

CONDENSED CLASSICS

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

Condensation by John Kendrick Bangs

IT WAS in the days when African slavery flourished under the free skies of America. Evil times had befallen the house of Shelby, and pressing debt required the sacrifice of a portion of the holdings of the Kentucky planter in human chattels. Uncle Tom instead of the freedom that had been promised him as the reward for a lifetime of devoted service found himself torn from wife, home and children, transferred to the hands of an unscrupulous trader, and consigned to the terror-ridden slave-marts of the lower Mississippi. So trusted had the black man been to him, that numerous avenues of escape lay open to him. Of one of these, in the dead of winter, over the ice-bound waters of the Ohio river, by the "underground" to Sandusky, and thence to freedom in Canada, the multi-gifted Eliza, and her son who had been sold at the same time, had availed themselves. But Tom's fidelity to his master was too strong, and fearing to involve him in further difficulties he bravely faced the mysteries of the future.

"I am in the Lord's hands," said he to those who tried to persuade him to escape. "And there'll be the same God there that there is here!"

"Well, it's a nasty mess," said Tom, "I s'pose my master's son George, as he bade the old slave farewell, 'But remember—some day I'll come down and buy you back.'"

The voyage down the Mississippi with the slave-gang to which Tom was attached was filled with scenes and episodes of woe and tragedy, but Tom found relief from sorrow in the companionship of a fellow-passenger, a fair-haired little girl, full of the smiling spirit of play, who fascinated by Tom's unusual dexterity in the making of strange toys dear to the hearts of children, clung to him as to an old and beloved friend.

"Where are you going, Tom?" she asked one day.

"I dunno, Missy," said Tom. "Reck on I'm gwine to be sold to somebody—but I dunno who."

"Well, my father can buy you," said she, "and I'll ask him to this very day."

"Thank you, my little lady," said Tom, gratefully.

And his "little lady" she soon became, for the brave black woman little Eliza's life back from the swifling waters of the Mississippi into which she had fallen, and in her gratitude for her deliverance the child's father, Augustine St. Clare, bought him from the trader.

The scene now changes to New Orleans, where in a beautiful home, in daily companionship with his little mistress, Tom for a time was happy. St. Clare, his new master, was kindly and sympathetic, and while of an easy-going disposition a dawning consciousness of the injustice of slavery came into his soul, a consciousness confirmed and accentuated by his daily contemplation of the nobility of heart of the faithful Tom. Two years of this unlooked for happiness passed away, and once more Tom was to face with misfortune. His flower-like little companion, growing daily more and more fragile, herself in spite of her years exuberant and depressed by the wickedness of the system of slavery which not only destroyed the souls of the oppressed, but debased the character of the oppressors, finally died. Heart-broken over his loss St. Clare found comfort only in the companionship of the equally heart-broken Tom, and one day in a sudden surge of gratitude he promised the old man his freedom, but the light of joy that shone in Tom's face when he heard the promise, disappeared.

"You haven't had such a big time here that you should be so glad to leave me," he said sadly.

"I ain't leavin' ya, Marse St. Clare," said Tom, "I'se bet'n free that I'm n-joyin' in."

But it was not to be. The easy-going nature of St. Clare caused him to delay Tom's emancipation papers, and one night trying to separate two drunken brothers intent upon fighting each other, St. Clare was himself stabbed to death; and in the settlement of his estate Tom once more found himself at the auction-block.

Enter now Simon Legree, a master of far different type from St. Clare, and St. Clare, a brute, and a drunkard. A beast whose glance was an insult to womanhood. A fiend who prided himself upon his inflexible brutality, and with brutal satisfaction showed to all who would look that his knuckles caloused with the blows he had inflicted upon the helpless. To him by virtue of length of pure flesh Tom who now tasted the tragic dregs of the cup of misery. The manifest contrast between the own easy brutality and the high-majesty character of his chattel aroused the envious wrath of his new owner, who endeavored by every wicked expedient possible to break Tom's spirit. But the unshakable faith in divine guidance,

and protection. Furtively he watched him at work, hoping to find a flaw, but in vain; but one day he found the way. He ordered Tom to log a woman-slave who was guilty of the shortcoming attributed to her, and for the first time in his career Legree was denied. Tom refused. Legree's answer was a blow upon Tom's cheek.

"What?" he roared in his rage. "Ye dare tell me ye won't, ye blasted black beast?"

"I'll die first," Tom replied, simply.

"Well, here's a pious dog—a saint—a gentleman!" sneered Legree. "Didn't ye ever read in your Bible, Servants obey your Masters? And I say Master? I don't pay twelve hundred dollars cash for ye, and ain't ye mine, body and soul?"

"No, Marse Legree," replied Tom, "through the tears and blood that coursed down his cheeks. 'My soul ain't yours! It's been bought and paid for by one that is able to keep it. Ye may kill my body, but ye can't harm my soul!'"

Now, according to the nature of his kind Legree was superior, and while his hatred increased, he began to fear in the presence of his fearless possession. In Tom's presence what passed for a conscience was aroused within him. Some of the unspeakable crimes of which in his lustful gratifications, and through his murderous instincts, he had been guilty began to prey upon him. Dark things that had happened in the decayed-old mansion in which Legree dwelt, and in common with the ignorant blacks by whom he was surrounded Legree began to have fears, accentuated by the delirium of drink, of impending visitations of ghosts. Taking advantage of these fears, his one-time mistress, Cassie, a woman of subtle powers, herself a slave, conspired with Emmaline, an attractive mulatto whom Legree was endeavoring to install in her place, to destroy his peace of mind, and to make himself by means of whitish appearances and weird sounds in the garret of the old mansion. Pretending to escape through the swamps, eluding their pursuers, they returned to the house, and lay hid there for days, working their soul-stirring stratagems upon the worried Legree. Legree at the head of a pursuing party made up of negroes and blood hounds sought the missing woman in the swamps and forests by night, and the plot of deception was surrounded, but in vain; and in the race of failure, believing him to have been party to the escape, he turned upon Tom.

