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H. P. Jewell
Orange, N. J.



Property of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" Club



1
"Uncle Tom's Cabin;"

A True History.

By the Original Publisher.

~~—~~ (John P. Jewett)

Many a time and oft have I been urged to prepare for the public a reliable statement of my transactions as publisher with Mrs. H. B. Stowe, the author of this remarkable book, with sketches of sundry intermediaries, whose officiousness caused continual friction and effervescence, terminating in open rupture. Slurs, innuendoes and open attacks have been repeatedly made upon me by the relatives and friends of Mrs. Stowe, if not by herself, the evident intent being to create a false public sentiment unfavorable to me; insinuating that I had driven a sharp bargain with Mrs. Stowe, and by so doing had realized the lion's share of the profits.

The following narrative, I trust,

with dispel this delusion and convince an impartial public that the converse is the truth. I am induced at this late day, in justice to myself and to my family, who may survive me, to place on record this veritable statement.

In the National Era, an anti-slavery newspaper, published in the years 1851-2, at Washington, D. C., by Dr. Bailey, there appeared some numbers of a story with the following title:-

Uncle Tom's Cabin;

Or, Life Among the Lowly.

By Harriet Beecher Stowe.

Being a subscriber to the Era and a sincere friend of Dr. Bailey, and in full sympathy with the principles therein enunciated, having stood by him more than once while howling mobs were destroying his press and type and throwing them into the Ohio river at Cincinnati, simply ^{for the reason that} ~~because~~ he had the manliness to defend a hunted and proscribed race, I naturally felt a desire that he should succeed at Washington.

and a determination to aid him to do so. I acted as Agent for the paper in New England and procured for him many subscribers. It was during the winter of '51-'52 that my attention was called to this story by my noble and gifted wife, to whom the entire credit is due of its publication in book form, and but for my wife and myself, it is very doubtful if it would ever have gone beyond the limited circulation it had in the columns of the Era, for three different publishing houses, to whom it had been offered by Mrs. Stowe or her friends, had positively declined to publish it, for three principal reasons:

First, through fear of losing Southern trade.

Second, from fear of personal violence, for those were martyr days to Abolitionists or their sympathizers; and

Third, that I was probably the only publisher in the country

sufficiently in sympathy with the sentiments of the book, to be willing to risk money and reputation by giving it publicity.

On a cold evening in the month of January, 1852, my wife sat by my side reading from the last number of the Era, the touching description of the death scene of little Eva; having more than once urged me to write to Mrs. Stowe soliciting the story for publication in book form, that she arose from her seat and, opening my desk, said, "my dear, before retiring for the night, you will please me by writing to Mrs. Stowe the request I have so often urged upon you, for I am sure Uncle Tom's Cabin will have a greater sale than any book you have ever published." This appeal proved irresistible, and accordingly, the mail of the next morning found my letter on its winding way to Brunswick, Me., the then residence of Mrs. Stowe. By return mail I received her reply, informing me that she and her husband

would be in Boston in three weeks and would be pleased to make arrangements with me for publishing her story. At the promised time they appeared, and negotiations were at once commenced, essentially as follows:

Professor Stone addressing me, said: "Mr. Jewett, I am afraid you will lose money if you publish this story; it has not made much stir in the Era, and who will read it who has not already done so in the paper?" I told him that I would take the risk; that although I had not read it, my wife had, and that her judgement was excellent and final with me. "Well," replied the professor, "I don't want you to lose money, at the same time you know your business best, and if you are willing to incur the risk, I suppose I ought not to object; I tell wife that if she ever makes enough out of it to buy her a handsome black silk dress, I shall be abundantly satisfied."

"Now, Mr. Jewell, what arrangement shall we make? Would you like to purchase it outright, for a small sum, or had we better hold the copyright and receive premium on sales?"

I replied, Prof. Stowe, I am not the proper person to answer that question; I am an interested party; if I should advise you to sell it to me for \$50 or \$100, I should speak as I believe for my good; if, on the other hand, I should advise you to hold it and take the usual percentage paid by publishers to authors, viz: ten per cent. on the retail price of the book, I should give you sound advice for your good. Prof. Stowe replied, "Mr. Jewell you have made an honest statement, as it appears to me, and my wife coincides with me, in this expression."

At this stage of the proceedings an evil genius strode into the arena, a notoriously officious intermeddler in other people's affairs, the elder sister of Mrs. Stowe, Catharine E. Beecher. Having been accustomed

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to ride rough-shod over people in
 general, and dictate the proprieties of
 life to Mrs. Stowe, in particular,
 having been Prof. Stowe's "thorn in
 the flesh" since his marriage, turning
 his house topsy-turvy every time she
 entered it, as he had more than once
 said to me. She assumed the role
 of dictator on this occasion, with a
 sang froid truly refreshing, giving
 the Stowes and myself to understand
 that her ipse dixit must govern now.
 Having been a publisher many years,
 and having drawn more than one
 hundred contracts, I felt entirely
 competent to draw another, without
 her assistance or dictation. So
 pertinacious and determined was
 she, that to quiet her, and show
 to Mr. and Mrs. Stowe my willingness
 to treat them with the utmost fairness,
 after Kate had taken herself away
 I proposed to Prof. and Mrs. Stowe
 to draw two contracts, one after
 Kate's pattern, the other, my own,
 it being the usual and accepted
 form; I proposed that Mr. and Mrs.

