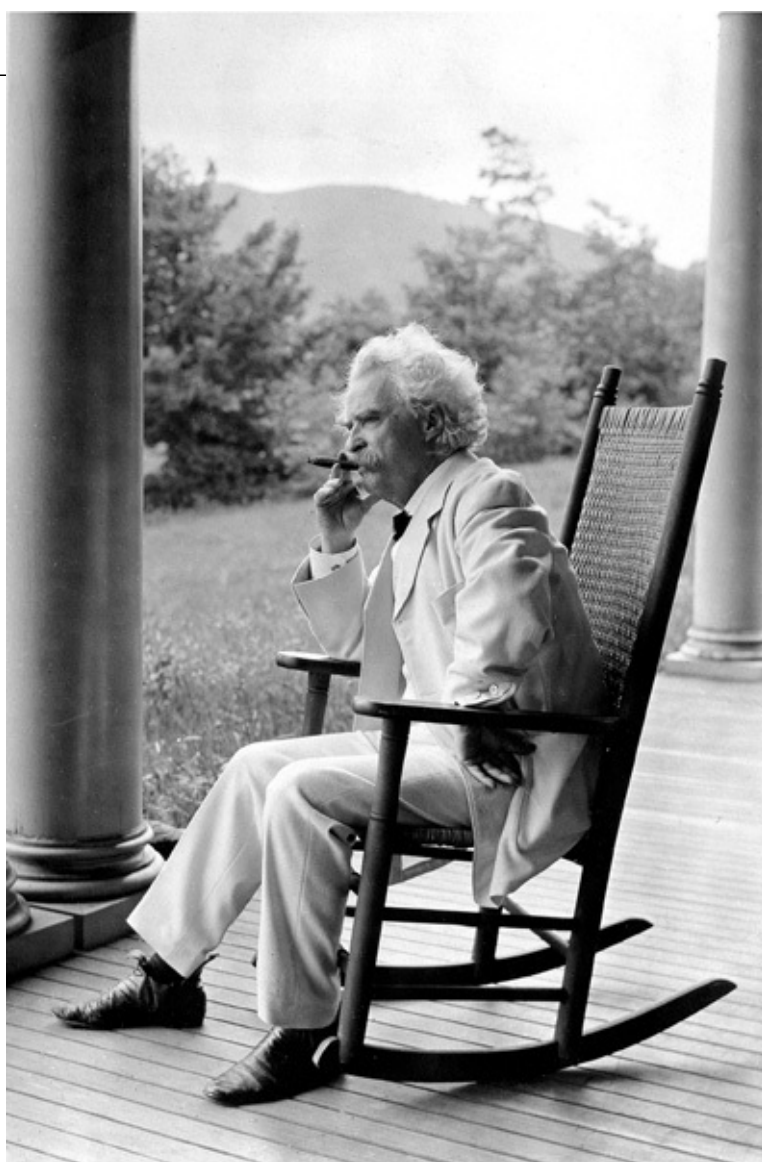




# AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MARK TWAIN

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VOLUME 1 | READER'S EDITION



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Acknowledgments

Introduction

## **AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MARK TWAIN**

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My Autobiography [Random Extracts from It]

The Latest Attempt

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*Photographs*

Between 1870 and 1905 Mark Twain (Samuel L. Clemens) tried repeatedly, and at long intervals, to write (or dictate) his autobiography, always shelving the manuscript before he had made much progress. By 1905 he had accumulated some thirty or forty of these false starts—manuscripts that were essentially experiments, drafts of episodes and chapters; many of these have survived in the Mark Twain Papers and two other libraries. To some of these manuscripts he went so far as to assign chapter numbers that placed them early or late in a narrative which he never filled in, let alone completed. None dealt with more than brief snatches of his life story.

He broke this pattern in January 1906 when he began almost daily dictations to a stenographer. He soon decided that these Autobiographical Dictations should form the bulk of what he would call the *Autobiography of Mark Twain*. Within a few months he reviewed his accumulation of false starts and decided which to incorporate into the newer dictation series and which to leave unpublished. By the time he had created more than two hundred and fifty of these dictations (and written a final chapter in December 1909, about the recent death of his daughter Jean), he had compiled more than half a million words. He declared the work done, but insisted that it should not be published in its entirety until a hundred years after his death, which occurred less than four months later, on 21 April 1910.

This belated success with a project that had resisted completion for thirty-five years can be traced to two new conditions. First, he had at last found a skilled stenographer who was also a responsible audience—Josephine S. Hobby—which encouraged him to embrace dictation as the method of composition, something he had experimented with as early as 1885. Second, and just as important, dictating the text made it easier to follow a style of composition which he had been drifting toward for at least twenty years. As he put it in June 1906, he had finally seen that the “right way” to dictate an autobiography was to “start it at no particular time of your life; wander at your free will all over your life; talk only about the thing which interests you for the moment; drop it the moment its interest threatens to pale, and turn your talk upon the new and more interesting thing that has intruded itself into your mind meantime.”<sup>1</sup>

Combining dictation and discursiveness in this bold way was unexpectedly liberating, in large part because it produced not a conventional narrative marching inexorably toward the grave, but rather a series of spontaneous recollections and comments on the present as well as the past, arranged simply in the order of their creation. The problem of method had been solved. It was also liberating to insist on posthumous publication, but that idea had been around from the start and was closely tied to Clemens’s ambition to tell the whole truth, without reservation. As he explained to an interviewer in 1899: “A book that is not to be published for a century gives the writer a freedom which he could not secure in no other way. In these conditions you can draw a man without prejudice exactly as you knew him and yet have no fear of hurting his feelings or those of his sons or grandsons.” Posthumous publication was also supposed to make it easier for Clemens to confess even shameful parts of his own story, but that goal proved illusory. In that same 1899 interview he admitted that a “man cannot tell the whole truth about himself, even if convinced that what he wrote would never be seen by others.”<sup>2</sup>

But if delaying publication failed to make him into a confessional autobiographer, it did free him to express unconventional thoughts about religion, politics, and the damned human race, without fear of ostracism. In January 1908 he recalled that he had long had “the common habit, in private conversation with friends, of revealing every private opinion I possessed relating to religion, politics

and men”—adding that he would “never dream of *printing* one of them.”<sup>3</sup> The need to defame the publication of subversive ideas seemed obvious to him. “We suppress an unpopular opinion because we cannot afford the bitter cost of putting it forth,” he wrote in 1905. “None of us likes to be hated, none of us likes to be shunned.”<sup>4</sup> So having the freedom to speak his mind (if not confess his sins) was still ample justification for delaying publication until after his death.

## History of Publication: Paine, DeVoto, and Neider

Seven months after he began the Autobiographical Dictations in 1906, however, Clemens did permit—indeed actively pursued—*partial* publication of what he had so far accumulated. He supervised the preparation of some twenty-five short extracts from his autobiographical manuscripts and dictations for publication in the *North American Review*, each selection deliberately tamed for that time and audience, and each prefaced by a notice: “No part of the autobiography will be published in book form during the lifetime of the author.”<sup>5</sup> But not long after Clemens died, his instruction to delay publication for a hundred years began to be ignored—first in 1924 by Albert Bigelow Paine, Mark Twain’s official biographer and first literary executor, then in 1940 by Paine’s successor, Bernard DeVoto, and most recently by Charles Neider in 1959.

