PAINE ALBERT BIGELOW

MARK TWAIN: A BIOGRAPHY. VOLUME II, PART 2: 1886-1900

Albert Paine

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CLXII
BROWNING, MEREDITH, AND MEISTERSCHAFT

The Browning readings must have begun about this time. Just what kindled Mark Twain's interest in the poetry of Robert Browning is not remembered, but very likely his earlier associations with the poet had something to do with it. Whatever the beginning, we find him, during the winter of 1886 and 1887, studiously, even violently, interested in Browning's verses, entertaining a sort of club or class who gathered to hear his rich, sympathetic, and luminous reading of the Payleyings—"With Bernard de Mandeville," "Daniel Bartoli," or "Christopher Smart." Members of the Saturday Morning Club were among his listeners and others-friends of the family. They were rather

remarkable gatherings, and no one of that group but always vividly remembered the marvelously clear insight which Mark Twain's vocal personality gave to those somewhat obscure measures. They did not all of them realize that before reading a poem he studied it line by line, even word by word; dug out its last syllable of meaning, so far as lay within human possibility, and indicated with pencil every shade of emphasis which would help to reveal the poet's purpose. No student of Browning ever more devoutly persisted in trying to compass a master's intent—in such poems as "Sordello," for instance—than Mark Twain. Just what permanent benefit he received from this particular passion it is difficult to know. Once, at a class-meeting, after finishing "Easter Day," he made a remark which the class requested him to "write down." It is recorded on the fly-leaf of Dramatis Personae as follows:

> One's glimpses & confusions, as one reads Browning, remind me of looking through a telescope (the small sort which you must move with your hand, not clock-work). You toil across dark spaces which are (to your lens) empty; but every now & then a splendor of stars & suns bursts upon you and fills the whole field with flame. Feb. 23, 1887.

In another note he speaks of the "vague dim flash of splendid hamming-birds through a fog." Whatever mental treasures he may or may not have laid up from Browning there was assuredly a deep gratification in the discovery of those splendors of "stars and suns" and the flashing "humming-birds," as there must also

have been in pointing out those wonders to the little circle of devout listeners. It all seemed so worth while.

It was at a time when George Meredith was a reigning literary favorite. There was a Meredith cult as distinct as that of Browning. Possibly it exists to-day, but, if so, it is less militant. Mrs. Clemens and her associates were caught in the Meredith movement and read Diana of the Crossways and the Egoist with reverential appreciation.

The Meredith epidemic did not touch Mark Twain. He read but few novels at most, and, skilful as was the artistry of the English favorite, he found his characters artificialities—ingeniously contrived puppets rather than human beings, and, on the whole, overrated by their creator. Diana of the Crossways was read aloud, and, listening now and then, he was likely to say:

"It doesn't seem to me that Diana lives up to her reputation. The author keeps telling us how smart she is, how brilliant, but I never seem to hear her say anything smart or brilliant. Read me some of Diana's smart utterances."

He was relentless enough in his criticism of a literature he did not care for, and he never learned to care for Meredith.

He read his favorite books over and over with an ever-changing point of view. He re-read Carlyle's French Revolution during the summer at the farm, and to Howells he wrote:

> How stunning are the changes which age makes in man while he sleeps! When I finished Carlyle's French Revolution in 1871 I was a Girondin; every time I have

read it since I have read it differently—being influenced & changed, little by little, by life & environment (& Taine & St. Simon); & now I lay the book down once more, & recognize that I am a Sansculotte!—And not a pale, characterless Sansculotte, but a Marat. Carlyle teaches no such gospel, so the change is in me—in my vision of the evidences.

People pretend that the Bible means the same to them at 50 that it did at all former milestones in their journey. I wonder how they can lie so. It comes of practice, no doubt. They would not say that of Dickens's or Scott's books. Nothing remains the same. When a man goes back to look at the house of his childhood it has always shrunk; there is no instance of such house being as big as the picture in memory & imagination call for. Shrunk how? Why, to its correct dimensions; the house hasn't altered; this is the first time it has been in focus.

Well, that's loss. To have house & Bible shrink so, under the disillusioning corrected angle, is loss—for a moment. But there are compensations. You tilt the tube skyward & bring planets & comets & corona flames a hundred & fifty thousand miles high into the field. Which I see you have done, & found Tolstoi. I haven't got him in focus yet, but I've got Browning.

In time the Browning passion would wane and pass, and the club was succeeded by, or perhaps it blended with, a German class which met at regular intervals at the Clemens home to study "der, die, and das" and the "gehabt habens" out of Meisterschaft

and such other text-books as Professor Schleutter could provide. They had monthly conversation days, when they discussed in German all sorts of things, real and imaginary. Once Dr. Root, a prominent member, and Clemens had a long wrangle over painting a house, in which they impersonated two German neighbors.

Clemens finally wrote for the class a three-act play "Meisterschaft"—a literary achievement for which he was especially qualified, with its picturesque mixture of German and English and its unfailing humor. It seems unlike anything ever attempted before or since. No one but Mark Twain could have written it. It was given twice by the class with enormous success, and in modified form it was published in the Century Magazine (January, 1888). It is included to-day in his "Complete Works," but one must have a fair knowledge of German to capture the full delight of it.—[On the original manuscript Mark Twain wrote: "There is some tolerably rancid German here and there in this piece. It is attributable to the proof-reader." Perhaps the proof-reader resented this and cut it out, for it does not appear as published.]

Mark Twain probably exaggerated his sentiments a good deal when in the Carlyle letter he claimed to be the most rabid of Sansculottes. It is unlikely that he was ever very bare-kneed and crimson in his anarchy. He believed always that cruelty should be swiftly punished, whether in king or commoner, and that tyrants should be destroyed. He was for the people as against kings, and

for the union of labor as opposed to the union of capital, though he wrote of such matters judicially—not radically. The Knights of Labor organization, then very powerful, seemed to Clemens the salvation of oppressed humanity. He wrote a vehement and convincing paper on the subject, which he sent to Howells, to whom it appealed very strongly, for Howells was socialistic, in a sense, and Clemens made his appeal in the best and largest sense, dramatizing his conception in a picture that was to include, in one grand league, labor of whatever form, and, in the end, all mankind in a final millennium. Howells wrote that he had read the essay "with thrills amounting to yells of satisfaction," and declared it to be the best thing yet said on the subject. The essay closed:

> He [the unionized workman] is here and he will remain. He is the greatest birth of the greatest age the nations of the world have known. You cannot sneer at him—that time has gone by. He has before him the most righteous work that was ever given into the hand of man to do; and he will do it. Yes, he is here; and the question is not—as it has been heretofore during a thousand ages—What shall we do with him? For the first time in history we are relieved of the necessity of managing his affairs for him. He is not a broken dam this time—he is the Flood!

It must have been about this time that Clemens developed an intense, even if a less permanent, interest in another matter which was to benefit the species. He was one day walking up

Fifth Avenue when he noticed the sign,

PROFESSOR LOISETTE

SCHOOL OF MEMORY

The Instantaneous Art of Never Forgetting

Clemens went inside. When he came out he had all of Professor Loisette's literature on "predicating correlation," and for the next several days was steeping himself in an infusion of meaningless words and figures and sentences and forms, which he must learn backward and forward and diagonally, so that he could repeat them awake and asleep in order to predicate his correlation to a point where remembering the ordinary facts of life, such as names, addresses, and telephone numbers, would be a mere diversion.

It was another case of learning the multitudinous details of the Mississippi River in order to do the apparently simple thing of steering a boat from New Orleans to St. Louis, and it is fair to say that, for the time he gave it, he achieved a like success. He was so enthusiastic over this new remedy for human distress that within a very brief time he was sending out a printed letter

recommending Loisette to the public at large. Here is an extract:

> I had no SYSTEM—and some sort of rational order of procedure is, of course, necessary to success in any study. Well, Loisette furnished me a system. I cannot undertake to say it is the best, or the worst, because I don't know what the other systems are. Loisette, among other cruelties, requires you to memorize a great long string of words that, haven't any apparent connection or meaning—there are perhaps 500 of these words, arranged in maniacal lines of 6 to 8 or 9 words in each line—71 lines in all. Of course your first impulse is to resign, but at the end of three or four hours you find to your surprise that you've GOT them and can deliver them backward or forward without mistake or hesitation. Now, don't you see what a world of confidence that must necessarily breed? —confidence in a memory which before you wouldn't even venture to trust with the Latin motto of the U. S. lest it mislay it and the country suffer.
>
> Loisette doesn't make memories, he furnishes confidence in memories that already exist. Isn't that valuable? Indeed it is to me. Whenever hereafter I shall choose to pack away a thing properly in that refrigerator I sha'n't be bothered with the aforetime doubts; I shall know I'm going to find it sound and sweet when I go for it again.

Loisette naturally made the most of this advertising and flooded the public with Mark Twain testimonials. But presently Clemens decided that after all the system was not sufficiently simple to benefit the race at large. He recalled his printed letters and prevailed upon Loisette to suppress his circulars. Later he

decided that the whole system was a humbug.

CLXIII
LETTER TO THE QUEEN OF ENGLAND

It was one day in 1887 that Clemens received evidence that his reputation as a successful author and publisher—a man of wealth and revenues—had penetrated even the dimness of the British Tax Offices. A formidable envelope came, inclosing a letter from his London publishers and a very large printed document all about the income tax which the Queen's officers had levied upon his English royalties as the result of a report that he had taken Buckenham Hall, Norwich, for a year, and was to become an English resident. The matter amused and interested him. To Chatto & Windus he wrote:

> I will explain that all that about Buckenham Hall was an English newspaper's mistake. I was not in England, and if I had been I wouldn't have been at Buckenham Hall anyway, but Buckingham Palace, or I would have endeavored to have found out the reason why . . .
>
> But we won't resist. We'll pay as if I were really a resident. The country that allows me copyright has a right to tax me.

Reflecting on the matter, Clemens decided to make literature of it. He conceived the notion of writing an open letter to

the Queen in the character of a rambling, garrulous, but well-disposed countryman whose idea was that her Majesty conducted all the business of the empire herself. He began:

HARTFORD, November 6, 2887.

MADAM, You will remember that last May Mr. Edward Bright, the clerk of the Inland Revenue Office, wrote me about a tax which he said was due from me to the Government on books of mine published in London —that is to say, an income tax on the royalties. I do not know Mr. Bright, and it is embarrassing to me to correspond with strangers, for I was raised in the country and have always lived there, the early part in Marion County, Missouri, before the war, and this part in Hartford County, Connecticut, near Bloomfield and about 8 miles this side of Farmington, though some call it 9, which it is impossible to be, for I have walked it many and many a time in considerably under three hours, and General Hawley says he has done it in two and a quarter, which is not likely; so it has seemed best that I write your Majesty.

The letter proceeded to explain that he had never met her Majesty personally, but that he once met her son, the Prince of Wales, in Oxford Street, at the head of a procession, while he himself was on the top of an omnibus. He thought the Prince would probably remember him on account of a gray coat with flap pockets which he wore, he being the only person on the omnibus who had on that kind of a coat.

"I remember him," he said, "as easily as I would a comet."

