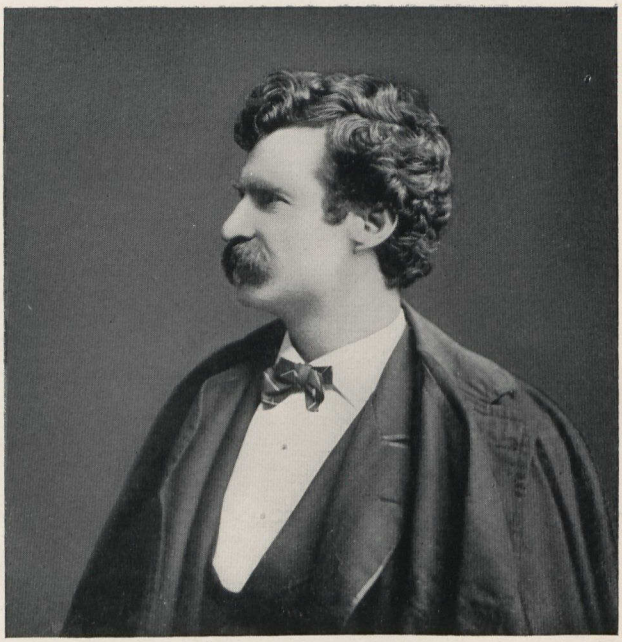
MARK TWAIN



Rischgitz

MARK TWAIN

(*A photograph from life taken in 1870*)

MARK TWAIN

BY

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WITH A FRONTISPIECE

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CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH—MARK TWAIN AS TOM SAWYER—1835–1857

THE name of Mark Twain stands for American Humour. More than that of any other writer, more than all names together, his name conveys the idea of American humour. For two generations his reputation and his fame have been carried all over the world with this connotation. He has become, as it were, an idea, a sort of abstraction, comparable to John Bull who represents England, or Sherlock Holmes who signifies an inexorable chain of logic.

The name, as all the world knows, is only a pen-name, selected after the conceited fashion of the day and taken from the river-calls of the Mississippi pilots. But its apt and easy sound rapidly obliterated the clumsy name of the writer who wore it. Samuel Langhorne Clemens died to the world, or rather, never lived for it. 'Mark Twain' became a household word for millions and came to signify not merely a par-

ticular person but an idea. Thus, side by side with Mr. Clemens, who is dead, there grew an imaginary person, Mark Twain, who became a legend and is living still.

American humour rose on the horizon of the nineteenth century as one of the undisputed national products of the new republic. Of American literature there was much doubt in Europe ; of American honesty, much more ; of American manners, more still. But American humour found a place alongside of German philosophy, Italian music, French wine, and British banking. No one denied its peculiar excellence and its distinctive national stamp.

Now Mark Twain did not create American humour nor the peculiar philosophy of life on which it rests. Before him were the Major Dowlings and the Sam Slicks, and in his own day the Petroleum Nasebys and the Orpheus C. Kerrs and others now resting as quietly as they do. But in the retrospect of retreating years nearly all the work of these sinks into insignificant dreariness or into a mere juggle of words, cheap and ephemeral. The name of only one contemporary, Artemus Ward, may be set in a higher light. Yet all that Ward ever wrote in words, as apart from his quaint

and pathetic personality, is but a fragment. If Mark Twain did not create American humour, he at least took it over and made something of it. He did for it what Shakespeare did for the English drama, and what Milton did for Hell. He 'put it on the map.' He shaped it into a form of thought, a way of looking at things, and hence a mode or kind of literature.

Not that Mark Twain did all this consciously. A deliberate humorist, seeking his effect, is as tiresome as a conscientious clown working by the week. His humour lay in his point of view, his angle of vision and the truth with which he conveyed it. This often enabled people quite suddenly to see things as they are, and not as they had supposed them to be—a process which creates the peculiar sense of personal triumph which we call humour. The savage shout of exultation modified down to our gurgling laugh greets the overthrow of the thing as it was. Mark Twain achieved this effect not by trying to be funny, but by trying to tell the truth. No one really knew what the German Kaiser was like till Mark Twain dined with him. No one really *saw* the painted works of the old masters till Mark Twain took a look at them. The absurd multiplicity of the saints

was never appreciated till Mark Twain counted them by the gross. The futility of making Egyptian mummies was never realized till he measured them by the cord as firewood. People who had tried in vain to rise to the dummy figures and the sentimental unreality of Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* got set straight on chivalry and all its works when they read *The Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's Court.* 'The boys went grailing,' says the Yankee, in reference to the pursuit of the Holy Grail by the Knights of the Round Table. 'The boys went grailing.' Why not?

Readers who had tried in vain to feel impressed and reverent over Tennyson's impossible creations felt an infinite relief in seeing them reduced to this familiar footing. Thus in a score of books and in a thousand anecdotes and phrases there was conveyed to the world something and somebody which it knew as Mark Twain.

All the rest of the man, the other aspects of his mind and personality, was left out of count. The flaming enthusiasms, the fierce elemental passion against tyranny, against monarchy, against hell, against the God of the Bible—all this was, and is, either unknown or forgotten. It has to be. The composite picture,

filled in line by line, would leave a new person to be called Samuel L. Clemens. The 'Mark Twain' of the legend would crumble into dust.

In any case, Mark Twain only half-expressed himself. Of the things nearest to his mind he spoke but low or spoke not at all. He would have liked to curse England for the Boer War, to curse America for the Philippine conquest, to curse the Roman Catholic Church for its past, and the Czar of Russia for his present. Instinct told him that had he done so, the Mark Twain legend that had filled the world would pass away. The kindly humorist with a corn-cob pipe would also be a rebel, an atheist, an anti-clerical.

So it was that Mark Twain's nearest and dearest thoughts were spoken only in a murmur, and the world laughed, thinking this some new absurdity; or were left unspoken, and the world never knew; or were published after he was dead, when no one could catch him. The kindly conspiracy was played out to the end.

It is better that it should be so. It leaves the legendary Mark Twain and his work and his humour as one of the great things of nineteenth-century America.

American he certainly was. He had the

advantage, or disadvantage, of being brought up solely in his own country, remote from its coasts, with no contact with the outside world, in the days when America was still America. He lived, and died, before the motion picture had flickered the whole world with similarity, and before rapid transport had enabled every country to live on the tourists of all the others. His childhood was spent in an isolation from the outside world now beyond all conception. Nor was the isolation much relieved by mental contact. Like Shakespeare and Dickens, young Sam Clemens had little school and no college. He thus acquired that peculiar sharpness of mind which comes from not going to school, and that power of independent thought obtained by not entering college. It was this youthful setting which enabled him to become what he was.

Here are some of the essential facts about his early life which need to be mentioned even in a biography.

Samuel Langhorne Clemens was born on the thirtieth of November in 1835 in a frontier settlement which he himself called the ' almost invisible village of Florida, Monroe County, Missouri.' His father and mother were people

as impoverished and as undistinguished as one could wish. Both came of plain pioneer stock, the father originally from Virginia, the mother from Kentucky. Mark Twain's father, John Clemens, seems to have been a kindly but shiftless person, succeeding at nothing, but dreaming always of a wonderful future. At intervals in an impoverished youth he had picked up an education and for a time attended a frontier law school. But he turned his hand to store-keeping, to house-building, to anything; and his mind to dreaming. He and his wife Jane went and settled in the mountain wilderness of East Tennessee. The older brothers and sisters of the family, 'the first crop of children,' were born there. Then John Clemens, with the restlessness of the frontiersman, moved from one habitat to another, and presently passed on to the new State of Missouri just beginning its existence. But he had meantime managed to raise four hundred dollars and with it to buy a vast tract of land, of about a hundred thousand acres. For the rest of his life the elder Clemens was inspired by visions of his Tennessee land and what it would mean for the future of his descendants. These dreams he passed on to his descendants as their chief legacy.

The Tennessee land contained great forests of yellow pine, beds of oil, deposits of coal and iron and copper, an El Dorado of wealth as we see it now. But in those days the timber was unsaleable for lack of transport, coal was unusable, and petroleum a mere curiosity of the marshes. Yet Clemens managed, with a wrench, to pay his five dollars a year in taxes, and dreamed of wealth to come. After his death the land was muddled away and parted with for next to nothing, till the last ten thousand acres were sold in 1894 for two hundred dollars. But the inspiration of the Tennessee land served as the background of *The Gilded Age* and helped to fashion the cheery optimism of Colonel Sellers; converted into literature and the drama it earned a fortune.

Side by side with the legend of the Tennessee land and the golden future still to come went another family legend, a very frequent one with impoverished families of unknown origin in America. This was the tradition of noble descent from a collateral branch of a great English family. Mark Twain's mother, being a Lampton of Kentucky, could be converted by the mere change of a letter into a Lambton of the noble family of the earldom of Durham. The Clemenses, with a similar twist, could

descend from or ascend to Geoffrey Clement, the regicide judge of Oliver Cromwell's day. But there is no need to linger over the Clemenses' claim to noble birth. It is shared by all of us in North America who can give no exact account of our remote origin. At any rate it served, along with the Tennessee dream, as the basis of the story to be called *The American Claimant.*

The Clemens family left the log village of Florida when little Sam was not yet four years old (1839). But his connection with the locality did not end there. An uncle and aunt and cousins lived on a farm about four miles from Florida, and he spent some part of every year there till he was twelve years old. Many of his most vital impressions and many of his fondest recollections centred around this Missouri farm. Even in old age he could recall 'the solemn twilight and mystery of the deep woods, the earthy smell, the faint odours of the wild flowers, the sheen of rain-washed foliage, the rattling clatter of drops when the wind shook the trees, the far-off hammering of wood-peckers and the muffled drumming of wood pheasants in the remoteness of the forest.' Beyond the woods again was 'the prairie and

its loneliness and peace with a vast hawk hanging motionless in the sky.'

From the setting and surrounding of this farm of his uncle was drawn much of Mark Twain's literary inspiration. Here was 'Uncle Daniel,' a middle-aged negro slave, converted later into 'Nigger Jim' of *Huckleberry Finn.* Indeed the whole farm, as Mark Twain himself explains in his autobiography, was adopted into the story; his uncle, John Quarles, becomes 'Silas Phelps,' and the farm is moved, uncle, aunt and all, down to Arkansas. 'It was all of six hundred miles,' he tells us proudly, 'but it was no trouble. It was not a very large farm — five hundred acres, perhaps — but I could have done it if it had been twice as large.'

Note how typical of Mark Twain's humour, on its mechanical side, is this wilful confusion between the form of words and the facts conveyed.

But though the Missouri farm supplied many of his fondest recollections in later life, the real boyhood home of Sam Clemens was the little town of Hannibal on the Missouri side of the Mississippi River. It was a 'steamboat town,' half-asleep and half-awake, with slavery drudging in the sunlit streets, and manufacture

trying to start into life, and with the great river and the river steamers as its glory.

Here John Clemens settled as a 'merchant,' that is, kept store, with a random pursuit of the law. His election (as in Florida) to be a local justice of the peace kept alive his title of 'judge.' But the circumstances of the family drifted and oscillated between a respectable competence and poverty, till the untimely death of the judge made poverty an anchorage.

Hannibal was a slave town in a slave state, with the daily sight and use and custom of slavery as a part and parcel of its life accepted and unquestioned. This was before the time when the soil was torn and riven with the Kansas-Nebraska quarrel, and before yet the ground trembled with the approaching conflict. The aspect of slavery was as familiar to that generation as the aspect of slums and pauperism to the generation that followed it. And it passed with as little protest. It was part of life as people knew it, and it drew its sanction, or at least its apology, from the fact that it was there.

It was scarcely possible for an unschooled boy of a Missouri village to surpass in outlook the people among whom he lived. Mark Twain himself has told later in his auto-

biography, in a chapter written in the middle 'nineties, how 'natural' slavery had seemed fifty years before.

'In my school days,' he writes, 'I had no aversion to slavery. I was not aware that there was anything wrong about it. No one arraigned it in my hearing; the local papers said nothing against it; the local pulpit taught us that God approved it, that it was a holy thing, and that the doubter need only look in the Bible if he wished to settle his mind.'

Yet he never liked slavery, never accepted it. It ran counter to the simple principles of right and wrong, of equality and fairness, on which his mentality was based. Mark Twain always tried to think in elementary terms, to reduce everything to a plain elementary form and to judge it so. By this process much of his humour was formed, and all of his philosophy. He knew nothing of relativity, of things right in one place and wrong in another, righteous in one day and wicked in another. Into such a code slavery could not be made to fit.

Not that Mark Twain ever came out as a champion or a protagonist against slavery. He never came out as a champion or protagonist against anything—or never for long. The mental fatigue of being a champion was

contrary to the spirit of his genius. There are in his books none of the fierce diatribes of Charles Dickens against the 'American institution.' But he grew to dislike it, and then to hate even the memory of it, and the references to it in his books are all the more scathing from this matter-of-fact realism.

Readers of *Huckleberry Finn* will recall the passage where Huck is accounting for his turning up at the Arkansas farm.

'*It was the grounding of the steamer,*' he explains to Aunt Sally, '*that kept us back. We blowed out a cylinder head.*'

'*Good gracious, anybody hurt?*'

'*No'm. Killed a nigger.*'

'*Well, it's lucky; because sometimes people do get hurt.*'

Pages of argument and volumes of history could not say more than this.

But the real feature of the life of little Sam Clemens and his playmates and fellow-citizens in Hannibal was the Mississippi River. It flowed past the town in a majestic stream, a mile wide from Missouri to the Illinois shore, coming from the unknown wilderness of the North and moving on to the infinite distance of the Gulf of Mexico. What the sea is to the

English children of the Channel coast, the Mississippi was to the children of the river towns of the Middle West.

These were the great days of the river. The railroad was still unknown in the West, the high-road non-existent, the motor-car and the aeroplane mere dreams of the scientist. Transport was all by water, and on the Mississippi and its great tributaries there was developed a system of passenger steamboat navigation, unique in all the world. Mark Twain himself has described in numberless passages in his *Life on the Mississippi* and in *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* the glories of the Mississippi steamboat.

Till his father died, little Samuel Langhorne Clemens lived in Hannibal somewhere between affluence and poverty, unaware of either. He had his full share of the careless happiness of childhood, and the fine, free adventure of boyhood on the frontier. There was the river, and the islands, the forests beyond, and above all, the great cave under the river bluff below the town. Sam Clemens was Tom Sawyer, and the adventurous fun of his childhood has passed into the world's literature.

Of education he had but little. Till he was twelve years old he attended school in his

native town. He learned to 'read and write and cipher,' as the phrase was, with a little elementary geography and history. Beyond that, nothing. High school he never saw; college he never knew. Nearly all that he acquired he picked up for himself. He seems to have carried in himself a native desire for information, in particular for facts and figures, which was perhaps increased and strengthened by the early cessation of his schooling. In the preface to one of his books (*Roughing It*), he tells us that 'information stewed out of him naturally like the precious attar of roses from the otter.' This may or may not have been true. But, at any rate, information all through his life 'stewed *into* him.' He was fond of facts and figures, guide-books and statistics. He liked to calculate how many feet and inches there would be in a 'light year,' and such things as that.

There seem, indeed, to be two distinct means by which a man of native genius may succeed in life. The one is by receiving a sound and complete education; the other by not getting any at all. It is likely that if Mark Twain had attended college and learned to rehearse the wisdom of other men and to repeat the standardized judgments of the past, he would

have been badly damaged by the process. It is the crowning triumph of his life that Oxford in his old age should have awarded him its honorary degree, doctor of literature. But if he had ever earned and received its B.A., it would probably have knocked all the ' Mark Twain ' out of him.

When John Clemens died, school ended for his son and work began. He had a brother, Orion Clemens, ten years older than himself, who had already taken up the trade of a printer. Sam followed his example, became a printer's apprentice ' for his board and clothes,' and for ten years—from 1847 till 1857—followed the trade. As far as the record goes, these seem to be the dreariest and least significant years of his life. He worked at first as an apprentice in his home town, then assisted his brother Orion (in 1850) in getting out a sheet called the *Hannibal Journal*. He even contributed two sketches to the *Saturday Evening Post* of Philadelphia ; they were accepted without pay and never identified. In 1853 he set out to see the world, printing as he saw it ; worked on the *Evening News* in St. Louis ; then visited New York and Philadelphia, working in both places ; and so after

two years back to join his brother in Keokuk (Iowa), printing still.

There is but little surviving intimate account of this youthful period of Mark Twain's life. A few letters sent to his family from New York and elsewhere have been preserved. They seem to differ in nothing from any other letters written by any young man who had come to New York from the Far West and describes to the home folk such marvels of the Latting Observatory, 'height about 280 feet,' and the Croton Aqueduct, 'which could supply every family in New York with a hundred barrels of water a day.' Among such touches of rustic wonder one looks in vain for the signs of emerging genius. Yet at least they reflect industrious days of hard work at the printer's case, and long evenings spent in devouring books from the free printers' library. Meantime he is saving up money so that he may take his mother for a trip to Kentucky next spring. 'Tell ma,' he writes, 'that my promises are faithfully kept.' The 'promises' referred to a pledge which his mother had imposed, one might say inflicted, on him in the formula, 'I do solemnly swear that I will not throw a card or drink a drop of liquor while I am gone.'

Thus early in Mark Twain's life there entered

a conflict between his natural ideas of conduct and belief and the pietistic code which he accepted from those he loved—his mother, his wife, his domestic circle. This conflict has been called by one of his most interesting critics the 'ordeal' of his life. It never left him, and he carried it, so to speak, beyond the grave in the works that he wrote for publication when he should be dead. Mark Twain never really believed in the creed and the code of those who dictated to him. But he preferred, as it were, to accept it and then to rebel against it. His was that characteristic American attitude, at least for the America of his day, of alternating between prayer and profanity, emotional belief and iconoclastic denial, asceticism and a spree, hard work and a bust, cold water and raw rum—with nowhere a happy medium, an accepted path and way. Out of this national phase of development has sprung much of the legislation of the United States, and most of the worst of it. Mark Twain was in this, as in all else, a true American.

