

SAMUEL L. CLEMENS, JOURNALIST

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THESIS

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PREFACE

At the age of eleven, Samuel L. Clemens of Hannibal, Missouri, became a printer's devil, thereby beginning an association with the journalism profession that would last the remainder of his life. His career in the fourth estate included the full scope of journalistic involvement: journeyman printer, occasional letter contributor, reporter, travel correspondent, editor and part owner of a metropolitan newspaper, free lancer, and magazine writer. His experiences helped shape the man, Samuel Clemens, and the writer, Mark Twain. His interest and knowledge of printing caused him to invest, and lose, a fortune in the invention of a typesetting machine. His Western newspaper articles inspired his first book; his special travel assignments inspired his second, which was an immediate success and launched his career as an author. Also, through his travel assignments, he discovered another lucrative profession: lecturing. Although he is more famous for his books than for his newspaper and magazine contributions, the early years he spent as a journalist were important to his development as a writer. They provided the fundamental training that preceded his achievement as an author. A study of his career as a journalist is necessary in order to understand where the special qualities of his books originated and how they matured.

In 1941 at the University of Missouri, William Roger Swann undertook this same task for his master's degree thesis. His study was adequate for the information then available. But since that time, a great deal more of Clemens' newspaper writing has been discovered and published, including six books devoted entirely to collections of his reporting for the Virginia City, Nevada, Territorial Enterprise, for the San Francisco, California, Morning Call, for the San Francisco Alta California, and the Sacramento, California, Daily Union. Articles from the Buffalo, New York, Express, some of which are known to be written by Clemens and others of which are probably by him, are contained in another book. Numerous other articles, penned by him for a wide variety of journals, have been discovered and published for Twain scholars. In addition, a host of other books, written by critics and dealing with his literary development as an author, have been published since 1941. Time for a new appraisal of Clemens as a journalist has arrived.

The purposes of this thesis are two-fold: 1) in light of the information which is now available, to record accurately the events of the long newspaper career of Samuel L. Clemens; and, 2) to attempt to assess the influence of his journalistic experiences on him as a man, as an observer of humanity, as a reporter fulfilling his assignments, as a developing artist, and as a future author of books.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. PRINTER AND PILOT	1
II. NEVADA NEWSPAPERMAN	36
III. METROPOLITAN REPORTER	82
IV. SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT	117
V. TRAVELING CORRESPONDENT	139
VI. PROPRIETOR AND EDITOR	180
VII. CONCLUSION	205
BIBLIOGRAPHY	211

CHAPTER I

PRINTER AND PILOT

Samuel L. Clemens' initiation into professional journalism was not as a journalist, as might be expected of so prolific a writer, but as a printer's devil in his eleventh year. When John L. Clemens died on March 24, 1847, he left a very poor family, hard pressed for sustenance. Samuel's older brother Orion was working as a journeyman printer in St. Louis. Living with Samuel's mother, Jane, were an older sister Pamela, who gave music lessons to help the family income, Samuel, and a younger brother, Henry. Daily existence was difficult for the Clemens, so Samuel, being the oldest male at home, was expected to assume mature responsibilities.

Samuel Clemens, at seventy-two, remembered that he had been removed from school and had been apprenticed to Joseph P. Ament, editor and proprietor of the Missouri Courier, immediately after his father's death. As is the case with many of Clemens' remembrances, the facts do not agree. Ament's Courier was being published in Palmyra when John Clemens died. In 1848, a year later, Ament bought the Hannibal Gazette and merged the two papers under the older Courier name.¹ Also, Dixon Wecter

¹DeLancey Ferguson, Mark Twain, Man and Legend (Indianapolis, 1943), p. 33. Hereafter cited as Ferguson, Man and Legend.

points out that the 1850 census shows that Clemens did attend school during the year of his father's death. He writes, "There seems little question that he continued his education at least until some time in 1849, while helping to support himself by working after hours or between whiles."² Thus Clemens probably started working for the Gazette in the summer of 1847 as a delivery and office-boy, with the apprenticeship beginning after Ament bought the paper. Clemens' memory of the Mexican War supports this conjecture. He erroneously recalled being circulation chief in charge of printing the extras during the last months of the war. According to DeLancey Ferguson,

His always creative memory associated this work with the latter part of his apprenticeship, but Chapultepec, the last major battle of the war, was fought less than six months after John Clemens died. Hence, Sam, instead of printing the extras, only delivered them, and such must have been his work for six months or more, until Ament took over the paper and the real apprenticeship began.³

No money was involved in apprenticeships of the period, but the cub was provided with board and clothes as he learned a trade. The usual training period was two years. Such was Clemens' arrangement with Ament. The Courier editor did not fulfill his terms of the deal to Clemens' satisfaction. In his Autobiography Clemens wrote:

²Dixon Wecter, Sam Clemens of Hannibal (Boston, 1961), p. 131. Hereafter cited as Wecter, Hannibal.

³Ferguson, Man and Legend, p. 33.

The clothes consisted of two suits a year but one of the suits always failed to materialize and the other suit was not purchased so long as Mr. Ament's old clothes held out. I was only about half as big as Ament, consequently his shirts gave me the uncomfortable sense of living in a circus tent, and I had to turn up his pants to my ears to make them short enough.⁴

Clemens also resented the fact that Ament's workers had to eat in the kitchen with the old Negro cook and her mulatto daughter. The food was so meager that the boys often raided the cellar for onions and potatoes which they cooked on the printing-office stove. Later they were invited to the family dining table, but the servings of food did not increase. Here they endured the agony of watching Mrs. Ament dole out sparse amounts of brown sugar into their coffee for sweetening. The apprentices slept on pallets on the printing shop floor and went to the Ament house only for food.

Wecter observes that Clemens' chores were typical of any printing apprentice:

He built fires on winter mornings, brought water from the neighborhood pump, swept out the office after picking up yesterday's scattered type from the floor, and as befitted a good devil, sorted out the good for the pi pile from the broken type which he dumped into the hellbox. On Saturdays he wetted down the paper stock and turned it on Sundays. During week days he turpented the inking-balls, made paste, started up the lye hopper, oiled the platen-springs, manipulated the rollers, and then washed them in the sink along with the forms. With the weekly sheets printed, he folded them and delivered them around town at

⁴Samuel L. Clemens, The Autobiography of Mark Twain, edited by Charles Neider (New York, 1959), pp. 95-96. Hereafter cited as Samuel Clemens, Autobiography.

dawn Thursday--his chief occupational hazard being the short-tempered dogs that saved their spleen for the carrier.⁵

Young Clemens was quick to learn the trade. When he had been with Ament about a year, he could, as Albert Bigelow Paine says, "set type as accurately and almost as rapidly as Pet McMurry, wash up the forms better than Pet, and run the job-press to the tune of 'Annie Laurie' or 'Along the Beach at Rockaway,' without missing a stroke or losing a finger."⁶ He became Ament's favorite and a kind of sub-editor who had the job of finding more copy when needed to fill pages just before a deadline. Alex Lacey, who in 1910 reminisced about working with Clemens in Hannibal, said that what he remembered most about young Clemens was that he could get more ink on his face and arms for the amount of work he did than any other person in the shop.⁷ Clemens remembered himself to be a green and lazy cub,⁸ but Orion's testimony indicated that Samuel's judgment was unjustified. Orion recalled that when his brother came to work for him, he was a fast and clean printer, turning out a good proof.⁹ Apparently he had learned his job well at Ament's shop.

⁵Wecter, Hannibal, p. 206.

⁶Albert Bigelow Paine, Mark Twain, A Biography (New York, 1912), I, 78. Hereafter cited as Paine, Biography.

⁷Edgar White, "Mark Twain's Printer Days," Overland Monthly, LXX (December, 1917), 574. Hereafter cited as Edgar White, "Printer Days."

⁸Wecter, Hannibal, p. 207. ⁹Ibid.

Despite some unpleasantries which Clemens found at Ament's, he enjoyed the companionship of his fellow workers, the apprentice Wales McCormick and the journeyman Pet McMurry. McCormick, a seventeen- or eighteen-year-old giant, practically suffocated in Ament's castoff clothes. He was, Clemens wrote later, a jolly, reckless youth who "was constantly and persistently and loudly making love to that mulatto girl and distressing the life out of her and worrying the old mother to death."¹⁰ A born fighter, McCormick also had a strong baritone voice for singing or for swearing in nine languages. He had no principles at all, and anything was worth five minutes entertainment. Clemens' favorite story about McCormick concerned his setting up a sermon of the great Alexander Campbell, the illustrious Cambellite leader, in which he abbreviated the Savior's name to "J. C." Campbell was incensed and rebuked McCormick, saying several times for emphasis, "Don't you ever diminish the Savior's name again. Put it all in."¹¹ McCormick overran the entire printing order, correcting the initials to "Jesus H. Christ." Years later Mark Twain used McCormick as the model for the wandering printer "Doangivadam" in the version of "The Mysterious Stranger" which was set in a print shop in Austria.

¹⁰ Samuel Clemens, Autobiography, p. 96.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 99.

Pet McMurry, Clemens' other printing companion, was a colorful young journeyman whose way of life was simple. "All he wanted was plate and bed, and money enough to get drunk on,"¹² Wecter writes. McMurry smoked "Cuba sixes," sported a red goatee, greased his hair, and walked with a mincing gait.¹³ Active for a while in the Sons of Temperance activities, he was prone to give temperance lectures when he did not have type to set. Twenty-five years later, McMurry recalled Clemens as "'a sandy-haired boy . . . mounted upon a little box' at the type-case, setting type while smoking a big cigar or tiny pipe--all the while interminably singing about a comic drunk or asking McMurry to hold his cigar"¹⁴ so he could fight McCormick for teasing him.

Besides teaching Clemens a useful trade, the print shop educated him in many other ways. In the process of setting type and building pages, he "had to learn spelling, reading, composition, history, current events, politics."¹⁵ Also, his personal associations were with older people who introduced him to a more liberal view of life than his Presbyterian upbringing had allowed. His self-confidence and his ability to adjust to and enjoy the variety of the world was in its

¹²Wecter, Hannibal, p. 206.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Effie Mona Mack, Mark Twain In Nevada (New York, 1947), p. 7.

embryonic stages. The print shop served as the early training field for the boy who some day would be as much at ease with kings as with elevator operators.

In the summer of 1850, Orion Clemens founded a Whig weekly in Hannibal called the Western Union. The first issue probably appeared on September 6, but the first surviving issue is dated October 10, 1850. Orion's shop also took in job printing. A year later he bought the Hannibal Weekly Dollar Journal; and on September 4, 1851, the first issue of the consolidated Journal And The Western Union appeared. Orion's weekly, published each Thursday, changed names three times during its ill-fated history: from September 4, 1851, to January 29, 1852, it was called the Hannibal Journal and Western Union; from February 26, 1852 to July 1852, it was the Hannibal Journal on the front page and the Journal and Union on the other three pages; from September 9, 1852, until its termination in the fall of 1853, it was the Hannibal Journal throughout.¹⁶ In March 1853, Orion added a daily paper to the responsibilities of his mismanaged shop.

Around the first of January, 1851, Samuel went to work for Orion for the promised salary of three dollars and fifty cents a week. Orion failed to pay his brother anything for his two and a half years of service because what little money

¹⁶C. J. Armstrong, "Mark Twain's Early Writings Discovered," Missouri Historical Review, XXIV (July, 1930), 487.

came in was barely enough to meet expenses. Most subscription and advertising bills were paid in cordwood, vegetables, clean linen and cotton rags. The clothes Orion provided were poor and shabby, and Samuel boarded at home on the steady diet of bacon, butter, bread, and coffee. The fun-loving companions of Ament's shop were replaced by Samuel's younger brother, Henry, whom he adored, and Jim Wolfe, an extremely shy apprentice whom Samuel loved to tease.

On January 9, 1851, soon after Samuel's arrival in Orion's shop, a fire broke out, causing little damage to the office. Albert Bigelow Paine stated incorrectly that "this was the fire which burned Orion out."¹⁷ He confused it with the disaster that happened a year later. The fire was important to Clemens' journalism history because it inspired him to write a sketch which was published in the January 16 issue of the Western Union. This little narrative of the excitement caused by the fire is his first known publication.

In midwinter of 1851-1852, Orion traveled to Tennessee to attend to the family's land and left the editorial duties of the newspaper to Dr. Hugh Meredith, recently returned from California. Samuel was promoted to the position of foreman. Although Samuel had little opportunity to contribute to the copy for the paper, his touch is suspected in a filler such as this one which appeared on December 18:

¹⁷Wecter, Hannibal, p. 236.

An old lady in Jersey--

TO BE CONTINUED¹⁸

Alex Lacey testified that Clemens did compose in type:

Sam worked in all departments, just like all country printers of that day, but he took most interest, it seemed to me, in setting little pieces "out of his head," composing his items at the case without copy. These were generally of a humorous nature concerning people about town. They would cause some little talk but . . . it mostly went over the people's heads.¹⁹

On January 29, about one week and a half after Orion returned from Tennessee, another fire occurred, causing damages which the insurance company valued at one hundred, fifty dollars. The rival papers in town helped Orion publish the next issue, and he replaced the needed equipment with the insurance money. Promptly, the shop relocated on the second floor of Stover and Horr's Clothing Store on Main Street. The danger of fire to the new print shop was again evident five weeks after the move. About daylight March 4, Garth's tobacco factory burned, threatening the new office. J. P. Ament, Samuel's former employer, moved out all the essentials in anticipation of the fire spreading to the shop. The next issue of the newspaper contained an expression of gratitude from Orion. Further down in the column, however, was a saucy little squib probably written by Samuel before the fire: "Our neighbor of the Courier thinks he is 'pretty'--

¹⁸Ibid., p. 242.

¹⁹Edgar White, "Printer Days," p. 575.

so he might be, if he would shave off the kinky bristles which his vanity flatters him are magnificent whiskers."²⁰

A sketch by Samuel Clemens, titled "The Dandy Frightening the Squatter," appeared May 1, 1852, in a Boston comic weekly, the Carpet-Bag, edited by B. P. Shillaber. The plot was a familiar one in the West: the backwoods bumpkin making a fool of the Easterner. Clemens' sketch showed a Dandy on a steamboat, announcing to the ladies that he was going to frighten a local sitting on the bank. He accosted the squatter who calmly with one blow knocked the dandy into the river while the passengers looked on and cheered. The sketch was clumsily written. It was infested with an over use of commas, subordinate constructions, and undistinguished adjectives. Edgar M. Branch comments, "The characters are brittle, the realistic treatment superficial, the situation stereotyped. Imaginative insight is present only in the barest beginnings."²¹ Obviously the amateurish work of a seventeen-year-old boy, the sketch was significant in that it was Clemens' first published work outside Hannibal. In "My First Literary Venture," published in Galaxy in April 1871, Mark Twain made no mention of the "Dandy." He may have forgotten about the sketch or may have

²⁰Wecter, Hannibal, p. 244.

²¹Edgar L. Branch, Literary Apprenticeship of Mark Twain, (Urbana, Illinois, 1950), p. 10. Hereafter cited as Branch, Apprenticeship.

failed to acknowledge it deliberately because of its crudeness. Franklin Meine discovered it twenty years after the author's death.²²

Clemens told his biographer, Albert Bigelow Paine, that about this same time he had two humorous anecdotes published in the Philadelphia Saturday Evening Post.²³ Again, the files prove Clemens' memory to be faulty. Dixon Wecter points out that beginning in 1847 the Sons of Temperance published for some time a paper called the Saturday Evening Post and Temperance Recorder.²⁴ Thus, Clemens in his old age may have confused the similar titles. Since only one copy of the temperance publication has been preserved, Samuel Clemens' publication in the Post remains a subject for conjecture.

A few weeks after the appearance of the "Dandy" sketch, Samuel began writing for Orion's Journal. Over forty separate pieces, some of questionable authenticity, appeared in Orion's papers between July 15, 1852, and May 26, 1853, when Samuel left Hannibal. Branch notes, "These include several anecdotes about local events; two fanciful sketches; numerous letters from correspondents; editorial comments; three poems; seven columns of mixed news reports, comments, and clippings; and several separate reportorial items."²⁵ Clemens' copy was lively and imaginative. He made sport of rival editors,

²²Wecter, Hannibal, p. 248.

²³Paine, Biography, I, 90.

²⁴Wecter, Hannibal, p. 247.

²⁵Branch, Apprenticeship, p. 3.

often setting off editorial fights, or entering frays others had begun.

The Journal by this time needed some interesting additions to its pages. It needed new subscribers and advertisers. Financial troubles were evident. Orion Clemens was a born failure whose enthusiasm for a project came in spurts and whose gift for mismanagement remained constant. When he changed the name of the newspaper, he advanced the price. Soon afterwards, he was compelled to reduce both subscription and advertising rates. Then he adopted what Paine described as "a descending scale of charges and expenditures to keep pace with his declining circulation."²⁶ Also, the content of his newspaper was, as a whole, dull reading.

Around mid-September of 1852, Orion left Samuel in charge of the paper for a week while he made a trip, probably to St. Louis. The September 16 issue which Samuel edited became a memorable event for the Clemens brothers. In the process of looking for local angles for news, he remembered a mad-dog menace campaign conducted by the Tri-Weekly Messenger. The editor of the paper had run stories for five weeks in support of collaring dogs. Both the Journal and the Courier commented on the Messenger's obsession, speaking in favor of the dogs. For three weeks before Samuel's issue appeared, all newspapers had been silent on the matter. In the September 16 issue,

²⁶Paine, Biography, I, 89.

Clemens printed a story, headlined "'LOCAL' RESOLVES TO COMMIT SUICIDE," in which he reported that the Messenger's local, or the reporter of Hannibal events, had decided to commit suicide since he had not heard any more from the "Dog-be-deviled Citizen," the signature for one of the articles in the Journal. The local had decided to end his life in Bear Creek, stated the Journal. Accompanying the story was a woodcut showing a dog-headed "'Local' sounding the stream with his walking-stick fearful lest he 'get out of his depth.'"²⁷ The local of the Messenger retorted savagely, and apparently he had reason. Romantic troubles had inspired him to consider suicide in Bear Creek and Clemens' funning touched on sensitive ground. Two days later, however, having discovered no doubt that Orion was absent, the newspaper reported that the local was sure the editor of the Journal intended him no injury and he was therefore absolved from all censure.

