

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN

(Told to the Children)

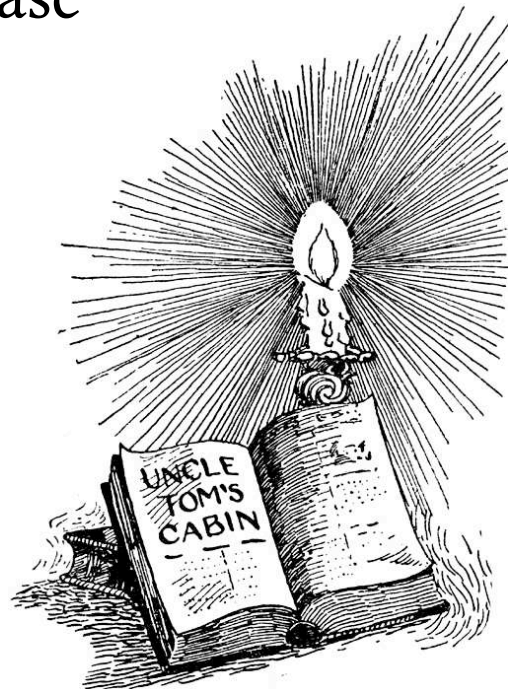
By

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Chapter 4

The Chase



When Eliza left Uncle Tom's cabin, she felt very sad and lonely. She knew she was leaving all the friends she had ever had behind her.

At first Harry was frightened. Soon he grew sleepy. 'Mother, I don't need to keep awake, do I?' he said.

'No, my darling, sleep, if you want to.'

'But, mother, if I do get asleep, you won't let the bad man take me?'

'No!'

'You're sure, an't you, mother?'

'Yes, sure.'

Harry dropped his little weary head upon her shoulder, and was soon fast asleep.

Eliza walked on and on, never resting, all through the night. When the sun rose, she was many miles away from her old home. Still she walked on, only stopping, in the middle of the day, to buy a little dinner for herself and Harry at a farm-house.

At last, when it was nearly dark, she arrived at a village, on the banks of the river Ohio. If she could only get across that river, Eliza felt she would be safe.

She went to a little inn on the bank, where a kind-looking woman was busy cooking supper.

'Is there a boat that takes people across the river now?' she asked.

'No, indeed,' replied the woman. 'The boats has stopped running. It isn't safe, there be too many blocks of ice floating about.'

Eliza looked so sad and disappointed when she heard this, that the good woman was sorry for her. Harry too was so tired, that he began to cry.

'Here, take him into this room,' said the woman, opening the door into a small bed-room.

Eliza laid her tired little boy upon the bed, and he soon fell fast asleep. But for her there was no rest. She stood at the window, watching the river with its great floating blocks of ice, wondering how she could cross it.

As she stood there she heard a shout. Looking up she saw Sam. She drew back just in time, for Haley and Andy were riding only a yard or two behind him.

It was a dreadful moment for Eliza. Her room opened by a side door to the river. She seized her child and sprang down the steps towards it.

Haley caught sight of her as she disappeared down the bank. Throwing himself from his horse, and calling loudly to Sam and Andy, he was after her in a moment.

In that terrible moment her feet scarcely seemed to touch the ground. The next, she was at the water's edge.

On they came behind her. With one wild cry and flying leap, she jumped right over the water by the shore, on to the raft of ice beyond. It was a desperate leap. Haley, Sam, and Andy cried out, and lifted up their hands in astonishment.

The great piece of ice pitched and creaked as her weight came upon it. But she stayed there not a moment. With wild cries she leaped to another and still another stumbling leaping—slipping—springing up again!

Her shoes were gone, her stockings cut from her feet by the sharp edges of the ice. Blood marked every step. But she knew nothing, felt nothing, till dimly, as in a dream, she saw the Ohio side, and a man helping her up the bank.

'Yer a brave gal, now, whoever ye are!' said the man.

'Oh, save me—do save me—do hide me,' she cried.

'Why, what's the matter?' asked the man.

'My child! this boy—mas'r sold him. There's his new mas'r,' she said, pointing to the other shore. 'Oh, save me.'

'Yer a right brave gal,' said the man. 'Go there,' pointing to a big white house close by. 'They are kind folks; they'll help you.'

'Oh, thank you, thank you,' said Eliza, as she walked quickly away. The man stood and looked after her wonderingly.

On the other side of the river Haley was standing perfectly amazed at the scene. When Eliza disappeared over the bank he turned and looked at Sam and Andy, with terrible anger in his eyes.

But Sam and Andy were glad, oh, so glad, that Eliza had escaped. They were so glad that they laughed till the tears rolled down their cheeks.

'I'll make ye laugh,' said Haley, laying about their heads with his riding whip.

They ducked their heads, ran shouting up the bank, and were on their horses before he could reach them.

'Good evening, mas'r,' said Sam. 'I berry much 'specs missis be anxious 'bout us. Mas'r Haley won't want us no longer.' Then off they went as fast as their horses could gallop.

It was late at night before they reached home again, but Mrs. Shelby was waiting for them. As soon as she heard the horses galloping up she ran out to the balcony.

'Is that you, Sam?' she called. 'Where are they?'

'Mas'r Haley's a--restin' at the tavern. He's drefful fatigued, missis.'

'And Eliza, Sam? Where are they?'

'Come up here, Sam,' called Mr. Shelby, who had followed his wife, 'and tell your mistress what she wants to know.'

So Sam went up and told the wonderful story of how Eliza had crossed the river on the floating ice. Mr. and Mrs. Shelby found it hard to believe that such a thing was possible.

Mrs. Shelby was very, very glad that Eliza had escaped. She told Aunt Chloe to give Sam and Andy a specially good supper. Then they went to bed quite pleased with their day's work.