The sturdy and robust intelligence of young Sam Clemens need not have fortified itself with an oath against the temptations of a king on cardboard. On the other hand, the

fact remains that young Sam Clemens the printer lived straight and worked hard, and kept adding every day to his knowledge of the Croton Aqueduct and the Latting Observatory. No doubt he was not very distinguishable from other young printers also not 'throwing' a card. Jumping on and off the water waggon, getting religion and losing it, swearing off cards and swearing on again, are favourite American performances, unknown to older and duller civilizations.

But the printer's trade was not destined to claim young Sam Clemens as its own, nor the cities of the East to contain his spirit. There seems to have been in him a certain restlessness calling him afar. As nearly as the boy could interpret it, the call was for South America—at that time a vague, almost fabulous land of gold-mines and revolutions. To get to the Amazon—his proposed destination—he left his job at Cincinnati (whither he had wandered again from Keokuk) and took ship on the river steamer *Paul Jones*, which brought him as far as New Orleans. Beyond that, fortune showed no means of attaining the Amazon. But in return it threw in his way, as he wandered about the levee and the wharves of New Orleans, an opportunity that he had coveted

in vain for years—the chance to become a pilot's apprentice on the great river. With that the first period of Mark Twain's career—his servitude as a printer—came to an end, and gave place to the open life of the river and the Far West that was to fashion his genius and inspire his thought.

II

LIFE ON THE MISSISSIPPI

1857–1861

WHEN the youthful Sam Clemens turned his back on printing to follow his fortune on the river and in the West, he may be said, in a modern overworked phrase, to have 'found himself.' Put very simply, he turned into Mark Twain.

It was the West, the river and the prairie, the Nevada desert and the Rocky Mountains and the sunlit shores of the Pacific, and with it the new civilization of the West, raw but virile, that nurtured the genius that never could have blossomed in a New York boarding-house or a Philadelphia printing-room. The West made Mark Twain. All that he wrote has its basis there. It supplies the point of view, the 'eye of innocence,' with which he was able later on to look upon Europe. His western life began on the Mississippi River. It resumed the play of childhood, broken ten years before.

Readers of the book that was published later as *Life on the Mississippi* do not need to be reminded of the romance, the interest and the humours of Mark Twain's pilot days. He has told the story so well that no one can follow him. The fascination of the river steamers, the pomp and luxury with which they seemed to glitter in an age of ox-waggons, mules, frame-houses and log churches, make the position of the pilot, seated sky-high in the pilot-house, almost one of majesty. Mark Twain, as a young man, had no higher ambition than to go on the river as a pilot. No doubt, in the dull hours of trying to set '10,000 ems of type a day,' he often dreamed himself just such a sky-high pilot, the envy of mankind. In vain he had often sought an opening. And now by chance fate threw it in his way when he was stranded in New Orleans looking vainly towards South America. Chance threw him into the company of one Mr. Horace Bixby, a famous pilot of his day, and afterwards his lifelong friend. He agreed with the young man to 'teach him the Mississippi River from New Orleans to St. Louis' for the sum of five hundred dollars chargeable against his future wages.

Mark Twain records how he 'entered on the

small enterprise of "learning" twelve or thirteen hundred miles of the Mississippi River ' with easy confidence, and records how he felt disillusioned, appalled and hopeless to find that he must know the river not only by day but in total darkness, not only upwards but downwards, not only at high water but at any water ; must learn to follow all the shifts of sand-bars and snags, and that, too, at a day when the Mississippi bore neither buoys nor lights to indicate its tortuous channels. ' If my ears hear aright,' he reflected, in the course of his early instruction, ' I have not only to get the names of all the towns and islands and bends, but I must get up a warm personal acquaintance with every old snag and one-limbed cotton-wood and obscure wood-pile that ornaments the banks of this river for twelve hundred miles ! '

What is more, he did it. Within eighteen months he got his licence ; before the job ended (with the Civil War) he was second to few on the river. His knowledge of the great river and his abiding feeling for it became part of his life and the inspiration, as in the pages of *Huckleberry Finn*, of the finest of his work.

From his Mississippi days Samuel Clemens

also carried away his pen-name of Mark Twain, which presently nullified the work of his godfather's and godmother's.

The origin of the *nom de plume* runs thus: 'Mark Twain' is the pilot's designation for two fathoms of water. Now it happened that there was in Sam Clemens's pilot days an ancient and experienced pilot, a Captain Sellers, who sometimes contributed to the New Orleans papers little bits of wisdom and forecast about the river, as crude in form as they were valuable in fact. These contributions to the press were signed 'Mark Twain.' Clemens, still something of a journalist at heart, wrote a little burlesque of his senior's prophecies which called forth a laugh that echoed up the Mississippi—and incidentally broke old Sellers's heart with its ridicule. Young Clemens learned for ever a lesson in the cruelty of 'fun,' and seldom sinned again. But later on, when Sellers was dead and beyond injury, he annexed the pen-name for himself.

Mark Twain's pilot days were ended by the outbreak of the Civil War and the blockade of the river. He succeeded in getting north from New Orleans to his own State on the last boat that got up the river (January 1861). The part he took at the opening of the war was

unheroic if not inglorious. He enlisted, as a Confederate, in some sort of irregular band which professed to be cavalry. Their aim was to 'liberate the soil of Missouri'—from what, it was not clearly understood.

But Mark Twain dropped out of the conflict almost at once and saw nothing of warfare. He himself has narrated the episode with that characteristic mixture of fact and exaggeration which baffles foreign readers in all his 'western' books, in his sketch called *A Campaign That Failed.*

But the truth is that his heart was not in the Civil War on either side. His common sense showed him that the war, in spite of the urgent denials of President Lincoln and the rest, had something to do with slavery. He could not fight to maintain *that.* But he was equally far from being a 'Yankee.' His brief sojourn as a youth at New York and Philadelphia was that of a stranger in a strange land. Of New England and its traditions of liberty, piety, intolerance and 'culture' he as yet knew nothing at all; nor ever sympathized with it later. His heart was neither in the North nor the South, but in the new West.

Thither he decided to go. His older brother, Orion Clemens, had contrived to secure an

appointment as secretary of the new territory of Nevada. Sam Clemens offered to go along with his brother as ' private secretary to the secretary,' an office which he himself describes as a ' unique sinecure,' there being ' nothing to do and no salary.' Indeed, it was Sam Clemens's savings as a pilot which financed the journey to the West, his brother Orion being invited by the United States, as was Mr. Pickwick by the Pickwick Club, to travel at his own expense.

These, of course, were the days of the rise of the American West, from a vast untraversed wilderness to an El Dorado of gold and silver. The gold discoveries in California had started the ' 'forty-niners ' on the trail. In the decade following, a flock of prospectors found their way into the mountains and disclosed the fabulous wealth of silver-bearing loads of the district of the Carson Valley, a part of the Mormon territory of Utah. It was the organization of this district as the territory of Nevada which gave to the two Clemens brothers the opportunity of taking part in the western movement. To get to Nevada they must go overland by the stage. There was as yet no railway across the continent, nor was there till some years after the Civil War. To reach California one

might make the stormy voyage around Cape Horn ; or choose the dangerous Isthmus route, by Panama or Nicaragua ; or the stage route over the prairies and mountains. For Nevada the stage route—only seventeen hundred miles ! —was the obvious choice.

Behold, then, the Clemens brothers mounting the coach at St. Jo, Missouri, climbing up on the mail-sacks to bid farewell to warfare in the East and seek peace among the savages.

III

ROUGHING IT IN THE WEST
1861–1866

ORION CLEMENS, secretary for the territory of Nevada, and his brother Sam, ex-pilot and retired Confederate soldier, set out from St. Jo for Carson City, Nevada, on the 26th of July 1861. Before them was seventeen hundred miles of prairie, mountain and desert, and nineteen days of glorious transit.

Mark Twain, in his book called *Roughing It*, has recalled in his own way his experience of the journey. There is no doubt of the exhilaration, the excitement, the thrill of it. But his account of it, like all his western books, is a standing perplexity to many of his British admirers. Where do the facts end and the lies begin? How much is statistical fact and how much is sheer exuberant exaggeration? For instance, is there, asks the reader, such an animal as the 'Jackass Rabbit'? Is it true that such an animal sits and 'thinks about its sins,' and then

moves off so fast that 'long after he is out of sight you can hear him whizz'? Many British readers have felt that this is open to doubt.

Or take the account of the Mormon settlement at Salt Lake. Is it really true that Brigham Young looked round to find one of his children and then gave up and said, 'I thought I would have known the little cub again, but I don't'? Seems a little hard to believe, doesn't it? Or again, is the water in the Humbolt county so full of alkali that it is like lye? or the water in Lake Tahoe so clear that one can see through eighty feet of it? or is there a 'washoe' wind which upsets stage-coaches and which blows so hard in Carson City as to account for the prevalence of so many bald-headed people, and which is described as a 'soaring dust drift about the size of the United States'?

In this wonderland of marvel and adventure the American reader easily finds his way. He knows by instinct that Mark Twain did *not* hear the same story told about Horace Greeley four hundred and eighty-four times; and he knows, on the other hand, that the claims staked out on the Ophir mine *were* worth four thousand dollars a foot; and that Mark and his friends *were* caught at night in a snowstorm and *did*

actually give themselves up for lost and huddle to sleep in the snow, waking to find a hotel forty-five feet away. But he does not believe the story, told in another connection, of the group of congressmen snowbound on a western train, driven at last to cannibalism and making their choice of successive victims with the proper forms of legislative procedure. One is reminded of poor John Bright's perplexity over hearing Mark Twain's contemporary, Artemus Ward, lecture in London. 'Many of the young man's statements,' he said, 'appear overdrawn and open to question.' Mark Twain himself has humorously explained this western method of his narration. 'I speak,' he says in the *Innocents Abroad*, 'of the north shore of Lake Tahoe, where one can count the scales on a trout at a depth of a hundred and eighty feet. I have tried to get this statement off at par here [he is writing from Europe], but with no success; so I have been obliged to negotiate it at fifty per cent. discount. At this rate I find some takers; perhaps the reader will receive it on the same terms, ninety feet instead of a hundred and eighty.' What is one to make of this? It seems to be giving the reader 'what the traffic will bear.'

But though overdrawn in the single state-

ment, Mark Twain's western writings give in their entirety a wonderful and fascinating picture of the new land of hope. It has all passed away so long ago and the country changed so completely that perhaps the fascination is all the greater. 'Where once the silent prairie saw the Indian and the scout, the Swede with alcoholic breath sets rows of cabbage out,'—so has a later songster chronicled the passing of frontier west.

Mark Twain's western life lasted in all some five and a half years. From his sinecure duties as secretary he turned to mining, caught for a time the fever of the day, and once only missed a fortune by quitting his washing-out of pay dirt a few bucketsful too soon. By a natural and easy transition he turned to journalism. These were the palmy days of the little local paper, favoured by isolation, springing up as easily as mushrooms and cultivated by hand. Such papers were the natural ground for local jests and squibs, and the practical jokes and hoaxes which passed for fun with the people of eighty years ago.

Sam Clemens, working as a surface miner, began contributing a little to a paper called the *Territorial Enterprise*, published by Joe Goodman at Virginia City. The editor—who was also

the proprietor—was struck by the quality of the sketches, and sent to the writer a proposal to join in the editorship at a salary of twenty-five dollars a week. Clemens dropped the pick and shovel, walked a hundred and thirty miles to take over the job, and with that stepped into a new life.

At the time when Sam Clemens abandoned mining and betook himself definitely to journalism (August 1862), he was twenty-six years old. He was a robust-looking young man with a mop of sandy hair turning to auburn and a blue eye filled with life and intelligence. In his infancy he had been a puny child, but the outdoor life of farm and bush and river had done its work and had presently endowed him with that deep-seated energy and vital power which is the birthright of the frontiersman.

As a young and rising pilot he had liked to make himself in point of dress a mirror of fashion. As a miner he did the exact opposite, outdoing his fellows in the careless roughness of his dress and the lazy slouch of his walk. He possessed, and accentuated by use, a slow and drawling speech. In short, he tried to make himself a ' character,' and succeeded to the full measure of his wish. A large part of his popularity and his local reputation in his

Nevada days sprang from the attraction of this easy and careless manner and appearance. Second nature though it became, there was beneath it an eager and a restless mind, filled in his mining days with the fever of the search for gold, dreaming of fortune. At times even his robust health broke under the strain of the intensity of his pursuit of fortune.

But the outside world saw nothing of this. By nature easy and optimistic, on the surface at least, he enjoyed at this time all the careless exuberance of the morning of life, while his easy disposition and his peculiar cast of thought and drollery of speech endeared him to those about him. Many of the friends he made at this time he made for life, such as Horace Bixby his pilot-master, Joe Goodman and Steve Gillis of the *Enterprise*.

By disposition Mark Twain was peaceful rather than belligerent. He lived in a rough world among rough men, with untamed Indians, desperadoes and outlaws as part of the environment of a western life. Under such circumstances no one could venture to be timorous, but Mark was at least not looking for a fight. He himself has described his feelings on finding himself in close contact with Slade, the most notorious 'bad man' and

'dead shot' of the West—afterwards to be hanged by the Vigilantes of Montana. Slade was at that time in charge of one of the eating-places of the Overland Company. 'He was about to take some coffee,' says the author of *Roughing It*, 'when he saw that my cup was empty. He politely offered to fill it, but although I wanted it, I politely declined. I was afraid he had not killed anybody that morning and might be needing diversion.'

Never was man more happily cast in his lot than young Sam Clemens when he joined the *Territorial Enterprise*. If he had become a reporter on the staff of an ordinary paper, he would have sickened rapidly at the drudgery of the task, the circumscribed round of duty, the necessity of carrying out the commands and ideas of other men. In fact, he did so sicken of it when later he held such a position as a reporter in San Francisco, and even as an editor and part-proprietor in Buffalo. But the *Enterprise* was an entirely different matter. The public of the roaring mining settlements cared nothing about foreign dispatches and world politics. Even the sound of the great war tearing the soil of the continent came faintly across the intervening two thousand miles. What the readers wanted was local stuff—

news of robberies, scraps, lucky finds—and above all, such was the mood of the time and place, local 'fun' about 'local' characters, personal touches, practical jokes, lies, and interchange of sarcastic 'cracks' between rival papers. For all this stuff 'Mark Twain' and his fellows were given a free hand. They wrote what they felt like writing; they were not so much 'reporters' as 'minstrels.' Looking back now on the surviving fragments of what Mark Twain wrote then, we can see emerging in it the outline of a clear and beautiful style, we can see already a striking power of phrase to convey the sights and sounds of nature. But we could hardly see all this except in the light of what happened after. In and of themselves Mark Twain's western sketches are of no account. Here, for example, is the *Petrified Man*, which set the camp in a roar because they appreciated it as the 'crack' at the local coroner who was supposed to hold an inquest over a body turned to rock centuries ago. But the story got somehow into the eastern papers as a fact, and that to the western mind was funnier still. The people in the West at that time seemed to have been moved to Homeric laughter every time they told a huge lie and got someone to believe it. Here again

is *My Bloody Massacre*, as entirely imaginary as the *Petrified Man*, but meant as a slap against a California mining company. The terrific joke lay in the fact that the 'Massacre' was committed—in the story—at a place where it couldn't have happened. The eastern papers, not knowing the locality, copied the story as an item of crime, at which the West slapped Mark on the back and roared again.

Into such life and such work the character of Sam Clemens fitted as into a mould. His skits and 'take-offs' and 'write-ups' became the delight of the territory. When he presently went to Carson City to 'write up' the legislature, he became about as important as the legislature itself and far more popular.

This may well have been the happiest time of Mark Twain's life. He and his fellow-minstrels led a roaring life, painting the town red, drinking imported champagne at the French restaurant, playing cards all night and practical jokes all day. Into their midst one day blew the young man Charles F. Browne (Artemus Ward), for whom the world still has a smile and a tear. He was of the same stamp and kind as Clemens, but his feet were already higher on the ladder of success. He was

'lecturing' in his own droll way, about anything or nothing, making money, touching Heaven and raising Hell. He 'caught on' instantly to Mark Twain, not as a local 'cut-up,' but as a real genius—urged him to strike out, to come East, to conquer the world.

There is something in the life of a new and roaring settlement—a mining town, a boom town—cut off from the rest of the world, which intensifies local interest, local character, and local personality. All men seem giants. All character is exceptional. All jokes become a roar. All lives appear intense. All episodes become Homeric and historic. Read, if one will, the history of early San Francisco or talk with the surviving old-timers of the Manitoba boom.

Such was the setting supplied for Mark Twain by the environment of Virginia City. 'Mark Twain' he was now by deliberate designation. The name was first signed to an *Enterprise* article of February 2, 1863. Henceforth he was Mark for the West.

The merry journalistic life at Virginia City was ended in a duel, the outcome of some particularly insulting jokes. How serious or

how comic the duel was, Heaven only knows. The account given in *Roughing It* is at least, like all else in that great work, partly true. But the new Territory in a moral moment had passed a law against duelling, and Mark Twain had to 'skip out.' He skipped to San Francisco. There he got a real place as a real reporter on the *Call*, a job which soon put the iron into his soul. It was no part of his nature to work at a routine task in a routine way. The management of the *Call* soon found him listless and careless in his work and 'let him go.' But he stayed on in San Francisco for a while—according to his own account, a poor outcast mendicant on the fringe of want. But this is only a legend—the western lie reasserting itself. In reality he never lacked the means of support; he wrote daily 'letters' for his old paper, the *Enterprise*, and did some 'pieces' for the *Californian Magazine*, and did very well. More than that, he was thrown in with Bret Harte and the group of young men whose genius was ripening under the favouring isolation of the Pacific Coast.