Yet each of these editors undertook to publish only a part of the text, and none ventured to do so in the way that Clemens actually wanted it published. Paine began his two-volume edition with all but a handful of the experiments carried out before 1906, as well as several texts that were probably never part of those experiments. He arranged all of them “in accordance with the author’s wish . . . in the order in which they were written, regardless of the chronology of events.”<sup>6</sup> It now seems clear that his understanding of “the author’s wish” was mistaken: Clemens never intended to include all those false starts, let alone ordered as they were written; he intended only the dictations begun in 1906 to be published that way. But having chosen this course, Paine then had space for only a relative handful of the 1906–9 dictations. In addition, he felt obliged to suppress or even alter certain passages without notice to the reader. He eventually acknowledged that he had published only about one-third of what he regarded as the whole text.<sup>7</sup>

DeVoto was critical of Paine’s acceptance of “the arrangement Mark Twain originally gave” the dictations, “interspersed as they were with trivialities, irrelevancies, newspaper clippings, and unimportant letters—disconnected and without plan.” Instead he chose to print only passages that Paine had left unpublished, drawn from “the typescript in which everything that Mark wanted in his memoirs had been brought together” (the Autobiographical Dictations). He then arranged the selections by topic, “omitting trivialities and joining together things that belonged together.” And he said with great satisfaction that he had “modernized the punctuation by deleting thousands of commas and dashes, and probably should have deleted hundreds more.” He was confident that he had “given the book a more coherent plan than Mark Twain’s” and he was unapologetic about having “left out what seemed to him ‘uninteresting.’”<sup>8</sup>

Neider, too, was unhappy with Paine’s acceptance of Mark Twain’s plan to publish the autobiography “not in chronological order but in the sequence in which it was written and dictated. What an extraordinary idea! As though the stream of composition time were in some mysterious way more revealing than that of autobiographical time!”<sup>9</sup> Neider had permission from the Mark Twain Estate to combine some thirty thousand words from the unpublished dictations with what Paine and DeVoto had already published. Like DeVoto, he omitted what he disliked, and was obliged to exclude



portions that Clara Clemens Samossoud, Clemens's daughter, disapproved of publishing. Neider the (figuratively) cut apart and rearranged the texts he had selected so that they approximated conventional, chronological narrative—exactly the kind of autobiography Mark Twain had rejected.

The result of these several editorial plans has been that no text of the *Autobiography* so far published is even remotely complete, much less completely authorial. It is therefore the goal of the present edition to publish the complete text as nearly as possible in the way Mark Twain intended it to be published after his death. That goal has only recently become attainable, for the simple reason that no one knew which parts of the great mass of autobiographical manuscripts and typescripts Mark Twain intended to include. In fact, the assumption had long prevailed that Mark Twain did not decide what to put in and what to leave out—that he left the enormous and very complicated manuscript incomplete and unfinished. That assumption was wrong. Although Mark Twain left no specific instructions (not even documentation for the instructions that Paine professed to follow), hidden within the approximately ten file feet of autobiographical documents were more than enough clues to show that he had in fact decided on the final form of the *Autobiography*, and which of the preliminary experiments were to be included and which omitted.

*Autobiography of Mark Twain, Volume 1* (the hardcover critical edition) was published in 2010. The complete text of that first volume is also available at *Mark Twain Project Online (MTPO)*. Two more volumes will follow, in both print and digital formats. Exhaustive documentation of all textual decisions will be published *only* at *MTPO*.<sup>10</sup> The first volume consists of two parts. The first, Preliminary Manuscripts and Dictations, comprises the short works written between 1870 and 1906 which Clemens intended for the autobiography, but reviewed and rejected from his final plan in June 1906. The second part begins with that final plan, the *Autobiography of Mark Twain* proper, starting with the several prefaces he created at the same time to frame the preliminary writings he had selected as opening texts, followed by the almost daily Autobiographical Dictations from 9 January through the end of March 1906—all that would fit into the volume. The dictations are arranged in their chronological order of their creation. The remaining volumes will include all the dictations he created between April 1906 and October 1909, likewise arranged chronologically, the whole concluding with the “Closing Words of My Autobiography.”

This paperback edition begins with the text of the *Autobiography* proper—that is, the second part of *Volume 1*, published in 2010. Only four early works from the first part are reprinted, in the Appendix Preliminary Manuscripts and Dictations. Also excluded are the Explanatory Notes, three of the five Appendixes, Note on the Text, Word Division in This Volume, and the Index. This Introduction is an abbreviated version of the one in the hardcover.

## “Scraps” and “Chapters” from the Autobiography

Each of his major books took Clemens between three and seven years to complete. He required that much time chiefly because he always encountered stretches during which he was unable to proceed and composition came to a complete halt. Since at least 1871 he had found it necessary, when his “tank had run dry” in this way, to “pigeonhole” his manuscripts. Beginning in the 1870s Clemens turned his attention to writing his autobiography, but only intermittently. Until January 1906 the tank seemed to “run dry” after relatively brief stints of writing or dictating, because he grew dissatisfied with his method of composing the work, or with its overall plan, or both.

The first indication that he had such a plan survives only in the report of a conversation that took place when he was forty, while Mrs. James T. Fields and her husband were visiting the Clemenses in

proceeded to speak of his Autobiography which he intends to write as fully and sincerely as possible to leave behind him—His wife laughingly said, she should look it over and leave out objectionable passages—No, he said very earnestly almost sternly, *you* are not to edit it—it is to appear as it is written with the whole tale told as truly as I can tell it—I shall take out passages from it and publish I go along, in the Atlantic and elsewhere, but I shall not limit myself as to space and at whatever ever age I am writing about even if I am an infant and an idea comes to me about myself when I am forty I shall put that in.<sup>11</sup>

This remarkable statement shows that Clemens was already committed to several ideas that would govern the autobiography he worked on over the next thirty-five years. They are clearly interrelated. The absolute truth telling would be made easier by knowing that his own death would precede publication and discursiveness (quite apart from his natural preference for it) would help to disarm his own impulse toward self-censorship. But it would take another thirty years to actually apply these various ideas to a real autobiography.

Just a year or so later Clemens actually began writing, prompted (as he recalled in 1904) by conversation with his good friend John Milton Hay. This eleven-page manuscript, probably written in late 1877, does not follow his expressed plan to ignore chronology. Entitled “Chapter 1,” it begins, “I was born the 30th of November, 1835” and goes on to reminisce briefly about his early memories of childhood in that “almost invisible village of Florida, Monroe county, Missouri.”<sup>12</sup> But this beginning ends abruptly, as if the author suddenly lost interest. As he recalled in 1904, “I resolved to begin my autobiography . . . but the resolve melted away and disappeared in a week.”<sup>13</sup>

After abandoning “Chapter 1,” however, Clemens wrote or dictated some two dozen short autobiographical works between 1885 and 1905 that reflect only his interest at the moment, not the chronology of his life.<sup>14</sup> Several of these had titles designating them “Scraps” or “Extracts” from the autobiography. To a handful of others he assigned chapter numbers: Chapter II (written in 1897–98), Chapter XIV (written in 1898), Chapter IX (written in 1900), and Chapters IV and XVII (both written in 1903). Although Clemens no doubt wrote additional numbered chapters that were subsequently lost or destroyed—Chapter XII, for example, was drafted but has not been found—it is highly unlikely that he produced as many as seventeen. It is significant that when these chapters are arranged in numerical order, their contents do follow a rough chronology—without, however, accurately reflecting the lapses of time. Clemens was fourteen in both Chapter IV and Chapter IX, but between Chapter IX and Chapter XIV he aged from fourteen to thirty, and then to age sixty-two by Chapter XVII. Still, the rough approximation is exactly what one would expect if the chapter numbers were only *estimates*. He chose not to write the chapters in numerical order, but it is clear that his ultimate goal was to arrange them into a chronological narrative.

