

My Mark Twain (from Literary Friends and Acquaintance) eBook

My Mark Twain (from Literary Friends and Acquaintance) by William Dean Howells

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I.

It was in the little office of James T. Fields, over the bookstore of Ticknor & Fields, at 124 Tremont Street, Boston, that I first met my friend of now forty-four years, Samuel L. Clemens. Mr. Fields was then the editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*, and I was his proud and glad assistant, with a pretty free hand as to manuscripts, and an unmanacled command of the book-notices at the end of the magazine. I wrote nearly all of them myself, and in 1869 I had written rather a long notice of a book just winning its way to universal favor. In this review I had intimated my reservations concerning the 'Innocents Abroad', but I had the luck, if not the sense, to recognize that it was such fun as we had not had before. I forget just what I said in praise of it, and it does not matter; it is enough that I praised it enough to satisfy the author. He now signified as much, and he stamped his gratitude into my memory with a story wonderfully allegorizing the situation, which the mock modesty of print forbids my repeating here. Throughout my long acquaintance with him his graphic touch was always allowing itself a freedom which I cannot bring my fainter pencil to illustrate. He had the Southwestern, the Lincolnian, the Elizabethan breadth of parlance, which I suppose one ought not to call coarse without calling one's self prudish; and I was often hiding away in discreet holes and corners the letters in which he had loosed his bold fancy to stoop on rank suggestion; I could not bear to burn them, and I could not, after the first reading, quite bear to look at them. I shall best give my feeling on this point by saying that in it he was Shakespearian, or if his ghost will not suffer me the word, then he was Baconian.

At the time of our first meeting, which must have been well toward the winter, Clemens (as I must call him instead of Mark Twain, which seemed always somehow to mask him from my personal sense) was wearing a sealskin coat, with the fur out, in the satisfaction of a caprice, or the love of strong effect which he was apt to indulge through life. I do not know what droll comment was in Fields's mind with respect to this garment, but probably he felt that here was an original who was not to be brought to any Bostonian book in the judgment of his vivid qualities. With his crest of dense red hair, and the wide sweep of his flaming mustache, Clemens was not discordantly clothed in that sealskin coat, which afterward, in spite of his own warmth in it, sent the cold chills through me when I once accompanied it down Broadway, and shared the immense publicity it won him. He had always a relish for personal effect, which expressed itself in the white suit of complete serge which he wore in his last years, and in the Oxford gown which he put on for every possible occasion, and said he would like to wear all the time. That was not vanity in him, but a keen feeling for costume which the severity



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of our modern tailoring forbids men, though it flatters women to every excess in it; yet he also enjoyed the shock, the offence, the pang which it gave the sensibilities of others. Then there were times he played these pranks for pure fun, and for the pleasure of the witness. Once I remember seeing him come into his drawing-room at Hartford in a pair of white cowskin slippers, with the hair out, and do a crippled colored uncle to the joy of all beholders. Or, I must not say all, for I remember also the dismay of Mrs. Clemens, and her low, despairing cry of, "Oh, Youth!" That was her name for him among their friends, and it fitted him as no other would, though I fancied with her it was a shrinking from his baptismal Samuel, or the vernacular Sam of his earlier companionships. He was a youth to the end of his days, the heart of a boy with the head of a sage; the heart of a good boy, or a bad boy, but always a wilful boy, and wilfullest to show himself out at every, time for just the boy he was.

II.

There is a gap in my recollections of Clemens, which I think is of a year or two, for the next thing I remember of him is meeting him at a lunch in Boston, given us by that genius of hospitality, the tragically destined Ralph Keeler, author of one of the most unjustly forgotten books, 'Vagabond Adventures', a true bit of picaresque autobiography. Keeler never had any money, to the general knowledge, and he never borrowed, and he could not have had credit at the restaurant where he invited us to feast at his expense. There was T. B. Aldrich, there was J. T. Fields, much the oldest of our company, who had just freed himself from the trammels of the publishing business, and was feeling his freedom in every word; there was Bret Harte, who had lately come East in his princely progress from California; and there was Clemens. Nothing remains to me of the happy time but a sense of idle and aimless and joyful talk-play, beginning and ending nowhere, of eager laughter, of countless good stories from Fields, of a heat-lightning shimmer of wit from Aldrich, of an occasional concentration of our joint mockeries upon our host, who took it gladly; and amid the discourse, so little improving, but so full of good fellowship, Bret Harte's fleeting dramatization of Clemens's mental attitude toward a symposium of Boston illuminates. "Why, fellows," he spluttered, "this is the dream of Mark's life," and I remember the glance from under Clemens's feathery eyebrows which betrayed his enjoyment of the fun. We had beefsteak with mushrooms, which in recognition of their shape Aldrich hailed as shoe-pegs, and to crown the feast we had an omelette souse, which the waiter brought in as flat as a pancake, amid our shouts of congratulations to poor Keeler, who took them with appreciative submission. It was in every way what a Boston literary lunch ought not to have been in the popular ideal which Harte attributed to Clemens.



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Our next meeting was at Hartford, or, rather, at Springfield, where Clemens greeted us on the way to Hartford. Aldrich was going on to be his guest, and I was going to be Charles Dudley Warner's, but Clemens had come part way to welcome us both. In the good fellowship of that cordial neighborhood we had two such days as the aging sun no longer shines on in his round. There was constant running in and out of friendly houses where the lively hosts and guests called one another by their Christian names or nicknames, and no such vain ceremony as knocking or ringing at doors. Clemens was then building the stately mansion in which he satisfied his love of magnificence as if it had been another sealskin coat, and he was at the crest of the prosperity which enabled him to humor every whim or extravagance. The house was the design of that most original artist, Edward Potter, who once, when hard pressed by incompetent curiosity for the name of his style in a certain church, proposed that it should be called the English violet order of architecture; and this house was so absolutely suited to the owner's humor that I suppose there never was another house like it; but its character must be for recognition farther along in these reminiscences. The vividest impression which Clemens gave us two ravenous young Boston authors was of the satisfying, the surfeiting nature of subscription publication. An army of agents was overrunning the country with the prospectuses of his books, and delivering them by the scores of thousands in completed sale. Of the 'Innocents Abroad' he said, "It sells right along just like the Bible," and 'Roughing It' was swiftly following, without perhaps ever quite overtaking it in popularity. But he lectured Aldrich and me on the folly of that mode of publication in the trade which we had thought it the highest success to achieve a chance in. "Anything but subscription publication is printing for private circulation," he maintained, and he so won upon our greed and hope that on the way back to Boston we planned the joint authorship of a volume adapted to subscription publication. We got a very good name for it, as we believed, in Memorable Murders, and we never got farther with it, but by the time we reached Boston we were rolling in wealth so deep that we could hardly walk home in the frugal fashion by which we still thought it best to spare car fare; carriage fare we did not dream of even in that opulence.

III.

The visits to Hartford which had begun with this affluence continued without actual increase of riches for me, but now I went alone, and in Warner's European and Egyptian absences I formed the habit of going to Clemens. By this time he was in his new house, where he used to give me a royal chamber on the ground floor, and come in at night after I had gone to bed to take off the burglar alarm so that the family should not be roused if anybody tried to get in at my window.

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This would be after we had sat up late, he smoking the last of his innumerable cigars, and soothing his tense nerves with a mild hot Scotch, while we both talked and talked and talked, of everything in the heavens and on the earth, and the waters under the earth. After two days of this talk I would come away hollow, realizing myself best in the image of one of those locust-shells which you find sticking to the bark of trees at the end of summer. Once, after some such bout of brains, we went down to New York together, and sat facing each other in the Pullman smoker without passing a syllable till we had occasion to say, "Well, we're there." Then, with our installation in a now vanished hotel (the old Brunswick, to be specific), the talk began again with the inspiration of the novel environment, and went on and on. We wished to be asleep, but we could not stop, and he lounged through the rooms in the long nightgown which he always wore in preference to the pajamas which he despised, and told the story of his life, the inexhaustible, the fairy, the Arabian Nights story, which I could never tire of even when it began to be told over again. Or at times he would reason high—

"Of Providence, foreknowledge, will and fate,
Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,"

walking up and down, and halting now and then, with a fine toss and slant of his shaggy head, as some bold thought or splendid joke struck him.

He was in those days a constant attendant at the church of his great friend, the Rev. Joseph H. Twichell, and at least tacitly far from the entire negation he came to at last. I should say he had hardly yet examined the grounds of his passive acceptance of his wife's belief, for it was hers and not his, and he held it unscanned in the beautiful and tender loyalty to her which was the most moving quality of his most faithful soul. I make bold to speak of the love between them, because without it I could not make him known to others as he was known to me. It was a greater part of him than the love of most men for their wives, and she merited all the worship he could give her, all the devotion, all the implicit obedience, by her surpassing force and beauty of character. She was in a way the loveliest person I have ever seen, the gentlest, the kindest, without a touch of weakness; she united wonderful tact with wonderful truth; and Clemens not only accepted her rule implicitly, but he rejoiced, he gloried in it. I am not sure that he noticed all her goodness in the actions that made it a heavenly vision to others, he so had the habit of her goodness; but if there was any forlorn and helpless creature in the room Mrs. Clemens was somehow promptly at his side or hers; she was always seeking occasion of kindness to those in her household or out of it; she loved to let her heart go beyond the reach of her hand, and imagined the whole hard and suffering world with compassion for its structural

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as well as incidental wrongs. I suppose she had her ladyhood limitations, her female fears of etiquette and convention, but she did not let them hamper the wild and splendid generosity with which Clemens rebelled against the social stupidities and cruelties. She had been a lifelong invalid when he met her, and he liked to tell the beautiful story of their courtship to each new friend whom he found capable of feeling its beauty or worthy of hearing it. Naturally, her father had hesitated to give her into the keeping of the young strange Westerner, who had risen up out of the unknown with his giant reputation of burlesque humorist, and demanded guaranties, demanded proofs. "He asked me," Clemens would say, "if I couldn't give him the names of people who knew me in California, and when it was time to hear from them I heard from him. 'Well, Mr. Clemens,' he said, 'nobody seems to have a very good word for you.' I hadn't referred him to people that I thought were going to whitewash me. I thought it was all up with me, but I was disappointed. 'So I guess I shall have to back you myself.'"

Whether this made him faithfuler to the trust put in him I cannot say, but probably not; it was always in him to be faithful to any trust, and in proportion as a trust of his own was betrayed he was ruthlessly and implacably resentful. But I wish now to speak of the happiness of that household in Hartford which responded so perfectly to the ideals of the mother when the three daughters, so lovely and so gifted, were yet little children. There had been a boy, and "Yes, I killed him," Clemens once said, with the unsparring self-blame in which he would wreak an unavailing regret. He meant that he had taken the child out imprudently, and the child had taken the cold which he died of, but it was by no means certain this was through its father's imprudence. I never heard him speak of his son except that once, but no doubt in his deep heart his loss was irreparably present. He was a very tender father and delighted in the minds of his children, but he was wise enough to leave their training altogether to the wisdom of their mother. He left them to that in everything, keeping for himself the pleasure of teaching them little scenes of drama, learning languages with them, and leading them in singing. They came to the table with their parents, and could have set him an example in behavior when, in moments of intense excitement, he used to leave his place and walk up and down the room, flying his napkin and talking and talking.

It was after his first English sojourn that I used to visit him, and he was then full of praise of everything English: the English personal independence and public spirit, and hospitality, and truth. He liked to tell stories in proof of their virtues, but he was not blind to the defects of their virtues: their submissive acceptance of caste, their callousness with strangers; their bluntness with one another. Mrs. Clemens had been in a way to suffer socially



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more than he, and she praised the English less. She had sat after dinner with ladies who snubbed and ignored one another, and left her to find her own amusement in the absence of the attention with which Americans perhaps cloy their guests, but which she could not help preferring. In their successive sojourns among them I believe he came to like the English less and she more; the fine delight of his first acceptance among them did not renew itself till his Oxford degree was given him; then it made his cup run over, and he was glad the whole world should see it.

His wife would not chill the ardor of his early Anglomania, and in this, as in everything, she wished to humor him to the utmost. No one could have realized more than she his essential fineness, his innate nobleness. Marriages are what the parties to them alone really know them to be, but from the outside I should say that this marriage was one of the most perfect. It lasted in his absolute devotion to the day of her death, that delayed long in cruel suffering, and that left one side of him in lasting night. From Florence there came to me heartbreaking letters from him about the torture she was undergoing, and at last a letter saying she was dead, with the simple-hearted cry, "I wish I was with Livy." I do not know why I have left saying till now that she was a very beautiful woman, classically regular in features, with black hair smooth over her forehead, and with tenderly peering, myopia eyes, always behind glasses, and a smile of angelic kindness. But this kindness went with a sense of humor which qualified her to appreciate the self-lawed genius of a man who will be remembered with the great humorists of all time, with Cervantes, with Swift, or with any others worthy his company; none of them was his equal in humanity.

IV.

Clemens had appointed himself, with the architect's connivance, a luxurious study over the library in his new house, but as his children grew older this study, with its carved and cushioned arm-chairs, was given over to them for a school-room, and he took the room above his stable, which had been intended for his coachman. There we used to talk together, when we were not walking and talking together, until he discovered that he could make a more commodious use of the billiard-room at the top of his house, for the purposes of literature and friendship. It was pretty cold up there in the early spring and late fall weather with which I chiefly associate the place, but by lighting up all the gas-burners and kindling a reluctant fire on the hearth we could keep it well above freezing. Clemens could also push the balls about, and, without rivalry from me, who could no more play billiards than smoke, could win endless games of pool, while he carried points of argument against imaginable differers in opinion. Here he wrote many of his tales and sketches, and for anything I know some of his books. I particularly remember his reading me here his first rough sketch of Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven, with the real name of the captain, whom I knew already from his many stories about him.



