

# Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: an Electronic Edition of the *National Era* Version

Wesley Raabe, Editor

<http://www.iath.virginia.edu/~wnr4c/index.htm>

## Over Uncle Tom's Dead Body

### Publication Context and Textual Variation

This digital dissertation project, completed in August 2006, includes a publicly accessible electronic edition of the *National Era* version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The edition provides two transcriptions of Stowe's newspaper text and two sets of archive-quality image facsimiles of the weekly issues in which Stowe's work appeared. The transcription and page images are based on a bound copy of the newspaper version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which is held in the Clifton Waller Barrett Collection at the University of Virginia.

This poster highlights textual variants and material publication contexts on 18 March 1852, when for the first time two versions of Stowe's work were public, the *Era's* newspaper installment of Stowe's work and the John P. Jewett edition (advertised in *Era* as published on that day). The newspaper serial continued through 1 April. On either side of this paragraph are images from facing pages in the *Era*. Opposite the page on which Simon Legree says "I don't sell dead niggers," the *Era* printed a report on a Greenville, South Carolina slave auction. Like Stowe's story, the notice also includes a slave's dead body. The box at bottom left highlights textual variation between the two versions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Bottom right is an 1852 Jewett edition facsimile.



*National Era* 18 Mar. 1852: 46

### George Shelby Punches Simon Legree in the *Era*



*National Era* 18 Mar. 1852: 47

### "one fellow deceased" at a Slave Auction

#### Antislavery Entertainment: "a most imprudent thing, George"

"I don't sell dead niggers," said Legree, doggedly. "You're welcome to bury him when and where you like."

"Boys," said George, in an authoritative tone, to two or three negroes who were looking at the body, "help me lift him up and carry him to my wagon, and get me a spade."

One of the negroes ran for a spade, and two others assisted George to carry the body to the wagon.

George neither spoke to nor looked at Legree, who did not countermand his orders, but stood whistling, with an air of unconcern. He sulkily followed them to where the wagon stood at the door. George spread his cloak in the wagon, had the body carefully disposed of in it, moving the seat, so as to give it room.

"Such a fuss for a dead nigger!" said Legree.

The word was a spark to a powder magazine. Prudence was never a cardinal virtue of the Kentucky boy. George turned, and with one indignant blow knocked Legree flat upon his face; and as he stood over him, blazing with wrath and defiance, he would have formed no bad personification of his great namesake, triumphing over the dragon.

**It was a most imprudent thing, George; but it is evident you do not care for that. You are far beyond prudence just now.**

Some men, however, are decidedly bettered by being knocked down.

*National Era* 18 Mar. 1852: 46

### Textual Fluidity and Two Versions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

#### Legree Educates George on Southern Law: "how you going to prove it?"

"I don't sell dead niggers," said Legree, doggedly. "You are welcome to bury him where and when you like."

"Boys," said George, in an authoritative tone, to two or three negroes, who were looking at the body, "help me lift him up, and carry him to my wagon; and get me a spade."

One of them ran for a spade; the other two assisted George to carry the body to the wagon.

George neither spoke to nor looked at Legree, who did not countermand his orders, but stood, whistling, with an air of forced unconcern. He sulkily followed them to where the wagon stood at the door.

George spread his cloak in the wagon, and had the body carefully disposed of in it,—moving the seat, so as to give it room. **Then he turned, fixed his eyes on Legree, and said, with forced composure,**

**"I have not, as yet, said to you what I think of this most atrocious affair;—this is not the time and place. But, sir, this innocent blood shall have justice. I will proclaim this murder. I will go to the very first magistrate, and expose you."**

"Do!" said Legree, snapping his fingers, scornfully. "I'd like to see you doing it. Where you going to get witnesses?—how you going to prove it?—Come, now!"

