

*'The Greatest Book of Its Kind':
A Publishing History of
'Uncle Tom's Cabin'*

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THE GREATEST BOOK of Its Kind.' Do you know it? Have you read it? Even if you have *not*, I suspect that you *are* familiar with many of its characters and scenes. Angelic little Eva, whose dying is so memorable. Mischievous Topsy, who explains herself with phrases such as 'I spect I grow'd' and 'I spect's 'cause I's so wicked!' Cruel Simon Legree, the slave driver who has Uncle Tom whipped to death. And noble Uncle Tom himself, who accepts his fate and thus proves his humanity through Christian humility.

'The Greatest Book of Its Kind.' This is how John P. Jewett, the original publisher of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in book form, described it in his advertisements.¹ But it is a curious phrase—one that seems to raise more questions than it answers. In what way is it great? Of what kind is it? I suppose that Jewett was himself unable to answer these questions, for in many ways *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was unlike

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1. This phrase was used in various advertisements for *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, including one printed at the back of the first printing of the cheap, one-volume 'edition for the million' of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* produced in late 1852.

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anything else that had ever been published in the United States. But he was clear on one thing, on the book's superlative nature—it was the greatest. As a discipline, the history of the book often leads us to consider the obscure and ephemeral, but it also must treat the famous and exceptional. This essay explores just how, over time, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* deserves the claim of being 'The Greatest Book of Its Kind.'

Uncle Tom's Cabin was conceived in Brunswick, Maine, in deep winter, early in 1851. Its author, Harriet Beecher Stowe, had arrived there from Cincinnati the preceding May to set up house-keeping for her husband, Calvin, who was to be appointed the Collins Professor of Natural and Revealed Religion at Bowdoin College. That winter, 1851, Calvin Stowe had returned to lecture in Cincinnati, as Lane Seminary had been unable to find anyone appropriate to fill his position there, and Harriet was managing alone in Brunswick with their six children. In addition to housework and cooking, Harriet supplemented the family's meager income by running a small home school and by writing domestic stories for magazines. This last she had been doing for years, since 1834. A small collection of her stories, *The Mayflower*, had been published by Harper Brothers in 1843.²

With the move to Brunswick Stowe had found a new outlet for her writing in the *National Era*, a weekly antislavery newspaper published in Washington, D.C. Its editor, Gamaliel Bailey, had also lived for many years in Cincinnati, where Stowe must have known of him as a dominant political figure in western abolitionism and as editor of the antislavery *Weekly Herald and Philanthropist*. In 1847 he had moved east at the behest of leading abolitionists to start up the *National Era* as a national antislavery paper. Between August 1850 and the end of January 1851, Bailey had published four pieces from Stowe, and in a letter to Calvin of January 12, 1851, Stowe mentioned receiving one hundred dollars

2. The standard recent biography of Stowe is Joan D. Hedrick, *Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), although I have also relied on Forrest Wilson, *Crusader in Crinoline: The Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1941).

from Bailey and 'ever so many good words with it' encouraging future contributions.³ While it might seem natural that Bailey would push her to write antislavery material, in fact only the first of these four pieces, 'The Freeman's Dream,' has such a theme; the other three reflect her familiar domestic mode.

Nevertheless, political events were provoking Stowe to write against slavery on her own. During her eighteen years in Cincinnati, she had been exposed to the political debates over slavery and abolitionism, which had raged even at her father's Lane Seminary and created divisions within the Beecher family itself. With Kentucky, a slave state, just across the Ohio River from Cincinnati, she had also witnessed slavery and its effects firsthand. In the fall of 1850, however, the Fugitive Slave Act was passed and signed into law. This controversial law not only denied alleged fugitive slaves their rights to *habeas corpus*, to a jury trial, and to testify on their own behalf, but also empowered court-appointed commissioners to force any citizen to serve on a fugitive-hunting posse, with a fine of \$1,000 for non-compliance. Stowe joined with many other Northerners who felt themselves compromised by this element of the Compromise of 1850. Many years later, writing of herself in the third person, she explained her position:

With astonishment and distress Mrs. Stowe heard on all sides, from humane and Christian people, that the slavery of the blacks was a guaranteed constitutional right, and that all opposition to it endangered the national Union. With this conviction she saw that even earnest and tender-hearted Christian people seemed to feel it a duty to close their eyes, ears, and hearts to the harrowing details of slavery, to put down all discussion of the subject, and even to assist slave-owners to recover fugitives in Northern States. She said to herself, these

3. Charles E. Stowe, *Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin, 1889), 148. There are several nineteenth-century accounts of the conception and composition of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, written by Stowe and her family, but these contradict one another in important details. E. Bruce Kirkham, *The Building of Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1977), reviews and assesses these sources and provides a good twentieth-century account. Claire Parfait, 'Les Éditions américaines d' *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, de Harriet Beecher Stowe, de 1852 . . . 1999,' Ph.D. diss., Université, Paris 7—Denis Diderot, defended and published, January 8, 2000, provides an even fuller account, but was not available to me at the time that this essay was originally written.

people cannot know what slavery is; they do not see what they are defending; and hence arose a purpose to write some sketches which should show to the world slavery as she had herself seen it.⁴

Accordingly, on March 9, 1851, Stowe wrote to Bailey offering an antislavery sketch:

Mr. Bailey, Dear Sir: I am at present occupied upon a story which will be a much longer one than any I have ever written, embracing a series of sketches which give the lights and shadows of the 'patriarchal institution,' written either from observation, incidents which have occurred in the sphere of my personal knowledge, or in the knowledge of my friends. I shall show the *best side* of the thing, and something *faintly approaching the worst*.

Up to this year I have always felt that I had no particular call to meddle with this subject, and I dreaded to expose even my own mind to the full force of its exciting power. But I feel now that the time is come when even a woman or a child who can speak a word for freedom and humanity is bound to speak. . . .