Two of the chapters are suggestive in a related way. Chapter II (“My Autobiography [Random Extracts from It]”) begins with a somewhat facetious discussion of the Clemens family’s forebears and continues with an incident that occurred in Berlin in 1891, and concludes with an evocative description of Clemens’s idyllic summers on his uncle’s farm near Florida, Missouri. And “Scrap from My Autobiography. From Chapter IX” recounts two stories from Clemens’s youth, when he was fourteen (1849–50), but concludes each story with much later events—the first in Calcutta in 1891 when he was sixty-one, and the second in London in 1873 when he was thirty-eight.<sup>15</sup> In both cases it seems that to follow the stories to what Clemens regarded as their natural conclusion, it was necessary to skip over several decades of his life. This preference for juxtaposing early memories with later experiences helps to explain why Clemens would reject the idea of a completely chronological narrative.

## First Experiment with Dictation (1885)

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Although Clemens had dictated letters and brief memoranda to a secretary as early as 1873, it was not until 1885 that he tried this method for literary composition. In March of that year he wrote in his notebook:

Get short-hander in New York & begin my autobiography at once & continue it straight through the summer. Which reminds me that Susie, aged 13, (1885), has begun to write my biography—solely of her own motion—a thing about which I feel proud & gratified. At breakfast this morning I intimated that if I seemed to be talking on a pretty high key, in the way of style, must be remembered that my biographer was present. Whereupon Susie struck upon the unique idea of having me sit up & purpose to *talk* for the biography!<sup>16</sup>

Susy's remark was undoubtedly a catalyst in Clemens's decision to experiment with dictation, but there was another reason for his interest in this method of composition. His friend Ulysses S. Grant was at work on the manuscript of his *Personal Memoirs*, while dying of throat cancer. As a frequent visitor to Grant's New York house, Clemens knew that Grant feared dying before he could finish his book. He suggested that Grant hire a stenographer to ease his task. Grant at first demurred, but later consented to try it. The experiment was "a thorough success," but Grant's illness made speed difficult, and much of the manuscript was ultimately written in his own hand.<sup>17</sup>

No doubt encouraged by Grant's experience, in early May Clemens asked his friend and former lecture manager James Redpath to serve as his stenographer. "I think we can make this thing blameless & enjoyable," he wrote Redpath—an indication that he was beginning to intuit the need for a responsive human audience when dictating. He made this idea quite explicit six years later in a letter to William Dean Howells, when he concluded that he could not "write literature" with Thomas Edison's recording phonograph "because it hasn't any ideas & it hasn't any gift for elaboration, or smartness of talk," and is just "as grave and unsmiling as the devil."<sup>18</sup> Over the next few weeks he dictated detailed accounts of his relationship with Grant and his negotiations to publish the *Memoirs* through Charles L. Webster and Co. (his own publishing firm), defending himself against accusations that he had unfairly deprived the Century Company of that opportunity. But when he read over some of the typescripts that Redpath had created from his stenographic notes, he found the result far from satisfactory. He told Henry Ward Beecher:

My Autobiography is pretty freely dictated, but my idea is to jack-plane it a little before I die, some day or other; I mean the rough construction & rotten grammar. It is the only dictating I ever did, & it was most troublesome & awkward work.<sup>19</sup>

Clemens once again set aside the autobiography and turned his attention elsewhere.

## Vienna Manuscripts (1897–1899)

Between 1885 and 1897 Clemens produced only one autobiographical manuscript, "The Machinery Episode" (written in two stages, in 1890 and 1893–94), a tirade against James W. Paige, inventor of the typesetting machine that was a major cause of Clemens's bankruptcy.<sup>20</sup> But in 1897–98 his interest was again revived, and he produced a number of sketches about life in Vienna as well as two reminiscences of his early lecturing experiences.<sup>21</sup> By late 1898, however, his interest had faded once again. On the manuscript of "My Debut as a Literary Person," written in October, he inserted a footnote, "This is Chapter XIV of my unfinished Autobiography & the way it is getting along

promises to remain an unfinished one.”<sup>22</sup> He published the piece in the *Century Magazine* for November 1899, having removed any reference to his autobiography. Still, it was the first “chapter” to be published in fulfillment of his long-held plan to publish selections from it.

Clemens’s attitude toward his “unfinished” autobiography fluctuated over the winter of 1898–99. On 10 October he claimed that a “good deal of the Autobiography is written,” but less than a month later concluded that he would “never write the Autobiography till I’m in a hole.” Shortly after that he told a friend, “I have resumed my Autobiography, and I suppose I shall have Vol. 1 done by spring time. I expect so.” Then at last, in February 1899, he wrote Richard Watson Gilder, “I have abandoned my Autobiography, & am not going to finish it.”<sup>23</sup> He was obviously struggling with how, or even whether, to proceed with a work that had been in and out of the “pigeonhole” for twenty years.

## The Florentine Dictations (1904)

In August 1902 Clemens’s wife, Olivia, became gravely ill. Despite some temporary improvement, her health continued to decline, and in 1903, on the recommendation of her doctors, Clemens decided to take the family to Italy. In early November they settled into the Villa di Quarto near Florence. In addition to Clemens and Olivia the travelers included their daughters, Clara and Jean, and Clemens’s secretary, Isabel V. Lyon. During his eight-month stay in Florence Clemens made unusual progress on the autobiography, in large part because of a renewed enthusiasm for dictation as a method of composition. He returned to the work in January 1904, relying on Lyon, who did not know shorthand, to record his dictation in full. She then gave Jean her notebook to copy on the typewriter. According to Lyon,

About January 14, Mr. Clemens began to dictate to me. His idea of *writing* an autobiography had never proved successful, for to his mind autobiography is like narrative & should be spoken. At Mrs. Clemens’s suggestion we tried, and Mr. Clemens found that I could do it to a charm.<sup>24</sup>

Two days later Clemens described his success to Howells:

I’ve struck it! And I will give it away—to You. You will never know how much enjoyment you have lost until you get to dictating your autobiography; then you will realize, with a pang, that you might have been doing it all your life if you had only had the luck to think of it. And you will be astonished (& charmed) to see how like *talk* it is, & how real it sounds, & how well & compactly & sequentially it constructs itself, & what a dewy & breezy & woodsy freshness it has. . . . There are little slips here & there, little inexactnesses, & many desertions of a thought before the end of it has been reached, but these are not blemishes, they are merits, . . . the subtle something which makes good talk so much better than the best imitation of it that can be done with a pen.<sup>25</sup>

In a dictation made later that month he hinted at the disinhibiting nature of talk:

Within the last eight or ten years I have made several attempts to do the autobiography in one way or another with a pen, but the result was not satisfactory, it was too literary. . . . With a pen in the hand the narrative stream is a canal; it moves slowly, smoothly & decorously, sleepily, it has no blemish except that it is all blemish. It is too literary, too prim, too nice; the gait and style and movement are not suited to narrative.<sup>26</sup>

Two years later, in mid-June 1906, he would look back on this time in 1904 as the moment he discovered his preference for free-wheeling, spoken narrative.

Only six Florentine Dictations are extant, but it is clear that there were others that do not survive. In August 1906 Clemens said that he had created more than a dozen “little biographies,” of which v

have almost none.

