

PAINE ALBERT BIGELOW

MARK TWAIN: A
BIOGRAPHY. VOLUME II,
PART 1: 1886-1900

Albert Paine

**Mark Twain: A Biography.
Volume II, Part 1: 1886-1900**

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Albert Bigelow Paine

Mark Twain: A Biography.

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CV

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."

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 Condover 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 Condover 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.

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.

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."

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."

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, 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.

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 up-stairs 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 bath-room 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.

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.

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."

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."

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.

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:

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.

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.

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.

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 note-book, 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:

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 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 your head for having enjoyed his joke."

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:

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.

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.

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

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).

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 book-shelves 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.

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 Omar 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.

"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 linguistically 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.

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 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, "Moblirte 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 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 to-morrow 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 bully-ragging 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 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.

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 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, excursioning 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.

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.

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, 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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