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THE NOVEL THAT FANNED THE FLAMES OF THE CIVIL WAR

Uncle Tom's CABIN

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

WITH A NEW AFTERWORD BY JONATHAN ARAC

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Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–96) was born in Litchfield, Connecticut. In 1832, her family moved to Cincinnati, where she married Calvin Ellis Stowe in 1836. The border town of Cincinnati was alive with abolitionist conflict, and Stowe came into contact with fugitive slaves and learned from friends and from personal visits what life was like for the African-American in the South. In 1850, the Fugitive Slave Law was passed, and that same year, Harriet's sister-in-law urged the author to put her feelings about the evils of slavery into words. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was published serially from 1851 to 1852 in *The National Era* and as a book in 1852. More than 300,000 copies of the novel were sold in one year. Mrs. Stowe continued to write, publishing eleven other novels and numerous articles before her death.

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Harriet Beecher Stowe

Uncle Tom's Cabin

or,
Life Among the Lowly

With an Introduction by Darryl Pinckney
and a New Afterword by Jonathan Arac

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INTRODUCTION

UNCLE Tom has outlived *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and he continues to have a meaning independent of Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel. The novel was a sensational best-seller when it was published in 1852. Uncle Tom has since come down to us as a symbol of cringing submission and disgraceful self-abasement in a black, a figure Lionel Trilling blamed on the stage adaptations that had little to do with Stowe's creation. Because of the inadequacy of copyright laws at the time, Stowe was unable to protect herself against the "borrowing" of her character. "Tom shows" became a regular feature of big-city and small-town American entertainment. Henry James recalled the aesthetic thrill one of the shows gave him when he saw it as a boy. Down through the years after the Civil War people knew about Uncle Tom without having read the book. The first screen version was released in 1909. Stowe's famous novel has met a fate similar to *Pilgrim's Progress*, a book many have heard of but that few read without good reason.

Harriet Beecher Stowe was born in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1811, into a family of thirteen children. Stowe's father, Lyman Beecher, who married three times, was a Congregational minister of stern but eccentric Calvinist views. All seven of her brothers eventually became ministers, though two of them killed themselves because of inner conflicts with the severity of their birthright. In Stowe's childhood home domestic responsibility fell mostly to the oldest child, Catherine, who later became a writer on social reform questions and an activist in the women's education movement. Stowe grew up in a household fiercely interested in the mysteries of the soul, which included the frontiers of human betterment. She knew everything there was to know about the ser-

mon and the religious tract. There was to be more Jonathan Edwards than Walter Scott in her.

In 1832 Lyman Beecher accepted an offer to preside over the newly established Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati, Ohio. In 1836 Harriet Beecher married a professor of Biblical Literature at Lane, Calvin Stowe, a widower. They had seven children, one of whom died in infancy. Mrs. Stowe worked hard as a teacher in the short-lived institutes her sister Catherine founded. The Stowe household was proper but impoverished. Mrs. Stowe's ambition to write therefore had about it the bite of necessity. "I do it for the pay," she said. Pro-slavery and anti-slavery forces collided in Cincinnati, a city of religious revivalism, temperance battles, and race riots. But Stowe's fictional world seemed far removed from the agitation. When not harassed by cares at home, writing to one of her numerous correspondents about her fits of depression, or coping with the devastations of cholera, she conjured up for women's magazines stories that celebrated New England settings and manners. Her first book, *The Mayflower; or, Sketches of Scenes and Characters among the Descendants of Pilgrims*, published in 1843, gave little indication that hers was an imagination that could trouble the conscience of the nation.

Of all the forces that converged around Mrs. Stowe's story to catapult it into history, the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850 was perhaps the most important. It broadened the debate about slavery, embittered its tone, and intensified sectarian struggle by implicating the North in the slave's destiny. Under the law people who gave food, shelter, or assistance to a runaway slave could be subject to a fine of $1,000 and six months in prison. The law abrogated the right to trial by jury. Because blacks were often kidnapped and returned South, Northern cities had had black vigilance groups since the 1830s. Emerson once declared that if Boston's prosperity depended on becoming a slave port then he would happily forgo such prosperity and retire to the mountains to chop wood.

Mrs. Stowe returned to New England in 1850 when her husband was offered a position as a professor of

Natural and Revealed Religion at Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine. A letter of encouragement from a sister-in-law prompted Stowe to enter the debate about slavery through her fiction. "If I could use a pen as you can, I would make this whole nation feel what an accursed thing slavery is." *National Era* was a moderate abolitionist publication based in Washington, D.C., where the editor had moved after a pro-slavery mob destroyed his press in Cincinnati. Stowe, who had published articles in the newspaper, proposed a new story, noting that the time had come for her to speak out: "The Carthagenian women in the last peril of their state cut off their hair for bow strings to give to the defenders of their country; and such peril and shame as now hangs over this country is worse than Roman slavery, and I hope every woman who can write will not be silent."

National Era serialized *Uncle Tom's Cabin* from May 1851 to April 1852. The book was already under contract with Catherine Beecher's Boston publishers. The Stowes lacked the financial resources to accept the publisher's offer that they share half the printing costs and half the profits, so Mrs. Stowe made do with the then customary ten percent royalty. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was published in March 1852 and sold 10,000 copies within the first week. The Stowes regretted the terms of her contract, but the publisher vowed to give the book an unparalleled circulation. The novel benefitted from innovations in printing, such as the development of the cylinder press, which made possible the mass production and distribution of inexpensive editions. The increase in the literacy rate in the United States, which had made culture more democratic, was also crucial to Stowe's success. By the year's end *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had sold an unprecedented 300,000 copies. Copyright protection was not then international. An estimated one million copies of numerous pirate editions were sold in England, and Stowe's novel also swept across the European continent. To this day, there is a subway stop in Berlin called Onkel Toms Hütte.

Everything having to do with what it means to be an Uncle Tom makes it impossible to approach the novel

in a state of innocence. You could try to get away from the fame of the title by changing it to something Mrs. Craik-like—"George Shelby, Gentleman"—and in so doing underline the fact that the parlor is of more importance to the book than the cabin where Aunt Chloe makes the pancakes that will prove to be Uncle Tom's last supper in the shelter of his family. However, because all the parlor talk is about slavery and Christian practice, you would soon know where you were—in the book that launched a thousand editorials, accusations, and rebuttals. Because of the preconceptions about the book, because its reputation has obscured the message of the book itself, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is always better or worse than anyone has said.

Stowe's intention—to dramatize the damage done to the souls of slaves and slaveholders alike—is fixed and so is her admonitory tone. Sometimes the narrator is omniscient and sometimes the narrator is a reporter testifying to what she has seen or heard herself. Often Stowe appeals directly to maternal feeling. She is full of explanatory or beseeching asides. You could say that Stowe shows more shrewdness about the emotional pitch of her audience, the nation, than she does about that of her characters. If anything, Stowe keeps such a challenging and lively eye on her readers that her characters are sometimes left waiting for the narration to take notice of them again. They are held in place by a moral design from which Stowe never deviates. Her narrative strategy is simple and disarming, which is to make sweeping assertions with breathtaking confidence about everything: living conditions, male and female temperaments, racial dispositions, the living God. As for the coincidences and fortuitous occurrences that drive her story along, Dickens recognized in Stowe a pupil of his own plot devices.