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By my count, estimating from the time when I began these dictations two years ago, in Italy, I have been in the right mood for competently and exhaustively feeding fat my ancient grudges in the cases of only thirteen deserving persons—one woman and twelve men. . . . I do believe I have flayed and mangled and mutilated those people beyond the dreams of avarice.<sup>27</sup>

Clemens certainly “flayed” the Countess Massiglia in “Villa di Quarto,” and excoriated Charles Webster at length in the Autobiographical Dictation of 29 May 1906, but we can only guess who the other “deserving” men were. The most likely candidates are Daniel Whitford, Clemens’s attorney; Elisha Bliss, his publisher; James W. Paige, inventor of the failed typesetter; and of course Brainerd Harte.<sup>28</sup>

### **The Autobiographical Dictations Begin (January 1906)**

Olivia died in June 1904, and the family accompanied her body back to Elmira, New York, for burial. Suffering from extreme grief, Clemens set aside the autobiography for two and a half years. A catalyst was needed to revive the enthusiasm of 1904, and on the night of 3 January 1906 it arrived in the form of Albert Bigelow Paine, an experienced writer and editor who approached Clemens with a proposal to write his biography. Paine suggested hiring a stenographer to record his reminiscences, and Clemens “proposed to double the value and interest of our employment by letting his dictations continue the form of those earlier autobiographical chapters, begun with Redpath in 1885, and continued later in Vienna and at the Villa Quarto.”<sup>29</sup> The project thus assumed a dual purpose—biography and autobiography.

Josephine S. Hobby, an experienced stenographer and an excellent typist, was hired for the task. Her hand, and work began on 9 January. Clemens proposed a schedule of four or five days a week, for roughly two hours each morning. He talked while Hobby took his words down in shorthand and Paine listened appreciatively. For these early sessions, Paine recalled, Clemens usually dictated from bed at his residence in New York, “clad in a handsome silk dressing-gown of rich Persian pattern, propped against great snowy pillows.”<sup>30</sup> In May the household moved to a summer home in Dublin, New Hampshire. There the work continued, with occasional breaks, into the fall.

Before Clemens finished dictating in 1909, he and Hobby, along with three other typists, generated more than five thousand pages of typescript. This enormous body of material has, since Clemens’s death, constituted the largest part of the work known as the “Autobiography.” But probably since DeVoto’s time as editor of the Mark Twain Papers, anyone who consulted that file was no doubt puzzled by two things. First, most of the Autobiographical Dictations between January and August 1906 were preserved in folders—one per dictation—containing between two and four separate, distinct typed copies of essentially the same text. Second, the differences (if any) between the duplicate typescripts were not obvious or readily intelligible: pagination differed, seemingly without pattern; some contained handwritten authorial revisions, while others were unmarked; and many were extensively marked by at least half a dozen different (mostly unidentified) hands, in addition to the author’s. These documents constituted the central puzzle confronting anyone who set out to publish the *Autobiography of Mark Twain*.

Ultimately four typescripts were identified, and their relationship to each other established. The first typescript was created by Hobby directly from her stenographic notes of the Autobiographical Dictations begun in January 1906. Clemens began to revise this typescript in late May 1906, and

mid-June Hobby began a second typescript, which incorporated his revisions. The third typescript comprises a series of extracts, drawn primarily from the first typescript, which were prepared as a printer's copy for the twenty-five "Chapters from My Autobiography" that Clemens published in the *North American Review* in 1906–7. The pattern of authorial revision on this typescript was clearly aimed at modifying the text for a contemporary readership: names were suppressed, overly personal and indelicate anecdotes excised, and controversial opinions omitted. All revisions of this nature, clearly not intended for the version to be published posthumously, have been rejected from the text of the 1906 edition. The fourth typescript contains the same material as the second one, but is derivative—that is, it shows no evidence of authorial review. Nevertheless, it serves as an important text source where portions of the other typescripts are missing.

### **"The Final (and Right) Plan" (June 1906)**

It was not until June that Clemens made a final decision about the contents of his autobiography. He returned to a task that he had begun the previous winter: reviewing his earlier writings, including his preliminary attempts at autobiography. He sent Paine to New York to fetch a "small steamer trunk" of manuscripts that he had gathered together for use in the biography.<sup>31</sup> By the time he left Dublin in late June for a break from dictating, he had decided to include "My Autobiography [Random Extracts from It]"—the "Chapter II" written in Vienna—and four of the 1904 Florentine Dictations. These earlier writings, not present in Hobby's first typescript, were inserted at the beginning of the second typescript, before the 1906 Autobiographical Dictations. Clemens was particularly pleased with "Random Extracts," as Lyon recorded in her journal on 22 June: "After luncheon we sat on the porch & Mr. Clemens read the very first autobiography beginning, written many years ago about 1879—4 typewritten pages, & telling of his boyhood days, & the farm. He was deeply moved as he read on on."<sup>32</sup> To explain his reasons for selecting these pieces, Clemens wrote prefaces to introduce them. These manuscript prefaces, whose purpose was not entirely clear until now, are in the Mark Twain Papers. The first one, "An Early Attempt," was intended to precede "Random Extracts." It begins: "The chapters which immediately follow constitute a fragment of one of my many attempts (after I was in my forties) to put my life on paper," and describes the sketch as an example of the "old, old, old inflexible and difficult" plan that "starts you at the cradle and drives you straight for the grave." The second preface, "The Latest Attempt," introduces the four Florentine Dictations: "Finally, in Florence in 1904, I hit upon the right way to do an Autobiography." On the following page he wrote the subtitle, "The Final (and Right) Plan." The manuscript ends with a three-part "Preface. As from the Grave," which Clemens described to Howells on 17 June: "I've written a short Preface. I like the title of it: 'Spoken from the Grave.' It will prepare the reader for the solemnities within."<sup>33</sup> This extensive front matter, complete and in the sequence that Clemens intended, was published for the first time in *Autobiography of Mark Twain, Volume 1* (2010).

"I intend that this autobiography shall become a model for all future autobiographies when it is published, after my death," Clemens says in a dictation of 26 March 1906; "I also intend that it shall be read and admired a good many centuries because of its form and method." This enthusiasm for his innovative approach continued through 1906. Although Clemens rejected a chronological format, the early dictations include incidents—both humorous and tragic—from every important phase of his early life, from his boyhood in Hannibal through the 1880s in Hartford. Included are anecdotes about his mother, brothers, and childhood friends; his experiences as a steamboat pilot, and as a prospect and journalist in the West; and many delightful snapshots of domestic life. Many of the recollections

were inspired by his daughter Susy's biography, which he begins to quote on 7 February. Freed from the need for self-censorship, he also expresses candid opinions about personal associates, such as his publisher Elisha Bliss (a "bastard monkey" with "the gibbering laugh of an idiot"), and public figures like Theodore Roosevelt ("one of the most impulsive men in existence") and John D. Rockefeller, Sr. ("an earnest uneducated Christian" who didn't pay his taxes). His irony is an effective weapon for his attacks on the hypocrisy of the wealthy and the powerful, especially those who kill in the name of Christianity. A prime target is the imperialist policy of the United States, whose "uniformed assassins" slaughtered the men, women, and children of the Moro tribe in the Philippines.

Like the January–March Autobiographical Dictations included in this first volume, those from April 1906 through 1909 can be characterized in only the most general way. Clemens "flays" Charles L. Webb, publisher of his first book, describing him as "by nature and training a fraud," and criticizes Bret Harte as "showy, meretricious, insincere." He confesses his financial gullibility and his failed investments. Overcoming his reluctance to revisit painful scenes, he describes the history of Olivia's illness and death. He talks of his 1907 trip to England to receive an honorary degree from Oxford University. He expresses his amusement at the banning of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, pointing out that it is more suitable than the Bible for young readers. And in a series of June 1906 dictations which he singled out for suppression until the "edition of A.D. 2406," he mocks the Bible and the believers who accept Christian doctrine as the literal truth.<sup>34</sup>

Not surprisingly, in 1907 and 1908 the intensity of Clemens's interest in the autobiography gradually abated. In each successive year the number of dictations declined by half, they became briefer, and the proportion of inserted clippings and other documents grew larger. By 1908 much of what he produced for the autobiography was actually original manuscript that he *labeled* as dictations. When on 24 December 1909 he wrote that because of Jean's death "this Autobiography closes here" he had in fact produced fewer than twelve new pages of typescript in the previous eight months.

