

# **Mark Twain, a Biography — Volume II, Part 1: 1886-1900 eBook**

## **Mark Twain, a Biography — Volume II, Part 1: 1886-1900 by Albert Bigelow Paine**

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# Page 1

## MARK TWAIN AT FORTY

In conversation with John Hay, Hay said to Clemens:

“A man reaches the zenith at forty, the top of the hill. From that time forward he begins to descend. If you have any great undertaking ahead, begin it now. You will never be so capable again.”

Of course this was only a theory of Hay’s, a rule where rules do not apply, where in the end the problem resolves itself into a question of individualities. John Hay did as great work after forty as ever before, so did Mark Twain, and both of them gained in intellectual strength and public honor to the very end.

Yet it must have seemed to many who knew him, and to himself, like enough, that Mark Twain at forty had reached the pinnacle of his fame and achievement. His name was on every lip; in whatever environment observation and argument were likely to be pointed with some saying or anecdote attributed, rightly or otherwise, to Mark Twain. “As Mark Twain says,” or, “You know that story of Mark Twain’s,” were universal and daily commonplaces. It was dazzling, towering fame, not of the best or most enduring kind as yet, but holding somewhere within it the structure of immortality.

He was in a constant state of siege, besought by all varieties and conditions of humanity for favors such as only human need and abnormal ingenuity can invent. His ever-increasing mail presented a marvelous exhibition of the human species on undress parade. True, there were hundreds of appreciative tributes from readers who spoke only out of a heart’s gratitude; but there were nearly as great a number who came with a compliment, and added a petition, or a demand, or a suggestion, usually unwarranted, often impertinent. Politicians, public speakers, aspiring writers, actors, elocutionists, singers, inventors (most of them he had never seen or heard of) cheerfully asked him for a recommendation as to their abilities and projects.

Young men wrote requesting verses or sentiments to be inscribed in young ladies’ autograph albums; young girls wrote asking him to write the story of his life, to be used as a school composition; men starting obscure papers coolly invited him to lend them his name as editor, assuring him that he would be put to no trouble, and that it would help advertise his books; a fruitful humorist wrote that he had invented some five thousand puns, and invited Mark Twain to father this terrific progeny in book form for a share of the returns. But the list is endless. He said once:

“The symbol of the race ought to be a human being carrying an ax, for every human being has one concealed about him somewhere, and is always seeking the opportunity to grind it.”

Even P. T. Barnum had an ax, the large ax of advertising, and he was perpetually trying to grind it on Mark Twain's reputation; in other words, trying to get him to write something that would help to popularize "The Greatest Show on Earth."

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There were a good many curious letters—letters from humorists, would-be and genuine. A bright man in Duluth sent him an old Allen “pepper-box” revolver with the statement that it had been found among a pile of bones under a tree, from the limb of which was suspended a lasso and a buffalo skull; this as evidence that the weapon was the genuine Allen which Bemis had lost on that memorable Overland buffalo-hunt. Mark Twain enjoyed that, and kept the old pepper-box as long as he lived. There were letters from people with fads; letters from cranks of every description; curious letters even from friends. Reginald Cholmondeley, that lovely eccentric of Conover Hall, where Mr. and Mrs. Clemens had spent some halcyon days in 1873, wrote him invitations to be at his castle on a certain day, naming the hour, and adding that he had asked friends to meet him. Cholmondeley had a fancy for birds, and spared nothing to improve his collection. Once he wrote Clemens asking him to collect for him two hundred and five American specimens, naming the varieties and the amount which he was to pay for each. Clemens was to catch these birds and bring them over to England, arriving at Conover on a certain day, when there would be friends to meet him, of course.

Then there was a report which came now and then from another English castle—the minutes of a certain “Mark Twain Club,” all neatly and elaborately written out, with the speech of each member and the discussions which had followed—the work, he found out later, of another eccentric; for there was no Mark Twain Club, the reports being just the mental diversion of a rich young man, with nothing else to do.—[In Following the Equator Clemens combined these two pleasant characters in one story, with elaborations.]

Letters came queerly addressed. There is one envelope still in existence which bears Clemens’s name in elaborate design and a very good silhouette likeness, the work of some talented artist. “Mark Twain, United States,” was a common address; “Mark Twain, The World,” was also used; “Mark Twain, Somewhere,” mailed in a foreign country, reached him promptly, and “Mark Twain, Anywhere,” found its way to Hartford in due season. Then there was a letter (though this was later; he was abroad at the time), mailed by Brander Matthews and Francis Wilson, addressed, “Mark Twain, God Knows Where.” It found him after traveling half around the world on its errand, and in his answer he said, “He did.” Then some one sent a letter addressed, “The Devil Knows Where.” Which also reached him, and he answered, “He did, too.”

Surely this was the farthest horizon of fame.

Countless Mark Twain anecdotes are told of this period, of every period, and will be told and personally vouched for so long as the last soul of his generation remains alive. For seventy years longer, perhaps, there will be those who will relate “personal recollections” of Mark Twain. Many of them will be interesting; some of them will be true; most of them will become history at last. It is too soon to make history of much of this drift now. It is only safe to admit a few authenticated examples.



## Page 3

It happens that one of the oftenest-told anecdotes has been the least elaborated. It is the one about his call on Mrs. Stowe. Twichell's journal entry, set down at the time, verifies it:

Mrs. Stowe was leaving for Florida one morning, and Clemens ran over early to say good-by. On his return Mrs. Clemens regarded him disapprovingly:

"Why, Youth," she said, "you haven't on any collar and tie."

He said nothing, but went up to his room, did up these items in a neat package, and sent it over by a servant, with a line:

"Herewith receive a call from the rest of me."

Mrs. Stowe returned a witty note, in which she said that he had discovered a new principle, the principle of making calls by instalments, and asked whether, in extreme cases, a man might not send his hat, coat, and boots and be otherwise excused.

Col. Henry Watterson tells the story of an after-theater supper at the Brevoort House, where Murat Halstead, Mark Twain, and himself were present. A reporter sent in a card for Colonel Watterson, who was about to deny himself when Clemens said:

"Give it to me; I'll fix it." And left the table. He came back in a moment and beckoned to Watterson.

"He is young and as innocent as a lamb," he said. "I represented myself as your secretary. I said that you were not here, but if Mr. Halstead would do as well I would fetch him out. I'll introduce you as Halstead, and we'll have some fun."

Now, while Watterson and Halstead were always good friends, they were political enemies. It was a political season and the reporter wanted that kind of an interview. Watterson gave it to him, repudiating every principle that Halstead stood for, reversing him in every expressed opinion. Halstead was for hard money and given to flying the "bloody shirt" of sectional prejudice; Watterson lowered the bloody shirt and declared for greenbacks in Halstead's name. Then he and Clemens returned to the table and told frankly what they had done. Of course, nobody believed it. The report passed the World night-editor, and appeared, next morning. Halstead woke up, then, and wrote a note to the World, denying the interview throughout. The World printed his note with the added line:

"When Mr. Halstead saw our reporter he had dined."

It required John Hay (then on the Tribune) to place the joke where it belonged.



There is a Lotos Club anecdote of Mark Twain that carries the internal evidence of truth. Saturday evening at the Lotos always brought a gathering of the “wits,” and on certain evenings—“Hens and chickens” nights—each man had to tell a story, make a speech, or sing a song. On one evening a young man, an invited guest, was called upon and recited a very long poem.



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One by one those who sat within easy reach of the various exits melted away, until no one remained but Mark Twain. Perhaps he saw the earnestness of the young man, and sympathized with it. He may have remembered a time when he would have been grateful for one such attentive auditor. At all events, he sat perfectly still, never taking his eyes from the reader, never showing the least inclination toward discomfort or impatience, but listening, as with rapt attention, to the very last line. Douglas Taylor, one of the faithful Saturday-night members, said to him later:

“Mark, how did you manage to sit through that dreary, interminable poem?”

“Well,” he said, “that young man thought he had a divine message to deliver, and I thought he was entitled to at least one auditor, so I stayed with him.”

We may believe that for that one auditor the young author was willing to sacrifice all the others.

One might continue these anecdotes for as long as the young man’s poem lasted, and perhaps hold as large an audience. But anecdotes are not all of history. These are set down because they reflect a phase of the man and an aspect of his life at this period. For at the most we can only present an angle here and there, and tell a little of the story, letting each reader from his fancy construct the rest.

## CVI

### HIS FIRST STAGE APPEARANCE

Once that winter the Monday Evening Club met at Mark Twain’s home, and instead of the usual essay he read them a story: “The Facts Concerning the Recent Carnival of Crime in Connecticut.” It was the story of a man’s warfare with a personified conscience—a, sort of “William Wilson” idea, though less weird, less somber, and with more actuality, more verisimilitude. It was, in fact, autobiographical, a setting-down of the author’s daily self-chidings. The climax, where conscience is slain, is a startling picture which appeals to most of humanity. So vivid is it all, that it is difficult in places not to believe in the reality of the tale, though the allegory is always present.

The club was deeply impressed by the little fictional sermon. One of its ministerial members offered his pulpit for the next Sunday if Mark Twain would deliver it to his congregation. Howells welcomed it for the Atlantic, and published it in June. It was immensely successful at the time, though for some reason it seems to be little known or remembered to-day. Now and then a reader mentions it, always with enthusiasm. Howells referred to it repeatedly in his letters, and finally persuaded Clemens to let Osgood bring it out, with “A True Story,” in dainty, booklet form. If the reader does not already know the tale, it will pay him to look it up and read it, and then to read it again.

Meantime Tom Sawyer remained unpublished.

“Get Bliss to hurry it up!” wrote Howells. “That boy is going to make a prodigious hit.”

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But Clemens delayed the book, to find some means to outwit the Canadian pirates, who thus far had laid hands on everything, and now were clamoring at the Atlantic because there was no more to steal.

Moncure D. Conway was in America, and agreed to take the manuscript of Sawyer to London and arrange for its publication and copyright. In Conway's Memoirs he speaks of Mark Twain's beautiful home, comparing it and its surroundings with the homes of Surrey, England. He tells of an entertainment given to Harriet Beecher Stowe, a sort of animated jarley wax-works. Clemens and Conway went over as if to pay a call, when presently the old lady was rather startled by an invasion of costumed figures. Clemens rose and began introducing them in his gay, fanciful fashion. He began with a knight in full armor, saying, as if in an aside, "Bring along that tinshop," and went on to tell the romance of the knight's achievements.

Conway read Tom Sawyer on the ship and was greatly excited over it. Later, in London, he lectured on it, arranging meantime for its publication with Chatto & Windus, thus establishing a friendly business relation with that firm which Mark Twain continued during his lifetime.

Clemens lent himself to a number of institutional amusements that year, and on the 26th of April, 1876, made his first public appearance on the dramatic stage.

It was an amateur performance, but not of the usual kind. There was genuine dramatic talent in Hartford, and the old play of the "Loan of the Lover," with Mark Twain as Peter Spuyk and Miss Helen Smith—[Now Mrs. William W. Ellsworth.]—as Gertrude, with a support sufficient for their needs, gave a performance that probably furnished as much entertainment as that pleasant old play is capable of providing. Mark Twain had in him the making of a great actor. Henry Irving once said to him:

"You made a mistake by not adopting the stage as a profession. You would have made even a greater actor than a writer."

Yet it is unlikely that he would ever have been satisfied with the stage. He had too many original literary ideas. He would never have been satisfied to repeat the same part over and over again, night after night from week to month, and from month to year. He could not stick to the author's lines even for one night. In his performance of the easy-going, thick-headed Peter Spuyk his impromptu additions to the lines made it hard on the company, who found their cues all at sixes and sevens, but it delighted the audience beyond measure. No such impersonation of that character was ever given before, or ever will be given again. It was repeated with new and astonishing variations on the part of Peter, and it could have been put on for a long run. Augustin Daly wrote immediately, offering the Fifth Avenue Theater for a "benefit" performance, and again, a few days later, urging acceptance. "Not for one night, but for many."



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Clemens was tempted, no doubt. Perhaps, if he had yielded, he would today have had one more claim on immortality.

### CVII

#### *Howells, Clemens, and "George"*

Howells and Clemens were visiting back and forth rather oftener just then. Clemens was particularly fond of the Boston crowd—Aldrich, Fields, Osgood, and the rest—delighting in those luncheons or dinners which Osgood, that hospitable publisher, was always giving on one pretext or another. No man ever loved company more than Osgood, or to play the part of host and pay for the enjoyment of others. His dinners were elaborate affairs, where the sages and poets and wits of that day (and sometimes their wives) gathered. They were happy reunions, those fore-gatherings, though perhaps a more intimate enjoyment was found at the luncheons, where only two or three were invited, usually Aldrich, Howells, and Clemens, and the talk continued through the afternoon and into the deepening twilight, such company and such twilight as somehow one seems never to find any more.

On one of the visits which Howells made to Hartford that year he took his son John, then a small boy, with him. John was about six years old at the time, with his head full of stories of Aladdin, and of other Arabian fancies. On the way over his father said to him:

"Now, John, you will see a perfect palace."

They arrived, and John was awed into silence by the magnificence and splendors of his surroundings until they went to the bath-room to wash off the dust of travel. There he happened to notice a cake of pink soap.

"Why," he said, "they've even got their soap painted!" Next morning he woke early—they were occupying the mahogany room on the ground floor—and slipping out through the library, and to the door of the dining-room, he saw the colored butler, George—the immortal George—setting the breakfast-table. He hurriedly tiptoed back and whispered to his father:

"Come quick! The slave is setting the table!"

This being the second mention of George, it seems proper here that he should be formally presented. Clemens used to say that George came one day to wash windows and remained eighteen years. He was precisely the sort of character that Mark Twain loved. He had formerly been the body-servant of an army general and was typically racially Southern, with those delightful attributes of wit and policy and gentleness which go with the best type of negro character. The children loved him no less than did their



father. Mrs. Clemens likewise had a weakness for George, though she did not approve of him. George's morals were defective. He was an inveterate gambler. He would bet on anything, though prudently and with knowledge. He would investigate before he invested. If he placed his money on a horse, he knew the horse's pedigree and the pedigree of the horses against it,

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also of their riders. If he invested in an election, he knew all about the candidates. He had agents among his own race, and among the whites as well, to supply him with information. He kept them faithful to him by lending them money—at ruinous interest. He buttonholed Mark Twain’s callers while he was removing their coats concerning the political situation, much to the chagrin of Mrs. Clemens, who protested, though vainly, for the men liked George and his ways, and upheld him in his iniquities.

Mrs. Clemens’s disapproval of George reached the point, now and then, where she declared he could not remain.

She even discharged him once, but next morning George was at the breakfast-table, in attendance, as usual. Mrs. Clemens looked at him gravely:

“George,” she said, “didn’t I discharge you yesterday?”

“Yes, Mis’ Clemens, but I knew you couldn’t get along without me, so I thought I’d better stay a while.”

In one of the letters to Howells, Clemens wrote:

When George first came he was one of the most religious of men. He had but one fault—young George Washington’s. But I have trained him; and now it fairly breaks Mrs. Clemens’s heart to hear him stand at that front door and lie to an unwelcome visitor.

George was a fine diplomat. He would come up to the billiard-room with a card or message from some one waiting below, and Clemens would fling his soul into a sultry denial which became a soothing and balmy subterfuge before it reached the front door.

The “slave” must have been setting the table in good season, for the Clemens breakfasts were likely to be late. They usually came along about nine o’clock, by which time Howells and John were fairly clawing with hunger.

Clemens did not have an early appetite, but when it came it was a good one. Breakfast and dinner were his important meals. He seldom ate at all during the middle of the day, though if guests were present he would join them at luncheon-time and walk up and down while they were eating, talking and gesticulating in his fervent, fascinating way. Sometimes Mrs. Clemens would say:

“Oh, Youth, do come and sit down with us. We can listen so much better.”

But he seldom did. At dinner, too, it was his habit, between the courses, to rise from the table and walk up and down the room, waving his napkin and talking!—talking in a strain and with a charm that he could never quite equal with his pen. It’s the opinion of most

people who knew Mark Twain personally that his impromptu utterances, delivered with that ineffable quality of speech, manifested the culmination of his genius.

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When Clemens came to Boston the Howells household was regulated, or rather unregulated, without regard to former routine. Mark Twain's personality was of a sort that unconsciously compelled the general attendance of any household. The reader may recall Josh Billings's remark on the subject. Howells tells how they kept their guest to themselves when he visited their home in Cambridge, permitting him to indulge in as many unconventions as he chose; how Clemens would take a room at the Parker House, leaving the gas burning day and night, and perhaps arrive at Cambridge, after a dinner or a reading, in evening dress and slippers, and joyously remain with them for a day or more in that guise, slipping on an overcoat and a pair of rubbers when they went for a walk. Also, how he smoked continuously in every room of the house, smoked during every waking moment, and how Howells, mindful of his insurance, sometimes slipped in and removed the still-burning cigar after he was asleep.

Clemens had difficulty in getting to sleep in that earlier day, and for a time found it soothing to drink a little champagne on retiring. Once, when he arrived in Boston, Howells said:

"Clemens, we've laid in a bottle of champagne for you."

But he answered:

"Oh, that's no good any more. Beer's the thing."

So Howells provided the beer, and always afterward had a vision of his guest going upstairs that night with a pint bottle under each arm.

He invented other methods of inducing slumber as the years went by, and at one time found that this precious boon came more easily when he stretched himself on the bathroom floor.

He was a perpetual joy to the Howells family when he was there, even though the household required a general reorganization when he was gone.

Mildred Howells remembers how, as a very little girl, her mother cautioned her not to ask for anything she wanted at the table when company was present, but to speak privately of it to her. Miss Howells declares that while Mark Twain was their guest she nearly starved because it was impossible to get her mother's attention; and Mrs. Howells, after one of those visits of hilarity and disorder, said:

"Well, it 'most kills me, but it pays," a remark which Clemens vastly enjoyed. Howells himself once wrote:

Your visit was a perfect ovation for us; we never enjoy anything so much as those visits of yours. The smoke and the Scotch and the late hours almost kill us; but we look each



other in the eyes when you are gone, and say what a glorious time it was, and air the library, and begin sleeping and longing to have you back again....

## CVIII

### SUMMER LABORS AT QUARRY FARM

They went to Elmira, that summer of '76, to be "hermits and eschew caves and live in the sun," as Clemens wrote in a letter to Dr. Brown. They returned to the place as to Paradise: Clemens to his study and the books which he always called for, Mrs. Clemens to a blessed relief from social obligations, the children to the shady play-places, the green, sloping hill, where they could race and tumble, and to all their animal friends.

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Susy was really growing up. She had had several birthdays, quite grand affairs, when she had been brought down in the morning, decked, and with proper ceremonies, with subsequent celebration. She was a strange, thoughtful child, much given to reflecting on the power and presence of infinity, for she was religiously taught. Down in the city, one night, there was a grand display of fireworks, and the hilltop was a good place from which to enjoy it; but it grew late after a little, and Susy was ordered to bed. She said, thoughtfully:

“I wish I could sit up all night, as God does.”

The baby, whom they still called “Bay,” was a tiny, brown creature who liked to romp in the sun and be rocked to sleep at night with a song. Clemens often took them for extended walks, pushing Bay in her carriage. Once, in a preoccupied moment, he let go of the little vehicle and it started downhill, gaining speed rapidly.

He awoke then, and set off in wild pursuit. Before he could overtake the runaway carriage it had turned to the roadside and upset. Bay was lying among the stones and her head was bleeding. Hastily binding the wound with a handkerchief he started full speed with her up the hill toward the house, calling for restoratives as he came. It was no serious matter. The little girl was strong and did not readily give way to affliction.

The children were unlike: Susy was all contemplation and nerves; Bay serene and practical. It was said, when a pet cat died—this was some years later—that Susy deeply reflected as to its life here and hereafter, while Bay was concerned only as to the style of its funeral. Susy showed early her father’s quaintness of remark. Once they bought her a heavier pair of shoes than she approved of. She was not in the best of humors during the day, and that night, when at prayer-time her mother said, “Now, Susy, put your thoughts on God,” she answered, “Mama, I can’t with those shoes.”

Clemens worked steadily that summer and did a variety of things. He had given up a novel, begun with much enthusiasm, but he had undertaken another long manuscript. By the middle of August he had written several hundred pages of a story which was to be a continuation of Tam Sawyer —The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. Now, here is a curious phase of genius. The novel which for a time had filled him with enthusiasm and faith had no important literary value, whereas, concerning this new tale, he says:

“I like it only tolerably well, as far as I have gone, and may possibly pigeonhole or burn the manuscript when it is done”—this of the story which, of his books of pure fiction, will perhaps longest survive. He did, in fact, give the story up, and without much regret, when it was about half completed, and let it lie unfinished for years.

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He wrote one short tale, "The Canvasser's Story," a burlesque of no special distinction, and he projected for the Atlantic a scheme of "blindfold novelettes," a series of stories to be written by well-known authors and others, each to be constructed on the same plot. One can easily imagine Clemens's enthusiasm over a banal project like that; his impulses were always rainbow-hued, whether valuable or not; but it is curious that Howells should welcome and even encourage an enterprise so far removed from all the traditions of art. It fell to pieces, at last, of inherent misconstruction. The title was to be, "A Murder and a Marriage." Clemens could not arrive at a logical climax that did not bring the marriage and the hanging on the same day.

The Atlantic started its "Contributors' Club," and Howells wrote to Clemens for a paragraph or more of personal opinion on any subject, assuring him that he could "spit his spite" out at somebody or something as if it were a passage from a letter. That was a fairly large permission to give Mark Twain. The paragraph he sent was the sort of thing he would write with glee, and hug himself over in the thought of Howells's necessity of rejecting it. In the accompanying note he said:

Say, Boss, do you want this to lighten up your old freight-train with? I suppose you won't, but then it won't take long to say, so.

He was always sending impossible offerings to the magazines; innocently enough sometimes, but often out of pure mischievousness. Yet they were constantly after him, for they knew they were likely to get a first-water gem. Mary Mopes Dodge, of St. Nicholas, wrote time and again, and finally said:

"I know a man who was persecuted by an editor till he went distracted."

In his reading that year at the farm he gave more than customary attention to one of his favorite books, Pepys' Diary, that captivating old record which no one can follow continuously without catching the infection of its manner and the desire of imitation. He had been reading diligently one day, when he determined to try his hand on an imaginary record of conversation and court manners of a bygone day, written in the phrase of the period. The result was Fireside Conversation in the Time of Queen Elizabeth, or, as he later called it, 1601. The "conversation," recorded by a supposed Pepys of that period, was written with all the outspoken coarseness and nakedness of that rank day, when fireside sociabilities were limited only by the range of loosened fancy, vocabulary, and physical performance, and not by any bounds of convention. Howells has spoken of Mark Twain's "Elizabethan breadth of parlance," and how he, Howells, was always hiding away in discreet holes and corners the letters in which Clemens had "loosed his bold fancy to stoop on rank suggestion." "I could not bear to burn them," he declares, "and I could not, after the first reading, quite bear to look at them."



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In the 1601 Mark Twain outdid himself in the Elizabethan field. It was written as a letter to that robust divine, Rev. Joseph Twichell, who had no special scruples concerning Shakespearian parlance and customs. Before it was mailed it was shown to David Gray, who was spending a Sunday at Elmira. Gray said:

“Print it and put your name to it, Mark. You have never done a greater piece of work than that.”

John Hay, whom it also reached in due time, pronounce it a classic—a “most exquisite bit of old English morality.” Hay surreptitiously permitted some proofs to be made of it, and it has been circulated privately, though sparingly, ever since. At one time a special font of antique type was made for it and one hundred copies were taken on hand-made paper. They would easily bring a hundred dollars each to-day.

1601 is a genuine classic, as classics of that sort go. It is better than the gross obscenities of Rabelais, and perhaps, in some day to come, the taste that justified Gargantua and the Decameron will give this literary refugee shelter and setting among the more conventional writings of Mark Twain. Human taste is a curious thing; delicacy is purely a matter of environment and point of view.—[In a note-book of a later period Clemens himself wrote: “It depends on who writes a thing whether it is coarse or not. I once wrote a conversation between Elizabeth, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Beaumont, Sir W. Raleigh, Lord Bacon, Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, and a stupid old nobleman—this latter being cup-bearer to the queen and ostensible reporter of the talk.

“There were four maids of honor present and a sweet young girl two years younger than the boy Beaumont. I built a conversation which could have happened—I used words such as were used at that time—1601. I sent it anonymously to a magazine, and how the editor abused it and the sender! But that man was a praiser of Rabelais, and had been saying, ‘O that we had a Rabelais!’ I judged that I could furnish him one.”]

Eighteen hundred and seventy-six was a Presidential year—the year of the Hayes-Tilden campaign. Clemens and Howells were both warm Republicans and actively interested in the outcome, Clemens, as he confessed, for the first time in his life. Before his return to Hartford he announced himself publicly as a Hayes man, made so by Governor Hayes’s letter of acceptance, which, he said, “expresses my own political convictions.” His politics had not been generally known up to that time, and a Tilden and Hendricks club in Jersey City had invited him to be present and give them some political counsel, at a flag-raising. He wrote, declining pleasantly enough, then added:

“You have asked me for some political counsel or advice: In view of Mr. Tilden’s Civil War record my advice is not to raise the flag.”

He wrote Howells: “If Tilden is elected I think the entire country will go pretty straight to—Mrs. Howells’s bad place.”

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Howells was writing a campaign biography of Hayes, which he hoped would have a large sale, and Clemens urged him to get it out quickly and save the country. Howells, working like a beaver, in turn urged Clemens to take the field in the cause. Returning to Hartford, Clemens presided at a political rally and made a speech, the most widely quoted of the campaign. All papers, without distinction as to party, quoted it, and all readers, regardless of politics, read it with joy.

Yet conditions did not improve. When Howells's book had been out a reasonable length of time he wrote that it had sold only two thousand copies.

"There's success for you," he said. "It makes me despair of the Republic, I can tell you."

Clemens, however, did not lose faith, and went on shouting for Hayes and damning Tilden till the final vote was cast. In later life he changed his mind about Tilden (as did many others) through sympathy. Sympathy could make—Mark Twain change his mind any time. He stood for the right, but, above all, for justice. He stood for the wronged, regardless of all other things.

### CIX

#### *The public appearance of "Tom Sawyer"*

Clemens gave a few readings in Boston and Philadelphia, but when urged to go elsewhere made the excuse that he was having his portrait painted and could not leave home.

As a matter of fact, he was enjoying himself with Frank Millet, who had been invited to the house to do the portrait and had captured the fervent admiration of the whole family. Millet was young, handsome, and lively; Clemens couldn't see enough of him, the children adored him and added his name to the prayer which included each member of the household—the "Holy Family," Clemens called it.

Millet had brought with him but one piece of canvas for the portrait, and when the first sketch was finished Mrs. Clemens was so delighted with it that she did not wish him to touch it again. She was afraid of losing some particular feeling in it which she valued. Millet went to the city for another canvas and Clemens accompanied him. While Millet was doing his shopping it happened to occur to Clemens that it would be well to fill in the time by having his hair cut. He left word with a clerk to tell Millet that he had gone across the street. By and by the artist came over, and nearly wept with despair when he saw his subject sheared of the auburn, gray-sprinkled aureola that had made his first sketch a success. He tried it again, and the result was an excellent likeness, but it never satisfied Millet.



The 'Adventures of Tom Sawyer' appeared late in December (1876), and immediately took its place as foremost of American stories of boy life, a place which it unquestionably holds to this day. We have already considered the personal details of this story, for they were essentially nothing more than the various aspects of Mark Twain's own boyhood. It is only necessary to add a word concerning the elaboration of this period in literary form.



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From every point it is a masterpiece, this picture of boy life in a little lazy, drowsy town, with all the irresponsibility and general disreputability of boy character coupled with that indefinable, formless, elusive something we call boy conscience, which is more likely to be boy terror and a latent instinct of manliness. These things are so truly portrayed that every boy and man reader finds the tale fitting into his own remembered years, as if it had grown there. Every boy has played off sick to escape school; every boy has reflected in his heart Tom's picture of himself being brought home dead, and gloated over the stricken consciences of those who had blighted his young life; every boy—of that day, at least—every normal, respectable boy, grew up to “fear God and dread the Sunday-school,” as Howells puts it in his review.

As for the story itself, the narrative of it, it is pure delight. The pirate camp on the island is simply boy heaven. What boy, for instance, would not change any other glory or boon that the world holds for this:

They built a fire against the side of a great log twenty or thirty steps within the somber depths of the forest, and then cooked some bacon in the frying-pan for supper, and used up half of the corn “pone” stock they had brought. It seemed glorious sport to be feasting in that wild, free way in the virgin forest of an unexplored and uninhabited island, far from the haunts of men, and they said they never would return to civilization. The climbing fire lit up their faces and threw its ruddy glare upon the pillared tree-trunks of their forest-temple, and upon the varnished foliage and the festooning vines.

There is a magic in it. Mark Twain, when he wrote it, felt renewed in him all the old fascination of those days and nights with Tom Blankenship, John Briggs, and the Bowen boys on Glasscock's Island. Everywhere in Tom Sawyer there is a quality, entirely apart from the humor and the narrative, which the younger reader is likely to overlook. No one forgets the whitewashing scene, but not many of us, from our early reading, recall this delicious bit of description which introduces it:

The locust-trees were in bloom, and the fragrance of the blossoms filled the air. Cardiff Hill, beyond the village and above it, was green with vegetation, and it lay just far enough away to seem a delectable land, dreamy, reposeful, and inviting.

Tom's night visit home; the graveyard scene, with the murder of Dr. Robinson; the adventures of Tom and Becky in the cave—these are all marvelously invented. Literary thrill touches the ultimate in one incident of the cave episode. Brander Matthews has written:

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Nor is there any situation quite as thrilling as that awful moment in the cave when the boy and girl are lost in the darkness, and when Tom suddenly sees a human hand bearing a light, and then finds that the hand is the hand of Indian Joe, his one mortal enemy. I have always thought that the vision of the hand in the cave in Tom Sawyer was one of the very finest things in the literature of adventure since Robinson Crusoe first saw a single footprint in the sand of the sea-shore.

Mark Twain's invention was not always a reliable quantity, but with that eccentricity which goes with any attribute of genius, it was likely at any moment to rise supreme. If to the critical, hardened reader the tale seems a shade overdone here and there, a trifle extravagant in its delineations, let him go back to his first long-ago reading of it and see if he recalls anything but his pure delight in it then. As a boy's story it has not been equaled.

Tom Sawyer has ranked in popularity with *Roughing It*.

Its sales go steadily on from year to year, and are likely to continue so long as boys and girls do not change, and men and women remember.

—[Col. Henry Watterson, when he finished *Tom Sawyer*, wrote: "I have just laid down *Tom Sawyer*, and cannot resist the pressure. It is immense! I read every word of it, didn't skip a line, and nearly disgraced myself several times in the presence of a sleeping-car full of honorable and pious people. Once I had to get to one side and have a cry, and as for an internal compound of laughter and tears there was no end to it.... The 'funeral' of the boys, the cave business, and the hunt for the hidden treasure are as dramatic as anything I know of in fiction, while the pathos—particularly everything relating to Huck and Aunt Polly—makes a cross between Dickens's skill and Thackeray's nature, which, resembling neither, is thoroughly impressive and original."]

## CX

### MARK TWAIN AND BRET HARTE WRITE A PLAY

It was the fall and winter of '76 that Bret Harte came to Hartford and collaborated with Mark Twain on the play "Ah Sin," a comedy-drama, or melodrama, written for Charles T. Parsloe, the great impersonator of Chinese character. Harte had written a successful play which unfortunately he had sold outright for no great sum, and was eager for another venture. Harte had the dramatic sense and constructive invention. He also had humor, but he felt the need of the sort of humor that Mark Twain could furnish. Furthermore, he believed that a play backed by both their reputations must start with great advantages. Clemens also realized these things, and the arrangement was made. Speaking of their method of working, Clemens once said:

“Well, Bret came down to Hartford and we talked it over, and then Bret wrote it while I played billiards, but of course I had to go over it to get the dialect right. Bret never did know anything about dialect.” Which is hardly a fair statement of the case. They both worked on the play, and worked hard.

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During the, period of its construction Harte had an order for a story which he said he must finish at once, as he needed the money. It must be delivered by the following night, and he insisted that he must be getting at it without a moment's delay. Still he seemed in no haste to begin. The evening passed; bedtime came. Then he asked that an open fire might be made in his room and a bottle of whisky sent up, in case he needed something to keep him awake. George attended to these matters, and nothing more was heard of Harte until very early next morning, when he rang for George and asked for a fresh fire and an additional supply of whisky. At breakfast-time he appeared, fresh, rosy, and elate, with the announcement that his story was complete.

That forenoon the Saturday Morning Club met at the Clemens home. It was a young women's club, of which Mark Twain was a sort of honorary member—a club for the purpose of intellectual advancement, somewhat on the order of the Monday Evening Club of men, except that the papers read before it were not prepared by members, but by men and women prominent in some field of intellectual progress. Bret Harte had agreed to read to them on this particular occasion, and he gaily appeared and gave them the story just finished, "Thankful Blossom," a tale which Mark Twain always regarded as one of Harte's very best.

The new play, "Ah Sin," by Mark Twain and Bret Harte, was put on at Washington, at the National Theater, on the evening of May 7, 1877. It had been widely exploited in the newspapers, and the fame of the authors insured a crowded opening. Clemens was unable to go over on account of a sudden attack of bronchitis. Parsloe was nervous accordingly, and the presence of Harte does not seem to have added to his happiness.

"I am not very well myself," he wrote to Clemens. "The excitement of the first night is bad enough, but to have the annoyance with Harte that I have is too much for a new beginner."

Nevertheless, the play seems to have gone well, with Parsloe as Ah Sin—a Chinese laundryman who was also a great number of other diverting things—with a fair support and a happy-go-lucky presentation of frontier life, which included a supposed murder, a false accusation, and a general clearing-up of mystery by the pleasant and wily and useful and entertaining Ah Sin. It was not a great play. It was neither very coherent nor convincing, but it had a lot of good fun in it, with character parts which, if not faithful to life, were faithful enough to the public conception of it to be amusing and exciting. At the end of each act not only Parsloe, but also the principal members of the company, were called before the curtain for special acknowledgments. When it was over there was a general call for Ah Sin, who came before the curtain and read a telegram.

*Charles T. Parsloe*,—I am on the sick-list, and therefore cannot come to Washington; but I have prepared two speeches—one to deliver in event of failure of the play, and the other if successful. Please tell me which I shall send. May be better to put it to vote.



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*Mark Twain.*

The house cheered the letter, and when it was put to vote decided unanimously that the play had been a success—a verdict more kindly than true.

J. I. Ford, of the theater management, wrote to Clemens, next morning after the first performance, urging him to come to Washington in person and “wet nurse” the play until “it could do for itself.”

Ford expressed satisfaction with the play and its prospects, and concludes:

I inclose notices. Come if you can. “Your presence will be worth ten thousand men. The king’s name is a tower of strength.” I have urged the President to come to-night.

The play made no money in Washington, but Augustin Daly decided to put it on in New York at the Fifth Avenue Theater, with a company which included, besides Parsloe, Edmund Collier, P. A. Anderson, Dora Goldthwaite, Henry Crisp, and Mrs. Wells, a very worthy group of players indeed. Clemens was present at the opening, dressed in white, which he affected only for warm-weather use in those days, and made a speech at the end of the third act.

“Ah Sin” did not excite much enthusiasm among New York dramatic critics. The houses were promising for a time, but for some reason the performance as a whole did not contain the elements of prosperity. It set out on its provincial travels with no particular prestige beyond the reputation of its authors; and it would seem that this was not enough, for it failed to pay, and all parties concerned presently abandoned it to its fate and it was heard of no more. Just why “Ah Sin” did not prosper it would not become us to decide at this far remove of time and taste. Poorer plays have succeeded and better plays have failed since then, and no one has ever been able to demonstrate the mystery. A touch somewhere, a pulling-about and a readjustment, might have saved “Ali Sin,” but the pullings and haulings which they gave it did not. Perhaps it still lies in some managerial vault, and some day may be dragged to light and reconstructed and recast, and come into its reward. Who knows? Or it may have drifted to that harbor of forgotten plays, whence there is no returning.

As between Harte and Clemens, the whole matter was unfortunate. In the course of their association there arose a friction and the long-time friendship disappeared.

## CXI

### A BERMUDA HOLIDAY

On the 16th of May, 1877, Mark Twain set out on what, in his note-book, he declared to be “the first actual pleasure-trip” he had ever taken, meaning that on every previous trip

he had started with a purpose other than that of mere enjoyment. He took with him his friend and pastor, the Rev. Joseph H. Twichell, and they sailed for Bermuda, an island resort not so well known or so fashionable as to-day.



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They did not go to a hotel. Under assumed names they took up quarters in a boarding-house, with a Mrs. Kirkham, and were unmolested and altogether happy in their wanderings through four golden days. Mark Twain could not resist keeping a notebook, setting down bits of scenery and character and incident, just as he had always done. He was impressed with the cheapness of property and living in the Bermuda of that period. He makes special mention of some cottages constructed of coral blocks: "All as beautiful and as neat as a pin, at the cost of four hundred and eighty dollars each." To Twichell he remarked:

"Joe, this place is like Heaven, and I'm going to make the most of it."

"Mark," said Twichell, "that's right; make the most of a place that is like Heaven while you have a chance."

In one of the entries—the final one—Clemens says:

"Bermuda is free (at present) from the triple curse of railways, telegraphs, and newspapers, but this will not last the year. I propose to spend next year here and no more."

When they were ready to leave, and started for the steamer, Twichell made an excuse to go back, his purpose being to tell their landlady and her daughter that, without knowing it, they had been entertaining Mark Twain.

"Did you ever hear of Mark Twain?" asked Twichell.

The daughter answered.

"Yes," she said, "until I'm tired of the name. I know a young man who never talks of anything else."

"Well," said Twichell, "that gentleman with me is Mark Twain."

The Kirkhams declined to believe it at first, and then were in deep sorrow that they had not known it earlier. Twichell promised that he and Clemens would come back the next year; and they meant to go back—we always mean to go back to places—but it was thirty years before they returned at last, and then their pleasant landlady was dead.

On the home trip they sighted a wandering vessel, manned by blacks, trying to get to New York. She had no cargo and was pretty helpless. Later, when she was reported again, Clemens wrote about it in a Hartford paper, telling the story as he knew it. The vessel had shipped the crew, on a basis of passage to New York, in exchange for labor. So it was a "pleasure-excursion!" Clemens dwelt on this fancy:



I have heard of a good many pleasure-excursions, but this heads the list. It is monumental, and if ever the tired old tramp is found I should like to be there and see him in his sorrowful rags and his venerable head of grass and seaweed, and hear the ancient mariners tell the story of their mysterious wanderings through the solemn solitudes of the ocean.

Long afterward this vagrant craft was reported again, still drifting with the relentless Gulf Stream. Perhaps she reached New York in time; one would like to know, but there seems no good way to find out.

That first Bermuda voyage was always a happy memory to Mark Twain. To Twichell he wrote that it was the “joyousest trip” he had ever made:



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Not a heartache anywhere, not a twinge of conscience. I often come to myself out of a reverie and detect an undertone of thought that had been thinking itself without volition of mind—viz., that if we had only had ten days of those walks and talks instead of four.

There was but one regret: Howells had not been with them. Clemens denounced him for his absence:

If you had gone with us and let me pay the fifty dollars, which the trip and the board and the various knick-knacks and mementos would cost, I would have picked up enough droppings from your conversation to pay me five hundred per cent. profit in the way of the several magazine articles which I could have written; whereas I can now write only one or two, and am therefore largely out of pocket by your proud ways.

Clemens would not fail to write about his trip. He could not help doing that, and he began "Some Rambling Notes of an Idle Excursion" as soon as he landed in Hartford. They were quite what the name would signify —leisurely, pleasant commentaries on a loafing, peaceful vacation. They are not startling in their humor or description, but are gently amusing and summery, reflecting, bubble-like, evanescent fancies of Bermuda. Howells, shut up in a Boston editorial office, found them delightful enough, and very likely his Atlantic readers agreed with him. The story of "Isaac and the Prophets of Baal" was one that Capt. Ned Wakeman had told to Twichell during a voyage which the latter had made to Aspinwall with that vigorous old seafarer; so in the "Rambling Notes" Wakeman appears as Captain Hurricane Jones, probably a step in the evolution of the later name of Stormfield. The best feature of the series (there were four papers in all) is a story of a rescue in mid-ocean; but surely the brightest ripple of humor is the reference to Bermuda's mahogany-tree:

There was exactly one mahogany-tree on the island. I know this to be reliable because I saw a man who said he had counted it many a time and could not be mistaken. He was a man with a haze lip and a pure heart, and everybody said he was as true as steel. Such men are all too few.

Clemens cared less for these papers than did Howells. He had serious doubts about the first two and suggested their destruction, but with Howells's appreciation his own confidence in them returned and he let them all go in. They did not especially advance his reputation, but perhaps they did it no harm.

## CXII

### A NEW PLAY AND A NEW TALE

He wrote a short story that year which is notable mainly for the fact that in it the telephone becomes a literary property, probably for the first time. "The Loves of Alonzo

Fitz-Clarence and Rosannah Ethelton” employed in the consummation what was then a prospect, rather than a reality—long-distance communication.



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His work that summer consisted mainly of two extensive undertakings, one of which he completed without delay. He still had the dramatic ambition, and he believed that he was capable now of constructing a play entirely from his own resources.

To Howells, in June, he wrote:

To-day I am deep in a comedy which I began this morning—principal character an old detective. I skeletoned the first act and wrote the second to-day, and am dog-tired now. Fifty-four pages of *Ms.* in seven hours.

Seven days later, the Fourth of July, he said:

I have piled up one hundred and fifty-one pages on my comedy. The first, second and fourth acts are done, and done to my satisfaction, too. To-morrow and next day will finish the third act, and the play. Never had so much fun over anything in my life never such consuming interest and delight. And just think! I had Sol Smith Russell in my mind's eye for the old detective's part, and bang it! he has gone off pottering with Oliver Optic, or else the papers lie.

He was working with enthusiasm, you see, believing in it with a faith which, alas, was no warrant for its quality. Even Howells caught his enthusiasm and became eager to see the play, and to have the story it contained told for the Atlantic.

But in the end it proved a mistake. Dion Boucicault, when he read the manuscript, pronounced it better than "Ah Sin," but that was only qualified praise. Actors who considered the play, anxious enough to have Mark Twain's name on their posters and small bills, were obliged to admit that, while it contained marvelous lines, it wouldn't "go." John Brougham wrote:

There is an absolute "embarrassment of riches" in your "Detective" most assuredly, but the difficulty is to put it into profitable form. The quartz is there in abundance, only requiring the necessary manipulation to extract the gold. In narrative structure the story would be full of life, character, and the most exuberant fun, but it is altogether too diffuse in its present condition for dramatic representation, and I confess I do not feel sufficient confidence in my own experience (even if I had the time, which on reflection I find I have not) to undertake what, under different circumstances, would be a "labor of love."

Yours sincerely, *John Brougham.*

That was frank, manly, and to the point; it covered the ground exactly. "Simon Wheeler, the Amateur Detective," had plenty of good material in it—plenty of dialogue and situations; but the dialogue wouldn't play, and the situations wouldn't act. Clemens realized that perhaps the drama was not, after all, his forte; he dropped "Simon

Wheeler," lost his interest in "Ah Sin," even leased "Colonel Sellers" for the coming season, and so, in a sort of fury, put theatrical matters out of his mind.



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He had entered upon what, for him, was a truer domain. One day he picked up from among the books at the farm a little juvenile volume, an English story of the thirteenth century by Charlotte M. Yonge, entitled, *The Prince and the Page*. It was a story of Edward I. and his cousins, Richard and Henry de Montfort; in part it told of the submerged personality of the latter, picturing him as having dwelt in disguise as a blind beggar for a period of years. It was a story of a sort and with a setting that Mark Twain loved, and as he read there came a correlative idea. Not only would he disguise a prince as a beggar, but a beggar as a prince. He would have them change places in the world, and each learn the burdens of the other's life.—[There is no point of resemblance between the Prince and the Pauper and the tale that inspired it. No one would ever guess that the one had grown out of the readings of the other, and no comparison of any sort is possible between them.]

The plot presented physical difficulties. He still had some lurking thought of stage performance, and saw in his mind a spectacular presentation, with all the costumery of an early period as background for a young and beautiful creature who would play the part of prince. The old device of changelings in the cradle (later used in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*) presented itself to him, but it could not provide the situations he had in mind. Finally came the thought of a playful interchange of raiment and state (with startling and unlooked-for consequence)—the guise and personality of Tom Canty, of *Offal Court*, for those of the son of Henry VIII., little Edward Tudor, more lately sixth English king of that name. This little prince was not his first selection for the part. His original idea had been to use the late King Edward VII. (then Prince of Wales) at about fifteen, but he found that it would never answer to lose a prince among the slums of modern London, and have his proud estate denied and jeered at by a modern mob. He felt that he could not make it seem real; so he followed back through history, looking along for the proper time and prince, till he came to little Edward, who was too young—but no matter, he would do.

He decided to begin his new venture in story form. He could dramatize it later. The situation appealed to him immensely. The idea seemed a brand-new one; it was delightful, it was fascinating, and he was saturated with the atmosphere and literature and history—the data and detail of that delightful old time. He put away all thought of cheap, modern play-acting and writing, to begin one of the loveliest and most entertaining and instructive tales of old English life. He decided to be quite accurate in his picture of the period, and he posted himself on old London very carefully. He bought a pocket-map which he studied in the minutest detail.

He wrote about four hundred manuscript pages of the tale that summer; then, as the inspiration seemed to lag a little, put it aside, as was his habit, to wait until the ambition for it should be renewed. It was a long wait, as usual. He did not touch it again for more than three years.



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## CXIII

### TWO DOMESTIC DRAMAS

Some unusual happenings took place that summer of 1877. John T. Lewis (colored), already referred to as the religious antagonist of Auntie Cord, by great presence of mind and bravery saved the lives of Mrs. Clemens's sister-in-law, Mrs. Charles ("Charley") Langdon, her little daughter Julia, and her nurse-maid. They were in a buggy, and their runaway horse was flying down East Hill toward Elmira to certain destruction, when Lewis, laboring slowly homeward with a loaded wagon, saw them coming and turned his team across the road, after which he leaped out and with extraordinary strength and quickness grabbed the horse's bridle and brought him to a standstill. The Clemens and Crane families, who had seen the runaway start at the farm gate, arrived half wild with fear, only to find the supposed victims entirely safe.

Everybody contributed in rewarding Lewis. He received money (\$1,500) and various other presents, including inscribed books and trinkets, also, what he perhaps valued more than anything, a marvelous stem-winding gold watch. Clemens, writing a full account to Dr. Brown of the watch, says:

And if any scoffer shall say, "behold this thing is out of character," there is an inscription within which will silence him; for it will teach him that this wearer aggrandizes the watch, not the watch the wearer.

