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# UNCLE TOM'S CABIN

OR  
LIFE AMONG THE LOWLY

BY HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

ARRANGED FOR YOUNG READERS

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PHILADELPHIA  
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## CHAPTER XX.

## TOPSY.

ONE morning, while Miss Ophelia was busy in some of her domestic cares, St. Clare's voice was heard, calling her at the foot of the stairs.

"Come down here, Cousin; I've something to show you."

"What is it?" said Miss Ophelia, coming down, with her sewing in her hand.

"I've made a purchase for your department,—see here," said St. Clare; and, with the word, he pulled along a little negro girl, about eight or nine years of age.

She was one of the blackest of her race; and her round, shining eyes, glittering as glass beads, moved with quick and restless glances over everything in the room. Her mouth, half open with astonishment at the wonders of the new Mas'r's parlor, displayed a white and brilliant set of teeth. Her woolly hair was braided in sundry little tails, which stuck out in every direction. The expression of her face was an odd mixture of shrewdness and cunning, over which was oddly drawn, like a kind of veil, an expression of the most doleful gravity and solemnity. She was dressed in a single filthy, ragged garment, made of bagging; and stood with her hands demurely folded before her. Altogether, there was something so odd and goblin-like about

her appearance as to inspire that good lady with utter dismay; and turning to St. Clare, she said,



Topsy.

“Augustine, what in the world have you brought that thing here for?”

“For you to educate, to be sure, and train in the way she should go. Here, Topsy,” he added, give us a song, now, and show us some of your dancing.”

The black glassy eyes glittered with a kind of wicked drollery, and the thing struck up, in a clear shrill voice, an odd negro melody, to which she kept time with her hands and feet, spinning round, clapping her hands, knocking her knees together, in a wild, fantastic sort of time, and producing in her throat all those odd guttural sounds which distinguish the native music of her race; and finally, turning a summerset or two,

and giving a prolonged closing note, as odd and unearthly as that of a steam whistle, she came

suddenly down on the carpet, and stood with her hands folded, and a most sanctimonious expression of meekness and solemnity over her face, only broken by the cunning glances which she shot askance from the corners of her eyes. Miss Ophelia stood silent, perfectly paralyzed with amazement. St. Clare, like a mischievous fellow as he was, appeared to enjoy her astonishment; and, addressing the child again, said,

“Topsy, this is your new mistress. I’m going to give you up to her; see now that you behave yourself.”

“Yes, Mas’r,” said Topsy, with sanctimonious gravity, her wicked eyes twinkling as she spoke.

“You’re going to be good, Topsy, you understand,” said St. Clare.

“O yes, Mas’r,” said Topsy, with another twinkle, her hands still devoutly folded.

“Now, Augustine, what upon earth is this for?” said Miss Ophelia.

“For you to educate—didn’t I tell you? You’re always preaching about educating.”

“I don’t want her, I am sure;—I have more to do with ’em now than I want to.”

“That’s you Christians, all over!—you’ll get up a society, and get some poor missionary to spend all his days among just such heathen. But let me see one of you that would take one into your house with you, and take the labor of their conversion on yourselves! No; when it comes to that, they are dirty and disagreeable, and it’s too much care, and so on.”

“Augustine, you know I didn’t think of it in that light,” said Miss Ophelia. “Well, it might be a real missionary

work," said she, looking rather more favorably on the child.

St. Clare had touched the right string. Miss Ophelia's conscientiousness was ever on the alert. "But," she added, "I really didn't see the need of buying this one;—there are enough now, in your house, to take all my time and skill."

"Well, then, Cousin," said St. Clare, drawing her aside, "I ought to beg your pardon for my good-for-nothing speeches. You are so good, after all, that there's no sense in them. Why, the fact is, this concern belonged to a couple of drunken creatures that keep a low restaurant that I have to pass by every day, and I was tired of hearing her screaming, and them beating and swearing at her. She looked bright and funny, too, as if something might be made of her;—so I bought her, and I'll give her to you."

"Well, I'll do what I can," said Miss Ophelia.

