

Diary of a Christian Soldier

☞ Rufus Kinsley and the Civil War ☞

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Contents

List of Illustrations ☞ viii

Preface ☞ xi

Acknowledgments ☞ xix

Introduction: Rufus Kinsley and the Civil War ☞ 1

**The Slaveholders' Rebellion: The Diary
of Rufus Kinsley ☞ 87**

Notes ☞ 181

Index ☞ 273

Illustrations

Frontispiece. Rufus Kinsley

1. Page from Kinsley diary ☞ xvii
2. Map of Gulf South ☞ xxii
3. Kinsley genealogy ☞ 4
4. Site of Old Corner Book Store and offices of Ticknor and Fields ☞ 12
5. *Massachusetts Life Boat* ☞ 14
6. Louisiana Native Guards on picket duty ☞ 30
7. Officers of the First Louisiana Native Guards ☞ 35
8. Endorsements of Kinsley resignation ☞ 49
9. Kinsley, his wife, and children ☞ 60
10. Kinsley, his brothers, and sister ☞ 63
11. Rufus Kinsley, circa 1904 ☞ 78
12. “LIEUT RUFUS KINSLEY” ☞ 80
13. Rufus and Ella Kinsley with children and spouses ☞ 82
14. Saltcellar and writing case ☞ 84
15. Union soldiers engaged in writing ☞ 86
16. Union vessels off Ship Island ☞ 91

17. Jackson Square 95
18. Union soldiers shooting a “Rebel ally” 97
19. Gordon, a runaway slave 99
20. Planter police checking passes 101
21. St. Louis Cemetery II 103
22. Emancipated slaves 105
23. Thibodaux, Louisiana 120
24. St. Joseph’s Catholic Church 121
25. Union soldiers marching along a bayou road 123
26. New Orleans Barracks 131
27. Soldiers in the Corps d’Afrique 135
28. Barracks General Hospital in New Orleans 138
29. Kinsley’s commission in the Second Corps d’Afrique 139
30. School for black soldiers and fugitive slaves 149
31. Fort Morgan after its surrender 161
32. Saltcellar from General Page’s table 162
33. Kinsley’s resignation from the Seventy-fourth United States Colored Infantry 179

INTRODUCTION

Rufus Kinsley and the Civil War

RUFUS KINSLEY WOULD PROBABLY NOT HAVE LIKED ROBERT Gould Shaw, the now-famous young Civil War officer who gave his life leading black troops into battle at Fort Wagner, South Carolina, and whose life has been immortalized in the popular movie *Glory*, in Augustus Saint-Gauden's magnificent sculpture on Boston Common, and in the memorable words of the philosopher William James, who proclaimed Shaw America's "blue-eyed child of fortune." To be sure, Kinsley would have respected Shaw for his decision to become an officer of black soldiers, although he would not have known that Shaw accepted the position only out of obligation to his abolitionist mother, who called her son's initial refusal of the commission "the bitterest disappointment that I have ever experienced." But beyond serving as officers in black regiments, Kinsley and Shaw had little in common. Although their lives briefly overlapped in Boston, where Shaw was attending Harvard and Kinsley was working on a newspaper, they were from different worlds. Kinsley's grandfather was not one of the richest men in New England, his family was not so wealthy that his father could retire at age thirty-two, his mother's closest friend was not Lydia Maria Child, his childhood playmates did not include William Lloyd Garrison's sons, his education did not require a private academy in Switzerland, his circle of acquaintances did not encompass Harriet Beecher Stowe, James Russell Lowell, and Nathaniel Hawthorne, and his death would not have inspired Ralph Waldo Emerson to write a poem eulogizing his sacrifices on the altar of freedom.¹

But Kinsley's disdain for Shaw would not have emanated from a sense of envy or jealousy, for that would have been a sin, and Kinsley was ever-mindful of sin. Kinsley's ideas about what constituted sinful behavior

