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THE
B U R I A L
OF
J O H N B R O W N.
BY
WILLIAM E. CHANNING.

THE BURIAL OF JOHN BROWN.

BY WILLIAM E. CHANNING.

That day, I mind it well, we buried him,
 There, in our heart of hearts! From city's wall,
 From depth of deepest woods, came up the moan,
 The weariness, the wail, all that was grief,
 Or could be, in a world all pain and woe.
 Gone and forever gone! the good, the just,
 The patriot fervid, he who lived — to die,
 As he had lived to act,— for the oppressed, the weak.
 A shining stone shall be engraved for him,
 Thereon a martyr's name, the last and best,
 Not Rose, not Lancaster, but "For the Slave,"
 Hapless and helpless, for his breaking heart,
 He stood, truest and best, that hero-soul,
 Old Ossawatomie!

Slow tolled those bells!
 Slow and how far away, and yet too near!
 Where grey Monadnoc lifts a forest front
 Over low Jeffrey's pass, sunk in the vale,
 (Or what seems such, to them who climb that mount),
 And wide Quonaticut, the Indian's stream,
 And those White hills that bend their brows in heaven;
 By seas and farthest lands, and sky and shore,
 Slow tolled the weary peal, John Brown is dead!
 Gone — in his prime of good and thought, and hope.
 Stabbed to his heart so foully by the men,
 Who wore the Southern Madness in their souls.
 Yes! like a falling star, thro' twilight's depth,
 He sank in Heaven, his words were like the hues
 Some gentlest eve imprints with Zephyr's touch,
 And overlays the ripples of the stream,
 In her last glory soothing earth to tears.
 And yet that knell, his form this fatal hour,
 Is swinging on the scaffold!

"Never I planned,
 To kill or ravage, torture or destroy,
 Not in rebellion, not to slay their foes
 Incite the slave, solely to loose his cords.
 'Do unto me as ye would have me do,
 And in my bonds be bound, even as myself,'
 By that, as far as in me I have done,
 God hath not parted persons in his law.
 Father! if by thy will, I came to be
 What now I am, if ever in my heart,
 From my first recollection, still I felt
 Thy guiding hand, be still to me, the same,



Lith of P S Duval Philad^a

W^m E . CHANNING .

This lovely hour all gentleness and peace,
 Ere the faint dawn has painted the dim sky,
 And all her beauty sleeps upon the world.
 I am at peace with all men, in my heart
 I feel the quiet of thy morn, O give
 Me strength of hope, and power of faith to meet
 This sacrifice, I make for man, myself
 A poor and sinful creature, worn and weak.
 Unfailing God, our friend, O give me strength,
 Truly uplift in love, renew my prayer,
 Father! pardon what I have done amiss,
 These deeds were sad, they wore a troubled look,
 Yet for that principle alone, of right,
 I forward moved, then sanctify these acts.
 May they upon the future, throw their light,
 As yonder rising orb who paints the morn,
 With beauteous tints of life; let them awake
 The hearts of a great people, who have moved
 Too sluggishly in freedom's cause, and let
 My name if vain, unnoticed, be the word
 To lift a struggling race, and free the Slave!
 O God! my Savior, my redeemer too,
 Receive me to thyself, now that the day
 Has dawned, when I must die, and those I leave
 That poor and scattered remnant on the hills,
 Of my contentment something breathe in them.
 And let their weeping souls be filled with light,
 And from their breaking hearts be heaven in view,
 Seeing that they, who try for duty, so to live,
 However weak, and so to die for it,
 May with thee be received—"

Mild was that morn, and peaceful was the day,
 When forth from his last prison, stepped this man,
 Who made the Union sacred, and renewed
 By heavenly deeds, the early patriot's faith,—
 Forth from his cell, a wounded dying saint,
 Far from his home, far from his loved-ones aid,
 But closest in their hearts,— with step unshaken,
 And firmly went he forth! and as he went,
 A poor devoted slave, a mother stood,
 One of the race that Christ came down to love,
 Bearing upon her breast, an infant-slave,
 There, by the prison-gate, his blessing craved,
 Softly, with angel-voice, he blessed her there,
 One of his children, for whose good he lived,
 His mind on heaven, his heart still loving earth!