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We had a peculiar pleasure in looking off from the high windows on the pretty Hartford landscape, and down from them into the tops of the trees clothing the hillside by which his house stood. We agreed that there was a novel charm in trees seen from such a vantage, far surpassing that of the farther scenery. He had not been a country boy for nothing; rather he had been a country boy, or, still better, a village boy, for everything that Nature can offer the young of our species, and no aspect of her was lost on him. We were natives of the same vast Mississippi Valley; and Missouri was not so far from Ohio but that we were akin in our first knowledges of woods and fields as we were in our early parlance. I had outgrown the use of mine through my greater bookishness, but I gladly recognized the phrases which he employed for their lasting juiciness and the long-remembered savor they had on his mental palate.

I have elsewhere sufficiently spoken of his unsophisticated use of words, of the diction which forms the backbone of his manly style. If I mention my own greater bookishness, by which I mean his less quantitative reading, it is to give myself better occasion to note that he was always reading some vital book. It might be some out-of-the-way book, but it had the root of the human matter in it: a volume of great trials; one of the supreme autobiographies; a signal passage of history, a narrative of travel, a story of captivity, which gave him life at first-hand. As I remember, he did not care much for fiction, and in that sort he had certain distinct loathings; there were certain authors whose names he seemed not so much to pronounce as to spew out of his mouth. Goldsmith was one of these, but his prime abhorrence was my dear and honored prime favorite, Jane Austen. He once said to me, I suppose after he had been reading some of my unsparing praises of her—I am always praising her, “You seem to think that woman could write,” and he forbore withering me with his scorn, apparently because we had been friends so long, and he more pitied than hated me for my bad taste. He seemed not to have any preferences among novelists; or at least I never heard him express any. He used to read the modern novels I praised, in or out of print; but I do not think he much liked reading fiction. As for plays, he detested the theatre, and said he would as lief do a sum as follow a plot on the stage. He could not, or did not, give any reasons for his literary abhorrences, and perhaps he really had none. But he could have said very distinctly, if he had needed, why he liked the books he did. I was away at the time of his great Browning passion, and I know of it chiefly from hearsay; but at the time Tolstoy was doing what could be done to make me over Clemens wrote, “That man seems to have been to you what Browning was to me.” I do not know that he had other favorites among the poets, but he had favorite poems which he liked to read to you, and he read, of course, splendidly. I have forgotten what piece of John Hay’s it was that he liked so much, but I remembered how he fiercely revelled in the vengefulness of William Morris’s ‘Sir Guy of the Dolorous Blast,’ and how he especially exalted in the lines which tell of the supposed speaker’s joy in slaying the murderer of his brother:



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“I am threescore years and ten,
And my hair is 'nigh turned gray,
But I am glad to think of the moment when
I took his life away.”

Generally, I fancy his pleasure in poetry was not great, and I do not believe he cared much for the conventionally accepted masterpieces of literature. He liked to find out good things and great things for himself; sometimes he would discover these in a masterpiece new to him alone, and then, if you brought his ignorance home to him, he enjoyed it, and enjoyed it the more the more you rubbed it in.

Of all the literary men I have known he was the most unliterary in his make and manner. I do not know whether he had any acquaintance with Latin, but I believe not the least; German he knew pretty well, and Italian enough late in life to have fun with it; but he used English in all its alien derivations as if it were native to his own air, as if it had come up out of American, out of Missourian ground. His style was what we know, for good and for bad, but his manner, if I may difference the two, was as entirely his own as if no one had ever written before. I have noted before this how he was not enslaved to the consecutiveness in writing which the rest of us try to keep chained to. That is, he wrote as he thought, and as all men think, without sequence, without an eye to what went before or should come after. If something beyond or beside what he was saying occurred to him, he invited it into his page, and made it as much at home there as the nature of it would suffer him. Then, when he was through with the welcoming of this casual and unexpected guest, he would go back to the company he was entertaining, and keep on with what he had been talking about. He observed this manner in the construction of his sentences, and the arrangement of his chapters, and the ordering or disordering of his compilations.—[Nowhere is this characteristic better found than in Twain's 'Autobiography,' it was not a “style” it was unselfconscious thought D.W.]—I helped him with a Library of Humor, which he once edited, and when I had done my work according to tradition, with authors, times, and topics carefully studied in due sequence, he tore it all apart, and “chucked” the pieces in wherever the fancy, for them took him at the moment. He was right: we were not making a text-book, but a book for the pleasure rather than the instruction of the reader, and he did not see why the principle on which he built his travels and reminiscences and tales and novels should not apply to it; and I do not now see, either, though at the time it confounded me. On minor points he was, beyond any author I have known, without favorite phrases or pet words. He utterly despised the avoidance of repetitions out of fear of tautology. If a word served his turn better than a substitute, he would use it as many times in a page as he chose.

V.

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At that time I had become editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*, and I had allegiances belonging to the conduct of what was and still remains the most scrupulously cultivated of our periodicals. When Clemens began to write for it he came willingly under its rules, for with all his wilfulness there never was a more biddable man in things you could show him a reason for. He never made the least of that trouble which so abounds for the hapless editor from narrower-minded contributors. If you wanted a thing changed, very good, he changed it; if you suggested that a word or a sentence or a paragraph had better be struck out, very good, he struck it out. His proof-sheets came back each a veritable “mush of concession,” as Emerson says. Now and then he would try a little stronger language than ‘*The Atlantic*’ had stomach for, and once when I sent him a proof I made him observe that I had left out the profanity. He wrote back: “Mrs. Clemens opened that proof, and lit into the room with danger in her eye. What profanity? You see, when I read the manuscript to her I skipped that.” It was part of his joke to pretend a violence in that gentlest creature which the more amusingly realized the situation to their friends.

I was always very glad of him and proud of him as a contributor, but I must not claim the whole merit, or the first merit of having him write for us. It was the publisher, the late H. O. Houghton, who felt the incongruity of his absence from the leading periodical of the country, and was always urging me to get him to write. I will take the credit of being eager for him, but it is to the publisher’s credit that he tried, so far as the modest traditions of ‘*The Atlantic*’ would permit, to meet the expectations in pay which the colossal profits of Clemens’s books might naturally have bred in him. Whether he was really able to do this he never knew from Clemens himself, but probably twenty dollars a page did not surfeit the author of books that “sold right along just like the Bible.”

We had several short contributions from Clemens first, all of capital quality, and then we had the series of papers which went mainly to the making of his great book, ‘*Life on the Mississippi*’. Upon the whole I have the notion that Clemens thought this his greatest book, and he was supported in his opinion by that of the ‘portier’ in his hotel at Vienna, and that of the German Emperor, who, as he told me with equal respect for the preference of each, united in thinking it his best; with such far-sundered social poles approaching in its favor, he apparently found himself without standing for opposition. At any rate, the papers won instant appreciation from his editor and publisher, and from the readers of their periodical, which they expected to prosper beyond precedent in its circulation. But those were days of simpler acceptance of the popular rights of newspapers than these are, when magazines strictly guard their vested interests against them. ‘The

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New York Times' and the 'St. Louis Democrat' profited by the advance copies of the magazine sent them to reprint the papers month by month. Together they covered nearly the whole reading territory of the Union, and the terms of their daily publication enabled them to anticipate the magazine in its own restricted field. Its subscription list was not enlarged in the slightest measure, and The Atlantic Monthly languished on the news-stands as undesired as ever.

VI.

It was among my later visits to Hartford that we began to talk up the notion of collaborating a play, but we did not arrive at any clear intention, and it was a telegram out of the clear sky that one day summoned me from Boston to help with a continuation of Colonel Sellers. I had been a witness of the high joy of Clemens in the prodigious triumph of the first Colonel Sellers, which had been dramatized from the novel of 'The Gilded Age.' This was the joint work of Clemens and Charles Dudley Warner, and the story had been put upon the stage by some one in Utah, whom Clemens first brought to book in the courts for violation of his copyright, and then indemnified for such rights as his adaptation of the book had given him. The structure of the play as John T. Raymond gave it was substantially the work of this unknown dramatist. Clemens never pretended, to me at any rate, that he had the least hand in it; he frankly owned that he was incapable of dramatization; yet the vital part was his, for the characters in the play were his as the book embodied them, and the success which it won with the public was justly his. This he shared equally with the actor, following the company with an agent, who counted out the author's share of the gate money, and sent him a note of the amount every day by postal card. The postals used to come about dinner-time, and Clemens would read them aloud to us in wild triumph.

One hundred and fifty dollars—two hundred dollars—three hundred dollars were the gay figures which they bore, and which he flaunted in the air before he sat down at table, or rose from it to brandish, and then, flinging his napkin into his chair, walked up and down to exult in.

By-and-by the popularity, of the play waned, and the time came when he sickened of the whole affair, and withdrew his agent, and took whatever gain from it the actor apportioned him. He was apt to have these sudden surceases, following upon the intensities of his earlier interest; though he seemed always to have the notion of making something more of Colonel Sellers. But when I arrived in Hartford in answer to his summons, I found him with no definite idea of what he wanted to do with him. I represented that we must have some sort of plan, and he agreed that we should both jot down a scenario overnight and compare our respective schemes the next morning. As

the author of a large number of little plays which have been privately presented throughout the United



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States and in parts of the United Kingdom, without ever getting upon the public stage except for the noble ends of charity, and then promptly getting off it, I felt authorized to make him observe that his scheme was as nearly nothing as chaos could be. He agreed hilariously with me, and was willing to let it stand in proof of his entire dramatic inability. At the same time he liked my plot very much, which ultimated Sellers, according to Clemens's intention, as a man crazed by his own inventions and by his superstition that he was the rightful heir to an English earldom. The exuberant nature of Sellers and the vast range of his imagination served our purpose in other ways. Clemens made him a spiritualist, whose specialty in the occult was materialization; he became on impulse an ardent temperance reformer, and he headed a procession of temperance ladies after disinterestedly testing the deleterious effects of liquor upon himself until he could not walk straight; always he wore a marvellous fire-extinguisher strapped on his back, to give proof in any emergency of the effectiveness of his invention in that way.

We had a jubilant fortnight in working the particulars of these things out. It was not possible for Clemens to write like anybody else, but I could very easily write like Clemens, and we took the play scene and scene about, quite secure of coming out in temperamental agreement. The characters remained for the most part his, and I varied them only to make them more like his than, if possible, he could. Several years after, when I looked over a copy of the play, I could not always tell my work from his; I only knew that I had done certain scenes. We would work all day long at our several tasks, and then at night, before dinner, read them over to each other. No dramatists ever got greater joy out of their creations, and when I reflect that the public never had the chance of sharing our joy I pity the public from a full heart. I still believe that the play was immensely funny; I still believe that if it could once have got behind the footlights it would have continued to pack the house before them for an indefinite succession of nights. But this may be my fondness.

At any rate, it was not to be. Raymond had identified himself with Sellers in the play-going imagination, and whether consciously or unconsciously we constantly worked with Raymond in our minds. But before this time bitter displeasures had risen between Clemens and Raymond, and Clemens was determined that Raymond should never have the play. He first offered it to several other actors, who eagerly caught it, only to give it back with the despairing renunciation, "That is a Raymond play." We tried managers with it, but their only question was whether they could get Raymond to do it. In the mean time Raymond had provided himself with a play for the winter—a very good play, by Demarest Lloyd; and he was in no hurry for ours. Perhaps he did not really care for it perhaps he knew when

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he heard of it that it must come to him in the end. In the end it did, from my hand, for Clemens would not meet him. I found him in a mood of sweet reasonableness, perhaps the more softened by one of those lunches which our publisher, the hospitable James R. Osgood, was always bringing people together over in Boston. He said that he could not do the play that winter, but he was sure that he should like it, and he had no doubt he would do it the next winter. So I gave him the manuscript, in spite of Clemens's charges, for his suspicions and rancors were such that he would not have had me leave it for a moment in the actor's hands. But it seemed a conclusion that involved success and fortune for us. In due time, but I do not remember how long after, Raymond declared himself delighted with the piece; he entered into a satisfactory agreement for it, and at the beginning of the next season he started with it to Buffalo, where he was to give a first production. At Rochester he paused long enough to return it, with the explanation that a friend had noted to him the fact that Colonel Sellers in the play was a lunatic, and insanity was so serious a thing that it could not be represented on the stage without outraging the sensibilities of the audience; or words to that effect. We were too far off to allege Hamlet to the contrary, or King Lear, or to instance the delight which generations of readers throughout the world had taken in the mad freaks of Don Quixote. Whatever were the real reasons of Raymond for rejecting the play, we had to be content with those he gave, and to set about getting it into other hands. In this effort we failed even more signally than before, if that were possible. At last a clever and charming elocutionist, who had long wished to get himself on the stage, heard of it and asked to see it. We would have shown it to any one by this time, and we very willingly showed it to him. He came to Hartford and did some scenes from it for us. I must say he did them very well, quite as well as Raymond could have done them, in whose manner he did them. But now, late toward spring, the question was where he could get an engagement with the play, and we ended by hiring a theatre in New York for a week of trial performances.

Clemens came on with me to Boston, where we were going to make some changes in the piece, and where we made them to our satisfaction, but not to the effect of that high rapture which we had in the first draft. He went back to Hartford, and then the cold fit came upon me, and "in visions of the night, in slumberings upon the bed," ghastly forms of failure appalled me, and when I rose in the morning I wrote him: "Here is a play which every manager has put out-of-doors and which every actor known to us has refused, and now we go and give it to an elocutioner. We are fools." Whether Clemens agreed with me or not in my conclusion, he agreed with me in my premises, and we promptly bought our play off the



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stage at a cost of seven hundred dollars, which we shared between us. But Clemens was never a man to give up. I relinquished gratis all right and title I had in the play, and he paid its entire expenses for a week of one-night stands in the country. It never came to New York; and yet I think now that if it had come, it would have succeeded. So hard does the faith of the unsuccessful dramatist in his work die.

VII.