would, however, have played a major role in his evaluation of Shaw. To Kinsley, Shaw would have been just another example of the party-loving, cigar-smoking, “rum-sucking officers” who all too often were put in command of black troops during the Civil War. Kinsley, who stopped using racial epithets prior to becoming an officer in the Second Louisiana Corps d’Afrique, would have been disappointed that Shaw continued throughout his colonelcy in the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts to call African Americans “nigs,” “niggers,” and “darkeys.”² Kinsley, who delighted in calling the freed slaves “men,” would have been offended by Shaw’s assertion that “they are perfectly childlike . . . and are no more responsible for their actions than so many puppies.” Kinsley, who took great pleasure in ridiculing those who spoke of “slavery loving negroes,” would have been outraged at Shaw’s suggestion that some slaves actually loved their masters. Kinsley, who could never see beyond the barbarity of slavery, would have been appalled by Shaw’s statement that the slaves of Charlestown, Virginia, were “well cared for.” Kinsley, who believed that the devastation Union troops inflicted upon the Confederacy was the fulfillment of God’s will, would have been utterly dumbfounded by Shaw’s characterization of the destruction of Darien, South Carolina, by Yankee soldiers as “barbarous” and “distasteful.” And Kinsley, who spent most of his free time teaching runaway slaves to read and write, would have been saddened by Shaw’s general indifference to the fate of the freedmen. Kinsley could not abide such liberators. And probably the feeling would have been mutual, for Shaw was contemptuous of the rough Western volunteer soldiers like Kinsley who made the job of Eastern elites like himself so difficult.³

☞ One ☞

Although Kinsley was born in western Vermont on the other side of the Appalachian Mountains – a cultural as well as physical barrier to someone like Shaw – his ancestors were among the earliest settlers of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and lived just outside of Boston in the 1630s. His maternal great-grandfather was driven out of Sunderland, Massachusetts, for radical religious beliefs and in 1761 settled in Bennington, Vermont, where he served on the town’s first board of selectmen. His maternal grandfather, Rufus Montague, was one of the original founders of the town of Fletcher, Vermont, and his paternal grandfather, Daniel Kinsley, was one of the first settlers of the adjoining town of Cambridge.

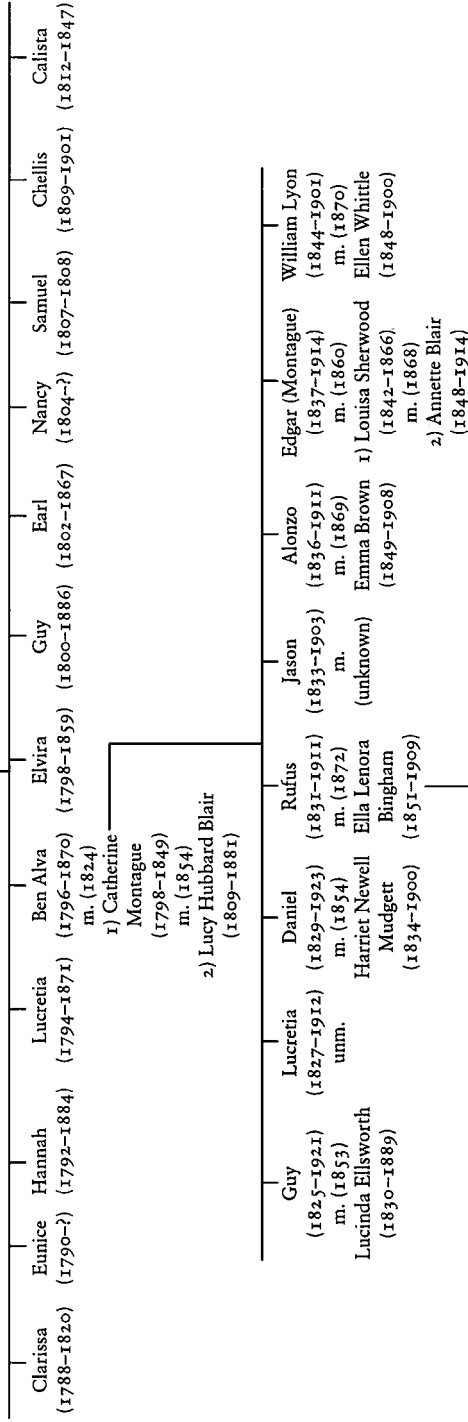
In fact, Daniel Kinsley's marriage to Lucy Montague was the first marriage recorded in Cambridge.⁴ Both of Kinsley's grandfathers were among the famous "Green Mountain Boys" who fought in the Revolutionary War, and doubtless Kinsley was proud of their role in creating the Union, just as he would later take great pride in his own role in preserving it. But like most Vermonters, Kinsley was especially proud of Vermont's founding generation for writing the nation's first state constitution that prohibited slavery, and in later years he would take even greater pride in the part he played in abolishing slavery throughout the nation.⁵