We know Uncle Tom's destiny before we meet him. When the novel opens, George Shelby's father is in debt and obliged to sell a slave or two to a creditor who is also a slave trader. The system of slavery in Kentucky, the guiding voice of Stowe observes, is milder than it is in more southern districts, because its agricultural pursuits are "quiet." The indulgence of some masters and

the loyalty of some slaves, Stowe continues, might tempt readers

> to dream the oft-fabled poetic legend of a patriarchal institution, and all that; but over and above the scene there broods a portentous shadow,—the shadow of *law*. So long as the law considers all these human beings, with beating hearts and living affections, only as so many *things* belonging to a master,—so long as the failure, or misfortune, or imprudence, or death of the kindest owner may cause them any day to exchange a life of kind protection and indulgence for one of hopeless misery and toil,—so long it is impossible to make anything beautiful or desirable in the best-regulated administration of slavery.

Kentucky, the border state, leads the action of the novel in two directions—either across the Ohio River, to the Quakers of the Underground Railroad, or down the Mississippi River, to bondage on infested cotton plantations. The beautiful slave Eliza, fearful that her child might be sold from her, steals away with him in the night. Before her flight she confers with her hot-tempered husband, George Harris. He reminds her that although Mrs. Shelby urged her to hold her wedding vows sacred, their marriage is not recognized in law because they are slaves. George lives on another farm nearby. His master is so resentful of his intelligence and enterprise that he has drowned the dog that was George's only friend. He would have no qualms about forcing George to take another woman or selling him down river. Consequently, George makes plain his intention soon to be among the missing.

George flees and is later reunited with his wife and child in Ohio after many suitable dangers, the most spectacular of which is Eliza's escape across the river of ice floes with little Harry in her arms. Made in Mr. and Mrs. Shelby's image, George and Eliza have been groomed for freedom. They are near-white in appearance, literate, well-mannered, noble. In the end Stowe has them on their way to Canada, and from there to Africa as mis-

sionaries, an indication that Stowe was not unmindful of Northern anxieties about having freedmen as competitors and neighbors. Many white abolitionists favored the emigration of free blacks to Africa rather than having them stay in the United States to raise problems of assimilation.

We have already had an intimation in Mr. Shelby's conversation with the trader that Tom will decline to choose the Underground Railroad as a way out. "An uncommon fellow," Shelby says of Tom, worth "that sum anywhere." The sum is not specified. Tom, he says, is steady, honest, capable, sensible, and pious ever since he got religion at a camp meeting four years earlier. Mr. Shelby has trusted him since then with everything: money, horses, houses. He tells the trader, "I let him go to Cincinnati alone, to do business for me, and bring home five hundred dollars. . . . Some low fellows, they say, said to him: 'Tom, why don't you make tracks for Canada?' 'Ah, master trusted me, and I couldn't.' "

And so Uncle Tom, in his cabin with his wife, his three children, and his reading teacher, young Master George, is unaware of but morally prepared for the fate that is about to claim him:

> [A] large, broad-chested, powerfully made man, of a full glossy black, and a face whose truly African features were characterized by an expression of grave and steady good sense, united with much kindliness and benevolence. There was something about his whole air self-respecting and dignified, yet united with a confiding and humble simplicity.

Tom's wife asks him, "Will you wait to be toted down river, where they kill niggers with hard work and starving?" Because Tom is Mr. Shelby's most valued hand, if Mr. Shelby can't sell him he'll have to dispose of several other slaves to make up the sum Tom would have fetched. Grief-stricken, Tom resolves to make the sacrifice so that other families may stay together and the farm itself may be spared. Moreover, Mr. Shelby is counting on him. "I never have broke trust, nor used

my pass no ways contrary to my word, and I never will." The slave trader thinks of Tom's height, of the price he'll bring at market. In contrast, as Tom is being taken away in the wagon, he is "thinking over some words of an unfashionable old book": "We have here no continuing city, but we seek one to come; wherefore God himself is not ashamed to be called our God; for he hath prepared for us a city." As a simple man, Tom is stirred to the depths. Courage and energy are called up where before there had been only the blackness of despair. Tom can't write letters home. He has only God to commune with. He has always a verse in mind, the Bible open on a little table or in his lap, his rough fingers tracing the words. He can read well enough.

The novel resorts to an almost picaresque mode, introducing various characters in the slave holding pen, on the riverboat, in New Orleans. Secondary characters pour out their bitter tales. Personalities, the embodiments of themes Stowe seeks to illustrate, animate Tom's new home, and he sits in the middle of this weather of talk and relentlessly declared emotion like someone drugged. He turns to the Bible in the way the other characters reach for sedatives, brandy, or the cambric handkerchief. The episodes set in Tom's new home in New Orleans with the aristocratic St. Clare family constitute the longest in the book and contain the most extensive arguments about slavery. As the refined, doomed Augustine St. Clare debates and speechifies and hesitates, Tom, well treated, well dressed, not overworked, and living in a lovely setting, can't do anything but get a little older.

Uncle Tom is also remembered as the adoring friend and loving playmate of St. Clare's angelic daughter, Eva. The image of Eva seated on Tom's knee was immediately represented in Staffordshire pottery, those objects meant to commemorate kings, queens, and sports figures, objects produced as tributes to everyone in the nineteenth century who was being talked about. It is easier to find this pottery in the provincial auction rooms of England today than it is to hunt down an early edition of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the rare and fine edition book-

shops of London. But the image of Tom as Eva's protector and pet is also why we tend to forget the "brave manly heart" behind his perfect acceptance of the slave's lot.

Tom saved Eva when she fell into the river, and she persuaded her father to buy Tom so she could devote herself to making Tom happy. It is hard to forgive Stowe their sentimental bond. Eva is a tyrant of exasperating cuteness, but she is precocious in her morbidity. She and Tom read the Bible together. They are especially drawn to dim, wondrous passages from Revelations and the Prophecies. Eva's Aunt Ophelia, a New England spinster, objects to her kissing Tom, but Eva's love is pure. It has restorative powers. Eva says she would die for the slaves if she could. As Eva succumbs to consumption, even Topsy, the comic liar, is redeemed. Before Eva offered Topsy the hand of understanding no one had ever loved Topsy. Her sense of mischief is laid to rest in Eva's swamp of goodness. Nearly everyone is affected by Eva's gentle fading away—except for Eva's hypochondriac mother. "Sink into my heart," Eva cries to Jesus with her last breath. "Oh! love,—joy,—peace!" she sighs after distributing from her deathbed locks of her hair and extorting from those around her promises that they will be good. The scene brings to mind Oscar Wilde's remark about *The Old Curiosity Shop*: it takes a heart of stone not to laugh at the death of Little Nell.

