wild and treasonable enthusiasts, unrestrained by the Constitution and laws of the land, by the precepts of religion, by the appeals of humanity or of mercy, formed a conspiracy to make a sudden descent upon the people of Harper's Ferry, to rob the arsenal, plunder the public property, and stir up servile insurrection. The plan devised and the mode of executing it were such as to promise every hope of success. The conspirators rented a farm in the State of Maryland, within a few miles of Harper's Ferry, where they remained for some months, apparently following peaceful, probably useful pursuits; during which time they took effectual means to conciliate the kind feelings of the people of the adjacent country, and particularly those of the village of Harper's Ferry. They became perfectly familiar with all the localities of the place, streets, houses, arsenals, and workshops, so that its contemplated seizure might be effected at any hour of the night without confusion or any usual movement calculated to attract attention or arouse suspicion. They knew, perfectly, the universal and unsuspecting security of the entire population. Up to the night of that attack there never was a man, within the Commonwealth of Virginia, who went to his bed with the slightest apprehension of danger from attack by citizens of the United States in any numbers, from any region, or for any purpose whatever. The sense of profound security was perfect and absolute. Having also no apprehension whatever of the slave population, (and this assurance was fully justified by the event,) nothing could be more favorable for the consummation of the diabolical designs of the conspirators. Having cut the telegraphic wires, they entered, under the cover of night, unmolested and unobserved, into the village, seized upon the solitary watchman placed at the arsenal as protection against fire only, and possessed themselves speedily of all the buildings containing arms or suitable for defense. The next movement was to seize the principal men of the place, with whom their long residence near there had made them acquainted, and confine them securely under their own control. These arrests were made singly and, in every instance, by several perfectly armed men, who conveyed their prisoners to the place of confinement. This process was carried on throughout the night, and extended not only to the village, but to the country around.

When the morning came, and the state of things was partially discovered, the people of the village gathered to the scene of confusion about the arsenal. The conspirators now commenced a fire upon the citizens. Then, for the first time, did the atrocious designs of these men fully appear, and, strange as it may seem, it was only then dis-

covered that the citizens of the place were almost wholly without arms and ammunition of any sort. Presently, however, some arms and ammunition not in possession of the plunderers were found, when the men of the village, and those who had assembled from the neighborhood, arming themselves, immediately returned the fire of the assailants with such effect that in the course of a few hours they were driven from their positions, and all either killed or wounded, with the exception of the leader and half a dozen others of his party, who were driven into an engine-house, whither they fled for security. They carried along with them ten or twelve of the prisoners they had taken the night before, who were to be used as hostages, as the robbers alleged, to prevent the fire of the citizens outside from being directed towards themselves in the house where they had taken shelter.

Throughout the whole day on Monday, from twelve o'clock, at which time intelligence of the outbreak reached this city, the most exaggerated accounts were received of the state of things at Harper's Ferry, and the number of persons engaged in it. Prompt measures, however, were taken, and Brevet Colonel Robert E. Lee, of the 1st cavalry, was at once summoned to take command of a detachment of marines and two companies of volunteers from Frederick, Maryland, who had promptly offered their services. The troops left this city by the afternoon train, and, taking up the volunteers on the way, reached the scene of action during the night.

The next morning, at an early hour, Colonel Lee gave orders to the marines to attack and carry the house where the conspirators were strongly barricaded, which was very promptly and gallantly done, with the loss of one man killed, another wounded. Colonel Lee's report of his proceedings is herewith communicated, which gives all other information on the subject thought to be of interest.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOHN B. FLOYD,
Secretary of War.

The PRESIDENT.

List of papers accompanying the report of the Secretary of War.

- I. Colonel Lee's report on affairs at Harper's Ferry.
- II. Difficulties at San Juan island.
- III. Military affairs in the department of Oregon.
- IV. Affairs in the department of Utah.
- V. Affairs in the department of New Mexico.
- VI. Affairs in the department of Texas.
- VII. Affairs in the department of California.
- VIII. Camels.
- IX. Lieutenant Anderson's report of a march from Fort Laramie to Fort Randall.
- X. General Twiggs to General Gibson, relative to the increase of the sugar and coffee ration.
- XI. Lieutenant Morton's Memoir on American Fortification.
- XII. Report from the Office of Explorations and Surveys.
- XIII. Reports on the Capitol extension, the new dome, and the Post Office extension.
- IV. Report of the Adjutant General.
- XV. Report of the Quartermaster General.
- XVI. Report of the Commissary General.
- XVII. Report of the Paymaster General.
- XVIII. Report of the Surgeon General.
- XIX. Report of the Chief Engineer.
- XX. Report of the Chief of Topographical Engineer.
- XXI. Report of the Chief of Ordnance.