Rufus Kinsley was born in Fletcher on October 9, 1831. Encompassing about twenty-four thousand acres and sitting on the southern edge of Franklin County, Fletcher is about twenty-five miles from the Canadian border. To the west is Lake Champlain, to the north Quebec, to the east the Green Mountains, and to the south the fertile Champlain Valley. Fletcher's landscape is hilly, even mountainous in places, and broken by valleys, meadows, ponds, rivers, and streams. Chartered by Governor Thomas Chittenden in 1781 and organized in 1790, Fletcher welcomed its first wave of settlers in the 1790s. These early settlers, as well as those who came later, according to Kinsley's father, were ordinary, hard-working Americans of good democratic stock. He wrote that "men of eminence are to be looked for in some other locality. But for men of solid worth, of stern integrity, men of unimpeachable character, Fletcher is by no means wanting. . . ." In fact, Ben Alva Kinsley believed that "probably, there are few towns in the State whose inhabitants are more nearly on a level, than in the town of Fletcher." By the time of Kinsley's birth, Fletcher boasted nearly eight hundred such inhabitants.⁶

Kinsley was the fourth of eight children born to Ben Alva and Catherine Montague Kinsley. Prior to Kinsley's birth, his parents and their children Guy, Lucretia, and Daniel lived in a log cabin that Kinsley's grandfather had built on the south side of Fletcher Mountain. But in the spring of 1829 the family moved into a small wooden building that Kinsley would call home for much of his childhood. "It was a very cheap structure," according to Kinsley's brother Guy, and "a sorry place for a mother and small children." It consisted of two rooms, a garret, and a stone fireplace. Instead of glass the windows were covered with raw sheepskin. There was no running water in the house; there was no tub, no sink, just a stream at the base of the hill. Over the next few years, Kinsley's father, a stonemason by trade, plastered the house, replaced the fireplace with a stove, installed a sink, and dug a well. Kinsley's two older brothers, Guy and Daniel, slept

Daniel Kinsley (1764-1828)
m. (1788)

Lucy Montague (1765-1850)



up in the garret, while he slept downstairs in a trundle bed with Lucretia and his younger brothers. By 1837 three more sons, Jason, Alonzo, and Edgar, joined an already crowded household. In the spring of 1837, a few months before Edgar's birth, Kinsley's father, who had been employed at a local brickyard, left home in search of work. He moved about fifteen miles southwest to the town of Colchester, where he found employment building factories around Winooski Falls. His earnings allowed him to send supplies home to a growing family that, according to one of his sons, he was having a "very difficult" time feeding and clothing.⁷

In the fall of the same year, however, the family suffered a devastating blow, as Kinsley's mother fell helpless to a crippling disease that left her knees swollen and stiff. Ben Alva gave up his job in Colchester, returned home, and began doing part-time agricultural labor for neighbors; the one and a half acres he owned were unfit for cultivation. That winter was grim for the family as Kinsley's mother struggled to regain her health, but she was never able to walk again and spent the rest of her life in a wheelchair. A few months after Catherine Kinsley was stricken with what her family called "inflammatory rheumatism," Kinsley's parents were forced to abandon the crude little wooden shanty they called home and farm out their children among friends and relatives. What happened to Kinsley, who was only six years old at the time of this crisis, is unknown, but in the spring of 1838 his brother Guy took a "very small bundle of clothes" and moved in with a neighbor, who paid him five dollars a month in farm produce for helping out with chores. A year later Guy returned home to help his mother and allow his father to find work in places like Colchester. In the summer of 1840 when the federal census taker visited the Kinsley household he found all the Kinsleys again living together.⁸ Had he returned four years later, he would have discovered that their number had grown to ten, for on March 12, 1844, Catherine Kinsley gave birth to William, her eighth and final child. Not quite five years later, at age fifty-one, she was dead.