But Clemens was not through with his editorial frolic. On September 23, two more woodcuts appeared, the first showing the local excited after having found something interesting in the pages of the Journal, and the second showing the same "dog-headed caricature bowled over by the blast of an old swivel he had discharged at 'the canine race,' while the Dog-be-deviled Citizen"²⁸ walked away. The following issue contained a letter, obviously written by Orion, praising the

²⁷ Wecter, Hannibal, p. 249.

²⁸ Ibid.

local on the Messenger as "a young man, recently come amongst us, with a design of occupying a respectable position in society, by industry and by propriety and straight-forwardness of conduct."²⁹ With a few more remarks about the puppyhood of his adversary, the Messenger local accepted the truce.

Also in the September 16 issue, Clemens took an editorial jab at Joseph P. Ament, who he conveniently forgot had lent a column of fillers after the January fire and had rescued the Journal equipment during the March fire scare. Entitling his squib "Editorial Agility," Clemens related on testimony of a young friend, probably Samuel himself, how at a recent exhibit in Benton Hall a curtain caught fire. In the audience was an editor, a little fellow who was usually quiet and well-behaved "unless some unlooked for accident occurs, or Pierce and King are mentioned."³⁰ This reference to the Democratic ticket in the upcoming election immediately identified the editor as Ament. Fearing for his press and type, the quiet little editor finally jumped over nine pews in his hasty exit. Ament's newspaper did not record his reaction.

Also in this same issue was a little filler called "Historical Exhibition--A No. 1 Ruse." Signed by W. Epaminondas Adrastus Blab, the tale told of a hoax played by Abram Curtis when he charged admission to see "Bonaparte Crossing the Rhine," a bone laid across a bacon rind. The story itself is not

²⁹Ibid., p. 250.

³⁰Ibid., p. 252.

particularly important to the study of Clemens' journalism except that it was in the same vein as the "Royal Nonesuch" of The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. The use of an elaborate pseudonym was the fashion of the day for village journalists, and Clemens' use of it indicates that he was trying to be a typical humorist. The name was also attached to another piece in the same issue, a squib called "Blabbing Government Secrets!" In this story the writer's name supposedly was changed to Blab by a special session of the state legislature, and the action cost the state only a few thousand dollars. This monologue showed Blab to be a frank, opinionated ignoramus who had, as Branch records, the "confident common sense, the sly insight, and the superiority of the provincial bumpkin."³¹ In the Journal for September 23, Mr. Blab announced, probably at Orion's request, that "I have retired from public life to the shades of Glasscock's Island."³²

Orion probably upbraided Samuel for his issue and curbed his writing for a while because except for an unsigned sketch on November 4 nothing in the younger Clemens' style appears in the Journal until April 29, 1853. By this time Orion had missed a publication on March 5 because of an accident in the shop in which several columns of type were dumped. Also, just a few days after the accident, he started a daily.

³¹Branch, Apprenticeship, p. 14.

³²Wecter, Hannibal, p. 252.

Beginning with the April 29 issue of the new daily and running for several weeks were stories signed by "Rambler," undoubtedly young Clemens' new pseudonym. These articles were mostly local news; but the May 5 newspaper contained three stanzas of sentimental verses called "The Heart's Lament: To Bettie W___e, of Tennessee." Again Clemens was attempting to write the latest journalism fashion.

In the Daily Journal the following day appeared this statement: "The Editor left yesterday for St. Louis. This must be our excuse if the paper is lacking in interest."³³ Lacking in interest, indeed! For the following week the papers displayed the saucy touch of young Samuel Clemens which, in all its crudity, was relief from Orion's dull attempts. In the May 6 issue appeared:

TERRIBLE ACCIDENT!

500 MEN KILLED AND MISSING!!!

We had set the above head up, expecting (of course) to use it, but as the accident hasn't happened yet, we'll say

(To be Continued.)³⁴

Further down in the same column, Clemens called the editor of the Bloomington Republican "that ugly monstrosity."³⁵ He scolded merchants for leaving goods boxes on the sidewalks, reported the success of a New York printers' strike for higher

³³Ibid., pp. 257-258.

³⁴Ibid., p. 258.

³⁵Ibid.

wages, and cast a cynical gibe at women.³⁶ Throughout Orion's absence, Samuel salted each issue with amateur wit. He spoke of the little girl who thought the last name of Uncle Tom's Topsy was Turvey, and the black mammy who asked the steamboat captain to wait until her hen laid the last of a dozen eggs. Without Orion's sanction he commented that because of the whisky tax, drinking had become a patriotic duty. Clemens gave local events a humorous twist and reprinted a lurid murder story which told of a drunk's pouring sulphuric acid down his wife's throat and gloating over her until she died.

Another "Rambler" poem dated Hannibal, May 4, 1853, appeared in the May 6 edition. Its caption read:

LOVE CONCEALED

TO MISS KATIE OF H___L.³⁷

Albert Bigelow Paine reported that Clemens used the dash because the headline was too long to be set in one column.³⁸ Examination of a xeroxed copy of the original disproves this. The headline "TO MISS KATIE OF H___L" is set in capital letters of a six-point type, nonpareil, probably, which was the type most generally used by American newspapers of this time. The headline which is centered in the middle of the column measures eight and a half picas, because the dash between the H and the L is so long. The width of the column is fourteen and one half picas. "TO MISS KATIE OF HANNIBAL"

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Paine, Biography, I, 90.

would probably measure only about ten and a half picas in this type. Therefore, the "HANNIBAL" headline would have fit with four or four and a half picas of white space left. At least two picas of white space would have been available on either side of the head.

That Clemens' memory failed in the retelling of this story to Paine is doubtful because he regarded the headline as a "perfect thunderbolt of humor."³⁹ In his old age he may have felt sheepish about his teenage attempt at editorship, and purposely altered the story about the headline. However, his delightful memory of the incident and his attitude toward the controversy which followed pointed to the notion that the dash was a deliberate effort at humor.

In the successive issues, May 7, 9, 10, 12, and 13, "Grumbler" who protested the verses which referred to "MISS KATIE OF HELL," and "Rambler" who denied the implication and who pretended offense at such an interpretation carried on a lively discourse. All the letters have Clemens' touch, so he more than likely manufactured the entire episode in an attempt to increase circulation. Orion stopped the affair abruptly upon his return: "Rambler and his enemies must stop their 'stuff.' It is a great bore to us and doubtless to the public generally."⁴⁰

³⁹Wecter, Hannibal, p. 258.

⁴⁰Ibid.

Samuel's most polished effort appeared May 13, the day Orion returned. Captioned "Oh, She has a Red Head," the piece was a mock-heroic defense of all those whose hair was red. Clemens assured the readers that Jefferson, Adam, and Jesus Christ all had red hair and that all children were fond of red before their tastes were perverted.⁴¹ Orion apparently approved of this sketch because in the June 9 paper, he spoke of the comfort it gave to people with red hair while he grumbled about the reprints that did not give the Journal credit.⁴²

Apparently, Orion had begun to realize his brother's worth as a witty contributor to the Journal's columns, because on May 23, 1853, "Our Assistant's Column" appeared.⁴³ Three columns so named appeared before Samuel left Orion's employ. Each consisted of miscellaneous items of local events, clippings from other papers, editorial comment, and quips. He took an editorial slap at Quincy, Illinois, and entered the feud brewing between the Journal and the Bloomington Republican. Wecter reports, "In his Galaxy memoirs Mark states that the angry editor stormed into his sanctum, but taking the measure of his boyish adversary, subsided after a war whoop. Again embroidery may be suspected."⁴⁴ The column contained information about the number of California emigrants

⁴¹Ibid., p. 260.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid., p. 261.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 261-262.

passing through St. Joseph and the fastest steamboat trip of the season from St. Louis to Hannibal. It reported a drunk who had beaten his wife and children, "poked fun at the spiritualists, and joked about the Negroes sweating in the first warm weather."⁴⁵

Orion's idea to make a columnist of his brother came too late to really help the Journal survive, however. On May 27 the newspaper advertised for an apprentice because Samuel Clemens had left Hannibal. He told his mother he was going to St. Louis to seek work, which he did. But he worked in that city on the Evening News only until he had made enough money to go to his original destination, New York City. His reasons for leaving Hannibal are only matters of conjecture. He told Paine that when he asked Orion for enough money to buy a secondhand gun and was not only refused but lectured for such extravagant desires, he decided to go elsewhere. Orion had never paid him any of the promised wages, and living conditions at home were cramped since the paper was now published in the Clemens' parlor. He was probably disillusioned with his brother's mismanagement and suppression of Samuel's attempts to help editorially. But a wanderlust to see the world beyond Hannibal may also have contributed to his decision. He later spoke of his envy at seeing a friend leave for California, and his columns often contained clippings of events in other cities. At any rate, he left. His

⁴⁵Ferguson, Man and Legend, p. 40.

leaving left its effect on Orion and the Journal. The Daily failed to appear for a whole month, June 11 to July 11, 1853. Both papers continued to decline in quality and circulation. Finally, that fall, Orion was forced to sell for five hundred dollars, the amount of the original mortgage.

Orion, in a typical moment of self judgement, reflected on his brother as a fellow printer:

I was tyrannical and unjust to Sam. He was as swift and as clean as a good journeyman. I gave him tasks, and if he got through well I begrudged him the time and made him work more. He set a clean proof, and Henry a dirty one. The correcting was left to be done in the form the day before publication. Once we were kept late, and Sam complained with tears of bitterness that he was held until midnight on Henry's dirty proofs.⁴⁶

When he departed from Hannibal, Samuel Clemens had finished his first efforts at journalism. His writing was typical of hundreds of village journalists of the time--no better, no worse. His columns and his reports of local items show that he was more interested in entertaining his readers than in accurately informing them. This interest in feature writing was to become a trend in his journalism career, and it indirectly influenced his travel writing. His reporting for the Journal was a minor part of his writing and should not be weighted too heavily in an overall judgment of his literary work. After all, Clemens' primary job on the Journal was that of printer; his writing was usually filler

⁴⁶Paine, Biography, I, 85.

material except when he substituted as editor for the absent Orion. But these clumsy efforts helped prepare him for his jobs on the Virginia City (Nevada) Territorial Enterprise and the San Francisco (California) Call. When he left Hannibal he began a four-year period of journeyman printing. This period is important to a history of his journalism only in that it was a period of experience gathering and letter writing. The letters, some of which were published in Orion's papers, inspired the idea of a travel book and led Samuel to attempt to sell some of his writings three years later.

A letter to his mother, dated August 24, 1853, announced his arrival in New York City. Orion published the letter with the following preface: "The free and easy impudence of the writer of the following letter will be appreciated by those who recognize him. We should be pleased to have more of his letters."⁴⁷ More did come. The second one stated that he had secured a position with the printing firm of John A. Gray and Green, with a salary of four dollars a week. He lodged at a mechanics' boarding-house in Duane Street and spent his leisure time reading and seeing the sights. His letters of this period are long, descriptive chronicles of a typical, imaginative sight-seer who is excited and interested in all the wonders of a big city. Minnie Brashear feels that these

⁴⁷Minnie M. Brashear, Mark Twain, Son of Missouri (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1934), p. 153. Hereafter cited as Brashear, Son of Missouri.

letters contain "in embryo the same elements that went into the Quaker City letters fifteen years later."⁴⁸

After two months in New York, Clemens moved to Philadelphia, where he found work "subbing" on a daily newspaper, the Inquirer. He had no trouble finding work because he was considered to be a fairly swift compositor, able to set ten thousand ems a day.⁴⁹ While in Philadelphia, he continued to write long descriptive letters home. Six of these were published in Orion's new newspaper, the Muscatine, Iowa, Journal, one under the stately title of "Philadelphia Correspondence."⁵⁰ In January Clemens made a tourist trip to Washington, D. C. He did not work there, but returned soon to Philadelphia, working for both the Ledger and the North American. Finally he returned to New York, but no letters of this second stay exist. In the summer of 1854, homesickness overcame him and he set out for the West and his family. After a brief visit with his mother, Henry, and Orion in Muscatine, he returned to the Evening News in St. Louis. Paine reports, "Orion urged him to stay with the Muscatine Journal, but he declared he would have to earn some money before he could afford that luxury."⁵¹

Early in 1855, however, Clemens did rejoin his brother. By this time, Orion had married, abandoned journalism, and

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 158.

⁴⁹ Paine, Biography, I, 97.

⁵⁰ Ferguson, Man and Legend, p. 43.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 44.

acquired the Benjamin Franklin book and job-printing office in Keokuk, Iowa. Henry still worked for him and Orion persuaded Samuel to join the family business for five dollars a week and his board. Samuel stayed about a year and a half. As might be expected, Orion's printing office was not prosperous. When he discovered he could not pay Samuel's wages, he made him a partner, which as Paine reports "meant that Sam got no wages at all, barely a living, for the office could not keep its head above water."⁵² He did not care much at first because his modest needs were provided for, but Orion's inability to manage the shop began to disturb him. He had worked in big print shops in the East and knew how they should be run. By the summer of 1856, he was ready for another change and the opportunity for such came in a most unexpected manner. On a windy fall day, a fifty-dollar bill blew past Clemens and he picked it up. When he advertised and nobody claimed it, Samuel Clemens left Keokuk headed for the Amazon to make a fortune in importing coca leaves. But he took a long indirect route for South America: by way of Quincy and Chicago to Cincinnati.

Before he left Keokuk, the idea of writing travel letters occurred to him, and he arranged to write a series of humorous letters for the Post, the most prosperous paper in the city. His pay was to be five dollars for each contribution--his

⁵²Paine, Biography, I, 108.

first literary earnings. Charles Honce, who discovered the letters in 1928, suggests that Clemens planned to write a book, based on his letters, about his projected trip to South America. Its name, because of the pseudonym he used, Thomas Jefferson Snodgrass, would be Snodgrass Dierrea. The book, of course, did not materialize. But three travel letters did. The first came from St. Louis in October and was written in exaggerated dialect which was then regarded as humorous.⁵³ For the only time in his life, Clemens employed all the common devices in the genre of illiterate dialect. The other two letters, written in the same style, were products of Clemens' winter stay in Cincinnati. The Thomas Jefferson Snodgrass letters were immature narratives of the experiences of a vulgar country bumpkin discovering the wonders of a big city. They were an ambitious attempt to portray character, Branch states,

but Snodgrass is far less convincing than the laconic squatter in Sam Clemens' first writing. He is poorly conceived, for realism and satire were at war in his creation: his quite credible pride and animal cunning are not consistent with his extreme gullibility and self-defeating violence. Nor is the contradiction cleared up by his naivete.⁵⁴

Clemens used Snodgrass as a spokesman, ridiculing "gossips, Irishmen, Keokuk hotel-keepers, and hard-bargaining Jews."⁵⁵

⁵³Ibid., p. 112.

⁵⁴Branch, Apprenticeship, p. 41.

⁵⁵Ibid.

The letters do not claim any other distinction. Like their predecessors on the Hannibal Journal, they are examples of typical Western humor: no better, no worse.

In April of 1857, he again set out for the Amazon. When he discovered that a ship would not be leaving New Orleans for his proposed destination for about ten years, Clemens decided to become a river boat pilot, thus entering another apprenticeship. During his apprenticeship on the river, Clemens apparently threw all of his energies into riverboating. He did no newspaper correspondence for two years. Early in 1858 Orion apparently suggested that Samuel take up his pen again; his brother replied, "I cannot correspond with a paper, because when one is learning the river, he is not allowed to do or think about anything else."⁵⁶

After receiving his license at the age of twenty-three, however, Clemens followed the example of other pilots in reporting the condition of the river to newspapers. At least two of these contributions may be found in the Missouri Republican, published in St. Louis.⁵⁷ The first appeared on May 27, 1860, under the headline "River News." Based on a recent trip, it was a statistical report of river conditions at various points. Signed by Wesley Jacobs and Samuel Clemens,

⁵⁶Ferguson, Man and Legend, p. 55.

⁵⁷Dewey Ganzel, "Sam Clemens' Correspondence in the St. Louis Missouri Republican," Anglia, LXXXV (December, 1967), 390.

pilots, it was the first known time that Clemens signed his full name to a piece. The second letter, dated August 30, 1860, was more significant because it was a chatty, humorous letter including information about the boats met on the trip and news of crops. Boat clerks and sometimes pilots often wrote descriptions of boats they had encountered on a trip, but Clemens' comic tone made his unusual. It too had his full signature. No other verifiable Clemens' correspondence has been found in the files of the Missouri Republican for 1858-1860, but a number of anonymous squibs suggest he might have been their author.⁵⁸

The only piece that Clemens admitted having written during the piloting days was a burlesque of Isaiah Sellers, the patriarch of river pilots. The article appeared in the New Orleans Daily Crescent on May 17, 1850. "Sellers had been a keelboat pilot before the day of steamboats; and a steamboat pilot before any other steamboat pilot, still surviving at the time I speak of, had ever turned a wheel," remembered Clemens in his old age.⁵⁹ Because of his vast experience and knowledge and his habit of letting all in earshot know of such wisdom, Sellers often irritated the young pilots by topping their stories with his own. They respected his record on the river but felt little love for

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 403.

⁵⁹ Ferguson, Man and Legend, p. 56.

his bragging mouth. In 1850 no means of measuring the upper rainfall and therefore accurately predicting the water level in the lower Mississippi existed. Consequently, the steamboat personnel were often called on for predictions concerning the river flow. Sellers was a natural choice for such information. In early May he announced that by June 1 water would be four feet deep in Canal Street in New Orleans, and said that the present flood was higher than any since 1815. Clemens, piqued as were the other pilots at such observations, decided to comment. Calling Sellers "Sergeant Fathom, one of the oldest cub pilots on the river,"⁶⁰ Clemens proceeded to parody the pilot's article. His introduction stated that Sergeant Fathom's magnificent record of 1,450 trips in the New Orleans and St. Louis trade without causing any damage to a steamboat was due to his seldom running his boat after dark. Clemens poked fun at Sellers' prediction and the fact that his communication was of interest to so many classes of people. Then followed his own communication: a crude, cruel narrative by Sergeant Fathom about some really high waters, beginning in the summer of 1763, "when the Sergeant came down the river on the old first Jubilee. On that trip, the Sergeant said the water covered all but the highest hills; in every flood year since, the river has risen less and the time was coming when it would cease to rise at all."⁶¹ The burlesque was crude,

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid., pp. 57-58.

heavy-handed, and overloaded with extreme exaggeration. But apparently Clemens captured the basic elements of Sellers' personality. Edgar M. Branch finds the absurdities exhilarating. "They have a tang of the true river talk, with its nonchalant vastness, and its soul-satisfying whoppers. The amalgam of farce, lampoon, travesty, parody, and fantastic exaggeration anticipates the giant burlesques Mark Twain wrote in Washoe."⁶² The greatest demerit of the piece was its cruelty in ridiculing a man who had never offended Clemens in any way. His audience, especially the young pilots and cubs, loved it, but Sellers was deeply hurt and refused to write for the newspapers thereafter.

