

Source: Edmund Clarence Stedman, in *New York Daily Tribune*, November 12, 1859.

HOW OLD BROWN TOOK HARPER'S FERRY

John Brown in Kansas settled, like a steadfast Yankee farmer,
Brave and godly, with four sons, all stalwart men of might.
There he spoke aloud for Freedom, and the Border-strife grew
warmer,
Till the Rangers fired his dwelling, in his absence, in the night: [5]
And Old Brown
Osawatomie Brown,
Came homeward in the morning—to find his house burned down

Then he grasped his trusty rifle and boldly fought for Freedom, [10]
Smote from border unto border the fierce, invading band;
And he and his brave boys vowed—so might Heaven help and speed
'em!—
They would save those grand old prairies from the curse that
blights the land:
And Old Brown, [15]
Osawatomie Brown,
Said, “Boys, the Lord will aid us!” and he shoved his ramrod down.

And the Lord *did* aid these men, and the labored day and even,
Saving Kansas from its peril; and their very lives seemed
charmed, [20]
Till the Ruffians killed one son, in the blessed light of Heaven—
In cold blood the fellows slew him, as he journeyed all unarmed:
And Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,
Shed not a tear, but shut his teeth and frowned a terrible frown! [25]

Then they seized another brave boy—not amid the heat of battle,
But in peace, behind his plow-share,—and they loaded him with
chains,
And with pikes, before their horses, even as the goad their cattle,
Drive him cruelly, for their sport, and at last blew out his brains: [30]
And Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,
Raised his right hand up to Heaven, calling Heaven's vengeance down.

And he swore a fearful oath, by the name of the Almighty, [35]
He would hunt this ravening evil that had scathed and torn
him so;

He would seize it by the vitals; he would crush it day and night; he
Would so pursue its footsteps, so return it blow for blow,
That Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown, [40]
Should be a name to swear by, in backwoods or in town!

Then his beard became more grizzled, and his wild blue eye grew wilder,
And more sharply curved his hawk's nose, snuffing battle from afar;
And he and the two boys left, though the Kansas strife waxed milder,
Grew more sullen, till was over the bloody Border War, [45]
And Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,
Had gone crazy, as they reckoned by his fearful glare and frown.

So he left the plains of Kansas and their bitter woes behind him,
Slept off into Virginia, where the statesmen all are born, [50]
Hired a farm by Harper's Ferry, and no one knew where to find him,
Or whether he'd turned parson, or was jacketed and shorn;
For Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,
Mad as he was, knew texts enough to wear a parson's gown. [55]

He bought no plows and harrows, spades and shovels, or such
trifles,
But quietly to his rancho there came, by every train,
Boxes full of pikes and pistols, and his well-beloved Sharp's rifles;
And eighteen other madmen joined their leader there again: [60]
Says Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,
"Boys, we have got an army large enough to whip the town!"

"Whip the town, and seize the muskets, free the negroes and then arm
them; [65]
Carry the County and the State, aye, and all the potent South.
On their own heads be the slaughter, if their victims rise to harm them—
These Virginians, who believed not, nor would heed the warning
mouth."

Says Old Brown [70]
Osawatomie Brown,
"The world shall see a Republic, or my name is not John Brown."

'T was the sixteenth of October, on the evening of a Sunday:
"This good work," declared the captain, "shall be on a holy night!"
It was on a Sunday evening, and before the noon of Monday, [75]
With two sons, and Captain Stephens, fifteen privates—black and
white—

Captain Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,
Marched across the bridged Potomac, and knocked the sentinel down; [80]

Took the guarded armory-building, and the muskets and the cannon;
Captured all the county majors and the colonels, one by one;
Scared to death each gallant scion of Virginia they ran on,
And before the noon of Monday, I say, the deed was done.
Mad Old Brown, [85]
Osawatomie Brown,
With his eighteen other crazy men, went in and took the town.

Very little noise and bluster, little smell of powder made he;
It was all done in the midnight, like the Emperor's *coup d'état*.
"Cut the wires! Stop the rail-cars! Hold the streets and bridges!" [90]
said he,
Then declared the new Republic, with himself for guiding star,—
This Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown;
And the bold two thousand citizens ran off and left the town. [95]

Then was riding and railroading and expressing here and thither;
And the Martinsburg Sharpshooters and the Charlestown Volun-
teers,
And the Shepherdstown and Winchester Militia hastened whither
Old Brown was said to muster his ten thousand grenadiers. [100]
General Brown!
Osawatomie Brown!!
Behind whose rampant banner all the North was pouring down.

But at last, 't is said, some prisoners escaped from Old Brown's durance,
And the effervescent valor of Ye Chivalry broke forth, [105]
When they learned that nineteen madmen had the marvellous assur-
ance—
Only nineteen—thus to seize the place and drive them straight about;
And Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown, [110]
Found an army come to take him, encamped around the town.

But to storm, with all the forces I have mentioned, was too risky;
So they hurried off to Richmond for the Government Marines,
Tore them from their weeping matrons, fired their souls with Bourbon
whiskey, [115]
Till they battered down Brown's castle with their ladders and machines;
And Old Brown,

Osawatomie Brown,
Received three bayonet stabs, and a cut on his brave old crown.

Tallyho! the old Virginia gentry gather to the baying! [120]

In they rushed and killed the game, shooting lustily away;
And whene'er they slew a rebel, those who came too late for slaying,
Not to lose a share of glory, fired their bullets in his clay;

And Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown, [125]
Saw his sons fall dead beside him, and between them laid him down.

How the conquerors wore their laurels; how they hastened on the
trial;

How Old Brown was placed, half dying, on the Charlestown Court-
House floor; [130]

How he spoke his grand oration, in the scorn of all denial;
What the brave old madman told them,—these are known the
country o'er.

"Hang Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown," [135]
Said the judge, "and all such rebels!" with his most judicial frown.

But, Virginians, don't do it! for I tell you that the flagon,

Filled with blood of Old Brown's offspring, was first poured by
Southern hands;
And each drop from Old Brown's life-veins, like the red gore of the [140]
dragon,

May spring up a vengeful Fury, hissing through your slave-worn
lands!

And Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown, [145]
May trouble you more than ever, when you've nailed his coffin down!

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