"Well, ye black beast," he roared, in a paroxysm of baffled rage, "I've made up my mind to kill ye."

"Very likely, Marse Legree," replied Tom, calmly.

"Unless ye tell me what ye know about these yer fakes," said Legree. "I ain't got nothin' to tell, Marse."

"Don't ye dare tell me that ye don't know, ye old black Christian," cried Legree, in angry contempt, striking him furiously.

"Yes, I know, Marse," said Tom, "but I can't tell anything. I can die." "Hark ye, Tom," roared Legree, in a terrible voice. "This time I mean what I say. I'll compare ye, or I'll kill ye till I can't find a drop of blood in your body till you give up."

"Marse," said Tom, "if you was sick, or in trouble, or dyin', and I would save ye, I'd give ye my heart's blood, and I takin' every drop of blood in your body, I'd give it to you, I'd give ye my precious soul, I'd give ye freely as the Lord gave him for me. Do the worst ye can. My troubles will soon be over, but if ye don't repent, yours never end!"

Legree, who had been so confident, now stood silent, his face pale, his hands outstretched in silence by Tom's absolutely fearless reliance upon his faith, but only for a moment. There was one hesitating pause, and the spirit of evil within him, defied, rose with seven-fold vengeance. Furious rage he struck his victim to the ground and gave him over to be flogged to ribbons.

Two days later George Shelby, Tom's husband, from Kentucky, now grown to manhood, appeared to fulfill his promise of redemption, but he came too late. Tom lay dying of his wounds.

"I've come to take you home," said George, tears streaming from his eyes as he bent over the old friend.

"Bless the Lord—it's Marse George!" cried Tom, as he opened his eyes, bewildered. "They haven't forgot me, have they? I haven't forgot me! Now I shall die content!"

At this moment Legree, snarling in, and looked on carelessly.

"The old Satan!" cried George, in indignation. "It's a comfort to think of the Devil with him for some of these days."

"Hush, Marse George!" said Uncle Tom. "Don't feel so. He ain't done me no real harm—only opened the door of heaven for me—that's all!" The sudden dying of strength fled away. A sense of sinking came over him, and he closed his eyes. His broad chest rose and fell heavily. The expression of his face was that of a conqueror.

"Who—who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" he whispered in a voice that contained with mortal weakness, and with a smile on his lips he fell asleep.

"Witness, Eternal God," said George Shelby, as he knelt beside the body of his departed friend. "O, witness from this hour, I will do what one man can do to drive this curse of slavery from our land!"

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MARKETS

DETROIT QUOTATIONS

Feed and Grain
WHEAT—Cash No. 2 red, 1.36; July, 1.37; September, 1.38; No. 2 white, 1.41; No. 2 yellow, 1.42; No. 2 hard, 1.43.
YELLOW CORN—Cash No. 2, 62 1-2; No. 2 white, 63 1-2; No. 2 yellow, 64 1-2; No. 2 hard, 65 1-2.
WHITE OATS—Cash No. 2, 41c; No. 2 white, 42c; No. 2 yellow, 43c; No. 2 hard, 44c.
BARLEY—Feeding, 1.30; 40c per cwt. No. 2, 1.31; No. 3, 1.32; No. 4, 1.33; No. 5, 1.34; No. 6, 1.35; No. 7, 1.36; No. 8, 1.37; No. 9, 1.38; No. 10, 1.39; No. 11, 1.40; No. 12, 1.41; No. 13, 1.42; No. 14, 1.43; No. 15, 1.44; No. 16, 1.45; No. 17, 1.46; No. 18, 1.47; No. 19, 1.48; No. 20, 1.49; No. 21, 1.50; No. 22, 1.51; No. 23, 1.52; No. 24, 1.53; No. 25, 1.54; No. 26, 1.55; No. 27, 1.56; No. 28, 1.57; No. 29, 1.58; No. 30, 1.59; No. 31, 1.60; No. 32, 1.61; No. 33, 1.62; No. 34, 1.63; No. 35, 1.64; No. 36, 1.65; No. 37, 1.66; No. 38, 1.67; No. 39, 1.68; No. 40, 1.69; No. 41, 1.70; No. 42, 1.71; No. 43, 1.72; No. 44, 1.73; No. 45, 1.74; No. 46, 1.75; No. 47, 1.76; No. 48, 1.77; No. 49, 1.78; No. 50, 1.79; No. 51, 1.80; No. 52, 1.81; No. 53, 1.82; No. 54, 1.83; No. 55, 1.84; No. 56, 1.85; No. 57, 1.86; No. 58, 1.87; No. 59, 1.88; No. 60, 1.89; No. 61, 1.90; No. 62, 1.91; No. 63, 1.92; No. 64, 1.93; No. 65, 1.94; No. 66, 1.95; No. 67, 1.96; No. 68, 1.97; No. 69, 1.98; No. 70, 1.99; No. 71, 2.00; No. 72, 2.01; No. 73, 2.02; 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No. 679, 8.08; No. 680, 8.09; No. 681, 8.10; No. 682, 8.11; No. 683, 8.12; No. 684, 8.13; No. 685, 8.14; No. 686, 8.15; No. 687, 8.16;