My vocation is simply that of *painter*, and my object will be to hold up in the most lifelike and graphic manner possible Slavery, its reverses, changes, and the negro character, which I have had ample opportunities for studying. There is no arguing with *pictures*, and everybody is impressed by them, whether they mean to be or not.⁵

In this letter Stowe stated that she believed her sketch would be ready in two or three weeks and might extend through three or four numbers, but she was wrong on both counts. Stowe's new story was not announced for nearly two months: the *National Era* for May 8, 1851, contains the first notice of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin: or The Man That Was a Thing,' which was to commence as a serial the 'week after next,' and readers were encouraged to renew their subscriptions lest they 'lose the beginning of it.'⁶ In the event, the first installment, now with its final subtitle, 'Life among

4. 'Introduction to the New Edition,' *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Boston: Houghton, Osgood, 1879), x-xi.

5. Wilson, *Crusader in Crinoline*, 259-60; transcribed from a typescript of the original, now lost, in the Boston Public Library.

6. *National Era* 5 (May 8, 1851): 74. The *National Era* 6 (April 1, 1852): 54 states: 'we have received literally thousands of testimonials from our renewing subscribers, to its unsurpassed ability'; see also another comment on readers' responses in *National Era* 6 (January 1, 1852): 2.

the Lowly,' did not appear until the June 5 issue. The serial also continued far longer than Stowe had at first imagined: the final weekly installment appeared in the *National Era* on April 1, 1852. She was later to claim that the story wrote itself, and given Stowe's other household responsibilities and the distance between Brunswick and Washington, it is indeed surprising that her contributions appeared so regularly: over those ten months her weekly installments were missed only three times, in August, October, and December. The *National Era's* readers responded enthusiastically, and Stowe surely earned the \$400 that Bailey eventually paid her for the work.⁷

Long before the serial was complete in the *National Era*, arrangements were being made for its publication in book form. In the issue of September 18, 1851, Bailey announced that he had learned through a private source that Stowe had completed arrangements with John P. Jewett & Co., publishers of Boston. He added that 'stereotyping commences this week; and it will be corrected, complete, from the press, immediately after its close in the Era.'⁸ In fact, publication was still six months away. Jewett's edition finally appeared on March 20, 1852, twelve days before the text was completed in the *National Era*. The first edition of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is in two volumes, with '6 elegant illustrations by Hammatt Billings, engraved by Baker.' It was offered in three styles of binding—cloth, cloth full gilt, and paper wrapper—at \$1.50, \$2.00, and \$1.00 respectively.⁹

7. For Bailey's account, dated May 27, 1853, of the serialization and payments to Stowe, see J. E. Snodgrass, 'A Pioneering Editor,' *Atlantic Monthly* 17 (1866): 748-49; see also Susan Geary, 'Mrs. Stowe's Income from the Serial Version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*,' *Studies in Bibliography* (1976): 380-82. For a recent critical evaluation of how serialization shaped the work and its reception, see Susan Belasco Smith, 'Serialization and the Nature of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*,' in *Periodical Literature in Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Kenneth M. Price and Susan Belasco Smith (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 69-89.

8. *National Era* 5 (September 18, 1851): 150; Jewett is again noted as the publisher of the work in book form in the *National Era* 6 (January 2, 1852): 2; (January 29, 1852): 19.

9. *National Era* 6 (April 1, 1852): 54. E. Bruce Kirkham's 'The First Editions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: A Bibliographical Study,' *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 65 (1971): 365-82, gives a full account and census of the early printings of this edition. For a discussion of Hammatt Billings's illustrations, see James F. O'Gorman, *Accomplished in All Departments of Art: Hammatt Billings of Boston, 1818-1874* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 46-62.

Right from the start, sales of the book took off. By April 1, the first printing of five thousand copies had been sold and a second five thousand had appeared.¹⁰ In mid-April Jewett announced these ten thousand copies had been sold in two weeks, adding: 'Three paper mills are constantly at work, manufacturing the paper, and three power presses are working twenty-four hours per day, in printing it, and more than one hundred book-binders are incessantly plying their trade to bind them, and still it has been impossible, as yet, to supply the demand.'¹¹ And the demand kept growing. By mid-May it was noted that fifty thousand copies had been sold in sixty days and that: 'it has taken 3,000 reams of medium paper, weighing 30 lbs to the ream—90,000 lbs. of paper; and that three or four of Adams's power presses have been kept running at the most rapid rate, day and night, and that from 125 to 200 book-binders have been constantly at work in binding. The weight of the books when bound would amount to 110,000 lbs. or fifty-five tons. These have been principally transported in small boxes or packages by Messrs. Kingsleys & Co. and Thompson & Co.'s Expresses.'¹² By mid-September the publishers announced the sale of over seventy-five thousand copies, and by mid-October the sale of one hundred twenty thousand was claimed.¹³

These are extraordinary figures, unprecedented in American publishing, but this was just the beginning. For the 1852 holiday season, Jewett produced an expensive (\$2.50 to \$5.00, depending on binding) octavo gift edition, lavishly illustrated with over one hundred vignettes by Hammatt Billings. An initial printing of three thousand copies was followed in February by a second of two thousand. Also in December, Jewett issued a third edition of

10. *National Era* 6 (April 1, 1852): 54.

11. *National Era* 6 (April 15, 1852): 62; the same statement appears in Jewett's advertisement in *Norton's Literary Gazette* (April 15, 1852): 73.

12. *Norton's Literary Gazette* (May 15, 1852): 84; *Literary World* 10 (May 22, 1852): 367. For a later attempt to quantify the book's success in similar terms, see 'Uncle Tomitudes,' *Putnam's Monthly* 1 (January 1853): 98.

13. *Norton's Literary Gazette* (September 15, 1852): 168; (October 15, 1852): 203. In *Norton's Literary Gazette* (November 15, 1852): 212, the sale of 120,000 copies is again noted as 'avowed' by the publishers.

the work—'An Edition for the Million!' as he announced it—an inexpensive (37½ cents), one-volume edition, printed in two columns in small type. The initial printing of thirty thousand of this edition was soon gone, followed before year's end by a second of twenty thousand, with thousands more produced in the new year.¹⁴

In February 1853 Jewett published a German translation, followed by two editions of Stowe's *Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which documented her account of slavery. Jewett and many others were also to issue numerous adaptations, condensations, responses, and other spinoffs. There were prints, songs, statues, even a printed handkerchief.¹⁵ The work was soon dramatized, and as a play, it was an immediate hit and became one of the most popular and longest-running works of the American popular theater.¹⁶ In England Stowe's text was an even bigger success. There it was reprinted over and over and was confidently said to have sold over one and a half million copies. It was quickly translated and printed throughout Europe and beyond.¹⁷ As a publishing phenomenon, there had been nothing like it! As one American commentator chortled in January 1853:

Never since books were first printed has the success of Uncle Tom been equalled; the history of literature contains nothing parallel to

14. 'Uncle Tomitudes,' *Putnam's Monthly* 1 (January 1853): 98; *National Era* 7 (February 10, 1853): 23.