I.

DISTURBANCES AT HARPER'S FERRY.

Colonel Lee to the Adjutant General.

HEADQUARTERS HARPER'S FERRY,
October 19, 1859.

COLONEL: I have the honor to report, for the information of the Secretary of War, that on arriving here on the night of the 17th instant, in obedience to Special Orders No. 194 of that date from your office, I learn that a party of insurgents, about 11 p. m. on the 16th, had seized the watchman stationed at the armory, arsenal, rifle factory, and bridge across the Potomac, and taken possession of those points. They then dispatched six men, under one of their party, called Captain Aaron C. Stevens, to arrest the principal citizens in the neighborhood and incite the negroes to join in the insurrection. The party took Colonel L. W. Washington from his bed about 1½ a. m. on the 17th, and brought him, with four of his servants, to this place. Mr. J. H. Allstadt and six of his servants were in the same manner seized about 3 a. m., and arms placed in the hands of the negroes. Upon their return here, John E. Cooke, one of the party sent to Mr. Washington's,

was dispatched to Maryland, with Mr. Washington's wagon, two of his servants, and three of Mr. Allstadt's, for arms and ammunition, &c. As day advanced, and the citizens of Harper's Ferry commenced their usual avocations, they were separately captured, to the number of forty, as well as I could learn, and confined in one room of the fire-engine house of the armory, which seems early to have been selected as a point of defense. About 11 a. m. the volunteer companies from Virginia began to arrive, and the Jefferson Guards and volunteers from Charlestown, under Captain J. W. Rowen, I understood, were first on the ground. The Hamtramck Guards, Captain V. M. Butler; the Shepherdstown troop, Captain Jacob Rienahart; and Captain Alburts' company from Martinsburg arrived in the afternoon. These companies, under the direction of Colonels R. W. Baylor and John T. Gibson, forced the insurgents to abandon their positions at the bridge and in the village, and to withdraw within the armory inclosure, where they fortified themselves in the fire-engine house, and carried ten of their prisoners for the purpose of insuring their safety and facilitating their escape, whom they termed hostages, and whose names are Colonel L. W. Washington, of Jefferson county, Virginia; Mr. J. H. Allstadt, of Jefferson county, Virginia; Mr. Israel Russell, justice of the peace, Harper's Ferry; Mr. John Donahue, clerk of Baltimore and Ohio railroad; Mr. Terence Byrne, of Maryland; Mr. George D. Shope, of Frederick, Maryland; Mr. Benjamin Mills, master armorer, Harper's Ferry arsenal; Mr. A. M. Ball, master machinist, Harper's Ferry arsenal; Mr. J. E. P. Dangerfield, paymaster's clerk, Harper's Ferry arsenal; Mr. J. Burd, armorer, Harper's Ferry arsenal. After sunset more troops arrived. Captain B. B. Washington's company from Winchester, and three companies from Fredericktown, Maryland, under Colonel Shriver. Later in the evening the companies from Baltimore, under General Charles C. Edgerton, second light brigade, and a detachment of marines, commanded by Lieutenant J. Green, accompanied by Major Russell, of that corps, reached Sandy Hook, about one and a half mile east of Harper's Ferry. At this point I came up with these last-named troops, and leaving General Edgerton and his command on the Maryland side of the river for the night, caused the marines to proceed to Harper's Ferry, and placed them within the armory grounds to prevent the possibility of the escape of the insurgents. Having taken measures to halt, in Baltimore, the artillery companies ordered from Fort Monroe, I made preparations to attack the insurgents at daylight. But for the fear of sacrificing the lives of some of the gentlemen held by them as prisoners in a midnight assault, I should have ordered the attack at once.

