

And oft she wandered night by night
Alone, bewailing her sad fate,
Until by chance, to her delight,
She met with one compassionate.
To Mara then she told this tale,
And he in turn did his narrate,
And when they could they would not fail
To meet here and anticipate
How they might safely plan and shape
Their way to freedom—and escape.

When Mara suddenly was hailed,
The day when he was out in charge
Of his young workers, he ne'er failed
To let those children run at large,
If there was opportunity.
And then he quickly went to see
What cause there might be to demand
His presence thus so hastily.
He wished to show he was at hand,
And hurried to the overseer,
Who met him partly on the way,
With look determined and severe,
And said, "There, take this whip and lay
It quick and hard on that old wench,
She's trying her old game once more,
Go lash till her desire you quench
For constant loafing—make her roar,
I've tried it, 'tis a certain cure."
Go now, begin and try your hand,
Your action must be quick and sure,
Go make them niggers understand
That you they also must obey,
That while you're under my command
They will be closer watched each day,
And that you'll do just what I say.
Here, take this whip and use it well,
And give each lazy nigger—hell."

Mara touched not the whip but went
To where the prostrate woman lay.
Her failing breath was almost spent,
And some around began to pray.
With tender care he had her raised,
And carried to the nearest shed,
By looks his humane act was praised—
Water was poured upon her head.
Just then the overseer in rushed,
He scowled at Mara as he passed,
As if his dignity was crushed,
He raged like a sirocco blast—

* NOTE—"No slave dares to be ill or unable to walk, but, when the poor sufferer dies, the master suspects there must have been something wrong inside, and regrets not having liberally applied the usual remedy of burning the belly with a red hot iron."—(Cailles Travels, Vol. II, Page 89.)

"Back niggers, quick, to work off go,
I'll manage this extremity."
And then to Mara said, "You'll know
That when I said go strike the blow,
I knew the right true remedy.
You disobeyed and left the whip,
And nigger like you sneaked away,
But I sha'n't let you go or slip—
You've got to do just what I say.
Here, take this lash and use it now,
Go make that scheming negress rise,
Come quick or else there'll be a row,
Your bastard back I shall chastise,
'Till fellow slaves shall you despise—
To me I'll make you humbly bow."
He said no more, but raised the lash
To strike the feeble woman there,
But Mara with a sudden dash
Snatched it and tossed it in the air,
Which made his raged opponent stare,
And o'er his face there came a scowl;
He then at Mara aimed a stroke,
Which might be deadly as it was foul,
If its great force had not been broke.
Then quick he drew a weapon out
And Mara saw a pistol aimed
Straight at his head, he wheeled about
And struck—the overseer fell maimed,
Apparently down in a faint—
Few thought he'd live to make complaint.
But soon he rose, and had he power
Mara would die that very hour;
Again he sought his pistol true,
'Twas gone, but how he never knew,
Then he made horrid threats and sneered
And cursed until he disappeared.
He left—but would a tale relate
Of insubordination base,
And an excitement would create
Enough to seal a plotter's fate.
It would be deemed a desperate case
To strike planter's overseer,
Or his authority resist,
Though should relationship be near.
The culprit would have cause to fear.
Those who owned slaves would all persist
In having strict obedience shown.
As slaves could nothing ever own.
That all their efforts, weak or strong,
Would to their owners still belong.
Mara knew this, he felt a dread
Of what his future fate might be,
Vengeance would fall upon his head—
His days one bleak, sad misery.

Such was the life slaves mostly led,
But from such life one just had fled—