There is an incident of this time so characteristic of both men that I will yield to the temptation of giving it here. After I had gone to Hartford in response to Clemens's telegram, Matthew Arnold arrived in Boston, and one of my family called on his, to explain why I was not at home to receive his introduction: I had gone to see Mark Twain. "Oh, but he doesn't like that sort of thing, does he?" "He likes Mr. Clemens very much," my representative answered, "and he thinks him one of the greatest men he ever knew." I was still Clemens's guest at Hartford when Arnold came there to lecture, and one night we went to meet him at a reception. While his hand laxly held mine in greeting, I saw his eyes fixed intensely on the other side of the room. "Who-who in the world is that?" I looked and said, "Oh, that is Mark Twain." I do not remember just how their instant encounter was contrived by Arnold's wish, but I have the impression that they were not parted for long during the evening, and the next night Arnold, as if still under the glamour of that potent presence, was at Clemens's house. I cannot say how they got on, or what they made of each other; if Clemens ever spoke of Arnold, I do not recall what he said, but Arnold had shown a sense of him from which the incredulous sniff of the polite world, now so universally exploded, had already perished. It might well have done so with his first dramatic vision of that prodigious head. Clemens was then hard upon fifty, and he had kept, as he did to the end, the slender figure of his youth, but the ashes of the burnt-out years were beginning to gray the fires of that splendid shock of red hair which he held to the height of a stature apparently greater than it was, and tilted from side to side in his undulating walk. He glimmered at you from the narrow slits of fine blue-greenish eyes, under branching brows, which with age grew more and more like a sort of plumage, and he was apt to smile into your face with a subtle but amiable perception, and yet with a sort of remote absence; you were all there for him, but he was not all there for you.

VIII.



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I shall, not try to give chronological order to my recollections of him, but since I am just now with him in Hartford I will speak of him in association with the place. Once when I came on from Cambridge he followed me to my room to see that the water was not frozen in my bath, or something of the kind, for it was very cold weather, and then hospitably lingered. Not to lose time in banalities I began at once from the thread of thought in my mind. "I wonder why we hate the past so," and he responded from the depths of his own consciousness, "It's so damned humiliating," which is what any man would say of his past if he were honest; but honest men are few when it comes to themselves. Clemens was one of the few, and the first of them among all the people I have known. I have known, I suppose, men as truthful, but not so promptly, so absolutely, so positively, so almost aggressively truthful. He could lie, of course, and did to save others from grief or harm; he was, not stupidly truthful; but his first impulse was to say out the thing and everything that was in him. To those who can understand it will not be contradictory of his sense of humiliation from the past, that he was not ashamed for anything he ever did to the point of wishing to hide it. He could be, and he was, bitterly sorry for his errors, which he had enough of in his life, but he was not ashamed in that mean way. What he had done he owned to, good, bad, or indifferent, and if it was bad he was rather amused than troubled as to the effect in your mind. He would not obtrude the fact upon you, but if it were in the way of personal history he would not dream of withholding it, far less of hiding it.

He was the readiest of men to allow an error if he were found in it. In one of our walks about Hartford, when he was in the first fine flush of his agnosticism, he declared that Christianity had done nothing to improve morals and conditions, and that the world under the highest pagan civilization was as well off as it was under the highest Christian influences. I happened to be fresh from the reading of Charles Loring Brace's 'Gesta Christi'; or, 'History of Humane Progress', and I could offer him abundant proofs that he was wrong. He did not like that evidently, but he instantly gave way, saying he had not known those things. Later he was more tolerant in his denials of Christianity, but just then he was feeling his freedom from it, and rejoicing in having broken what he felt to have been the shackles of belief worn so long. He greatly admired Robert Ingersoll, whom he called an angelic orator, and regarded as an evangel of a new gospel—the gospel of free thought. He took the warmest interest in the newspaper controversy raging at the time as to the existence of a hell; when the noes carried the day, I suppose that no enemy of perdition was more pleased. He still loved his old friend and pastor, Mr. Twichell, but he no longer went to hear him preach his sage and beautiful

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sermons, and was, I think, thereby the greater loser. Long before that I had asked him if he went regularly to church, and he groaned out: "Oh yes, I go. It 'most kills me, but I go," and I did not need his telling me to understand that he went because his wife wished it. He did tell me, after they both ceased to go, that it had finally come to her saying, "Well, if you are to be lost, I want to be lost with you." He could accept that willingness for supreme sacrifice and exult in it because of the supreme truth as he saw it. After they had both ceased to be formal Christians, she was still grieved by his denial of immortality, so grieved that he resolved upon one of those heroic lies, which for love's sake he held above even the truth, and he went to her, saying that he had been thinking the whole matter over, and now he was convinced that the soul did live after death. It was too late. Her keen vision pierced through his ruse, as it did when he brought the doctor who had diagnosticated her case as organic disease of the heart, and, after making him go over the facts of it again with her, made him declare it merely functional.

To make an end of these records as to Clemens's beliefs, so far as I knew them, I should say that he never went back to anything like faith in the Christian theology, or in the notion of life after death, or in a conscious divinity. It is best to be honest in this matter; he would have hated anything else, and I do not believe that the truth in it can hurt any one. At one period he argued that there must have been a cause, a conscious source of things; that the universe could not have come by chance. I have heard also that in his last hours or moments he said, or his dearest ones hoped he had said, something about meeting again. But the expression, of which they could not be certain, was of the vaguest, and it was perhaps addressed to their tenderness out of his tenderness. All his expressions to me were of a courageous, renunciation of any hope of living again, or elsewhere seeing those he had lost. He suffered terribly in their loss, and he was not fool enough to try ignoring his grief. He knew that for this there were but two medicines; that it would wear itself out with the years, and that meanwhile there was nothing for it but those respites in which the mourner forgets himself in slumber. I remember that in a black hour of my own when I was called down to see him, as he thought from sleep, he said with an infinite, an exquisite compassion, "Oh, did I wake you, did I wake, you?" Nothing more, but the look, the voice, were everything; and while I live they cannot pass from my sense.

IX.

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He was the most caressing of men in his pity, but he had the fine instinct, which would have pleased Lowell, of never putting his hands on you—fine, delicate hands, with taper fingers, and pink nails, like a girl's, and sensitively quivering in moments of emotion; he did not paw you with them to show his affection, as so many of us Americans are apt to do. Among the half-dozen, or half-hundred, personalities that each of us becomes, I should say that Clemens's central and final personality was something exquisite. His casual acquaintance might know him, perhaps, from his fierce intensity, his wild pleasure in shocking people with his ribaldries and profanities, or from the mere need of loosing his rebellious spirit in that way, as anything but exquisite, and yet that was what in the last analysis he was. They might come away loathing or hating him, but one could not know him well without realizing him the most serious, the most humane, the most conscientious of men. He was Southwestern, and born amid the oppression of a race that had no rights as against ours, but I never saw a man more regardful of negroes. He had a yellow butler when I first began to know him, because he said he could not bear to order a white man about, but the terms of his ordering George were those of the softest entreaty which command ever wore. He loved to rely upon George, who was such a broken reed in some things, though so stanch in others, and the fervent Republican in politics that Clemens then liked him to be. He could interpret Clemens's meaning to the public without conveying his mood, and could render his roughest answer smooth to the person denied his presence. His general instructions were that this presence was to be denied all but personal friends, but the soft heart of George was sometimes touched by importunity, and once he came up into the billiard-room saying that Mr. Smith wished to see Clemens. Upon inquiry, Mr. Smith developed no ties of friendship, and Clemens said, "You go and tell Mr. Smith that I wouldn't come down to see the Twelve Apostles." George turned from the threshold where he had kept himself, and framed a paraphrase of this message which apparently sent Mr. Smith away content with himself and all the rest of the world.

The part of him that was Western in his Southwestern origin Clemens kept to the end, but he was the most desouthernized Southerner I ever knew. No man more perfectly sensed and more entirely abhorred slavery, and no one has ever poured such scorn upon the second-hand, Walter-Scotticized, pseudo-chivalry of the Southern ideal. He held himself responsible for the wrong which the white race had done the black race in slavery, and he explained, in paying the way of a negro student through Yale, that he was doing it as his part of the reparation due from every white to every black man. He said he had never seen this student, nor ever wished to see him or know his name; it was quite enough that he was a negro. About that time a

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colored cadet was expelled from West Point for some point of conduct “unbecoming an officer and gentleman,” and there was the usual shabby philosophy in a portion of the press to the effect that a negro could never feel the claim of honor. The man was fifteen parts white, but, “Oh yes,” Clemens said, with bitter irony, “it was that one part black that undid him.” It made him a “nigger” and incapable of being a gentleman. It was to blame for the whole thing. The fifteen parts white were guiltless.

Clemens was entirely satisfied with the result of the Civil War, and he was eager to have its facts and meanings brought out at once in history. He ridiculed the notion, held by many, that “it was not yet time” to philosophize the events of the great struggle; that we must “wait till its passions had cooled,” and “the clouds of strife had cleared away.” He maintained that the time would never come when we should see its motives and men and deeds more clearly, and that now, now, was the hour to ascertain them in lasting verity. Picturesquely and dramatically he portrayed the imbecility of deferring the inquiry at any point to the distance of future years when inevitably the facts would begin to put on fable.

He had powers of sarcasm and a relentless rancor in his contempt which those who knew him best appreciated most. The late Noah Brooks, who had been in California at the beginning of Clemens’s career, and had witnessed the effect of his ridicule before he had learned to temper it, once said to me that he would rather have any one else in the world down on him than Mark Twain. But as Clemens grew older he grew more merciful, not to the wrong, but to the men who were in it. The wrong was often the source of his wildest drolling. He considered it in such hopelessness of ever doing it justice that his despair broke in laughter.

X.

I go back to that house in Hartford, where I was so often a happy guest, with tenderness for each of its endearing aspects. Over the chimney in the library which had been cured of smoking by so much art and science, Clemens had written in perennial brass the words of Emerson, “The ornament of a house is the friends who frequent it,” and he gave his guests a welcome of the simplest and sweetest cordiality: but I must not go aside to them from my recollections of him, which will be of sufficient garrulity, if I give them as fully as I wish. The windows of the library looked northward from the hillside above which the house stood, and over the little valley with the stream in it, and they showed the leaves of the trees that almost brushed them as in a Claude Lorraine glass. To the eastward the dining-room opened amply, and to the south there was a wide hall, where the voices of friends made themselves heard as they entered without ceremony and answered his joyous hail. At the west was a little semicircular conservatory of a pattern invented by Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe,

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and adopted in most of the houses of her kindly neighborhood. The plants were set in the ground, and the flowering vines climbed up the sides and overhung the roof above the silent spray of a fountain accompanied by callas and other water-loving lilies. There, while we breakfasted, Patrick came in from the barn and sprinkled the pretty bower, which poured out its responsive perfume in the delicate accents of its varied blossoms. Breakfast was Clemens's best meal, and he sat longer at his steak and coffee than at the courses of his dinner; luncheon was nothing to him, unless, as might happen, he made it his dinner, and reserved the later repast as the occasion of walking up and down the room, and discoursing at large on anything that came into his head. Like most good talkers, he liked other people to have their say; he did not talk them down; he stopped instantly at another's remark and gladly or politely heard him through; he even made believe to find suggestion or inspiration in what was said. His children came to the table, as I have told, and after dinner he was apt to join his fine tenor to their trebles in singing.

Fully half our meetings were at my house in Cambridge, where he made himself as much at home as in Hartford. He would come ostensibly to stay at the Parker House, in Boston, and take a room, where he would light the gas and leave it burning, after dressing, while he drove out to Cambridge and stayed two or three days with us. Once, I suppose it was after a lecture, he came in evening dress and passed twenty-four hours with us in that guise, wearing an overcoat to hide it when we went for a walk. Sometimes he wore the slippers which he preferred to shoes at home, and if it was muddy, as it was wont to be in Cambridge, he would put a pair of rubbers over them for our rambles. He liked the lawlessness and our delight in allowing it, and he rejoiced in the confession of his hostess, after we had once almost worn ourselves out in our pleasure with the intense talk, with the stories and the laughing, that his coming almost killed her, but it was worth it.

In those days he was troubled with sleeplessness, or, rather, with reluctant sleepiness, and he had various specifics for promoting it. At first it had been champagne just before going to bed, and we provided that, but later he appeared from Boston with four bottles of lager-beer under his arms; lager-beer, he said now, was the only thing to make you go to sleep, and we provided that. Still later, on a visit I paid him at Hartford, I learned that hot Scotch was the only soporific worth considering, and Scotch-whiskey duly found its place on our sideboard. One day, very long afterward, I asked him if he were still taking hot Scotch to make him sleep. He said he was not taking anything. For a while he had found going to bed on the bath-room floor a soporific; then one night he went to rest in his own bed at ten o'clock, and had gone promptly to sleep without anything. He had done the like with the like effect ever since. Of course, it amused him; there were few experiences of life, grave or gay, which did not amuse him, even when they wronged him.

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He came on to Cambridge in April, 1875, to go with me to the centennial ceremonies at Concord in celebration of the battle of the Minute Men with the British troops a hundred years before. We both had special invitations, including passage from Boston; but I said, Why bother to go into Boston when we could just as well take the train for Concord at the Cambridge station? He equally decided that it would be absurd; so we breakfasted deliberately, and then walked to the station, reasoning of many things as usual. When the train stopped, we found it packed inside and out. People stood dense on the platforms of the cars; to our startled eyes they seemed to project from the windows, and unless memory betrays me they lay strewn upon the roofs like brakemen slain at the post of duty.

