

Source: Whittier, *The Poetical Works of John Greenleaf Whittier* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1892) 258.

BROWN OF OSSAWATOMIE

John Brown of Ossawatomie spake
on his dying day:
"I will not have to shrive my soul a
priest in Slavery's pay.
But let some poor slave-mother whom I [5]
have striven to free,
With her children, from the gallows-
stair put up a prayer for me!"

John Brown of Ossawatomie, they led [10]
him out to die;
And lo! a poor slave-mother with her
little child pressed nigh.
Then the bold, blue eye grew tender,
and the old harsh face grew mild,
As he stooped between the jeering ranks [15]
and kissed the negro's child!

The shadows of his stormy life that mo-
ment fell apart;
And they who blamed the bloody hand
forgave the loving heart. [20]
That kiss from all its guilty means re-
deemed the good intent,
And round the grisly fighter's hair the
martyr's aureole bent!

Perish with him the folly that seeks [25]
through evil good!
Long live the generous purpose unstained
with human blood!
Not the raid of midnight terror, but the
thought which underlies; [30]
Not the borderer's pride of daring, but
the Christian's sacrifice.

Nevermore may yon Blue Ridges the
Northern rifle hear,
Nor see the light of blazing homes flash [35]

on the negro's spear.
But let the free-winged angel Truth
their guarded passes scale,
To teach that right is more than might,
and justice more than mail! [40]

So vainly shall Virginia set her battle
in array;
In vain her trampling squadrons knead
the winter snow with clay.
She may strike the pouncing eagle, but [45]
she dares not harm the dove;
And every gate she bars to Hate shall
open wide to Love!