Kinsley, from the time he was about six years old, watched as his mother suffered stoically through the last dozen years of her life until February 15, 1849, when, in the words of her husband, "her Heavenly Father said, 'it is enough, come up higher.'" Although Ben Alva married Lucy Blair, the childless widow of an old friend, five years after Catherine's death, the Kinsley children never forgot their natural mother. Seventeen years after her demise, Kinsley's brother Jason affectionately remembered the mother "whose smiles we miss" and reassured his brothers and sister that

“A Mother’s fond caress, a Mother’s loving kiss,” awaits each of us “When we have done / With this dark, weary world, and soar to worlds above.”⁹

Within a year of Catherine Kinsley’s death, her family had been permanently broken up. Guy had been boarding with neighbors and relatives from about 1841 until roughly 1847, when he and his brother Daniel moved to Massachusetts in search of employment. In 1850, Guy was working in Worcester County as a laborer for Amasa Walker, a “Gentleman” who owned property valued at twenty-eight thousand dollars and who by 1853 was paying Guy twenty dollars a month in wages. Daniel was working on the North Brookfield farm of Bonum Nye, a county commissioner who helped him win election in 1853 to the post of messenger of the Worcester County courts, a position Daniel held for the next fifty years. Kinsley’s sixteen-year-old brother Jason was also living in Worcester County in 1850. He had apparently been entrusted to his aunt Nancy Kinsley Scott and her husband Jefferson. Kinsley’s thirteen-year-old brother Edgar remained in Fletcher, but sometime prior to the summer of 1850 he had been handed over to his mother’s brother Rufus Montague II and his wife Elvira. They legally adopted the boy, who thereafter was known as Edgar Kinsley Montague. Kinsley’s sister Lucretia, under the thumb of a strong patriarchal father, remained at home in 1850 to take care of fourteen-year-old Alonzo and six-year-old William.¹⁰

Before long, even Kinsley’s father was thinking about moving. On June 13, 1851, probably in response to his dire economic situation, Ben Alva Kinsley, who had fought in the War of 1812, applied for “bounty land” that the federal government in 1850 had set aside for “certain officers and soldiers who have been engaged in the military service of the United States.” On October 1, 1853, the Pension Bureau granted him a 160-acre quarter section in Iowa; a month later his son Guy was on his way west to see whether the land was worth settling. Once there, Guy decided to stay. With the savings he had amassed during his six years as a farm laborer in Massachusetts, he purchased 240 acres of his own near the town of McGregor in Clayton County. Two years later his brother Jason also left Massachusetts for Iowa. While Guy took up farming, Jason became a teacher, but both of them called Iowa home for the remainder of their lives. Apparently encouraged by reports from his sons and eager to see his homestead in the West, Ben Alva migrated to Iowa in the late 1850s. He lived there along with his new wife Lucy and his young son William on Guy’s farm for about two years before deciding to return to Fletcher in the fall of 1860.¹¹

In returning to Fletcher, Ben Alva was moving against the tide. Most of those who left Fletcher in the 1850s never looked back. In 1850 Fletcher had 1,084 inhabitants, but by 1860 that number stood at only 916, a 16 percent decline. Most of the decline can be attributed to the out-migration of young males, like the Kinsley brothers, as is suggested by the drop in the town's ratio of males per 100 females from 104 in 1850 to 97 in 1860. These young men left what they obviously believed was a poor farming community with little opportunity. Fletcher was, to be sure, an agricultural community. According to the 1850 census nearly 90 percent of those living in Fletcher who reported an occupation identified themselves as either farmers or farm laborers, and they worked hard at raising cattle, sheep, and oxen and at producing butter, cheese, wool, sugar, wheat, corn, potatoes, and hay. Fletcher was also a poor community. In 1850 fully 90 percent of its residents reported owning no property, and the per capita wealth in real estate was a paltry \$171. Even among those who reported owning property, the median value of their real estate was only \$800, and 97 percent of them owned real estate valued at \$1,500 or less. No wonder the Kinsleys took to heart Horace Greeley's admonition to "Go West, young man, go West."¹²

Like his father and brothers, Rufus Kinsley was also on the move. About the time of his mother's death in 1849, when he was in his late teens, Kinsley left home for St. Albans, a shire town of about eighteen hundred inhabitants that was ten miles north of Fletcher. Known for its antislavery sentiments, St. Albans was a stop on the Underground Railroad and home to some of Vermont's leading abolitionists. One was Asa O. Aldis, the first president of the Vermont Anti-Slavery Society, which had been founded in 1834 as an auxiliary to William Lloyd Garrison's American Anti-Slavery Society. Another was Lawrence Brainerd, recognized in St. Albans for his work smuggling runaway slaves into Canada and known throughout Vermont as gubernatorial candidate of both the Liberty Party and the Free Soil Party. Brainerd's cousin Joseph also resided in St. Albans. A Yale graduate, Joseph Brainerd had gained notoriety in St. Albans in the early 1830s as the man who had founded one of the county's leading newspapers, the reform-oriented *Franklin Journal*. Brainerd subsequently sold the paper to Enoch B. Whiting, who renamed it the *St. Albans Messenger* and published it without interruption for thirty-three years. It was a job as a printer's devil on Whiting's newspaper that brought Rufus Kinsley to St. Albans.¹³