### **Autobiography as Literature (1909)**

Shortly after Clemens's death in 1910, Howells reported in *My Mark Twain* that at some point Clemens had "suddenly" told him he was no longer working on the autobiography, although Howells was unclear whether Clemens "had finished it or merely dropped it; I never asked." He also recalled that at the outset of his work Clemens had intended the autobiography to be "a perfectly veracious record of his life and period," but he now admitted 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."<sup>35</sup> In fact, by 1904 Clemens had already convinced himself, by experiment, that an autobiography "consists mainly of extinctions of the truth," even if "the remorseless truth is there, between the lines."<sup>36</sup> And in April 1906 he had said in one of his dictations:

I have been dictating this autobiography of mine daily for three months; I have thought of fifteen hundred or two thousand incidents in my life which I am ashamed of, but I have not gotten one of them to consent to go on paper yet. I think that that stock will still be complete and unimpaired when I finish these memoirs, if I ever finish them. I believe that if I should put in all or any of the incidents I should be sure to strike them out when I came to revise this book.<sup>37</sup>

There is good reason to suppose that by the time of his death Clemens had reached a more enlightened understanding of what his or anyone else's autobiography could accomplish. In mid-1909 he was asked whether his remarks about his family's Tennessee land as published in the *North American Review* were true. "Yes," he replied, "literarily they are true, that is to say they are a product of m

impressions—recollections. As sworn testimony they are not worth anything; they are mere literature.”<sup>38</sup>

More than one hundred years have now passed since Clemens’s death. It seems fitting that the *Autobiography of Mark Twain* should finally be recovered from his vast accumulation of papers, and that its standing and value as “literature” be at last recognized. This edition relies on the eloquent evidence of historical documents to understand and carry out his wishes for this, his last major literary work. His longstanding plan to speak as truthfully as possible “from the grave” is no longer just a plan.

H. E.  
*Mark Twain Project, Berkeley*

1. “The Latest Attempt,” one of the prefaces written to introduce the final form of the autobiography.
2. “Mark Twain’s Bequest,” *London Times*, 23 May 1899, 4, in Scharnhorst 2006, 334.
3. Autobiographical Dictation, 13 Jan 1908.
4. “The Privilege of the Grave,” written in 1905, published in SLC 2009, 56.
5. These words came at the end of the editorial note that preceded each of the twenty-five selections in the *Review*.
6. *Mark Twain’s Autobiography*, edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1924), 1:1; hereafter *MTA*.
7. Paine told a reporter in 1933 that the “complete autobiography . . . would fill about six volumes, including the two already published, and probably would not be made public for ‘many, many years’ ” (“Canard Blasted by Biographer of Mark Twain,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 8 July 1933, clipping in CU-MARK).
8. “Introduction,” *Mark Twain in Eruption*, edited by Bernard DeVoto (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1940), vii–ix; hereafter *MTE*.
9. “Introduction,” *The Autobiography of Mark Twain, Including Chapters Now Published for the First Time*, arranged and edited with an introduction and notes, by Charles Neider (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), ix, xvi, xx–xxiii; hereafter *AMT*.
10. *MTPO* (<http://www.marktwainproject.org>) is an open access website maintained by the Mark Twain Project in order to make all of its editions available online. *Autobiography of Mark Twain* is the first work to be published there simultaneously with the printed edition, and the first to publish the textual apparatus in electronic form only.
11. Annie Adams Fields Papers, diary entry for 28 Apr 1876, MHi, published in Howe 1922, 250–51.
12. This sketch is commonly known as “Early Years in Florida, Missouri,” the title Paine assigned it, which is adopted here (see the Appendix, Preliminary Manuscripts and Dictations).
13. See “John Hay.”
14. That is, there are two dozen works known to survive; others may have been destroyed.
15. “Random Extracts,” originally subtitled “From Chapter II,” is the first sketch in this volume. The chapter number is no longer in the text, because Clemens deleted it in the process of revision. “From Chapter IX” is reprinted in the Appendix, Preliminary Manuscripts and Dictations.
16. *N&J3*, 112. Clemens would eventually reproduce much of Susy’s biography in the final form of his autobiography, beginning with the Autobiographical Dictation of 7 Feb 1906.
17. Autobiographical Dictation, 26 Feb 1906.
18. 5 May 1885 to Redpath, MiU-H; 4 Apr 1891 to Howells, NN-BGC, in *MTHL*, 2:641.
19. 11 Sept 1885 to Beecher, draft in CU-MARK. The first Grant Dictation, “The Chicago G. A. R. Festival,” is included in the Appendix, Preliminary Manuscripts and Dictations.
20. See *AutoMT1*, 101–6.
21. One of these, “Ralph Keeler,” is included in the Appendix, Preliminary Manuscripts and Dictations.
22. See *AutoMT1*, 127–44, and the Textual Commentary for this sketch at *MTPO*.
23. 10 Oct 1898 to Bok, ViU; 6 and 7 Nov 1898 and 12 Nov 1898 to Rogers (2nd of 2), collection of Peter A. Salm, in *HTB* 374, 376; 25 Feb 1899 to Gilder, CtY-BR.
24. Lyon 1903–6, entry for 28 Feb 1904.
25. 16 Jan 1904 to Howells, MH-H, in *MTHL*, 2:778.
26. “John Hay.”
27. Autobiographical Dictation, 6 Aug 1906.
28. See the Autobiographical Dictations of 26 May (Whitford), 2 June (Paige), and 14 June 1906 (Bret Harte).
29. *MTB*, 3:1266.
30. *MTB*, 3:1267.



31. Paine to Lyon, 11 June 1906, CU-MARK.

32. Lyon 1906, entry for 22 June. Lyon's date (1879) for this typescript was wrong; she may have intended to write "1897" which would have been about right.

33. 17 June 1906 to Howells, NN-BGC, in *MTHL*, 2:811.

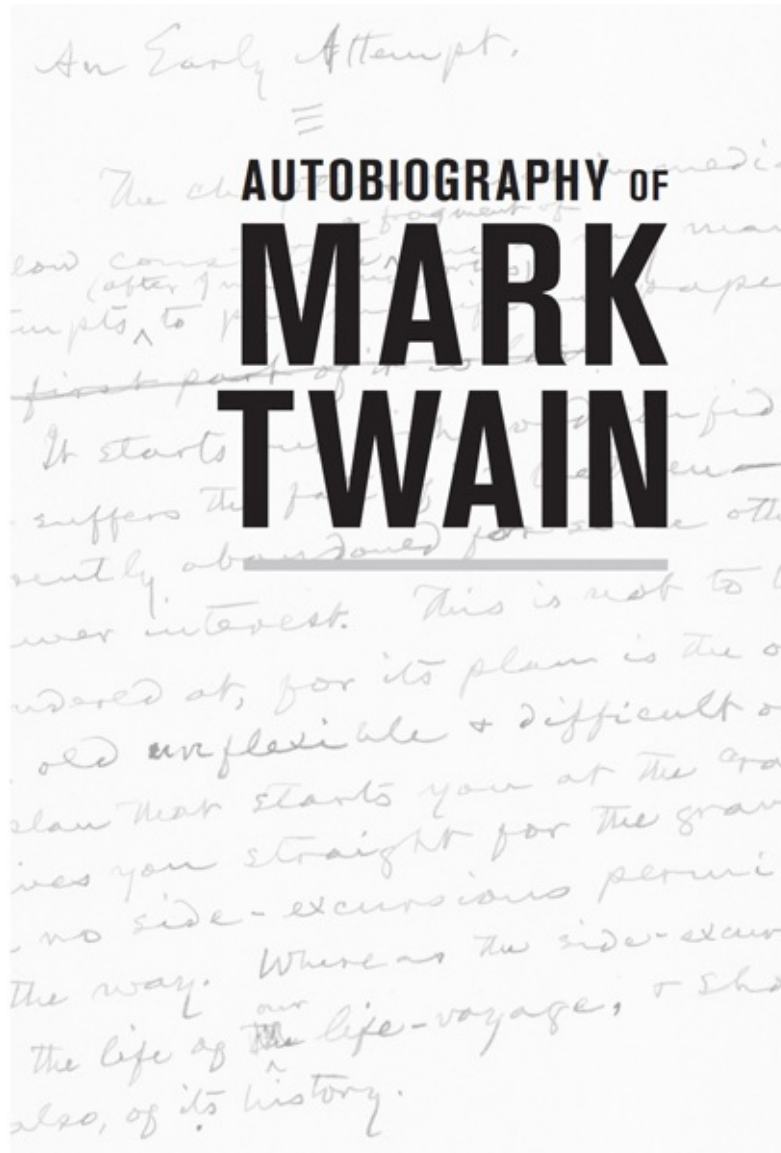
34. One of these, the Autobiographical Dictation of 20 June 1906, is included in Excerpt from *Autobiography of Mark Twain* Volume 2.