15. There is no complete list of these, but Stephen A. Hirsch, 'Uncle Tomitudes: The Popular Reaction to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*,' *Studies in the American Renaissance*, ed. Joel Myerson (1978), 303-20, gives a sense of their variety.

16. See Harry A. Birdoff, *The World's Greatest Hit: Uncle Tom's Cabin Illustrated with Old-time Playbills, Daguerreotypes, Vignettes, Music-Sheets, Poems, and Cartoons* (New York: S. F. Vanni, 1947).

17. Contemporary accounts of the early English editions are printed in *Literary World* 11 (October 2, 1852): 222, and *National Era* 6 (October 21, 1852): 170, while 'Uncle Tom's Literature,' *National Literary Gazette* (November 15, 1852): 212-23, gives an early list of the English and American editions and of imitations and other works relating to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. George Bullen, 'A Bibliographical Account of Uncle Tom's Cabin,' in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Boston: Houghton, Osgood, 1879), [xii]-lviii, is the earliest attempt at a systematic list of the English editions and translations; later lists include Joseph Sabin et al., *Bibliotheca Americana: A Dictionary of Books Relating to America*, 29 vols. (New York, 1933-34), 24: 44-73, and Margaret Holbrook Hildreth, *Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Bibliography* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1976).

it, nor approaching it; it is, in fact, the first real success in book-making, for all other successes in literature were failures when compared with the success of Uncle Tom. And it is worth remembering that this first success in a field which all the mighty men of the earth have labored in, was accomplished by an American woman. Who reads an American book, did you inquire, Mr. Smith? Why, your comfortable presence should have been preserved in the world a year or two longer, that you might have asked, as you would have done, 'who does not?'¹⁸

Indeed, it was 'The Greatest Book of Its Kind.' *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the debate it generated, succeeded in bringing the issue of slavery before the American reading public as nothing else had.¹⁹ Stowe herself was now a world-famous figure, who would be feted and lionized during a tour of Great Britain and the Continent during the summer of 1853. Only two years earlier, she had been concerned to augment her family's meager income with her writing, but now she was a wealthy woman. In July 1852 she had received her first royalty payment of \$10,300 from Jewett, and another \$10,000 was paid at year's end. Her earnings in 1852 were more than twenty times her husband's annual professorial salary, and by 1855 Jewett had paid \$30,000 in royalties to Stowe for works that she published with him. It was estimated that Jewett's profits on the book would come to \$50,000.²⁰ Surely both author and publisher had every reason to be satisfied with the success they had made of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. But this was not the case. Despite the book's success—even while it was making its greatest success—the relationship between author and publisher was a troubled one, and the strain would eventually lead to a complete

18. 'Uncle Tomitudes,' *Putnam's Monthly* 1 (January 1853): 97–98. The reference is to the Reverend Sydney Smith's quip in the *Edinburgh Review* 33 (January–May 1820): 80, 'In the four quarters of the globe, who reads an American book?'

19. The best all-around study of the work's impact is Thomas F. Gossett, *Uncle Tom's Cabin in American Culture* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1985).

20. For Stowe's royalties, see *Literary World* 11 (July 17, 1852): 47; 'Uncle Tomitudes,' *Putnam's Monthly* 1 (January 1853): 98; *Norton's Literary Gazette* (January 15, 1855): 35. The estimate of Jewett's profits, dated March 9, 1853, comes from 'Dun & Bradstreet Records,' Massachusetts-Suffolk, 68: 317; given the work's subsequent publishing history, the estimate may be too high—indeed, if Jewett overproduced the work during the spring of 1853, he may have had to bear losses.

break. The reasons for this are obscure and have often been misunderstood or misstated, so it is useful to review the evidence.

As must be already clear, Stowe had at first little sense of the eventual extent of her work or of the success it would achieve, and she had little experience with book publishers. It is hardly surprising, then, that her older sister, Catharine, who had already published a dozen books, should become involved. In any case it was Catharine Beecher who during the summer of 1851 made the first attempt to find a publisher for Stowe when she approached Phillips, Sampson & Co., the Boston firm that had recently published her own *The True Remedy for the Wrongs of Woman*, with the claim that she was authorized to negotiate for the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. After discussion, the firm declined the work, believing that an antislavery novel published in an antislavery newspaper 'never could sell a thousand copies in book form' and that, as the firm enjoyed a very large southern trade, an antislavery novel 'would disturb their business relations with the South, beyond any compensation that would result from its sale.'²¹

What next brought Stowe together with Jewett is not entirely clear—accounts vary—but he was not an illogical choice. He had started in business in 1837 as a bookseller and publisher in Salem, Massachusetts, and in 1844 had briefly set up in Cincinnati, where he must have become aware of, and may have even had dealings with, the Beecher family. Indeed, since his return to Salem in 1845, his list had included a work by Stowe's brother Henry Ward Beecher, entitled *Lectures to Young Men*, and in 1845 he also reprinted an edition of James Barr Walker's *The Philosophy of the Plan of Salvation* with a new introductory essay by Stowe's husband, Calvin. Although Jewett was not known as a publisher of novels or *belles lettres*, his list did include many religious works—especially those representing the evangelical wing of Congregationalism that was associated with the Andover Theological Seminary and that the Beecher family favored—and he

²¹ James C. Derby, *Fifty Years among Authors, Books and Publishers* (New York: Carleton, 1884), 520.

had already published several antislavery works.²² There were other links, for on September 15, 1851, three days before the *National Era* announced that arrangements had been made for Jewett to act as publisher of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, it was also announced that he would publish the first of a projected six volumes of the *Works* of Stowe's father, Lyman Beecher.²³

