

Week Twelve: The Fireside Poets / Anti-Slavery

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

(1807–1882)

Longfellow was one of the most serious writers of his age, and although a poet, enormously popular. He combined considerable learning with an enlightened understanding of the people, and he expressed the lives and ideals of humbler Americans in poems that they could not forget. Amid the rising democracy of his day, Longfellow became the national bard. His more popular poems strongly reflected the optimistic sentiment and the love of a good lesson that characterized the humanitarian spirit of the people. Unfortunately for his reputation in the twentieth century, the surviving picture has been that of the gray old poet of “The Children’s Hour,” seated by the fireside in the armchair made from “the spreading chestnut tree,” a present from the children of Cambridge. However, there was another Longfellow, well known to more discerning readers of his own day as the poet of “The Saga of King Olaf” and *Christus*, the author of great ballads and of many sonnets and reflective lyrics remarkable for imaginative propriety and constructive skill. To be sure, the familiar spirit is always present in his work, and it too contributes to what in his writing is genuine, large, and enduring.

Longfellow was born in Portland, Maine, on February 27, 1807, into a family of established tradition and moderate means. He attended Portland Academy and was tutored for admission to nearby Bowdoin College, which he entered in the sophomore class, a fellow student of Hawthorne. Having published his first poem at thirteen, two years earlier, he dreamed of “future eminence in literature.” Upon his graduation in 1825, he accepted a professorship of foreign languages at Bowdoin, which included a provision for further preparatory study abroad. He visited France, Spain, Italy, and Germany, returning to Bowdoin in the autumn of 1829. There he taught for six years, edited textbooks, and wrote articles on European literatures in the tradition of his profession. His reward was the offer of the Smith professorship at Harvard, which George Ticknor was vacating, and a leave of absence for further study of German. Meanwhile he had married (1831), and published in the *New England Magazine* the travel sketches which appeared as his first volume, *Outre Mer*, in 1835. The twenty months abroad (1835–1836) increased Longfellow’s knowledge of Germanic and Scandinavian literatures, soon to become a deep influence upon his writing.

His young wife died during the journey, in November 1835. With renewed dedication to the combined responsibilities of teacher and creative writer, at the dawn of the well-named “flowering of New England,” Longfellow soon became a leading figure among the writers and scholars of that region. Hawthorne was now an intimate friend. Within three years he entered upon the decade of remarkable production (1839–1849) which gave him national prominence and the affection of his countrymen.

Hyperion, a prose romance, and *Voices of the Night*, his first collection of poems, both appeared in 1839. *Ballads and Other Poems* (December 1841, dated 1842), containing “The Skeleton in Armor,” “The Wreck of the Hesperus,” and “The Village Blacksmith,” exactly expressed the popular spirit of the day. *Poems on Slavery* (1842) was followed by *The Spanish Student* (1843), his first large treatment of a foreign theme.

The standard text is the Riverside Edition of the *Complete Poetical and Prose Works*, 11 vols., edited by H. E. Scudder, 1886, with valuable notes, based in part on Samuel Longfellow’s *Life*. The one-volume *Complete Poetical Works*, Cambridge Edition, 1893, is excellent. Andrew Hilen edited *The Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, 6 vols., 1967–1983.

The Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 2 vols., 1886, by the poet’s brother, Samuel Longfellow, was for years the standard work, still serviceable. The same author added a third volume, *Final Memorials*, in 1887. A modern full biography is Newton Arvin’s *Longfellow: His Life and Work*, 1963. Additional studies include T. W. Higginson, *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, American Men of Letters Series, 1902; James T. Hatfield, *New Light on Longfellow*, 1933; Lawrence Thompson, *Young Longfellow*, 1938; C. B. Williams, *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, 1964; Edward Wagenknecht, *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: Portrait of an American Humanist*, 1966; and Edward Wagenknecht, *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: His Poetry and Prose*, 1986.

Of more importance was *The Belfry of Bruges and Other Poems* (1845, dated 1846). Such poems as “Nuremberg” illustrate how the poet familiarized untraveled Americans with the European scene and culture. At the same time, he was acquainting his countrymen with themselves in such poems as “The Arsenal at Springfield,” “The Old Clock on the Stairs,” and “The Arrow and the Song.” His contribution to the epic of his country found its first large expression in *Evangeline* (1847), which aroused national enthusiasm for its pictorial vividness and narrative skill. *The Seaside and the Fireside* (1849, dated 1850) contained “The Building of the Ship,” a powerful plea for national unity in the face of the mounting crises before the Civil War. Minor works of this period include a prose tale, *Kavanagh* (1849), and several anthologies of poetry and criticism.

After two decades of conflict between the writer and the teacher, he resigned his Harvard professorship to James Russell Lowell in 1854. But Craigie House, his home in Cambridge, remained no less a sort of literary capitol. Longfellow had lodged there on first going to Harvard, and it became his as a gift from Nathan Appleton, the Lowell industrialist whose daughter the poet had married in 1843.

In 1855, he published *The Song of Hiawatha*, based on American Indian legends, and in 1858, *The Courtship of Miles Standish*, which popularized the legend of Plymouth Colony. These poems gave him an impregnable position in the affections of his countrymen, and increased his already wide recognition abroad. His appeal for the common reader in England was as great as at home, and rivaled that of Tennyson; a bust of Longfellow occupies a niche near the memorial to T. S. Eliot (who became a British citizen) in Westminster Abbey’s Poets’ Corner. They are the only Americans so honored.

In 1861, his beloved Frances Appleton, reputed heroine of *Hyperion* and eighteen years his wife, was burned to death. His deep religious feeling and his reflective spirit, present in his work from the beginning, now became dominant. He bent his energies upon two large works, earlier begun and laid aside. To the translation of Dante’s *Divine Comedy* he brought both a scholar’s love and religious devotion. It appeared in three volumes (1865–1867), principally in unrimed triplets, and it long remained a useful translation, although in most respects not an inspired one. However, *Christus, A Mystery* (1872) reveals at many points his highest inspiration. *The Golden Legend*, a cycle of religious miracle plays, ultimately Part II of *Christus*, had appeared in 1851. He now added Part III, *The New England Tragedies* (1868), two fine closet dramas dealing with the Puritan themes of “John Endicott” and “Giles Corey.” Part I, published in 1871 as *The Divine Tragedy*, dealt with Christ’s life and Passion.

During these last twenty years the poet published several additional volumes, containing many of his most mature reflective lyrics. When *Tales of a Wayside Inn* appeared in 1863, his publishers prepared an unprecedented first edition of fifteen thousand copies. A second group of the *Tales* appeared in *Three Books of Song* (1872), and a third in *Aftermath* (1873). These famous *Tales* ranged from the level of “Paul Revere’s Ride” to “The Saga of King Olaf,” a high point of accomplishment. Among other volumes were *Flower-de-Luce* (1867), in which the sonnets “Divina Commedia” appeared as a sequence; *The Masque of Pandora* (1875); *Kéramos and Other Poems* (1878); *Ultima Thule* (1880); and *In the Harbor*, published in 1882, the year of his death.

Longfellow’s lapses into didacticism and sentimentality reflected the flabbier romanticism of his age, but he has remained in the tradition and memory of the American people. Admiration for Longfellow today rests on his gift for narrative and his daring experiments in narrative verse, his balladry, his popularization of the national epic, his naturalization of foreign themes and poetic forms, his ability to bring his erudition within the range of general understanding, his versatile and sensitive craftsmanship, and, perhaps beyond all else, the large and endearing qualities of the man himself.

 HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

My Lost Youth¹

Often I think of the beautiful town
 That is seated by the sea;²
 Often in thought go up and down
 The pleasant streets of that dear old town,
 And my youth comes back to me. 5
 And a verse of a Lapland song
 Is haunting my memory still:
 “A boy’s will is the wind’s will,
 And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts.”³

I can see the shadowy lines of its trees, 10
 And catch, in sudden gleams,
 The sheen of the far-surrounding seas,
 And islands that were the Hesperides⁴
 Of all my boyish dreams.
 And the burden of that old song, 15
 It murmurs and whispers still:
 “A boy’s will is the wind’s will,
 And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts.”

I remember the black wharves and the slips,
 And the sea-tides tossing free; 20
 And Spanish sailors with bearded lips,
 And the beauty and mystery of the ships,
 And the magic of the sea.
 And the voice of that wayward song
 Is singing and saying still: 25
 “A boy’s will is the wind’s will,
 And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts.”

1. Like “The Building of the Ship,” this poem contains “a memory of Portland,—my native town, the city by the sea,” as Longfellow noted in his diary on March 29, 1855. The next day, he continued, “Wrote the poem; and am rather pleased with it, and with the bringing in of the two lines of the old Lapland song.” He was referring to the two-line refrain ending each stanza. These words became so familiar that, as late as 1913, Robert Frost could call his first volume *A Boy’s Will*, and be understood. Longfellow’s poem appeared in *Putnam’s Monthly Magazine* for August 1855 and was included among the “other poems” of *The Courtship of Miles Standish* volume (1858).

2. In his diary Longfellow associates these words with those of Francesca in Dante’s *Inferno*, V, 97–98: “Sieda la terra dove nato fui / Sulla marina” (The city where I was born is situated on the seashore).

3. The Cambridge *Complete Poetical Works* reports the source of this refrain as John Scheffer’s *History of Lapland* (Oxford, 1674), where occur the lines: “A Youth’s desire is the desire of the wind, / All his essaies / Are long delaies, / No issue can they find.”

4. The mythical garden of the golden apples which Gaea (the earth) gave Hera, queen of the gods, on her marriage to Zeus.

I remember the bulwarks by the shore,
 And the fort upon the hill;⁵
 The sunrise gun, with its hollow roar, 30
 The drum-beat repeated o'er and o'er,
 And the bugle wild and shrill.
 And the music of that old song
 Throbs in my memory still:
 "A boy's will is the wind's will, 35
 And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

I remember the sea-fight far away,⁶
 How it thundered o'er the tide!
 And the dead captains, as they lay
 In their graves, o'erlooking the tranquil bay 40
 Where they in battle died.
 And the sound of that mournful song
 Goes through me with a thrill:
 "A boy's will is the wind's will,
 And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts." 45

I can see the breezy dome of groves,
 The shadows of Deering's Woods;
 And the friendships old and the early loves
 Come back with a Sabbath sound, as of doves 50
 In quiet neighborhoods.
 And the verse of that sweet old song,
 It flutters and murmurs still:
 "A boy's will is the wind's will,
 And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

I remember the gleams and glooms that dart 55
 Across the school-boy's brain;
 The song and the silence in the heart,
 That in part are prophecies, and in part
 Are longings wild and vain.
 And the voice of that fitful song 60
 Sings on, and is never still:
 "A boy's will is the wind's will,
 And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

5. Years before, in 1846, Longfellow noted in his diary a walk around "Munjoy's Hill and Fort St. Lawrence." There he "lay down in one of the embrasures and listened to the lashing, lulling sound of the sea just at my feet * * * the harbor was full of white sails * * *. Meditated a poem on the old Fort." But no poem resulted at that time.

6. "This was the engagement between the [American] *Enterprise* and [British] *Boxer* off the harbor of Portland, in which both captains were slain. They were buried side by side in the cemetery on Mountjoy [Munjoy Hill]" [Longfellow's note]. The *Enterprise* won this battle (1813), which Longfellow, a boy of six, may have seen; he is reported as witnessing the burial of the captains.

