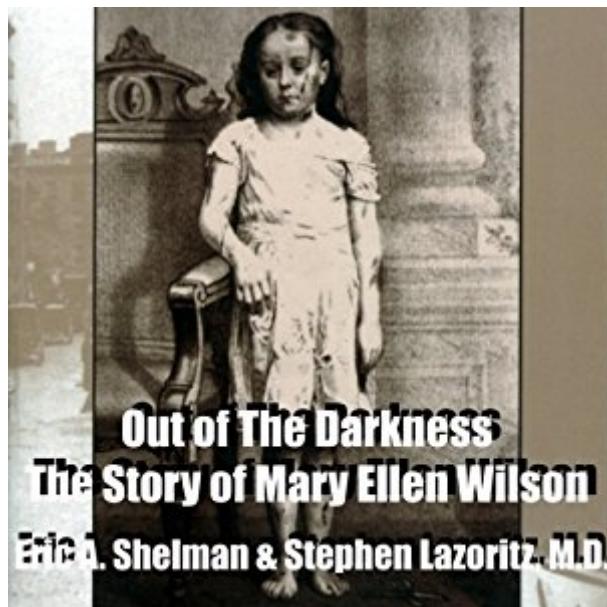


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# Out Of The Darkness: The Story Of Mary Ellen Wilson



## **Synopsis**

In New York City, in April of 1874, a most unusual event took place. A severely abused nine-year-old girl named Mary Ellen Wilson became the first child in America to be rescued from an abusive home. She had been beaten, burned, slashed with scissors, locked in a closet, and had never been outside of her tenement home in over 7 years. Thanks to the concern and dedication of a missionary named Etta Wheeler, the child was finally saved from her cruel captors. Henry Bergh's ASPCA - yes, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals - was instrumental in securing her rescue. When no other agencies would become involved, the ASPCA used its power and influence to not only save Mary Ellen, but to charter the first organization of its kind to prevent cruelty to children, the NYSPCC - the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. This book remains the only book that tells the dramatic story of Mary Ellen's life and rescue.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

"Out of the Darkness" is indeed the perfect title for the long-awaited telling of these events. For the past 50 years, only students and professionals in the child protection field have learned the profound significance of Mary Ellen's story. This, the first book entirely devoted to this landmark case, brings Mary Ellen to life along with all those who helped her survive. The story opens in May 1864 on a battlefield in Cold Harbor, Virginia, as Thomas Wilson receives word of the birth of his little girl in New York City and dreams of returning soon to his wife, Fanny, and their child. Shortly afterward, however, he dies in battle. Amid the hustle and bustle of New York City life, Mary Ellen's

mother attempts to care for her little girl, but poverty soon forces her to abandon the child. We learn of Mary Ellen's stay in an almshouse for a time before being taken into a foster home where she is beaten, locked in a closet, burned, and permitted no contact with the outside world. She remains in this home for 6 long years. Shelman and Lavoritz accurately and poignantly describe the New York City of the 1860s and 1870s, allowing the reader to experience the overcrowding and the sounds and smells of the infamous Hell's Kitchen area of NYC where Mary Ellen is finally found and rescued. The story follows two threads, first told separately, and then woven skillfully together. We learn of Mary Ellen's plight, while at the same time in NYC, Henry Bergh is working to found the American Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA). We are with Bergh as he enforces the new animal protection laws in NYC. He fights to protect them all --from turtles to horses. He is often ridiculed as he charges, "Turtle abuse!" But he persists.

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