35. Howells 1910, 93–94.

36. 14 Mar 1904 to Howells, NN-BGC, in *MTHL*, 2:782.

37. Autobiographical Dictation, 6 Apr 1906.

38. Clemens was giving a deposition as a plaintiff in a lawsuit involving the land ("Interrogatories for Saml. L. Clemens," filed April 1909, and "Deposition S. L. Clemens," filed 11 June 1909, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration 1907–9; copies of these documents provided courtesy of Barbara Schmidt).



## An Early Attempt

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The chapters which immediately follow constitute a fragment of one of my many attempts (after I was in my forties) to put my life on paper.

It starts out with good confidence, but suffers the fate of its brethren—is presently abandoned for some other and newer interest. This is not to be wondered at, for its plan is the old, old, old unflexible and difficult one—the plan that starts you at the cradle and drives you straight for the grave, with no side-excursions permitted on the way. Whereas the side-excursions are the life of our life-voyage, and should be, also, of its history.

\* \* \* \* So much for the earlier days, and the New England branch of the Clemenses. The other brother settled in the South, and is remotely responsible for me. He has collected his reward several generations ago, whatever it was. He went South with his particular friend Fairfax, and settled in Maryland with him, but afterward went further and made his home in Virginia. This is the Fairfax whose descendants were to enjoy a curious distinction—that of being American-born English earls. The founder of the house was Lord General Fairfax of the Parliamentary army, in Cromwell's time. The earldom, which is of recent date, came to the American Fairfaxes through the failure of male heirs in England. Old residents of San Francisco will remember "Charley," the American earl of the mid-'60s—tenth Lord Fairfax according to Burke's Peerage, and holder of a modest public office of some sort or other in the new mining town of Virginia City, Nevada. He was never out of America. I knew him, but not intimately. He had a golden character, and that was all his fortune. He laid his titles aside, and gave it a holiday until his circumstances should improve to a degree consonant with his dignity; but that time never came, I think. He was a manly man, and had fine generousities in his makeup. A prominent and pestilent creature named Ferguson, who was always picking quarrels with better men than himself, picked one with him, one day, and Fairfax knocked him down. Ferguson gathered himself up and went off mumbling threats. Fairfax carried no arms, and refused to carry any now, though his friends warned him that Ferguson was of a treacherous disposition and would be sure to take revenge by base means sooner or later. Nothing happened for several days; then Ferguson took the earl by surprise and snapped a revolver at his breast. Fairfax wrenched the pistol from him and was going to shoot him, but the man fell on his knees and begged, and said "*Don't* kill me—I have a wife and children." Fairfax was in a towering passion, but the appeal reached his heart, and he said, "*Thou* have done me no harm," and he let the rascal go.

Back of the Virginian Clemenses is a dim procession of ancestors stretching back to Noah's time. According to tradition, some of them were pirates and slavers in Elizabeth's time. But this is not to their discredit, for so were Drake and Hawkins and the others. It was a respectable trade, then, and our monarchs were partners in it. In my time I have had desires to be a pirate myself. The reader—if he will look deep down in his secret heart, will find—but never mind what he will find there: I am not writing his Autobiography, but mine. Later, according to tradition, one of the procession was our Ambassador to Spain in the time of James I, or of Charles I, and married there and sent down a strain of Spanish blood to warm us up. Also, according to tradition, this one or another—Geoffrey Clemens by name—helped to sentence Charles to death. I have not examined into these traditions myself, partly because I was indolent, and partly because I was so busy polishing up this end of the line and trying to make it showy; but the other Clemenses claim that they have made the examination and that it stood the test. Therefore I have always taken for granted that I did help Charles out of his trouble by ancestral proxy. My instincts have persuaded me, too. Whenever we have a strong and persistent and ineradicable instinct, we may be sure that it is not original with us, but inherited—inherited from away back, and hardened and perfected by the petrifying influence of time. Now I have been always and unchangingly bitter against Charles, and I am quite certain that this feeling trickled down to me through the veins of my forebears from the heart of that judge; for it is not my disposition to be bitter against people on my own personal account. I am not bitter against Jeffreys. I ought to be, but I am not. It indicates that my ancestors of James II's time were indifferent to him; I do not know why; but never could make it out; but that is what it indicates. And I have always felt friendly toward Satan. Of course that is ancestral; it must be in the blood, for I could not have originated it.

. . . And so, by the testimony of instinct, backed by the assertions of Clemenses who said they had

examined the records, I have always been obliged to believe that Geoffrey Clement the martyr-maker was an ancestor of mine, and to regard him with favor, and in fact pride. This has not had a good effect upon me, for it has made me vain, and that is a fault. It has made me set myself above people who were less fortunate in their ancestry than I, and has moved me to take them down a peg, upon occasion, and say things to them which hurt them before company.

A case of the kind happened in Berlin several years ago. William Walter Phelps was our Minister at the Emperor's Court, then, and one evening he had me to dinner to meet Count S., a cabinet minister. This nobleman was of long and illustrious descent. Of course I wanted to let out the fact that I had some ancestors, too; but I did not want to pull them out of their graves by the ears, and I never could seem to get a chance to work them in in a way that would look sufficiently casual. I suppose Phelps was in the same difficulty. In fact he looked distraught, now and then—just as a person looks who wants to uncover an ancestor purely by accident, and cannot think of a way that will seem accidental enough. But at last, after dinner, he made a try. He took us about his drawing-room, showing us the pictures, and finally stopped before a rude and ancient engraving. It was a picture of the court that tried Charles I. There was a pyramid of judges in Puritan slouch hats, and below them three bar-headed secretaries seated at a table. Mr. Phelps put his finger upon one of the three, and said with exulting indifference—

“An ancestor of mine.”

I put my finger on a judge, and retorted with scathing languidness—

“Ancestor of mine. But it is a small matter. I have others.”

It was not noble in me to do it. I have always regretted it since. But it landed him. I wonder how he felt? However, it made no difference in our friendship; which shows that he was fine and high notwithstanding the humbleness of his origin. And it was also creditable in me, too, that I could overlook it. I made no change in my bearing toward him, but always treated him as an equal.