Whether this was really so or not, it is certain that the train presented an impenetrable front even to our imagination, and we left it to go its way without the slightest effort to board. We remounted the fame-worn steps of Porter's Station, and began exploring North Cambridge for some means of transportation overland to Concord, for we were that far on the road by which the British went and came on the day of the battle. The liverymen whom we appealed to received us, some with compassion, some with derision, but in either mood convinced us that we could not have hired a cat to attempt our conveyance, much less a horse, or vehicle of any description. It was a raw, windy day, very unlike the exceptionally hot April day when the routed redcoats, pursued by the Colonials, fled panting back to Boston, with "their tongues hanging out like dogs," but we could not take due comfort in the vision of their discomfiture; we could almost envy them, for they had at least got to Concord. A swift procession of coaches, carriages, and buggies, all going to Concord, passed us, inert and helpless, on the sidewalk in the peculiarly cold mud of North Cambridge. We began to wonder if we might not stop one of them and bribe it to take us, but we had not the courage to try, and Clemens seized the opportunity to begin suffering with an acute indigestion, which gave his humor a very dismal cast. I felt keenly the shame of defeat, and the guilt of responsibility for our failure, and when a gay party of students came toward us on the top of a tally ho, luxuriously empty inside, we felt that our chance had come, and our last chance. He said that if I would stop them and tell them who I was they would gladly, perhaps proudly, give us passage; I contended that if with his far vaster renown he would approach them, our success would be assured. While we stood, lost in this "contest of civilities," the coach passed us, with gay notes blown from the horns of the students, and then Clemens started in pursuit, encouraged with shouts from the merry party who could not imagine who was trying to run them down, to a rivalry in speed. The unequal match could end only in one way, and I am glad I cannot recall what he said when he came back to me. Since then I have often wondered at the grief which would have wrung those blithe young hearts if they could have known that they might have had the company of Mark Twain to Concord that day and did not.

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We hung about, unavailingly, in the bitter wind a while longer, and then slowly, very slowly, made our way home. We wished to pass as much time as possible, in order to give probability to the deceit we intended to practise, for we could not bear to own ourselves baffled in our boasted wisdom of taking the train at Porter's Station, and had agreed to say that we had been to Concord and got back. Even after coming home to my house, we felt that our statement would be wanting in verisimilitude without further delay, and we crept quietly into my library, and made up a roaring fire on the hearth, and thawed ourselves out in the heat of it before we regained our courage for the undertaking. With all these precautions we failed, for when our statement was imparted to the proposed victim she instantly pronounced it unreliable, and we were left with it on our hands intact. I think the humor of this situation was finally a greater pleasure to Clemens than an actual visit to Concord would have been; only a few weeks before his death he laughed our defeat over with one of my family in Bermuda, and exulted in our prompt detection.

XI.

From our joint experience in failing I argue that Clemens's affection for me must have been great to enable him to condone in me the final defection which was apt to be the end of our enterprises. I have fancied that I presented to him a surface of such entire trustworthiness that he could not imagine the depths of unreliability beneath it; and that never realizing it, he always broke through with fresh surprise but unimpaired faith. He liked, beyond all things, to push an affair to the bitter end, and the end was never too bitter unless it brought grief or harm to another. Once in a telegraph office at a railway station he was treated with such insolent neglect by the young lady in charge, who was preoccupied in a flirtation with a "gentleman friend," that emulous of the public spirit which he admired in the English, he told her he should report her to her superiors, and (probably to her astonishment) he did so. He went back to Hartford, and in due time the poor girl came to me in, terror and in tears; for I had abetted Clemens in his action, and had joined my name to his in his appeal to the authorities. She was threatened with dismissal unless she made full apology to him and brought back assurance of its acceptance. I felt able to give this, and, of course, he eagerly approved; I think he telegraphed his approval. Another time, some years afterward, we sat down together in places near the end of a car, and a brakeman came in looking for his official note-book. Clemens found that he had sat down upon it, and handed it to him; the man scolded him very abusively, and came back again and again, still scolding him for having no more sense than to sit down on a note-book. The patience of Clemens in bearing it was so angelic that I saw fit to comment, "I suppose you will report this fellow." "Yes," he answered, slowly and sadly. "That's what I should have done once. But now I remember that he gets twenty dollars a month."



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Nothing could have been wiser, nothing tenderer, and his humanity was not for humanity alone. He abhorred the dull and savage joy of the sportsman in a lucky shot, an unerring aim, and once when I met him in the country he had just been sickened by the success of a gunner in bringing down a blackbird, and he described the poor, stricken, glossy thing, how it lay throbbing its life out on the grass, with such pity as he might have given a wounded child. I find this a fit place to say that his mind and soul were with those who do the hard work of the world, in fear of those who give them a chance for their livelihoods and underpay them all they can. He never went so far in socialism as I have gone, if he went that way at all, but he was fascinated with Looking Backward and had Bellamy to visit him; and from the first he had a luminous vision of organized labor as the only present help for working-men. He would show that side with such clearness and such force that you could not say anything in hopeful contradiction; he saw with that relentless insight of his that with Unions was the working-man's only present hope of standing up like a man against money and the power of it. There was a time when I was afraid that his eyes were a little holden from the truth; but in the very last talk I heard from him I found that I was wrong, and that this great humorist was as great a humanist as ever. I wish that all the work-folk could know this, and could know him their friend in life as he was in literature; as he was in such a glorious gospel of equality as the 'Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court.'

XII.

Whether I will or no I must let things come into my story thoughtwise, as he would have let them, for I cannot remember them in their order. One night, while we were giving a party, he suddenly stormed in with a friend of his and mine, Mr. Twichell, and immediately began to eat and drink of our supper, for they had come straight to our house from walking to Boston, or so great a part of the way as to be a-hungered and a-thirst. I can see him now as he stood up in the midst of our friends, with his head thrown back, and in his hand a dish of those scalloped oysters without which no party in Cambridge was really a party, exulting in the tale of his adventure, which had abounded in the most original characters and amusing incidents at every mile of their progress. They had broken their journey with a night's rest, and they had helped themselves lavishly out by rail in the last half; but still it had been a mighty walk to do in two days. Clemens was a great walker, in those years, and was always telling of his tramps with Mr. Twichell to Talcott's Tower, ten miles out of Hartford. As he walked of course he talked, and of course he smoked. Whenever he had been a few days with us, the whole house had to be aired, for he smoked all over it from breakfast to bedtime. He always went to bed with a cigar in his mouth, and sometimes, mindful of my fire insurance, I went up and took it away, still burning, after he had fallen asleep. I do not know how much a man may smoke and live, but apparently he smoked as much as a man could, for he smoked incessantly.

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He did not care much to meet people, as I fancied, and we were greedy of him for ourselves; he was precious to us; and I would not have exposed him to the critical edge of that Cambridge acquaintance which might not have appreciated him at, say, his transatlantic value. In America his popularity was as instant as it was vast. But it must be acknowledged that for a much longer time here than in England polite learning hesitated his praise. In England rank, fashion, and culture rejoiced in him. Lord mayors, lord chief justices, and magnates of many kinds were his hosts; he was desired in country houses, and his bold genius captivated the favor of periodicals which spurned the rest of our nation. But in his own country it was different. In proportion as people thought themselves refined they questioned that quality which all recognize in him now, but which was then the inspired knowledge of the simple-hearted multitude. I went with him to see Longfellow, but I do not think Longfellow made much of him, and Lowell made less. He stopped as if with the long Semitic curve of Clemens's nose, which in the indulgence of his passion for finding every one more or less a Jew he pronounced unmistakably racial. It was two of my most fastidious Cambridge friends who accepted him with the English, the European entirety—namely, Charles Eliot Norton and Professor Francis J. Child. Norton was then newly back from a long sojourn abroad, and his judgments were delocalized. He met Clemens as if they had both been in England, and rejoiced in his bold freedom from environment, and in the rich variety and boundless reach of his talk. Child was of a personal liberty as great in its fastidious way as that of Clemens himself, and though he knew him only at second hand, he exulted in the most audacious instance of his grotesquery, as I shall have to tell by-and-by, almost solely. I cannot say just why Clemens seemed not to hit the favor of our community of scribes and scholars, as Bret Harte had done, when he came on from California, and swept them before him, disrupting their dinners and delaying their lunches with impunity; but it is certain he did not, and I had better say so.

I am surprised to find from the bibliographical authorities that it was so late as 1875 when he came with the manuscript of Tom Sawyer, and asked me to read it, as a friend and critic, and not as an editor. I have an impression that this was at Mrs. Clemens's instance in his own uncertainty about printing it. She trusted me, I can say with a satisfaction few things now give me, to be her husband's true and cordial adviser, and I was so. I believe I never failed him in this part, though in so many of our enterprises and projects I was false as water through my temperamental love of backing out of any undertaking. I believe this never ceased to astonish him, and it has always astonished me; it appears to me quite out of character; though it is certain that an undertaking, when I have entered upon it, holds

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me rather than I it. But however this immaterial matter may be, I am glad to remember that I thoroughly liked Tom Sawyer, and said so with every possible amplification. Very likely, I also made my suggestions for its improvement; I could not have been a real critic without that; and I have no doubt they were gratefully accepted and, I hope, never acted upon. I went with him to the horse-car station in Harvard Square, as my frequent wont was, and put him aboard a car with his *Ms.* in his hand, stayed and reassured, so far as I counted, concerning it. I do not know what his misgivings were; perhaps they were his wife's misgivings, for she wished him to be known not only for the wild and boundless humor that was in him, but for the beauty and tenderness and "natural piety"; and she would not have had him judged by a too close fidelity to the rude conditions of Tom Sawyer's life. This is the meaning that I read into the fact of his coming to me with those doubts.

XIII.

Clemens had then and for many years the habit of writing to me about what he was doing, and still more of what he was experiencing. Nothing struck his imagination, in or out of the daily routine, but he wished to write me of it, and he wrote with the greatest fulness and a lavish dramatization, sometimes to the length of twenty or forty pages, so that I have now perhaps fifteen hundred pages of his letters. They will no doubt some day be published, but I am not even referring to them in these records, which I think had best come to the reader with an old man's falterings and uncertainties. With his frequent absences and my own abroad, and the intrusion of calamitous cares, the rich tide of his letters was more and more interrupted. At times it almost ceased, and then it would come again, a torrent. In the very last weeks of his life he burst forth, and, though too weak himself to write, he dictated his rage with me for recommending to him a certain author whose truthfulness he could not deny, but whom he hated for his truthfulness to sordid and ugly conditions. At heart Clemens was romantic, and he would have had the world of fiction stately and handsome and whatever the real world was not; but he was not romanticistic, and he was too helplessly an artist not to wish his own work to show life as he had seen it. I was preparing to rap him back for these letters when I read that he had got home to die; he would have liked the rapping back.

He liked coming to Boston, especially for those luncheons and dinners in which the fertile hospitality of our publisher, Osgood, abounded. He dwelt equidistant from Boston and New York, and he had special friends in New York, but he said he much preferred coming to Boston; of late years he never went there, and he had lost the habit of it long before he came home from Europe to live in New York. At these feasts, which were often of after-dinner-speaking measure,

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he could always be trusted for something of amazing delightfulness. Once, when Osgood could think of no other occasion for a dinner, he gave himself a birthday dinner, and asked his friends and authors. The beautiful and splendid trooper-like blaring was there, and I recall how in the long, rambling speech in which Clemens went round the table hitting every head at it, and especially visiting Osgood with thanks for his ingenious pretext for our entertainment, he congratulated blaring upon his engineering genius and his hypnotic control of municipal governments. He said that if there was a plan for draining a city at a cost of a million, by seeking the level of the water in the down-hill course of the sewers, blaring would come with a plan to drain that town up-hill at twice the cost and carry it through the Common Council without opposition. It is hard to say whether the time was gladder at these dinners, or at the small lunches at which Osgood and Aldrich and I foregathered with him and talked the afternoon away till well toward the winter twilight.

He was a great figure, and the principal figure, at one of the first of the now worn-out Authors' Readings, which was held in the Boston Museum to aid a Longfellow memorial. It was the late George Parsons Lathrop (everybody seems to be late in these sad days) who imagined the reading, but when it came to a price for seats I can always claim the glory of fixing it at five dollars. The price if not the occasion proved irresistible, and the museum was packed from the floor to the topmost gallery. Norton presided, and when it came Clemens's turn to read he introduced him with such exquisite praises as he best knew how to give, but before he closed he fell a prey to one of those lapses of tact which are the peculiar peril of people of the greatest tact. He was reminded of Darwin's delight in Mark Twain, and how when he came from his long day's exhausting study, and sank into bed at midnight, he took up a volume of Mark Twain, whose books he always kept on a table beside him, and whatever had been his tormenting problem, or excess of toil, he felt secure of a good night's rest from it. A sort of blank ensued which Clemens filled in the only possible way. He said he should always be glad that he had contributed to the repose of that great man, whom science owed so much, and then without waiting for the joy in every breast to burst forth, he began to read. It was curious to watch his triumph with the house. His carefully studied effects would reach the first rows in the orchestra first, and ripple in laughter back to the standees against the wall, and then with a fine resurgence come again to the rear orchestra seats, and so rise from gallery to gallery till it fell back, a cataract of applause from the topmost rows of seats. He was such a practised speaker that he knew all the stops of that simple instrument man, and there is no doubt that these results were accurately intended from his unerring

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knowledge. He was the most consummate public performer I ever saw, and it was an incomparable pleasure to hear him lecture; on the platform he was the great and finished actor which he probably would not have been on the stage. He was fond of private theatricals, and liked to play in them with his children and their friends, in dramatizations of such stories of his as 'The Prince and the Pauper;' but I never saw him in any of these scenes. When he read his manuscript to you, it was with a thorough, however involuntary, recognition of its dramatic qualities; he held that an actor added fully half to the character the author created. With my own hurried and half-hearted reading of passages which I wished to try on him from unprinted chapters (say, out of 'The Undiscovered Country' or 'A Modern Instance') he said frankly that my reading could spoil anything. He was realistic, but he was essentially histrionic, and he was rightly so. What we have strongly conceived we ought to make others strongly imagine, and we ought to use every genuine art to that end.

XIV.

There came a time when the lecturing which had been the joy of his prime became his loathing, loathing unutterable, and when he renounced it with indescribable violence. Yet he was always hankering for those fleshpots whose savor lingered on his palate and filled his nostrils after his withdrawal from the platform. The Authors' Readings when they had won their brief popularity abounded in suggestion for him. Reading from one's book was not so bad as giving a lecture written for a lecture's purpose, and he was willing at last to compromise. He had a magnificent scheme for touring the country with Aldrich and Mr. G. W. Cable and myself, in a private car, with a cook of our own, and every facility for living on the fat of the land. We should read only four times a week, in an entertainment that should not last more than an hour and a half. He would be the impresario, and would guarantee us others at least seventy-five dollars a day, and pay every expense of the enterprise, which he provisionally called the Circus, himself. But Aldrich and I were now no longer in those earlier thirties when we so cheerfully imagined 'Memorable Murders' for subscription publication; we both abhorred public appearances, and, at any rate, I was going to Europe for a year. So the plan fell through except as regarded Mr. Cable, who, in his way, was as fine a performer as Clemens, and could both read and sing the matter of his books. On a far less stupendous scale they two made the rounds of the great lecturing circuit together. But I believe a famous lecture-manager had charge of them and travelled with them.



