

Source: John James Piatt, *Landmarks and Other Poems* (New York: Hurd & Houghton, 1872) 96-97.

### TRANSFIGURATION

[CHARLESTON, VA., DEC. 2, 1859  
WASHINGTON, D.C., DEC. 2, 1863\*]

Four years ago the Saviour of the Slave  
Took in his strong, brave arms a slave-born  
child—  
Ere from the gallows to the martyr's grave  
He passed—with manly blessing, deep and mild.

O Land, however strong, too weak to do [5]  
Such office then! Like Christopher of old,  
In that poor child the lifted Christ he knew,  
The great Bond-Breaker in his human hold!

O humbled Nation! To thy proudest place [10]  
Thou liftest yonder Shape of Freedom now,  
Where Morning shall be quick to see her face,  
And Eve to touch with dew her sacred brow!

But he who seeks the soul within the form  
In that bright shape shall see another sight:  
A grey old man, holding, in calm or storm, [15]  
The unfettered child forever in the light!

\* It was remarked as a suggestive coincidence, that Crawford's Statue of Freedom (the work of putting which in bronze was said to have been done by negroes who were, or had been, slaves in the employment of Clark Mills, another sculptor) was raised to its position on the dome of the National Capitol at Washington on the anniversary of the execution of John Brown at Charlestown, Virginia, four years previous, and at the same hour of the day.