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UNCLE TOM'S CABIN.

CHAP. XX.

A Present—Topsy's first Toilet—Raised, not born—A Virgin Soil—A first Lesson—A Delinquent—The Confession—The two Extremes —Training Difficulties—Topsy's Accomplishments—The Pride of Wickedness—Teaching the Catechism.

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

"Come down here, cousin; I've somthing to show you."

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

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

She was one of the blackest of her race; and her round shining eyes, glittering as glass beads, moved with quick and restless glances over everything in the room. Her woolly hair was done up in a single filthy, ragged garment, made of bagging; and stood with her hands demurely folded before her. Altogether, there was something odd and goblin-like in her appearance—something, as Miss Ophelia afterwards said, "so heathenish," as to inspire that good lady with utter dismay; and, turning to St. Clare, she said,—

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

"For you to educate, to be sure, and train in the way she should go. I thought she was rather a funny specimen in the Jim Crow line. Here, Topsy," he added, giving a new whistle, as a man would to call the attention of a dog, "give us a song, now, and show us some of your dancing."

The black, glassy eyes, glittered with a kind of wicked drollery, and the thing struck up, in a clear shrill voice, an odd negro melody, to which she, kept time with her hands and feet, spinning round clapping her hands, knocking her knees together, in a wild, fantastic sort of time, and introducing in her throat all those odd guttural sounds which distinguish the native music of her race; and finally, turning a somerset or two, and giving a prolonged closing note, as odd and unearthly as that of a steam-whistle, she came suddenly down on the carpet, and stood with her hands folded, and a most sanctimonious expression of meekness and solemnity over her face, only broken by the cunning glances which she shot askance from the corners of her eyes.

Miss Ophelia stood allent, perfectly paralysed with amazement.

St. Clare, like a mischievous fellow as he was, appeared to enjoy her astonishment; and, addressing the thing, said—

"Topsy, this is your new mistress. I'm going to give you up to her, see, now, that you behave yourself."

"Yes, mas'r," said Topsy, with a sanctimonious gravity, her wicked eyes twinkling as she spoke.

"You're going to be good, Topsy, you understand," said St. Clare.

"Oh, yes, mas'r," said Topsy, with another twinkle, her hands still devoutly folded.

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

"Your house is so full of these little plagues, now, and so much sweet thin food does run without treading on 'em. I get up in the morning, and, find one asleep behind the door, and see one black, head poking out from under the table, one lying on the door-mat; and they are stepping and mowing, and grinning between all the railings, and tumbling over the kitchen floor! What on earth did you want to bring this one for?"

"For you to educate—didn't I tell you? You're always preaching about educating. I thought I would make you a present of a fresh-caught specimen, and let you try your hand on her, and bring her up in the way she should go."

"I don't want her, I am sure, I have more to do with 'em now than I want to."

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

"Augustine, you know I didn't think of it in that light," said Miss Ophelia, evidently softening.

"Well, it might be a real missionary work," said she, looking rather more favourable on the child.

St. Clare had touched the right string. Miss Ophelia's conscientiousness was ever on the alert.

"But," she added, "I really didn't see the need of buying this one—there are enough now in your house to take all my time and skill."

"Well, then, cousin," said St. Clare, drawing her aside, "I ought to beg your pardon for my good-for-nothing speeches. You are so good, after all, that there's no sense in them. Why, the fact is, this concern belonged to a couple of drunken creatures that keep a low restaurant, that I mean to pass by every day, and I was tired of hearing her screaming, and them beating and swearing at her. She looked bright and funny, too, as if something might be made of her, so I bought her, and I'll give her to you. Try, now, and give her a good orthodox New England bringing-up, and see what it'll make of her. You know I haven't any gift that way, but I'd like you to try."

"Well, I'll do what I can," said Miss Ophelia; and she approached her new subject very much as a person might be supposed to approach a black spider, supposing him to have benevolent designs toward it.

"She's dreadfully dirty, and half naked," she said.

"Well, take her down stairs, and make some of them clean and clothe her up."

Miss Ophelia carried her to the kitchen regions.

"Don't see what Mas'r St. Clare wants of another nigger!" said Dinah, surveying the new arrival with no friendly air. "Wan't have her round under my feet, I know!"

"Pah!" said Rosa and Jane, with supreme disgust; "let her keep out of our way! What in world was t' wanted another of these low niggers for, I can't see!"

