

**THE HIRELING AND  
THE SLAVE, CHICORA,  
AND OTHER POEMS**

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The Hireling and the Slave, Chicora, and Other Poems by William J. Grayson

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**WILLIAM J. GRAYSON**

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BY

WILLIAM J. GRAYSON.

After all, Slavery in their case (the Jamaica slaves) is but another name for servitude.—M. G. LEWIS.

Irish whites have been long emancipated, and nobody asks them to work, or permits them to work, on condition of finding them potatoes.—CARLYLE.

I never saw servants in any old English family more comfortable or more devoted; it is a relief to see any thing so patriarchal after the \* \* \* Northern States. I would rather be a "slave" here, than a grumbling, saucy "help" there.—Miss MURRAY in *Georgia*.



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1856.

PS1764  
G238  
1856  
MAIN

TO

JAMES L. PETIGRU, LL.D.

I ASK permission to inscribe the following verses to you. If not a fit offering to your taste and judgment, they at least give me an opportunity for saying how much I admire the wit, intellect; and learning which you have devoted with so much success to every noble purpose; which have never failed friend or stranger in distress, nor shrunk from a toil or sacrifice required by Justice, Humanity, or Generosity.

The most exalted station in society is that of the Advocate who employs distinguished legal attainments and abilities to defend the unfortunate, vindicate truth and right, and maintain law, order, and established government, and this station is universally admitted to be yours.

## P R E F A C E.

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THE malignant abuse lavished on the slaveholders of America by writers in this country and England can be accounted for but in one way consistently with any degree of charitable consideration for the slanderers. They have no knowledge of the thing abused. They substitute an ideal of their own contriving for the reality. They regard slavery as a system of chains, whips, and tortures. They consider its abuses as its necessary condition, and a cruel master its fair representative. Mr. Clarkson took up the subject, originally, as a fit one for a college exercise in rhetoric, and it became a rhetorical exercise for life to himself and his followers. With these people the cruelty of slavery is an affair of tropes and figures. But they have dealt so long in metaphorical fetters and prisons, that they have brought themselves to believe that the Negroes work in chains and live in dungeons.

To prove the evils of slavery, they collect, from all quarters, its abuses, and show the same regard for fairness and common sense as they would do to gather

all the atrocities of their own country committed by husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, priest and people, and denounce these several relations in life in consequence of their abuses.

The laborer suffers wrong and cruelty in England, but they say it is against the law, against public opinion; he may apply to the courts for redress; these are open to him. Cruelty to the slave is equally against the law. It is equally condemned by public opinion; and as to the courts of law being open to the pauper hireling, we may remember the reply of Sheridan to a similar remark, Yes, and so are the London hotels: justice and a good dinner at a public house are equally within his reach. If, in consequence of the evils incident to hireling labor—because there are severe, heartless, grinding employers, and miserable, starving hirelings, it were proposed to abolish hireling labor, it would be quite as just and logical as the argument to abolish slavery because there are sufferings among slaves, and hard hearts among masters. The cruelty or suffering is no more a necessary part of the one system than of the other. Notwithstanding its abuses and miseries, the hireling system works beneficially with white laborers; and so also, notwithstanding hard masters, slavery, among a Christian people, is advantageous to the Negro. But to establish the hireling system with Africans would be as wise as to endeavor to bestow the constitutional government of England on Ashantee or Dahomey. In both cases



there would be an equal amount of abstract truth and practical absurdity.

Slavery is that system of labor which exchanges subsistence for work, which secures a life-maintenance from the master to the slave, and gives a life-labor from the slave to the master. The slave is an apprentice for life, and owes his labor to his master; the master owes support, during life, to the slave. Slavery is the Negro system of labor. He is lazy and improvident. Slavery makes all work, and it insures homes, food, and clothing for all. It permits no idleness, and it provides for sickness, infancy, and old age. It allows no tramping or skulking, and it knows no pauperism.

This is the whole system substantially. All cruelty is an abuse; does not belong to the institution; is now punished, and may be in time prevented. The abuses of slavery are as open to all reforming influences as those of any other civil, social, or political condition. The improvement in the treatment of the slave is as marked as in that of any other laboring class in the world. If it be true of the English soldier or sailor that his condition has been ameliorated in the last fifty years, it is quite as true of the negro.

If slavery is subject to abuses, it has its advantages also. It establishes more permanent, and, therefore, kinder relations between capital and labor. It removes what Stuart Mill calls "the widening and embittering feud between the class of labor and the class of capi-

tal." It draws the relation closer between master and servant. It is not an engagement for days or weeks, but for life. There is no such thing with slavery as a laborer for whom nobody cares or provides. The most wretched feature in hiring labor is the isolated, miserable creature who has no home, no work, no food, and in whom no one is particularly interested. *This is seen among hirelings only.*

The sale of slaves is thought to be a great evil to the slave. But what is it substantially more than a transfer of labor from one employer to another? Is this an evil to the laborer? Would it be considered an evil by the European hiring if the laws required every master, before he dismissed his workmen, to secure to them another employer? Would it be an evil to the hiring to be certain of obtaining work—to be safe from the misery of having no employer, no work, while he is starving for bread? The sale of the slave is the form in which the laws secure the slave from this misery of the hiring—secure to him a certainty of employment and a certainty of subsistence. The hiring has neither.

I do not say that slavery is the best system of labor, but only that it is the best for the Negro in this country. In a nation composed of the same race or similar races, where the laborer is intelligent, industrious, and provident, money-wages may be better than subsistence. Even under all advantages there are great defects in the hiring system, for which, hitherto, no

statesman has discovered an adequate remedy. In hireling states there are thousands of idlers, trampers, poachers, smugglers, drunkards, and thieves, who make theft a profession. There are thousands who suffer for want of food and clothing, from inability to obtain them. For these two classes—those who will not work, and those who can not—there is no sufficient provision. Among slaves there are no trampers, idlers, smugglers, poachers, and none suffer from want. Every one is made to work, and no one is permitted to starve. Slavery does for the Negro what European schemers in vain attempt to do for the hireling. It secures work and subsistence for all. It secures more order and subordination also.\* The master is a Commissioner of the Poor on every plantation, to provide food, clothing, medicine, houses, for his people. He is a police-officer to prevent idleness, drunkenness, theft, or disorder. I do not mean by formal appointment of law, but by virtue of his relation to his slaves. There is, therefore, no starvation among slaves. There are, comparatively, few crimes. If there are paupers in slave states, they are the hirelings of other countries, who have run away from their homes. Pauperism began with them when serfage was abolished.

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\* One of the best arrangements for the relief of the hireling laborer is the provision made in France of houses where the children of laborers are taken in when the laborers go to work in the morning, are carefully attended during the day, and restored to the parents on their return at night. A similar provision for the care of children is found on every plantation.