

4. The rise and rise of sentimentalism and children's editions

By the end of the nineteenth century children's editions were becoming common, and in these the sentimentalism was ratcheted up several notches, both in the way they were (usually) abridged and in their illustrations. Such editions could be quite lavish in their production.

Old Stories Told Anew: Uncle Tom's Cabin, by Harriet Beecher Stowe

Edited by Julia S.E. Rae, with original illustrations by Florence Maplestone. London: Trischler and Company 1891

A richly-produced edition published in London in 1891 by Trischler and Company ideally introduces this section:



Florence Maplestone, Cover design, *Old Stories Told Anew: Uncle Tom's Cabin*, by Harriet Beecher Stowe, London, Trischler and Company 1891

Published in the *Old Stories Told Anew* series, this children's edition is especially notable for its striking use of pastel colors, creating what might be called a restrained but full-blown sentimentalism.



Florence Maplestone, 'Eva distributes Oranges', *Old Stories Told Anew: Uncle Tom's Cabin*, by Harriet Beecher Stowe, London, Trischler and Company 1891, facing page 20.

Unashamedly aimed at the child reader, this edition's sheer lavishness stands as a testimony to the book's enduring popularity in its super-sentimentalized wrappings.



Florence Maplestone, *Old Stories Told Anew: Uncle Tom's Cabin*, by Harriet Beecher Stowe, London, Trischler and Company 1891, facing page 24.

Just what is happening to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in this sentimentalized transmogrification becomes clear when we see Emmeline on the slave block. In this illustration Emmeline is

rendered so white as to suggest visually a tale of white slavery is being told rather than one of African American immiseration.



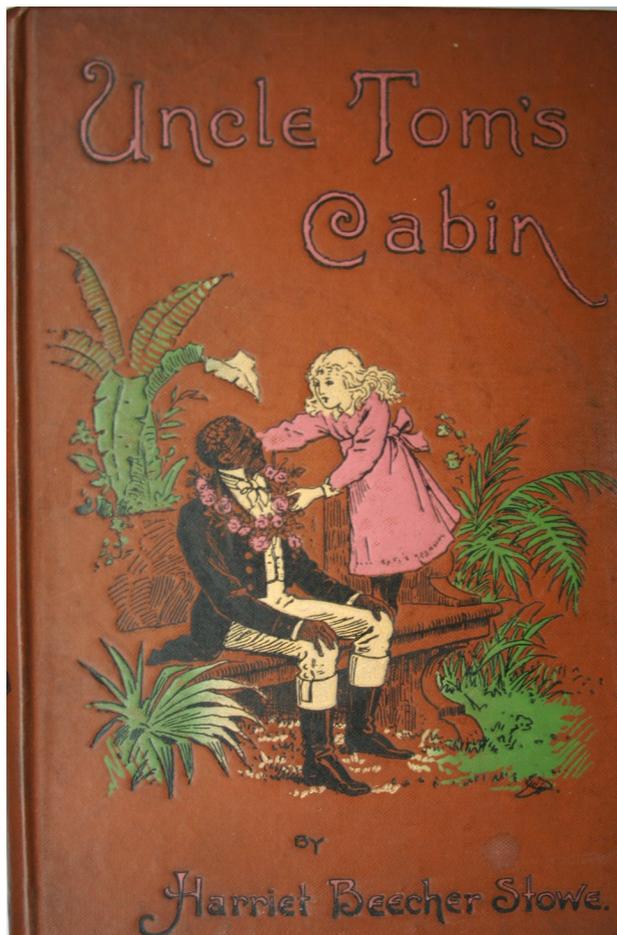
Florence Maplestone, *Old Stories Told Anew: Uncle Tom's Cabin*, by Harriet Beecher Stowe, London, Trischler and Company 1891, facing page 78

By the 1890s, the apotheosis of Eva was also complete and the story shortened to accentuate its sentimentality. It is perhaps this legacy of Stowe's novel that led African Americans in the post World War Two period to object to it so strongly.

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

With new illustrations. London: Sunday School Union, c.1896.