In another paragraph he says:

When Lewis arrived the other evening, after having saved those lives by a feat which I think is the most marvelous I can call to mind, when he arrived hunched up on his manure-wagon and as grotesquely picturesque as usual, everybody wanted to go and see how he looked. They came back and said he was beautiful. It was so, too, and yet he would have photographed exactly as he would have done any day these past seven years that he has occupied this farm.

Lewis acknowledged his gifts in a letter which closed with a paragraph of rare native loftiness:

But I beg to say, humbly, that inasmuch as divine Providence saw fit to use me as an instrument for the saving of those preshious lives, the honner conferd upon me was greater than the feat performed.

Lewis lived to enjoy his prosperity, and the honor of the Clemens and Langdon households, for twenty-nine years. When he was too old to work there was a pension, to which Clemens contributed; also Henry H. Rogers. So the simple-hearted, noble old negro closed his days in peace.



Mrs. Crane, in a letter, late in July, 1906, told of his death:

He was always cheerful, and seemed not to suffer much pain, told stories, and was able to eat almost everything.

Three days ago a new difficulty appeared, on account of which his doctor said he must go to the hospital for care such as it was quite impossible to give in his home.

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He died on his way there.

Thus it happened that he died on the road where he had performed his great deed.

A second unusual incident of that summer occurred in Hartford. There had been a report of a strange man seen about the Clemens place, thought to be a prospecting burglar, and Clemens went over to investigate. A little searching inquiry revealed that the man was not a burglar, but a mechanic out of employment, a lover of one of the house-maids, who had given him food and shelter on the premises, intending no real harm. When the girl found that her secret was discovered, she protested that he was her fiance, though she said he appeared lately to have changed his mind and no longer wished to marry her.

The girl seemed heartbroken, and sympathy for her was naturally the first and about the only feeling which Clemens developed, for the time being. He reasoned with the young man, but without making much headway. Finally his dramatic instinct prompted him to a plan of a sort which would have satisfied even Tom Sawyer. He asked Twichell to procure a license for the couple, and to conceal himself in a ground floor bath-room. He arranged with the chief of police to be on hand in another room; with the rest of the servants quietly to prepare a wedding-feast, and finally with Lizzie herself to be dressed for the ceremony. He had already made an appointment with the young man to come to, see him at a certain hour on a "matter of business," and the young man arrived in the belief, no doubt, that it was something which would lead to profitable employment. When he came in Clemens gently and quietly reviewed the situation, told him of the young girl's love for him; how he had been sheltered and fed by her; how through her kindness to him she had compromised her reputation for honesty and brought upon her all the suspicion of having sheltered a burglar; how she was ready and willing to marry him, and how he (Clemens) was ready to assist them to obtain work and a start in life.

But the young man was not enthusiastic. He was a Swede and slow of action. He resolutely declared that he was not ready to marry yet, and in the end refused to do so. Then came the dramatic moment. Clemens quietly but firmly informed him that the wedding ceremony must take place; that by infesting his premises he had broken the law, not only against trespass, but most likely against house-breaking. There was a brief discussion of this point. Finally Clemens gave him five minutes to make up his mind, with the statement that he had an officer in waiting, and unless he would consent to the wedding he would be taken in charge. The young man began to temporize, saying that it would be necessary for him to get a license and a preacher. But Clemens stepped to the door of the bath-room, opened it, and let out Twichell, who had been sweltering there in that fearful place for more than an hour, it being August. The delinquent lover found himself confronted with



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all the requisites of matrimony except the bride, and just then this detail appeared on the scene, dressed for the occasion. Behind her ranged the rest of the servants and a few invited guests. Before the young man knew it he had a wife, and on the whole did not seem displeased. It ended with a gay supper and festivities. Then Clemens started them handsomely by giving each of them a check for one hundred dollars; and in truth (which in this case, at least, is stranger than fiction) they lived happily and prosperously ever after.

Some years later Mark Twain based a story on this episode, but it was never entirely satisfactory and remains unpublished.

### CXIV

#### THE WHITTIER BIRTHDAY SPEECH

It was the night of December 17, 1877, that Mark Twain made his unfortunate speech at the dinner given by the Atlantic staff to John G. Whittier on his seventieth birthday. Clemens had attended a number of the dinners which the Atlantic gave on one occasion or another, and had provided a part of the entertainment. It is only fair to say that his after-dinner speeches at such times had been regarded as very special events, genuine triumphs of humor and delivery. But on this particular occasion he determined to outdo himself, to prepare something unusual, startling, something altogether unheard of.

When Mark Twain had an impulse like that it was possible for it to result in something dangerous, especially in those earlier days. This time it produced a bombshell; not just an ordinary bombshell, or even a twelve-inch projectile, but a shell of planetary size. It was a sort of hoax—always a doubtful plaything—and in this case it brought even quicker and more terrible retribution than usual. It was an imaginary presentation of three disreputable frontier tramps who at some time had imposed themselves on a lonely miner as Longfellow, Emerson, and Holmes, quoting apposite selections from their verses to the accompaniment of cards and drink, and altogether conducting themselves in a most unsavory fashion. At the end came the enlightenment that these were not what they pretended to be, but only impostors—disgusting frauds. A feature like that would be a doubtful thing to try in any cultured atmosphere. The thought of associating, ever so remotely, those three old bummers which he had conjured up with the venerable and venerated Emerson, Longfellow, and Holmes, the Olympian trinity, seems ghastly enough to-day, and must have seemed even more so then. But Clemens, dazzled by the rainbow splendor of his conception, saw in it only a rare colossal humor, which would fairly lift and bear his hearers along on a tide of mirth. He did not show his effort to any one beforehand. He wanted its full beauty to burst upon the entire company as a surprise.



It did that. Howells was toastmaster, and when he came to present Clemens he took particular pains to introduce him as one of his foremost contributors and dearest friends. Here, he said, was “a humorist who never left you hanging you head for having enjoyed his joke.”



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Thirty years later Clemens himself wrote of his impressions as he rose to deliver his speech.

I vaguely remember some of the details of that gathering: dimly I can see a hundred people—no, perhaps fifty—shadowy figures, sitting at tables feeding, ghosts now to me, and nameless forevermore. I don't know who they were, but I can very distinctly see, seated at the grand table and facing the rest of us, Mr. Emerson, supernaturally grave, unsmiling; Mr. Whittier, grave, lovely, his beautiful spirit shining out of his face; Mr. Longfellow, with his silken-white hair and his benignant face; Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, flashing smiles and affection and all good-fellowship everywhere, like a rose-diamond whose facets are being turned toward the light, first one way and then another—a charming man, and always fascinating, whether he was talking or whether he was sitting still (what he would call still, but what would be more or less motion to other people). I can see those figures with entire distinctness across this abyss of time.

William Winter, the poet, had just preceded him, and it seemed a moment aptly chosen for his so-different theme. "And then," to quote Howells, "the amazing mistake, the bewildering blunder, the cruel catastrophe was upon us."

After the first two or three hundred words, when the general plan and purpose of the burlesque had developed, when the names of Longfellow, Emerson, and Holmes began to be flung about by those bleary outcasts, and their verses given that sorry association, those Atlantic diners became petrified with amazement and horror. Too late, then, the speaker realized his mistake. He could not stop, he must go on to the ghastly end. And somehow he did it, while "there fell a silence weighing many tons to the square inch, which deepened from moment to moment, and was broken only by the hysterical and blood-curdling laughter of a single guest, whose name shall not be handed down to infamy."

Howells can remember little more than that, but Clemens recalls that one speaker made an effort to follow him—Bishop, the novelist, and that Bishop didn't last long.

It was not many sentences after his first before he began to hesitate and break, and lose his grip, and totter and wobble, and at last he slumped down in a limp and mushy pile.

The next man had not strength to rise, and somehow the company broke up.

Howells's next recollection is of being in a room of the hotel, and of hearing Charles Dudley Warner saying in the gloom:

"Well, Mark, you're a funny fellow."



He remembers how, after a sleepless night, Clemens went out to buy some bric-a-brac, with a soul far from bric-a-brac, and returned to Hartford in a writhing agony of spirit. He believed that he was ruined forever, so far as his Boston associations were concerned; and when he confessed all the tragedy to Mrs. Clemens it seemed to her also that the mistake could never be wholly repaired. The fact that certain papers quoted the speech and spoke well of it, and certain readers who had not listened to it thought it enormously funny, gave very little comfort. But perhaps his chief concern was the ruin which he believed he had brought upon Howells. He put his heart into a brief letter:



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*My dear Howells*,—My sense of disgrace does not abate. It grows. I see that it is going to add itself to my list of permanencies, a list of humiliations that extends back to when I was seven years old, and which keep on persecuting me regardless of my repentances. I feel that my misfortune has injured me all over the country; therefore it will be best that I retire from before the public at present. It will hurt the Atlantic for me to appear in its pages now. So it is my opinion, and my wife's, that the telephone story had better be suppressed. Will you return those proofs or revises to me, so that I can use the same on some future occasion? It seems as if I must have been insane when I wrote that speech and saw no harm in it, no disrespect toward those men whom I revered so much. And what shame I brought upon you, after what you said in introducing me! It burns me like fire to think of it.

The whole matter is a dreadful subject. Let me drop it here—at least on paper.

Penitently yours, *mark*

So, all in a moment, his world had come to an end—as it seemed. But Howells's letter, which came rushing back by first mail, brought hope.

"It was a fatality," Howells said. "One of those sorrows into which a man walks with his eyes wide open, no one knows why."

Howells assured him that Longfellow, Emerson, and Holmes would so consider it, beyond doubt; that Charles Eliot Norton had already expressed himself exactly in the right spirit concerning it. Howells declared that there was no intention of dropping Mark Twain's work from the Atlantic.

You are not going to be floored by it; there is more justice than that even in this world. Especially as regards me, just call the sore spot well. I can say more, and with better heart, in praise of your good feeling (which was what I always liked in you), since this thing happened than I could before.

It was agreed that he should at once write a letter to Longfellow, Emerson, and Holmes, and he did write, laying his heart bare to them. Longfellow and Holmes answered in a fine spirit of kindness, and Miss Emerson wrote for her father in the same tone. Emerson had not been offended, for he had not heard the speech, having arrived even then at that stage of semi-oblivion as to immediate things which eventually so completely shut him away. Longfellow's letter made light of the whole matter. The newspapers, he said, had caused all the mischief.

A bit of humor at a dinner-table talk is one thing; a report of it in the morning papers is another. One needs the lamplight and the scenery. These failing, what was meant in jest assumes a serious aspect.

I do not believe that anybody was much hurt. Certainly I was not, and Holmes tells me that he was not. So I think you may dismiss the matter from your mind, without further remorse.



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It was a very pleasant dinner, and I think Whittier enjoyed it very much.

Holmes likewise referred to it as a trifle.

It never occurred to me for a moment to take offense, or to feel wounded by your playful use of my name. I have heard some mild questioning as to whether, even in fun, it was good taste to associate the names of the authors with the absurdly unlike personalities attributed to them, but it seems to be an open question. Two of my friends, gentlemen of education and the highest social standing, were infinitely amused by your speech, and stoutly defended it against the charge of impropriety. More than this, one of the cleverest and best-known ladies we have among us was highly delighted with it.

Miss Emerson's letter was to Mrs. Clemens and its homelike New England fashion did much to lift the gloom.

*Dear Mrs. Clemens,—*At New Year's our family always meets, to spend two days together. To-day my father came last, and brought with him Mr. Clemens's letter, so that I read it to the assembled family, and I have come right up-stairs to write to you about it. My sister said, "Oh, let father write!" but my mother said, "No, don't wait for him. Go now; don't stop to pick that up. Go this minute and write. I think that is a noble letter. Tell them so." First let me say that no shadow of indignation has ever been in any of our minds. The night of the dinner, my father says, he did not hear Mr. Clemens's speech. He was too far off, and my mother says that when she read it to him the next day it amused him. But what you will want is to know, without any softening, how we did feel. We were disappointed. We have liked almost everything we have ever seen over Mark Twain's signature. It has made us like the man, and we have delighted in the fun. Father has often asked us to repeat certain passages of *The Innocents Abroad*, and of a speech at a London dinner in 1872, and we all expect both to approve and to enjoy when we see his name. Therefore, when we read this speech it was a real disappointment. I said to my brother that it didn't seem good or funny, and he said, "No, it was unfortunate. Still some of those quotations were very good"; and he gave them with relish and my father laughed, though never having seen a card in his life, he couldn't understand them like his children. My mother read it lightly and had hardly any second thoughts about it. To my father it is as if it had not been; he never quite heard, never quite understood it, and he forgets easily and entirely. I think it doubtful whether he writes to Mr. Clemens, for he is old and long ago gave up answering letters, I think you can see just how bad, and how little bad, it was as far as we are concerned, and this lovely heartbreaking letter makes up for our disappointment in our much-liked author, and restores our former feeling about him.

*Ellen T. Emerson.*



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The sorrow dulled a little as the days passed. Just after Christmas Clemens wrote to Howells:

I haven't done a stroke of work since the Atlantic dinner. But I'm going to try to-morrow. How could I ever——

Ah, well, I am a great and sublime fool. But then I am God's fool, and all his work must be contemplated with respect.

So long as that unfortunate speech is remembered there will be differences of opinion as to its merits and propriety. Clemens himself, reading it for the first time in nearly thirty years, said:

"I find it gross, coarse—well, I needn't go on with particulars. I don't like any part of it, from the beginning to the end. I find it always offensive and detestable. How do I account for this change of view? I don't know."

But almost immediately afterward he gave it another consideration and reversed his opinion completely. All the spirit and delight of his old first conception returned, and preparing it for publication, he wrote:

—[North American Review, December, 1907, now with comment included in the volume of "Speeches." (Also see Appendix O, at the end of last volume.)—I have read it twice, and unless I am an idiot it hasn't a single defect in it, from the first word to the last. It is just as good as good can be. It is smart; it is saturated with humor. There isn't a suggestion of coarseness or vulgarity in it anywhere.]

It was altogether like Mark Twain to have those two absolutely opposing opinions in that brief time; for, after all, it was only a question of the human point of view, and Mark Twain's points of view were likely to be as extremely human as they were varied.

Of course the first of these impressions, the verdict of the fresh mind uninfluenced by the old conception, was the more correct one. The speech was decidedly out of place in that company. The skit was harmless enough, but it was of the Comstock grain. It lacked refinement, and, what was still worse, it lacked humor, at least the humor of a kind suited to that long-ago company of listeners. It was another of those grievous mistakes which genius (and not talent) can make, for genius is a sort of possession. The individual is pervaded, dominated for a time by an angel or an imp, and he seldom, of himself, is able to discriminate between his controls. A literary imp was always lying in wait for Mark Twain; the imp of the burlesque, tempting him to do the 'outré', the outlandish, the shocking thing. It was this that Olivia Clemens had to labor hardest against: the cheapening of his own high purpose with an extravagant false note, at which sincerity, conviction, and artistic harmony took wings and fled away. Notably he



did a good burlesque now and then, but his fame would not have suffered if he had been delivered altogether from his besetting temptation.

**CXV**

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### HARTFORD AND BILLIARDS

Clemens was never much inclined to work, away from his Elmira study. “Magnanimous Incident Literature” (for the Atlantic) was about his only completed work of the winter of 1877-78. He was always tinkering with the “Visit to Heaven,” and after one reconstruction Howells suggested that he bring it out as a book, in England, with Dean Stanley’s indorsement, though this may have been only semi-serious counsel. The story continued to lie in seclusion.

Clemens had one new book in the field—a small book, but profitable. Dan Slote’s firm issued for him the Mark Twain Scrap-book, and at the end of the first royalty period rendered a statement of twenty-five thousand copies sold, which was well enough for a book that did not contain a single word that critics could praise or condemn. Slote issued another little book for him soon after *Punch, Brothers, Punch!*—which, besides that lively sketch, contained the “Random Notes” and seven other selections.

Mark Twain was tempted to go into the lecture field that winter, not by any of the offers, though these were numerous enough, but by the idea of a combination which he thought might be not only profitable but pleasant. Thomas Nast had made a great success of his caricature lectures, and Clemens, recalling Nast’s long-ago proposal, found it newly attractive. He wrote characteristically:

*My dear Nast,*—I did not think I should ever stand on a platform again until the time was come for me to say, “I die innocent.” But the same old offers keep arriving. I have declined them all, just as usual, though sorely tempted, as usual.

Now, I do not decline because I mind talking to an audience, but because (1) traveling alone is so heartbreakingly dreary, and (2) shouldering the whole show is such a cheer-killing responsibility.

Therefore, I now propose to you what you proposed to me in 1867, ten years ago (when I was unknown)—viz., that you stand on the platform and make pictures, and I stand by you and blackguard the audience. I should enormously enjoy meandering around (to big towns—don’t want to go to the little ones), with you for company.

My idea is not to fatten the lecture agents and lyceums on the spoils, but to put all the ducats religiously into two equal piles, and say to the artist and lecturer, “absorb these.”

For instance, [here follows a plan and a possible list of the cities to be visited]. The letter continues:



Call the gross receipts \$100,00 for four months and a half, and the profit from \$60,000 to \$75,000 (I try to make the figures large enough, and leave it to the public to reduce them).

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I did not put in Philadelphia because Pugh owns that town, and last winter, when I made a little reading-trip, he only paid me \$300, and pretended his concert (I read fifteen minutes in the midst of a concert) cost him a vast sum, and so he couldn't afford any more. I could get up a better concert with a barrel of cats.

I have imagined two or three pictures and concocted the accompanying remarks, to see how the thing would go. I was charmed.

Well, you think it over, Nast, and drop me a line. We should have some fun.

Undoubtedly this would have been a profitable combination, but Nast had a distaste for platforming—had given it up, as he thought, for life. So Clemens settled down to the fireside days, that afforded him always the larger comfort. The children were at an age “to be entertaining, and to be entertained.” In either case they furnished him plenty of diversion when he did not care to write. They had learned his gift as a romancer, and with this audience he might be as extravagant as he liked. They sometimes assisted by furnishing subjects. They would bring him a picture, requiring him to invent a story for it without a moment's delay. Sometimes they suggested the names of certain animals or objects, and demanded that these be made into a fairy tale. If they heard the name of any new creature or occupation they were likely to offer them as impromptu inspiration. Once he was suddenly required to make a story out of a plumber and a “bawgunstricator,” but he was equal to it. On one side of the library, along the bookshelves that joined the mantelpiece, were numerous ornaments and pictures. At one end was the head of a girl, that they called “Emeline,” and at the other was an oil-painting of a cat. When other subjects failed, the romancer was obliged to build a story impromptu, and without preparation, beginning with the cat, working along through the bric-a-brac, and ending with “Emeline.” This was the unvarying program. He was not allowed to begin with “Emeline” and end with the cat, and he was not permitted to introduce an ornament from any other portion of the room. He could vary the story as much as he liked. In fact, he was required to do that. The trend of its chapters, from the cat to “Emeline,” was a well-trodden and ever-entertaining way.

He gave up his luxurious study to the children as a sort of nursery and playroom, and took up his writing-quarters, first in a room over the stables, then in the billiard-room, which, on the whole, he preferred to any other place, for it was a third-story remoteness, and he could knock the balls about for inspiration.



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The billiard-room became his headquarters. He received his callers there and impressed them into the game. If they could play, well and good; if they could not play, so much the better—he could beat them extravagantly, and he took a huge delight in such conquests. Every Friday evening, or oftener, a small party of billiard-lovers gathered, and played until a late hour, told stories, and smoked till the room was blue, comforting themselves with hot Scotch and general good-fellowship. Mark Twain always had a genuine passion for billiards. He was never tired of the game. He could play all night. He would stay till the last man gave out from sheer weariness; then he would go on knocking the balls about alone. He liked to invent new games and new rules for old games, often inventing a rule on the spur of the moment to fit some particular shot or position on the table. It amused him highly to do this, to make the rule advantage his own play, and to pretend a deep indignation when his opponents disqualified his rulings and rode him down. S. C. Dunham was among those who belonged to the “Friday Evening Club,” as they called it, and Henry C. Robinson, long dead, and rare Ned Bunce, and F. G. Whitmore; and the old room there at the top of the house, with its little outside balcony, rang with their voices and their laughter in that day when life and the world for them was young. Clemens quoted to them sometimes:

Come, fill the cup, and in the fire of spring  
Your winter garment of repentance fling;  
The bird of time has but a little way  
To flutter, and the bird is on the wing.

Omar was new then on this side of the Atlantic, and to his serene “eat, drink, and be merry” philosophy, in Fitzgerald’s rhyme, these were early converts. Mark Twain had an impressive, musical delivery of verse; the players were willing at any moment to listen as he recited:

For some we loved, the loveliest and best  
That from his vintage rolling time has prest,  
Have drunk their cup a round or two before,  
And one by one crept silently to rest.  
Ah, make the most of what we yet may spend,  
Before we too into the dust descend;  
Dust unto dust, and under dust to lie,  
Sans wine, sans song, sans singer, and—sans End.’

—[The ‘Rubaiyat’ had made its first appearance, in Hartford, a little before in a column of extracts published in the Courant.] Twichell immediately wrote Clemens a card:

“Read (if you haven’t) the extracts from Oman Khayyam, on the first page of this morning’s Courant. I think we’ll have to get the book. I never yet came across anything that uttered certain thoughts of mine so adequately. And it’s only a translation. Read it,



and we'll talk it over. There is something in it very like the passage of Emerson you read me last night, in fact identical with it in thought.

“Surely this Omar was a great poet. Anyhow, he has given me an immense revelation this morning.



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“Hoping that you are better,

J. H. T.”

Twichell’s “only a translation” has acquired a certain humor with time.

### CXVI

#### OFF FOR GERMANY

The German language became one of the interests of the Clemens home during the early months of 1878. The Clemenses had long looked forward to a sojourn in Europe, and the demand for another Mark Twain book of travel furnished an added reason for their going. They planned for the spring sailing, and to spend a year or more on the Continent, making their headquarters in Germany. So they entered into the study of the language with an enthusiasm and perseverance that insured progress. There was a German nurse for the children, and the whole atmosphere of the household presently became lingually Teutonic. It amused Mark Twain, as everything amused him, but he was a good student; he acquired a working knowledge of the language in an extraordinarily brief time, just as in an earlier day he had picked up piloting. He would never become a German scholar, but his vocabulary and use of picturesque phrases, particularly those that combined English and German words, were often really startling, not only for their humor, but for their expressiveness.

Necessarily the new study would infect his literature. He conceived a plan for making Captain Wakeman (Stormfield) come across a copy of Ollendorf in Heaven, and proceed to learn the language of a near-lying district.

They arranged to sail early in April, and, as on their former trip, persuaded Miss Clara Spaulding, of Elmira, to accompany them. They wrote to the Howellses, breaking the news of the journey, urging them to come to Hartford for a good-by visit. Howells and his wife came. The Twichells, Warners, and other Hartford friends paid repeated farewell calls. The furniture was packed, the rooms desolated, the beautiful home made ready for closing.

They were to have pleasant company on the ship. Bayard Taylor, then recently appointed Minister to Germany, wrote that he had planned to sail on the same vessel; Murat Halstead’s wife and daughter were listed among the passengers. Clemens made a brief speech at Taylor’s “farewell dinner.”

The “Mark Twain” party, consisting of Mr. and Mrs. Clemens, Miss Spaulding, little Susy and Clara (“Bay”), and a nurse-maid, Rosa, sailed on the Holsatia, April 11, 1878. Bayard Taylor and the Halstead ladies also sailed, as per program; likewise Murat Halstead himself, for whom no program had been made. There was a storm outside,



and the Holsatia anchored down the bay to wait until the worst was over. As the weather began to moderate Halstead and others came down in a tug for a final word of good-by. When the tug left, Halstead somehow managed to get overlooked, and was presently on his way across the ocean with only such wardrobe as he had on, and what Bayard Taylor, a large man like himself, was willing to lend him. Halstead was accused of having intentionally allowed himself to be left behind, and his case did have a suspicious look; but in any event they were glad to have him along.



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In a written word of good-by to Howells, Clemens remembered a debt of gratitude, and paid it in the full measure that was his habit.

And that reminds me, ungrateful dog that I am, that I owe as much to your training as the rude country job-printer owes to the city boss who takes him in hand and teaches him the right way to handle his art. I was talking to Mrs. Clemens about this the other day, and grieving because I never mentioned it to you, thereby seeming to ignore it or to be unaware of it. Nothing that has passed under your eye needs any revision before going into a volume, while all my other stuff does need so much.

In that ancient day, before the wireless telegraph, the voyager, when the land fell away behind him, felt a mighty sense of relief and rest, which to some extent has gone now forever. He cannot entirely escape the world in this new day; but then he had a complete sense of dismissal from all encumbering cares of life. Among the first note-book entries Mark Twain wrote:

To go abroad has something of the same sense that death brings—"I am no longer of ye; what ye say of me is now of no consequence—but of how much consequence when I am with ye and of ye. I know you will refrain from saying harsh things because they cannot hurt me, since I am out of reach and cannot hear them. This is why we say no harsh things of the dead."

It was a rough voyage outside, but the company made it pleasant within. Halstead and Taylor were good smoking-room companions. Taylor had a large capacity for languages and a memory that was always a marvel. He would repeat for them Arabian, Hungarian, and Russian poetry, and show them the music and construction of it. He sang German folk-lore songs for them, and the "Lorelei," then comparatively unknown in America. Such was his knowledge of the language that even educated Germans on board submitted questions of construction to him and accepted his decisions. He was wisely chosen for the mission he had to fill, but unfortunately he did not fill it long. Both Halstead and Taylor were said to have heart trouble. Halstead, however, survived many years. Taylor died December 19, 1878.

## CXVII

### GERMANY AND GERMAN

From the note-book:

It is a marvel that never loses its surprise by repetition, this aiming a ship at a mark three thousand miles away and hitting the bull's-eye in a fog—as we did. When the fog fell on us the captain said we ought to be at such and such a spot (it had been eighteen hours since an observation was had), with the Scilly islands bearing so and so, and



about so many miles away. Hove the lead and got forty-eight fathoms; looked on the chart, and sure enough this depth of water showed that we were right where the captain said we were. Another idea. For ages man probably did not know why God carpeted the ocean bottom

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with sand in one place, shells in another, and so on. But we see now; the kind of bottom the lead brings up shows where a ship is when the soundings don't, and also it confirms the soundings.

They reached Hamburg after two weeks' stormy sailing. They rested a few days there, then went to Hanover and Frankfort, arriving at Heidelberg early in May.

They had no lodgings selected in Heidelberg, and leaving the others at an inn, Clemens set out immediately to find apartments. Chance or direction, or both, led him to the beautiful Schloss Hotel, on a hill overlooking the city, and as fair a view as one may find in all Germany. He did not go back after his party. He sent a message telling them to take carriage and drive at once to the Schloss, then he sat down to enjoy the view.

Coming up the hill they saw him standing on the veranda, waving his hat in welcome. He led them to their rooms—spacious apartments—and pointed to the view. They were looking down on beautiful Heidelberg Castle, densely wooded hills, the far-flowing Neckar, and the haze-empurpled valley of the Rhine. By and by, pointing to a small cottage on the hilltop, he said:

“I have been picking out my little house to work in; there it is over there; the one with the gable in the roof. Mine is the middle room on the third floor.”

Mrs. Clemens thought the occupants of the house might be surprised if he should suddenly knock and tell them he had come to take possession of his room. Nevertheless, they often looked over in that direction and referred to it as his office. They amused themselves by watching his “people” and trying to make out what they were like. One day he went over there, and sure enough there was a sign out, “Mobilirte Wohnung zu Vermiethen.” A day or two later he was established in the very room he had selected, it being the only room but one vacant.

In *A Tramp Abroad* Mark Twain tells of the beauty of their Heidelberg environment. To Howells he wrote:

Our bedroom has two great glass bird-cages (inclosed balconies), one looking toward the Rhine Valley and sunset, the other looking up the Neckar cul-de-sac, and naturally we spend pearly all our time in these. We have tables and chairs in them; we do our reading, writing, studying, smoking, and suppering in them . . . . It must have been a noble genius who devised this hotel. Lord, how blessed is the repose, the tranquillity of this place! Only two sounds: the happy clamor of the birds in the groves and the muffled music of the Neckar tumbling over the opposing dikes. It is no hardship to lie awake awhile nights, for this subdued roar has exactly the sound of a steady rain beating upon a roof. It is so healing to the spirit; and it bears up the thread of one's

imaginings as the accompaniment bears up a song....I have waited for a “call” to go to work—I knew it would come. Well, it began to come a week ago; my note-book



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comes out more and more frequently every day since; three days ago I concluded to move my manuscripts over to my den. Now the call is loud and decided at last. So tomorrow I shall begin regular, steady work, and stick to it till the middle of July or August 1st, when I look for Twichell; we will then walk about Germany two or three weeks, and then I'll go to work again (perhaps in Munich).

The walking tour with Twichell had been contemplated in the scheme for gathering book material, but the plan for it had not been completed when he left Hartford. Now he was anxious that they should start as soon as possible. Twichell, receiving the news in Hartford, wrote that it was a great day for him: that his third son had been happily born early that morning, and now the arrival of this glorious gift of a tramp through Germany and Switzerland completed his blessings.

I am almost too joyful for pleasure [he wrote]. I labor with my felicities. How I shall get to sleep to-night I don't know, though I have had a good start, in not having slept much last night. Oh, my! do you realize, Mark, what a symposium it is to be? I do. To begin with, I am thoroughly tired and the rest will be worth everything. To walk with you and talk with you for weeks together—why, it's my dream of luxury. Harmony, who at sunrise this morning deemed herself the happiest woman on the Continent when I read your letter to her, widened her smile perceptibly, and revived another degree of strength in a minute. She refused to consider her being left alone; but: only the great chance opened to me.

*Shoes*—Mark, remember that ever so much of our pleasure depends upon your shoes. Don't fail to have adequate preparation made in that department.

Meantime, the struggle with the “awful German language” went on. It was a general hand-to-hand contest. From the head of the household down to little Clara not one was exempt. To Clemens it became a sort of nightmare. Once in his note-book he says:

“Dreamed all bad foreigners went to German heaven; couldn't talk, and wished they had gone to the other place”; and a little farther along, “I wish I could hear myself talk German.”

To Mrs. Crane, in Elmira, he reported their troubles:

Clara Spaulding is working herself to death with her German; never loses an instant while she is awake—or asleep, either, for that matter; dreams of enormous serpents, who poke their heads up under her arms and glare upon her with red-hot eyes, and inquire about the genitive case and the declensions of the definite article. Livy is bullying herself about as hard; pesters over her grammar and her reader and her dictionary all day; then in the evening these two students stretch themselves out on

sofas and sigh and say, “Oh, there’s no use! We never can learn it in the world!” Then Livy takes a sentence to go to bed on: goes gaping and stretching to



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her pillow murmuring, "Ich bin Ihnen sehr verbunden—Ich bin Ihnen sehr verbunden—Ich bin Ihnen sehr verbunden—I wonder if I can get that packed away so it will stay till morning"—and about an hour after midnight she wakes me up and says, "I do so hate to disturb you, but is it 'Ich Ben Jonson sehr befinden'?"

And Mrs. Clemens wrote:

Oh, Sue dear, strive to enter in at the straight gate, for many shall seek to enter it and shall not be able. I am not striving these days. I am just interested in German.

Rosa, the maid, was required to speak to the children only in German, though Bay at first would have none of it. The nurse and governess tried to blandish her, in vain. She maintained a calm and persistent attitude of scorn. Little Susy tried, and really made progress; but one, day she said, pathetically:

"Mama, I wish Rosa was made in English."

Yet a little later Susy herself wrote her Aunt Sue:

I know a lot of German; everybody says I know a lot. I give you a million dollars to see you, and you would give two hundred dollars to see the lovely woods that we see.

Even Howells, in far-off America, caught the infection and began a letter in German, though he hastened to add, "Or do you prefer English by this time? Really I could imagine the German going hard with you, for you always seemed to me a man who liked to be understood with the least possible personal inconvenience."

Clemens declared more than once that he scorned the "outrageous and impossible German grammar," and abandoned it altogether. In his note-book he records how two Germans, strangers in Heidelberg, asked him a direction, and that when he gave it, in the most elaborate and correct German he could muster, one of them only lifted his eyes and murmured:

"Gott im Himmel!"

He was daily impressed with the lingual attainments of foreigners and his own lack of them. In the notes he comments:

Am addressed in German, and when I can't speak it immediately the person tackles me in French, and plainly shows astonishment when I stop him. They naturally despise such an ignoramus. Our doctor here speaks as pure English, as I.



On the Fourth of July he addressed the American students in Heidelberg in one of those mixtures of tongues for which he had a peculiar gift.

The room he had rented for a study was let by a typical German family, and he was a great delight to them. He practised his German on them, and interested himself in their daily affairs.

Howells wrote insistently for some assurance of contributions to the Atlantic.

“I must begin printing your private letters to satisfy the popular demand,” he said. “People are constantly asking when you are going to begin.”

Clemens replied that he would be only too glad to write for the Atlantic if his contributions could be copyrighted in Canada, where pirates were persistently enterprising.



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I do not know that I have any printable stuff just now—separatable stuff, that is—but I shall have by and by. It is very gratifying to hear that it is wanted by anybody. I stand always prepared to hear the reverse, and am constantly surprised that it is delayed so long. Consequently it is not going to astonish me when it comes.

The Clemens party enjoyed Heidelberg, though in different ways. The children romped and picnicked in the castle grounds, which adjoined the hotel; Mrs. Clemens and Miss Spaulding were devoted to bric-a-brac hunting, picture-galleries, and music. Clemens took long walks, or made excursions by rail and diligence to farther points. Art and opera did not appeal to him. The note-book says:

I have attended operas, whenever I could not help it, for fourteen years now; I am sure I know of no agony comparable to the listening to an unfamiliar opera. I am enchanted with the airs of “Trovatore” and other old operas which the hand-organ and the music-box have made entirely familiar to my ear. I am carried away with delighted enthusiasm when they are sung at the opera. But oh, how far between they are! And what long, arid, heartbreaking and headaching “between-times” of that sort of intense but incoherent noise which always so reminds me of the time the orphan asylum burned down. Sunday night, 11th. Huge crowd out to-night to hear the band play the “Fremersberg.” I suppose it is very low-grade music—I know it must be low-grade music—because it so delighted me, it so warmed me, moved me, stirred me, uplifted me, enraptured me, that at times I could have cried, and at others split my throat with shouting. The great crowd was another evidence that it was low-grade music, for only the few are educated up to a point where high-class music gives pleasure. I have never heard enough classic music to be able to enjoy it, and the simple truth is I detest it. Not mildly, but with all my heart. What a poor lot we human beings are anyway! If base music gives me wings, why should I want any other? But I do. I want to like the higher music because the higher and better like it. But you see I want to like it without taking the necessary trouble, and giving the thing the necessary amount of time and attention. The natural suggestion is, to get into that upper tier, that dress-circle, by a lie—we will pretend we like it. This lie, this pretense, gives to opera what support it has in America. And then there is painting. What a red rag is to a bull Turner’s “Slave Ship” is to me. Mr. Ruskin is educated in art up to a point where that picture throws him into as mad an ecstasy of pleasure as it throws me into one of rage. His cultivation enables him to see water in that yellow mud; his cultivation reconciles the floating of unfloatable things to him—chains *etc.*; it reconciles him to fishes swimming on top of the water. The



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most of the picture is a manifest impossibility, that is to say, a lie; and only rigid cultivation can enable a man to find truth in a lie. A Boston critic said the "Slave Ship" reminded him of a cat having a fit in a platter of tomatoes. That went home to my non-cultivation, and I thought, here is a man with an unobstructed eye.

Mark Twain has dwelt somewhat upon these matters in 'A Tramp Abroad'. He confesses in that book that later he became a great admirer of Turner, though perhaps never of the "Slave Ship" picture. In fact, Mark Twain was never artistic, in the common acceptance of that term; neither his art nor his tastes were of an "artistic" kind.

### CXVIII

#### TRAMPING WITH TWICHELL

Twichell arrived on time, August 1st. Clemens met him at Baden-Baden, and they immediately set out on a tramp through the Black Forest, excursions as pleased them, and having an idyllic good time. They did not always walk, but they often did. At least they did sometimes, when the weather was just right and Clemens's rheumatism did not trouble him. But they were likely to take a carriage, or a donkey-cart, or a train, or any convenient thing that happened along. They did not hurry, but idled and talked and gathered flowers, or gossiped with wayside natives and tourists, though always preferring to wander along together, beguiling the way with discussion and speculation and entertaining tales. They crossed on into Switzerland in due time and considered the conquest of the Alps. The family followed by rail or diligence, and greeted them here and there when they rested from their wanderings. Mark Twain found an immunity from attention in Switzerland, which for years he had not known elsewhere. His face was not so well known and his pen-name was carefully concealed.

It was a large relief to be no longer an object of public curiosity; but Twichell, as in the Bermuda trip, did not feel quite honest, perhaps, in altogether preserving the mask of unrecognition. In one of his letters home he tells how; when a young man at their table was especially delighted with Mark Twain's conversation, he could not resist taking the young man aside and divulging to him the speaker's identity.

"I could not forbear telling him who Mark was," he says, "and the mingled surprise and pleasure his face exhibited made me glad I had done so."

They climbed the Rigi, after which Clemens was not in good walking trim for some time; so Twichell went on a trip on his own account, to give his comrade a chance to rest. Then away again to Interlaken, where the Jungfrau rises, cold and white; on over the loneliness of Gemini Pass, with glaciers for neighbors and the unfading white peaks

against the blue; to Visp and to Zermatt, where the Matterhorn points like a finger that directs mankind to God. This was true Alpine wandering—sweet vagabondage.

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The association of the wanderers was a very intimate one. Their minds were closely attuned, and there were numerous instances of thought—echo-mind answering to mind—without the employment of words. Clemens records in his notes:

Sunday A.M., August 11th. Been reading Romola yesterday afternoon, last night, and this morning; at last I came upon the only passage which has thus far hit me with force—Tito compromising with his conscience, and resolving to do; not a bad thing, but not the best thing. Joe entered the room five minutes—no, three minutes later—and without prelude said, “I read that book you’ve got there six years ago, and got a mighty good text for a sermon out of it the passage where the young fellow compromises with his conscience, and resolves to do, not a bad thing, but not the best thing.” This is Joe’s first reference to this book since he saw me buy it twenty-four hours ago. So my mind operated on his in this instance. He said he was sitting yonder in the reading-room, three minutes ago (I have not got up yet), thinking of nothing in particular, and didn’t know what brought Romola into his head; but into his head it came and that particular passage. Now I, forty feet away, in another room, was reading that particular passage at that particular moment.

Couldn’t suggest Romola to him earlier, because nothing in the book had taken hold of me till I came to that one passage on page 112, Tauchnitz edition.

And again:

The instances of mind-telegraphing are simply innumerable. This evening Joe and I sat long at the edge of the village looking at the Matterhorn. Then Joe said, “We ought to go to the Cervin Hotel and inquire for Livy’s telegram.” If he had been but one instant later I should have said those words instead of him.

Such entries are frequent, and one day there came along a kind of object-lesson. They were toiling up a mountainside, when Twichell began telling a very interesting story which had happened in connection with a friend still living, though Twichell had no knowledge of his whereabouts at this time. The story finished just as they rounded a turn in, the cliff, and Twichell, looking up, ended his last sentence, “And there’s the man!” Which was true, for they were face to face with the very man of whom he had been telling.

Another subject that entered into their discussion was the law of accidents. Clemens held that there was no such thing an accident: that it was all forewritten in the day of the beginning; that every event, however slight, was embryonic in that first instant of created life, and immutably timed to its appearance in the web of destiny. Once on their travels, when they were on a high bank above a brawling stream, a little girl, who started to run toward them, slipped and rolled under the bottom rail of the protecting fence, her feet momentarily hanging out over the precipice and the tearing torrent

below. It seemed a miraculous escape from death, and furnished an illustration for their discussion. The condition of the ground, the force of her fall, the nearness of the fatal edge, all these had grown inevitably out of the first great projection of thought, and the child's fall and its escape had been invested in life's primal atom.



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The author of *A Tramp Abroad* tells us of the rushing stream that flows out of the Arcadian sky valley, the Gasterthal, and goes plunging down to Kandersteg, and how he took exercise by making “Harris” (Twichell) set stranded logs adrift while he lounged comfortably on a boulder, and watched them go tearing by; also how he made Harris run a race with one of those logs. But that is literature. Twichell, in a letter home, has preserved a likelier and lovelier story:

Mark is a queer fellow. There is nothing that he so delights in as a swift, strong stream. You can hardly get him to leave one when once he is within the influence of its fascinations. To throw in stones and sticks seems to afford him rapture. Tonight, as we were on our way back to the hotel, seeing a lot of driftwood caught by the torrent side below the path, I climbed down and threw it in. When I got back to the path Mark was running down-stream after it as hard as he could go, throwing up his hands and shouting in the wildest ecstasy, and when a piece went over a fall and emerged to view in the foam below he would jump up and down and yell. He said afterward that he hadn't been so excited in three months. He acted just like a boy; another feature of his extreme sensitiveness in certain directions.

Then generalizing, Twichell adds:

He has coarse spots in him. But I never knew a person so finely regardful of the feelings of others in some ways. He hates to pass another person walking, and will practise some subterfuge to take off what he feels is the discourtesy of it. And he is exceedingly timid, tremblingly timid, about approaching strangers; hates to ask a question. His sensitive regard for others extends to animals. When we are driving his concern is all about the horse. He can't bear to see the whip used, or to see a horse pull hard. To-day, when the driver clucked up his horse and quickened his pace a little, Mark said, “The fellow's got the notion that we are in a hurry.” He is exceedingly considerate toward me in regard of everything—or most things.

The days were not all sunshine. Sometimes it rained and they took shelter by the wayside, or, if there was no shelter, they plodded along under their umbrellas, still talking away, and if something occurred that Clemens wanted to put down they would stand stock still in the rain, and Twichell would hold the umbrella while Clemens wrote—a good while sometimes—oblivious to storm and discomfort and the long way yet ahead.

After the day on Gemmi Pass Twichell wrote home:

Mark, to-day, was immensely absorbed in the flowers. He scrambled around and gathered a great variety, and manifested the intensest pleasure in them. He crowded a pocket of his note-book with his specimens and wanted more room. So I stopped the guide and got out my needle and thread, and out of a stiff paper, a hotel advertisement, I had about me made a paper bag, a cornucopia like,

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and tied it to his vest in front, and it answered the purpose admirably. He filled it full with a beautiful collection, and as soon as we got here to-night he transferred it to a cardboard box and sent it by mail to Livy. A strange Mark he is, full of contradictions. I spoke last night of his sensitive to others' feelings. To-day the guide got behind, and came up as if he would like to go by, yet hesitated to do so. Mark paused, went aside and busied himself a minute picking a flower. In the halt the guide got by and resumed his place in front. Mark threw the flower away, saying, "I didn't want that. I only wanted to give the old man a chance to go on without seeming to pass us." Mark is splendid to walk with amid such grand scenery, for he talks so well about it, has such a power of strong, picturesque expression. I wish you might have heard him to-day. His vigorous speech nearly did justice to the things we saw.

In an address which Twichell gave many years later he recalls another pretty incident of their travels. They had been toiling up the Gorner Grat.

As we paused for a rest, a lamb from a flock of sheep near by ventured inquisitively toward us, whereupon Mark seated himself on a rock, and with beckoning hand and soft words tried to get it to come to him.

On the lamb's part it was a struggle between curiosity and timidity, but in a succession of advances and retreats it gained confidence, though at a very gradual rate. It was a scene for a painter: the great American humorist on one side of the game and that silly little creature on the other, with the Matterhorn for a background. Mark was reminded that the time he was consuming was valuable—but to no purpose. The Gorner Grat could wait. He held on with undiscouraged perseverance till he carried his point: the lamb finally put its nose in his hand, and he was happy over it all the rest of the day.

The matter of religion came up now and again in the drift of their discussions. It was Twichell's habit to have prayers in their room every night at the hotels, and Clemens was willing to join in the observances. Once Twichell, finding him in a responsive mood—a remorseful mood—gave his sympathy, and spoke of the larger sympathy of divinity. Clemens listened and seemed soothed and impressed, but his philosophies were too wide and too deep for creeds and doctrines. A day or two later, as they were tramping along in the hot sun, his honesty had to speak out.

"Joe," he said, "I'm going to make a confession. I don't believe in your religion at all. I've been living a lie right straight along whenever I pretended to. For a moment, sometimes, I have been almost a believer, but it immediately drifts away from me again. I don't believe one word of your Bible was inspired by God any more than any other book. I believe it is entirely the work of man from beginning to end—atonement and all. The problem of life and death and eternity and the true conception of God is a bigger thing than is contained in that book."

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So the personal side of religious discussion closed between them, and was never afterward reopened.

They joined Mrs. Clemens and the others at Lausanne at last, and their Swiss holiday was over. Twichell set out for home by way of England, and Clemens gave himself up to reflection and rest after his wanderings. Then, as the days of their companionship passed in review, quickly and characteristically he sent a letter after his comrade:

*Dear old Joe,* It is actually all over! I was so low-spirited at the station yesterday, and this morning, when I woke, I couldn't seem to accept the dismal truth that you were really gone, and the pleasant tramping and talking at an end. Ah, my boy! it has been such a rich holiday to me, and I feel under such deep and honest obligations to you for coming. I am putting out of my mind all memory of the times when I misbehaved toward you and hurt you; I am resolved to consider it forgiven, and to store up and remember only the charming hours of the journeys and the times when I was not unworthy to be with you and share a companionship which to me stands first after Livy's. It is justifiable to do this; for why should I let my small infirmities of disposition live and grovel among my mental pictures of the eternal sublimities of the Alps?

Livy can't accept or endure the fact that you are gone. But you are, and we cannot get around it. So take our love with you, and bear it also over the sea to Harmony, and God bless you both.

*Mark.*

## CXIX

### ITALIAN DAYS

The Clemens party wandered down into Italy—to the lakes, Venice, Florence, Rome—loitering through the galleries, gathering here and there beautiful furnishings—pictures, marbles, and the like—for the Hartford home.

In Venice they bought an old careen bed, a massive regal affair with serpentine columns surmounted by singularly graceful cupids, and with other cupids sporting on the headboard: the work of some artist who had been dust three centuries maybe, for this bed had come out of an old Venetian palace, dismantled and abandoned. It was a furniture with a long story, and the years would add mightily to its memories. It would become a stately institution in the Clemens household. The cupids on the posts were removable, and one of the highest privileges of childhood would be to occupy that bed and have down one of the cupids to play with. It was necessary to be ill to acquire that privilege—not violently and dangerously ill, but interestingly so—ill enough to be propped up with pillows and have one's meals served on a tray, with dolls and picture-



books handy, and among them a beautiful rosewood cupid who had kept dimpled and dainty for so many, many years.

