

## UNCLE TOM'S CABIN AND ABOLITIONISM

*Tung-hsun Sun*

### Abstract

When *Uncle Tom's Cabin* first appeared in book form in March, 1852, it immediately achieved a great success in sale. The reasons for its wide and earnest reception by the reading audience might be varied. But one of them must have been Harriet Beecher Stowe's sentimental presentation of the miserable life of slaves under the cruel slavery system which touched the tender hearts of hundreds of thousands of men and women.

Though her attack on the peculiar institution of the antebellum South was relentless, Mrs. Stowe was not an abolitionist. It is true that she was in agreement with the abolitionists at least on four points. All of them directed their attack at the slavery system itself, not at the white of the South, disclaimed the use of political power or any form of brutal force to end slavery, and showed relatively no clear racial bias against the Negro. But on one crucial point Mrs. Stowe differed sharply from the abolitionists. While the abolitionists would grant full citizenship of the United States to the Negroes after they were emancipated, Mrs. Stowe seemed in favor of sending the freedmen to Liberia after providing them with some education. It is because of this difference that the author of this paper concluded that Mrs. Stowe's antislavery thought as shown in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was much more moderate than that of most abolitionists.