

CHAPTER IX.

CHANGE OF LOCATION.

Miss Lucretia—Her kindness—How it was manifested—"The"—A battle with him—Miss Lucretia's balsam—Bread—How it was obtained—Gleams of sunlight amidst the general darkness—Suffering from cold—How we took our meal mush—Preparations for going to Baltimore—Delight at the change—Cousin Tom's opinion of Baltimore—Arrival there—Kind reception—Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Auld—Their son Tommy—My relations to them—My duties—A turning-point in my life.

I HAVE nothing cruel or shocking to relate of my own personal experience while I remained on Col. Lloyd's plantation, at the home of my old master. An occasional cuff from Aunt Katy, and a regular whipping from old master, such as any heedless and mischievous boy might get from his father, is all that I have to say of this sort. I was not old enough to work in the field, and there being little else than field-work to perform, I had much leisure. The most I had to do was to drive up the cows in the evening, to keep the front-yard clean, and to perform small errands for my young mistress, Lucretia Auld. I had reasons for thinking this lady was very kindly disposed toward me, and although I was not often the object of her attention, I constantly regarded her as my friend, and was always glad when it was my privilege to do her a service. In a family where there was so much that was harsh and indifferent, the slightest word or look of kindness was of great value. Miss Lucretia—as we all continued to call her long after her marriage—had bestowed on me such looks and words as taught me that she pitied me, if she did not love me. She sometimes gave me a piece of bread and butter, an article not set down in our bill of fare, but an extra ration aside from both Aunt Katy and old master, and given as I believed solely out of the tender regard she had for me. Then too, I one day

got into the wars with Uncle Abel's son "Ike," and had got sadly worsted; the little rascal struck me directly in the forehead with a sharp piece of cinder, fused with iron, from the old blacksmith's forge, which made a cross in my forehead very plainly to be seen even now. The gash bled very freely, and I roared and betook myself home. The cold-hearted Aunt Katy paid no attention either to my wound or my roaring except to tell me it "served me right; I had no business with Ike; it would do me good; I would now keep away from 'dem Lloyd niggers.'" Miss Lucretia in this state of the case came forward, and called me into the parlor (an extra privilege of itself), and without using toward me any of the hard and reproachful epithets of Aunt Katy, quietly acted the good Samaritan. With her own soft hand she washed the blood from my head and face, brought her own bottle of balsam, and with the balsam wetted a nice piece of white linen and bound up my head. The balsam was not more healing to the wound in my head, than her kindness was healing to the wounds in my spirit, induced by the unfeeling words of Aunt Katy. After this Miss Lucretia was yet more my friend. I felt her to be such; and I have no doubt that the simple act of binding up my head did much to awaken in her heart an interest in my welfare. It is quite true that this interest seldom showed itself in anything more than in giving me a piece of bread and butter, but this was a great favor on a slave plantation, and I was the only one of the children to whom such attention was paid. When very severely pinched with hunger, I had the habit of singing, which the good lady very soon came to understand, and when she heard me singing under her window, I was very apt to be paid for my music. Thus I had two friends, both at important points,—Mas'r Daniel at the great house, and Miss Lucretia at home. From Mas'r Daniel I got protection from the bigger boys, and from Miss Lucretia I got bread by singing when I was hungry, and sympathy when I was abused by the termagant in the kitchen. For such friendship I was deeply grateful, and bitter as are my recol-

lections of slavery, it is a true pleasure to recall any instances of kindness, any sunbeams of humane treatment, which found way to my soul, through the iron grating of my house of bondage. Such beams seem all the brighter from the general darkness into which they penetrate, and the impression they make there is vividly distinct.

As before intimated, I received no severe treatment from the hands of my master, but the insufficiency of both food and clothing was a serious trial to me, especially from the lack of clothing. In hottest summer and coldest winter, I was kept almost in a state of nudity. My only clothing—a little coarse sack-cloth or tow-linen sort of shirt, scarcely reaching to my knees, was worn night and day and changed once a week. In the day time I could protect myself by keeping on the sunny side of the house, or in stormy weather, in the corner of the kitchen chimney. But the great difficulty was to keep warm during the night. The pigs in the pen had leaves, and the horses in the stable had straw, but the children had no beds. They lodged anywhere in the ample kitchen. I slept generally in a little closet, without even a blanket to cover me. In very cold weather I sometimes got down the bag in which corn was carried to the mill, and crawled into that. Sleeping there with my head in and my feet out, I was partly protected, though never comfortable. My feet have been so cracked with the frost that the pen with which I am writing might be laid in the gashes. Our corn meal mush, which was our only regular if not all-sufficing diet, when sufficiently cooled from the cooking, was placed in a large tray or trough. This was set down either on the floor of the kitchen or out of doors on the ground, and the children were called like so many pigs, and like so many pigs would come, some with oyster-shells, some with pieces of shingles, but none with spoons, and literally devour the mush. He who could eat fastest got most, and he that was strongest got the best place, but few left the trough really satisfied. I was the most unlucky of all, for Aunt Katy had no good feeling for me, and

if I pushed the children, or if they told her anything unfavorable of me, she always believed the worst, and was sure to whip me.

As I grew older and more thoughtful, I became more and more filled with a sense of my wretchedness. The unkindness of Aunt Katy, the hunger and cold I suffered, and the terrible reports of wrongs and outrages which came to my ear, together with what I almost daily witnessed, led me to wish I had never been born. I used to contrast my condition with that of the black-birds, in whose wild and sweet songs I fancied them so happy. Their apparent joy only deepened the shades of my sorrow. There are thoughtful days in the lives of children—at least there were in mine—when they grapple with all the great primary subjects of knowledge, and reach in a moment conclusions which no subsequent experience can shake. I was just as well aware of the unjust, unnatural, and murderous character of slavery, when nine years old, as I am now. Without any appeal to books, to laws, or to authorities of any kind, to regard God as “Our Father,” condemned slavery as a crime.

