SINCE "Jane Eyre," no book has had so sudden and so great a success on this side of the Atlantic as "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Everybody has read it, is reading, and is about to read it. And certainly it is one of the most remarkable literary productions of the time—an evident result of some of the highest attributes of the novel writer.

As all the world knows, "Uncle Tom's Cabin" purports to be a picture of slavery as it now exists in the Southern States. It is an attempt to present the accidental and inevitable evils of slavery side by side with the practical advantages of the system in its paternal care of a long depressed, if not actually inferior, race. It paints both slaveholder and slave, and none can doubt the intention of the author to deal justly with both, nothing exterminating and setting down naught in malice. The incidents are stated to be drawn from the personal experience of the writer or her most immediate friends, and we believe it is universally admitted that, as a mere story, the book is of intense interest.

But we would here remark that some portions are very highly colored. The main facts stated, also, may have occurred somewhere or other, and at distant intervals of times; but the aggregation of so many rare horrors into two small volumes, produces a picture which we are happy to believe does not do justice to practical slavery in our Southern States. In a word, the effect of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," as a whole, is grossly to exaggerate the actual evils of negro slavery in this country. As a didactic work, therefore, it should be swallowed with a considerable dose of allowance.

But it is not as an instructive work, chiefly, that we now desire to regard it. As chroniclers of the literature of the day, we have much more to do with the conception and execution of books, as merely literary works, than with their sentiment or effect, although these latter may be all that make them practically important. Suffice it to say, then, that "Uncle Tom's Cabin," even with our dose of allowance, is the finest picture yet painted of the abominable horrors of slavery, (bad enough at the best, and inevitably) and that it is likely to do more for the cause of liberal abolitionism, than all that has been preached, said, and sung for a long time.

But throwing aside the design or effect of the book under notice, and looking at it as a literary work merely, it must be confessed that if the incidents be exaggerated in themselves, or if they be so unduly crowded as to create an erroneous impression—admitting all this, we say—it must be owned that the incidents are treated artistically and with a master hand. The whole is truth-seeming if not true, and the whole book reads naturally and probably. It has nothing forced or awkward in its conduct.

And yet the management of the tale is among its lesser interests. Both in dialogue and in character Mrs. Stowe has produced a fiction which can scarcely be excelled, in its peculiar line. To be sure, her negroes often pronounce a word properly, while a few sentences later on the same people mangle it horribly. But such inaccuracies are of little consequence, and are soon lost in the tide of humor, pathos, and oddity that flows from the lips of the queer children of Africa. The dialogue, both of the whites and the blacks, is naturalness itself, having nothing either of books or of the theatre in its composition.

And in respect to character-painting, "Uncle Tom's Cabin" may compare with any fiction of the day, English or American. It does not contain a figure that is not so vigorously sketched as to be fully individualized, and well able to stand alone. Every slave differs from his fellows in some essential features, and runs no risk of being mistaken for a sooty brother. Mrs. Shelby's "Sam," for instance, though visible in but a single scene, is as well drawn as if he were the sole hero of the fiction. Chloe the cook is not Dinah the cook, and neither of the young quadroon slaves of St. Clare could be mistaken for the quadroon George or his wife Eliza. The Quakers also, who appear but once, are very nicely sketched, and Mrs. Shelby, who is scarcely seen but in a few
crapers, as one beginning, is as person a portrait or
the intelligent and right-hearted lady as we have lately
seen. Topsy is a gem. Indeed, whether as regards
black or white, everybody is hit off properly, and is
nobody else but himself.

But coming to the principal characters, we must say
that Uncle Tom himself, St. Clare, Marie, Eva and Miss
Ophelia are given with a truth to nature that fairly
astonished us, in our utter ignorance that a female
author lived who was capable of such painting. Eva,
indeed, is not to be criticized. She stands with Little
Neil and Little Paul—unnatural, it may be said, as a
child of man, but a creation of exquisite beauty,
tenderness, intelligence, and affection—an
embodiment, in baby form, of all that is highest,
holiest, and best in human nature.

We hope the book in hand will be noticed by our
leading reviews. As an American novel, merely, it
deserves an elaborate critique, and we feel that our
limited space does not do it justice.

We should like to sustain our praise by several
extracts, but are obliged to refer our readers to the
glowing pages themselves.

"Uncle Tom's Cabin," as much as any novel we know of,
is stamped on every page with genius. The author
cannot touch a single incident without showing that
she bears the sacred fire. How strong and wide may
be the blaze we know not, but taking the present novel
as the first effort in this line of writing, it is a wonderful
composition, emanating from true genius, and
produced with a nice tact, and ingenuity, and a
thorough knowledge of human nature, etc. The scene
at Senator Bird's, the flight across the Ohio, the
interview of George with the manufacturer; at the
road-side inn, the night scene in the steamer—nay,
many other passages—are not prominent portions of
the work, but they are given in a masterly manner. Not
one word in the book suggests mediocrity, whether the
pictures of slavery please or displease. And the death
of Eva! We have said that some chapters are beyond
criticism—the reader will find them so. And with all the
pathos and intensity of most of the story, there is no jot
of dulness—no harping on one string. A vein of humor
and drollery meanders through it, and one is often
laughing with wet eyes.

But brilliant as is "Uncle Tom's Cabin" as a literary
work, it is yet more creditable to the author in another
point of view. It proves that unlike most women, and
very many men, Mrs. Stowe has the high ability of
looking on both sides of one question. With feelings
and principles equally opposed to slavery, for its
unavoidable evils as well as its accidental abuses, she
is yet able to paint the slaveholder as he lives and
moves, with no touch of bigotry or fanaticism. No
southerner need be ashamed of the noble, kind and
generous St. Clare, or the angel-child, his daughter.

More than this, Mrs. Stowe has fairly presented the
various arguments in favor of slavery, and the various
feelings which exist in the mind of the south, in
reference to this terrible evil. And indeed, were it not
for the incidental remarks in the book, one would be
rather puzzled to say, from the dialogue alone, what
were Mrs. Stowe's real sentiments. Both sides are
presented with heart, soul and strength.

The entire fiction is filled with instances of this
peculiar power of the author to look on both sides of a
question at once, and this (so called) masculine
quality of mind is sustained by an exceeding ease in
the management of details and the handling of
masculine facts of all sorts. One wonders, indeed,
where a lady could pick up so much stuff, and how
she could acquire such free and easy manners in
disposing of it. Everything is fish that comes to her
net, and she is equally at home with saint or sinner,
black or white, high or low. She never suffers any
modesty, reverence or respect for any world-prejudice
whatever to stand in the way of truth of
potraiture or naturalness of dialogue.

"Uncle Tom's Cabin," we believe, was first published
in chapters, in the National Era. It there became
known to a sufficient number of readers to give it a
large circulation, when it appeared in book-form.