Clemens' next contributions consisted of ten letters printed in the New Orleans Daily Crescent during the first three months of 1861. They were signed by Quintus Curtius Snodgrass, and addressed to his friend Charles Augustus Brown. Samuel Clemens never acknowledged these letters, nor the earlier Snodgrass letters. Bernard DeVoto in Mark Twain in Eruption was convinced that Clemens wrote the Thomas Jefferson variety;⁶³ and Ernest Leisy has done a very convincing study of the last group. Leisy states: "That Clemens is the author is borne out, I think, by the parallels, the use of various

⁶²Branch, Apprenticeship, p. 46.

⁶³Samuel L. Clemens, Mark Twain in Eruption, edited by Bernard DeVoto (New York, 1940), p. 232.

names and telltale phrases, the frequent references to drinking and eating, the exaggeration--even by the amateurish manner of the satire."⁶⁴

However, Claude S. Brinegar, after conducting a series of word frequency tests, says that Samuel Clemens "almost certainly did not write these 10 letters."⁶⁵ Brinegar compared the words of the last Snodgrass letters with word samples from the Sergeant Fathom and Madame Caprell letters, the Territorial Enterprise period, the first Innocents Abroad letters, Roughing It, and Following the Equator. Space does not permit a thorough investigation of the manner of the tests here, but the results can be stated simply. The word samples from the early known writings and those from the later known writings compared favorably, showing that Clemens used the same words regularly. But, when these samples were compared with the Snodgrass letters, a wide difference in the choice of words was evident. Brinegar claims further that Henry Nash Smith feels that Clemens did not write the letters because "their prose style and attempts at humor are considerably more primitive than other writings by Clemens during this period."⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Samuel L. Clemens, The Letters of Quintus Curtius Snodgrass, edited by Ernest E. Leisy (Dallas, 1946), p. vi. Hereafter cited as Samuel Clemens, Quintus.

⁶⁵ Claude S. Brinegar, "Mark Twain and the Quintus Curtius Snodgrass Letters: A Statistical Test of Authorship," Journal of American Statistical Association, LVIII (March, 1963), 85.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 96.

Other external evidence established by Allan Bates during a study of Clemens as a riverboat pilot also points to the fact that he "could not have been at some of the places mentioned in the letters at the time the writer of the letters was there."⁶⁷ The authorship of the Quintus Curtius Snodgrass papers cannot be settled here. But since the letters are thought by some scholars to be written by Clemens, they deserve mention.

The first letter, printed January 21, 1861, related a bloodless military expedition to Baton Rouge for the purpose of capturing the Federal garrison. The other newspapers report the actual expedition in the same holiday mood which he used, but the Clemens' squib was satiric. He discussed the discomforts of the journey in mock heroic style. "Ever the foe of regimentation, he used its dehumanizing influence as the butt of his satire."⁶⁸ A Washington artillery ball was the subject of the second paper, dated February 1, 1861. It was a frolicsome affair which proved to be expensive. The February 18 letter began a series of parodies on the Confederate Manual of Arms in the form of "Hints to Young Campaigners." Sergeants who could scarcely drill their squads without a handbook got a thorough debasing by the Private of the Louisiana Guard in "Hints in the Drill Room." In the next issue,

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Samuel Clemens, Quintus, p. x.

February 25, privates were given lofty advice on the general subject of implicit obedience to superiors. They were told

to form the "habit of doing everything briskly and in a series of jerks." This will help them at mess-table. Muskets are to be brought to the ground simultaneously; should someone be so unfortunate as to be behind hand, it is proper to "bring the butt down upon his neighbor's foot, which will effectually deaden the sounds." During parades, the paper continued, a disinterested attitude must be maintained toward the ladies thronging the galleries.⁶⁹

The fifth paper, appearing March 4, gave hints on active service. The March 4 paper abandoned the military theme and took Snodgrass and Larrynder Kydd, a Beau Brummell with a remarkable capacity for food, on a tour of the various eating places and current entertainments in New Orleans. Quintus Curtius sounded much like Thomas Jefferson in his pronouncements upon the performances at the Varieties and the stampede of the audience at the close of the evening. In the seventh letter, March 14, Snodgrass dined with Lincoln while he was President of the United States. Leisy says, "Here appear the conventional jibes at 'Old Abe'--his 'patriarchal simplicity,' his homely fare, his fondness for telling jokes, the dominance of his wife--together with a few digs at son Bob's insolence."⁷⁰ "Hints to Young Campaigners" also returned in the March 4 issue, with letter eight entitled, "Part II. Active Service, Chapter II." Leisy observes "This letter, on sentry duty, with its humorous allusions to cards and drink, and its satire

⁶⁹Ibid.,

⁷⁰Ibid., p. xii.

of pomp and the caste system, is further characteristic of Clemens, as is the sustained irony of the ninth (March 18) on the subject of skirmishing."⁷¹ A typical Twainish dodge was hinted in the remarks about "taking an imaginary stone out of your shoe" while attacking a fortress.⁷² Military promotions were the subject of the last paper, appearing on March 30. Snodgrass poked fun at the sergeants and the cavalymen before remarking that the horses really deserve the credit for bravery which the men usually receive. Snodgrass satirized a legislature which voted itself bonuses, but made no effort to reimburse privates for their outlay in equipment. He concluded by asking if someone would soon write a "Hints to Old Legislators."

The Quintus Curtius Snodgrass papers had an elegant style, displaying greater evidence of a cultural background than anything Clemens had written before this. The letters were sprinkled with French, German, and Latin phrases. Minnie Brashear observed "The change in tone is due to the fact that throughout that period, he had been devoting himself to things which would contribute to his personal culture."⁷³ Clemens' fondness for verbiage and rhetoric was evident, but he had learned a new comic trick: understatement. The letters

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Brashear, Son of Missouri, p. 191.

showed a maturing Samuel Clemens. Ernest Leisy concludes, "Though amateurish, they have the exuberance and mock-heroic spirit which made the humorist famous."⁷⁴

In June 1861, Clemens left the river and joined a backwoods military unit near Hannibal, thus entering the Civil War for a short military career of several weeks. In late July he headed west with his brother Orion, who had received a commission as Secretary to the Governor of Nevada Territory. Thus, a chapter in the life of the future novelist ended. Samuel Clemens had received little formal schooling in his first twenty-five years, but he was a graduate of experience--experience of various types, in many settings, and with contrasting individuals. He had begun his printing apprenticeship under tragic circumstances, but it was a fortunate beginning for a young boy with Clemens' potential. The print shop itself was a school of literature. As Clemens said, one cannot set type for literature for ten years without learning to distinguish the good from the bad.⁷⁵ The print shop was also the home of a breed of unique craftsmen: rough, rowdy, proud, and aware individuals who, for the most part, relished life. Much of Clemens' self-assurance and imagination found fuel for growth in this environment. His knowledge of

⁷⁴Ernest E. Leisy, "The Quintus Curtius Snodgrass Letters in New Orleans Daily Crescent," Twainian, V (September-October, 1946), 1.

⁷⁵Ferguson, Man and Legend, p. 35.

printing enabled him to support himself as he traveled, and being in a print shop inspired his first wobbly efforts at journalism.

His writings of this period were amateurish and immature with no particular literary merit. They reflected the current trends in village journalism of the time, but were not distinctive even in that area. There had been no sustained effort at authorship and nothing so far pointed toward professional writing as a future career. Certain elements, however, do point toward further development in his Western journalism experience. As Ivan Benson sees them,

One is Sam Clemens' predilection for humorous writings. A second is his preference for writing travel letters, as a correspondent, rather than writing local items for the newspaper. A third is his weakness for editorial controversy; he enjoyed picking fights with other editors, or with anyone who would carry on a controversy through the columns of newspapers. A fourth is his tendency to satirize individuals, often injuring them unjustly, merely for the sake of a good story or to make some point that in itself may have been justified.⁷⁶

All four of these elements were to blossom in his Western newspaper writings. In Nevada he would find the freedom, lacking in Hannibal, that allowed him to develop his style as a humorist, and to display his real ability as a journalist.

⁷⁶Ivan Benson, Mark Twain's Western Years (Stanford, California, 1938), p. 9.

CHAPTER II

NEVADA NEWSPAPERMAN

On July 26, 1861, Orion and Samuel Clemens left St. Joseph, Missouri, headed west. Their possessions included one valise, a bulky unabridged dictionary, and high hopes. Their hilariously eventful trip of twenty-one days on the Overland Stage is reported in Roughing It. Clemens wrote, "Even at this day it thrills me through and through to think of the life, the gladness, and the wild sense of freedom that used to make the blood dance in my face on those fine Overland mornings."¹

When Orion and Sam stepped off the stage in Carson City, Nevada, August 16, 1861, they entered a new world--an environment unlike that of Hannibal, of Iowa, of the East, or of the Mississippi River. Rich in native gold and silver, sagebrush, and desert sand, the Nevada West of 1861 was a free uninhibited land, populated largely by rowdy, reckless adventurers. Mining camps dotted the territory. Saloons, dance halls, and brothels characterized the mining camps.

¹Samuel L. Clemens, The Writings of Mark Twain, Definitive Edition (New York, 1922), III, 31. Hereafter cited as Samuel Clemens, The Writings.

Work and talk centered around prospecting and mining. Entertainment included whisky, poker, fights, and occasionally a theatrical presentation provided by traveling troupes from San Francisco. Life was cheap: murder and suicide were common. But the primitive society of Washoe, the popular name for Nevada, was not without its light side. In fact, humor was almost essential for existence in this rough land. Men accustomed to disappointments, hard living, and death sought relief in their entertainment. Thus, their humor reflected the coarseness, the robustness, the saltiness of their environment.

This crude West would leave its mark on the Clemens brothers. Their high hopes were to be realized, but not as they had expected. Here Orion would experience the only near success of his ill-fated life. Here, also, Sam Clemens would find his literary destiny and complete his last apprenticeship. Here Mark Twain would be born.

As Orion assumed his duties as the Governor's secretary, Sam began to prowl around soaking in the spirit of the new frontier. The prospect of a fortune made through mining did not interest him at first, but since his position as secretary to his brother included no pay, he looked for another way to make a fortune. Just a few weeks after he arrived, he and John D. Kinney, a young man from Cincinnati, set out for Lake Bigler, now Lake Tahoe, to stake a rich timber claim. In the

four days they spent there, they succeeded in marking off their land; in building a shed of sorts since one was required; and, through their own sloven camping habits, in setting a fire which burned their timber to the ground. The event, including the magnificent spectacle of the fire, is also recorded in Roughing It. Discouraged, they returned to Carson City.

For about two months after his return, Clemens rather loafed about, adjusting to the Nevada way of life and listening to the tales of big silver and gold strikes and the wild adventures connected with prospecting. Then the mining fever struck, and Sam became as avid a prospector as any in Washoe. From early winter until August of 1862, Sam Clemens joined the thousands of prospectors poking around the Humboldt and Esmeralda hills in search of the native ores which would make them all instantly rich. Roughing It chronicles his many experiences and his one close brush with millionaire status.

During the periods of bad weather when the miners were confined to their cabins, Clemens often wrote letters as had been his habit since the beginning of his journeyman days. Some were to his family and others were addressed to newspapers. Before leaving Iowa, Orion had promised to write letters to the Keokuk Gate City. Three of his letters, all dated August, 1861, have been found in that newspaper's files. Orion encouraged Sam to write also, and one letter, a revision

of one to his mother, appeared in the Gate City in October.² While prospecting, he wrote three others for the Iowa paper. They, along with Orion's, have been collected and published by Franklin R. Rogers. But the Iowa newspaper was not the only one to receive Clemens' contributions. Signing his letters "Josh," he began sending letters to the Virginia City Territorial Enterprise, the chief newspaper of Nevada Territory. These letters, written in moments of inactivity to ward off boredom, are important to the literary career of Samuel Clemens, not for their literary merit but because of the opportunity they inspired.

Times were hard for Clemens. He was not a successful prospector, and money was running out. He constantly asked Orion to send more. In July he wrote Orion and asked him to write to the Sacramento Union

and tell them I'll write as many letters as they want for \$10 a week. My board must be paid. Tell them I have corresponded with the New Orleans Crescent and other papers--and the Enterprise. . . . I'll write a short letter twice a week, for the present for the Age, for \$5 per week. Now it has been a long time since I couldn't make my own living and it shall be a long time before I loaf another year.³

² Samuel L. Clemens and Orion Clemens, The Pattern for Mark Twain's "Roughing It," edited by Franklin R. Rogers (Berkeley, 1961), p. 8.

³ Albert Bigelow Paine, Mark Twain, A Biography (New York, 1912), I, 202. Hereafter cited as Paine, Biography.

But the Sacramento Union was not to have Sam Clemens on its payroll--at least, not yet. However, the "Josh" letters did appeal to the editor of the Enterprise, Joseph T. Goodman. None of these letters is extant, but they are thought to be crude burlesques written in a manner befitting the coarse frontier humor. One concerned an egotistical lecturer, "Professor Personal Pronoun," whose lecture could not be "printed in full as the printer had run out of capital I's."⁴ The professor sketch was supposedly a take-off on Chief Justice Turner, who had a tendency to refer constantly to himself in his speeches.⁵ The story which really struck Goodman's fancy was a burlesque Fourth of July oration. Filled with cliché patriotic phrases, it began: "I was sired by the Great American Eagle and foaled by a Continental Dam."⁶

Always eager to find new talent, Goodman sent "Josh" an invitation to write for the newspaper as the local for the salary of twenty-five dollars a week. A replacement was needed for William Wright, known to his reading audience as Dan De Quille, who was abandoning his position as chief local for a trip to the "states" to see his family. The invitation

⁴Ivan Benson, Mark Twain's Western Years (Stanford, California, 1938), p. 48. Hereafter cited as Benson, Western Years.

⁵Paul Fatout, Mark Twain In Virginia City (Bloomington, Indiana, 1964), p. 5. Hereafter cited as Fatout, Virginia City.

⁶Ibid.

was a godsend to the moneyless miner. Clemens gave this colorful reaction to the Enterprise letter in Roughing It:

Eureka! . . . I would have challenged the publisher in the "blind lead" days--I wanted to fall down and worship him now. Twenty-Five Dollars a week--it looked like bloated luxury--a fortune, a sinful and lavish waste of money. But my transports cooled when I thought of my inexperience and consequent unfitness for the position--and straightway, on top of this my long array of failures rose up before me. Yet if I refused this place I must presently become dependent upon somebody for my bread, a thing necessarily distasteful to a man who had never experienced such a humiliation since he was thirteen years old. Not much to be proud of. So I was scared into being city editor. I would have declined, otherwise. Necessity is the mother of "taking chances."⁷

The two weeks between his invitation and his acceptance of the offer to write for the newspaper have caused a great deal of controversy among biographers. On July 30, Clemens wrote his brother Orion:

I shall leave at midnight tonight, alone and on foot for a walk of sixty or seventy miles through a totally uninhabited country and it is barely possible that mail facilities may prove internally "slow" during the few weeks I expect to spend out there. But do you write Barstow that I have left here for a week or so, and in case he should want me, he must write me here or let me know through you.⁸

Barstow was an employee of the Enterprise who had written to Clemens. In eight days Clemens wrote his sister Pamela from Aurora, some 140 miles from Esmeralda.

⁷ Samuel Clemens, The Writings, IV, 3-4.

⁸ Paine, Biography, I, 204.

Albert Bigelow Paine interpreted this period to be a "mystical session of soul-searching over whether to take a job at a wage considerably below the expectations of a would-be tycoon, or to continue the struggle with resistant nature in Esmeralda, Humboldt, or some other mining region."⁹ He wrote: "So he had gone into the wilderness to fight out his battle alone."¹⁰ Granted Sam Clemens wished to strike it rich as others had done, but he was a realistic man who had endured poverty in his youth and had escaped it by his own resourcefulness. His own provider since he was thirteen, he felt degraded in having to accept money from his older brother, whom he did not particularly respect. This passage in Clemens' letter seemed to Van Wyck Brooks to be "symbolic of a sense of degradation in accepting a position as a mere writer and a humorous one at that."¹¹ Brooks in his interpretation chose to overlook the fact that Clemens had contributed to newspapers since his teenage years on his brother's Hannibal paper. Except for the river reports and the letters to his mother from New York, which were not written primarily for newspaper publication, all of his newspaper contributions had been humorous. Even one pilot account of river conditions had

⁹Fatout, Virginia City, pp. 6-7.

¹⁰Paine, Biography, I, 204.

¹¹Van Wyck Brooks, The Ordeal of Mark Twain (New York, 1933), p. 110. Hereafter cited as Brooks, Ordeal.

a comic tone. That Clemens felt degraded to accept a position as humorous writer on a newspaper seems quite doubtful.

Clemens probably wrestled with the idea of giving up mining and becoming a reporter, but, as Paul Fatout suggests, he was a physically lazy man who was unlikely to walk through the "wilderness" carrying provisions for seven days just to make a decision.¹² A more logical explanation is simply that he had heard another rumor about another legendary bonanza and had decided to investigate before he left Esmeralda. By leaving at midnight he would insure secrecy. The brevity of his absence supports this conjecture.¹³ A few days after the letter to Pamela, he left for Virginia City, traveling the 122 miles by foot. The road led through Carson City and was well traveled. Clemens probably hitched occasional rides on ore wagons.

Rollin M. Daggett, a reporter for the Enterprise, said many years later that Sam Clemens "had been living on alkali water and whang leather several months,"¹⁴ and did not look like a very promising addition to the staff when he arrived in August of 1862. He was coatless, and his pantaloons were stuffed into the tops of his boots. Dust and sprigs of hay

¹²Fatout, Virginia City, p. 6.

¹³DeLancey Ferguson, Mark Twain, Man and Legend (Indianapolis, 1943), p. 76. Hereafter cited as Ferguson, Man and Legend.