If the choice of publisher was settled in September 1851, the contract was apparently not signed until March 13, 1852, a week before publication, and in the meanwhile terms were a matter of negotiation. Catharine Beecher had originally suggested a half-profits contract, an arrangement whereby Stowe would receive a half share of the profits after all expenses were paid, whereas Jewett had favored the more usual arrangement of a royalty of 10 percent on the retail price of all copies sold. In the event, Catharine Beecher prevailed, and the first contract that was drawn up was for half profits. Before it was signed, however, Stowe's husband, Calvin, who took charge of the negotiations, looked over this contract and found it a 'complex, ugly thing' and, upon expressing his dissatisfaction, discovered that Jewett shared his opinion. Calvin Stowe then sought advice from Philip Greeley, a friend and businessman, who consulted in turn with C. C. Dean and T. R. Marvin, both established members of the Boston book trade. All encouraged Stowe to accept a royalty arrangement: Dean suggested 15 percent, but Marvin 'said that he thought 10 per cent. was all that Jewett could afford.' Stowe then returned to Jewett and asked for a new contract and 20 percent royalty, but Jewett refused to consider publishing the book on those terms. Stowe then proposed a 15 percent royalty, and according to an account written by Stowe later that year, Jewett responded that

at that price he could afford only to make it a common book-store publication, without the employment of agencies, or any extra expense of

22. For Jewett and his publications, see my 'John Punchard Jewett, Publisher of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: A Biographical Note with a Preliminary List of His Imprints' in *Roger Eliot Stoddard at Sixty-Five: A Celebration* (New York: Thornwillow Press, 2000), 85-114.

23. *Norton's Literary Advertiser* (September 15, 1851): 52.

advertising. But if I would let him have it at 10 per cent. he would employ agents every where—he would advertise in every possible form, and he would spare no pains nor expense nor effort to push the book into unparalleled circulation; and it was his opinion that I should, in this way, reap altogether a larger harvest of profit than I could by 15 or 20 per cent, or by the first contract; & that too without any risk or trouble whatever on my part.²⁴

Stowe continued to push for 15 percent, which Jewett steadily declined, and eventually Stowe agreed to 10 percent. The new contract was written and signed.

As we have seen, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* certainly had an unparalleled circulation, and this was certainly due in part to Jewett's efforts. He later claimed that he had spent thousands of dollars for advertising in the greater number of northern newspapers before the book was published, and during its run he certainly took care to keep the public informed of its success. Upon publication Jewett traveled to Washington and pushed the book to all the 'leading senators, Northern and Southern,' a tactic that certainly helped attract attention to the book.²⁵ And Jewett led the way in the vogue for 'Uncle Tomitudes' when in June 1852 he commissioned John Greenleaf Whittier to write for \$50 the words to the 'Song of Little Eva,' which he published as sheet music.²⁶ Despite

24. Calvin E. Stowe, 'Statement of Facts . . . in Regard to the Publication of Mrs. Stowe's Work Entitled *Uncle Tom's Cabin*,' June 21, 1852 (Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford, Conn.). This account is largely corroborated by Jewett's account recorded in William Henry Forman, 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,' *The Manhattan* 1 (January 1883): [28]–31. I have been unable to consult another account by Jewett of the work's publication that was printed in the East Orange (N.J.) *Record* (November 13, 1947), but it is discussed—and excerpts quoted from it—in Kirkham, *Building of Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 142–43.

25. Charles E. Stowe, *Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe*, 162. For other remarks on the effectiveness of Jewett's advertising campaign in ensuring the work's success, see *Norton's Literary Gazette* (June 1, 1854): 257, and George L. Austin, 'Lee and Shepard,' *Bay State Monthly* 2 (1885): 313.

26. Advertisement, *National Era* 6 (July 8, 1852): 111; see also letter, Isabella Hooker to John Hooker, June 26–27, 1852, Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford, Conn. Jewett later had Whittier's poem printed on a printed cotton cloth as 'Little Eva Song'; this was deposited for copyright on September 27, 1852, and includes a statement claiming that 115,000 copies of the two-volume edition of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had been sold in six months (see Thomas Franklin Currier, *A Bibliography of John Greenleaf Whittier* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1937], 576).

later misunderstandings, Calvin Stowe readily admitted that 'His part of the contract Mr. Jewett has most faithfully performed, he has done all that he promised to do, & even more. . . .'²⁷

The final contract negotiations for *Uncle Tom's Cabin* apparently took place while Catharine Beecher was traveling in the West—presumably visiting the Milwaukee Female College, to which she was devoted—and upon her return she was critical of the results. At the end of June 1852, when over fifty thousand copies of the book had been reported as sold, Stowe's half-sister Isabella Hooker, who was visiting in Brunswick, explained the situation in a letter to her husband: 'Poor sister Cate, has taken up the matter of Hatty's bargain with the Publisher & is determined to make a fuss about it—tho' Mr. Stowe did the business in his own way & is perfectly satisfied now. Cate is making herself sick about it—calls Jewett a scoundrel & with her usual pertinacity says she will make the matter public unless they adopt her view of the case. What a pity that she will meddle so. . . .' The letter goes on to explain that Stowe was not swayed by Catharine: 'Hatty thinks & knows that tis Jewett's efforts & outlay, that have secured so large a sale. She has been behind the curtain & knows where the puffs come from &c—& she says he has lost southern trade before, for publishing A. Sy. [*sic*] works & being an abolitionist & she is glad to have him rewarded. She will get 20,000 ultimately without doubt to say nothing of future works.'²⁸

This last point no doubt was telling for Stowe, as the first royalty payment of \$10,300 was delivered the following week, early in July. That month, Jewett published two small pamphlets by Stowe, as well as the sheet music with Whittier's 'Song of Little Eva,' and one is left with the impression that Jewett was being careful to pamper his star author. Over the next year, he was to publish several more of Stowe's works: not just two more editions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and a German translation, but two editions of *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*

27. Calvin E. Stowe, 'Statement of Facts.'

28. Letter, Isabella Hooker to John Hooker, June 26–27, 1852, Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford, Conn.