Tom mourns Eva as much as he misses his own children and honors her memory by undertaking an evangelical campaign among the survivors in the St. Clare household. He swears to remain with Eva's devastated father until her father finds his way to Jesus:

> "Oh, Mas'r, when I was sold away from my old woman and the children, I was jest a'most broke up. I felt as if there warn't nothing left; and then the good Lord, he stood by me, and he says, 'Fear not, Tom;' and he brings light and joy into a poor feller's soul,—makes all peace; and I's so happy, and loves everybody, and feels willin' jest to be the Lord's."

But St. Clare is killed before he can fulfill his promise to emancipate his slaves. Once again, Uncle Tom is on the move, this time to the hell of a backwoods plantation ruled over by Simon Legree.

Stowe's God is apt to chasten those He loves in a furnace of affliction. This Tom understands when he tells a drunken slave, "O ye poor crittur! . . . han't nobody never telled ye how the Lord Jesus loved ye . . . and ye can go to heaven, and have rest, at last!" The first thing Legree does is to throw away Tom's Methodist hymn book. "I'm your church now." The Legree plantation is Tom's most severe test of worthiness. "Is it strange that the religious peace and trust, which had upborne him hitherto, should give way to tossings of soul and despondent darkness? The gloomiest problem of this mysterious life was constantly before his eyes,—souls crushed and ruined, evil triumphant, and God silent." Oppressed and mocked, Tom has a vision of the One, crowned with thorns, buffeted and bleeding. His inmost heart thrills to the majestic patience in that face; he falls to his knees and hears, "He that overcometh shall sit down with my Father on his throne." Stowe, who all along has insisted that her novel is life, not fiction, defends Tom's vision by saying that black slaves have a religious tradition of such visions and an understandable need to believe in them, as if she had not composed his vision, but merely transcribed it.

In any event, Tom revives. "I cannot heal it, but Jesus can." Legree's cruelty is no match for Tom's faultless patience. Tom's soul overflows with compassion for master and slave. From his treasury of faith he draws the strength to resist when others dare him to take up the ax or to connive with them against the weak, superstitious, tormented Legree. In an attempt to break his spirit, to prove that his God has abandoned him, Legree has Tom repeatedly whipped. By the time young Mas'r George arrives from Kentucky to make good his parents' pledge to buy Tom his freedom, it is too late. Tom expires in a fervor of exclamations. "Heaven is better than Kintuck." Tom's dying wish is that George not tell his wife of the

pitiful physical condition in which he found him. "After all, what a fuss, for a dead nigger!" Legree says.

The surprise of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is not what Stowe says about slavery, but that it is a work of such fervent religiosity. Stowe claimed that Tom's death came to her as a vision in church and that she rushed home to begin the novel that was unstoppable in her, burning her up, like the zeal of God's house. "Jesus is a trick on niggers," a Flannery O'Connor character says. And on Harriet Beecher Stowe, you might want to add, until you considered how volatile a force religious belief was in the political life of the nineteenth-century secular Republic. It is not that Stowe was unmoved by the plight of slaves, but she opposed slavery because it offended her understanding of Christian doctrine. In her argument in the final pages of the novel, Stowe insists that slaves are necessarily closer to the true spirit of Christ, that the Christian church has strayed from its teachings, that both North and South are guilty, that non-slaveholders and the indifferent are also culpable because nothing less than the nation's soul is in peril, and that unredressed injustices risked incurring the wrath of God. Her exhortation was bold, given how much pro-slavery arguments depended on the Old and New Testaments because they seemed to sanction slavery. Did not Paul urge the runaway slave to return home?

Stowe sometimes said that God wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, that she was merely an instrument of His will. Perhaps her instinct as a woman writer who had had only modest success was to deflect the sudden notoriety. Humility would prefer to credit divine intervention for the kind of fame and influence that had come to her. Perhaps it was also a way of protecting herself should the controversies and persecutions get out of hand. God commanded her at the writing desk; God guarded her during the interviews. Because the overwhelming majority of Stowe's readers at the time were white, Uncle Tom's martyrdom was a tremendous provocation. The whole country seemed to rise up with opinions about what she had written. "So this is the little lady who made this big war," Lincoln is supposed to have said when he

met her. Then, too, the hand of God masked how little experience of the South she actually had—or really needed.

When Stowe lived in Cincinnati she made a brief visit to Kentucky, her only direct observation of the South. But back in Ohio, the Underground Railroad went right by her front door. In 1839 a black girl in her family's employ confessed that she was a runaway. Stowe's husband and her favorite brother helped the girl to escape. Stowe also heard from her cook, a former slave, Eliza Buck, stories about auction blocks and whippings. What moved Stowe in particular was Buck's testimony about sexual relations between slave owners and slave women and how powerless black women were to resist their masters. In 1850 while living in Maine, the Stowes once again helped a runaway. By the time she started writing *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* Stowe was not shy when needing material. She appealed to siblings who had traveled in the South, and when for an upcoming installment she needed information about cotton plantations, she wrote with some urgency to Frederick Douglass, asking that he put her in touch with Henry Bibb, whose *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, an American Slave* had appeared in 1849. It isn't known whether or not Douglass replied.

In 1853 Stowe published a companion volume, *The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in which she assembled an array of documents and corroborative statements to answer her critics who charged that her characters were implausible and her descriptions of slavery distorted. Her portrait of Uncle Tom was as controversial in her time as was her depiction of the system of slavery, because many whites were distressed that she had made a black man sensitive and intelligent. In the *Key* Stowe is therefore eager to give examples of abiding Christian faith among blacks and she cites the autobiography of Josiah Henson. "His Christian principle was invulnerable," Stowe says of his life. Since Henson did not learn to read until he was forty-two years old, his narrative was ghostwritten. Three versions of his autobiography were published during his lifetime, the first in 1849.

Stowe wrote the preface to the second edition in 1858. The 1877 edition of Henson's autobiography was issued as *Uncle Tom's Story of His Life.* Curiously, Stowe never answered clearly the question of whether or not Henson had been her primary model.

Josiah Henson, who was born into slavery in Maryland in 1789, grew up without religion until as a youth he went to a camp meeting. In 1825 his master faced ruin in Maryland and sought to save the capital that his slaves represented by moving them in secret to his brother's farm in Kentucky. He put Henson in sole charge of the transfer down the Ohio River. People along the Ohio shore tried to persuade Henson that he and his fellow passengers were free. Crowds of black people gathered around them in Cincinnati. But Henson, remembering that his master had always been able to count on him, felt that his notions of right were against stealing this chance and ordered that the boat push off.

> Pride, too, came in to confirm me. I had undertaken a great thing; my vanity had been flattered all along the road by hearing myself praised; I thought it would be a feather in my cap to carry it through thoroughly, and had often painted the scene in my imagination of the final surrender of my charge to Master Amos, and the immense admiration and respect with which he would regard me.