There are things of which I may not speak;
 There are dreams that cannot die; 65
 There are thoughts that make the strong heart weak,
 And bring a pallor into the cheek,
 And a mist before the eye.
 And the words of that fatal song
 Come over me like a chill: 70
 “A boy’s will is the wind’s will,
 And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts.”

 Strange to me now are the forms I meet
 When I visit the dear old town;
 But the native air is pure and sweet, 75
 And the trees that o’ershadow each well-known street,
 As they balance up and down,
 Are singing the beautiful song,
 Are sighing and whispering still:
 “A boy’s will is the wind’s will, 80
 And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts.”

 And Deering’s Woods are fresh and fair,
 And with joy that is almost pain
 My heart goes back to wander there,
 And among the dreams of the days that were, 85
 I find my lost youth again.
 And the strange and beautiful song,
 The groves are repeating it still:
 “A boy’s will is the wind’s will,
 And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts.” 90

1855

1855, 1858

John Greenleaf Whittier

(1807–1892)

Longfellow became a poet of the people, by choice and by nature, but Whittier was fitted for that rôle also by all the circumstances of his early experience and family tradition. The Whittiers had farmed along the Merrimack, almost within sight of the sea, since the days of Thomas Whittier, who in 1648 cleared the farmstead near Haverhill, Massachusetts, where the poet was born in 1807. The family immortalized in *Snow-Bound* was frugal by necessity, but also by conviction, for the Quaker way of life, to which the Whittiers were devoted, was one of simplicity, piety, and social responsibility. Although Whittier's opportunities were severely limited, the responsibility for study and expression was a Quaker tradition; the imagination of the young poet was nourished on the impassioned mysticism and moral earnestness of the classic journals of early Friends, on the Bible and *Pilgrim's Progress*, and on the few books that chance brought to a country farmhouse. Less by chance than by destiny, as it seems, the schoolmaster, Joshua Coffin, lent the boy the poetry of Robert Burns, whose lyric expression of the common life confirmed Whittier's natural bent as a writer. Burns's influence is everywhere apparent in Whittier's poems, although the American was fundamentally incapable of his Scottish master's discipline, wit, and racy earthiness.

At nineteen he had a poem accepted for publication. The Newburyport *Press*, in which it appeared, was edited by William Lloyd Garrison, soon to become the editor of the *Liberator*, the foremost journal of abolitionism. Garrison, who became Whittier's lifelong friend and associate in emancipation propaganda, encouraged the young man to think of himself as a writer. He abandoned the trade of cobbler, which he was learning, and returned to school. He spent a year at Haverhill Academy, taught school, worked for a Boston publisher, and held obscure editorial positions while his articles and poems appeared with increasing frequency in a variety of publications. His first volume, *Legends of New England* (1831), was prose; a poem published the next year, *Moll Pitcher*, had a story with some elements of interest, but after revising it for the volume of 1840 the poet wisely excluded it from further collections. This was the fate of a large proportion of his early poems. He had great facility, genuine feeling, and an engaging earnestness but little training for his task. As a result, his early poems are amateurish, and while a few were revised, the great majority were abandoned to the obscurity of the periodicals or early volumes in which they appeared.

Meanwhile his general activities had given him a position, if not actual prominence, in the journalism of reform. *Justice and Expediency* (1833) was a notable antislavery tract, coinciding with his election as delegate to the National Anti-Slavery Convention in Philadelphia. Such participation led to his election, in 1835, to the Massachusetts legislature, where he served one term, while drawing a small additional income as editor of the *Haverhill Gazette*. In 1836 he moved down the Merrimack to nearby Amesbury, where, in 1840, he chose the permanent residence which has become a shrine to his memory. Meanwhile his best energies and writing had been devoted to the antislavery cause. In 1835, he and the British abolitionist George Thompson, mobbed on a lecture tour in Concord, New Hampshire, drove their carriage through a hail of bullets,

The standard edition is *The Writings of John Greenleaf Whittier*, Riverside Edition, 7 vols., 1888–1889, reissued, enlarged, as the Standard Library Edition, 7 vols., 1894. The complete one-volume Cambridge Edition, *The Complete Poetical Works of John Greenleaf Whittier*, 1894, is still the best generally available edition. *Letters of John Greenleaf Whittier*, 3 vols., 1975, was edited by John B. Pickard.

The standard nineteenth-century biography is Samuel T. Pickard, *Life and Letters of John Greenleaf Whittier*, 2 vols., 1894, revised 1907. The same author published *Whittier-Land*, a useful study, in 1904. Both must now be supplemented by later studies. G. R. Carpenter's *Whittier, American Men of Letters Series*, 1903, is a good introduction. More recent studies of value are Whitman Bennett, *Whittier: Bard of Freedom*, 1941; John A. Pollard, *John Greenleaf Whittier*, 1949; Lewis Leary, *John Greenleaf Whittier*, 1961; John B. Pickard, *John Greenleaf Whittier*, 1961; Edward Wagenknecht, *John Greenleaf Whittier*, 1967; Robert Penn Warren, *John Greenleaf Whittier's Poetry: An Appraisal and Selection*, 1971; Donald C. Freeman, John B. Pickard, and Roland C. Woodwell, *Whittier and Whittierland*, 1976; and R. H. Woodwell, *John Greenleaf Whittier: A Biography*, 1985.

miraculously escaping with their lives. In 1837 he went to Philadelphia to write for an abolition paper, which he edited as *The Pennsylvania Freeman* for two years before returning to Amesbury.

The remainder of his life was centered in this quiet town. He maintained intermittent editorial connections with the local *Transcript*, and was contributing editor for several more distant publications, notably the antislavery *National Era* in Washington. He continued, for the next quarter of a century, to be more generally known as a propagandist of reform than as a poet, although actually he had now found his own independent voice. A new Whittier, master of a firm and simple eloquence, appeared with increasing frequency in such volumes as *Ballads and Other Poems* (1844), *Voices of Freedom* (1846), *Songs of Labor* (1850), *The Chapel of the Hermits and Other Poems* (1853), *The Panorama and Other Poems* (1856), and *Home Ballads and Poems* (1860).

His fellow literary men recognized his maturity in this period, and he was inevitably included in the group associated with Lowell, Holmes, and others in the founding of the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1857. Although his poems were published in a collected edition in London (1850) and in Boston (1857), it was not until his masterpiece, *Snow-Bound*, appeared in 1866 that his countrymen at large recognized his value, and rewarded him with a sufficient sale to make his situation comfortable. It was now possible to see his earlier work in better perspective, and to distinguish, in the mass of his periodical poetry, the solid core of his true expression. The *Poetical Works* of 1869 was a success, and the remainder of Whittier's life was marked by mounting if modest prosperity.

His personal life was now beset by problems, reflected in the increasing religious fervor and thoughtfulness of his lyrics. He had never married, devoting his slender means to his family at Amesbury, and the death of his mother and two sisters occurred between 1857 and 1864. His health, which had never been vigorous, was in steady decline after a severe illness during the winter of 1867–1868. The end of the Civil War was a profound relief, as the thanksgiving of “*Laus Deo*” indicates, but emancipation, together with the success of other reforms, suddenly canceled the incentives for the bulk of his writing.

In the next score of years, however, he published twelve volumes of poems, some of the best of them in *The Tent on the Beach* (1867), *Among the Hills* (1869), *The Pennsylvania Pilgrim* (1872), and his last volume, *At Sundown* (1890). His seventieth birthday, in 1877, was celebrated at the famous dinner given him by the *Atlantic Monthly*, which was attended by almost every living American author of note from the generation of Bryant to that of Mark Twain, and received much public attention both here and abroad. His eightieth birthday was marked by a national celebration in recognition of his unique expression of the common American life of an age that was then forever passing away. Five years later, in 1892, he died at Hampton Falls, New Hampshire.

It seems likely that Whittier's genuine values will survive the neglect of recent decades, during which there has been a tendency to undervalue poetry written in the familiar style. Whittier too often marred a poem by sentimentality, but such poems as “*Telling the Bees*” and “*Abraham Davenport*” prove him also the master of simplicity. Impassioned simplicity combines with the precise and sharply etched representation of a character or scene in many poems, even those of considerable extent. *The Pennsylvania Pilgrim*, a remarkable reconstruction of the early settlement of the German plain folk under Pastorius in colonial Philadelphia, and that more remarkable idyll, *Snow-Bound*, deserve comparison with Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village* or Burns's “*The Cotter's Saturday Night*.” Many of Whittier's contemporary satires and occasional poems have lost their interest for a later age, no longer concerned with the same problems or events, but *Snow-Bound* makes a timeless appeal to a nation now nostalgic for its country childhood. Equally timeless are his fine hymns and religious lyrics, not only because they remind us of our innocence, but also because, in their piety and their glowing faith, they assuage our present need.

 JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

Telling the Bees¹

Here is the place; right over the hill
 Runs the path I took;
 You can see the gap in the old wall still,
 And the stepping-stones in the shallow brook.

There is the house, with the gate red-barred, 5
 And the poplars tall;
 And the barn's brown length, and the cattle-yard,
 And the white horns tossing above the wall.

There are the beehives ranged in the sun;
 And down by the brink 10
 Of the brook are her poor flowers, weed-o'errun,
 Pansy and daffodil, rose and pink.

A year has gone, as the tortoise goes,
 Heavy and slow;
 And the same rose blows, and the same sun glows, 15
 And the same brook sings of a year ago.

There's the same sweet clover-smell in the breeze;
 And the June sun warm
 Tangles his wings of fire in the trees,
 Setting, as then, over Fernside farm. 20

I mind me how with a lover's care
 From my Sunday coat
 I brushed off the burrs, and smoothed my hair,
 And cooled at the brookside my brow and throat.

Since we parted, a month had passed,— 25
 To love, a year;
 Down through the beeches I looked at last
 On the little red gate and the well-sweep near.

1. First collected in *Home Ballads and Other Poems* (1860) after appearing in the *Atlantic Monthly* for April 1858. On submitting it to Lowell, Whittier admitted the fear that its "simplicity" might occasion disparagement. Actually, it is his purest ballad, free of didacticism, and simply faithful to the Whittier homestead, "Fernside farm." However, it was not his sister Mary who had died there the year before, but his mother. In the volume, the poet added the following explanatory note: "A remarkable custom, brought from the Old Country, formerly prevailed in the rural districts of New England. On the death of a member of the family, the bees were at once informed of the event, and their hives dressed in mourning. This ceremonial was supposed to be necessary to prevent the swarms from leaving their hives and seeking a new home."

I can see it all now,—the slantwise rain
Of light through the leaves, 30
The sundown's blaze on her window-pane,
The bloom of her roses under the eaves.

Just the same as a month before,—
The house and the trees,
The barn's brown gable, the vine by the door,— 35
Nothing changed but the hives of bees.

Before them, under the garden wall,
Forward and back,
Went drearily singing the chore-girl small,
Draping each hive with a shred of black. 40

Trembling, I listened: the summer sun
Had the chill of snow;
For I knew she was telling the bees of one
Gone on the journey we all must go!

Then I said to myself, "My Mary weeps 45
For the dead to-day:
Haply her blind old grandsire sleeps
The fret and the pain of his age away."