Kinsley arrived in St. Albans having had very little formal education. The Fletcher common schools appear to have been adequate, although

the Kinsley children did have a teacher who once hung a student by his thumbs until the boy was blue in the face. But according to family members it was not fear of corporal punishment that kept the “Kinsley urchins” from attending school regularly. First, the family simply did not have enough pants for all the boys to attend school on the same day, and, second, the family’s desperate need for supplementary labor and income often determined that the children would work, at home or for a neighbor, rather than go to school. Consequently, much of Kinsley’s education took place at home, in talk with his father. Ben Alva himself had virtually no regular schooling, but he was a man of genuine intellectual curiosity. Although his spelling and grammar were erratic, Kinsley’s father wrote engaging letters that, given his upbringing in an oral, face-to-face, frontier culture, were remarkably literate. He also wrote an entertaining essay on Fletcher for inclusion in Vermont historian Abby Hemenway’s massive five-volume study of the state’s towns and counties. Subscribers to the Hemenway volumes included many of Vermont’s richest and most powerful citizens, but at the head of the subscription list for Franklin County was the name of a struggling stonemason named “BEN A. KINSLEY.”¹⁴

Kinsley’s father also belonged to local literary clubs and regularly opened his home to speakers “of all religious denominations.” This last activity hints at one of the Kinsleys’ most fundamental beliefs, that education was useless unless it was tested and tempered within a Christian context. Thus, when Kinsley’s brother Guy later remembered that “the acquisition of knowledge from books and schools in my native town was an uphill business,” he immediately added that “not all knowledge is wisdom, much of it is great folly. One of the wisest men said many hundred years ago, that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. . . .” The kind of education that Kinsley offered to freed slaves in the South during the Civil War suggests that he agreed completely with his family’s assessment of the limits of a purely secular education.¹⁵

There was little chance that Kinsley himself would receive an education devoted entirely to worldly knowledge. He grew up in a region that had been repeatedly “burned-over” by evangelical Protestant revivals and in a family that offered compelling models of Christian piety. One such model was an uncle who served as the pastor of the Congregational Church in nearby Cambridge, a church whose founding members included several of Kinsley’s ancestors. Another was his aunt Elvira Kinsley, who “loved the Bible,” read it religiously, and for thirty-five years taught the children

of Fletcher with “christian devotion” and “a rare modesty and humility of spirit.” Still another was his grandfather Rufus Montague, who took Kinsley’s entire family into his household from 1833 to 1835 and gathered them around him to pray every morning. And, finally, there was his father, himself the product of a “strict and reverent” upbringing, who not only held religious meetings in his home but also served as superintendent of the town’s Sabbath school and who worked tirelessly to overcome what he perceived as insufficient religious unity and zeal among Fletcher’s inhabitants. “Mr. Kinsley,” a friend of Ben Alva’s observed, “is a man of good judgment, deep feeling and religious principle,” who “has ever taken an active interest in . . . whatever pertains to the improvement and advancement of society in general.”¹⁶

Elaborating on his portrait of Kinsley’s father, the friend noted that Ben Alva was known “for his eccentricities, originality and stern independence of thought and action, and has a vein of good humor underlying his whole character. . . . To say that he has no enemies would be to make him more than a god, or less than a man,” the friend continued. “Such a character as his always gains warm friends and bitter enemies. . . .” Perhaps Kinsley was inspired by the example of his father to stand up for principle whatever the cost, for by the end of the Civil War the words offered by Ben Alva’s friend perfectly described Rufus Kinsley as well as his father. Whatever the case, these were the values that Kinsley brought with him in the late 1840s when he went to work for Enoch Whiting’s *St. Albans Messenger*.¹⁷