Then, forth, that tread of soldiers with bright arms,

Rifles in long derision at his side,
 Flashed on December sunshine, like a pall
 O'er all that speechless world, cutting the cold
 And hard rapacity of civil lines
 Across God's sky of light,— on, with his cheerful thoughts,
 That patriot fared, and sitting on the bier,
 That soon should hold his silent form, he said :
 " This is a country beautiful, and first
 With pleasure have I seen it now." Serene,
 And clear, modest and sensible,
 He passed along, eyeing in peace the hills,
 That urge the steep Potomac on its flight,
 By old romantic wood and cliff tower tall,—
 Blue as the skies above them, far away
 O'er drear Virginia's vales,—soft russet shades
 The earth, and some few trees, leafless this day,
 Recalling in their grace more vernal bliss.
 O had the might been present in that hour !
 To lift his sinking form and bear him on
 With the dark race he fondly rushed to save !
 O had the soul, the power acquitted then,
 Its future to the world ? (his name is graved,
 First on the Capitol, his figure shines
 Above the highest, who holds the nation's heart) ;
 And now he asked : " Why are not all within the field,
 Not only soldiers, but the citizens ?"
 Faithful to freedom in this cruel hour.
 Why were ye faithless, heavens ? Shall yon chill sky,
 Wherein December's sun gleams sadly forth,
 Fail to prefer one pitying look on him,
 Who dies to liberate the down-trod race,
 From stripes and crime, and legal butcheries,
 Inexpiable, untold woes, the stake, the lash,—
 Not tears, not pity, mercy, no remorse,
 In those who stand around, to slay this man,
 (They called him brave ; " That was my mother's lesson),"
 So mild and pure, an infant without guile !—
 'Twas o'er, 'twas done, the noble, generous soul,
 Now more than martyr, met a felon's doom.—

He went

To death !— death for a multitude, whose hearts
 Were wrung with time-worn suffering, all one pang,
 And torn, like desolation's corses chill,
 Across some mountain-chain, where hungry wolves
 Gnaw the still quivering flesh, and reek their thirst
 On hearts, quick with life's pulses, went to death,
 After those words spoke on Judea's mount,
 The text of love, no wild revenge or hate :

" I could have moved,

But there were prisoners, within my charge,
 I did not fire, this came we for alone,
 But this, no more, to free the Slave, 'tis right,
 The poorest and the weakest, these we aid."

He stood, he could not fly,
 His children fell, that loss was on his soul,
 He spared the lives of them, who sought his own,
 Weak as a dying infant spake great words,
 Soft as an angel's voice, they clearly fall ;
 " I think my friends ! you wrong both God and man,
 And such as interfere in this respect,
 Must act for right, to break man's galling chains,"

They answered,— " Yes,"
 They felt it in their hearts, knew in their minds,
 A voice sprang back from the dark centuries' folds,
 " Father forgive them, they know not what they do."
 They could have wept, bound up the brave man's wounds,
 And set him on a throne, a hero's throne,
 And triumphed him to Alabama's shores,
 Or where the hot Caribbean melts her wave
 Of fire and silver on the Texan's coast,
 O'er Carolina's sands and rice-bound marsh,
 And proud Virginia, once of Washington.

That could not be !
 God's hand was on the hour,— it must not be !
 Never since human breath had moulded sound,
 Or given words to sense, more awful truths,
 Were stretched across the strands of Fate, than those,
 From that poor, simple, dying, tender soul.
 It could not be ! by camp and tower, and ford,
 By crashing cannon tearing down the glen,
 In the lone forest, up dark mountains hoar,
 On sea and land, and graves on earth and wave,
 Sons, fathers falling, doomed without a shrift,
 Unburied not unknelled, came forth that voice
 From the cold armory of Harper's vale,
 A prophecy of woe, " Prepare, prepare,
 The soonest — best, the settlement will come,
 The end's not yet," a voice of woe and war,—
 Where thro' their valleys dash the liberal streams,
 And at day's dying hour, the purple hills
 Smile in their forests at the bounteous heavens.

His seat, is vacant now

The son is gone ; his mother folds her hands,
 Her hair is gray, " Yes, he was mine, 'tis just !
 I gave him for the slave, that hour was God's,
 The negro's blood was ours, he died for him,
 (All that I loved sat in his empty chair),

Died for the mother weeping o'er her child,
 Torn from her bleeding arms; the scourging lash
 Striping her naked flesh, because she wept
 For her young infant's life, sold on the block—
 Sold? God in heaven, yes, for her, he died!"
 (Their barren fields dry shrinking in the sun,
 The city's pomp is o'er, the grass grows green
 Along the silent mart, the drooping flag
 Fades in the hot glare of that Southern tomb).

Here, in these quiet fields, John Brown came forth,
 Cradled in peace and modest competence;
 In pleasant Torrington, drew first his breath,
 Where swift a gleaming wave, darts Naugatuck,
 And the calm hills stretch off to Wolcott's side,
 Soft in their laurel clumps 'neath towers of pine,
 Birthplace of kindred thought all purely reared,
 Where mellow Alcott spake and fetched that strain
 Of sweet, melodious converse. O ye hills!
 And groves, and charming greensward meads,
 Of rural Torrington, never had yet,
 A more devoted soul emerged to life,
 Among the baffling shades that sepulchre,
 This large, afflictive, unwound web of time,
 Than him, I vainly speak of.