But her dog whined low; on the doorway sill,
With his cane to his chin, 50
The old man sat; and the chore-girl still
Sung to the bees stealing out and in.

And the song she was singing ever since
In my ear sounds on:—
"Stay at home, pretty bees, fly not hence! 55
Mistress Mary is dead and gone!"

1858, 1860

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

(1809–1894)

Holmes's reading made a full man; his sense of responsibility made a man ever ready for the play of ideas which he regarded as inseparable from living; his scientific training made him an exact and formidable opponent; his wit was at once an instrument and a recreation; his sense of humor and love of fun gave a kindly and human dimension to his criticism of life.

These characteristics of his personality and his writing were a natural reflection of the New England "renaissance," of the highly cultured society into which he was born, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1809. He was graduated from Harvard with the class of 1829, which he later celebrated annually for many years, in the best poems ever lavished upon such a subject. In 1830 he initiated the effective movement to prevent the scrapping of the gallant ship *Constitution*, by composing his famous poem "Old Ironsides," written impromptu with the competence of the born writer. In the next two years, magazine readers saw the first two of his *Autocrat* papers, thereafter not to be resumed for a quarter of a century, although he frequently contributed to the periodicals during his busy years of professional activity.

That profession was medicine, which he began to study in 1830 in Boston. In 1833 he went to Paris, where the new emphasis on experimental techniques was revolutionizing medical science. Here Holmes laid the foundations for his later pioneering in microscopy, but his devotion to science was not so great as to prevent him from spending holidays on long rambles about Europe. He returned to Harvard in 1836 to take his degree in medicine, and that year he also published *Poems*, his first volume.

Although he acknowledged that he had "a right to be grateful to his ancestors," what he inherited was a tradition, not a fortune. He soon found that he was not happy in the practice of medicine and turned to the teaching of medical science. After serving as professor of anatomy at Dartmouth (1838–1840), he returned to general practice in Boston upon his marriage in 1840; but in 1847 he found his true vocation in the appointment as Parkman Professor of Anatomy and Physiology in Harvard Medical School. Among his scientific publications, the most notable had been an analysis of the shortcomings of homeopathy, and, in 1843, a study of "The Contagiousness of Puerperal Fever," a contribution to the reduction of the fearful mortality rate then connected with childbirth. However, his professional reputation was won not by research, of which he did his share, but by his high accomplishments as a clinician and a medical educator. He was dean of Harvard Medical School from 1847 to 1853; and until his retirement, as emeritus professor, in 1882, he continued to contribute to the broad development of medical education.

Literature, however, remained his avocation. His periodical contributions were included, along with new poems, in the *Poems* of 1846 and 1849, the former published in London, where he began to be recognized for his light verse. In 1852

he first collected his *Poetical Works*. In 1854 he published the *Songs of the Class of 1829*, to be reissued with additions for many years.

In 1857 he and other members of the Saturday Club founded the *Atlantic Monthly*, which he named. His famous *Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table* appeared in it serially, beginning with the first number, and established the familiar tone which that justly celebrated magazine preserved for many years. The *Autocrat* was published as a volume in 1858. Thereafter, this wise and whimsical table talk, which ranks with the best “conversations” of literature, continued to appear in the *Atlantic* and was collected in *The Professor at the Breakfast-Table* (1860), *The Poet at the Breakfast-Table* (1872), and *Over the Teacups* (1891).

In contrast, the novels of Holmes are unimpressive, especially as narratives. Yet many readers have found compensation in the witty commentary, the sociological criticism, and the psychological explication of *Elsie Venner* (1861), *The Guardian Angel* (1867), and *A Mortal Antipathy* (1885). For all their shortcomings in fictional technique, these were pioneering experiments in the analysis of elements then becoming familiar to the clinicians of mental science, such as prenatal influence, hereditary traits, and mental trauma or fixations, in their relations to the problems of moral responsibility. Here Holmes arrayed the resources of his science against the Calvinistic orthodoxy that he attacked on various levels—including the ridiculous, in “The Deacon’s Masterpiece.”

Meanwhile, many of his poems were published, chiefly in the *Atlantic*, and later in the volumes of 1862, 1875, 1880, 1883 (a collected *Poetical Works*), and 1888. In spite of the real merit of some of his reflective lyrics, his recognition as a poet, here and abroad, was based on the unquestioned success of his comic verse, his gracious occasional poems, his urbane and witty light verse and *vers de société*. By its nature, humorous and light verse must seem casual and easy, and in view of its relative impermanence as compared with serious poetry, the survival of Holmes’s work with the best of this genre is evidence of his genius.

No short sketch can do justice to the many-sided activities of this small dynamo. He was scientist and teacher, poet, essayist, and novelist. He could have had a career as a serious lecturer; he became a favorite after-dinner speaker. He wrote three biographical volumes—*Motley* (1879); *Emerson*, for the American Men of Letters Series (1885); and *Henry Jacob Bigelow* (1891). He gave numerous professional lectures, assisted in founding the American Medical Association, and wrote his quota of medical articles and books. Retired from his professorship at seventy-three, he at once undertook the three-year task of revising and annotating his works. He turned the observations of a foreign journey into *Our Hundred*

Days in Europe (1887). If he was conservative with respect to the humanitarian cultural tradition, he was also a radical and courageous opponent of all meaningless survivals or current shams. He broke with both the Calvinistic and Unitarian traditions of New England. Within his Brahmin “caste,” as he called it, he attacked the snobbish respect for wealth, privilege, and idleness. In his novels he employed a new frankness which only his adroit expression made acceptable to his time. While satirizing feminism, he supported the admission of women to medical schools. He advocated such unpopular advances in medical practice as anesthesia and antisepsis. He energetically and cheerfully outlived the entire illustrious generation of his contemporary authors and died in 1894, just past eighty-five.

The standard text is the Riverside Edition, *The Writings of Oliver Wendell Holmes*, 13 vols., 1891–1892, reproduced in the Standard Library Edition, 1892, to which were added in 1896 the two volumes of Morse’s *Life and Letters* (listed below). The poems are taken from *The Complete Poetical Works of Oliver Wendell Holmes*, Cambridge Edition, 1 vol., edited by H. E. Scudder, 1895, the best text. The notes by Holmes are from his revised *Poetical Works* of 1883. *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table*, often reprinted, was critically edited by Franklin T. Baker, 1928. *Oliver Wendell Holmes: Representative Selections*, edited by S. I. Hayakawa and H. M. Jones, American Writers Series, 1939, is excellent for its selections, introduction, and bibliography.

For biography and criticism, see J. T. Morse, *Life and Letters of Oliver Wendell Holmes*, 2 vols., 1896; M. A. DeWolfe Howe, *Holmes of the Breakfast-Table*, 1939; Eleanor M. Tilton, *Amiable Autocrat: A Biography of Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes*, 1947; Miriam Rossiter Small, *Oliver Wendell Holmes*, 1962; and Edwin P. Hoyt, *The Improper Bostonian: Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes*, 1979.

 OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

My Aunt¹

My aunt! my dear unmarried aunt!
 Long years have o'er her flown;
 Yet still she strains the aching clasp
 That binds her virgin zone;²
 I know it hurts her,—though she looks 5
 As cheerful as she can;
 Her waist is ampler than her life,
 For life is but a span.

My aunt! my poor deluded aunt!
 Her hair is almost gray; 10
 Why will she train that winter curl
 In such a spring-like way?
 How can she lay her glasses down,
 And say she reads as well,
 When through a double convex lens 15
 She just makes out to spell?

Her father—grandpapa! forgive
 This erring lip its smiles—
 Vowed she should make the finest girl
 Within a hundred miles; 20
 He sent her to a stylish school;
 'Twas in her thirteenth June;
 And with her, as the rules required,
 “Two towels and a spoon.”

They braced my aunt against a board, 25
 To make her straight and tall;
 They laced her up, they starved her down,
 To make her light and small;
 They pinched her feet, they singed her hair,
 They screwed it up with pins;— 30
 Oh, never mortal suffered more
 In penance for her sins.

1. Published in the *New England Magazine* for October 1831; reprinted in the *Harbinger* volume of 1833; collected in *Poems*, 1836.

2. A broad ornamental girdle or belt.

So, when my precious aunt was done,
My grandsire brought her back
(By daylight, lest some rabid youth
Might follow on the track);
“Ah!” said my grandsire, as he shook
Some powder in his pan,³
“What could this lovely creature do
Against a desperate man!”
Alas! nor chariot, nor barouche,⁴
Nor bandit cavalcade,
Tore from the trembling father’s arms
His all-accomplished maid.
For her how happy had it been!
And Heaven had spared to me
To see one sad, ungathered rose
On my ancestral tree.

35

40

45

1831, 1836

3. In ancient breech-loading muskets and pistols, the hollow in the lock that received the priming powder.

4. Types of four-wheeled carriages then fashionable: the chariot light and open; the barouche with a folding top, facing seats, and a driver’s seat in front.

 HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

(1811–1896)

Harriet Beecher Stowe was born in Litchfield, Connecticut, in 1811. Her father, Lyman Beecher, was pastor of the Congregational church there. In 1824 she left Litchfield to attend her sister Catherine's school in Hartford, where she later taught. When Lyman Beecher went to Cincinnati in 1832 as president of Lane Theological Seminary, she followed. There she taught and wrote, becoming familiar with the tensions of a border city in the growing abolitionist controversy and observing at first hand the slavery across the river in Kentucky. In 1836 she married Calvin Ellis Stowe, a professor who had come to Lane from Dartmouth. Meanwhile, a younger brother, Henry Ward Beecher, had begun in Cincinnati the brilliant career that was to make him one of the most famous preachers of the nineteenth century, a leader in the antislavery movement, and a proponent of women's suffrage. Although she found time for seven children, she was clearly neither by nature nor by the influence of her environment a woman likely to be satisfied with a role on the sidelines of the intellectual and moral issues that were coming to a head as the country marched toward civil war.

By 1850, when the Fugitive Slave Act was passed, she was living in Maine, where her husband had accepted a post at Bowdoin College. There she had the vision that prompted *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a book she later reported to have been inspired by God. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* ran first in 1851–1852 as a serial in an antislavery periodical, the *National Era*. Appearing in 1852 as a book, it was immensely popular in the United States; was published in numerous editions, most of them pirated, in Great Britain; and was translated into many languages, selling finally in the millions. Adapted for the stage, it played in that form for years as Uncle Tom, Topsy, and Little Eva became possessions of the masses. Southerners wrote novels and tracts to counteract its influence and Mrs. Stowe wrote *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1853) to lend documentary support to her fiction. She was feted at home and abroad. According to a story that is probably apocryphal, when she was introduced to President Lincoln, he said, "So this is the little lady who made this big war!"

Although few books have had a greater impact, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is not typical of her work. A second antislavery novel, *Dred, a Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* (1856), has been highly praised by some readers, but much of her best work has no focus on slavery at all.