The Trischler edition of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had been, typically, substantially abridged; other editions intended for slightly older children, were not, though the sentimentalism was not much reduced, as this Sunday School Union edition dating from 1896, makes blatant through its cover design:



Cover design, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe, London, Sunday School Union, c.1896. With new illustrations

In recognition of the fact that the book's target audience was slightly older, however, the conventional, sentimental-sensational image of Eliza fleeing across the river features as the book's frontispiece.



Frontispiece, 'Eliza crossing the ice', *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe, London, Sunday School Union, c.1896

Uncle Tom's Cabin

London: Bliss, Sands and Company, 1897

Exceptions to this general rule of ever-intensifying sentimentalism were those reprints that, with increasing rareness, returned to some of the original illustrations, of which Cruikshank's 1852 depictions were the most popular by far. An 1897 Bliss Sands and Company edition adopted this approach for its frontispiece, but in this instance the selection of the print deserves comment. The Cruikshank engraving chosen was 'Persecuted Virtue. "She was whipped, sir, for wanting to live a decent Christian life, such as your laws give no slave girl a right to live!"':



George Cruikshank, ““She was whipped, sir, for wanting to live a decent Christian life ...””, rpt. In *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, London: Bliss, Sands and Company, 1897

Its re-appearance serves as a reminder that just possibly one appeal of *Uncle Tom* was still the voyeuristic sadomasochism that can be held to run through it, which, as we have seen, illustrators had exploited in early editions. Certainly we know that depictions of chained, naked females frequently appear in Victorian ‘high cultural’ art forms, either as classical studies or as studies of female (often white) slaves.

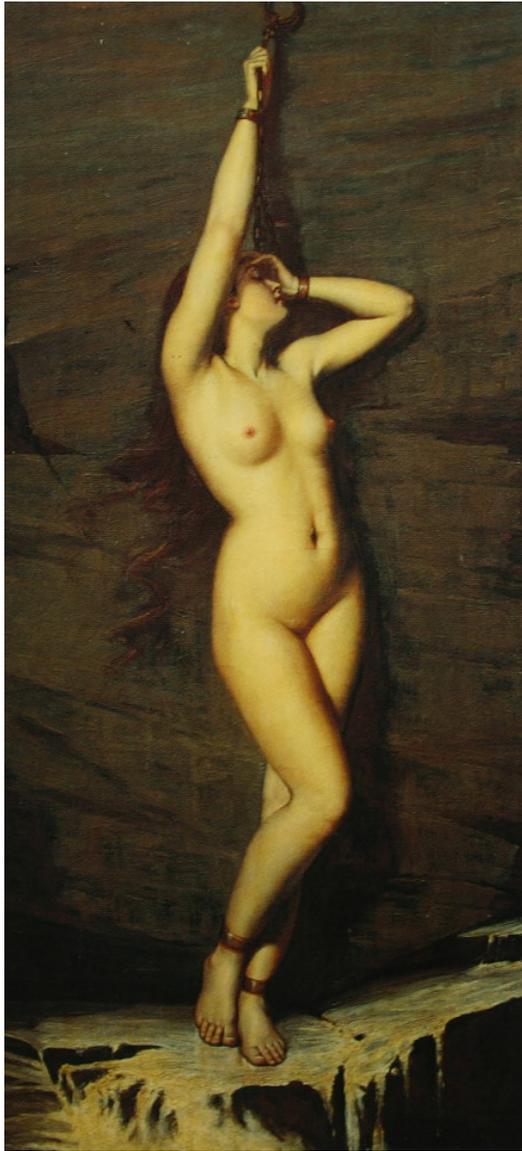
The Victorian collector, Sir Merton Russell Cotes, exemplifies such tastes. For example, there is a statue he owned of a naked female, the ‘Shiva Slave’ (aka ‘The Greek Slave’), on display at the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum. The work is by Gerolamo Oldofredi, a Milanese exhibiting in Rome, Venice and Milan during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The sculpture dates to circa 1880-1900 and was collected by Sir Merton Russell Cotes at the beginning of the twentieth century. This illustration is directly related to slavery

as an institution, to tap into the obscenely asymmetrical power relations that slavery set up and which could be readily exploited:



Gerolamo Oldofredi, 'Shiva Slave' (aka 'The Greek Slave'), c. 1880-1900. (The Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum, Bournemouth.)

