

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN.

Something About the Real Hero of the Famous Book.

His Name Is Lewis Clarke and He Is Now Living in Peaceful Retirement in Kentucky—Reminiscences of the Beecher Family.

No book of modern times has enjoyed a wider popularity or more largely affected the moral and political thought of the world than "Uncle Tom's Cabin." And no character in that book awakened profounder interest than its hero, "George Harris," the handsome, stalwart and intelligent young mulatto, the down-trodden victim of the slavery system in the south, who subsequently escaped to Canada. This character, writes Daisy Fitzhugh in Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, finds a prototype in Lewis Clarke, who personally provided Mrs. Stowe with most of the sensational and dramatic data for her story in her own home at Cambridgeport, Mass.

Clarke, who enjoys this unique distinction with proud complacency, was born in Madison county, Ky., in 1815, his mother being a slave, the property of Samuel Campbell, a very wealthy man. After many vicissitudes and blood-curdling experiences—subsequently detailed for the edification of Mrs. Stowe—George, or, more correctly, Lewis, was put up at auction at sixteen years of age, like any other goods and chattels, at Stanford Court House, Ky., and knocked down to the highest bidder, a gentleman from Garrard.

Here, according to the man's account, history repeated itself, and continuous persecution on the part of his master, who would fain have kept him in ignorance and dire subjection, fired the lusty, quick-witted youth with the purpose of effecting his escape and winning his way to Canada, the bondsman's Mecca. Here the cases of the story's hero, George Harris, and Lewis Clarke



LEWIS CLARKE, ALIAS GEORGE HARRIS.

are parallel. Personally, too, there was no dissimilarity between the real and the fictitious character. Mrs. Stowe drew her picture accurately from life. The description that the story gives of George Harris was an exact description of Lewis Clarke at the time that Mrs. Stowe knew him. "Six feet in height, a very light mulatto, brown, curly hair, is very intelligent, speaks handsomely, can read and write."

Both were accomplished and adepts at the spinning-wheel. After an effectual escape and several years of slow progress northward, during which time he was favorably received in Ohio and other states, he finally found his way to Cambridgeport, Mass., where he was kindly received by Dr. Lyman Beecher, who felt a keen interest in his career, and gave him pleasant employment at his own home.

Lewis Clarke, now an old man, delights in relating incidents in the home life of the Beecher family, with which he was closely identified for six years, and among whom he was treated with the utmost kindness. Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe, whose husband at that time was a professor at Lane seminary, an Ohio institution of which her father, Lyman Beecher, was president, made it a custom to spend her summers at Cambridgeport, her girlhood's home. It was during these visits that her sympathies became aroused in the young mulatto under her father's roof, who had endured so much, and who became to her a type of his kind, and a just exponent of the barbarities of the southern slave-holding system. Mrs. Stowe turned an attentive ear to every reminiscence with which young Clarke was quite willing to regale her, being especially alert at any incident or detail that she fancied she might render available. Frequently she would follow the young man about his work and ply him with deft questions, he unsuspecting of ulterior motive on her part. Then suddenly she would say with apparent indifference: "Wait here, George, until I come back," and hasten to her room to make a stealthy memorandum, returning soon to continue her "drawing out" of the young negro and collect further material.

The "Aunt Chloe" of the book had for her original old "Aunt Annie," who belonged to Clarke's Kentucky master. "Emeline" was his sister, Delia Clarke. Other characters were specific subjects from real life idealized. "Uncle Tom" was a sort of composite photograph, compiled from various sources, and artistically retouched.

Lewis Clarke, alias George Harris, is now a striking, picturesque looking man of seventy-six, with a refined face, silken snow-white locks that curl about his head, and a skin of Caucasian fairness. He has devoted considerable time, both in Canada and New England, in the lecture field, his theme in former days being "The Exposure of Slavery." Even now he has a taste for public life.

With strange inconsistency he has turned to Kentucky, the scene of the bitterest and most galling associations of his life, as he alleges, as to a peaceful haven in his declining years, and is living in contentment with his children there. Nature has justified herself.