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UNCLE TOM'S CABIN.

CHAP. XLIV.

The Liberator—George Shelby's Return—Crushed Hopes—Aunt Chloe's Sorrow—The Slaves freed.

George Shelby had written to his mother merely a line, stating the day that she might expect him home. Of the death-scene of his old friend he had not the heart to write. He had tried several times, and only succeeded in half-choking himself; and invariably finished by tearing up the paper, wiping his eyes, and rushing somewhere to get quiet.

There was a pleased bustle all through the Shelby mansion that day, in expectation of the arrival of young Mas'r George.

Mrs. Shelby was seated in her comfortable parlour, where a cheerful hickory fire was dispelling the chill of the late autumn evening. A supper-table, glittering with plate and cut glass, was set out, on whose arrangements our former old Chloe, was presiding.

Arrayed in a new calico dress, with clean, white apron, and high, well-starched turban, her black, polished face glowing with satisfaction, she lingered, with needless punctiliousness, around the arrangements of the table, merely as an excuse for talking a little to her mistress.

"Laws, now! won't it look natural to him?" she said. "Thar—I set his plate just whar he likes it—round by the fire. Mas'r George allers wants de warm seat. Oh, go way. Why didn't Sally get out de *best* tea-pot—de little new one Mas'r George got for missis, Chrismas? I'll have it out! And missis has heard from Mas'r George?" she said, inquiringly.

"Yes, Chloe; but only a line, just to say he would be home to night, if he could—that's all."

"Didn't say nothin' 'bout my old man, 'spose?" said Chloe, still fidgeting with the teacups.

"No, he didn't. He did not speak of anything, Chloe. He said he would tell all when he got home."

"Jes like Mas'r George; he's allers so fevce for tellin' everything hisself. I allers minded dat ar in Mas'r George. Don't see, for my part, how white people gen'ally can bar to hev to write things much as they do—writin's such slow, oneasy kind of work.

Mrs. Shelby smiled.

"I'm a thinkin' my old man won't know de boys and de baby. Lor'! she's the biggest gal, now; good she is too, and peart, Polly is. She's out to the house, now, watchin' de hoe-cake. I'se got jist de very pattern my old man liked so much a bakin.' Jist sich as I gin him the mornin' he was took off. Lord bless us! how I felt dat ar morning!"

Mrs. Shelby sighed, and felt a heavy weight on her heart at this allusion. She had felt uneasy ever since she received her son's letter, lest something should prove to be hidden behind the veil of silence which he had drawn.

"Missis had got dem bills?" said Chloe, anxiously.

"Yes, Chloe,"

"Cause I wants to show my old man dem very bills de *perfectioner* gave me. 'And,' says he, 'Chloe, I wish you'd stay longer.' 'Thank you, mas'r,' says I, 'I would, only my old man's coming home, and missis, she can't do without me no longer.' Ther's jest what I telled him. Berry nice man, dat Mas'r Jones was."

Chloe had pertinaciously insisted that the very bills in which her wages had been paid should be preserved to show to her husband, in memorial of her capability; and Mrs. Shelby had readily consented to humour her in the request.

"He won't know Polly—my old man won't. Laws, it's five year since they tuk him! She was a baby den—couldn't but jist stand. Remember how tickled he used to be, 'cause she would keep a fallin' over when she sot out to walk. Laws a me!"

The rattling of wheels now was heard.

"Mas'r George!" said Aunt Chloe, starting to the window.

Mrs. Shelby ran to the entry door, and was folded in the arms of her son. Aunt Chloe stood anxiously straining her eyes out into darkness.

"O *poor* Aunt Chloe!" said George, stopping compassionately, and taking her hard black hand between both his. "I'd have given all my fortune to have brought him with me, but he's gone to a better country."

There was a passionate exclamation from Mrs. Shelby, but Aunt Chloe said nothing.

The party entered the supper-room. The money of which Chloe was so proud was still lying on the table.

"Thar," said she, gathering it up, and holding it with a trembling hand to her mistress, "don't never want to see nor hear on't again. Jist as I knew 'twould be—sold and murdered on dem ar' old plantations!"

Chloe turned, and was walking proudly out of the room. Mrs. Shelby followed her softly, and took one of her hands, drew her down into a chair, and sat down by her.

"My poor, good Chloe!" said she.

Chloe leaned her head on her mistress's shoulder, and sobbed out, "O missis! 'scuse me, my heart's broke—dat's all!"

"I know it is," said Mrs. Shelby, as her tears fell fast; "and *I* cannot heal it, but Jesus can. He healeth the broken-hearted, and bindeth up their wounds."

There was a silence for some time, and all wept together. At last, George, sitting down beside the mourner, took her hand, and, with simple pathos, repeated the triumphant scene of her husband's death, and his last messages of love.