As striking is the painting by Arthur Hill that Sir Merton Russell Cotes collected, entitled 'Andromeda' (1875-76). This classical study of a despairing, chained, white female, like the statue of the Shiva slave, dwells lovingly on the rounded form of the female:

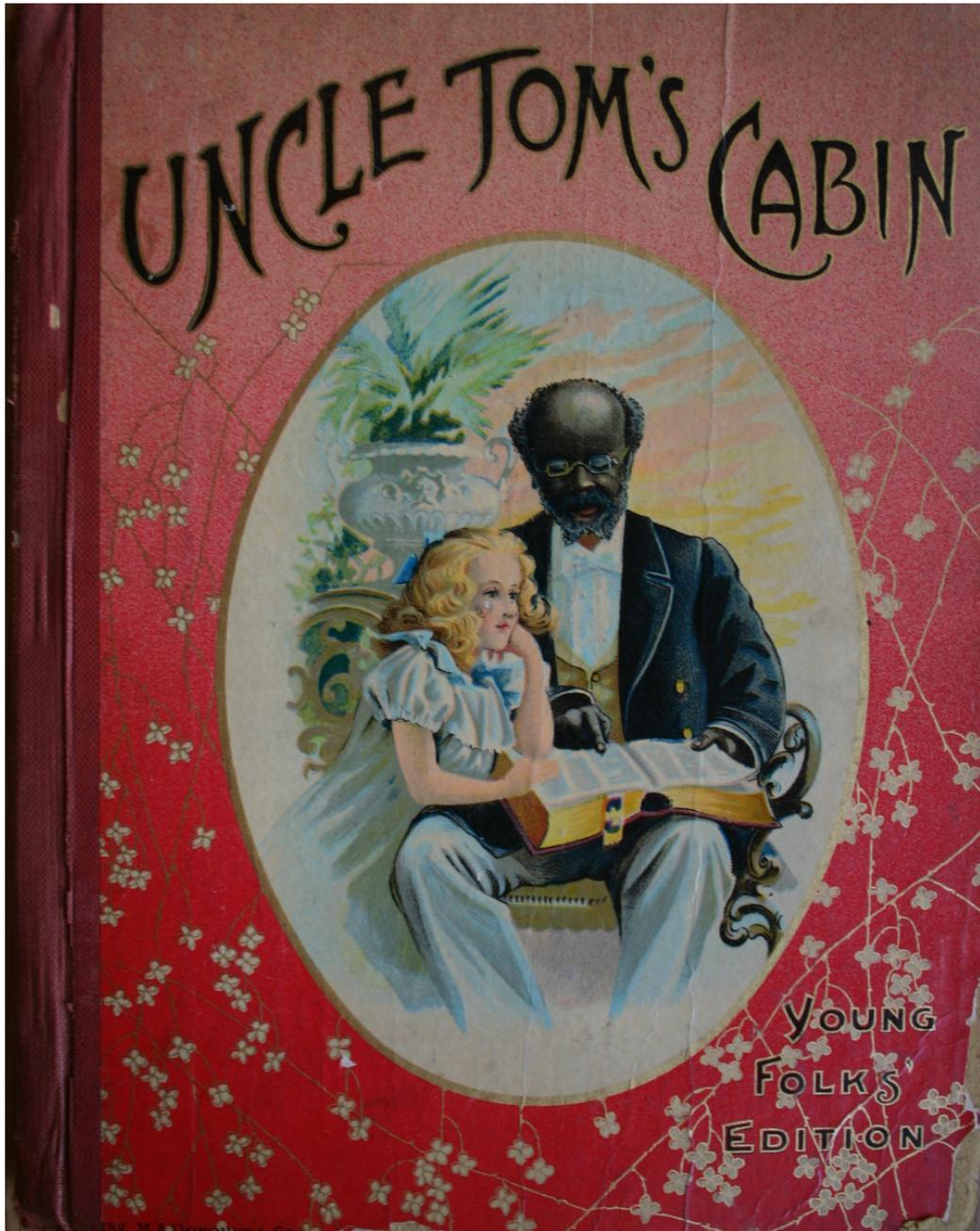


Arthur Hill, 'Andromeda', 1875-76. (The Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum, Bournemouth.)