He explained the difficulty he had in understanding under what heading he was taxed. There was a foot-note on the list which stated that he was taxed under "Schedule D, section 14." He had turned to that place and found these three things: "Trades, Offices, Gas Works." He did not regard authorship as a trade, and he had no office, so he did not consider that he was taxable under "Schedule D, section 14." The letter concludes:

> Having thus shown your Majesty that I am not taxable, but am the victim of the error of a clerk who mistakes the nature of my commerce, it only remains for me to beg that you will, of your justice, annul my letter that I spoke of, so that my publisher can keep back that tax money which, in the confusion and aberration caused by the Document, I ordered him to pay. You will not miss the sum, but this is a hard year for authors, and as for lectures I do not suppose your Majesty ever saw such a dull season.
>
> With always great and ever-increasing respect, I beg to sign myself your Majesty's servant to command,
> *MARK TWAIN.*
>
> Her Majesty the Queen, London.

The letter, or "petition," as it was called, was published in the Harper's Magazine "Drawer" (December, 1889), and is now included in the "Complete Works." Taken as a whole it is one of the most exquisite of Mark Twain's minor humors. What other humorist could have refrained from hinting, at least, the

inference suggested by the obvious "Gas Works"? Yet it was a subtler art to let his old, simple-minded countryman ignore that detail. The little skit was widely copied and reached the Queen herself in due time, and her son, Prince Edward, who never forgot its humor.

Clemens read a notable paper that year before the Monday Evening Club. Its subject was "Consistency"—political consistency—and in it he took occasion to express himself pretty vigorously regarding the virtue of loyalty to party before principle, as exemplified in the Blaine-Cleveland campaign. It was in effect a scathing reply to those who, three years, before, had denounced Twichell and himself for standing by their convictions.—[Characteristic paragraphs from this paper will be found under Appendix R, at the end of last volume.]

CLXIV
SOME FURTHER ACCOUNT OF CHARLES L. WEBSTER & CO

Flood-tide is a temporary condition, and the ebb in the business of Charles L. Webster & Co., though very deliberate, was not delayed in its beginning. Most of the books published —the early ones at least-were profitable. McClellan's memoirs paid, as did others of the war series.

Even The Life of Pope Leo XIII. paid. What a statement to make, after all their magnificent dreams and preparations! It was published simultaneously in six languages. It was exploited in every conceivable fashion, and its aggregate sales fell far short of the number which the general agents had promised for their first orders. It was amazing, it was incredible, but, alas! it was true. The prospective Catholic purchaser had decided that the Pope's Life was not necessary to his salvation or even to his entertainment. Howells explains it, to his own satisfaction at least, when he says:

> We did not consider how often Catholics could not read, how often, when they could, they might not wish to read. The event proved that, whether they could read or not, the immeasurable majority did not wish to read The Life of the Pope, though it was written by a dignitary of the Church and

issued to the world with sanction from the Vatican.

Howells, of course, is referring to the laboring Catholic of that day. There are no Catholics of this day—no American Catholics, at least—who do not read, and money among them has become plentiful. Perhaps had the Pope's Life been issued in this new hour of enlightenment the tale of its success might have been less sadly told.

A variety of books followed. Henry Ward Beecher agreed to write an autobiography, but he died just when he was beginning the work, and the biography, which his family put together, brought only a moderate return. A book of Sandwich Islands tales and legends, by his Hawaiian Majesty King Kalakaua, edited by Clemens's old friend, Rollin M. Daggett, who had become United States minister to the islands, barely paid for the cost of manufacture, while a volume of reminiscences by General Hancock was still less fortunate. The running expenses of the business were heavy. On the strength of the Grant success Webster had moved into still larger quarters at No. 3 East Fifteenth Street, and had a ground floor for a salesroom. The force had become numerous and costly. It was necessary that a book should pay largely to maintain this pretentious establishment. A number of books were published at a heavy loss. Never mind their titles; we may forget them, with the name of the bookkeeper who presently embezzled thirty thousand dollars of the firm's money and returned but a trifling sum.

By the end of 1887 there were three works in prospect

on which great hopes were founded—'The Library of Humor', which Howells and Clark had edited; a personal memoir of General Sheridan's, and a Library of American Literature in ten volumes, compiled by Edmund Clarence Stedman and Ellen Mackay Hutchinson. It was believed these would restore the fortunes and the prestige of the firm. They were all excellent, attractive features. The Library of Humor was ably selected and contained two hundred choice drawings by Kemble. The Sheridan Memoir was finely written, and the public interest in it was bound to be general. The Library of American Literature was a collection of the best American writing, and seemed bound to appeal to every American reading-home. It was necessary to borrow most of the money required to build these books, for the profit made from the Grant Life and less fortunate ventures was pretty well exhausted. Clemens presently found a little drift of his notes accumulating at this bank and that—a disturbing condition, when he remembered it, for he was financing the typesetting machine by this time, and it was costing a pretty sum.

Meantime, Webster was no longer active in the management. In two years he had broken down from overwork, and was now desperately ill with an acute neuralgia that kept him away from the business most of the time. Its burdens had fallen upon his assistant, Fred J. Hall, a willing, capable young man, persevering and hopeful, lacking only years and experience. Hall worked like a beaver, and continually looked forward to success. He explained, with each month's report of affairs, just why the

business had not prospered more during that particular month, and just why its profits would be greater during the next. Webster finally retired from the business altogether, and Hall was given a small partnership in the firm. He reduced expenses, worked desperately, pumping out the debts, and managed to keep the craft afloat.

The Library of Humor, the Life of Sheridan, and The Library of American Literature all sold very well; not so well as had been hoped, but the sales yielded a fair profit. It was thought that if Clemens himself would furnish a new book now and then the business might regain something of its original standing.

We may believe that Clemens had not been always patient, not always gentle, during this process of decline. He had differed with Webster, and occasionally had gone down and reconstructed things after his own notions. Once he wrote to Orion that he had suddenly awakened to find that there was no more system in the office than in a nursery without a nurse.

"But," he added, "I have spent a good deal of time there since, and reduced everything to exact order and system."

Just what were the new features of order instituted it would be interesting to know. That the financial pressure was beginning to be felt even in the Clemens home is shown by a Christmas letter to Mrs. Moffett.

> HARTFORD, December 18, 1887.
>
> DEAR PAMELA,—Will you take this $15 & buy some candy or other trifle for yourself & Sam & his wife to

remind you that we remember you?

If we weren't a little crowded this year by the type-setter I'd send a check large enough to buy a family Bible or some other useful thing like that. However, we go on & on, but the type-setter goes on forever—at $3,000 a month; which is much more satisfactory than was the case the first 17 months, when the bill only averaged $2,000, & promised to take a thousand years. We'll be through now in 3 or 4 months, I reckon, & then the strain will let up and we can breathe freely once more, whether success ensues or failure.

Even with a type-setter on hand we ought not to be in the least scrimped-but it would take a long letter to explain why & who is to blame.

All the family send love to all of you, & best Christmas wishes for your prosperity.

Affectionately,

SAM.

CLXV
LETTERS, VISITS, AND VISITORS

There were many pleasanter things, to be sure. The farm life never failed with each returning summer; the winters brought gay company and fair occasions. Sir Henry and Lady Stanley, visiting. America, were entertained in the Clemens home, and Clemens went on to Boston to introduce Stanley to his lecture audience. Charles Dickens's son, with his wife and daughter, followed a little later. An incident of their visit seems rather amusing now. There is a custom in England which requires the host to give the guest notice of bedtime by handing him a lighted candle. Mrs. Clemens knew of this custom, but did not have the courage to follow it in her own home, and the guests knew of no other way to relieve the situation; as a result, all sat up much later than usual. Eventually Clemens himself suggested that possibly the guests would like to retire.

Robert Louis Stevenson came down from Saranac, and Clemens went in to visit him at his New York hotel, the St. Stevens, on East Eleventh Street. Stevenson had orders to sit in the sunshine as much as possible, and during the few days of their association he and Clemens would walk down to Washington Square and sit on one of the benches and talk. They discussed many things—philosophies, people, books; it seems a pity their talk could not have been preserved.

Stevenson was a great admirer of Mark Twain's work. He said that during a recent painting of his portrait he had insisted on reading Huck Finn aloud to the artist, a Frenchman, who had at first protested, and finally had fallen a complete victim to Huck's yarn. In one of Stevenson's letters to Clemens he wrote:

> My father, an old man, has been prevailed upon to read Roughing It (his usual amusement being found in theology), and after one evening spent with the book he declared: "I am frightened. It cannot be safe for a man at my time of life to laugh so much."

What heaps of letters, by the way, remain from this time, and how curious some of them are! Many of them are requests of one sort or another, chiefly for money—one woman asking for a single day's income, conservatively estimated at five thousand dollars. Clemens seldom answered an unwarranted letter; but at one time he began a series of unmailed answers—that is to say, answers in which he had let himself go merely to relieve his feelings and to restore his spiritual balance. He prepared an introduction for this series. In it he said:

> You receive a letter. You read it. It will be tolerably sure to produce one of three results: 1, pleasure; 2, displeasure; 3, indifference. I do not need to say anything about Nos. 1 & 3; everybody knows what to do with those breeds of letters; it is breed No. 2 that I am after. It is the one that is loaded up with trouble.
>
> When you get an exasperating letter what happens? If

you are young you answer it promptly, instantly—and mail the thing you have written. At forty what do you do? By that time you have found out that a letter written in a passion is a mistake in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred; that it usually wrongs two persons, and always wrongs one—yourself. You have grown weary of wronging yourself and repenting; so you manacle, you fetter, you log-chain the frantic impulse to write a pulverizing answer. You will wait a day or die. But in the mean time what do you do? Why, if it is about dinner- time, you sit at table in a deep abstraction all through the meal; you try to throw it off and help do the talking; you get a start three or four times, but conversation dies on your lips every time —your mind isn't on it; your heart isn't in it. You give up, and subside into a bottomless deep of silence, permanently; people must speak to you two or three times to get your attention, and then say it over again to make you understand. This kind of thing goes on all the rest of the evening; nobody can interest you in anything; you are useless, a depressing influence, a burden. You go to bed at last; but at three in the morning you are as wide awake as you were in the beginning. Thus we see what you have been doing for nine hours—on the outside. But what were you doing on the inside? You were writing letters—in your mind. And enjoying it, that is quite true; that is not to be denied. You have been flaying your correspondent alive with your incorporeal pen; you have been braining him, disemboweling him, carving him into little bits, and then—doing it all over again. For nine hours.

It was wasted time, for you had no intention of putting

any of this insanity on paper and mailing it. Yes, you know that, and confess it—but what were you to do? Where was your remedy? Will anybody contend that a man can say to such masterful anger as that, Go, and be obeyed?

No, he cannot; that is certainly true. Well, then, what is he to do? I will explain by the suggestion contained in my opening paragraph. During the nine hours he has written as many as forty- seven furious letters—in his mind. If he had put just one of them on paper it would have brought him relief, saved him eight hours of trouble, and given him an hour's red-hot pleasure besides.

He is not to mail this letter; he understands that, and so he can turn on the whole volume of his wrath; there is no harm. He is only writing it to get the bile out. So to speak, he is a volcano: imaging himself erupting does no good; he must open up his crater and pour out in reality his intolerable charge of lava if he would get relief.