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He was a most sanguine man, a most amiable person, and such a believer in fortune that Clemens used to say of him, as he said of one of his early publishers, that you could rely upon fifty per cent. of everything he promised. I myself many years later became a follower of this hopeful prophet, and I can testify that in my case at least he was able to keep ninety-nine, and even a hundred, per cent. of his word. It was I who was much nearer failing of mine, for I promptly began to lose sleep from the nervous stress of my lecturing and from the gratifying but killing receptions afterward, and I was truly in that state from insomnia which Clemens recognized in the brief letter I got from him in the Western city, after half a dozen wakeful nights. He sardonically congratulated me on having gone into "the lecture field," and then he said: "I know where you are now. You are in hell."

It was this perdition which he re-entered when he undertook that round-the-world lecturing tour for the payment of the debts left to him by the bankruptcy of his firm in the publishing business. It was not purely perdition for him, or, rather, it was perdition for only one-half of him, the author-half; for the actor-half it was paradise. The author who takes up lecturing without the ability to give histrionic support to the literary reputation which he brings to the crude test of his reader's eyes and ears, invokes a peril and a misery unknown to the lecturer who has made his first public from the platform. Clemens was victorious on the platform from the beginning, and it would be folly to pretend that he did not exult in his triumphs there. But I suppose, with the wearing nerves of middle life, he hated more and more the personal swarming of interest upon him, and all the inevitable clatter of the thing. Yet he faced it, and he labored round our tiresome globe that he might pay the uttermost farthing of debts which he had not knowingly contracted, the debts of his partners who had meant well and done ill, not because they were evil, but because they were unwise, and as unfit for their work as he was. "Pay what thou owest." That is right, even when thou owest it by the error of others, and even when thou owest it to a bank, which had not lent it from love of thee, but in the hard line of business and thy need.

Clemens's behavior in this matter redounded to his glory among the nations of the whole earth, and especially in this nation, so wrapped in commerce and so little used to honor among its many thieves. He had behaved like Walter Scott, as millions rejoiced to know, who had not known how Walter Scott had behaved till they knew it was like Clemens. No doubt it will be put to his credit in the books of the Recording Angel, but what the Judge of all the Earth will say of it at the Last Day there is no telling. I should not be surprised if He accounted it of less merit than some other things that Clemens did and was: less than his abhorrence of the Spanish War, and the



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destruction of the South-African republics, and our deceit of the Filipinos, and his hate of slavery, and his payment of his portion of our race's debt to the race of the colored student whom he saw through college, and his support of a poor artist for three years in Paris, and his loan of opportunity to the youth who became the most brilliant of our actor-dramatists, and his eager pardon of the thoughtless girl who was near paying the penalty of her impertinence with the loss of her place, and his remembering that the insolent brakeman got so few dollars a month, and his sympathy for working-men standing up to money in their Unions, and even his pity for the wounded bird throbbing out its little life on the grass for the pleasure of the cruel fool who shot it. These and the thousand other charities and beneficences in which he abounded, openly or secretly, may avail him more than the discharge of his firm's liabilities with the Judge of all the Earth, who surely will do right, but whose measures and criterions no man knows, and I least of all men.

He made no great show of sympathy with people in their anxieties, but it never failed, and at a time when I lay sick for many weeks his letters were of comfort to those who feared I might not rise again. His hand was out in help for those who needed help, and in kindness for those who needed kindness. There remains in my mind the dreary sense of a long, long drive to the uttermost bounds of the South End at Boston, where he went to call upon some obscure person whose claim stretched in a lengthening chain from his early days in Missouri—a most inadequate person, in whose vacuity the gloom of the dull day deepened till it was almost too deep for tears. He bore the ordeal with grim heroism, and silently smoked away the sense of it, as we drove back to Cambridge, in his slippered feet, sombrely musing, sombrely swearing. But he knew he had done the right, the kind thing, and he was content. He came the whole way from Hartford to go with me to a friendless play of mine, which Alessandro Salvini was giving in a series of matinees to houses never enlarging themselves beyond the count of the brave two hundred who sat it through, and he stayed my fainting spirit with a cheer beyond flagons, joining me in my joke at the misery of it, and carrying the fun farther.

Before that he had come to witness the aesthetic suicide of Anna Dickinson, who had been a flaming light of the political platform in the war days, and had been left by them consuming in a hapless ambition for the theatre. The poor girl had had a play written especially for her, and as Anne Boleyn she ranted and exhorted through the five acts, drawing ever nearer the utter defeat of the anticlimax. We could hardly look at each other for pity, Clemens sitting there in the box he had taken, with his shaggy head out over the corner and his slippered feet curled under him: he either went to a place in his slippers or he carried them with him, and put them on as soon

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as he could put off his boots. When it was so that we could not longer follow her failure and live, he began to talk of the absolute close of her career which the thing was, and how probably she had no conception that it was the end. He philosophized the mercifulness of the fact, and of the ignorance of most of us, when mortally sick or fatally wounded. We think it is not the end, because we have never ended before, and we do not see how we can end. Some can push by the awful hour and live again, but for Anna Dickinson there could be, and was, no such palingenesis. Of course we got that solemn joy out of reading her fate aright which is the compensation of the wise spectator in witnessing the inexorable doom of others.

XV.

When Messrs. Houghton & Mifflin became owners of The Atlantic Monthly, Mr. Houghton fancied having some breakfasts and dinners, which should bring the publisher and the editor face to face with the contributors, who were bidden from far and near. Of course, the subtle fiend of advertising, who has now grown so unblushing bold, lurked under the covers at these banquets, and the junior partner and the young editor had their joint and separate fine anguishes of misgiving as to the taste and the principle of them; but they were really very simple-hearted and honestly meant hospitalities, and they prospered as they ought, and gave great pleasure and no pain. I forget some of the "emergent occasions," but I am sure of a birthday dinner most unexpectedly accepted by Whittier, and a birthday luncheon to Mrs. Stowe, and I think a birthday dinner to Longfellow; but the passing years have left me in the dark as to the pretext of that supper at which Clemens made his awful speech, and came so near being the death of us all. At the breakfasts and luncheons we had the pleasure of our lady contributors' company, but that night there were only men, and because of our great strength we survived.

I suppose the year was about 1879, but here the almanac is unimportant, and I can only say that it was after Clemens had become a very valued contributor of the magazine, where he found himself to his own great explicit satisfaction. He had jubilantly accepted our invitation, and had promised a speech, which it appeared afterward he had prepared with unusual care and confidence. It was his custom always to think out his speeches, mentally wording them, and then memorizing them by a peculiar system of mnemonics which he had invented. On the dinner-table a certain succession of knife, spoon, salt-cellar, and butter-plate symbolized a train of ideas, and on the billiard-table a ball, a cue, and a piece of chalk served the same purpose. With a diagram of these printed on the brain he had full command of the phrases which his excogitation had attached to them, and which embodied the ideas in perfect form. He believed he had been particularly fortunate in his notion for the speech



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of that evening, and he had worked it out in joyous self-reliance. It was the notion of three tramps, three deadbeats, visiting a California mining-camp, and imposing themselves upon the innocent miners as respectively Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Oliver Wendell, Holmes. The humor of the conception must prosper or must fail according to the mood of the hearer, but Clemens felt sure of compelling this to sympathy, and he looked forward to an unparalleled triumph.

But there were two things that he had not taken into account. One was the species of religious veneration in which these men were held by those nearest them, a thing that I should not be able to realize to people remote from them in time and place. They were men of extraordinary dignity, of the thing called presence, for want of some clearer word, so that no one could well approach them in a personally light or trifling spirit. I do not suppose that anybody more truly valued them or more piously loved them than Clemens himself, but the intoxication of his fancy carried him beyond the bounds of that regard, and emboldened him to the other thing which he had not taken into account—namely, the immense hazard of working his fancy out before their faces, and expecting them to enter into the delight of it. If neither Emerson, nor Longfellow, nor Holmes had been there, the scheme might possibly have carried, but even this is doubtful, for those who so devoutly honored them would have overcome their horror with difficulty, and perhaps would not have overcome it at all.

The publisher, with a modesty very ungrateful to me, had abdicated his office of host, and I was the hapless president, fulfilling the abhorred function of calling people to their feet and making them speak. When I came to Clemens I introduced him with the cordial admiring I had for him as one of my greatest contributors and dearest friends. Here, I said, in sum, was a humorist who never left you hanging your head for having enjoyed his joke; and then the amazing mistake, the bewildering blunder, the cruel catastrophe was upon us. I believe that after the scope of the burlesque made itself clear, there was no one there, including the burlesquer himself, who was not smitten with a desolating dismay. There fell a silence, weighing many tons to the square inch, which deepened from moment to moment, and was broken only by the hysterical and blood-curdling laughter of a single guest, whose name shall not be handed down to infamy. Nobody knew whether to look at the speaker or down at his plate. I chose my plate as the least affliction, and so I do not know how Clemens looked, except when I stole a glance at him, and saw him standing solitary amid his appalled and appalling listeners, with his joke dead on his hands. From a first glance at the great three whom his jest had made its theme, I was aware of Longfellow sitting upright, and regarding the humorist with an air of pensive puzzle, of Holmes



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busily writing on his menu, with a well-feigned effect of preoccupation, and of Emerson, holding his elbows, and listening with a sort of Jovian oblivion of this nether world in that lapse of memory which saved him in those later years from so much bother. Clemens must have dragged his joke to the climax and left it there, but I cannot say this from any sense of the fact. Of what happened afterward at the table where the immense, the wholly innocent, the truly unimagined affront was offered, I have no longer the least remembrance. I next remember being in a room of the hotel, where Clemens was not to sleep, but to toss in despair, and Charles Dudley Warner's saying, in the gloom, "Well, Mark, you're a funny fellow." It was as well as anything else he could have said, but Clemens seemed unable to accept the tribute.

I stayed the night with him, and the next morning, after a haggard breakfast, we drove about and he made some purchases of bric-a-brac for his house in Hartford, with a soul as far away from bric-a-brac as ever the soul of man was. He went home by an early train, and he lost no time in writing back to the three divine personalities which he had so involuntarily seemed to flout. They all wrote back to him, making it as light for him as they could. I have heard that Emerson was a good deal mystified, and in his sublime forgetfulness asked, Who was this gentleman who appeared to think he had offered him some sort of annoyance! But I am not sure that this is accurate. What I am sure of is that Longfellow, a few days after, in my study, stopped before a photograph of Clemens and said, "Ah, he is a wag!" and nothing more. Holmes told me, with deep emotion, such as a brother humorist might well feel, that he had not lost an instant in replying to Clemens's letter, and assuring him that there had not been the least offence, and entreating him never to think of the matter again. "He said that he was a fool, but he was God's fool," Holmes quoted from the letter, with a true sense of the pathos and the humor of the self-abasement.

To me Clemens wrote a week later, "It doesn't get any better; it burns like fire." But now I understand that it was not shame that burnt, but rage for a blunder which he had so incredibly committed. That to have conceived of those men, the most dignified in our literature, our civilization, as impersonable by three hoboos, and then to have imagined that he could ask them personally to enjoy the monstrous travesty, was a break, he saw too late, for which there was no repair. Yet the time came, and not so very long afterward, when some mention was made of the incident as a mistake, and he said, with all his fierceness, "But I don't admit that it was a mistake," and it was not so in the minds of all witnesses at second hand. The morning after the dreadful dinner there came a glowing note from Professor Child, who had read the newspaper report of it, praising Clemens's burlesque as the richest



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piece of humor in the world, and betraying no sense of incongruity in its perpetration in the presence of its victims. I think it must always have ground in Clemens's soul, that he was the prey of circumstances, and that if he had some more favoring occasion he could retrieve his loss in it by giving the thing the right setting. Not more than two or three years ago, he came to try me as to trying it again at a meeting of newspaper men in Washington. I had to own my fears, while I alleged Child's note on the other hand, but in the end he did not try it with the newspaper men. I do not know whether he has ever printed it or not, but since the thing happened I have often wondered how much offence there really was in it. I am not sure but the horror of the spectators read more indignation into the subjects of the hapless drolling than they felt. But it must have been difficult for them to bear it with equanimity. To be sure, they were not themselves mocked; the joke was, of course, beside them; nevertheless, their personality was trifled with, and I could only end by reflecting that if I had been in their place I should not have liked it myself. Clemens would have liked it himself, for he had the heart for that sort of wild play, and he so loved a joke that even if it took the form of a liberty, and was yet a good joke, he would have loved it. But perhaps this burlesque was not a good joke.

XVI.

Clemens was oftenest at my house in Cambridge, but he was also sometimes at my house in Belmont; when, after a year in Europe, we went to live in Boston, he was more rarely with us. We could never be long together without something out of the common happening, and one day something far out of the common happened, which fortunately refused the nature of absolute tragedy, while remaining rather the saddest sort of comedy. We were looking out of my library window on that view of the Charles which I was so proud of sharing with my all-but-next-door neighbor, Doctor Holmes, when another friend who was with us called out with curiously impersonal interest, "Oh, see that woman getting into the water!" This would have excited curiosity and alarmed anxiety far less lively than ours, and Clemens and I rushed downstairs and out through my basement and back gate. At the same time a coachman came out of a stable next door, and grappled by the shoulders a woman who was somewhat deliberately getting down the steps to the water over the face of the embankment. Before we could reach them he had pulled her up to the driveway, and stood holding her there while she crazily grieved at her rescue. As soon as he saw us he went back into his stable, and left us with the poor wild creature on our hands. She was not very young and not very pretty, and we could not have flattered ourselves with the notion of anything romantic in her suicidal mania, but we could take her on the broad human level, and on this we proposed to escort her up Beacon Street



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till we could give her into the keeping of one of those kindly policemen whom our neighborhood knew. Naturally there was no policeman known to us or unknown the whole way to the Public Garden. We had to circumvent our charge in her present design of drowning herself, and walk her past the streets crossing Beacon to the river. At these points it needed considerable reasoning to overcome her wish and some active manoeuvring in both of us to enforce our arguments. Nobody else appeared to be interested, and though we did not court publicity in the performance of the duty so strangely laid upon us, still it was rather disappointing to be so entirely ignored.