Sitting down before her, she began to question her.

"How old are you, Topsy?"

"Dun no, Missis," said the image.

"Don't know how old you are? Didn't anybody ever tell you? Who was your mother?"

"Never had none!" said the child.

"Never had any mother? What do you mean? Where were you born?"

"Never was born!" persisted Topsy, with another goblin-like grin.

"You mustn't answer me in that way, child. Tell me where you were born, and who your father and mother were."

"Never was born," reiterated the creature, more em-

phatically; "never had no father nor mother, nor nothin'. I was raised by a speculator, with lots of others. Old Aunt Sue used to take care on us."

"Laws, Missis, there's heaps of 'em," said Jane, breaking in. "Speculators buys 'em up cheap, when they's little, and gets 'em raised for market."

"How long have you lived with your master and mistress?"

"Dun no, Missis."

"Is it a year, or more, or less?"

"Dun no, Missis."

"Laws, Missis, those low negroes,—they can't tell; they don't know anything about time," said Jane; "they don't know what a year is; they don't know their own ages."

"Have you ever heard anything about God, Topsy?"

The child looked bewildered, but grinned as usual.

"Do you know who made you?"

"Nobody, as I knows on," said the child, with a short laugh. "I spect I grow'd. Don't think nobody never made me."

"Do you know how to sew?" said Miss Ophelia.

"No, Missis."

"What can you do?—what did you do for your master and mistress?"

"Fetch water, and wash dishes, and rub knives, and wait on folks."

"Were they good to you?"

"Spect they was," said the child, scanning Miss Ophelia cunningly.

Miss Ophelia began with Topsy by taking her into her chamber, the first morning, and solemnly commencing a

course of instruction in the art and mystery of bed-making. Topsy, washed and shorn of all the little braided tails wherein her heart had delighted, arrayed in a clean gown, with well-starched apron stood reverently before Miss Ophelia, with an expression of solemnity well befitting a funeral.

"Now, Topsy, I'm going to show you just how my bed is to be made. I am very particular about my bed. You must learn exactly how to do it."

"Yes, ma'am," says Topsy, with a deep sigh, and a face of woful earnestness.

"Now, Topsy, look here;—this is the hem of the sheet, —this is the right side of the sheet, and this is the wrong; —will you remember?"

"Yes, ma'am," says Topsy, with another sigh; but when the good lady's back was turned, the young disciple snatched a pair of gloves and a ribbon and adroitly slipped them into her sleeves.

"Now, Topsy, let's see you do this," said Miss Ophelia, pulling off the clothes, and seating herself.

Topsy, with great gravity and adroitness, went through the exercise completely to Miss Ophelia's satisfaction, but by an unlucky slip, however, a fragment of the ribbon hung out of one of her sleeves, just as she was finishing, and caught Miss Ophelia's attention. Instantly she pounced upon it. "What's this? You naughty, wicked child,—you've been stealing this!"

Topsy was not in the least disconcerted. "Laws! why, that ar's Miss Feely's ribbon, an't it? How could it a got caught in my sleeve?"

"Topsy, you naughty girl, don't you tell me a lie,—you stole that ribbon!"

"Missis, I declar for 't, I didn't;—never seed it till dis yer blessed minnit."

"Topsy," said Miss Ophelia, "don't you know it's wicked to tell lies?"

"I never tells no lies, Miss Feely," said Topsy, with virtuous gravity; "it's jist the truth I've been a tellin' now, and an't nothin' else."

"Topsy, I shall have to whip you, if you tell lies so."

"Laws, Missis, if you's to whip all day, couldn't say no other way," said Topsy, beginning to blubber. "I never seed that ar,—it must a got caught in my sleeve. Miss Feely must have left it on the bed, and it got caught in the clothes, and so got in my sleeve."

Miss Ophelia was so indignant at the barefaced lie, that she caught the child and shook her.

"Don't you tell me that again!"

The shake brought the gloves on to the floor, from the other sleeve.

"There you!" said Miss Ophelia, "will you tell me now, you didn't steal the ribbon?"

