Irving

“What! Irving? thrice welcome, warm heart and fine brain,
You bring back the happiest spirit from Spain;”
And the gravest sweet humor, that ever were there
Since Cervantes met death in his gentle despair;
Nay, don’t be embarrassed, nor look so beseeching,
I sha’nt run directly against my own preaching,
And, having just laughed at their Raphaels and Dantes,
Go to setting you up beside matchless Cervantes;
But allow me to speak what I honestly feel,—
To a true poet-heart add the fun of Dick Steele,
Throw in all of Addison, minus the chill,
With the whole of that partnership’s stock and good-will,
Mix well, and while stirring, hum o’er, as a spell,
The fine old English Gentleman, simmer it well,
Sweeten just to your own private liking, then strain,
That only the finest and clearest remain,
Let it stand out of doors till a soul it receives
From the warm lazy sun loitering down through green leaves,
And you’ll find a choice nature, not wholly deserving
A name either English or Yankee,—just Irving.

[Lowell]

“There is Lowell, who’s striving Parnassus to climb
With a whole bale of isms tied together with rhyme,
He might get on alone, spite of brambles and boulders,
But he can’t with that bundle he has on his shoulders,
The top of the hill he will ne’er come nigh reaching
Till he learns the distinction ‘twixt singing and preaching:
His lyre has some chords that would ring pretty well,
But he’d rather by half make a drum of the shell,
And rattle away till he’s old as Methuselah;
At the head of a march to the last new Jerusalem.

1848

Washington Irving had written a history of Granada (1829) and The Legends of the Alhambra (1832).
Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (1547–1616), author of Don Quixote (1605, 1615).
Richard Steele (1679–1700), English essayist.
Joseph Addison (1672–1719), English essayist and collaborator with Steele on the eighteenth-century periodical The Spectator.
“The English Country Gentleman” was an essay in Irving’s Brazenbridge Hall (1822).
Methuselah is reported to have lived 969 years. Genesis 5:27.

Stowe

Harriet Beecher Stowe 1811–1896

In 1862, when President Lincoln first met Harriet Beecher Stowe, he reportedly called her “the little lady who wrote the book that made this big war!” Lincoln expressed the view of many who have come to see her novel Uncle Tom’s Cabin (1852) as the greatest of all antislavery manifestoes, one that helped stir the North to embark on a military crusade against the slaveholding South.

She also wrote a second antislavery novel, Dred; a Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp, published in 1856, and intended as a complement to Uncle Tom’s Cabin. In Dred she focused attention on the effects of slavery on the slave owners, and Dred is generally considered the better written of the two novels. Yet it was never as popular as Uncle Tom’s Cabin, which was an immediate success; in its first year of publication more than 300,000 copies were sold, a phenomenal number for that time.

Harriet Beecher Stowe was a shrewd businesswoman, far more successful in negotiating profitably with publishers than were Cooper, Melville, and Irving. In 1870 she made the then daring proposal to her publisher that salesmen be sent into the South with an illustrated edition of Uncle Tom’s Cabin. “Books,” she wrote her publisher, “to do anything here in these southern states must be sold by agents. . . . Yet there is money on hand even down to the colored families, and an attractive book would have a history.”

Harriet Beecher Stowe had been raised in New England, in a household dominated by her father, Lyman Beecher, one of America’s most celebrated clergymen and the principal spokesman for Calvinism in nineteenth-century America. He was a passionate opponent of sinners and backsliders, and his daughter, like her most famous brother, Henry Ward Beecher, was an evangelist for moralism and reform.

Her childhood was filled with spiritual exercises designed to fill her with the “iron of Calvinism” and to assist her to the blessings of religious conversion, a divine excitement she experienced twice. Educated in a female seminary, she read widely in Calvinist theology and New England history. When she was twenty-one she moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, where her father had become president of a theological seminary. Four years later she married one of the seminary professors, Calvin Stowe, and in 1850 returned to New England when her husband was appointed to the faculty of Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine. It was there, while seated at the communion table in the Brunswick Congregational Church, that she received the inspiration for her most famous book, Uncle Tom’s Cabin, which she then wrote out at her kitchen table, under the divine direction (she later reported) of God.