Their safety was the subject of painful consideration, and to prevent, if possible, jeopardizing their lives, I determined to summon the insurgents to surrender. As soon after daylight as the arrangements were made Lieutenant J. E. B. Stewart, 1st cavalry, who had accompanied me from Washington as staff officer, was dispatched, under a flag, with a written summons, (a copy of which is hereto annexed, marked A.) Knowing the character of the leader of the insurgents, I did not expect it would be accepted. I had therefore directed that the volunteer troops, under their respective commanders, should be paraded on the lines

assigned them outside the army, and had prepared a storming party of twelve marines, under their commander, Lieutenant Green, and had placed them close to the engine-house, and secure from its fire. Three marines were furnished with sledge-hammers to break in the doors, and the men were instructed how to distinguish our citizens from the insurgents; to attack with the bayonet, and not to injure the blacks detained in custody unless they resisted. Lieutenant Stewart was also directed not to receive from the insurgents any counter propositions. If they accepted the terms offered, they must immediately deliver up their arms and release their prisoners. If they did not, he must, on leaving the engine-house, give me the signal. My object was, with a view of saving our citizens, to have as short an interval as possible between the summons and attack. The summons, as I had anticipated, was rejected. At the concerted signal the storming party moved quickly to the door and commenced the attack. The fire-engines within the house had been placed by the besieged close to the doors. The doors were fastened by ropes, the spring of which prevented their being broken by the blows of the hammers. The men were therefore ordered to drop the hammers, and, with a portion of the reserve, to use as a battering-ram a heavy ladder, with which they dashed in a part of the door and gave admittance to the storming party. The fire of the insurgents up to this time had been harmless. At the threshold one marine fell mortally wounded. The rest, led by Lieutenant Green and Major Russell, quickly ended the contest. The insurgents that resisted were bayoneted. Their leader, John Brown, was cut down by the sword of Lieutenant Green, and our citizens were protected by both officers and men. The whole was over in a few minutes.

After our citizens were liberated and the wounded cared for, Lieutenant Colonel S. S. Mills, of the 53d Maryland regiment, with the Baltimore Independent Greys, Lieutenant B. F. Simpson commanding, was sent on the Maryland side of the river to search for John E. Cooke, and to bring in the arms, &c., belonging to the insurgent party, which were said to be deposited in a school-house two and a half miles distant. Subsequently Lieutenant J. E. B. Stewart, with a party of marines, was dispatched to the Kennedy farm, situated in Maryland, about four and a half miles from Harper's Ferry, which had been rented by John Brown, and used as the depot for his men and munitions. Colonel Mills saw nothing of Cooke, but found the boxes of arms, (Sharp's carbines and belt revolvers,) and recovered Mr. Washington's wagon and horses. Lieutenant Stewart found also at the Kennedy farm a number of sword pikes, blankets, shoes, tents, and all the necessaries for a campaign. These articles have been deposited in the government storehouse at the armory.

From the information derived from the papers found upon the persons and among the baggage of the insurgents, and the statement of those now in custody, it appears that the party consisted of 19 men—14 white, and 5 black. That they were headed by John Brown, of some notoriety in Kansas, who in June last located himself in Maryland, at the Kennedy farm, where he has been engaged in preparing to capture the United States works at Harper's Ferry. He avows that

his object was the liberation of the slaves of Virginia, and of the whole south; and acknowledges that he has been disappointed in his expectations of aid from the black as well as white population, both in the southern and northern States. The blacks whom he forced from their homes in this neighborhood, as far as I could learn, gave him no voluntary assistance. The servants of Messrs. Washington and Allstadt, retained at the armory, took no part in the conflict, and those carried to Maryland returned to their homes as soon as released. The result proves that the plan was the attempt of a fanatic or madman, which could only end in failure; and its temporary success was owing to the panic and confusion he succeeded in creating by magnifying his numbers. I append a list of the insurgents, (marked B.) Cooke is the only man known to have escaped. The other survivors of the expedition, viz: John Brown, A. C. Stevens, Edwin Coppee, and Green Shields, (*alias* S. Emperour,) I have delivered into the hands of the marshal of the western district of Virginia and the sheriff of Jefferson county. They were escorted to Charlestown by a detachment of marines, under Lieutenant Green. About 9 o'clock this evening I received a report from Mr. Moore, from Pleasant Valley, Maryland, that a body of men had, about sunset, descended from the mountains, attacked the house of Mr. Genett, and from the cries of murder and the screams of the women and children, he believed the residents of the valley were being massacred. The alarm and excitement in the village of Harper's Ferry was increased by the arrival of families from Sandy Hook fleeing for safety. The report was, however, so improbable that I could give no credence to it, yet I thought it possible that some atrocity might have been committed, and I started with twenty-five marines, under Lieutenant Green, accompanied by Lieutenant Stewart, for the scene of the alleged outrage, about $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles distant. I was happy to find it a false alarm. The inhabitants of Pleasant Valley were quiet and unharmed, and Mr. Genett and his family safe and asleep.