In 1850 the eighteen-year-old Kinsley was not only working for Whiting but also residing at the publisher’s home. Others who lived under Whiting’s roof included his parents, his wife and two children, an editor, three printers, and two illiterate young girls, who were probably domestics. Whiting’s wife Mary was a native of the nearby town of Georgia and “one of the [county’s] most estimable of women, excellent in every Christian and womanly virtue.” Whiting, a native of Amherst, Massachusetts, had achieved an equally respectable position. Over the years he built a reputation as a gracious but serious gentleman of deep religious convictions and unassailable integrity. Except for Whiting’s wealth – in 1850 at age thirty-four he already owned property valued at four thousand dollars – the Whiting household, marked as it was by piety and propriety, must have reminded Kinsley of home and reinforced the lessons of his youth.¹⁸

Work at the paper must also have reinforced the informal, eclectic education that Kinsley received at home. Billed as “A Journal of Politics,

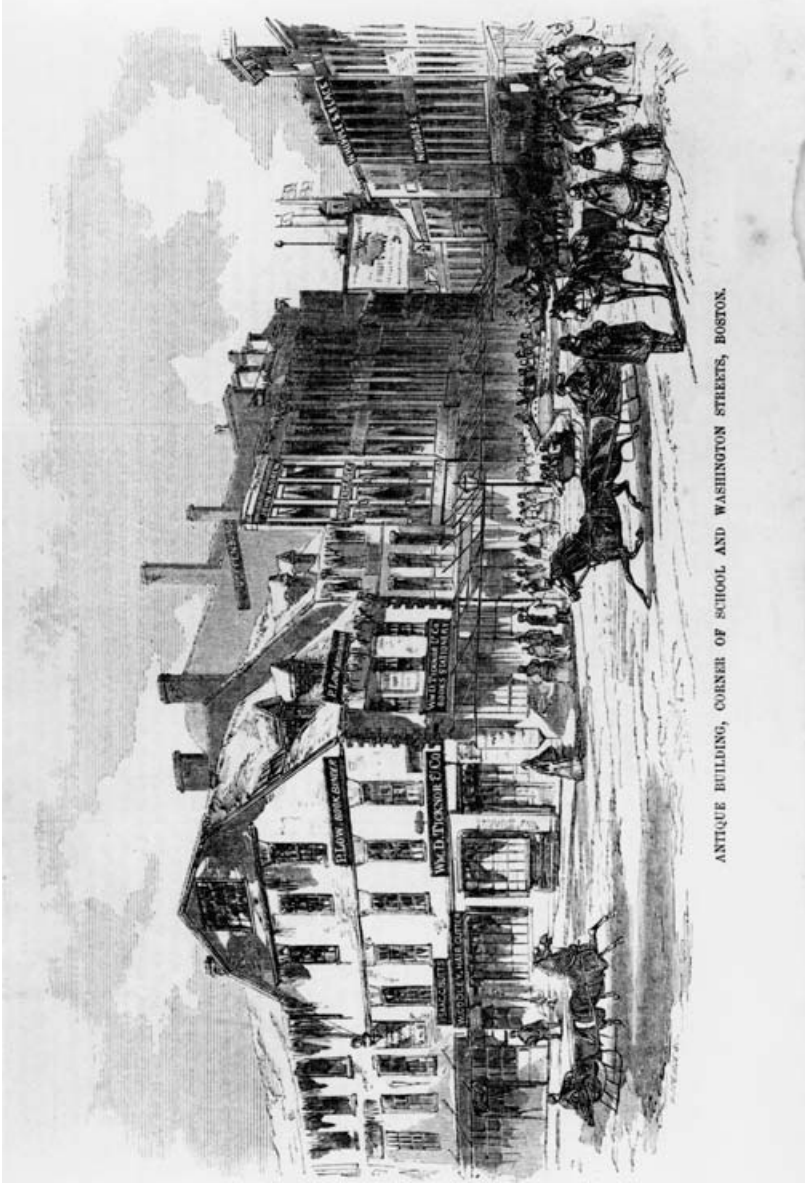
Literature, Morals, Agriculture and General Intelligence,” the *Messenger* filled its columns with poems, fiction, and essays as well as with the standard crop reports, crime notes, town council minutes, and legislative debates.¹⁹ Perhaps it was while laying out these literary columns that Kinsley first began reading Shakespeare’s plays, parts of which, along with the Bible, he committed to memory. Perhaps it was also at the *Messenger* that he picked up the smattering of Latin that appears in his diary. It is certain, however, that in setting type for the paper, Kinsley learned about words: how to spell them, shape them, and use them. He learned how to make them bold or thin, pointed or flat, piercing or dull. As a printer he came to appreciate the power of words, and as someone who was always aware of space limitations and production costs, he came to appreciate an economy and simplicity of style that would later be reflected in the lean, lucid prose of his Civil War diary.²⁰