Topsy now confessed to the gloves, but still persisted in denying the ribbon.

"Now, Topsy," said Miss Ophelia, "if you'll confess all about it, I won't whip you this time." Thus adjured, Topsy confessed to the ribbon and gloves, with woful protestations of penitence.

"Well, now, tell me. I know you must have taken other things since you have been in the house, for I let you run



about all day yesterday. Now, tell me if you took anything, and I shan't whip you."

"Laws, Missis! I took Miss Eva's red thing she wars on her neck."

"You did, you naughty child!—Well, what else?"

"I took Rosa's yer-rings,—them red ones."

"Go bring them to me this minute, both of 'em."

"Laws, Missis! I can't,—they's burnt up!"

"Burnt up!—what a story! Go get 'em, or I'll whip you."

Topsy, with loud protestations, and tears, and groans, declared that she could not. "They's burnt up,—they was."

"What did you burn 'em up for?" said Miss Ophelia.

"Cause I's wicked,—I is. I's mighty wicked, any how. I can't help it."

Just at this moment, Eva came innocently into the room, with the identical coral necklace on her neck.

"Why, Eva, where did you get your necklace?" said Miss Ophelia.

"Get it? Why, I've had it on all day," said Eva.

"Did you have it on yesterday?"

"Yes; and what is funny, Aunt, I had it on all night. I forgot to take it off when I went to bed."

Miss Ophelia looked perfectly bewildered; the more so, as Rosa, at that instant, came into the room, with the coral ear-drops shaking in her ears!

"I'm sure I can't tell anything what to do with such a child!" she said, in despair. "What in the world did you tell me you took those things for, Topsy?"

"Why, Missis said I must 'fess; and I couldn't think of nothin' else to 'fess," said Topsy, rubbing her eyes.

"But, of course, I didn't want you to confess things you



"Poor Topsy, why need you steal?"

didn't do," said Miss Ophelia; "that's telling a lie, just as much as the other."

"Laws, now, is it?" said Topsy, with an air of innocent wonder.

"La, there an't any such thing as truth in that limb,"

said Rosa, looking indignantly at Topsy. "If I was Mas'r St. Clare, I'd whip her till the blood run. I would,—I'd let her catch it!"

"No, no, Rosa," said Eva, with an air of command, which the child could assume at times; "you mustn't talk so, Rosa. I can't bear to hear it."

"La sakes! Miss Eva, you'se so good, you don't know nothing how to get along with niggers. There's no way but to cut 'em well up, I'll tell ye."

"Rosa!" said Eva, "hush! Don't you say another word of that sort!" and the eye of the child flashed, and her cheek deepened its color.

Rosa was cowed in a moment, and passed out of the room.

Eva stood looking at Topsy perplexed and sorrowful, but she said sweetly:

"Poor Topsy, why need you steal? You're going to be taken good care of, now. I'm sure I'd rather give you anything of mine, than have you steal it."

It was the first word of kindness the child had ever heard in her life; and the sweet tone and manner struck strangely on the wild, rude heart, and a sparkle of something like a tear shone in the keen, round, glittering eye; but it was followed by the short laugh and habitual grin.

But what was to be done with Topsy? Miss Ophelia found the case a puzzler, and so shut Topsy up in a dark closet till she had arranged her ideas further on the subject.

"I don't see," said Miss Ophelia to St. Clare, "how I'm going to manage that child without whipping her."

"O, well, certainly," said St. Clare; "do as you think

best. Only I'll make one suggestion: I've seen this child whipped with a poker, knocked down with the shovel or tongs, or whichever came handiest, and, seeing that she is used to that style of operation, I think your whippings will have to be pretty energetic, to make much impression."

"I can only persevere and try, and do the best I can," said Miss Ophelia; after this, she did labor with zeal and energy, on her new subject. She instituted regular hours and employments for her, and undertook to teach her to read and to sew.