They spent three weeks in Venice: a dreamlike experience, especially for the children, who were on the water most of the time, and became fast friends with their gondolier, who taught them some Italian words; then a week in Florence and a fortnight in Rome.



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—[From the note-book:

“*Bay*—When the waiter brought my breakfast this morning I spoke to him in Italian.

“*Mama*—What did you say?

“*B.*—I said, ‘*Polly-vo fransay.*’

“*M.*—What does it mean?

“*B.*—I don’t know. What does it mean, *Susy*?

“*S.*—It means, ‘*Polly wants a cracker.*”]

Clemens discovered that in twelve years his attitude had changed somewhat concerning the old masters. He no longer found the bright, new copies an improvement on the originals, though the originals still failed to wake his enthusiasm. Mrs. Clemens and Miss Spaulding spent long hours wandering down avenues of art, accompanied by him on occasion, though not always willingly. He wrote his sorrow to Twichell:

I do wish you were in Rome to do my sight-seeing for me. Rome interests me as much as East Hartford could, and no more; that is, the Rome which the average tourist feels an interest in. There are other things here which stir me enough to make life worth living. Livy and Clara are having a royal time worshipping the old masters, and I as good a time gritting my ineffectual teeth over them.

Once when Sarah Orne Jewett was with the party he remarked that if the old masters had labeled their fruit one wouldn’t be so likely to mistake pears for turnips.

“Youth,” said Mrs. Clemens, gravely, “if you do not care for these masterpieces yourself, you might at least consider the feelings of others”; and Miss Jewett, regarding him severely, added, in her quaint Yankee fashion:

“Now, you’ve been spoke to!”

He felt duly reprimanded, but his taste did not materially reform. He realized that he was no longer in a proper frame of mind to write of general sight-seeing. One must be eager, verdant, to write happily the story of travel. Replying to a letter from Howells on the subject he said:

I wish I could give those sharp satires on European life which you mention, but of course a man can’t write successful satire except he be in a calm, judicial good-humor; whereas I hate travel, and I hate hotels, and I hate the opera, and I hate the old masters. In truth I don’t ever seem to be in a good enough humor with anything to satirize it. No, I want to stand up before it and curse it and foam at the mouth, or take a club and pound it to rags and pulp. I have got in two or three chapters about Wagner’s operas, and managed to do it without showing temper, but the strain of another such effort would burst me.



Clemens became his own courier for a time in Italy, and would seem to have made more of a success of it than he did a good many years afterward, if we may believe the story he has left us of his later attempt:

“Am a shining success as a courier,” he records, “by the use of francs. Have learned how to handle the railway guide intelligently and with confidence.”

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He declares that he will have no more couriers; but possibly he could have employed one to advantage on the trip out of Italy, for it was a desperately hard one, with bad connections and delayed telegrams. When, after thirty-six hours weary, continuous traveling, they arrived at last in Munich in a drizzle and fog, and were domiciled in their winter quarters, at No. 1a, Karlstrasse, they felt that they had reached the home of desolation itself, the very throne of human misery.

And the rooms were so small, the conveniences so meager, and the porcelain stove was grim, ghastly, dismal, intolerable! So Livy and Clara Spaulding sat down forlorn and cried, and I retired to a private place to pray. By and by we all retired to our narrow German beds, and when Livy and I had finished talking across the room it was all decided that we should rest twenty-four hours, then pay whatever damages were required and straightway fly to the south of France.

The rooms had been engaged by letter, months before, of their proprietress, Fraulein Dahlweiner, who had met them at the door with a lantern in her hand, full of joy in their arrival and faith in her ability to make them happy. It was a faith that was justified. Next morning, when they all woke, rested, the weather had cleared, there were bright fires in the rooms, the world had taken on a new aspect. Fraulein Dahlweiner, the pathetic, hard-working little figure, became almost beautiful in their eyes in her efforts for their comfort. She arranged larger rooms and better conveniences for them. Their location was central and there was a near-by park. They had no wish to change. Clemens, in his letter to Howells, boasts that he brought the party through from Rome himself, and that they never had so little trouble before; but in looking over this letter, thirty years later, he commented, "Probably a lie."

He secured a room some distance away for his work, but then could not find his Swiss note-book. He wrote Twichell that he had lost it, and that after all he might not be obliged to write a volume of travels. But the notebook turned up and the work on the new book proceeded. For a time it went badly. He wrote many chapters, only to throw them aside. He had the feeling that he had somehow lost the knack of descriptive narrative. He had become, as it seemed, too didactic. He thought his description was inclined to be too literal, his humor manufactured. These impressions passed, by and by; interest developed, and with it enthusiasm and confidence. In a letter to Twichell he reported his progress:

I was about to write to my publisher and propose some other book, when the confounded thing [the note-book] turned up, and down went my heart into my boots. But there was now no excuse, so I went solidly to work, tore up a great part of the *Ms.* written in Heidelberg—wrote and tore up, continued to write and tear up—and at last, reward of patient and noble persistence, my pen got the old swing again! Since then I'm glad that Providence knew better what to do with the Swiss notebook than I did.



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Further along in the same letter there breaks forth a true heart-answer to that voice of the Alps which, once heard, is never wholly silent:

O Switzerland! The further it recedes into the enriching haze of time, the more intolerably delicious the charm of it and the cheer of it and the glory and majesty, and solemnity and pathos of it grow. Those mountains had a soul: they thought, they spoke. And what a voice it was! And how real! Deep down in my memory it is sounding yet. Alp calleth unto Alp! That stately old Scriptural wording is the right one for God's Alps and God's ocean. How puny we were in that awful Presence, and how painless it was to be so! How fitting and right it seemed, and how stingless was the sense of our unspeakable insignificance! And Lord, how pervading were the repose and peace and blessedness that poured out of the heart of the invisible Great Spirit of the mountains! Now what is it? There are mountains and mountains and mountains in this world, but only these take you by the heartstrings. I wonder what the secret of it is. Well, time and time and again it has seemed to me that I must drop everything and flee to Switzerland once more. It is a longings deep, strong, tugging longing. That is the word. We must go again, Joe.

## CXX

### IN MUNICH

That winter in Munich was not recalled as an unpleasant one in after-years. His work went well enough—always a chief source of gratification. Mrs. Clemens and Miss Spaulding found interest in the galleries, in quaint shops, in the music and picturesque life of that beautiful old Bavarian town. The children also liked Munich. It was easy for them to adopt any new environment or custom. The German Christmas, with its lavish tree and toys and cakes, was an especial delight. The German language they seemed fairly to absorb. Writing to his mother Clemens said:

I cannot see but that the children speak German as well as they do English. Susy often translates Livy's orders to the servants. I cannot work and study German at the same time; so I have dropped the latter and do not even read the language, except in the morning paper to get the news.

In Munich—as was the case wherever they were known—there were many callers. Most Americans and many foreigners felt it proper to call on Mark Twain. It was complimentary, but it was wearying sometimes. Mrs. Clemens, in a letter written from Venice, where they had received even more than usual attention, declared there were moments when she almost wished she might never see a visitor again.

Originally there was a good deal about Munich in the new book, and some of the discarded chapters might have been retained with advantage. They were ruled out in

the final weeding as being too serious, along with the French chapters. Only a few Italian memories were left to follow the Switzerland wanderings.



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The book does record one Munich event, though transferring it to Heilsbronn. It is the incident of the finding of the lost sock in the vast bedroom. It may interest the reader to compare what really happened, as set down in a letter to Twichell, with the story as written for publication:

Last night I awoke at three this morning, and after raging to myself for two interminable hours I gave it up. I rose, assumed a catlike stealthiness, to keep from waking Livy, and proceeded to dress in the pitch-dark. Slowly but surely I got on garment after garment—all down to one sock; I had one slipper on and the other in my hand. Well, on my hands and knees I crept softly around, pawing and feeling and scooping along the carpet, and among chair-legs, for that missing sock, I kept that up, and still kept it up, and kept it up. At first I only said to myself, “Blame that sock,” but that soon ceased to answer. My expletives grew steadily stronger and stronger, and at last, when I found I was lost, I had to sit flat down on the floor and take hold of something to keep from lifting the roof off with the profane explosion that was trying to get out of me. I could see the dim blur of the window, but of course it was in the wrong place and could give me no information as to where I was. But I had one comfort—I had not waked Livy; I believed I could find that sock in silence if the night lasted long enough. So I started again and softly pawed all over the place, and sure enough, at the end of half an hour I laid my hand on the missing article. I rose joyfully up and butted the washbowl and pitcher off the stand, and simply raised——so to speak. Livy screamed, then said, “Who is it? What is the matter?” I said, “There ain’t anything the matter. I’m hunting for my sock.” She said, “Are you hunting for it with a club?” I went in the parlor and lit the lamp, and gradually the fury subsided and the ridiculous features of the thing began to suggest themselves. So I lay on the sofa with note-book and pencil, and transferred the adventure to our big room in the hotel at Heilsbronn, and got it on paper a good deal to my satisfaction.

He wrote with frequency to Howells, and sent him something for the magazine now and then: the “Gambetta Duel” burlesque, which would make a chapter in the book later, and the story of “The Great Revolution in Pitcairn.”—[Included in *The Stolen White Elephant* volume. The “Pitcairn” and “Elephant” tales were originally chapters in ‘A Tramp Abroad’; also the unpleasant “Coffin-box” yarn, which Howells rejected for the Atlantic and generally condemned, though for a time it remained a favorite with its author.]

Howells’s novel, ‘*The Lady of the Aroostook*’, was then running through the ‘Atlantic’, and in one of his letters Clemens expresses the general deep satisfaction of his household in that tale:



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If your literature has not struck perfection now we are not able to see what is lacking. It is all such truth—truth to the life; everywhere your pen falls it leaves a photograph . . . . Possibly you will not be a fully accepted classic until you have been dead one hundred years—it is the fate of the Shakespeares of all genuine professions—but then your books will be as common as Bibles, I believe. In that day I shall be in the encyclopedias too, thus: “Mark Twain, history and occupation unknown; but he was personally acquainted with Howells.”

Though in humorous form, this was a sincere tribute. Clemens always regarded with awe William Dean Howells’s ability to dissect and photograph with such delicacy the minutiae of human nature; just as Howells always stood in awe of Mark Twain’s ability to light, with a single flashing sentence, the whole human horizon.

### CXXI

#### PARIS, ENGLAND, AND HOMEWARD BOUND

They decided to spend the spring months in Paris, so they gave up their pleasant quarters with Fraulein Dahlweiner, and journeyed across Europe, arriving at the French capital February 28, 1879. Here they met another discouraging prospect, for the weather was cold and damp, the cabmen seemed brutally ill-mannered, their first hotel was chilly, dingy, uninviting. Clemens, in his note-book, set down his impressions of their rooms. A paragraph will serve:

Ten squatty, ugly arm-chairs, upholstered in the ugliest and coarsest conceivable scarlet plush; two hideous sofas of the same—uncounted armless chairs ditto. Five ornamental chairs, seats covered with a coarse rag, embroidered in flat expanse with a confusion of leaves such as no tree ever bore, six or seven a dirty white and the rest a faded red. How those hideous chairs do swear at the hideous sofa near them! This is the very hatefulest room I have seen in Europe.

Oh, how cold and raw and unwarmable it is!

It was better than that when the sun came out, and they found happier quarters presently at the Hotel Normandy, rue de l’Echelle.

But, alas, the sun did not come out often enough. It was one of those French springs and summers when it rains nearly every day, and is distressingly foggy and chill between times. Clemens received a bad impression of France and the French during that Parisian-sojourn, from which he never entirely recovered. In his note-book he wrote: “France has neither winter, nor summer, nor morals. Apart from these drawbacks it is a fine country.”



The weather may not have been entirely accountable for his prejudice, but from whatever cause Mark Twain, to the day of his death, had no great love for the French as a nation. Conversely, the French as a nation did not care greatly for Mark Twain. There were many individual Frenchmen that Mark Twain admired, as there were many Frenchmen who admired the work and personality of Mark Twain; but on neither side was there the warm, fond, general affection which elsewhere throughout Europe he invited and returned.



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His book was not yet finished. In Paris he worked on it daily, but without enthusiasm. The city was too noisy, the weather too dismal. His note-book says:

May 7th. I wish this terrible winter would come to an end. Have had rain almost without intermission for two months and one week.

May 28th. This is one of the coldest days of this most damnable and interminable winter.

It was not all gloom and discomfort. There was congenial company in Paris, and dinner-parties, and a world of callers. Aldrich the scintillating—[Of Aldrich Clemens used to say: "When Aldrich speaks it seems to me he is the bright face of the moon, and I feel like the other side." Aldrich, unlike Clemens, was not given to swearing. The Parisian note-book has this memorandum: "Aldrich gives his seat in the horse-car to a crutched cripple, and discovers that what he took for a crutch is only a length of walnut beading and the man not lame; whereupon Aldrich uses the only profanity that ever escaped his lips: 'Damn a dam'd man who would carry a dam'd piece of beading under his dam'd arm!'" ]—was there, also Gedney Bunce, of Hartford, Frank Millet and his wife, Hjalinar Hjorth Boyesen and his wife, and a Mr. and Mrs. Chamberlain, artist people whom the Clemenses had met pleasantly in Italy. Turgenieff, as in London, came to call; also Baron Tauchnitz, that nobly born philanthropist of German publishers, who devoted his life, often at his personal cost, to making the literature of other nations familiar to his own. Tauchnitz had early published the 'Innocents', following it with other Mark Twain volumes as they appeared, paying always, of his own will and accord, all that he could afford to pay for this privilege; which was not really a privilege, for the law did not require him to pay at all. He traveled down to Paris now to see the author, and to pay his respects to him. "A mighty nice old gentleman," Clemens found him. Richard Whiteing was in Paris that winter, and there were always plenty of young American painters whom it was good to know.

They had what they called the Stomach Club, a jolly organization, whose purpose was indicated by its name. Mark Twain occasionally attended its sessions, and on one memorable evening, when Edwin A. Abbey was there, speeches were made which never appeared in any printed proceedings. Mark Twain's address that night has obtained a wide celebrity among the clubs of the world, though no line of it, or even its title has ever found its way into published literature.

Clemens had a better time in Paris than the rest of his party. He could go and come, and mingle with the sociabilities when the abnormal weather kept the others housed in. He did a good deal of sight-seeing of his own kind, and once went up in a captive balloon. They were all studying French, more or less, and they read histories and other books relating to France. Clemens renewed his old interest in Joan of Arc, and for the first time appears to have conceived the notion of writing the story of that lovely character.



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The Reign of Terror interested him. He reread Carlyle's *Revolution*, a book which he was never long without reading, and they all read 'A Tale of Two Cities'. When the weather permitted they visited the scenes of that grim period.

In his note-book he comments:

"The Reign of Terror shows that, without distinction or rank, the people were savages. Marquises, dukes, lawyers, blacksmiths, they each figure in due proportion to their crafts."

And again:

"For 1,000 years this savage nation indulged itself in massacre; every now and then a big massacre or a little one. The spirit is peculiar to France—I mean in Christendom—no other state has had it. In this France has always walked abreast, kept her end up with her brethren, the Turks and the Burmese. Their chief traits—love of glory and massacre."

Yet it was his sense of fairness that made him write, as a sort of quittance:

"You perceive I generalize with intrepidity from single instances. It is the tourists' custom. When I see a man jump from the Vendome Column I say, 'They like to do that in Paris.'"

Following this implied atonement, he records a few conclusions, drawn doubtless from Parisian reading and observation:

"Childish race and great."

"I'm for cremation."

"I disfavor capital punishment."

"Samson was a Jew, therefore not a fool. The Jews have the best average brain of any people in the world. The Jews are the only race in the world who work wholly with their brains, and never with their hands. There are no Jew beggars, no Jew tramps, no Jew ditchers, hod-carriers, day-laborers, or followers of toilsome mechanical trade.

"They are peculiarly and conspicuously the world's intellectual aristocracy."

"Communism is idiocy. They want to divide up the property. Suppose they did it. It requires brains to keep money as well as to make it. In a precious little while the money would be back in the former owner's hands and the communist would be poor again.

The division would have to be remade every three years or it would do the communist no good.”

A curious thing happened one day in Paris. Boyesen; in great excitement, came to the Normandy and was shown to the Clemens apartments. He was pale and could hardly speak, for his emotion. He asked immediately if his wife had come to their rooms. On learning that she had not, he declared that she was lost or had met with an accident. She had been gone several hours, he said, and had sent no word, a thing which she had never done before. He besought Clemens to aid him in his search for her, to do something to help him find her. Clemens, without showing the least emotion or special concentration of interest, said quietly:

“I will.”

“Where will you go first,” Boyesen demanded.

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Still in the same even voice Clemens said:

“To the elevator.”

He passed out of the room, with Boyesen behind him, into the hall. The elevator was just coming up, and as they reached it, it stopped at their landing, and Mrs. Boyesen stepped out. She had been delayed by a breakdown and a blockade. Clemens said afterward that he had a positive conviction that she would be on the elevator when they reached it. It was one of those curious psychic evidences which we find all along during his life; or, if the skeptics prefer to call them coincidences, they are privileged to do so.

Paris, June 1, 1879. Still this vindictive winter continues. Had a raw, cold rain to-day. To-night we sit around a rousing wood fire.

They stood it for another month, and then on the 10th of July, when it was still chilly and disagreeable, they gave it up and left for Brussels, which he calls “a dirty, beautiful (architecturally), interesting town.”

Two days in Brussels, then to Antwerp, where they dined on the Trenton with Admiral Roan, then to Rotterdam, Dresden, Amsterdam, and London, arriving there the 29th of July, which was rainy and cold, in keeping with all Europe that year.

Had to keep a rousing big cannel-coal fire blazing in the grate all day. A remarkable summer, truly!

London meant a throng of dinners, as always: brilliant, notable affairs, too far away to recall. A letter written by Mrs. Clemens at the time preserves one charming, fresh bit of that departed bloom.

Clara [Spaulding] went in to dinner with Mr. Henry James; she enjoyed him very much. I had a little chat with him before dinner, and he was exceedingly pleasant and easy to talk with. I had expected just the reverse, thinking one would feel looked over by him and criticized. Mr. Whistler, the artist, was at the dinner, but he did not attract me. Then there was a lady, over eighty years old, a Mrs. Stuart, who was Washington Irving's love, and she is said to have been his only love, and because of her he went unmarried to his grave. —[Mrs. Clemens was misinformed. Irving's only “love” was a Miss Hoffman.]—She was also an intimate friend of Madame Bonaparte. You would judge Mrs. Stuart to be about fifty, and she was the life of the drawing-room after dinner, while the ladies were alone, before the gentlemen came up. It was lovely to see such a sweet old age; every one was so fond of her, every one deferred to her, yet every one was joking her, making fun of her, but she was always equal to the occasion, giving back as bright replies as possible; you had not the least sense that she was aged. She quoted French in her stories with perfect ease and fluency, and had all the time such a kindly, lovely way. When she entered the room, before dinner, Mr. James, who was then



talking with me, shook hands with her and said, "Good evening, you wonderful lady." After she had passed . . . he said, "She is the youngest person in London. She has the youngest feelings and the youngest interests . . . . She is always interested."

It was a perfect delight to hear her and see her.



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For more than two years they had had an invitation from Reginald Cholmondeley to pay him another visit.

So they went for a week to Conover, where many friends were gathered, including Millais, the painter, and his wife (who had been the wife of Ruskin), numerous relatives, and other delightful company. It was one of the happiest chapters of their foreign sojourn.—[Moncure D. Conway, who was in London at the time, recalls, in his *Autobiography*, a visit which he made with Mr. and Mrs. Clemens to Stratford-on-Avon. “Mrs. Clemens was an ardent Shakespearian, and Mark Twain determined to give her a surprise. He told her that we were going on a journey to Epworth, and persuaded me to connive with the joke by writing to Charles Flower not to meet us himself, but send his carriage. On arrival at the station we directed the driver to take us straight to the church. When we entered, and Mrs. Clemens read on Shakespeare’s grave, ‘Good friend, for Jesus’ sake, forbear,’ she started back, exclaiming, ‘where am I?’ Mark received her reproaches with an affluence of guilt, but never did lady enjoy a visit more than that to Avonbank. Mrs. Charles Flower (nee Martineau) took Mrs. Clemens to her heart, and contrived that every social or other attraction of that region should surround her.”]

From the note-book:

Sunday, August 17,'79. Raw and cold, and a drenching rain. Went to hear Mr. Spurgeon. House three-quarters full—say three thousand people. First hour, lacking one minute, taken up with two prayers, two ugly hymns, and Scripture-reading. Sermon three-quarters of an hour long. A fluent talker, good, sonorous voice. Topic treated in the unpleasant, old fashion: Man a mighty bad child, God working at him in forty ways and having a world of trouble with him.

A wooden-faced congregation; just the sort to see no incongruity in the majesty of Heaven stooping to plead and sentimentalize over such, and see in their salvation an important matter.

Tuesday, August 19th. Went up Windermere Lake in the steamer. Talked with the great Darwin.

They had planned to visit Dr. Brown in Scotland. Mrs. Clemens, in particular, longed to go, for his health had not been of the best, and she felt that they would never have a chance to see him again. Clemens in after years blamed himself harshly for not making the trip, declaring that their whole reason for not going was an irritable reluctance on his part to take the troublesome journey and a perversity of spirit for which there was no real excuse. There is documentary evidence against this harsh conclusion. They were, in fact, delayed here and there by misconnections and the continued terrific weather, barely reaching Liverpool in time for their sailing date, August 23d. Unquestionably he was weary of railway travel, for he always detested it. Time would magnify his

remembered reluctance, until, in the end, he would load his conscience with the entire burden of blame.



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Their ship was the Gallia, and one night, when they were nearing the opposite side of the Atlantic, Mark Twain, standing on deck, saw for the third time in his experience a magnificent lunar rainbow: a complete arch, the colors part of the time very brilliant, but little different from a day rainbow. It is not given to many persons in this world to see even one of these phenomena. After each previous vision there had come to him a period of good-fortune. Perhaps this also boded well for him.

### CXXII

#### AN INTERLUDE

The Gallia reached New York September 3, 1879. A report of his arrival, in the New York Sun, stated that Mark Twain had changed in his absence; that only his drawl seemed natural.

His hat, as he stood on the deck of the incoming Cunarder, Gallia, was of the pattern that English officers wear in India, and his suit of clothes was such as a merchant might wear in his store. He looked older than when he went to Germany, and his hair has turned quite gray.

It was a late hour when they were finally up to the dock, and Clemens, anxious to get through the Custom House, urged the inspector to accept his carefully prepared list of dutiable articles, without opening the baggage. But the official was dubious. Clemens argued eloquently, and a higher authority was consulted. Again Clemens stated his case and presented his arguments. A still higher chief of inspection was summoned, evidently from his bed. He listened sleepily to the preamble, then suddenly said: "Oh, chalk his baggage, of course! Don't you know it's Mark Twain and that he'll talk all night?"

They went directly to the farm, for whose high sunlit loveliness they had been longing through all their days of absence. Mrs. Clemens, in her letters, had never failed to dwell on her hunger for that fair hilltop. From his accustomed study-table Clemens wrote to Twichell:

"You have run about a good deal, Joe, but you have never seen any place that was so divine as the farm. Why don't you come here and take a foretaste of Heaven?" Clemens declared he would roam no more forever, and settled down to the happy farm routine. He took up his work, which had not gone well in Paris, and found his interest in it renewed. In the letter to Twichell he said:

I am revising my *Ms.* I did not expect to like it, but I do. I have been knocking out early chapters for more than a year now, not because they had not merit, but merely because they hindered the flow of the narrative; it was a dredging process. Day before yesterday



my shovel fetched up three more chapters and laid them, reeking, on the festering shore-pile of their predecessors, and now I think the yarn swims right along, without hitch or halt. I believe it will be a readable book of travels. I cannot see that it lacks anything but information.

Mrs. Clemens was no less weary of travel than her husband. Yet she had enjoyed their roaming, and her gain from it had been greater than his. Her knowledge of art and literature, and of the personal geography of nations, had vastly increased; her philosophy of life had grown beyond all counting.



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She had lost something, too; she had outstripped her traditions. One day, when she and her sister had walked across the fields, and had stopped to rest in a little grove by a pretty pond, she confessed, timidly enough and not without sorrow, how she had drifted away from her orthodox views. She had ceased to believe, she said, in the orthodox Bible God, who exercised a personal supervision over every human soul. The hordes of people she had seen in many lands, the philosophies she had listened to from her husband and those wise ones about him, the life away from the restricted round of home, all had contributed to this change. Her God had become a larger God; the greater mind which exerts its care of the individual through immutable laws of time and change and environment—the Supreme Good which comprehends the individual flower, dumb creature, or human being only as a unit in the larger scheme of life and love. Her sister was not shocked or grieved; she too had grown with the years, and though perhaps less positively directed, had by a path of her own reached a wider prospect of conclusions. It was a sweet day there in the little grove by the water, and would linger in the memory of both so long as life lasted. Certainly it was the larger faith; though the moment must always come when the narrower, nearer, more humanly protecting arm of orthodoxy lends closer comfort. Long afterward, in the years that followed the sorrow of heavy bereavement, Clemens once said to his wife, “Livy, if it comforts you to lean on the Christian faith do so,” and she answered, “I can’t, Youth. I haven’t any.”

And the thought that he had destroyed her illusion, without affording a compensating solace, was one that would come back to him, now and then, all his days.

### CXXIII

#### THE GRANT SPEECH OF 1879

If the lunar rainbow had any fortuitous significance, perhaps we may find it in the two speeches which Mark Twain made in November and December of that year. The first of these was delivered at Chicago, on the occasion of the reception of General Grant by the Army of the Tennessee, on the evening of November 73, 1879. Grant had just returned from his splendid tour of the world. His progress from San Francisco eastward had been such an ovation as is only accorded to sovereignty. Clemens received an invitation to the reunion, but, dreading the long railway journey, was at first moved to decline. He prepared a letter in which he made “business” his excuse, and expressed his regret that he would not be present to see and hear the veterans of the Army of the Tennessee at the moment when their old commander entered the room and rose in his place to speak.

“Besides,” he said, “I wanted to see the General again anyway and renew the acquaintance. He would remember me, because I was the person who did not ask him for an office.”



He did not send the letter. Reconsidering, it seemed to him that there was something strikingly picturesque in the idea of a Confederate soldier who had been chased for a fortnight in the rain through Ralls and Monroe counties, Missouri, now being invited to come and give welcome home to his old imaginary pursuer. It was in the nature of an imperative command, which he could not refuse to obey.

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He accepted and agreed to speak. They had asked him to respond to the toast of “The Ladies,” but for him the subject was worn out. He had already responded to that toast at least twice. He telegraphed that there was one class of the community that had always been overlooked upon such occasions, and that if they would allow him to do so he would take that class for a toast: the babies. Necessarily they agreed, and he prepared himself accordingly.

He arrived in Chicago in time for the prodigious procession of welcome. Grant was to witness the march from a grand reviewing stand, which had been built out from the second story of the Palmer House. Clemens had not seen the General since the “embarrassing” introduction in Washington, twelve years before. Their meeting was characteristic enough. Carter Harrison, Mayor of Chicago, arriving with Grant, stepped over to Clemens, and asked him if he wouldn’t like to be presented. Grant also came forward, and a moment later Harrison was saying:

“General, let me present Mr. Clemens, a man almost as great as yourself.” They shook hands; there was a pause of a moment, then Grant said, looking at him gravely:

“Mr. Clemens, I am not embarrassed, are you?”

So he remembered that first, long-ago meeting. It was a conspicuous performance. The crowd could not hear the words, but they saw the greeting and the laugh, and cheered both men.

Following the procession, there were certain imposing ceremonies of welcome at Haverly’s Theater where long, laudatory eloquence was poured out upon the returning hero, who sat unmoved while the storm of music and cheers and oratory swept about him. Clemens, writing of it that evening to Mrs. Clemens, said:

I never sat elbow to elbow with so many historic names before.  
Grant, Sherman, Sheridan, Schofield, Pope, Logan, and so on.

What an iron man Grant is! He sat facing the house, with his right leg crossed over his left, his right boot sole tilted up at an angle, and his left hand and arm reposing on the arm of his chair. You note that position? Well, when glowing references were made to other grandees on the stage, those grandees always showed a trifle of nervous consciousness, and as these references came frequently the nervous changes of position and attitude were also frequent. But Grant! He was under a tremendous and ceaseless bombardment of praise and congratulation; but as true as I’m sitting here he never moved a muscle of his body for a single instant during thirty minutes! You could have played him on a stranger for an effigy. Perhaps he never would have moved, but at last a speaker made such a particularly ripping and blood-stirring remark about him that the audience rose and roared and yelled and stamped and clapped an entire



minute—Grant sitting as serene as ever-when General Sherman stepped up to him, laid his hand affectionately on his shoulder, bent

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respectfully down, and whispered in his ear. Then Grant got up and bowed, and the storm of applause swelled into a hurricane.

But it was the next evening that the celebration rose to a climax. This was at the grand banquet at the Palmer House, where six hundred guests sat down to dinner and Grant himself spoke, and Logan and Hurlbut, and Vilas and Woodford and Pope, fifteen in all, including Robert G. Ingersoll and Mark Twain. Chicago has never known a greater event than that dinner, for there has never been a time since when those great soldiers and citizens could have been gathered there.

To Howells Clemens wrote:

Imagine what it was like to see a bullet-shredded old battle-flag reverently unfolded to the gaze of a thousand middle-aged soldiers, most of whom hadn't seen it since they saw it advancing over victorious fields when they were in their prime. And imagine what it was like when Grant, their first commander, stepped into view while they were still going mad over the flag, and then right in the midst of it all somebody struck up "When we were marching through Georgia." Well, you should have heard the thousand voices lift that chorus and seen the tears stream down. If I live a hundred years I sha'n't ever forget these things, nor be able to talk about them. I sha'n't ever forget that I saw Phil Sheridan, with martial cloak and plumed chapeau, riding his big black horse in the midst of his own cannon; by all odds the superbest figure of a soldier. I ever looked upon! Grand times, my boy, grand times!

Mark Twain declared afterward that he listened to four speeches that night which he would remember as long as he lived. One of them was by Emory Storrs, another by General Vilas, another by Logan, and the last and greatest by Robert Ingersoll, whose eloquence swept the house like a flame. The Howells letter continues:

I doubt if America has ever seen anything quite equal to it; I am well satisfied I shall not live to see its equal again. How pale those speeches are in print, but how radiant, how full of color, how blinding they were in the delivery! Bob Ingersoll's music will sing through my memory always as the divinest that ever enchanted my ears. And I shall always see him, as he stood that night on a dinner-table, under the flash of lights and banners, in the midst of seven hundred frantic shouters, the most beautiful human creature that ever lived. "They fought, that a mother might own her child." The words look like any other print, but, Lord bless me! he borrowed the very accent of the angel of mercy to say them in, and you should have seen that vast house rise to its feet; and you should have heard the hurricane that followed. That's the only test! People may shout, clap their hands, stamp, wave their napkins, but none but the master can make them get up on their feet.



Clemens's own speech came last. He had been placed at the end to hold the house. He was preceded by a dull speaker, and his heart sank, for it was two o'clock and the diners were weary and sleepy, and the dreary speech had made them unresponsive.



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They gave him a round of applause when he stepped up upon the table in front of him—a tribute to his name. Then he began the opening words of that memorable, delightful fancy.

“We haven’t all had the good-fortune to be ladies; we haven’t all been generals, or poets, or statesmen; but when the toast works down to the babies—we stand on common ground—”

The tired audience had listened in respectful silence through the first half of the sentence. He made one of his effective pauses on the word “babies,” and when he added, in that slow, rich measure of his, “we stand on common ground,” they let go a storm of applause. There was no weariness and inattention after that. At the end of each sentence, he had to stop to let the tornado roar itself out and sweep by. When he reached the beginning of the final paragraph, “Among the three or four million cradles now rocking in the land are some which this nation would preserve for ages as sacred things if we could know which ones they are,” the vast audience waited breathless for his conclusion. Step by step he led toward some unseen climax—some surprise, of course, for that would be his way. Then steadily, and almost without emphasis, he delivered the opening of his final sentence:

“And now in his cradle, somewhere under the flag, the future illustrious commander-in-chief of the American armies is so little burdened with his approaching grandeurs and responsibilities as to be giving his whole strategic mind, at this moment, to trying to find out some way to get his own big toe into his mouth, an achievement which (meaning no disrespect) the illustrious guest of this evening also turned his attention to some fifty-six years ago.”

He paused, and the vast crowd had a chill of fear. After all, he seemed likely to overdo it to spoil everything with a cheap joke at the end. No one ever knew better than Mark Twain the value of a pause. He waited now long enough to let the silence become absolute, until the tension was painful, then wheeling to Grant himself he said, with all the dramatic power of which he was master:

“And if the child is but the father of the man, there are mighty few who will doubt that he succeeded!”

The house came down with a crash. The linking of their hero’s great military triumphs with that earliest of all conquests seemed to them so grand a figure that they went mad with the joy of it. Even Grant’s iron serenity broke; he rocked and laughed while the tears streamed down his cheeks.

They swept around the speaker with their congratulations, in their efforts to seize his hand. He was borne up and down the great dining-hall. Grant himself pressed up to make acknowledgments.



“It tore me all to pieces,” he said; and Sherman exclaimed, “Lord bless you, my boy! I don’t know how you do it!”

The little speech has been in “cold type” so many years since then that the reader of it to-day may find it hard to understand the flame of response it kindled so long ago. But that was another day—and another nation—and Mark Twain, like Robert Ingersoll, knew always his period and his people.



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### CXXIV

#### ANOTHER "ATLANTIC" SPEECH

The December good-fortune was an opportunity Clemens had to redeem himself with the Atlantic contingent, at a breakfast given to Dr. Holmes.

Howells had written concerning it as early as October, and the first impulse had been to decline. It would be something of an ordeal; for though two years had passed since the fatal Whittier dinner, Clemens had not been in that company since, and the lapse of time did not signify. Both Howells and Warner urged him to accept, and he agreed to do so on condition that he be allowed to speak.

If anybody talks there I shall claim the right to say a word myself, and be heard among the very earliest, else it would be confoundedly awkward for me—and for the rest, too. But you may read what I say beforehand, and strike out whatever you choose.

Howells advised against any sort of explanation. Clemens accepted this as wise counsel, and prepared an address relevant only to the guest of honor.

It was a noble gathering. Most of the guests of the Whittier dinner were present, and this time there were ladies. Emerson, Longfellow, and Whittier were there, Harriet Beecher Stowe and Julia Ward Howe; also the knightly Colonel Waring, and Stedman, and Parkman, and grand old John Bigelow, old even then.—[He died in 1911 in his 94th year.]

Howells was conservative in his introduction this time. It was better taste to be so. He said simply:

"We will now listen to a few words of truth and soberness from Mark Twain."

Clemens is said to have risen diffidently, but that was his natural manner. It probably did not indicate anything of the inner tumult he really felt.

Outwardly he was calm enough, and what he said was delicate and beautiful, the kind of thing that he could say so well. It seems fitting that it should be included here, the more so that it tells a story not elsewhere recorded. This is the speech in full:

*Mr. Chairman, ladies, and gentlemen,*—I would have traveled a much greater distance than I have come to witness the paying of honors to Dr. Holmes, for my feeling toward him has always been one of peculiar warmth. When one receives a letter from a great man for the first time in his life it is a large event to him, as all of you know by your own experience. You never can receive letters enough from famous men afterward to obliterate that one or dim the memory of the pleasant surprise it was and the



gratification it gave you. Lapse of time cannot make it commonplace or cheap. Well, the first great man who ever wrote me a letter was our guest, Oliver Wendell Holmes. He was also the first great literary man I ever stole anything from, and that is how I came to write to him and he to me. When my first book was new a friend of mine said, "The dedication is very neat." Yes, I said,



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I thought it was. My friend said, "I always admired it, even before I saw it in *The Innocents Abroad*." I naturally said, "What do you mean? Where did you ever see it before?" "Well, I saw it first, some years ago, as Dr. Holmes's dedication to his *Songs in Many Keys*." Of course my first impulse was to prepare this man's remains for burial, but upon reflection I said I would reprieve him for a moment or two, and give him a chance to prove his assertion if he could. We stepped into a book-store, and he did prove it. I had stolen that dedication almost word for word. I could not imagine how this curious thing happened; for I knew one thing, for a dead certainty—that a certain amount of pride always goes along with a teaspoonful of brains, and that this pride protects a man from deliberately stealing other people's ideas. That is what a teaspoonful of brains will do for a man, and admirers had often told me I had nearly a basketful, though they were rather reserved as to the size of the basket. However, I thought the thing out and solved the mystery. Some years before I had been laid up a couple of weeks in the Sandwich Islands, and had read and reread Dr. Holmes's poems till my mental reservoir was filled with them to the brim. The dedication lay on top and handy, so by and by I unconsciously took it. Well, of course, I wrote to Dr. Holmes and told him I hadn't meant to steal, and he wrote back and said, in the kindest way, that it was all right, and no harm done, and added that he believed we all unconsciously worked over ideas gathered in reading and hearing, imagining they were original with ourselves. He stated a truth and did it in such a pleasant way, and salved over my sore spot so gently and so healingly, that I was rather glad I had committed the crime, for the sake of the letter. I afterward called on him and told him to make perfectly free with any ideas of mine that struck him as good protoplasm for poetry. He could see by that time that there wasn't anything mean about me; so we got along, right from the start.— [Holmes in his letter had said: "I rather think *The Innocents Abroad* will have many more readers than *Songs in Many Keys*. . . You will be stolen from a great deal oftener than you will borrow from other people."] I have met Dr. Holmes many times since; and lately he said—However, I am wandering wildly away from the one thing which I got on my feet to do; that is, to make my compliments to you, my fellow-teachers of the great public, and likewise to say I am right glad to see that Dr. Holmes is still in his prime and full of generous life, and as age is not determined by years but by trouble, and by infirmities of mind and body, I hope it may be a very long time yet before any can truthfully say, "He is growing old."

Whatever Mark Twain may have lost on that former occasion, came back to him multiplied when he had finished this happy tribute. So the year for him closed prosperously. The rainbow of promise was justified.



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### CXXV

#### THE QUIETER THINGS OF HOME

Upset and disturbed as Mark Twain often was, he seldom permitted his distractions to interfere with the program of his fireside. His days and his nights might be fevered, but the evenings belonged to another world. The long European wandering left him more than ever enamoured of his home; to him it had never been so sweet before, so beautiful, so full of peace. Company came: distinguished guests and the old neighborhood circles. Dinner-parties were more frequent than ever, and they were likely to be brilliant affairs. The best minds, the brightest wits, gathered around Mark Twain's table. Booth, Barrett, Irving, Sheridan, Sherman, Howells, Aldrich: they all assembled, and many more. There was always some one on the way to Boston or New York who addressed himself for the day or the night, or for a brief call, to the Mark Twain fireside.

Certain visitors from foreign lands were surprised at his environment, possibly expecting to find him among less substantial, more bohemian surroundings. Henry Drummond, the author of *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*, in a letter of this time, said:

I had a delightful day at Hartford last Wednesday . . . . Called on Mark Twain, Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe, and the widow of Horace Bushnell. I was wishing A——had been at the Mark Twain interview. He is funnier than any of his books, and to my surprise a most respected citizen, devoted to things esthetic, and the friend of the poor and struggling.—[Life of Henry Drummond, by George Adam Smith.]

The quieter evenings were no less delightful. Clemens did not often go out. He loved his own home best. The children were old enough now to take part in a form of entertainment that gave him and them especial pleasure—acting charades. These he invented for them, and costumed the little performers, and joined in the acting as enthusiastically and as unrestrainedly as if he were back in that frolicsome boyhood on John Quarles's farm. The Warner and Twichell children were often there and took part in the gay amusements. The children of that neighborhood played their impromptu parts well and naturally. They were in a dramatic atmosphere, and had been from infancy. There was never any preparation for the charades. A word was selected and the parts of it were whispered to the little actors. Then they withdrew to the hall, where all sorts of costumes had been laid out for the evening, dressed their parts, and each detachment marched into the library, performed its syllable and retired, leaving the audience, mainly composed of parents, to guess the answer. Often they invented their own words, did their own costuming, and conducted the entire performance independent of grown-up assistance or interference. Now and then, even at this early period, they conceived and produced little plays, and of course their father could not resist joining in these. At other times, evenings, after dinner, he would sit at the piano

and recall the old darky songs-spirituals and jubilee choruses-singing them with fine spirit, if not with perfect technic, the children joining in these moving melodies.

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He loved to read aloud to them. It was his habit to read his manuscript to Mrs. Clemens, and, now that the children were older, he was likely to include them in his critical audience.

It would seem to have been the winter after their return from Europe that this custom was inaugurated, for 'The Prince and the Pauper' manuscript was the first one so read, and it was just then he was resuming work on this tale. Each afternoon or evening, when he had finished his chapter, he assembled his little audience and read them the result. The children were old enough to delight in that half real, half fairy tale of the wandering prince and the royal pauper: and the charm and simplicity of the story are measurably due to those two small listeners, to whom it was adapted in that early day of its creation.

Clemens found the Prince a blessed relief from 'A Tramp Abroad', which had become a veritable nightmare. He had thought it finished when he left the farm, but discovered that he must add several hundred pages to complete its bulk. It seemed to him that he had been given a life-sentence. He wrote six hundred pages and tore up all but two hundred and eighty-eight. He was about to destroy these and begin again, when Mrs. Clemens's health became poor and he was advised to take her to Elmira, though it was then midwinter. To Howells he wrote:

I said, "if there is one death that is painfuler than another, may I get it if I don't do that thing."

So I took the 288 pages to Bliss and told him that was the very last line I should ever write on this book (a book which required 600 pages of *Ms.*, and I have written nearly four thousand, first and last).

I am as soary (and flighty) as a rocket to-day, with the unutterable joy of getting that Old Man of the Sea off my back, where he has been roosting more than a year and a half.

They remained a month at Elmira, and on their return Clemens renewed work on 'The Prince and the Pauper'. He reported to Howells that if he never sold a copy his jubilant delight in writing it would suffer no diminution. A week later his enthusiasm had still further increased:

I take so much pleasure in my story that I am loath to hurry, not wanting to get it done. Did I ever tell you the plot of it? It begins at 9 A.M., January 27, 1547.

He follows with a detailed synopsis of his plot, which in this instance he had worked out with unusual completeness—a fact which largely accounts for the unity of the tale. Then he adds:

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My idea is to afford a realizing sense of the exceeding severity of the laws of that day by inflicting some of their penalties upon the king himself, and allowing him a chance to see the rest of them applied to others; all of which is to account for certain mildnesses which distinguished Edward VI.'s reign from those that precede it and follow it. Imagine this fact: I have even fascinated Mrs. Clemens with this yarn for youth. My stuff generally gets considerable damning with faint praise out of her, but this time it is all the other way. She is become the horse-leech's daughter, and my mill doesn't grind fast enough to suit her. This is no mean triumph, my dear sir.

He forgot, perhaps, to mention his smaller auditors, but we may believe they were no less eager in their demands for the tale's continuance.

### CXXVI

*"A tramp abroad"*

'A Tramp Abroad' came from the presses on the 13th of March, 1880. It had been widely heralded, and there was an advance sale of twenty-five thousand copies. It was of the same general size and outward character as the Innocents, numerous illustrations, and was regarded by its publishers as a satisfactory book.

It bore no very striking resemblance to the Innocents on close examination. Its pictures—drawn, for the most part, by a young art student named Brown, whom Clemens had met in Paris—were extraordinarily bad, while the crude engraving process by which they had been reproduced; tended to bring them still further into disrepute. A few drawings by True Williams were better, and those drawn by Clemens himself had a value of their own. The book would have profited had there been more of what the author calls his "works of art."

Mark Twain himself had dubious anticipations as to the book's reception.

But Howells wrote:

Well, you are a blessing. You ought to believe in God's goodness, since he has bestowed upon the world such a delightful genius as yours to lighten its troubles.

Clemens replied:

Your praises have been the greatest uplift I ever had. When a body is not even remotely expecting such things, how the surprise takes the breath away! We had been interpreting your stillness to melancholy and depression, caused by that book. This is honest. Why, everything looks brighter now. A check for untold cash could not have made our hearts sing as your letter has done.



A letter from Tauchnitz, proposing to issue an illustrated edition in Germany, besides putting it into his regular series, was an added satisfaction. To be in a Tauchnitz series was of itself a recognition of the book's merit.

To Twichell, Clemens presented a special copy of the Tramp with a personal inscription, which must not be omitted here:



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*My dear "Harris"—No, I mean my dear Joe,—*Just imagine it for a moment: I was collecting material in Europe during fourteen months for a book, and now that the thing is printed I find that you, who were with me only a month and a half of the fourteen, are in actual presence (not imaginary) in 440 of the 531 pages the book contains! Hang it, if you had stayed at home it would have taken me fourteen years to get the material. You have saved me an intolerable whole world of hated labor, and I'll not forget it, my boy. You'll find reminders of things, all along, that happened to us, and of others that didn't happen; but you'll remember the spot where they were invented. You will see how the imaginary perilous trip up the Riffelberg is preposterously expanded. That horse-student is on page 192. The "Fremersberg" is neighboring. The Black Forest novel is on page 211. I remember when and where we projected that: in the leafy glades with the mountain sublimities dozing in the blue haze beyond the gorge of Allerheiligen. There's the "new member," page 213; the dentist yarn, 223; the true Chamois, 242; at page 248 is a pretty long yarn, spun from a mighty brief text meeting, for a moment, that pretty girl who knew me and whom I had forgotten; at 281 is "Harris," and should have been so entitled, but Bliss has made a mistake and turned you into some other character; 305 brings back the whole Rigi tramp to me at a glance; at 185 and 186 are specimens of my art; and the frontispiece is the combination which I made by pasting one familiar picture over the lower half of an equally familiar one. This fine work being worthy of Titian, I have shed the credit of it upon him. Well, you'll find more reminders of things scattered through here than are printed, or could have been printed, in many books.

All the "legends of the Neckar," which I invented for that unstoried region, are here; one is in the Appendix. The steel portrait of me is just about perfect.

We had a mighty good time, Joe, and the six weeks I would dearly like to repeat any time; but the rest of the fourteen months—never.  
With love,

Yours, *mark*.

Hartford, March 16, 1880.

Possibly Twichell had vague doubts concerning a book of which he was so large a part, and its favorable reception by the critics and the public generally was a great comfort. When the Howells letter was read to him he is reported as having sat with his hands on his knees, his head bent forward—a favorite attitude—repeating at intervals:

"Howells said that, did he? Old Howells said that!"

