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JOHN BROWN, "of Ossawatimie," a celebrated American abolitionist and anti-slavery agitator, was born at Torrington, Conn., May 9, 1800, and was executed at Charlestown, Va., Dec. 2, 1859. He settled as a boy in Ohio, where he learned the tanner's trade, married, and had, it is said, twenty children. In 1855, he emigrated to Kansas, where his radical anti-slavery opinions brought him into conflict with the pro-slavery leaders. After his home had been burned and his son John killed by "border ruffians," as the armed pro-slavery men were termed, his fanaticism led him to undertake, by way of reprisal, the midnight assassination of five of his opponents. In 1859, he organized an invasion of Virginia as a step toward securing emancipation of the slaves, and on October 16, with over a score of associates, he surprised the town of Harper's Ferry, in what is now West Virginia, and there seized the arsenal and armory. Brown and his followers were on the following day arrested by the United States troops and handed over to the State authorities. Brown, with several of his associates, was tried before a Virginia court, found guilty on several counts, and was hanged, exhibiting on the scaffold the serene composure and confidence of a martyr. See "Lives" by Redpath (1860), and Sanborn (1885); and Thoreau's "Anti-Slavery and Reform Papers" (1890).

WORDS TO GOVERNOR WISE AT HARPER'S FERRY

GOVERNOR,—I have from all appearances not more than fifteen or twenty years the start of you in the journey to that eternity of which you kindly warn me; and, whether my time here shall be fifteen months or fifteen days or fifteen hours, I am equally prepared to go. There is an eternity behind and an eternity before; and this little speck in the centre, however long, is but comparatively a minute. The difference between your tenure and mine is trifling, and I therefore tell you to be prepared. I am prepared. You all have a heavy responsibility, and it behooves you to prepare more than it does me.

LAST SPEECH TO THE COURT

NOVEMBER 2, 1859

I HAVE, may it please the Court, a few words to say. In the first place, I deny everything but what I have all along admitted,—the design on my part to free the slaves. I intended certainly to have made a clean thing of that matter, as I did last winter, when I went into Missouri and there took slaves without the snapping of a gun on either side, moved them through the country, and finally left them in Canada. I designed to have done the same thing again on a larger scale. That was all I intended. I never did intend murder, or treason, or the destruction of property, or to excite or incite slaves to rebellion, or to make insurrection.

I have another objection; and that is, it is unjust that I should suffer such a penalty. Had I interfered in the manner which I admit, and which I admit has been fairly proved (for I admire the truthfulness and candor of the greater portion of the witnesses who have testified in this case),—had I so interfered in behalf of the rich, the powerful, the intelligent, the so-called great, or in behalf of any of their friends, —either father, mother, brother, sister, wife, or children, or any of that class,—and suffered and sacrificed what I have in this interference, it would have been all right; and every man in this court would have deemed it an act worthy of reward rather than punishment.

This court acknowledges, as I suppose, the validity of the law of God. I see a book kissed here which I suppose to be the Bible, or at least the New Testament. That teaches me that all things whatsoever I would that men should do to me,

I should do even so to them. It teaches me, further, to “remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them.” I endeavored to act up to that instruction. I say I am yet too young to understand that God is any respecter of persons. I believe that to have interfered as I have done—as I have always freely admitted I have done—in behalf of his despised poor was not wrong, but right. Now, if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and mingle my blood further with the blood of my children and with the blood of millions in this slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel, and unjust enactments,—I submit; so let it be done!

Let me say one word further.

I feel entirely satisfied with the treatment I have received on my trial. Considering all the circumstances, it has been more generous than I expected. But I feel no consciousness of guilt. I have stated from the first what was my intention and what was not. I never had any design against the life of any person, nor any disposition to commit treason, or excite slaves to rebel, or make any general insurrection. I never encouraged any man to do so, but always discouraged any idea of that kind.

Let me say also a word in regard to the statements made by some of those connected with me. I hear it has been stated by some of them that I have induced them to join me. But the contrary is true. I do not say this to injure them, but as regretting their weakness. There is not one of them but joined me of his own accord, and the greater part of them at their own expense. A number of them I never saw, and never had a word of conversation with till the day they came to me; and that was for the purpose I have stated.

Now I have done.