In the former art, the child was quick enough. She learned her letters as if by magic, and was very soon able to read plain reading; but the sewing was a more difficult matter. The creature was as lithe as a cat, and as active as a monkey, and the confinement of sewing was her abomination; so she broke her needles, threw them slyly out of windows, or down in chinks of the walls; she tangled, broke, and dirtied her thread, or, with a sly movement, would throw a spool away altogether.

Topsy was soon a noted character in the establishment. In her play hours, she invariably had every child in the establishment at her heels, open-mouthed with admiration and wonder,—not excepting Miss Eva, who appeared to be fascinated by her, as a dove is sometimes charmed by a serpent. Miss Ophelia was uneasy that Eva should fancy Topsy's society so much, and implored St. Clare to forbid it.

"Poh! let the child alone," said St. Clare. "Topsy will do her good."

"But so depraved a child,—are you not afraid she will teach her some mischief?"

"She can't teach her mischief; she might teach it to some children, but evil rolls off Eva's mind like dew off a cabbage-leaf,—not a drop sinks in."

Topsy was smart and energetic in all manual operations, learning everything that was taught her with surprising quickness. Mortal hands could not lay spread smoother,



"Raising Cain."

adjust pillows more accurately, sweep and dust and arrange more perfectly, than Topsy, when she chose—but she didn't very often choose. When left to herself, instead of making the bed, she would amuse herself with pulling off the pillow-cases, butting her woolly head among the pillows, till it would sometimes be grotesquely ornamented with feathers sticking out in various directions; she would climb the posts, and hang head downward from the tops; flourish the sheets and spreads all over the apartment; dress the bolster up in Miss Ophelia's night clothes, singing and whistling, and making grimaces at herself in the looking-glass; in short, as Miss Ophelia phrased it, "raising Cain" generally.

On one occasion, Miss Ophelia found Topsy with her

very best scarlet India Canton crape shawl wound round her head for a turban, going on with her rehearsals before the glass in great style,—Miss Ophelia having, with carelessness most unheard-of in her, left the key for once in her drawer.

“Topsy!” she would say, when at the end of all patience, “what does make you act so?”

“Dunno, Missis,—I spects cause I’s so wicked!”

“I don’t know anything what I shall do with you, Topsy.”

“Law, Missis, you must whip me; my old Missis allers whipped me. I an’t used to workin’ unless I gets whipped.”

“Why, Topsy, I don’t want to whip you. You can do well, if you’ve a mind to; what is the reason you won’t?”

“Laws, Missis, I’s used to whippin’; I spects it’s good for me.”

Miss Ophelia tried the recipe, and Topsy invariably made a terrible commotion, screaming, groaning and imploring, though half an hour afterwards, when roosted on some projection of the balcony, and surrounded by a flock of admiring “young uns,” she would express the utmost contempt of the whole affair.

“Law, Miss Feely whip!—would n’t kill a skeeter, her whippins. Oughter see how old Mas’r made the flesh fly; old Mas’r know’d how!”

Topsy always made great capital of her own sins and enormities, evidently considering them as something peculiarly distinguishing.

“Law, you niggers,” she would say to some of her auditors, “does you know you ’s all sinners? Well, you is—

everybody is. White folks is sinners too,—Miss Feely says so; but I 'spects niggers is the biggest ones; but lor! ye an't any on ye up to me. I 's so awful wicked there can't nobody do nothin' with me. I used to keep old Missis a swarin' at me half de time. I 'spects I 's the wickedest critter in the world;" and Topsy would cut a summerset, and come up brisk and shining on to a higher perch, and evidently plume herself on the distinction.

St. Clare took the same kind of amusement in the child that a man might take in the tricks of a parrot or a pointer. Topsy, whenever her sins brought her into disgrace in other quarters, always took refuge behind his chair; and St. Clare, in one way or other, would make peace for her. From him she got many a stray coin, which she laid out in nuts and candies, and distributed, with careless generosity, to all the children in the family; for Topsy, to do her justice, was good-natured and liberal, and only spiteful in self-defence.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

## FORESHADOWINGS.

**T**WO days after this, Alfred St. Clare and Augustine parted; and Eva, who had been stimulated by the society of her young cousin, to exertions beyond her strength, began to fail rapidly. St. Clare was at last willing to call in medical advice,—a thing from which he had always shrunk, because it was the admission of an unwelcome truth.