Before he has filled his first sheet sometimes the relief is there.

He degenerates into good-nature from that point.

Sometimes the load is so hot and so great that one writes as many as three letters before he gets down to a mailable one; a very angry one, a less angry one, and an argumentative one with hot embers in it here and there. He pigeonholes these and then does one of two things—dismisses the whole matter from his mind or writes the proper sort of letter and mails it.

To this day I lose my balance and send an overwarm letter—or more frequently telegram—two or three times a

year. But that is better than doing it a hundred times a year, as I used to do years ago. Perhaps I write about as many as ever, but I pigeonhole them. They ought not to be thrown away. Such a letter a year or so old is as good as a sermon to the maw who wrote it. It makes him feel small and shabby, but—well, that wears off. Any sermon does; but the sermon does some little good, anyway. An old cold letter like that makes you wonder how you could ever have got into such a rage about nothing.

The unmailed answers that were to accompany this introduction were plentiful enough and generally of a fervent sort. One specimen will suffice. It was written to the chairman of a hospital committee.

DEAR SIR,—If I were Smithfield I would certainly go out and get behind something and blush. According to your report, "the politicians are afraid to tax the people for the support" of so humane and necessary a thing as a hospital. And do your "people" propose to stand that?—at the hands of vermin officials whom the breath of their votes could blow out of official existence in a moment if they had the pluck to band themselves together and blow. Oh, come, these are not "people"—they are cowed school-boys with backbones made of boiled macaroni. If you are not misreporting those "people" you are just in the right business passing the mendicant hat for them. Dear sir, communities where anything like citizenship exists are accustomed to hide their shames, but here we have one proposing to get up a great "exposition" of its dishonor and

advertise it all it can.

It has been eleven years since I wrote anything for one of those graveyards called a "Fair paper," and so I have doubtless lost the knack of it somewhat; still I have done the best I could for you.

This was from a burning heart and well deserved. One may almost regret that he did not send it.

Once he received a letter intended for one Samuel Clements, of Elma, New York, announcing that the said Clements's pension had been allowed. But this was amusing. When Clemens had forwarded the notice to its proper destination he could not resist sending this comment to the commissioner at Washington:

DEAR SIR,—I have not applied for a pension. I have often wanted a pension—often—ever so often—I may say, but in as much as the only military service I performed during the war was in the Confederate army, I have always felt a delicacy about asking you for it. However, since you have suggested the thing yourself, I feel strengthened. I haven't any very pensionable diseases myself, but I can furnish a substitute—a man who is just simply a chaos, a museum of all the different kinds of aches and pains, fractures, dislocations and malformations there are; a man who would regard "rheumatism and sore eyes" as mere recreation and refreshment after the serious occupations of his day. If you grant me the pension, dear sir, please hand it to General Jos. Hawley, United States Senator—I mean hand him the certificate, not the money, and he will forward it to me. You will observe by this postal-card which

I inclose that he takes a friendly interest in the matter. He thinks I've already got the pension, whereas I've only got the rheumatism; but didn't want that—I had that before. I wish it were catching. I know a man that I would load up with it pretty early. Lord, but we all feel that way sometimes. I've seen the day when but never mind that; you may be busy; just hand it to Hawley—the certificate, you understand, is not transferable.

Clemens was in good standing at Washington during the Cleveland administration, and many letters came, asking him to use his influence with the President to obtain this or that favor. He always declined, though once—a few years later, in Europe—when he learned that Frank Mason, consul-general at Frankfort, was about to be displaced, Clemens, of his own accord, wrote to Baby Ruth Cleveland about it.

MY DEAR RUTH, I belong to the Mugwumps, and one of the most sacred rules of our order prevents us from asking favors of officials or recommending men to office, but there is no harm in writing a friendly letter to you and telling you that an infernal outrage is about to be committed by your father in turning out of office the best Consul I know (and I know a great many) just because he is a Republican and a Democrat wants his place.

He went on to recall Mason's high and honorable record, suggesting that Miss Ruth take the matter into her own hands. Then he said:

I can't send any message to the President, but the next time you have a talk with him concerning such matters I

> wish you would tell him about Captain Mason and what I think of a Government that so treats its efficient officials.

Just what form of appeal the small agent made is not recorded, but by and by Mark Twain received a tiny envelope, postmarked Washington, inclosing this note in President Cleveland's handwriting:

> Miss Ruth Cleveland begs to acknowledge the receipt of Mr. Twain's letter and say that she took the liberty of reading it to the President, who desires her to thank Mr. Twain for her information, and to say to him that Captain Mason will not be disturbed in the Frankfort Consulate. The President also desires Miss Cleveland to say that if Mr. Twain knows of any other cases of this kind he will be greatly obliged if he will write him concerning them at his earliest convenience.

Clemens immensely admired Grover Cleveland, also his young wife, and his visits to Washington were not infrequent. Mrs. Clemens was not always able to accompany him, and he has told us how once (it was his first visit after the President's marriage) she put a little note in the pocket of his evening waistcoat, which he would be sure to find when dressing, warning him about his deportment. Being presented to Mrs. Cleveland, he handed her a card on which he had written "He didn't," and asked her to sign her name below those words. Mrs. Cleveland protested that she couldn't sign it unless she knew what it was he hadn't done; but he insisted, and she promised to sign if he would

tell her immediately afterward all about it. She signed, and he handed her Mrs. Clemens's note, which was very brief. It said:

"Don't wear your arctics in the White House."

Mrs. Cleveland summoned a messenger and had the card she had signed mailed at once to Mrs. Clemens at Hartford.

He was not always so well provided against disaster. Once, without consulting his engagements, he agreed to assist Mrs. Cleveland at a dedication, only to find that he must write an apology later. In his letter he said:

> I do not know how it is in the White House, but in this house of ours whenever the minor half of the administration tries to run itself without the help of the major half it gets aground.

He explained his position, and added:

> I suppose the President often acts just like that; goes and makes an impossible promise, and you never find it out until it is next to impossible to break it up and set things straight again. Well, that is just our way exactly—one-half the administration always busy getting the family into trouble and the other half busy getting it out.

CLVXI
A "PLAYER" AND A MASTER OF ARTS

One morning early in January Clemens received the following note:

> DALY'S THEATER, NEW YORK, January 2, 1888.
>
> Mr. Augustin Daly will be very much pleased to have Mr. S. L. Clemens meet Mr. Booth, Mr. Barrett, and Mr. Palmer and a few friends at lunch on Friday next, January 6th (at one o'clock in Delmonico's), to discuss the formation of a new club which it is thought will claim your (sic) interest.
>
> *R. S. V. P.*

There were already in New York a variety of literary and artistic societies, such as The Kinsmen and Tile clubs, with which Clemens was more or less associated. It was proposed now to form a more comprehensive and pretentious organization—one that would include the various associated arts. The conception of this new club, which was to be called The Players, had grown out of a desire on the part of Edwin Booth to confer some enduring benefit upon the members of his profession. It had been discussed during a summer cruise on Mr. E. C. Benedict's steam-yacht by a little party which, besides the

owner, consisted of Booth himself, Aldrich, Lawrence Barrett, William Bispham, and Laurence Hutton. Booth's original idea had been to endow some sort of an actors' home, but after due consideration this did not appear to be the best plan. Some one proposed a club, and Aldrich, with never-failing inspiration, suggested its name, The Players, which immediately impressed Booth and the others. It was then decided that members of all the kindred arts should be admitted, and this was the plan discussed and perfected at the Daly luncheon. The guests became charter members, and The Players became an incorporated fact early in January, 1888. —[Besides Mr. Booth himself, the charter members were: Lawrence Barrett, William Bispham, Samuel L. Clemens, Augustin Daly, Joseph F. Daly, John Drew, Henry Edwards, Laurence Hutton, Joseph Jefferson, John A. Lane, James Lewis, Brander Matthews, Stephen H. Olin, A. M. Palmer, and William T. Sherman.]—Booth purchased the fine old brownstone residence at 16 Gramercy Park, and had expensive alterations made under the directions of Stanford White to adapt it for club purposes. He bore the entire cost, furnished it from garret to cellar, gave it his books and pictures, his rare collections of every sort. Laurence Hutton, writing of it afterward, said:

And on the first Founder's Night, the 31st of December, 1888, he transferred it all to the association, a munificent gift; absolutely without parallel in its way. The pleasure it gave to Booth during the few remaining years of his life was very great.

He made it his home. Next to his own immediate family it was his chief interest, care, and consolation. He nursed and petted it, as it nursed and petted and honored him. He died in it. And it is certainly his greatest monument.

There is no other club quite like The Players. The personality of Edwin Booth pervades it, and there is a spirit in its atmosphere not found in other large clubs—a spirit of unity, and ancient friendship, and mellowness which usually come only of small membership and long establishment. Mark Twain was always fond of The Players, and more than once made it his home. It is a true home, and its members are a genuine brotherhood.

It was in June, 1888, that Yale College conferred upon Samuel Clemens the degree of Master of Arts. It was his first honor of this kind, and he was proud of it. To Charles Hopkins ("Charley") Clark, who had been appointed to apprise him of the honor, he wrote:

> I felt mighty proud of that degree; in fact I could squeeze the truth a little closer and say vain of it. And why shouldn't I be? I am the only literary animal of my particular subspecies who has ever been given a degree by any college in any age of the world as far as I know.

To which Clark answered:

> MY DEAR FRIEND, You are "the only literary animal of your particular subspecies" in existence, and you've no cause for humility in the fact. Yale has done herself at least

as much credit as she has done you, and "don't you forget it."
C. H. C.

Clemens could not attend the alumni dinner, being at Elmira and unable to get away, but in an address he made at Yale College later in the year he thus freely expressed himself:

> I was sincerely proud and grateful to be made a Master of Arts by this great and venerable University, and I would have come last June to testify this feeling, as I do now testify it, but that the sudden and unexpected notice of the honor done me found me at a distance from home and unable to discharge that duty and enjoy that privilege.
>
> Along at first, say for the first month or so, I, did not quite know hove to proceed because of my not knowing just what authorities and privileges belonged to the title which had been granted me, but after that I consulted some students of Trinity—in Hartford—and they made everything clear to me. It was through them that I found out that my title made me head of the Governing Body of the University, and lodged in me very broad and severely responsible powers.
>
> I was told that it would be necessary to report to you at this time, and of course I comply, though I would have preferred to put it off till I could make a better showing; for indeed I have been so pertinaciously hindered and obstructed at every turn by the faculty that it would be difficult to prove that the University is really in any better shape now than it was when I first took charge. By advice, I turned my earliest attention to the Greek department. I

told the Greek professor I had concluded to drop the use of Greek- written character because it is so hard to spell with, and so impossible to read after you get it spelt. Let us draw the curtain there. I saw by what followed that nothing but early neglect saved him from being a very profane man. I ordered the professor of mathematics to simplify the whole system, because the way it was I couldn't understand it, and I didn't want things going on in the college in what was practically a clandestine fashion. I told him to drop the conundrum system; it was not suited to the dignity of a college, which should deal in facts, not guesses and suppositions; we didn't want any more cases of if A and B stand at opposite poles of the earth's surface and C at the equator of Jupiter, at what variations of angle will the left limb of the moon appear to these different parties?—I said you just let that thing alone; it's plenty time to get in a sweat about it when it happens; as like as not it ain't going to do any harm, anyway. His reception of these instructions bordered on insubordination, insomuch that I felt obliged to take his number and report him. I found the astronomer of the University gadding around after comets and other such odds and ends—tramps and derelicts of the skies. I told him pretty plainly that we couldn't have that. I told him it was no economy to go on piling up and piling up raw material in the way of new stars and comets and asteroids that we couldn't ever have any use for till we had worked off the old stock. At bottom I don't really mind comets so much, but somehow I have always been down on asteroids. There is nothing mature about them; I wouldn't sit up nights

the way that man does if I could get a basketful of them. He said it was the bast line of goods he had; he said he could trade them to Rochester for comets, and trade the comets to Harvard for nebulae, and trade the nebula to the Smithsonian for flint hatchets. I felt obliged to stop this thing on the spot; I said we couldn't have the University turned into an astronomical junk shop. And while I was at it I thought I might as well make the reform complete; the astronomer is extraordinarily mutinous, and so, with your approval, I will transfer him to the law department and put one of the law students in his place. A boy will be more biddable, more tractable, also cheaper. It is true he cannot be intrusted with important work at first, but he can comb the skies for nebulae till he gets his hand in. I have other changes in mind, but as they are in the nature of surprises I judge it politic to leave them unspecified at this time.