New England village life is the subject she began with in her first collection of sketches, *The Mayflower* (1843), and returned to most often in the books thereafter. The seaside town of *The Minister's Wooing* (1859) is based on Newport, Rhode Island; *The Pearl of Orr's Island* (1862) is set in Maine; *Oldtown Folks* (1869) depicts a village a few miles south of Boston; and *Poganuc People* (1878) recaptures the Litchfield, Connecticut, of her childhood. In general, she records folkways with less ironic distance and more sympathy than can be found in other observers of the time. Introducing *Oldtown Folks*, which she called "my résumé

of the whole spirit and body of New England,” she summarizes the narrator’s purpose in these words: “In doing this work, I have tried to make my mind as still and passive as a looking-glass, or a mountain lake, and then to give you merely the images reflected there.” Both in theory and practice she was an important forerunner of the realistic movement generally and of such later writers in particular as Sarah Orne Jewett and Mary E. Wilkins Freeman.

Most of Stowe’s best work is collected in *The Writings of Harriet Beecher Stowe*, 16 vols., 1896. Among individual titles not mentioned above, *Sam Lawson’s Oldtown Fireside Stories*, 1872, is an impressive collection of folk yarns. *Collected Poems*, 1967, was edited by John M. Moran, Jr.

Recent and excellent is Joan D. Hedrick, *Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Life*, 1994. Stowe’s son, Charles Edward Stowe, wrote *Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe*, 1889. Other biographies include Forrest Wilson, *Crusader in Crinoline: The Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe*, 1941; Edward Wagenknecht, *Harriet Beecher Stowe: The Known and the Unknown*, 1965; and Noel B. Gerson, *Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Biography*, 1976. Critical studies are Charles H. Foster, *The Rungless Ladder: Harriet Beecher Stowe and New England Puritanism*, 1954; John R. Adams, *Harriet Beecher Stowe*, 1963; Alice C. Crozier, *The Novels of Harriet Beecher Stowe*, 1969; Edwin Bruce Kirkham, *The Building of Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, 1977; Ellen Moer, *Harriet Beecher Stowe and American Literature*, 1978; and Thomas F. Gossett, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin and American Culture*, 1985.

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

*From Uncle Tom's Cabin;*¹

or

Life among the Lowly

Chapter VII: The Mother's Struggle

It is impossible to conceive of a human creature more wholly desolate and forlorn than Eliza, when she turned her footsteps from Uncle Tom's cabin.²

Her husband's suffering and dangers,³ and the danger of her child, all blended in her mind with a confused and stunning sense of the risk she was running in leaving the only home she had ever known, and cutting loose from the protection of a friend whom she loved and revered. Then there was the parting from every familiar object,—the place where she had grown up, the trees under which she had played, the groves where she had walked many an evening in happier days by the side of her young husband,—everything, as it lay in the clear, frosty starlight, seemed to speak reproachfully to her, and ask her whither she could go from a home like that?

But stronger than all was maternal love, wrought into a paroxysm of frenzy by the near approach of a fearful danger. Her boy was old enough to have walked by her side, and, in an indifferent case, she would only have led him by the hand; but now the bare thought of putting him out of her arms made her shudder, and she strained him to her bosom with a convulsive grasp as she went rapidly forward.

The frosty ground creaked beneath her feet, and she trembled at the sound; every quaking leaf and fluttering shadow sent the blood backward to her heart, and quickened her footsteps. She wondered within herself at the strength that seemed to be come upon her; for she felt the weight of her boy as if it had been a feather, and every flutter of fear seemed to increase the supernatural power that bore her on, while from her pale lips burst forth, in frequent ejaculations, the prayer to a Friend above,—“Lord, help! Lord, save me!”

If it were *your* Harry, mother, or your Willie, that were going to be torn from you by a brutal trader, to-morrow morning,—if you had seen the man, and heard that the papers were signed and delivered, and you had only from twelve o'clock till morning to make good your escape,—how fast could you walk? How many miles could you make in those few brief hours, with the darling at your bosom,—the little sleepy head on your shoulder,—the small, soft arms trustingly holding on to your neck?

For the child slept. At first, the novelty and alarm kept him waking; but his mother so hurriedly repressed every breath or sound, and so assured him that if he

1. The text is that of *The Writings of Harriet Beecher Stowe*, Riverside Edition, 1896.

2. At this point in the novel Eliza, a slave on the Shelby estate in Kentucky, has learned that her son has been sold to a slave trader.

3. Eliza's husband, a slave belonging to a different master, had previously decided to run away.

were only still she would certainly save him, that he clung quietly round her neck, only asking, as he found himself sinking to sleep,—

“Mother, I don’t need to keep awake, do I?”

“No, my darling; sleep, if you want to.”

“But, mother, if I do get asleep, you won’t let him get me?”

“No! so may God help me!” said his mother, with a paler cheek and a brighter light in her large, dark eyes.

“You’re *sure*, ain’t you, mother?”

“Yes, *sure!*” said the mother, in a voice that startled herself; for it seemed to her to come from a spirit within, that was no part of her; and the boy dropped his little weary head on her shoulder and was soon asleep. How the touch of those warm arms, and gentle breathings that came in her neck, seemed to add fire and spirit to her movements. It seemed to her as if strength poured into her in electric streams from every gentle touch and movement of the sleeping, confiding child. Sublime is the dominion of the mind over the body, that, for a time, can make flesh and nerve impregnable, and string the sinews like steel, so that the weak become so mighty.

The boundaries of the farm, the grove, the wood-lot, passed by her dizzily as she walked on; and still she went, leaving one familiar object after another, slackening not, pausing not, till reddening daylight found her many a long mile from all traces of any familiar objects upon the open highway.

She had often been, with her mistress, to visit some connections in the little village of T—, not far from the Ohio River, and knew the road well. To go thither, to escape across the Ohio River, were the first hurried outlines of her plan of escape; beyond that, she could only hope in God.

When horses and vehicles began to move along the highway, with that alert perception peculiar to a state of excitement, and which seems to be a sort of inspiration, she became aware that her headlong pace and distracted air might bring on her remark and suspicion. She therefore put the boy on the ground, and, adjusting her dress and bonnet, she walked on at as rapid a pace as she thought consistent with the preservation of appearances. In her little bundle she had provided a store of cakes and apples, which she used as expedients for quickening the speed of the child, rolling the apple some yards before them, when the boy would run with all his might after it; and this ruse, often repeated, carried them over many a half-mile.

After a while, they came to a thick patch of woodland, through which murmured a clear brook. As the child complained of hunger and thirst, she climbed over the fence with him; and, sitting down behind a large rock which concealed them from the road, she gave him a breakfast out of her little package. The boy wondered and grieved that she could not eat; and when, putting his arms round her neck, he tried to wedge some of his cake into her mouth, it seemed to her that the rising in her throat would choke her.

“No, no, Harry darling! mother can’t eat till you are safe! We must go on,—on,—till we come to the river!” And she hurried again into the road, and again constrained herself to walk regularly and composedly forward.

She was many miles past any neighborhood where she was personally known. If she should chance to meet any who knew her, she reflected that the well-known kindness of the family would be of itself a blind to suspicion, as making it an unlikely supposition that she could be a fugitive. As she was also so white as not to

be known as of colored lineage without a critical survey, and her child was white also, it was much easier for her to pass on unsuspected.

On this presumption, she stopped at noon at a neat farmhouse to rest herself, and buy some dinner for her child and self; for, as the danger decreased with the distance, the supernatural tension of the nervous system lessened, and she found herself both weary and hungry.

The good woman, kindly and gossiping, seemed rather pleased than otherwise with having somebody come in to talk with; and accepted without examination Eliza's statement that she "was going on a little piece to spend a week with her friends,"—all which she hoped in her heart might prove strictly true.

An hour before sunset, she entered the village of T—, by the Ohio River, weary and footsore, but still strong in heart. Her first glance was at the river, which lay, like Jordan, between her and the Canaan of liberty on the other side.

It was now early spring, and the river was swollen and turbulent; great cakes of floating ice were swinging heavily to and fro in the turbid waters. Owing to the peculiar form of the shore on the Kentucky side, the land bending far out into the water, the ice had been lodged and detained in great quantities, and the narrow channel which swept round the bend was full of ice, piled one cake over another, thus forming a temporary barrier to the descending ice, which lodged, and formed a great, undulating raft, filling up the whole river, and extending almost to the Kentucky shore.

Eliza stood, for a moment, contemplating this unfavorable aspect of things, which she saw at once must prevent the usual ferry-boat from running, and then turned into a small public house on the bank to make a few inquiries.

The hostess, who was busy in various fizzing and stewing operations over the fire, preparatory to the evening meal, stopped, with a fork in her hand, as Eliza's sweet and plaintive voice arrested her.

"What is it?" she said.

"Isn't there any ferry or boat that takes people over to B— now?" she said.

"No, indeed!" said the woman; "the boats has stopped running."

Eliza's look of dismay and disappointment struck the woman, and she said inquiringly,—

"Maybe you're wanting to get over?—anybody sick? Ye seem mighty anxious."

"I've got a child that's very dangerous," said Eliza. "I never heard of it till last night, and I've walked quite a piece to-day in hopes to get to the ferry."

"Well, now, that's onlucky," said the woman, whose motherly sympathies were much aroused; "I'm re'lly consarned for ye. Solomon!" she called, from the window, towards a small back building. A man, in leather apron and very dirty hands, appeared at the door.

"I say, Sol," said the woman, "is that ar man going to tote them bar'ls over to-night?"

"He said he should try, if't was anyway prudent," said the man.

"There's a man a piece down here, that's going over with some truck this evening, if he durs' to; he'll be in here to supper to-night, so you'd better set down and wait. That's a sweet little fellow," added the woman, offering him a cake.

But the child, wholly exhausted, cried with weariness.

"Poor fellow! he isn't used to walking, and I've hurried him on so," said Eliza.

“Well, take him into this room,” said the woman, opening into a small bedroom, where stood a comfortable bed. Eliza laid the weary boy upon it, and held his hand in hers till he was fast asleep. For her there was no rest. As a fire in her bones, the thought of the pursuer urged her on; and she gazed with longing eyes on the sullen, surging waters that lay between her and liberty.

Here we must take our leave of her for the present, to follow the course of her pursuers.

Though Mrs. Shelby had promised that the dinner should be hurried on table, yet it was soon seen, as the thing has often been seen before, that it required more than one to make a bargain. So, although the order was fairly given out in Haley’s⁴ hearing, and carried to Aunt Chloe by at least half a dozen juvenile messengers, that dignitary only gave certain very gruff snorts and tosses of her head, and went on with every operation in an unusually leisurely and circumstantial manner.

For some singular reason, an impression seemed to reign among the servants generally that Missis would not be particularly disobliged by delay;⁵ and it was wonderful what a number of counter accidents occurred constantly to retard the course of things. One luckless wight contrived to upset the gravy; and then gravy had to be got up *de novo*,⁶ with due care and formality, Aunt Chloe watching and stirring with dogged precision, answering shortly, to all suggestions of haste, that she “warn’t a-going to have raw gravy on the table to help nobody’s catchings.” One tumbled down with the water, and had to go to the spring for more; and another precipitated the butter into the path of events; and there was from time to time giggling news brought into the kitchen that “Mas’r Haley was mighty oneasy, and that he couldn’t sit in his cheer⁷ nowadays, but was walkin’ and stalkin’ to the winders and through the porch.”

“Sarves him right!” said Aunt Chloe indignantly. “He’ll get wus nor oneasy, one of these days, if he don’t mend his ways. *His* master’ll be sending for him, and then see how he’ll look!”

“He’ll go to torment, and no mistake,” said little Jake.

