

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN

(Told to the Children)

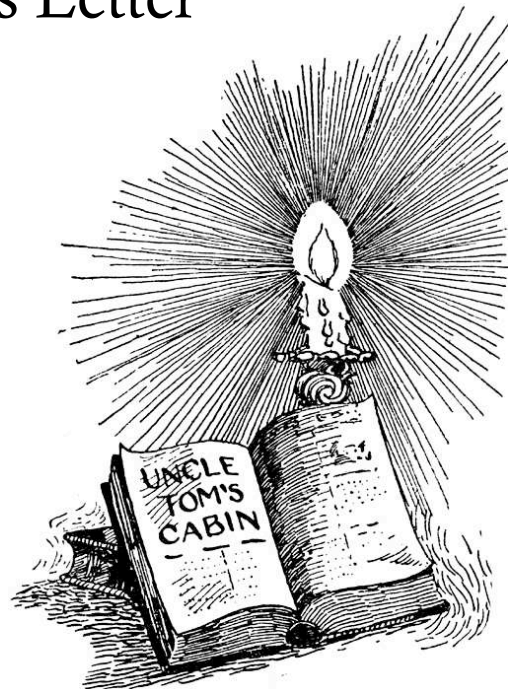
By

Harriet Beecher Stowe

H. E. Marshall ed.

Chapter 11

Uncle Tom's Letter



Uncle Tom felt that he was indeed very fortunate to have found such a kind master and so good a home. He had nice clothes, plenty of food, and a comfortable room to sleep in. He had no hard, disagreeable work to do. His chief duties were to drive Mrs. St. Clare's carriage when she wanted to go out, and to attend on Eva when she wanted him. He soon grew to love his little mistress very, very much indeed.

Mr. St. Clare too began to find Tom very useful. He was dreadfully careless about money, and his chief servant was just as careless as his master. So between them a great deal was not only spent but wasted.

Mr. Shelby had trusted Tom in everything, and Tom had always been careful of his master's money—as careful as if it had been his own. Waste seemed dreadful to him, and he tried to do something to stop it now.

Mr. St. Clare was not long in finding out how clever Tom was, and soon trusted him as thoroughly as Mr. Shelby had done.

But in spite of all his good fortune Tom used to long very much to go home to see his dear ones again. He had plenty of spare time, and whenever he had nothing to do he would pull his Bible out of his pocket and try to find comfort in reading it.

But as time went on, Uncle Tom longed more and more for his home. At last one day he had a grand idea. He would write a letter.

Before Uncle Tom was sold, George Shelby had been teaching him to write so he thought he could manage a letter.

He begged a sheet of writing-paper from Eva, and going to his room began to make a rough copy on his slate.

It was very difficult. Poor Uncle Tom found that he had quite forgotten how to make some of the letters. Of those he did remember, he was not

quite sure which he ought to use. Yes, it was a very difficult thing indeed.

While he was working away, breathing very hard over it, Eva came behind him, and peeped over his shoulder.

'Oh, Uncle Tom! what funny things you are making there!'

'I'm trying to write to my old woman and my little chil'en, Miss Eva,' said Tom, drawing the back of his hand over his eyes to wipe away the tears. 'But somehow I'm feared I shan't be able to do it.'

'I wish I could help you, Tom. I've learnt to write a little. Last year I could make all the letters. But I'm afraid I've forgotten.'

Eva put her little golden head close to Uncle Tom's black one, and the two began a grave and anxious talk over the letter. They were both very earnest, and both very ignorant. But after a great deal of consulting over every word, the writing began, they really thought, to look quite like a proper letter.

'Yes, Uncle Tom, it begins to look beautiful,' said Eva, gazing on it with delight. 'How pleased your wife will be, and the poor little children! Oh, it is a shame that you ever had to go away from them! I mean to ask papa to let you go back, some day.'

'Missis said that she would send down money for me, as soon as they could get it together,' said Tom. 'Young Mas'r George, he said he'd come for me. He gave me this dollar as a sign,' and Tom drew the precious dollar from under his coat.

'Oh, he is sure to come, then,' said Eva, 'I am so glad.'

'I wanted to send a letter, you see, to let 'em know where I was, and tell poor Chloe that I was well off, 'cause she felt so dreadful, poor soul.'

'I say, Tom,' said Mr. St. Clare, coming in at the door at this minute.

Tom and Eva both started.

'What's this?' Mr. St. Clare went on, coming up and looking at the slate.

'Oh, it's Tom's letter. I'm helping him to write it,' said Eva. 'Isn't it nice?'

'I wouldn't discourage either of you,' said her father; 'but I rather think, Tom, you had better let me write your letter for you. I'll do it when I come home from my ride.'

'It is very important that he should write,' said Eva, 'because his mistress is going to send money to buy him back again, you know, papa. He told me they had said so.'

Mr. St. Clare thought in his heart that very likely this meant nothing. He thought it was only one of these things which good-natured people said to their slaves to comfort them when they were taken away from their dear ones to be sold. He did not really believe that Mrs. Shelby meant to buy Tom back again. However, he did not say so out loud, but just told Tom to get the horses ready for a ride.

That evening the letter was written, and Uncle Tom carried it joyfully to the post-office.