Harriet Beecher Stowe’s literary models were the Bible and the works of Cooper, Scott, Dickens, and Defoe. She had also been influenced by her wide reading of antislavery literature, by stories of slavery she had heard from black freedmen and white travelers in the South, by her year in southern Ohio, where she saw the operation of the Underground Railroad, and by her visits to Kentucky plantations across the river from Cincinnati.

Uncle Tom’s Cabin has been called the “Iliad of the blacks,” the “cornerstone of American protest fiction.” The book’s pathos, sensationalism, and timeliness made it enormously popular. Millions of copies were sold and it was translated throughout the world. It even inspired a literary genre: Anti Uncle Tom novels written by opponents of abolition. It was abridged in religious tracts, versified, set to music, and dramatized by numerous barnstorming theatrical companies—called “Tom Shows”—whose melodramatic productions still appear in America.

TEXT: Uncle Tom's Cabin, 1852. Some corrections have been made in spelling and punctuation.

from UNCLE TOM'S CABIN;

OR,

LIFE AMONG THE LOWLY

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.
bring home five hundred dollars. 'Tom,' says I to him, 'I trust you, because I think you're a Christian—I know you would n'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 could n'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 as much conscience as any man in business can afford to keep,—just a little, you know, to swear by, as 'twere,' 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, have n'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 flax silk, hung in glossy curls about his round, dimpled face, while a pair of large dark eyes, full of tire 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 unused to being petted and noticed by his master.

'Hulloa, Jim Crow!' said Mr. Shelby, whistling and snapping a bunch of rattle snakes 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 comic 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.

^5With one-fourth black ancestry.

^6Name commonly used for blacks. It originated in the early nineteenth century and was popularized in a popular minstrel song of the 1850s. Use of the term ‘Jim Crow’ to refer to segregation laws and customs began in the 1850s.

^7An African ‘day-name,’ meaning Monday, given to black male slaves to show their day of birth.
“What on earth can you want with the child?” said Shelby.

“Why, I’ve got a friend that’s going into this yer lar’ 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?—Lal yes—something of that ar natur. I understand, perfectly. It is mighty unpleasant getting on with women, sometimes. I al’sy hates these yer screechin’, screechin’ times. They are mighty unpleasant; 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 ain’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’ trade⁹ 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 did n’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, just 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 arm, with an air of virtuous decision, apparently considering himself a second Wilberforce.⁶

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 on all 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.

⁶Buying and selling slaves.
⁷William Wilberforce (1759–1833), British statesman and philanthropist.

They ain’t pop’lar, and they ain’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 now-a-days, 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,³⁰ he was a clever fellow, Tom was, only the very devil with niggers,—on principle I 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 u’s 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 yelow¹ gardens, 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 jawnin’ and crackin’; and it pays better,’ says I, ‘depend on ‘t. But Tom could n’t get the hang on ‘t; and he spilled so many for me, that I had to break off with him, though he was a good-hearted fellow, and as far a business hand 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 unpleasant 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 ain’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, has no kind of expections of no kind; so all these things comes easier.”

“I’m afraid mine are not properly brought up, then,” said Mr. Shelby.

“Spose not; you Kentucky folks spile your niggers. You mean well by ‘em, but ‘t ain’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 ain’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 hardier on him arter. Now, I venture to say, your niggers would be quite chop-fallen¹² 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.”

³⁰Natchez, Mississippi.
¹¹Yellow, light-skinned; of mixed black and white ancestry.
¹²Jaw-fallen, dejected, gloomy.
“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[^13] 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.^[5]

“Of course, 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[^14] 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[^15], to one of those rascally traders, I should have said, ‘Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?’[^16] 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,—high! The fellow sees his advantage, and means to push it.”

CHAPTER IV.