“He desarnes it!” said Aunt Chloe grimly; “he’s broke a many, many, many hearts,—I tell ye all!” she said, stopping with a fork uplifted in her hands; “it’s like what Mas’r George⁸ reads in Ravelations,—souls a-callin’ under the altar! and a-callin’ on the Lord for vengeance on sich!—and by and by the Lord he’ll hear ’em,—so he will!”

Aunt Chloe, who was much revered in the kitchen, was listened to with open mouth; and, the dinner being now fairly sent in, the whole kitchen was at leisure to gossip with her and to listen to her remarks.

“Sich’ll be burnt up forever, and no mistake; won’t ther?” said Andy.

“I’d be glad to see it, I’ll be boun’,” said little Jake.

4. Haley is the trader who has purchased Eliza’s child, as well as Uncle Tom, husband to Aunt Chloe, the cook.

5. Mrs. Shelby is opposed to the sale, which her husband believes a financial necessity.

6. Made anew.

7. Chair.

8. Young George Shelby, the young master.

"Chil'en!" said a voice that made them all start. It was Uncle Tom, who had come in, and stood listening to the conversation at the door.

"Chil'en!" he said, "I'm afeard you don't know what ye're sayin'. Forever is a *dre'ful* word, chil'en; it's awful to think on 't. You oughtenter wish that ar to any human crittur."

"We would n't to anybody but the soul-drivers," said Andy; "nobody can help wishing it to them, they 's so awful wicked."

"Don't natur herself kinder cry out on 'em?" said Aunt Chloe. "Don't dey tear der suckin' baby right off his mother's breast and sell him, and der little children as is crying and holding on by her clothes,—don't dey pull 'em off and sells 'em? Don't dey tear wife and husband apart?" said Aunt Chloe, beginning to cry, "when it's jest takin' the very life on 'em?—and all the while does they feel one bit,—don't dey drink and smoke, and take it uncommon easy? Lor, if the devil don't get them, what's he good for?" And Aunt Chloe covered her face with her checked apron, and began to sob in good earnest.

"Pray for them that 'spitefully use you, the good book says," says Tom.

"Pray for 'em!" said Aunt Chloe; "Lor, it's too tough! I can't pray for 'em."

"It's natur, Chloe, and natur's strong," said Tom, "but the Lord's grace is stronger; besides, you oughter think what an awful state a poor crittur's soul's in that'll do them ar things,—you oughter thank God that you ain't *like* him, Chloe. I'm sure I'd rather be sold, ten thousand times over, than to have all that ar poor crittur's got to answer for."

"So'd I, a heap," said Jake. "Lor, *should* n't we cotch it, Andy?"

Andy shrugged his shoulders, and gave an acquiescent whistle.

"I'm glad Mas'r did n't go off this morning, as he looked to," said Tom; "that ar hurt me more than sellin', it did. Mebbe it might have been natural for him, but 't would have come desp't hard on me, as has known him from a baby; but I've seen Mas'r, and I begin ter feel sort o' reconciled to the Lord's will now. Mas'r could n't help hisself; he did right, but I'm feared things will be kinder goin' to rack when I'm gone. Mas'r can't be spected to be a-pryin' round everywhar, as I've done, a-keepin' up all the ends. The boys all means well, but they's powerful car'less. That ar troubles me."

The bell here rang, and Tom was summoned to the parlor.

"Tom," said his master kindly, "I want you to notice that I give this gentleman bonds to forfeit a thousand dollars if you are not on the spot when he wants you; he's going to-day to look after his other business, and you can have the day to yourself. Go anywhere you like, boy."

"Thank you, Mas'r," said Tom.

"And mind yerself," said the trader, "and don't come it over your master with any o' yer nigger tricks; for I'll take every cent out of him if you ain't thar. If he'd hear to me he would n't trust any on ye,—slippery as eels!"

"Mas'r," said Tom,—and he stood very straight,—"I was jist eight years old when ole Missis put you into my arms, and you was n't a year old. 'Thar,' says she, 'Tom, that's to be *your* young Mas'r; take good care on him,' says she. And now I jist ask you, Mas'r, have I ever broke word to you, or gone contrary to you, 'specially since I was a Christian?"

Mr. Shelby was fairly overcome, and the tears rose to his eyes.

"My good boy," said he, "the Lord knows you say but the truth; and if I was able to help it, all the world should n't buy you."

"And sure as I am a Christian woman," said Mrs. Shelby, "you shall be redeemed as soon as I can anyway bring together means. Sir," she said to Haley, "take good account of whom you sell him to, and let me know."

"Lor, yes; for that matter," said the trader, "I may bring him up in a year, not much the wuss for wear, and trade him back."

"I'll trade with you then, and make it for your advantage," said Mrs. Shelby.

"Of course," said the trader, "all's equal with me; li'ves trade 'em up as down, so I does a good business. All I want is a livin', you know, ma'am; that's all any on us wants, I s'pose."

Mr. and Mrs. Shelby both felt annoyed and degraded by the familiar impudence of the trader, and yet both saw the absolute necessity of putting a constraint on their feelings. The more hopelessly sordid and insensible he appeared, the greater became Mrs. Shelby's dread of his succeeding in recapturing Eliza and her child, and of course the greater her motive for detaining him by every female artifice. She therefore graciously smiled, assented, chatted familiarly, and did all she could to make time pass imperceptibly.

At two o'clock Sam and Andy brought the horses up to the posts, apparently greatly refreshed and invigorated by the scamper of the morning.

Sam was there, new oiled from dinner, with an abundance of zealous and ready officiousness. As Haley approached, he was boasting, in flourishing style, to Andy, of the evident and eminent success of the operation, now that he had "fa'rly come to it."

"Your master, I s'pose, don't keep no dogs?" said Haley thoughtfully, as he prepared to mount.

"Heaps on 'em," said Sam triumphantly; "thar's Bruno,—he's a roarer! and, besides that, 'bout every nigger of us keeps a pup of some natur or uther."

"Poh!" said Haley,—and he said something else, too, with regard to the said dogs, at which Sam muttered,—

"I don't see no use cussin' on 'em, noway."

"But your master don't keep no dogs (I pretty much know he don't) for trackin' out niggers."

Sam knew exactly what he meant, but he kept on a look of earnest and desperate simplicity.

"Our dogs all smells round consid'able sharp. I spect they's the kind, though they hain't never had no practice. They's *fa'r* dogs, though, at most anything, if you'd get 'em started. Here, Bruno," he called, whistling to the lumbering Newfoundland, who came pitching tumultuously toward them.

"You go hang!" said Haley, getting up. "Come, tumble up now."

Sam tumbled up accordingly, dexterously contriving to tickle Andy as he did so, which occasioned Andy to split out into a laugh, greatly to Haley's indignation, who made a cut at him with his riding-whip.

"I's 'stonished at yer, Andy," said Sam, with awful gravity. "This yer's a seris bisness, Andy. Yer must n't be a-makin' game. This yer ain't noway to help Mas'r."

"I shall take the straight road to the river," said Haley decidedly, after they had come to the boundaries of the estate. "I know the way of all of 'em,—they makes tracks for the underground."⁹

"Sartin," said Sam, "dat's de idee. Mas'r Haley hits de thing right in de middle. Now, der's two roads to de river,—de dirt road and der pike,—which Mas'r mean to take?"

Andy looked up innocently at Sam, surprised at hearing this new geographical fact, but instantly confirmed what he said by a vehement reiteration.

"'Cause," said Sam, "I'd rather be 'clined to 'magine that Lizy 'd take the dirt road, bein' it's the least traveled."

Haley, notwithstanding that he was a very old bird, and naturally inclined to be suspicious of chaff, was rather brought up by this view of the case.

"If yer warn't both on yer such cussed liars, now!" he said contemptively, as he pondered a moment.

The pensive, reflective tone in which this was spoken appeared to amuse Andy prodigiously, and he drew a little behind, and shook so as apparently to run a great risk of falling off his horse, while Sam's face was immovably composed into the most doleful gravity.

"Course," said Sam, "Mas'r can do as he'd ruther; go de straight road, if Mas'r thinks best,—it's all one to us. Now, when I study 'pon it, I think de straight road de best, *decidedly*."

"She would naturally go a lonesome way," said Haley, thinking aloud, and not minding Sam's remark.

"Dar ain't no sayin'," said Sam; "gals is peculiar; they never does nothin' ye thinks they will; mose gen'lly the contrar. Gals is nat'lly made contrary; and so, if you thinks they've gone one road, it is sartin you'd better go t' other, and then you'll be sure to find 'em. Now, my private 'pinion is, Lizy took der dirt road; so I think we'd better take de straight one."

This profound generic view of the female sex did not seem to dispose Haley particularly to the straight road; and he announced decidedly that he should go the other, and asked Sam when they should come to it.

"A little piece ahead," said Sam, giving a wink to Andy with the eye which was on Andy's side of the head; and he added gravely, "but I've studded on de matter, and I'm quite clar we ought not to go dat ar way. I nebber been over it noway. It's despit lonesome, and we might lose our way,—whar we'd come to, de Lord only knows."

"Nevertheless," said Haley, "I shall go that way."

"Now I think on't, I think I hearn 'em tell that dat ar road was all fenced up and down by der creek and thar, ain't it, Andy?"

Andy was n't certain; he'd only "hearn tell" about that road, but never been over it. In short, he was strictly noncommittal.

Haley, accustomed to strike the balance of probabilities between lies of greater or lesser magnitude, thought that it lay in favor of the dirt road aforesaid. The

9. The Underground Railroad, an alliance for assisting escaped slaves through the free states to Canada, where they would be outside the jurisdiction of the Fugitive Slave Act.

mention of the thing he thought he perceived was involuntary on Sam's part at first, and his confused attempts to dissuade him he set down to a desperate lying on second thoughts, as being unwilling to implicate Eliza.

When, therefore, Sam indicated the road, Haley plunged briskly into it, followed by Sam and Andy.

Now, the road, in fact, was an old one, that had formerly been a thoroughfare to the river, but abandoned for many years after the laying of the new pike. It was open for about an hour's ride, and after that it was cut across by various farms and fences. Sam knew this fact perfectly well,—indeed, the road had been so long closed up that Andy had never heard of it. He therefore rode along with an air of dutiful submission, only groaning and vociferating occasionally that 't was "despit rough, and bad for Jerry's foot."

"Now, I jest give yer warning," said Haley; "I know yer; yer won't get me to turn off this yer road, with all yer fussin',—so you shet up!"

"Mas'r will go his own way!" said Sam, with rueful submission, at the same time winking most portentously to Andy, whose delight was now very near the explosive point.

Sam was in wonderful spirits,—professed to keep a very brisk lookout,—at one time exclaiming that he saw "a gal's bonnet" on the top of some distant eminence, or calling to Andy "if that thar wasn't 'Lizy' down in the hollow;" always making these exclamations in some rough or craggy part of the road, where the sudden quickening of speed was a special inconvenience to all parties concerned, and thus keeping Haley in a state of constant commotion.

After riding about an hour in this way, the whole party made a precipitate and tumultuous descent into a barnyard belonging to a large farming establishment. Not a soul was in sight, all the hands being employed in the fields; but, as the barn stood conspicuously and plainly square across the road, it was evident that their journey in that direction had reached a decided finale.

"Warn't dat ar what I telled Mas'r?" said Sam, with an air of injured innocence. "How does strange gentleman spect to know more about a country dan de natives born and raised?"