But the two brothers cheated Henson of money and broke their promise that he could purchase his freedom. Most of the slaves whom Henson delivered to the farm in Kentucky were sold off. He saw some of them again when he himself was being taken downriver. Their faces were so changed by hunger and abuse he hardly recognized them. Henson, like Uncle Tom, was tempted to kill in order to escape or to take revenge, but he thanked the Lord that he resisted the murderous impulse. Henson was also lucky. Though his master intended to sell him, while downriver he fell seriously ill and had no one but Henson to nurse him and conduct him home. Not

until years later was Henson able to escape with his wife and children to Canada.

Henson muses on the missed chance at liberation.

> Often since that day has my soul been pierced with bitter anguish, at the thought of having been thus instrumental, in consigning to the infernal bondage of slavery, so many fellow beings. I have wrestled in prayer with God for forgiveness. Having experienced myself the sweetness of liberty, and knowing too well the after-misery of a number of these slaves, my infatuation has often seemed to me to have been an unpardonable sin. But I console myself with the thought that I acted according to my best light, though the light that was in me was darkness. Those were the days of my ignorance. I knew not then the glory of free manhood, or that the title deed of the slave owner is robbery and outrage.

When Henson chose not to take the chance for freedom in Cincinnati, he condemned others. But the first time Uncle Tom is offered Ohio, he is alone, and by condemning himself to a worse servitude later, he saves others from the same fate. While Uncle Tom is a saint, Josiah Henson was a man whose pride led him to make a terrible blunder. Perhaps Stowe overlooked this tragic episode in Henson's story because it would contradict her thesis about Uncle Tom's simplicity and blamelessness.

Uncle Tom was formed from Stowe's view that blacks were inclined to mesmerism when they were exposed to religion. Slavery, according to Stowe, could only produce a heathenish, degraded, miserable people, and so Uncle Tom's victory is that he retains the sweetness and docility Stowe presents as innately characteristic of the Negro. Stowe could not depict Uncle Tom as having the kind of power over others that Josiah Henson wielded. Uncle Tom's power is in his passive example. He has no psychology apart from his fate and the appropriate Biblical quotation, as though Stowe did not know what inner life to make behind the capacity for Christian sweetness

she saw as a racial difference. George Harris's forceful temperament would have been attributed to his mixed blood. It has been said that Stowe managed to learn something about slavery, but not much about black people because of the conventions of her time.

In one of the later prefaces to her novel, Stowe chose to be eloquently misleading about the silence that supposedly hung over the subject of slavery before her book was published. Before her book, she claimed, it was said that people went insane trying to investigate slavery. But in the *Key* she refers to Theodore Weld's *Slavery As It Is* (1839), sometimes characterized as a compilation of atrocity stories. Weld had been a student at the Lane Seminary in Cincinnati where he led a rebellion against Stowe's father concerning to what extent white students should associate with blacks. As an abolitionist, Lyman Beecher was a gradualist and a member of the kind of colonization society opposed by radical white abolitionists and the majority of free blacks.

The anti-slavery elements of Stowe's novel had been scattered throughout the literature of the previous decades. *The Slave, or the Memoirs of Archie Moore*, published in 1836, was thought at first to be a slave narrative until it was revealed to be the work of a white historian, Richard Hildreth. The reliability of slave narratives was a contentious topic in the first half of the nineteenth century, and when not treated as a transient form of political expression, they may have been regarded as a resource, which was perhaps why white novelists were somewhat free in their use of them. Hildreth's revelation about his authorship came in an article meant to answer Catherine Beecher's *Essay on Slavery and Abolition,* published in 1837, in which she cautioned that women should not take part in public debates on slavery. But the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law encouraged those who had once remained silent to make themselves heard, and women were starting to participate in public discussions. Stowe had several women competitors among anti-slavery writers such as Lydia Maria Child and Emily Catherine Pierson. Moreover, Stowe's writing career began in the pages of *Godey's Lady's Book*, a woman's

monthly edited by Sarah Hale, the author of a slavery novel, *Northwood, or Life North and South* (1827).

In contrast to this literature were novels such as John Pendleton Kennedy's pro-slavery novel, *Swallow Barn.* Published in 1832, it is generally credited with establishing the plantation tradition in American fiction. The contented slave was a common feature of such novels. Southern sympathizers were especially drawn to humor in their efforts to ridicule anti-slavery ideas and to mock blacks. Much of this defensiveness existed in the South long before Stowe's book. In the three years following *Uncle Tom's Cabin*'s appearance at least fourteen pro-slavery novels were issued, some of which branded Stowe a mad woman or a plain liar.

The South denounced *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and its author, "the vile wretch in petticoats," though Stowe had hoped to show that regional identities were irrelevant by making Simon Legree a native of Vermont. But many in the North were also troubled, because Stowe's scene of the Quakers in Ohio coming to the aid of George and Eliza Harris seemed to condone breaking the law. Some Northerners argued that whatever people thought of the Fugitive Slave Law it was nevertheless the law. However, that was not the only scene in which Stowe painted a picture of Christian conscience taking precedence over repressive legislative acts. Young George Shelby teaches Uncle Tom to read, though it was against the law in the South to instruct slaves or to maintain schools for free blacks. Northern communities were also hostile to the education of blacks. A mob in one Connecticut town burned down a girls' academy in 1832 because townspeople feared that white boys would try to court the black girls the school's headmistress wanted to admit as pupils.

Questions surrounding the subjects of sex and morality circulate through Stowe's pages. Among the white characters in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, moral authority and courage are invested in the women. They are the ones who stand for Christian principles over pragmatism and acceptable community habits. In a notorious 1851 trial in Richmond, Virginia, an impecunious widow of impec-

cable reputation came to court dressed in her velvets and armed with a prayer book. She was to answer charges that she kept a school in her home for the instruction of black children. Because she was one of Richmond's own, the court was inclined to leniency, until, representing herself, she condemned slavery because of the humiliation to wives in having to look daily upon the bastard children of their husbands by slave women. The court hastened to sentence her in order to shut her up. Stowe largely avoided the usual ingredients of the romantic woman's novel in her plot. But the mere insinuation in the way her slave traders gaze at silky-haired slave women or joke among themselves about their uses was sufficient for some to resent her pointing out, however subtly, the existence of this brutal form of miscegenation.

Stowe's next book, *Dred, or A Tale of the Great Swamp*, came out in 1856. It was a saga about a slave rebellion, based on the life of Nat Turner. Stowe even gave her hero a suitable pedigree as the son of Denmark Vesey, the free black who attempted to lead a slave revolt in South Carolina in 1822. But Stowe could not bring herself to portray blacks killing whites and confined herself to making Dred a folk bandit. Black abolitionists like Martin Delany had criticized *Uncle Tom's Cabin* because of what they felt Stowe did not know about black men, and though Frederick Douglass recognized the importance of Stowe's novel to the anti-slavery cause, he was telling audiences in 1857, following the Dred Scott decision, that blacks would become insurrectionist and that they would not, like Uncle Tom, remain an inoffensive people shouting about glory. Stowe herself became more militant and praised John Brown's action after his death in 1859.

