

From: Louise Imogen Guiney, *The White Sail and Other Poems* (Boston: Ticknor & Co., 1887) 132-133.

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### JOHN BROWN: A PARADOX

Compassionate eyes has our brave John  
Brown,  
And a craggy stern forehead, a militant frown;  
He, the storm-bow of peace. Give him volley on  
volley, [5]  
The fool who redeemed us once of our folly,  
And the smiter that healed us, our right John Brown!

Too vehement, verily, was John Brown!  
For waiting is statesmanlike; his the renown  
Of the holy rash arm, the equiper and starter [10]  
Of freedman; aye, call his fanatic and martyr:  
He can carry both halos, our plain John Brown.

A scandalous stumbling-block was John Brown,  
And a jeer; but ah! soon from the terrified town,  
In his bleeding track made over hilltop and hollow, [15]  
Wise armies and councils were eager to follow,  
And the children's lips chanted our lost John Brown.

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Star-led for us, stumbled and groped John Brown,  
Star-led, in the awful morasses to drown;  
And the trumpet that rang for a nation's upheaval, [20]  
From the thought that was just, thro' the deed that  
    was evil,  
Was blown with the breath of this dumb John Brown!

Bared heads and a pledge unto mad John Brown!  
Now the curse is allayed, now the dragon is down, [25]  
Now we see, clear enough, looking back at the onset,  
Christianity's flood-tide and Chivalry's sunset  
In the old broken heart of our hanged John Brown!