Marie St. Clare had taken no notice of the child's gradually decaying health and strength, because she was completely absorbed in studying out two or three new forms of disease to which she believed she herself was a victim.

Miss Ophelia had several times tried to awaken her maternal fears about Eva; but to no avail.

In a week or two, there was a great improvement of symptoms, and Eva's step was again in the garden,—in the balconies; she played and laughed again,—and her father, in a transport, declared that they should soon have her as hearty as anybody. Miss Ophelia and the physician alone felt no encouragement from this illusive truce. There was one other heart, too, that felt the same certainty, and that was the little heart of Eva.

For the child, though nursed so tenderly, and though



life was unfolding before her with every brightness that love and wealth could give, had no regret for herself in dying.

In that book which she and her simple old friend had read so much together, she had seen and taken to her young heart the image of One who loved the little child; and, as she gazed and mused, He had ceased to be an image and a picture of the distant past, and come to be a living, all-surrounding reality. But her heart yearned with sad tenderness for all that she was to leave behind.

Eva came tripping up the verandah steps to her father. He folded her suddenly in his arms, and said:

“Eva, dear, you are better nowadays,—are you not?”

“Papa,” said Eva, with sudden firmness, “I ’ve had things I wanted to say to you, a great while. I want to say them now, before I get weaker.”

St. Clare trembled as Eva seated herself in his lap. She laid her head on his bosom, and said,

“It ’s all no use, papa, to keep it to myself any longer. The time is coming that I am going to leave you. I am going, and never to come back!” and Eva sobbed.

“O, now, my dear little Eva!” said St. Clare, trembling as he spoke, but speaking cheerfully, “you ’ve got nervous and low-spirited; you must n’t indulge such gloomy thoughts.”

“No, papa,” said Eva, “don’t deceive yourself!—I am not any better, I know it perfectly well,—and I am going, before long. I am not nervous,—I am not low-spirited. If it were not for you, papa, and my friends, I should be perfectly happy. I want to go,—I long to go!”

“Why, dear child, what has made your poor little heart

so sad? "You have had everything, to make you happy, that could be given you."

"I had rather be in heaven; though, only for my friends' sake, I would be willing to live. There are a great



"No, papa, don't deceive yourself!"

many things here that make me sad, that seem dreadful to me; I had rather be there; but I don't want to leave you,—it almost breaks my heart!"

"What makes you sad, and seems dreadful, Eva?"

"O, things that are done, and done all the time. I feel sad for our poor people; they love me dearly, and they are all good and kind to me. I wish, papa, they were all free."

"Why, don't you think they are well enough off now?"

"O, but, papa, if anything should happen to you, what would become of them? Papa, these poor creatures love their children as much as you do me. O! do something for them! There 's poor Mammy loves her children; I 've seem her cry when she talked about them. And Tom loves his children; and it 's dreadful, papa, that such things are happening, all the time!"

"There, there, darling," said St. Clare, soothingly; "only don't distress yourself, and don't talk of dying, and I will do anything you wish."

"And promise me, dear father, that Tom shall have his freedom as soon as"—she stopped, and said, in a hesitating tone—"I am gone!"

"Yes, dear, I will do anything in the world,—anything you could ask me to."

"Dear papa," said the child, laying her burning cheek against his, "how I wish we could go together!"

"Where, dearest?" said St. Clare.

"To our Savior's home; it 's so sweet and peaceful there—it is all so loving there!" The child spoke unconsciously, as of a place where she had often been. "Don't you want to go, papa?" she said.

St. Clare drew her closer to him, but was silent.

"You will come to me," said the child, speaking in a voice of calm certainty which she often used unconsciously.

"I shall come after you. I shall not forget you."