There are some four or five crossings to the river between 302 Beacon Street and the Public Garden, and the suggestions at our command were pretty well exhausted by the time we reached it. Still the expected policeman was nowhere in sight; but a brilliant thought occurred to Clemens. He asked me where the nearest police station was, and when I told him, he started off at his highest speed, leaving me in sole charge of our hapless ward. All my powers of suasion were now taxed to the utmost, and I began attracting attention as a short, stout gentleman in early middle life endeavoring to detain a respectable female of her personal liberty, when his accomplice had abandoned him to his wicked design. After a much longer time than I thought I should have taken to get a policeman from the station, Clemens reappeared in easy conversation with an officer who had probably realized that he was in the company of Mark Twain, and was in no hurry to end the interview. He took possession of our captive, and we saw her no more. I now wonder that with our joint instinct for failure we ever got rid of her; but I am sure we did, and few things in life have given me greater relief. When we got back to my house we found the friend we had left there quite unruffled and not much concerned to know the facts of our adventure. My impression is that he had been taking a nap on my lounge; he appeared refreshed and even gay; but if I am inexact in these details he is alive to refute me.

XVII.

A little after this Clemens went abroad with his family, and lived several years in Germany. His letters still came, but at longer intervals, and the thread of our intimate relations was inevitably broken. He would write me when something I had written pleased him, or when something signal occurred to him, or some political or social outrage stirred him to wrath, and he wished to free his mind in pious profanity. During this sojourn he came near dying of pneumonia in Berlin, and he had slight relapses from it after coming home. In Berlin also he had the honor of dining with the German Emperor at the table of a cousin married to a high officer of the court. Clemens was a man to enjoy such a distinction; he knew how to take it as a delegated recognition from



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the German people; but as coming from a rather cockahoop sovereign who had as yet only his sovereignty to value himself upon, he was not very proud of it. He expressed a quiet disdain of the event as between the imperiality and himself, on whom it was supposed to confer such glory, crowning his life with the topmost leaf of laurel. He was in the same mood in his account of an English dinner many years before, where there was a "little Scotch lord" present, to whom the English tacitly referred Clemens's talk, and laughed when the lord laughed, and were grave when he failed to smile. Of all the men I have known he was the farthest from a snob, though he valued recognition, and liked the flattery of the fashionable fair when it came in his way. He would not go out of his way for it, but like most able and brilliant men he loved the minds of women, their wit, their agile cleverness, their sensitive perception, their humorous appreciation, the saucy things they would say, and their pretty, temerarious defiances. He had, of course, the keenest sense of what was truly dignified and truly undignified in people; but he was not really interested in what we call society affairs; they scarcely existed for him, though his books witness how he abhorred the dreadful fools who through some chance of birth or wealth hold themselves different from other men.

Commonly he did not keep things to himself, especially dislikes and condemnations. Upon most current events he had strong opinions, and he uttered them strongly. After a while he was silent in them, but if you tried him you found him in them still. He was tremendously worked up by a certain famous trial, as most of us were who lived in the time of it. He believed the accused guilty, but when we met some months after it was over, and I tempted him to speak his mind upon it, he would only say. The man had suffered enough; as if the man had expiated his wrong, and he was not going to do anything to renew his penalty. I found that very curious, very delicate. His continued blame could not come to the sufferer's knowledge, but he felt it his duty to forbear it.

He was apt to wear himself out in the vehemence of his resentments; or, he had so spent himself in uttering them that he had literally nothing more to say. You could offer Clemens offences that would anger other men and he did not mind; he would account for them from human nature; but if he thought you had in any way played him false you were anathema and maranatha forever. Yet not forever, perhaps, for by and-by, after years, he would be silent. There were two men, half a generation apart in their succession, whom he thought equally atrocious in their treason to him, and of whom he used to talk terrifyingly, even after they were out of the world. He went farther than Heine, who said that he forgave his enemies, but not till they were dead. Clemens did not forgive his dead enemies; their death seemed to deepen their crimes, like a base evasion, or a cowardly attempt



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to escape; he pursued them to the grave; he would like to dig them up and take vengeance upon their clay. So he said, but no doubt he would not have hurt them if he had had them living before him. He was generous without stint; he trusted without measure, but where his generosity was abused, or his trust betrayed, he was a fire of vengeance, a consuming flame of suspicion that no sprinkling of cool patience from others could quench; it had to burn itself out. He was eagerly and lavishly hospitable, but if a man seemed willing to batten on him, or in any way to lie down upon him, Clemens despised him unutterably. In his frenzies of resentment or suspicion he would not, and doubtless could not, listen to reason. But if between the paroxysms he were confronted with the facts he would own them, no matter how much they told against him. At one period he fancied that a certain newspaper was hounding him with biting censure and poisonous paragraphs, and he was filling himself up with wrath to be duly discharged on the editor's head. Later, he wrote me with a humorous joy in his mistake that Warner had advised him to have the paper watched for these injuries. He had done so, and how many mentions of him did I reckon he had found in three months? Just two, and they were rather indifferent than unfriendly. So the paper was acquitted, and the editor's life was spared. The wretch never knew how near he was to losing it, with incredible preliminaries of obloquy, and a subsequent devotion to lasting infamy.

His memory for favors was as good as for injuries, and he liked to return your friendliness with as loud a band of music as could be bought or bribed for the occasion. All that you had to do was to signify that you wanted his help. When my father was consul at Toronto during Arthur's administration, he fancied that his place was in danger, and he appealed to me. In turn I appealed to Clemens, bethinking myself of his friendship with Grant and Grant's friendship with Arthur. I asked him to write to Grant in my father's behalf, but No, he answered me, I must come to Hartford, and we would go on to New York together and see Grant personally. This was before, and long before, Clemens became Grant's publisher and splendid benefactor, but the men liked each other as such men could not help doing. Clemens made the appointment, and we went to find Grant in his business office, that place where his business innocence was afterward so betrayed. He was very simple and very cordial, and I was instantly the more at home with him, because his voice was the soft, rounded, Ohio River accent to which my years were earliest used from my steamboating uncles, my earliest heroes. When I stated my business he merely said, Oh no; that must not be; he would write to Mr. Arthur; and he did so that day; and my father lived to lay down his office, when he tired of it, with no urgency from above.

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It is not irrelevant to Clemens to say that Grant seemed to like finding himself in company with two literary men, one of whom at least he could make sure of, and unlike that silent man he was reputed, he talked constantly, and so far as he might he talked literature. At least he talked of John Phoenix, that delightfulest of the early Pacific Slope humorists, whom he had known under his real name of George H. Derby, when they were fellow-cadets at West Point. It was mighty pretty, as Pepys would say, to see the delicate deference Clemens paid our plain hero, and the manly respect with which he listened. While Grant talked, his luncheon was brought in from some unassuming restaurant near by, and he asked us to join him in the baked beans and coffee which were served us in a little room out of the office with about the same circumstance as at a railroad refreshment-counter. The baked beans and coffee were of about the railroad-refreshment quality; but eating them with Grant was like sitting down to baked beans and coffee with Julius Caesar, or Alexander, or some other great Plutarchan captain. One of the highest satisfactions of Clemens's often supremely satisfactory life was his relation to Grant. It was his proud joy to tell how he found Grant about to sign a contract for his book on certainly very good terms, and said to him that he would himself publish the book and give him a percentage three times as large. He said Grant seemed to doubt whether he could honorably withdraw from the negotiation at that point, but Clemens overbore his scruples, and it was his unparalleled privilege, his princely pleasure, to pay the author a far larger check for his work than had ever been paid to an author before. He valued even more than this splendid opportunity the sacred moments in which their business brought him into the presence of the slowly dying, heroically living man whom he was so befriending; and he told me in words which surely lost none of their simple pathos through his report how Grant described his suffering.

The prosperity, of this venture was the beginning of Clemens's adversity, for it led to excesses of enterprise which were forms of dissipation. The young sculptor who had come back to him from Paris modelled a small bust of Grant, which Clemens multiplied in great numbers to his great loss, and the success of Grant's book tempted him to launch on publishing seas where his bark presently foundered. The first and greatest of his disasters was the Life of Pope Leo XIII, which he came to tell me of, when he had imagined it, in a sort of delirious exultation. He had no words in which to paint the magnificence of the project, or to forecast its colossal success. It would have a currency bounded only by the number of Catholics in Christendom. It would be translated into every language which was anywhere written or printed; it would be circulated literally in every country of the globe, and Clemens's book agents would carry the prospectuses and then the bound copies



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of the work to the ends of the whole earth. Not only would every Catholic buy it, but every Catholic must, as he was a good Catholic, as he hoped to be saved. It was a magnificent scheme, and it captivated me, as it had captivated Clemens; it dazzled us both, and neither of us saw the fatal defect in it. We did not consider how often Catholics could not read, how often when they could, they might not wish to read. The event proved that whether they could read or not the immeasurable majority did not wish to read the life of the Pope, though it was written by a dignitary of the Church and issued to the world with every sanction from the Vatican. The failure was incredible to Clemens; his sanguine soul was utterly confounded, and soon a silence fell upon it where it had been so exuberantly jubilant.

XIX.

The occasions which brought us to New York together were not nearly so frequent as those which united us in Boston, but there was a dinner given him by a friend which remains memorable from the fatuity of two men present, so different in everything but their fatuity. One was the sweet old comedian Billy Florence, who was urging the unsuccessful dramatist across the table to write him a play about Oliver Cromwell, and giving the reasons why he thought himself peculiarly fitted to portray the character of Cromwell. The other was a modestly millioned rich man who was then only beginning to amass the moneys afterward heaped so high, and was still in the condition to be flattered by the condescension of a yet greater millionaire. His contribution to our gaiety was the verbatim report of a call he had made upon William H. Vanderbilt, whom he had found just about starting out of town, with his trunks actually in the front hall, but who had stayed to receive the narrator. He had, in fact, sat down on one of the trunks, and talked with the easiest friendliness, and quite, we were given to infer, like an ordinary human being. Clemens often kept on with some thread of the talk when we came away from a dinner, but now he was silent, as if "high sorrowful and cloyed"; and it was not till well afterward that I found he had noted the facts from the bitterness with which he mocked the rich man, and the pity he expressed for the actor.

He had begun before that to amass those evidences against mankind which eventuated with him in his theory of what he called "the damned human race." This was not an expression of piety, but of the kind contempt to which he was driven by our follies and iniquities as he had observed them in himself as well as in others. It was as mild a misanthropy, probably, as ever caressed the objects of its malediction. But I believe it was about the year 1900 that his sense of our perdition became insupportable and broke out in a mixed abhorrence and amusement which spared no occasion, so that I could quite understand why Mrs. Clemens should have found some compensation,



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when kept to her room by sickness, in the reflection that now she should not hear so much about “the damned human race.” He told of that with the same wild joy that he told of overhearing her repetition of one of his most inclusive profanities, and her explanation that she meant him to hear it so that he might know how it sounded. The contrast of the lurid blasphemy with her heavenly whiteness should have been enough to cure any one less grounded than he in what must be owned was as fixed a habit as smoking with him. When I first knew him he rarely vented his fury in that sort, and I fancy he was under a promise to her which he kept sacred till the wear and tear of his nerves with advancing years disabled him. Then it would be like him to struggle with himself till he could struggle no longer and to ask his promise back, and it would be like her to give it back. His profanity was the heritage of his boyhood and young manhood in social conditions and under the duress of exigencies in which everybody swore about as impersonally as he smoked. It is best to recognize the fact of it, and I do so the more readily because I cannot suppose the Recording Angel really minded it much more than that Guardian. Angel of his. It probably grieved them about equally, but they could equally forgive it. Nothing came of his pose regarding “the damned human race” except his invention of the Human Race Luncheon Club. This was confined to four persons who were never all got together, and it soon perished of their indifference.

In the earlier days that I have more specially in mind one of the questions that we used to debate a good deal was whether every human motive was not selfish. We inquired as to every impulse, the noblest, the holiest in effect, and he found them in the last analysis of selfish origin. Pretty nearly the whole time of a certain railroad run from New York to Hartford was taken up with the scrutiny of the self-sacrifice of a mother for her child, of the abandon of the lover who dies in saving his mistress from fire or flood, of the hero's courage in the field and the martyr's at the stake. Each he found springing from the unconscious love of self and the dread of the greater pain which the self-sacrificer would suffer in-forbearing the sacrifice. If we had any time left from this inquiry that day, he must have devoted it to a high regret that Napoleon did not carry out his purpose of invading England, for then he would have destroyed the feudal aristocracy, or “reformed the lords,” as it might be called now. He thought that would have been an incalculable blessing to the English people and the world. Clemens was always beautifully and unfalteringly a republican. None of his occasional misgivings for America implicated a return to monarchy. Yet he felt passionately the splendor of the English monarchy, and there was a time when he gloried in that figurative poetry by which the king was phrased as “the Majesty of England.” He rolled



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the words deep-throatedly out, and exulted in their beauty as if it were beyond any other glory of the world. He read, or read at, English history a great deal, and one of the by-products of his restless invention was a game of English Kings (like the game of Authors) for children. I do not know whether he ever perfected this, but I am quite sure it was not put upon the market. Very likely he brought it to a practicable stage, and then tired of it, as he was apt to do in the ultimatum of his vehement undertakings.

XX.