There have been many and varying opinions since then as to the literary merits of 'A Tramp Abroad'. Human tastes differ, and a "mixed" book of this kind invites as many



opinions as it has chapters. The word “uneven” pretty safely describes any book of size, but it has a special application to this one. Written under great stress and uncertainty of mind, it could hardly be uniform. It presents Mark Twain at his best, and at his worst. Almost any American writer was better than Mark Twain at his worst: Mark Twain at his best was unapproachable.



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It is inevitable that 'A Tramp Abroad' and 'The Innocents Abroad' should be compared, though with hardly the warrant of similarity. The books are as different as was their author at the periods when they were written. 'A Tramp Abroad' is the work of a man who was traveling and observing for the purpose of writing a book, and for no other reason. The Innocents Abroad was written by a man who was reveling in every scene and experience, every new phase and prospect; whose soul was alive to every historic association, and to every humor that a gay party of young sight-seers could find along the way. The note-books of that trip fairly glow with the inspiration of it; those of the later wanderings are mainly filled with brief, terse records, interspersed with satire and denunciation. In the 'Innocents' the writer is the enthusiast with a sense of humor. In the 'Tramp' he has still the sense of humor, but he has become a cynic; restrained, but a cynic none the less. In the 'Innocents' he laughs at delusions and fallacies—and enjoys them. In the 'Tramp' he laughs at human foibles and affectations—and wants to smash them. Very often he does not laugh heartily and sincerely at all, but finds his humor in extravagant burlesque. In later life his gentler laughter, his old, untroubled enjoyment of human weakness, would return, but just now he was in that middle period, when the "damned human race" amused him indeed, though less tenderly. (It seems proper to explain that in applying this term to mankind he did not mean that the race was foredoomed, but rather that it ought to be.)

Reading the 'Innocents', the conviction grows that, with all its faults, it is literature from beginning to end. Reading the 'Tramp', the suspicion arises that, regardless of technical improvement, its percentage of literature is not large. Yet, as noted in an earlier volume, so eminent a critic as Brander Matthews has pronounced in its favor, and he undoubtedly had a numerous following; Howells expressed his delight in the book at the time of its issue, though one wonders how far the personal element entered into his enjoyment, and what would be his final decision if he read the two books side by side to-day. He reviewed 'A Tramp Abroad' adequately and finely in the Atlantic, and justly; for on the whole it is a vastly entertaining book, and he did not overpraise it.

'A Tramp Abroad' had an "Introduction" in the manuscript, a pleasant word to the reader but not a necessary one, and eventually it was omitted. Fortunately the appendix remained. Beyond question it contains some of the very best things in the book. The descriptions of the German Portier and the German newspaper are happy enough, and the essay on the awful German language is one of Mark Twain's supreme bits of humor. It is Mark Twain at his best; Mark Twain in a field where he had no rival, the field of good-natured, sincere fun-making-ridicule of the manifest absurdities of some national custom or institution which the nation itself could enjoy, while the individual suffered no wound. The present Emperor of Germany is said to find comfort in this essay on his national speech when all other amusements fail. It is delicious beyond words to express; it is unique.

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In the body of the book there are also many delights. The description of the ant might rank next to the German language almost in its humor, and the meeting with the unrecognized girl at Lucerne has a lively charm.

Of the serious matter, some of the word-pictures are flawless in their beauty; this, for instance, suggested by the view of the Jungfrau from Interlaken:

There was something subduing in the influence of that silent and solemn and awful presence; one seemed to meet the immutable, the indestructible, the eternal, face to face, and to feel the trivial and fleeting nature of his own existence the more sharply by the contrast. One had the sense of being under the brooding contemplation of a spirit, not an inert mass of rocks and ice—a spirit which had looked down, through the slow drift of ages, upon a million vanished races of men and judged them; and would judge a million more—and still be there, watching unchanged and unchangeable, after all life should be gone and the earth have become a vacant desolation. While I was feeling these things, I was groping, without knowing it, toward an understanding of what the spell is which people find in the Alps, and in no other mountains; that strange, deep, nameless influence which, once felt, cannot be forgotten; once felt, leaves always behind it a restless longing to feel it again—a longing which is like homesickness; a grieving, haunting yearning, which will plead, implore, and persecute till it has its will. I met dozens of people, imaginative and unimaginative, cultivated and uncultivated, who had come from far countries and roamed through the Swiss Alps year after year—they could not explain why. They had come first, they said, out of idle curiosity, because everybody talked about it; they had come since because they could not help it, and they should keep on coming, while they lived, for the same reason; they had tried to break their chains and stay away, but it was futile; now they had no desire to break them. Others came nearer formulating what they felt; they said they could find perfect rest and peace nowhere else when they were troubled: all frets and worries and chafings sank to sleep in the presence of the benignant serenity of the Alps; the Great Spirit of the mountain breathed his own peace upon their hurt minds and sore hearts, and healed them; they could not think base thoughts or do mean and sordid things here, before the visible throne of God.

Indeed, all the serious matter in the book is good. The reader's chief regret is likely to be that there is not more of it. The main difficulty with the humor is that it seems overdone. It is likely to be carried too far, and continued too long. The ascent of Riffelberg is an example. Though spotted with delights it seems, to one reader at least, less admirable than other of the book's important features, striking, as it does, more emphatically the chief note of the book's humor—that is to say, exaggeration.



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Without doubt there must be many—very many—who agree in finding a fuller enjoyment in 'A Tramp Abroad' than in the 'Innocents'; only, the burden of the world's opinion lies the other way. The world has a weakness for its illusions: the splendor that falls on castle walls, the glory of the hills at evening, the pathos of the days that are no more. It answers to tenderness, even on the page of humor, and to genuine enthusiasm, sharply sensing the lack of these things; instinctively resenting, even when most amused by it, extravagance and burlesque. The Innocents Abroad is more soul-satisfying than its successor, more poetic; more sentimental, if you will. The Tramp contains better English usage, without doubt, but it is less full of happiness and bloom and the halo of romance. The heart of the world has felt this, and has demanded the book in fewer numbers.—[The sales of the Innocents during the earlier years more than doubled those of the Tramp during a similar period. The later ratio of popularity is more nearly three to one. It has been repeatedly stated that in England the Tramp has the greater popularity, an assertion not sustained by the publisher's accountings.]

## CXXVII

### LETTERS, TALES, AND PLANS

The reader has not failed to remark the great number of letters which Samuel Clemens wrote to his friend William Dean Howells; yet comparatively few can even be mentioned. He was always writing to Howells, on every subject under the sun; whatever came into his mind—business, literature, personal affairs—he must write about it to Howells. Once, when nothing better occurred, he sent him a series of telegrams, each a stanza from an old hymn, possibly thinking they might carry comfort.—[“Clemens had then and for many years the habit of writing to me about what he was doing, and still more of what he was experiencing. Nothing struck his imagination, in or out of the daily routine, but he wished to write me of it, and he wrote with the greatest fullness and a lavish dramatization, sometimes to the length of twenty or forty pages.” (My Mark Twain, by W. D. Howells.)] Whatever of picturesque happened in the household he immediately set it down for Howells's entertainment. Some of these domestic incidents carry the flavor of his best humor. Once he wrote:

Last night, when I went to bed, Mrs. Clemens said, “George didn't take the cat down to the cellar; Rosa says he has left it shut up in the conservatory.” So I went down to attend to Abner (the cat). About three in the morning Mrs. C. woke me and said, “I do believe I hear that cat in the drawing-room. What did you do with him?” I answered with the confidence of a man who has managed to do the right thing for once, and said, “I opened the conservatory doors, took the library off the alarm, and spread everything open, so that there wasn't any obstruction between him and the cellar.”



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Language wasn't capable of conveying this woman's disgust. But the sense of what she said was, "He couldn't have done any harm in the conservatory; so you must go and make the entire house free to him and the burglars, imagining that he will prefer the coal-bins to the drawing-room. If you had had Mr. Howells to help you I should have admired, but not have been astonished, because I should know that together you would be equal to it; but how you managed to contrive such a stately blunder all by yourself is what I cannot understand."

So, you see, even she knows how to appreciate our gifts....

I knocked off during these stirring hours, and don't intend to go to work again till we go away for the summer, four or six weeks hence. So I am writing to you, not because I have anything to say, but because you don't have to answer and I need something to do this afternoon.

The rightful earl has——  
Friday, 7th.

Well, never mind about the rightful earl; he merely wanted to-borrow money. I never knew an American earl that didn't.

After a trip to Boston, during which Mrs. Clemens did some bric-a-brac shopping, he wrote:

Mrs. Clemens has two imperishable topics now: the museum of andirons which she collected and your dinner. It is hard to tell which she admires the most. Sometimes she leans one way and sometimes the other; but I lean pretty steadily toward the dinner because I can appreciate that, whereas I am no prophet in andirons. There has been a procession of Adams Express wagons filing before the door all day delivering andirons.

In a more serious vein he refers to the aged violinist Ole Bull and his wife, whom they had met during their visit, and their enjoyment of that gentle-hearted pair.

Clemens did some shorter work that spring, most of which found its way into the Atlantic. "Edward Mills and George Benton," one of the contributions of this time, is a moral sermon in its presentation of a pitiful human spectacle and misdirected human zeal.

It brought a pack of letters of approval, not only from laity, but the church, and in some measure may have helped to destroy the silly sentimentalism which manifested itself in making heroes of spectacular criminals. That fashion has gone out, largely. Mark Twain wrote frequently on the subject, though never more effectively than in this particular instance. "Mrs. McWilliams and the Lightning" was another Atlantic story, a

companion piece to “Mrs. McWilliams’s Experience with the Membranous Croup,” and in the same delightful vein—a vein in which Mark Twain was likely to be at his best—the transcription of a scene not so far removed in character from that in the “cat” letter just quoted: something which may or may not have happened, but might have happened, approximately as set down. Rose Terry Cooke wrote:



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Horrid man, how did you know the way I behave in a thunderstorm? Have you been secreted in the closet or lurking on the shed roof? I hope you got thoroughly rained on; and worst of all is that you made me laugh at myself; my real terrors turned round and grimaced at me: they were sublime, and you have made them ridiculous just come out here another year and have four houses within a few rods of you struck and then see if you write an article of such exasperating levity. I really hate you, but you are funny.

In addition to his own work, he conceived a plan for Orion. Clemens himself had been attempting, from time to time, an absolutely faithful autobiography; a document in which his deeds and misdeeds, even his moods and inmost thoughts, should be truly set down. He had found it an impossible task. He confessed freely that he lacked the courage, even the actual ability, to pen the words that would lay his soul bare, but he believed Orion equal to the task. He knew how rigidly honest he was, how ready to confess his shortcomings, how eager to be employed at some literary occupation. It was Mark Twain's belief that if Orion would record in detail his long, weary struggle, his succession of attempts and failures, his past dreams and disappointments, along with his sins of omission and commission, it would make one of those priceless human documents such as have been left by Benvenuto Cellini, Cazenova, and Rousseau.

"Simply tell your story to yourself," he wrote, "laying all hideousness utterly bare, reserving nothing. Banish the idea of the audience and all hampering things."

Orion, out in Keokuk, had long since abandoned the chicken farm and a variety of other enterprises. He had prospected insurance, mining, journalism, his old trade of printing, and had taken down and hung up his law shingle between each of these seizures. Aside from business, too, he had been having a rather spectacular experience. He had changed his politics three times (twice in one day), and his religion as many more. Once when he was delivering a political harangue in the street, at night, a parade of the opposition (he had but just abandoned them) marched by carrying certain flaming transparencies, which he himself had made for them the day before. Finally, after delivering a series of infidel lectures; he had been excommunicated and condemned to eternal flames by the Presbyterian Church. He was therefore ripe for any new diversion, and the Autobiography appealed to him. He set about it with splendid enthusiasm, wrote a hundred pages or so of his childhood with a startling minutia of detail and frankness, and mailed them to his brother for inspection.

They were all that Mark Twain had expected; more than he had expected. He forwarded them to Howells with great satisfaction, suggesting, with certain excisions, they be offered anonymously to the Atlantic readers.

But Howells's taste for realism had its limitations. He found the story interesting—indeed, torturingly, heart-wringingly so—and, advising strongly against its publication, returned it.



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Orion was steaming along at the rate of ten to twenty pages a day now, forwarding them as fast as written, while his courage was good and the fires warm. Clemens, receiving a package by every morning mail, soon lost interest, then developed a hunted feeling, becoming finally desperate. He wrote wildly to shut Orion off, urging him to let his manuscript accumulate, and to send it in one large consignment at the end. This Orion did, and it is fair to say that in this instance at least he stuck to his work faithfully to the bitter, disheartening end. And it would have been all that Mark Twain had dreamed it would be, had Orion maintained the simple narrative spirit of its early pages. But he drifted off into theological byways; into discussions of his excommunication and infidelities, which were frank enough, but lacked human interest.

In old age Mark Twain once referred to Orion's autobiography in print and his own disappointment in it, which he attributed to Orion's having departed from the idea of frank and unrestricted confession to exalt himself as a hero—a statement altogether unwarranted, and due to one of those curious confusions of memory and imagination that more than once resulted in a complete reversal of the facts. A quantity of Orion's manuscript has been lost and destroyed, but enough fragments of it remain to show its fidelity to the original plan. It is just one long record of fleeting hope, futile effort, and humiliation. It is the story of a life of disappointment; of a man who has been defeated and beaten down and crushed by the world until he has nothing but confession left to surrender.—[Howells, in his letter concerning the opening chapters, said that they would some day make good material. Fortunately the earliest of these chapters were preserved, and, as the reader may remember, furnished much of the childhood details for this biography.]

Whatever may have been Mark Twain's later impression of his brother's manuscript, its story of failure and disappointment moved him to definite action at the time.

Several years before, in Hartford, Orion had urged him to make his publishing contracts on a basis of half profits, instead of on the royalty plan. Clemens, remembering this, had insisted on such an arrangement for the publication of 'A Tramp Abroad', and when his first statement came in he realized that the new contract was very largely to his advantage. He remembered Orion's anxiety in the matter, and made it now a valid excuse for placing his brother on a firm financial footing.

Out of the suspicions which you bred in me years ago has grown this result, to wit: that I shall within the twelve months get \$40,000 out of this Tramp, instead of \$20,000. \$20,000, after taxes and other expenses are stripped away, is worth to the investor about \$75 a month, so I shall tell Mr. Perkins [his lawyer and financial agent] to make your check that amount per month hereafter.... This ends the loan business, and hereafter you can reflect that you are living not on borrowed money, but on money which you have squarely earned, and which has no taint or savor of charity about it, and you can also reflect that the money which you have been receiving of me is charged

against the heavy bill which the next publisher will have to stand who gets a book of mine.



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From that time forward Orion Clemens was worth substantially twenty thousand dollars—till the day of his death, and, after him, his widow. Far better was it for him that the endowment be conferred in the form of an income, than had the capital amount been placed in his hands. CXXVIII

### *Mark TWAIN's absent-mindedness*

A number of amusing incidents have been more or less accurately reported concerning Mark Twain's dim perception of certain physical surroundings, and his vague resulting memories—his absent-mindedness, as we say.

It was not that he was inattentive—no man was ever less so if the subject interested him—but only that the casual, incidental thing seemed not to find a fixed place in his deeper consciousness.

By no means was Mark Twain's absent-mindedness a development of old age. On the two occasions following he was in the very heyday of his mental strength. Especially was it, when he was engaged upon some absorbing or difficult piece of literature, that his mind seemed to fold up and shut most of the world away. Soon after his return from Europe, when he was still struggling with 'A Tramp Abroad', he wearily put the manuscript aside, one day, and set out to invite F. G. Whitmore over for a game of billiards. Whitmore lived only a little way down the street, and Clemens had been there time and again. It was such a brief distance that he started out in his slippers and with no hat. But when he reached the corner where the house, a stone's-throw away, was in plain view he stopped. He did not recognize it. It was unchanged, but its outlines had left no impress upon his mind. He stood there uncertainly a little while, then returned and got the coachman, Patrick McAleer, to show him the way.

The second, and still more picturesque instance, belongs also to this period. One day, when he was playing billiards with Whitmore, George, the butler, came up with a card.

"Who is he, George?" Clemens asked, without looking at the card.

"I don't know, suh, but he's a gentleman, Mr. Clemens."

"Now, George, how many times have I told you I don't want to see strangers when I'm playing billiards! This is just some book agent, or insurance man, or somebody with something to sell. I don't want to see him, and I'm not going to."

"Oh, but this is a gentleman, I'm sure, Mr. Clemens. Just look at his card, suh."

"Yes, of course, I see—nice engraved card—but I don't know him, and if it was St. Peter himself I wouldn't buy the key of salvation! You tell him so—tell him—oh, well, I suppose I've got to go and get rid of him myself. I'll be back in a minute, Whitmore."



He ran down the stairs, and as he got near the parlor door, which stood open, he saw a man sitting on a couch with what seemed to be some framed water-color pictures on the floor near his feet.

“Ah, ha!” he thought, “I see. A picture agent. I’ll soon get rid of him.”



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He went in with his best, “Well, what can I do for you?” air, which he, as well as any man living, knew how to assume; a friendly air enough, but not encouraging. The gentleman rose and extended his hand.

“How are you, Mr. Clemens?” he said.

Of course this was the usual thing with men who had axes to grind or goods to sell. Clemens did not extend a very cordial hand. He merely raised a loose, indifferent hand—a discouraging hand.

“And how is Mrs. Clemens?” asked the uninvited guest.

So this was his game. He would show an interest in the family and ingratiate himself in that way; he would be asking after the children next.

“Well—Mrs. Clemens is about as usual—I believe.”

“And the children—Miss Susie and little Clara?”

This was a bit startling. He knew their names! Still, that was easy to find out. He was a smart agent, wonderfully smart. He must be got rid of.

“The children are well, quite well,” and (pointing down at the pictures) —“We’ve got plenty like these. We don’t want any more. No, we don’t care for any more,” skilfully working his visitor toward the door as he talked.

The man, looking non-plussed—a good deal puzzled—allowed himself to be talked into the hall and toward the front door. Here he paused a moment:

“Mr. Clemens, will you tell me where Mr. Charles Dudley Warner lives?”

This was the chance! He would work him off on Charlie Warner. Perhaps Warner needed pictures.

“Oh, certainly, certainly! Right across the yard. I’ll show you. There’s a walk right through. You don’t need to go around the front way at all. You’ll find him at home, too, I’m pretty sure”; all the time working his caller out and down the step and in the right direction.

The visitor again extended his hand.

“Please remember me to Mrs. Clemens and the children.”

“Oh, certainly, certainly, with pleasure. Good day. Yes, that’s the house Good-by.”



On the way back to the billiard-room Mrs. Clemens called to him. She was ill that day.

“Youth!”

“Yes, Livy.” He went in for a word.

“George brought me Mr. B——’s card. I hope you were very nice to him; the B——s were so nice to us, once last year, when you were gone.”,

“The B——s—Why, Livy——”

“Yes, of course, and I asked him to be sure to call when he came to Hartford.”

He gazed at her helplessly.

“Well, he’s been here.”

“Oh, Youth, have you done anything?”

“Yes, of course I have. He seemed to have some pictures to sell, so I sent him over to Warner’s. I noticed he didn’t take them with him. Land sakes, Livy, what can I do?”

“Which way did he go, Youth?”

“Why, I sent him to Charlie Warner’s. I thought——”

“Go right after him. Go quick! Tell him what you have done.”



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He went without further delay, bareheaded and in his slippers, as usual. Warner and B——were in cheerful and friendly converse. They had met before. Clemens entered gaily:

“Oh Yes, I see! You found him all right. Charlie, we met Mr. B——and his wife in Europe last summer and they made things pleasant for us. I wanted to come over here with him, but was a good deal occupied just then. Livy isn’t very well, but she seems a good deal better, so I just followed along to have a good talk, all together.”

He stayed an hour, and whatever bad impression had formed in B——’s mind faded long before the hour ended. Returning home Clemens noticed the pictures still on the parlor floor.

“George,” he said, “what pictures are those that gentleman left?”

“Why, Mr. Clemens, those are our own pictures. I’ve been straightening up the room a little, and Mrs. Clemens had me set them around to see how they would look in new places. The gentleman was looking at them while he was waiting for you to come down.”

## CXXIX

### FURTHER AFFAIRS AT THE FARM

It was at Elmira, in July (1880), that the third little girl came—Jane Lampton, for her grandmother, but always called Jean. She was a large, lovely baby, robust and happy. When she had been with them a little more than a month Clemens, writing to Twichell, said:

*Dear old Joe,*—Concerning Jean Clemens, if anybody said he “didn’t see no pints about that frog that’s any better’n any other frog,” I should think he was convicting himself of being a pretty poor sort of observer. She is the comeliest and daintiest and perfectest little creature the continents and archipelagos have seen since the Bay and Susy were her size. I will not go into details; it is not necessary; you will soon be in Hartford, where I have already hired a hall; the admission fee will be but a trifle. It is curious to note the change in the stock-quotations of the Affection Board brought about by throwing this new security on the market. Four weeks ago the children still put Mama at the head of the list right along, where she had always been. But now: Jean

Mama

Motley |cats

Fraulein |

PapaThat is the way it stands now. Mama is become No. 2; I have dropped from No. 4, and am become No. 5. Some time ago it used to be nip and tuck between me and the



cats, but after the cats “developed” I didn’t stand any more show. Been reading Daniel Webster’s Private Correspondence. Have read a hundred of his diffuse, conceited, “eloquent,” bathotic (or bathostic) letters, written in that dim (no, vanished) past, when he was a student. And Lord! to think that this boy, who is so real to me now, and so booming with fresh young blood and bountiful life, and sappy cynicisms about girls,

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has since climbed the Alps of fame and stood against the sun one brief, tremendous moment with the world's eyes on him, and then—fzt! where is he? Why, the only long thing, the only real thing about the whole shadowy business, is the sense of the lagging dull and hoary lapse of time that has drifted by since then; a vast, empty level, it seems, with a formless specter glimpsed fitfully through the smoke and mist that lie along its remote verge. Well, we are all getting along here first-rate. Livy gains strength daily and sits up a deal; the baby is five weeks old and—But no more of this. Somebody may be reading this letter eighty years hence. And so, my friend (you pitying snob, I mean, who are holding this yellow paper in your hand in 1960), save yourself the trouble of looking further. I know how pathetically trivial our small concerns would seem to you, and I will not let your eye profane them. No, I keep my news; you keep your compassion. Suffice it you to know, scoffer and ribald, that the little child is old and blind now, and once more tooth less; and the rest of us are shadows these many, many years. Yes, and your time cometh!

*Mark.*

It is the ageless story. He too had written his youthful letters, and later had climbed the Alps of fame and was still outlined against the sun. Happily, the little child was to evade that harsher penalty—the unwarranted bitterness and affront of a lingering, palsied age.

Mrs. Clemens, in a letter somewhat later, set down a thought similar to his:

“We are all going so fast. Pretty soon we shall have been dead a hundred years.”

Clemens varied his work that summer, writing alternately on 'The Prince and the Pauper' and on the story about 'Huck Finn', which he had begun four years earlier.

He read the latter over and found in it a new interest. It did not fascinate him, as did the story of the wandering prince. He persevered only as the spirit moved him, piling up pages on both the tales.

He always took a boy's pride in the number of pages he could complete at a sitting, and if the day had gone well he would count them triumphantly, and, lighting a fresh cigar, would come tripping down the long stair that led to the level of the farm-house, and, gathering his audience, would read to them the result of his industry; that is to say, he proceeded with the story of the Prince. Apparently he had not yet acquired confidence or pride enough in poor Huck to exhibit him, even to friends.

The reference (in the letter to Twichell) to the cats at the farm introduces one of the most important features of that idyllic resort. There were always cats at the farm. Mark Twain himself dearly loved cats, and the children inherited this passion. Susy once said:

“The difference between papa and mama is, that mama loves morals and papa loves cats.”



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The cats did not always remain the same, but some of the same ones remained a good while, and were there from season to season, always welcomed and adored. They were commendable cats, with such names as Fraulein, Blatherskite, Sour Mash, Stray Kit, Sin, and Satan, and when, as happened now and then, a vacancy occurred in the cat census there followed deep sorrow and elaborate ceremonies.

Naturally, there would be stories about cats: impromptu bedtime stories, which began anywhere and ended nowhere, and continued indefinitely through a land inhabited only by cats and dreams. One of these stories, as remembered and set down later, began:

Once upon a time there was a noble, big cat whose christian name was Catasaqua, because she lived in that region; but she didn't have any surname, because she was a short-tailed cat, being a manx, and didn't need one. It is very just and becoming in a long-tailed cat to have a surname, but it would be very ostentatious, and even dishonorable, in a manx. Well, Catasaqua had a beautiful family of cattings; and they were of different colors, to harmonize with their characters. Cattaraugus, the eldest, was white, and he had high impulses and a pure heart; Catiline, the youngest, was black, and he had a self-seeking nature, his motives were nearly always base, he was truculent and insincere. He was vain and foolish, and often said that he would rather be what he was, and live like a bandit, yet have none above him, than be a cat-o'-nine-tails and eat with the king.

And so on without end, for the audience was asleep presently and the end could wait.

There was less enthusiasm over dogs at Quarry Farm.

Mark Twain himself had no great love for the canine breed. To a woman who wrote, asking for his opinion on dogs, he said, in part:

By what right has the dog come to be regarded as a "noble" animal? The more brutal and cruel and unjust you are to him the more your fawning and adoring slave he becomes; whereas, if you shamefully misuse a cat once she will always maintain a dignified reserve toward you afterward you can never get her full confidence again.

He was not harsh to dogs; occasionally he made friends with them. There was once at the farm a gentle hound, named Bones, that for some reason even won his way into his affections. Bones was always a welcome companion, and when the end of summer came, and Clemens, as was his habit, started down the drive ahead of the carriage, Bones, half-way to the entrance, was waiting for him. Clemens stooped down, put his arms around him, and bade him an affectionate good-by. He always recalled Bones tenderly, and mentioned him in letters to the farm.

**CXXX**

**COPYRIGHT AND OTHER FANCIES**

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The continued assault of Canadian pirates on his books kept Mark Twain's interest sharply alive on the subject of copyright reform. He invented one scheme after another, but the public-mind was hazy on the subject, and legislators were concerned with purposes that interested a larger number of voters. There were too few authors to be of much value at the polls, and even of those few only a small percentage were vitally concerned. For the others, foreign publishers rarely paid them the compliment of piracy, while at home the copyright limit of forty-two years was about forty-two times as long as they needed protection. Bliss suggested a law making the selling of pirated books a penal offense, a plan with a promising look, but which came to nothing.

Clemens wrote to his old friend Rollin M. Daggett, who by this time was a Congressman. Daggett replied that he would be glad to introduce any bill that the authors might agree upon, and Clemens made at least one trip to Washington to discuss the matter, but it came to nothing in the end. It was a Presidential year, and it would do just as well to keep the authors quiet by promising to do something next year. Any legislative stir is never a good thing for a campaign.

Clemens's idea for copyright betterment was not a fixed one. Somewhat later, when an international treaty which would include protection for authors was being discussed, his views had undergone a change. He wrote, asking Howells:

Will the proposed treaty protect us (and effectually) against Canadian piracy? Because, if it doesn't, there is not a single argument in favor of international copyright which a rational American Senate could entertain for a moment. My notions have mightily changed lately. I can buy Macaulay's History, three vols.; bound, for \$1.25; Chambers's Cyclopaedia, ten vols., cloth, for \$7.25 (we paid \$60), and other English copyrights in proportion; I can buy a lot of the great copyright classics, in paper, at from three cents to thirty cents apiece. These things must find their way into the very kitchens and hovels of the country. A generation of this sort of thing ought to make this the most intelligent and the best-read nation in the world. International copyright must becloud this sun and bring on the former darkness and dime novel reading. Morally this is all wrong; governmentally it is all right. For it is the duty of governments and families to be selfish, and look out simply for their own. International copyright would benefit a few English authors and a lot of American publishers, and be a profound detriment to twenty million Americans; it would benefit a dozen American authors a few dollars a year, and there an end. The real advantages all go to English authors and American publishers.

And even if the treaty will kill Canadian piracy, and thus save me an average of \$5,000 a year, I'm down on it anyway, and I'd like cussed well to write an article opposing the treaty.



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It is a characteristic expression. Mark Twain might be first to grab for the life-preserver, but he would also be first to hand it to a humanity in greater need. He could damn the human race competently, but in the final reckoning it was the interest of that race that lay closest to his heart.

Mention has been made in an earlier chapter of Clemens's enthusiasms or "rages" for this thing and that which should benefit humankind. He was seldom entirely without them. Whether it was copyright legislation, the latest invention, or a new empiric practice, he rarely failed to have a burning interest in some anodyne that would provide physical or mental easement for his species. Howells tells how once he was going to save the human race with accordion letter-files—the system of order which would grow out of this useful device being of such nerve and labor saving proportions as to insure long life and happiness to all. The fountain-pen, in its first imperfect form, must have come along about the same time, and Clemens was one of the very earliest authors to own one. For a while it seemed that the world had known no greater boon since the invention of printing; but when it clogged and balked, or suddenly deluged his paper and spilled in his pocket, he flung it to the outer darkness. After which, the stylo-graphic pen. He tried one, and wrote severally to Dr. Brown, to Howells, and to Twichell, urging its adoption. Even in a letter to Mrs. Howells he could not forget his new possession:

And speaking of Howells, he ought to use the stylographic pen, the best fountain-pen yet invented; he ought to, but of course he won't—a blamed old sodden-headed conservative—but you see yourself what a nice, clean, uniform *Ms.* it makes.

And at the same time to Twichell:

I am writing with a stylographic pen. It takes a royal amount of cussing to make the thing go the first few days or a week, but by that time the dullest ass gets the hang of the thing, and after that no enrichments of expression are required, and said ass finds the stylographic a genuine God's blessing. I carry one in each breeches pocket, and both loaded. I'd give you one of them if I had you where I could teach you how to use it—not otherwise. For the average ass flings the thing out of the window in disgust the second day, believing it hath no virtue, no merit of any sort; whereas the lack lieth in himself, God of his mercy damn him.

It was not easy to withstand Mark Twain's enthusiasm. Howells, Twichell, and Dr. Brown were all presently struggling and swearing (figuratively) over their stylographic pens, trying to believe that salvation lay in their conquest. But in the midst of one letter, at last, Howells broke down, seized his old steel weapon, and wrote savagely: "No white man ought to use a stylographic pen, anyhow!" Then, with the more ancient implement, continued in a calmer spirit.

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It was only a little later that Clemens himself wrote:

You see I am trying a new pen. I stood the stylograph as long as I could, and then retired to the pencil. The thing I am trying now is that fountain-pen which is advertised to employ and accommodate itself to any kind of pen. So I selected an ordinary gold pen—a limber one—and sent it to New York and had it cut and fitted to this thing. It goes very well indeed—thus far; but doubtless the devil will be in it by tomorrow.

Mark Twain's schemes were not all in the line of human advancement; some of them were projected, primarily at least, for diversion. He was likely at any moment to organize a club, a sort of private club, and at the time of which we are writing he proposed what was called the "Modest" Club. He wrote to Howells, about it:

At present I am the only member, and as the modesty required must be of a quite aggravated type the enterprise did seem for a time doomed to stop dead still with myself, for lack of further material; but on reflection I have come to the conclusion that you are eligible. Therefore, I have held a meeting and voted to offer you the distinction of membership. I do not know that we can find any others, though I have had some thought of Hay, Warner, Twichell, Aldrich, Osgood, Fields, Higginson, and a few more, together with Mrs. Howells, Mrs. Clemens, and certain others of the sex. I have long felt there ought to be an organized gang of our kind.

He appends the by-laws, the main ones being:

The object of the club shall be to eat and talk.

Qualification for membership shall be aggravated modesty, unobtrusiveness, native humility, learning, talent, intelligence, unassailable character.

There shall be no officers except a president, and any member who has anything to eat and talk about may constitute himself president for the time being.

Any brother or sister of the order finding a brother or a sister in imminently deadly peril shall forsake his own concerns, no matter at what cost, and call the police.

Any member knowing anything scandalous about himself shall immediately inform the club, so that they shall call a meeting and have the first chance to talk about it.

It was one of his whimsical fancies, and Howells replied that he would like to join it, only that he was too modest—that is, too modest to confess that he was modest enough for membership.



He added that he had sent a letter, with the rules, to Hay, but doubted his modesty. He said:

“He will think he has a right to belong as much as you or I.”

Howells agreed that his own name might be put down, but the idea seems never to have gone any further. Perhaps the requirements of membership were too severe.

**CXXXI**



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### WORKING FOR GARFIELD

Eighteen hundred and eighty was a Presidential year. General Garfield was nominated on the Republican ticket (against General Hancock), and Clemens found him satisfactory.

Garfield suits me thoroughly and exactly [he wrote Howells]. I prefer him to Grant's friends. The Presidency can't add anything to Grant; he will shine on without it. It is ephemeral; he is eternal.

That was the year when the Republican party became panicky over the disaffection in its ranks, due to the defeat of Grant in the convention, and at last, by pleadings and promises, conciliated Platt and Conkling and brought them into the field. General Grant also was induced to save the party from defeat, and made a personal tour of oratory for that purpose. He arrived in Hartford with his family on the 16th of October, and while his reception was more or less partizan, it was a momentous event. A vast procession passed in review before him, and everywhere houses and grounds were decorated. To Mrs. Clemens, still in Elmira, Clemens wrote:

I found Mr. Beals hard at work in the rain with his decorations. With a ladder he had strung flags around our bedroom balcony, and thence around to the porte-cochere, which was elaborately flagged; thence the flags of all nations were suspended from a line which stretched past the greenhouse to the limit of our grounds. Against each of the two trees on the mound, half-way down to our gate, stands a knight in complete armor. Piles of still-bundled flags clutter up the ombra (to be put up), also gaudy shields of various shapes (arms of this and other countries), also some huge glittering arches and things done in gold and silver paper, containing mottoes in big letters. I broke Mr. Beals's heart by persistently and inflexibly annulling and forbidding the biggest and gorgeousest of the arches—it had on it, in all the fires of the rainbow, "The Home of Mark Twain," in letters as big as your head. Oh, we're going to be decorated sufficient, don't you worry about that, madam.

Clemens was one of those delegated to receive Grant and to make a speech of welcome. It was a short speech but an effective one, for it made Grant laugh. He began:

"I am among those deputed to welcome you to the sincere and cordial hospitalities of Hartford, the city of the historic and revered Charter Oak, of which most of the town is built." He seemed to be at loss what to say next, and, leaning over, pretended to whisper to Grant; then, as if he had obtained the information he wanted, he suddenly straightened up and poured out the old-fashioned eulogy on Grant's achievements, adding, in an aside, as he finished: "I nearly forgot that part of my speech," which evoked roars of laughter from the assembly and a grim smile from Grant. He spoke of

Grant as being out of public employment, with private opportunities closed against him, and added, "But your country will reward you, never fear."

Then he closed:



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When Wellington won Waterloo, a battle about on a level with any one of a dozen of your victories, sordid England tried to pay him for that service with wealth and grandeurs. She made him a duke and gave him \$4,000,000. If you had done and suffered for any other country what you have done and suffered for your own you would have been affronted in the same sordid way. But, thank God! this vast and rich and mighty republic is imbued to the core with a delicacy which will forever preserve her from so degrading you. Your country loves you—your country's proud of you—your country is grateful to you. Her applauses, which have been many, thundering in your ears all these weeks and months, will never cease while the flag you saved continues to wave. Your country stands ready from this day forth to testify her measureless love and pride and gratitude toward you in every conceivable—inexpensive way. Welcome to Hartford, great soldier, honored statesman, unselfish citizen.

Grant's grim smile showed itself more than once during the speech, and when Clemens reached the sentence that spoke of his country rewarding him in "every conceivable—inexpensive way" his composure broke up completely and he "nearly laughed his entire head off," according to later testimony, while the spectators shouted their approval.

Grant's son, Col. Fred Grant,—[Maj.-Gen'l, U. S. Army, 1906. Died April, 1912.]—dined at the Clemens home that night, and Rev. Joseph Twichell and Henry C. Robinson. Twichell's invitation was in the form of a telegram. It said:

I want you to dine with us Saturday half past five and meet Col.  
Fred Grant. No ceremony. Wear the same shirt you always wear.

The campaign was at its height now, and on the evening of October 26th there was a grand Republican rally at the opera-house with addresses by Charles Dudley Warner, Henry C. Robinson, and Mark Twain. It was an unpleasant, drizzly evening, but the weather had no effect on their audience. The place was jammed and packed, the aisles, the windows, and the gallery railings full. Hundreds who came as late as the hour announced for the opening were obliged to turn back, for the building had been thronged long before. Mark Twain's speech that night is still remembered in Hartford as the greatest effort of his life. It was hardly that, except to those who were caught in the psychology of the moment, the tumult and the shouting of patriotism, the surge and sweep of the political tide. The roaring delight of the audience showed that to them at least it was convincing. Howells wrote that he had read it twice, and that he could not put it out of his mind. Whatever its general effect was need not now be considered. Garfield was elected, and perhaps Grant's visit to Hartford and the great mass-meeting that followed contributed their mite to that result.

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Clemens saw General Grant again that year, but not on political business. The Educational Mission, which China had established in Hartford—a thriving institution for eight years or more—was threatened now by certain Chinese authorities with abolishment. Yung Wing (a Yale graduate), the official by whom it had been projected and under whose management it had prospered, was deeply concerned, as was the Rev. Joseph Twichell, whose interest in the mission was a large and personal one. Yung Wing declared that if influence could be brought upon Li Hung Chang, then the most influential of Chinese counselors, the mission might be saved. Twichell, remembering the great honors which Li Hung Chang had paid to General Grant in China, also Grant's admiration of Mark Twain, went to the latter without delay. Necessarily Clemens would be enthusiastic, and act promptly. He wrote to Grant, and Grant replied by telegraph, naming a day when he would see them in New York.

They met at the Fifth Avenue Hotel. Grant was in fine spirits, and by no means the “silent man” of his repute.

He launched at once into as free and flowing talk as I have ever heard [says Twichell], marked by broad and intelligent views on the subject of China, her wants, disadvantages, *etc.* Now and then he asked a question, but kept the lead of the conversation. At last he proposed, of his own accord, to write a letter to Li Hung Chang, advising the continuance of the Mission, asking only that I would prepare him some notes, giving him points to go by. Thus we succeeded easily beyond our expectations, thanks, very largely, to Clemens's assistance.

Clemens wrote Howells of the interview, detailing at some length Twichell's comical mixture of delight and chagrin at not being given time to air the fund of prepared statistics with which he had come loaded. It was as if he had come to borrow a dollar and had been offered a thousand before he could unfold his case.

## CXXXII

### A NEW PUBLISHER

It was near the end of the year that Clemens wrote to his mother:

I have two stories, and by the verbal agreement they are both going into the same book; but Livy says they're not, and by George! she ought to know. She says they're going into separate books, and that one of them is going to be elegantly gotten up, even if the elegance of it eats up the publisher's profits and mine too. I anticipate that publisher's melancholy surprise when he calls here Tuesday. However, let him suffer; it is his own fault. People who fix up agreements with me without first finding out what Livy's plans are take their fate into their own hands. I said two stories, but one of them is only half

done; two or three months' work on it yet. I shall tackle it Wednesday or Thursday; that is, if Livy yields and allows both

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stories to go in one book, which I hope she won't.

The reader may surmise that the finished story—the highly regarded story—was 'The Prince and the Pauper'. The other tale—the unfinished and less considered one was 'The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn'. Nobody appears to have been especially concerned about Huck, except, possibly, the publisher.

The publisher was not the American Company. Elisha Bliss, after long ill health, had died that fall, and this fact, in connection with a growing dissatisfaction over the earlier contracts, had induced Clemens to listen to offers from other makers of books. The revelation made by the "half-profit" returns from *A Tramp Abroad* meant to him, simply that the profits had not been fairly apportioned, and he was accordingly hostile. To Orion he wrote that, had Bliss lived, he would have remained with the company and made it reimburse him for his losses, but that as matters stood he would sever the long connection. It seemed a pity, later, that he did this, but the break was bound to come. Clemens was not a business man, and Bliss was not a philanthropist. He was, in fact, a shrewd, capable publisher, who made as good a contract as he could; yet he was square in his dealings, and the contract which Clemens held most bitterly against him—that of 'Roughing It'—had been made in good faith and in accordance with the conditions, of that period. In most of the later contracts Clemens himself had named his royalties, and it was not in human nature—business human nature—for Bliss to encourage the size of these percentages. If one wished to draw a strictly moral conclusion from the situation, one might say that it would have been better for the American Publishing Company, knowing Mark Twain, voluntarily to have allowed him half profits, which was the spirit of his old understanding even if not the letter of it, rather than to have waited till he demanded it and then to lose him by the result. Perhaps that would be also a proper business deduction; only, as a rule, business morals are regulated by the contract, and the contract is regulated by the necessities and the urgency of demand.

Never mind. Mark Twain revised 'The Prince and the Pauper', sent it to Howells, who approved of it mightily (though with reservations as to certain chapters), and gave it to James R. Osgood, who was grateful and agreed to make it into a book upon which no expense for illustration or manufacture should be spared. It was to be a sort of partnership arrangement as between author and publisher, and large returns were anticipated.

Among the many letters which Clemens was just then writing to Howells one was dated "Xmas Eve." It closes with the customary pleasantries and the final line:

"But it is growing dark. Merry Christmas to all of you!"



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That last was a line of large significance. It meant that the air was filled with the whisper of hovering events and that he must mingle with the mystery of preparation. Christmas was an important season in the Clemens home. Almost the entire day before, Patrick was out with the sleigh, delivering food and other gifts in baskets to the poor, and the home preparations were no less busy. There was always a tree—a large one—and when all the gifts had been gathered in—when Elmira and Fredonia had delivered their contributions, and Orion and his wife in Keokuk had sent the annual sack of hickory-nuts (the big river-bottom nuts, big as a silver dollar almost, such nuts as few children of this later generation ever see) when all this happy revenue had been gathered, and the dusk of Christmas Eve had hurried the children off to bed, it was Mrs. Clemens who superintended the dressing of the tree, her husband assisting, with a willingness that was greater than his skill, and with a boy's anticipation in the surprise of it next morning.

Then followed the holidays, with parties and dances and charades, and little plays, with the Warner and Twichell children. To the Clemens home the Christmas season brought all the old round of juvenile happiness—the spirit of kindly giving, the brightness and the merrymaking, the gladness and tenderness and mystery that belong to no other season, and have been handed down through all the ages since shepherds watched on the plains of Bethlehem.

### CXXXIII

#### THE THREE FIRES—SOME BENEFACTIONS

The tradition that fires occur in groups of three was justified in the Clemens household that winter. On each of three successive days flames started that might have led to ghastly results.

The children were croupy, and one morning an alcohol lamp near little Clara's bed, blown by the draught, set fire to the canopy. Rosa, the nurse, entered just as the blaze was well started. She did not lose her presence of mind,—[Rosa was not the kind to lose her head. Once, in Europe, when Bay had crept between the uprights of a high balustrade, and was hanging out over destruction, Rosa, discovering her, did not scream but spoke to her playfully and lifted her over into safety.]—but snatched the little girl out of danger, then opened the window and threw the burning bedding on the lawn. The child was only slightly scorched, but the escape was narrow enough.

Next day little Jean was lying asleep in her crib, in front of an open wood fire, carefully protected by a firescreen, when a spark, by some ingenuity, managed to get through the mesh of the screen and land on the crib's lace covering. Jean's nurse, Julia, arrived to find the lace a gust of flame and the fire spreading. She grabbed the sleeping Jean and screamed. Rosa, again at hand, heard the scream, and rushing in once more opened a

window and flung out the blazing bedclothes. Clemens himself also arrived, and together they stamped out the fire.



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On the third morning, just before breakfast-time, Susy was practising at the piano in the school-room, which adjoined the nursery. At one end of the room a fire of large logs was burning. Susy was at the other end of the room, her back to the fire. A log burned in two and fell, scattering coals around the woodwork which supported the mantel. Just as the blaze was getting fairly started a barber, waiting to trim Mr. Clemens's hair, chanced to look in and saw what was going on. He stepped into the nursery bath-room, brought a pitcher of water and extinguished the flames. This period was always referred to in the Clemens household as the "three days of fire."

Clemens would naturally make philosophical deductions from these coincidental dangers and the manner in which they had been averted. He said that all these things were comprehended in the first act of the first atom; that, but for some particular impulse given in that remote time, the alcohol flame would not have blown against the canopy, the spark would not have found its way through the screen, the log would not have broken apart in that dangerous way, and that Rosa and Julia and the barber would not have been at hand to save precious life and property. He did not go further and draw moral conclusions as to the purpose of these things: he never drew conclusions as to purpose. He was willing to rest with the event. Logically he did not believe in reasons for things, but only that things were.

Nevertheless, he was always trying to change them; to have a hand in their improvement. Had you asked him, he would have said that this, too, was all in the primal atom; that his nature, such as it was, had been minutely embodied there.

In that charming volume, 'My Mark Twain', Howells tells us of Clemens's consideration, and even tenderness, for the negro race and his effort to repair the wrong done by his nation. Mark Twain's writings are full of similar evidence, and in his daily life he never missed an opportunity to pay tribute to the humbler race. He would go across the street to speak to an old negro, and to take his hand. He would read for a negro church when he would have refused a cathedral. Howells mentions the colored student whose way through college Clemens paid as a partial reparation "due from every white man to every black man."—[Mark Twain paid two colored students through college. One of them, educated in a Southern institution, became a minister of the gospel. The other graduated from the Yale Law School.]—This incident belongs just to the period of which we are now writing, and there is another which, though different enough, indicates the same tendency.

Garfield was about to be inaugurated, and it was rumored that Frederick Douglass might lose his position as Marshal of the District of Columbia. Clemens was continually besought by one and another to use his influence with the Administration, and in every case had refused. Douglass had made no such application. Clemens, learning that the old negro's place was in danger, interceded for him of his own accord. He closed his letter to General Garfield:

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A simple citizen may express a desire, with all propriety, in the matter of recommendation to office, and so I beg permission to hope that you will retain Mr. Douglass in his present office of Marshal of the District of Columbia, if such a course will not clash with your own preferences or with the expediencies and interests of your Administration. I offer this petition with peculiar pleasure and strong desire, because I so honor this man's high and blemishless character, and so admire his brave, long crusade for the liberties and elevation of his race.

He is a personal friend of mine, but that is nothing to the point; his history would move me to say these things without that, and I feel them, too.

Douglass wrote to Clemens, thanking him for his interest; at the end he said:

I think if a man is mean enough to want an office he ought to be noble enough to ask for it, and use all honorable means of getting it. I mean to ask, and I will use your letter as a part of my petition. It will put the President-elect in a good humor, in any case, and that is very important.

With great respect,  
Gratefully yours,  
*Frederick Douglass.*

Mark Twain's benefactions were not all for the colored race. One morning in February of this same year, while the family were at late breakfast, George came in to announce "a lady waiting to see Mr. Clemens in the drawing-room." Clemens growled.