Very likely it was in this new capacity, as the head of the governing body, that he wrote one morning to Clark advising him as to the misuse of a word in the Courant, though he thought it best to sign the communication with the names of certain learned friends, to give it weight with the public, as he afterward explained.

SIR,—The word "patricide" in your issue of this morning (telegrams) was an error. You meant it to describe the slayer of a father; you should have used "parricide" instead. Patricide merely means the killing of an Irishman —any Irishman, male or female.

Respectfully,

J. HAMMOND TRUMBULL.

N. J. BURTON.

J. H. TWICHELL.

CLXVII
NOTES AND LITERARY MATTERS

Clemens' note-books of this time are full of the vexations of his business ventures, figures, suggestions, and a hundred imagined combinations for betterment—these things intermingled with the usual bits of philosophy and reflections, and amusing reminders.

> Aldrich's man who painted the fat toads red, and naturalist chasing and trying to catch them.
>
> Man who lost his false teeth over Brooklyn Bridge when he was on his way to propose to a widow.
>
> One believes St. Simon and Benvenuto and partly believes the Margravine of Bayreuth. There are things in the confession of Rousseau which one must believe.
>
> What is biography? Unadorned romance. What is romance? Adorned biography. Adorn it less and it will be better than it is.
>
> If God is what people say there can be none in the universe so unhappy as he; for he sees unceasingly myriads of his creatures suffering unspeakable miseries, and, besides this, foresees all they are going to suffer during the remainder of their lives. One might well say "as unhappy as God."

In spite of the financial complexities and the drain of the enterprises already in hand he did not fail to conceive others.

He was deeply interested in Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress at the moment, and from photography and scenic effect he presaged a possibility to-day realized in the moving picture.

Dress up some good actors as Apollyon, Greatheart, etc., & the other Bunyan characters, take them to a wild gorge and photograph them—Valley of the Shadow of Death; to other effective places & photo them along with the scenery; to Paris, in their curious costumes, place them near the Arc de l'Etoile & photo them with the crowd-Vanity Fair; to Cairo, Venice, Jerusalem, & other places (twenty interesting cities) & always make them conspicuous in the curious foreign crowds by their costume. Take them to Zululand. It would take two or three years to do the photographing & cost $10,000; but this stereopticon panorama of Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress could be exhibited in all countries at the same time & would clear a fortune in a year. By & by I will do this.

> If in 1891 I find myself not rich enough to carry out my scheme of buying Christopher Columbus's bones & burying them under the Statue of Liberty Enlightening the World I will give the idea to somebody who is rich enough.

Incidentally he did an occasional piece of literary work. Early in the year, with Brander Matthews, he instructed and entertained the public with a copyright controversy in the Princeton Review. Matthews would appear to have criticized the English copyright protection, or rather the lack of it, comparing it unfavorably with American conditions. Clemens, who had been amply protected

in Great Britain, replied that America was in no position to criticize England; that if American authors suffered in England they had themselves to blame for not taking the proper trouble and precautions required by the English law, that is to say, "previous publication" on English soil. He declared that his own books had been as safe in England as at home since he had undertaken to comply with English requirements, and that Professor Matthews was altogether mistaken, both as to premise and conclusion.

"You are the very wrong-headedest person in America," he said; "and you are injudicious." And of the article: "I read it to the cat—well, I never saw a cat carry on so before . . . . The American author can go to Canada, spend three days there and come home with an English and American copyright as strong as if it had been built out of railroad iron."

Matthews replied that not every one could go to Canada, any more than to Corinth. He said:

"It is not easy for a poor author who may chance to live in Florida or Texas, those noted homes of literature, to go to Canada."

Clemens did not reply again; that is to say, he did not publish his reply. It was a capable bomb which he prepared, well furnished with amusing instance, sarcasm, and ridicule, but he did not use it. Perhaps he was afraid it would destroy his opponent, which would not do. In his heart he loved Matthews. He laid the deadly thing away and maintained a dignified reserve.

Clemens often felt called upon to criticize American institutions, but he was first to come to their defense, especially when the critic was an alien. When Matthew Arnold offered some strictures on America. Clemens covered a good many quires of paper with caustic replies. He even defended American newspapers, which he had himself more than once violently assailed for misreporting him and for other journalistic shortcomings, and he bitterly denounced every shaky British institution, touched upon every weak spot in hereditary rule. He did not print—not then—[An article on the American press, probably the best of those prepared at this time, was used, in part, in The American Claimant, as the paper read before the Mechanics' Club, by "Parker," assistant editor of the 'Democrat'.]—he was writing mainly for relief—without success, however, for he only kindled the fires of his indignation. He was at Quarry Farm and he plunged into his neglected story —A Yankee in King Arthur's Court—and made his astonishing hero the mouthpiece of his doctrines. He worked with an inspiration and energy born of his ferocity. To Whitmore, near the end of the summer, he wrote:

I've got 16 working-days left yet, and in that time I will add another 120,000 words to my book if I have luck.

In his memoranda of this time he says:

> There was never a throne which did not represent a crime. There is no throne to-day which does not represent a crime ….

Show me a lord and I will show you a man whom you couldn't tell from a journeyman shoemaker if he were stripped, and who, in all that is worth being, is the shoemaker's inferior; and in the shoemaker I will show you a dull animal, a poor-spirited insect; for there are enough of him to rise and chuck the lords and royalties into the sea where they belong, and he doesn't do it.

But his violence waned, maybe, for he did not finish the Yankee in the sixteen days as planned. He brought the manuscript back to Hartford, but found it hard work there, owing to many interruptions. He went over to Twichell's and asked for a room where he might work in seclusion. They gave him a big upper chamber, but some repairs were going on below. From a letter written to Theodore Crane we gather that it was not altogether quiet.

Friday, October 5, 1888.

> DEAR THEO, I am here in Twichell's house at work, with the noise of the children and an army of carpenters to help: Of course they don't help, but neither do they hinder. It's like a boiler factory for racket, and in nailing a wooden ceiling on to the room under me the hammering tickles my feet amazingly sometimes and jars my table a good deal, but I never am conscious of the racket at all, and I move my feet into positions of relief without knowing when I do it. I began here Monday morning, and have done eighty pages since. I was so tired last night that I thought I would lie abed and rest to-day; but I couldn't resist. I mean to try to knock off tomorrow, but it's doubtful if I do. I want to finish the day

the machine finishes, and a week ago the closest calculations for that indicated Oct. 22—but experience teaches me that the calculations will miss fire as usual.

The other day the children were projecting a purchase, Livy and I to furnish the money—a dollar and a half. Jean discouraged the idea. She said, "We haven't got any money. Children, if you would think, you would remember the machine isn't done."

It's billiards to-night. I wish you were here.

With love to you both, S. L. C.

P. S. I got it all wrong. It wasn't the children, it was Marie.

She wanted a box of blacking for the children's shoes. Jean reproved her and said, "Why, Marie, you mustn't ask for things now.

The machine isn't done."

Neither the Yankee nor the machine was completed that fall, though returns from both were beginning to be badly needed. The financial pinch was not yet severe, but it was noticeable, and it did not relax.

A memorandum of this time tells of an anniversary given to Charles and Susan Warner in their own home. The guests assembled at the Clemens home, the Twichells among them, and slipped across to Warner's, entering through a window. Dinner was then announced to the Warners, who were sitting by their library fire. They came across the hall and opened the dining-room door, to be confronted by a table fully spread and lighted

and an array of guests already seated.

CLXVIII
INTRODUCING NYE AND RILEY AND OTHERS

It was the winter (1888-89) that the Bill Nye and James Whitcomb Riley entertainment combination set out on its travels. Mark Twain introduced them to their first Boston audience. Major J. B. Pond was exploiting Nye and Riley, and Clemens went on to Boston especially to hear them. Pond happened upon him in the lobby of the Parker House and insisted that nothing would do but he must introduce them. In his book of memories which he published later Pond wrote:

He replied that he believed I was his mortal enemy, and determined that he should never have an evening's enjoyment in my presence. He consented, however, and conducted his brother-humorist and the Hoosier poet to the platform. Mark's presence was a surprise to the audience, and when they recognized him the demonstration was tremendous. The audience rose in a body, and men and women shouted at the very top of their voices. Handkerchiefs waved, the organist even opened every forte key and pedal in the great organ, and the noise went on unabated for minutes. It took some time for the crowd to get down to listening, but when they did subside, as Mark stepped to the front, the silence was as impressive as the noise had been.

He presented the Nye-Riley pair as the Siamese Twins. "I saw them first," he sand, "a great many years ago, when Mr. Barnum had them, and they were just fresh from Siam. The ligature was their best hold then, but literature became their best hold later, when one of them committed an indiscretion, and they had to cut the old bond to accommodate the sheriff."

He continued this comic fancy, and the audience was in a proper frame of mind, when he had finished, to welcome the "Twins of Genius" who were to entertain them:

Pond says:

It was a carnival of fun in every sense of the word. Bostonians will not have another such treat in this generation.

Pond proposed to Clemens a regular tour with Nye and Riley. He wrote:

> I will go partners with you, and I will buy Nye and Riley's time and give an entertainment something like the one we gave in Boston. Let it be announced that you will introduce the "Twins of Genius." Ostensibly a pleasure trip for you. I will take one-third of the profits and you two-thirds. I can tell you it will be the biggest thing that can be brought before the American public.