But again his journalism got him into trouble. His letters to the Virginia City *Enterprise* denouncing municipal corruption in San Francisco hurt the feelings of the city police. They

decided to make it hot for him. On which Mark Twain again skipped out, this time to the hills. Here he found refuge at the mining camp of Jim Gillis, the 'truthful James' of Bret Harte, a brother of the Steve Gillis of Nevada. Here and in the near-by Calaveras county Mark Twain spent the rainy winter of 1864-65, scratching round for surface gold and listening to the endless yarns of the miners in the bar-room of Angel's Camp (see Bret Harte for 'Abner Dean of Angel's'). Here was a solemn jackass who used to repeat to the point of weariness a solemn story about a frog—a jumping frog into which someone put shot to shut it out in what the Germans would call a frog-jump-money-bet-competition, and the English an 'open frog jump.' Mark Twain wrote up the story and sent it to New York for Artemus Ward's funny book. It missed the book, drifted into a newspaper, and became the famous *Jumping Frog*—vastly admired by those who haven't read it. But long before the *Jumping Frog* had found its way into print, its author had thrown down pick and shovel (missing a snug little fortune by one bucketful of dirt) and drifted back to San Francisco.

Here then was Mark Twain at the age of

thirty, the period of his western life drawing to a close, his career of success about to begin. His biographers have greatly exaggerated the amount of his achievement at this period. His western success as a journalist and a wit was purely local. A few of his ' pieces ' had drifted into the eastern papers, but the world at large had never heard of him.

Indeed, nothing that he had written was of any real value. The *Jumping Frog* he himself declared to be ' a villainous backwoods sketch,' and he was just about right. We are told that when it appeared in the New York press it set all America in a roar. This is nonsense. Even the America of 1865 did not roar so easily as that. The legend rests on the phrase of a California correspondent in New York who sent home items to a home paper, and is merely the kind of legend that grows up round the life-story of a great man. The truth is that Mark Twain was practically unknown, and deserved to be.

But now things changed. A San Francisco newspaper offered the young man a job as a special correspondent to go forth and ' write up ' the Sandwich Islands, in those days (1865) an unknown paradise, lost in the Pacific. Mark Twain undertook the task and carried it out

with wonderful success; saw, traversed, explored, and described the islands as no one else could have done; and sent also to his paper, by a piece of journalistic good luck, the first news of a disaster at sea—a 'scoop' of the first magnitude. His Sandwich Islands letters attracted great attention in California. They well deserved it. Apart from any incidental humour, they reveal that power of vivid description, that marvellous facility in conveying the sights and sounds in nature, which henceforth constitutes one of the distinctive charms of Mark Twain's work. He returned to San Francisco in a blaze of glory.

The blaze was rapidly turned to a conflagration. His friends persuaded him to give a lecture on his Sandwich Islands trip. This was new. Until now Mark had spoken a few times 'for fun' and made a burlesque speech or two on Carson City politics. But to attempt to talk for *money*—for a dollar a seat in a big public place—to be '*funny*' on a platform at a set hour, was as new and exciting as it was terrifying. His friends shoved him to it and took the biggest theatre in town. Mark advertised that the '*doors open at seven o'clock. The trouble begins at eight o'clock*,' and in due course found himself thrust out before the

lights, a huge manuscript in his hand, to receive a welcoming roar of applause that must be repaid in services. An hour or so later, when he ended his talk that had been carried along in billows of laughter, he left the platform with his head among the clouds, and on it a golden crown (October 2, 1866).

This was the beginning of his success as a lecturer, unrivalled except by that of his senior contemporary, Charles Dickens. The lecture on the Sandwich Islands was carried around the State of California and repeated in theatres, in halls, and on improvised platforms in mining camps, amid a continuous roar of laughter.

Mark Twain was now 'started' in earnest. He dreamed of wider fields—of a trip around the world. Alexander the Great wanted to conquer the world, Mark Twain wanted to write it up. He determined to follow the rising star of his success, to reverse the advice of Horace Greeley to his contemporaries and to 'go East.' He made a rough-and-ready arrangement with the *Alta* newspaper for sending them letters from somewhere or anywhere, then set off on the steamship *America* on December 15, 1866, to reach the east of the Isthmus route, and landed in New York on January 11, 1867. The Innocent was abroad.

IV

INNOCENTS ABROAD AND AT HOME
1867–1870

When Mark Twain landed in New York in January of 1867, he had in his mind an idea of travelling round the world and writing letters about it. But he was still a little vague as to how to begin. He started writing 'letters' from New York to the *Alta* of San Francisco, made a trip to the Mississippi to see his mother at St. Louis, visited his native town of Hannibal, made arrangements about publishing a book of sketches, and then opportunity came to him, just as it should, at the opportune moment.

He learned that the luxurious paddle-wheel steamer *Quaker City* would leave New York on an excursion trip across the Atlantic to the Mediterranean and the Holy Land. The ship would be 'provided with every necessary comfort, including library and musical instruments'; it would carry 'an experienced physician'; it would proceed—but it is un-

necessary to give further details. All the world knows of the *Quaker City* and its cargo of Innocents Abroad.

Mark Twain leaped at the chance. He proposed to the proprietors of the *Alta* that he should go on the excursion. They accepted the offer, forwarded his passage money, and promised him twenty dollars a letter for his correspondence.

To the elation caused by this prospect there was added just before he sailed the satisfaction of another laurel in his new crown of success. His friend, ' Governor Frank Fuller '—governor once of Utah and hence ' Governor ' for ever—was in New York. He insisted that Mark should lecture ; prophesied fame and a fortune, took the Cooper Institute and advertised ' a serio-humorous lecture concerning Kanakadom,' by ' Mark Twain ' (there was no Mr. Clemens any more). At the last moment it began to seem clear, to the lecturer's horror, that nobody was coming. Mark Twain as yet was not worth fifty cents. A great flood of free tickets was sent to all the school teachers within range. The lecture was given in a hall crowded to capacity, to an audience suffocated with laughter. Financially the lecture was a failure : it cost $500 ; the receipts were $300.

The generous 'Governor' made good the deficit. 'It's all right, Mark,' he said; 'the fortune didn't come, but the fame has arrived.'

And on June 8, 1867, in the glow of a new notoriety, Mark Twain sailed as one of the 'lions' of the *Quaker City*.

The sea voyage, as judged by our pampered standards of to-day, was dingy and drab enough. The paddle-wheel steamer, luxurious in 1867, would seem cramped and dim to-day; the speed a crawl. The passenger list contained a high percentage of ministers of the Gospel, spinsters and teachers, whose moral worth is out of proportion to their value as fun. In these days when all the women are young enough to dance, and all the girls are old enough to drink, the 'Innocents' seem a pretty dusty crowd. 'Debates' in the evening in the saloon seem poor stuff in an age of jazz music and radio. But after all, they had with them the unregenerate American bar, that covered a multitude of sins, and was worth more than a floating palace, dry.

The excursionists 'did' the Continent, from Paris to the Crimea, with Asia to the Holy Land and Africa to the pyramids. They got their money's worth. Without Mark Twain they

would have been only a set of spectacled American tourists, thumbing their guide-books, and trying to admire Giotto and remember when Vermicelli lived. Mark Twain waved over them the magic wand of inspired genius, and turned them into the merry group of Innocents Abroad, whose pilgrimage is part of history. The letters which he sent home to the *Alta* in California and to the *Tribune* in New York reached the public this time—east, west, and everywhere—and deserved to. When the boat returned to America (November 19, 1867), Mark Twain stepped off the *Quaker City* a celebrity. He had gone away a lamb —or at best a western mustang,—he came back a lion.

Success greeted him on his return like a tidal wave. All of a sudden, it seemed, the American nation knew him and acclaimed him. His success was not as sudden, as sweeping and as phenomenal as that of Dickens after the *Pickwick Papers*. But it was second only to it. And it had in it the same ingredient of personal affection. The public took Mark to its heart, as England had taken young 'Boz'; and with an added feeling of national pride unknown and unnecessary in the case of Dickens. Here was, at last, an *American* author.

The Longfellows and the Hawthornes and the Fenimore Coopers had written English literature in America. Here at last was a man who wrote American literature, and wrote it in and on Europe. The publication of the *Innocents Abroad* was the first step in the Americanization of Europe now reaching its climax.

No wonder success came in a flood. A lecture bureau offered him a contract for eighteen nights at a hundred dollars a night. A western senator wanted him as literary secretary. The New York *Tribune* put him on their staff. All of the papers—the *Tribune*, the *Herald*, the San Francisco *Alta*, the Chicago press, the magazines, wanted letters and articles. And meanwhile his first book, *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County and Other Sketches*, which had appeared (May 1, 1867) just before the *Quaker City* left, was on the market and selling.

Bigger things were to come.

In Hartford, Connecticut, was a sagacious and wide-minded publisher, Elisha Bliss of the American Publishing Company. He saw at once the mine of humour, and of gold, in Mark Twain's work. He proposed to bring out the *Quaker City* letters as a book of travel. It was Mark Twain's visits to Hartford to consult

with Bliss that made his first connection with that town—presently to be his home—and his friendship with the Reverend 'Joe' Twitchell, henceforth his closest associate. The book arrangements, generous enough, were soon made.

Then came a hitch. The *Alta* people, having paid for the *Quaker City* trip and paid for the letters that described it, had got the idea in their heads that the literary material was theirs, and proposed to publish it. Hearing this, Mark Twain was consumed with fury at 'the *Alta* thieves.' It is unfortunate how often in his literary life Mark Twain felt that he was being cheated by a pack of rogues, and how many were the associations and friendships shattered thereby. Like most geniuses, he alternated in his view of his work between utter despair and absolute conceit. He was thus inclined to be first grateful to people for helping him, then angry with them for cheating him.

In the case of the *Alta*, he did an amazing but a wise thing. Letters and telegraphs could serve no purpose. He decided to 'see the thieves face to face,' set off for California (1868) —by sea, via Aspinwall. Once on the spot he easily persuaded the *Alta* people—noble fellows now and not thieves—to let go their claims.

He only stayed long enough in San Francisco to deliver a lecture on the *Quaker City* trip—a pandemonium of success. Then on July 2, 1868, he made, at a dinner, a speech of farewell to the wonderland of the West, which he never saw again.

Back in New York (July 28, 1868), he picked up again the golden thread of success. The ensuing season was spent in getting his new book ready and in a triumphant lecture tour of the cities of the East. His lecture was called 'A Vandal Abroad.' He floated from place to place on a rising tide of national admiration. Money rolled in a flood. The season, his first on the platform, netted him $8000 in some sixty nights. Mr. Paine, his matchless biographer, quotes for us a contemporary journalist's impression at the time.

'Mark Twain is a man of medium height, about five feet ten, sparsely built, with dark reddish-brown hair and moustache. His features are fair, his eyes keen and twinkling. He dresses in scrupulous evening attire. In lecturing he hangs about the desk, leaning on it, or flirting around the corners of it, then marching or counter-marching in the rear of it. He seldom casts a glance at his manuscript.'

Strangely enough, at this period, even with

the exceptional success that had crowned his lecturing and the literary reputation, if not fame, that his writing had brought, Mark Twain did not yet think of himself as an author, or contemplate writing as his profession. He looked on himself as a journalist, a newspaper-man, and his mind still ran rather in terms of a flow of 'funny pieces' than the creation of a masterpiece. Indeed, up to this time, America took him still as a 'funny man,' not an author, and he followed, as we all do, the estimate of his fellows. He therefore looked about for a newspaper opening, bought with his accumulated surplus (one won't say 'savings'; he never saved) a share in the Buffalo *Express*, and sat down at the editorial desk (August 14, 1869). He proposed evidently to use the desk in the old Nevada fashion, for he announced to his readers, 'I shall not often meddle with politics because we have a political editor who is already excellent and only needs to serve a term or two in the penitentiary to be perfect. I shall not write any poetry unless I conceive a spite against the subscribers.'

This cheerful form of editing, combined with lecturing and writing sketches for the *Galaxy* magazine in New York, kept him at work for the year 1869.

But meantime a new inspiration to effort and a greater happiness than fame had come into Mark Twain's life. He had met the girl who was to be his wife, he had entered on that lifelong devotion which only ended at the grave. Among the pilgrims of the *Quaker City* had been a young man from Elmira, New York, by name Charlie Langdon. One day (it was in the Bay of Smyrna) Langdon showed to his friend Clemens a beautiful little miniature of his beloved sister Olivia Langdon. As with David Copperfield and Dora, it was all over. Mark Twain fell so deeply in love that he never again came to the surface.

A month or so after the return of the pilgrims, the Langdons were in New York and young Charlie invited his celebrated friend to dine with them at the old St. Nicholas Hotel. There Mark Twain saw and loved at sight the girl of his day-dreams. After dinner they went to Steinway Hall to hear a lecture by the world-famous Charles Dickens, now on his second American tour (the first was twenty-six years before) and carrying all before him—including the remnants of his own strength and life—in the tumult of his success. It is strange to think of Mark Twain, seated beside his frail little sweetheart—she was that to his mind

already—listening to Dickens's impassioned rendering of the storm scene in *David Copperfield.*

The dinner party was followed by a call, and a little later by an invitation to visit the family at Elmira; also by Mark Twain 'dropping in' during a lecture tour. In fact, it was soon clear that this impetuous young man was 'courting Livy.' Knowing a celebrity is one thing; letting him 'court Livy' is another.

For Olivia Langdon was in complete contrast to her dynamic lover. She was as delicate as he was robust, as devout as he was sceptical, as orthodox as he was unconventional. For years, in consequence of a fall, she had been an invalid. Then she had been healed, through a sort of miracle, by a faith-healer. It left her with a deep sense of religious faith, that any doubt or irreverence wounded to the heart. But marriages are made in heaven—or were, in that Victorian age. To obtain the hand of Livy Langdon young Mr. Clemens, after the fashion of the time, must obtain the consent of her father and the approval of all her family. Now the Langdons were well-to-do people of the merchant class, orthodox, conventional, devout. To them, Mark Twain, arriving in a

queer suit of clothes, with a shock of red hair, a piercing eye, an intensity of intelligence masked with a drawling speech, was an arresting personality. He appeared as an uncouth genius, an uncut diamond, a dynamo. About him was the aureole of celebrity, somewhat dazzling to plain people. But it is one thing to feel flattered in having an uncut diamond or a dynamo in the parlour. It is another thing to give to it your fragile, innocent daughter. The more so as young Charlie Langdon must have known that the dynamo had a profane tongue, or worse, and a mind sceptical to the verge of sin.

Hence the courtship met, if not with opposition from the family, at least with a certain inertia. But love, as Mr. Robert Benchley has said, conquers all. Mr. Jarvis Langdon, shrewd after his degree, forgave the young lover and gave the family consent to an engagement that was announced on February 4, 1869. Nor did he do things by halves. Without the knowledge of his prospective son-in-law he bought and furnished a house in Buffalo (472 Delaware Avenue) and turned it over as a fairy gift for the wedding day (February 2, 1870).

Behold then Samuel L. Clemens—now become for everybody Mark Twain, the great

American humorist—the rough days of his western life put behind him, settled down at number 472 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, trying hard to be respectable. Here he lives the model life of a family man, joins in morning prayer and listens as best he can to the daily reading of the Scriptures. More than that, he even makes desperate efforts to give up smoking.

He has his wife at his side, his desk at his elbow, and the world at his feet. After all, what does tobacco matter? Let's have another chapter of Deuteronomy.

V

THE FLOOD-TIDE OF SUCCESS

1870–1877

On Mark Twain's wedding day his publishers handed him a cheque for $4000, as his royalty for three months' sale of the *Innocents Abroad.* The book was a success from the start; over 30,000 copies (at three dollars and a half) were sold in five months. The sales never stopped. We are told by those who know, that the *Innocents Abroad* is still the most widely sold travel book there is. The money received was the beginning of the phenomenal returns of Mark Twain's writings and plays and lectures. They should have made him a rich man. They never did. All his life he moved with a dark shadow of debt just behind him; always about to emerge into the sunshine of unbounded wealth, and never reaching it. In the end the shadow covered all the horizon; but as yet it was only a small dark cloud in a clear sky.

The book, *The Innocents Abroad, or the New*

Pilgrims' Progress, deserves all its success. It could not be written again. The time has passed. Travel is too common, the world too completely unified, to leave room for Innocents. Everybody has been everywhere—at least through the magic door of the moving-picture house. But in those days world-travel was still new. The book was read for its wonderful pictures of foreign scenery and foreign cities and queer foreign people; it was read for the intense light in which it revealed the past —the monuments, the art, the catacombs, the history of Europe. It was read by Americans for its intense scorn of the bygone tyranny of the old world. But more than for all these reasons put together (and multiplied), it was read because it was 'funny.'

The first day out at sea, with the sea-sick old gentleman murmuring 'Oh my!'—the Italian guide being rebuked in the matter of Christopher Columbus—the sheer burlesque thrown in to 'modernize' the gladiatorial fights of Rome—these things remain in the mind of readers for a lifetime. It is an amazing book, that seldom flags and never stops, undisfigured as yet by the prolixity that grew into Mark Twain's later writing—the garrulousness of self-assured old age.

It is the point of view that appeals. The book represents Europe as seen from the Rocky Mountains, Rome as interpreted from Carson City. Mark Twain in all his life and work saw only two things, Western America and Europe. Of the East (meaning the Eastern States) he was unaware. He lived in it, worked in it, and died in it, but he never saw it. The East was just his audience. A good actor never sees them.

The success of the *Innocents Abroad* not only reached over America but spread to England. Indeed it was in England that Mark Twain was first recognized as an 'author,' as a man of literary genius, by people of taste and cultivation. In America he was the delight of the uncultivated West; to the 'culture' of New England he was still regarded as an amusing western 'cut-up,' not to be classed, of course, with the solemn Emersons and the dignified Longfellows. Thus ever does enthroned dullness guard its sovereignty.

Seated thus in his new chair in Buffalo, Mark Twain planned all sorts of literary projects. It is amazing, from now on, how much he planned and never started; how much he started and never finished; how much he finished and threw away. He projected a six-

hundred-page book on the cruise of Noah's Ark—presumably a monumental piece of funny irreverence. All through his life he never realized that people who read the Bible don't want it made fun of, and people who don't read the Bible don't see any fun to make of it.