"George," he said, "it's a book agent. I won't see her. I'll die, in my tracks first."

He went, fuming and raging inwardly, and began at once to ask the nature of the intruder's business. Then he saw that she was very young and modest, with none of the assurance of a canvasser, so he gave her a chance to speak. She told him that a young man employed in Pratt & Whitney's machine-shops had made a statue in clay, and would like to have Mark Twain come and look at it and see if it showed any promise of future achievement. His name, she said, was Karl Gerhardt, and he was her husband. Clemens protested that he knew nothing about art, but the young woman's manner and appearance (she seemed scarcely more than a child) won him. He wavered, and finally promised that he would come the first chance he had; that in fact he would come some time during the next week. On her suggestion he agreed to come early in the week; he specified Monday, "without fail."

When she was gone, and the door shut behind her, his usual remorse came upon him. He said to himself:



“Why didn’t I go now? Why didn’t I go with her now?”

She went from Clemens’s over to Warner’s. Warner also resisted, but, tempted beyond his strength by her charm, laid down his work and went at once. When he returned he urged Clemens to go without fail, and, true to promise, Clemens took Patrick, the coachman, and hunted up the place. Clemens saw the statue, a seminude, for which the young wife had posed, and was struck by its evident merit. Mrs. Gerhardt told him the story of her husband’s struggles between his daily work and the effort to develop his talent. He had never had a lesson, she said; if he could only have lessons what might he not accomplish?



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Mrs. Clemens and Miss Spaulding called next day, and were equally carried away with Karl Gerhardt, his young wife, and his effort to win his way in art. Clemens and Warner made up their minds to interest themselves personally in the matter, and finally persuaded the painter J. Wells Champney to come over from New York and go with them to the Gerhardts' humble habitation, to see his work. Champney approved of it. He thought it well worth while, he said, for the people of Hartford to go to the expense of Gerhardt's art education. He added that it would be better to get the judgment of a sculptor. So they brought over John Quincy Adams Ward, who, like all the others, came away bewitched with these young people and their struggles for the sake of art. Ward said:

"If any stranger had told me that this 'prentice did not model that thing from plaster-casts I should not have believed it. It's full of crudities, but it's full of genius, too. Hartford must send him to Paris for two years; then, if the promise holds good, keep him there three more."

When he was gone Mrs. Clemens said:

"Youth, we won't wait for Hartford to do it. It would take too long. Let us send the Gerhardts to Paris ourselves, and say nothing about it to any one else."

So the Gerhardts, provided with funds and an arrangement that would enable them to live for five years in Paris if necessary, were started across the sea without further delay.

Clemens and his wife were often doing something of this sort. There was seldom a time that they were not paying the way of some young man or woman through college, or providing means and opportunity for development in some special field of industry.

## CXXXIV

### LITERARY PROJECTS AND A MONUMENT TO ADAM

Mark Twain's literary work languished during this period. He had a world of plans, as usual, and wrote plentifully, but without direction or conclusion. "A Curious Experience," which relates a circumstance told to him by an army officer, is about the most notable of the few completed manuscripts of this period.

Of the books projected (there were several), a burlesque manual of etiquette would seem to have been the most promising. Howells had faith in it, and of the still remaining fragments a few seem worth quoting:

*At billiards*



If your ball glides along in the intense and immediate vicinity of the object-ball, and a count seems exquisitely imminent, lift one leg; then one shoulder; then squirm your body around in sympathy with the direction of the moving ball; and at the instant when the ball seems on the point of colliding throw up both of your arms violently. Your cue will probably break a chandelier, but no matter; you have done what you could to help the count.

*At the dog-fight*



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If it occur in your block, courteously give way to strangers desiring a view, particularly ladies.

Avoid showing partiality toward the one dog, lest you hurt the feelings of the other one.

Let your secret sympathies and your compassion be always with the under dog in the fight—this is magnanimity; but bet on the other one—this is business.

### *At poker*

If you draw to a flush and fail to fill, do not continue the conflict.

If you hold a pair of trays, and your opponent is blind, and it costs you fifty to see him, let him remain unperceived.

If you hold nothing but ace high, and by some means you know that the other man holds the rest of the aces, and he calls, excuse yourself; let him call again another time.

### *Wall street*

If you live in the country, buy at 80, sell at 40. Avoid all forms of eccentricity.

### *In the restaurant*

When you wish to get the waiter's attention, do not sing out "Say!" Simply say "Szt!"

His old abandoned notion of "Hamlet" with an added burlesque character came back to him and stirred his enthusiasm anew, until even Howells manifested deep interest in the matter. One reflects how young Howells must have been in those days; how full of the joy of existence; also how mournfully he would consider such a sacrilege now.

Clemens proposed almost as many things to Howells as his brother Orion proposed to him. There was scarcely a letter that didn't contain some new idea, with a request for advice or co-operation. Now it was some book that he meant to write some day, and again it would be a something that he wanted Howells to write.

Once he urged Howells to make a play, or at least a novel, out of Orion. At another time he suggested as material the "Rightful Earl of Durham."



He is a perfectly stunning literary bonanza, and must be dug up and put on the market. You must get his entire biography out of him and have it ready for Osgood's magazine. Even if it isn't worth printing, you must have it anyway, and use it one of these days in one of your stories or in a play.

It was this notion about 'The American Claimant' which somewhat later would lead to a collaboration with Howells on a drama, and eventually to a story of that title.

But Clemens's chief interest at this time lay in publishing, rather than in writing. His association with Osgood inspired him to devise new ventures of profit. He planned a 'Library of American Humor', which Howells (soon to leave the Atlantic) and "Charley" Clark—[Charles Hopkins Clark, managing editor of the Hartford Courant.]—were to edit, and which Osgood would publish, for subscription sale. Without realizing it, Clemens was taking his first step toward becoming his own publisher. His contract with Osgood for 'The Prince and

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the Pauper' made him essentially that, for by the terms of it he agreed to supply all the money for the making of the book, and to pay Osgood a royalty of seven and one-half per cent. for selling it, reversing the usual conditions. The contract for the Library of Humor was to be a similar one, though in this case Osgood was to have a larger royalty return, and to share proportionately in the expense and risk. Mark Twain was entering into a field where he did not belong; where in the end he would harvest only disaster and regret.

One curious project came to an end in 1881—the plan for a monument to Adam. In a sketch written a great many years later Mark Twain tells of the memorial which the Rev. Thomas K. Beecher and himself once proposed to erect to our great common ancestor. The story is based on a real incident. Clemens, in Elmira one day (it was October, 1879), heard of a jesting proposal made by F. G. Hall to erect a monument in Elmira to Adam. The idea promptly caught Mark Twain's fancy. He observed to Beecher that the human race really showed a pretty poor regard for its great progenitor, who was about to be deposed by Darwin's simian, not to pay him the tribute of a single monument. Mankind, he said, would probably accept the monkey ancestor, and in time the very name of Adam would be forgotten. He declared Mr. Hall's suggestion to be a sound idea.

Beecher agreed that there were many reasons why a monument should be erected to Adam, and suggested that a subscription be started for the purpose. Certain business men, seeing an opportunity for advertising the city, took the matter semi-seriously, and offered to contribute large sums in the interest of the enterprise. Then it was agreed that Congress should be petitioned to sanction the idea exclusively to Elmira, prohibiting the erection of any such memorial elsewhere. A document to this effect was prepared, headed by F. G. Hall, and signed by other leading citizens of Elmira, including Beecher himself. General Joe Hawley came along just then on a political speech-making tour. Clemens introduced him, and Hawley, in turn, agreed to father the petition in Congress. What had begun merely as pleasantries began to have a formidable look.

But alas! in the end Hawley's courage had failed him. He began to hate his undertaking. He was afraid of the national laugh it would arouse, the jeers of the newspapers. It was certain to leak out that Mark Twain was behind it, in spite of the fact that his name nowhere appeared; that it was one of his colossal jokes. Now and then, in the privacy of his own room at night, Hawley would hunt up the Adam petition and read it and feel the cold sweat breaking out. He postponed the matter from one session to another till the summer of 1881, when he was about to sail for Europe. Then he gave the document to his wife, to turn over to Clemens, and ignominiously fled.

[For text of the petition in full, *etc.*, see Appendix P, at the end of last volume.]



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Mark Twain's introduction of Hawley at Elmira contained this pleasantry: "General Hawley was president of the Centennial Commission. Was a gallant soldier in the war. He has been Governor of Connecticut, member of Congress, and was president of the convention that nominated Abraham Lincoln."

General Hawley: "That nominated Grant."

Twain: "He says it was Grant, but I know better. He is a member of my church at Hartford, and the author of 'Beautiful Snow.' Maybe he will deny that. But I am only here to give him a character from his last place. As a pure citizen, I respect him; as a personal friend of years, I have the warmest regard for him; as a neighbor whose vegetable garden joins mine, why—why, I watch him. That's nothing; we all do that with any neighbor. General Hawley keeps his promises, not only in private, but in public. He is an editor who believes what he writes in his own paper. As the author of 'Beautiful Snow' he added a new pang to winter. He is broad-souled, generous, noble, liberal, alive to his moral and religious responsibilities. Whenever the contribution-box was passed I never knew him to take out a cent."

### CXXXV

*A trip with Sherman and an interview with Grant.*

The Army of the Potomac gave a dinner in Hartford on the 8th of June, 1881. But little memory remains of it now beyond Mark Twain's speech and a bill of fare containing original comments, ascribed to various revered authors, such as Johnson, Milton, and Carlyle. A pleasant incident followed, however, which Clemens himself used to relate. General Sherman attended the banquet, and Secretary of War, Robert Lincoln. Next morning Clemens and Twichell were leaving for West Point, where they were to address the military students, guests on the same special train on which Lincoln and Sherman had their private car. This car was at the end of the train, and when the two passengers reached the station, Sherman and Lincoln were out on the rear platform addressing the multitude. Clemens and Twichell went in and, taking seats, waited for them.

As the speakers finished the train started, but they still remained outside, bowing and waving to the assembled citizens, so that it was under good headway before they came in. Sherman came up to Clemens, who sat smoking unconcernedly.

"Well," he said, "who told you you could go in this car?"

"Nobody," said Clemens.

"Do you expect to pay extra fare?" asked Sherman.

"No," said Clemens. "I don't expect to pay any fare."



“Oh, you don’t. Then you’ll work your way.”

Sherman took off his coat and military hat and made Clemens put them on.

“Now,” said he, “whenever the train stops you go out on the platform and represent me and make a speech.”

It was not long before the train stopped, and Clemens, according to orders, stepped out on the rear platform and bowed to the crowd. There was a cheer at the sight of his military uniform. Then the cheer waned, became a murmur of uncertainty, followed by an undertone of discussion. Presently somebody said:

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“Say, that ain’t Sherman, that’s Mark Twain,” which brought another cheer.

Then Sherman had to come out too, and the result was that both spoke. They kept this up at the different stations, and sometimes Lincoln came out with them. When there was time all three spoke, much to the satisfaction of their audiences.

President Garfield was shot that summer—July 2, 1881.—[On the day that President Garfield was shot Mrs. Clemens received from their friend Reginald Cholmondeley a letter of condolence on the death of her husband in Australia; startling enough, though in reality rather comforting than otherwise, for the reason that the “Mark Twain” who had died in Australia was a very persistent impostor. Clemens wrote Cholmondeley: “Being dead I might be excused from writing letters, but I am not that kind of a corpse. May I never be so dead as to neglect the hail of a friend from a far land.” Out of this incident grew a feature of an anecdote related in *Following the Equator* the joke played by the man from Bendigo.]—He died September 19th, and Arthur came into power. There was a great feeling of uncertainty as to what he would do. He was regarded as “an excellent gentleman with a weakness for his friends.” Incumbents holding appointive offices were in a state of dread.

Howells’s father was consul at Toronto, and, believing his place to be in danger, he appealed to his son. In his book Howells tells how, in turn, he appealed to Clemens, remembering his friendship with Grant and Grant’s friendship with Arthur. He asked Clemens to write to Grant, but Clemens would hear of nothing less than a call on the General, during which the matter would be presented to him in person. Howells relates how the three of them lunched together, in a little room just out of the office, on baked beans and coffee, brought in from some near-by restaurant:

The baked beans and coffee were of about the railroad-refreshment quality; but eating them with Grant was like sitting down to baked beans and coffee with Julius Caesar, or Alexander, or some other great Plutarchan captain.

Clemens, also recalling the interview, once added some interesting details:

“I asked Grant if he wouldn’t write a word on a card which Howells could carry to Washington and hand to the President. But, as usual, General Grant was his natural self—that is to say, ready and determined to do a great deal more for you than you could possibly ask him to do. He said he was going to Washington in a couple of days to dine with the President, and he would speak to him himself on the subject and make it a personal matter. Grant was in the humor to talk—he was always in a humor to talk when no strangers were present—he forced us to stay and take luncheon in a private room, and continued to talk all the time. It was baked beans, but how ‘he sits and towers,’ Howells said, quoting Dame. Grant remembered ‘Squibob’



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Derby (John Phoenix) at West Point very well. He said that Derby was always drawing caricatures of the professors and playing jokes on every body. He told a thing which I had heard before but had never seen in print. A professor questioning a class concerning certain particulars of a possible siege said, 'Suppose a thousand men are besieging a fortress whose equipment of provisions is so-and-so; it is a military axiom that at the end of forty-five days the fort will surrender. Now, young men, if any of you were in command of such a fortress, how would you proceed?'

"Derby held up his hand in token that he had an answer for that question. He said, 'I would march out, let the enemy in, and at the end of forty-five days I would change places with him.'

"I tried hard, during that interview, to get General Grant to agree to write his personal memoirs for publication, but he wouldn't listen to the suggestion. His inborn diffidence made him shrink from voluntarily coming before the public and placing himself under criticism as an author. He had no confidence in his ability to write well; whereas we all know now that he possessed an admirable literary gift and style. He was also sure that the book would have no sale, and of course that would be a humility too. I argued that the book would have an enormous sale, and that out of my experience I could save him from making unwise contracts with publishers, and would have the contract arranged in such a way that they could not swindle him, but he said he had no necessity for any addition to his income. Of course he could not foresee that he was camping on a volcano; that as Ward's partner he was a ruined man even then, and of course I had no suspicion that in four years from that time I would become his publisher. He would not agree to write his memoirs. He only said that some day he would make very full notes and leave them behind him, and then if his children chose to make them into a book they could do so. We came away then. He fulfilled his promise entirely concerning Howells's father, who held his office until he resigned of his own accord."

## CXXXVI

*"The prince and the pauper"*

During the summer absence alterations were made in the Hartford home, with extensive decorations by Tiffany. The work was not completed when the family returned. Clemens wrote to Charles Warren Stoddard, then in the Sandwich Islands, that the place was full of carpenters and decorators, whereas what they really needed was "an incendiary."

If the house would only burn down we would pack up the cubs and fly to the isles of the blest, and shut ourselves up in the healing solitudes of the crater of Haleakala and get a



good rest, for the mails do not intrude there, nor yet the telephone and the telegraph; and after resting we would come down the mountain a piece and board with a godly, breech-clouted native, and eat poi and dirt, and give thanks to whom all thanks belong for these privileges, and never housekeep any more.



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They had acquired more ground. One morning in the spring Mark Twain had looked out of his window just in time to see a man lift an ax to cut down a tree on the lot which lay between his own and that of his neighbor. He had heard that a house was to be built there; altogether too close to him for comfort and privacy. Leaning out of the window he called sonorously, "Woodman, spare that tree!" Then he hurried down, obtained a stay of proceedings, and without delay purchased the lot from the next-door neighbor who owned it, acquiring thereby one hundred feet of extra ground and a greenhouse which occupied it. It was a costly purchase; the owner knew he could demand his own price; he asked and received twelve thousand dollars for the strip.

In November, Clemens found that he must make another trip to Canada. 'The Prince and the Pauper' was ready for issue, and to insure Canadian copyright the author must cross the line in person. He did not enjoy the prospect of a cold-weather trip to the north, and tried to tempt Howells to go with him, but only succeeded in persuading Osgood, who would do anything or go anywhere that offered the opportunity for pleasant company and junket.

It was by no means an unhappy fortnight. Clemens took a note-book, and there are plenty of items that give reality to that long-ago excursion. He found the Canadian girls so pretty that he records it as a relief now and then to see a plain one. On another page he tells how one night in the hotel a mouse gnawed and kept him awake, and how he got up and hunted for it, hoping to destroy it. He made a rebus picture for the children of this incident in a letter home.

We get a glimpse just here of how he was constantly viewing himself as literary material—human material—an example from which some literary aspect or lesson may be drawn. Following the mouse adventure we find it thus dramatized:

Trace Father Brebeuf all through this trip, and when I am in a rage and can't endure the mouse be reading of Brebeuf's marvelous endurances and be shamed.

And finally, after chasing the bright-eyed rascal several days, and throwing things and trying to jump on him when in my overshoes, he darts away with those same bright eyes, then straightway I read Brebeuf's magnificent martyrdom, and turn in, subdued and wondering. By and by the thought occurs to me, Brebeuf, with his good, great heart would spare even that poor humble mousie—and for his sake so will I—I will throw the trap in the fire—jump out of bed, reach under, fetch out the trap, and find him throttled there and not two minutes dead.

They gave him a dinner in Montreal. Louis Frechette, the Canadian poet, was there and Clemens addressed him handsomely in the response he made to the speech of welcome. From that moment Frechette never ceased to adore Mark Twain, and visited him soon after the return to Hartford.



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'The Prince and the Pauper' was published in England, Canada, Germany, and America early in December, 1881. There had been no stint of money, and it was an extremely handsome book. The pen-and-ink drawings were really charming, and they were lavish as to number. It was an attractive volume from every standpoint, and it was properly dedicated "To those good-mannered and agreeable children, Susy and Clara Clemens."

The story itself was totally unlike anything that Mark Twain had done before. Enough of its plan and purpose has been given in former chapters to make a synopsis of it unnecessary here. The story of the wandering prince and the pauper king—an impressive picture of ancient legal and regal cruelty—is as fine and consistent a tale as exists in the realm of pure romance. Unlike its great successor, the 'Yankee at King Arthur's Court', it never sacrifices the illusion to the burlesque, while through it all there runs a delicate vein of humor. Only here and there is there the slightest disillusion, and this mainly in the use of some ultra-modern phrase or word.

Mark Twain never did any better writing than some of the splendid scenes in 'The Prince and the Pauper'. The picture of Old London Bridge; the scene in the vagabond's retreat, with its presentation to the little king of the wrongs inflicted by the laws of his realm; the episode of the jail where his revelation reaches a climax—these are but a few of the splendid pictures which the chapters portray, while the spectacle of England acquiring mercy at the hands of two children, a king and a beggar, is one which only genius could create. One might quote here, but to do so without the context would be to sacrifice atmosphere, half the story's charm. How breathlessly interesting is the tale of it! We may imagine that first little audience at Mark Twain's fireside hanging expectant on every paragraph, hungry always for more. Of all Mark Twain's longer works of fiction it is perhaps the most coherent as to plot, the most carefully thought out, the most perfect as to workmanship. This is not to say that it is his greatest story. Probably time will not give it that rank, but it comes near to being a perfectly constructed story, and it has an imperishable charm.

It was well received, though not always understood by the public. The reviewer was so accustomed to looking for the joke in Mark Twain's work, that he found it hard to estimate this new product. Some even went so far as to refer to it as one of Mark Twain's big jokes, meaning probably that he had created a chapter in English history with no foundation beyond his fancy. Of course these things pained the author of the book. At one time, he had been inclined to publish it anonymously, to avert this sort of misunderstanding, and sometimes now he regretted not having done so.

Yet there were many gratifying notices. The New York Herald reviewer gave the new book two columns of finely intelligent appreciation. In part he said:



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To those who have followed the career of Mark Twain, his appearance as the author of a charming and noble romance is really no more of a surprise than to see a stately structure risen upon slightly ground owned by an architect of genius, with the resources of abundant building material and ample training at command. Of his capacity they have had no doubt, and they rejoice in his taking a step which they felt he was able to take. Through all his publications may be traced the marks of the path which half led up to this happy height. His humor has often been the cloak, but not the mask, of a sturdy purpose. His work has been characterized by a manly love of truth, a hatred of humbug, and a scorn for cant. A genial warmth and whole-souledness, a beautiful fancy, a fertile imagination, and a native feeling for the picturesque and a fine eye for color have afforded the basis of a style which has become more and more plastic and finished.

And in closing:

The characters of these two boys, twins in spirit, will rank with the purest and loveliest creations of child-life in the realm of fiction.

## CXXXVII

### CERTAIN ATTACKS AND REPRISALS

Beyond the publication of *The Prince and the Pauper* Clemens was sparingly represented in print in '81. A chapter originally intended for the book, the "Whipping Boy's Story," he gave to the *Bazaar Budget*, a little special-edition sheet printed in Hartford. It was the story of the 'Bull and the Bees' which he later adapted for use in *Joan of Arc*, the episode in which Joan's father rides a bull to a funeral. Howells found that it interfered with the action in the story of the Prince, and we might have spared it from the story of Joan, though hardly without regret.

The military story "A Curious Episode" was published in the *Century Magazine* for November. The fact that Clemens had heard, and not invented, the story was set forth quite definitely and fully in his opening paragraphs. Nevertheless, a "Captious Reader" thought it necessary to write to a New York publication concerning its origin:

I am an admirer of the writings of Mr. Mark Twain, and consequently, when I saw the table of contents of the November number of the *Century*, I bought it and turned at once to the article bearing his name, and entitled, "A Curious Episode." When I began to read it, it struck me as strangely familiar, and I soon recognized the story as a true one, told me in the summer of 1878 by an officer of the United States artillery. Query: Did Mr. Twain expect the public to credit this narrative to his clever brain?

The editor, seeing a chance for Mark Twain “copy,” forwarded a clipping to Clemens and asked him if he had anything to say in the matter. Clemens happened to know the editor very well, and he did have something to say, not for print, but for the editor’s private ear.

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The newspaper custom of shooting a man in the back and then calling upon him to come out in a card and prove that he was not engaged in any infamy at the time is a good enough custom for those who think it justifiable. Your correspondent is not stupid, I judge, but purely and simply malicious. He knew there was not the shadow of a suggestion, from the beginning to the end of "A Curious Episode," that the story was an invention; he knew he had no warrant for trying to persuade the public that I had stolen the narrative and was endeavoring to palm it off as a piece of literary invention; he also knew that he was asking his closing question with a base motive, else he would have asked it of me by letter, not spread it before the public. I have never wronged you in any way, and I think you had no right to print that communication; no right, neither any excuse. As to publicly answering that correspondent, I would as soon think of bandying words in public with any other prostitute.

The editor replied in a manly, frank acknowledgment of error. He had not looked up the article itself in the Century before printing the communication.

"Your letter has taught me a lesson," he said. "The blame belongs to me for not hunting up the proofs. Please accept my apology."

Mark Twain was likely to be peculiarly sensitive to printed innuendos. Not always. Sometimes he would only laugh at them or be wholly indifferent. Indeed, in his later years, he seldom cared to read anything about himself, one way or the other, but at the time of which we are now writing—the period of the early eighties—he was alive to any comment of the press. His strong sense of humor, and still stronger sense of human weakness, caused him to overlook many things which another might regard as an affront; but if the thing printed were merely an uncalled-for slur, an inexcusable imputation, he was inclined to rage and plan violence. Sometimes he conceived retribution in the form of libel suits with heavy damages. Sometimes he wrote blasting answers, which Mrs. Clemens would not let him print.

At one time he planned a biography of a certain editor who seemed to be making a deliberate personal campaign against his happiness. Clemens had heard that offending items were being printed in this man's paper; friends, reporting with customary exaggeration, declared that these sneers and brutalities appeared almost daily, so often as to cause general remark.

This was enough. He promptly began to collect data—damaging data—relating to that editor's past history. He even set a man to work in England collecting information concerning his victim. One of his notebooks contains the memoranda; a few items will show how terrific was to be the onslaught.

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When the naturalist finds a new kind of animal, he writes him up in the interest of science. No matter if it is an unpleasant animal. This is a new kind of animal, and in the cause of society must be written up. He is the polecat of our species . . . . He is purely and simply a Guiteau with the courage left out . . . .

Steel portraits of him as a sort of idiot, from infancy up—to a dozen scattered through the book—all should resemble him.

But never mind the rest. When he had got thoroughly interested in his project Mrs. Clemens, who had allowed the cyclone to wear itself out a little with its own vehemence, suggested that perhaps it would be well to have some one make an examination of the files of the paper and see just what had been said of him. So he subscribed for the paper himself and set a man to work on the back numbers. We will let him tell the conclusion of the matter himself, in his report of it to Howells:

The result arrived from my New York man this morning. Oh, what a pitiable wreck of high hopes! The “almost daily” assaults for two months consist of (1) adverse criticism of P. & P. from an enraged idiot in the London Athenaeum, (2) paragraphs from some indignant Englishman in the Pall Mall Gazette, who pays me the vast compliment of gravely rebuking some imaginary ass who has set me up in the neighborhood of Rabelais, (3) a remark about the Montreal dinner, touched with an almost invisible satire, and, (4) a remark about refusal of Canadian copyright, not complimentary, but not necessarily malicious; and of course adverse criticism which is not malicious is a thing which none but fools irritate themselves about. There, that is the prodigious bugaboo in its entirety! Can you conceive of a man’s getting himself into a sweat over so diminutive a provocation? I am sure I can’t. What the devil can those friends of mine have been thinking about to spread those three or four harmless things out into two months of daily sneers and affronts? Boiled down, this vast outpouring of malice amounts to simply this: one jest (one can make nothing more serious than that out of it). One jest, and that is all; for foreign criticisms do not count, they being matters of news, and proper for publication in anybody’s newspaper . . . . Well, my mountain has brought forth its mouse, and a sufficiently small mouse it is, God knows. And my three weeks’ hard work has got to go into the ignominious pigeonhole. Confound it, I could have earned ten thousand dollars with infinitely less trouble.

Howells refers to this episode, and concludes:

So the paper was acquitted and the editor’s life was spared. The wretch never, never knew how near he was to losing it, with incredible preliminaries of obloquy, and a subsequent devotion to lasting infamy.

**CXXXVIII**



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### MANY UNDERTAKINGS

To write a detailed biography of Mark Twain at this period would be to defy perusal. Even to set down all the interesting matters, interesting to the public of his time, would mean not only to exhaust the subject, but the reader. He lived at the top of his bent, and almost anything relating to him was regarded as news. Daily and hourly he mingled with important matters or spoke concerning them. A bare list of the interesting events of Mark Twain's life would fill a large volume.

He was so busy, so deeply interested himself, so vitally alive to every human aspect. He read the papers through, and there was always enough to arouse his indignation—the doings of the human race at large could be relied upon to do that—and he would write, and write, to relieve himself. His mental Niagara was always pouring away, turning out articles, essays, communications on every conceivable subject, mainly with the idea of reform. There were many public and private abuses, and he wanted to correct them all. He covered reams of paper with lurid heresies—political, religious, civic—for most of which there was no hope of publication.

Now and then he was allowed to speak out: An order from the Post-office Department at Washington concerning the superscription of envelopes seemed to him unwarranted. He assailed it, and directly the nation was being entertained by a controversy between Mark Twain and the Postmaster-General's private secretary, who subsequently receded from the field. At another time, on the matter of postage rates he wrote a paper which began: "Reader, suppose you were an idiot. And suppose you were a member of Congress. But I repeat myself."

It is hardly necessary to add that the paper did not appear.

On the whole, Clemens wrote his strictures more for relief than to print, and such of these papers as are preserved to-day form a curious collection of human documents. Many of them could be printed to-day, without distress to any one. The conditions that invited them are changed; the heresies are not heresies any more. He may have had some thought of their publication in later years, for once he wrote:

Sometimes my feelings are so hot that I have to take the pen and put them out on paper to keep them from setting me afire inside; then all that ink and labor are wasted because I can't print the result. I have just finished an article of this kind, and it satisfies me entirely. It does my weather-beaten soul good to read it, and admire the trouble it would make for me and the family. I will leave it behind and utter it from the grave. There is a free speech there, and no harm to the family.

It is too late and too soon to print most of these things; too late to print them for their salutary influence, too soon to print them as literature.



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He was interested in everything: in music, as little as he knew of it. He had an ear for melody, a dramatic vision, and the poetic conception of sound. Reading some lilting lyric, he could fancy the words marching to melody, and would cast about among his friends for some one who could supply a tuneful setting. Once he wrote to his friend the Rev. Dr. Parker, who was a skilled musician, urging him to write a score for Tennyson's "Bugle Song," outlining an attractive scheme for it which the order of his fancy had formulated. Dr. Parker replied that the "Bugle Song," often attempted, had been the despair of many musicians.

He was interested in business affairs. Already, before the European trip, he had embarked in, and disembarked from, a number of pecuniary ventures. He had not been satisfied with a strictly literary income. The old tendency to speculative investment, acquired during those restless mining days, always possessed him. There were no silver mines in the East, no holes in the ground into which to empty money and effort; but there were plenty of equivalents—inventions, stock companies, and the like. He had begun by putting five thousand dollars into the American Publishing Company; but that was a sound and profitable venture, and deserves to be remembered for that reason.

Then a man came along with a patent steam generator which would save ninety per cent. of the fuel energy, or some such amount, and Mark Twain was early persuaded that it would revolutionize the steam manufactures of the world; so he put in whatever bank surplus he had and bade it a permanent good-by.

Following the steam generator came a steam pulley, a rather small contrivance, but it succeeded in extracting thirty-two thousand dollars from his bank account in a period of sixteen months.

By the time he had accumulated a fresh balance, a new method of marine telegraphy was shown him, so he used it up on that, twenty-five thousand dollars being the price of this adventure.

A watch company in western New York was ready to sell him a block of shares by the time he was prepared to experiment again, but it did not quite live to declare the first dividend on his investment.

Senator John P. Jones invited him to join in the organization of an accident insurance company, and such was Jones's confidence in the venture that he guaranteed Clemens against loss. Mark Twain's only profit from this source was in the delivery of a delicious speech, which he made at a dinner given to Cornelius Walford, of London, an insurance author of repute. Jones was paying back the money presently, and about that time came a young inventor named Graham Bell, offering stock in a contrivance for carrying the human voice on an electric wire. At almost any other time Clemens would eagerly have welcomed this opportunity; but he was so gratified at having got his money out of

the insurance venture that he refused to respond to the happy “hello” call of fortune. In some memoranda made thirty years later he said:



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I declined. I said I didn't want anything more to do with wildcat speculation. Then he [Bell] offered the stock to me at twenty-five. I said I didn't want it at any price. He became eager; insisted that I take five hundred dollars' worth. He said he would sell me as much as I wanted for five hundred dollars; offered to let me gather it up in my hands and measure it in a plug hat; said I could have a whole hatful for five hundred dollars. But I was the burnt child, and I resisted all these temptations—resisted them easily; went off with my check intact, and next day lent five thousand of it, on an unendorsed note, to a friend who was going to go bankrupt three days later.

About the end of the year I put up a telephone wire from my house down to the Courant office, the only telephone wire in town, and the first one that was ever used in a private house in the world.

That had been only a little while before he sailed for Europe. When he returned he would have been willing to accept a very trifling interest in the telephone industry for the amount of his insurance salvage.

He had a fresh interest in patents now, and when his old friend Dan Slote got hold of a new process for engraving—the kaolatype or “chalk-plate” process—which was going to revolutionize the world of illustration, he promptly acquired a third interest, and eventually was satisfied with nothing short of control. It was an ingenious process: a sheet of perfectly smooth steel was coated with a preparation of kaolin (or china clay), and a picture was engraved through the coating down to the steel surface. This formed the matrix into which the molten metal was poured to make the stereotype plate, or die, for printing. It was Clemens's notion that he could utilize this process for the casting of brass dies for stamping book covers—that, so applied, the fortunes to be made out of it would be larger and more numerous. Howells tells how, at one time, Clemens thought the “damned human race” was almost to be redeemed by a process of founding brass without air-bubbles in it. This was the time referred to and the race had to go unredeemed; for, after long, worried, costly experimenting, the brass refused to accommodate its nature to the new idea, while the chalk plate itself, with all its subsidiary and auxiliary possibilities, was infringed upon right and left, and the protecting patent failed to hold. The process was doomed, in any case. It was barely established before the photographic etching processes, superior in all ways, were developed and came quickly into use. The kaolatype enterprise struggled nobly for a considerable period. Clemens brought his niece's husband, young Charles L. Webster, from Fredonia to manage it for him, and backed it liberally. Webster was vigorous, hard-working, and capable; but the end of each month showed a deficit, until Clemens was from forty to fifty thousand dollars out of pocket in his effort to save the race with chalk and brass. The history of these several ventures (and there were others), dismissed here in a few paragraphs, would alone make a volume not without interest, certainly not without humor. Following came the type-setting machine, but we are not ready for that. Of necessity it is a longer, costlier story.



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Mrs. Clemens did not share his enthusiasm in these various enterprises. She did not oppose them, at least not strenuously, but she did not encourage them. She did not see their need. Their home was beautiful; they were happy; he could do his work in deliberation and comfort. She knew the value of money better than he, cared more for it in her own way; but she had not his desire to heap up vast and sudden sums, to revel in torrential golden showers. She was willing to let well enough alone. Clemens could not do this, and suffered accordingly. In the midst of fair home surroundings and honors we find him writing to his mother:

Life has come to be a very serious matter with me. I have a badgered, harassed feeling a good part of my time. It comes mainly from business responsibilities and annoyances.

He had no moral right to be connected with business at all. He had a large perception of business opportunity, but no vision of its requirements—its difficulties and details. He was the soul of honor, but in anything resembling practical direction he was but a child. During any period of business venture he was likely to be in hot water: eagerly excited, worried, impatient; alternately suspicious and over-trusting, rash, frenzied, and altogether upset.

Yet never, even to the end of his days, would he permanently lose faith in speculative ventures. Human traits are sometimes modified, but never eliminated. The man who is born to be a victim of misplaced confidence will continue to be one so long as he lives and there are men willing to victimize him. The man who believes in himself as an investor will uphold that faith against all disaster so long as he draws breath and has money to back his judgments.

## CXXXIX

### FINANCIAL AND LITERARY

By a statement made on the 1st of January, 1882, of Mark Twain's disbursements for the preceding year, it is shown that considerably more than one hundred thousand dollars had been expended during that twelve months. It is a large sum for an author to pay out in one year. It would cramp most authors to do it, and it was not the best financing, even for Mark Twain. It required all that the books could earn, all the income from the various securities, and a fair sum from their principal. There is a good deal of biography in the statement. Of the amount expended forty-six thousand dollars represented investments; but of this comfortable sum less than five thousand dollars would cover the legitimate purchases; the rest had gone in the "ventures" from whose bourne no dollar would ever return. Also, a large sum had been spent for the additional land and for improvements on the home—somewhat more than thirty thousand dollars altogether—while the home life had become more lavish, the establishment had grown

each year to a larger scale, the guests and entertainments had become more and, more numerous, until the actual household expenditure required about as much as the books and securities could earn.



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It was with the increased scale of living that Clemens had become especially eager for some source of commercial profit; something that would yield a return, not in paltry thousands, but hundreds of thousands. Like Colonel Sellers, he must have something with “millions in it.” Almost any proposition that seemed to offer these possible millions appealed to him, and in his imagination he saw the golden feshet pouring in.

His natural taste was for a simple, inexpensive life; yet in his large hospitality, and in a certain boyish love of grandeur, he gloried in the splendor of his entertainment, the admiration and delight of his guests. There were always guests; they were coming and going constantly. Clemens used to say that he proposed to establish a bus line between their house and the station for the accommodation of his company. He had the Southern hospitality. Much company appealed to a very large element in his strangely compounded nature. For the better portion of the year he was willing to pay the price of it, whether in money or in endurance, and Mrs. Clemens heroically did her part. She loved these things also, in her own way. She took pride in them, and realized that they were a part of his vast success. Yet in her heart she often longed for the simpler life—above all, for the farm life at Elmira. Her spirit cried out for the rest and comfort there. In one of her letters she says:

The house has been full of company, and I have been “whirled around.” How can a body help it? Oh, I cannot help sighing for the peace and quiet of the farm. This is my work, and I know that I do very wrong when I feel chafed by it, but how can I be right about it? Sometimes it seems as if the simple sight of people would drive me mad. I am all wrong; if I would simply accept the fact that this is my work and let other things go, I know I should not be so fretted; but I want so much to do other things, to study and do things with the children, and I cannot.

I have the best French teacher that I ever had, and if I could give any time to it I could not help learning French.

When we reflect on the conditions, we are inclined to say how much better it would have been to have remained there among the hills in that quiet, inexpensive environment, to have let the world go. But that was not possible. The game was of far larger proportions than any that could be restricted to the limits of retirement and the simpler round of life. Mark Twain’s realm had become too large for his court to be established in a cottage.

It is hard to understand that in spite of a towering fame Mark Twain was still not regarded by certain American arbiters of reputations as a literary fixture; his work was not yet recognized by them as being of important meaning and serious purport.

In Boston, at that time still the Athens of America, he was enjoyed, delighted in; but he was not honored as being quite one of the elect. Howells tells us that:

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In proportion as people thought themselves refined they questioned that quality which all recognize in him now, but which was then the inspired knowledge of the simple-hearted multitude.

Even at the Atlantic dinners his place was “below the salt”—a place of honor, but not of the greatest honor. He did not sit on the dais with Emerson, Longfellow, Holmes, Whittier, Howells, and Aldrich. We of a later period, who remember him always as the center of every board—the one supreme figure, his splendid head and crown of silver hair the target of every eye—find it hard to realize the Cambridge conservatism that clad him figuratively always in motley, and seated him lower than the throne itself.

Howells clearly resented this condition, and from random review corners had ventured heresy. Now in 1882 he seems to have determined to declare himself, in a large, free way, concerning his own personal estimate of Mark Twain. He prepared for the *Century Magazine* a biographical appreciation, in which he served notice to the world that Mark Twain’s work, considered even as literature, was of very considerable importance indeed. Whether or not Howells then realized the “inspired knowledge of the multitude,” and that most of the nation outside of the counties of Suffolk and Essex already recognized his claim, is not material. Very likely he did; but he also realized the mental dusk of the cultured uninspired and his prerogative to enlighten them. His *Century* article was a kind of manifesto, a declaration of independence, no longer confined to the obscurities of certain book notices, where of course one might be expected to stretch friendly favor a little for a popular Atlantic contributor. In the open field of the *Century Magazine* Howells ventured to declare:

Mark Twain’s humor is as simple in form and as direct as the statesmanship of Lincoln or the generalship of Grant.

When I think how purely and wholly American it is I am a little puzzled at its universal acceptance . . . . Why, in fine, should an English chief-justice keep Mark Twain’s books always at hand? Why should Darwin have gone to them for rest and refreshment at midnight, when spent with scientific research? I suppose that Mark Twain transcends all other American humorists in the universal qualities. He deals very little with the pathetic, which he nevertheless knows very well how to manage, as he has shown, notably in the true story of the old slave-mother; but there is a poetic lift in his work, even when he permits you to recognize it only as something satirized. There is always the touch of nature, the presence of a sincere and frank manliness in what he says, the companionship of a spirit which is at once delightfully open and deliciously shrewd. Elsewhere I have tried to persuade the reader that his humor is, at its best, the foamy break of the strong tide of earnestness



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in him. But it would be limiting him unjustly to describe him as a satirist, and it is hardly practicable to establish him in people's minds as a moralist; he has made them laugh too long; they will not believe him serious; they think some joke is always intended. This is the penalty, as Dr. Holmes has pointed out, of making one's first success as a humorist. There was a paper of Mark Twain's printed in the Atlantic Monthly some years ago and called, "The Facts Concerning the Late Carnival of Crime in Connecticut," which ought to have won popular recognition of the ethical intelligence underlying his humor. It was, of course, funny; but under the fun it was an impassioned study of the human conscience. Hawthorne or Bunyan might have been proud to imagine that powerful allegory, which had a grotesque force far beyond either of them.... Yet it quite failed of the response I had hoped for it, and I shall not insist here upon Mark Twain as a moralist; though I warn the reader that if he leaves out of the account an indignant sense of right and wrong, a scorn of all affectations and pretense, an ardent hate of meanness and injustice, he will come infinitely short of knowing Mark Twain.

Howells realized the unwisdom and weakness of dogmatic insistence, and the strength of understatement. To him Mark Twain was already the moralist, the philosopher, and the statesman; he was willing that the reader should take his time to realize these things. The article, with his subject's portrait as a frontispiece, appeared in the Century for September, 1882. If it carried no new message to many of its readers, it at least set the stamp of official approval upon what they had already established in their hearts.

## CXL

### DOWN THE RIVER

Osgood was doing no great things with *The Prince and the Pauper*, but Clemens gave him another book presently, a collection of sketches—*The Stolen White Elephant*. It was not an especially important volume, though some of the features, such as "Mrs. McWilliams and the Lightning" and the "Carnival of Crime," are among the best of their sort, while the "Elephant" story is an amazingly good take-off on what might be called the spectacular detective. The interview between Inspector Blunt and the owner of the elephant is typical. The inspector asks:

"Now what does this elephant eat, and how much?"

"Well, as to what he eats—he will eat anything. He will eat a man, he will eat a Bible; he will eat anything between a man and a Bible."



“Good-very good, indeed, but too general. Details are necessary; details are the only valuable thing in our trade. Very well, as to men. At one meal—or, if you prefer, during one day—how many men will he eat if fresh?”

“He would not care whether they were fresh or not; at a single meal he would eat five ordinary men.”



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“Very good; five men. We will put that down. What nationalities would he prefer?”

“He is indifferent about nationalities. He prefers acquaintances, but is not prejudiced against strangers.”

“Very good. Now, as to Bibles. How many Bibles would he eat at a meal?”

“He would eat an entire edition.”

Clemens and Osgood had a more important publishing enterprise on hand. The long-deferred completion of the Mississippi book was to be accomplished; the long-deferred trip down the river was to be taken. Howells was going abroad, but the charming Osgood was willing to make the excursion, and a young man named Roswell Phelps, of Hartford, was engaged as a stenographer to take the notes.

Clemens made a farewell trip to Boston to see Howells before his departure, and together they went to Concord to call on Emerson; a fortunate thing, for he lived but a few weeks longer. They went again in the evening, not to see him, but to stand reverently outside and look at his house. This was in April. Longfellow had died in March. The fact that Howells was going away indefinitely, made them reminiscent and sad.

Just what breach Clemens committed during this visit is not remembered now, and it does not matter; but his letter to Howells, after his return to Hartford, makes it pretty clear that it was memorable enough at the time. Half-way in it he breaks out:

But oh, hell, there is no hope for a person that is built like me,  
because there is no cure, no cure.

If I could only know when I have committed a crime: then I could conceal it, and not go stupidly dribbling it out, circumstance by circumstance, into the ears of a person who will give no sign till the confession is complete; and then the sudden damnation drops on a body like the released pile-driver, and he finds himself in the earth down to his chin. When he merely supposed he was being entertaining.

Next day he was off with Osgood and the stenographer for St. Louis, where they took the steamer *Gold Dust* down the river. He intended to travel under an assumed name, but was promptly recognized, both at the Southern Hotel and on the boat. In ‘Life on the Mississippi’ he has given us the atmosphere of his trip, with his new impressions of old scenes; also his first interview with the pilot, whom he did not remember, but who easily remembered him.



“I did not write that story in the book quite as it happened,” he reflected once, many years later. “We went on board at night. Next morning I was up bright and early and out on deck to see if I could recognize any of the old landmarks. I could not remember any. I did not know where we were at all. It was a new river to me entirely. I climbed up in the pilot-house and there was a fellow of about forty at the wheel. I said ‘Good morning.’ He answered pleasantly enough. His face was entirely strange to me. Then I sat down on the high seat back of the wheel and looked out at the river and began to ask a few questions, such as a landsman would ask. He began, in the old way, to fill me up with the old lies, and I enjoyed letting him do it. Then suddenly he turned round to me and said:



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“I want to get a cup of coffee. You hold her, will you, till I come back?’ And before I could say a word he was out of the pilot-house door and down the steps. It all came so suddenly that I sprang to the wheel, of course, as I would have done twenty years before. Then in a moment I realized my position. Here I was with a great big steamboat in the middle of the Mississippi River, without any further knowledge than that fact, and the pilot out of sight. I settled my mind on three conclusions: first, that the pilot might be a lunatic; second, that he had recognized me and thought I knew the river; third, that we were in a perfectly safe place, where I could not possibly kill the steamboat. But that last conclusion, though the most comforting, was an extremely doubtful one. I knew perfectly well that no sane pilot would trust his steamboat for a single moment in the hands of a greenhorn unless he were standing by the greenhorn’s side. Of course, by force of habit, when I grabbed the wheel, I had taken the steering marks ahead and astern, and I made up my mind to hold her on those marks to the hair; but I could feel myself getting old and gray. Then all at once I recognized where we were; we were in what is called the Grand Chain—a succession of hidden rocks, one of the most dangerous places on the river. There were two rocks there only about seventy feet apart, and you’ve got to go exactly between them or wreck the boat. There was a time when I could have done it without a tremor, but that time wasn’t now. I would have given any reasonable sum to have been on the shore just at that moment. I think I was about ready to drop dead when I heard a step on the pilothouse stair; then the door opened and the pilot came in, quietly picking his teeth, and took the wheel, and I crawled weakly back to the seat. He said:

“You thought you were playing a nice joke on me, didn’t you? You thought I didn’t know who you were. Why, I recognized that drawl of yours as soon as you opened your mouth.’

“I said, ‘Who the h—I are you? I don’t remember you.’

“‘Well,’ he said, ‘perhaps you don’t, but I was a cub pilot on the river before the war, when you were a licensed pilot, and I couldn’t get a license when I was qualified for one, because the Pilots’ Association was so strong at that time that they could keep new pilots out if they wanted to, and the law was that I had to be examined by two licensed pilots, and for a good while I could not get any one to make that examination. But one day you and another pilot offered to do it, and you put me through a good, healthy examination and indorsed my application for a license. I had never seen you before, and I have never seen you since until now, but I recognized you.’

“‘All right,’ I said. ‘But if I had gone half a mile farther with that steamboat we might have all been at the bottom of the river.’



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“We got to be good friends, of course, and I spent most of my time up there with him. When we got down below Cairo, and there was a big, full river—for it was highwater season and there was no danger of the boat hitting anything so long as she kept in the river—I had her most of the time on his watch. He would lie down and sleep, and leave me there to dream that the years had not slipped away; that there had been no war, no mining days, no literary adventures; that I was still a pilot, happy and care-free as I had been twenty years before.”

