

A VENERABLE CELEBRITY.

Lewis George Clarke, the Original
George Harris of Mrs.
Stowe's Novel.

He Discourses to a "Herald" Reporter of
Old Slavery Days in the
Sunny South.

Yesterday afternoon a rather singular looking personage arrived in this city, whose form and features were particularly attractive. It was an old man who, if he lives a fortnight longer, will attain the ripe age of 70 years. Notwithstanding these many years of service on earth, he is tall and erect, and has the appearance of a man who will see many seasons more. His race is denoted by the fact that his face is almost imperceptibly shadowed by African blood. The face is a pleasant one, and is surrounded with a frame of silver hair. The personage is none other than Lewis George Clarke, the original George Harris of Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe's famous story of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," the whole of which is well known to have been written from real life. When talking of the old days, as he apparently delights to do, his face beams with happy recollections, and then is shadowed for the instant by the painful thoughts of slavery. There is scarcely a trace of any dialect in his speech.

In conversation with a HERALD reporter he said: "Of my early life I cannot say much. I simply know that when I was but 5 years of age I was given as a present to a man named Sam Campbell, who lived in Madison county, Kentucky. Some years later, when I was still but a boy, I was sold on a mortgage by Sheriff Ben Dancann at the Lincoln county court house, Kentucky. That was the first time I was ever sold, and the next time I was placed on the block was after the death of my master, Tom Kennedy of Garrett county, Kentucky. The next time I was sold at Lancaster, in the same county. Being a part of an estate, I was driven in with the horses, cattle and other chattels to the sale. Soon after I resolved to escape, and one night I up and ran away. As you see, I am nearly white, and I disguised myself as a white man, and, stealing a horse, began my flight. The ruse succeeded, and I reached Boston in safety, although it was with some difficulty, as the lack of education of my class in those days made it impossible for us to read the sign posts. I concealed this ignorance as well I could, for I knew that people would think a white man should read. When I reached Boston I was induced to go across the Charles river, to Cambridgeport to the home of Mrs. Safford. It was at her home that I was taught a great deal that has been valuable to me in my later life, and it was there that I first met Mrs. Stowe. At the latter's earnest solicitation I was induced to tell my story. She was deeply interested in it and took all I said in notes. Then she wanted me to tell her all about slavery and its horrors. She said that she had met many slaves who had escaped, and they were all afraid to tell of their life in the south, and so I told her all I could of what I had seen and experienced.

"When I assumed the disguise of a traveler I took the name of George Harris and it was this name that she used in her book. All of the names she used are fictitious, but they stand for people who have lived, breathed and suffered in bondage. Her ideal of the character of Uncle Tom lived until quite recently, but in her story she portrayed his death from the fate of an old and faithful slave of whom I told her. She made her George Harris quick at handling machinery. That was because I was a flax spinner, which I still follow to some extent.

"It has been said that Mrs. Stowe paid me for the information that I gave her, but that is not so. All I cared for was her friendship, and the kind words of those around me."

At this point Mr. Clark told some incidents of his early childhood; how he, owing to his whiteness, was often taken for his master's son, and how these errors became so unpleasant that the lad was forced into the field to work under the burning sun, which peeled off his skin and made him still lighter. In speaking of this fact he reverently said: "Thank God, it also gave me the opportunity to escape from that terrible bondage."

Mr. Clark makes his home in Detroit, and has been a widower for several years. He has nine children, and all of them were educated at Oberlin, O., and he proudly says that not a professor has ever had to reprimand one of them. He exhibits no bitterness in speaking of his past experience, but the resentment he may have felt in years gone by has been deadened by the kindness he has met with since his shackles were struck off, from people of both the north and the south. He delights in talking of the emancipation, of the good it has done his race, and of the grand manner that the race has improved the opportunities which were obtained by the sacrifice of so many thousand union soldiers.