He planned and executed a cheerful article on *God, Ancient and Modern.* 'The sole solicitude of the God of the Bible,' so he wrote, 'was about a handful of truculent nomads. He worried and fretted over them in a peculiarly and distractingly human way. One day he coaxed and petted them beyond their due, the next he harried and lashed them beyond their deserts. He sulked, he cursed, he raged, he grieved, according to his mood and the circumstances . . . when the fury was on him, he was blind to all reason—he not only slaughtered the offender, but even his harmless little children and his cattle.'

This is the real Mark Twain—elemental, defiant.

His wife would not let him publish the article. It was suppressed as one of the first victims of the new 'censorship.' Mark Twain's biographers are fond of telling us that after his marriage his wife became the censor and the editor of his work. He himself says so, with

affectionate gratitude, in the preface to his *Joan of Arc* twenty-five years later. For all that he wrote henceforth Olivia Clemens, 'Livy,' became his critic and his censor, cutting away what was wrong, and schooling him into culture. Nothing must be printed unless 'Livy' gave it her approval.

Put very simply, this means that what he wrote must fit into the frame of what was thought 'nice' in Elmira, N.Y., in 1870; that he mustn't write awful words like God damn! —though he may write d—n (with a stroke), provided that it is in a half-playful way and put into the mouth of a churchgoing character. He mustn't write about nasty things except in a nice way. Crime must be lighted up into melodrama—as Mr. Dickens did it. Love must sigh and languish—but keep its clothes on (Mark would have said, keep its pants on). Death itself may be as melodramatic as the drunkard's fate, as poignant as the death of little Paul, but it must be 'respectable'—and never wander out of sight of the loving pastor, the kindly old clergyman, or the 'stern minister' to whose business it belongs. Thus the whole of literature must be 'stewed' in respectability before being served.

These were the fetters and this was the editing

imposed upon Mark Twain. His marriage with Livy Langdon was from the first day such a beautiful romance, her love for him so tender and so cherishing, and his for her so instant and so undying, that the voice of the critic must be subdued. To those who love Mark Twain's work the memory of his sweet wife is sacred. Yet one cannot but wonder and question at her influence on her husband's work and the history of American letters.

To her influence was presently added that of the Reverend Joe Twitchell of Hartford—henceforth 'Joe' to Mark, a muscular Christian of Mark's own age, a veteran chaplain of the Civil War—and an all-round good fellow. Mark Twain loved him with the love of the sceptic for the man who can believe something, the love of the brilliant man for the slow, of the erratic for the immovable. From now on, 'Joe,' in the intervals of preaching and expounding the Bible, undertook to help 'Livy' to show Mark Twain what nice people ought to write and what not. When presently there was added the influence of Mr. Howells of the *Atlantic Monthly*, Mark Twain enjoyed such all-round support that the wonder is that he ever wrote at all.

Yet let it be noticed that all the basis and

background of his work was and remained the Mississippi and the West, and Europe as seen therefrom ; from his setting in Elmira, nothing ; from his life and surrounding in Buffalo, nothing ; from Hartford, nothing. There was as much to see on Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, as on Main Street in Carson City, Nevada ; as much of light and shadow in Hartford as in Angel's Camp. But he had no eyes to see. To get vision he must shut his eyes and look across the prairies and the mountains to the sunset over the Golden Gates. Such was the genesis of *Tom Sawyer* and *Roughing It* and *Huckleberry Finn* and *Life on the Mississippi* and all the splendid work that he wrote in the years that followed his return from Europe. That the love of his wife and the happiness of his home helped him to work is beyond doubt. But to think that she and Joe Twitchell schooled him to write is childish. Mark Twain taught himself to write, just as he had taught himself everything since he was twelve years old.

But if Mark Twain, as a creative genius, wore fetters, it is only fair to remember that they were those of his day and age. This ' Victorian ' period of the late nineteenth century, for all its

splendid courage in the field, its industrial force and its unsurpassed literature, was, in art and morals, a namby-pamby age. Nothing must be said or drawn or written that was not 'respectable.' Books, journals and pictures must be suited to a Kensington drawing-room or a Boston boarding-house. 'Damn' was a wicked word, and a 'leg' was called a 'limb.' Characters in books who swore must say, 'by Heaven!' or 'by the Foul Fiend!' but not 'Jesus Christ!' Consider the little clergyman, Lewis Carroll, blinking in the daylight when he emerged from Wonderland into society, and thinking 'damn' terribly wicked and Gilbert and Sullivan's *Pinafore* hopelessly coarse. After all, if 'Livy' and 'Joe' and Mr. Howells put fetters on Mark Twain's hand, it was only a chain which most of his contemporaries wore as they worked. Some felt it, but others scarcely knew it was there. Dickens was never bothered by it, for he himself was eminently respectable. What he wanted to denounce and to satirize was the Court of Chancery, the Guardians of the Poor, and the Circumlocution Offices of the British Government. And that is respectable. But he had no wish to satirize God Almighty, to question whether Hell is just and the Bible

'bunk.' The things that Mark Twain wanted to write would have horrified Charles Dickens. As the editor of *Household Words* he could have found no place for them. Hence it was that Mark Twain, as his literary work passed from mere diversion to a great reality, found himself in a dilemma. He wanted to write of things which his loving 'censors' told him he mustn't talk about; and he wanted to use words and phrases which his loving censors told him 'nice' people didn't use. And his faith in their views was as naïve and as touching as the respect of Nigger Jim for white people. In reality he was a giant who towered over their heads. He should have brushed aside their censorship with a kiss and a laugh. The tradition that Howells and the Rev. Twitchell and Mrs. Clemens 'made' Mark Twain is sheer nonsense. They did their loving best to ruin his work—and failed; that's all. By good luck, *Huckleberry Finn*, afterwards excluded from more than one puritanical library, got past the censors, or nearly so. The manuscript was read aloud in the family circle, and the merry laughter of the children disarmed the censorship. In any case, neither Mrs. Clemens nor the other associates seemed to have realized the scope and reach of the book; nor ap-

parently did Mark Twain himself. Even at that, many things were cut out or altered.

As a sample of how the language of the natural Huckleberry Finn was 'improved' by Mrs. Clemens, take a passage from the concluding chapter of *Tom Sawyer*. Mark Twain made Huck say (in speaking of his benefactress, the widow Douglas): 'She makes me git up at the same time every morning, she makes me wash . . . *they comb me all to hell.*' Mrs. Clemens changed this to: '*They comb me all to thunder.*' In other words, she changed what Huck would have said and must have said, which is exquisite, to a stupid phrase which neither Huck nor anyone else would have said. 'She guarded his work sacredly,' said his biographer. She did indeed.

Apart from his studies on Noah's Ark and God, Mark Twain, in his Buffalo days (1870), brought out a comic autobiography of himself —so funny, or so silly, that he presently bought in and destroyed the plates. This is not the fragmentary 'Autobiography' of later years.

The Buffalo life lasted less than two years. Apart from the raptures of honeymoon days, it was not altogether a success. Mark Twain sat uneasily in the luxurious editorial chair

that proved more rigid than a stool in Nevada. He sold out his share in the paper, at a loss; henceforth he began to dream of publishing, not editing.

Moreover, the Clemenses took no root in Buffalo, caring little for social life; and the shadow of death fell as on their family when Livy's father died in August of 1871. The death of a dear friend of his wife in their house itself, the premature arrival of a feeble little son (Langdon Clemens, November 7, 1870), whose days seemed numbered before they were begun, somehow turned the sunlight of the fairy house into gloom.

Mark Twain moved away to Hartford, attracted by the charm of an old-world town, the culture of the environment and companionship of his new friend Joe Twitchell. The cloud of debt that fringed the sunlight of his opulence followed him from Buffalo. To drive it away he took to lecturing, a thing he had already learned to hate. 'I am not going to lecture any more for ever,' he had written from Buffalo to Redpath, his manager. 'Count me out.' But it was to be a quarter-century yet before he could count himself out of it. Life at Hartford seems to have been, from the beginning, as pleasant and natural as that in

Buffalo was gloomy and ill-set. Mark Twain enjoyed the sense of being admitted—even if somewhat reluctantly—to the cultivated life of New England ; he enjoyed his association with Twitchell, their endless walks and one-sided conversations. More than all, he appreciated the friendship and sympathy of W. D. Howells, for whose *Atlantic Monthly* he now became a contributor. His first offering was the article called *A True Story* (November 1874), to be followed by the papers on *Old Times on the Mississippi* (January to July 1875), which later became a book, and by many other sketches in the ensuing five years. Mark Twain, wisely or foolishly, took Howells for his mentor ; and him at least he never cast aside.

In August of 1872 he made a journey to England, as sudden as the California trip to the *Alta* ' thieves.' This was inspired by the idea of getting after a new pack of thieves—the copyright pirates. For most of his life Mark Twain, like Charles Dickens, was obsessed with the copyright question, for which the present volume has neither space nor interest to spare. For both of them it was like King Charles's head to Mr. Dick in *David Copperfield* —it wouldn't keep out of things. But it worked

differently. Dickens came out to America to be entertained like a prince and made a row about copyright. Mark Twain went over to England to make a row about copyright and was entertained like a prince—and forgot about it.

His reception was indeed overwhelming. Here, at last, he was treated at his true worth —as a real author, not as a western 'cut-up.' Authors vied to meet him. Dickens, alas! was gone (June 1870), but Tom Hood, Charles Reade, Charles Kingsley and a hundred others vied in doing him reverence. His visit was a series of dinners and entertainments. He had no time to get mad over copyright; no time to write anything or do anything. He did indeed plan a book on England (the Innocents, one recalls, had not visited it), designed to put it in its place. But nothing happened. In November he was back in America, a bigger figure than ever. 'When I yell again for less than five hundred dollars,' he had written to Redpath, 'I'll be pretty hungry.' Being hungry presently, he lectured twice in New York at six hundred and fifty dollars a night—a great sum in those days.

His life was too busy and too full to be bothered with lecturing. His new book,

Roughing It, that he had begun at Buffalo, had come out (1872). He had invented—or rather recalled—a boy called Tom Sawyer, whose adventures he was trying to shape. He was busy with a book called *The Gilded Age*, done in collaboration with Charles Dudley Warner, which appeared in 1873, as imperfect as all collaborations are. But it contains the priceless character of Colonel Sellers, whose impecunious life was illuminated by a rainbow and bounded by a mirage.

More than all was his increasing interest in his home and his family circle. The little boy had faded out of life (June 2, 1872), but the place he might have filled was taken by a garland of little girls who grew up to be the idol of their father's heart. Susie Clemens, of marvellous and tragic memory, came first (March 1872); then Clara, renamed 'Bay' for family purposes, and as the third, Jean (Jane Lampton), born in July 1880. It was as if fate decided to throw to Mark Twain's lot all that can be given—success, fame, affluence, a loving wife, and a babbling nursery. To frame such happiness, homes must be provided. He acquired two—always since connected with his life and memory. The one was the house at Hartford (on Farmington Avenue),

largely designed by himself. Its special feature was the famous billiard-room on the top floor, henceforth its owner's sanctum. The game of billiards was an abiding passion with Mark Twain, as with so many successful men from the West. The crooked cues and the bounding cushions of the mining camp and the saloon had got in their deadly work. No recovery was possible.

The home at Hartford alternated with a summer home at Quarry Farm, a beautiful hillside country house just outside of Elmira. Mrs. Crane, Livy's sister, who owned the place, built for Mark a quaint little study with eight sides to it, looking far away in all directions. Mr. Paine compares it to a Mississippi pilot-house—an added attraction for its occupant. Such were the gifts which fortune showered upon Mark Twain—to remove them one by one: for affluence, poverty; for the warmth of love and affection nothing but the cold dignity of despair that knows no consolation that may conquer death.

But as yet all that was far away. Mark Twain was busy and happy beyond the common lot—on the verge (he knew it) of princely opulence—millions; and in his mind a book, a real book, not letters and scraps of journalism,

but a book about a boy whom he remembered (better than all the world) called Tom Sawyer. On this boy he pondered like Gibbon over ancient Rome.

Around this boy he had already (in 1872) attempted to construct a play. But in Mark Twain's crowded, busy, happy and talkative life, with lectures to give, billiards to play, children arriving, and visitors coming and going, it took time to finish things. In fact, another triumphal progress in England intervened before 'Tom' came to light. This time Mrs. Clemens accompanied her illustrious husband and could measure for herself the estimate they made of him abroad. From London they went on to Scotland, where a friendship was formed with John Brown (of *Rab and his Friends*) which was kept warm till that good old man's death. Most important of all, Mark Twain lectured in London (October 13, 1873). The announcement of the lecture is typically British, very unlike the San Francisco 'trouble will begin at eight.' 'Mr. George Dolby,' it declared, 'begs to announce that Mr. Mark Twain will deliver a lecture of a humorous character on Monday evening next and *repeat it in the same place on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.*' There

is something brutally matter-of-fact in the promise of ' repeating it in the same place.'

But the lecture and all its repetitions were the wildest of successes. The London press was washed from its moorings in the flood of admiration. Mark Twain became a hero—a legend—a glory. Strange how mankind loves to create heroes—something greater than our poor mean selves—and of the heroes a legend. Such became Mark Twain.

The Clemenses were back in America in January of 1874. Mark Twain got *Tom Sawyer* finished, and it came out in December of 1876. Its success was immediate, complete and continuous. For such people as remained who had never heard of Mark Twain he was now ' the man who wrote *Tom Sawyer*.'

Tom Sawyer is a world-famous book, and the boy Tom a world celebrity. The book did not make Mark Twain's reputation. That had been done by the *Innocents Abroad*. But it clinched it. The publication of the *Adventures of Tom Sawyer* definitely established the position and reputation of Mark Twain as the great American humorist; so much so that few people realized that the book is on a lower plane altogether than the later *Huckleberry Finn*, which

grew out of it. Indeed, *Tom Sawyer* owes some of its success to its very simplicity. It makes no great demand upon the intellect ; anybody can read it. The famous story of how Tom Sawyer was set to whitewash the fence as a punishment, and by pretending that it was a treat got the other boys to pay for the privilege of whitewashing, is as simple and as wide in its appeal as any folk-lore. It is like the mediaeval stories of the 'smartness' of Reynard the Fox. It strikes the familiar note of the clever hero who outwits stupidity and defeats brute force. Tom Sawyer was a ' smart ' boy. Indeed, by a sort of general consensus he is supposed to be *the* boy, the typical boy, and parents who put the strap to their own Tom Sawyers chuckle with indulgent laughter over the escapades of the imaginary Tom.

But there is more in the book than all that. Its background of the vast moving river and the wilderness, the romance of the steamboat, the gloomy terror of the great cave, though but lightly sketched in the book *Tom Sawyer*, contains the same appeal—the appealing majesty of nature—which was to become an outstanding feature of the book *Huckleberry Finn.* Threaded through it is a really exciting story, painted in crude elemental colours.

Tom Sawyer and his friend Huckleberry Finn, out on a night exploit, witness the robbing of a corpse from a grave by a young doctor and two hired body-snatchers. The crude details are all there—the graveyard, midnight, moonlight, terror. Of the body-snatchers, one is 'Indian Joe,' murderer and 'bad man,' the other the village drunkard. There is a quarrel at the graveside. Indian Joe stabs the young doctor dead, and Tom and Huck, having seen more than enough, flee in terror. The murder is fastened on the town drunkard, whose knife is found beside the dead body. Tom and Huck, in deadly fear of Indian Joe, keep an agonized silence. Then at last they speak out in a melodramatic scene at the murder trial of the drunkard. Indian Joe leaps through the court-room window and escapes, a fugitive from the law. He hides in the great cave in the river bluff. Weeks later Tom and a little girl companion Becky, lost in the cave and almost expiring, see the flickering light of a candle and the form of Indian Joe, groping in the darkness. The children are rescued. Only weeks later do they learn that the rescuers have barred and sealed the entrance to the cavern. Tom Sawyer's exclamation to Becky's father, '*Oh, judge, Indian Joe's in the cave!*' remains

in the memory of thousands of readers as one of the sensations of literature.

Yet, all in all, the book is far below *Huckleberry Finn.* Mark Twain, in writing *Tom Sawyer,* was unconsciously groping his way towards the broader canvas and the fuller meaning of the later book. *Tom Sawyer* as a book is full of obvious faults. The stage effects are too elementary, too obvious ; they belong to the class of the melodrama and the stock villain and the heroine who requested to be ' unhanded '—in other words, the regular working apparatus of nineteenth-century popular literature. Tom Sawyer himself may be a ' smart boy,' but he runs dangerously close to being a ' smart Aleck.' Yet with all its faults the book went round the world and carried the name of Mark Twain into all the languages of civilization.

VI

MARK TWAIN AS A NATIONAL ASSET
1877–1894

THE period between the publication of *Tom Sawyer* and the time when he was overwhelmed by financial disaster shows Mark Twain at the height of his success, his literary reputation, his affluence, his domestic happiness. His name had become a household word in America. He had grown to be a sort of national asset. Men quoted his stories, his latest sayings, and much that he never said. His lecture trips were a triumphant progress ; his books flooded the country in sales that widened like ripples over a pond. His pictured face, with the shock of hair that turned from red to grey and from grey to white, with the Missouri corn-cob pipe to give it character, was as familiar to the public as those of Washington and Lincoln and Grant. Most of all, he had earned, as he had deserved, the affection of his fellow-men.

Nor was his fame confined within national limits. Mark Twain had become a citizen of the world, and his time in these ensuing years of affluence and achievement was divided between two continents. His reputation in England, his London lectures, his London dinner speeches, the wide sales of his books in Great Britain, may be said to have helped much in renewing the national sympathy of nations that had drifted apart in the ominous days of the Civil War. English people realized that, after all, America was the place that Mark Twain came from ; it couldn't be so rotten.

In explanation of the activities of Mark Twain's life during his prime, let it be remembered that he was perpetually busy, not only with things that came to completion, but with things that never did, or proved to be failures and were abandoned. A good deal of his time after *Tom Sawyer* was put into a play called *Ah Sin,* done in collaboration with his old friend Bret Harte. It was played in the National Theatre at Washington (May 7, 1877), tried out in New York and died of inanition. The only tangible result of the enterprise was to end the friendship of two old friends.

Following that came a trip to Bermuda with Twitchell largely done *incognito,* Mark now

falling back on a privilege confined to royalty and the criminal class.