and a reissue of *The Mayflower*, her collection of stories that had been first published in New York ten years earlier. He also published the abridged *Pictures and Stories from Uncle Tom's Cabin* for children and was the American distributor for Sampson Low's London edition of *A Peep into Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which included Stowe's 'Address . . . to the Children of England and America.'²⁹

Nevertheless, Catharine Beecher's meddling had planted doubts. In December 1852, Calvin Stowe wrote to George Merriam, in reference to a proposal that the Merriams publish a work by Stowe, that 'In a long conversation with Mr. Jewett, she became satisfied that she ought not, at present at least, to look to any other publisher.'³⁰ Despite her decision to stay with Jewett, the sentence suggests that other possibilities had been seriously considered. A year later, after her return from England in September 1853, Stowe again turned to Jewett for explanation. In an undated letter that survives only in draft, she asked: 'Did you do right to persuade Mr Stowe that it was best for him to take ten percent on Uncle Tom when he wished to take twenty & you had offered half profits—and to persuade me afterwards to make the same for the Key & so endeavor to persuade me to adopt this as the best rule in future works[?]' She admitted that in past conversations he had settled her mind on this matter and convinced her 'that it was better for me as you said,' but she continued:

When I went to England & on many occasions subsequently I had occasion to state your arguments to men of business,—as the reasons why I considered my contract an advantageous one. I found the theory disputed,—I found the most honorable publishers of England of their own accord offering me half profits—& when I enquired if they considered this the fairest arrangement for publisher & author, answering that they did. Moreover on some occasions in my zeal to defend you from what I considered unjust implications I repeated all

29. See Winship, 'John Punchard Jewett.' There is no thorough analytical bibliography of Stowe's works, but the list in Jacob Blanck, comp., *Bibliography of American Literature*, Vol. 8: *Charles Warren Stoddard to Susan Bogert Warner*, ed. Michael Winship (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1990), 70–133, gives the basic facts.

30. Letter, Calvin E. Stowe to George Merriam, December 2, 1852, Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford, Conn.

your arguments & statements to business men in America—(not men in the trade) but men who understood its details. They brought arguments & figures, which to my mind seemed to demonstrate that your theory of business was not the correct one.³¹

Stowe's tone here is more that of someone seeking explanation than accusatory, but Jewett's response did not satisfy her. In another letter, apparently to her brother Edward, she admitted readily that 'great allowances are to be made for Mr Jewett. He has made great efforts, he has given time thought & care to the sale of this book. C's course with regard to him has I think been wrong and he has suffered real injustice from her representations.' Nevertheless she expressed hesitation to continue doing business with Jewett and was relieved that his note left her 'entirely at liberty' to seek another publisher:

'Yet I must say that the general character of Mr Jewett as developed in the whole makes me feel increasingly that he is *not* the man I wish to be in business relations with. He is positive—overbearing—uneasy if crossed & unwilling to have fair enquiries made. So, it seems to me.— . . . For my own part, I feel much as he does that peace of mind is worth more than money, & there can be no peace in future relation with him—founded on arrangements which are subject to such difficulties—For if he offers higher percentage he does it with the assurance that I shall lose by it—& if I take ten percent I have the testimony of many business men & figures that I lose by it—On this dilemma he is unwilling to give me the light that might be gained by a reference to other business men—rejects it angrily & prefers to break entirely[.]'³²

In 1854 Phillips, Sampson & Co., the firm that had first rejected *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, became Stowe's publisher. Jewett commented on this development revealingly in a letter to Charles Sumner: 'I dont know if I have told you that I had refused to publish anything more for *Mrs Stowe*. She has treated me very unhandsomely. So much so that I positively refused to have anything more to do with her. She has shown great ingratitude, & a

31. Undated [late 1853?] draft letter, Harriet Beecher Stowe to John P. Jewett, Folder 261, Beecher-Stowe Collection, Schlesinger Library.

32. Undated [late 1853?] letter, Harriet Beecher Stowe to Edward [Beecher?], Folder 261, Beecher-Stowe Collection, Schlesinger Library.

most selfish, and mercenary [*sic*] disposition. I will tell you the whole at some future time, but cannot write it. She has gone to Phillips & Sampson, a pro slavery concern.³³

It is difficult to know just what to make of the break. Jewett's position, though it seems at first glance to go against common sense, had much in its favor, especially in an American book market that tended to favor large sales with small profits per copy. The half-profits arrangement that Catharine Beecher recommended, while common in England, was indeed unusual in the United States and often fostered mistrust between author and publisher. Finally, it is not entirely certain that Stowe would have made a great deal more money had she indeed shared equally in the profits of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, for it is not widely known that in the United States the production, and presumably the sale, of Stowe's original text seems to have come to a halt in the spring of 1853 or very soon thereafter. In just over a year, Jewett had printed just under 310,000 copies, but apparently few, if any, additional copies were needed for nearly ten years.³⁴ Ironically, Jewett's business failed during the Panic of 1857 and ceased operations in August 1860—an unexpected and ignominious end for someone who had published what was widely recognized as one

33. Letter, John P. Jewett to Charles Sumner, February 25, 1854, MS Am 1, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

34. The exact number of copies of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* produced or sold by Jewett cannot be established. Jewett, in a letter to Charles Sumner dated March 24, 1853 (Houghton Library, Harvard University), claimed to have published 305,000 copies during the work's first year of publication, and a copy of the one-volume cheap edition bearing the statement 305th thousand on the title page was received at the Boston Athenaeum on May 9, 1853. The highest edition statement that I have found recorded is the 308th thousand, which appears on the title page of an 1853 reprint of the original two-volume edition bound in a single volume (OCLC acc. no. 29295220). 'Our Letter from Boston' (dated February 1856 and signed 'T. W. M.'), *American Publishers' Circular* 2 (February 16, 1856): 95, states that the sales were 305,000 copies, although S. Austin Allibone, *A Critical Dictionary of English Literature and British and American Authors* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1858-72), 2278, reports that 313,000 copies had been sold by April 28, 1856. Two years later, an article on bookselling reprinted in *American Publishers' Circular* 4 (August 14, 1858): 391, gives the number of copies sold as 310,000, the same figure that was used in 1862 by Ticknor and Fields, the work's new publisher, as the basis for numbering its own subsequent editions. In 1884 Jewett is reported to have claimed: 'More than 320,000 sets of two volumes each were published in the first year. After that demand fell off.' (Forman, 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,' 30) Although these figures are surely inflated—only 120,000 copies of the two-volume edition and somewhere around 310,000 of the work had been produced—Jewett's memory of the decline in demand is telling.

of the most popular books of the century—and for the time being *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was without a publisher. If this book made the Civil War, as Lincoln is said to have once claimed, then it seems that it was long out-of-print when it did so!

