

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN

(Told to the Children)

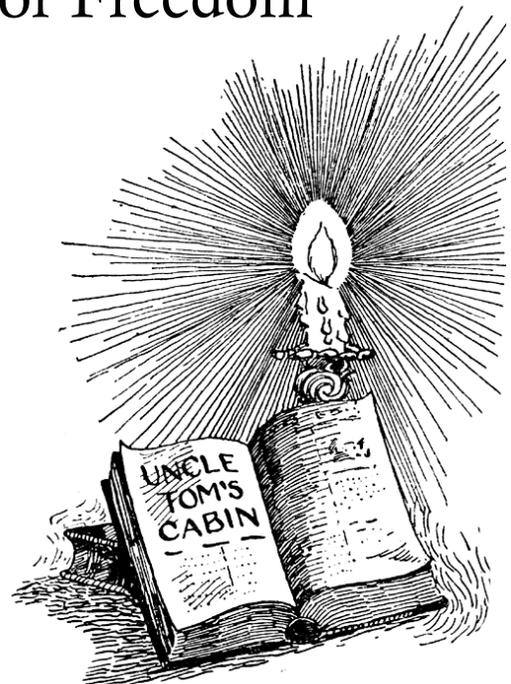
By

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Chapter 13

George Fights For Freedom



The day after George and Eliza met each other once more at the end of so many sad months of parting, was a very happy one in the Quaker house.

The two had much to say to each other. George had to tell how he had escaped from his cruel master, and how he had followed Eliza all the way and at last found her. Then there were plans to make for going on towards Canada. It was arranged that they should start that night at ten o'clock. 'The pursuers are hard after thee, we must not delay,' said Simeon.

Rachel was happy and busy, packing up food and clothes for them to take on the journey.

Late in the afternoon another Quaker, called Phineas, came with the dreadful news that the wicked men, whom Haley had sent to catch Eliza, were only a few miles away.

So George and Eliza decided to start as soon as it was dark. A little while after supper a large covered waggon drew up before the door. They got in and the waggon drove off.

On and on, all through the dark night they drove. About three o'clock, George heard the click of a horse's hoof coming behind them.

'That's Simeon,' said Phineas, who was driving, as he pulled up the horses to listen.

'Halloa, there, Simeon,' he shouted, 'what news? Are they coming?'

'Yes, right on behind, eight or ten of them.'

'Oh! what shall we do?' groaned Eliza.

But Phineas knew the road well. He lashed the horses till they flew along, the waggon rattling and jumping over the hard road behind them.

On they went till they came to a place where the rocks rose straight up from the road like a wall. It seemed impossible for any one to climb up there. But Phineas knew a way.

He stopped the horses. 'Here, Simeon,' he said, 'take the waggon, and drive on as fast as thou canst, and bring back help. Now follow me,' he said to the others, 'quick, for your lives. Run now, if you ever did run.'

Quicker than we can say it, they were following him up a tiny narrow path to the top of the rocks, and Simeon was galloping the horses with the empty waggon along the road.

'We are pretty safe here,' said Phineas, when they had reached the top. 'Only one person can come up that path at a time. If any one tries it, shoot him.'

The men who were chasing them had now arrived at the foot of the rocks. They were led by a big man called Tom Loker, and another mean-looking little man, whom Haley had sent.

After some hunting about, they found the path, and, headed by Tom Loker, began to climb up.

'Come up if you like,' George called out, 'but if you do we will shoot you.'

For answer, the little man took aim at George, and fired.

Eliza screamed, but the shot did not hurt him. It passed close to his hair, nearly touched her cheek, and struck a tree behind.

Tom Loker came on. George waited until he was near enough, then he fired. The shot hit him in the side. But, though wounded, he would not go back. With a yell like that of a mad bull he came leaping on, and sprang right in among them.

Quakers are not allowed to use guns and pistols, so Phineas had been standing back while George shot. Now he sprang forward. As Tom Loker landed in the middle of them, he gave him a great push, saying, 'Friend, thee isn't wanted here.'

Down fell Tom Loker, down, down the steep side of the rock. He crashed and crackled among trees, bushes, logs, loose stones, till he lay bruised and groaning far below. The fall might have killed him, had it not been broken by his clothes catching on the branches of a large tree.

Cruel people are, very often, cowardly too. When the men saw their leader first wounded, and then thrown down, they all ran away. Mounting their horses, they rode off as fast as they could, leaving Tom Loker lying on the ground wounded and groaning with pain.

As soon as Phineas and the others saw that the wicked men had really ridden away, they climbed down, meaning to walk along the road till they met Simeon.

They had just reached the bottom, when they saw him coming back with the waggon and two other men.

'Now we are safe,' cried Phineas joyfully:

'Well, do stop then,' said Eliza, 'and do something for that poor man. He is groaning dreadfully.'

'It would be no more than Christian,' said George. 'Let us take him with us.'

They lifted the wounded man gently, as if he had been a friend instead of a cruel enemy, and laid him in the waggon. Then they all set out once more.

A drive of about an hour brought them to a neat farm-house. There the tired travellers were kindly received and given a good breakfast.

Tom Loker was put into a comfortable bed, far cleaner and softer than any he had ever slept in before. George and Eliza walked about the garden hand-in-hand, feeling happy together, and almost safe. They were so near Canada now.