Stowe's book was so popular it helped to break the prejudice of church people like herself against novel reading—and theater going—as unworthy pursuits. Stowe went on to write several more novels, but God would not make a return visit. She died in 1896. Some sources say that by 1900 *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had all but vanished from the shelves of book dealers. Most expla-

nations for its decline in popularity cast the book as a casualty of the Civil War. People wanted to put the years of strife behind them. The "battle of the books" was over. And yet the defeat of the Confederacy did not mean an end to the plantation tradition. If anything, it gave new impetus to sentimental portraits of the antebellum South. It is significant that the popularity of such novels attended the defeat, not of the Confederacy, but of Reconstruction, which meant the implementation of the Black Codes, the triumph of Jim Crow, the servitude of sharecropping.

The dialect story enjoyed renewed popularity during this time, most famously in the folktales that Joel Chandler Harris retold through Uncle Remus. Folklorists agree that Uncle Remus, with his poetic speech and meditative philosophy, is finely conceived as a storyteller. But Uncle Remus is also made to express admiration for white folks, to ridicule black education, and to praise the Old South and the old ways. Uncle Remus, telling stories to entertain a white child, is a revision of Uncle Tom. He is his usurper, because when we think of Uncle Tom what we really see is the wizened face and bald crown of Uncle Remus. Tom sang hymns for Eva and told her stories, but there was never a twinkle in his eye. Nevertheless, Uncle Tom continues to be confused with Uncle Remus the old darky. Stowe, however, meant for Uncle Tom to die while still in his prime—as a martyr and a teacher.

—Darryl Pinckney

Uncle Tom's Cabin

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

THE scenes of this story, as its title indicates, lie among a race hitherto ignored by the associations of polite and refined society; an exotic race, whose ancestors, born beneath a tropic sun, brought with them, and perpetuated to their descendants, a character so essentially unlike the hard and dominant Anglo-Saxon race, as for many years to have won from it only misunderstanding and contempt.

But, another and better day is dawning; every influence of literature, of poetry, and of art, in our times, is becoming more and more in unison with the great master chord of Christianity, "good-will to man."

The poet, the painter, and the artist now seek out and embellish the common and gentler humanities of life, and, under the allurements of fiction, breathe a humanizing and subduing influence, favorable to the development of the great principles of Christian brotherhood.

The hand of benevolence is everywhere, stretched out, searching into abuses, righting wrongs, alleviating distresses, and bringing to the knowledge and sympathies of the world the lowly, the oppressed, and the forgotten.

In this general movement, unhappy Africa at last is remembered; Africa, who began the race of civilization and human progress in the dim, gray dawn of early time, but who, for centuries, has lain bound and bleeding at the foot of civilized and Christianized humanity, imploring compassion in vain.

But the heart of the dominant race, who have been her conquerors, her hard masters, has at length been turned towards her in mercy; and it has been seen how far nobler it is in nations to protect the feeble than to oppress them. Thanks be to God, the world has at last outlived the slave-trade!

The object of these sketches is to awaken sympathy and feeling for the African race, as they exist among us;

to show their wrongs and sorrows, under a system so necessarily cruel and unjust as to defeat and do away the good effects of all that can be attempted for them, by their best friends, under it.

In doing this, the author can sincerely disclaim any insidious feelings towards those individuals who, often without any fault of their own, are involved in the trials and embarrassments of the legal relations of slavery.

Experience has shown her that some of the noblest of minds and hearts are often thus involved; and no one knows better than they do, that what may be gathered of the evils of slavery from sketches like these, is not the half that could be told, of the unspeakable whole.

In the Northern States, these representations may, perhaps, be thought caricatures; in the Southern States are witnesses who know their fidelity. What personal knowledge the author has had, of the truth of incidents such as here are related, will appear in its time.

It is a comfort to hope, as so many of the world's sorrows and wrongs have, from age to age, been lived down, so a time shall come when sketches similar to these shall be valuable only as memorials to what has long ceased to be.

When an enlightened and Christianized community shall have, on the shores of Africa, laws, language, and literature, drawn from among us, may then the scenes of the house of bondage be to them like the remembrance of Egypt to the Israelite,—a motive of thankfulness to Him who hath redeemed them!

For, while politicians contend, and men are swerved this way and that by conflicting tides of interest and passion, the great cause of human liberty is in the hands of One, of whom it is said:—

"He shall not fail nor be discouraged
Till he have set judgment in the earth.

"He shall deliver the needy when he crieth,
The poor, and him that hath no helper.

"He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence,
And precious shall their blood be in his sight."

CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH THE READER IS INTRODUCED TO A MAN OF HUMANITY.

LATE in the afternoon of a chilly day in February, two gentlemen were sitting alone over their wine, in a well-furnished dining parlor, in the town of P——, in Kentucky. There were no servants present, and the gentlemen, with chairs closely approaching, seemed to be discussing some subject with great earnestness.

For convenience' sake, we have said, hitherto, two *gentlemen.* One of the parties, however, when critically examined, did not seem, strictly speaking, to come under the species. He was a short thick-set man, with coarse commonplace features, and that swaggering air of pretension which marks a low man who is trying to elbow his way upward in the world. He was much overdressed, in a gaudy vest of many colors, a blue neckerchief, bedropped gayly with yellow spots, and arranged with a flaunting tie, quite in keeping with the general air of the man. His hands, large and coarse, were plentifully bedecked with rings; and he wore a heavy gold watch-chain, with a bundle of seals of portentous size, and a great variety of colors, attached to it,—which, in the ardor of conversation, he was in the habit of flourishing and jingling with evident satisfaction. His conversation was in free and easy defiance of Murray's Grammar, and was garnished at convenient intervals with various profane expressions, which not even the desire to be graphic in our account shall induce us to transcribe.

His companion, Mr. Shelby, had the appearance of a gentleman; and the arrangements of the house, and the general air of the housekeeping, indicated easy, and even opulent, circumstances. As we before stated, the two were in the midst of an earnest conversation.

"That is the way I should arrange the matter," said Mr. Shelby.

"I can't make trade that way,—I positively can't, Mr. Shelby," said the other, holding up a glass of wine between his eye and the light.

"Why, the fact is, Haley, Tom is an uncommon fellow; he is certainly worth that sum anywhere,—steady, honest, capable, manages my whole farm like a clock."

"You mean honest, as niggers go," said Haley, helping himself to a glass of brandy.

"No; I mean, really, Tom is a good, steady, sensible, pious fellow. He got religion at a camp-meeting, four years ago; and I believe he really *did* get it. I've trusted him, since then, with everything I have,—money, house, horses,—and let him come and go round the country; and I always found him true and square in everything."

"Some folks don't believe there is pious niggers, Shelby," said Haley, with a candid flourish of his hand, "but *I do.* I had a fellow, now, in this yer last lot I took to Orleans,—'t was as good as a meetin', now, really, to hear that critter pray; and he was quite gentle and quietlike. He fetched me a good sum, too, for I bought him cheap of a man that was 'bliged to sell out; so I realized six hundred on him. Yes, I consider religion a valeyable thing in a nigger, when it's the genuine article, and no mistake."