He satisfied the impassioned demand of his nature for incessant activities of every kind by taking a personal as well as a pecuniary interest in the inventions of others. At one moment "the damned human race" was almost to be redeemed by a process of founding brass without air bubbles in it; if this could once be accomplished, as I understood, or misunderstood, brass could be used in art-printing to a degree hitherto impossible. I dare say I have got it wrong, but I am not mistaken as to Clemens's enthusiasm for the process, and his heavy losses in paying its way to ultimate failure. He was simultaneously absorbed in the perfection of a type-setting machine, which he was paying the inventor a salary to bring to a perfection so expensive that it was practically impracticable. We were both printers by trade, and I could take the same interest in this wonderful piece of mechanism that he could; and it was so truly wonderful that it did everything but walk and talk. Its ingenious creator was so bent upon realizing the highest ideal in it that he produced a machine of quite unimpeachable efficiency. But it was so costly, when finished, that it could not be made for less than twenty thousand dollars, if the parts were made by hand. This sum was prohibitive of its introduction, unless the requisite capital could be found for making the parts by machinery, and Clemens spent many months in vainly trying to get this money together. In the mean time simpler machines had been invented and the market filled, and his investment of three hundred thousand dollars in the beautiful miracle remained permanent but not profitable. I once went with him to witness its performance, and it did seem to me the last word in its way, but it had been spoken too exquisitely, too fastidiously. I never heard him devote the inventor to the infernal gods, as he was apt to do with the geniuses he lost money by, and so I think he did not regard him as a traitor.

In these things, and in his other schemes for the 'subiti guadagni' of the speculator and the "sudden making of splendid names" for the benefactors of our species, Clemens satisfied the Colonel Sellers nature in himself (from which he drew the picture of that wild and lovable figure), and perhaps made as good use of his money as he could. He did not care much for money in itself, but he luxuriated in the lavish use of it, and he was as generous with

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it as ever a man was. He liked giving it, but he commonly wearied of giving it himself, and wherever he lived he established an almoner, whom he fully trusted to keep his left hand ignorant of what his right hand was doing. I believe he felt no finality in charity, but did it because in its provisional way it was the only thing a man could do. I never heard him go really into any sociological inquiry, and I have a feeling that that sort of thing baffled and dispirited him. No one can read *The Connecticut Yankee* and not be aware of the length and breadth of his sympathies with poverty, but apparently he had not thought out any scheme for righting the economic wrongs we abound in. I cannot remember our ever getting quite down to a discussion of the matter; we came very near it once in the day of the vast wave of emotion sent over the world by 'Looking Backward,' and again when we were all so troubled by the great coal strike in Pennsylvania; in considering that he seemed to be for the time doubtful of the justice of the workingman's cause. At all other times he seemed to know that whatever wrongs the workingman committed work was always in the right.

When Clemens returned to America with his family, after lecturing round the world, I again saw him in New York, where I so often saw him while he was shaping himself for that heroic enterprise. He would come to me, and talk sorrowfully over his financial ruin, and picture it to himself as the stuff of some unhappy dream, which, after long prosperity, had culminated the wrong way. It was very melancholy, very touching, but the sorrow to which he had come home from his long journey had not that forlorn bewilderment in it. He was looking wonderfully well, and when I wanted the name of his elixir, he said it was plasmon. He was apt, for a man who had put faith so decidedly away from him, to take it back and pin it to some superstition, usually of a hygienic sort. Once, when he was well on in years, he came to New York without glasses, and announced that he and all his family, so astigmatic and myopic and old-sighted, had, so to speak, burned their spectacles behind them upon the instruction of some sage who had found out that they were a delusion. The next time he came he wore spectacles freely, almost ostentatiously, and I heard from others that the whole Clemens family had been near losing their eyesight by the miracle worked in their behalf. Now, I was not surprised to learn that "the damned human race" was to be saved by plasmon, if anything, and that my first duty was to visit the plasmon agency with him, and procure enough plasmon to secure my family against the ills it was heir to for evermore. I did not immediately understand that plasmon was one of the investments which he had made from "the substance of things hoped for," and in the destiny of a disastrous disappointment. But after paying off the creditors of his late publishing firm, he had to do something with his money, and it was not his fault if he did not make a fortune out of plasmon.



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XXI.

For a time it was a question whether he should not go back with his family to their old home in Hartford. Perhaps the father's and mother's hearts drew them there all the more strongly because of the grief written ineffaceably over it, but for the younger ones it was no longer the measure of the world. It was easier for all to stay on indefinitely in New York, which is a sojourn without circumstance, and equally the home of exile and of indecision. The Clemenses took a pleasant, spacious house at Riverdale, on the Hudson, and there I began to see them again on something like the sweet old terms. They lived far more unpretentiously than they used, and I think with a notion of economy, which they had never very successfully practised. I recall that at the end of a certain year in Hartford, when they had been saving and paying cash for everything, Clemens wrote, reminding me of their avowed experiment, and asking me to guess how many bills they had at New Year's; he hastened to say that a horse-car would not have held them. At Riverdale they kept no carriage, and there was a snowy night when I drove up to their handsome old mansion in the station carryall, which was crusted with mud as from the going down of the Deluge after transporting Noah and his family from the Ark to whatever point they decided to settle at provisionally. But the good talk, the rich talk, the talk that could never suffer poverty of mind or soul, was there, and we jubilantly found ourselves again in our middle youth. It was the mighty moment when Clemens was building his engines of war for the destruction of Christian Science, which superstition nobody, and he least of all, expected to destroy. It would not be easy to say whether in his talk of it his disgust for the illiterate twaddle of Mrs. Eddy's book, or his admiration of her genius for organization was the greater. He believed that as a religious machine the Christian Science Church was as perfect as the Roman Church and destined to be, more formidable in its control of the minds of men. He looked for its spread over the whole of Christendom, and throughout the winter he spent at Riverdale he was ready to meet all listeners more than half-way with his convictions of its powerful grasp of the average human desire to get something for nothing. The vacuous vulgarity of its texts was a perpetual joy to him, while he bowed with serious respect to the sagacity which built so securely upon the everlasting rock of human credulity and folly.

An interesting phase of his psychology in this business was not only his admiration for the masterly, policy of the Christian Science hierarchy, but his willingness to allow the miracles of its healers to be tried on his friends and family, if they wished it. He had a tender heart for the whole generation of empirics, as well as the newer sorts of scienticians, but he seemed to base his faith in them largely upon the failure of the regulars rather than upon their own successes, which also he believed in. He was recurrently, but not insistently, desirous that you should try their strange magics when you were going to try the familiar medicines.



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XXII.

The order of my acquaintance, or call it intimacy, with Clemens was this: our first meeting in Boston, my visits to him in Hartford, his visits to me in Cambridge, in Belmont, and in Boston, our briefer and less frequent meetings in Paris and New York, all with repeated interruptions through my absences in Europe, and his sojourns in London, Berlin, Vienna, and Florence, and his flights to the many ends, and odds and ends, of the earth. I will not try to follow the events, if they were not rather the subjective experiences, of those different periods and points of time which I must not fail to make include his summer at York Harbor, and his divers residences in New York, on Tenth Street and on Fifth Avenue, at Riverdale, and at Stormfield, which his daughter has told me he loved best of all his houses and hoped to make his home for long years.

Not much remains to me of the week or so that we had together in Paris early in the summer of 1904. The first thing I got at my bankers was a cable message announcing that my father was stricken with paralysis, but urging my stay for further intelligence, and I went about, till the final summons came, with my head in a mist of care and dread. Clemens was very kind and brotherly through it all. He was living greatly to his mind in one of those arcaded little hotels in the Rue de Rivoli, and he was free from all household duties to range with me. We drove together to make calls of digestion at many houses where he had got indigestion through his reluctance from their hospitality, for he hated dining out. But, as he explained, his wife wanted him to make these visits, and he did it, as he did everything she wanted. 'At one place, some suburban villa, he could get no answer to his ring, and he "hove" his cards over the gate just as it opened, and he had the shame of explaining in his unexplanatory French to the man picking them up. He was excruciatingly helpless with his cabmen, but by very cordially smiling and casting himself on the drivers' mercy he always managed to get where he wanted. The family was on the verge of their many moves, and he was doing some small errands; he said that the others did the main things, and left him to do what the cat might.

It was with that return upon the buoyant billow of plasmon, renewed in look and limb, that Clemens's universally pervasive popularity began in his own country. He had hitherto been more intelligently accepted or more largely imagined in Europe, and I suppose it was my sense of this that inspired the stupidity of my saying to him when we came to consider "the state of polite learning" among us, "You mustn't expect people to keep it up here as they do in England." But it appeared that his countrymen were only wanting the chance, and they kept it up in honor of him past all precedent. One does not go into a catalogue of dinners, receptions, meetings, speeches, and the like, when there are more



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vital things to speak of. He loved these obvious joys, and he eagerly strove with the occasions they gave him for the brilliancy which seemed so exhaustless and was so exhausting. His friends saw that he was wearing himself out, and it was not because of Mrs. Clemens's health alone that they were glad to have him take refuge at Riverdale. The family lived there two happy, hopeless years, and then it was ordered that they should change for his wife's sake to some less exacting climate. Clemens was not eager to go to Florence, but his imagination was taken as it would have been in the old-young days by the notion of packing his furniture into flexible steel cages from his house in Hartford and unpacking it from them untouched at his villa in Fiesole. He got what pleasure any man could out of that triumph of mind over matter, but the shadow was creeping up his life. One sunny afternoon we sat on the grass before the mansion, after his wife had begun to get well enough for removal, and we looked up toward a balcony where by-and-by that lovely presence made itself visible, as if it had stooped there from a cloud. A hand frailly waved a handkerchief; Clemens ran over the lawn toward it, calling tenderly: "What? What?" as if it might be an asking for him instead of the greeting it really was for me. It was the last time I saw her, if indeed I can be said to have seen her then, and long afterward when I said how beautiful we all thought her, how good, how wise, how wonderfully perfect in every relation of life, he cried out in a breaking voice: "Oh, why didn't you ever tell her? She thought you didn't like her." What a pang it was then not to have told her, but how could we have told her? His unreason endeared him to me more than all his wisdom.

To that Riverdale sojourn belong my impressions of his most violent anti-Christian Science rages, which began with the postponement of his book, and softened into acceptance of the delay till he had well-nigh forgotten his wrath when it came out. There was also one of those joint episodes of ours, which, strangely enough, did not eventuate in entire failure, as most of our joint episodes did. He wrote furiously to me of a wrong which had been done to one of the most helpless and one of the most helped of our literary brethren, asking me to join with him in recovering the money paid over by that brother's publisher to a false friend who had withheld it and would not give any account of it. Our hapless brother had appealed to Clemens, as he had to me, with the facts, but not asking our help, probably because he knew he need not ask; and Clemens enclosed to me a very taking-by-the-throat message which he proposed sending to the false friend. For once I had some sense, and answered that this would never do, for we had really no power in the matter, and I contrived a letter to the recreant so softly diplomatic that I shall always think of it with pride when my honesties no longer give me satisfaction,



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saying that this incident had come to our knowledge, and suggesting that we felt sure he would not finally wish to withhold the money. Nothing more, practically, than that, but that was enough; there came promptly back a letter of justification, covering a very substantial check, which we hilariously forwarded to our beneficiary. But the helpless man who was so used to being helped did not answer with the gladness I, at least, expected of him. He acknowledged the check as he would any ordinary payment, and then he made us observe that there was still a large sum due him out of the moneys withheld. At this point I proposed to Clemens that we should let the nonchalant victim collect the remnant himself. Clouds of sorrow had gathered about the bowed head of the delinquent since we began on him, and my fickle sympathies were turning his way from the victim who was really to blame for leaving his affairs so unguardedly to him in the first place. Clemens made some sort of grit assent, and we dropped the matter. He was more used to ingratitude from those he helped than I was, who found being lain down upon not so amusing as he found my revolt. He reckoned I was right, he said, and after that I think we never recurred to the incident. It was not ingratitude that he ever minded; it was treachery, that really maddened him past forgiveness.

XXIII.

During the summer he spent at York Harbor I was only forty minutes away at Kittery Point, and we saw each other often; but this was before the last time at Riverdale. He had a wide, low cottage in a pine grove overlooking York River, and we used to sit at a corner of the veranda farthest away from Mrs. Clemens's window, where we could read our manuscripts to each other, and tell our stories, and laugh our hearts out without disturbing her. At first she had been about the house, and there was one gentle afternoon when she made tea for us in the parlor, but that was the last time I spoke with her. After that it was really a question of how soonest and easiest she could be got back to Riverdale; but, of course, there were specious delays in which she seemed no worse and seemed a little better, and Clemens could work at a novel he had begun. He had taken a room in the house of a friend and neighbor, a fisherman and boatman; there was a table where he could write, and a bed where he could lie down and read; and there, unless my memory has played me one of those constructive tricks that people's memories indulge in, he read me the first chapters of an admirable story. The scene was laid in a Missouri town, and the characters such as he had known in boyhood; but as often as I tried to make him own it, he denied having written any such story; it is possible that I dreamed it, but I hope the *Ms.* will yet be found. Upon reflection I cannot believe that I dreamed it, and I cannot believe that it was an effect of that sort of pseudomnemonics which I have mentioned. The characters in the novel are too clearly outlined in my recollection, together with some critical reservations of my own concerning them. Not only does he seem to have read me those first chapters, but to have talked them over with me and outlined the whole story.

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I cannot say whether or not he believed that his wife would recover; he fought the fear of her death to the end; for her life was far more largely his than the lives of most men's wives are theirs. For his own life I believe he would never have much cared, if I may trust a saying of one who was so absolutely without pose as he was. He said that he never saw a dead man whom he did not envy for having had it over and being done with it. Life had always amused him, and in the resurgence of its interests after his sorrow had ebbed away he was again deeply interested in the world and in the human race, which, though damned, abounded in subjects of curious inquiry. When the time came for his wife's removal from York Harbor I went with him to Boston, where he wished to look up the best means of her conveyance to New York. The inquiry absorbed him: the sort of invalid car he could get; how she could be carried to the village station; how the car could be detached from the eastern train at Boston and carried round to the southern train on the other side of the city, and then how it could be attached to the Hudson River train at New York and left at Riverdale. There was no particular of the business which he did not scrutinize and master, not only with his poignant concern for her welfare, but with his strong curiosity as to how these unusual things were done with the usual means. With the inertness that grows upon an aging man he had been used to delegating more and more things, but of that thing I perceived that he would not delegate the least detail.

