

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN

(Told to the Children)

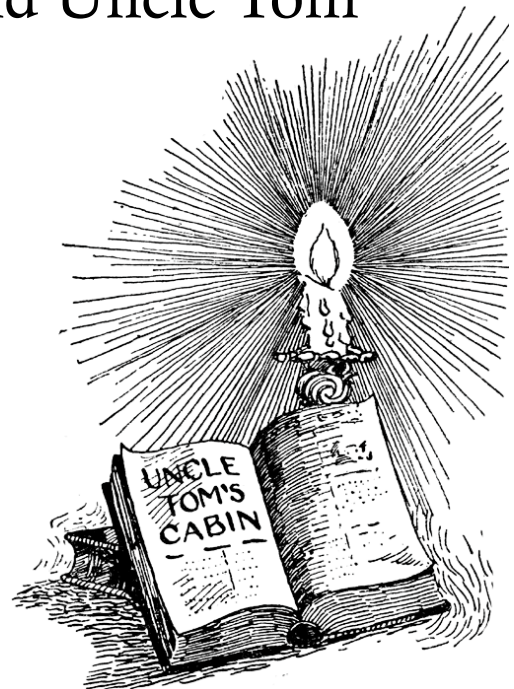
By

Harriet Beecher Stowe

H. E. Marshall ed.

Chapter 7

Master George and Uncle Tom



Haley and Tom had rattled along the dusty road for about a mile, when Haley pulled up at a blacksmith's shop. He got out to have something done to a pair of handcuffs, leaving Tom in the cart.

Tom was sitting there, very mournfully, when suddenly he heard the quick, short click of a horse's hoof behind him. Almost before he knew what was happening, George Shelby sprang into the cart. He threw his arms round Tom's neck, sobbing and scolding.

'I declare it's real mean. I don't care what they say, any of them. It's a nasty, mean shame. If I were a man, they shouldn't do it—they should not!'

'Oh, Mas'r George, this does me good,' said Tom. 'I couldn't bear to go off without seein' ye. It does me real good, ye can't tell.'

Here Tom made a movement with his feet, and George's eyes fell on the chains.

'What a shame,' he cried. 'I'll knock that old fellow down, I will.'

'No, you won't, Mas'r George; and you must not talk so loud. It won't help me any, to anger him.'

'Well, I won't then, for your sake. But only to think of it—isn't it a shame? They never sent for me, nor sent me any word. If it hadn't been for Tom Lincoln, I shouldn't have heard of it. I tell you, I blew them up well, all of them, at home.'

'That wasn't right, I'm feared, Mas'r George.'

'Can't help it. I say it's a shame. Look here, Uncle Tom,' said he, turning his back to the shop, and speaking in a mysterious tone, 'I've brought you my dollar.'

'Oh, I couldn't think of takin' it, Mas'r George, noways in the world,' said Tom.

'But you shall take it,' said George. 'Look here, I told Aunt Chloe I'd do it. She advise, me just to make a hole in it, and put a string through. You can hang it round your neck, and keep it out of sight, else this mean scamp will take it away. I tell you, Tom, I want to blow him up. It would do me good.'

'No, don't, Mas'r George, for it won't do me any good.'

'Well, I won't for your sake,' said George, busily tying his dollar round Tom's neck. 'There, now button your coat tight over it, and keep it safe. Remember every time you see it, that I'm coming after you some day, to bring you back. Aunt Chloe and I have been talking about it: I told her not to fear. I'll see to it. I'll tease father's life out, if he doesn't see to it.'

'Oh, Mas'r George, ye mustn't talk so 'bout your father.'

'Dear me, Uncle Tom, I don't mean anything bad.'

'And now, Mas'r George,' said Tom, 'ye must be a good boy. 'Member how many hearts is set on ye. Always keep close to your mother. Don't be getting into any o' them foolish ways boys has of getting too big to mind their mothers. Tell ye what, Mas'r George, the Lord gives a good many things twice over, but he don't give ye a mother but once. Ye'll never see such another woman, Mas'r George—not if ye live to be a hundred years old. So, now, you hold on to her, and grow up, and be a comfort to her, there's my own good boy—you will now—won't ye?'

'Yes, I will, Uncle Tom,' said George seriously.

'And be careful of yer speaking, Mas'r George. Young boys, when they comes to your age, is wilful sometimes—it's natural they should be. But

real gentlemen such as I hopes you'll be, never lets fall words that isn't 'spectful to their parents. Ye an't offended, Mas'r George?'

'No, indeed, Uncle Tom, you always give me good advice.'

'Tse older, you know,' said Tom, stroking George's curly head with his large strong hand, but speaking in a voice as tender as a mother's.

'Oh, Mas'r George, you has everything—learning, reading, writing—and you'll grow up to be a great, learned, good man. All the people on the place, and your father and mother, 'll be proud of ye. Be a good mas'r like your father, and be a Christian like your mother, Mas'r George.'

'I'll be real good, Uncle Tom, I tell you,' said George. 'And don't you be discouraged. I'll have you back yet. As I told Aunt Chloe this morning, I'll build your house over again. You shall have a room for a parlour, with a carpet on it, when I'm a man. Oh, you'll have good times yet.'

Haley now came to the shop door with the handcuffs in his hand.

'Look here, now, mister,' said George, looking at him very grandly, 'I shall let father and mother know how you treat Uncle Tom.'

'You're welcome,' replied he.

'I should think you'd be ashamed to spend all your life buying men and women, and chaining them like cattle! I should think you'd feel mean,' said George.

'So long as you grand folks wants to buy men and women, I'm as good as they,' said Haley. 'It isn't any meaner to sell them than to buy them.'

'I'll never do either, when I'm a man,' said George. 'I'm ashamed this day. Good-bye, Uncle Tom,' he added, 'don't get down-hearted.'

'Good-bye, Mas'r George,' said Tom. 'God Almighty bless you.'

Away George went, and Tom looked after him until the clatter of his horse's heels died away. It was the last sound or sight of his home. But over his heart there seemed to be a warm spot where George had placed that precious dollar. Tom put up his hand and held it close to his heart.

Haley came to the cart, threw the handcuffs in, and jumping up on to the seat, drove off again.

All day long, they drove over the rough country roads. Late in the evening they arrived at a town called Washington. Haley went to a comfortable inn for the night, but poor Tom was sent to prison with handcuffs on his wrists, and heavy chains on his ankles. This was not because he had done anything wicked, but only that he happened to be a black man and a slave.