"Well, Tom's got the real article, if ever a fellow had," rejoined the other. "Why, last fall, I let him go to Cincinnati alone, to do business for me, and bring home five hundred dollars. 'Tom,' says I to him, 'I trust you, because I think you're a Christian,—I know you wouldn't cheat.' Tom comes back, sure enough; I knew he would. Some low fellows, they say, said to him, 'Tom, why don't you make tracks for Canada?' 'Ah, master trusted me, and I couldn't,'—they told me about it. I am sorry to part with Tom, I must say. You ought to let him cover the whole balance of the debt; and you would, Haley, if you had any conscience."

"Well, I've got just as much conscience as any man in business can afford to keep,—just a little, you know, to swear by, as 't were," said the trader, jocularly; "and,

then, I'm ready to do anything in reason to 'blige friends; but this yer, you see, is a leetle too hard on a fellow,—a leetle too hard." The trader sighed contemplatively, and poured out some more brandy.

"Well then, Haley, how will you trade?" said Mr. Shelby, after an uneasy interval of silence.

"Well, haven't you a boy or gal that you could throw in with Tom?"

"Hum!—none that I could well spare; to tell the truth, it's only hard necessity makes me willing to sell at all. I don't like parting with any of my hands, that's a fact."

Here the door opened, and a small quadroon boy, between four and five years of age, entered the room. There was something in his appearance remarkably beautiful and engaging. His black hair, fine as floss silk, hung in glossy curls about his round dimpled face, while a pair of large dark eyes, full of fire and softness, looked out from beneath the rich, long lashes, as he peered curiously into the apartment. A gay robe of scarlet and yellow plaid, carefully made and neatly fitted, set off to advantage the dark and rich style of his beauty; and a certain comic air of assurance, blended with bashfulness, showed that he had been not unused to being petted and noticed by his master.

"Hulloa, Jim Crow!" said Mr. Shelby, whistling, and snapping a bunch of raisins towards him, "pick that up, now!"

The child scampered, with all his little strength, after the prize, while his master laughed.

"Come here, Jim Crow," said he. The child came up, and the master patted the curly head, and chucked him under the chin.

"Now, Jim, show this gentleman how you can dance and sing." The boy commenced one of those wild, grotesque songs common among the Negroes, in a rich, clear voice, accompanying his singing with many evolutions of the hands, feet, and whole body, all in perfect time to the music.

"Bravo!" said Haley, throwing him a quarter of an orange.

"Now, Jim, walk like old Uncle Cudjoe when he has the rheumatism," said his master.

Instantly the flexible limbs of the child assumed the appearance of deformity and distortion, as, with his back humped up, and his master's stick in his hand, he hobbled about the room, his childish face drawn into a doleful pucker, and spitting from right to left, in imitation of an old man.

Both gentlemen laughed uproariously.

"Now, Jim," said his master, "show us how old Elder Robbins leads the psalm." The boy drew his chubby face down to a formidable length, and commenced toning a psalm tune through his nose with imperturbable gravity.

"Hurrah! bravo! what a young un!" said Haley; "that chap's a case, I'll promise. Tell you what," said he, suddenly clapping his hand on Mr. Shelby's shoulder, "fling in that chap and I'll settle the business,—I will. Come, now, if that an't doing the thing up about the rightest!"

At this moment, the door was pushed gently open, and a young quadroon woman, apparently about twenty-five, entered the room.

There needed only a glance from the child to her, to identify her as its mother. There was the same rich, full, dark eye, with its long lashes; the same ripples of silky black hair. The brown of her complexion gave way on the cheek to a perceptible flush, which deepened as she saw the gaze of the strange man fixed upon her in bold and undisguised admiration. Her dress was of the neatest possible fit, and set off to advantage her finely moulded shape; a delicately formed hand and a trim foot and ankle were items of appearance that did not escape the quick eye of the trader, well used to run up at a glance the points of a fine female article.

"Well, Eliza?" said her master, as she stopped and looked hesitatingly at him.

"I was looking for Harry, please, sir;" and the boy bounded towards her, showing his spoils, which he had gathered in the skirt of his robe.

"Well, take him away, then," said Mr. Shelby; and hastily she withdrew, carrying the child on her arm.

"By Jupiter," said the trader, turning to him in admiration, "there's an article, now! You might make your fortune on that ar gal in Orleans, any day. I've seen

over a thousand, in my day, paid down for gals not a bit handsomer."

"I don't want to make my fortune on her," said Mr. Shelby, dryly; and, seeking to turn the conversation, he uncorked a bottle of fresh wine, and asked his companion's opinion of it.

"Capital, sir,—first chop!" said the trader; then turning, and slapping his hand familiarly on Shelby's shoulder, he added,—

"Come, how will you trade about the gal?—what shall I say for her,—what'll you take?"

"Mr. Haley, she is not to be sold," said Shelby. "My wife would not part with her for her weight in gold."

"Ay, ay! women always say such things, cause they han't no sort of calculation. Just show 'em how many watches, feathers, and trinkets one's weight in gold would buy, and that alters the case, *I* reckon."

"I tell you, Haley, this must not be spoken of; I say no, and I mean no," said Shelby, decidedly.

"Well, you'll let me have the boy, though," said the trader; "you must own I've come down pretty handsomely for him."

"What on earth can you want with the child?" said Shelby.

"Why, I've got a friend that's going into this yer branch of the business,—wants to buy up handsome boys to raise for the market. Fancy articles entirely,—sell for waiters, and so on, to rich 'uns, that can pay for handsome 'uns. It sets off one of yer great places,—a real handsome boy to open door, wait, and tend. They fetch a good sum; and this little devil is such a comical, musical concern, he's just the article."

"I would rather not sell him," said Mr. Shelby, thoughtfully; "the fact is, sir, I'm a humane man, and I hate to take the boy from his mother, sir."

"Oh, you do?—La! yes,—something of that ar natur. I understand, perfectly. It is mighty onpleasant getting on with women, sometimes. I al'ays hates these yer screechin' screamin' times. They are *mighty* onpleasant; but, as I manages business, I generally avoids 'em, sir. Now, what if you get the girl off for a day, or a week,

or so; then the thing's done quietly,—all over before she comes home. Your wife might get her some ear-rings, or a new gown, or some such truck, to make up with her."

"I'm afraid not."