However, such artworks were held in private collections or museums. It has to be said that encountering Cruikshank's sensational illustrations was by the 1890s becoming increasingly uncommon. Rather, *Uncle Tom* was largely being handed over to a child readership, and its images were laundered in the process, for moral and historical instruction – hence the emphasis on Eva and/or Tom reading that now becomes predominant in compositions depicting the pair.

Young Folks Edition: Uncle Tom's Cabin by Harriet Beecher Stowe
Chicago, M.A. Donohue and Co., n.d. [c. 1900]

A striking example of how learning to read was foregrounded comes from the cover of a cheaply-produced and heavily abridged children's version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*:



Cover design, *Young Folks Edition: 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' by Harriet Beecher Stowe*, Chicago: M.A. Donohue and Co., n.d. [c. 1900]

This is a particularly arresting example of the sentimentalization of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, featuring the by-now iconographic image of Uncle Tom and Little Eva (which had also long been the subject of Staffordshire flat-back mass-produced ceramics, from the early 1850s onwards).

This M.A. Donohue edition of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is particularly striking for the variations in its visual style, however — featuring as it did, for example, this faintly art nouveau plate, featuring an unusually aged Uncle Tom:



Frontispiece, *Young Folks Edition 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'* by Harriet Beecher Stowe, Chicago: M.A. Donohue and Co., n.d. [c. 1900]

It has to be added, too, that in this M.A. Donohue edition the very varied stylistic approach to the illustrations also includes two scenes referencing the more violent and disgraceful aspects of slavery:



Young Folks Edition 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' by Harriet Beecher Stowe, Chicago: M.A. Donohue and Co., n.d. [c. 1900], p.8.

But, in editions aimed at children, such an image is, simply, the exception. Rather, high sentimentalism dominates — as it does in most other modes of releasing the novel in the nineteenth century.

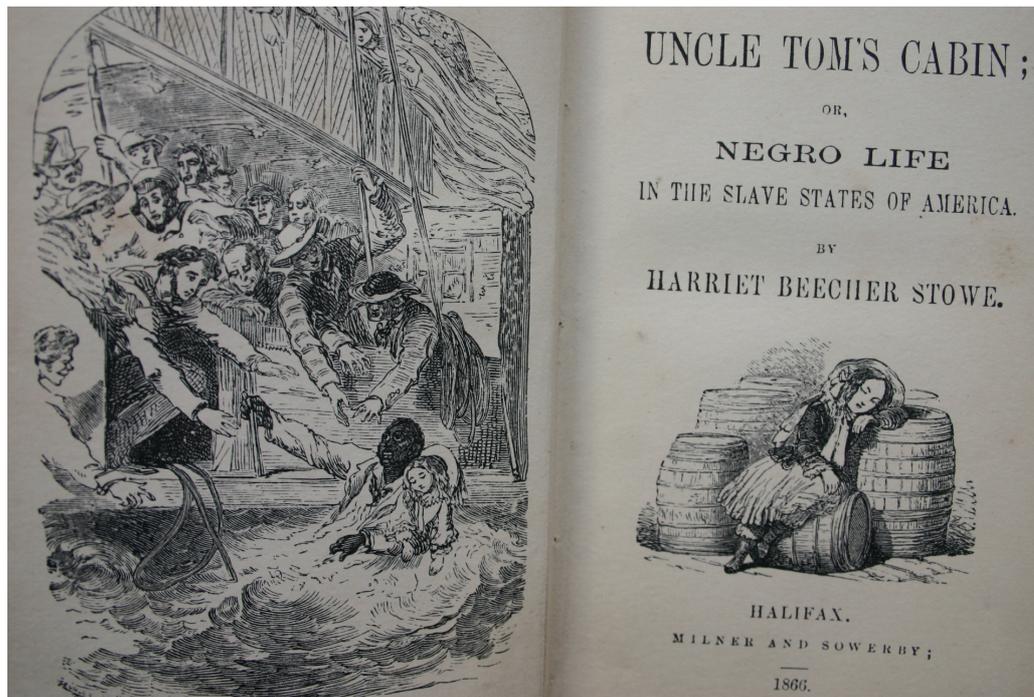
Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*
London, Milner and Company Ltd, n.d., [c.1900-1905].