But Clemens, badly as he was beginning to need the money, put this temptation behind him. His chief diversion these days was in gratuitous appearances. He had made up his mind not to read or lecture again for pay, but he seemed to take a peculiar enjoyment in doing these things as a benefaction. That he was

beginning to need the money may have added a zest to the joy of his giving. He did not respond to all invitations; he could have been traveling constantly had he done so. He consulted with Mrs. Clemens and gave himself to the cause that seemed most worthy. In January Col. Richard Malcolm Johnston was billed to give a reading with Thomas Nelson Page in Baltimore. Page's wife fell ill and died, and Colonel Johnston, in extremity, wired Charles Dudley Warner to come in Page's place. Warner, unable to go, handed the invitation to Clemens, who promptly wired that he would come. They read to a packed house, and when the audience was gone and the returns had been counted an equal division of the profits was handed to each of the authors. Clemens pushed his share over to Johnston, saying:

"That's yours, Colonel. I'm not reading for money these days."

Colonel Johnston, to whom the sum was important, tried to thank him, but he only said:

"Never mind, Colonel, it only gave me pleasure to do you that little favor. You can pass it on some day."

As a matter of fact, hard put to it as he was for funds, Clemens at this time regarded himself as a potential multi-millionaire. The type-setting machine which for years had been sapping his financial strength was believed to be perfected, and ship-loads of money were waiting in the offing. However, we shall come to this later.

Clemens read for the cadets at West Point and for a variety of institutions and on many special occasions. He usually gave

chapters from his Yankee, now soon to be finished, chapters generally beginning with the Yankee's impression of the curious country and its people, ending with the battle of the Sun-belt, when the Yankee and his fifty-four adherents were masters of England, with twenty-five thousand dead men lying about them. He gave this at West Point, including the chapter where the Yankee has organized a West Point of his own in King Arthur's reign.

In April, '89, he made an address at a dinner given to a victorious baseball team returning from a tour of the world by way of the Sandwich Islands. He was on familiar ground there. His heart was in his words.

He began:

> I have been in the Sandwich Islands-twenty-three years ago—that peaceful land, that beautiful land, that far-off home of solitude, and soft idleness, and repose, and dreams, where life is one long slumberous Sabbath, the climate one long summer day, and the good that die experience no change, for they but fall asleep in one heaven and wake up in another. And these boys have played baseball there!—baseball, which is the very symbol, the outward and visible expression, of the drive and push and rush and struggle of the living, tearing, booming nineteenth, the mightiest of all the centuries!

He told of the curious island habits for his hearers' amusement, but at the close the poetry of his memories once more possessed him:

Ah, well, it is refreshment to the jaded, it is water to the thirsty, to look upon men who have so lately breathed the soft air of those Isles of the Blest and had before their eyes the inextinguishable vision of their beauty. No alien land in all the earth has any deep, strong charm for me but that one; no other land could so longingly and so beseechingly haunt me, sleeping and waking, through half a lifetime, as that one has done. Other things leave me, but it abides; other things change, but it remains the same. For me its balmy airs are always blowing, its summer seas flashing in the sun; the pulsing of its surf is in my ear; I can see its garlanded crags, its leaping cascades, its plumy palms drowsing by the shore, its remote summits floating like islands above the cloud-rack; I can feel the spirit of its woody solitudes, I hear the plashing of the brooks; in my nostrils still lives the breath of flowers that perished twenty years ago.

CLXIX
THE COMING OF KIPLING

It was the summer of 1889 that Mark Twain first met Rudyard Kipling. Kipling was making his tour around the world, a young man wholly unheard of outside of India. He was writing letters home to an Indian journal, The Pioneer, and he came to Elmira especially to see Mark Twain. It was night when he arrived, and next morning some one at the hotel directed him to Quarry Farm. In a hired hack he made his way out through the suburbs, among the buzzing planing-mills and sash factories, and toiled up the long, dusty, roasting east hill, only to find that Mark Twain was at General Langdon's, in the city he had just left behind. Mrs. Crane and Susy Clemens were the only ones left at the farm, and they gave him a seat on the veranda and brought him glasses of water or cool milk while he refreshed them with his talk-talk which Mark Twain once said might be likened to footprints, so strong and definite was the impression which it left behind. He gave them his card, on which the address was Allahabad, and Susy preserved it on that account, because to her India was a fairyland, made up of magic, airy architecture, and dark mysteries. Clemens once dictated a memory of Kipling's visit.

Kipling had written upon the card a compliment to me.

This gave it an additional value in Susy's eyes, since, as a distinction, it was the next thing to being recognized by a denizen of the moon.

Kipling came down that afternoon and spent a couple of hours with me, and at the end of that time I had surprised him as much as he had surprised me—and the honors were easy. I believed that he knew more than any person I had met before, and I knew that he knew that I knew less than any person he had met before—though he did not say it, and I was not expecting that he would. When he was gone Mrs. Langdon wanted to know about my visitor. I said:

"He is a stranger to me, but he is a most remarkable man—and I am the other one. Between us we cover all knowledge; he knows all that can be known, and I know the rest."

He was a stranger to me and to all the world, and remained so for twelve months, then he became suddenly known, and universally known. From that day to this he has held this unique distinction—that of being the only living person, not head of a nation, whose voice is heard around the world the moment it drops a remark; the only such voice in existence that does not go by slow ship and rail, but always travels first-class—by cable.

About a year after Kipling's visit in Elmira George Warner came into our library one morning in Hartford with a small book in his hand and asked me if I had ever heard of Rudyard Kipling. I said, "No."

He said I would hear of him very soon, and that the noise he was going to make would be loud and continuous.

The little book was the Plain Tales, and he left it for me to read, saying it was charged with a new and inspiriting fragrance, and would blow a refreshing breath around the world that would revive the nations. A day or two later he brought a copy of the London World which had a sketch of Kipling in it, and a mention of the fact that he had traveled in the United States. According to this sketch he had passed through Elmira. This remark, with the additional fact that he hailed from India, attracted my attention—also Susy's. She went to her room and brought his card from its place in the frame of her mirror, and the Quarry Farm visitor stood identified.

Kipling also has left an account of that visit. In his letter recording it he says:

You are a contemptible lot over yonder. Some of you are Commissioners and some are Lieutenant-Governors, and some have the V. C., and a few are privileged to walk about the Mall arm in arm with the Viceroy; but I have seen Mark Twain this golden morning, have shaken his hand and smoked a cigar—no, two cigars—with him, and talked with him for more than two hours! Understand clearly that I do not despise you; indeed, I don't. I am only very sorry for you, from the Viceroy downward.

A big, darkened drawing-room; a huge chair; a man with eyes, a mane of grizzled hair, a brown mustache covering a mouth as delicate as a woman's, a strong, square hand shaking mine, and the slowest, calmest, levelest voice in all the world saying:

"Well, you think you owe me something, and you've come to tell me so. That's what I call squaring a debt handsomely."

"Piff!" from a cob-pipe (I always said that a Missouri meerschaum was the best smoking in the world), and behold! Mark Twain had curled himself up in the big arm-chair, and I was smoking reverently, as befits one in the presence of his superior.

The thing that struck me first was that he was an elderly man; yet, after a minute's thought, I perceived that it was otherwise, and in five minutes, the eyes looking at me, I saw that the gray hair was an accident of the most trivial. He was quite young. I was shaking his hand. I was smoking his cigar, and I was hearing him talk—this man I had learned to love and admire fourteen thousand miles away.

Reading his books, I had striven to get an idea of his personality, and all my preconceived notions were wrong and beneath the reality. Blessed is the man who finds no disillusion when he is brought face to face with a revered writer.

The meeting of those two men made the summer of '89 memorable in later years. But it was recalled sadly, too. Theodore Crane, who had been taken suddenly and dangerously ill the previous autumn, had a recurring attack and died July 3d. It was the first death in the immediate families for more than seventeen years, Mrs. Clemens, remembering that earlier period of sorrow, was depressed with forebodings.

CLXX
"THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER" ON THE STAGE

There was an unusual dramatic interest in the Clemens home that autumn. Abby Sage Richardson had dramatized 'The Prince and the Pauper', and Daniel Frohman had secured Elsie Leslie (Lyde) to take the double role of the Prince and Tom Canty. The rehearsals were going on, and the Clemens children were naturally a good deal excited over the outcome. Susy Clemens was inspired to write a play of her own—a pretty Greek fancy, called "The Triumph of Music," and when it was given on Thanksgiving night, by herself, with Clara and Jean and Margaret Warner, it was really a lovely performance, and carried one back to the days when emotions were personified, and nymphs haunted the seclusions of Arcady. Clemens was proud of Susy's achievement, and deeply moved by it. He insisted on having the play repeated, and it was given again later in the year.

Pretty Elsie Leslie became a favorite of the Clemens household. She was very young, and when she visited Hartford Jean and she were companions and romped together in the hay-loft. She was also a favorite of William Gillette. One day when Clemens and Gillette were together they decided to give the little girl a surprise—a unique one. They agreed to embroider a pair

of slippers for her—to do the work themselves. Writing to her of it, Mark Twain said:

> Either one of us could have thought of a single slipper, but it took both of us to think of two slippers. In fact, one of us did think of one slipper, and then, quick as a flash, the other of the other one. It shows how wonderful the human mind is….
>
> Gillette embroidered his slipper with astonishing facility and splendor, but I have been a long time pulling through with mine. You see, it was my very first attempt at art, and I couldn't rightly get the hang of it along at first. And then I was so busy that I couldn't get a chance to work at it at home, and they wouldn't let me embroider on the cars; they said it made the other passengers afraid. They didn't like the light that flared into my eye when I had an inspiration. And even the most fair-minded people doubted me when I explained what it was I was making—especially brakemen. Brakemen always swore at it and carried on, the way ignorant people do about art. They wouldn't take my word that it was a slipper; they said they believed it was a snow-shoe that had some kind of disease.

He went on to explain and elucidate the pattern of the slipper, and how Dr. Root had come in and insisted on taking a hand in it, and how beautiful it was to see him sit there and tell Mrs. Clemens what had been happening while they were away during the summer, holding the slipper up toward the end of his nose, imagining the canvas was a "subject" with a scalp-wound,

working with a "lovely surgical stitch," never hesitating a moment in his talk except to say "Ouch!" when he stuck himself with the needle.

> Take the slippers and wear them next your heart, Elsie dear; for every stitch in them is a testimony of the affection which two of your loyalest friends bear you. Every single stitch cost us blood. I've got twice as many pores in me now as I used to have; and you would never believe how many places you can stick a needle in yourself until you go into the embroidery line and devote yourself to art.
>
> Do not wear these slippers in public, dear; it would only excite envy; and, as like as not, somebody would try to shoot you.
>
> Merely use them to assist you in remembering that among the many, many people who think all the world of you is your friend,
> *MARK TWAIN.*

The play of "The Prince and the Pauper," dramatized by Mrs. Richardson and arranged for the stage by David Belasco, was produced at the Park Theater, Philadelphia, on Christmas Eve. It was a success, but not a lavish one. The play was well written and staged, and Elsie Leslie was charming enough in her parts, but in the duality lay the difficulty. The strongest scenes in the story had to be omitted when one performer played both Tom Canty and the little Prince. The play came to New York—to the Broadway Theater—and was well received. On the opening night there Mark Twain made a speech, in which he said that the

presentation of "The Prince and the Pauper" realized a dream which fifteen years before had possessed him all through a long down-town tramp, amid the crowds and confusion of Broadway. In Elsie Leslie, he said, he had found the embodiment of his dream, and to her he offered homage as the only prince clothed in a divine right which was not rags and sham—the divine right of an inborn supremacy in art.