"You go long! No more nigger den you be, Miss Rosa," said Dinah, who felt this last remark a reflection on herself. You seem to tink yourself white folks. You an't nerry one; black *nor* white. I'd like to be one or turrer."

Miss Ophelia saw that there was nobody in the camp that would undertake to oversee the cleansing and dressing of the new arrival; and so she was forced to do it herself, with some very ungracious and reluctant assistance from Jane.

It is not for ears polite to hear the particulars of the first toilet of a neglected, abused child. In fact, in this world, multitudes must live and die in a state that it would be too great a shock to the nerves of their fellow-mortals even to hear described. Miss Ophelia had a good, strong, practical deal of resolution; and she went through all the disgusting details with heroic thoroughness, though it must be confessed, with no very gracious air—for endurance was the utmost to which her principles could bring her. When she saw, on the back and shoulders of the child, great welts and calloused spots, ineffaceable marks of the system under which she had grown up thus far, her heart became pitiful within her.

"Poor thing!" said Jane, pointing to the marks, "don't that show she's a limb? We'll have fine works with her, I reckon. I hate these nigger young uns! so disgustin, I wonder that mas'r would buy her."

The "young un" alluded to heard all these comments with the subdued and doleful air which seemed habitual to her, only scanning, with a keen and furtive glance of her flickering eyes, the ornaments which Jane wore in her ears. When arrayed at last in a suit of decent and whole clothing, her hair cropped short to her head, Miss Ophelia, with some satisfaction, saw that the child looked more human like than she did, and in her own mind began to mature some plans for her instruction.

Sitting down before her, she began to question her.

"How old are you, Topsy?"

"Dun no, missis," said the image, with a grin that showed all her teeth.

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

"Never had none," said the child, with another grin.

"Have had any mother? What do you mean? Where were you born?"

"Never was born!" persisted Topsy, with another grin, that looked so goblin-like, that, if Miss Ophelia had been at all superstitious, she might have fancied that she had got hold of some sooty gnome from the land of Diablerie; but Miss Ophelia was not nervous, but plain and business-like, and she said, with some severeness—

"You mustn't answer me in that way, child; I'm not playing with you. Tell me where you were born, and who your father and mother were."

"Never was born," reiterated the creature, more emphatically; "never had no father nor mother, nor nothin'. I was raised by a speculator, with lots of others. Old Aunt Sue used to take car on us."

The child was evidently sincere; and Jane, breaking into a short laugh, said—

"Law, missis, there's heaps of 'em. Specculators buys 'em up cheap, when they's little, and gets 'em raised for market."

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

"Dun no, missis."

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

"Dun no, missis."

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

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

The child looked bewildered, but grinned as usual.

"Do you know who made you?"

"Nobody, as I knows on," said the child, with a short laugh.

The idea appeared to amuse her considerably; for her eyes twinkled, and she added—

"I 'spect I grow'd. Don't think nobody never made me."

"Do you know how to sew?" said Miss Ophelia, who thought she would turn her inquiries to something more tangible.

"No, missis."

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

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

"Were they good to you?"

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

Miss Ophelia rose from this encouraging colloquy; St. Clare was leaning over the back of her chair.

"You find virgin soil there, cousin; put in your own ideas—you won't find many to pull up."

Miss Ophelia's ideas of education, like all her other ideas, were very set and definite, and of the kind that prevailed in New England a century ago, and which are still preserved in some very retired and unsophisticated parts, where there are no railroads. As nearly as could be expressed, they could be comprised in very few words; to teach them to mind when they were spoken to; to teach them the catechism, sewing, and reading: and to whip them if they told lies. And though, of course in the flood of light that is now poured on education, these are left far away in the rear, yet it is an undisputed fact that our grandmothers raised some tolerably fair men and women under this *regime*, as many of us can remember and testify. At all events, Miss Ophelia knew of nothing else to do, and therefore applied her mind to her heathen with the best diligence she could command.

The child was announced and considered in the family as Miss Ophelia's girl; and, as she was looked upon with no gracious eye in the kitchen, Miss Ophelia resolved to confine her sphere of operation and instruction chiefly to her own chamber. With a self-sacrifice which some of our readers will appreciate, she resolved, instead of comfortably making her own bed, sweeping and dusting her own chamber—which she had hitherto done, in utter scorn of all offers of help from the chambermaid of the establishment—to condemn herself to the martyrdom of instructing Topsy to perform these operations. Ah, woe the day! Did any of our readers ever do the same, they will appreciate the amount of her self-sacrifice.