This pocket edition, which went through many different editions in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, with its frontispiece illustration regularly updated, typifies the sort of illustration that predominates in its early twentieth century edition:



Frontispiece, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, London: Milner and Company Ltd, n.d. [c.1900-1905]

Probably published in the 1900s, long after the end of Civil War, this pocket edition was brought out by English publishers Milner and Company, which specialized in cheap versions of popular novels. That it featured in Milner's 'Juvenile Series' underlines the novel's established role as a source of instruction for youngsters in Christian fortitude and charity. Pocket editions were very popular: as the habit of traveling grew, people could pull them out to read on the long, slow journeys by stagecoach or, later, railway. In this sense such pocket editions were the forerunners of the twentieth century paperback. This Milner edition had been regularly reprinted since the 1860s. The following image of a frontispiece and title page is taken from an 1866 Milner edition, and by comparing it with the frontispiece above, it can be clearly seen how illustrators had, across the decades, somewhat racked up the stress on high domestic sentimentality whilst also updating the costumes of the protagonists (in this instance the resemblance of Little Eva to Cruikshank's illustrations of little girls for Dickens in the frontispiece of the 1866 edition stands in contrast to the relatively revealing costume of Little Eva in the later edition, reproduced above):



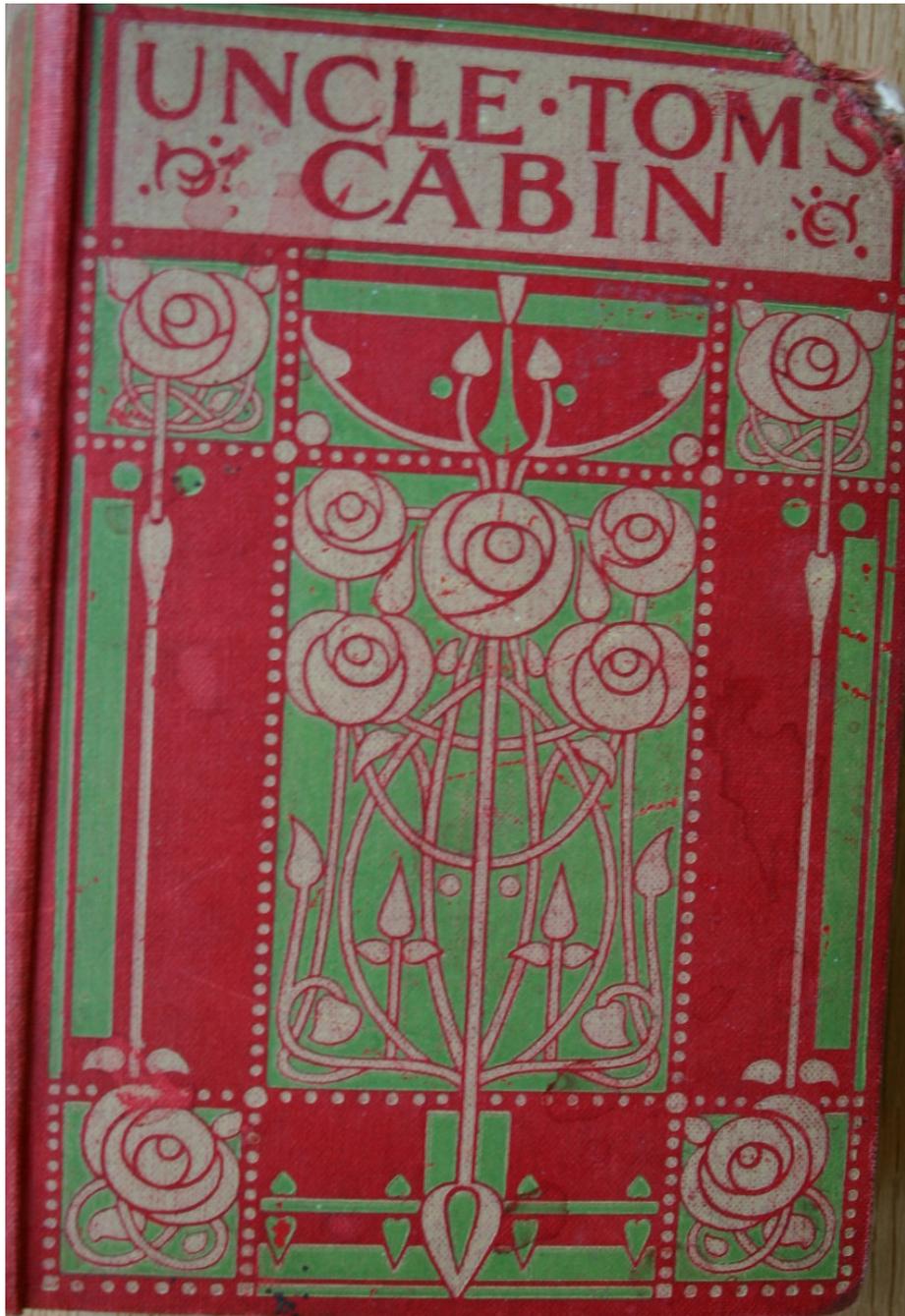
Frontispiece and title page, *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or Negro Life in the Slave States of America*, London: Milner and Company Ltd, n.d. [1866]