"Lor bless ye, yes! These critters an't like white folks, you know; they gets over things, only manage right. Now, they say," said Haley, assuming a candid and confidential air, "that this kind o' trade is hardening to the feelings; but I never found it so. Fact is, I never could do things up the way some fellers manage the business. I've seen 'em as would pull a woman's child out of her arms, and set him up to sell, and she screechin' like mad all the time;—very bad policy,—damages the article,—makes 'em quite unfit for service sometimes. I knew a real handsome gal once, in Orleans, as was entirely ruined by this sort o' handling. The fellow that was trading for her didn't want her baby; and she was one of your real high sort, when her blood was up. I tell you, she squeezed up her child in her arms, and talked, and went on real awful. It kinder makes my blood run cold to think on 't; and when they carried off the child, and locked her up, she jest went ravin' mad, and died in a week. Clear waste, sir, of a thousand dollars, jest for want of management,—there's where 't is. It's always best to do the humane thing, sir; that's been *my* experience." And the trader leaned back in his chair, and folded his arms, with an air of virtuous decision, apparently considering himself a second Wilberforce.

The subject appeared to interest the gentleman deeply; for while Mr. Shelby was thoughtfully peeling an orange, Haley broke out afresh, with becoming diffidence, but as if actually driven by the force of truth to say a few words more.

"It don't look well, now, for a feller to be praisin' himself; but I say it jest because it's the truth. I believe I'm reckoned to bring in about the finest droves of niggers that is brought in,—at least, I've been told so; if I have once, I reckon I have a hundred times, all in good case,—fat and likely, and I lose as few as any man in the business. And I lays it all to my management, sir;

and humanity, sir, I may say, is the great pillar of *my* management."

Mr. Shelby did not know what to say, and so he said, "Indeed!"

"Now, I've been laughed at for my notions, sir, and I've been talked to. They an't pop'lar, and they an't common; but I stuck to 'em, sir; I've stuck to 'em, and realized well on 'em; yes, sir, they have paid their passage, I may say," and the trader laughed at his joke.

There was something so piquant and original in these elucidations of humanity, that Mr. Shelby could not help laughing in company. Perhaps you laugh too, dear reader; but you know humanity comes out in a variety of strange forms nowadays, and there is no end to the odd things that humane people will say and do.

Mr. Shelby's laugh encouraged the trader to proceed.

"It's strange now, but I never could beat this into people's heads. Now, there was Tom Loker, my old partner, down in Natchez; he was a clever fellow, Tom was, only the very devil with niggers,—on principle 't was, you see, for a better-hearted feller never broke bread; 't was his *system,* sir. I used to talk to Tom. 'Why, Tom,' I used to say, 'when your gals takes on and cry, what's the use o' crackin' on 'em over the head, and knockin' on 'em round? It's ridiculous,' says I, 'and don't do no sort o' good. Why, I don't see no harm in their cryin',' says I; 'it's natur,' says I, 'and if natur can't blow off one way, it will another. Besides, Tom,' says I, 'it jest spiles your gals; they get sickly and down in the mouth; and sometimes they gets ugly,—particular yallow gals do,—and it's the devil and all gettin' on 'em broke in. Now,' says I, 'why can't you kinder coax 'em up, and speak 'em fair? Depend on it, Tom, a little humanity, thrown in along, goes a heap further than all your jawin' and crackin'; and it pays better,' says I, 'depend on 't.' But Tom couldn't get the hang on 't; and he spiled so many for me, that I had to break off with him, though he was a good-hearted fellow, and as fair a business hand as is goin'."

"And do you find your ways of managing do the business better than Tom's?" said Mr. Shelby.

"Why, yes, sir, I may say so. You see, when I any ways can, I takes a leetle care about the onpleasant parts, like selling young uns and that,—get the gals out of the way,—out of sight, out of mind, you know,—and when it's clean done, and can't be helped, they naturally gets used to it. 'T an't, you know, as if it was white folks that's brought up in the way of 'spectin' to keep their children and wives, and all that. Niggers, you know, that's fetched up properly han't no kind of 'spectations of no kind; so all these things comes easier."

"I'm afraid mine are not properly brought up, then," said Mr. Shelby.

"S'pose not; you Kentucky folks spile your niggers. You mean well by 'em, but 't an't no real kindness, arter all. Now, a nigger, you see, what's got to be hacked and tumbled round the world, and sold to Tom, and Dick, and the Lord knows who, 't an't no kindness to be givin' on him notions and expectations, and bringin' on him up too well, for the rough and tumble comes all the harder on him arter. Now, I venture to say, your niggers would be quite chop-fallen in a place where some of your plantation niggers would be singing and whooping like all possessed. Every man, you know, Mr. Shelby, naturally thinks well of his own ways; and I think I treat niggers just about as well as it's ever worth while to treat 'em."

"It's a happy thing to be satisfied," said Mr. Shelby, with a slight shrug, and some perceptible feelings of a disagreeable nature.

"Well," said Haley, after they had both silently picked their nuts for a season, "what do you say?"

"I'll think the matter over, and talk with my wife," said Mr. Shelby. "Meantime, Haley, if you want the matter carried on in the quiet way you speak of, you'd best not let your business in this neighborhood be known. It will get out among my boys, and it will not be a particularly quiet business getting away any of my fellows, if they know it, I'll promise you."

"Oh, certainly, by all means, mum! of course. But I'll tell you, I'm in a devil of a hurry, and shall want to

know, as soon as possible, what I may depend on," said he, rising and putting on his overcoat.

"Well, call up this evening, between six and seven, and you shall have my answer," said Mr. Shelby, and the trader bowed himself out of the apartment.

"I'd like to have been able to kick the fellow down the steps," said he to himself, as he saw the door fairly closed, "with his impudent assurance; but he knows how much he has me at advantage. If anybody had ever said to me that I should sell Tom down south to one of those rascally traders, I should have said, 'Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?' And now it must come, for aught I see. And Eliza's child, too! I know that I shall have some fuss with wife about that; and, for that matter, about Tom, too. So much for being in debt,—heigh-ho! The fellow sees his advantage, and means to push it."

Perhaps the mildest form of the system of slavery is to be seen in the State of Kentucky. The general prevalence of agricultural pursuits of a quiet and gradual nature, not requiring those periodic seasons of hurry and pressure that are called for in the business of more southern districts, makes the task of the Negro a more healthful and reasonable one; while the master, content with a more gradual style of acquisition, has not those temptations to hardheartedness which always overcome frail human nature when the prospect of sudden and rapid gain is weighed in the balance, with no heavier counterpoise than the interests of the helpless and unprotected.

Whoever visits some estates there, and witnesses the good-humored indulgence of some masters and mistresses, and the affectionate loyalty of some slaves, might be tempted to dream the oft-fabled poetic legend of a patriarchal institution, and all that; but over and above the scene there broods a portentous shadow,—the shadow of *law*. So long as the law considers all these human beings, with beating hearts and living affections, only as so many *things* belonging to a master,—so long as the failure, or misfortune, or imprudence, or death of the kindest owner may cause them any day to exchange

a life of kind protection and indulgence for one of hopeless misery and toil,—so long it is impossible to make anything beautiful or desirable in the best-regulated administration of slavery.

Mr. Shelby was a fair average kind of man, good natured and kindly, and disposed to easy indulgence of those around him, and there had never been a lack of anything which might contribute to the physical comfort of the Negroes on his estate. He had, however, speculated largely and quite loosely; had involved himself deeply, and his notes to a large amount had come into the hands of Haley; and this small piece of information is the key to the preceding conversation.