From your force,
 A child, he drew perpetual courage,
 Full rich in the love of a good mother,
 To life's adventure saintly and resigned,
 Taught to serve truth, seek God and do the right!
 Yes! must there move all blessings in this air
 Of dear Connecticut, o'er her green fields,
 Her lone romantic hills, her torrents bold,
 And yonder wave-fringed town, whence busy Yale
 Pours forth such learned rivers, o'er the States.
 And still, it stands, the home where he was born,—
 The homely house, domestic in its style,
 As he, who there first felt the wrench of time,
 With sloping roof behind, with windows quaint,
 And lavish chimney from its centre flung,
 Shaming the villa's brick. And here he played,
 A merry boy beneath the low stone wall,
 Or saw the sunset fade across the lines
 That suit yon happy fields. Here, as a child,
 Along the meadows, where the streamlet glides,
 No future condescension could reveal
 The boding years, and yet remain these things;
 But he, who saw them so unconsciously
 Of days in store, he may not come again,
 When even the weeds and tall, neglected grass,

Whisper their fitful surmise to the breeze,
 That overtops their dreams! Widely the day,
 On this uncumbered horizon falls in
 From those blue skies, a house standing so free,
 In its society of light and air.
 What tho' its casements rattle in the blast,
 Immortal deeds within them sprang to life!
 Not long his hours among his household gods,
 For, far away, where bold Ohio's stream,
 Pours down her volume, past Kentucky's vales,
 And further yet, and in maturer years,
 He spent his strength upon that prairie fight
 For bleeding Kansas, when Missouri's crimes
 Burnt thro' a freeman's heart and lit its flames.
 There, came the sorrow o'er him, there his race
 Fell at the Southern rifle, there he fought,
 And with superior calmness, or swift guile
 Such as a woodman's creed sweetly allows,
 Thus preached a hero's truth, saintly if strong,
 Wise Ossawatomie!

He knew not that,—

The day in Harper's vale. Never he heard,
 Those pealing strains ascend from camp and town,
 "We're marching on," unknown, unheard-of lived,
 Where the dark Adirondacs fling the pine,
 Up the unsounded ramparts of their chains,
 And lakes, whence the wild waterfall alone,
 Whirls thro' the steep-cut flume a curdling hymn.
 There, as a settler on the silent lands,
 Within his heart musing of many things,
 His children near, their mother by his side,
 (She, who walked truly with him to the end,
 Soothed his affliction, staunched his wounds with love),
 There, in that tranquil Elba, might have lived,—
 And all that is, not been?

Most vain that thought!

Before him lay the laws, the swift reward,
 The spy, the bribe, the scoff, hunted from town
 To town, bearing a charmed life, for death
 Grimly prepared. And still that voice, a cry
 From breaking hearts, more wretched than his own.
 That simple, childlike, helpless, loving race,—
 Enough, he heard it still!

No, no, not rest,

He knew no rest, sleeping or waking none!
 Holding his plough across the fresh-broke swards,
 When fell his children in the prairie-fight,
 Or at the good man's burial from the church,
 In storm or calm, in danger or repose,

"Do ye for us, as we should do, for you,
 We are the poor, oppressed, and you — the strong."
 Nor aid he sought, nor force of arms nor men,
 But in his daring heart, and soldier's brain,
 Matched to heroic will with earnest prayers,
 And those few watchful souls who knew this man,
 As one, a bride, upon a summer morn,
 To some sweet sacrifice of all her dower,
 Devoted to the death for him she loves,
 He went, not all alone!

That race kept with him,
 The oppressed, the weak, those who him needed.
 The souls went too, of all the martyred good,
 Who died for men, stars that adorn the Past,
 And light the sky of ages, lamps of fame!
 And one whom he had worshiped from his birth,
 The Savior! Those too, him half-way welcomed,
 Fluent and loud, fixed pioneers of speech,
 Who poured forth abolition, and preferred
 Scant reconciliation in all human souls,
 To close companionship. And women,
 Of tried passion, who surprised man's fortitude,
 And off their silvery lips loosed the shrill breath
 Of liberty into war's clarion keen,
 Shaping man's rancor.

With this host he passed,—
 All that was acting on life's stage, he passed :
 Or crowding street, or miscellaneous wain,
 Towering with luxuries, the Mill whose bleach,
 Was spun from bloody thread; the Court, the Church,
 Where never yet, that name of Slave was breathed,
 He knew them well, twas the loud treacherous world,
 He oft had dreamed of, masking Human Right,
 (Pouring envenomed death, thro' life and love)
 Till one man touch the cords and launch the bark,
 With loud acclaim, United Liberty!

He came, he touched the cords, 'tis done!
 The chain is snapt; the vessel leaves the shore.