AN EVENING IN UNCLE TOM’S CABIN

The cabin of Uncle Tom was a small log building, close adjoining to “the house,” as the negro par excellence designates his master’s dwelling. In front it had a neat garden-patch, where, every summer, strawberries, raspberries, and a variety of fruits and vegetables, flourished under careful tending. The whole front of it was covered by a large scarlet bignonia and a native multi-flora rose, which, entwisting and interlacing, left scarce a vestige of the rough logs to be seen. Here, also, in summer, various brilliant annuals, such as marigolds, petunias, four-o’clocks, found an inculted corner in which to unfold their splendors, and were the delight and pride of Aunt Chloe’s heart.

Let us enter the dwelling. The evening meal at the house is over, and Aunt Chloe, who presided over its preparation as head cook, has left to inferior officers in the kitchen the business of clearing away and washing dishes, and

[^13]: Mused, pondered.
[^14]: Pay a call[^15]; i.e., “come to see me.”
[^15]: I.e., send Tom to labor on one of the large plantations in the deep South.
[^16]: 1 Kings 8:13.

STOWE / Uncle Tom’s Cabin

come out into her own snug territories, to “get her ole man’s supper,” therefore, doubt not that it is her you see by the fire, presiding with anxious interest over certain frizziling items in a stew-pan, and anong with grave consideration lifting the cover of a bake-kettle, from whence steam forth indubitable intimations of “something good.” A round, black, shining face is hers, so glossy as to suggest the idea that she might have been washed over with white of eggs, like one of her own tea rusks.^[1] Her whole plump countenance beams with satisfaction and contentment from under her well-starved checkered turban, bearing on it, however, if we must confess it, a little of that tinge of self-consciousness which becomes the first cook of the neighborhood, as Aunt Chloe was universally held and acknowledged to be.

A cook she certainly was, in the very bone and centre of her soul. Not a chicken or turkey or duck in the barn-yard but looked grave when they saw her approaching, and seemed evidently to be reflecting on their latter end; and certain it was that she was always meditating on trussing, stuffing and roasting, to a degree that was calculated to inspire terror in any reflecting fowl living. Her corn-cake, in all its varieties of hoe-cake, dodgers, muffins, and other species too numerous to mention, was a sublime mystery to all less practised connoisseurs; and she would shake her fat sides with honest pride and merriment, as she would narrate the fruitless efforts that one and another of her companions had made to attain to her elevation.

The arrival of company at the house, the arranging of dinners and suppers “in style,” awoke all the energies of her soul; and no sight was more welcome to her than a pile of travelling trunks launched on the verandah, for then she foresaw fresh efforts and fresh triumphs.

Just at present, however, Aunt Chloe is looking into the bake-pan; in which congenial operation we shall leave her till we finish our picture of the cottage.

In one corner of it stood a bed, covered neatly with a snowy spread; and by the side of it was a piece of carpeting, of some considerable size: On this piece of carpeting Aunt Chloe took her stand, as being decidedly in the upper walks of life; and it and the bed by which it lay, and the whole corner, in fact, were treated with distinguished consideration, and made, so far as possible, sacred from the marauding inroads and desecrations of little folks. In fact, that corner was the drawing-room of the establishment. In the other corner was a bed of much humbler pretensions, and evidently designed for us.

The wall over the fireplace was adorned with some very brilliant scriptural prints, and a portrait of General Washington, drawn and colored in a manner which would certainly have astonished that hero, if ever he had happened to meet with its like.

On a rough bench in the corner, a couple of woolly-headed boys, with glinting black eyes and fat shining cheeks, were busy in superintending the first walking operations of the baby, which, as is usually the case, consisted in getting up on its feet, balancing a moment, and then tumbling down,—each successive failure being violently chorted, as something decidedly clever.

A table, somewhat rheumatic in its limbs, was drawn out in front of the fire, and covered with a cloth, displaying cups and saucers of a decidedly br

[^1]: Hard baked bread often made sweet to serve as a dessert. When baked with a light cover of egg white, it has a glossy surface.