From the book we gather that he could not keep out of the pilot-house. He was likely to get up at any hour of the night to stand his watch, and truly enough the years had slipped away. He was the young fellow in his twenties again, speculating on the problems of existence and reading his fortune in the stars. To heighten the illusion, he had himself called regularly with the four-o'clock watch, in order not to miss the mornings. —[It will repay the reader to turn to chap. xxx of *Life on the Mississippi*, and consider Mark Twain's word-picture of the river sunrise.]

The majesty and solitude of the river impressed him more than ever before, especially its solitude. It had been so full of life in his time; now it had returned once more to its primal loneliness—the loneliness of God.

At one place two steamboats were in sight at once an unusual spectacle. Once, in the mouth of a river, he noticed a small boat, which he made out to be the Mark Twain. There had been varied changes in twenty-one years; only the old fascination of piloting remained unchanged. To Bixby afterward he wrote:

“I'd rather be a pilot than anything else I've ever done in my life. How do you run Plum Point?”

He met Bixby at New Orleans. Bixby was captain now on a splendid new Anchor Line steamboat, the *City of Baton Rouge*. The Anchor Line steamers were the acme of Mississippi River steamboat-building, and they were about the end of it. They were imposingly magnificent, but they were only as gorgeous clouds that marked the sunset of Mississippi steamboat travel. Mark Twain made his trip down the river just in time.

In New Orleans he met George W. Cable and Joel Chandler Harris, and they had a fraternizing good time together, mousing about the old French Quarter or mingling with the social life of the modern city. He made a trip with Bixby in a tug to the Warmouth plantation, and they reviewed old days together, as friends parted for twenty-one years will. Altogether the New Orleans sojourn was a pleasant one, saddened only by a newspaper notice of the death, in Edinburgh, of the kindly and gentle and beloved Dr. Brown.

Clemens arranged to make the trip up the river on the *Baton Rouge*. Bixby had one pretty inefficient pilot, and stood most of the watches himself, so that with “Sam

Clemens” in the pilot-house with him, it was wonderfully like those old first days of learning the river, back in the fifties.



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“Sam was ever making notes in his memorandum-book, just as he always did,” said Bixby to the writer, recalling the time. “I was sorry I had to stay at the wheel so much. I wanted to have more time with Sam without thinking of the river at all. Sam was sorry, too, from what he wrote after he got home.”

Bixby produced a letter in the familiar handwriting. It was a tender, heart-spoken letter:

I didn't see half enough of you. It was a sore disappointment. Osgood could have told you, if he would—discreet old dog—I expected to have you with me all the time. Altogether, the most pleasant part of my visit with you was after we arrived in St. Louis, and you were your old natural self again. Twenty years have not added a month to your age or taken a fraction from your loveliness.

Said Bixby: “When we arrived in St. Louis we came to the Planters' Hotel; to this very table where you and I are sitting now, and we had a couple of hot Scotches between us, just as we have now, and we had a good last talk over old times and old acquaintances. After he returned to New York he sent for my picture. He wanted to use it in his book.”

At St. Louis the travelers changed boats, and proceeded up the Mississippi toward St. Paul. Clemens laid off three days at Hannibal.

Delightful days [he wrote home]. Loitering around all day long, examining the old localities, and talking with the gray heads who were boys and girls with me thirty or forty years ago. I spent my nights with John and Helen Garth, three miles from town, in their spacious and beautiful house. They were children with me, and afterward schoolmates. That world which I knew in its blooming youth is old and bowed and melancholy now; its soft cheeks are leathery and withered, the fire has gone out of its eyes, the spring from its step. It will be dust and ashes when I come again.

He had never seen the far upper river, and he found it very satisfying. His note-book says:

The bluffs all along up above St. Paul are exquisitely beautiful where the rough and broken turreted rocks stand up against the sky above the steep, verdant slopes. They are inexpressibly rich and mellow in color; soft dark browns mingled with dull greens—the very tints to make an artist worship.

In a final entry he wrote:

The romance of boating is gone now. In Hannibal the steamboat man is no longer the god.



## CXLI

### LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY

Clemens took a further step toward becoming a publisher on his own account. Not only did he contract to supply funds for the Mississippi book, but, as kaolatype, the chalk-engraving process, which had been lingeringly and expensively dying, was now become merely something to swear at, he had his niece's husband, Webster, installed as Osgood's New York subscription manager, with charge of the general agencies. There was no delay in this move. Webster must get well familiarized with the work before the Mississippi book's publication.



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He had expected to have the manuscript finished pretty promptly, but the fact that he had promised it for a certain time paralyzed his effort. Even at the farm he worked without making much headway. At the end of October he wrote Howells:

The weather turned cold, and we had to rush home, while I still lacked thirty thousand words. I had been sick and got delayed. I am going to write all day and two-thirds of the night until the thing is done or break down at it. The spur and burden of the contract are intolerable to me. I can endure the irritation of it no longer. I went to work at nine o'clock yesterday morning and went to bed an hour after midnight. Result of the day (mainly stolen from books though credit given), 9,500 words, so I reduced my burden by one-third in one day. It was five days' work in one. I have nothing more to borrow or steal; the rest must all be written. It is ten days' work and unless something breaks it will be finished in five.

He had sworn once, when he had finally finished 'A Tramp Abroad', that he would never limit himself as to time again. But he had forgotten that vow, and was suffering accordingly.

Howells wrote from London urging him to drop everything and come over to Europe for refreshment.

We have seen lots of nice people, and have been most pleasantly made of; but I would rather have you smoke in my face and talk for half a day, just for pleasure, than to go to the best house or club in London.

Clemens answered:

Yes, it would be more profitable to me to do that because, with your society to help me, I should swiftly finish this now apparently interminable book. But I cannot come, because I am not boss here, and nothing but dynamite can move Mrs. Clemens away from home in the winter season.

This was in November, and he had broken all restrictions as to time. He declared that he had never had such a fight over any book before, and that he had told Osgood and everybody concerned that they must wait.

I have said with sufficient positiveness that I will finish the book at no particular date; that I will not hurry it; that I will not hurry myself; that I will take things easy and comfortably—write when I choose to write, leave it alone when I do so prefer . . . I have got everything at a dead standstill, and that is where it ought to be, and that is where it must remain; to follow any other policy would be to make the book worse than it already is. I ought to have finished it before showing it to anybody, and then sent it across the ocean to you to be edited, as usual; for you seem to be a great many shades happier

than you deserve to be, and if I had thought of this thing earlier I would have acted upon it and taken the tuck somewhat out of your joyousness.

It was a long, heartfelt letter. Near the end of it he said:



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Cable has been here, creating worshipers on all hands. He is a marvelous talker on a deep subject. I do not see how even Spencer could unwind a thought more smoothly or orderly, and do it in cleaner, clearer, crisper English. He astounded Twichell with his faculty. You know that when it comes down to moral honesty, limpid innocence, and utterly blemishless piety, the apostles were mere policemen to Cable; so with this in mind you must imagine him at a midnight dinner in Boston the other night, where we gathered around the board of the Summerset Club: Osgood full, Boyle O'Reilly full, Fairchild responsively loaded, and Aldrich and myself possessing the floor and properly fortified. Cable told Mrs. Clemens, when he returned here, that he seemed to have been entertaining himself with horses, and had a dreamy idea that he must have gone to Boston in a cattle-car. It was a very large time. He called it an orgy. And no doubt it was, viewed from his standpoint.

Osgood wanted Mark Twain to lecture that fall, as preliminary advertising for the book, with "Life on the Mississippi" as his subject. Osgood was careful to make this proposition by mail, and probably it was just as well; for if there was any single straw that could have broken the back of Clemens's endurance and made him violent at this particular time, it was a proposition to go back on the platform. His answer to Osgood has not been preserved.

Clemens spoke little that winter. In February he addressed the Monday Evening Club on "What is Happiness?" presenting a theory which in later years he developed as a part of his "gospel," and promulgated in a privately printed volume, "What is Man"? It is the postulate already mentioned in connection with his reading of Lecky, that every human action, bad or good, is the result of a selfish impulse; that is to say, the result of a desire for the greater content of spirit. It is not a new idea; philosophers in all ages have considered it, and accepted or rejected it, according to their temperament and teachings, but it was startling and apparently new to the Monday Evening Club. They scoffed and jeered at it; denounced it as a manifest falsity. They did not quite see then that there may be two sorts of selfishness—brutal and divine; that he who sacrifices others to himself exemplifies the first, whereas he who sacrifices himself for others personifies the second—the divine contenting of his soul by serving the happiness of his fellow-men. Mark Twain left this admonition in furtherance of that better sort:

"Diligently train your ideals upward, and still upward, toward a summit where you will find your chiefest pleasure, in conduct which, while contenting you, will be sure to confer benefits upon your neighbor and the community."

It is a divine admonition, even if, in its suggested moral freedom, it does seem to conflict with that other theory—the inevitable sequence of cause and effect, descending from the primal atom. There is seeming irrelevance in introducing this matter here; but it has a chronological relation, and it presents a mental aspect of the time. Clemens was forty-eight, and becoming more and more the philosopher; also, in logic at least, a good deal of a pessimist. He made a birthday aphorism on the subject:



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“The man who is a pessimist before he is forty-eight knows too much; the man who is an optimist after he is forty-eight knows too little.”

He was never more than a pessimist in theory at any time. In practice he would be a visionary; a builder of dreams and fortunes, a veritable Colonel Sellers to the end of his days.

### CXLII

*“Life on the Mississippi”*

The Mississippi book was completed at last and placed in Osgood’s hands for publication. Clemens was immensely fond of Osgood. Osgood would come down to Hartford and spend days discussing plans and playing billiards, which to Mark Twain’s mind was the proper way to conduct business. Besides, there was Webster, who by this time, or a very little later, had the word “publisher” printed in his letter-heads, and was truly that, so far as the new book was concerned. Osgood had become little more than its manufacturer, shipping-agent, and accountant. It should be added that he made the book well, though somewhat expensively. He was unaccustomed to getting out big subscription volumes. His taste ran to the artistic, expensive product.

“That book cost me fifty thousand dollars to make,” Clemens once declared. “Bliss could have built a whole library, for that sum. But Osgood was a lovely fellow.”

Life on the Mississippi was issued about the middle of May. It was a handsome book of its kind and a successful book, but not immediately a profitable one, because of the manner of its issue. It was experimental, and experiments are likely to be costly, even when successful in the final result.

Among other things, it pronounced the final doom of kaolatype. The artists who drew the pictures for it declined to draw them if they were to be reproduced by that process, or indeed unless some one of the lately discovered photographic processes was used. Furthermore, the latter were much cheaper, and it was to the advantage of Clemens himself to repudiate kaolatype, even for his own work.

Webster was ordered to wind up the last ends of the engraving business with as little sacrifice as possible, and attend entirely to more profitable affairs—viz., the distribution of books.

As literature, the Mississippi book will rank with Mark Twain’s best—so far, at least, as the first twenty chapters of it are concerned. Earlier in this history these have been sufficiently commented upon. They constitute a literary memorial seemingly as enduring as the river itself.

Concerning the remaining chapters of the book, they are also literature, but of a different class. The difference is about the same as that between 'A Tramp Abroad' and the 'Innocents'. It is the difference between the labors of love and duty; between art and industry, literature and journalism.



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But the last is hardly fair. It is journalism, but it is literary journalism, and there are unquestionably areas that are purely literary, and not journalistic at all. There would always be those in any book of travel he might write. The story of the river revisited is an interesting theme; and if the revisiting had been done, let us say eight or ten years earlier, before he had become a theoretical pessimist, and before the river itself had become a background for pessimism, the tale might have had more of the literary glamour and illusion, even if less that is otherwise valuable.

'Life on the Mississippi' has been always popular in Germany. The Emperor William of Germany once assured Mark Twain that it was his favorite American book, and on the same evening the portier of the author's lodging in Berlin echoed the Emperor's opinion.

Paul Lindau, a distinguished German author and critic, in an interview at the time the Mississippi book appeared, spoke of the general delight of his countrymen in its author. When he was asked, "But have not the Germans been offended by Mark Twain's strictures on their customs and language in his 'Tramp Abroad'?" he replied, "We know what we are and how we look, and the fanciful picture presented to our eyes gives us only food for laughter, not cause for resentment. The jokes he made on our long words, our inverted sentences, and the position of the verb have really led to a reform in style which will end in making our language as compact and crisp as the French or English. I regard Mark Twain as the foremost humorist of the age."

Howells, traveling through Europe, found Lindau's final sentiment echoed elsewhere, and he found something more: in Europe Mark Twain was already highly regarded as a serious writer. Thomas Hardy said to Howells one night at dinner:

"Why don't people understand that Mark Twain is not merely a great humorist? He is a very remarkable fellow in a very different way."

The Rev. Dr. Parker, returning from England just then, declared that, wherever he went among literary people, the talk was about Mark Twain; also that on two occasions, when he had ventured diffidently to say that he knew that author personally, he was at once so evidently regarded as lying for effect that he felt guilty, and looked it, and did not venture to say it any more; thus, in a manner, practising untruth to save his reputation for veracity.

That the Mississippi book throughout did much to solidify this foreign opinion of Mark Twain's literary importance cannot be doubted, and it is one of his books that will live longest in the memory of men.

## CXLIII

### A GUEST OF ROYALTY

For purposes of copyright another trip to Canada was necessary, and when the newspapers announced (May, 1883) that Mark Twain was about to cross the border there came one morning the following telegram:



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Meeting of Literary and Scientific Society at Ottawa from 22d to 26th. It would give me much pleasure if you could come and be my guest during that time.

*Lorne.*

The Marquis of Lorne, then Governor-General of Canada, was the husband of Queen Victoria's daughter, the Princess Louise. The invitation was therefore in the nature of a command. Clemens obeyed it graciously enough, and with a feeling of exaltation no doubt. He had been honored by the noble and the great in many lands, but this was royalty—English royalty—paying a tribute to an American writer whom neither the Marquis nor the Princess, his wife, had ever seen. They had invited him because they had cared enough for his books to make them wish to see him, to have him as a guest in Rideau Hall, their home. Mark Twain was democratic. A king to him was no more than any other man; rather less if he were not a good king. But there was something national in this tribute; and, besides, Lord Lorne and the Princess Louise were the kind of sovereigns that honored their rank, instead of being honored by it.

It is a good deal like a fairy tale when you think of it; the barefooted boy of Hannibal, who had become a printer, a pilot, a rough-handed miner, being summoned, not so many years later, by royalty as one of America's foremost men of letters. The honor was no greater than many others he had received, certainly not greater than the calls of Canon Kingsley and Robert Browning and Turgenieff at his London hotel lodgings, but it was of a less usual kind.

Clemens enjoyed his visit. Princess Louise and the Marquis of Lorne kept him with them almost continually, and were loath to let him go. Once they took him tobogganing—an exciting experience.

It happened that during his stay with them the opening of the Canadian Parliament took place. Lord Lorne and the principal dignitaries of state entered one carriage, and in a carriage behind them followed Princess Louise with Mark Twain. As they approached the Parliament House the customary salute was fired. Clemens pretended to the Princess considerable gratification. The temptation was too strong to resist:

“Your Highness,” he said, “I have had other compliments paid to me, but none equal to this one. I have never before had a salute fired in my honor.”

Returning to Hartford, he sent copies of his books to Lord Lorne, and to the Princess a special copy of that absurd manual, *The New Guide of the Conversation in Portuguese and English*, for which he had written an introduction.—[A serious work, in Portugal, though issued by Osgood ('83) as a joke. Clemens in the introduction says: “Its delicious, unconscious ridiculousness and its enchanting naivety are as supreme and

unapproachable in their way as Shakespeare's sublimities." An extract, the closing paragraph from the book's preface, will illustrate his meaning:



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“We expect then, who the little book (for the care that we wrote him, and for her typographical correction), that maybe worth the acceptance of the studious persons, and especially of the Youth, at which we dedicate him particularly.”]

### CXLIV

#### A SUMMER LITERARY HARVEST

Arriving at the farm in June, Clemens had a fresh crop of ideas for stories of many lengths and varieties. His note-book of that time is full of motifs and plots, most of them of that improbable and extravagant kind which tended to defeat any literary purpose, whether humorous or otherwise. It seems worth while setting down one or more of these here, for they are characteristic of the myriad conceptions that came and went, and beyond these written memoranda left no trace behind. Here is a fair example of many:

Two men starving on a raft. The pauper has a Boston cracker, resolves to keep it till the multimillionaire is beginning to starve, then make him pay \$50,000 for it. Millionaire agrees. Pauper's cupidity rises, resolves to wait and get more; twenty-four hours later asks him a million for the cracker. Millionaire agrees. Pauper has a wild dream of becoming enormously rich off his cracker; backs down; lies all night building castles in the air; next day raises his price higher and higher, till millionaire has offered \$100,000,000, every cent he has in the world. Pauper accepts. Millionaire: “Now give it to me.”

Pauper: “No; it isn't a trade until you sign documental history of the transaction and make an oath to pay.”

While pauper is finishing the document millionaire sees a ship. When pauper says, “Sign and take the cracker,” millionaire smiles a smile, declines, and points to the ship.

Yet this is hardly more extravagant than another idea that is mentioned repeatedly among the notes—that of an otherwise penniless man wandering about London with a single million-pound bank-note in his possession, a motif which developed into a very good story indeed.

*Idea for “STORMFIELD'S visit to heaven”*

In modern times the halls of heaven are warmed by registers connected with hell; and this is greatly applauded by Jonathan Edwards, Calvin, Baxter and Company, because it adds a new pang to the sinner's sufferings to know that the very fire which tortures him is the means of making the righteous comfortable.

Then there was to be another story, in which the various characters were to have a weird, pestilential nomenclature; such as “Lockjaw Harris,” “Influenza Smith,” “Sinapism Davis,” and a dozen or two more, a perfect outbreak of disorders.

Another—probably the inspiration of some very hot afternoon—was to present life in the interior of an iceberg, where a colony would live for a generation or two, drifting about in a vast circular current year after year, subsisting on polar bears and other Arctic game.



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An idea which he followed out and completed was the 1002d Arabian Night, in which Scheherazade continues her stories, until she finally talks the Sultan to death. That was a humorous idea, certainly; but when Howells came home and read it in the usual way he declared that, while the opening was killingly funny, when he got into the story itself it seemed to him that he was “made a fellow-sufferer with the Sultan from Scheherazade’s prolixity.”

“On the whole,” he said, “it is not your best, nor your second best; but all the way it skirts a certain kind of fun which you can’t afford to indulge in.”

And that was the truth. So the tale, neatly typewritten, retired to seclusion, and there remains to this day.

Clemens had one inspiration that summer which was not directly literary, but historical, due to his familiarity with English dates. He wrote Twichell:

Day before yesterday, feeling not in condition for writing, I left the study, but I couldn’t hold in—had to do something; so I spent eight hours in the sun with a yardstick, measuring off the reigns of the English kings on the roads in these grounds, from William the Conqueror to 1883, calculating to invent an open-air game which shall fill the children’s heads with dates without study. I give each king’s reign one foot of space to the year and drive one stake in the ground to mark the beginning of each reign, and I make the children call the stake by the king’s name. You can stand in the door and take a bird’s-eye view of English monarchy, from the Conqueror to Edward IV.; then you can turn and follow the road up the hill to the study and beyond with an opera-glass, and bird’s-eye view the rest of it to 1883. You can mark the sharp difference in the length of reigns by the varying distances of the stakes apart. You can see Richard II., two feet; Oliver Cromwell, two feet; James II., three feet, and so on—and then big skips; pegs standing forty-five, forty-six, fifty, fifty-six, and sixty feet apart (Elizabeth, Victoria, Edward III., Henry III., and George III.). By the way, third’s a lucky number for length of days, isn’t it? Yes, sir; by my scheme you get a realizing notion of the time occupied by reigns. The reason it took me eight hours was because, with little Jean’s interrupting assistance, I had to measure from the Conquest to the end of Henry VI. three times over, and besides I had to whittle out all those pegs. I did a full day’s work and a third over, yesterday, but was full of my game after I went to bed trying to fit it for indoors. So I didn’t get to sleep till pretty late; but when I did go off I had contrived a new way to play my history game with cards and a board.

We may be sure the idea of the game would possess him, once it got a fair start like that. He decided to save the human race that year with a history game.



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When he had got the children fairly going and interested in playing it, he adapted it to a cribbage-board, and spent his days and nights working it out and perfecting it to a degree where the world at large might learn all the facts of all the histories, not only without effort, but with an actual hunger for chronology. He would have a game not only of the English kings, but of the kings of every other nation; likewise of great statesmen, vice-chancellors, churchmen, of celebrities in every line. He would prepare a book to accompany these games. Each game would contain one thousand facts, while the book would contain eight thousand; it would be a veritable encyclopedia. He would organize clubs throughout the United States for playing the game; prizes were to be given. Experts would take it up. He foresaw a department in every newspaper devoted to the game and its problems, instead of to chess and whist and other useless diversions. He wrote to Orion, and set him to work gathering facts and dates by the bushel. He wrote to Webster, sent him a plan, and ordered him to apply for the patent without delay. Patents must also be applied for abroad. With all nations playing this great game, very likely it would produce millions in royalties; and so, in the true Sellers fashion, the iridescent bubble was blown larger and larger, until finally it blew up. The game on paper had become so large, so elaborate, so intricate, that no one could play it. Yet the first idea was a good one: the king stakes driven along the driveway and up the hillside of Quarry Farm. The children enjoyed it, and played it through many sweet summer afternoons. Once, in the days when he had grown old, he wrote, remembering:

Among the principal merits of the games which we played by help of the pegs were these: that they had to be played in the open air, and that they compelled brisk exercise. The peg of William the Conqueror stood in front of the house; one could stand near the Conqueror and have all English history skeletonized and landmarked and mile-posted under his eye . . . . The eye has a good memory. Many years have gone by and the pegs have disappeared, but I still see them and each in its place; and no king's name falls upon my ear without my seeing his pegs at once, and noticing just how many feet of space he takes up along the road.

It turned out an important literary year after all. In the Mississippi book he had used a chapter from the story he had been working at from time to time for a number of years, 'The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn'. Reading over the manuscript now he found his interest in it sharp and fresh, his inspiration renewed. The trip down the river had revived it. The interest in the game became quiescent, and he set to work to finish the story at a dead heat.

To Howells, August 22 (1883), he wrote:



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I have written eight or nine hundred manuscript pages in such a brief space of time that I mustn't name the number of days; I shouldn't believe it myself, and of course couldn't expect you to. I used to restrict myself to four and five hours a day and five days in the week, but this time I have wrought from breakfast till 5.15 P.M. six days in the week, and once or twice I smouched a Sunday when the boss wasn't looking. Nothing is half so good as literature hooked on Sunday, on the sly.

He refers to the game, though rather indifferently.

When I wrote you I thought I had it; whereas I was merely entering upon the initiatory difficulties of it. I might have known it wouldn't be an easy job or somebody would have invented a decent historical game long ago—a thing which nobody has done.

Notwithstanding the fact that he was working at Huck with enthusiasm, he seems to have been in no hurry to revise it for publication, either as a serial or as a book. But the fact that he persevered until Huck Finn at last found complete utterance was of itself a sufficient matter for congratulation.

## CXLV

### HOWELLS AND CLEMENS WRITE A PLAY

Before Howells went abroad Clemens had written:

Now I think that the play for you to write would be one entitled, "Colonel Mulberry Sellers in Age" (75), with Lafayette Hawkins (at 50) still sticking to him and believing in him and calling him "My lord." He [Sellers] is a specialist and a scientist in various ways. Your refined people and purity of speech would make the best possible background, and when you are done, I could take your manuscript and rewrite the Colonel's speeches, and make him properly extravagant, and I would let the play go to Raymond, and bind him up with a contract that would give him the bellyache every time he read it. Shall we think this over, or drop it as being nonsense?

Howells, returned and settled in Boston once more, had revived an interest in the play idea. He corresponded with Clemens concerning it and agreed that the American Claimant, Leathers, should furnish the initial impulse of the drama.

They decided to revive Colonel Sellers and make him the heir; Colonel Sellers in old age, more wildly extravagant than ever, with new schemes, new patents, new methods of ameliorating the ills of mankind.

Howells came down to Hartford from Boston full of enthusiasm. He found Clemens with some ideas of the plan jotted down: certain effects and situations which seemed to him amusing, but there was no general scheme of action. Howells, telling of it, says:

I felt authorized to make him observe that his scheme was as nearly nothing as chaos could be. He agreed hilariously with me, and was willing to let it stand in proof of his entire dramatic inability.



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Howells, in turn, proposed a plan which Clemens approved, and they set to work. Howells could imitate Clemens's literary manner, and they had a riotously jubilant fortnight working out their humors. Howells has told about it in his book, and he once related it to the writer of this memoir. He said:

"Clemens took one scene and I another. We had loads and loads of fun about it. We cracked our sides laughing over it as it went along. We thought it mighty good, and I think to this day that it was mighty good. We called the play 'Colonel Sellers.' We revived him. Clemens had a notion of Sellers as a spiritual medium—there was a good deal of excitement about spiritualism then; he also had a notion of Sellers leading a women's temperance crusade. We conceived the idea of Sellers wanting to try, in the presence of the audience, how a man felt who had fallen, through drink. Sellers was to end with a sort of corkscrew performance on the stage. He always wore a marvelous fire extinguisher, one of his inventions, strapped on his back, so in any sudden emergency, he could give proof of its effectiveness."

In connection with the extinguisher, Howells provided Sellers with a pair of wings, which Sellers declared would enable him to float around in any altitude where the flames might break out. The extinguisher, was not to be charged with water or any sort of liquid, but with Greek fire, on the principle that like cures like; in other words, the building was to be inoculated with Greek fire against the ordinary conflagration. Of course the whole thing was as absurd as possible, and, reading the old manuscript to-day, one is impressed with the roaring humor of some of the scenes, and with the wild extravagance of the farce motive, not wholly warranted by the previous character of Sellers, unless, indeed, he had gone stark mad. It is, in fact, Sellers caricatured. The gentle, tender side of Sellers—the best side—the side which Clemens and Howells themselves cared for most, is not there. Chapter III of Mark Twain's novel, *The American Claimant*, contains a scene between Colonel Sellers and Washington Hawkins which presents the extravagance of the Colonel's materialization scheme. It is a modified version of one of the scenes in the play, and is as amusing and unoffending as any.

The authors' rollicking joy in their work convinced them that they had produced a masterpiece for which the public in general, and the actors in particular, were waiting. Howells went back to Boston tired out, but elate in the prospect of imminent fortune.

## CXLVI

### DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

Meantime, while Howells had been in Hartford working at the play with Clemens, Matthew Arnold had arrived in Boston. On inquiring for Howells, at his home, the visitor was told that he had gone to see Mark Twain. Arnold was perhaps the only literary

Englishman left who had not accepted Mark Twain at his larger value. He seemed surprised and said:

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“Oh, but he doesn’t like that sort of thing, does he?”

To which Mrs. Howells replied:

“He likes Mr. Clemens very much, and he thinks him one of the greatest men he ever knew.”

Arnold proceeded to Hartford to lecture, and one night Howells and Clemens went to meet him at a reception. Says Howells:

While his hand laxly held mine in greeting I saw his eyes fixed intensely on the other side of the room. “Who—who in the world is that?” I looked and said, “Oh, that is Mark Twain.” I do not remember just how their instant encounter was contrived by Arnold’s wish; but I have the impression that they were not parted for long during the evening, and the next night Arnold, as if still under the glamour of that potent presence, was at Clemens’s house.

He came there to dine with the Twichells and the Rev. Dr. Edwin P. Parker. Dr. Parker and Arnold left together, and, walking quietly homeward, discussed the remarkable creature whose presence they had just left. Clemens had been at his best that night—at his humorous best. He had kept a perpetual gale of laughter going, with a string of comment and anecdote of a kind which Twichell once declared the world had never before seen and would never see again. Arnold seemed dazed by it, unable to come out from under its influence. He repeated some of the things Mark Twain had said; thoughtfully, as if trying to analyze their magic. Then he asked solemnly:

“And is he never serious?”

And Dr. Parker as solemnly answered:

“Mr. Arnold, he is the most serious man in the world.” Dr. Parker, recalling this incident, remembered also that Protap Chunder Mazoomdar, a Hindoo Christian prelate of high rank, visited Hartford in 1883, and that his one desire was to meet Mark Twain. In some memoranda of this visit Dr. Parker has written:

I said that Mark Twain was a friend of mine, and we would immediately go to his house. He was all eagerness, and I perceived that I had risen greatly in this most refined and cultivated gentleman’s estimation. Arriving at Mr. Clemens’s residence, I promptly sought a brief private interview with my friend for his enlightenment concerning the distinguished visitor, after which they were introduced and spent a long while together. In due time Mazoomdar came forth with Mark’s likeness and autograph, and as we walked away his whole air and manner seemed to say, with Simeon of old, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace!”



CXLVII

*the fortunes of A play*

Howells is of the impression that the "Claimant" play had been offered to other actors before Raymond was made aware of it; but there are letters (to Webster) which indicate that Raymond was to see the play first, though Clemens declares, in a letter of instruction, that he hopes Raymond will not take it. Then he says:



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Why do I offer him the play at all? For these reasons: he plays that character well; there are not thirty actors in the country who can do it better; and, too, he has a sort of sentimental right to be offered the piece, though no moral, or legal, or other kind of right.

Therefore we do offer it to him; but only once, not twice. Let us have no hemming and hawing; make short, sharp work of the business. I decline to have any correspondence with R. myself in any way.

This was at the end of November, 1883, while the play was still being revised. Negotiations with Raymond had already begun, though he does not appear to have actually seen the play during that theatrical season, and many and various were the attempts made to place it elsewhere; always with one result—that each actor or manager, in the end, declared it to be strictly a Raymond play. The thing was hanging fire for nearly a year, altogether, while they were waiting on Raymond, who had a profitable play, and was in no hurry for the recrudescence of Sellers. Howells tells how he eventually took the manuscript to Raymond, whom he found “in a mood of sweet reasonableness” at one of Osgood’s luncheons. Raymond said he could not do the play then, but was sure he would like it for the coming season, and in any case would be glad to read it.

In due time Raymond reported favorably on the play, at least so far as the first act was concerned, but he objected to the materialization feature and to Sellers as claimant for the English earldom. He asked that these features be eliminated, or at least much ameliorated; but as these constituted the backbone and purpose of the whole play, Clemens and Howells decided that what was left would be hardly worth while. Raymond finally agreed to try the play as it was in one of the larger towns —Howells thinks in Buffalo. A week later the manuscript came back to Webster, who had general charge of the business negotiations, as indeed he had of all Mark Twain’s affairs at this time, and with it a brief line:

*Dear sir,*—I have just finished rereading the play, and am convinced that in its present form it would not prove successful. I return the manuscript by express to your address.

Thanking you for your courtesy, I am,

Yours truly, *John T. Raymond.*

P.S.—If the play is altered and made longer I will be pleased to read it again.

In his former letter Raymond had declared that “Sellers, while a very sanguine man, was not a lunatic, and no one but a lunatic could for a moment imagine that he had done such a work” (meaning the materialization). Clearly Raymond wanted a more



serious presentation, something akin to his earlier success, and on the whole we can hardly blame him. But the authors had faith in their performance as it stood, and agreed they would make no change.



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Finally a well-known elocutionist, named Burbank, conceived the notion of impersonating Raymond as well as Sellers, making of it a sort of double burlesque, and agreed to take the play on those terms. Burbank came to Hartford and showed what he could do. Howells and Clemens agreed to give him the play, and they hired the old Lyceum Theater for a week, at seven hundred dollars, for its trial presentation. Daniel Frohman promoted it. Clemens and Howells went over the play and made some changes, but they were not as hilarious over it or as full of enthusiasm as they had been in the beginning. Howells put in a night of suffering—long, dark hours of hot and cold waves of fear—and rising next morning from a tossing bed, wrote: “Here’s a play which every manager has put out-of-doors and which every actor known to us has refused, and now we go and give it to an elocutioner. We are fools.”

Clemens hurried over to Boston to consult with Howells, and in the end they agreed to pay the seven hundred dollars for the theater, take the play off and give Burbank his freedom. But Clemens’s faith in it did not immediately die. Howells relinquished all right and title in it, and Clemens started it out with Burbank and a traveling company, doing one-night stands, and kept it going for a week or more at his own expense. It never reached New York.

“And yet,” says Howells, “I think now that if it had come it would have been successful. So hard does the faith of the unsuccessful dramatist die.”—[This was as late as the spring of 1886, at which time Howells’s faith in the play was exceedingly shaky. In one letter he wrote: “It is a lunatic that we have created, and while a lunatic in one act might amuse, I’m afraid that in three he would simply bore.”

And again:

“As it stands, I believe the thing will fail, and it would be a disgrace to have it succeed.”]

## CXLVIII

### CABLE AND HIS GREAT JOKE

Meanwhile, with the completion of the Sellers play Clemens had flung himself into dramatic writing once more with a new and more violent impetuosity than ever. Howells had hardly returned to Boston when he wrote:

Now let’s write a tragedy.

The inclosed is not fancy, it is history; except that the little girl was a passing stranger, and not kin to any of the parties. I read the incident in Carlyle’s *Cromwell* a year ago, and made a note in my note-book; stumbled on the note to-day, and wrote up the closing scene of a possible tragedy, to see how it might work.



If we made this colonel a grand fellow, and gave him a wife to suit—hey? It's right in the big historical times—war; Cromwell in big, picturesque power, and all that.

Come, let's do this tragedy, and do it well. Curious, but didn't Florence want a Cromwell? But Cromwell would not be the chief figure here.

It was the closing scene of that pathetic passage in history from which he would later make his story, "The Death Disc." Howells was too tired and too occupied to undertake immediately a new dramatic labor, so Clemens went steaming ahead alone.

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My billiard-table is stacked up with books relating to the Sandwich Islands; the walls are upholstered with scraps of paper penciled with notes drawn from them. I have saturated myself with knowledge of that unimaguably beautiful land and that most strange and fascinating people. And I have begun a story. Its hidden motive will illustrate a but-little considered fact in human nature: that the religious folly you are born in you will die in, no matter what apparently reasonable religious folly may seem to have taken its place; meanwhile abolished and obliterated it. I start Bill Ragsdale at eleven years of age, and the heroine at four, in the midst of the ancient idolatrous system, with its picturesque and amazing customs and superstitions, three months before the arrival of the missionaries and—the erection of a shallow Christianity upon the ruins of the old paganism.

Then these two will become educated Christians and highly civilized.

And then I will jump fifteen years and do Ragsdale's leper business. When we come to dramatize, we can draw a deal of matter from the story, all ready to our hand.

He made elaborate preparations for the Sandwich Islands story, which he and Howells would dramatize later, and within the space of a few weeks he actually did dramatize 'The Prince and the Pauper' and 'Tom Sawyer', and was prodding Webster to find proper actors or managers; stipulating at first severe and arbitrary terms, which were gradually modified, as one after another of the prospective customers found these dramatic wares unsuited to their needs. Mark Twain was one of the most dramatic creatures that ever lived, but he lacked the faculty of stage arrangement of the dramatic idea. It is one of the commonest defects in the literary make-up; also one of the hardest to realize and to explain.

The winter of 1883-84 was a gay one in the Clemens home. Henry Irving was among those entertained, Augustus Saint-Gaudens, Aldrich and his wife, Howells of course, and George W. Cable. Cable had now permanently left the South for the promised land which all authors of the South and West seek eventually, and had in due course made his way to Hartford. Clemens took Cable's fortunes in hand, as he had done with many another, invited him to his home, and undertook to open negotiations with the American Publishing Company, of which Frank Bliss was now the manager, for the improvement of his fortunes.

Cable had been giving readings from his stories and had somewhere picked up the measles. He suddenly came down with the complaint during his visit to Clemens, and his case was a violent one. It required the constant attendance of a trained nurse and one or two members of the household to pull him through.



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In the course of time he was convalescent, and when contagion was no longer to be feared guests were invited in for his entertainment. At one of these gatherings, Cable produced a curious book, which he said had been lent to him by Prof. Francis Bacon, of New Haven, as a great rarity. It was a little privately printed pamphlet written by a Southern youth, named S. Watson Wolston, a Yale student of 1845, and was an absurd romance of the hyperflorid, grandiloquent sort, entitled, "Love Triumphant, or the Enemy Conquered." Its heroine's name was Ambulinia, and its flowery, half-meaningless periods and impossible situations delighted Clemens beyond measure. He begged Cable to lend it to him, to read at the Saturday Morning Club, declaring that he certainly must own the book, at whatever cost. Henry C. Robinson, who was present, remembered having seen a copy in his youth, and Twichell thought he recalled such a book on sale in New Haven during his college days. Twichell said nothing as to any purpose in the matter; but somewhat later, being in New Haven, he stepped into the old book-store and found the same proprietor, who remembered very well the book and its author. Twichell rather fearfully asked if by any chance a copy of it might still be obtained.

"Well," was the answer, "I undertook to put my cellar in order the other day, and found about a cord of them down there. I think I can supply you."

Twichell took home six of the books at ten cents each, and on their first spring walk to Talcott's Tower casually mentioned to Clemens the quest for the rare Ambulinia. But Clemens had given up the pursuit. New York dealers had reported no success in the matter. The book was no longer in existence.

"What would you give for a copy?" asked. Twichell.

Clemens became excited.

"It isn't a question of price," he said; "that would be for the owner to set if I could find him."

Twichell drew a little package from his pocket.

"Well, Mark," he said, "here are six copies of that book, to begin with. If that isn't enough, I can get you a wagon-load."

It was enough. But it did not deter Clemens in his purpose, which was to immortalize the little book by pointing out its peculiar charms. He did this later, and eventually included the entire story, with comments, in one of his own volumes.

Clemens and Twichell did not always walk that spring. The early form of bicycle, the prehistoric high-wheel, had come into vogue, and they each got one and attempted its conquest. They practised in the early morning hours on Farmington Avenue, which was



wide and smooth, and they had an instructor, a young German, who, after a morning or two, regarded Mark Twain helplessly and said:

“Mr. Clemens, it’s remarkable—you can fall off of a bicycle more different ways than the man that invented it.”



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They were curious things, those old high-wheel machines. You were perched away up in the air, with the feeling that you were likely at any moment to strike a pebble or something that would fling you forward with damaging results. Frequently that is what happened. The word “header” seems to have grown out of that early bicycling period. Perhaps Mark Twain invented it. He had enough experience to do it. He always declared afterward that he invented all the new bicycle profanity that has since come into general use. Once he wrote:

There was a row of low stepping-stones across one end of the street, a measured yard apart. Even after I got so I could steer pretty fairly I was so afraid of those stones that I always hit them. They gave me the worst falls I ever got in that street, except those which I got from dogs. I have seen it stated that no expert is quick enough to run over a dog; that a dog is always able to skip out of his way. I think that that may be true; but I think that the reason he couldn't run over the dog was because he was trying to. I did not try to run over any dog. But I ran over every dog that came along. I think it makes a great deal of difference. If you try to run over the dog he knows how to calculate, but if you are trying to miss him he does not know how to calculate, and is liable to jump the wrong way every time. It was always so in my experience. Even when I could not hit a wagon I could hit a dog that came to see me practise. They all liked to see me practise, and they all came, for there was very little going on in our neighborhood to entertain a dog.

He conquered, measurably, that old, discouraging thing, and he and Twichell would go on excursions, sometimes as far as Wethersfield or to the tower. It was a pleasant change, at least it was an interesting one; but bicycling on the high wheel was never a popular diversion with Mark Twain, and his enthusiasm in the sport had died before the “safety” came along.

He had his machine sent out to Elmira, but there were too many hills in Chemung County, and after one brief excursion he came in, limping and pushing his wheel, and did not try it again.

To return to Cable. When the 1st of April (1884) approached he concluded it would be a good time to pay off his debt of gratitude for his recent entertainment in the Clemens's home. He went to work at it systematically. He had a “private and confidential” circular letter printed, and he mailed it to one hundred and fifty of Mark Twain's literary friends in Boston, Hartford, Springfield, New York, Brooklyn, Washington, and elsewhere, suggesting that they write to him, so that their letters would reach him simultaneously April 1st, asking for his autograph. No stamps or cards were to be inclosed for reply, and it was requested that “no stranger to Mr. Clemens and no minor” should take part. Mrs. Clemens was let into the secret, so that she would see to it that her husband did not reject his mail or commit it to the flames unopened.



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It would seem that every one receiving the invitation must have responded to it, for on the morning of April 1st a stupefying mass of letters was unloaded on Mark Twain's table. He did not know what to make of it, and Mrs. Clemens stood off to watch the results. The first one he opened was from Dean Sage, a friend whom he valued highly. Sage wrote from Brooklyn:

*Dear Clemens,*—I have recently been asked by a young lady who unfortunately has a mania for autograph-collecting, but otherwise is a charming character, and comely enough to suit your fastidious taste, to secure for her the sign manual of the few distinguished persons fortunate enough to have my acquaintance. In enumerating them to her, after mentioning the names of Geo. Shepard Page, Joe Michell, Capt. Isaiah Ryndus, Mr. Willard, Dan Mace, and J. L. Sullivan, I came to yours. "Oh!" said she, "I have read all his works—Little Breeches, The Heathen Chinee, and the rest—and think them delightful. Do oblige me by asking him for his autograph, preceded by any little sentiment that may occur to him, provided it is not too short."

Of course I promised, and hope you will oblige me by sending some little thing addressed to Miss Oakes.

We are all pretty well at home just now, though indisposition has been among us for the past fortnight. With regards to Mrs. Clemens and the children, in which my wife joins,

Yours truly, *Dean Sage*.

It amused and rather surprised him, and it fooled him completely; but when he picked up a letter from Brander Matthews, asking, in some absurd fashion, for his signature, and another from Ellen Terry, and from Irving, and from Stedman, and from Warner, and Waring, and H. C. Bunner, and Sarony, and Laurence Hutton, and John Hay, and R. U. Johnson, and Modjeska, the size and quality of the joke began to overawe him. He was delighted, of course; for really it was a fine compliment, in its way, and most of the letters were distinctly amusing. Some of them asked for autographs by the yard, some by the pound. Henry Irving said:

I have just got back from a very late rehearsal-five o'clock—very tired—but there will be no rest till I get your autograph.

Some requested him to sit down and copy a few chapters from *The Innocents Abroad* for them or to send an original manuscript. Others requested that his autograph be attached to a check of interesting size. John Hay suggested that he copy a hymn, a few hundred lines of Young's "Night Thoughts," and an equal amount of Pollak's "Course of Time."



I want my boy to form a taste for serious and elevated poetry, and it will add considerable commercial value to have them in your handwriting.

Altogether the reading of the letters gave him a delightful day, and his admiration for Cable grew accordingly. Cable, too, was pleased with the success of his joke, though he declared he would never risk such a thing again. A newspaper of the time reports him as saying:



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I never suffered so much agony as for a few days previous to the 1st of April. I was afraid the letters would reach Mark when he was in affliction, in which case all of us would never have ceased flying to make it up to him. When I visited Mark we used to open our budgets of letters together at breakfast. We used to sing out whenever we struck an autograph-hunter. I think the idea came from that. The first person I spoke to about it was Robert Underwood Johnson, of the Century. My most enthusiastic ally was the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher. We never thought it would get into the papers. I never played a practical joke before. I never will again, certainly.

Mark Twain in those days did not encourage the regular autograph-collectors, and seldom paid any attention to their requests for his signature. He changed all this in later years, and kept a supply always on hand to satisfy every request; but in those earlier days he had no patience with collecting fads, and it required a particularly pleasing application to obtain his signature.

## CXLIX

### MARK TWAIN IN BUSINESS

Samuel Clemens by this time was definitely engaged in the publishing business. Webster had a complete office with assistants at 658 Broadway, and had acquired a pretty thorough and practical knowledge of subscription publishing. He was a busy, industrious young man, tirelessly energetic, and with a good deal of confidence, by no means unnecessary to commercial success. He placed this mental and physical capital against Mark Twain's inspiration and financial backing, and the combination of Charles L. Webster & Co. seemed likely to be a strong one.

Already, in the spring of 1884., Webster had the new Mark Twain book, 'The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn', well in hand, and was on the watch for promising subscription books by other authors. Clemens, with his usual business vision and eye for results, with a generous disregard of detail, was supervising the larger preliminaries, and fulminating at the petty distractions and difficulties as they came along. Certain plays he was trying to place were enough to keep him pretty thoroughly upset during this period, and proof-reading never added to his happiness. To Howells he wrote:

My days are given up to cursings, both loud and deep, for I am reading the 'Huck Finn' proofs. They don't make a very great many mistakes, but those that do occur are of a nature that make a man swear his teeth loose.

Whereupon Howells promptly wrote him that he would help him out with the Huck Finn proofs for the pleasure of reading the story. Clemens, among other things, was trying to place a patent grape-scissors, invented by Howells's father, so that there was, in some

degree, an equivalent for the heavy obligation. That it was a heavy one we gather from his fervent acknowledgment:



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It took my breath away, and I haven't recovered it yet, entirely—I mean the generosity of your proposal to read the proofs of Huck Finn.

Now, if you mean it, old man—if you are in earnest-proceed, in God's name, and be by me forever blessed. I can't conceive of a rational man deliberately piling such an atrocious job upon himself. But if there be such a man, and you be that man, pile it on. The proof-reading of 'The Prince and the Pauper' cost me the last rags of my religion.

Clemens decided to have the Huckleberry Finn book illustrated after his own ideas. He looked through the various comic papers to see if he could find the work of some new man that appealed to his fancy. In the pages of Life he discovered some comic pictures illustrating the possibility of applying electrical burners to messenger boys, waiters, *etc.* The style and the spirit of these things amused him. He instructed Webster to look up the artist, who proved to be a young man, E. W. Kemble by name, later one of our foremost cartoonists. Webster engaged Kemble and put the manuscript in his hands. Through the publication of certain chapters of Huck Finn in the Century Magazine, Kemble was brought to the notice of its editors, who wrote Clemens that they were profoundly indebted to him for unearthing "such a gem of an illustrator."

Clemens, encouraged and full of enthusiasm, now endeavored to interest himself in the practical details of manufacture, but his stock of patience was light and the details were many. His early business period resembles, in some of its features, his mining experience in Esmeralda, his letters to Webster being not unlike those to Orion in that former day. They are much oftener gentle, considerate, even apologetic, but they are occasionally terse, arbitrary, and profane. It required effort for him to be entirely calm in his business correspondence. A criticism of one of Webster's assistants will serve as an example of his less quiet method:

Charley, your proof-reader, is an idiot; and not only an idiot, but blind; and not only blind, but partly dead.

Of course, one must regard many of Mark Twain's business aspects humorously. To consider them otherwise is to place him in a false light altogether. He wore himself out with his anxieties and irritations; but that even he, in the midst of his furies, saw the humor of it all is sufficiently evidenced by the form of his savage phrasing. There were few things that did not amuse him, and certainly nothing amused more, or oftener, than himself.