"You rascal!" said Haley, "you knew all about this."

"Did n't I tell yer I *know'd*, and yer would n't believe me? I telled Mas'r 't was all shet up, and fenced up, and I did n't spect we could get through,—Andy heard me."

It was all too true to be disputed, and the unlucky man had to pocket his wrath with the best grace he was able, and all three faced to the right about, and took up their line of march for the highway.

In consequence of all the various delays, it was about three quarters of an hour after Eliza had laid her child to sleep in the village tavern that the party came riding into the same place. Eliza was standing by the window, looking out in another direction, when Sam's quick eye caught a glimpse of her. Haley and Andy were two yards behind. At this crisis, Sam contrived to have his hat blown off, and uttered a loud and characteristic ejaculation, which startled her at once; she drew suddenly back; the whole train swept by the window, round to the front door.

A thousand lives seemed to be concentrated in that one moment to Eliza. Her room opened by a side door to the river. She caught her child, and sprang down the steps toward it. The trader caught a full glimpse of her, just as she was disap-

pearing down the bank; and throwing himself from his horse, and calling loudly on Sam and Andy, he was after her like a hound after a deer. In that dizzy moment her feet to her scarce seemed to touch the ground, and a moment brought her to the water's edge. Right on behind they came; and, nerved with strength such as God gives only to the desperate, with one wild cry and flying leap, she vaulted sheer over the turbid current by the shore, on to the raft of ice beyond. It was a desperate leap,—impossible to anything but madness and despair; and Haley, Sam, and Andy instinctively cried out, and lifted up their hands, as she did it.

The huge green fragment of ice on which she alighted pitched and creaked as her weight came on it, but she stayed there not a moment. With wild cries and desperate energy she leaped to another and still another cake;—stumbling,—leaping,—slipping,—springing upwards again! Her shoes are gone,—her stockings cut from her feet,—while blood marked every step; but she saw nothing, felt nothing, till dimly, as in a dream, she saw the Ohio side, and a man helping her up the bank.

"Yer a brave gal, now, whoever ye ar!" said the man, with an oath.

Eliza recognized the voice and face of a man who owned a farm not far from her old home.

"Oh, Mr. Symmes!—save me,—do save me,—do hide me!" said Eliza.

"Why, what's this?" said the man. "Why, if 't ain't Shelby's gal!"

"My child!—this boy!—he'd sold him! There is his Mas'r," said she, pointing to the Kentucky shore. "Oh, Mr. Symmes, you've got a little boy!"

"So I have," said the man, as he roughly, but kindly, drew her up the steep bank. "Besides, you're a right brave gal. I like grit, wherever I see it."

When they had gained the top of the bank, the man paused. "I'd be glad to do something for ye," said he; "but then there's nowhar I could take ye. The best I can do is to tell ye to go *thar*," said he, pointing to a large white house which stood by itself, off the main street of the village. "Go *thar*; they're kind folks. *Thar's* no kind o' danger but they'll help you,—they're up to all that sort o' thing."

"The Lord bless you!" said Eliza earnestly.

"No 'casion, no 'casion in the world," said the man. "What I've done 's of no 'count."

"And oh, surely, sir, you won't tell any one!"

"Go to thunder, gal! What do you take a feller for? In course not," said the man. "Come, now, go along like a likely, sensible gal, as you are. You 've arnt your liberty, and you shall have it, for all me."

The woman folded her child to her bosom, and walked firmly and swiftly away. The man stood and looked after her.

"Shelby, now, mebbe won't think this yer the most neighborly thing in the world; but what's a feller to do? If he catches one of my gals in the same fix, he's welcome to pay back. Somehow I never could see no kind o' crittur a strivin' and pantin' and trying to clar theirselves, with the dogs arter 'em, and go agin 'em. Besides, I don't see no kind of 'casion for me to be hunter and catcher for other folks, neither."

So spoke this poor heathenish Kentuckian, who had not been instructed in his constitutional relations, and consequently was betrayed into acting in a sort of Christianized manner, which, if he had been better situated and more enlightened, he would not have been left to do.

Haley had stood a perfectly amazed spectator of the scene, till Eliza had disappeared up the bank, when he turned a blank, inquiring look on Sam and Andy.

"That ar was a tol'able fa'r stroke of business," said Sam.

"The gal's got seven devils in her, I believe!" said Haley. "How like a wildcat she jumped!"

"Wal, now," said Sam, scratching his head, "I hope Mas'r'll scuse us tryin' dat ar road. Don't think I feel spry enough for dat ar, noway!" and Sam gave a hoarse chuckle.

"*You* laugh!" said the trader, with a growl.

"Lord bless you, Mas'r, I could n't help it now," said Sam, giving way to the long pent-up delight of his soul. "She looked so curis a leapin' and springin'—ice a-crackin'—and only to hear her,—plump! ker chunk! ker splash! Spring! Lord! how she goes it!" and Sam and Andy laughed till the tears rolled down their cheeks.

"I'll make yer laugh t' other side yer mouths!" said the trader, laying about their heads with his riding-whip.

Both ducked, and ran shouting up the bank, and were on their horses before he was up.

"Good-evening, Mas'r!" said Sam, with much gravity. "I bery much spect Missis be anxious 'bout Jerry. Mas'r Haley won't want us no longer. Missis would n't hear of our ridin' the critters over Lizy's bridge to-night;" and with a facetious poke into Andy's ribs, he started off, followed by the latter, at full speed,—their shouts of laughter coming faintly on the wind.

1851–1852, 1852

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

*From Uncle Tom's Cabin;*¹
or
Life among the Lowly

*Chapter XIX: Miss Ophelia's Experiences and Opinions, Continued*²

* * * St. Clare rested his head on his hands, and did not speak for some minutes. After a while, he looked up, and went on:—

“What poor, mean trash this whole business of human virtue is! A mere matter, for the most part, of latitude and longitude, and geographical position, acting with natural temperament. The greater part is nothing but an accident! Your father, for example, settles in Vermont, in a town where all are, in fact, free and equal; becomes a regular church-member and deacon, and in due time joins an Abolition society, and thinks us all little better than heathens. Yet he is, for all the world, in constitution and habit, a duplicate of my father. I can see it leaking out in fifty different ways,—just that same strong, overbearing, dominant spirit. You know very well how impossible it is to persuade some of the folks in your village that Squire Sinclair does not feel above them. The fact is, though he has fallen on democratic times, and embraced a democratic theory, he is to the heart an aristocrat, as much as my father, who ruled over five or six hundred slaves.”

Miss Ophelia felt rather disposed to cavil at this picture, and was laying down her knitting to begin, but St. Clare stopped her.

“Now, I know every word you are going to say. I do not say they *were* alike, in fact. One fell into a condition where everything acted against the natural tendency, and the other where everything acted for it; and so one turned out a pretty willful, stout, overbearing old democrat, and the other a willful, stout old despot. If both had owned plantations in Louisiana, they would have been as like as two old bullets cast in the same mould.”

“What an undutiful boy you are!” said Miss Ophelia.

“I don't mean them any disrespect,” said St. Clare. “You know reverence is not my forte. But, to go back to my history:—

“When father died, he left the whole property to us twin boys, to be divided as we should agree. There does not breathe on God's earth a nobler-souled, more generous fellow than Alfred, in all that concerns his equals; and we got on admirably with this property question, without a single unbrotherly word or feeling. We undertook to work the plantation together; and Alfred, whose outward life and capabilities had double the strength of mine, became an enthusiastic planter, and a wonderfully successful one.

“But two years' trial satisfied me that I could not be a partner in that matter. To have a great gang of seven hundred, whom I could not know personally, or feel

1. The text is that of *The Writings of Harriet Beecher Stowe*, Riverside Edition, 1896.

2. In the following passage the scene has shifted to the New Orleans home of Augustine St. Clare, a man of inherited wealth who is opposed to slavery. Miss Ophelia St. Clare, his cousin, is a visitor from Vermont.

any individual interest in, bought and driven, housed, fed, worked like so many horned cattle, strained up to military precision,—the question of how little of life's commonest enjoyments would keep them in working order being a constantly recurring problem, the *necessity* of drivers and overseers,—the ever-necessary whip, first, last, and only argument,—the whole thing was insufferably disgusting and loathsome to me; and when I thought of my mother's estimate of one poor human soul, it became even frightful!

"It's all nonsense to talk to me about slaves *enjoying* all this! To this day I have no patience with the unutterable trash that some of your patronizing Northerners have made up, as in their zeal to apologize for our sins. We all know better. Tell me that any man living wants to work all his days, from day-dawn till dark, under the constant eye of a master, without the power of putting forth one irresponsible volition, on the same dreary, monotonous, unchanging toil, and all for two pairs of pantaloons and a pair of shoes a year, with enough food and shelter to keep him in working order! Any man who thinks that human beings can, as a general thing, be made about as comfortable that way as any other, I wish he might try it. I'd buy the dog, and work him, with a clear conscience!"

"I always have supposed," said Miss Ophelia, "that you, all of you, approved of these things, and thought them *right*,—according to Scripture."

"Humbug! We are not quite reduced to that yet. Alfred, who is as determined a despot as ever walked, does not pretend to this kind of defense;—no, he stands, high and haughty, on that good old respectable ground, *the right of the strongest*; and he says, and I think quite sensibly, that the American planter is 'only doing, in another form, what the English aristocracy and capitalists are doing by the lower classes;' that is, I take it, *appropriating* them, body and bone, soul and spirit, to their use and convenience. He defends both,—and I think, at least, *consistently*. He says that there can be no high civilization without enslavement of the masses, either nominal or real. There must, he says, be a lower class, given up to physical toil and confined to an animal nature; and a higher one thereby acquires leisure and wealth for a more expanded intelligence and improvement, and becomes the directing soul of the lower. So he reasons, because, as I said, he is born an aristocrat;—so I don't believe, because I was born a democrat."

"How in the world can the two things be compared?" said Miss Ophelia. "The English laborer is not sold, traded, parted from his family, whipped."

"He is as much at the will of his employer as if he were sold to him. The slave-owner can whip his refractory slave to death,—the capitalist can starve him to death. As to family security, it is hard to say which is the worse,—to have one's children sold, or see them starve to death at home."

"But it's no kind of apology for slavery, to prove that it is n't worse than some other bad thing."

"I did n't give it for one,—nay, I'll say, besides, that ours is the more bold and palpable infringement of human rights; actually buying a man up, like a horse,—looking at his teeth, cracking his joints, and trying his paces, and then paying down for him,—having speculators, breeders, traders, and brokers in human bodies and souls,—sets the thing before the eyes of the civilized world in a more tangible form, though the thing done be, after all, in its nature, the same; that is, appropriating one set of human beings to the use and improvement of another, without any regard to their own."

"I never thought of the matter in this light," said Miss Ophelia.

"Well, I've traveled in England some, and I've looked over a good many documents as to the state of their lower classes; and I really think there is no denying Alfred, when he says that his slaves are better off than a large class of the population of England. You see, you must not infer, from what I have told you, that Alfred is what is called a hard master; for he is n't. He is despotic, and unmerciful to insubordination; he would shoot a fellow down with as little remorse as he would shoot a buck, if he opposed him. But, in general, he takes a sort of pride in having his slaves comfortably fed and accommodated.

