

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN

(Told to the Children)

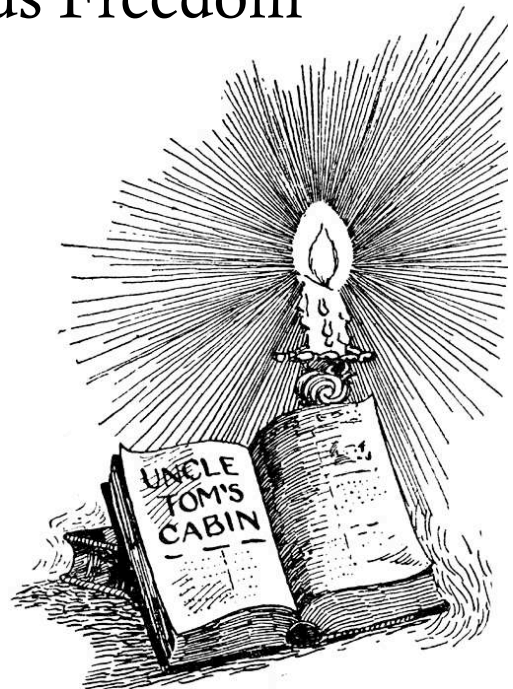
By

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Chapter 20

Uncle Tom Finds Freedom



The letter which Miss Ophelia wrote to Mrs. Shelby, telling her that Tom was to be sold again, was delayed a long time in the post. When at last it did arrive, Mr. Shelby was very ill, and though Mrs. Shelby felt dreadfully sorry about Uncle Tom, she could do nothing, as her husband was so ill. Soon Mr. Shelby died. Mrs. Shelby was very sad, but in her sorrow she did not forget her promise to Aunt Chloe and Uncle Tom. As soon as she could, she sold some land, and George Shelby, taking the money with him, went off to try to find Uncle Tom and buy him back again.

But by the time George Shelby came to the place where Mr. St. Clare used to live, Uncle Tom had been sold to Legree, and no one knew where he had gone to.

At last, after searching about for months, George Shelby found out where Uncle Tom was, and followed him.

Two days after Legree had been so cruel, George Shelby drove up the avenue and stopped at the door of the odd house.

'I hear,' he said to Legree, 'that you bought a slave named Tom. He used to belong to my father. I have come to buy him back again.'

Legree's face grew black with anger. 'Yes, I did buy such a fellow,' he growled in rage. 'And a bad bargain it was, too! The most rebellious, saucy, impudent dog! Set up my niggers to run away. He owned to it, and, when I bid him tell me where they were, he said he knew, but wouldn't tell. He stuck to it, too, though I gave him the very worst beating I ever gave a nigger yet. I believe he is trying to die. I shouldn't wonder if he did.'

'Where is he?' said George. 'Let me see him.' His cheeks were crimson, and his eye flashed fire at the thought that Legree had dared to treat dear Uncle Tom so badly.

'He is in that shed,' said a little fellow who was holding George Shelby's horse.

George, without saying another word, hurried to the place to which the little boy pointed.

As he entered the shed, his head felt giddy and his heart sick.

Uncle Tom lay on a heap of straw on the floor, still and quiet.

'Oh, dear Uncle Tom,' cried George as he knelt beside him, 'dear Uncle Tom, do wake—do speak once more. Here's Mas'r George—your own little Mas'r George. Don't you know me?'

'Mas'r George!' said Tom, opening his eyes, and speaking in a feeble voice. 'Mas'r George? it is—it is. It's all I wanted. They haven't forgot me. It warms my soul; it does my old heart good. Now I shall die content.'

'You shan't die! you mustn't die, nor think of it. I've come to buy you and take you home,' said George, and the tears came into his eyes as he bent over poor Uncle Tom.

'Oh, Mas'r George, ye're too late. The Lord has bought me, and is going to take me home.'

'Oh, don't. It breaks my heart to think of what you've suffered—lying in this old shed, too.'

'You mustn't, now, tell Chloe, poor soul, how ye found me,' said Tom, taking George by the hand. 'It would seem so dreadful to her. Only tell her ye found me going into glory, and that I couldn't stay for no one. And oh, the poor chil'en, and the baby—my old heart's been most broke for them. Tell them to follow me. Give my love to mas'r, and dear, good missis, and everybody in the place. I love them all.'

He closed his eyes, and with a smile he fell asleep. Uncle Tom too was free.

Beyond the gates of Legree's farm, George had noticed a dry, sandy knoll, shaded by a few trees. There he made Uncle Tom's grave. No stone marks his last resting-place. He needs none. God knows where he lies.

Kneeling there George bent his head, in shame and sorrow. 'Here me, dear God,' he said, 'from this day, I will do what one man can to drive out the curse of slavery from this land.'