But it was a hard night for me in one way. Mr. Phelps thought I was the guest of honor, and so did Count S.; but I didn't, for there was nothing in my invitation to indicate it. It was just a friendly offer of hand note, on a card. By the time dinner was announced Phelps was himself in a state of doubt. Something had to be done; and it was not a handy time for explanations. He tried to get me to go out with him, but I held back; then he tried S., and he also declined. There was another guest, but there was no trouble about him. We finally went out in a pile. There was a decorous plunge for seats, and I got the one at Mr. Phelps's left, the Count captured the one facing Phelps, and the other guest had to take the place of honor, since he could not help himself. We returned to the drawing-room in the original disorder. I had new shoes on, and they were tight. At eleven I was privately crying; I couldn't help it; the pain was so cruel. Conversation had been dead for an hour. S. had been due at the bedside of a dying official ever since half past nine. At last we all rose by one blessed impulse and went down to the street door without explanations—in a pile, and no precedence; and so, parted.

The evening had its defects; still, I got my ancestor in, and was satisfied.

Among the Virginian Clemenses were Jere. (already mentioned), and Sherrard. Jere. Clemens had a wide reputation as a good pistol-shot, and once it enabled him to get on the friendly side of some drummers when they would not have paid any attention to mere smooth words and arguments. He went out stumping the State at the time. The drummers were grouped in front of the stand, and had been hired by the opposition to drum while he made his speech. When he was ready to begin, he got out his revolver and laid it before him, and said in his soft, silky way—

“I do not wish to hurt anybody, and shall try not to; but I have got just a bullet apiece for those smooth drums, and if you should want to play on them, don't stand behind them.”

Sherrard Clemens was a Republican Congressman from West Virginia in the war days, and the

went out to St. Louis, where the James Clemens branch lived, and still lives, and there he became warm rebel. This was after the war. At the time that he was a Republican I was a rebel; but by the time he had become a rebel I was become (temporarily) a Republican. The Clemenses have always done the best they could to keep the political balances level, no matter how much it might inconvenience them. I did not know what had become of Sherrard Clemens; but once I introduced Senator Hawley to a Republican mass meeting in New England, and then I got a bitter letter from Sherrard from St. Louis. He said that the Republicans of the North—no, the “mudsills of the North”—had swept away the aristocracy of the South with fire and sword, and it ill became me, an aristocrat by blood, to train with that kind of swine. Did I forget that I was a Lambton?

That was a reference to my mother's side of the house. As I have already said, she was a Lambton—Lambton with a *p*, for some of the American Lamp-tons could not spell very well in early times, and so the name suffered at their hands. She was a native of Kentucky, and married my father in Lexington in 1823, when she was twenty years old and he twenty-four. Neither of them had an overplus of property. She brought him two or three negroes, but nothing else, I think. They removed to the remote and secluded village of Jamestown, in the mountain solitudes of east Tennessee. There their first crop of children was born, but as I was of a later vintage I do not remember anything about it. I was postponed—postponed to Missouri. Missouri was an unknown new State and needed attractions.

I think that my eldest brother, Orion, my sisters Pamela and Margaret, and my brother Benjamin were born in Jamestown. There may have been others, but as to that I am not sure. It was a great likelihood for that little village to have my parents come there. It was hoped that they would stay, so that it would become a city. It was supposed that they would stay. And so there was a boom; but by and by they went away, and prices went down, and it was many years before Jamestown got another start. I have written about Jamestown in the “Gilded Age,” a book of mine, but it was from hearsay, not from personal knowledge. My father left a fine estate behind him in the region round about Jamestown—75,000 acres.\* When he died in 1847 he had owned it about twenty years. The taxes were almost nothing (five dollars a year for the whole), and he had always paid them regularly and kept his title perfect. He had always said that the land would not become valuable in his time, but that it would be a commodious provision for his children some day. It contained coal, copper, iron and timber, and he had said that in the course of time railways would pierce to that region, and then the property would be valuable in fact as well as in name. It also produced a wild grape of a promising sort. He had sent some samples to Nicholas Longworth, of Cincinnati, to get his judgment upon them, and Mr. Longworth had said that they would make as good wine as his Catawbas. The land contained all the riches; and also oil, but my father did not know that, and of course in those early days he would have cared nothing about it if he had known it. The oil was not discovered until about 1895. I wish I owned a couple of acres of the land now. In which case I would not be writing Autobiographies for a living. My father's dying charge was, “Cling to the land and wait; let nothing beguile it away from you.” My mother's favorite cousin, James Lampton, who figures in the “Gilded Age” as “Colonel Sellers,” always said of that land—and said it with blazing enthusiasm, too,—“There's millions in it—millions!” It is true that he always said that about everything—and was always mistaken, too; but the time he was right; which shows that a man who goes around with a prophecy-gun ought never to get discouraged: if he will keep up his heart and fire at everything he sees, he is bound to hit something big and by.

Many persons regarded “Colonel Sellers” as a fiction, an invention, an extravagant impossibility, and did me the honor to call him a “creation;” but they were mistaken. I merely put him on paper as he was; he was not a person who could be exaggerated. The incidents which looked most extravagant in both in the book and on the stage, were not inventions of mine but were facts of his life; and I was present when they were developed. John T. Raymond's audiences used to come near to dying with

laughter over the turnip-eating scene; but, extravagant as the scene was, it was faithful to the facts, all its absurd details. The thing happened in Lampton's own house, and I was present. In fact I was myself the guest who ate the turnips. In the hands of a great actor that piteous scene would have dimmed any manly spectator's eyes with tears, and racked his ribs apart with laughter at the same time. But Raymond was great in humorous portrayal only. In that he was superb, he was wonderful—in a word, great; in all things else he was a pigmy of the pigmies. The real Colonel Sellers, as I knew him in James Lampton, was a pathetic and beautiful spirit, a manly man, a straight and honorable man, a man with a big, foolish, unselfish heart in his bosom, a man born to be loved; and he was loved by all his friends, and by his family worshiped. It is the right word. To them he was but little less than a god. The real Colonel Sellers was never on the stage. Only half of him was there. Raymond could not play the other half of him; it was above his level. That half was made up of qualities of which Raymond was wholly destitute. For Raymond was not a manly man, he was not an honorable man nor an honest one, he was empty and selfish and vulgar and ignorant and silly, and there was a vacancy in him where his heart should have been. There was only one man who could have played the whole Colonel Sellers, and that was Frank Mayo.\*

It is a world of surprises. They fall, too, where one is least expecting them. When I introduced Sellers into the book, Charles Dudley Warner, who was writing the story with me, proposed a change of Sellers's Christian name. Ten years before, in a remote corner of the West, he had come across a man named Eschol Sellers, and he thought that Eschol was just the right and fitting name for our Sellers, since it was odd, and quaint, and all that. I liked the idea, but I said that that man might turn up and object. But Warner said it couldn't happen; that he was doubtless dead by this time, a man with a name like that couldn't live long; and be he dead or alive we must have the name, it was exactly the right one and we couldn't do without it. So the change was made. Warner's man was a farmer in a cheap and humble way. When the book had been out a week, a college-bred gentleman of courtly manners and ducal upholstery arrived in Hartford in a sultry state of mind and with a libel suit in his eye, and *his* name was Eschol Sellers! He had never heard of the other one, and had never been within a thousand miles of him. This damaged aristocrat's program was quite definite and business-like: the American Publishing Company must suppress the edition as far as printed, and change the name in the plates, or stand a suit for \$10,000. He carried away the Company's promise and many apologies, and we changed the name back to Colonel Mulberry Sellers, in the plates. Apparently there is nothing that cannot happen. Even the existence of two unrelated men wearing the impossible name of Eschol Sellers is a possible thing.