That Stowe's *Uncle Tom* retained sufficient popularity so long after slavery's abolition as to command regular reprinting in a pocket edition is an indication of how the book was read as a story leading to Christian improvement.

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

London, Glasgow and Bombay, Blackie and Son Ltd, n.d. [c.1905]

Buoyed by its enduring popularity, as its blend of sentimentalism, sensation, Christian conversion and moral improvement still held an audience even as slavery further faded as an issue, editions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* continued to proliferate, appearing in numerous formats — as is the case in this undated late Victorian or early Edwardian edition, with an attractive Art Nouveau cover design.



Cover design, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, London, Glasgow and Bombay: Blackie and Son Ltd, n.d. [c. 1905].

Open the covers, however, and the frontispiece illustration strikes an almost wholly conventional note. Its depiction of Little Eva and Uncle Tom, provides another example of how dominant this image had become by the turn of the century.



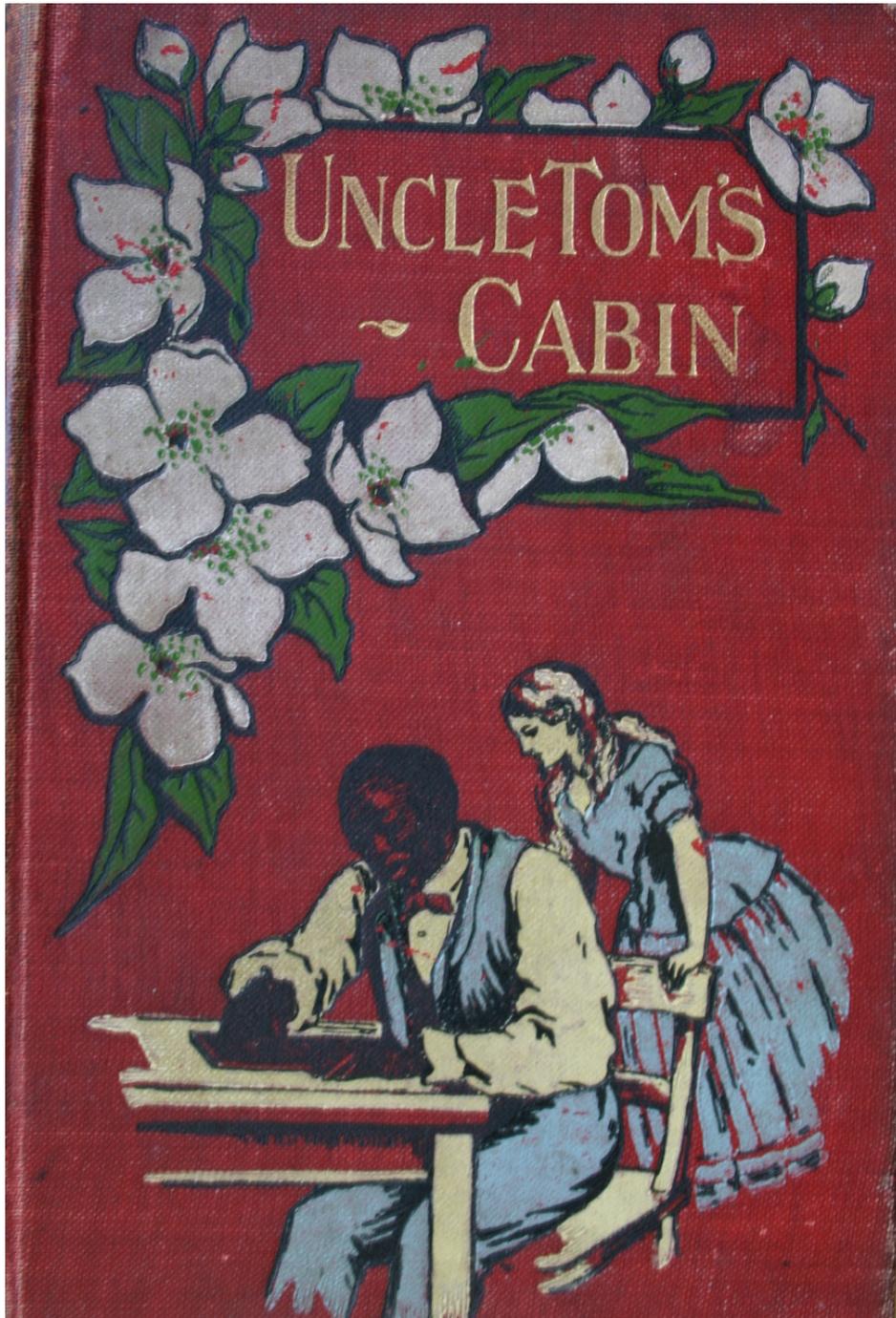
'Uncle Tom and Eva' frontispiece, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, London, Glasgow and Bombay: Blackie and Son Ltd., n.d. [c. 1905].