It is proper to add a detail in evidence of a business soundness which he sometimes manifested. He had observed the methods of Bliss and Osgood, and had drawn his conclusions. In the beginning of the Huck Finn canvass he wrote Webster:



Keep it diligently in mind that we don't issue till we have made a big sale.



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Get at your canvassing early and drive it with all your might, with an intent and purpose of issuing on the 10th or 15th of next December (the best time in the year to tumble a big pile into the trade); but if we haven't 40,000 subscriptions we simply postpone publication till we've got them. It is a plain, simple policy, and would have saved both of my last books if it had been followed. [That is to say, 'The Prince and the Pauper' and the Mississippi book, neither of which had sold up to his expectations on the, initial canvass.]

### CL

#### FARM PICTURES

Gerhardt returned from Paris that summer, after three years of study, a qualified sculptor. He was prepared to take commissions, and came to Elmira to model a bust of his benefactor. The work was finished after four or five weeks of hard effort and pronounced admirable; but Gerhardt, attempting to make a cast one morning, ruined it completely. The family gathered round the disaster, which to them seemed final, but the sculptor went immediately to work, and in an amazingly brief time executed a new bust even better than the first, an excellent piece of modeling and a fine likeness. It was decided that a cut of it should be used as a frontispiece for the new book, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

Clemens was at this time giving the final readings to the *Huck Finn* pages, a labor in which Mrs. Clemens and the children materially assisted. In the childish biography which Susy began of her father, a year later, she says:

Ever since papa and mama were married papa has written his books and then taken them to mama in manuscript, and she has expurgated —[Susy's spelling is preserved] —them. Papa read *Huckleberry Finn* to us in manuscript,—[Probably meaning proof.] —just before it came out, and then he would leave parts of it with mama to expurgate, while he went off to the study to work, and sometimes Clara and I would be sitting with mama while she was looking the manuscript over, and I remember so well, with what pangs of regret we used to see her turn down the leaves of the pages, which meant that some delightfully terrible part must be scratched out. And I remember one part pertickularly which was perfectly fascinating it was so terrible, that Clara and I used to delight in and oh, with what despair we saw mama turn down the leaf on which it was written, we thought the book would almost be ruined without it. But we gradually came to think as mama did.

Commenting on this phase of Huck's evolution Mark Twain has since written:



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I remember the special case mentioned by Susy, and can see the group yet—two-thirds of it pleading for the life of the culprit sentence that was so fascinatingly dreadful, and the other third of it patiently explaining why the court could not grant the prayer of the pleaders; but I do not remember what the condemned phrase was. It had much company, and they all went to the gallows; but it is possible that that especially dreadful one which gave those little people so much delight was cunningly devised and put into the book for just that function, and not with any hope or expectation that it would get by the “expurgator” alive. It is possible, for I had that custom.

Little Jean was probably too youthful yet to take part in that literary arbitration. She was four, and had more interest in cows. In some memoranda which her father kept of that period—the “Children’s Book”—he says:

She goes out to the barn with one of us every evening toward six o’clock, to look at the cows—which she adores—no weaker word can express her feeling for them. She sits rapt and contented while David milks the three, making a remark now and then—always about the cows. The time passes slowly and drearily for her attendant, but not for her. She could stand a week of it. When the milking is finished, and “Blanche,” “Jean,” and “the cross cow” are turned into the adjoining little cow-lot, we have to set Jean on a shed in that lot, and stay by her half an hour, till Eliza, the German nurse, comes to take her to bed. The cows merely stand there, and do nothing; yet the mere sight of them is all-sufficient for Jean. She requires nothing more. The other evening, after contemplating them a long time, as they stood in the muddy muck chewing the cud, she said, with deep and reverent appreciation, “Ain’t this a sweet little garden?” Yesterday evening our cows (after being inspected and worshiped by Jean from the shed for an hour) wandered off down into the pasture and left her bereft. I thought I was going to get back home, now, but that was an error. Jean knew of some more cows in a field somewhere, and took my hand and led me thitherward. When we turned the corner and took the right-hand road, I saw that we should presently be out of range of call and sight; so I began to argue against continuing the expedition, and Jean began to argue in favor of it, she using English for light skirmishing and German for “business.” I kept up my end with vigor, and demolished her arguments in detail, one after the other, till I judged I had her about cornered. She hesitated a moment, then answered up, sharply:

“Wir werden nichts mehr daruber sprechen!” (We won’t talk any more about it.)

It nearly took my breath away, though I thought I might possibly have misunderstood. I said:

“Why, you little rascal! Was hast du gesagt?”



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But she said the same words over again, and in the same decided way. I suppose I ought to have been outraged, but I wasn't; I was charmed.

His own note-books of that summer are as full as usual, but there are fewer literary ideas and more philosophies. There was an excitement, just then, about the trichina germ in pork, and one of his memoranda says:

I think we are only the microscopic trichina concealed in the blood of some vast creature's veins, and that it is that vast creature whom God concerns himself about and not us.

And there is another which says:

People, in trying to justify eternity, say we can put it in by learning all the knowledge acquired by the inhabitants of the myriads of stars. We sha'n't need that. We could use up two eternities in learning all that is to be learned about our own world, and the thousands of nations that have risen, and flourished, and vanished from it. Mathematics alone would occupy me eight million years.

He records an incident which he related more fully in a letter to Howells:

Before I forget it I must tell you that Mrs. Clemens has said a bright thing. A drop-letter came to me asking me to lecture here for a church debt. I began to rage over the exceedingly cool wording of the request, when Mrs. Clemens said: "I think I know that church, and, if so, this preacher is a colored man; he doesn't know how to write a polished letter. How should he?"

My manner changed so suddenly and so radically that Mrs. C. said: "I will give you a motto, and it will be useful to you if you will adopt it: 'Consider every man colored till he is proved white.'"

It is dern good, I think.

One of the note-books contains these entries:

Talking last night about home matters, I said, "I wish I had said to George when we were leaving home, 'Now, George, I wish you would take advantage of these three or four months' idle time while I am away——'"

"To learn to let my matches alone," interrupted Livy. The very words I was going to use. Yet George had not been mentioned before, nor his peculiarities.

Several years ago I said:



“Suppose I should live to be ninety-two, and just as I was dying a messenger should enter and say——”

“You are become Earl of Durham,” interrupted Livy. The very words I was going to utter. Yet there had not been a word said about the earl, or any other person, nor had there been any conversation calculated to suggest any such subject.

## CLI

### MARK TWAIN MUGWUMPS



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The Republican Presidential nomination of James G. Blaine resulted in a political revolt such as the nation had not known. Blaine was immensely popular, but he had many enemies in his own party. There were strong suspicions of his being connected with doubtful financiering-enterprises, more or less sensitive to official influence, and while these scandals had become quieted a very large portion of the Republican constituency refused to believe them unjustified. What might be termed the intellectual element of Republicanism was against Blaine: George William Curtis, Charles Dudley Warner, James Russell Lowell, Henry Ward Beecher, Thomas Nast, the firm of Harper & Brothers, Joseph W. Hawley, Joseph Twichell, Mark Twain—in fact the majority of thinking men who held principle above party in their choice.

On the day of the Chicago nomination, Henry C. Robinson, Charles E. Perkins, Edward M. Bunce, F. G. Whitmore, and Samuel C. Dunham were collected with Mark Twain in his billiard-room, taking turns at the game and discussing the political situation, with George, the colored butler, at the telephone down-stairs to report the returns as they came in. As fast as the ballot was received at the political headquarters down-town, it was telephoned up to the house and George reported it through the speaking-tube.

The opposition to Blaine in the convention was so strong that no one of the assembled players seriously expected his nomination. What was their amazement, then, when about mid-afternoon George suddenly announced through the speaking-tube that Blaine was the nominee. The butts of the billiard cues came down on the floor with a bump, and for a moment the players were speechless. Then Henry Robinson said:

“It’s hard luck to have to vote for that man.”

Clemens looked at him under his heavy brows.

“But—we don’t—have to vote for him,” he said.

“Do you mean to say that you’re not going to vote for him?”

“Yes, that is what I mean to say. I am not going to vote for him.”

There was a general protest. Most of those assembled declared that when a party’s representatives chose a man one must stand by him. They might choose unwisely, but the party support must be maintained. Clemens said:

“No party holds the privilege of dictating to me how I shall vote. If loyalty to party is a form of patriotism, I am no patriot. If there is any valuable difference between a monarchist and an American, it lies in the theory that the American can decide for himself what is patriotic and what isn’t. I claim that difference. I am the only person in the sixty millions that is privileged to dictate my patriotism.”



There was a good deal of talk back and forth, and, in the end, most of those there present remained loyal to Blaine. General Hawley and his paper stood by Blaine. Warner withdrew from his editorship of the Courant and remained neutral. Twichell stood with Clemens and came near losing his pulpit by it. Open letters were published in the newspapers about him. It was a campaign when politics divided neighbors, families, and congregations. If we except the Civil War period, there never had been a more rancorous political warfare than that waged between the parties of James G. Blaine and Grover Cleveland in 1884.



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That Howells remained true to Blaine was a grief to Clemens. He had gone to the farm with Howells on his political conscience and had written fervent and imploring letters on the subject. As late as September 17th, he said:

Somehow I can't seem to rest quiet under the idea of your voting for Blaine. I believe you said something about the country and the party. Certainly allegiance to these is well, but certainly a man's first duty is to his own conscience and honor; the party and country come second to that, and never first. I don't ask you to vote at all. I only urge you not to soil yourself by voting for Blaine.... Don't be offended; I mean no offense. I am not concerned about the rest of the nation, but well, good-by.

Yours ever, *mark*.

Beyond his prayerful letters to Howells, Clemens did not greatly concern himself with politics on the farm, but, returning to Hartford, he went vigorously into the campaign, presided, as usual, at mass-meetings, and made political speeches which invited the laughter of both parties, and were universally quoted and printed without regard to the paper's convictions.

It was during one such speech as this that, in the course of his remarks, a band outside came marching by playing patriotic music so loudly as to drown his voice. He waited till the band got by, but by the time he was well under way again another band passed, and once more he was obliged to wait till the music died away in the distance. Then he said, quite serenely:

"You will find my speech, without the music, in the morning paper."

In introducing Carl Schurz at a great mugwump mass-meeting at Hartford, October 20, 1884., he remarked that he [Clemens] was the only legitimately elected officer, and was expected to read a long list of vice-presidents; but he had forgotten all about it, and he would ask all the gentlemen there, of whatever political complexion, to do him a great favor by acting as vice-presidents. Then he said:

As far as my own political change of heart is concerned, I have not been convinced by any Democratic means. The opinion I hold of Mr. Blaine is due to the comments of the Republican press before the nomination. Not that they have said bitter or scandalous things, because Republican papers are above that, but the things they said did not seem to be complimentary, and seemed to me to imply editorial disapproval of Mr. Blaine and the belief that he was not qualified to be President of the United States. It is just a little indelicate for me to be here on this occasion before an assemblage of voters, for the reason that the ablest newspaper in Colorado—the ablest newspaper in the world—has recently nominated me for President. It is hardly fit for me to preside at a discussion of the brother candidate, but the best



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among us will do the most repulsive things the moment we are smitten with a Presidential madness. If I had realized that this canvass was to turn on the candidate's private character I would have started that Colorado paper sooner. I know the crimes that can be imputed and proved against me can be told on the fingers of your hands. This cannot be said of any other Presidential candidate in the field.

Inasmuch as the Blaine-Cleveland campaign was essentially a campaign of scurrility, this touch was loudly applauded.

Mark Twain voted for Grover Cleveland, though up to the very eve of election he was ready to support a Republican nominee in whom he had faith, preferably Edmunds, and he tried to inaugurate a movement by which Edmunds might be nominated as a surprise candidate and sweep the country.

It was probably Dr. Burchard's ill-advised utterance concerning the three alleged R's of Democracy, "Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion," that defeated Blaine, and by some strange, occult means Mark Twain's butler George got wind of this damning speech before it became news on the streets of Hartford. George had gone with his party, and had a considerable sum of money wagered on Blaine's election; but he knew it was likely to be very close, and he had an instant and deep conviction that these three fatal words and Blaine's failure to repudiate them meant the candidate's downfall. He immediately abandoned everything in the shape of household duties, and within the briefest possible time had changed enough money to make him safe, and leave him a good margin of winnings besides, in the event of Blaine's defeat. This was evening. A very little later the news of Blaine's blunder, announced from the opera-house stage, was like the explosion of a bomb. But it was no news to George, who went home rejoicing with his enemies.

## CLII

### PLATFORMING WITH CABLE

The drain of many investments and the establishment of a publishing house had told heavily on Clemens's finances. It became desirable to earn a large sum of money with as much expedition as possible. Authors' readings had become popular, and Clemens had read in Philadelphia and Boston with satisfactory results. He now conceived the idea of a grand tour of authors as a commercial enterprise. He proposed to Aldrich, Howells, and Cable that he charter a private car for the purpose, and that with their own housekeeping arrangements, cooking, *etc.*, they could go swinging around the circuit, reaping, a golden harvest. He offered to be general manager of the expedition, the impresario as it were, and agreed to guarantee the others not less than seventy-five dollars a day apiece as their net return from the "circus," as he called it.

Howells and Aldrich liked well enough to consider it as an amusing prospect, but only Cable was willing to realize it. He had been scouring the country on his own account, and he was willing enough to join forces with Mark Twain.



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Clemens detested platforming, but the idea of reading from his books or manuscript for some reason seemed less objectionable, and, as already stated, the need of much money had become important.

He arranged with J. B. Pond for the business side of the expedition, though in reality he was its proprietor. The private-car idea was given up, but he employed Cable at a salary of four hundred and fifty dollars a week and expenses, and he paid Pond a commission. Perhaps, without going any further, we may say that the tour was a financial success, and yielded a large return of the needed funds.

Clemens and Cable had a pleasant enough time, and had it not been for the absence from home and the disagreeableness of railway travel, there would have been little to regret. They were a curiously associated pair. Cable was orthodox in his religion, devoted to Sunday-school, Bible reading, and church affairs in general. Clemens—well, Clemens was different. On the first evening of their tour, when the latter was comfortably settled in bed with an entertaining book, Cable appeared with his Bible, and proceeded to read a chapter aloud. Clemens made no comment, and this went on for an evening or two more. Then he said:

“See here, Cable, we’ll have to cut this part of the program out. You can read the Bible as much as you please so long as you don’t read it to me.”

Cable retired courteously. He had a keen sense of humor, and most things that Mark Twain did, whether he approved or not, amused him. Cable did not smoke, but he seemed always to prefer the smoking compartment when they traveled, to the more respectable portions of the car. One day Clemens said to him:

“Cable, why do you sit in here? You don’t smoke, and you know I always smoke, and sometimes swear.”

Cable said, “I know, Mark, I don’t do these things, but I can’t help admiring the way you do them.”

When Sunday came it was Mark Twain’s great happiness to stay in bed all day, resting after his week of labor; but Cable would rise, bright and chipper, dress himself in neat and suitable attire, and visit the various churches and Sunday-schools in town, usually making a brief address at each, being always invited to do so.

It seems worth while to include one of the Clemens-Cable programs here—a most satisfactory one. They varied it on occasion, and when they were two nights in a place changed it completely, but the program here given was the one they were likely to use after they had proved its worth:

*Program*



Richling's visit to Kate Riley  
*Geo. W. Cable*

King Sollermun  
*mark Twain*

- (a) Kate Riley and Ristofolo
- (b) Narcisse in mourning for "Lady Byron"
- (c) Mary's Night Ride

*Geo. W. Cable*

- (a) Tragic Tale of the Fishwife
- (b) A Trying Situation
- (c) A Ghost Story

*mark Twain*



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At a Mark Twain memorial meeting (November 30, 1910), where the few who were left of his old companions told over quaint and tender memories, George Cable recalled their reading days together and told of Mark Twain's conscientious effort to do his best, to be worthy of himself, regardless of all other concerns. He told how when they had been traveling for a while Clemens seemed to realize that he was only giving the audience nonsense; making them laugh at trivialities which they would forget before they had left the entertainment hall. Cable said that up to that time he had supposed Clemens's chief thought was the entertainment of the moment, and that if the audience laughed he was satisfied. He told how he had sat in the wings, waiting his turn, and heard the tides of laughter gather and roll forward and break against the footlights, time and time again, and how he had believed his colleague to be glorying in that triumph. What was his surprise, then, on the way to the hotel in the carriage, when Clemens groaned and seemed writhing in spirit and said:

"Oh, Cable, I am demeaning myself. I am allowing myself to be a mere buffoon. It's ghastly. I can't endure it any longer."

Cable added that all that night and the next day Mark Twain devoted himself to the study and rehearsal of selections which were justified not only as humor, but as literature and art.

A good many interesting and amusing things would happen on such a tour. Many of these are entirely forgotten, of course, but of others certain memoranda have been preserved. Grover Cleveland had been elected when they set out on their travels, but was still holding his position in Albany as Governor of New York. When they reached Albany Cable and Clemens decided to call on him. They drove to the Capitol and were shown into the Governor's private office. Cleveland made them welcome, and, after greetings, said to Clemens:

"Mr. Clemens, I was a fellow-citizen of yours in Buffalo a good many months some years ago, but you never called on me then. How do you explain this?"

Clemens said: "Oh, that is very simple to answer, your Excellency. In Buffalo you were a sheriff. I kept away from the sheriff as much as possible, but you're Governor now, and on the way to the Presidency. It's worth while coming to see you."

Clemens meantime had been resting, half sitting, on the corner of the Executive desk. He leaned back a little, and suddenly about a dozen young men opened various doors, filed in and stood at attention, as if waiting for orders.

No one spoke for a moment; then the Governor said to this collection of attendants:

"You are dismissed, young gentlemen. Your services are not required. Mr. Clemens is sitting on the bells."



In Buffalo, when Clemens appeared on the stage, he leisurely considered the audience for a moment; then he said:

“I miss a good many faces. They have gone—gone to the tomb, to the gallows, or to the White House. All of us are entitled to at least one of these distinctions, and it behoves us to be wise and prepare for all.”



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On Thanksgiving Eve the readers were in Morristown, New Jersey, where they were entertained by Thomas Nast. The cartoonist prepared a quiet supper for them and they remained overnight in the Nast home. They were to leave next morning by an early train, and Mrs. Nast had agreed to see that they were up in due season. When she woke next morning there seemed a strange silence in the house and she grew suspicious. Going to the servants' room, she found them sleeping soundly. The alarm-clock in the back hall had stopped at about the hour the guests retired. The studio clock was also found stopped; in fact, every timepiece on the premises had retired from business. Clemens had found that the clocks interfered with his getting to sleep, and he had quieted them regardless of early trains and reading engagements. On being accused of duplicity he said:

“Well, those clocks were all overworked, anyway. They will feel much better for a night's rest.”

A few days later Nast sent him a caricature drawing—a picture which showed Mark Twain getting rid of the offending clocks.

At Christmas-time they took a fortnight's holiday and Clemens went home to Hartford. A surprise was awaiting him there. Mrs. Clemens had made an adaptation of 'The Prince and the Pauper' play, and the children of the neighborhood had prepared a presentation of it for his special delectation. He knew, on his arrival home, that something mysterious was in progress, for certain rooms were forbidden him; but he had no inkling of their plan until just before the performance—when he was led across the grounds to George Warner's home, into the large room there where it was to be given, and placed in a seat directly in front of the stage.

Gerhardt had painted the drop-curtain, and assisted in the general construction of scenery and effects. The result was really imposing; but presently, when the curtain rose and the guest of honor realized what it was all about, and what they had undertaken for his pleasure, he was deeply moved and supremely gratified.

There was but one hitch in the performance. There is a place where the Prince says, “Fathers be alike, mayhap; mine hath not a doll's temper.”

This was Susy's part, and as she said it the audience did not fail to remember its literal appropriateness. There was a moment's silence, then a titter, followed by a roar of laughter, in which everybody but the little actors joined. They did not see the humor and were disturbed and grieved. Curiously enough, Mrs. Clemens herself, in arranging and casting the play, had not considered the possibility of this effect. The parts were all daintily played. The children wore their assumed personalities as if native to them. Daisy Warner played the part of Tom Canty, Clara Clemens was Lady Jane Grey.



It was only the beginning of The Prince and the Pauper productions. The play was repeated, Clemens assisting, adding to the parts, and himself playing the role of Miles Hendon. In her childish biography Susy says:



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Papa had only three days to learn the part in, but still we were all sure that he could do it. The scene that he acted in was the scene between Miles Hendon and the Prince, the "Prithee, pour the water" scene. I was the Prince and papa and I rehearsed together two or three times a day for the three days before the appointed evening. Papa acted his part beautifully, and he added to the scene, making it a good deal longer. He was inexpressibly funny, with his great slouch hat and gait—oh such a gait! Papa made the Miles Hendon scene a splendid success and every one was delighted with the scene, and papa too. We had great fun with our "Prince and Pauper," and I think we none of us shall forget how immensely funny papa was in it. He certainly could have been an actor as well as an author.

The holidays over, Cable and Clemens were off on the circuit again. At Rochester an incident happened which led to the writing of one of Mark Twain's important books, 'A Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's Court'. Clemens and Cable had wandered into a book-store for the purpose of finding something to read. Pulling over some volumes on one of the tables, Clemens happened to pick up a little green, cloth-bound book, and after looking at the title turned the pages rather curiously and with increasing interest.

"Cable," he said, "do you know anything about this book, the Arthurian legends of Sir Thomas Malory, Morte Arthure?"

Cable answered: "Mark, that is one of the most beautiful books in the world. Let me buy it for you. You will love it more than any book you ever read."

So Clemens came to know the old chronicler's version of the rare Round Table legends, and from that first acquaintance with them to the last days of his life seldom let the book go far from him. He read and reread those quaint, stately tales and revered their beauty, while fairly reveling in the absurdities of that ancient day. Sir Ector's lament he regarded as one of the most simply beautiful pieces of writing in the English tongue, and some of the combats and quests as the most ridiculous absurdities in romance. Presently he conceived the idea of linking that day, with its customs, costumes, and abuses, with the progress of the present, or carrying back into that age of magicians and armor and superstition and cruelties a brisk American of progressive ideas who would institute reforms. His note-book began to be filled with memoranda of situations and possibilities for the tale he had in mind. These were vague, unformed fancies as yet, and it would be a long time before the story would become a fact. This was the first entry:



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Dream of being a knight-errant in armor in the Middle Ages. Have the notions and habits, though, of the present day mixed with the necessities of that. No pockets in the armor. No way to manage certain requirements of nature. Can't scratch. Cold in the head and can't blow. Can't get a handkerchief; can't use iron sleeve; iron gets red-hot in the sun; leaks in the rain; gets white with frost and freezes me solid in winter; makes disagreeable clatter when I enter church. Can't dress or undress myself. Always getting struck by lightning. Fall down and can't get up.

Twenty-one years later, discussing the genesis of the story, he said:

"As I read those quaint and curious old legends I suppose I naturally contrasted those days with ours, and it made me curious to fancy what might be the picturesque result if we could dump the nineteenth century down into the sixth century and observe the consequences."

The reading tour continued during the first two months of the new year and carried them as far west as Chicago. They read in Hannibal and Keokuk, and Clemens spent a day in the latter place with his mother, now living with Orion, brisk and active for her years and with her old-time force of character. Mark Twain, arranging for her Keokuk residence, had written:

Ma wants to board with you, and pay her board. She will pay you \$20 a month (she wouldn't pay a cent more in heaven; she is obstinate on this point), and as long as she remains with you and is content I will add \$25 a month to the sum Perkins already sends you.

Jane Clemens attended the Keokuk reading, and later, at home, when her children asked her if she could still dance, she rose, and at eighty-one tripped as lightly as a girl. It was the last time that Mark Twain ever saw his mother in the health and vigor which had been always so much a part of her personality.

Clemens saw another relative on that trip; in St. Louis, James Lampton, the original of Colonel Sellers, called.

He was become old and white-headed, but he entered to me in the same old breezy way of his earlier life, and he was all there, yet—not a detail wanting: the happy light in his eye, the abounding hope in his heart, the persuasive tongue, the miracle-breeding imagination—they were all there; and before I could turn around he was polishing up his Aladdin's lamp and flashing the secret riches of the world before me. I said to myself: "I did not overdraw him by a shade, I set him down as he was; and he is the same man to-day. Cable will recognize him."

Clemens opened the door into Cable's room and allowed the golden dream-talk to float in. It was of a "small venture" which the caller had undertaken through his son.

“Only a little thing—a, mere trifle—a bagatelle. I suppose there’s a couple of millions in it, possibly three, but not more, I think; still, for a boy, you know——”



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It was the same old Cousin Jim. Later, when he had royally accepted some tickets for the reading and bowed his exit, Cable put his head in at the door.

“That was Colonel Sellers,” he said.

### CLIII

#### HUCK FINN COMES INTO HIS OWN

In the December Century (1884) appeared a chapter from 'The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn', "The Grangerford-Shepherdson Feud," a piece of writing which Edmund Clarence Stedman, Brander Matthews, and others promptly ranked as among Mark Twain's very best; when this was followed, in the January number, by "King Sollermun," a chapter which in its way delighted quite as many readers, the success of the new book was accounted certain. —[Stedman, writing to Clemens of this instalment, said: "To my mind it is not only the most finished and condensed thing you have done but as dramatic and powerful an episode as I know in modern literature."]

'The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn' was officially published in England and America in December, 1884, but the book was not in the canvassers' hands for delivery until February. By this time the orders were approximately for forty thousand copies, a number which had increased to fifty thousand a few weeks later. Webster's first publication venture was in the nature of a triumph. Clemens wrote to him March 16th:

“Your news is splendid. Huck certainly is a success.”

He felt that he had demonstrated his capacity as a general director and Webster had proved his efficiency as an executive. He had no further need of an outside publisher.

The story of Huck Finn will probably stand as the best of Mark Twain's purely fictional writings. A sequel to Tom Sawyer, it is greater than its predecessor; greater artistically, though perhaps with less immediate interest for the juvenile reader. In fact, the books are so different that they are not to be compared—wherein lies the success of the later one. Sequels are dangerous things when the story is continuous, but in Huckleberry Finn the story is a new one, wholly different in environment, atmosphere, purpose, character, everything. The tale of Huck and Nigger Jim drifting down the mighty river on a raft, cross-sectioning the various primitive aspects of human existence, constitutes one of the most impressive examples of picaresque fiction in any language. It has been ranked greater than Gil Blas, greater even than Don Quixote; certainly it is more convincing, more human, than either of these tales. Robert Louis Stevenson once wrote, "It is a book I have read four times, and am quite ready to begin again tomorrow."

It is by no means a flawless book, though its defects are trivial enough. The illusion of Huck as narrator fails the least bit here and there; the “four dialects” are not always maintained; the occasional touch of broad burlesque detracts from the tale’s reality. We are inclined to resent this. We never wish to feel that Huck is anything but a real character. We want him always the Huck who was willing to go to hell if necessary, rather than sacrifice Nigger Jim; the Huck who watched the river through long nights, and, without caring to explain why, felt his soul go out to the sunrise.



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Two or three days and nights went by; I reckon I might say they swum by, they slid along so quiet and smooth and lovely. Here is the way we put in the time. It was a monstrous big river down there —sometimes a mile and a half wide; we run nights and laid up and hid daytimes; soon as the night was most gone we stopped navigating and tied up—nearly always in the dead water under a towhead; and then cut young cottonwoods and willows and hid the raft with them. Then we set out the lines. Next we slid into the river and had a swim, so as to freshen up and cool off; then we set down on the sandy bottom where the water was about knee deep, and watched the daylight come. Not a sound anywheres—perfectly still—just like the whole world was asleep, only sometimes the bullfrogs a-cluttering, maybe. The first thing to see, looking away over the water, was a kind of dull line—that was the woods on t’other side, you couldn’t make nothing else out; then a pale place in the sky; then more paleness, spreading around; then the river softened up, away off, and warn’t black anymore, but gray; you could see little dark spots drifting along, ever so far away—trading scows, and such things; and long black streaks—rafts; sometimes you could hear a sweep screaming; or jumbled up voices, it was so still, and sounds come so far; and by- and-by you could see a streak on the water which you know by the look of the streak that there’s a snag there in a swift current which breaks on it and makes that streak look that way; and you see the mist curl up off the water, and the east reddens up, and the river, and you make out a log-cabin in the edge of the woods, away on the bank on t’other side of the river, being a wood-yard, likely, and piled by them cheats so you can throw a dog through it anywheres; then the nice breeze springs up, and comes fanning you over there, so cool and fresh, and sweet to smell, on account of the woods and the flowers.... And next you’ve got the full day, and everything smiling in the sun, and the song-birds just going it!

This is the Huck we want, and this is the Huck we usually have, and that the world has long been thankful for.

Take the story as a whole, it is a succession of startling and unique pictures. The cabin in the swamp which Huck and his father used together in their weird, ghastly relationship; the night adventure with Jim on the wrecked steamboat; Huck’s night among the towheads; the Grangerford-Shepherdson battle; the killing of Boggs—to name a few of the many vivid presentations—these are of no time or literary fashion and will never lose their flavor nor their freshness so long as humanity itself does not change. The terse, unadorned Grangerford-Shepherdson episode—built out of the Darnell—Watson feuds—[See *Life on the Mississippi*, chap. xxvi. Mark Twain himself, as a cub pilot, came near witnessing the battle he describes.]—is simply classic in its vivid casualness, and the same



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may be said of almost every incident on that long river-drift; but this is the strength, the very essence of picaresque narrative. It is the way things happen in reality; and the quiet, unexcited frame of mind in which Huck is prompted to set them down would seem to be the last word in literary art. To Huck, apparently, the killing of Boggs and Colonel Sherburn's defiance of the mob are of about the same historical importance as any other incidents of the day's travel. When Colonel Sherburn threw his shotgun across his arm and bade the crowd disperse Huck says:

The crowd washed back sudden, and then broke all apart and went tearing off every which way, and Buck Harkness he heeled it after them, looking tolerable cheap. I could a staid if I'd a wanted to, but I didn't want to.

I went to the circus, and loafed around the back side till the watchman went by, and then dived in under the tent.

That is all. No reflections, no hysterics; a murder and a mob dispersed, all without a single moral comment. And when the Shepherdsons had got done killing the Grangerfords, and Huck had tugged the two bodies ashore and covered Buck Grangerford's face with a handkerchief, crying a little because Buck had been good to him, he spent no time in sentimental reflection or sermonizing, but promptly hunted up Jim and the raft and sat down to a meal of corn-dodgers, buttermilk, pork and cabbage, and greens:

There ain't nothing in the world so good, when it is cooked right; and while I eat my supper we talked, and had a good time. I was powerful glad to get away from the feuds, and so was Jim to get away from the swamp. We said there warn't no home like a raft, after all. Other places do seem so cramped up and smothery, but a raft don't; you feel mighty free and easy and comfortable on a raft.

It was Huck Finn's morality that caused the book to be excluded from the Concord Library, and from other libraries here and there at a later day. The orthodox mental attitude of certain directors of juvenile literature could not condone Huck's looseness in the matter of statement and property rights, and in spite of New England traditions, Massachusetts librarians did not take any too kindly to his uttered principle that, after thinking it over and taking due thought on the deadly sin of abolition, he had decided that he'd go to hell rather than give Jim over to slavery. Poor vagrant Ben Blankenship, hiding his runaway negro in an Illinois swamp, could not dream that his humanity would one day supply the moral episode of an immortal book.



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Able critics have declared that the psychology of Huck Finn is the book's large feature: Huck's moral point of view—the struggle between his heart and his conscience concerning the sin of Jim's concealment, and his final decision of self-sacrifice. Time may show that as an epic of the river, the picture of a vanished day, it will rank even greater. The problems of conscience we have always with us, but periods once passed are gone forever. Certainly Huck's loyalty to that lovely soul Nigger Jim was beautiful, though after all it may not have been so hard for Huck, who could be loyal to anything. Huck was loyal to his father, loyal to Tom Sawyer of course, loyal even to those two river tramps and frauds, the King and the Duke, for whom he lied prodigiously, only weakening when a new and livelier loyalty came into view—loyalty to Mary Wilks.

The King and the Duke, by the way, are not elsewhere matched in fiction. The Duke was patterned after a journeyman-printer Clemens had known in Virginia City, but the King was created out of refuse from the whole human family—"all tears and flapdoodle," the very ultimate of disrepute and hypocrisy—so perfect a specimen that one must admire, almost love, him. "Hain't we all the fools in town on our side? and ain't that a big enough majority in any town?" he asks in a critical moment—a remark which stamps him as a philosopher of classic rank. We are full of pity at last when this pair of rascallions ride out of the history on a rail, and feel some of Huck's inclusive loyalty and all the sorrowful truth of his comment: "Human beings can be awful cruel to one another."

The "poor old king" Huck calls him, and confesses how he felt "ornery and humble and to blame, somehow," for the old scamp's misfortunes. "A person's conscience ain't got no sense," he says, and Huck is never more real to us, or more lovable, than in that moment. Huck is what he is because, being made so, he cannot well be otherwise. He is a boy throughout—such a boy as Mark Twain had known and in some degree had been. One may pettily pick a flaw here and there in the tale's construction if so minded, but the moral character of Huck himself is not open to criticism. And indeed any criticism of this the greatest of Mark Twain's tales of modern life would be as the mere scratching of the granite of an imperishable structure. Huck Finn is a monument that no puny pecking will destroy. It is built of indestructible blocks of human nature; and if the blocks do not always fit, and the ornaments do not always agree, we need not fear. Time will blur the incongruities and moss over the mistakes. The edifice will grow more beautiful with the years.

## CLIV

### THE MEMOIRS OF GENERAL GRANT

The success of Huck Finn, though sufficiently important in itself, prepared the way for a publishing venture by the side of which it dwindled to small proportions. One night (it was early in November, 1884), when Cable and Clemens had finished a reading at

Chickering Hall, Clemens, coming out into the wet blackness, happened to hear Richard Watson Gilder's voice say to some unseen companion:



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“Do you know General Grant has actually determined to write his memoirs and publish them. He has said so to-day, in so many words.”

Of course Clemens was immediately interested. It was the thing he had proposed to Grant some three years previously, during his call that day with Howells concerning the Toronto consulship.

With Mrs. Clemens, he promptly overtook Gilder and accompanied him to his house, where they discussed the matter in its various particulars. Gilder said that the Century Editors had endeavored to get Grant to contribute to their war series, but that not until his financial disaster, as a member of the firm of Grant & Ward, had he been willing to consider the matter. He said that Grant now welcomed the idea of contributing three papers to the series, and that the promised payment of five hundred dollars each for these articles had gladdened his heart and relieved him of immediate anxiety.— [Somewhat later the Century Company, voluntarily, added liberally to this sum.]

Gilder added that General Grant seemed now determined to continue his work until he had completed a book, though this at present was only a prospect.

Clemens was in the habit of calling on Grant, now and then, to smoke a cigar with him, and he dropped in next morning to find out just how far the book idea had developed, and what were the plans of publication. He found the General and his son, Colonel Fred Grant, discussing some memoranda, which turned out to be a proposition from the Century Company for the book publication of his memoirs. Clemens asked to be allowed to look over the proposed terms, and when he had done so he said:

“General, it is clear that the Century people do not realize the importance—the commercial magnitude of your book. It is not strange that this is true, for they are comparatively new publishers and have had little or no experience with books of this class. The terms they propose indicate that they expect to sell five, possibly ten thousand copies. A book from your hand, telling the story of your life and battles, should sell not less than a quarter of a million, perhaps twice that sum. It should be sold only by subscription, and you are entitled to double the royalty here proposed. I do not believe it is to your interest to conclude this contract without careful thought and investigation. Write to the American Publishing Company at Hartford and see what they will do for you.”

But Grant demurred. He said that, while no arrangements had been made with the Century Company, he thought it only fair and right that they should have the book on reasonable terms; certainly on terms no greater than he could obtain elsewhere. He said that, all things being equal, the book ought to go to the man who had first suggested it to him.

Clemens spoke up: “General, if that is so, it belongs to me.”

Grant did not understand until Clemens recalled to him how he had urged him, in that former time, to write his memoirs; had pleaded with him, agreeing to superintend the book's publication. Then he said:



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“General, I am publishing my own book, and by the time yours is ready it is quite possible that I shall have the best equipped subscription establishment in the country. If you will place your book with my firm—and I feel that I have at least an equal right in the consideration—I will pay you twenty per cent. of the list price, or, if you prefer, I will give you seventy per cent. of the net returns and I will pay all office expenses out of my thirty per cent.”

General Grant was really grieved at this proposal. It seemed to him that here was a man who was offering to bankrupt himself out of pure philanthropy—a thing not to be permitted. He intimated that he had asked the Century Company president, Roswell Smith, a careful-headed business man, if he thought his book would pay as well as Sherman’s, which the Scribners had published at a profit to Sherman of twenty-five thousand dollars, and that Smith had been unwilling to guarantee that amount to the author.—[Mark Twain’s note-book, under date of March, 1885, contains this memorandum: “Roswell Smith said to me: ‘I’m glad you got the book, Mr. Clemens; glad there was somebody with courage enough to take it, under the circumstances. What do you think the General wanted to require of me?’”

“He wanted me to insure a sale of twenty-five thousand sets of his book. I wouldn’t risk such a guarantee on any book that was ever published.”

Yet Roswell Smith, not so many years later, had so far enlarged his views of subscription publishing that he fearlessly and successfully invested a million dollars or more in a dictionary, regardless of the fact that the market was already thought to be supplied.]

Clemens said:

“General, I have my check-book with me. I will draw you a check now for twenty-five thousand dollars for the first volume of your memoirs, and will add a like amount for each volume you may write as an advance royalty payment, and your royalties will continue right along when this amount has been reached.”

Colonel Fred Grant now joined in urging that matters be delayed, at least until more careful inquiry concerning the possibilities of publishing could be made.

Clemens left then, and set out on his trip with Cable, turning the whole matter over to Webster and Colonel Fred for settlement. Meantime, the word that General Grant was writing his memoirs got into the newspapers and various publishing propositions came to him. In the end the General sent over to Philadelphia for his old friend, George W. Childs, and laid the whole matter before him. Childs said later it was plain that General Grant, on the score of friendship, if for no other reason, distinctly wished to give the book to Mark Twain. It seemed not to be a question of how much money he would make, but of personal feeling entirely. Webster’s complete success with Huck Finn



being now demonstrated, Colonel Fred Grant agreed that he believed Clemens and Webster could handle the book as profitably as anybody; and after investigation Childs was of the same opinion. The decision was that the firm of Charles L. Webster & Co. should have the book, and arrangements for drawing the contract were made.



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General Grant, however, was still somewhat uneasy as to the terms. He thought he was taking an unfair advantage in receiving so large a proportion of the profits. He wrote to Clemens, asking him which of his two propositions—the twenty per cent. gross-royalty or the seventy per cent. of the net profit—would be the best all around. Clemens sent Webster to tell him that he believed the simplest, as well as the most profitable for the author, would be the twenty per cent. arrangement. Whereupon Grant replied that he would take the alternative; as in that case, if the book were a failure, and there were no profits, Clemens would not be obliged to pay him anything. He could not consent to the thought of receiving twenty per cent. on a book published at a loss.

Meantime, Grant had developed a serious illness. The humiliation of his business failure had undermined his health. The papers announced his malady as cancer of the tongue. In a memorandum which Clemens made, February 26, 1885, he states that on the 21st he called at the Grant home, 3 East 66th Street, and was astonished to see how thin and weak the General looked. He was astonished because the newspaper, in a second report, had said the threatening symptoms had disappeared, that the cancer alarm was a false one.

I took for granted the report, and said I had been glad to see that news. He smiled and said, "Yes—if it had only been true."

One of the physicians was present, and he startled me by saying the General's condition was the opposite of encouraging.

Then the talk drifted to business, and the General presently said: "I mean you shall have the book—I have about made up my mind to that—but I wish to write to Mr. Roswell Smith first, and tell him I have so decided. I think this is due him." From the beginning the General has shown a fine delicacy toward those people—a delicacy which was native to the character of the man who put into the Appomattox terms of surrender the words, "Officers may retain their side-arms," to save General Lee the humiliation of giving up his sword. [Note-book.]

The physician present was Dr. Douglas, and upon Clemens assuming that the General's trouble was probably due to smoking, also that it was a warning to those who smoked to excess, himself included, Dr. Douglas said that General Grant's affliction could not be attributed altogether to smoking, but far more to his distress of mind, his year-long depression of spirit, the grief of his financial disaster. Dr. Douglas's remark started General Grant upon the subject of his connection with Ward, which he discussed with great freedom and apparent relief of mind. Never at any time did he betray any resentment toward Ward, but characterized him as one might an offending child. He spoke as a man who has been deeply wronged and humiliated and betrayed, but without a venomous expression or one with revengeful nature. Clemens confessed in his notes that all the time he himself was "inwardly boiling—scalping Ward—flaying him alive—breaking him on the wheel—pounding him to a jelly."



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While he was talking Colonel Grant said:

“Father is letting you see that the Grant family are a pack of fools, Mr. Clemens.”

The General objected to this statement. He said that the facts could be produced which would show that when Ward laid siege to a man he was pretty certain to turn out to be a fool; as much of a fool as any of the Grant family. He said that nobody could call the president of the Erie Railroad a fool, yet Ward had beguiled him of eight hundred thousand dollars, robbed him of every cent of it.

He cited another man that no one could call a fool who had invested in Ward to the extent of half a million. He went on to recall many such cases. He told of one man who had come to the office on the eve of departure for Europe and handed Ward a check for fifty thousand dollars, saying:

“I have no use for it at present. See what you can do with it for me.” By and by this investor, returning from Europe, dropped in and said:

“Well, did anything happen?”

Ward indifferently turned to his private ledger, consulted it, then drew a check for two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and handed it over, with the casual remark:

“Well, yes, something happened; not much yet—a little too soon.”

The man stared at the check, then thrust it back into Ward’s hand. “That’s all right. It’s plenty good enough for me. Set that hen again,” and left the place.

Of course Ward made no investments. His was the first playing on a colossal scale of the now worn-out “get rich quick” confidence game. Such dividends as were made came out of the principal. Ward was the Napoleon of that game, whether he invented it or not. Clemens agreed that, as far as himself or any of his relatives were concerned, they would undoubtedly have trusted Ward.

Colonel Grant followed him to the door when he left, and told him that the physicians feared his father might not live more than a few weeks longer, but that meantime he had been writing steadily, and that the first volume was complete and fully half the second. Three days later the formal contract was closed, and Webster & Co. promptly advanced General Grant ten thousand dollars for imminent demands, a welcome arrangement, for Grant’s debts and expenses were many, and his available resources restricted to the Century payments for his articles.

Immediately the office of Webster & Co. was warm with affairs. Reporters were running hot-foot for news of the great contract by which Mark Twain was to publish the life of General Grant. No publishing enterprise of such vast moment had ever been

undertaken, and no publishing event, before or since, ever received the amount of newspaper comment. The names of General Grant and Mark Twain associated would command columns, whatever the event, and that Mark Twain was to become the publisher of Grant's own story of his battles was of unprecedented importance.



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The partners were sufficiently occupied. Estimates and prices for vast quantities of paper were considered, all available presses were contracted for, binderies were pledged exclusively for the Grant book. Clemens was boiling over with plans and suggestions for distribution. Webster was half wild with the tumult of the great campaign. Applications for agencies poured in.

In those days there were general subscription agencies which divided the country into districts, and the heads of these agencies Webster summoned to New York and laid down the law to them concerning the, new book. It was not a time for small dealings, and Webster rose to the occasion. By the time these men returned to their homes they had practically pledged themselves to a quarter of a million sets of the Grant Memoirs, and this estimate they believed to be conservative.

Webster now moved into larger and more pretentious quarters. He took a store-room at 42 East 14th Street, Union Square, and surrounded himself with a capable force of assistants. He had become, all at once, the most conspicuous publisher in the world.

### CLV

#### DAYS WITH A DYING HERO

The contract for the publication of the Grant Life was officially closed February 27, 1885. Five days later, on the last day and at the last hour of President Arthur's administration, and of the Congress then sitting, a bill was passed placing Grant as full General, with full pay, on the retired army list. The bill providing for this somewhat tardy acknowledgment was rushed through at the last moment, and it is said that the Congressional clock was set back so that this enactment might become a law before the administration changed.

Clemens was with General Grant when the news of this action was read to him. Grant had greatly desired such recognition, and it meant more to him than to any one present, yet Clemens in his notes records:

Every face there betrayed strong excitement and emotion except one —General Grant's. He read the telegram, but not a shade or suggestion of a change exhibited itself in his iron countenance. The volume of his emotion was greater than all the other emotions there present combined, but he was able to suppress all expression of it and make no sign.

Grant's calmness, endurance, and consideration during these final days astonished even those most familiar with his noble character. One night Gerhardt came into the library at Hartford with the announcement that he wished to show his patron a small bust he had been making in clay of General Grant. Clemens did not show much



interest in the prospect, but when the work was uncovered he became enthusiastic. He declared it was the first likeness he had ever seen of General Grant that approached reality. He agreed that the Grant family ought to see it, and that he would take Gerhardt with him next day in order that he might be within reach in case they had any suggestions. They went to New York next morning, and called at the Grant home during the afternoon.



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From the note-book:

Friday, March 20, 1885. Gerhardt and I arrived at General Grant's about 2.30 P.m. and I asked if the family would look at a small clay bust of the General which Gerhardt had made from a photograph. Colonel Fred and Jesse were absent to receive their sister, Mrs. Sartoris, who would arrive from Europe about 4.30; but the three Mrs. Grants examined the work and expressed strong approval of it, and also great gratification that Mr. Gerhardt had undertaken it. Mrs. Jesse Grant had lately dreamed that she was inquiring where the maker of my bust could be found (she had seen a picture of it in *Huck Finn*, which was published four weeks ago), for she wanted the same artist to make one of General Grant. The ladies examined the bust critically and pointed out defects, while Gerhardt made the necessary corrections. Presently Mrs. General Grant suggested that Gerhardt step in and look at the General. I had been in there talking with the General, but had never thought of asking him to let a stranger come in. So Gerhardt went in with the ladies and me, and the inspection and cross-fire began: "There, I was sure his nose was so and so," and, "I was sure his forehead was so and so," and, "Don't you think his head is so and so?" And so everybody walked around and about the old hero, who lay half reclining in his easy chair, but well muffled up, and submitting to all this as serenely as if he were used to being served so. One marked feature of General Grant's character is his exceeding gentleness, goodness, sweetness. Every time I have been in his presence—lately and formerly—my mind was drawn to that feature. I wonder it has not been more spoken of. Presently he said, let Gerhardt bring in his clay and work there, if Gerhardt would not mind his reclining attitude. Of course we were glad. A table for the bust was moved up in front of him; the ladies left the room; I got a book; Gerhardt went to work; and for an hour there was perfect stillness, and for the first time during the day the General got a good, sound, peaceful nap. General Badeau came in, and probably interrupted that nap. He spoke out as strongly as the others concerning the great excellence of the likeness. He had some sheets of *Ms.* in his hand, and said, "I've been reading what you wrote this morning, General, and it is of the utmost value; it solves a riddle that has puzzled men's brains all these years and makes the thing clear and rational." I asked what the puzzle was, and he said, "It was why Grant did not immediately lay siege to Vicksburg after capturing Port Hudson" (at least that is my recollection, now toward midnight, of General Badeau's answer).