This is not the end of the story, however. In June 1860, Stowe and her family, who had been touring Europe, arranged to return to Boston on the same Cunard packet steamer as James T. Fields, one of America's premier literary publishers—with the works of Emerson, Hawthorne, Thoreau, among others, on his list—and soon-to-be editor of the influential *Atlantic Monthly*. When Jewett's publishing firm finally went out of business in August 1860, arrangements were made to transfer the plates for the original two-volume edition of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to Fields's firm, Ticknor and Fields. Fields was, however, in no hurry to reprint the book, and it was not until November 1862, after minor corrections and alterations to the plates, that an impression of only 270 copies was run off. On March 5, 1863, Stowe signed a contract with Ticknor and Fields: the firm agreed to pay eighteen cents on every copy sold (a 12 percent royalty) and in return was to be the sole publisher of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the United States as long as the copyright remained in force.³⁵

Thus, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* became part of the list of canonical American literary works that modern scholars have come to associate with Houghton, Mifflin & Co., the firm that Ticknor and Fields eventually evolved into. These successive firms were to remain Stowe's primary publishers through the end of the century—and unlike poor J. P. Jewett, who died in obscurity in

35. Ticknor and Fields, *Cost Book*, fair C (1857-63), p. 308, and Houghton, Mifflin & Co. Contract Files. On January 1, 1861, Ticknor and Fields also purchased the plates for the '8vo' edition of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*—probably the cheap, one-volume 'edition for the million'—from Jewett, but the price of \$29.20 (reckoned at \$0.07 per pound) suggests that the plates were being valued as scrap metal; see Ticknor and Fields, *Cost Book*, fair C (1857-63), 198. The business records of Ticknor and Fields and related firms, including Houghton, Mifflin & Co., are at the Houghton Library, Harvard University, where they are primarily shelved as MS Am 2030 (Houghton, Mifflin & Co., hereafter HM) and MS Am 2030.2 (Ticknor and Fields, hereafter T&F). The HM Contract Files are uncatalogued, but material relating to Stowe is shelved as MS Storage 228, box 73. The letters, Frederic J. Garrison to Henry O. Houghton, 1891-95, are shelved as bMS Am 1648 (330).

1884—they and Stowe reaped the benefits as the work was transformed from bestseller to steady seller, and from antislavery propaganda to a classic of American literature.

As we have seen, the initial Ticknor and Fields printing (270 copies) was modest indeed, especially compared to those that Jewett had been ordering ten years earlier, and sales were not spectacular during the 1860s. In all, just under eight thousand (7,951) copies were produced, from which Stowe earned \$1,230.30, and the publisher roughly \$4,100. During the 1870s, almost nineteen and a half thousand (19,458) more copies were produced from these plates, still the original ones cast for Jewett in early 1852, which earned Stowe \$3,463.38 in royalties and the firm roughly \$11,545. Early in 1878, when the new partnership Houghton, Osgood & Co. was formed, the stereotype plates were inventoried and valued at \$4,524.60, a figure that in reality represented the worth of the firm's right to act as sole publisher of the text, for the actual plates after over thirty-five years had become very worn and battered.³⁶ They were finally replaced in 1879.

The decision to make new plates coincided with the expiration of the original copyright, which had now run for twenty-eight years, and both author and publisher were concerned that papers for a renewal of fourteen years were filed correctly and in timely fashion.³⁷ For the new edition, the Houghton firm prepared new illustrations and editorial matter. An introductory account of the

36. Figures for the number of copies produced are compiled from T&F and T&F Sheet Stock Books 1 (1851-70), ff. 108, 210, and 2 (1871-78) ff. 93; and HM Sheet Stock Book 3 (1878-81), f. 181. Figures for Stowe's royalties and the firm's profits are from the T&F Copyright Books 1 (1860-76), 164, 171, and 2 (1876-81), 254. Profits have been estimated by assuming that on a rough average the firm's earnings on each copy sold were \$0.60 (the retail price of \$2.00, less 40 percent discount, \$0.42 manufacturing cost, and \$0.18 royalty), which is the formula for estimating profits that the firm itself used when calculating the inventory value of the work's stereotype plates in T&F Plate Inventory (1873-77). In fact, entries in T&F Cost Books, fair C (1857-63), 301, 324, and D (1863-67), 74, 139, 160, 262, report that the actual retail price was \$1.50 from 1862 to 1864, and \$1.75 in 1864 and 1865, before it was raised to \$2.00 in 1866. Stowe's royalty remained \$0.18 per copy throughout, which means that after 1866 her effective royalty rate was a mere 9 percent, less even than that paid by Jewett.

37. See, for example, a letter, Harriet Beecher Stowe to James R. Osgood, March 25, 1878, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin.

work, written anonymously by Stowe, stressed its national and international impact, first as an antislavery force and more recently as a religious influence, and a bibliography by George Bullen of the British Museum listed reprints and translations of the work. These plates, which were used for both the \$3.50 red-line 'Holiday Edition' and the cheaper \$2.00 'Library Edition,' eventually produced over 72,000 copies before they were melted in 1909. In 1885 a second new set of plates was made for the cheaper 'Popular Edition,' which sold at \$1.00 in cloth and 50 cents in paper. These plates were still in use in 1917, at which time they had produced over 202,000 copies.³⁸

These figures are impressive and show that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* continued to have steady popular appeal. In the five-year period from 1886 through 1890, for example, a total of 109,495 copies were sold, providing Stowe \$13,324.50 in royalties—nearly two-and-a-half times the combined royalty (\$5,476.53) on all her other books published by the firm.³⁹ It is difficult to form a reliable estimate of the publisher's profits on *Uncle Tom's Cabin* during these years, but they also must have been considerable. If they continued at roughly the same proportion to Stowe's royalties as they had been in earlier decades, they would have been as high as \$44,415.