In this instance, however, the class issues bubbling away on the surface in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* are picked up with interest, as Tom is rendered as footman serving the needs of an upper class or *haute bourgeois* Little Eva — though, of course, as we have by now seen, the updating of the clothing style (here of Little Eva) is, effectively, an established convention in Victorian illustrations.

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

London, George Routledge and Sons, n.d. [c.1907]. Unabridged edition with a preface by the Earl of Carlisle. Illustrated with four plates by Symington.

When examining Victorian and early Edwardian edition of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a certain monotony sets in. Striking covers can, however, still result, as is the case with this edition from circa 1907:



Cover design, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, London: George Routledge and Sons c.1907.

This reprint again addresses the requirement that, before dust jackets became commonplace, books needed to attract readers by way of the design of their binding, for example by placing an illustration of a scene from the novel on the front-cover board itself. The scene selected is, unsurprisingly, both one featuring Uncle Tom and Little Eva (a very Victorianised Little Eva) and one involving learning to read. Inside, one of Symington's plates can serve to remind us of the problematic minstrelization of the African American characters — none more so than Topsy:

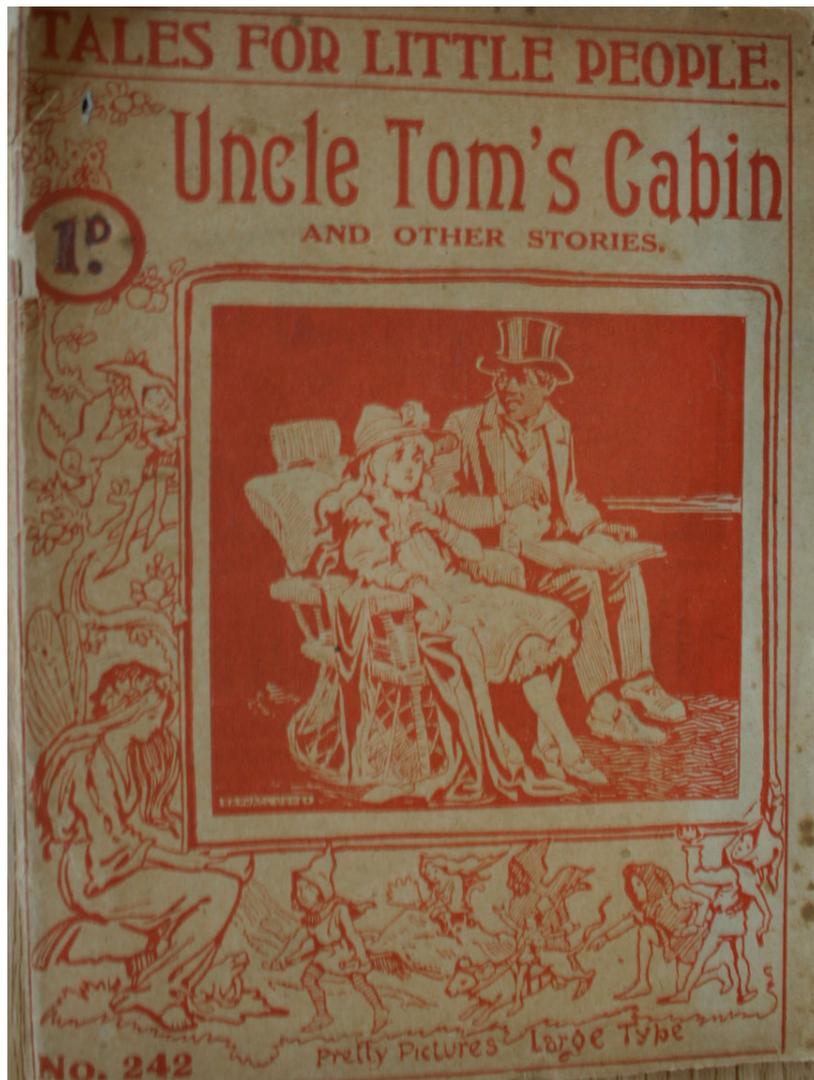


Symington, 'Spinning round in a wild, fantastic sort of time', *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, London: George Routledge and Sons c.1907, p. 176.

It remains easy to see, from this illustration, how offence can be caused when picking up an edition of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

***Tales for Little People: Uncle Tom's Cabin and Other Stories*, edited by Lady Kathleen**
London: Aldine Publishing Company, 1911

After the end of the Victorian era, abridged versions for children continued to proliferate. A striking example is the very cheaply produced version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the Tales for Little People series of 1911.



Cover design, *Tales for Little People: Uncle Tom's Cabin and Other Stories*, edited by Lady Kathleen, London: Aldine Publishing Company, 1911.

