

Harriet Beecher Stowe Center Teacher Institute:
Slavery and Emancipation in New England
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Excerpts From *Uncles Tom's Cabin* that reflects Harriet Beecher Stowe's views on slavery from a conversation between George Harris and his wife, Eliza, before he decides to run away

"I wish he'd never been born!" said George, bitterly (*looking at his son, Harry*) "I wish I'd never been born myself!" ...

"George! George! How can you talk so? What dreadful thing has happened, or is going to happen? I'm sure we've been very happy, till lately."

"So we have, dear," said George. Then drawing his child on his knee, he gazed intently on his glorious dark eyes, and passed his hand through his long curls.

"Just like you, Eliza; and you are the handsomest woman I ever saw, and the best one I ever wish to see; but, oh, I wish I'd never seen you, nor you me!"

"O, George, how can you!"

"Yes, Eliza, it's all misery, misery, misery! My life is bitter as wormwood; the very life is burning out of me. I'm a poor, miserable, forlorn drudge; I shall only drag you down with me, that's all. What's the use of our trying to do anything, trying to know anything, trying to be anything? What's the use of living? I wish I was dead!"

"O, now, dear George, that is really wicked! I know how you feel about losing your place in the factory, and you have a hard master; but pray be patient, and perhaps something..."

"Patient!" said he, interrupting her; "haven't I been patient? Did I say a word when he came and took me away, for no unearthly reason, from the place where everybody was kind to me? I'd paid him truly every cent of my earnings, - and they all say I worked well."

"Well it *is* dreadful," said Eliza; "but after all, he is your master, you know."

"My master! And who made him my master? That's what I think of - what right has he to me? I'm a man as much as he is. I'm a better man than he is. I know more about business than he does; I am a better manager than he is; I can read better than he can; I can write a better hand, - and I've learned it all myself, and no thanks to him, - I've learned it in spite of him; and now what right has he to make a dray-horse of me? - to take me from things I can do, and do better than he can, and put me to work that any horse can do? He tries to do it; he says he'll bring me down and humble me, and he puts me to just the hardest, meanest and dirtiest work, on purpose!"