¹⁴Fatout, Virginia City, p. 7.

covered his blue woolen shirt and slouch hat. Whiskers came halfway down to his waist. A revolver was slung to his belt. On his back he carried a heavy roll of blankets. Entering the office of the newspaper, he wearily slung his pack to the floor and dropped into a chair. Dennis E. McCarthy, a proprietor of the Enterprise, asked the stranger what could be done for him. Clemens sat silent for a moment before replying, "My starboard leg seems to be unshipped. I'd like about one hundred yards of line; I think I am falling to pieces." Then he paused in a manner that one day would become famous on the lecture stage. "I want to see Mr. Barstow or Mr. Goodman." Another pause followed before he concluded: "My name is Clemens, and I've come to write for the paper."¹⁵

Thus, Samuel L. Clemens, age 26, ex-printer, ex-river boat pilot, ex-soldier, ex-miner, began his final apprenticeship. By accepting the position as local for the Virginia City paper, he launched a professional journalism career, a career which indirectly would inspire him to become a scribbler of books. In none of his earlier activities had he found his life's work, but on the Territorial Enterprise he began writing for a living, an occupation which he would pursue the rest of his life.

As Ivan Benson reports, Virginia City was a boom town when Clemens moved there--"a loud and convivial bachelor

¹⁵Benson, Western Years, p. 54.

mining camp with a predilection for 'rough stuff' and coarse humor."¹⁶ Three years before it had been simply another mining camp. In 1859 an essay showed that the ore of the Comstock Lode, on which Virginia City sat, contained rich deposits of silver. Further probing established that the Lode housed the richest deposit of silver in the world. Virginia City mushroomed over night. In 1861 the population was up to 4,500,¹⁷ and during the following decade the city ranked next to San Francisco in size and importance. When Clemens arrived, it was a typical boom town with little law and numerous wild activities. Hard-rock mining and saloon-keeping were the two leading enterprises. Fortunes were made and lost daily.

The prosperity of the Territorial Enterprise paralleled that of Virginia City. Nevada's first newspaper, the Enterprise was founded as a weekly at Geonora in December, 1858. The subscription rate was five dollars a year. After three changes of ownership and two changes of residence, the Enterprise found an unsteady home in Virginia City. Joe Goodman and Dennis E. McCarthy bought it in 1861, "type, fixtures, good will, and all, for a thousand dollars, on long

¹⁶Ibid., p. 55.

¹⁷Harold Meyer, "Mark Twain on the Comstock," Southwest Review, XII (April, 1927), 197. Hereafter cited as Meyer, "Comstock."

time."¹⁸ In The History of the Big Bonanza, Dan De Quille described the early days of the newspaper:

The office in which the Enterprise was first published in Virginia City, was a small, one-story frame building with a shed or lean-to on one side, and was a queerly arranged establishment. The proprietors had the shed part fitted up as a kitchen and dining and lodging-place. Bunks were ranged along the sides of the room, one above another, as on shipboard, and here editors, printers, proprietors, and all hands "bunked" after the style of the miners in their cabins. A Chinaman, "Old Joe," did the cooking, and three times each day the whole crowd of "newspaper men" were called out to the long table in the shed to get their "square meal." The "devil" went for numerous lunches between meals, and often came flying out into the composition-room with a large piece of pie in his mouth, and the old Chinaman at his heels.¹⁹

By the time Clemens joined its staff, the Enterprise had become the foremost daily of the territory. The organization of the paper was more big-city than any other Western paper except for those in San Francisco. Because of the efficiency of its business manager, Jerry Driscoll, profits rolled in. Even the New York Herald, which ignored most Western journals, paid sixteen dollars a year for a subscription.²⁰ Clemens said of the Enterprise,

The advertising rates were exorbitant, and the columns crowded. The paper was clearing from six to ten thousand dollars a month, and the Enterprise building was finished and ready for

¹⁸ Samuel Clemens, The Writings, IV, 24.

¹⁹ Benson, Western Years, p. 67.

²⁰ Fatout, Virginia City, p. 11.

occupation--a stately fireproof brick. Every day from five all the way up to eleven columns of "live" advertisements were left out or crowded into spasmodic and irregular "supplements."²¹

The paper bragged of a steam driven press, and employed five editors, twenty-three printers, and a corps of reporters. Its literary personnel included the best writers in the Territory: Dan De Quille, Capt. Joe Plunkett, Rollin M. Daggett, and Howard P. Taylor.

Its editorial content claimed its greatest fame, however. It was, as Benson notes, a "journal of comradery--a lively, fresh, rugged, vigorous, fearless, picturesque, distinctive, masculine expression of the energetic life on the Comstock Lode."²² Its pages were filled with stirring illustrations, strong editorials, strange and weird stories, sweet and sentimental poems, and the best reports on the mines. George Dunlap Lyman, a native writer of the Comstock, said that the Enterprise was

the nerve center of Washoe, the brainiest sheet on the Coast. It was privy to all the Mountain's secrets, both above and below the earth's crust. It had acquired enormous prestige. It could make any man in the Territory. It was honest and fearless. It might fear God--but no puny man. It was the mouthpiece of Sun Mountain--her final tribunal--her judge and advocate. It could be loved; it could be feared like the plague. When it got angry, it had claws like those of a mountain cat. It was Comstock to the core--the mirror of her astounding

²¹Samuel Clemens, The Writings, IV, 24.

²²Benson, Western Years, p. 67.

personality--the sounding-board of her buoyant, virile young life.²³

Because of its provocative brand of journalism, editors throughout the West raided its pages to fill their own.

A position on no other newspaper would have had the same effect that association with the Enterprise had on Samuel Clemens. Editor Joseph Goodman gave his temperamental staff a loose rein and allowed them almost complete literary freedom as long as they defended themselves.²⁴ Blue pencils seldom altered their manuscripts. Hoaxes and jokes were common copy. Occasionally the paper launched a crusade, and running battles between reporters, even among those on the same staff, occurred frequently. DeLancey Ferguson observes, "If rival editors could work up a vitriolic feud, if self-important citizens or incompetent officials could be lampooned, or if the public could be hoaxed by carefully contrived tall stories, the readers felt they were getting their money's worth."²⁵ The Enterprise staff writers were men who, says Benson, believed in a "robust, lively, interesting journalism"²⁶ which gave full play to rough humor. Their jokes were crude, but honesty and fair

²³Effie Mona Mack, Mark Twain In Nevada (New York, 1947), pp. 217-218. Hereafter cited as Mack, Nevada.

²⁴Linda Boeser, "Two Comstock Journalists: Samuel L. Clemens and William L. Wright as Reporters and Authors," Missouri Historical Review, LIX (July, 1965), 429.

²⁵Ferguson, Man and Legend, pp. 79-80.

²⁶Benson, Western Years, p. 71.

play were the basis of their journalism. When principles were at stake, they wrote in the cause of "justice, tolerance and loyalty to ideals."²⁷ In this setting Samuel Clemens was in his element. Here he found the first real opportunity to express himself freely as he had tried to do on the Hannibal Journal. His tendency for social satire and his attempts at humor found perfect conditions for development.

The Enterprise's brilliant staff provided inspiration and encouragement for Clemens. Joe Goodman, the editor-in-chief, set the pace. Two years younger than Clemens, he had been a miner, an explorer, a printer, and a contributor to journals before he purchased the Enterprise. Years later, he achieved world renown when he first deciphered the Maya inscriptions which held the key to the history of that race.²⁸ Well-known for his long commemorative poems and his editorials with a punch, Goodman believed in forceful, interesting journalism but stressed that the straight news be actually based on fact. His advice to Clemens on joining the staff was the following:

Never say "We learn" so-and-so, or "It is reported," or "It is rumored," or "We understand" so-and-so, but go to headquarters and get the absolute facts, and then speak out and say "It is so-and-so." Otherwise, people will not put confidence in your news. Unassailable certainty is the thing that gives a newspaper the firmest and most valuable reputation.²⁹

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Meyer, "Comstock," p. 199.

²⁹ Samuel Clemens, The Writings, IV, 5.

The other co-owner of the newspaper, Dennis McCarthy, became Clemens' business manager for the lecture tour of 1866.

Another Enterprise staff member who became Clemens' close friend and who figured in his newspaper career was Steve Gillis, the ninety-five pound fighting printer. A jokester who often made Clemens his target, Gillis accompanied Clemens on many ventures. He was to serve as Clemens' second at the famous duel which ended the Comstock career, and they fled to San Francisco together. Gillis introduced the writer to his brother who lived at Jackass Hill to where Clemens escaped from the San Francisco police and heard the jumping frog story.

Rollin M. Daggett, Goodman's rival as poet, taught Clemens many lessons in the art of fighting corruption in places of authority. Daggett was an ex-miner who had established the Golden Era in San Francisco before joining the Territorial Enterprise as its associate editor. A highly courageous man, Daggett used his forceful satire in the crusade for justice and fair play. In Mark Twain's America, Bernard DeVoto records: "He gave himself freely the pleasures of the world, but alcohol did not soften the edge of his satire. He hurled the Enterprise at villainy and corruption in high places. Men went looking for him armed; he gave public notice of his office hours."³⁰

³⁰ Bernard DeVoto, Mark Twain's America (Boston, 1942), p. 136. Hereafter cited as DeVoto, America.

Probably the greatest single influence on Clemens was Dan De Quille, the top local on the paper. De Quille was a man of mild disposition and placid temper. He served as stabilizer of the unruly crew.³¹ His job as local, which Clemens was hired to assume for a few months, was to fill the Enterprise's columns with news of local interest. A model craftsman and an expert on the mines and mining activities, De Quille was an excellent reporter, going to extremes sometimes to insure accuracy. He was also well-known for writing light humorous pieces and hoaxes, which he called "quaints."³² Fatout states that because De Quille was shy and gentle, these humorous pieces were "droll, whimsical, puckish, sometimes mildly sentimental."³³ C. C. Goodwin, an associate on the Enterprise for many years, said that De Quille

had a quaint irony through which he could make fun of his fellowman's idiosyncrasies, which everyone recognized at a glance, but he never offended anyone. Daggett, with his intellectual cleaver, would chop a man to pieces; Mark Twain, with his droll humor, would lead his victim up to the shambles he had waiting for him, and the unconscious creature would never suspect what was going to happen until the ax fell. But Dan had a softer way. The intended victim would know all the time after the first ten lines that he was going to be sacrificed, but he was under a spell, enjoyed the process, and laughed after he was downed. . . .³⁴

³¹Fatout, Virginia City, p. 33.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Benson, Western Years, p. 69.

De Quille published articles in many other newspapers, but he preferred his berth on the Enterprise to similar positions on other papers. He remained there until the newspaper died in 1893. De Quille and Clemens became good friends, influenced each other's writing, and even roomed together after De Quille returned from the East. They became a reporting team.

Clemens and De Quille often helped each other on their regular assignments in order to fulfill what Goodman expected of them. To cover every event in bustling Virginia City was, at times, impossible; they had to select what to publish among the daily stage robberies, the wonderful discoveries of fabulously rich ore bodies, the mining fights, the shootings, the frequent suicides, and the new industrial enterprises. "They came tumbling over one another as though playing at leap-frog," wrote Dan later. "When a stage robbery was being written up, a shooting affray started; and before the smoke from the pistol shots had cleared, the fire bells were clanging out an alarm."³⁵ The reporters' tasks included roaming the town for any news item which might be of interest to the work-weary, fun-loving Washoe readers. Routine assignments, called "regulars," included covering school board meetings, court actions, coroner's juries, and meetings of the Board of Aldermen. Inquests were also considered "regulars" because murders

³⁵ William Wright (Dan De Quille), "Reporting With Mark Twain," Californian, IV (July, 1893), 170. Hereafter cited as Wright, "Reporting With Twain."

followed by such investigations occurred daily. In fact, murder and suicide were so common, they were not considered interesting news unless the circumstances were unusual. They received only a few lines. News about the mines, whether handout, rumor, or personal inspection, was always important. Miners, eager for publicity, would often provide carriages for the reporters so they could inspect the mines and mention them in the newspaper. Saloon keepers also were eager for publicity. Usually, when a new saloon opened in town, a basket of samples was sent to the news office. Once, Clemens, all alone, had to write one of these stories. It was so colored by the influence of the samples that the composing room foreman read it once and threw it away.³⁶ When news was dull or, for some strange reason, lacking, the reporters filled their columns with creative items composed in the office. Often these were jokes or hoaxes.

Clemens' intense interest in people had begun in Hannibal when he was a boy and had grown while he ran the river. But it was in the West as a newspaper reporter that he perceived the significance of his observations in relation to himself as a writer. Because of the appetite of the Comstock readers for the interesting, Clemens began to see events and individuals as sources for his material. He early learned to fill his columns with tales that would interest Washoe. He wrote in

³⁶Meyer, "Comstock," p. 200.

Roughing It that he had difficulty finding subjects for copy on his first day as reporter. Joe Goodman told him that De Quille sometimes made "a good thing out of the hay wagons in a dry time when there were no fires or inquests."³⁷ So Clemens scouted around town, found one dilapidated old hay wagon, "multiplied it by sixteen, brought it into town from sixteen different directions, made sixteen separate items out of it, and got up such another sweat about hay as Virginia City had never seen in the world before."³⁸ Later in the evening, a murder occurred in the saloon. Clemens was so grateful for the additional copy, he thanked the murderer:

Sir, you are a stranger to me, but you have done me a kindness this day which I can never forget. If whole years of gratitude can be to you any slight compensation, they shall be yours. I was in trouble and you have relieved me nobly and at a time when all seemed dark and drear. Count me as your friend from this time forth, for I am not a man to forget a favor.³⁹

Clemens went back to the office and wrote his story, with only one regret: when he had turned in his story, he was sorry the crowd had not hanged the murderer, whom he had just thanked, so he could write that up too. Obviously, Samuel Clemens caught quickly the reckless spirit of Washoe journalism. Its saltiness, its coarseness gave him confidence and revealed to him the tremendous license he could assume in his burlesques.

³⁷Samuel Clemens, The Writings, IV, 6.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

Samuel Clemens' writings for the Enterprise fall into four categories: the routine local items, an occasional unsigned editorial, letters sent to the paper from Carson City and San Francisco, and reports of sessions of the Territorial Legislature and Constitutional Convention of 1863.⁴⁰ The letters from out of town resemble the work of twentieth century humorous columnists with their gossipy and whimsical nature.⁴¹ The local items, editorials, and political dispatches are mostly straight reporting, often spiced with comic tones. De Quille, years later, evaluated Clemens:

Twain, as a reporter, was earnest and enthusiastic in such work as suited him--really industrious--but when it came to "cast-iron" items, he gave them "a lick and a promise." He hated to have to do with figures, measurements, and solid facts, such as were called for in matters pertaining to mines and machinery.⁴²

Consequently, De Quille usually handled the tedious news concerning the mines, and Clemens concentrated on the lighter things. Benson notes, "Writing as a reporter-at-large on any subject that struck his fancy, playing up the feature element and the human interest over the news angle--this is what Mark Twain preferred and what he was best fitted to do in the field of journalism."⁴³ Although Clemens did his share of the

⁴⁰ Samuel L. Clemens, Mark Twain of the "Enterprise," edited by Henry Nash Smith and Frederick Anderson (Berkeley, 1957), p. 7.

⁴¹ Ibid. ⁴² Wright, "Reporting with Twain," p. 171.

⁴³ Benson, Western Years, p. 86.

routine straight reporting, as John Q. Reed says, "he never hesitated to give his own opinion or to inject some humor into his 'news' columns. Therefore the form of a great deal of his reporting resembles very much the personal essay and verges on feature writing."⁴⁴

Lack of form for the sake of humor is a chief characteristic of Clemens' early feature articles. "By using flimsy association, abrupt changes of subject and long digressions, he deliberately created chaotic disorder,"⁴⁵ observes Reed. Sometimes the real subject of the article was hidden by long digressions. For example, an account of two prize fighters opened the story titled "The Great Prize Fight." Soon, however, the story shifted to Morgan, a horse the author hired to take him to the fight. After a page of information on the horse, the plot returned to the fight. A mixture of several different kinds of discourse led to comic disorder in other articles. As Reed points out, "In 'Those Blasted Children' he makes use of dialogue, narration, description, a letter, elaborate parenthesis, and free association."⁴⁶ One of the greatest problems Clemens had as a novelist was structure. This problem dates to these comic feature writings for the Territorial Enterprise.

⁴⁴John Q. Reed, "Mark Twain: West Coast Journalist," Midwestern Quarterly, I (Winter, 1960), 143.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 144.

⁴⁶Ibid.

Clemens, often bored while covering the regulars, would doodle during the proceedings. Once the Board of Aldermen was discussing how it was going to make a menagerie show, having many animals, buy a license to perform in Virginia City. Clemens, amused by the discussion, sketched the City Marshall leading away an elephant by its trunk; the Mayor mounted on a giraffe; one policemen pulling a lion by the tail; another holding a rhinoceros; and others marching away carrying kangaroos, monkeys, and other animals. Clemens labeled the sketch, "The Captured Menagerie," and posted it on the wall of the newsroom.

De Quille remembered another Clemens' habit. The two men worked at opposite ends of the same felt-covered table. Clemens used his knife to clip items from other newspapers; and as a result, his end of the table was so slashed that not much was left of the original cloth. When De Quille visited Clemens many years later at the Hartford home, he inspected Clemens' writing desk to see if it too were slashed.

Clemens enjoyed the position of importance that he occupied as a reporter for the Enterprise. That he took his responsibility as a reporter seriously is evident in a letter to his sister Pamela, written a few months after he joined the staff. He chided her for not appreciating the interest that is attached to names. He wrote: "An item is of no use unless it speaks of some person, and not then, unless that

person's name is distinctly mentioned. The most interesting letter one can write to an absent friend is one that treats of persons he has been acquainted with rather than the public events of the day."⁴⁷ This is the feature writer speaking, of course. Clemens' local items, hoaxes, satires, editorial and travel letters of the Western period show that he had faith in the appeal of persons over the appeal of events, because they deal invariably with people.⁴⁸

In the dozen years between 1849 and 1862, the West Coast had developed a folklore of its own in such matters as the lampoon and the hoax. In 1854, Ferdinand Cartwright Ewer, editor of the Pioneer, San Francisco's first literary magazine, published an elaborate burlesque of spiritualism, which was picked up and published in papers all over the country. Hundreds of spiritualists wrote to him about the events of the story. Even when he confessed in the New York Herald that it was just a hoax, spiritualists refused to believe him and one, Judge John Worth Edmonds, even demonstrated to his own satisfaction that the manifestations were genuine by communicating with the deceased soul in Ewer's fiction. Other hoaxes followed. The tradition that gullible Easterners could be taken in by a Western hoax was established.⁴⁹

⁴⁷Benson, Western Years, p. 77.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ferguson, Man and Legend, p. 80.