He had meant never to go abroad again, but when it came time to go he did not look forward to returning; he expected to live in Florence always after that; they were used to the life and they had been happy there some years earlier before he went with his wife for the cure of Nauheim. But when he came home again it was for good and all. It was natural that he should wish to live in New York, where they had already had a pleasant year in Tenth Street. I used to see him there in an upper room, looking south over a quiet open space of back yards where we fought our battles in behalf of the Filipinos and the Boers, and he carried on his campaign against the missionaries in China. He had not yet formed his habit of lying for whole days in bed and reading and writing there, yet he was a good deal in bed, from weakness, I suppose, and for the mere comfort of it.

My perspectives are not very clear, and in the foreshortening of events which always takes place in our review of the past I may not always time things aright. But I believe it was not until he had taken his house at 21 Fifth Avenue that he began to talk to me of writing his autobiography. He meant that it should be a perfectly veracious record of his life and period; for the first time in literature there should be a true history of a man and a true presentation of the men the man had known. As we talked it over the



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scheme enlarged itself in our riotous fancy. We said it should be not only a book, it should be a library, not only a library, but a literature. It should make good the world's loss through Omar's barbarity at Alexandria; there was no image so grotesque, so extravagant that we did not play with it; and the work so far as he carried it was really done on a colossal scale. But one day he said that as to veracity it was a failure; he had begun to lie, and that if no man ever yet told the truth about himself it was because no man ever could. How far he had carried his autobiography I cannot say; he dictated the matter several hours each day; and the public has already seen long passages from it, and can judge, probably, of the make and matter of the whole from these. It is immensely inclusive, and it observes no order or sequence. Whether now, after his death, it will be published soon or late I have no means of knowing. Once or twice he said in a vague way that it was not to be published for twenty years, so that the discomfort of publicity might be minimized for all the survivors. Suddenly he told me he was not working at it; but I did not understand whether he had finished it or merely dropped it; I never asked.

We lived in the same city, but for old men rather far apart, he at Tenth Street and I at Seventieth, and with our colds and other disabilities we did not see each other often. He expected me to come to him, and I would not without some return of my visits, but we never ceased to be friends, and good friends, so far as I know. I joked him once as to how I was going to come out in his autobiography, and he gave me some sort of joking reassurance. There was one incident, however, that brought us very frequently and actively together. He came one Sunday afternoon to have me call with him on Maxim Gorky, who was staying at a hotel a few streets above mine. We were both interested in Gorky, Clemens rather more as a revolutionist and I as a realist, though I too wished the Russian Tsar ill, and the novelist well in his mission to the Russian sympathizers in this republic. But I had lived through the episode of Kossuth's visit to us and his vain endeavor to raise funds for the Hungarian cause in 1851, when we were a younger and nobler nation than now, with hearts if not hands, opener to the "oppressed of Europe"; the oppressed of America, the four or five millions of slaves, we did not count. I did not believe that Gorky could get the money for the cause of freedom in Russia which he had come to get; as I told a valued friend of his and mine, I did not believe he could get twenty-five hundred dollars, and I think now I set the figure too high. I had already refused to sign the sort of general appeal his friends were making to our principles and pockets because I felt it so wholly idle, and when the paper was produced in Gorky's presence and Clemens put his name to it I still refused. The next day Gorky was expelled from his hotel with the woman who was not his wife, but who, I am bound to say, did not look as if she were not, at least to me, who am, however, not versed in those aspects of human nature.



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I might have escaped unnoted, but Clemens's familiar head gave us away to the reporters waiting at the elevator's mouth for all who went to see Gorky. As it was, a hunt of interviewers ensued for us severally and jointly. I could remain aloof in my hotel apartment, returning answer to such guardians of the public right to know everything that I had nothing to say of Gorky's domestic affairs; for the public interest had now strayed far from the revolution, and centred entirely upon these. But with Clemens it was different; he lived in a house with a street door kept by a single butler, and he was constantly rung for. I forget how long the siege lasted, but long enough for us to have fun with it. That was the moment of the great Vesuvian eruption, and we figured ourselves in easy reach of a volcano which was every now and then "blowing a cone off," as the telegraphic phrase was. The roof of the great market in Naples had just broken in under its load of ashes and cinders, and crashed hundreds of people; and we asked each other if we were not sorry we had not been there, where the pressure would have been far less terrific than it was with us in Fifth Avenue. The forbidden butler came up with a message that there were some gentlemen below who wanted to see Clemens.

"How many?" he demanded.

"Five," the butler faltered.

"Reporters?"

The butler feigned uncertainty.

"What would you do?" he asked me.

"I wouldn't see them," I said, and then Clemens went directly down to them. How or by what means he appeased their voracity I cannot say, but I fancy it was by the confession of the exact truth, which was harmless enough. They went away joyfully, and he came back in radiant satisfaction with having seen them. Of course he was right and I wrong, and he was right as to the point at issue between Gorky and those who had helplessly treated him with such cruel ignominy. In America it is not the convention for men to live openly in hotels with women who are not their wives. Gorky had violated this convention and he had to pay the penalty; and concerning the destruction of his efficiency as an emissary of the revolution, his blunder was worse than a crime.

XXIV.

To the period of Clemens's residence in Fifth Avenue belongs his efflorescence in white serge. He was always rather aggressively indifferent about dress, and at a very early date in our acquaintance Aldrich and I attempted his reform by clubbing to buy him a cravat. But he would not put away his stiff little black bow, and until he imagined the suit of white serge, he wore always a suit of black serge, truly deplorable in the cut of the



sagging frock. After his measure had once been taken he refused to make his clothes the occasion of personal interviews with his tailor; he sent the stuff by the kind elderly woman who had been in the service of the family from



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the earliest days of his marriage, and accepted the result without criticism. But the white serge was an inspiration which few men would have had the courage to act upon. The first time I saw him wear it was at the authors' hearing before the Congressional Committee on Copyright in Washington. Nothing could have been more dramatic than the gesture with which he flung off his long loose overcoat, and stood forth in white from his feet to the crown of his silvery head. It was a magnificent coup, and he dearly loved a coup; but the magnificent speech which he made, tearing to shreds the venerable farrago of nonsense about nonproperty in ideas which had formed the basis of all copyright legislation, made you forget even his spectacularity.

It is well known how proud he was of his Oxford gown, not merely because it symbolized the honor in which he was held by the highest literary body in the world, but because it was so rich and so beautiful. The red and the lavender of the cloth flattered his eyes as the silken black of the same degree of Doctor of Letters, given him years before at Yale, could not do. His frank, defiant happiness in it, mixed with a due sense of burlesque, was something that those lacking his poet-soul could never imagine; they accounted it vain, weak; but that would not have mattered to him if he had known it. In his London sojourn he had formed the top-hat habit, and for a while he lounged splendidly up and down Fifth Avenue in that society emblem; but he seemed to tire of it, and to return kindly to the soft hat of his Southwestern tradition.

He disliked clubs; I don't know whether he belonged to any in New York, but I never met him in one. As I have told, he himself had formed the Human Race Club, but as he never could get it together it hardly counted. There was to have been a meeting of it the time of my only visit to Stormfield in April of last year; but of three who were to have come I alone came. We got on very well without the absentees, after finding them in the wrong, as usual, and the visit was like those I used to have with him so many years before in Hartford, but there was not the old ferment of subjects. Many things had been discussed and put away for good, but we had our old fondness for nature and for each other, who were so differently parts of it. He showed his absolute content with his house, and that was the greater pleasure for me because it was my son who designed it. The architect had been so fortunate as to be able to plan it where a natural avenue of savins, the closeknit, slender, cypress-like cedars of New England, led away from the rear of the villa to the little level of a pergola, meant some day to be wreathed and roofed with vines. But in the early spring days all the landscape was in the beautiful nakedness of the northern winter. It opened in the surpassing loveliness of wooded and meadowed uplands, under skies that were the first days blue, and the last gray over a rainy and then a snowy



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floor. We walked up and down, up and down, between the villa terrace and the pergola, and talked with the melancholy amusement, the sad tolerance of age for the sort of men and things that used to excite us or enrage us; now we were far past turbulence or anger. Once we took a walk together across the yellow pastures to a chasmlal creek on his grounds, where the ice still knit the clayey banks together like crystal mosses; and the stream far down clashed through and over the stones and the shards of ice. Clemens pointed out the scenery he had bought to give himself elbow-room, and showed me the lot he was going to have me build on. The next day we came again with the geologist he had asked up to Stormfield to analyze its rocks. Truly he loved the place, though he had been so weary of change and so indifferent to it that he never saw it till he came to live in it. He left it all to the architect whom he had known from a child in the intimacy which bound our families together, though we bodily lived far enough apart. I loved his little ones and he was sweet to mine and was their delighted-in and wondered-at friend. Once and once again, and yet again and again, the black shadow that shall never be lifted where it falls, fell in his house and in mine, during the forty years and more that we were friends, and endeared us the more to each other.

XXV.

My visit at Stormfield came to an end with tender reluctance on his part and on mine. Every morning before I dressed I heard him sounding my name through the house for the fun of it and I know for the fondness; and if I looked out of my door, there he was in his long nightgown swaying up and down the corridor, and wagging his great white head like a boy that leaves his bed and comes out in the hope of frolic with some one. The last morning a soft sugarsnow had fallen and was falling, and I drove through it down to the station in the carriage which had been given him by his wife's father when they were first married, and been kept all those intervening years in honorable retirement for this final use. Its springs had not grown yielding with time; it had rather the stiffness and severity of age; but for him it must have swung low like the sweet chariot of the negro "spiritual" which I heard him sing with such fervor, when those wonderful hymns of the slaves began to make their way northward. 'Go Down, Daniel', was one in which I can hear his quavering tenor now. He was a lover of the things he liked, and full of a passion for them which satisfied itself in reading them matchlessly aloud. No one could read 'Uncle Remus' like him; his voice echoed the voices of the negro nurses who told his childhood the wonderful tales. I remember especially his rapture with Mr. Cable's 'Old Creole Days,' and the thrilling force with which he gave the forbidding of the leper's brother when the city's survey ran the course of an avenue through the cottage where the leper lived in hiding: "Strit must not pass!"



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Out of a nature rich and fertile beyond any I have known, the material given him by the Mystery that makes a man and then leaves him to make himself over, he wrought a character of high nobility upon a foundation of clear and solid truth. At the last day he will not have to confess anything, for all his life was the free knowledge of any one who would ask him of it. The Searcher of hearts will not bring him to shame at that day, for he did not try to hide any of the things for which he was often so bitterly sorry. He knew where the Responsibility lay, and he took a man's share of it bravely; but not the less fearlessly he left the rest of the answer to the God who had imagined men.

It is in vain that I try to give a notion of the intensity with which he pierced to the heart of life, and the breadth of vision with which he compassed the whole world, and tried for the reason of things, and then left trying. We had other meetings, insignificantly sad and brief; but the last time I saw him alive was made memorable to me by the kind, clear judicial sense with which he explained and justified the labor-unions as the sole present help of the weak against the strong.

Next I saw him dead, lying in his coffin amid those flowers with which we garland our despair in that pitiless hour. After the voice of his old friend Twichell had been lifted in the prayer which it wailed through in broken-hearted supplication, I looked a moment at the face I knew so well; and it was patient with the patience I had so often seen in it: something of puzzle, a great silent dignity, an assent to what must be from the depths of a nature whose tragical seriousness broke in the laughter which the unwise took for the whole of him. Emerson, Longfellow, Lowell, Holmes—I knew them all and all the rest of our sages, poets, seers, critics, humorists; they were like one another and like other literary men; but Clemens was sole, incomparable, the Lincoln of our literature.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Absolute devotion to the day of her death,
Absolutely, so positively, so almost aggressively truthful
Addressed to their tenderness out of his tenderness
Amiable perception, and yet with a sort of remote absence
Amuse him, even when they wronged him
Amusingly realized the situation to their friends
But now I remember that he gets twenty dollars a month"
Christianity had done nothing to improve morals and conditions
Church: "Oh yes, I go It 'most kills me, but I go,"
Clemens was sole, incomparable, the Lincoln of our literature
Despair broke in laughter
Despised the avoidance of repetitions out of fear of tautology
Everlasting rock of human credulity and folly
Flowers with which we garland our despair in that pitiless hour



He did not care much for fiction
He did not paw you with his hands



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to show his affection

He was a youth to the end of his days

Heroic lies

His coming almost killed her, but it was worth it

Honest men are few when it comes to themselves

It was mighty pretty, as Pepys would say

Jane Austen

Left him to do what the cat might

Lie, of course, and did to save others from grief or harm

Liked to find out good things and great things for himself

Livy Clemens: nthe loveliest person I have ever seen

Marriages are what the parties to them alone really know

Mind and soul were with those who do the hard work of the world

Mock modesty of print forbids my repeating here

Most desouthernized Southerner I ever knew

Most serious, the most humane, the most conscientious of men

Nearly nothing as chaos could be

Never saw a dead man whom he did not envy

Never saw a man more regardful of negroes

No man ever yet told the truth about himself

No man more perfectly sensed and more entirely abhorred slavery

Not possible for Clemens to write like anybody else

Ought not to call coarse without calling one's self prudish

Polite learning hesitated his praise

Praised it enough to satisfy the author

Reparation due from every white to every black man

Shackles of belief worn so long

Some superstition, usually of a hygienic sort

Stupidly truthful

The ornament of a house is the friends who frequent it

Truthful

Used to ingratitude from those he helped

Vacuous vulgarity of its texts

Walter-Scotticized, pseudo-chivalry of the Southern ideal

We have never ended before, and we do not see how we can end

Well, if you are to be lost, I want to be lost with you

What he had done he owned to, good, bad, or indifferent

Whether every human motive was not selfish

Wonder why we hate the past so—"It's so damned humiliating!"