All the next summer (1877) he was busy with the idea of a story in which a little child of the people changes places with a king's son—but the story had to wait three years for its completion as *The Prince and the Pauper*. There was another idea of the same period which he started and threw aside as of no great value—a sort of wandering tale about Huckleberry Finn, who had already appeared as the satellite of Tom Sawyer. This, the greatest idea that he ever had, Mark Twain seems to have valued little. 'I like it only tolerably well,' he said, 'and I may burn the manuscript when it is done.' For years the 'Huck' book lay around as neglected as Huck himself. But let the curious compare the author's fulsome praise of his *Joan of Arc*.

But Huckleberry Finn and much else had to wait while Mark Twain and his family sailed away on a sort of grand tour of Europe. They left in April of 1878, visited Germany, passed down to Italy, where they visited in especial Venice and Florence and Rome; then back to Germany to winter in Munich; then came Paris, England (in August of 1879), and home to America (September 3, 1879). It was

in the earlier part of the tour that Mark Twain took his walking tour in Germany and Switzerland with Twitchell, immortalized as *A Tramp Abroad*, in which Twitchell is cast for the part of 'Harris.' It goes without saying that the book is not as good as the *Innocents*. No one can be born twice. But the book is the real thing, and parts of it are inimitable: the vividness of the word-pictures, the tourists, the waiters, the Alpine climbing, the incidents of history, the excursions into facts and, above all, the play of an interesting mind that illuminates everything that it touches. Mark Twain could do this kind of thing as no one else.

Here begins also his inexhaustible interest in the German language, a source of mingled wonder, fascination and annoyance. The family set themselves to learn German. Having had no schooling, linguistic study was a novelty to Mark Twain. He could take as much fun out of the interminable German nouns and the inverted sentences as a schoolboy out of parody of Latin. Later on, in his *King Arthur* book, when he wants words to use as magic spells he finds them in such glorious compounds as *Constantinopolitanischerdudelsackmachersgesellschaft*, a much more imposing compound than the

humble English—Bagpipe Manufacturers Company of Constantinople.

It would be as tedious as it would be purposeless to follow all the comings and goings of Mark Twain and his family in the years that followed their return from Europe. Among the more notable peregrinations was a trip to the Mississippi, down the river from St. Louis to New Orleans and up again to St. Paul. Mark renewed his experiences as a pilot, fraternized again with Horace Bixley, dropped off at Hannibal for three days to see the boys and girls—in short, the return of the hero, enjoyed as much as it was earned.

The trip helped him to prepare, from his *Atlantic* articles, his work *Life on the Mississippi* —his pilot life already recounted—which appeared in 1883. It was published partly at his own expense and risk—the beginning of the new finance that was to ruin him. But he had got it into his head that the previous publishers had been cheating him—like the *Alta* thieves and the copyright pirates. As literature, the book ranks high; as a commercial venture, low. 'It cost me fifty thousand dollars to make,' so its author said. He was dealing in big sums now.

Other episodes of the period were Mark Twain's brief pilgrimages to Canada. They were made to 'acquire copyright,' a sort of purification necessary under the existing law, but they turned into social and public triumphs. There was a great dinner at Montreal (1880), and on the next trip (1883) an invitation to stay at Rideau Hall, Ottawa, where resided the Marquis of Lorne and his wife, the Princess Louise, daughter of Queen Victoria. Mr. Paine, the biographer, writes of this: 'It is a good deal like a fairy tale . . . the bare-footed boy of Hannibal who had become a printer, a pilot, a rough-handed miner, being summoned by royalty as one of America's foremost men of letters.'

It takes an American democrat to see these things in their proper light.

Meantime *The Prince and the Pauper* had already appeared (1880), meeting with a reception in which approval mingled with disappointment. It is told that a certain great classical scholar of the eighteenth century said to Alexander Pope, when his 'Iliad and Odyssey' appeared, 'It's a very pretty poem, Mr. Pope, but it is not Homer.' Many readers felt this way about *The Prince and the Pauper*;

it was a very pretty story, but *it wasn't Mark Twain* ; at least not the Mark Twain who made frogs jump and conducted innocents abroad. In other words, *it wasn't funny* (except in lapses). Its author could have answered the indictment by saying that it wasn't meant to be, and could have drawn attention to the beauty of description of old London and its bridges.

Human nature being as discontented as it is, 'funny' writers are never content with their cap and bells. They would like to write sermons. From this time on Mark Twain showed a desire to redeem himself from the charge of being 'funny.' As a result we have *The Prince and the Pauper* and, later on, *Joan of Arc*, which—whatever they may be—are not Mark Twain. There are books that he wrote in which he tried to be Mark Twain and failed ; such as *Tom Sawyer Abroad* or *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, a Mississippi story of 1892, at best an attempt to recapture a tune also sung. But in the historical books he is trying to do something else altogether.

For serious historical writing he was not fitted. His view of the present is like a photograph ; his view of the past is made of fierce lights and shadows thrown by firelight on a dark wall. His history is too elemental : for

King read tyrant ; for priest read bigot ; for justice read torture ; and for anything called Louis read putrefaction. Mark Twain was too much impressed by the cruelty, the bigotry and the tyranny of the past to see it in its true light. Strange that a man writing in the days of the Homestead strikes and the Haymarket riots, with hideous lynchings in the South, murder walking the streets in Chicago, and on the horizon the tyranny of the prohibitionist, the gangster, the hi-jacker and the racketeer, could see so little to regret in the vanished past.

But when Mark Twain turned from the Thames of 1550 to the Mississippi of 1850, that was another story. The appearance in print of the *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* marks the highest reach of his achievement.

All the world has read the story of the ragged little outcast, Huckleberry Finn, floating down the Mississippi on a raft, his companion the runaway Nigger Jim. Every reader has felt the wonderful charm of the scenery and setting —the broad flood of the river, the islands tangled with wild vines, the sand-bars and the current swirling past the sunken snags : the stillness of the night with voices coming from

the lumber rafts far over the water: the fascination of the passing steamboat, its lighted windows and its trail of sparks breaking the black night; and then the dawn and the sun clearing the mist from the waters.

The writer seems to have groped his way into the book like a treasure-seeker. It opens to a wrong start—Tom Sawyer and his boy-chums and pirate games—that would never have gone far. Then it drifts to Huck Finn and his drunken, dissolute, unkempt father, 'pap' ('His hair was long and tangled and greasy, and hung down, and you could see his eyes shining through like he was behind vines'); Huck a prisoner in a hut in the hands of the drunkard; his escape; the raft; the finding of Nigger Jim, and with that we float away on the bosom of the river. There are tragic episodes of the river, the feud, the murder, the false claim of the inheritance, the bag of money in the coffin. The story pushes hard against burlesque here and there, as when the raft is invaded by the down-and-out bummers, the 'King' and the 'Duke.' Artistically it almost breaks here—yet oddly enough this is the very part that readers who care nothing for art like best—the sheer roaring fun of it. The Duke getting ready a performance to be given in

passing a town and furbishing up his recollections of Shakespeare in the form of—

'*To be or not to be; that is the bare bodkin,*' is as typically and triumphantly Mark Twain as anything he ever wrote.

In the end the raft floats to Arkansas; Huck is cast up at Silas Phelps's farm and Tom Sawyer gets back into the book—and spoils it. As soon as he comes all the depth of meaning, all the breadth of the picture is lost. It is just back-yard stuff—the kind of thing they make ' comic strips ' of.

But the bulk of the book is marvellous. The vision of American institutions—above all, of slavery—as seen through the unsullied mind of little Huck; the pathos and charm of the Negro race shining through the soul of Nigger Jim—the western scene, the frontier people—it is the epic of a vanished America.

Strange that anyone could imagine that such a book as *Joan of Arc*—conventional, imitative, unnatural—could compare with this. Yet Mark Twain supposed it far superior, and the pundits and stodges, belly-heavy with culture, all agreed. Yet there are those, there must be, who consider the *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* the greatest book ever written in America.

An outstanding feature of the book is that

it is American literature. Whatever the works of Washington Irving and Fenimore Cooper and Longfellow were, there is no doubt about *Huckleberry Finn.* Every now and then the dispute breaks out in the colleges and spills over into the press as to what *American* literature was and is, and when it began. Like all controversies, the dispute is bottomless and involves a hopeless number of definitions of terms. But by American literature in the proper sense we ought to mean literature written in an American way, with an American turn of language and an American cast of thought. The test is that it couldn't have been written anywhere else. When we read the books of O. Henry we know that they were not written in England ; they couldn't have been. Longfellow may have written about America, but the form of his language and his thought was the same as that of his English contemporaries. He shared in their heritage, and added to the common stock. Judged in this sense—in order to make the point clear and rob it of all venom —there is as yet no Canadian literature, though many books have been written in Canada, including some very bad ones.

But *Huckleberry Finn* was triumphantly obvious and undeniably American.

But the writing of books and of incidental sketches for the *Atlantic*, and presently for the *Century*, *Harper's*, and other magazines, was only the chief part and by no means the whole of Mark Twain's activity during these busy years. There were dinners and banquets and reunions to attend, with speeches to make. There was, alas, an increasing interest in the business of publishing. His earlier books were published by canvass and subscription, with a royalty to the author, who took no risk. The cost of sale under this system is high, the royalty low (five to seven per cent. was fair enough), but Mark Twain felt that he could improve on this. He first took half the risk and half the profits, then presently launched into the publishing business itself. It seems that many authors feel a desire to be publishers, just as an English butler wants to run a public house and an American bar-tender aspires—or used to, when he existed—to 'keep hotel.' The results are usually unfortunate. So it was to be in this instance. But for the time all was optimism and rosy calculation worthy of Colonel Sellers.

Another feature of this period was lecturing, including a notable tour in the season of 1884-1885 managed by the admirable Major J. B.

Pond, of worthy and illustrious memory, and carried out with George W. Cable as partner on the platform.

The lectures were a huge success for all except Mark Twain, to whom they were a mere labour of necessity.

The truth is that Mark Twain never liked lecturing. Indeed, apart from the initial joys of triumph, he grew to abominate it. Nearly all lecturers hate lecturing, whether from nervousness of appearing in public, on account of need of working up a fixed emotion at a fixed hour, or because of the fatigues of travel or the effort demanded by social entertainment. No one likes lecturing except those who can't do it. A dull lecturer enjoys his own performance immensely.

Mark Twain hated lecturing for all the above reasons—even nervousness, in the sense of nervous intensity. And he added a special reason of his own, that he felt as if lecturing to make people laugh turned him into a buffoon. This, of course, was sheer ingratitude. But he wanted to be a man of letters, a philosopher, a character—he didn't want to be a comic man. 'Oh, Cable!' he moaned to his lecture-mate one night, 'I am demeaning myself. I am allowing myself to be a mere

buffoon. It's ghastly. I can't endure it any longer.' No doubt he was contrasting himself with the solemn little Cable, who didn't smoke, drank water, read the Bible in the hotel bedroom, and drew tears from the audience.

In other words, Mark Twain wanted it both ways, coming and going. He wanted to have the world laugh when he said the ' reports of his death had been grossly exaggerated,' he wanted to write a comic account of Noah's Ark and a comic life of Adam, he wanted to set King Arthur's knights to playing baseball—but he didn't want to take the consequences and have people think him ' funny ' ; or rather, he wanted them to understand that he was also—as he was—a man of intense and passionate ideals, capable of righteous indignation against iniquity. About this the mass of the public cared nothing at all. Mark Twain to them was Mark Twain. That was all. When he said that he was a Chinese ' Boxer '—meaning that the Chinese nationalists were right—they laughed. ' Have you heard Mark Twain's latest ? ' they said.

Even more successful than his public lectures, if that were possible, were Mark Twain's after-dinner speeches. Here, of course, he was

entirely himself. Here he could exploit to the full the natural drollery of his speech, the peculiar drawl, the assumption of innocence—all those arts and artifices which swept his auditors away on billows of tumultuous laughter. After-dinner speaking in those unredeemed days was an easier art in America than now. Indeed, the contrast of those days with the gloomy ' banquet ' of to-day is pathetic. To-day the auditors sit in silence, their surreptitious cocktail, of three hours before, dead within them, chewing fiercely at celery and listening to an hour's talk on such a thing as the Chicago Drainage Canal. But in those evil days a banquet was a real banquet. The audience came from the bar to the banquet, and gravitated from the banquet to the bar. Swimming in champagne in a haze of blue smoke they wanted fun, not information. And Mark Twain could give it to them as no one else could.

These years were the great years of Mark Twain's public lecturing, in which he easily eclipsed all those who preceded and followed him. The only exception was Charles Dickens, whose crowded houses and breathless audiences at least equalled those of the great American humorist. But Dickens was different; his

towering fame was the background ; he ' read,' not lectured, though with intense dramatic effect and magnetic personal contact. What the audience saw was not Dickens but his characters—the death-bed of the dying child, the fury of the murderer Sykes, and the Homeric court-room of Bardell *versus* Pickwick. What Mark Twain's audience saw was Mark Twain ; what the audience heard was Mark Twain—not Tom Sawyer, nor Huck Finn, but Mark Twain. His thought and feeling, by the magic of his method, carried across.

Which was the higher art and which the lower, it is needless to enquire.

Many of the dinner speeches, such as that at the great Army dinner at Chicago (1879), became historic. For the rest of their lives those present recalled and magnified the wonder of Mark Twain. Once, once only, the magic failed utterly and dismally. One may recall, as an irony of personal history, Mark Twain's greatest after-dinner success (done with a third-rate joke at the end of a speech of no merit), and his great and ignominious failure with a prepared speech that was as funny as it was subtle, accidentally derailed in transit. The great success was the dinner given in honour of General Grant by the Army

of the Tennessee at Chicago on November 13, 1879. Grant was there, and Sherman and Sheridan and a galaxy of great soldiers. Colonel Robert Ingersoll carried the audience away in a real speech of patriotic oratory ; and there was the usual tiresome speaker (still unhanged among us) who began for a minute and spoke for an hour. Mark Twain rose at 2 a.m. to talk not on the Ladies, as invited, but on the Babies. 'We haven't all the good fortune to be ladies,' he said in opening, 'we haven't all been generals or poets or statesmen ; but when the toast works down to the babies—*we stand on common ground.*' We are told that the speaker 'had to stop to let the tornado roar of laughter go by.' The concluding paragraph of the speech is the most quoted part of all Mark Twain's oratory. It runs :

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

Here Mark Twain paused. What followed

is thus related by his incomparable biographer Mr. Paine :

' The vast crowd had a chill of fear. After all, he seemed likely to overdo it, to spoil it with a cheap joke at the end. He waited long enough to let the silence become absolute, until the tension was painful, and then . . . " *and if the child is but the father of the man, there are mighty few who will doubt that he succeeded.*"

' The house came down with a crash.'

Now let us admit that a joke cannot be fully appreciated without the voice, the mood, the occasion ; let us admit also that it is historically interesting to think of such a distinguished audience swept away on a gale of laughter. But after all, what does the joke amount to ? Nothing much, and they had to wait for it. But the reader may judge for himself.

The other occasion is equally historic—memorable in its utter and awful failure. For the time it crushed Mark Twain with a dead weight of despair. The scene was the dinner given on December 17, 1877, by the staff of the *Atlantic* to the aged poet Whittier on his seventieth birthday. Present were Whittier himself, and Longfellow and Emerson

and Holmes and all the great literary lights of Boston, the Magi of the East, refulgent with their own genius and consuming their own smoke. Mark Twain shouldn't have given a damn for them, but he did. Longfellow was there and old Emerson—too deaf to hear—and others too stuffed to listen. But Mark Twain was afraid of them. In their eyes and in his own he was not in their class. They were 'authors,' real ones; he was just a rough, cheap westerner. So he prepared a speech line by line and word by word. It was a delightful piece of burlesque—picturing three old 'bummers' arriving at a western mining camp and spouting poetry. One 'bum' impersonated Longfellow, one Holmes, and one Emerson—the parody of their work was to show that. But the speech went wrong. The audience caught on to the 'bums,' but not to the parody—old men are slow in such things. There was a frozen silence. The speaker's 'inferiority complex' (though he never lived to hear of it) seized him. His own face turned to misery. The speech ended. The old men shuffled into their coats. It was all over.

Next day Mark Twain wrote agonized letters of apology. He wanted to resign everything, to quit everything, to give up everything—not

to be Mark Twain any more. His despair was as fierce as his hopes had been eager. Years after, he read the speech again, and again sank into a pit of despair. Years after that, he read it again, and the light broke in and he felt that it was glorious. So it was. If he had given that speech to the students of Yale and Harvard instead of the stuffy old men in Boston, it would have taken the roof off.

The mention of General Grant and the famous Grant dinner at Chicago recalls one of the outstanding episodes of Mark Twain's life in the hey-day of his success—his marvellous rescue of Grant and his family from ruin.

A grateful nation had made the hero of Appomattox its president. It has a way of doing so. It is said that the Chinese, in the days of the Empire, used to select by examination their highest scholars and make them generals. The Americans select their highest generals and make them presidents. Of Grant's presidency there is no need to speak here. After his time expired he was induced to go into Wall Street business, or rather to lend his name as a cover for business of which he understood absolutely nothing. The colossal success of the fraudulent Ward was followed

by catastrophic failure and the imprisonment of Ward, and carried down with it the fortune, and worse still the reputation, of General Grant. There he was—ruined—saved only from legal prosecution by national sympathy and by the fact that he was already stricken with a disease destined to prove fatal.

In his adversity he turned to the idea of living by his pen—of fighting over again with ink and compasses the battles won by the sword. A leading magazine offered him what they thought a handsome sum for articles on his campaigns ; a publishing firm were willing to bring out a book of memoirs of his life. But the whole plan, in scope and in prospective return, was on a modest scale. At this point Mark Twain ' butted in.' He saw the idea of Grant's memoirs with the eyes of Colonel Sellers ! What ! Offer the General a mere five hundred dollars for an article on the battle of Shiloh ! What ! Talk of ten thousand copies of a book from such a hand ! ' General ' (the words are actual), ' a book telling the story of your life and battles should sell not less than a quarter of a million, perhaps twice that ! ' And a little later, in a further discussion of the subject, ' General, I have my cheque-book with me. I will draw you now

a cheque for twenty-five thousand dollars as an advance royalty ! '

And just for once the Colonel Sellers vision was absolutely correct.