Samuel Clemens, absorbing quickly the humor of the West, added his contributions to the tradition. A few weeks after assuming his position on the Enterprise, he used his imagination to concoct a story about a petrified man, aimed at the "growing evil" of the mania for digging up petrifications.⁵⁰ As Benson points out, "Sam felt the power of the newspaper that employed him; he had no intention of allowing anyone to seem to disdain that power: he resolved to 'show'"⁵¹ a coroner and justice of the peace at Humboldt who had been too independent in furnishing news to the Enterprise. Therefore, in the spirit of public service, Clemens wrote a straight report of a petrified man discovered near Gravelly Ford who, "in the opinion of a savant who has examined the defunct,"⁵² had died about a century ago.

Clemens used scrambled description in presenting the details:

The body was in a sitting posture, and leaning against a huge mass of croppings; the attitude was pensive. The right thumb rested against the side of the nose; the left thumb partially supported the chin, the forefinger pressing the inner corner of the left eye, and drawing it partly open; the right eye was closed, and the fingers of the right hand spread out.⁵³

Justice Sewell or Sowell of Humboldt City "conducted an inquest and concluded with the verdict that the man had died from

⁵⁰Fatout, Virginia City, p. 16.

⁵¹Benson, Western Years, p. 75.

⁵²Fatout, Virginia City, p. 16.

⁵³Ibid.

"protracted exposure."⁵⁴ The judge also objected to a burial for the deceased because he would have to be blasted from his limestone seat and this move seemed a desecration "little less than sacrilege."⁵⁵

The story was reprinted far and wide by other newspapers including the London Lancet, a journal of medicine, chemistry, criticism, literature and news. Some editors recognized it as a hoax; but most, especially in the East, ran it as straight news since it was written in that style. The Comstock miners loved the story. It was their kind of humor, and they were extremely amused by the reactions of other newspapers.

The hoax caused such a stir in the West that Clemens wrote a follow-up in which he said that it was speculated that the petrified man was on his way to the Comstock when he died. He also said that a trace of dirt found under the nail of the great toe identified the man as having been a native of the Kingdom of New Jersey. The story also announced that the head and the foot were on display in the glass case on the third floor of the library building. The miners continued to laugh, but just how many gullible people went to view the remains is not known.

A year later, Clemens wrote the "Empire City Massacre," a hoax which helped to establish a reputation for him on the coast. It was an account of a bloody mass murder in which

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid.

Phillip Hopkins beat to death his wife, whom he also scalped, and seven of his nine children. After cutting his own throat from ear to ear, he rode from the pine forest at Empire City into Carson City, carrying the dripping scalp of his wife. In front of the Magnolia saloon, he collapsed and died in five minutes. Hopkins had supposedly been driven to insanity by his financial ruin, brought on by unsound investments in crooked firms. The San Francisco newspapers were responsible, because they had inspired him to invest in these concerns and had failed to expose the sneaky dealings.

Benson states that the story had two purposes.⁵⁶ First, it supposedly was written to punish the San Francisco Bulletin for its adverse criticism of mining affairs on the Comstock Lode and its suggestion that money might better be invested in California resources. The second objective was to take a slap at the Magnolia saloon at Carson City, which was known for its potent whisky. For some reason the saloon keeper had offended Clemens. Just how this story was designed to hurt the Magnolia was not explained, and De Quille said that he was not aware of the saloon losing any business as a result. As far as Clemens personally was concerned, he had struck out boldly at a public weakness. This seems to have been his initiation, for never again was he timid about speaking out against public institutions. The social satirist in him had

⁵⁶Benson, Western Years, p. 92.

bloomed. It would reach its full flower in his novels. DeVoto points out that social satire appears embedded in the native joke.⁵⁷ But a great deal of bloody violence, even for a Western hoax, is evident in Clemens' story. As Gladys Bellamy says,

Mark Twain, unconcerned at this point with aesthetic effect, couched his satire in terms calculated to shock his readers into an awareness of a situation he deplored. The laxness of the newspapers had left such occurrences entirely unnoticed; consequently, he designed a piece so horrific that it could not be overlooked and, once read, could not be forgotten. He meant, however, to treat his readers with good faith. This is proved by the notice he printed the following day:
 "I take it all back. * * * * * Mark Twain."⁵⁸

The story was a triumph on the Comstock. The miners immediately recognized it as a hoax. Empire City and Dutch Nick's were two names for the same place. There were in that area no pine forest, no log house, and no large Hopkins family. Fatout observes, "That a man should ride four or five miles with his throat cut from ear to ear was improbable. A subtle pointer was the juxtaposition of 'murderer' and the Magnolia saloon, a well-known Carson bar of which the proprietor was Peter Hopkins."⁵⁹ But many of the newspapers which reprinted the story did not see these signposts, and the story ran as

⁵⁷ DeVoto, America, p. 155.

⁵⁸ Gladys Carmen Bellamy, Mark Twain As A Literary Artist (Norman, Oklahoma, 1950), p. 85.

⁵⁹ Fatout, Virginia City, p. 101.

news. De Quille remembered that when the California papers discovered they had been duped, "there was a howl from Siskiyou to San Diego."⁶⁰ Some went so far as to demand that the author be fired, and many swore never to quote another line from the Enterprise so long as Clemens was employed. Firing Clemens never entered Goodman's mind. As Fatout says, "His burlesque was in accord with Western predilection for tom foolery, particularly evident in Virginia City, where the artful dodge was an old established custom on the Enterprise."⁶¹

Clemens, however, was extremely disturbed by this intense criticism. He told Dan De Quille that he was being burned alive. He could not sleep; he tossed about at night, mumbling and groaning aloud. Finally De Quille comforted him by telling him, "Never mind the bit of a gale; it will soon blow itself out. This item of yours will be remembered and talked about when all your other work is forgotten. The murder at Dutch Nick's will be quoted years from now as the big sell of these times."⁶² Clemens thought about it and decided De Quille was right. Then he found the situation to be funny.

The massacre was not significant as an example of Clemens' literary ability; it was simply a crude hoax. But it was significant, as Benson says, in that Clemens could write such

⁶⁰Wright, "Reporting With Twain," p. 172.

⁶¹Fatout, Virginia City, p. 108.

⁶²Wright, "Reporting With Twain," p. 172.

a coarse story and be "championed by an editor of Goodman's caliber, so that there was yet left an opportunity to go on to more worthwhile achievement."⁶³ This editorial freedom was important to Clemens' development as a writer. Had he been severely penalized for this type of writing, it might have resulted badly for the creative genius in him.

Clemens also was allowed free license in his bantering with other reporters including his close friends, Dan De Quille of the Enterprise and Clement Rice of the Union, arch rival of the Enterprise. The journalists of the Comstock made up a unique fraternity of literary comradeship. In private they lived, traveled, and caroused together, but in the newspaper columns, they dug back and forth at one another. De Quille published elaborate stories about how Clemens stole firewood from other lodgers in their rooming house. In one story he discussed Clemens' red nose after a boxing lesson. Clemens filled a column with a tale about how he presented Rice with a coffin when he was ill, and he ran Rice's obituary once. Describing a lark to San Francisco with Rice, whom Clemens had named "the Unreliable," Clemens chatted indefinitely about Rice's manners and how he would crash parties, gorging himself on food and drink while insisting on singing a solo. Once, when Clemens was sick, Rice substituted for him. The next day's paper ran an elaborate apology, signed Mark Twain,

⁶³Benson, Western Years, p. 93.

to everyone the local had offended, including Rice. Clemens was infuriated. In the following issue, he retorted:

We are to blame for giving "the Unreliable" an opportunity to misrepresent us, and therefore refrain from repining to any great extent at the result. We simply claim the right to deny the truth of every statement made by him in yesterday's paper, to annul all apologies he coined as coming from us, and to hold him up to public commiseration as a reptile endowed with no more intellect, no more cultivation, no more Christian principle than animates and adorns the sportive jackass rabbit of the Sierras. We have done. ⁶⁴

Such horseplay in print appealed greatly to the humor of the Nevada miners, and Clemens did his share to accommodate his readers. After all, he had begun this type of humor in Hannibal as a boy.

Not all of the journalists' jokes were played in print. The Enterprise sometimes had difficulty in obtaining the school board reports because the principal hated the newspaper. One snowy evening, Clemens set out to try to obtain it when he met Boggs, a rival reporter on the Union who was known to engage in a good drunk occasionally. Clemens asked if he could tag along with Boggs to get the school report. Just as Boggs refused, he noticed a saloon boy carrying a pitcher of warm punch into the Enterprise office. He changed his mind, got the report, and sat around the Enterprise office talking and drinking while Clemens copied the report. Then they left to cover an inquest and afterwards separated. About

⁶⁴Fatout, Virginia City, p. 81.

three in the morning, the editor of the Union wandered into the Enterprise office asking if anyone had seen Boggs or the school board report. A search revealed Boggs

standing on a table in a saloon, with an old tin lantern in one hand and the school report in the other, haranguing a gang of intoxicated Cornish miners on the iniquity of squandering the public money on education "when hundreds and hundreds of honest hard-working men are literally starving for whiskey." . . . He had been assisting in a regal spree with those parties for hours.⁶⁵

The Union had no school report the next day and Boggs held Clemens responsible.

A perfect opportunity for revenge occurred when the next report was due. The two men rode in a carriage five miles out of town to inspect a mine. The miners were just stopping for their supper break when the reporters arrived. Since Boggs was much larger than Clemens, he agreed to lower Clemens into the mine which was a hole in the ground ninety feet deep. When Clemens finished his investigation and announced he was ready to ascend, the Union reporter asked if he was comfortable and if he could wait a while. Clemens answered "Yes" to both questions, and Boggs told him "Goodbye." When asked where he was going, Boggs answered: "After the school report."⁶⁶ And off he went. Clemens had to wait for the miners to return to lift him up and he had to walk back to town. The next morning the Union had a school report but the Enterprise did not.

⁶⁵Samuel Clemens, The Writings, IV, 10.

⁶⁶Ibid.

Samuel Clemens got his first taste of theatrical critical writing on the Enterprise. Goodman, a real theater lover, devoted considerable space to entertainments currently showing in Virginia City. The public in general and the histrionic profession in particular were attracted by his skill in criticizing actors and their productions. Because of the prestige of the Enterprise, the newspaper had the power to make or ruin the reputation of a trouper. Members of a theatrical production would wait anxiously to find out what the Enterprise had to say about them. In fact, Maguire's Theatre reserved some of the best seats in the house for the newspaper's reporters in recognition of the influence of the Enterprise and its generosity in giving considerable space in its columns to theatrical events. Therefore, on most first-night performances, Goodman, De Quille, and Clemens would be present. After the show was over, the three critics would return to the news office, and write their stories. Then each read the others' reports and a symposium was held. This discussion ended in selecting an article for publication.⁶⁷ Clemens' judgment and ability to convey his true feelings were sharpened and polished by these experiences.

One of Clemens' reviews deserves mention because it was reprinted in April, 1864, in a monthly magazine in the East, Yankee Notions. He reviewed Ingomar, the Barbarian in a

⁶⁷Mack, Nevada, p. 286.

manner which he felt the Comstock miners would appreciate, describing Polydor, for instance, as a "wealthy, spindle-shanked, stingy, old stockbroker."⁶⁸ He described the Comanches throwing dice and the heroine's father "packing faggots on a jack."⁶⁹ The love scene at the end, according to Clemens, was just the same old thing. In this critique, Clemens showed a breaking away from the cruder humor that characterized his early burlesque writings. Gradually he came to depend on cleverness rather than coarseness.

Although Clemens was well-known for his humorous writing, he was more than a humorous writer. As mentioned earlier, the social satire of his novels had its beginning in his Western journalism. In fact, when he moved to San Francisco in May of 1864, he was better known there as a social satirist than as a humorist. His satire touched many subjects from the serious to the ridiculous. For example, on one trip to San Francisco with Clement T. Rice, Clemens wrote an article on the fashions of the city, as seen at a ball given in his honor when he paid his hotel bill. He burlesqued both women and men, but with greater emphasis on the women. One woman, he said, had her hair up in papers--greenbacks.⁷⁰ This article by Clemens as a roving reporter hints at the sort of writing he was to do later in his travel letters. He often satirized the general follies of mankind or derided what he considered

⁶⁸Benson, Western Years, p. 96. ⁶⁹Ibid. ⁷⁰Ibid., p. 85.

particular public wrongs. He consciously designed many of his humorous sketches as vehicles for what he termed "preaching." He wrote artistically with a variety of effects, from the coarsest burlesque to fine descriptive and informative articles. For example, crime conditions on the Comstock furnished Clemens material for his protest against the American jury system. He felt that the jury system banned intelligence and honesty and in turn rewarded ignorance, stupidity and perjury. Men of brains and honesty, Clemens thought, should have an equal chance with fools and miscreants.⁷¹ He found frequent sources for his social satires in the Western political scene. The purpose of the "Great Prize Fight" was to burlesque the pugilistic jargon of the day and to pay his respects to certain practices. On the Comstock, Clemens developed, little by little, as Benson notes, "the ability to fight these evils with humor, satire, irony, hoax, and other manifestations of his growing skill as a writer."⁷²

Although Clemens preferred feature writing and satire, a study of his legislative reporting indicates that he was a good reporter, capable of gathering the facts and writing them into an accurate story. He also had a knack for spicing these stories with colorful language and details of minor importance. Since most of his early writings have been lost, judgment of how early in his apprenticeship he reconciled himself to the

⁷¹Ibid., p. 74.

⁷²Ibid.

treadmill of factual reporting cannot be made. His reports of the Territorial Legislature and the Constitutional Convention, which are preserved, do prove that he was capable of buckling down to a daily chore.

His first opportunity for legislative reporting occurred in November and December, 1862. Always a restless man, Clemens asked Goodman for an out-of-town assignment, and Goodman sent him to Carson City.⁷³ Clemens suddenly found himself to be an important person because he was a reporter for the Enterprise and because he was the brother of the Governor's secretary. He learned to use both situations to advantage and gained much power in the legislature. However, when he first arrived, he was entirely untrained in briefing legislative discussion and recording the parliamentary proceedings in the passing of laws. His first articles were inaccurate and lacking. As a result, Clement Rice, who was covering the session for the Union, ridiculed Clemens severely in print. Deeply hurt by such criticism, Clemens fired back in the next dispatch, tagging Rice "the Unreliable," a label which followed the Union reporter the rest of his life.⁷⁴ William Gillespie, secretary of the session and former legislative correspondent for the Enterprise, took pity on Clemens, and schooled him in parliamentary matters. Two prominent members of the legislature,

⁷³Benson, Western Years, p. 77.

⁷⁴Mack, Nevada, p. 223.

Billy Claggett and A. J. Simmons, also helped him learn the ropes.⁷⁵ Soon Clemens became as efficient a reporter as could be found in the West.

As might be expected, his articles were not all on the passage, discussion, or defeat of bills. Always the human interest writer at heart, Clemens burlesqued many of the members of the legislature. His letters included, as Fatout points out,

playful remarks about the Nevada Supreme Court and toll roads, illustrated by a satirical map; a ludicrous view of Representative Williams, feet on desk, nonchantly munching a turnip during the chaplain's prayer; the tryout of the new engine of the Empire City Eagle Fire Company; a description of a quadrille at the White House, written with an engaging humor that forecast the style of the future Mark Twain.⁷⁶

His tendency to embroider his news with insignificant details for humorous effect became part of his style which the Comstock reader loved. In these legislative sketches he often jumped from subject to subject, again establishing a habit of formlessness which weakened his sense of story structure. Thus, Washoe's influence was not always good.

Clemens was a good reporter, however. He performed his duty so well and became so well respected as a member of the press that at the end of the second Territorial Legislature, the group passed a resolution of appreciation to him and to Rice for "full and accurate reports of the proceedings."⁷⁷

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 224. ⁷⁶Fatout, Virginia City, p. 26.

⁷⁷Ibid.

Members were conscious of his scrutiny because he was quick to print comment on any move he thought to be bad. If a bad law was passed, he denounced it; if a good law amended a previously bad situation, he applauded it. For example, when the legislature passed a law restricting the number of notaries in the Territory, Clemens wrote a satirical sketch on conditions of notaries prior to that time. By the time he covered the Constitutional Convention, ambitious politicians were seeking his friendship. Clemens' opinions carried weight and his approval was eagerly sought.

By the time he covered the Territorial Legislature for the third time, Clemens had become so efficient that he no longer needed the assistance of a shorthand expert. He and Rice collaborated in preparing their daily dispatches with Clemens' share averaging about 1,800 words per day. This persistent and detailed reporting, often covering dull material, proves that Clemens could perform routine news coverage if he had to, although it was not his first love. It also shows that he took his position seriously.

During these assignments Clemens' writing showed marked improvement. The notary sketch, for example, employed exaggeration and irony in a much more effective manner than his previous sketches had done. His satire, directed toward problems of some real importance in the life of the community, became, as Benson states, "more substantial writing, more

thought-provoking, less coarse than his previous writings."⁷⁸ No doubt, the fact that he felt he now had some real influence in public affairs had much to do with the change in content, style, and tone of his articles.

The legislative writings, because of their effectiveness, gave Clemens much favorable publicity, more than he had known previously. Readers began to realize that he was capable of writing more than merely coarse burlesques, and his talent gained recognition. One of the reasons he became known is that on February 2, 1863, he first signed a legislative article with the penname, "Mark Twain."⁷⁹ Thus, readers identified his writings with the man himself. The name fitted him perfectly and had charm and influence from the very first. Despite Van Wyck Brooks' contention that Clemens was hiding behind the name in frustration and shame,⁸⁰ the practice of having a nom de plume was typical of Western journalism. Samuel Clemens, striving to be a typical newspaper contributor, had adopted pseudonyms at least five times prior to this. At first, however, "Mark Twain" was usually signed only to the feature materials, while the straight reports of legislative activity, if signed at all, carried the name, "Sam Clemens."

⁷⁸Benson, Western Years, p. 100.

⁷⁹E. Hudson Long, Mark Twain Handbook (New York, 1957), p. xiv.

⁸⁰Brooks, Ordeal, p. 113.

Mark Twain became so well known among the Enterprise readers that in a few months Samuel Clemens was dropped forever.