Kinsley learned about more than words and writing at the *Messenger*. The paper was full of news about politics and reform at the local, state, and national levels. It discussed the advantages of admitting California to the Union; it reported the minutes of women’s rights conventions; it assessed the Vermont state legislature’s budget for plank roads; it covered Franklin County temperance meetings, at which Kinsley’s father – an avid prohibitionist as well as abolitionist – played an active role. The paper even addressed environmental issues, and in the process chided Vermonters for despoiling their landscape by cutting down every tree in sight and encouraged readers to “Go and plant a tree at once, then boast of having done one good deed in your life. . . .”²¹ But after Congress passed the Compromise of 1850, with its infamous Fugitive Slave Law that required Northern states to assist in the return of runaway slaves to their masters in the South, the *Messenger* was dominated by articles chronicling the growing national crisis over the institution of slavery. Like most Northern papers, the *Messenger* denounced the Fugitive Slave Law as “evil” and “unconstitutional,” but it was equally vehement in denouncing those who advocated violent resistance to the law. It condemned meetings like the one held in New York City on October 10, 1850, at which “there was a great deal of talk about bowie knives and bloodshed” and about arming blacks and killing police officers who tried to enforce the law. “What right,” the *Messenger* asked, “have these men to put down all law and set up anarchy? What right have they to peril the life and property of all the citizens? What right have they to go armed?”²²

How Kinsley, who may well have set the type for this moderate anti-slavery editorial, would have answered these questions in 1850 is open to conjecture, but within a little more than a decade he would not only be defending John Brown's lawless rampage in Kansas and advocating the arming of African Americans, but he would be marching alongside black men in Louisiana, turning them into disciplined soldiers in Mississippi, and leading them into battle in Alabama. In the immediate future, however, Kinsley was on his way to Boston, that hotbed of abolitionism, where black and white radicals had long maintained that there should be no compromise with Southern slaveholders or with Northern proslavery laws and institutions.

Kinsley's departure for Boston in the early 1850s might indicate that the *Messenger's* politics were already too conservative for his taste, or perhaps it simply indicated that Kinsley, an able and adventurous young man, wanted to pursue his career in a city that was the hub of the nation's print world as well as an exciting metropolis of nearly 150,000 inhabitants. In 1853 he was boarding at 10 Morton Place, just off Washington Street, which was known as "Newspaper Row" and was the scene of frantic, nonstop activity where the clashing of presses could be heard day and night. Kinsley worked nearby at 27 School Street as a printer for the *Massachusetts Life Boat*, a weekly temperance paper. The offices of Ticknor and Fields, the preeminent publisher of belles lettres in nineteenth-century America, were just a few doors down the street, at the corner of School and Washington Streets. Below Ticknor and Fields was the Old Corner Bookstore, which stocked foreign as well as domestic publications and was a popular meeting place for Emerson, Longfellow, Hawthorne, Julia Ward Howe, and other members of Boston's literati. Also close at 22 School Street were the offices of *The Youth's Companion*, a popular magazine aimed at nurturing the moral character of young men and women, for which Kinsley also set type during his stay in Boston.²³

Although it might publish a literary review from time to time and it repeatedly professed an interest in "Morals, Education, Business, and General Information," the *Life Boat* was above all else a hard-core temperance paper. In early 1853 the paper boasted that it was "the only paper in Boston devoted exclusively to the cause of temperance," and claimed to have "as large a circulation as any temperance paper ever had in this State." The paper's owner and editor, Benjamin W. Williams, was also the secretary of the governing committee of the Massachusetts Temperance Society, and the society's statewide headquarters were located



ANTIQUÉ BUILDING, CORNER OF SCHOOL AND WASHINGTON STREETS, BOSTON.