"When I was with him, I insisted that he should do something for their instruction; and, to please me, he did get a chaplain, and used to have them catechised Sunday, though, I believe, in his heart, that he thought it would do about as much good to set a chaplain over his dogs and horses. And the fact is, that a mind stupefied and animalized by every bad influence from the hour of birth, spending the whole of every week-day in unreflecting toil, cannot be done much with by a few hours on Sunday. The teachers of Sunday-schools among the manufacturing population of England, and among plantation-hands in our country, could perhaps testify to the same result, *there and here*. Yet some striking exceptions there are among us, from the fact that the negro is naturally more impressible to religious sentiment than the white."

"Well," said Miss Ophelia, "how came you to give up your plantation life?"

"Well, we jogged on together some time, till Alfred saw plainly that I was no planter. He thought it absurd, after he had reformed, and altered, and improved everywhere, to suit my notions, that I still remained unsatisfied. The fact was, it was, after all, the *THING* that I hated,—the using these men and women, the perpetuation of all this ignorance, brutality, and vice,—just to make money for me!

"Besides, I was always interfering in the details. Being myself one of the laziest of mortals, I had altogether too much fellow feeling for the lazy; and when poor, shiftless dogs put stones at the bottom of their cotton-baskets to make them weigh heavier, or filled their sacks with dirt, with cotton at the top, it seemed so exactly like what I should do if I were they, I could n't and would n't have them flogged for it. Well, of course, there was an end of plantation discipline; and Alf and I came to about the same point that I and my respected father did, years before. So he told me that I was a womanish sentimentalist, and would never do for business life; and advised me to take the bank-stock and the New Orleans family mansion, and go to writing poetry, and let him manage the plantation. So we parted, and I came here."

"But why did n't you free your slaves?"

"Well, I was n't up to that. To hold them as tools for money-making, I could not;—have them to help spend money, you know, did n't look quite so ugly to me. Some of them were old house-servants, to whom I was much attached; and the younger ones were children to the old. All were well satisfied to be as they were." He paused, and walked reflectively up and down the room.

"There was," said St. Clare, "a time in my life when I had plans and hopes of doing something in this world, more than to float and drift. I had vague, indistinct yearnings to be a sort of emancipator,—to free my native land from this spot and stain. All young men have had such fever-fits, I suppose, some time,—but then"—

"Why did n't you?" said Miss Ophelia;—"you ought not to put your hand to the plough, and look back."

"Oh, well, things did n't go with me as I expected, and I got the despair of living that Solomon did. I suppose it was a necessary incident to wisdom in us both; but, somehow or other, instead of being actor and regenerator in society, I became a piece of driftwood, and have been floating and eddying about, ever since. Alfred scolds me, every time we meet; and he has the better of me, I grant,—for he really does something; his life is a logical result of his opinions, and mine is a contemptible *non sequitur*."

"My dear cousin, can you be satisfied with such a way of spending your probation?"

"Satisfied! Was I not just telling you I despised it? But, then, to come back to this point,—we were on this liberation business. I don't think my feelings about slavery are peculiar. I find many men who, in their hearts, think of it just as I do. The land groans under it; and, bad as it is for the slave, it is worse, if anything, for the master. It takes no spectacles to see that a great class of vicious, improvident, degraded people, among us, are an evil to us, as well as to themselves. The capitalist and aristocrat of England cannot feel that as we do, because they do not mingle with the class they degrade as we do. They are in our houses; they are the associates of our children, and they form their minds faster than we can; for they are a race that children always will cling to and assimilate with. If Eva,³ now, was not more angel than ordinary, she would be ruined. We might as well allow the small-pox to run among them, and think our children would not take it, as to let them be uninstructed and vicious, and think our children will not be affected by that. Yet our laws positively and utterly forbid any efficient general educational system, and they do it wisely, too; for, just begin and thoroughly educate one generation, and the whole thing would be blown sky high. If we did not give them liberty, they would take it."

"And what do you think will be the end of this?" said Miss Ophelia.

"I don't know. One thing is certain,—that there is a mustering among the masses, the world over; and there is a *dies irae*⁴ coming on, sooner or later. The same thing is working in Europe, in England, and in this country. My mother used to tell me of a millennium that was coming, when Christ should reign, and all men should be free and happy. And she taught me, when I was a boy, to pray, 'Thy kingdom come.' Sometimes I think all this sighing, and groaning, and stirring among the dry bones⁵ foretells what she used to tell me was coming. But who may abide the day of his appearing?"

"Augustine, sometimes I think you are not far from the kingdom," said Miss Ophelia, laying down her knitting, and looking anxiously at her cousin.

"Thank you for your good opinion; but it's up and down with me,—up to heaven's gate in theory, down in earth's dust in practice. But there's the tea-bell,—do let's go,—and don't say, now, I have n't had one downright serious talk, for once in my life." * * *

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3. St. Clare's daughter, Little Eva.

4. Day of wrath. The *Dies Irae* is a Roman Catholic hymn, a part of the requiem mass, with a description of the judgment day and prayer for mercy. The biblical reference is Zephaniah 1: 14–18.

5. Cf. Ezekiel 37:1–14.

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

*From Uncle Tom's Cabin;*¹
or
Life among the Lowly

Chapter XL: The Martyr

* * * The hunt² was long, animated, and thorough, but unsuccessful, and with grave, ironic exultation, Cassy looked down on Legree, as, weary and dispirited, he alighted from his horse.

"Now, Quimbo,"³ said Legree, as he stretched himself down in the sitting-room, "you jest go and walk that Tom up here right away! The old cuss is at the bottom of this yer whole matter; and I'll have it out of his old black hide, or I'll know the reason why."

Sambo and Quimbo both, though hating each other, were joined in one mind by a no less cordial hatred of Tom. Legree had told them at first that he had bought him for a general overseer in his absence; and this had begun an ill will, on their part, which had increased, in their debased and servile natures, as they saw him becoming obnoxious to their master's displeasure. Quimbo, therefore, departed with a will, to execute his orders.

Tom heard the message with a forewarning heart; for he knew all the plan of the fugitives' escape, and the place of their present concealment; he knew the deadly character of the man he had to deal with, and his despotic power. But he felt strong in God to meet death rather than betray the helpless.

He set his basket down by the row, and, looking up, said, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit! Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth!" and then quietly yielded himself to the rough, brutal grasp with which Quimbo seized him.

"Ay, ay!" said the giant, as he dragged him along; "ye'll cotch it now! I'll boun' Mas'r's back's up *high*! No sneaking out now! Tell ye, ye'll get it, and no mistake! See how ye'll look, now, helpin' Mas'r's niggers to run away! See what ye'll get!"

The savage words none of them reached that ear!—a higher voice there was saying, "Fear not them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." Nerve and bone of that poor man's body vibrated to those words, as if touched by the finger of God; and he felt the strength of a thousand souls in one. As he passed along, the trees and bushes, the huts of his servitude, the whole scene of his degradation, seemed to whirl by him as the landscape by the rushing car. His soul throbbed,—his home was in sight,—and the hour of release seemed at hand.

1. The text is that of *The Writings of Harriet Beecher Stowe*, Riverside Edition, 1896.

2. The scene is Simon Legree's plantation, up the Red River from New Orleans. Two female slaves, Cassy and Emmeline, have escaped and are hiding in the garret of Legree's house.

3. Quimbo and Sambo (below) are slaves used by Legree as overseers.

"Well, Tom!" said Legree, walking up, and seizing him grimly by the collar of his coat, and speaking through his teeth, in a paroxysm of determined rage, "do you know I've made up my mind to KILL you?"

"It's very likely, Mas'r," said Tom calmly.

"I have," said Legree, with grim, terrible calmness, "*done—just—that—thing*, Tom, unless you'll tell me what you know about these yer gals!"

Tom stood silent.

"D' ye hear?" said Legree, stamping, with a roar like that of an incensed lion. "Speak!"

"*I hain't got nothing to tell, Mas'r,*" said Tom, with a slow, firm, deliberate utterance.

"Do you dare to tell me, ye old black Christian, ye don't *know*?" said Legree.

Tom was silent.

"Speak!" thundered Legree, striking him furiously. "Do you know anything?"

"I know, Mas'r; but I can't tell anything. *I can die!*"

Legree drew in a long breath; and, suppressing his rage, took Tom by the arm, and, approaching his face almost to his, said in a terrible voice, "Hark 'e, Tom!—ye think 'cause I've let you off before I don't mean what I say; but, this time *I've made up my mind*, and counted the cost. You've always stood it out agin me: now, I'll *conquer ye or kill ye!*—one or t' other. I'll count every drop of blood there is in you, and take 'em, one by one, till ye give up!"

Tom looked up to his master, and answered, "Mas'r, if you was sick, or in trouble, or dying, and I could save ye, I'd *give* ye my heart's blood; and, if taking every drop of blood in this poor old body would save your precious soul, I'd give 'em freely, as the Lord gave his for me. Oh, Mas'r! don't bring this great sin on your soul! It will hurt you more than't will me! Do the worst you can, my troubles'll be over soon; but if ye don't repent yours won't *never* end!"

Like a strange snatch of heavenly music, heard in the lull of a tempest, this burst of feeling made a moment's blank pause. Legree stood aghast, and looked at Tom; and there was such a silence that the tick of the old clock could be heard, measuring, with silent touch, the last moments of mercy and probation to that hardened heart.

It was but a moment. There was one hesitating pause,—one irresolute, relenting thrill,—and the spirit of evil came back, with sevenfold vehemence; and Legree, foaming with rage, smote his victim to the ground.

Scenes of blood and cruelty are shocking to our ear and heart. What man has nerve to do, man has not nerve to hear. What brother man and brother Christian must suffer cannot be told us, even in our secret chamber, it so harrows up the soul! And yet, O my country! these things are done under the shadow of thy laws! O Christ! thy church sees them, almost in silence!

But, of old, there was One whose suffering changed an instrument of torture, degradation, and shame, into a symbol of glory, honor, and immortal life; and, where his spirit is, neither degrading stripes, nor blood, nor insults can make the Christian's last struggle less than glorious.

Was he alone that long night, whose brave, loving spirit was bearing up, in that old shed, against buffeting and brutal stripes?

Nay! There stood by him ONE,—seen by him alone—"like unto the Son of God."

The tempter stood by him, too,—blinded by furious, despotic will,—every moment pressing him to shun that agony by the betrayal of the innocent. But the brave, true heart was firm on the Eternal Rock. Like his Master, he knew that, if he saved others, himself he could not save; nor could utmost extremity wring from him words save of prayer and holy trust.

“He’s ’most gone, Mas’r,” said Sambo, touched, in spite of himself, by the patience of his victim.

“Pay away, till he gives up! Give it to him!—give it to him!” shouted Legree. “I’ll take every drop of blood he has, unless he confesses!”

Tom opened his eyes, and looked upon his master. “Ye poor miserable crittur!” he said, “there ain’t no more ye can do! I forgive ye, with all my soul!” and he fainted entirely away.

“I b’lieve, my soul, he’s done for finally,” said Legree, stepping forward to look at him. “Yes, he is! Well, his mouth’s shut up at last,—that’s one comfort!”

Yes, Legree; but who shall shut up that voice in thy soul?—that soul, past repentance, past prayer, past hope, in whom the fire that never shall be quenched is already burning!