The origin of the pseudonym is also a disputed part of Twain lore. Clemens himself said that he acquired it from Captain Isaiah Sellers, who signed it to his river news in the New Orleans Picayune. This is the same Sellers that Clemens had ridiculed in the "Sergeant Fathom" sketch during his river days. When Sellers died in 1863, according to the story, Clemens felt that he no longer needed the name, so "I laid violent hands upon it without asking permission of the proprietor's remains."⁸¹ Paine accepted the story as fact and thought that Clemens, feeling guilty about his earlier parody, was making psychological amends by adopting the name.⁸² Judging from the number of time Clemens repeated the tale, he must have believed it himself, but facts do not substantiate it. For one thing, Sellers died in 1864, one year after Clemens first used the name. Also, the captain's humdrum river news was signed only by a plain, "I. Sellers." An examination of the files of the New Orleans paper shows that no "Mark Twain" signature was used. Besides, the Sellers' river news was in general so dull that it seems unlikely to have inspired the invention of such an imaginative name.⁸³

⁸¹Fatout, Virginia City, p. 32.

⁸²Paine, Biography, I, 222.

⁸³Fatout, Virginia City, p. 35.

George W. Cassidy of the Eureka, Nevada, Sentinel in the eighteen-seventies offered a more logical explanation. He said that the name originated in John Piper's bar, known as "Old Corner saloon," a favorite Virginia City hangout for reporters and bohemians. The proprietor, according to Cassidy,

conducted a cash business, and refused to keep any books. As a special favor . . . he would occasionally chalk down drinks to the boys on the wall back of the bar. Sam Clemens, when localizing for the Enterprise, always had an account with the balance against him. Clemens was by no means a Coal Oil Tommy; he drank for the pure and unadulterated love of the ardent. Most of his drinking was conducted in a single-handed contest, but occasionally he would invite Dan, Charley Parker, Bob Lowery or Alf Doten, never more than one of them . . . at a time, and whenever he did, his parting injunction was to "mark twain," meaning two chalk marks In this way . . . he acquired the title which has since become famous wherever . . . English . . . is read or spoken.⁸⁴

A similar version of this story, told in the vernacular by a "Washoe genius," was published in the Nevada City, California, Transcript in February of 1866.⁸⁵ This story is more convincing than the Sellers version. Samuel was known to frequent bars, and his writings of the period are infested with river vernacular, so he probably used such terms constantly in his speech. The story is in keeping with the Comstock environment and brand of humor. According to Fatout,

When he settled in the more austere moral climate of New England, he may have evolved the Sellers story, or somehow pulled it out of the haze of mistaken remembrance, as a means of suppressing knowledge of that free Nevada life, knowing full

⁸⁴Ibid., pp. 35-36.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 36.

well that barroom escapades were scarcely correct in Connecticut.⁸⁶

Regardless of its origin, that the use of a nom de plume assisted in Clemens' growing popularity is evident. By the time he left Washoe for San Francisco in May of 1864, he was known throughout the Western states because stories with his nom de plume had appeared in most coastal papers.

In December, 1863, Samuel Clemens met another great influence. Artemus Ward, the West coast humorist, appeared in Virginia City on a lecture tour. He stayed three weeks, spending each night after his performances drinking and dining with the reporters of the Territorial Enterprise. He would even help De Quille and Clemens finish their locals so no delays would interfere with their carousing. Many of the stage techniques which Ward employed were to appear later in the lecture presentations of Mark Twain, but the humorist's immediate influence was of a different sort. He recognized the genius in Clemens and encouraged him to contribute to Eastern journals.⁸⁷ Six months later he wrote Clemens asking for a story for publication in a book of humor, thus inspiring him to write the jumping frog story.

The next major event in Clemens' journalistic history was to be his last writing activity in Nevada. In the spring

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 39.

⁸⁷ Fatout, Virginia City, p. 131...

of 1864, Ruel C. Gridley traveled about the Territory auctioning off a bag of flour to raise money for the Sanitary Fund, the Red Cross of the Civil War. Towns competed against one another in raising money for the cause. In Carson City in May, one of the fund raising activities was a society ball given by the prominent women of the town, including Clemens' sister-in-law, Mollie Clemens. Clemens, looking for lively copy while he substituted for two months as editor for Goodman, wrote an insulting squib in which he suggested that proceeds of the ball might go to a miscegenation society in the East instead of the Sanitary Fund. Dan De Quille read the story and advised Clemens not to print it because it would probably offend. Clemens agreed and tossed it aside. Later in the evening, after the two reporters had left, the composing room foreman found the squip, thought it was copy for the morning paper, and used it. When it appeared the society ladies responsible for the affair were outraged. They even ostracized poor Mollie because she was related to him.⁸⁸ The Union naturally pounced on the story and an editorial fight between the two papers resulted. What exactly was published does not survive, but it was such that Clemens, although he wrote a private apology to the ladies, was so offended that he challenged the Union editor, James Laird, to a duel. Steve Gillis, the fighting printer, was to be his

⁸⁸Ferguson, Man and Legend, p. 93.

second. Despite the exaggerated stories told by Clemens and Steve Gillis in the years following, the duel never materialized.⁸⁹ Clemens in his old age told Paine that without realizing it, his public challenges had written him into a corner. A new law had been passed making it a felony in Nevada to send or accept a challenge to a duel. Supposedly fearing possible arrest and imprisonment, Clemens and Gillis left for San Francisco May 29, 1864.⁹⁰ Clemens in the Enterprise columns had made a fool of himself and he knew it. Therefore, he may have left to save himself from more embarrassment, rather than out of fear of arrest. The law, as he had satirized it himself, was very lax in Virginia City. The subject was still too touchy for him to mention when he wrote Roughing It seven years later.⁹¹

The staff of the Enterprise was sorry to see Clemens go. The majority of readers were likewise sad. Rival newspapers which had felt the sting of his satire, were not emotionally overcome, however. The Union said nothing, but the Gold Hill Daily News expressed the general opinion of relief in an editorial entitled "An Exile":

Among the few immortal names of the departed-- that is, those who departed yesterday per California stage--we notice that of Mark Twain. We don't wonder. Mark Twain's beard is full of dirt, and his face is

⁸⁹Benson, Western Years, p. 112. ⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ferguson, Man and Legend, p. 95.

black before the people of Washoe. Giving way to the idiosyncratic eccentricities of an erratic mind, Mark has indulged in the game infernal--in short, "played hell." Shifting the locale of his tales of fiction from the Forest of Dutch Nick's to Carson City; the dramatis personae thereof from the Hopkins family to the fair Ladies of the Sanitary Fair; and the plot thereof from murder to miscegenation--he stopped. The indignation aroused by his enormities has been too crushing to be borne by living man, though sheathed with the brass and triple cheek of Mark Twain.⁹²

Little did Samuel L. Clemens realize when he boarded the stage coach for San Francisco that he had reached a plateau in his life. Little did he know that soon he would abandon the role of newspaper reporter for that of news correspondent and then finally for that of author of books. He had no inclination of the impact his Washoe years would have on the books he was to pen. Many of them would be outgrowths of his experience here, both as a man and as a writer. He had come to Virginia City as a jobless miner with a flair for letter writing; he left as a seasoned newspaper man with a reputation for effective journalism.

During the two years he spent in the Washoe, Samuel Clemens soaked in the society of the frontier. He absorbed and observed the frenzied quest for gold, the bitter disillusionments. He observed and reacted to the characteristics of the human race. Many of the thoughts and feelings which would inspire him to conceive What is Man? and Letters From

⁹²Fatout, Virginia City, p. 211.

the Earth found their first expressions here. He associated with one of the most illustrious groups of literary men in the uninhibited West. They helped him to learn how to use his power as a newspaper man as an outlet for exposing the sham, the corruption, "the artifices of bunko steerers."⁹³ In this environment emerged the fearless personality of the man.

Because Western journalism was uninhibited, Clemens had ample opportunity to develop and perfect his satire, his humor, his irony: the same literary techniques he was to use in his later novels. From the beginning of his journalism career, flashes of his future style are evident, although sometimes in rudimentary form. It is this same uninhibited expression, however, that is responsible for much of the immature structure of his novels. His formlessness, his burlesque, "his ephemeral funmaking"⁹⁴ had their birth in his free license as a newspaper feature writer in the West.

Obviously, the Nevada period is important because it was here that he discovered the pseudonym that would become famous the world over. When he left for San Francisco, it was still new to Clemens. He was not comfortable with it yet. But he had discovered it, and gained some reputation as a literary personality.

⁹³Mack, Nevada, p. 3.

⁹⁴Edgar M. Branch, Literary Apprenticeship of Mark Twain (Urbana, Illinois, 1950), p. 111.

All other reasons aside, the years he spent as a Washoe newspaper reporter are important because they kept him writing during such formative years. The best way to improve as a writer is to write. Clemens' job as reporter demanded that he produce constantly. This in itself may be one of the reasons he was able to produce such massive amounts of work in short periods of time during his book-writing years. Also, having the demands of filling two local columns daily helped him to sharpen his awareness of the world around him. There his perception was broadened, and he looked for potential stories in people and situations that he otherwise might have overlooked. On the other hand, it might be convincingly argued that the demand for copy taught him to pad his materials for length, a habit which weakened his later writings.

Regardless of how critics view this period, it did have an impact on the jobless miner who became a newspaper personality and a scribbler of books. It was in the journalism of the Washoe that Samuel Clemens, apprentice, developed into Mark Twain, writer. When he left for San Francisco, he had gone through the training period; the tedious job of perfection and achievement lay ahead.

CHAPTER III

METROPOLITAN REPORTER

San Francisco was no stranger to Samuel Clemens when he and Steve Gillis arrived there in May of 1864. He had made three previous trips to that city as a correspondent for the Virginia City Territorial Enterprise. Nor was he a stranger to the newspaper readers of that city. Many of his articles had been reprinted from the Washoe newspapers in the dailies of San Francisco and in its literary magazine, the Golden Era. He had also written articles primarily for the Era. In addition he had served as special correspondent to the San Francisco Morning Call since the summer of 1863, contributing at least a dozen letters, two brief telegrams, and three dispatches of sensational news. These bore his nom de plume, "Mark Twain." As his reputation grew on the coast, the Call published not only Clemens' writings, but news of his own activities, including the feud with Laird in May of 1864.

Therefore, Clemens had little trouble in obtaining employment. He became the local on the Morning Call for forty dollars a week, while Gillis worked as compositor on the same newspaper. His first day as local was probably Monday, June

6, 1864.¹ He was twenty-eight at the time. Clemens did not intend to work on the Call longer than a month--just until he could make enough money to return to the "States." Circumstances, however, would keep him there four months and on the Coast for a total of twenty-one months before he would depart for the Sandwich Islands.

When Clemens joined the Call, it was a noncrusading paper published daily, except for Mondays, which had a circulation of about ten thousand, the largest of any San Francisco daily. The newspaper's first issue had been printed on December 1, 1856, in a dingy room over the Blue Wing Saloon at 140 Montgomery Street.² Five printers, calling themselves "An Association of Practical Printers," had bought the stock of the dying San Francisco Herald and begun publication.³ In February, 1857, George Barnes bought into the group, and he and James J. Ayers dominated the company. Barnes was editor when Clemens joined the ranks. The Call's price of twelve and a half cents a week was the cheapest of any of the city's papers. In eight years of publication, the subscription rate had not increased, but the paper's physical size had tripled. Its editorial policy, as well as its price, was aimed at the common wage earner. A few days before Clemens went to work,

¹Samuel L. Clemens, Clemens of the "Call," Mark Twain in San Francisco, edited by Edgar M. Branch (Berkeley, 1969), p. 16.

²Ibid., p. 11.

³Ibid.

the Call's editor had written that the aim of "the cheapest paper in California" was "to afford to the masses a journal which would at once watch over their interests and convey to them as expeditiously as possible a knowledge of everything transpiring throughout the world."⁴

John McComb of the Argus remembered two locals on the Call in the fall of 1864, Samuel Clemens and William McGrew. Other evidence, however, indicates that Clemens was probably the only one. At that time, one man usually made up the local staff of a metropolitan newspaper, and Clemens made no references in his letters to another local on the Call. In September he did acquire a helper, whom he called Smiggy McGlural in Roughing It. McGrew was probably this helper since the two worked together for about a month to six weeks.

Clemens was extremely busy as local on the Call. During the four months he reported for the newspaper, the Call published between five and six thousand local items, a figure that, according to Edgar M. Branch, "includes brief squibs, fillers, and puffs--many of which were his."⁵ In Clemens of the "Call," Branch lists 471 articles which he feels with some certainty Samuel wrote.⁶ They show him working under pressure with the great responsibility of covering the city of San Francisco. Competition was keen among the newspapers of the city, and since the Call relied upon the working class of people for its subscribers, local news was of vital importance.

⁵Ibid., p. 2.

⁶Ibid., pp. 289-300.

In many respects, Clemens' responsibility as local of the San Francisco paper was like that of local of the Virginia City newspaper. His task on each was filling the columns with local items. The scope of this assignment made a difference, however. In the summer of 1864, San Francisco was a growing city of 115,000 population, "whose dominant characteristics were vigor, resourcefulness, and boundless optimism,"⁷ says Bernard Taper. It had "a score of newspapers, an academy of natural sciences, six theatres, some fine hotels and excellent restaurants, forty-one churches, and about ten times that many saloons."⁸ Material for copy was plentiful, but the job of covering the city properly was immense. That one man could adequately cover the local scene seems doubtful today.

Clemens' work day began usually at ten in the morning with the police reports and concluded in the evening after the theatre presentations. He said in his autobiography that often he covered six theatres in one night, staying only five minutes at each before hurrying back to the office about midnight to write his stories before the deadline at two in the morning.⁹ The regular beats included the Police Court, the higher courts, and the theatres. "They were sources of reportorial information which never failed," wrote Clemens. "During the rest of the

⁷Bernard Taper, "Mark Twain's San Francisco," American Heritage, XIV (August, 1963), 50.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Saunel L. Clemens, The Autobiography of Mark Twain, edited by Charles Neider (New York, 1961), p. 130.

day we raked the town from end to end, gathering such material as we might, wherewith to fill our required column--and if there were no fires to report we started some."¹⁰ Certainly some of the news items were brought to the office, but most of them were the results of searching far and wide. In a city the size of San Francisco, these local stories were of greater variety than those in Virginia City had been. They also required a more versatile skill in writing. Branch summarizes,

In his run-of-the-mill items he reported occurrences as different as the latest earthquake, the races at Bay View Park, a meeting of hard-money advocates, the finding of an abandoned painting, and a strike of steamer employees. He attended and summarized meetings of the Board of Supervisors (the town council) and the Board of Education. He puffed local merchants and enterprises. He handled special continuing assignments like the Industrial Fair and covered some political gatherings. He wrote lead articles on important civic events and on sensational crimes and accidents. He contributed a few sketches and some articles pungently expressing his opinions on topics close to his heart. In fact, he was responsible for many pieces of considerable length and prominence.¹¹

Albert Bigelow Paine said that on the Call Clemens was "simply a part of a news-machine,"¹² but this allusion is not quite true. Reporting for the San Francisco newspapers was still primarily a personal activity, in which the reporters went far beyond mere factual reporting. The locals had routine

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Samuel Clemens, Clemens of the "Call," p. 30.

¹²Albert Bigelow Paine, Mark Twain, A Biography (New York, 1912), I, 257.

beats to cover, but they had much leeway in the subjects of their stories and in the manner in which they wrote up the news. Although they all wrote objectively at times, they were still free, within the restrictions of the newspaper's policy, to pepper their writings with their own personal observations. For example, Albert S. Evans, the local on the Call before he moved to the Alta California a few weeks before Clemens moved to San Francisco, often inserted items about an invented character, Armand Leonidas Stiggers.¹³ Clemens constantly commented on his Washoe friends in the Call columns. James Ayers evaluated Clemens' local items as being "deficient in 'the plain unvarnished truth.'"¹⁴ A filler published Friday, August 5, 1864, testifies to the fact that he sometimes made his own fires, as he had done in Virginia City. All public offices, schools, markets, banks, and most businesses closed on Thursday, August 4, because President Abraham Lincoln had proclaimed it a day of humiliation and of prayer for peace and forgiveness. Clemens' columns still had to be filled. He wrote:

Almost An Item--While "norating [sic] around" among the wharves yesterday keeping the Fast, by reason of the morning "for the benefit of the poor of the congregation," (of which we were one,) we discovered a speck of fire among broken up straw, which had communicated with the wharf timbers and promised fairly for an item. All this was at the corner of Clay and East streets. We took a position to watch the item growing, but alas! for human hopes; an

¹³Samuel Clemens, Clemens of the "Call," p. 30.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 20.

energetic and public spirited young man who possessed an interest in a ready-made clothing store close by, conceived the wretched idea of squelching the item, which he accomplished with accelerated movements, by anointing the burning materials with a basin of water. The fire was doubtless the work of some careless smoker. We didn't mind the extinguishment, but the indignity of sousing our budding item with dirty water, provoked a profane utterance.¹⁵

Rudyard Kipling twenty-five years later wrote that the San Francisco newspaper men who remembered Clemens said he was "delightfully incapable of reporting according to the needs of the day. He preferred, so they said, to coil himself into a heap and meditate until the last minute. Then he would produce copy bearing no sort of relationship to his legitimate work" ¹⁶ George Barnes found Clemens to be a useless reporter because he was "so slow in getting around his newsbeat and so tortuously deliberate in writing the copy."¹⁷ A comparison of Clemens' local columns with other San Francisco newspapers at the time shows that Barnes had reason to be dissatisfied. The others were fuller in detail and information while Clemens' were chatty and obviously padded.

In direct contrast to the formal standardized style of the Call editorials, Clemens' items are informal, cynical, and critical. An examination of the files of the Call quickly shows a marked difference in the tone of the local items during Clemens' employment and those which followed after his dismissal.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 17.

¹⁶Rudyard Kipling, From Sea to Sea (Garden City, New Jersey, 1920), p. 181.

¹⁷Samuel Clemens, Clemens of the "Call," p. 20.

In June 1864, Albert S. Evans commented in the Alta California:

"The Call has secured the services of 'Mark Twain' as its local reporter. His items already give evidence of a new hand at the bellows."¹⁸ Edgar M. Branch observes that "evidence

of an irrepressible imagination surprisingly often marks a Call report as his own."¹⁹ A novel word combination in the most routine items, often beyond the reach of other reporters, frequently appeared in Clemens' journalistic writings. His approach to the news was as varied and colorful as the news itself. Often, he wrote as journalists are supposed to write: neutrally stating the facts as they were. Sometimes he let the dramatic and serious subjects speak for themselves as the story flowed naturally and he remained in the background.

Branch comments on his style:

Sometimes when the subject touched him closely or spilled over into tabooed areas, he typically fell back on the pious maudlin, or censorous cliches of polite rhetoric, unable to handle his topic otherwise. But by and large, a radical originality of style and personality--radical for local reporting at least--makes itself felt. An indomitable quality--of funning, or criticism, of seeing things his own way--bubbles through his reports of frequently grubby and depressing human events.²⁰

Clemens' intense interest in people and their foibles is evident in his San Francisco writings. The activities of all sorts of characters sneaked into his stories: miners,

¹⁸Ibid., p. 29.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 22.