Mark Twain had had a certain connection already, one might say friendship, with General Grant. Once, long before, he had visited him when President, and had relieved the awkwardness of the meeting by saying, ' Mr. President, I am embarrassed, are you ? ' Grant treasured the remark as a man without humour keeps an old joke. Afterwards came the famous dinner and other casual meetings.

Mark Twain did not ' butt in ' in any offensive sense to steal the business of other publishers. He offered them a field they wouldn't take, and when it was clear, occupied it himself for his own publishing firm, Webster and Company. He set the General to work dictating his memoirs, watched over him, encouraged, cheered him to it. Grant, stricken as he was, worked stubbornly on. All the best in the man shone on in his stubborn fight against approaching death. When the cancer in his throat reached the point where dictation was impossible, he took a pencil and wrote on, firmly, stubbornly, as if his pencil were an iron point against paper. He won out. There

came a day when he laid aside the pencil; the *Personal Memoirs of General Grant* were ended. Three days later (July 23, 1885) the world learned that General Grant was dead.

Grant had written with the plain simplicity of one not looking for style or effect, but setting down what he had to say for its own sake, without a wasted word. So wrote Xenophon and Julius Caesar.

But the vast success of the *Memoirs* was not solely due to the national interest in the narration, the national appeal of the circumstances, or the plain soldierly writing of the General. It owed much to the energy and boldness of Mark Twain, the fearless disregard of expense with which the enterprise was launched, the skill with which it was carried through.

Before Grant died he had the satisfaction of knowing that his name and his family were saved. After he was dead the royalties paid to his widow ran to nearly four hundred and fifty thousand dollars!

After the great Grant episode comes as a landmark the publication of *The Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's Court.* It appeared in December 1889, but it had been long in

thought and preparation. Ever since he had first visited England, Mark Twain had wanted to write a book about English institutions. The plan was originally killed by kindness, but refused to stay dead. It revived in his mind. He carried it about with him, and by 1866, in his new Hartford home, he began the felicitous book with the happy title in which his England was encompassed. The writing was interrupted by the composition of sketches and articles, by dinners and speeches, and by the receipt of honorary degrees (such as the Yale Master of Arts in 1888), but it never stopped till it culminated in the issue of the book by Webster and Company, the author's own publishing house.

To many of us who are old enough to remember most of Mark Twain's works from the time of their appearance, there is a certain list which seemed then and seem now the real Mark Twain. The rest don't matter. The list includes *Roughing It*, *Life on the Mississippi*, *The Innocents Abroad*, *Tom Sawyer* (a little grudgingly), *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and, most certainly and beyond controversy, the *Connecticut Yankee*. We don't need to care what the critics say ; we can recall the sheer unadulterated joy of that first perusal.

The story is based thus :

A Connecticut Yankee, a factory boss, skilled in all mechanical arts, is ' put to sleep ' by a crack on the head with a crowbar from an employee. He wakes up to find himself—not forward in time as most Utopians are, but backward. He is lying on a grassy bank in the woodland country of King Arthur's England. To him approaches a knight in ' old time iron armour from head to heel.'

' *Fair sir, will ye joust ?* ' asks the knight.

' *Will I which ?* ' says the Yankee.

And with that the tale is on. The Yankee, about to be put to death, recalls the fact that an eclipse happened that very year and day, and ' puts out ' the sun. This beats out Merlin and makes the Yankee a magician. He rules King Arthur's England ; introduces machinery, fights the superstitions of the church, the cruelty of the law, the brutality of the strong—only to meet disaster at the end.

It is a strange and wonderful tale, and carries with it not only a story but a meaning. By and through his Yankee Mark Twain is denouncing all the things that he hated—hereditary power, the church, aristocracy, privilege, superstition. He is able, under the guise of humour, to give vent to the fierce

elemental ideas of justice and right and equality, hatred of oppression and religious persecution, by which he was inspired. In other books this could only be incidental—a word, a phrase, a quoted speech. Here it was the whole book.

It was no wonder that such a book called forth plenty of criticism, even of denunciation ; no wonder that many of Mark Twain's English admirers turned their backs on him. The book seemed to challenge this. In the first place, from the point of view of the historian, if taken seriously, it is contemptible. The date of the story is fixed by a solar eclipse which is part of its machinery as the year 528 A.D. The time is that of King Arthur. But the author has lumped into it in an indistinguishable mass the manners and customs of ten centuries, all the tyrannies of all the countries he ever heard of (except America)—the Dark Ages, the Middle Ages, the Old Régime in France ; all the aristocracies of Europe, with especial reference to the English, past and present ; with this, and running all through it, is a denunciation, by name, of the Roman Catholic Church.

Witness, for example, the following typical quotations :

'*It was pitiful for a person born in a wholesome*

free atmosphere to listen to their humble and hearty outpourings of loyalty towards their king and church and nobility; as if they had any more occasion to love and honour king and church and noble than a slave has to love and honour the lash. . . .'

'Before the day of the Church's supremacy in the world, men were men and held their heads up.'

'Any established church is an established crime, an established slave pen.'

'A privileged class, an aristocracy, is but a band of slave-holders under another name.'

Now of course it is not really the fictitious Yankee speaking here, but the author himself. The voice is Yankee but the hand is from Missouri.

Such criticism of England, past and present, from a citizen of the American Republic, was a little too much like a child of light reproving the children of darkness. Against the tyranny of aristocracy could be set the rising tyranny of the trust; the criminals and bandits of King Arthur's time (whenever it was) were soon to be overmatched by the gangsters of the United States; against the power of the

church stood the social tyranny of Puritanical America ; denunciations of slavery came ill from a writer brought up in a slave-holding family in the greatest slave state the world ever saw, and the rack and stake of the Middle Ages could be paralleled in the hell-fires of the Southern lynchers.

At best it was Satan rebuking sin, the pot calling the kettle black. Underneath was the insult that Mark Twain really thought America a far superior place to England, a fact of which the next generation were not so assured. But the delusion of American freedom died hard.

Yet real lovers of Mark Twain's work, those who understand it, will 'wipe all that out.' When the *Yankee* book appeared, it was read by thousands with sheer unadulterated joy from cover to cover ; by thousands who didn't care a rush for historical accuracy, and were as willing to fuse all the centuries together as the author was. To such readers the burlesque of chivalry was a delight ; it was glorious to think of King Arthur's knights set to play base-ball and to ride round with advertising boards instead of hunting the Holy Grail. The reader threw off the dead weight of literary reverence and roared at the fun of it. And the de-

nunciation of cruelty and tyranny, and the triumph of machine-power, the revolver against the knight on horseback—all that was equally thrilling. It didn't matter where the tyranny was or when it was ; the reader had a notion that the institutions of dark ages were dark indeed, and exulted in their overthrow.

These readers were right. The *Yankee* is the most 'artistic' of all Mark Twain's works ; the burlesque the most unbroken, the theme the most continuous and consistent. The book *Huckleberry Finn* is imperfect as art when it breaks or nearly breaks into burlesque ; in other books the burlesque is imperfect when it breaks into sentiment. The *Yankee* is a complete artistic conception, carried unbroken to a finish. Such faults as it has, in the technique of humour, lie elsewhere. Mark Twain never could convey the idea of prolixity except by getting prolix ; to convey the idea of an interminable speech, he makes one ; as witness the talk of Alisande in the tale and many of his characters elsewhere. Art should do better than that.

One may pass over with but little comment the other writings and the other achievements of Mark Twain, from the time between the

appearance of the *Yankee* and his financial disasters of four years later. All through this period, and long before it, he had been reading intermittently about Joan of Arc, and presently working on a book about her. There was a family trip to Europe again in 1891-92 (France, Germany, Switzerland). To the family themselves the trip was chiefly memorable for its happiness. But to students of Mark Twain's work and life it is memorable for his famous dinner with the Kaiser and what he thought of that exalted potentate.

During that winter in Berlin, Mark Twain and his family saw more of 'high society' than at any time of their lives. They were entertained as leading celebrities of the day in diplomatic and aristocratic circles at a time when European nobility enjoyed its last and its brightest lustre. Highest of all honours for Mark Twain was an invitation to dine at the royal table of the 'young' German Emperor.

It is difficult for us, even for those of us whose memory carries back to it, to reconstruct the setting and surrounding of the past before the downfall of Europe: the pomp and majesty of kingship; the resplendent glory of unbroken militarism; the ancestral pride of nobility,

the authority and dignity of the church and the stability of established society. The gap between all that and bankrupt nations, labour democracies, red revolutions, and the threatened collapse of our civilization, is as great as that between the majestic vassal of God, William the Second, and an old man with a half-withered arm sawing wood at Doorn. Anyone *now* can see the real figure of the Kaiser; Mark Twain could see it then.

He dined as one of a large company as a guest of the Kaiser on February 20, 1892. Afterwards he wrote down (for himself) his impressions of the Emperor and his entourage, the silent dinner, the monologue conversations, the frigid questions and the rigid answers, the utter suppression of everyone except the sovereign himself. He recorded how he alone in all that obeisant company had the hardihood to venture a few original observations, with the result of universal consternation and discomfort. Years later, he related the incidents, from his notes, to his biographer for publication after his death.

Very different was a meeting a little later (in the following summer), at Nauheim, with the Prince of Wales (Edward VII.). This was as jovial and informal as the 'Kaiser-contakt'

had been rigid and conventional. The two walked up and down arm in arm, the Prince joking with Mark about a reference he had made to His Highness in one of his books. The ' royal memory,' whether coached or not, worked its usual charm.

Meantime publishing went on in America. There was the book, *The American Claimant*, with a play made out of it, that brought in a lot of money. Then there was a new Tom Sawyer story published in *St. Nicholas* in 1893-1894, and later as a book. It was called *Tom Sawyer Abroad*, and is interesting only as illustrating the failures of genius. In this story Tom and Huck and Nigger Jim start off in a (highly) dirigible balloon, cross the Atlantic, and ' fool around ' the Sahara Desert. The whole setting is about as unconvincing and pointless as if we had a sequel story in which, let us say, Sherlock Holmes becomes a country clergyman, or Mr. Pickwick joins the army and heads a cavalry charge in the Crimean War. Another sequel, *Tom Sawyer, Detective*, is a little happier, the scene at any rate being laid where it belongs.

And all this time, though he didn't realize it, Mark Twain's fortunes were moving towards

disaster, like swift-flowing water moving silently towards a cataract.

One pauses a moment before contemplating the shipwreck of a happiness that was never again restored, to dwell upon the completeness of it. It was not only in the world's goods and in the world's applause that Mark Twain was blessed. There was added to it the felicity of his private life. His abiding love for his sweet wife was only a part of the happy domestic and family relations with which his life was blessed throughout. His father, indeed, was little more than a memory, albeit a cherished one. For his mother, Jane Clemens, —the 'Aunt Polly' of Tom Sawyer—he bore a constant affection and a deep respect, even after he ceased to obey her precepts and 'touched' liquor and 'threw' cards. He sent her money as soon and as often as he had any to send.

After he left home he seldom saw his mother, though in his pilot days he once took her for a trip down the river to New Orleans.

Later on, after her son's marriage and his rise to eminence, Jane Clemens came east with her daughter Pamela (Mrs. Moffatt), and lived for a while in Fredonia (N.Y.), but she moved west again to make her home with her oldest

son Orion at Keokuk. There Mark Twain and his wife and children visited her in the summer of 1886. There she died in her eighty-eighth year in the summer of 1890, while her son was at the height of his success. All her later life was filled with pride over his achievements.

Orion Clemens, older than Sam by seven years and in his later life supported by his brother's bounty, was, in a way, nearer to Mark Twain, more sympathetic, than anyone else in the world. Orion was a sort of queer double of Sam, with the one quality of success left out. He was a printer who failed at printing (he hated to charge money for it), a writer who couldn't write, an inventor who didn't invent and a promoter who couldn't promote anything. But he felt himself always on the threshold of success and on the brink of fortune. After his return from the West, he lived, in the earthly sense, chiefly in Keokuk, Iowa, but in the real sense in a world of dreams. He wrote, at his brother's suggestion, a vast autobiography, pathetic in its record of failure. In his old age he was found one morning seated in the kitchen, his head upon the table—dead. Beside him were pens and paper; no doubt he had thought of something wonderful to write.

Mark Twain has paid a full tribute to his brother Orion in his autobiography. Among other things he says :

'Innumerable were Orion's projects for paying off his debts to me. These projects extended straight through the succeeding thirty years, but in every case they failed. During all those thirty years Orion's well-established honesty kept him in offices of trust where other people's money had to be taken care of, but where no salary was paid. He was treasurer of all the benevolent institutions ; he took care of the money and other property of widows and orphans ; he never lost a cent for anybody, and never made one for himself.

'Every time he changed his religion the church of his new faith was glad to get him ; made him treasurer at once, and at once he stopped the graft and the leaks in that church.

'He exhibited a faculty of changing his political complexion that was a marvel to the whole community. One morning he was a Republican, and upon invitation he agreed to make a campaign speech at the Republican mass meeting that night. He prepared the speech. After luncheon he became a Democrat, and agreed to write a score of exciting mottoes to be painted upon the transparencies

which the Democrats would carry in their torchlight procession that night. He wrote these shouting Democratic mottoes during the afternoon, and they occupied so much of his time that it was night before he had a chance to change his politics again ; so he actually made a rousing Republican campaign speech in the open air while his Democratic transparencies passed by in front of him, to the joy of every witness present.'

May the earth lie lightly on such a man.

In addition to Orion, his sister Pamela meant much in Mark Twain's life. Her little boy was christened after him as ' Samuel.' But it was when his own marriage was blessed with children that Mark Twain's domestic happiness received its final crown. His first child, it is true (Langdon Clemens, born November 7, 1870), was a delicate child and passed like an early flower (June 2, 1872). But the little girls who followed (Susie, 1872, Clara, 1874, and Jean, 1880) became the delight of their parents' life. Mrs. Clemens was a model mother—giving the children her time, her care, her teaching, her love, and Mark was an ideal father, romping with the children, playing games with them, acting with them, and spoiling them all he could—a proper division

of parental labour. The little Susie, in especial, was a child of exception, destined, it would have seemed, for great things. She wrote a part of a 'biography' of her father as quaint and interesting as her father's own work.

'Papa,' she writes, 'doesn't like to go to church at all, why, I never understood, until just now. He told us the other day that he couldn't bear to hear anyone talk but himself, but that he could listen to himself talk for hours without getting tired; of course he said this in joke, but no doubt it was founded on truth.'

For the intense happiness of such affections Mark Twain was destined later on to pay the full price. For him each break in the circle must come as a cruel blow, beyond consolation, without hope, cruel, final.

Such a time was approaching.

VII

DISASTER—1894–1900

It might have been thought that throughout the years of literary success Mark Twain was moving up from poverty to a competence, from a competence to wealth, from wealth to affluence. So indeed he thought himself. Books, plays and lectures were bringing in a stream of money, that at times ran in a flood. The colossal success of the Grant *Memoirs* seemed to open a boundless horizon. Shrewd investment, as the investor saw it, would multiply every dollar that was saved. There was no limit but the sky.

Of course, there was a stream of money going out in the other direction. The beautiful house in Hartford sopped up money as beautiful houses do. When its owner bought some adjacent land from his neighbour, his neighbour 'stung' him as adjacent neighbours do. Then there was the cost of entertainment. Mark Twain never wanted to go to other people's

houses, but he wanted everybody to come to his. This is an expensive taste. The dinners, the visits, the company went on without end.

Still, an income that runs to a hundred thousand dollars a year will stand a lot of strain. And Mark Twain carried with him the comfortable feeling that after spending a lot of money—say, twenty or thirty thousand a year—in keeping things going, he was still able every year to 'salt away' great sums of money that would guarantee the future against disaster. He felt this all the more because he knew that he had a progressive and inventive turn of mind, and was a man who could forecast the money that was going to be made of new inventions, new ideas. For instance, a large slice of his earlier savings went into a 'steam generator.' This was a marvellous mechanism calculated to save ninety per cent. of the fuel, if it had ever generated anything. It never did. Thirty-two thousand dollars went into a 'steam pulley' that didn't pull, and was followed by twenty-five invested under the sea in a marine telegraph. It never came up. Then there was the 'Kaolatype'—a new process of engraving by means of which fifty thousand dollars was placed on a smooth sheet of steel coated with China clay and left there.

At times Mark Twain showed what he thought to be his hard-headed business caution. A young man called Graham Bell offered him what he described as ' a whole hatful ' of shares in a new ingenious sort of toy called a ' telephone.' But he was not to be caught with *that.*

Meantime ordinary profits had grown to look too small, ordinary gains too paltry. A hundred dollars was only fit to light a cigar with, a thousand too small to save. What was needed was something with ' millions in it.' In other words, Mark Twain having invented, or drawn, the character of Colonel Sellers, had turned into Sellers himself; brought up on the ' Tennessee land ' and the lost earldom of Durham and the Esmeralda mine, he ran true to form and became Colonel Sellers, James Lampton and the Earl of Durham all in one. It was as if a Greek Fate, a Destiny of Necessity, had doomed him for disaster.

All this ran along for years.

But the chief agent in his undoing was a wonderful invention, a ' machine ' calculated to revolutionize all the trade of printing, publishing and book-making. This was no less than a machine that would set type, would

replace the laborious toil of the compositor by the dexterous and unerring work of mechanical power. Mark Twain had been a printer. He saw what this would mean. He realized that the dreamy young inventor James Paige had got hold of something that would turn the world upside down. All that was needed was to link up with Paige a man of keen business sense, a man with practical experience, a man commanding capital and bold enough to use it, in other words, himself.

The calculations made were staggering, were super-Sellers. Such a machine (when Paige had it absolutely complete ; it takes time to get a big thing like that just right) would be an indispensable necessity for all the newspapers in all the languages in all the world, and for all the magazines and book-printing of all nations everywhere. Multiply these by the circulation of the papers and the sales of the books, and remember that even in its earliest form the machine could work against four men—millions in it ? no, billions.