About a month after this, one morning, all the servants of the Shelby estate were convened together in the great hall that ran through the house, to hear a few words from their young master.

To the surprise of all he appeared among them with a bundle of papers in his hand, containg a certificate of freedom to every one on the place, which he read successively, and presented, amid the sobs and tears and shouts of all present.

Many, however, pressed around him, earnestly begging him not to send them away; and, with anxious faces, tendering back their free papers.

"We don't want to be no freer than we are. We's allers had all we wanted. We don't want to leave the ole place, and mas'r and missis, and de rest!"

"My good friends," said George, as soon as he could get a silence, "there'll be no need for you to leave me. The place wants as many hands to work it as it did before. We need the same about the house that we did before. But you are now free men and free women. I shall pay you for your work, such as we shall agree on. The advantage is, that in case of my getting in debt or dying—things that might happen—you cannot now be taken up and sold. I expect to carry on the estate, and to teach you what, perhaps, it will take you some time to learn—how to use the rights I give you as free men and women. I expect you to be good, and willing to learn; and I trust in God that I shall be faithful, and willing to teach. And now, my friends, look up, and thank God for the blessing of freedom."

An aged, patriarchal negro, who had grown grey and blind on the estate, now rose, and lifting his trembling hand, said, "Let us give thanks unto the Lord!" As all kneeled by one consent, a more touching and hearty Te Deum never ascended to heaven, though borne on the peal of organ, bell, and cannon, than came from that honest old heart.

On rising, another struck up a Methodist hymn, of which the burden was:—

"The year of Jubilee is come—
Return, ye ransomed sinners, home."

"One thing more," said George, as he stopped the congratulations of the throng. "You all remember our good old Uncle Tom!"

George here gave a short narration of the scene of his death, and of his loving farewell to all on the place, and added,—

"It was on his grave, my friends, that I resolved, before God, that I would never own another slave while it was possible to free him: that nobody, through me, should ever run the risk of being parted from home and friends, and dying on a lonely plantation, as he died. So, when you rejoice in your freedom, think that you owe it to that good old soul, and pay it back in kindness to his wife and children. Think of your freedom, every time you see Uncle Tom's Cabin; and let it be a memorial to put you all in mind to follow in his steps, and be as honest, and faithful, and Christian as he was."

A CITY ON THE TOPS OF TREES.

It is not easy to give the reader an idea of this remarkable city (Amsterdam) crossed and re-crossed by canals in all directions—a city half water and half land—in which the canals are the streets and highways, leading toward the open sea, which seems to hold the city in its arms. It is only by means of expensive and most substantial dikes and sluices, elaborately constructed and carefully repaired, and guarded that the sea is kept back—and but for these, this city, containing upwards of two hundred thousand inhabitants, would inevitably be submerged and destroyed. Four great canals run across the city in parallel curved lines, and, crossing these, are a series of other canals, converging into the harbour like the lines of a fan. Large basins occur here and there at intervals. The buildings in the best parts of the city are magnificent—many of them of great age, bearing rich and grotesque ornamental work on their fronts. You would scarcely believe that the soil under these majestic buildings was only sand and soft mud!—Yet it is so: and it is only by means of piles of wood driven far down through the sand into the solid stratum beneath, that a foundation has been gained. Hence Erasmus said of Amsterdam, that the inhabitants, like crows, lived on the tops of trees. Any one who merely pays a passing visit to Amsterdam, as I did cannot fail to be thrown in a state of perplexity and maze by the apparent and inextricable complicity of the city, its innumerable bridges, its endless succession of canals and interminable brick streets. The canals and bridges so much resemble each other, that the stranger without a guide feels as if he were wandering in a labyrinth; he loses all recollection of the points of the compass; and as I did, he will soon probly lose his way. The most interesting public building in Amsterdam is the Stadt house, formerly occupied by the famous Bank of Amsterdam, but now used as a royal palace. The great feature of its interior is its grand hall, lined with white Italian marble, said to be the finest hall of the kind in the world. The smaller apartments in the palace contains some fine modern Dutch paintings, to which the public are freely admitted. One painting, representing the hero, Van Speyk, applying the match to blow up his vessel at Antwerp, rather than allow it to be taken by the Belgians, is one that lives in the memory of him who has seen it. To those who have leisure, the Museum, or National Picture Gallery, is well worthy of a visit. But pictures can be seen at home, and are not a novelty. The real interest of Amsterdam is in its streets, its bustle and commerce, its bridges and canals, and the many striking and peculiar features of this city of the sea—features which are nowhere to be found characteristic of any city in Europe, north of Venice.

Nothing is easier, nor more delightful to most women, than to pay away money. To see the energy that prevades all their movements, the light that dances in their eyes when bound on a shopping excursion, one would think that the mere act of passing the "filthy lucre" from hand to hand has something exhilerating and restorative in it.