

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN

(Told to the Children)

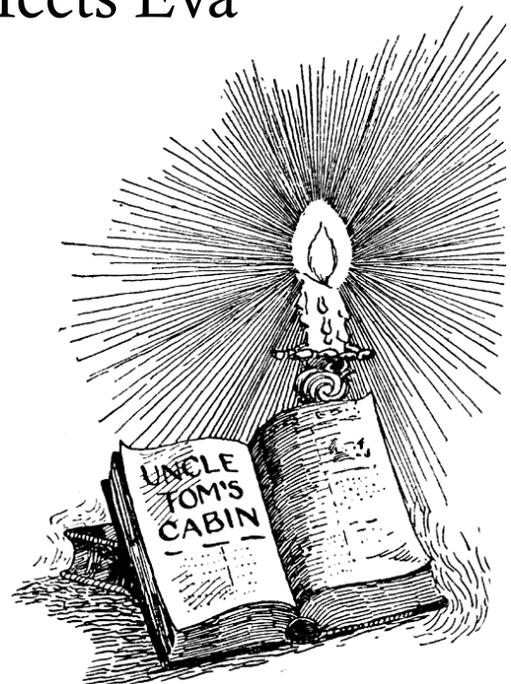
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Chapter 8

Uncle Tom Meets Eva



Haley stayed in Washington several days. He went to market each day and bought more slaves. He put heavy chains on their hands and feet, and sent them to prison along with Tom.

When he had bought all the slaves he wanted, and was ready to go, he drove them before him, like a herd of cattle, on to a boat which was going south.

It was a beautiful boat. The deck was gay with lovely ladies and fine gentlemen walking about enjoying the bright spring sunshine.

Down on the lower deck, in the dark, among the luggage, were crowded Tom and the other poor slaves.

Some of the ladies and gentlemen on board were very sorry for the poor niggers, and pitied them. Others never thought about them at all, or if they did, thought it was quite just and proper that they should be treated badly. 'They are only slaves,' they said.

Among the passengers was a pretty little girl, about six years old. She had beautiful golden hair, and big blue eyes. She ran about here, there, and everywhere, dancing and laughing like a little fairy. There were other children on board, but not one so pretty or so merry as she. She was always dressed in white, and Tom thought she looked like a little angel, as she danced and ran about.

Often and often she would come, and walk sadly round the place where the poor slaves sat in their chains. She would look pityingly at them, and then go slowly away. Once or twice she came with her pinafore full of sweets, nuts, and oranges, and gave them all some.

Tom watched the little lady, and tried to make friends with her. His pockets were full of all kinds of things, with which he used to amuse his old master's children.

He could make whistles of every sort and size, cut baskets out of cherry-stones, faces out of nut-shells, jumping figures out of bits of wood. He brought these out one by one, and though the little girl was shy at first, they soon grew to be great friends.

'What is missy's name?' said Tom one day.

'Evangeline St. Clare,' said the little girl; 'though papa and everybody else call me Eva. Now, what's your name?'

'My name's Tom. The little chil'en at my old home used to call me Uncle Tom.'

'Then I mean to call you Uncle Tom, because, you see, I like you,' said Eva. 'So, Uncle Tom, where are you going?'

'I don't know, Miss Eva.'

'Don't know?' said Eva.

'No. I'm going to be sold to somebody. I don't know who.'

'My papa can buy you., said Eva quickly. 'If he buys you you will have good times. I mean to ask him to, this very day.'

'Thank you, my little lady,' said Tom.

Just at this moment, the boat stopped at a small landing-place to take in some wood. Eva heard her father's voice, and ran away to speak to him.

Tom too rose and walked to the side. He was allowed to go about now without chains. He was so good and gentle, that even a man like Haley could not help seeing that it could do no harm to let him go free.

Tom helped the sailors to carry the wood on the boat. He was so big and strong that they were very glad to have his help.

Eva and her father were standing by the railings as the boat once more began to move. It had hardly left the landing-stage when, somehow or other, Eva lost her balance. She fell right over the side of the boat into the water.

Tom was standing just under her, on the lower deck, as she fell. In one moment he sprang after her. The next he had caught her his arms, and was swimming with her to the boat-side, where eager hands were held out to take her.

The whole boat was in confusion. Every one ran to help Eva, while the poor slave went back to his place, unnoticed and uncared for.

But Mr. St. Clare did not forget.

The next day Tom sat on the lower deck, with folded arms, anxiously watching him as he talked to Haley.

Eva's father was a very handsome man. He was like Eva, with the same beautiful blue eyes and golden-brown hair. He was very fond of fun and laughter, and though he had quite made his mind to buy Tom, he was now teasing Haley, and pretending to think that he was asking too much money for him.

'Papa do buy him, it's no matter what you pay', whispered Eva softly, putting her arms around her father's neck. 'You have money enough, I know. I want him.'

'What for, pussy? Are you going to use him for a rattle-box, or a rocking-horse, or what?'

'I want to make him happy.'

Mr. St. Clare laughed; but after making a few more jokes about it, he gave Haley the money he asked for, and Tom had a new master.

'Come, Eva,' said Mr. St. Clare, and, taking her hand, went across the boat to Tom.

'Look up, Tom,' he said to him, 'and see how you like your new master.'

Tom looked up. Mr. St. Clare had such a gay, young, handsome face, that Tom could not help feeling glad. Grateful tears rushed to his eyes as he said, 'God bless you, mas'r.'

'Can you drive horses, Tom?'

'I've been allays used to horses,' said Tom.

'Well, I think I'll make you a coachman. But you must not get drunk.'

Tom looked surprised and a little hurt.

'I never drink, mas'r,' he said.

'Never mind, my boy,' said Mr. St. Clare, seeing him look so grave; 'I don't doubt you mean to do well.'

'I certainly do, mas'r,' said Tom.

'And you shall have good times,' said Eva. 'Papa is very good to everybody, only he always will laugh at them.'

'Papa is much obliged to you,' said Mr. St. Clare laughing, as he walked away.