The little bust of Grant which Gerhardt worked on that day was widely reproduced in terra-cotta, and is still regarded by many as the most nearly correct likeness of Grant. The original is in possession of the family.



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General Grant worked industriously on his book. He had a superb memory and worked rapidly. Webster & Co. offered to supply him with a stenographer, and this proved a great relief. Sometimes he dictated ten thousand words at a sitting. It was reported at the time, and it has been stated since, that Grant did not write the Memoirs himself, but only made notes, which were expanded by others. But this is not true. General Grant wrote or dictated every word of the story himself, then had the manuscript read aloud to him and made his own revisions. He wrote against time, for he knew that his disease was fatal. Fortunately the lease of life granted him was longer than he had hoped for, though the last chapters were written when he could no longer speak, and when weakness and suffering made the labor a heavy one indeed; but he never flinched or faltered, never at any time suggested that the work be finished by another hand.

Early in April General Grant's condition became very alarming, and on the night of the 3d it was believed he could not live until morning. But he was not yet ready to surrender. He rallied and renewed his task; feebly at first, but more perseveringly as each day seemed to bring a little added strength, or perhaps it was only resolution. Now and then he appeared depressed as to the quality of his product. Once Colonel Fred Grant suggested to Clemens that if he could encourage the General a little it might be worth while. Clemens had felt always such a reverence and awe for the great soldier that he had never dreamed of complimenting his literature.

"I was as much surprised as Columbus's cook could have been to learn that Columbus wanted his opinion as to how Columbus was doing his navigating."

He did not hesitate to give it, however, and with a clear conscience. Grant wrote as he had fought; with a simple, straightforward dignity, with a style that is not a style at all but the very absence of it, and therefore the best of all literary methods. It happened that Clemens had been comparing some of Grant's chapters with Caesar's Commentaries, and was able to say, in all sincerity, that the same high merits distinguished both books: clarity of statement, directness, simplicity, manifest truthfulness, fairness and justice toward friend and foe alike, soldierly candor and frankness, and soldierly avoidance of flowery speech.

"I placed the two books side by side upon the same level," he said, "and I still think that they belong there. I learned afterward that General Grant was pleased with this verdict. It shows that he was just a man, just a human being, just an author."

Within two months after the agents had gone to work canvassing for the Grant Memoirs—which is to say by the 1st of May, 1885—orders for sixty thousand sets had been received, and on that day Mark Twain, in his note-book, made a memorandum estimate of the number of books that the country would require, figuring the grand total at three hundred thousand sets of two volumes each. Then he says:



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If these chickens should really hatch according to my account, General Grant's royalties will amount to \$420,000, and will make the largest single check ever paid an author in the world's history. Up to the present time the largest one ever paid was to Macaulay on his History of England, £20,000. If I pay the General in silver coin at \$12 per pound it will weigh seventeen tons.

Certainly this has a flavor in it of Colonel Sellers, but we shall see by and by in how far this calculation was justified.

Grant found the society of Mark Twain cheering and comforting, and Clemens held himself in readiness to go to the dying man at call. On the 26th of May he makes this memorandum:

It is curious and dreadful to sit up in this way and talk cheerful nonsense to General Grant, and he under sentence of death with that cancer. He says he has made the book too large by 200 pages—not a bad fault. A short time ago we were afraid we would lack 400 of being enough. To-day talked with General Grant about his and my first great Missouri campaign in 1861. He surprised an empty camp near Florida, Missouri, on Salt River, which I had been occupying a day or two before. How near he came to playing the devil with his future publisher.

Of course Clemens would amuse the old commander with the tale of his soldiering, how his company had been chased through the brush and mud by the very announcement that Grant was coming. Some word of this got to the Century editors, who immediately proposed that Mark Twain contribute to the magazine War Series the story of his share in the Rebellion, and particularly of his war relations with General Grant. So the "Private History of a Campaign that Failed" was prepared as Mark Twain's side-light on the history of the Rebellion; and if it was not important history it was at least amusing, and the telling of that tale in Mark Twain's inimitable fashion must have gone far toward making cheerful those last sad days of his ancient enemy.

During one of their talks General Grant spoke of the question as to whether he or Sherman had originated the idea of the march to the sea. Grant said:

"Neither of us originated the idea of that march. The enemy did it."

Reports were circulated of estrangements between General Grant and the Century Company, and between Mark Twain and the Century Company, as a result of the book decision. Certain newspapers exploited and magnified these rumors—some went so far as to accuse Mark Twain of duplicity, and to charge him with seeking to obtain a vast fortune for himself at the expense of General Grant and his family. All of which was the merest nonsense. The Century Company, Webster & Co., General Grant, and Mark Twain individually, were all working harmoniously, and nothing but the most cordial relations and understanding prevailed. As to the charge of unfair dealing on the part of

Mark Twain, this was too absurd, even then, to attract more than momentary attention. Webster & Co., somewhat later in the year, gave to the press a clear statement of their publishing arrangement, though more particularly denying the report that General Grant had been unable to complete his work.



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## CLVI

### THE CLOSE OF A GREAT CAREER

The Clemens household did not go to Elmira that year until the 27th of June. Meantime General Grant had been taken to Mount McGregor, near the Adirondacks. The day after Clemens reached Elmira there came a summons saying that the General had asked to see him. He went immediately, and remained several days. The resolute old commander was very feeble by this time. It was three months since he had been believed to be dying, yet he was still alive, still at work, though he could no longer speak. He was adding, here and there, a finishing touch to his manuscript, writing with effort on small slips of paper containing but a few words each. His conversation was carried on in the same way. Mark Twain brought back a little package of those precious slips, and some of them are still preserved. The writing is perfectly legible, and shows no indication of a trembling hand.

On one of these slips is written:

There is much more that I could do if I was a well man. I do not write quite as clearly as I could if well. If I could read it over myself many little matters of anecdote and incident would suggest themselves to me.

On another:

Have you seen any portion of the second volume? It is up to the end, or nearly so. As much more work as I have done to-day will finish it. I have worked faster than if I had been well. I have used my three boys and a stenographer.

And on still another:

If I could have two weeks of strength I could improve it very much. As I am, however, it will have to go about as it is, with verifications by the boys and by suggestions which will enable me to make a point clear here and there.

Certainly no campaign was ever conducted with a braver heart. As long as his fingers could hold a pencil he continued at his task. Once he asked if any estimate could now be made of what portion would accrue to his family from the publication. Clemens's prompt reply, that more than one hundred thousand sets had been sold, and that already the amount of his share, secured by safe bonds, exceeded one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, seemed to give him deep comfort. Clemens told him that the country was as yet not one-third canvassed, and that without doubt there turns would be twice as much more by the end of the year. Grant made no further inquiry, and probably never again mentioned the subject to any one.

When Clemens left, General Grant was sitting, fully dressed, with a shawl about his shoulders, pencil and paper beside him. It was a picture that would never fade from the memory. In a later memorandum he says:



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I then believed he would live several months. He was still adding little perfecting details to his book, and preface, among other things. He was entirely through a few days later. Since then the lack of any strong interest to employ his mind has enabled the tedious weariness to kill him. I think his book kept him alive several months. He was a very great man and superlatively good.

This note was made July 23, 1885, at 10 A.M., on receipt of the news that General Grant was dead. To Henry Ward Beecher, Clemens wrote:

One day he put his pencil aside and said there was nothing more to do. If I had been there I could have foretold the shock that struck the world three days later.

It can be truly said that all the nation mourned. General Grant had no enemies, political or sectional, in those last days. The old soldier battling with a deadly disease, yet bravely completing his task, was a figure at once so pathetic and so noble that no breath of animosity remained to utter a single word that was not kind.

Memorial services were held from one end of the country to the other. Those who had followed him in peace or war, those who had fought beside him or against him, alike paid tribute to his memory. Twichell, from the mountains of Vermont, wrote:

I suppose I have said to Harmony forty times since I got up here, "How I wish I could see Mark!" My notion is that between us we could get ourselves expressed. I have never known any one who could help me read my own thoughts in such a case as you can and have done many a time, dear old fellow.

I'd give more to sit on a log with you in the woods this afternoon, while we twined a wreath together for Launcelot's grave, than to hear any conceivable eulogy of him pronounced by mortal lips.

The death of Grant so largely and so suddenly augmented the orders for his Memoirs that it seemed impossible to get the first volume printed in time for the delivery, which had been promised for December 1st. J. J. Little had the contract of manufacture, and every available press and bindery was running double time to complete the vast contract.

In the end more than three hundred thousand sets of two volumes each were sold, and between four hundred and twenty and four hundred and fifty thousand dollars was paid to Mrs. Grant. The first check of two hundred thousand dollars, drawn February 27, 1886, remains the largest single royalty check in history. Mark Twain's prophecy had been almost exactly verified.



## CLVII

### MINOR MATTERS OF A GREAT YEAR

The Grant episode, so important in all its phases, naturally overshadowed other events of 1885. Mark Twain was so deeply absorbed in this great publishing enterprise that he wasted little thought or energy in other directions.



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Yet there are a few minor things that it seems worth while to remember. Howells has told something of the Authors' Reading given for the Longfellow Memorial, an entertainment managed by George Parsons Lathrop, though Howells justly claims the glory of having fixed the price of admission at five dollars. Then he recalls a pleasing anecdote of Charles Eliot Norton, who introduced the attractions.

Norton presided, and when it came Clemens's turn to read he introduced him with such exquisite praises as he best knew how to give, but before he closed he fell a prey to one of those lapses of tact which are the peculiar peril of people of the greatest tact. He was reminded of Darwin's delight in Mark Twain, and how when he came from his long day's exhausting study, and sank into bed at midnight, he took up a volume of Mark Twain, whose books he always kept on a table beside him, and whatever had been his tormenting problem, or excess of toil, he felt secure of a good night's rest from it. A sort of blank ensued which Clemens filled in the only possible way. He said he should always be glad he had contributed to the repose of that great man, to whom science owed so much, and then without waiting for the joy in every breast to burst forth, he began to read.

Howells tells of Mark Twain's triumph on this occasion, and in a letter at the time he wrote: "You simply straddled down to the footlights and took that house up in the hollow of your hand and tickled it."

Howells adds that the show netted seventeen hundred dollars. This was early in May.

Of literary work, beyond the war paper, the "Private History of a Campaign that Failed" (published December, 1885), Clemens appears to have done very little. His thoughts were far too busy with plans for furthering the sale of the great military Memoir to follow literary ventures of his own. At one time he was impelled to dictate an autobiography—Grant's difficulties in his dying hour suggesting this—and he arranged with Redpath, who was no longer a lecture agent and understood stenography, to co-operate with him in the work. He dictated a few chapters, but he was otherwise too much occupied to continue. Also, he was unused to dictation, and found it hard and the result unsatisfactory.

Two open communications from Mark Twain that year deserve to be remembered. One of these; unsigned, was published in the Century Magazine, and expressed the need for a "universal tinker," the man who can accept a job in a large household or in a community as master of all trades, with sufficient knowledge of each to be ready to undertake whatever repairs are likely to be required in the ordinary household, such as—"to put in windowpanes, mend gas leaks, jack-plane the edges of doors that won't shut, keep the waste-pipe and other water-pipe joints, glue and otherwise repair havoc done in furniture, etc." The letter was signed X. Y. Z., and it brought replies from various parts of the world. None of the applicants seemed universally qualified, but in Kansas

City a business was founded on the idea, adopting “The Universal Tinker” as its firm name.



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The other letter mentioned was written to the 'Christian Union', inspired by a tale entitled, "What Ought We to Have Done?" It was a tale concerning the government of children; especially concerning the government of one child—John Junior—a child who, as it would appear from the tale, had a habit of running things pretty much to his own notion. The performance of John junior, and of his parents in trying to manage him, stirred Mark Twain considerably—it being "enough to make a body's blood boil," as he confesses—and it impelled him to set down surreptitiously his impressions of what would have happened to John Junior as a member of the Clemens household. He did not dare to show the communication to Mrs. Clemens before he sent it, for he knew pretty well what its fate would be in that case. So he took chances and printed it without her knowledge. The letter was published July 16, 1885. It is too long to be included entire, but it is too illuminating to be altogether omitted. After relating, in considerable detail, Mrs. Clemens's method of dealing with an unruly child—the gentleness yet firmness of her discipline—he concludes:

The mother of my children adores them—there is no milder term for it—and they worship her; they even worship anything which the touch of her hand has made sacred. They know her for the best and truest friend they have ever had, or ever shall have; they know her for one who never did them a wrong, and cannot do them a wrong; who never told them a lie, nor the shadow of one; who never deceived them by even an ambiguous gesture; who never gave them an unreasonable command, nor ever contented herself with anything short of a perfect obedience; who has always treated them as politely and considerately as she would the best and oldest in the land, and has always required of them gentle speech and courteous conduct toward all, of whatsoever degree with whom they chanced to come in contact; they know her for one whose promise, whether of reward or punishment, is gold, and always worth its face, to the uttermost farthing. In a word, they know her, and I know her, for the best and dearest mother that lives—and by a long, long way the wisest....In all my life I have never made a single reference to my wife in print before, as far as I can remember, except once in the dedication of a book; and so, after these fifteen years of silence, perhaps I may unseal my lips this one time without impropriety or indelicacy. I will institute one other novelty: I will send this manuscript to the press without her knowledge and without asking her to edit it. This will save it from getting edited into the stove.

Susy's biography refers to this incident at considerable length. She states that her father had misgivings after he had sent it to the Christian Union, and that he tried to recall the manuscript, but found it too late. She sets down some comments of her own on her mother's government, then tells us of the appearance of the article:



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When the Christian Union reached the farm and papa's article in it, all ready and waiting to be read to mama, papa hadn't the courage to show it to her (for he knew she wouldn't like it at all) at first, and he didn't, but he might have let it go and never let her see it; but finally he gave his consent to her seeing it, and told Clara and I we could take it to her, which we did with tardiness, and we all stood around mama while she read it, all wondering what she would say and think about it.

She was too much surprised (and pleased privately too) to say much at first; but, as we all expected, publicly (or rather when she remembered that this article was to be read by every one that took the Christian Union) she was rather shocked and a little displeased.

Susy goes on to tell that the article provoked a number of letters, most of them pleasant ones, but some of them of quite another sort. One of the latter fell into her mother's hands, after which there was general regret that the article had been printed, and the subject was no longer discussed at Quarry Farm.

Susy's biography is a unique record. It was a sort of combined memoir and journal, charming in its innocent frankness and childish insight. She used to keep it under her pillow, and after she was asleep the parents would steal it out and find a tender amusement and pathos in its quaint entries. It is a faithful record so far as it goes, and the period it covers is an important one; for it presents a picture of Mark Twain in the fullness of his manhood, in the golden hour of his fortune. Susy's beginning has a special value here:—[Susy's' spelling and punctuation are preserved.]

We are a very happy family! We consist of papa, mama, Jean, Clara and me. It is papa I am writing about, and I shall have no trouble in not knowing what to say about him, as he is a very striking character. Papa's appearance has been described many times, but very incorrectly; he has beautiful curly grey hair, not any too thick, or any too long, just right; a Roman nose, which greatly improves the beauty of his features, kind blue eyes, and a small mustache, he has a wonderfully shaped head, and profile, he has a very good figure in short he is an extraordinarily fine looking man. All his features are perfect, except that he hasn't extraordinary teeth. His complexion is very fair, and he doesn't wear a beard:

He is a very good man, and a very funny one; he has got a temper but we all of us have in this family. He is the loveliest man I ever saw, or ever hope to see, and oh so absent-minded!



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That this is a fair statement of the Clemens home, and the truest picture of Mark Twain at fifty that has been preserved, cannot be doubted. His hair was iron-gray, not entirely white at this time, the auburn tints everywhere mingled with the shining white that later would mantle it like a silver crown. He did not look young for his years, but he was still young, always young—indestructibly young in spirit and bodily vigor. Susy tells how that summer he blew soap-bubbles for the children, filling the bubbles with tobacco smoke; how he would play with the cats, and come clear down from his study on the hill to see how “Sour Mash,” then a kitten, was getting along; also how he wrote a poem for Jean’s donkey, Cadichon (which they made Kiditchin): She quotes the poem:

### *Kiditchin*

O du lieb’ Kiditchin  
Du bist ganz bewitchin,  
Waw- — — -he!

In summer days Kiditchin  
Thou’rt dear from nose to britchin  
Waw——he!

No dought thoult get a switchin  
When for mischief thou’rt itchin’  
Waw- — — -he!

But when you’re good Kiditchin  
You shall feast in James’s kitchin  
Waw- — — -he!

O now lift up thy song  
Thy noble note prolong  
Thou living Chinese gong!  
Waw——he! waw——he waw  
Sweetest donkey man ever saw.

Clemens undertook to ride Kiditchin one day, to show the children how it should be done, but Kiditchin resented this interference and promptly flung him over her head. He thought she might have been listening to the poem he had written of her.

Susy’s discovery that the secret of her biography was known is shown by the next entry, and the touch of severity in it was probably not entirely unconscious:

Papa said the other day, “I am a mugwump and a mugwump is pure from the marrow out.” (Papa knows that I am writing this biography of him, and he said this for it.) He doesn’t like to go to church at all, why I never understood, until just now. He told us the



other day that he couldn't bear to hear anyone talk but himself, but that he could listen to himself talk for hours without getting tired, of course he said this in joke, but I've no doubt it was founded on truth.

Susy's picture of life at Quarry Farm at this period is realistic and valuable—too valuable to be spared from this biography:

There are eleven cats at the farm here now. Papa's favorite is a little tortoise-shell kitten he has named "Sour Mash," and a little spotted one "Fannie." It is very pretty to see what papa calls the cat procession; it was formed in this way. Old Minniecat headed, (the mother of all the cats) next to her came aunt Susie, then Clara on the donkey, accompanied by a pile of cats, then papa and Jean hand in hand and a pile of cats brought up in the rear, mama and I made up the audience. Our various occupations are as follows.



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Papa rises about 1/2 past 7 in the morning, breakfasts at eight, writes, plays tennis with Clara and me and tries to make the donkey go, in the morning; does various things in P.M., and in the evening plays tennis with Clara and me and amuses Jean and the donkey. Mama rises about 1/4 to eight, breakfasts at eight, teaches Jean German reading from 9-10; reads German with me from 10-11. Then she reads studdies or visits with aunt Susie for a while, and then she reads to Clara and I till lunch time things connected with English history (for we hope to go to England next summer) while we sew. Then we have lunch. She studdies for about half an hour or visits with aunt Susie, then reads to us an hour or more, then studdies writes reads and rests till supper time. After supper she sits out on the porch and works till eight o'clock, from eight o'clock to bedtime she plays whist with papa and after she has retired she reads and studdies German for a while.

Clara and I do most everything from practicing to donkey riding and playing tag. While Jean's time is spent in asking mama what she can have to eat.

It is impossible, at this distance, to convey all that the farm meant to the children during the summers of their infancy and childhood and girlhood which they spent there. It was the paradise, the dreamland they looked forward to during all the rest of the year. Through the long, happy months there they grew strong and brown, and drank deeply of the joy of life. Their cousins Julia, Jervis, and Ida Langdon ranged about their own ages and were almost their daily companions. Their games were mainly of the out-of-doors; the woods and meadows and hillside pastures were their playground. Susy was thirteen when she began her diary; a gentle, thoughtful, romantic child. One afternoon she discovered a wonderful tangle of vines and bushes between the study and the sunset—a rare hiding-place. She ran breathlessly to her aunt:

“Can I have it? Can Clara and I have it all for our own?”

The petition was granted, of course, and the place was named Helen's Bower, for they were reading Thaddeus of Warsaw and the name appealed to Susy's poetic fancy. Then Mrs. Clemens conceived the idea of building a house for the children just beyond the bower. It was a complete little cottage when finished, with a porch and with furnishings contributed by friends and members of the family. There was a stove—a tiny affair, but practical—dishes, table, chairs, shelves, and a broom. The little house was named Ellerslie, out of Grace Aguilar's Days of Robert Bruce, and became one of the children's most beloved possessions. But alas for Helen's Bower! A workman was sent to clear away the debris after the builders, and being a practical man, he cut away Helen's Bower—destroyed it utterly. Susy first discovered the vandalism, and came rushing to the house in a torrent of sorrow. For her the joy of life seemed ended, and it was long before she could be comforted. But Ellerslie in time satisfied her hunger for

retreat, became, in fact, the nucleus around which the children's summer happiness centered.



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To their elders the farm remained always the quiet haven. Once to Orion's wife Clemens wrote:

This is a superb Sunday . . . .

The city in the valley is purple with shade, as seen from up here at the study. The Cranes are reading and loafing in the canvas- curtained summer-house, fifty yards away, on a higher (the highest) point; the cats are loafing over at Ellerslie, which is the children's estate and dwelling house in their own private grounds (by deed from Susie Crane), a hundred yards from the study, among the clover and young oaks and willows. Livy is down at the house, but I shall now go and bring her up to the Cranes to help us occupy the lounges and hammocks, whence a great panorama of distant hills and valley and city is seeable. The children have gone on a lark through the neighboring hills and woods, Susie and Clara horseback and Jean, driving a buggy, with the coachman for comrade and assistant at need. It is a perfect day indeed.

The ending of each year's summer brought only regret. Clemens would never take away all his things. He had an old superstition that to leave some article insured return. Mrs. Clemens also left something—her heart's content. The children went around bidding various objects good-by and kissed the gates of Ellerslie too.

### CLVIII

#### MARK TWAIN AT FIFTY

Mark Twain's fiftieth birthday was one of the pleasantly observed events of that year. There was no special celebration, but friends sent kindly messages, and *The Critic*, then conducted by Jeannette and Joseph Gilder, made a feature of it. Miss Gilder wrote to Oliver Wendell Holmes and invited some verses, which with his never-failing kindness he sent, though in his accompanying note he said:

"I had twenty-three letters spread out on my table for answering, all marked immediate, when your note came."

Dr. Holmes's stanzas are full of his gentle spirit:

*To mark Twain*

(On his fiftieth birthday)

Ah, Clemens, when I saw thee last,  
We both of us were younger;  
How fondly mumbling o'er the past  
Is Memory's toothless hunger! So fifty years have fled, they say,



Since first you took to drinking;  
I mean in Nature's milky way  
Of course no ill I'm thinking. But while on life's uneven road  
Your track you've been pursuing,  
What fountains from your wit have flowed  
What drinks you have been brewing! I know whence all your magic came,  
Your secret I've discovered,  
The source that fed your inward flame,  
The dreams that round you hovered. Before you learned to bite or munch,  
Still kicking in your cradle,  
The Muses mixed a bowl of punch  
And Hebe seized the ladle.



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Dear babe, whose fiftieth year to-day  
Your ripe half-century rounded,  
Your books the precious draught betray  
The laughing Nine compounded. So mixed the sweet, the sharp, the strong,  
Each finds its faults amended,  
The virtues that to each belong  
In happiest union blended. And what the flavor can surpass  
Of sugar, spirit, lemons?  
So while one health fills every glass  
Mark Twain for Baby Clemens!

*Oliver Wendell Holmes.*

Frank R. Stockton, Charles Dudley Warner, and Joel Chandler Harris sent pleasing letters. Warner said:

You may think it an easy thing to be fifty years old, but you will find it's not so easy to stay there, and your next fifty years will slip away much faster than those just accomplished.

Many wrote letters privately, of course, and Andrew Lang, like Holmes, sent a poem that has a special charm.

*For mark Twain*

To brave Mark Twain, across the sea,  
The years have brought his jubilee.  
One hears it, half in pain,  
That fifty years have passed and gone  
Since danced the merry star that shone  
Above the babe Mark Twain. We turn his pages and we see  
The Mississippi flowing free;  
We turn again and grin  
O'er all Tom Sawyer did and planned  
With him of the ensanguined hand,  
With Huckleberry Finn! Spirit of Mirth, whose chime of bells  
Shakes on his cap, and sweetly swells  
Across the Atlantic main,  
Grant that Mark's laughter never die,  
That men through many a century  
May chuckle o'er Mark Twain!

Assuredly Mark Twain was made happy by these attentions; to Dr. Holmes he wrote:



*Dear Dr. Holmes,*—I shall never be able to tell you the half of how proud you have made me. If I could you would say you were nearly paid for the trouble you took. And then the family: If I could convey the electrical surprise and gratitude and exaltation of the wife and the children last night, when they happened upon that Critic where I had, with artful artlessness, spread it open and retired out of view to see what would happen—well, it was great and fine and beautiful to see, and made me feel as the victor feels when the shouting hosts march by: and if you also could have seen it you would have said the account was squared. For I have brought them up in your company, as in the company of a warm and friendly and beneficent but far-distant sun; and so, for you to do this thing was for the sun to send down out of the skies the miracle of a special ray and transfigure me before their faces. I knew what that poem would be to them; I knew it would raise me up to remote and shining heights in their eyes, to very fellowship with the chambered Nautilus itself, and that from that fellowship they could never more dissociate me while they should live; and so I made sure to be by when the surprise should come.



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Charles Dudley Warner is charmed with the poem for its own felicitous sake; and so indeed am I, but more because it has drawn the sting of my fiftieth year; taken away the pain of it, the grief of it, the somehow shame of it, and made me glad and proud it happened.

With reverence and affection,  
Sincerely yours,  
S. L. Clemens.

So Samuel Clemens had reached the half-century mark; reached it in what seemed the fullness of success from every viewpoint. If he was not yet the foremost American man of letters, he was at least the most widely known he sat upon the highest mountain-top. Furthermore, it seemed to him that fortune was showering her gifts into his lap. His unfortunate investments were now only as the necessary experiments that had led him to larger successes. As a publisher, he was already the most conspicuous in the world, and he contemplated still larger ventures: a type-setting machine patent, in which he had invested, and now largely controlled, he regarded as the chief invention of the age, absolutely certain to yield incalculable wealth. His connection with the Grant family had associated him with an enterprise looking to the building of a railway from Constantinople to the Persian Gulf. Charles A. Dana, of the Sun, had put him in the way of obtaining for publication the life of the Pope, Leo XIII, officially authorized by the Pope himself, and this he regarded as a certain fortune.

Now that the tide had turned he felt no hesitancy in reckoning a fortune from almost any venture. The Grant book, even on the liberal terms allowed to the author, would yield a net profit of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars to its publishers. Huck Finn would yield fifty thousand dollars more. The sales of his other books had considerably increased. Certainly, at fifty, Mark Twain's fortunes were at flood-tide; buoyant and jubilant, he was floating on the topmost wave. If there were undercurrents and undertow they were down somewhere out of sight. If there were breakers ahead, they were too far distant to be heard. So sure was he of the triumphant consummation of every venture that to a friend at his home one night he said:

"I am frightened at the proportions of my prosperity. It seems to me that whatever I touch turns to gold."

## CLIX

### THE LIFE OF THE POPE

As Mark Twain in the earlier days of his marriage had temporarily put aside authorship to join in a newspaper venture, so now again literature had dropped into the background, had become an avocation, while financial interests prevailed. There were

two chief ventures—the business of Charles L. Webster & Co. and the promotion of the Paige type-setting machine. They were closely identified in fortunes, so closely that in time the very existence of each depended upon the success of the other; yet they were quite distinct, and must be so treated in this story.

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The success of the Grant Life had given the Webster business an immense prestige. It was no longer necessary to seek desirable features for publication. They came uninvited. Other war generals preparing their memoirs naturally hoped to appear with their great commander. McClellan's *Own Story* was arranged for without difficulty. A *Genesis of the Civil War*, by Gen. Samuel Wylie Crawford, was offered and accepted. General Sheridan's *Memoirs* were in preparation, and negotiations with Webster & Co. for their appearance were not delayed. Probably neither Webster nor Clemens believed that the sale of any of these books would approach those of the Grant Life, but they expected them to be large, for the Grant book had stimulated the public taste for war literature, and anything bearing the stamp of personal battle experience was considered literary legal-tender.

Moreover, these features, and even the Grant book itself, seemed likely to dwindle in importance by the side of *The Life of Pope Leo XIII.*, who in his old and enfeebled age had consented to the preparation of a memoir, to be published with his sanction and blessing.—[By Bernard O'Reilly, D.D., LL.D. "Written with the Encouragement, Approbation, and Blessings of His Holiness the Pope."]—Clemens and Webster—every one, in fact, who heard of the project—united in the belief that no book, with the exception of the Holy Scripture itself or the Koran, would have a wider acceptance than the biography of the Pope. It was agreed by good judges—and they included Howells and Twichell and even the shrewd general agents throughout the country—that every good Catholic would regard such a book not only as desirable, but as absolutely necessary to his salvation. Howells, recalling Clemens's emotions of this time, writes:

He had no words in which to paint the magnificence of the project or to forecast its colossal success. It would have a currency bounded only by the number of Catholics in Christendom. It would be translated into every language which was anywhere written or printed; it would be circulated literally in every country of the globe.

The formal contract for this great undertaking was signed in Rome in April, 1886, and Webster immediately prepared to go over to consult with his Holiness in person as to certain details, also, no doubt, for the newspaper advertising which must result from such an interview.

It was decided to carry a handsome present to the Pope in the form of a specially made edition of the Grant *Memoirs* in a rich-casket, and it was Clemens's idea that the binding of the book should be solid gold—this to be done by Tiffany at an estimated cost of about three thousand dollars. In the end, however, the binding was not gold, but the handsomest that could be designed of less precious and more appropriate materials.



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Webster sailed toward the end of June, and was warmly received and highly honored in Rome. The great figures of the Grant success had astonished Europe even more than America, where spectacular achievements were more common. That any single publication should pay a profit to author and publisher of six hundred thousand dollars was a thing which belonged with the wonders of Aladdin's garden. It was natural, therefore, that Webster, who had rubbed the magic lamp with this result, who was Mark Twain's partner, and who had now traveled across the seas to confer with the Pope himself, should be received with royal honors. In letters written at the time, Webster relates how he found it necessary to have an imposing carriage and a footman to maintain the dignity of his mission, and how, after various impressive formalities, he was granted a private audience, a very special honor indeed. Webster's letter gives us a picture of his Holiness which is worth preserving.

We—[Mrs. Webster, who, the reader will remember, was Annie Moffett, a daughter of Pamela Clemens, was included in the invitation to the Presence Chamber.]—found ourselves in a room perhaps twenty-five by thirty-five feet; the furniture was gilt, upholstered in light-red silk, and the side-walls were hung with the same material. Against the wall by which we entered and in the middle space was a large gilt throne chair, upholstered in red plush, and upon it sat a man bowed with age; his hair was silvery white and as pure as the driven snow. His head was partly covered with a white skullcap; he was dressed in a long white cassock which reached to his feet, which rested upon a red-plush cushion and were inclosed in red embroidered slippers with a design of a cross. A golden chain was about his neck and suspended by it in his lap was a gold cross set in precious stones. Upon a finger of his right hand was a gold ring with an emerald setting nearly an inch in diameter. His countenance was smiling, and beamed with benevolence. His face at once impressed us as that of a noble, pure man who could not do otherwise than good. This was the Pope of Rome, and as we advanced, making the three genuflexions prescribed by etiquette, he smiled benignly upon us. We advanced and, kneeling at his feet, kissed the seal upon his ring. He took us each by the hand repeatedly during the audience and made us perfectly at our ease.

They remained as much as half an hour in the Presence; and the Pope conversed on a variety of subjects, including the business failure of General Grant, his last hours, and the great success of his book. The figures seemed to him hardly credible, and when Webster assured him that already a guaranteed sale of one hundred thousand copies of his own biography had been pledged by the agents he seemed even more astonished. "We in Italy cannot comprehend such things," he said. "I know you do great work in America; I know you have done a great and noble work in regard to General Grant's book, but that my Life should have such a sale seems impossible."



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He asked about their home, their children, and was in every way the kindly, gentle-hearted man that his pictured face has shown him. Then he gave them his final blessing and the audience closed.

We each again kissed the seal on his ring. As Annie was about to kiss it he suddenly withdrew his hand and said, "And will you, a little Protestant, kiss the Pope's ring?" As he said this, his face was all smiles, and mischief was clearly delineated upon it. He immediately put back his hand and she kissed the ring. We now withdrew, backing out and making three genuflections as before. Just as we reached the door he called to Dr. O'Reilly, "Now don't praise me too much; tell the truth, tell the truth."

## CLX

### A GREAT PUBLISHER AT HOME

Men are likely to be spoiled by prosperity, to be made arrogant, even harsh. Success made Samuel Clemens merely elate, more kindly, more humanly generous. Every day almost he wrote to Webster, suggesting some new book or venture, but always considerately, always deferring to suggestions from other points of view. Once, when it seemed to him that matters were not going as well as usual, a visit from Webster showed him that it was because of his own continued absence from the business that he did not understand. Whereupon he wrote:

*Dear Charley,—Good—it's all good news. Everything is on the pleasantest possible basis now, and is going to stay so. I blame myself in not looking in on you oftener in the past—that would have prevented all trouble. I mean to stand to my duty better now.*

At another time, realizing the press of responsibility, and that Webster was not entirely well, he sent a warning from Mrs. Clemens against overwork. He added:

Your letter shows that you need such a warning. So I warn you myself to look after that. Overwork killed Mr. Langdon and it can kill you.

Clemens found his own cares greatly multiplied. His connection with the firm was widely known, and many authors sent him their manuscripts or wrote him personal letters concerning them. Furthermore, he was beset by all the cranks and beggars in Christendom. His affairs became so numerous at length that he employed a business agent, F. G. Whitmore, to relieve him of a part of his burden. Whitmore lived close by, and was a good billiard-player. Almost anything from the morning mail served as an excuse to send for Whitmore.

Clemens was fond of affairs when they were going well; he liked the game of business, especially when it was pretentious and showily prosperous. It is probable that he was

never more satisfied with his share of fortune than just at this time. Certainly his home life was never happier. Katie Leary, for thirty years in the family service, has set down some impressions of that pleasant period.



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Mr. Clemens was a very affectionate father. He seldom left the house at night, but would read to the family, first to the children until bedtime, afterward to Mrs. Clemens. He usually read Browning to her. They were very fond of it. The children played charades a great deal, and he was wonderful at that game and always helped them. They were very fond of private theatricals. Every Saturday of their lives they had a temporary stage put up in the school-room and we all had to help. Gerhardt painted the scenery. They frequently played the balcony scene from "Romeo and Juliet" and several plays they wrote themselves. Now and then we had a big general performance of "The Prince and the Pauper." That would be in the library and the dining-room with the folding-doors open. The place just held eighty-four chairs, and the stage was placed back against the conservatory. The children were crazy about acting and we all enjoyed it as much as they did, especially Mr. Clemens, who was the best actor of all. I had a part, too, and George. I have never known a happier household than theirs was during those years. Mr. Clemens spent most of his time up in the billiard-room, writing or playing billiards. One day when I went in, and he was shooting the balls around the tables, I noticed smoke coming up from the hearth. I called Patrick, and John O'Neill, the gardener, and we began taking up the hearth to see what was the matter. Mr. Clemens kept on playing billiards right along and paid no attention to what we were doing. Finally, when we got the hearth up, a lot of flame and smoke came out into the room. The house was on fire. Mr. Clemens noticed then what we were about, and went over to the corner where there were some bottle fire-extinguishers. He took one down and threw it into the flames. This put them out a good deal, and he took up his cue, went back to the table, and began to shoot the balls around again as if nothing had happened. Mrs. Clemens came in just then and said, "Why, the house is afire!"

"Yes, I know it," he said, but went on playing.

We had a telephone and it didn't work very well. It annoyed him a good deal and sometimes he'd say:

"I'll tear it out."

One day he tried to call up Mrs. Dr. Tafft. He could not hear plainly and thought he was talking to central. "Send down and take this d—thing out of here," he said; "I'm tired of it." He was mad, and using a good deal of bad language. All at once he heard Mrs. Dr. Tafft say, "Oh, Mr. Clemens, good morning." He said, "Why, Mrs. Tafft, I have just come to the telephone. George, our butler, was here before me and I heard him swearing as I came up. I shall have to talk to him about it." Mrs. Tafft often told it on him.—[Mark Twain once wrote to the telephone management: "The time is coming very soon when the telephone will be a perfect instrument, when proximity will no



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longer be a hindrance to its performance, when, in fact, one will hear a man who is in the next block just as easily and comfortably as he would if that man were in San Francisco.”] Mrs. Clemens, before I went there, took care of his desk, but little by little I began to look after it when she was busy at other things. Finally I took care of it altogether, but he didn’t know it for a long time. One morning he caught me at it. “What are you doing here?” he asked.

“Dusting, Mr. Clemens,” I said.

“You have no business here,” he said, very mad.

“I’ve been doing it for a year, Mr. Clemens,” I said. “Mrs. Clemens told me to do it.”

After that, when he missed anything—and he missed things often—he would ring for me. “Katie,” he would say, “you have lost that manuscript.”

“Oh, Mr. Clemens,” I would say, “I am sure I didn’t touch it.”

“Yes, you did touch it, Katie. You put it in the fire. It is gone.”

He would scold then, and fume a great deal. Then he would go over and mark out with his toe on the carpet a line which I was never to cross. “Katie,” he would say, “you are never to go nearer to my desk than that line. That is the dead-line.” Often after he had scolded me in the morning he would come in in the evening where I was dressing Mrs. Clemens to go out and say, “Katie, I found that manuscript.” And I would say, “Mr. Clemens, I felt so bad this morning that I wanted to go away.” He had a pipe-cleaner which he kept on a high shelf. It was an awful old dirty one, and I didn’t know that he ever used it. I took it to the balcony which was built out into the woods and threw it away as far as I could throw it. Next day he asked, “Katie, did you see my pipe-cleaner? You did see it; I can tell by your looks.”

I said, “Yes, Mr. Clemens, I threw it away.”

“Well,” he said, “it was worth a thousand dollars,” and it seemed so to me, too, before he got done scolding about it.

It is hard not to dwell too long on the home life of this period. One would like to make a long chapter out of those play-acting evenings alone. They remained always fresh in Mark Twain’s memory. Once he wrote of them:



We dined as we could, probably with a neighbor, and by quarter to eight in the evening the hickory fire in the hall was pouring a sheet of flame up the chimney, the house was in a drench of gas- light from the ground floor up, the guests were arriving, and there was a babble of hearty greetings, with not a voice in it that was not old and familiar and affectionate; and when the curtain went up we looked out from the stage upon none but faces that were dear to us, none but faces that were lit up with welcome for us.

## CLXI

**HISTORY: MAINLY BY SUSY**



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Suzy, in her biography, which she continued through this period, writes:

Mama and I have both been very much troubled of late because papa, since he had been publishing General Grant's books, has seemed to forget his own books and works entirely; and the other evening, as papa and I were promonading up and down the library, he told me that he didn't expect to write but one more book, and then he was ready to give up work altogether, die, or, do anything; he said that he had written more than he had ever expected to, and the only book that he had been pertickularly anxious to write was one locked up in the safe downstairs, not yet published.

The book locked in the safe was Captain Stormfield, and the one he expected to write was A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court. He had already worked at it in a desultory way during the early months of 1886, and once wrote of it to Webster:

I have begun a book whose scene is laid far back in the twilight of tradition; I have saturated myself with the atmosphere of the day and the subject and got myself into the swing of the work. If I peg away for some weeks without a break I am safe.

But he could not peg away. He had too many irons in the fire for that. Matthew Arnold had criticized General Grant's English, and Clemens immediately put down other things to rush to his hero's defense. He pointed out that in Arnold's criticism there were no less than "two grammatical crimes and more than several examples of very crude and slovenly English," and said:

There is that about the sun which makes us forget his spots, and when we think of General Grant our pulses quicken and his grammar vanishes; we only remember that this is the simple soldier, who, all untaught of the silken phrase-makers, linked words together with an art surpassing the art of the schools, and put into them a something which will still bring to American ears, as long as America shall last, the roll of his vanished drums and the tread of his marching hosts.—[Address to Army and Navy Club. For full text see Appendix]

Clemens worked at the Yankee now and then, and Howells, when some of the chapters were read to him, gave it warm approval and urged its continuance.

Howells was often in Hartford at this time. Webster & Co. were planning to publish The Library of Humor, which Howells and "Charley" Clark had edited several years before, and occasional conferences were desirable. Howells tells us that, after he and Clark had been at great trouble to get the matter logically and chronologically arranged, Clemens pulled it all to pieces and threw it together helter-skelter, declaring that there ought to be no sequence in a book of that sort, any more than in the average reader's mind; and Howells admits that this was probably the truer method in a book made for the diversion rather than the instruction of the reader.



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One of the literary diversions of this time was a commentary on a delicious little book by Caroline B. Le Row—English as She Is Taught—being a compilation of genuine answers given to examination questions by pupils in our public schools. Mark Twain was amused by such definitions as: “Aborigines, system of mountains”; “Alias—a good man in the Bible”; “Ammonia—the food of the gods,” and so on down the alphabet.

Susy, in her biography, mentions that her father at this is time read to them a little article which he had just written, entitled “Luck,” and that they thought it very good. It was a story which Twichell had heard and told to Clemens, who set it down about as it came to him. It was supposed to be true, yet Clemens seemed to think it too improbable for literature and laid it away for a number of years. We shall hear of it again by and by.

From Susy’s memoranda we gather that humanity at this time was to be healed of all evils and sorrows through “mind cure.”

Papa has been very much interested of late in the “mind-cure” theory. And, in fact, so have we all. A young lady in town has worked wonders by using the “mind cure” upon people; she is constantly busy now curing peoples’ diseases in this way—and curing her own, even, which to me seems the most remarkable of all. A little while past papa was delighted with the knowledge of what he thought the best way of curing a cold, which was by starving it. This starving did work beautifully, and freed him from a great many severe colds. Now he says it wasn’t the starving that helped his colds, but the trust in the starving, the “mind cure” connected with the starving. I shouldn’t wonder if we finally became firm believers in “mind cure.” The next time papa has a cold I haven’t a doubt he will send for Miss Holden, the young lady who is doctoring in the “mind-cure” theory, to cure him of it.

Again, a month later, she writes:

April 19, 1886. Yes, the “mind cure” does seem to be working wonderfully. Papa, who has been using glasses now for more than a year, has laid them off entirely. And my near-sightedness is really getting better. It seems marvelous. When Jean has stomach-ache Clara and I have tried to divert her by telling her to lie on her side and try “mind cure.” The novelty of it has made her willing to try it, and then Clara and I would exclaim about how wonderful it was she was getting better. And she would think it really was finally, and stop crying, to our delight. The other day mama went into the library and found her lying on the sofa with her back toward the door. She said, “Why, Jean, what’s the matter? Don’t you feel well?” Jean said that she had a little stomach-ache, and so thought she would lie down. Mama said, “Why don’t you try ‘mind cure’?” “I am,” Jean answered.

Howells and Twichell were invited to try the “mind



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cure," as were all other friends who happened along. To the end of his days Clemens would always have some panacea to offer to allay human distress. It was a good trait, when all is said, for it had its root in his humanity. The "mind cure" did not provide all the substance of things hoped for, though he always allowed for it a wide efficacy.

Once, in later years, commenting on Susy's record, he said:

The mind cannot heal broken bones, and doubtless there are many other physical ills which it cannot heal, but it can greatly help to modify the severities of all of them without exception, and there are mental and nervous ailments which it can wholly heal without the help of physician or surgeon.

Susy records another burning interest of this time:

Clara sprained her ankle a little while ago by running into a tree when coasting, and while she was unable to walk with it she played solitaire with cards a great deal. While Clara was sick and papa saw her play solitaire so much he got very much interested in the game, and finally began to play it himself a little; then Jean took it up, and at last mama even played it occasionally; Jean's and papa's love for it rapidly increased, and now Jean brings the cards every night to the table and papa and mama help her play, and before dinner is at an end papa has gotten a separate pack of cards and is playing alone, with great interest. Mama and Clara next are made subject to the contagious solitaire, and there are four solotarireans at the table, while you hear nothing but "Fill up the place," etc. It is dreadful!

But a little further along Susy presents her chief subject more seriously. He is not altogether absorbed with "mind cure" and solitaire, or even with making humorous tales.

Papa has done a great deal in his life I think that is good and very remarkable, but I think if he had had the advantages with which he could have developed the gifts which he has made no use of in writing his books, or in any other way, for peoples' pleasure and benefit outside of his own family and intimate friends, he could have done more than he has, and a great deal more, even. He is known to the public as a humorist, but he has much more in him that is earnest than that is humorous. He has a keen sense of the ludicrous, notices funny stories and incidents, knows how to tell them, to improve upon them, and does not forget them.

And again:

When we are all alone at home nine times out of ten he talks about some very earnest subject (with an occasional joke thrown in), and he a good deal more often talks upon such subjects than upon the other kind. He is as much of a philosopher as anything, I think. I think he could have done a great deal in this direction if he had studied while young, for he seems to enjoy reasoning out things, no matter what; in a great many such directions he has greater ability than in the gifts which have made him famous.

It was with the keen eyes and just mind of childhood that Susy estimated, and there is little to add to her valuation.

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Susy's biography came to an end that summer after starting to record a visit which they all made to Keokuk to see Grandma Clemens. They went by way of the Lakes and down the Mississippi from St. Paul. A pleasant incident happened that first evening on the river. Soon after nightfall they entered a shoal crossing. Clemens, standing alone on the hurricane-deck, heard the big bell forward boom out the call for leads. Then came the leadsmen's long-drawn chant, once so familiar, the monotonous repeating in river parlance of the depths of water. Presently the lead had found that depth of water signified by his nom de plume and the call of "Mark Twain, Mark Twain" floated up to him like a summons from the past. All at once a little figure came running down the deck, and Clara confronted him, reprovingly:

"Papa," she said, "I have hunted all over the boat for you. Don't you know they are calling for you?"

They remained in Keokuk a week, and Susy starts to tell something of their visit there. She begins:

"We have arrived in Keokuk after a very pleasant——"

The sentence remains unfinished. We cannot know what was the interruption or what new interest kept her from her task. We can only regret that the loving little hand did not continue its pleasant history. Years later, when Susy had passed from among the things we know, her father, commenting, said:

When I look at the arrested sentence that ends the little book it seems as if the hand that traced it cannot be far—it is gone for a moment only, and will come again and finish it. But that is a dream; a creature of the heart, not of the mind—a feeling, a longing, not a mental product; the same that lured Aaron Burr, old, gray, forlorn, forsaken, to the pier day after day, week after week, there to stand in the gloom and the chill of the dawn, gazing seaward through veiling mists and sleet and snow for the ship which he knew was gone down, the ship that bore all his treasure—his daughter.