It seems incredible to-day that, realizing the play's possibilities as Mark Twain did, and as Belasco and Daniel Frohman must have done, they did not complete their partial triumph by finding another child actress to take the part of Tom Canty. Clemens urged and pleaded with them, but perhaps the undertaking seemed too difficult—at all events they did not find the little beggar king. Then legal complications developed. Edward House, to whom Clemens had once given a permission to attempt a dramatization of the play, suddenly appeared with a demand for recognition, backed by a lawsuit against all those who had a proprietary interest in the production. House, with his adopted Japanese daughter Koto, during a period of rheumatism and financial depression, had made a prolonged visit in the Clemens home and originally undertook the dramatization as a sort of return for hospitality. He appears not to have completed it and to have made no arrangement for its production or to have taken any definite step until Mrs. Richardson's play was profitably put on; whereupon his suit and injunction.

By the time a settlement of this claim had been reached the

play had run its course, and it was not revived in that form. It was brought out in England, where it was fairly prosperous, though it seems not to have been long continued. Variously reconstructed, it has occasionally been played since, and always, when the parts of Tom Canty and the Prince were separate, with great success. Why this beautiful drama should ever be absent from the boards is one of the unexplainable things. It is a play for all times and seasons, the difficulty of obtaining suitable "twin" interpreters for the characters of the Prince and the Pauper being its only drawback.

CLXXI
"A CONNECTICUT YANKEE IN KING ARTHUR'S COURT"

From every point of view it seemed necessary to make the 'Yankee in King Arthur's Court' an important and pretentious publication. It was Mark Twain's first book after a silence of five years; it was a book badly needed by his publishing business with which to maintain its prestige and profit; it was a book which was to come out of his maturity and present his deductions, as to humanity at large and kings in particular, to a waiting public. It was determined to spare no expense on the manufacture, also that its illustrations must be of a sort to illuminate and, indeed, to elaborate the text. Clemens had admired some pictures made by Daniel Carter ("Dan") Beard for a Chinese story in the Cosmopolitan, and made up his mind that Beard was the man for the Yankee. The manuscript was sent to Beard, who met Clemens a little later in the office of Webster & Co. to discuss the matter. Clemens said:

"Mr. Beard, I do not want to subject you to any undue suffering, but I wish you would read the book before you make the pictures."

Beard replied that he had already read it twice.

"Very good," Clemens said; "but I wasn't led to suppose that

that was the usual custom among illustrators, judging from some results I have seen. You know," he went on, "this Yankee of mine has neither the refinement nor the weakness of a college education; he is a perfect ignoramus; he is boss of a machine shop; he can build a locomotive or a Colt's revolver, he can put up and run a telegraph line, but he's an ignoramus, nevertheless. I am not going to tell you what to draw. If a man comes to me and says, 'Mr. Clemens, I want you to write me a story,' I'll write it for him; but if he undertakes to tell me what to write I'll say, 'Go hire a typewriter.'"

To Hall a few days later he wrote:

> Tell Beard to obey his own inspirations, and when he sees a picture in his mind put that picture on paper, be it humorous or be it serious. I want his genius to be wholly unhampered. I sha'n't have any fear as to results.

Without going further it is proper to say here that the pictures in the first edition of A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court justified the author's faith in the artist of his selection. They are far and away Dan Beard's best work. The socialism of the text strongly appealed to him. Beard himself had socialistic tendencies, and the work inspired him to his highest flights of fancy and to the acme of his technic. Clemens examined the pictures from time to time, and once was moved to write:

> My pleasure in them is as strong and as fresh as ever. I do not know of any quality they lack. Grace, dignity, poetry, spirit, imagination, these enrich them and make

them charming and beautiful; and wherever humor appears it is high and fine—easy, unforced, kept under, masterly, and delicious.

He went on to describe his appreciation in detail, and when the drawings were complete he wrote again:

> Hold me under permanent obligations. What luck it was to find you! There are hundreds of artists who could illustrate any other book of mine, but there was only one who could illustrate this one. Yes, it was a fortunate hour that I went netting for lightning-bugs and caught a meteor. Live forever!

This was not too much praise. Beard realized the last shade of the author's allegorical intent and portrayed it with a hundred accents which the average reader would otherwise be likely to miss.

Clemens submitted his manuscript to Howells and to Stedman, and he read portions of it, at least, to Mrs. Clemens, whose eyes were troubling her so that she could not read for herself. Stedman suggested certain eliminations, but, on the whole, would seem to have approved of the book. Howells was enthusiastic. It appealed to him as it had appealed to Beard. Its sociology and its socialism seemed to him the final word that could be said on those subjects. When he had partly finished it he wrote:

> It's a mighty great book and it makes my heart, burn with wrath. It seems that God didn't forget to put a soul in you.

He shuts most literary men off with a brain, merely.

A few days later he wrote again:

> The book is glorious-simply noble. What masses of virgin truth never touched in print before!

And when he had finished it:

> Last night I read your last chapter. As Stedman says of the whole book, it's titanic.

Clemens declared, in one of his replies to Howells:

> I'm not writing for those parties who miscall themselves critics, and I don't care to have them paw the book at all. It's my swan song, my retirement from literature permanently, and I wish to pass to the cemetery unclodded . . . . Well, my book is written—let it go, but if it were only to write over again there wouldn't be so many things left out. They burn in me; they keep multiplying and multiplying, but now they can't ever be said; and besides they would require a library —and a pen warmed up in hell.

In another letter of this time to Sylvester Baxter, apropos of the tumbling Brazilian throne, he wrote:

> When our great brethren, the disenslaved Brazilians, frame their declaration of independence I hope they will insert this missing link: "We hold these truths to be self-evident—that all monarchs are usurpers and descendants of usurpers, for the reason that no throne was ever set up in this world by the will, freely exercised, of the only body possessing the legitimate right to set it up—the numerical

mass of the nation."

He was full of it, as he had been all along, and 'A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court' is nothing less than a brief for human rights and human privileges. That is what it is, and it is a pity that it should be more than that. It is a pity that he should have been beset by his old demon of the burlesque, and that no one should have had the wisdom or the strength to bring it under control.

There is nothing more charming in any of Mark Twain's work than his introductory chapter, nothing more delightful than the armoring of the Yankee and the outset and the wandering with Alisande. There is nothing more powerful or inspiring than his splendid panoramic picture—of the King learning mercy through his own degradation, his daily intercourse with a band of manacled slaves; nothing more fiercely moving than that fearful incident of the woman burned to warm those freezing chattels, or than the great gallows scene, where the priest speaks for the young mother about to pay the death penalty for having stolen a halfpenny's worth, that her baby might have bread. Such things as these must save the book from oblivion; but alas! its greater appeal is marred almost to ruin by coarse and extravagant burlesque, which destroys illusion and antagonizes the reader often at the very moment when the tale should fill him with a holy fire of a righteous wrath against wrong. As an example of Mark Twain at his literary worst and best the Yankee ranks supreme. It is unnecessary to quote examples; one cannot pick up the volume

and read ten pages of it, or five pages, without finding them. In the midst of some exalted passage, some towering sublimity, you are brought suddenly to earth with a phrase which wholly destroys the illusion and the diviner purpose. Howells must have observed these things, or was he so dazzled by the splendor of its intent, its righteous charge upon the ranks of oppression, that he regarded its offenses against art as unimportant. This is hard to explain, for the very thing that would sustain such a great message and make it permanent would be the care, the restraint, the artistic worthiness of its construction. One must believe in a story like that to be convinced of its logic. To lose faith in it —in its narrative—is absolutely fatal to its purpose. The Yankee in King Arthur's Court not only offended the English nation, but much of it offended the better taste of Mark Twain's own countrymen, and in time it must have offended even Mark Twain himself. Reading it, one can visualize the author as a careering charger, with a bit in his teeth, trampling the poetry and the tradition of the romantic days, the very things which he himself in his happier moods cared for most. Howells likened him to Cervantes, laughing Spain's chivalry away. The comparison was hardly justified. It was proper enough to laugh chivalry out of court when it was a reality; but Mark Twain, who loved Sir Thomas Malory to the end of his days, the beauty and poetry of his chronicles; who had written 'The Prince and the Pauper', and would one day write that divine tale of the 'Maid of Orleans'; who was himself no more nor less than a knight always ready to

redress wrong, would seem to have been the last person to wish to laugh it out of romance.

And yet, when all is said, one may still agree with Howells in ranking the Yankee among Mark Twain's highest achievements in the way of "a greatly imagined and symmetrically developed tale." It is of that class, beyond doubt. Howells goes further:

> Of all the fanciful schemes in fiction it pleases me most, and I give myself with absolute delight to its notion of a keen East Hartford Yankee finding himself, by a retroactionary spell, at the court of King Arthur of Britain, and becoming part of the sixth century with all the customs and ideas of the nineteenth in him and about him. The field for humanizing satire which this scheme opens is illimitable.

Colossal it certainly is, as Howells and Stedman agreed: colossal in its grotesqueness as in its sublimity. Howells, summarizing Mark Twain's gifts (1901), has written:

> He is apt to burlesque the lighter colloquiality, and it is only in the more serious and most tragical junctures that his people utter themselves with veracious simplicity and dignity. That great, burly fancy of his is always tempting him to the exaggeration which is the condition of so much of his personal humor, but which when it invades the drama spoils the illusion. The illusion renews itself in the great moments, but I wish it could be kept intact in the small, and I blame him that he does not rule his fancy better.

All of which applies precisely to the writing of the Yankee

in King Arthur's Court. Intended as a fierce heart-cry against human injustice —man's inhumanity to man—as such it will live and find readers; but, more than any other of Mark Twain's pretentious works, it needs editing —trimming by a fond but relentless hard.

CLXXII
THE "YANKEE" IN ENGLAND

The London publishers of the Yankee were keenly anxious to revise the text for their English readers. Clemens wrote that he had already revised the Yankee twice, that Stedman had critically read it, and that Mrs. Clemens had made him strike out many passages and soften others. He added that he had read chapters of it in public several times where Englishmen were present and had profited by their suggestions. Then he said:

> Now, mind you, I have taken all this pains because I wanted to say a Yankee mechanic's say against monarchy and its several natural props, and yet make a book which you would be willing to print exactly as it comes to you, without altering a word.
>
> We are spoken of (by Englishmen) as a thin-skinned people. It is you who are thin-skinned. An Englishman may write with the most brutal frankness about any man or institution among us and we republish him without dreaming of altering a line or a word. But England cannot stand that kind of a book written about herself. It is England that is thin-skinned. It causeth me to smile when I read the modifications of my language which have been made in my English editions to fit them for the sensitive English palate.
>
> Now, as I say, I have taken laborious pains to so trim this book of offense that you'll not lack the nerve to print it just

as it stands. I am going to get the proofs to you just as early as I can. I want you to read it carefully. If you can publish it without altering a single word, go ahead. Otherwise, please hand it to J. R. Osgood in time for him to have it published at my expense.

This is important, for the reason that the book was not written for America; it was written for England. So many Englishmen have done their sincerest best to teach us something for our betterment that it seems to me high time that some of us should substantially recognize the good intent by trying to pry up the English nation to a little higher level of manhood in turn.