Here, the sentimentalized reading scene between Uncle Tom and Eva — by now wholly to be predicted — is complicated by the appearance of Uncle Tom in a top hat — rendering him curiously 'Other' — in this case, certainly, with a taint of minstrel stereotype creeping into his ambiguous representation. Obviously aimed at children and designed to appeal to them ('Pretty Pictures, Large Type'), the book, like so many *Uncle Tom's Cabins*, offers up a disturbingly-racialized iconography.

Within this pamphlet's pages, another pattern becomes apparent — as never before, perhaps, but still as part of a pattern: this is the way in which, consistently, in illustrations for editions of *Uncle Tom*, almost all whipping scenes depict African American on African American whippings:



‘Legree had two savage negroes called Sambo and Quimbo’, *Tales for Little People: Uncle Tom’s Cabin and Other Stories*, edited by Lady Kathleen, London: Aldine Publishing Company, 1911, p. 19.



‘Sambo and Quimbo lashed her with their cruel whips’, *Tales for Little People: Uncle Tom’s Cabin and Other Stories*, edited by Lady Kathleen, London: Aldine Publishing Company, 1911, p. 21.

Here, in this instance in a mass-circulation pamphlet aimed at children, a particular construction is placed on the source of violence in slaveholding — instigated by whites, it is, however, always laid on by blacks. A total of three of the images in an abridged version of the story lasting for only 30 pages depict two of Stowe’s peripheral characters, the black overseers, Sambo and Quimbo, whips in hand. If a white (Legree) holds a whip, then it is only in the background:



‘Trash him until I tell you to stop,’ commanded Legree. Then they thrashed poor Uncle Tom’, *Tales for Little People: Uncle Tom’s Cabin and Other Stories*, edited by Lady Kathleen, London: Aldine Publishing Company, 1911, p. 29.

In a book so heavily aimed at children (*Tales for Little People*), this emphasis on blacks whipping blacks and their depiction as ‘savage’ introduces an almost menacing amount of racist ideology into the equation. The rise of a refreshed scientific racism rooted in alleged proofs of mental feebleness at this time (just before World War One) provides one context for viewing this startling imbalance in the distribution of illustrations across the tale.

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