²⁰Ibid.

millionaires, actors, bill collectors, ministers, notables, and bums. He was particularly attracted in a disapproving way to women committed to jail for drunkenness.

Samuel Clemens had learned well his job as reporter in Virginia City. There too he had learned the role his pen could play as an instrument for public good; therefore, his social satire continued during his stay on the West Coast, although checked somewhat by the Call's news policies. He had great fun with the vestry of Grace Cathedral when he invented a correspondence with three clergymen who did exist: the Rev. Dr. Cummings, Bishop Hawks, and the Rev. Phillips Brooks. Clemens mocked orthodox religion as each minister told why he could not accept the call to San Francisco, listing such reasons as speculations in cotton, petroleum and wheat.

Paine reported that Clemens' criticism was published rarely. The biographer based his information, of course, on what Clemens remembered, but again his memory was faulty. A review of his writings in the Call reveals a goodly number of items in which Clemens expressed strong dissatisfaction with public officials. His famous invective toward the police department which grew to bitter proportions in November and December of 1964, did not begin in the columns of the Call. In only one article did the local criticize the police, and it was in defense of his good friend and part-time roommate,

Lewis P. Ward.²¹ The Call editor probably did censor Clemens' rebukes concerning the maltreatment of the Chinese.

Because most of the Call's subscribers were of the working class, the paper was quick to support the wage earner's causes--as long as he was white.²² The newspaper constantly spoke against the Chinese, who, according to the Call, were "as unhealthy to the city as the small pox."²³ In an October 30, 1864, item, the Call leveled a number of criticisms against the Chinese, followed by this conclusion:

Our sympathies are with our own race as against all others. Justice to all, but privileges, patronage, favors for our own people. While opposed to all oppression of the Black or the yellow-skinned nations, our attachments are to those of our own blood, the pale faces. And we claim that in our legislation, so far as required in this country, the Caucasian should be considered superior to the Mongol, and should be protected at least, so far as treaties allow, against a ruinous competition in labor and trade.²⁴

The Negro did not pose as much of a problem to the San Francisco citizens as the Chinese did, so the Call could indulge in some support of the black man's rights. The Call editor felt that although the Negro would never be equal to the white, he should be free. Also, he continued, the white should attempt to "atone for the huge wrong our Nation has done"²⁵ the Negro slaves, and the newspaper urged gradual concessions to the Negro on the Coast.

²¹Ibid., p. 222.

²²Ibid., p. 13.

²³Ibid., p. 14.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

Clemens soon found that these attitudes inhibited somewhat his functioning as social reformer on the Call. He had grown up with Negroes in Missouri and had begun to understand the Chinese in Virginia City. He was accustomed to fraternizing with members of other races. In 1865 a contemporary observed him walking arm-in-arm with a Negro journalist in San Francisco.²⁶ In Virginia City, Clemens had been allowed to speak out against whatever wrongs he saw. The restriction of his pen in defense of decent treatment of the Chinese dampened his creative enthusiasm. It indirectly influenced his decision to leave the newspaper. Thus, years later, he probably magnified this restriction as he recalled his attempts at social satire on the Call.

One article of social reproof did receive a great deal of attention. In September of 1864, a practical joker made a false entry on the information slate in an undertaking establishment which also served as a coroner's office. Three of the other newspapers published the article. When they discovered it was untrue, they rebuked the coroner's deputy for allowing the news to be released. Angered by this criticism, the undertaker removed the slate and refused any information to the press. Clemens then wrote an article called "A Small Piece of Spite," severely criticizing Coroner Sheldon and his assistants for withholding vital information. He felt that the people

²⁶Ibid., p. 15.

would not understand the coroner's hiding the business of his office "'in order that the small-potato malice of his employee against two or three newspaper reporters may be gratified.'"²⁷ Clemens summarized the event in a letter to his mother on September 25:

I have triumphed. They refused me and the other reporters some information at a branch of the Coroner's office--Massey's undertaker establishment, a few weeks ago. I published the wickedest article on them I ever wrote in my life, and you can rest assured we got all the information we wanted after that.²⁸

Articles like these earned for Clemens the titles of "The Washoe Giant," "the Moral Phenomenon," "Moralist of the Main," and "the Wild Humorist of the Sage Brush Hills."²⁹ When he came to the Call, he was known first as a moralist and then as a humorist. His activities on that paper strengthened that reputation.

A large number of the Call articles attributed to Clemens concern animals, and foreshadow his famous jumping frog story. Stray dogs were an issue in San Francisco, just as they had been years before in Hannibal. Clemens again seized the opportunity to satirize public officials in the paper. Into a sober write-up of the Board of Supervisors' regular meetings, he injected

²⁷Ivan Benson, Mark Twain's Western Years (Stanford, 1938), p. 116.

²⁸Samuel L. Clemens, Mark Twain's Letters, edited by Albert Bigelow Paine (New York, 1917), p. 100.

²⁹Philip S. Foner, Mark Twain, Social Critic (New York, 1958), p. 22.

this aside: "It is pleasant to know that during the month of August, the Poundkeeper killed one hundred dogs, but that pleasure is greatly modified by the reflection that probably fifteen hundred were born during the same month." As he discussed the business of the Poundkeepers, he constantly included little words of advice to the stray dogs: "Non-muzzled dogs will take notice that Joseph C. Gridley has been elected Poundkeeper, and will consequently refrain from skirminishing."³¹ Clemens also covered the horse races for the Call. In September, he covered the World's Horse Fair, held at the Bay View Race Track at Hunter's Point, about six miles from City Hall. That he was sent to cover such an event is testimony to his ability. James Anthony, Clemens' friend and proprietor of the Sacramento Daily Union in the 1860's, felt that "Mr. Twain . . . was the best reporter of a horse race that ever was made"³² In style and presentation Clemens' Call stories of these events are preparatory for the performance of the "fifteen-minute nag" in the "Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County."³³

Sam Clemens did not enjoy his work on the San Francisco Daily Call. He recalled later: "It was fearful drudgery--soulless drudgery--and almost destitute of interest. It was

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., p. 91.

³³Ibid.

an awful slavery for a lazy man."³⁴ In his 1909 essay, "The Turning Point of my Life," when he briefly discussed the influence of his Western newspaper work, he failed to mention his San Francisco experiences at all. He created only one metropolitan reporter in his fiction, and that was in an unfinished play, "Brummell and Arabella," which was begun before he left for the Sandwich Islands. This in itself seems unusual for a man whose major works center around the events of his past. In fact, the only known time he ever discussed the Call position was in 1906, when he read in a newspaper that the Call building had been gutted by an earthquake. Finally, he felt, Providence had repaid the Call editors for firing him.

Obviously, this was not a happy period in Clemens' life. He was disappointed that his mining stocks had not made him an instant millionaire. He had to stay on the Call three months longer than he had planned. As local for a big-city daily, he had lost his pseudonym, and consequently much of the glamour of being a reporter. Always a physically lazy man who liked to sleep late in the mornings, Clemens did not like the long hours involved in his job. Also, he disliked having to write straight news, without the unrestricted freedom of comment which he had relished while on the Virginia City Territorial Enterprise.

³⁴Paine, Biography, I, 257.

In mid-August, he persuaded George Barnes to hire a helper to cover the night work. Clemens' pay was reduced to twenty-five dollars a week, but he could sleep late and stop work by six in the evenings so he was much happier. Clemens described his helper, whom he named Smiggy McGlural in Roughing It, as being an energetic and eager worker. In fact, McGlural was so eager that within a month Clemens allowed him to do most of the work. Clemens' dissatisfaction with his berth had affected his writing; and Branch observes that at this point in his reporting, he "sometimes merely went through the motions, flippantly, disdainfully."³⁵ He eagerly welcomed the opportunity to load some of the work on someone else. Thus, he spent a good deal of his time in the U. S. Mint, which was located in the Call building. Bret Harte worked there as secretary to the superintendent of the Mint.

By mutual agreement with Barnes that he was unfit for the work on the Call, Clemens left the newspaper around October 10, 1864.³⁶ He then started free lancing. In a story in the Call in March of 1878, Barnes recounted his conversation with Clemens. In giving Clemens his opinion of his local reporting, Barnes supposedly said, "You are out of your element in the routine of the position, . . . you are capable of better things in literature." Clemens, with a twinkle in his eye, said "You

³⁵ Samuel Clemens, Clemens of the "Call," p. 7.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 24.

mean to say I don't suit you." Barnes agreed, and Clemens proclaimed that he was surprised that the editor had not discovered it months before. They both laughed heartily.³⁷

Clemens later remembered that neglect of duty caused his dismissal.³⁸ The evidence does not suggest that he failed in his responsibility of covering the city, but rather that he grew disinterested and slack in writing up the news. An example is his description of the trial of Charles Lannigan for robbery: "Mr. Murphy proved that Lannigan's character was good, because he had previously had opportunities of stealing, but didn't steal, and Mr. Platt demonstrated that his character was bad, because he had the opportunity of stealing and did steal."³⁹ Samuel Clemens of the Virginia City Territorial Enterprise would never have submitted such a scanty report. Clemens listed several reasons for his lack of interest. He said that the lost opportunity for a mine sale led to such "repinings and sighings and foolish regrets, that I neglected my duties and became about worthless, as a reporter for a brisk newspaper."⁴⁰

He also said that Barnes' suppression of a story involving maltreatment of a Chinaman was a key reason for his neglect of duty. While making his rounds one day, Clemens saw some hoodlums

³⁸Ibid., p. 24.

³⁹Ibid., p. 20.

⁴⁰Samuel L. Clemens, The Writings of Mark Twain, Definitive Edition (New York, 1922), IV, 144.

stoning a peaceful Chinese laundryman for fun, while an Irish policeman looked on laughing. Clemens was incensed and wrote up the story with hot indignation. He recalled later:

Usually I didn't want to read in the morning what I had written the night before; it had come from a torpid heart. But this item had come from a live one . . . and so I sought for it in the paper next morning with eagerness. It wasn't there. . . . I went up to the composing room and found it tucked away among condemned matter on the standing galley. I asked about it. The foreman said Mr. Barnes had found it in a galley proof and ordered its extinction.⁴¹

When Clemens asked Barnes about the item, the editor supposedly replied that the Call was the paper of the poor, gathering its livelihood from the poor. Therefore, since the Irish made up the poor in San Francisco, the newspaper could not afford to offend them and had to respect their prejudices.⁴² Clemens was humiliated. "There was fire in it, and I believed it was literature,"⁴³ he wrote later. In recalling the incident in 1906, he seemed to forget that when he first arrived in the West, he too was guilty of teasing the Chinese by dropping beer bottles on their tin roofs just to see them run out of their hovels in fear.

Probably no single incident inspired Samuel Clemens to tire of his newspaper work. He was given much more leeway than he remembered in his Call writing. "Within limits that he

⁴¹ Samuel L. Clemens, Mark Twain in Eruption, edited by Bernard DeVoto (New York, 1940), p. 256.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

he stretched more than a little, he wrote much as he pleased and made numerous good hits," comments Branch. "He was proud of some of his Call journalism."⁴⁴ But the creative genius in him was restless, as it had been in Virginia City before he left there. His growing ambition had caused him to contribute to the literary publications of the Coast. The restrictions of newspaper production did not allow the leisure outlet for expression that he apparently needed. The Call's primary purpose was to report the factual news of San Francisco; always the social satirist, Clemens was driven by a need to interpret those events in terms of the sham and hypocrisy he saw in the world around him. The mind that would someday write What Is Man? was struggling for expression. Consequently, the suppression of the Chinese story would stick in his memory as a symbol of his unfulfillment in newspaper writing. Although it may have served as the final insult to his pride, it alone did not inspire all of Clemens' waning interest in his work. Regardless of the reasons, he left his post on the Call and began free lancing for a living.

His rival and target for occasional abuse, Albert Evans, the Fitz Smythe of the Alta California, noted that after Clemens was dismissed from the Morning Call, he earned a living by "writing 'sundry literature,' which Evans called 'the grave of

⁴⁴Samuel Clemens, Clemens of the "Call," p. 22.

genius."⁴⁵ Barnes recalled that Clemens engaged in any sort of literary work "whereby he could turn a cent. It was a terrible uphill business, and a less determined man than himself would have abandoned the struggle and remained at the base."⁴⁶

Clemens wrote later in Roughing It that he was penniless after his break with the Call.⁴⁷ Disgusted with the turn of his mining speculation, he may have felt that he was poverty-stricken, but that he was in great distress seems unlikely. While on the Territorial Enterprise and the Morning Call, he had written for other publications and was well-known in free-lancing circles.

Almost immediately after his arrival in San Francisco, he sold two sketches to the Golden Era, the literary journal of the Coast. They were published in June of 1864. Founded in December of 1852, the Golden Era, although it called itself a family weekly newspaper, was really a magazine devoted to literature. It resembled a newspaper only in size and typography.⁴⁸ Before leaving Nevada, Clemens had contributed at least thirteen articles to its pages.⁴⁹ Most of them had been reprints of his

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 27.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Samuel Clemens, The Writings, IV, 145.

⁴⁸Benson, Western Years, p. 116.

⁴⁹Samuel L. Clemens, The Washoe Giant In San Francisco, edited by Franklin Walker (San Francisco, 1938), p. 141.

Territorial Enterprise stories, but at least one had been written primarily for the San Francisco publication. A third article, "Early Rising" appeared in the July 3, 1864, issue, before Clemens abandoned the Era for the newly founded literary magazine, the Californian which he thought was more "high-toned"⁵⁰ than the Era. The "Early Rising" sketch attempted to disprove Ben Franklin's advice to people to rise early. After relating his own experiences at early rising, Clemens agreed with George Washington: "I don't see it."⁵¹

During the last two months of Clemens' employment on the Call, he contributed regularly to the Californian. This magazine's first issue appeared on May 28, 1864, the same week that he moved to San Francisco. Charles Henry Webb served as editor with Bret Harte as the major contributor. It was a small folio of sixteen pages with a three-column makeup except for the last two advertising pages which were arranged in a four-column typography.⁵² Harte was editor from September of 1864 to November 19, 1865, and again from December 9 to 30, 1865. Before Clemens left the Call, he agreed to write an article a week for the Californian for the price of fifty dollars a month. Frank Soule recalled Clemens "scribbling

⁵⁰Samuel Clemens, Letters, p. 100.

⁵¹Samuel Clemens, Washoe Giant, p. 83.

⁵²Benson, Western Years, p. 118.

next to him in the Call editorial room with 'grand aspirations.'⁵³ His "grand aspirations" also included plans for a book which his friend, the Rev. Dr. Henry W. Bellows, president of the United States Sanitary Commission, encouraged Clemens to write. It did not advance beyond the planning stage, however.

After leaving the Call, Clemens continued to write for the Californian. Through his association with the journal, he became acquainted with the literary bohemians of San Francisco: Harte, Prentice Mulford, Charles Warren Stoddard, Fitzhugh Ludlow, Joaquin Miller and Orpheus C. Kerr.⁵⁴ These men were constant companions, drinking together, eating together, airing their views on the world, and discussing their writing experiences. They stimulated Clemens' thinking and fanned his growing ambition. Barnes said, however, that Clemens was not really by nature a bohemian; he looked always to the future.⁵⁵

During this period Clemens started sending letters to his former employer, Joe Goodman. Whether he began at this time his daily correspondence with the Enterprise for the sum of twenty-five dollars a week is not known since the files of the paper for this period are not extant. That he did contribute to the Washoe publication in the fall of 1864 is proved

⁵³Samuel Clemens, Clemens of the "Call," p. 19.

⁵⁴Benson, Western Years, p. 116.

⁵⁵Samuel Clemens, Clemens of the "Call," p. 19.

by the fact that a group of letters about the San Francisco police department inspired a hurried exit from the city in December. By the spring of 1865, he was sending a daily dispatch.

As a free-lance writer, Clemens was in his element. The job of roving reporter, free to choose his topics and comment at will, was what he loved most and did best. With this arrangement he was able to concentrate on more serious literary efforts, as Artemus Ward had encouraged him to do. Also, in his letters to the Enterprise, he could criticize anything that displeased him and with whatever intensity he felt necessary. The social satirist was unleashed.

In mid-autumn of 1864 in the Enterprise correspondence, Clemens began scorching attacks on the city officials, especially those in the police department. Reporting the scene just as he saw it, including the use of names and specific incidents, Clemens aired his wrath against the political corruption that existed in San Francisco. Consequently, the officials of the city were infuriated. Clemens' attacks were so savage that none of the San Francisco papers would print them, but Joe Goodman did in Virginia City--exactly as he received them. One story reported the death in prison of a man who had been arrested for stealing a packet of flour sacks worth seventy-five cents. According to Clemens' account, the man was dumped into a cell and left there, without any of the jailers checking on him. They probably did not notice

anything unusual about him, said Clemens, because the prisoner was "sleeping with the calm serenity which is peculiar to men whose heads have been caved in with a club."⁵⁶ After several weeks of this ridicule, Martin G. Burke, the San Francisco Chief of Police, filed a libel suit against the Nevada newspaper. The suit was ineffectual because the paper was published in another state, and Clemens continued. His next correspondence to the Comstock was, said Benson, "a still more forceful letter, describing the police corruption in the city and the lechery that was openly permitted."⁵⁷ Goodman published the letter word for word with the remark, "If Mark can stand it, I can."⁵⁸

Clemens' campaign against corruption was halted for a few months by a different type of fight involving his companion Steve Gillis. One night, Gillis passed a barroom, noticed a brawl in progress, and decided to join. He thoroughly whipped a bartender much larger than himself, who just happened to be a close friend of Chief Burke. Aware of the relationship between Clemens and Gillis, Burke arrested the scrappy printer on the charge of "assault with intent to kill."⁵⁹ Clemens

⁵⁶Samuel L. Clemens, Mark Twain's San Francisco, edited by Bernard Taper (New York, 1963), p. xx.

⁵⁷Benson, Western Years, p. 122.

⁵⁸Paine, Biography, I, 264.

⁵⁹DeLancey Ferguson, Mark Twain, Man and Legend (Indianapolis, 1943), p. 101.

provided the bail and Gillis left for Virginia City. Burke, when he could not locate Gillis, brought action against his bondsman. Deciding that he had better leave San Francisco until the police cooled, Clemens journeyed with Jim Gillis, Steve's brother, to Jackass Hill in the Mother Lode country, a few miles from Tuttletown and Sonora. They arrived there on December 4, 1864, and Clemens stayed three months.