So the Yankee was published in England just as he had written it,—[The preface was shortened and modified for both the American and English editions. The reader will find it as originally written under Appendix S, at the end of last volume.]—and the criticisms were as plentiful as they were frank. It was referred to as a "lamentable failure" and as an "audacious sacrilege" and in terms still less polite. Not all of the English critics were violent. The Daily Telegraph gave it something more than a column of careful review, which did not fail to point out the book's sins with a good deal of justice and dignity; but the majority of English papers joined in a sort of objurgatory chorus which, for a time at least, spared neither the author nor his work. Strictures on the Yankee extended to his earlier books. After all, Mark Twain's work was not for the cultivated class.

These things must have begun to gravel Clemens a good deal

at last, for he wrote to Andrew Lang at considerable length, setting forth his case in general terms—that is to say, his position as an author—inviting Lang to stand as his advocate before the English public. In part he said:

> The critic assumes every time that if a book doesn't meet the cultivated-class standard it isn't valuable . . . The critic has actually imposed upon the world the superstition that a painting by Raphael is more valuable to the civilizations of the earth than is a chromo; and the august opera more than the hurdy-gurdy and the villagers' singing society; and the Latin classics than Kipling's far-reaching bugle-note; and Jonathan Edwards than the Salvation Army . . . . If a critic should start a religion it would not have any object but to convert angels, and they wouldn't need it. It is not that little minority who are already saved that are best worth lifting up, I should think, but the mighty mass of the uncultivated who are underneath! That mass will never see the old masters—that sight is for the few; but the chromo-maker can lift them all one step upward toward appreciation of art; they cannot have the opera, but the hurdy-gurdy and the singing-class lift them a little way toward that far height; they will never know Homer, but the passing rhymester of their day leaves them higher than he found them; they may never even hear of the Latin classics, but they will strike step with Kipling's drum-beat and they will march; for all Jonathan Edwards's help they would die in their slums, but the Salvation Army will beguile some of them to a purer air and a cleaner life.

> I have never tried, in even one single little instance, to help cultivate the cultivated classes. I was not equipped for it either by native gifts or training. And I never had any ambition in that direction, but always hunted for bigger game—the masses. I have seldom deliberately tried to instruct them, but I have done my best to entertain them, for they can get instruction elsewhere . . . . My audience is dumb; it has no voice in print, and so I cannot know whether I have won its approval or only got its censure.

He closed by asking that Lang urge the critics to adopt a rule recognizing the masses, and to formulate a standard whereby work done for them might be judged. "No voice can reach further than yours in a case of this kind," he said, "or carry greater weight of authority." There was no humor in this letter, and the writer of it was clearly in earnest.

Lang's response was an article published in the Illustrated London News on the art of Mark Twain. He began by gently ridiculing hyperculture —the new culture—and ended with a eulogy on Huck Finn. It seems worth while, however, to let Andrew Lang speak for himself.

> I have been educated till I nearly dropped; I have lived with the earliest apostles of culture, in the days when Chippendale was first a name to conjure with, and Japanese art came in like a raging lion, and Ronsard was the favorite poet, and Mr. William Morris was a poet, too, and blue and green were the only wear, and the name of Paradise was Camelot. To be sure, I cannot say that I took all this quite

> seriously, but "we, too, have played" at it, and know all about it. Generally speaking, I have kept up with culture. I can talk (if desired) about Sainte-Beuve, and Merimee, and Felicien Rops; I could rhyme "Ballades" when they were "in," and knew what a "pantoom" was . . . . And yet I have not culture. My works are but tinkling brass because I have not culture. For culture has got into new regions where I cannot enter, and, what is perhaps worse, I find myself delighting in a great many things which are under the ban of culture.

He confesses that this is a dreadful position; one that makes a man feel like one of those Liberal politicians who are always "sitting on the fence," and who follow their party, if follow it they do, with the reluctant acquiescence of the prophet's donkey. He further confesses that he has tried Hartmann and prefers Plato, that he is shaky about Blake, though stalwart concerning Rudyard Kipling.

> This is not the worst of it. Culture has hardly a new idol but I long to hurl things at it. Culture can scarcely burn anything, but I am impelled to sacrifice to that same. I am coming to suspect that the majority of culture's modern disciples are a mere crowd of very slimly educated people who have no natural taste or impulses; who do not really know the best things in literature; who have a feverish desire to admire the newest thing, to follow the latest artistic fashion; who prate about "style," without the faintest acquaintance with the ancient examples of style in Greek, French, or English; who talk about the classics and—criticize the classical critics and poets, without being

able to read a line of them in the original. Nothing of the natural man is left in these people; their intellectual equipment is made up of ignorant vanity and eager desire for novelty, and a yearning to be in the fashion. Take, for example—and we have been a long time in coming to him —Mark Twain. [Here follow some observations concerning the Yankee, which Lang confesses that he has not read, and has abstained from reading because–]. Here Mark Twain is not, and cannot be, at the proper point of view. He has not the knowledge which would enable him to be a sound critic of the ideals of the Middle Ages. An Arthurian Knight in New York or in Washington would find as much to blame, and justly, as a Yankee at Camelot.

Of Mark Twain's work in general he speaks with another conclusion:

> Mark Twain is a benefactor beyond most modern writers, and the cultured who do not laugh are merely to be pitied. But his art is not only that of the maker of the scarce article—mirth. I have no hesitation in saying that Mark Twain is one among the greatest contemporary makers of fiction . . . . I can never forget or be ungrateful for the exquisite pleasure with which I read Huckleberry Finn for the first time years ago. I read it again last night, deserting Kenilworth for Huck. I never laid it down till I had finished it. I perused several passages more than once, and rose from it with a higher opinion of its merits than ever.
>
> What is it that we want in a novel? We want a vivid and original picture of life; we want character naturally

> displayed in action; and if we get the excitement of adventure into the bargain, and that adventure possible and plausible, I so far differ from the newest school of criticism as to think that we have additional cause for gratitude. If, moreover, there is an unstrained sense of humor in the narrator we have a masterpiece, and Huckleberry Finn is, nothing less.

He reviews Huck sympathetically in detail, and closes:

> There are defects of taste, or passages that to us seem deficient in taste, but the book remains a nearly flawless gem of romance and of humor. The world appreciates it, no doubt, but "cultured critics" are probably unaware of its singular value. The great American novel has escaped the eyes of those who watch to see this new planet swim into their ken. And will Mark Twain never write such another? One is enough for him to live by, and for our gratitude, but not enough for our desire.

In the brief column and a half which it occupies, this comment of Andrew Lang's constitutes as thoughtful and fair an estimate of Mark Twain's work as was ever written.

W. T. Stead, of the Review of Reviews, was about the only prominent English editor to approve of the Yankee and to exploit its merits. Stead brought down obloquy upon himself by so doing, and his separation from his business partner would seem to have been at least remotely connected with this heresy.

The Yankee in King Arthur's Court was dramatized in America by Howard Taylor, one of the Enterprise compositors,

whom Clemens had known in the old Comstock days. Taylor had become a playwright of considerable success, with a number of well-known actors and actresses starring in his plays. The Yankee, however, did not find a manager, or at least it seems not to have reached the point of production.

CLXXIII
A SUMMER AT ONTEORA

With the exception of one article—"A Majestic Literary Fossil" —[Harper's Magazine, February, 1890. Included in the "Complete Works."] —Clemens was writing nothing of importance at this time. This article grew out of a curious old medical work containing absurd prescriptions which, with Theodore Crane, he had often laughed over at the farm. A sequel to Huckleberry Finn—Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer Among the Indians —was begun, and a number of its chapters were set in type on the new Paige compositor, which had cost such a gallant sum, and was then thought to be complete. There seems to have been a plan to syndicate the story, but at the end of Chapter IX Huck and Tom had got themselves into a predicament from which it seemed impossible to extricate them, and the plot was suspended for further inspiration, which apparently never came.

Clemens, in fact, was troubled with rheumatism in his arm and shoulder, which made writing difficult. Mrs. Clemens, too, had twinges of the malady. They planned to go abroad for the summer of 1890, to take the waters of some of the German baths, but they were obliged to give up the idea. There were too many business complications; also the health of Clemens's mother had become very feeble. They went to Tannersville in the Catskills, instead—to the Onteora Club, where Mrs. Candace Wheeler

had gathered a congenial colony in a number of picturesque cottages, with a comfortable hotel for the more transient visitor. The Clemenses secured a cottage for the season. Mrs. Mary Mapes Dodge, Laurence Hutton, Carroll Beckwith, the painter; Brander Matthews, Dr. Heber Newton, Mrs. Custer, and Dora Wheeler were among those who welcomed Mark Twain and his family at a generous home-made banquet.

It was the beginning of a happy summer. There was a constant visiting from one cottage to another, with frequent assemblings at the Bear and Fox Inn, their general headquarters. There were pantomimes and charades, in which Mark Twain and his daughters always had star parts. Susy Clemens, who was now eighteen, brilliant and charming, was beginning to rival her father as a leader of entertainment. Her sister Clara gave impersonations of Modjeska and Ada Rehan. When Fourth of July came there were burlesque races, of which Mark Twain was starter, and many of that lighthearted company took part. Sometimes, in the evening, they gathered in one of the cottages and told stories by the firelight, and once he told the story of the Golden Arm, so long remembered, and brought them up with the same old jump at the sudden climax. Brander Matthews remembers that Clemens was obliged frequently to go to New York on business connected with the machine and the publishing, and that during one of these absences a professional entertainer came along, and in the course of his program told a Mark Twain story, at which Mrs. Clemens and the girls laughed without

recognizing its authorship. Matthews also remembers Jean, as a little girl of ten, allowed to ride a pony and to go barefoot, to her great delight, full of health and happiness, a favorite of the colony.

Clemens would seem to have forgiven Brander Matthews for his copyright articles, for he walked over to the Matthews cottage one morning and asked to be taught piquet, the card game most in vogue there that season. At odd times he sat to Carroll Beckwith for his portrait, and smoked a cob pipe meantime, so Beckwith painted him in that way.

It was a season that closed sadly. Clemens was called to Keokuk in August, to his mother's bedside, for it was believed that her end was near. She rallied, and he returned to Onteora. But on the 27th of October came the close of that long, active life, and the woman who two generations before had followed John Clemens into the wilderness, and along the path of vicissitude, was borne by her children to Hannibal and laid to rest at his side. She was in her eighty-eighth year.

The Clemens family were back in Hartford by this time, and it was only a little later that Mrs. Clemens was summoned to the death-bed of her own mother, in Elmira. Clemens accompanied her, but Jean being taken suddenly ill he returned to Hartford. Watching by the little girl's bedside on the night of the 27th of November, he wrote Mrs. Clemens a birthday letter, telling of Jean's improved condition and sending other good news and as many loving messages as he could devise. But it proved a sad

birthday for Mrs. Clemens, for on that day her mother's gentle and beautiful soul went out from among them. The foreboding she had felt at the passing of Theodore Crane had been justified. She had a dread that the harvest of death was not yet ended. Matters in general were going badly with them, and an anxiety began to grow to get away from America, and so perhaps leave sorrow and ill-luck behind. Clemens, near the end of December, writing to his publishing manager, Hall, said:

> Merry Christmas to you, and I wish to God I could have one myself before I die.