## CHAPTER XXV.

## THE LITTLE EVANGELIST.

**I**T was Sunday afternoon. St. Clare was stretched on a bamboo lounge in the verandah, solacing himself with a cigar. Marie lay reclined on a sofa, opposite the window opening on the verandah, closely secluded, under an awning of transparent gauze, from the outrages of the mosquitos, and languidly holding in her hand an elegantly-bound prayer-book. She was holding it because it was Sunday, and she imagined she had been reading it,—though, in fact, she had been only taking a succession of short naps, with it open in her hand.

Miss Ophelia, who, after some rummaging, had hunted up a small Methodist meeting within riding distance, had gone out, with Tom as driver, to attend it; and Eva had accompanied them. Soon after their return Miss Ophelia appeared, dragging Topsy after her.

“Come out here, now!” she said. “I will tell your master!”

“What ’s the case now?” asked Augustine.

“The case is, that I cannot be plagued with this child any longer! It ’s past all bearing; flesh and blood cannot endure it! Here, I locked her up, and gave her a hymn to study; and what does she do, but spy out where I put my

key, and has gone to my bureau, and got a bonnet trimming and cut it all to pieces, to make dolls' jackets! I never saw anything like it, in my life!"

"Come here, Tops, you monkey!" said St. Clare, calling the child up to him.

Topsy came up; her round, hard eyes glittering and blinking with a mixture of apprehensiveness and their usual odd drollery.

"What makes you behave so?" said St. Clare, who could not help being amused with the child's expression.

"Spects it 's my wicked heart," said Topsy, demurely; "Miss Feely says so."

"Don't you see how much Miss Ophelia has done for you? She says she has done everything she can think of."

"Lor, yes, Mas'r! old Missis used to say so, too. She whipped me a heap harder, and used to pull my har, and knock my head agin the dor; but it did n't do me no good! I spects, if they 's to pull every spear o' har out o' my head, it would n't do no good, neither,—I 's so wicked! Laws! I 's nothin' but a nigger, no ways!"

Eva, who had stood a silent spectator of the scene thus far, made a silent sign to Topsy to follow her. There was a little glass room at the corner of the verandah, which St. Clare used as a sort of reading-room; and Eva and Topsy disappeared into this place.

St. Clare lifted up a curtain that covered the glass door, and looked in. In a moment, laying his finger on his lips, he made a silent gesture to Miss Ophelia to come and look. There sat the two children on the floor, Topsy, with her usual air of careless drollery and unconcern; Eva, with

her whole face fervent with feeling, and tears in her large eyes.

“What does make you so bad, Topsy? Why won't you try and be good? Don't you love anybody, Topsy?”



“I will tell your master.”

“Dunno nothing 'bout love; I loves candy and sich, that 's all,” said Topsy.

“But you love your father and mother?”

“Never had none, ye know. I telled ye that, Miss Eva.”

"O, I know," said Eva, sadly; "but had n't you any brother, or sister, or aunt, or—"

"No, none on 'em,—never had nothing nor nobody."

"But, Topsy, if you 'd only try to be good, you might—"

"Could n't never be nothin' but a nigger, if I was ever so good," said Topsy. "If I could be skinned, and come white, I 'd try then."

"But people can love you, if you are black, Topsy. Miss Ophelia would love you, if you were good."

Topsy gave the short, blunt laugh that was her common mode of expressing incredulity.

"Don't you think so?" said Eva.

"No; she can't bar me, 'cause I 'm a nigger!—she 'd 's soon have a toad touch her! There can't nobody love niggers, and niggers can't do nothin'! I don't care," said Topsy, beginning to whistle.

"O, Topsy, poor child, I love you!" said Eva, with a sudden burst of feeling, and laying her little thin, white hand on Topsy's shoulder; "I love you, because you haven't had any father, or mother, or friends;—because you've been a poor, abused child! I love you, and I want you to be good. I am very unwell, Topsy, and I think I shan't live a great while; and it really grieves me, to have you be so naughty. I wish you would try to be good, for my sake;—it's only a little while I shall be with you."

"O, dear Miss Eva, dear Miss Eva!" said the child; "I will try, I will try; I never did care nothin' about it before."

St. Clare dropped the curtain.