4. Historic Boston building on the corner of School and Washington Streets that during the nineteenth century served as home to both the Old Corner Book Store and the publishers Ticknor and Fields. Courtesy of the Bostonian Society.

at the offices of the *Life Boat*. Each week the paper carefully reported the progress of temperance reform throughout New England, and then flooded its columns with sensational cautionary tales about “Dissipation and Destruction,” “Robbery and Rum,” “The Rumseller and His Victim in a Village Graveyard,” “The Loved and Lost,” and “The Poor Drunkard.” Like most other reform papers, the *Life Boat* occasionally expressed its abolitionist sympathies by publishing harrowing accounts of slavery in the South, and a Fourth of July editorial observed that the Fugitive Slave Law and Southern efforts to take slaves into the Nebraska territories “should make every freeman hang his head for shame.” But however brutal slavery in the South might be, the editor of the *Life Boat* maintained that “Never was there a more cruel Slavery than that imposed by the drinking system. . . . The slave trade in all its horrors, never killed, and maimed, and tortured a tithe of the number that strong drink is doing every year.” Yet the odds against the paper succeeding in its war against alcohol were overwhelming, according to the editor, because Robert Gould Shaw’s grandfather and other members of the “wealth and talent and respectability of Boston” were bitterly opposed to the anti-liquor laws that could put an end to “The Slavery of Drinking.” Here, in this small newspaper office staffed by a handful of dedicated teetotalers, Kinsley got a taste of fighting formidable opponents in the name of principle.²⁴

Kinsley worked at the *Life Boat* until August 22, 1854, when the paper ceased operation because its owner and editor Benjamin W. Williams merged his temperance sheet with the *Boston Weekly Commonwealth*, an organ of the Free Soil Party, to form the *Boston Evening Telegraph*, which appeared daily except Sunday. Williams brought Kinsley along with him to the new operation, which had its business offices at 82 Washington Street, and paid him twenty-five dollars a week. The new paper continued to advocate temperance, to attack Boston as a dangerously complacent community where “moderate drinkers . . . are thick as blackberries,” and to denounce the rumseller as “an outlaw—he is a criminal, and in pursuing his business he commits a grave offense.” The paper also took a strong stand against slavery. And in light of the importance Kinsley later attached to John Brown’s war against the spread of slavery into the Midwest, it is perhaps worth noting that the *Telegraph* devoted considerable space to the activities of the “resolute and determined anti-Slavery men” fighting for Kansas and declared that until the “Kansas Question” is settled “we have but the form of a republic, writhing under the rule of oligarchic tyranny. . . .”²⁵

It is also worth noting that in early 1856 the *Telegraph* harangued Kinsley's future employer, the *Boston Evening Traveller*, for suggesting that slavery was an issue in America primarily because a few fanatics had made it one for political reasons. Indignant, the *Telegraph* contended that slavery "is no paltry question about men; but a question of principles; Liberty or Slavery is the issue." Later, in 1857, when Kinsley was working there, the *Traveller* published other articles that must have upset the young idealist, who by this time was almost certainly committed to the immediate abolition of slavery. One editorial dismissed the abolitionist circle as "not larger than a fashionable hoop," another attacked Wendell Phillips for criticizing the Republican Party for promising not to interfere with slavery in the South, and yet another opposed the introduction of slaves into the nation's temperate zones on the grounds that "A free negro population is bad enough and a great injury to such a land, but as slaves they are infinitely more detrimental."²⁶

At the same time that Kinsley's employers at the *Traveller* were complaining about how unpleasant it was to be around free blacks, Kinsley was seeking out black Bostonians and making forays into their community. Since at least the early 1830s with the arrival of William Lloyd Garrison and his newspaper, *The Liberator*, Boston had been home to a handful of black and white antislavery advocates and their integrated meetings. Kinsley probably attended some of these meetings and was inspired by the courageous men and women who even in Boston risked their lives and reputations by preaching immediate abolition. Kinsley knew about the meetings because the newspapers he worked for reported when and where they would be held. Perhaps Kinsley set the type in early 1856 that announced the forthcoming lyceum lecture by John Swett Rock, the brilliant physician and lawyer who would later become the first African American admitted to practice law before the United States Supreme Court. Perhaps after work Kinsley even made his way over to Tremont Temple and listened as Rock delivered an invigorating speech to an integrated audience on "The Unity of the Human Race." And perhaps it was at one of the bookfairs that often accompanied such meetings that Kinsley acquired a small leather-bound volume of religious poems that he kept for the rest of his life and inscribed with the words: "Written by a Negress."²⁷

Attending a racially mixed gathering such as the one at Tremont Temple would have signaled a dramatic change in Kinsley's life, for prior to moving to Boston he had lived in a virtually all-white environment. In