

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN

(Told to the Children)

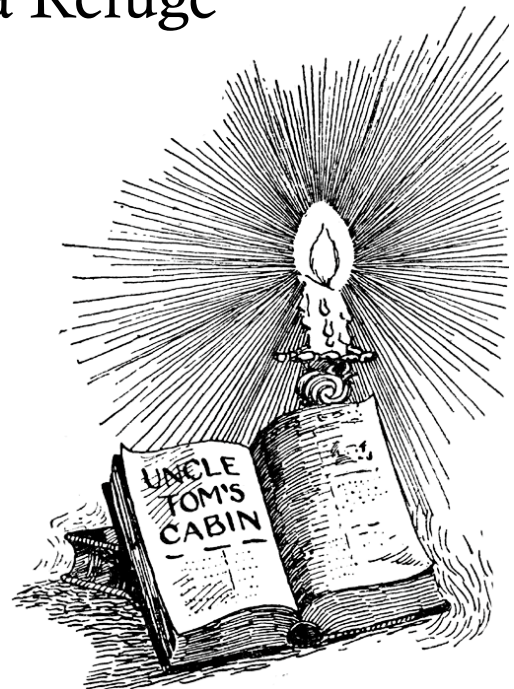
By

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Chapter 5

Eliza Finds a Refuge



A lady and gentleman were sitting talking happily together in the drawing-room of the white house to which Eliza had gone. Suddenly their old black man-of-all-work put his head in at the door and said, 'Will missis come into the kitchen?'

The lady went. Presently she called to her husband, 'I do wish you would come here a moment.'

He rose and went into the kitchen. There lay Eliza on two kitchen chairs. Her poor feet were all cut and bleeding, and she had fainted quite away. The master of the house drew his breath short, and stood silent.

His wife and the cook were trying to bring Eliza round. The old man had Harry on his knee, and was busy pulling off his shoes and stockings, to warm the little cold feet.

'Poor creature,' said the lady.

Suddenly Eliza opened her eyes. A dreadful look of pain came into her face. She sprang up saying, 'Oh, my Harry, have they got him?'

As soon as he heard her voice, Harry jumped from the old man's knee, and running to her side, put up his arms.

'Oh, he's here! he's here,' she said, kissing him. 'Oh, ma'am,' she went, on turning wildly to the lady of the house, 'do protect us, don't let them get him.'

'Nobody shall hurt you here, poor woman,' said the lady. 'You are safe; don't be afraid.'

'God bless you,' said Eliza, covering her face and sobbing, while Harry, seeing her crying, tried to get into her lap to comfort her.

'You needn't be afraid of anything; we are friends here, poor woman. Tell me where you come from and what you want,' said the lady.

'I came from the other side of the river,' said Eliza.

'When?' said the gentleman, very much astonished.

'To-night.'

'How did you come?'

'I crossed on the ice.'

'Crossed on the ice!' exclaimed every one.

'Yes,' said Eliza slowly, 'I did. God helped me, and I crossed on the ice. They were close behind me—right behind, and there was no other way.'

'Law, missis,' said the old servant, 'the ice is all in broken up blocks, a—swinging up and down in the water.'

'I know it is. I know it,' said Eliza wildly. 'But I did it. I would'nt have thought I could—I didn't think I could get over, but I didn't care. I could but die if I didn't. And God helped me.'

'Were you a slave?' said the gentleman.

'Yes, sir.'

'Was your master unkind to you?'

'No, sir.'

'Was your mistress unkind to you?'

No, sir—no. My mistress was always good to me.'

'What could make you leave a good home, then, and run away, and go through such danger?'

'They wanted to take my boy away from me—to sell him—to sell him down south, ma'am. To go all alone—a baby that had never been away from his mother in his life. I couldn't bear it. I took him, and ran away in the night. They chased me, they were coming down close behind me, and I heard 'em. I jumped right on to the ice. How I got across I don't know. The first I knew, a man was helping me up the bank.'

It was such a sad story, that the tears came into the eyes of everyone who heard her tell it.

'Where do you mean to go to, poor woman?' asked the lady.

'To Canada, if I only knew where that was. Is it very far off, is Canada?' said Eliza, looking up in a simple, trusting way, to the kind lady's face.

'Poor woman,' said she again.

'Is it a great way off?' asked Eliza.

'Yes,' said the lady of the house sadly, 'it is far away. But we will try to help you to get there.' Eliza wanted to go to Canada, because it belonged to the British. They did not allow any one to be made a slave there. George, too, was going to try to reach Canada.

'Wife,' said the gentleman, when they had gone back again into their own sitting-room, 'we must get that poor woman away to-night. She is not safe here. I know some good people, far in the country, who will take care of her.'

So this kind gentleman got the carriage ready, and drove Eliza and her boy a long, long way, through the dark night, to a cottage far in the country. There he left her with a good man and his wife, who promised

to be kind to her, and help her to go to Canada. He gave some money to the good man too, and told him to use it for Eliza.