During these decades the American book trade was bedeviled by pirates and undersellers, publishers and booksellers who took advantage of the lack of international copyright on British works and the increasing use of trade sales as a means of dumping surplus or out-of-date stock to flood the market with cheap books. As an established publisher, Houghton, Mifflin was well aware of the losses caused by these practices, and the firm supported the trade conventions known as 'courtesy of the trade' that had been developed to support American publishers' claims to foreign works. As

38. See HM Sheet Stock Books 3 (1878-81), ff. 181-82, 209; 4 (1882-86), ff. 210, 212; 5 (1886-89), ff. 235-36, 243; 6 (1889-91), ff. 323, 330-31, 383; 7 (1892-96), ff. 335, 339; 8 (1896-99), ff. 377, 378, 380, 382; 9 (1900-24), f. 405.

39. These figures of sales and royalties, as well as those given below for the 1890s, are taken from a table showing the sales and royalties on all of Stowe's works, 1886-1895, Uncatalogued HM Contract Files.

an American work, however, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, was legally protected from the pirates by copyright law, at least until it entered the public domain in 1893. Thus, when in August 1891 it was learned that George C. Whitney of Springfield, Massachusetts, had imported 500 copies of an illustrated English edition of excerpted *Stories from Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the firm was in a position to insist that Whitney return the sheets, even though Whitney offered to pay royalties if the firm were to allow their sale in the United States.⁴⁰

By the summer of 1891, when this incident occurred, discussions were already under way at the highest level of the firm on how best to face the moment when *Uncle Tom's Cabin* entered the public domain, and for the remainder of the year various strategies and plans were considered.⁴¹ It can be no surprise, then, if Houghton, Mifflin was alarmed in March 1892 when the *National Advertiser*, an otherwise undistinguished magazine, announced a 'Remarkable Discovery' about *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in a brief notice: 'It was discovered by accident a few days ago that one of the most profitable books ever published in the United States was not, and never has been, legally copyrighted.'⁴² This threat to the firm's right to act as the sole legal publisher of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the United States had to be taken very seriously indeed. Lawyers were called in.

After taking legal advice, the firm decided to send one of its clerks secretly to the copyright office in Washington to investigate. On the morning of March 23, 1892, this clerk, A. G. Wheeler, called on Ainsworth Rand Spofford, the Librarian of Congress, and consulted with him over the matter. Early that afternoon Wheeler sent off a coded telegram to Boston with the information he had gathered: 'Allen cat money but book deposited April 1, 1852. Steep on Dec. 9, 1878. Poor Wire me at Riggs House whether intelligible. Letter by Mail.' That evening

40. Frederic J. Garrison to Henry O. Houghton, August 11, 1891.

41. This discussion is reported in a series of letters, Frederic J. Garrison to Henry O. Houghton, July 14 to December 4, 1891.

42. 'A Remarkable Discovery,' *The National Advertiser* 3 (March 1, 1892): 227.

he sat down in his hotel room and wrote a long and detailed account of his meeting with Spofford. During the meeting, at Wheeler's request, Spofford had consulted the copyright records, which proved that the title had been entered in the District of Maine in the name of Mrs. H. B. Stowe on May 12, 1851, and that a copy of the published book had been deposited April 1, 1852—'Allen cat money but book deposited April 1, 1852' in the telegram's code. However, it was discovered that no copy of the *National Era*, where the text had been originally serialized, had ever been deposited. The records did show that after running for twenty-eight years from the date of original entry, the copyright had been renewed for another fourteen years: the Massachusetts records contained a receipt for the two copies deposited on December 9, 1878—'Steep on Dec. 9, 1878' in code—that had been 'sent to perfect the entry made Nov. 13, 1878 for the renewal from May 12, 1879.' For a small fee, Spofford had prepared a certified copy of this information, but although everything looked in order, he had refused to venture an opinion on the legal validity of the copyright. When Wheeler pressed, he had merely stated, 'That's a matter for the courts to settle.' He did, however, pass along some important information. As Wheeler reported:

... a few months ago *Mr J. S. Ogilvie*, representing the U. S. Book Co. he believed, came there and consulted the D. C. and the Mass. records and finding no entry in either in 1851, jumped at the conclusion that no entry had been *made*.

It never seemed to occur to him, so Mr. S. says, to look in the Maine or any other records. He further said that about a month ago a N. Y. lawyer had been there looking for information regarding the book but he didn't know what he had found out.

... He thinks Ogilvie inspired that article in the *Nat'l Adv's*. The writer of the article evidently knew nothing of the Maine record and probably didn't look for a *renewal* in 1879 (recorded of course in 1878).⁴³

⁴³. Letter, A. G. Wheeler to Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 23 March 1892, HM Contract Files.

With this information and a certified copy of the original certificate in hand, Houghton, Mifflin issued a warning to the trade by taking a full-page advertisement in *Publishers' Weekly* on April 16:

As certain statements have recently appeared in a New York newspaper which give the impression, and have created the belief in the minds of many persons, that the copyright on Mrs. Stowe's world-famous novel, 'UNCLE TOM'S CABIN,' has expired, or is non-existent, the undersigned hereby give notice that there is no foundation in fact for the assertions that have been made. Copyright was originally and duly issued to Mrs. Stowe; it was duly reissued to her on the expiration of the first term of twenty-eight years, as is shown by the official certificates in our possession; and it has still a considerable period to run. Mrs. Stowe's interest in the work continues without abatement, and she receives a royalty on every copy sold. Any attempt to reprint 'UNCLE TOM'S CABIN' before the expiration of copyright will be illegal and an infringement on the rights of Mrs. Stowe and ourselves, and will be promptly prosecuted by us. The trade and public are hereby cautioned against buying any editions except those published by the undersigned. . . .⁴⁴

A month later, on May 14, in a second advertisement in *Publishers' Weekly*, Houghton, Mifflin printed 'A Card to the Trade,' giving the legal opinions of 'eminent counsel: Hon. Edmund H. Bennett, Dean of the Law School of the Boston University, and Charles C. Beaman, Esq., of the law firm of Evarts, Choate & Beaman, New York': the facts in the case of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* would enable Houghton, Mifflin 'to obtain an injunction against any person who shall . . . print, publish, sell or expose for sale any copy of said book within the term . . . of said copyright.'⁴⁵

This seems to have settled the matter, at least for the time being, but all was not well. The firm had been careful in these warnings not to provide too much information. The copyright 'still has a considerable period to run;' it had claimed in *Publishers' Weekly*, but if *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was still protected by copyright in May 1892, the fact remained that it would enter the pub-

44. *Publishers' Weekly* 41 (April 16, 1892): 602.