I was in this unhappy state when I received from Miss Lucretia the joyful intelligence that my old master had determined to let me go to Baltimore to live with Mr. Hugh Auld, a brother to Mr. Thomas Auld, Miss Lucretia's husband. I shall never forget the ecstasy with which I received this information, three days before the time set for my departure. They were the three happiest days I had ever known. I spent the largest part of them in the creek, washing off the plantation scurf, and thus preparing for my new home. Miss Lucretia took a lively interest in getting me ready. She told me I must get all the dead skin off my feet and knees, for the people in Baltimore were very cleanly, and would laugh at me if I looked dirty; and besides she was intending to give me a pair of trowsers, but which I could not put on unless I got all the dirt off. This was a warning which I was bound to heed, for the thought of owning and wearing a pair of trowsers was

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great indeed. So I went at it in good earnest, working for the first time in my life in the hope of reward. I was greatly excited, and could hardly consent to sleep lest I should be left. The ties that ordinarily bind children to their homes, had no existence in my case, and in thinking of a home elsewhere, I was confident of finding none that I should relish less than the one I was leaving. If I should meet with hardship, hunger, and nakedness, I had known them all before, and I could endure them elsewhere, especially in Baltimore, for I had something of the feeling about that city that is expressed in the saying that "being hanged in England is better than dying a natural death in Ireland." I had the strongest desire to see Baltimore. My cousin Tom, a boy two or three years older than I, had been there, and, though not fluent in speech (he stuttered immoderately), he had inspired me with that desire by his eloquent descriptions of the place. Tom was sometimes cabin-boy on board the sloop "Sally Lloyd" (which Capt. Thomas Auld commanded), and when he came home from Baltimore he was always a sort of hero among us, at least till his trip to Baltimore was forgotten. I could never tell him anything, or point out anything that struck me as beautiful or powerful, but that he had seen something in Baltimore far surpassing it. Even the "great house," with all its pictures within, and pillars without, he had the hardihood to say, "was nothing to Baltimore." He bought a trumpet (worth sixpence) and brought it home; told what he had seen in the windows of the stores; that he had heard shooting-crackers, and seen soldiers; that he had seen a steamboat; that there were ships in Baltimore that could carry four such sloops as the "Sally Lloyd." He said a great deal about the Market house; of the ringing of the bells, and of many other things which roused my curiosity very much, and indeed which brightened my hopes of happiness in my new home. We sailed out of Miles River for Baltimore early on a Saturday morning. I remember only the day of the week, for at that time I had no knowledge of the days of the month, nor indeed of the

months of the year. On setting sail I walked aft and gave to Col. Lloyd's plantation what I hoped would be the last look I should give to it, or to any place like it. After taking this last view, I quitted the quarter-deck, made my way to the bow of the boat, and spent the remainder of the day in looking ahead; interesting myself in what was in the distance, rather than in what was near by, or behind. The vessels sweeping along the bay were objects full of interest to me. The broad bay opened like a shoreless ocean on my boyish vision, filling me with wonder and admiration.

Late in the afternoon we reached Annapolis, stopping there not long enough to admit of going ashore. It was the first large town I had ever seen, and though it was inferior to many a factory village in New England, my feelings on seeing it were excited to a pitch very little below that reached by travelers at the first view of Rome. The dome of the State house was especially imposing, and surpassed in grandeur the appearance of the "great house" I had left behind. So the great world was opening upon me, and I was eagerly acquainting myself with its multifarious lessons.

We arrived in Baltimore on Sunday morning, and landed at Smith's wharf, not far from Bowly's wharf. We had on board a large flock of sheep, for the Baltimore market; and after assisting in driving them to the slaughter house of Mr. Curtiss, on Loudon Slater's hill, I was conducted by Rich—one of the hands belonging to the sloop—to my new home on Alliana street, near Gardiner's ship-yard, on Fell's point. Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Auld, my new master and mistress, were both at home and met me at the door with their rosy-cheeked little son Thomas, to take care of whom was to constitute my future occupation. In fact it was to "little Tommy," rather than to his parents, that old master made a present of me, and, though there was no *legal* form or arrangement entered into, I have no doubt that Mr. and Mrs. Auld felt that in due time I should be the legal property of their bright-eyed and beloved boy Tommy. I was struck with the appearance especially of my

new mistress. Her face was lighted with the kindest emotions; and the reflex influence of her countenance, as well as the tenderness with which she seemed to regard me, while asking me sundry little questions, greatly delighted me, and lit up, to my fancy, the pathway of my future. Little Thomas was affectionately told by his mother, that "there was his Freddy," and that "Freddy would take care of him;" and I was told to "be kind to little Tommy," an injunction I scarcely needed, for I had already fallen in love with the dear boy. With these little ceremonies I was initiated into my new home, and entered upon my peculiar duties, then unconscious of a cloud to dim its broad horizon.

I may say here that I regard my removal from Col. Lloyd's plantation as one of the most interesting and fortunate events of my life. Viewing it in the light of human likelihoods, it is quite probable that but for the mere circumstance of being thus removed, before the rigors of slavery had fully fastened upon me; before my young spirit had been crushed under the iron control of the slave-driver, I might have continued in slavery until emancipated by the war.