James Lampton floated, all his days, in a tinted mist of magnificent dreams, and died at last without seeing one of them realized. I saw him last in 1884, when it had been twenty-six years since I ate the basin of raw turnips and washed them down with a bucket of water in his house. He was become old and white-headed, but he entered to me in the same old breezy way of his earlier life, and he was as there, yet—not a detail wanting: the happy light in his eye, the abounding hope in his heart, the persuasive tongue, the miracle-breeding imagination—they were all there; and before I could turn around he was polishing up his Aladdin's lamp and flashing the secret riches of the world before me. I said to myself, "I did not overdraw him by a shade, I set him down as he was; and he is the same man to-day: Cable will recognize him." I asked him to excuse me a moment, and ran into the next room, which was Cable's; Cable and I were stumping the Union on a reading-tour. I said—

"I am going to leave your door open, so that you can listen. There is a man in there who is interesting."

I went back and asked Lampton what he was doing, now. He began to tell me of a "small venture" he had begun in New Mexico through his son; "only a little thing—a mere trifle—partly to amuse myself in leisure, partly to keep my capital from lying idle, but mainly to develop the boy—develop the boy

fortune's wheel is ever revolving, he may have to work for his living some day—as strange things have happened in this world. But it's only a little thing—a mere trifle, as I said.”

And so it was—as he began it. But under his deft hands it grew, and blossomed, and spread—on beyond imagination. At the end of half an hour he finished; finished with this remark, uttered in an adorably languid manner:

“Yes, it is but a trifle, as things go nowadays—a bagatelle—but amusing. It passes the time. The boy thinks great things of it, but he is young, you know, and imaginative; lacks the experience which comes of handling large affairs, and which tempers the fancy and perfects the judgment. I suppose there's a couple of millions in it, possibly three, but not more, I think; still, for a boy, you know, just starting in life, it is not bad. I should not want him to make a fortune—let that come later. It could turn his head, at his time of life, and in many ways be a damage to him.”

Then he said something about his having left his pocket-book lying on the table in the morning drawing-room at home, and about its being after banking hours, now, and—

I stopped him, there, and begged him to honor Cable and me by being our guest at the lecture—with as many friends as might be willing to do us the like honor. He accepted. And he thanked me as a prince might who had granted us a grace. The reason I stopped his speech about the tickets was because I saw that he was going to ask me to furnish them to him and let him pay next day; and I knew that if he made the debt he would pay it if he had to pawn his clothes. After a little further chat he shook hands heartily and affectionately, and took his leave. Cable put his head in at the door, and said—

“That was Colonel Sellers.”

## Chapter

1847

As I have said, that vast plot of Tennessee land\* was held by my father twenty years—intact. When he died in 1847, we began to manage it ourselves. Forty years afterward, we had managed it all away except 10,000 acres, and gotten nothing to remember the sales by. About 1887—possibly it was earlier—the 10,000 went. My brother found a chance to trade it for a house and lot in the town of Corry, in the oil regions of Pennsylvania. About 1894 he sold this property for \$250. That ended the Tennessee Land.

If any penny of cash ever came out of my father's wise investment but that, I have no recollection of it. No, I am overlooking a detail. It furnished me a field for Sellers and a book. Out of my half of the book I got \$15,000 or \$20,000; out of the play I got \$75,000 or \$80,000—just about a dollar an acre. It is curious: I was not alive when my father made the investment, therefore he was not intending any partiality; yet I was the only member of the family that ever profited by it. I shall have occasion to mention this land again, now and then, as I go along, for it influenced our life in one way or another during more than a generation. Whenever things grew dark it rose and put out its hopeful Sellers hand and cheered us up, and said “Do not be afraid—trust in me—wait.” It kept us hoping and hoping during forty years, and forsook us at last. It put our energies to sleep and made visionaries of us—dreamers, and indolent. We were always going to be rich next year—no occasion to work. It is good to begin life poor; it is good to begin life rich—these are wholesome; but to begin it *prospectively* rich. The man who has not experienced it cannot imagine the curse of it.

My parents removed to Missouri in the early thirties; I do not remember just when, for I was not born then, and cared nothing for such things. It was a long journey in those days, and must have been a rough and tiresome one. The home was made in the wee village of Florida, in Monroe County, and

was born there in 1835. The village contained a hundred people and I increased the population by 1 per cent. It is more than the best man in history ever did for any other town. It may not be modest in me to refer to this, but it is true. There is no record of a person doing as much—not even Shakspeare. But I did it for Florida, and it shows that I could have done it for any place—even London, I suppose.

Recently some one in Missouri has sent me a picture of the house I was born in. Heretofore I have always stated that it was a palace, but I shall be more guarded, now.

I remember only one circumstance connected with my life in it. I remember it very well, though I was but two and a half years old at the time. The family packed up everything and started in wagons for Hannibal, on the Mississippi, thirty miles away. Toward night, when they camped and counted the children, one was missing. I was the one. I had been left behind. Parents ought always to count the children before they start. I was having a good enough time playing by myself until I found that the doors were fastened and that there was a grisly deep silence brooding over the place. I knew, then, that the family were gone, and that they had forgotten me. I was well frightened, and I made all the noise I could, but no one was near and it did no good. I spent the afternoon in captivity and was not rescued till the gloaming had fallen and the place was alive with ghosts.

My brother Henry was six months old at that time. I used to remember his walking into a field outdoors when he was a week old. It was remarkable in me to remember a thing like that, which occurred when I was so young. And it was still more remarkable that I should cling to the delusion, for thirty years, that I *did* remember it—for of course it never happened; he would not have been able to walk at that age. If I had stopped to reflect, I should not have burdened my memory with this impossible rubbish so long. It is believed by many people that an impression deposited in a child's memory within the first two years of its life cannot remain there five years, but that is an error. The incident of Benvenuto Cellini and the salamander must be accepted as authentic and trustworthy; and then that remarkable and indisputable instance in the experience of Helen Keller—however, I will not speak of that at another time. For many years I believed that I remembered helping my grandfather drink his whisky toddy when I was six weeks old, but I do not tell about that any more, now; I am grown old, and my memory is not as active as it used to be. When I was younger I could remember anything, whether it had happened or not; but my faculties are decaying, now, and soon I shall be so that I cannot remember any but the latter. It is sad to go to pieces like this, but we all have to do it.

My uncle, John A. Quarles, was a farmer, and his place was in the country four miles from Florida. He had eight children, and fifteen or twenty negroes, and was also fortunate in other ways. Particularly so in his character. I have not come across a better man than he was. I was his guest for two or three months every year, from the fourth year after we removed to Hannibal till I was eleven or twelve years old. I have never consciously used him or his wife in a book, but his farm has come very handy to me in literature, once or twice. In "Huck Finn" and in "Tom Sawyer Detective" I moved it down to Arkansas. It was all of six hundred miles, but it was no trouble, it was not a very large farm; five hundred acres, perhaps, but I could have done it if it had been twice as large. And as for the morality of it, I cared nothing for that; I would move a State if the exigencies of literature required it.

It was a heavenly place for a boy, that farm of my uncle John's. The house was a double log on a hill with a spacious floor (roofed in) connecting it with the kitchen. In the summer the table was set in the middle of that shady and breezy floor, and the sumptuous meals—well, it makes me cry to think of them. Fried chicken; roast pig; wild and tame turkeys, ducks, and geese; venison just killed; squirrel and rabbits, pheasants, partridges, prairie chickens; home-made bacon and ham; hot biscuits, hot batter cakes, hot buckwheat cakes, hot "wheatbread," hot rolls, hot corn pone; fresh corn boiled on the ear; succotash, butter-beans, string beans, tomatoes, peas, Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes; buttermilk, sweet milk, "clabber;" watermelons, musk melons, canteloups—all fresh from the garden—apple pie, peach pie, pumpkin pie, apple dumplings, peach cobbler—I can't remember the rest. The way that the things



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