

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN

(Told to the Children)

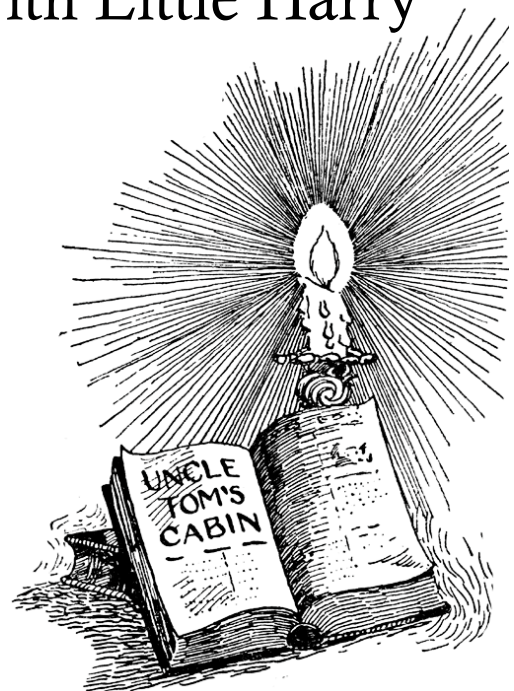
By

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Chapter 2

Eliza Runs Away With Little Harry



Mr. Shelby was very unhappy because of what he had done. He knew his wife would be very unhappy too, and he did not know how to tell her.

He had to do it that night, however, before she went to bed.

Mrs. Shelby could hardly believe it. 'Oh, you do not mean this,' she said. 'You must not sell our good Tom and dear little Harry. Do anything rather than that. It is a wicked, wicked thing to do.'

'There is nothing else I can do,' said Mr. Shelby. 'I have sold everything I can think of, and at any rate now that Haley has set his heart on having Tom and Harry, he would not take anything or anybody instead.'

Mrs. Shelby cried very much about it, but at last, though she was very, very unhappy she fell asleep.

But some one whom Mr. and Mrs. Shelby never thought of was listening to this talk.

Eliza was sitting in the next room. The door was not quite closed, so she could not help hearing what was said. As she listened she grew pale and cold and a terrible look of pain came into her face.

Eliza had had three dear little children, but two of them had died when they were tiny babies. She loved and cared for Harry all the more because she had lost the others. Now he was to be taken from her, and sold to cruel men, and she would never see him again. She felt she could not bear it.

Eliza's husband was called George, and was a slave too. He did not belong to Mr. Shelby, but to another man, who had a farm quite near. George and Eliza could not live together as a husband and wife generally do. Indeed, they hardly ever saw each other. George's master was a cruel man, and would not let him come to see his wife. He was so cruel, and

beat George so dreadfully, that the poor slave made up his mind to run away. He had come that very day to tell Eliza what he meant to do.

As soon as Mr. and Mrs. Shelby stopped talking, Eliza crept away to her own room, where little Harry was sleeping. There he lay with his pretty curls around his face. His rosy mouth was half open, his fat little hands thrown out over the bed-clothes, and a smile like a sunbeam upon his face.

'My baby, my sweet one,' said Eliza, 'they have sold you. But mother will save you yet!'

She did not cry. She was too sad and sorrowful for that. Taking a piece of paper and a pencil, she wrote quickly.

'Oh, missis! dear missis! don't think me ungrateful—don't think hard of me, anyway! I heard all you and master said to-night. I am going to try to save my boy—you will not blame me! God bless and reward you for all your kindness!'

Eliza was going to run away.

She gathered a few of Harry's clothes into a bundle, put on her hat and jacket, and went to wake him.

Poor Harry was rather frightened at being waked in the middle of the night, and at seeing his mother bending over him, with her hat and jacket on.

'What is the matter, mother?' he said beginning to cry.

'Hush,' she said, 'Harry mustn't cry or speak aloud, or they will hear us. A wicked man was coming to take little Harry away from his mother, and carry him 'way off in the dark. But mother won't let him. She's going

to put on her little boy's cap and coat, and run off with him, so the ugly man can't catch him.'

Harry stopped crying at once, and was good and quiet as a little mouse, while his mother dressed him. When he was ready, she lifted him in her arms, and crept softly out of the house.

It was a beautiful, clear, starlight night, but very cold, for it was winter-time. Eliza ran quickly to Uncle Tom's cottage, and tapped on the window.

Aunt Chloe was not asleep, so she jumped up at once, and opened the door. She was very much astonished to see Eliza standing there with Harry in her arms. Uncle Tom followed her to the door, and was very much astonished too.

'I'm running away, Uncle Tom and Aunt Chloe—carrying off my child,' said Eliza. 'Master sold him.'

'Sold him?' they both echoed, lifting up their hands in dismay.

'Yes, sold him,' said Eliza. 'I heard master tell missis that he had sold my Harry, and you, Uncle Tom. The man is coming to take you away to-morrow.'

At first Tom could hardly believe what he heard. Then he sank down, and buried his face in his hands.

'The good Lord have pity on us!' said Aunt Chloe. 'What has Tom done that master should sell him?'

'He hasn't done anything—it isn't for that. Master don't want to sell; but he owes this man money. If he doesn't pay him it will end in his having to sell the house and all the slaves. Master said he was sorry. But missis she talked like an angel. I'm a wicked girl to leave her so, but I can't help

it. It must be right; but if it an't right, the good Lord will forgive me, for I can't help doing it.

'Tom,' said Aunt Chloe, 'why don't you go too? There's time.'

Tom slowly raised his head and looked sorrowfully at her.

'No, no,' he said. 'Let Eliza go. It is right that she should try to save her boy. Mas'r has always trusted me, and I can't leave him like that. It is better for me to go alone than for the whole place to be sold. Mas'r isn't to blame, Chloe. He will take care of you and the poor— —'

Tom could say no more. Big man though he was, he burst into tears, at the thought of leaving his wife and dear little children, never to see them any more.

'Aunt Chloe,' said Eliza, in a minute or two, 'I must go. I saw my husband to-day. He told me he meant to run away soon, because his master is so cruel to him. Try to send him a message from me. Tell him I have run away to save our boy. Tell him to come after me if he can. Good-bye, good-bye. God bless you!'

Then Eliza went out again into the dark night with her little boy in her arms, and Aunt Chloe shut the door softly behind her.