Miss Ophelia began with Topsy by taking her into her chamber the first morning, and solemnly commencing a course of instruction in the art and mystery of bed-making.

Behold, then, Topsy, washed and shorn of all but little braided tails wherein her heart had delighted, arrayed in a clean gown, with well starched apron, standing reverently before Miss Ophelia, with an expression of solemnity well befitting a funeral.

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

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

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

"Yes, ma'am," says Topsy, with another sigh.

"Well, now, the under sheet you must bring over the bolster—so—and tuck it clear down under the mattress nice and smooth—so; do you see?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Topsy, with profound attention.

"But the upper sheet," said Miss Ophelia, "must be brought down in this way, and tucked under firm and smooth at the foot—so—the narrow hem at the foot."

"Yes, ma'am," said Topsy, as before; but will add, what Miss Ophelia did not see, that during the time when the good lady's back was turned, in the zeal of her manipulations, the young disciple had contrived to pull a pair of gloves and a ribbon, which she had adroitly slipped into her sleeves, and stood with her hands dutifully folded, as before.

"Now, Topsy, you see how to do this," said Miss Ophelia, pulling off the clothes, and seating herself.

Topsy, with great gravity and adroitness, went through the exercise, occasionally eying Miss Ophelia,s satisfaction; smoothing the sheets, patting out every wrinkle, and exhibiting, through the whole process, a gravity and seriousness with which the instructress was greatly edified. By an unlucky slip, however, a fastening fragment of the ribbon hung out of one of her sleeves, just as she was finishing, and caught Miss Ophelia's attention. Instantly she pounced upon it. "What is this? You naughty, wicked child—you've been stealing this!"

The ribbon was pulled out of Topsy's own sleeve, yet she was not in the least disconcerted; she only looked at it with an air of the most surprised and unconscious innocence.

"Laws! why that a'n Miss Feely's ribbon, an't it? How could it a got in my sleeve?"

"Topsy, you assert a falsehood; don't you tell me a lie; you stole that ribbon!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Don't you tell me that again."

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

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

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

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

"Well, now, tell me. I know you must have taken other things since you have been in the house, I let you run about all day yesterday. Now, tell me if you took anything, and I shan't whip you."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Got it! Why, I've had it on all day," said Eva.

"Did you have it on yesterday?"

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

Miss Ophelia looked perfectly bewildered; the more so as Rosa at that instant came into the room, with a basket of newly-ironed linen dressed on her head, and the coral ear-drops shaking in her ears.

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

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

"But, of course, I didn't want you to confess things you didn't do," said Miss Ophelia; "that's telling a lie, just as much as the other."

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

"La, there an't any such thing as truth in that limb," said Rosa, looking indignantly at Topsy. "If I was Mas'r St. Clare, I'd whip her till the blood run, I would! I'd let her catch it!"

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

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

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

Rosa was cowed in a moment.

"Miss Eva has got the St. Clare blood in her, that's plain. She can speak for all the world just like her papa," she said, as she passed out of the room.

Eva stood looking at Topsy.

There stood the two children, representatives of the two extremes of society. The fair, high-born child, with her golden hair, deep eyes, her spiritual, noble brow, and prince-like movements; and her black, keen, subtle, cringing, but acute neighbour. They stood the oppressed and the born lords. The Saxon, born of ages of cultivation, command, education, physical and moral eminence, the Afric, born of ages of oppression, submission, ignorance, toil, and vice.

Something, perhaps, of such thoughts struggled through Eva's mind. But a child's thoughts are rather dim, undefined instincts; and in Eva, naturally quick and sensitive, and in whom the kneeling, worshipping, adoring heart was so soon developed, there was only a sense of wonder, pity, and a dim feeling that some duty was required of her.

"Topsy," she said, gently, "I'm sorry you've been whipped, and I'm sorry you stole the things, and I'm sorry you told a lie; and I want you never to do so any more. Don't you know you mustn't?"

"Yes, Miss Eva," said Topsy, with a twinkle, and a low curtsy.

"Then why will you, Topsy?"

"Spect 'cause I's wicked, I reckon, Miss Eva; I can't help it."

"Topsy, don't you want to be good?"

"Spect I do as well as anybody," said Topsy, with a short laugh.

"Topsy, don't you love anybody?" said Eva.

"Spect I don't," said Topsy.

"Why, Topsy, I love you