George saw, at once, the force of this defiance. There was

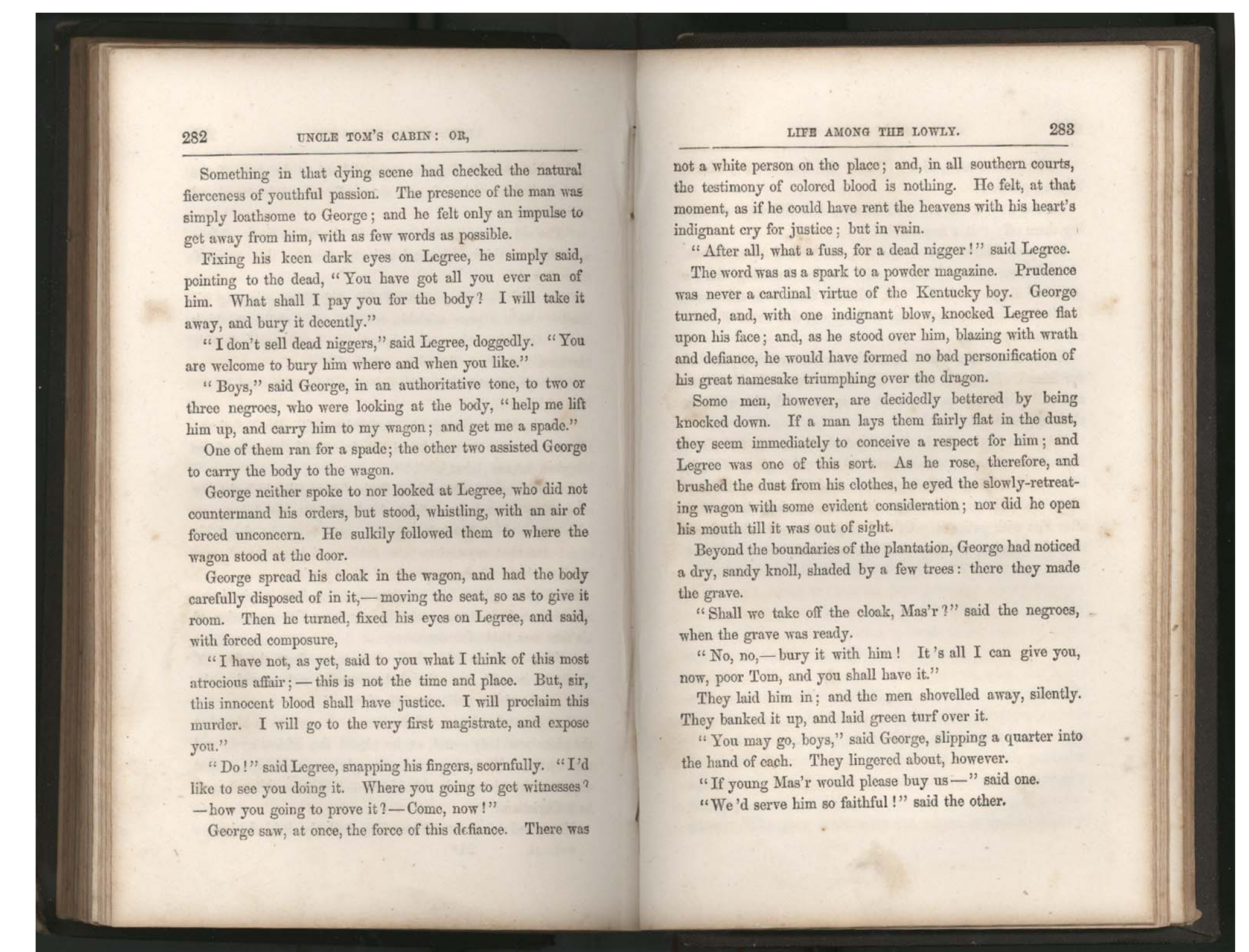
**not a white person on the place; and, in all southern courts, the testimony of colored blood is nothing. He felt, at that moment, as if he could have rent the heavens with his heart's indignant cry for justice; but in vain.**

"After all, what a fuss, for a dead nigger!" said Legree.

The word was as a spark to a powder magazine. Prudence was never a cardinal virtue of the Kentucky boy. George turned, and, with one indignant blow, knocked Legree flat upon his face; and, as he stood over him, blazing with wrath and defiance, he would have formed no bad personification of his great namesake triumphing over the dragon.

Some men, however, are decidedly bettered by being knocked down.

Jewett Edition, vol. II: 282-83



1852 Jewett Edition 282-83

### Jewett as Material Publication: "Satanic" Legree?

The newspaper page images and textual transcription are from the dissertation edition. The Jewett edition image is based on a personal copy. The Jewett edition text is transcribed from that copy. The concept of "textual fluidity" draws on the work of John Bryant, *The Fluid Text* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2002).