

JOHN BROWN'S LAST LETTER TO HIS FAMILY.

CHARLESTON PRISON,
JEFFERSON Co. VA., Nov. 30, 1859. }

MY DEARLY BELOVED WIFE, SONS AND DAUGHTERS, EVERYONE—

As I now begin what is probably the last letter I shall ever write to any of you, I conclude to write to all at same time. I will mention some little matters particularly applicable to little property concerns in another place.

I recently received a letter from my wife, from near Philadelphia, dated November 22, by which it would seem that she was about giving up the idea of seeing me again. I had written her to come on if she felt equal to the undertaking, but I do not know that she will get my letter in time. It was on her own account chiefly that I asked her to stay back. At first I had a most strong desire to see her again, but there appeared to be very serious objections; and should we never meet in this life, I trust that she will in the end be satisfied it was for the best at least, if not most for her comfort. I inclosed in my last letter to her a draft of fifty dollars from John Jay, made payable to her order. I have now another to send her, from my excellent old, friend Edward Harris, of Woonsocket, R. I., for one hundred dollars, which I shall also make payable to her order.

I am waiting the hour of my public murder with great composure of mind and cheerfulness, feeling the strong assurance that in no other possible way could I be used to so much advantage to the cause of good and of humanity, and that nothing that either I or all my family have sacrificed or suffered will be lost. The reflection that a wise and merciful, as well as just and Holy God, rules not only the affairs of this world, but of all worlds, is a rock to set our feet upon under all circumstances—even those more severely trying ones into which our own feelings and wrongs have placed us. I have now no doubt but that our seeming disaster will ultimately result in the most glorious success; so, my dear shattered and broken family, be of good cheer, and believe and trust in God with all your heart, and with all your soul; for He doeth all things well. Do not feel ashamed on my account, nor for one moment despair of the cause or grow weary of well doing. I bless God I never felt stronger confidence in the certain and near approach of a bright morning and a glorious day than I have felt, and do now feel, since my confinement here. I am endeavoring to return, like a poor prodigal as I am, to my Father, against whom I have always sinned, in the hope that he may kindly and forgivingly meet me, though a very great way off.

Oh! my dear wife and children, would to God you could know how I have been travelling in birth for you all, that no one of you may fail of the grace of God.

Through Jesus Christ—that no one of you may be blind to the truth and glorious light of his Word, in which life and immortality are brought to light, I beseech you every one, to make the Bible your daily and nightly study, with a childlike, honest, candid, teachable spirit of love and respect for your husband and father.

And I beseech the God of my fathers to open all your eyes to the discovery of the truth. You cannot imagine how much you may soon need the consolations of the Christian religion. Circumstances like my own for more than a month past have convinced me beyond all doubt, of our great need of some theories treasured up when our prejudices are excited, our vanity worked up to the highest pitch. Oh! do not trust your eternal all upon the boisterous ocean without even a helm or compass to aid you, in steering. I do not ask any of you to throw away your reason; I only ask you to make a candid, sober use of your reason.

My dear younger children, will you listen to this last poor admonition of one who can only love you? Oh! be determined at once to give your whole heart to God, and let nothing shake or alter that resolution. You need have no fears of regretting it. Do not be vain and thoughtless, but sober minded; and let me entreat you all to love the whole remnant of our once great family. Try and build up again your broken walls, and to make the utmost of every stone that is left. Nothing can so tend to make life a blessing as the consciousness that your life and example bless and leave you the stronger. Still, it is ground of the utmost comfort to my mind to know that so many of you as have had the opportunity have given some proof of your fidelity to the great family of men. Be faithful unto death; from the exercise of habitual love to man it cannot be very hard to learn to love his Maker.

I must yet insert the reason for my firm belief in the divine inspiration of the Bible, notwithstanding I am perhaps naturally skeptical, certainly not credulous. I wish all to consider it most thoroughly when you read that blessed book, and see whether you cannot discover such evidence yourselves. It is the purity of heart filling our minds as well as work and actions, which is everywhere insisted on, that distinguishes it from all the other teachings, that commends it to

my conscience. Whether my heart be willing and obedient or not, the inducement that it holds out is another reason of my convictions of its truth and genuineness; but I do not here omit this my last argument on the Bible that eternal life is what my soul is panting after this moment. I mention this as a reason for endeavoring to leave a valuable copy of the Bible to be carefully preserved in remembrance of me, to see many of my posterity, instead of some other book at equal cost.

I beseech you all to live in habitual contentment with moderate circumstances and gains of worldly store, and earnestly to teach this to your children and children's children after you, by example as well as precept. Be determined to know by experience, as soon as may be, whether Bible instruction is of divine origin or not. Be sure to owe no man anything, but to love one another. John Rogers wrote to his children, "Abhor that arrant whore of Rome." John Brown writes to his children to abhor, with undying hatred also, that sum of all villainies—Slavery. Remember, he that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth in spirit than he that taketh a city. Remember, also, that they, being wise, shall shine, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.

And now, dearly beloved family, to God and the work of His Grace I commend you all.

Your affectionate husband and father,

JOHN BROWN.

JOHN BROWN'S WILL.

CHARLESTOWN, Jefferson County, Va., December 1, 1859.

I GIVE to my son, John Brown, jr., my surveyor's compass and other surveyor's articles, if found; also, my old granite monument, now at North Elba, N. Y., to receive upon its two sides a further inscription, as I will hereafter direct; said stone monument, however, to remain at North Elba so long as *any of my children and my wife* may remain there as residents.

I give to my son, Jason Brown, my silver watch, with my name engraved on inner case.

I give to my son, Owen Brown, my double-spring opera-glass, and my rifle-gun (if found), presented to me at Worcester, Mass. It is globe-sighted and new. I give, also, to the same son \$50 in cash, to be paid him from the proceeds of my father's estate, in consideration of his terrible suffering in Kansas and his crippled condition from his childhood.

I give to my son, Solomon Brown, \$50 in cash, to be paid him from my father's estate, as an offset to the first two cases above-named.

I give to my daughter, Ruth Thompson, my large old Bible, containing the family record.

I give to each of my sons, and to each of my *other* daughters, my son-in-law, Henry Thompson, and to each of my daughters-in-law, as good a copy of the Bible as can be purchased at some bookstore in New York or Boston, at a cost of \$5 each in cash; to be paid out of the proceeds of my father's estate.

I give to each of my grandchildren that may be living when my father's estate is settled, as good a copy of the Bible as can be purchased (as above) at a cost of \$3 each.

All the Bibles to be purchased at one and the same time, for cash, on the best terms.

I desire to have (\$50) fifty dollars *each* paid out of the final proceeds of my father's estate, to the following-named persons, to wit: To Allen Hammond, Esq., of Rockville, Tolland County, Conn., or to George Kellogg, Esq., former agent of the New England Company at that place, *for the use and benefit of that company*. Also, \$50 to Silas Havens, formerly of Lewisburg, Summit County, O., if he can be found; also, \$50 to a man of Storek County, O., at Canton, who sued my father in his lifetime, through Judge Humphrey and Mr. Upson of Akron, to be paid by J. R. Brown to the man in person, if he can be found. His name I cannot remember. My father made a compromise with the man by taking our house and lot at Manneville. I desire that any remaining balance that may become my due from my father's estate may be paid in equal amounts to my wife, and to each of my children, and to the widows of Watson and Owen Brown, by my brother.

JOHN AVIS, WITNESS.

JOHN BROWN.