Stowe should take these ~~two~~ documents to three business men of Boston, all of whom should be friends of Dr. Stowe and his wife, two of whom were book publishers and the other the collector of the port of Boston, Prof. Stowe's brother-in-law. Both Dr. and Mrs. Stowe said, ^{that} nothing could be fairer than this proposition. "Dr. Stowe, take these two contracts to these three gentlemen, and without note or comment, obtain their approval of one or the other, and whichever they advise you to take, I will adopt."

"But, Mr. Jewett, you will accompany us?"

"No, Professor; should I do so, it might be said that by some hocus-facens, some extraordinary feat of legerdemain, or mesmeric or mind reading influence I had so biased (?) these true, astute business men as to influence them in the wrong direction; go without me, return to me with the decision of the

referees and I will cheerfully abide the verdict."

In about two hours they returned, ^{smiling,} and stated that the unanimous verdict was unqualifiedly for my contract; characterizing Kate's as perfectly absurd. Mine, by the voice of Mrs. Stowe's friends, was therefore adopted, and it governed the action of both parties during the publication of the book.

Next in order after the contract with the author came the contracts for ~~type~~ setting, stereotyping, printing and binding. I called upon my printers, Messrs. Rand and Avery, one of the largest establishments in Boston, and asked Mr. Rand how many power presses he had. He replied, eight.

"Mr. Rand, will you give me the exclusive use of these presses so long as I can keep them running?"

"Mr. Jewett, are you crazy?"

"Not that I am aware of, Mr. Rand."

"Well, do you ^{realize} ~~know~~ how many books can be printed per day on

eight power presses?"

"Yes, Mr. Rand, I know something about that; will you run these presses day and night for me, stopping only Sundays, to the exclusion of all other parties, so long as I can give them employ?"

"Mr. Jewett, I thought you were crazy before, now I know you are."

"Mr. Rand, I did not come here to discuss insanity; I came on business and I have put straightforward business questions to you, and expect proper replies."

"You are right, Mr. Jewett; but what upon earth do you expect to print, to run eight presses at that rate?"

"That is my business, Mr. Rand."

"That is true; you shall have these presses, day and night, so long as you can use them."

And from that time, for six months, they ceased not, day or night, save on Sundays, and during working hours, for months longer.

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Professor and Mrs. Stowe being determined that Kate should not know which contract was adopted, it being none of her business, gave her the cold shoulder, and she thought best to take Greeley's advice and "go west", and, as we all fondly hoped, there to remain. But no, we were not to be thus highly favored; the tormentore appeared among us again, rampant and roaring; her pugnaciousness could not be satisfied in so narrow a field as the great West presented; its smiling fields and pastures green were not the fields for her; her occupation soon languished for lack of human prey, to prey upon; the "Star in the East" shewn resplendent to her gaze, and back she hid, armed cap-a-pie for a grand foray upon anyone whom she fancied might be poaching upon her real or imaginary preserves. Being snugly ensconced at the Marlboro Hotel, that noted rendezvous of

ancient maidens, of both sexes;
 Zion's Pilgrims; members of Dorcas
 Societies, and Borro Boola Lah asso-
 ciations for the conversion of the
 heathen, whose daily ^{and vesper} matutinal ^{and} ^{vesper}
 orisons, stimulated by bochea decoctions,
 made this a choice spot in which to
 indite just such a lonely, verjuice
 epistle, overflowing with acrimony,
 as was the attack Miss Catharine
 made upon me, which she forwarded
 to my house by special messenger.
 On breaking the seal, to my horror
 I beheld four pages of large sized
 letter paper covered with fine,
 closely written female chirography,
 each sentence charged to the muzzle
 with fulminating powder, vituperation
 and slander, accusing me of taking
 advantage of Mrs. Stowe's ignorance,
 in obtaining from her a contract so
 different from the one she had marked
 out for her adoption; one which would
 work so greatly to my advantage
 and so detrimental to her sister.
 The letter was so abusive that my
 first impulse was to treat it with

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silent contempt, but my wife advised me to give her a piece of my mind in the most epigrammatic style. Acting upon her advice I wrote and mailed to Katie, the following:-

Boston, 1852.

Miss Catharine E. Beecher,

Madam:

Your exceedingly impertinent and unladylike letter of yesterday reached me about an hour since. If you have been appointed Guardian for Mr. and Mrs. Stowe, and they ~~are~~ now are Wards of yours, ~~or if you have a power of attorney from them,~~ authorizing you to catechise me in their behalf, I will respond to your interrogations, and not without. Yours, &c.

John P. Jewell.

This was my full reply and it was final, for never after did I pay the slightest attention to her vituperations, although she kept sending on an average two per week for many weeks. Her father and Dr. Stowe, hearing that she had returned to Boston, and had attacked me, came