Mark Twain had heard of the machine about 1880, had put in three thousand dollars just for luck ; then later more ; then determined to limit his stake in it to thirty thousand dollars ; then plunged in on a neck-or-nothing

contract that could eat up money as fast as he could save it. All through the years of his great success—the days of Huck Finn and General Grant and the Yankee—Paige was tinkering at the machine, perfecting it, and Clemens pouring money down an endless pipe. He never realized that other machines might 'get there' first; he saw, as a printer, what a revolution a 'linotype' would make; he didn't see that other revolutionists might step in ahead.

And with that went in these same years the publishing business. Mark Twain by this time was a publisher, the firm of Webster and Company being virtually owned by him, and managed by 'Charlie' Webster, a man as visionary as himself and united to his family by marriage with a niece. Any optimism that Mark Twain lacked, Webster supplied. The resounding success of the Grant *Memoirs* had given the firm a universal éclat. Other war memoirs followed, a whole *Library of Humour* was planned. As the greatest undertaking of all, the firm brought out, by subscription sale, a magnificent *Life of Pope Leo the Thirteenth.* Here was an enterprise indeed! As Clemens saw it, this would make the 300,000 copies of the *Personal Memoirs of General Grant* look

like a mere handful. This would be read by every living Roman Catholic; put the number of these at, say, 250,000,000, translate the book into every language, sell it on the average of, say, three dollars, and what do you get? Something pretty substantial! These are not Mark Twain's words, but they represent his state of mind. Charlie Webster took a run over to Italy and had a talk with the aged Leo. He carried with him a copy of the Grant book—bound in gold it was to be, but Mark Twain's friends dissuaded him; Webster talked in millions! The poor old pontiff was swept away. He gave his blessing to the work and begged Father O'Reilly, who was to write him up, somewhat pathetically, just to 'tell the truth, tell the truth.' As from a pope to a priest these are strong words. 'We in Italy cannot comprehend such things,' said Leo to Charlie. Neither they could in America, so it presently seemed. In short, 'Mark' and 'Charlie' had overlooked the fact that millions and millions of Roman Catholics couldn't read, and if they did, they wouldn't read the Life of the Pope, and that a pope doesn't have a 'life' anyway, and they haven't got three dollars if he had.

So presently the magnificent *Life of Pope Leo*

dragged along, beside the war memoirs and the humour library, with the increasing deficit of Webster and Company. Then came the hard times, the attempt to raise money in a falling market, the machine, the machine! that never could get down—and then right ahead in plain sight the prospect of disaster, ruin, bankruptcy, like breakers under the bow of a ship.

During these years, 1892, 1893 and 1894, Mark Twain rushed back and forward from Europe to America. He dashed across in June 1892; Paige and Webster recharged him with optimism, and in two weeks he was off again for Europe. *Pudd'nhead Wilson* was ready to be issued, and *The American Claimant* was already published; the hard times hit the sales (and in any case the book was not the real thing), but the house kept going. By April of 1893 Mark Twain was back in America, rushing to Chicago to see Paige, then in May, reassured, but devoured with anxiety, off to Genoa. That summer he was back again. The end was getting near.

One friend he found on the brink of his disaster—Henry H. Rogers of the Standard Oil Company. The name of that corporation in those days had an evil sound, but to Mark

Twain, H. H. Rogers was and remained one of the noblest men in the world. All his life Rogers had read and admired Mark Twain's works. He met him now and played for him the part that Mark Twain had played for General Grant. He gathered in his firm hands the tangled threads of the humorist's enterprises and unravelled the disorder; marked with the eye of business genius the assets that lay in the skein, ready to be rewoven. Then with his back against the wall he faced the creditors, who stood, some reluctant and some ravenous, ready to spring. But even Rogers could not prevent the inevitable. Mark Twain, back in France (May 1894), where his wife remained, returned to America.

Then came the crash. Charles L. Webster and Company went bankrupt on April 18, 1894. Rogers, acting for Mark Twain, got a settlement with the creditors at fifty cents on the dollar for the hundred thousand dollars of debt that carried the firm down. Mark Twain was ruined.

One needs to reflect for a moment to realize the extent of disaster. Mark Twain was almost sixty years old. He must begin all over again. He had thought himself affluent beyond the

common lot. He had now nothing ; less than nothing. He had supposed that henceforth he could use his pen as he would wish to, writing for writing's sake—about such things, for example, as the life of Joan of Arc, about which he had dreamed for years. He had thought himself done and finished for ever with lecturing ; he must pick up that weary task where he had left it off. Old and tired and wearying already of the world, he must assume the mantle of youth, the mask of merriment. He must pretend to be Mark Twain.

Nothing in his life became him better than the way he faced his adversity. He would have nothing to do with the fifty cents on the dollar ; give him time, he would pay it all. When the news of his ruin reached the world there was at once talk of a national subscription to pay his debts. He would not hear of it ; not while he could work ; to people brought up to rough it on the frontier in the West, public charity was too much like the county poorhouse.

But the public sympathy counted for much. Letters and telegrams flowed in, cheques which he refused to take, but which touched his heart, and letters from some of the creditors waiving

their claims indefinitely till he was ready to pay them. Most of all, from his wife, still in France, there came messages of love and encouragement; he wrote back with undaunted courage: 'A burden has been lifted from me and I am blithe inside . . . except when I think of you, dear heart . . . for I seem to see you grieving and ashamed. There is temporary defeat, but no dishonour; we will march again.'

Oddly enough, in one corner of his mind was one sunlit spot filled with hope. The machine! For even now Rogers, who knew everything, still thought it might work, and Paige was still perfecting it.

So within a few weeks Mark Twain was over again in France with his family, settled down at Étretat on the Normandy coast, filled with new hopes and busy at what he felt was the real work of his life, a presentation of the career of Joan of Arc. At Étretat and at Paris, while his business affairs were being straightened out, Paige continuing his perfecting, and the enthusiastic Major Pond organizing a world lecture tour, he completed his *Joan*—for which, perhaps, as a child of adversity, he had a

greater affection than for any other of his books.

Authors are notoriously perverse creatures. They are apt to repudiate their noblest offspring; Conan Doyle hated to be always thought of as the author of Sherlock Holmes; he felt himself to be a historical novelist, and grew to hate Sherlock. Lord Macaulay thought himself a poet, and Sir Isaac Newton, very probably, imagined himself a humorist. So did Mark Twain turn from the roaring fun of *Roughing It* and the *Innocents* to cherish the sorrows of the martyred *Joan.*

Joan of Arc was finished in Paris in January 1895 (before the lecture tour started), and published as a serial in *Harper's* that year. The writer withheld his name, for fear that the signature of 'Mark Twain' would give a false turn to the reader. The *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc* were published as if a translation from an actual memoir written by the Sieur de Conte, a supposed contemporary and companion of the Maid of Orleans. But this thin pretence broke down. Such a literary secret could perhaps be kept in Shakespeare's time, but not in ours; and in any case the Sieur de Conte, when he philosophizes, talks

rather like Nigger Jim. The leading critics and biographers have joined in ranking the book high. In its author's own opinion, expressed deliberately in writing, it is counted as his greatest work. When it came out as a book he dedicated it proudly to his wife 'in grateful recognition of her twenty-five years of valued service as my literary adviser and editor.' It seems presumption to express a contrary opinion. The actual story of Joan of Arc is of course a tragedy of the ages; no imaginable picture can surpass that of a beautiful and inspired girl, saving her country in arms, and dying in the flames of martyrdom. But because Joan is great it doesn't follow that Mark Twain's book about Joan is great. One very simple test of a book is whether people read it and whether they read it for its own sake; because they want to read it, or for some other reason, such as the vainglory of culture, the author's reputation, or by the attraction of the subject which the title professes to treat. Another excellent test of a book is whether the reader finishes it. It may be doubted by the sceptical whether the book *Joan of Arc* passes these tests. How many have said of it, 'a sweet thing,' 'a beautiful thing,' and left the beautiful thing unfinished.

We recall how Mr. Pickwick listened to a story read out loud at Dingley Dell with his eyes closed as in an ecstasy of appreciation. No doubt he woke up at the end and said, ' a sweet thing.'

Those of us old enough to recall the appearance of *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* and the *Yankee* and such, and the sheer joy of reading them without knowing or caring about critical judgment, cultural value and literary conversation, will remember that there was no such thing with the *Joan of Arc* book. The comment of the plain reader was, ' Hell ! it isn't funny ! ' What he meant was, it isn't Mark Twain ; of course, it wasn't meant to be. But unfortunately it is Mark Twain whenever it gets prosy. Mark Twain, in *Is Shakespeare Dead?*, has scoffed at those who try to write in the words and technique of a trade and calling which they do not know. He shows that Captain Marryat and Richard Dana could write like sailors because they *were* sailors, and Shakespeare couldn't because he wasn't. Mark Twain gets intense fun out of Shakespeare's *Tempest* storm, where the captain says, ' *Fall to it, yarely, or we run ourselves to ground; bestir! bestir!* ' And the boatswain answers, ' *Heigh! my hearts! Cheerly, cheerly,*

my hearts! Yare, yare!' 'That will do for the present,' says Mark in comment, 'let us yare a little now, for a change.' But compare the author himself as the Sieur de Conte, when he says of the fighting outside of Orleans: '*We had a long tough piece of work before us, but we carried it through before night, Joan keeping us hard at it. . . . Everybody was tired out with this long day's hard work.*' Picturesque, isn't it? But is this mediaeval hand-to-hand fighting or setting ten thousand ems of type? Pretty exhausting, evidently, this mediaeval combat. A man deserves his supper after it.

Shakespeare on the deck of a ship 'has nothing on this.'

What is more, all the Sieur de Conte's knights and squires seem somehow to come from Missouri or Illinois. He says that Catherine Boucher belonged to Orleans, France, yet somehow she seemed to suggest Keokuk, Iowa. Even Joan and her enemies and her judges sound like a book of quotations. In fine, Mark Twain should have been content to remain Mark Twain, if he could face the ignominy of being a 'funny' writer and live it down.

He was under the impression that he had 'spent twelve years of preparation on this book.' But as the years from 1883 to 1895 saw also

the writing of *Huckleberry Finn*, *The Connecticut Yankee*, *The American Claimant*, *Tom Sawyer Abroad*, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, a great quantity of sketches published and otherwise, a vast series of lectures all over the map, two or three trips to Europe, social life in floods of hospitality, billiards night and day, and company without end—the researches into the Middle Ages could not have been so very exacting. Mark Twain, who had never been to college, had no notion of the long slow labour of a Gibbon, or the devoted hours of a college historian buried in book-dust, invisible for years. In flat contradiction of real authorities, let it be stated here that *Joan of Arc*, apart from the elevated subject, is about as good or as bad as dozens of historical romances written at the time, but never could have made a great reputation, nor sustained it. Mark Twain's *Joan* floats down the stream of time held up by the humble arms of *Huckleberry Finn* and *The Connecticut Yankee*.

But meantime, while *Joan* was running in *Harper's*, Mark Twain had sailed back to America, where Major Pond had already arranged his round-the-world lecture tour. It was to cover a western trip across America, then Australia, India, South Africa, and thence

to England and home. Anyone who realizes how tired Mark Twain was of lecturing, of posing as a celebrity, of forcing new sayings and old jokes, may imagine with what weariness of soul he looked towards this prospect.

Yet he went at it bravely enough. He wrote to his young friend and admirer, Rudyard Kipling, to meet him in India, where he would arrive 'riding on his Ayah,' and then, like the man in the ballad, set his face towards the West. The chain of lectures was delivered in midsummer heat from Cleveland out to Vancouver. There he took ship (August 1895) for Australia, busy on board with his notes for the book that should recall the world trip. In Australia, lectures, receptions, honours; in India the same; in South Africa the same. Political opinions, nationalities, conflicts made no difference; for all the world he was Mark Twain; all the world knew and appreciated the nobility of his present purpose. He travelled the length and breadth of India; was entertained everywhere by officials, by rajahs, by society. He was in South Africa and saw Johannesburg and Pretoria just after the Jameson Raid, with the Uitlanders still in jail and the world still humming with speculation. Then back to England in July of 1896. There he expected to greet

again his daughter Susie, who had stayed behind at college in America. But fate was not done with Mark Twain yet. Instead of the rapturous meeting there came the ominous news of illness, and then of his child's death (August 18, 1896).

The blow fell with cruel force. Beside this the financial disaster seemed as nothing. From this, and the successive bereavements that followed, Mark Twain never recovered.

But his work he bravely carried to completion. His world tour presently appeared as a book (1897) under the happy title, *Following the Equator*. There is no need to discuss its literary merit; of course it is not the *Innocents Abroad*. But the marvel is that under such circumstances the book was done so well. Such as it is, no one else could have done it. There is as ever the same instinct in finding what is interesting, and the same queer 'innocence' of the eye that by looking at things crooked gets them straight. In the case of South Africa, the book is of still greater interest. Its comments, written as between the Jameson Raid of New Year 1895-96 and the War of October 1899, and written without a knowledge of the sequel of the things described, show an unusual insight. Take the calculation

—Mark Twain, one recalls, was great on calculation—made as a sort of comic statistics—that at the usual rate of casualties as between Boers and Britons at Majuba and elsewhere, Dr. Jameson would have needed 240,000 men for his raid ! This was meant to be as funny as the calculations of the saints and the mummies in the *Innocents Abroad.* In the light of the Boer War it is just a ghastly prophecy.

Mark Twain did not return to America with his book. He lingered on in Europe. He spent the first winter in London (1896-97) ; then moved about, spending a summer in Switzerland and two winters in Vienna (1897-1898, 1898-99), with an Austrian country summer in between. In Austria he seems to have found a new fatherland, a second country —or, counting England, a third. In the Austrian capital especially he enjoyed a peculiar prestige. Mr. Paine tells us that his rooms at the Metropole Hotel were something like a court. Even on the street the people knew his striking figure and loved to honour him. ' Herr Mark Twain ' was one of the celebrities of Vienna. Better still, money was coming in again fast. His new industry did not flag. There were articles in *Harper's*, the *Cosmopolitan*

and the *Century*. *Pudd'nhead Wilson* had been published in 1894 by his first publisher, the American Publishing Company. It was accompanied by *Tom Sawyer Abroad* and followed by *Tom Sawyer, Detective*. The cloud of debt was lifting. The horizon was clearing again. The 'machine,' indeed, had finally gone on the scrap-heap, but financially the turn of the tide had come.

But the days were saddened by new bereavements. To Vienna came the news of Orion's death (December 11, 1897). It was as if a part of Mark Twain's own life had gone. Then came the death of his old coloured butler George, a part of his Hartford home, whose loss added to the increasing loneliness. Worst of all, his little girl Jean, who had accompanied her father and mother on their wanderings, was developing an epileptic illness that struck fear into her parents' hearts.

The family left Vienna and went to London for special treatment for Jean ; and from there, on the same quest, to Sweden for the summer. It was partly Jean's illness, and partly ailments of his own, that turned Mark Twain's mind to thoughts of medicine, to osteopathy, to mental treatment by Christian Science and to the by-paths and mysteries of the healing art. For a

time he took a terrific interest in a new food —some sort of harmless mess of concentrated milk which he wished to see the whole world adopt. For anyone brought up in the West, the patent medicine habit dies hard. The last days of the European sojourn were spent in London, and the last summer at a charming country house (Dollis Hill House) in the suburbs. The English had long since ceased to harbour any resentment for the *Connecticut Yankee*. The life in London was one continual offer of honours and entertainments. But he longed for home. Then at last, the exile ended, he could set his feet on the home trail. With his daughter's health improved, if not restored, with the burden of debt cleared and paid, dollar for dollar, Mark Twain in the autumn of 1900 said farewell to the tumults and tyrannies of benighted Europe and stepped again into the free atmosphere of America (in a New York Customs House) on October 15, 1900.

He was back home. His work was done.

His ' career ' was ended.

VIII

THE EVENING OF A LONG DAY

1900–1910

MARK TWAIN'S return to America in the autumn of 1900, with the cloud of debt lifted and ease and affluence assured, may be said to mark the end of his active career. His work was done. There was no further need for him to seek celebrity ; the national reception which greeted him on his return, the affection which surrounded him, the legend which had grown about his personality, these things could be brought to no higher point. Moreover, he was sixty-five years old. His literary work was done. The rest of his life—for he lived for nearly ten years more—was only an epilogue. It was a long evening after the day's work.

Even now he did not settle down to a single place and home. He established himself first in a furnished house (14 West Tenth Street) in New York. But in the last ten years of his life, as between the ages of sixty-five and seventy-

four, Mark Twain moved about more and lived in more homes than most people do in their whole lifetime. The migratory habit had become a part of his existence. The mere enumeration of his continued change of place is staggering to sedentary people of a fixed abode. In the summer after his return (that of 1901) he and his family occupied a 'cabin' on Saranac Lake in the Adirondacks, with a trip to Elmira and a yachting cruise from New England to Nova Scotia with Henry Rogers. There followed a winter (1901-2) in a new home at Riverdale, a Hudson River suburb of New York. In the summer following there came a trip to the West to pick up a degree at Missouri, with five days at Hannibal, and then a summer residence at York Harbor, Maine. There was a second winter at Riverdale (1902-3), and then a summer, the last one, at Elmira. The Hartford house had been sold ; that home and its associations were gone for ever. The next winter there was a new European tour for the sake of Mrs. Clemens's failing health. It was spent at Florence, and there on the fifth of June 1904 the deepest of all shadows fell over Mark Twain's life, with the loss of his first and last love.

Henceforth, he still had his daughters, Jean

almost to the end, and Clara, alone of the family to survive him. After the homecoming to America they lived out the summer in a cottage at Tyrringham, and the winter following in New York City, at 21 Fifth Avenue. The next summer was spent in the village of Dublin in New Hampshire, and again a winter in New York, with a second summer (1906) at Dublin. But the winter following saw a trip to Bermuda, and the summer after that—contrary to all Mark Twain's own expectations—a new voyage across the Atlantic. He had thought that nothing could again induce him to cross the sea. But the award of the honorary degree of Doctor of Literature by the University of Oxford could not be refused. With the degree went entertainment and honours in London—the final and crowning proof of England's admiration and affection for the great American.

