

for war, later on took an active part in the defense of Baltimore, either as soldiers in the ranks or as members of the Committee of Vigilance and Safety.

On the 18th of June, 1812, Congress declared war against Great Britain;<sup>\*</sup> and on Saturday, the 20th of June, the *Federal Republican*, edited by Jacob Wagner and Alexander C. Hanson, published the following editorial: "*Thou hast done a deed whereat valor will weep.*" Without funds, without taxes, without an army, navy, or adequate fortifications—with one hundred and fifty millions of our property in the hands of the declared enemy, without any of his in our power, and with a vast commerce afloat, our rulers have promulgated a war against the clear and decided sentiments of a vast majority of the nation. As the consequences will be soon felt, there is no need of pointing them out to the few who have not sagacity enough to apprehend them. Instead of employing our pen in this dreadful detail, we think it more apposite to delineate the course we are determined to pursue as long as the war shall last. We mean to represent in as strong colors as we are capable, that it is unnecessary, inexpedient, and entered into from partial, personal, and as we believe, motives bearing upon their front marks of undisguised foreign influence, which cannot be mistaken. We mean to use every constitutional argument and every legal means to render as odious and suspicious to the American people, as they deserve to be, the patrons and contrivers of this highly impolitic and destructive war, in the fullest persuasion that we shall be supported and ultimately applauded by nine-tenths of our countrymen, and that our silence would be treason to them. We detest and abhor the endeavors of faction to create civil contest through the pretext of a foreign war it has rashly and premeditatedly commenced, and we shall be ready cheerfully to hazard everything most dear, to frustrate anything leading to the prostration of civil rights, and the establishment of a system of terror and proscription announced in the Government paper at Washington as the inevitable consequence of the measure now proclaimed. We shall cling to the rights of freemen, both in act and opinion, till we sink with the liberties of our country or sink

<sup>\*</sup> The declaration was drafted by Attorney-General William Pinkney of Maryland.

alone. We shall hereafter, as heretofore, unravel every intrigue and imposture which has beguiled or may be put forth to circumvent our fellow-citizens into the toils of the great earthly enemy of the human race. We are avowedly hostile to the presidency of James Madison, and we never will breathe under the dominion, direct or derivative, of Bonaparte, let it be acknowledged when it may. Let those who cannot openly adopt this confession, abandon us; and those who can, we shall cherish as friends and patriots worthy of the name."

Wagner, the editor-in-chief, who had served as chief clerk in the State Department for some years, was a Federalist of the black cockade school. As such he had denounced the administration with a bitterness which stirred up the deadly hatred of the Democrats. Long before war was declared this conduct had called forth fierce replies in the newspapers and had led a number of distinguished people to say that, if it were continued after war was declared, the *Federal Republican* should be silenced.

On the evening of Monday the 22d of June, two days after the publication of this ill-advised editorial, a well organized mob wrecked the printing office, destroyed the type, smashed the presses, and razed the building in which the *Federal Republican* was printed. One of the mob, while engaged in tearing a window from the building, fell from the second story and was instantly killed. The *Federal Gazette* of June 24, in commenting on this disgraceful affair said: "The Mayor of the city, the Judge of the Court of Oyer and Terminer, and several magistrates and military officers, were present and witnessed this dreadful outrage which their *peaceful efforts* were insufficient to prevent, although it was generally known during the preceding day that the attack was meditated."

Hanson, who lived at Rockville, Montgomery County, not having been in Baltimore on the night the printing office was destroyed, was quickly informed of the fact by John Howard Payne, who urged him not to be downed by the mob, but to go on with his paper, assert the liberty of the press which every Republican from Jefferson down to the lowest demagogue had prated so persistently, and, if need be, defend it with arms.