I will now, in obedience to your dispatch of this date, direct the detachment of marines to return to the navy yard at Washington, in the train that passes here at $1\frac{1}{4}$ a. m. to-night, and will myself take advantage of the same train to report to you in person at the War Department. I must also ask to express my thanks to Lieutenant Stewart, Major Russell, and Lieutenant Green, for the aid they afforded me, and my entire commendation of the conduct of the detachment of marines, who were at all times ready and prompt in the execution of any duty.

The promptness with which the volunteer troops repaired to the scene of disturbance, and the alacrity they displayed to suppress the gross outrage against law and order, I know will elicit your hearty approbation. Equal zeal was shown by the president and officers of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company in their transportation of the troops, and in their readiness to furnish the facilities of their well-ordered road.

A list of the killed and wounded, as far as came to my knowledge, is herewith annexed, (marked C;) and I inclose a copy of the "Provisional Constitution and ordinances for the people of the United

States," of which there were a large number prepared for issue by the insurgents.

I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

R. E. LEE, *Colonel Commanding.*

Colonel S. COOPER,

Adjutant General U. S. Army, Washington City, D. C.

A.

HEADQUARTERS HARPER'S FERRY,
October 18, 1859.

Colonel Lee, United States army, commanding the troops sent by the President of the United States to suppress the insurrection at this place, demands the surrender of the persons in the armory buildings.

If they will peaceably surrender themselves and restore the pillaged property, they shall be kept in safety to await the orders of the President. Colonel Lee represents to them, in all frankness, that it is impossible for them to escape; that the armory is surrounded on all sides by troops; and that if he is compelled to take them by force he cannot answer for their safety.

R. E. LEE,
Colonel Commanding United States Troops.

B.

List of Insurgents.—14.

John Brown, of New York, commander-in-chief, badly wounded; prisoner.

Aaron C. Stevens, Connecticut, captain, badly wounded; prisoner.

Edwin Coppee, Iowa, lieutenant, unhurt; prisoner.

Oliver Brown, New York, captain; killed.

Watson Brown, New York, captain; killed.

Albert Hazlett, Pennsylvania, lieutenant; killed.

William Leman, Maine, lieutenant; killed.

Stuart Taylor, Canada, private; killed.

Charles P. Tidd, Maine, private; killed.

William Thompson, New York, private; killed.

Adolph Thompson, New York, private; killed.

John Kagi, Ohio, private; killed.

Jeremiah Anderson, Indiana, private; killed.

John E. Cooke, Connecticut, captain; escaped.

Negroes.—5.

Dangerfield, Newly, Ohio; killed.
 Louis Leary, Oberlin, Ohio; killed.
 Green Shields, (alias Emperor,) New York, unhurt; prisoner.
 Copeland, Oberlin, Ohio; prisoner.
 O. P. Anderson, Pennsylvania, unaccounted for.

C.

List of the killed and wounded by the Insurgents.—14.

Fontaine Beckham, railroad agent and mayor of Harper's Ferry; killed.

G. W. Turner, Jefferson county, Virginia; killed.

Thomas Boerly, Harper's Ferry; killed.

Heywood Shepherd, negro, railroad porter; killed.

Private Quinn, marine corps; killed.

Mr. Murphy; wounded.

Mr. Young; wounded.

Mr. Richardson; wounded.

Mr. Hammond; wounded.

Mr. McCabe; wounded.

Mr. Dorsey; wounded.

Mr. Hooper; wounded.

Mr. Woollet; wounded.

Private Rupert, marine corps; wounded.

Colonel Lee to the Secretary of War.

HARPER'S FERRY ARSENAL,
 October 18, 1859.

SIR: Upon a more deliberate examination of the wounds of O. Brown, they are believed not to be mortal. He has three wounds, but they are not considered by the surgeon as bad as first reported. Please direct me what to do with him and the other white prisoners.

I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

R. E. LEE,
 Colonel Commanding.

HON. SECRETARY OF WAR,
 Washington, D. C.