45. *Publishers' Weekly* 41 (May 14, 1892): 753.

lic domain on May 12, 1893. However profitable a steady seller the book had been over many years for author and publisher, both must have known full well that their control over its publication had only one more year to run. This scare could only have served to bring this fact home.

What strategy did the firm choose to follow? The plan decided on was to issue a variety of new editions, which, taken together with those already being published, would fill as many market niches as possible. In late 1891, a new two-volume, illustrated, deluxe 'Holiday Edition,' printed from fresh plates, had already been published. At the retail price of \$4.00, this was an expensive book, but a \$10.00 'Large Paper' limited edition, signed by Stowe, had also been issued, printed from the same plates. The real competition, however, would be at the other end of the market. In February 1892, another new edition—the 'Universal Edition'—was published and priced at fifty cents in cloth, and twenty-five cents in paper, and later that year plans were under way for an even cheaper edition.

A letter to Charles Stowe, who by this time was managing his ailing mother's affairs, explains the firm's goals for this last edition: 'It is also to be said that the book will probably sell in channels not usually open to our higher priced publications. We hope that the results will bring a fair return to us both, and that the edition will serve to discourage reprinters, who of course have no thought of paying your mother a cent, and to protect the other higher priced editions, of which we trust and believe the sale will not entirely cease when the copyright has run out. . . .' For emphasis, the point was repeated in a postscript: 'If it [the new edition] is successful . . . and prevents unworthier editions from getting a foothold in the market, it can hardly fail to insure to the advantage and the continued sale of our better editions.'⁴⁶ This 'Brunswick Edition,' priced at only thirty cents in cloth, was finally ready in March 1893. By the time the copyright expired

46. Letter, Frederic J. Garrison to Charles E. Stowe, December 16, 1892, HM Contract Files.

just a month and a half later, over thirty-eight thousand (38,104) copies had been produced.

Did the firm's strategy succeed? Its immediate results must have been gratifying. For many years Stowe's royalties on *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had ranged between \$2,000 and \$3,000 per annum, but in 1892 her earnings rose to \$6,693.77—chiefly as a result of the new 'Universal Edition.' The publication of the 'Brunswick Edition' in 1893, however, brought the sales of the 'Universal Edition' to a near halt. For although 53,498 copies of the 'Brunswick Edition' had been sold by the end of October, its retail price of thirty cents meant that it paid a very low royalty, and in 1893 Stowe's earnings on the work fell to only \$2,407.51. Although the firm was to remain a major publisher of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* after the copyright expired, sales of all the Houghton, Mifflin editions fell off markedly as they had more and more to compete with a range of new editions published by firms such as Altemus, Burt, Caldwell, Coates, Crowell, Dominion, Donohue, Fenno, Hill, Hurst, Lupton, McKay, Mershon, Neely, Page, People, Rand, Routledge, Warne, and Ziegler—a veritable catalogue of the cheap publishers operating at the turn of the century.⁴⁷ In 1894 Stowe's earnings on the work fell to \$903.59; the following year to just \$696.56.

In February 1896, Stowe assigned the rights to all her works, including *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, to Houghton, Mifflin & Co. for \$1.00. In exchange the firm agreed to pay her \$10,000 over four years in quarterly payments of \$625. Given Stowe's recent earnings, this arrangement was a generous one on the part of the firm: for when Stowe died on July 1, 1896, the profits and royalties from what must have been one of the most valuable American literary copyrights of the nineteenth century had all but played themselves out.⁴⁸

47. These are the editions listed in *The United States Catalog: Books in Print, 1899 (Part 1: Author Index)*, ed. George Flavel Danforth and Marion E. Potter (Minneapolis: H. W. Wilson, 1900), 631. There were other cheap editions; see, for example, the lists included in *The Publishers' Trade List Annual* (New York: Publishers' Weekly, v.d.) for these years.

48. See agreements, dated February 24, 1896 (HM Contract Files).

But more than royalties were at stake. Among American publishers, Houghton, Mifflin & Co. is famous for having published many of the nineteenth-century literary works that have come to be recognized as part of our national literary canon—indeed some scholars have argued that Houghton, Mifflin was instrumental in the formation of that canon. In the 1890s, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was certainly a part of that list. But as taste and values changed with the twentieth century, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* came to seem a literary curiosity: old-fashioned, overly religious and sentimental, and blatantly racist—perhaps an interesting social document, but certainly not a work of any lasting literary value. The numerous cheap editions available on the market must have only helped to reinforce this impression. In this regard, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is not unlike the poetry of Longfellow and Whittier that had also been published by Houghton, Mifflin. At century's end they were also widely reprinted in cheap editions, and today have generally come to be viewed as having no lasting literary value.

Who, then, could have foreseen that after a century in the public domain *Uncle Tom's Cabin* would again be considered part of the canon of nineteenth-century American literature, taking its place once more on the shelf next to the works of Emerson, Hawthorne, and Thoreau that had also been published by Houghton, Mifflin & Co.? Who could have imagined that a Pulitzer-prize winning novelist and critic, writing recently in *Harper's Magazine*, would argue that it is a greater work than Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*?⁴⁹ But that curious development, and the related shift in the audience for *Uncle Tom's Cabin* from popular to academic, is after all what led me to devote the James Russell Wiggins Lecture in the History of the Book in American Culture to 'The Greatest Book of Its Kind.'

49. Jane Smiley, 'Say It Ain't So, Huck: Second Thoughts on Mark Twain's "Masterpiece",' *Harper's Magazine* (January 1996): 61-67.

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