Yet Tom was not quite gone. His wondrous words and pious prayers had struck upon the hearts of the imbruted blacks, who had been the instruments of cruelty upon him; and, the instant Legree withdrew, they took him down, and, in their ignorance, sought to call him back to life,—as if *that* were any favor to him.

“Sartin, we’s been doin’ a drefful wicked thing!” said Sambo; “hopes Mas’r’ll have to ’count for it, and not we.”

They washed his wounds,—they provided a rude bed, of some refuse cotton, for him to lie down on; and one of them, stealing up to the house, begged a drink of brandy of Legree, pretending that he was tired, and wanted it for himself. He brought it back, and poured it down Tom’s throat.

“Oh, Tom!” said Quimbo, “we’s been awful wicked to ye!”

“I forgive ye, with all my heart!” said Tom faintly.

“Oh, Tom! do tell us who is *Jesus*, anyhow?” said Sambo,—“Jesus, that’s been a-standin’ by you so all this night?—Who is he?”

The word roused the failing, fainting spirit. He poured forth a few energetic sentences of that wondrous One,—his life, his death, his everlasting presence, and power to save.

They wept,—both the two savage men.

“Why did n’t I never hear this before?” said Sambo; “but I do believe!—I can’t help it! Lord Jesus, have mercy on us!”

“Poor critturs!” said Tom; “I’d be willin’ to bar all I have, if it’ll only bring ye to Christ! O Lord! give me these two more souls, I pray!”

That prayer was answered.

1851–1852, 1852

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

From Uncle Tom's Cabin;¹
or
Life among the Lowly
Chapter XLI: The Young Master

* * * After some months of unsuccessful search, by the merest accident, George² fell in with a man in New Orleans, who happened to be possessed of the desired information; and with his money in his pocket, our hero took steamboat for Red River, resolving to find out and repurchase his old friend.

He was soon introduced into the house, where he found Legree in the sitting-room.

Legree received the stranger with a kind of surly hospitality.

"I understand," said the young man, "that you bought, in New Orleans, a boy named Tom. He used to be on my father's place, and I came to see if I could n't buy him back."

Legree's brow grew dark, and he broke out passionately: "Yes, I did buy such a fellow,—and a h—l of a bargain I had of it, too! The most rebellious, saucy, impudent dog! Set up my niggers to run away; got off two gals, worth eight hundred or a thousand dollars apiece. He owned to that, and when I bid him tell me where they was, he up and said he knew, but he would n't tell; and stood to it, though I gave him the cussedest flogging I ever gave nigger yet. I b'lieve he's trying to die; but I don't know as he'll make it out."

"Where is he?" said George impetuously. "Let me see him." The cheeks of the young man were crimson, and his eyes flashed fire; but he prudently said nothing as yet.

"He's in dat ar shed," said a little fellow, who stood holding George's horse.

Legree kicked the boy, and swore at him; but George, without saying another word, turned and strode to the spot.

Tom had been lying two days since the fatal night; not suffering, for every nerve of suffering was blunted and destroyed. He lay for the most part in a quiet stupor; for the laws of a powerful and well-knit frame would not at once release the imprisoned spirit. By stealth, there had been there, in the darkness of the night, poor desolated creatures, who stole from their scanty hours' rest, that they might repay to him some of those ministrations of love in which he had always been so abundant. Truly, those poor disciples had little to give,—only the cup of cold water; but it was given with full hearts.

Tears had fallen on that honest, insensible face,—tears of late repentance in the poor, ignorant heathen, whom his dying love and patience had awakened to

1. The text is that of *The Writings of Harriet Beecher Stowe*, Riverside Edition, 1896.

2. After his father's death, young George Shelby has been searching for Uncle Tom, hoping to buy him back.

repentance, and bitter prayers, breathed over him to a late-found Saviour, of whom they scarce knew more than the name, but whom the yearning ignorant heart of man never implores in vain.

Cassy, who had glided out of her place of concealment, and, by overhearing, learned the sacrifice that had been made for her and Emmeline, had been there the night before, defying the danger of detection; and moved by the few last words which the affectionate soul had yet strength to breathe, the long winter of despair, the ice of years, had given way, and the dark, despairing woman had wept and prayed.

When George entered the shed, he felt his head giddy and his heart sick.

"Is it possible,—is it possible?" said he, kneeling down by him. "Uncle Tom, my poor, poor old friend!"

Something in the voice penetrated to the ear of the dying. He moved his head gently, smiled, and said,—

"Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are."

Tears which did honor to his manly heart fell from the young man's eyes, as he bent over his poor friend.

"Oh, dear Uncle Tom! do wake,—do speak once more! Look up! Here's Mas'r George,—your own little Mas'r George. Don't you know me?"

"Mas'r George!" said Tom, opening his eyes, and speaking in a feeble voice. "Mas'r George!" He looked bewildered.

Slowly the idea seemed to fill his soul; and the vacant eye became fixed and brightened, the whole face lighted up, the hard hands clasped, and tears ran down the cheeks.

"Bless the Lord! it is,—it is,—it's all I wanted! They have n't forgot me. It warms my soul; it does my old heart good! Now I shall die content! Bless the Lord, O my soul!"

"You sha'n't die! you *must* n't die, nor think of it. I've come to buy you, and take you home," said George, with impetuous vehemence.

"Oh, Mas'r George, ye're too late. The Lord's bought me, and is going to take me home,—and I long to go. Heaven is better than Kintuck."

"Oh, don't die! It'll kill me!—it'll break my heart to think what you've suffered,—and lying in this old shed here! Poor, poor fellow!"

"Don't call me poor fellow!" said Tom solemnly. "I *have* been poor fellow; but that's all past and gone now. I'm right in the door, going into glory! Oh, Mas'r George! *heaven has come!* I've got the victory!—the Lord Jesus has given it to me! Glory be to his name!"

George was awe-struck at the force, the vehemence, the power, with which these broken sentences were uttered. He sat gazing in silence.

Tom grasped his hand, and continued: "Ye must n't, now, tell Chloe, poor soul! how ye found me;—'t would be so drefful to her. Only tell her ye found me going into glory; and that I could n't stay for no one. And tell her the Lord's stood by me everywhere and al'ays, and made everything light and easy. And oh, the poor chil'en and the baby!—my old heart's been most broke for 'em time and agin! Tell 'em all to follow me—follow me! Give my love to Mas'r, and dear good Missis, and everybody in the place! Ye don't know! 'Pears like I loves 'em all! I loves every creatur every-whar!—it's nothing *but* love! Oh, Mas'r George, what a thing 't is to be a Christian!"

At this moment, Legree sauntered up to the door of the shed, looked in, with a dogged air of affected carelessness, and turned away.

"The old Satan!" said George, in his indignation. "It's a comfort to think the devil will pay *him* for this some of these days!"

"Oh, don't!—Oh, ye must n't!" said Tom, grasping his hand; "he's a poor mis'able crittur! it's awful to think on't! Oh, if he only could repent, the Lord would forgive him now; but I'm 'feard he never will!"

"I hope he won't!" said George; "I never want to see *him* in heaven!"

"Hush, Mas'r George!—it worries me! Don't feel so! He ain't done me no real harm,—only opened the gate of the kingdom for me; that's all!"

At this moment, the sudden flush of strength which the joy of meeting his young master had infused into the dying man gave way. A sudden sinking fell upon him; he closed his eyes; and that mysterious and sublime change passed over his face, that told the approach of other worlds.

He began to draw his breath with long, deep inspirations, and his broad chest rose and fell heavily. The expression of his face was that of a conqueror.

"Who—who—who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" he said, in a voice that contended with mortal weakness; and, with a smile, he fell asleep.

George sat fixed with solemn awe. It seemed to him that the place was holy; and, as he closed the lifeless eyes and rose up from the dead, only one thought possessed him,—that expressed by his simple old friend: "What a thing it is to be a Christian!"

He turned; Legree was standing sullenly behind him.

Something in that dying scene had checked the natural fierceness of youthful passion. The presence of the man was simply loathsome to George; and he felt only an impulse to get away from him, with as few words as possible.

Fixing his keen, dark eyes on Legree, he simply said, pointing to the dead, "You have got all you ever can of him. What shall I pay you for the body? I will take it away, and bury it decently."

"I don't sell dead niggers," said Legree doggedly. "You are welcome to bury him where and when you like."

"Boys," said George, in an authoritative tone, to two or three negroes, who were looking at the body, "help me lift him up, and carry him to my wagon; and get me a spade."

One of them ran for a spade; the other two assisted George to carry the body to the wagon.

George neither spoke to nor looked at Legree, who did not countermand his orders, but stood, whistling with an air of forced unconcern. He sulkily followed them to where the wagon stood at the door.

George spread his cloak in the wagon, and had the body carefully disposed of in it,—moving the seat, so as to give it room. Then he turned, fixed his eyes on Legree, and said, with forced composure,—

"I have not as yet said to you what I think of this most atrocious affair;—this is not the time and place. But, sir, this innocent blood shall have justice. I will proclaim this murder. I will go to the very first magistrate and expose you."

"Do!" said Legree, snapping his fingers scornfully. "I'd like to see you doing it. Where you going to get witnesses?—how you going to prove it?—Come, now!"

George saw, at once, the force of this defiance. There was not a white person on the place; and, in all Southern courts, the testimony of colored blood is nothing. He felt at that moment as if he could have rent the heavens with his heart's indignant cry for justice; but in vain.

"After all, what a fuss, for a dead nigger!" said Legree.

The word was as a spark to a powder-magazine. Prudence was never a cardinal virtue of the Kentucky boy. George turned, and, with one indignant blow, knocked Legree flat upon his face; and, as he stood over him, blazing with wrath and defiance, he would have formed no bad personification of his great namesake triumphing over the dragon.

Some men, however, are decidedly bettered by being knocked down. If a man lays them fairly flat in the dust, they seem immediately to conceive a respect for him; and Legree was one of this sort. As he rose, therefore, and brushed the dust from his clothes, he eyed the slowly retreating wagon with some evident consideration; nor did he open his mouth till it was out of sight.

Beyond the boundaries of the plantation, George had noticed a dry, sandy knoll, shaded by a few trees; there they made the grave.

"Shall we take off the cloak, Mas'r?" said the negroes, when the grave was ready.

"No, no,—bury it with him! It's all I can give you now, poor Tom, and you shall have it."

They laid him in; and the men shoveled away silently. They banked it up, and laid green turf over it.

"You may go, boys," said George, slipping a quarter into the hand of each. They lingered about, however.

"If young Mas'r would please buy us"—said one.

"We'd serve him so faithful!" said the other.

"Hard times here, Mas'r!" said the first. "Do, Mas'r, buy us, please!"

"I can't,—I can't!" said George, with difficulty, motioning them off; "it's impossible!"

The poor fellows looked dejected, and walked off in silence.

"Witness, eternal God!" said George, kneeling on the grave of his poor friend,—“oh, witness, that, from this hour, I will do *what one man can* to drive out this curse of slavery from my land!"

There is no monument to mark the last resting-place of our friend. He needs none! His Lord knows where he lies, and will raise him up, immortal, to appear with him when he shall appear in his glory.

Pity him not! Such a life and death is not for pity! Not in the riches of omnipotence is the chief glory of God; but in self-denying, suffering love! And blessed are the men whom he calls to fellowship with him, bearing their cross after him with patience. Of such it is written, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

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