Now, it had so happened that, in approaching the door, Eliza had caught enough of the conversation to know that a trader was making offers to her master for somebody.

She would gladly have stopped at the door to listen, as she came out; but her mistress just then calling, she was obliged to hasten away.

Still she thought she heard the trader make an offer for her boy;—could she be mistaken? Her heart swelled and throbbed, and she involuntarily strained him so tight that the little fellow looked up into her face in astonishment.

"Eliza, girl, what ails you to-day?" said her mistress, when Eliza had upset the wash-pitcher, knocked down the work-stand, and finally was abstractedly offering her mistress a long nightgown in place of the silk dress she had ordered her to bring from the wardrobe.

Eliza started. "Oh, Missis!" she said, raising her eyes; then, bursting into tears, she sat down in a chair, and began sobbing.

"Why, Eliza, child! what ails you?" said her mistress.

"Oh, Missis," said Eliza, "there's been a trader talking with Master in the parlor! I heard him."

"Well, silly child, suppose there has."

"Oh, Missis, *do* you suppose Mas'r would sell my Harry?" And the poor creature threw herself into a chair, and sobbed convulsively.

"Sell him! No, you foolish girl! you know your master never deals with those southern traders, and never means to sell any of his servants, as long as they behave

well. Why, you silly child, who do you think would want to buy your Harry? Do you think all the world are set on him as you are, you goosie! Come, cheer up, and hook my dress. There now, put my back hair up in that pretty braid you learnt the other day, and don't go listening at doors any more."

"Well, but, Missis, *you* never would give your consent—to—to"—

"Nonsense, child! to be sure I shouldn't. What do you talk so for? I would as soon have one of my own children sold. But really, Eliza, you are getting altogether too proud of that little fellow. A man can't put his nose into the door, but you think he must be coming to buy him."

Reassured by her mistress's confident tone, Eliza proceeded nimbly and adroitly with her toilet, laughing at her own fears, as she proceeded.

Mrs. Shelby was a woman of a high class, both intellectually and morally. To that natural magnanimity and generosity of mind which one often marks as characteristic of the women of Kentucky, she added high moral and religious sensibility and principle, carried out with great energy and ability into practical results. Her husband, who made no professions to any particular religious character, nevertheless, reverenced and respected the consistency of hers, and stood, perhaps, a little in awe of her opinion. Certain it was that he gave her unlimited scope in all her benevolent efforts for the comfort, instruction, and improvement of her servants, though he never took any decided part in them himself. In fact, if not exactly a believer in the doctrine of the efficacy of the extra good works of saints, he really seemed somehow or other to fancy that his wife had piety and benevolence enough for two,—to indulge a shadowy expectation of getting into heaven through her superabundance of qualities to which he made no particular pretension.

The heaviest load on his mind, after his conversation with the trader, lay in the foreseen necessity of breaking to his wife the arrangement contemplated,—meeting the importunities and opposition which he knew he should have reason to encounter.

Mrs. Shelby, being entirely ignorant of her husband's

embarrassments, and knowing only the general kindliness of his temper, had been quite sincere in the entire incredulity with which she had met Eliza's suspicions. In fact, she dismissed the matter from her mind, without a second thought; and being occupied in preparations for an evening visit, it passed out of her thoughts entirely.

CHAPTER II.

THE MOTHER.

ELIZA had been brought up by her mistress, from girlhood, as a petted and indulged favorite.

The traveller in the south must often have remarked that peculiar air of refinement, that softness of voice and manner, which seems in many cases to be a particular gift to the quadroon and mulatto women. These natural graces in the quadroon are often united with beauty of the most dazzling kind, and in almost every case with a personal appearance prepossessing and agreeable. Eliza, such as we have described her, is not a fancy sketch, but taken from remembrance, as we saw her, years ago, in Kentucky. Safe under the protecting care of her mistress, Eliza had reached maturity without those temptations which make beauty so fatal an inheritance to a slave. She had been married to a bright and talented young mulatto man, who was a slave on a neighboring estate, and bore the name of George Harris.

This young man had been hired out by his master to work in a bagging factory, where his adroitness and ingenuity caused him to be considered the first hand in the place. He had invented a machine for the cleaning of the hemp, which, considering the education and circumstances of the inventor, displayed quite as much mechanical genius as Whitney's cotton-gin.*

*A machine of this description was really the invention of a young colored man in Kentucky.

He was possessed of a handsome person and pleasing manners, and was a general favorite in the factory. Nevertheless, as this young man was in the eye of the law not a man, but a thing, all these superior qualifications were subject to the control of a vulgar, narrow-minded, tyrannical master. This same gentleman, having heard of the fame of George's invention, took a ride over to the factory, to see what this intelligent chattel had been about. He was received with great enthusiasm by the employer, who congratulated him on possessing so valuable a slave.

He was waited upon over the factory, shown the machinery by George, who, in high spirits, talked so fluently, held himself so erect, looked so handsome and manly, that his master began to feel an uneasy consciousness of inferiority. What business had his slave to be marching round the country, inventing machines, and holding up his head among gentlemen? He'd soon put a stop to it. He'd take him back, and put him to hoeing and digging, and "see if he'd step about so smart." Accordingly, the manufacturer and all hands concerned were astounded when he suddenly demanded George's wages, and announced his intention of taking him home.

"But, Mr. Harris," remonstrated the manufacturer, "isn't this rather sudden?"

"What if it is?—isn't the man *mine*?"

"We would be willing, sir, to increase the rate of compensation."

"No object at all, sir. I don't need to hire any of my hands out, unless I've a mind to."

"But, sir, he seems peculiarly adapted to this business."

"Dare say he may be; never was much adapted to anything that I set him about, I'll be bound."

"But only think of his inventing this machine," interposed one of the workmen, rather unluckily.

"Oh, yes!—a machine for saving work, is it? He'd invent that, I'll be bound; let a nigger alone for that, any time. They are all labor-saving machines themselves, every one of 'em. No, he shall tramp!"

Signet Classics

Uncle Tom's Cabin

Harriet Beecher Stowe

"So this is the little lady who made this big war."

Abraham Lincoln's legendary comment upon meeting Harriet Beecher Stowe demonstrates the significant place *Uncle Tom's Cabin* holds in American history—and literature. Stowe's timeless and moving novel inflamed the passions and prejudices of countless numbers, fanning the embers of the struggle between free and slave states into the fire of the Civil War.

Uncle Tom's Cabin is the story of the slave Tom. Devout and loyal, he is sold and sent down south, where he endures brutal treatment at the hands of the evil plantation owner Simon Legree. By exposing the extreme cruelties of slavery, Stowe explores society's failures and asks a profound question: "What is it to be a moral human being?" As the novel that helped to move a nation to battle, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is an essential part of the collective experience of the American people.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY DARRYL PINCKNEY
AND A NEW AFTERWORD BY JONATHAN ARAC

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