The house was emptier that winter than before, for Susy was at Bryn Mawr. Clemens planned some literary work, but the beginning, after his long idleness, was hard. A diversion was another portrait of himself, this time undertaken by Charles Noel Flagg. Clemens rather enjoyed portrait-sittings. He could talk and smoke, and he could incidentally acquire information. He liked to discuss any man's profession with him, and in his talks with Flagg he made a sincere effort to get that insight which would enable him to appreciate the old masters. Flagg found him a tractable sitter, and a most interesting one. Once he paid him a compliment, then apologized for having said the obvious thing.

"Never mind the apology," said Clemens. "The compliment that helps us on our way is not the one that is shut up in the mind, but the one that is spoken out."

When Flagg's portrait was about completed, Mrs. Clemens and Mrs. Crane came to the studio to look at it. Mrs. Clemens

complained only that the necktie was crooked.

"But it's always crooked," said Flagg, "and I have a great fancy for the line it makes."

She straightened it on Clemens himself, but it immediately became crooked again. Clemens said:

"If you were to make that necktie straight people would say; 'Good portrait, but there is something the matter with it. I don't know where it is.'"

The tie was left unchanged.

CLXXIV
THE MACHINE

The reader may have realized that by the beginning of 1891 Mark Twain's finances were in a critical condition. The publishing business had managed to weather along. It was still profitable, and could have been made much more so if the capital necessary to its growth had not been continuously and relentlessly absorbed by that gigantic vampire of inventions—that remorseless Frankenstein monster—the machine.

The beginning of this vast tragedy (for it was no less than that) dated as far back as 1880, when Clemens one day had taken a minor and purely speculative interest in patent rights, which was to do away with setting type by hand. In some memoranda which he made more than ten years later, when the catastrophe was still a little longer postponed, he gave some account of the matter.

> This episode has now spread itself over more than one-fifth of my life, a considerable stretch of time, as I am now 55 years old.
>
> Ten or eleven years ago Dwight Buell, a jeweler, called at our house and was shown up to the billiard-room-which was my study; and the game got more study than the other sciences. He wanted me to take some stock in a type-setting machine. He said it was at the Colt's Arms factory, and was about finished. I took $2,000 of the stock. I was

always taking little chances like that, and almost always losing by it, too. Some time afterward I was invited to go down to the factory and see the machine. I went, promising myself nothing, for I knew all about type-setting by practical experience, and held the settled and solidified opinion that a successful type-setting machine was an impossibility, for the reason that a machine cannot be made to think, and the thing that sets movable type must think or retire defeated. So, the performance I witnessed did most thoroughly amaze me. Here was a machine that was really setting type, and doing it with swiftness and accuracy, too. Moreover, it was distributing its case at the same time. The distribution was automatic; the machine fed itself from a galley of dead matter and without human help or suggestion, for it began its work of its own accord when the type channels needed filling, and stopped of its own accord when they were full enough. The machine was almost a complete compositor; it lacked but one feature—it did not "justify" the lines. This was done by the operator's assistant.

I saw the operator set at the rate of 3,000 ems an hour, which, counting distribution, was but little short of four casemen's work. William Hamersley was there. He said he was already a considerable owner, and was going to take as much more of the stock as he could afford. Wherefore, I set down my name for an additional $3,000. It is here that the music begins.

It was the so-called Farnham machine that he saw, invented by James W. Paige, and if they had placed it on the market

then, without waiting for the inventor to devise improvements, the story might have been a different one. But Paige was never content short of absolute perfection —a machine that was not only partly human, but entirely so. Clemens' used to say later that the Paige type-setter would do everything that a human being could do except drink and swear and go on a strike. He might properly have omitted the last item, but of that later. Paige was a small, bright-eyed, alert, smartly dressed man, with a crystal-clear mind, but a dreamer and a visionary. Clemens says of him: "He is a poet; a most great and genuine poet, whose sublime creations are written in steel."

It is easy to see now that Mark Twain and Paige did not make a good business combination. When Paige declared that, wonderful as the machine was, he could do vastly greater things with it, make it worth many more and much larger fortunes by adding this attachment and that, Clemens was just the man to enter into his dreams and to furnish the money to realize them. Paige did not require much money at first, and on the capital already invested he tinkered along with his improvements for something like four or five years; Hamersley and Clemens meantime capitalizing the company and getting ready to place the perfected invention on the market. By the time the Grant episode had ended Clemens had no reason to believe but that incalculable wealth lay just ahead, when the newspapers should be apprised of the fact that their types were no longer to be set by hand. Several contracts had been made with Paige, and several

new attachments had been added to the machine. It seemed to require only one thing more, the justifier, which would save the labor of the extra man. Paige could be satisfied with nothing short of that, even though the extra man's wage was unimportant. He must have his machine do it all, and meantime five precious years had slipped away. Clemens, in his memoranda, says:

> End of 1885. Paige arrives at my house unheralded. I had seen little or nothing of him for a year or two. He said:

"What will you complete the machine for?"

"What will it cost?"

"Twenty thousand dollars; certainly not over $30,000."

"What will you give?"

"I'll give you half."

Clemens was "flush" at this time. His reading tour with Cable, the great sale of Huck Finn, the prospect of the Grant book, were rosy realities. He said:

"I'll do it, but the limit must be $30,000."

They agreed to allow Hamersley a tenth interest for the money he had already invested and for legal advice.

Hamersley consented readily enough, and when in February, 1886, the new contract was drawn they believed themselves heir to the millions of the Fourth Estate.

By this time F. G. Whitmore had come into Clemens's business affairs, and he did not altogether approve of the new contract. Among other things, it required that Clemens should not only complete the machine, but promote it, capitalize it

commercially. Whitmore said:

"Mr. Clemens, that clause can bankrupt you."

Clemens answered: "Never mind that, Whitmore; I've considered that. I can get a thousand men worth a million apiece to go in with me if I can get a perfect machine."

He immediately began to calculate the number of millions he would be worth presently when the machine was completed and announced to the waiting world. He covered pages with figures that never ran short of millions, and frequently approached the billion mark. Colonel Sellers in his happiest moments never dreamed more lavishly. He obtained a list of all the newspapers in the United States and in Europe, and he counted up the machines that would be required by each. To his nephew, Sam Moffett, visiting him one day, he declared that it would take ten men to count the profits from the typesetter. He realized clearly enough that a machine which would set and distribute type and do the work of half a dozen men or more would revolutionize type composition. The fact that other inventors besides Paige were working quite as diligently and perhaps toward more simple conclusions did not disturb him. Rumors came of the Rogers machine and the Thorne machine and the Mergenthaler linotype, but Mark Twain only smiled. When the promoters of the Mergenthaler offered to exchange half their interests for a half interest in the Paige patent, to obtain thereby a wider insurance of success, it only confirmed his trust, and he let the golden opportunity go by.

Clemens thinks the thirty thousand dollars lasted about a year. Then Paige confessed that the machine was still incomplete, but he said that four thousand dollars more would finish it, and that with ten thousand dollars he could finish it and give a big exhibition in New York. He had discarded the old machine altogether, it seems, and at Pratt & Whitney's shops was building a new one from the ground up—a machine of twenty thousand minutely exact parts, each of which must be made by expert hand workmanship after elaborate drawings and patterns even more expensive. It was an undertaking for a millionaire.

Paige offered to borrow from Clemens the amount needed, offering the machine as security. Clemens supplied the four thousand dollars, and continued to advance money from time to time at the rate of three to four thousand dollars a month, until he had something like eighty thousand dollars invested, with the machine still unfinished. This would be early in 1888, by which time other machines had reached a state of completion and were being placed on the market. The Mergenthaler, in particular, was attracting wide attention. Paige laughed at it, and Clemens, too, regarded it as a joke. The moment their machine was complete all other machines would disappear. Even the fact that the Tribune had ordered twenty-three of the linotypes, and other journals were only waiting to see the paper in its new dress before ordering, did not disturb them. Those linotypes would all go into the scrap-heap presently. It was too bad people would waste their money so. In January, 1888, Paige promised

that the machine would be done by the 1st of April. On the 1st of April he promised it for September, but in October he acknowledged there were still eighty-five days' work to be done on it. In November Clemens wrote to Orion:

The machine is apparently almost done—but I take no privileges on that account; it must be done before I spend a cent that can be avoided. I have kept this family on very short commons for two years and they must go on scrimping until the machine is finished, no matter how long that may be.

By the end of '88 the income from the books and the business and Mrs. Clemens's Elmira investments no longer satisfied the demands of the type-setter, in addition to the household expense, reduced though the latter was; and Clemens began by selling and hypothecating his marketable securities. The whole household interest by this time centered in the machine. What the Tennessee land had been to John and Jane Clemens and their children, the machine had now become to Samuel Clemens and his family. "When the machine is finished everything will be all right again" afforded the comfort of that long-ago sentence, "When the Tennessee land is sold."

They would have everything they wanted then. Mrs. Clemens planned benefactions, as was her wont. Once she said to her sister:

"How strange it will seem to have unlimited means, to be able to do whatever you want to do, to give whatever you want to give without counting the cost."

Straight along through another year the three thousand dollars and more a month continued, and then on the 5th of January, 1889, there came what seemed the end—the machine and justifier were complete! In his notebook on that day Mark Twain set down this memorandum:

EUREKA!

> Saturday, January 5, 1889-12.20 P.M. At this moment I have seen a line of movable type spaced and justified by machinery! This is the first time in the history of the world that this amazing thing has ever been done. Present: J. W. Paige, the inventor; Charles Davis, | Mathematical assistants Earll | & mechanical Graham | experts Bates, foreman, and S. L. Clemens. This record is made immediately after the prodigious event.

Two days later he made another note:

> Monday, January 7—4.45 P.m. The first proper name ever set by this new keyboard was William Shakspeare. I set it at the above hour; & I perceive, now that I see the name written, that I either misspelled it then or I've misspelled it now.
>
> The space-bar did its duty by the electric connections & steam & separated the two words preparatory to the reception of the space.

It seemed to him that his troubles were at an end. He wrote

overflowing letters, such as long ago he had written about his first mining claims, to Orion and to other members of the family and to friends in America and Europe. One of these letters, written to George Standring, a London printer and publisher, also an author, will serve as an example.

> The machine is finished! An hour and forty minutes ago a line of movable type was spaced and justified by machinery for the first time in the history of the world. And I was there to see.
>
> That was the final function. I had before seen the machine set type, automatically, and distribute type, and automatically distribute its eleven different thicknesses of spaces. So now I have seen the machine, operated by one individual, do the whole thing, and do it a deal better than any man at the case can do it.
>
> This is by far and away the most marvelous invention ever contrived by man. And it is not a thing of rags and patches; it is made of massive steel, and will last a century.
>
> She will do the work of six men, and do it better than any six men that ever stood at a case.
>
> The death-warrant of all other type-setting machines in this world was signed at 12.20 this afternoon, when that first line was shot through this machine and came out perfectly spaced and justified. And automatically, mind you.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.