After his return home there came another trip to Bermuda, and then, in June 1908, the entry into a new and specially built home at Redding—a beautiful country place for which Mark Twain had given general directions—especially for billiards—but which he never saw until he moved in. The place presently acquired the name of 'Stormfield,' after his

latest character in fiction. The next winter saw another visit to Bermuda, from which he returned in April of the ensuing year to Stormfield, where he died on April 21, 1910.

It would be without purpose to indicate in detail all the varied happenings of these last ten years. There were occasions of special honour, such as the granting of degrees from Yale and from Missouri, the great dinner in New York in 1902, for Mark Twain's sixty-seventh birthday, and the famous banquet given by the Lotos Club in 1908 after his return from the crowning honours of Oxford. One such special occasion was the final and farewell lecture given in Carnegie Hall, New York, April 6, 1906, for a public charity, a *nunc dimittis* after a long servitude.

Nor is it of much use to deal at full length with all the varied and random writing of the last ten years, a part of it reserved for publication till after the writer's death. The truth is that what Mark Twain wrote after 1900 is chiefly interesting because Mark Twain wrote it. Yet even to this there are brilliant exceptions.

Students of Mark Twain's work will be inclined to agree that it can be divided into

various categories. There is a part of it which represents The Great Humorist, drawing our spontaneous laughter from the contrasts, the follies, and the incongruity of life. Here the cast of thought and the form of the words vie in excellence. The form of thought consists in bringing to bear an absolutely open and 'innocent' point of view on things already valued and prejudged and showing them as they are. The form of words consists in making terms and phrases take on a new and sudden meaning, obvious when found, but findable only by the same process of 'innocent' application. For both these things—the power of vision and the innocence of expression—Mark Twain has never been surpassed. The works that bear this stamp fully indented and fall into this class are pre-eminently the ones indicated in an earlier chapter—*Life on the Mississippi*, *Roughing It*, *The Innocents Abroad*, *Tom Sawyer*, *Huckleberry Finn*, and the *Yankee*. This is all that Mark Twain ever need have written.

Alongside of these are works intended to be in the same strain, but failing in their aim—such as *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, *The American Claimant*, *Tom Sawyer Abroad*. *The Gilded Age* is a mixed product, to place where one will. Close to

these are the vast gargantuan burlesques planned but not finished, such as the huge *Noah's Ark* that was to have been, and a lot of fragmentary sketches. It was always possible with Mark Twain for prolixity to destroy excellence, for exaggerations to reach the point of being meaningless.

Quite different are the stories in which Mark Twain laid aside the cap and bells of the humorist to assume, in whole or in part, the character of the romantic novelist. These are *The Prince and the Pauper* and, more than anything, *Joan of Arc. De gustibus non est disputandum*, but it may be humbly suggested that the praise awarded by the cultured to these books was not accompanied by the enjoyment of the uncultured public.

But quite different from all such work was what Mark Twain wrote not as humour but as invective, not as amusement but as denunciation, not for writing's sake but for the sake of a public cause, a public idea, for liberty, for humanity. Here he only used his matchless power of phrase, his matchless touch of humour—as a weapon to destroy, a hammer to drive home a blow.

Such illumination as was shed from his old age was exactly in this field : the denunciation

of war and conquest, of England in South Africa, of Europe in China, of his own republic in the Philippines; the discussion, pointed and controversial, but not altogether hostile, of the power and meaning of Christian Science; the discussion, brilliant in spite of prolixity, of who was Shakespeare; and, most of all, the discussion of heaven and hell, of God and the devil, of man and immortality, in terms not known in the Sunday School at Hannibal, Missouri, in 1850.

In such work as this, after humour for its own sake was gone, and romance had simmered into sentimentality, Mark Twain was still a master.

One pauses a moment to consider some of it.

On Shakespeare one must not linger. The ashes of controversy fan too soon into a flame. But in the opinion of many unqualified people Mark Twain's *Is Shakespeare Dead?* is the best piece of Shakespearian criticism ever attempted. He proves conclusively that Shakespeare was not Shakespeare.

But his writings on peace and war, conquest and imperialism, merit a longer mention.

It was just in this closing period of Mark

Twain's life, just at the turn of the century, that the 'imperialism' of the white race, gathering for a generation, reached its culmination. These were the days of the 'white man's burden,' of the partition of Africa, the 'opening-up' of China, and the 'strangling' of Persia. There was the South African War, the European armed force in China; there was 'red rubber' on the Amazon and on the Congo, and there was the American occupation of the Philippine Islands. It is impossible here to discuss the good and bad of this movement. Some of the best people in the world were in favour of it; and some of the best against it. Perhaps it was destiny, perhaps it wasn't. In any case, it is long since replaced by vast upheavals of nations and of classes that have destroyed the world in which it stood. The white man has burdens of his own now.

But at the time, to many of the outgoing generation, especially in America, the whole thing seemed, as it did to Mark Twain, a reversion to barbarism, the substitution of brute force for justice, of slavery for liberty.

There was the Boer War. Mark Twain himself had written (in *Following the Equator*) of rights and wrongs in South Africa, and had stated with great emphasis the case of the

Uitlanders against the Kruger government. But the spectacle of the two little republics being overwhelmed by the sheer brute power of an associated Empire, fighting overmatched but without surrender, was more than he could stand. He could not, he the Mark Twain of the legend and the corn-cob pipe, speak out. Yet it was hard for him to be silent. He told his friends that he was writing bitter articles ' in his head ' about it. He did write at least one article, meaning to publish it, unsigned, in the *London Times*. But he withdrew it. He could not face the storm of obloquy and denunciation that would have replaced the affection of a nation. He tried to persuade himself. ' Even if wrong—and she is wrong—England must be upheld.' So he wrote to Howells, ' he is an enemy of the human race who shall speak against her now.' This is bunk, and he knew it.

His feelings were similar towards the Philippines conquest. Mark Twain was an American of the older covenant for whom the Monroe Doctrine worked both ways. ' Apparently,' so he wrote, but not for publication, ' we are not proposing to set the Filipinos free and give their islands to them ; and apparently we are not proposing to hang the priests and confiscate

their property. If these things are so, the war out there has no interest for me.'

Of China and the Boxers and the missionaries and so forth, Mark Twain could speak more freely. He had nothing but admiration for the labours of the real missionary, facing poverty, hardship, exile and barbarous death to extend God's Kingdom on earth. But for the other kind of missionary, living in comfort, accompanied by gunboats and protected by punitive expeditions—the advance guard of European rapacity—he had nothing but horror and contempt. Those who share his feelings may read with joy and comfort the fierce invective of the article *To the Person Sitting in Darkness*, published by the *North American* in February 1901, and since included in his books.

As with the missionaries, so—and much more so—with King Leopold and the Congo. See the pamphlet, *King Leopold's Soliloquy*, written by Mark Twain and circulated by the Congo Reform Association. Official Belgium now undertakes the augean task of whitewashing the former king. We may therefore be content with quoting, without comment, what Mark Twain wrote as a proposed epitaph for the King of the Belgians. 'Here under this gilded tomb lies rotting the body of one the smell

of whose name may still offend the nostrils of men ages upon ages after all the Caesars and Washingtons and Napoleons shall have ceased to be praised or blamed and been forgotten—Leopold of Belgium.'

It is a sweet thought, nicely expressed.

For the present purpose bygone sins and dead-and-gone issues do not count. But the point is that in reading these invectives against injustice one is in contact with Mark Twain as vitally as in reading the smiling pages of the *Innocents Abroad.*

An interesting side-issue is found in Mark Twain's queer obsession with Christian Science. On this he wrote various articles (in the *Cosmopolitan* and the *North American,* 1899-1903), and ended by wasting a whole book on it. He had taken it into his head that Christian Science was about to envelop the world ; that it was going to get all the money and all the world there is—over-ride all political parties, churches, corporations and governments, and dominate mankind.

Quite evidently Mark Twain didn't know what he himself thought about Christian Science. He was fascinated with its mental

healing, with its dismissal of pain. But he denounced Mrs. Eddy as a liar and a humbug, who didn't write her own books because she couldn't. Mark Twain's whole attitude was a sort of obsession. He could not see that Christian Science would come and go, like all other cults and creeds—lose its first hard outline, its combative enthusiasm, and become—respectable; in other words, just a way of 'going to church,' which is for many people an instinct and a necessity. 'Christian Scientists' who call in doctors become like Methodists who dance and Presbyterians who don't go to hell. Mark Twain needn't have worried. His book, *Christian Science* (1907), sounds now like attacking a grass-bird with a cannon.

But chief in interest in all of these later writings are the ones that are meant to deal with fundamental issues of God and man, heaven and hell, the Bible and the sinner. Here, for example, is *Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven.* It relates, on a vast cosmic scale, of size and space and number, how Captain Stormfield—a sea-captain character lifted out of one of Mark Twain's California voyages—was taken up to heaven and what he saw. It

is meant to show that people couldn't *really* play the harp all day. They'd get sick of it. They couldn't really sit and wear golden crowns all day. They'd get bored with it. Such a book from the point of view of the Hannibal Sunday School class of 1850 would be bold and wicked beyond words, fascinating indeed, but apt to land the reader in hell. To the ordinary reader of to-day it is as pointless as it is prosy. Perhaps a divinity student might find it an amusing skit.

In other words, Mark Twain was like Don Quixote tilting against windmills. He had been brought up amongst simple frontier people, slaves, western desperadoes and bad men. None of these people ever question the Scripture. All are willing to admit that the world was made in six days, or less, that Joshua stopped the sun, and that the proof of the existence of miracles is that one happened last year in Wyoming.

In *Captain Stormfield* and *What Is Man?* (1906) and in *The Mysterious Stranger*, published after his death, Mark Twain is attacking forms of literalism long since passed away among people of any enlightenment. Mark Twain could never forgive the 'God of the Bible' for his cruelty to man, his eternal sentence to hell,

his creation of pain and sorrow that man might suffer.

But if no such God ever existed, why worry about him?

Such thoughts and such angers Mark Twain carried in his intimate mind all his life. He wrote them into notes, into scraps, into odd fancies in his books. When Huck Finn says, 'All right, I'll *go to hell*,' that is Mark Twain defying God. Some of this writing was published in his lifetime, some printed privately (like *What Is Man?*), and some had to wait till the loving censorship that held it back was gone. And some of it he laid aside to be published after his death, when no one could 'get after' him.

That time was approaching.

Mark Twain had gone to Bermuda in the autumn of 1909, but, with characteristic restlessness, sailed home again to spend the Christmas holidays with Jean, who had stayed home at Stormfield. Clara, the other daughter, whose voice and whose musical talent were the delight of her father, had married, had become Mrs. Gabrilowitch, and was abroad. There was only Jean.

On the day before Christmas, in the midst of her busy and loving preparation of the Christmas tree, Jean was suddenly stricken dead. On Christmas night her body was carried away to be buried beside her mother at Elmira. 'From my windows,' wrote her father, 'I saw the hearse and the carriages wind along the road and gradually grow vague and spectral in the falling snow, and presently disappear. Jean had gone out of my life and would not come back any more.'

Next day there was a great storm of driving snow. He looked out on it. 'They are burying her now at Elmira,' he said. 'Jean always loved to see a storm like this.' For Mark Twain this was the end.

He had not long to wait. In January of 1910 he went back to Bermuda, writing home cheerfully enough to Howells and the Mr. Paine who had for years past been preparing his biography, and to his daughter Clara. But he was a stricken man. There was trouble with his heart and he had lost the will to live. Each of us, it seems, lives, as apart from accidents, as long as we want to, but the time comes when we don't want to. So it was with Mark Twain. When the time came to leave

Bermuda he was failing rapidly. They carried him on board the ship and so, two days later, to the shore, and then on by train and carriage to Stormfield. He gathered strength to step from the carriage across the threshold, and from there Paine and others carried him upstairs to his bed. This was on April 14. Meantime his daughter Clara was hurrying home, arriving a day or so after they brought her father there. The end came, just with the sunset, on the evening of April 21, 1910. His last words were, 'Good-bye,' and then, 'if we meet——' and then silence. Mark Twain was gone.

His body was buried at Elmira beside the graves of his wife and daughter.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE LIFE AND WORK OF MARK TWAIN

[SAMUEL LANGHORNE CLEMENS]

1835, Nov. 30. Born at Florida, Missouri.

1839. Family moved to Hannibal, Missouri.

1847, March 24. Father died; began work as a printer's apprentice.

1853. Worked as a printer at St. Louis, then in New York and Philadelphia.

1854. Worked again in St. Louis.

1855. Worked with Orion Clemens at Keokuk, Iowa.

1856-57. Worked in Cincinnati.

1857. Abandoned printer's trade. Became a pilot's apprentice and then a pilot on the Mississippi.

1861. Civil War. Pilot business ended; enlisted as a Confederate in a temporary Missouri organization. Retired after two weeks.

1861. Went to Nevada as unpaid secretary to his brother Orion. Became a miner.

1862. On the staff of the *Territorial Enterprise*, Virginia City.

1863. Adopted the pen-name of 'Mark Twain.'

1864. Moved to San Francisco.

1864-65. Fled to the mountains; a miner again.

1865. Back in San Francisco.

1866, March-June. Sandwich Islands trip.

1866, Oct. 2. San Francisco lecture on the Sandwich Islands.

1866, Dec. 15. Sailed from San Francisco for New York via the Isthmus.

1867, May 6. Lectured in Cooper Union building, New York.

1867, May. Published *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County and Other Sketches.*

1867, June-Nov. The *Quaker City* excursion of the Innocents Abroad.

1867, Dec. 23. Met Olivia Langdon; went with her to hear Charles Dickens lecture.

1868. To California and back via Aspinwall to adjust rights of publishing *Quaker City* letters.

1868, July 2. Farewell Address in San Francisco.

1868, July 28. Arrived New York.

1868-69, Season of. Lecture Tour in Eastern Cities.

1869, Feb. 4. Engagement with Olivia Langdon.

1869, July 20. Published *Innocents Abroad.*

1869, Aug. 14. Editor Buffalo *Express.*

1870, Feb. 2. Married Olivia Langdon.

1870, Nov. 7. Langdon Clemens born.

1871. Left Buffalo for Hartford connection; sold out of *Express.*

1871. Published *Roughing It.*

1872, March 19. Olivia Susan (Susie) Clemens born.

1872, June 2. Langdon Clemens died.

1872, Aug.-Nov. First visit to England.

1873. Published *The Gilded Age*; built a house in Hartford.

1873, May–1874, Jan. Second visit to England.

1873, Oct. 13. Lectured in London.

1874. Summer at Quarry Farm, Elmira. Clara Clemens born (June).

1874-75. First articles in *Atlantic*: *A True Story*; *Old Times on the Mississippi.*

1876. Summer at Quarry Farm.

1876. Play of *Ah Sin*, with Bret Harte.

1876. *Tom Sawyer.*

1877. To Bermuda with Rev. Joe Twitchell.

1877, Dec. 17. The Whittier Birthday Speech.

1878, April–1879, Sept. European Tour: Germany, Switzerland, Italy, France, England.

1879, Nov. 13. Speech at the Grant Banquet at Chicago.

1880. Published *A Tramp Abroad* and *The Prince and the Pauper.*

1880, July. Jane Lampton (Jean) Clemens born.

1880 and 1883. Trips to Canada. Banquet at Montreal (1880). Guest at Rideau Hall (1883).

1883. *Life on the Mississippi.*

1884. Went into publishing business.

1884. Lecture tour with George W. Cable.

1884. *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.*

1885. Contract with General Grant.

1888. Master of Arts of Yale.

1889. *Connecticut Yankee.*

1891, June. Went with family to Europe for protracted residence: in Berlin winter of 1891-1892; travelled France, Germany, Italy.

1891. *The American Claimant.*

1892, June. Back to America for two weeks; returned to Europe.

1892-93. In Italy, chiefly at Florence.

1893, March-May. To America and back to Europe.

1893, Aug. Back to New York.

1894. Went back to France and then home again to America.

1894, April 18. Publishing firm, Charles L. Webster and Co., failed.

1894, May. Returned to France, then back to America.

1894. Summer at Étretat, France; winter in Paris.

1895, May. Returned to America.

1895, April-Dec. *Joan of Arc* (*Harper's*).

1895, July–1896, July. Round-the-world Lecture Trip: United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, South Africa.

1896, July 14. Landed at Southampton.

1896, Aug. Susie Clemens died.

1896-1900, Oct. London, Switzerland, Vienna, Sweden.

1897. *Following the Equator.*

1900, Oct. 15. Return of Mark Twain to America; lived at 14 West Tenth Street, New York.

1901, Summer. At Saranac Lake.

1901, Doctor of Letters of Yale.

1901-2, Winter. At Riverdale on the Hudson.

1902, Summer. At York Harbor, Maine.

1902, Nov. 27. New York Banquet for sixty-seventh birthday.

1902-3, Winter. Riverdale.

1903, Summer. Elmira.

1903-4. Travelled in Europe; Florence.

1904, June 5. Mrs. Clemens died.

1904. Returned to America; rest of summer at Tyrringham.

1904. First portions of *Autobiography.*

1904. Lived at 21 Fifth Avenue, New York.

1905. Summer at Dublin, New Hampshire.

1906, April 19. Farewell lecture in New York.

1906. *What is Man?* (book privately printed).

1906. Second summer at Dublin.

1906-7. Trip to Bermuda.

1907. To England; Oxford Degree, June 26, 1907.

1908, Jan. 11. Lotos Club Banquet.

1908. To Bermuda.

1908, Summer. New House (Stormfield) at Redding, Connecticut.

1909. *Is Shakespeare Dead?* (book).

1909, Nov. To Bermuda.

1909, Dec. Back to Stormfield. Jean Clemens died, Dec. 24.

1910, Jan. Back to Bermuda.

1910, April. Returned to Stormfield. Died, April 21.

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