

Where neath a large umbrageous tree
The overseer sat sleepily,
But still he watched each worker's hoe
Move steadily along each row,
And shouted if one wearied back,
At labor bent, in work grew slack—
In thought he thus would slaves attack:
"Feel touched for them!—no, not the
least,

Each one was scarcely more than brute,
As cannibals they all would feast,
This was a fact none could dispute.
They all are made for white men's use
And will not work without abuse."
Such was the character bestowed
On those called slaves, yet it was known
That such oppressed ones often showed
True kindness almost theirs alone.

Just then a woman worn and faint,
Who feared of ills to make complaint,
Dropped on the hot and dusty ground,
Quick all the negroes stared around,
A few rushed out to raise her head,
And some exclaimed, "She's dead, she's
dead."

The overseer from his snug place
Frowned on them with a sullen face.
He felt annoyed to be disturbed,
His temper rose, 'twas not soon curbed,
He swore he would each negro damn—
"Back fools! You know it's all a sham.
She's often worked that trick before,
And now she's trying it once more,
Back, back to work and let her stay,
We'll give her physic right away,
A certain cure, sure and complete,
'Twill quickly bring her to her feet,
I've tried it often as you know,
Scarce more at times than one smart
blow—

"Here Mara, here," he shouted out,
Which startled some of those about
And frightened others who well knew
That what he threatened he would do.
"Here Mara, quick," and then he took
A whip from out a corner nook.

Some negro children on that day
Were out at work not far away.
A young man had them in his charge,
Who often let them run at large.
With Ethiope blood he was defiled,
Though said to be his owner's child.
He watched them work and heard them
shout,
And liked to see them romp about.
Each had to do some little task,

Scarce more from children could one ask,
Some trifling job, half work half play,
He'd give to each from day to day,
Unless pressed by the overseer,
And then he'd seem to be severe,
But when that strict man left their view
The boys and girls again well knew
That they could work just as before,
Their manager would ask no more.
He had a heart and pitied those
Who dreamt not yet of future woes,
Nor of the storms which might descend
To sweep away an only friend.
Poor simple things, they never thought
To what condition they were brought.
They saw the sun and the blue sky,
Their childish hopes were just as high,
Few knew the meaning of a sigh.
Their songs and laughter, jokes and play
Delighted them from day to day.
For these young creatures he could feel,
He would not yet their state reveal,
For they could scarcely understand
Their degradation in the land.
Though he was resolute and brave
His tender feelings never gave
Him nerve to say each was a slave—
A vassal, such as he was held,
Against which state his heart rebelled.
He might be either kept or sold
'Till he had grown infirm or old,
Just as his owner needed gold.
Yet he was favored in a way,
He need not toil day after day,
He mostly had his own desire,
But must not from the place retire—
'Twas said his owner was his sire,
Perhaps indulged on this account
He was allowed a fair amount
Of liberty in many ways.
To school he had been early sent
On learning much his mind seemed bent.
His skill in gardening did amaze,
The flowers he grew got all the praise,
Yet strange he mostly liked to be
With children in captivity,
For them he had great sympathy.
Of such he was made overseer,
But subject to a senior near.
This task to him was his delight
And often privately at night
He'd teach some older slaves to write—
A dangerous task, for 'twas a crime
To teach a negro at that time—
For many say, whatever may come,
That ignorance is best for some.
He read and told them many things
Of gods and men, of priests and kings,