After many consultations with friends, the editors decided to print the *Federal Republican* at Georgetown, where the plant

would be safe, and issue it from the house on Charles street, lately occupied by Wagner, the editor-in-chief. Accordingly, on Sunday the 26th of July, Hanson, accompanied by a number of friends who had volunteered their services "in maintaining the rights of person and property and defending the liberty of the press," took possession of the house which had been supplied with provisions and arms to withstand a siege. On the following day they were joined by more volunteers, making the total number in the party about thirty. Copies of the paper arrived and were distributed without interference, but at night the mob rose in force, stoned the house, beat in the door, brought up a cannon and were about to blow the building to pieces, when a compromise was effected through the mediation of the Mayor and the commander of the militia, General Stricker. In consideration of the promise of a military guard the garrison agreed to surrender to the civil authorities, and the mob agreed to do no further harm to life or property. During the night a number of the defenders had been sent out to notify the authorities, or for other purposes, and were unable to return so that at the time of the surrender the garrison was reduced to twenty-three. The following persons were conducted to jail and committed for further examination: Alexander C. Hanson, Gen. Henry Lee, Gen. James M. Lingan, William Schroeder, John Thompson, William B. Bend, Otho Sprigg, Henry Kennedy, Robert Kilgour, Henry Nelson, John E. Hall, George Winchester, Dr. Peregrine Warfield, George Richards, Edward Gwinn, David Hoffman, Horatio Bigelow, Ephraim Gaither, William Gaither, Jacob Schley, Mark U. Pringle, Daniel Murray and Richard S. Crabb. After the removal of the prisoners, the house was instantly gutted by the mob.

During the following night, the militia having been withdrawn and dismissed, the jail was stormed. Eight of the prisoners mingled with the mob and escaped; nine were taken, dragged to the door where a butcher beat them down with a club and flung their bodies in a pile at the foot of the stairway. The mob fell on the senseless bodies, beat them with clubs, thrust pen-knives into their cheeks, poured candle grease into their eyes and finally gave them to the jail doctor to make skeletons of. General Lingan was killed and General Lee was made a cripple for life. John Thompson, after being terribly beaten and mutilated was tarred

and feathered. Some of the others were hidden in hay carts and sent to friends in town, while those remaining, being too badly hurt to be moved, were cared for at the jail hospital.

The affair was investigated by a joint committee of the two branches of the City Council and later by the Committee of Grievances and Courts of Justice in the General Assembly. Presentments were found against many individuals of each party, but all were acquitted and discharged.

The effect of this shameful riot was far-reaching. All over the country decent people of both parties were alarmed, as they realized that something more than a riot had happened. The freedom of the press had been attacked. The Federal newspapers reminded their readers of the days of the Sedition Law and of the violence with which the Republicans then cried out for free speech and a free press. Their columns were filled with all the details of the riot, Baltimore was nicknamed Mobtown and the blame was laid on the administration.<sup>4</sup>

The immediate effect in Maryland was shown at the state election in October, when the Federalists elected a preponderating majority in the General Assembly on joint ballot, enabling them to elect a Governor and Council and a United States Senator. On the crest of this wave Mr. Hanson was elected to Congress; and was later reimbursed for the losses inflicted on him by the mob. Under date of October 10, 1812, *Niles' Register* said: "The political aspect of the State of Maryland has been completely changed by the election held on Monday last. Various causes are assigned as producing this effect; the chief of which, probably was, the existing diversity of sentiment in some of the counties (always nearly balanced) as to the presidency of the United States."

The issue of October 17 of the *Register* contains this startling announcement: "Mr. Alexander Contee Hanson and his associates who defended the house in Charles street in this city, on the night of the 27th July, *indicted for manslaughter*, have had their trial at Annapolis, and are acquitted!"

<sup>4</sup> McMaster, *History of the People of the U. S.*, 3: 555. For details of the riot see *Niles Register* 2: 373 and 2: 405.

HALL OF HISTORY  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND

THE  
BRITISH INVASION OF MARYLAND  
1812-1815

BY  
WILLIAM M. MARINE

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EDITED, WITH AN APPENDIX, CONTAINING ELEVEN THOUSAND NAMES, BY  
LOUIS HENRY DIELMAN

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