His sojourn at Jackass Hill proved to be the bonanza he had searched for in the West. In the solitude and comradeship of Gillis' cabin, Clemens unknowingly reached another plateau in his development as a writer. Jackass Hill was located in a region that once had teemed with mining activity. In December of 1864, only an occasional pocket miner prospected the deposits along the Stanislaus River and in the hills of the Mother Lode. Solitude, inductive to thought and the quiet pursuits of creative writing, pervaded the area. Gillis' cabin was a humble structure of logs and slabs, and was sheltered by a giant oak. It provided a few modest comforts: a fireplace, a number of his favorite books, and friends. Besides Gillis, the occupants were William Gillis, a younger brother, Dick Stocker, and his cat. The latter pair became Dick Baker and his cat Tom Quartz in Roughing It. Evenings and rainy days were spent courting the girls who lived near by and swapping stories in front of the fireplace. Clemens included many of these stories in his later writings. When the rain set in late in January, the group was on a

pocket-mining trip some distance from Jackass Hill. Unable to prospect, they spent most of February at Angel's Camp, which like Jackass Hill, was a declining mining community. There they played billiards, drank, complained about the food, and talked with other miners.

At Angel's Camp, Clemens met Ben Coon, an old barfly who constantly told pointless stories to whoever would listen. A few years earlier, Clemens probably would have fled the endless drawl of Coon's chatter, but newspaper reporting had sharpened his awareness. By habit he was constantly on the alert for interesting copy, so he listened to the old man spin his yarns. One appealed to Clemens, and he made a note of it in his notebook: "Coleman with his jumping frog--bet a stranger \$50--Stranger had no frog and C. got him one:--In the meantime stranger filled C's frog full of shot and he couldn't jump. The stranger's frog won."⁶⁰ It was an old story, having been circulated on the Coast for some time. Apparently, Clemens had not heard it before. The plot would certainly appeal to the man who had written "The Dandy Frightening the Squatter."

On February 25, 1865, Clemens left Angel's Camp, walked over the mountains to Jackass Hill through a snowstorm, and returned to San Francisco and a stack of mail.⁶¹ One of the

⁶⁰Samuel L. Clemens, Mark Twain's Notebook, edited by Albert Bigelow Paine (New York, 1935), p. 7.

⁶¹Ferguson, Man and Legend, p. 104.

letters was from Artemus Ward in New York, requesting Clemens to send him a story for a book of humor he was compiling. Clemens replied immediately, explaining why he had not answered and regretting that it was too late for the book. Ward answered that there was still time, and Clemens wrote out the jumping frog story. The story did arrive too late for the book, however, and G. W. Carleton, Ward's publisher, gave the manuscript to Henry Clapp, editor of the Saturday Press. It appeared in that publication on November 18, 1865. Newspapers everywhere reprinted the story, and it appeared in the Californian a month later. Although a few newspapers had previously published some Mark Twain items, Clemens had gained little recognition except on the West Coast. "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" changed that situation somewhat. Surely the name "Mark Twain" did not become an institution,⁶² but it did gain national exposure by attachment to a story that would be remembered. The story is also important to Clemens' development as a writer because of its literary merit. For the first time, he developed on paper vivid characters who were sharply defined. "A commonplace folk tale had become literature because it was restated in terms of recognizable human personalities,"⁶³ DeLancey Ferguson observes. Apparently, as Edgar M. Branch points out,

⁶²Benson, Western Years, p. 129.

⁶³Ferguson, Man and Legend, p. 104.

this was a creative area that Clemens had not sounded before.⁶⁴ It was not to reach maturity for several years, but the true genius of Mark Twain had surfaced.

When Clemens returned from Jackass Hill in February of 1865, he resumed his correspondence with the Territorial Enterprise and his contributions to the Californian. In October he joined the staff of the San Francisco Dramatic Chronicle and again started writing for the Golden Era. The Sacramento Union also published his letters. His free lancing continued until he left for the Sandwich Islands in March of 1866. In these articles he discussed all sorts of subjects: fashions, politics, theatre critics, rival newspapers, opera, prize fights, and spiritualism.⁶⁵ Branch observes, "In them the San Francisco of the sixties comes alive and kicking, with all its verve and foibles and delights and pretensions."⁶⁶ Many of the subjects and techniques of his later novels appear in these sketches.

In one of his opera reviews, he solemnly discussed the performance of the furniture mover. In his reports on the Lick House and Pioneer Balls, he parodied the fashions, the

⁶⁴Edgar M. Branch, "'My Voice Is Still for Setchell': A Background Study of 'Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog,'" Publications of the Modern Language Association, LXXXII (December, 1967), 601.

⁶⁵Samuel Clemens, San Francisco, p. xvi.

⁶⁶Ibid.

fashion writers, and the society set. One of the guests at the Pioneer ball, said Clemens, displayed her cultured bearing by the way she blew her nose: "Its exquisitely modulated tone excited the admiration of all who had the happiness to hear it."⁶⁷ He commented on the varicolored garters the ladies wore after investigating their new hoop skirts by standing at the lower corner of a street and looking up the hill. The hoop skirts reminded him of peeking under circus tent flaps as a boy. "The ladies of fashionable South Park were shocked and infuriated by such impertinent observations,"⁶⁸ reports Branch; but roars of laughter accompanied these remarks at such places as the Bank Exchange bar, where the gentleman of the city collected.

During this period, Clemens did a series of articles for the Golden Era and the Territorial Enterprise on spiritualism, the new wildcat religion which was popular in San Francisco. In January of 1866, he wrote of a Kearney Street ghost who did not like the servant girls in a particular house. One night, the ghost appeared to a girl in the house who in her fright ducked under the bedclothes. Aroused by her screams, the other members of the household rushed in to find on her pillow nine kittens, decorated with bloody finger marks. Even their mother did not want to be near them but paraded around with her tail in the air and her hair on end. Clemens asked at the

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. xvii.

end of his sketch: "What would you think of a ghost that came to your bedside at dead of night and had kittens?"⁶⁹ He attended some of the séances held by Mrs. Ada Hoyt Foye. At one he was appointed a member of the investigating committee, a fact that made the ghosts a bit nervous, or so he reported in February in the Golden Era. He described Mrs. Foye, the medium, as "a good-looking, earnest-faced, pale-red-haired, neatly dressed young woman standing on a little stage behind a small deal table with slender legs and no drawers--the table, understand me."⁷⁰

In the last contribution to the Golden Era on March 18, 1866, Clemens exhibited some of the religious skepticism that was to appear so generously in the writings of his later years. He pointed out that he had not been to church in months because he had no pew and had to sit in the gallery with the sinners. He objected because he considered himself a high-ranking Presbyterian, who had been sprinkled in infancy. The heaven and hell of the "blamed wildcat religions" were vague and ill-defined;⁷¹ therefore, he preferred the Presbyterian's fire and brimstone variety.

At least twenty-one of Clemens' sketches appeared in the Californian from the time he left the Call until he departed

⁶⁹Ferguson, Man and Legend, p. 105.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Benson, Western Years, p. 137.

San Francisco for the Sandwich Islands seventeen months later. His first contribution, called "A Notable Conundrum," appeared in October of 1864 while he was still localizing for the Call. It was a humorous squib combining for comic effect a love letter, a soap boiler's advertisement, getting drunk at the Cliff House Bar, and the aroma of a stranded whale.⁷² Clemens played on that aroma:

The whale was not a long one, physically speaking--say thirty-five feet--but he smelt much longer; he smelt as much as a mile and a half longer, I should say, for we traveled about that distance beyond him before we ceased to detect his fragrance in the atmosphere A whale does not smell like magnolia, nor yet like heliotrope or "Balm of a Thousand Flowers"; I do not know but I should judge that it smells more like a thousand polecats.⁷³

Several of his Californian stories concerned horse races. In "How I Went to the Great Race Between Lodi and Norfolk," Clemens related how the man who offered him a ride, had invited 150 other men as well. They all walked. In December, 1865, the Californian published a Clemens' character study of "Uncle Lige," which was really a parody of Dan De Quille "who had suffered a temporary lapse into sentimentality."⁷⁴ The article pictured a crude individual who, while blind drunk, spat on his shirt-bosom and slurred it off with his hand. He sported a "wine-bred cauliflower on his nose."⁷⁵ The article is reminiscent of his Comstock brand of journalism.

⁷²Ferguson, Man and Legend, p. 99.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 100.

⁷⁵Ibid.

During his Californian period, Clemens associated closely with Bret Harte, who periodically alternated as editor of the Californian and of the Golden Era. Although Clemens was to say some very harsh things of Harte in later years after both had gone east, they apparently got along well in San Francisco. Harte was already established as a literary figure when Clemens met him in the Mint, and Clemens naturally deferred to him. In 1866 Clemens wrote his mother that Harte and not himself deserved to be called the best writer in California.⁷⁶ Harte also had been a compositor, and Clemens delighted in hearing his tales about writing his first stories for the Golden Era in type and watching the reaction of the editor when the proofs appeared on his desk. In 1871, Clemens told Thomas Bailey Aldrich that Harte was the one "who trimmed and trained and schooled me patiently until he changed me from an awkward utterer of coarse grotesques to a writer of paragraphs and chapters that have found a certain favor in the eyes of some of the decentest people in the land."⁷⁷ Harte's trimming and training influence is not verified by the stories Clemens published in the Golden Era and the Californian of the period, however. They are not very different from the writings for the Territorial Enterprise, as the above examples show. Harte's greatest influence was probably inspiration rather than actual instruction.

⁷⁶Samuel Clemens, Letters, p. 102.

⁷⁷Ferguson, Man and Legend, p. 98.

Under Webb and Harte, Clemens' satire was encouraged. The Californian lampooned many of the so-called "California Values," such as the climate, the scenery, the "honest miner" stereotype, and even patriotism.⁷⁸ Clemens delighted in this freedom of expression. He was impressed with the idea that his feelings were important enough to be published in "the best weekly literary paper in the United States."⁷⁹

Beginning June 3, 1865, Clemens wrote a column called "Answers to Correspondents" for the Californian. Six columns appeared.⁸⁰ This announcement accompanied the first: "All letters to this department should be addressed to Mr. Mark Twain who has been detailed from the editorial staff to conduct it. Courting Etiquette, Distressed Lovers, of either sex, and Struggling young Authors, as yet unknown to Fame, will receive especial attention."⁸¹ That Clemens was considered prominent enough as a writer to be giving struggling authors advice is noteworthy.

Clemens' last literary connection on the Coast was with the Dramatic Chronicle, which later became the San Francisco

⁷⁸Albert E. Stone, The Innocent Eye: Childhood in Mark Twain's Imagination (New Haven, 1961), p. 37.

⁷⁹Samuel Clemens, Letters, p. 100.

⁸⁰Edgar M. Branch, "Chronological Bibliography of Writings of Sam Clemens to June 8, 1867," American Literature, XVIII (May, 1946), 136-138.

⁸¹Benson, Western Years, p. 135.

Chronicle. For it he wrote dramatic criticism for forty dollars a month. He seems to have worked on the staff two months, beginning October 16, 1865. His contributions included some squibs and a few sketches, plus a column entitled "Amusements." In the column, Clemens noticed and commented on the daily offerings at the theatres, museums, and resorts, including one account of James Whit's Museum of freaks.⁸²

Although the role of newspaper correspondent was more suitable for Clemens' temperament than that of daily reporter on a metropolitan newspaper, his restless creative spirit was still unfulfilled. Samuel Clemens was ready for fresh experiences, new subjects to tackle with his pen. He was tired of San Francisco. Thus he welcomed the opportunity to board the new steamer, the Ajax, headed for the Sandwich Islands in March of 1866.

Each new phase of experience in Samuel Clemens' life seemed to be a stepping stone, a training period, for new developments in his thoughts and his talent. He gleaned from the present all that he could. Although in his later novels he borrowed characters and situations from his past, Clemens seemed unable in life to return to what had been. He seemed always to be moving forward. So it was with his San Francisco journalism.

In Nevada, he had found his trade and his pseudonym. In San Francisco he worked at perfecting that trade, and in the

⁸²Branch, "Background of 'Frog'," p. 595.

process of perfecting, discovered a deep dissatisfaction that drove him to more artistic expression. Finding that he was unsuited for routine newspaper work, he abandoned it and used his pen as a weapon against the wrongs of the world. He grew surer in his expression of his true feelings. As a free lancer, he gained confidence in the personality that accompanied the image of the literary "Mark Twain." Also he had more time for serious concentration on his writing. Although the techniques were at times still somewhat crude and unrefined, they show evidence of a growing skill.

The subjects of his writings broadened in scope and in depth as his perception of the world sharpened. As Branch states,

He was becoming more practiced in fighting for a cause--for literary integrity or social morality. His increasing efforts to improve man's condition were matched by a heightened sense of man's irrationality and weakness. The egotistical and anti-social in human behavior were claiming more of his attention. His mature interest in man "as an ethical component of society" was coming to the front.⁸³

As Clemens observed the urban society around him, he committed its characteristics to memory. All of the follies of mankind which he later ridiculed in his novels are present in his West Coast journalism.

Here also he associated with the literary personages of San Francisco bohemia. As he had done in Virginia City, he

⁸³Edgar M. Branch, Literary Apprenticeship of Mark Twain (Urbana, 1950), p. 157.

enjoyed the company of other writers and from them drew inspiration. As if by an ironic decree of fate, he retreated from the bustle of city life and discovered in the solitude of the abandoned mine fields of Jackass Hill the first evidence of his real creative genius. He had come to the West to get rich; little did he realize that he had found his bonanza. The "Jumping Frog" story brought to the surface Clemens' true talent. It also introduced his name to the reading populace of the country and added fuel to his already flaming ambition.

When Mark Twain shipped for the Sandwich Islands, a chapter in his newspaper life closed behind him. Although his journalism days were far from over, never again would he write against deadlines for his livelihood. Never again would he depend on the whims and restrictions of editors for his mere existence. The role of newspaper reporter specializing in "comic sketches"⁸⁴ had ended. The role of daily correspondent raking a town for subjects had ended. He now embarked upon a journey as traveling correspondent. The journey to the Sandwich Islands would simply be another link, another preparation, for a greater journey--one which would inspire his first book and introduce him to a form of writing he could pursue the rest of his life. The Ajax trip would be another stepping stone toward his destiny.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 156.

CHAPTER IV

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

In February of 1866, the Pacific Mail Steamship Company inaugurated the first regular steamship service between San Francisco and Honolulu. For the maiden voyage of its steamer, the Ajax, the company invited a select party of guests to make the trip. Samuel Clemens was one of them, but he declined the offer because he felt obligated to continue his correspondence for the Virginia City Territorial Enterprise. Immediately, he regretted his decision: "If the Ajax were back I would go quick, and throw up my correspondence. She had fifty-two invited guests aboard--the cream of the town--gentlemen and ladies and a splendid brass band."¹

When the Ajax returned on February 22, Clemens eagerly sought the passengers for information and made an interview with one the basis of a letter to the Enterprise. He toyed with the idea of going to the Islands. He was restless; the daily letter to Virginia City had become a bore to him; in becoming routine, it had lost its charm. The Coast buzzed with talk of the Sandwich Islands and their sugar industry. Clemens wanted to visit them so much that he finally appealed to James

¹Albert Bigelow Paine, Mark Twain, A Biography (New York, 1912), I, 281.

Anthony and Paul Morrill of the Sacramento Daily Union. He proposed that they send him as their special correspondent to report on the "life, trade, agriculture, and general aspect of the islands."² To his delight, they approved the idea and agreed to pay him twenty dollars each for twenty to thirty letters.³

Thus, at four in the evening March 7, 1866, when the Ajax set sail on its second trip to the islands, its passenger list included "Mark Twain." G. Ezra Dane notes, "The character that Sam Clemens had created for himself in print was beginning to absorb his identity."⁴

Clemens was forever grateful to the proprietors of the Union for the opportunity to visit the islands. In his article "My Debut As A Literary Person" in 1899, he spoke of them as

lovable and well-beloved men: long ago dead, no doubt, but in me there is at least one person who still holds them in grateful remembrance; for I dearly wanted to see the islands, and they listened to me and gave me the opportunity when there was but slender likelihood that it could profit them in any way.⁵

Other contemporary writers held them in high esteem also.

²Ibid.

³Samuel L. Clemens, Mark Twain's Letters From the Sandwich Islands, edited by G. Ezra Dane (Palo Alto, 1938), p. ix.

⁴Ibid., p. x.

⁵Walter Francis Frear, Mark Twain and Hawaii (Chicago, 1947), p. 93.

At that time the Sacramento Daily Union was the largest and most powerful journal in the West.⁶ Morrill voiced the policy that made the newspaper so popular: "Be just to everybody. Never strain the truth. Do not mince your words when you have to attack a great wrong. But above all things, the Union is the friend of the common people! And the enemy of their enemies, high or low, rich or poor."⁷ Hated by political rings and public plunderers of the time, the Union was "independent, above suspicion, trusted by the people. It came to be known as something more than a newspaper--an institution."⁸ It was the kind of newspaper that Samuel Clemens could work for with ease.

He was pleased to be associated with the Union and took his responsibility seriously. On the voyage over, he strove to acquire as much information about Hawaii as he could. He diligently questioned seamen and the Honolulu passengers, of whom several were well-informed missionary sons. Also he perused books on the islands, including a Hawaiian dictionary and phrase book.⁹

The Ajax arrived in Honolulu on March 18 at eleven-thirty in the morning, after a voyage of ten days and nineteen and one half hours. Clemens was well supplied with letters of

⁶Samuel Clemens, Sandwich Islands, p. viii.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Frear, Hawaii, p. 94.

⁹Ibid., p. 9.

introduction from his West Coast friends to prominent Honoluluans, most of whom had heard of him as a result of his journalism and his "Jumping Frog" story. They welcomed him warmly. He instantly loved the islands, an affection he continued all his life. He had planned to stay one month; he stayed four.

His sojourn was a period of activity during which Clemens investigated the various aspects of the islands. He spent the first month in Oahu, the next five weeks in Maui, the following three weeks in Hawaii, and the final month in Oahu.¹⁰ Nothing escaped his scrutiny. He took the trip about Oahu riding up the valleys of Nuuanu and Kalihi, visiting historical sites and soaking in the culture of the people. In Maui he gathered information on the sugar and coffee industries first hand on the plantations. On that island he also found time to visit the extinct volcano Mount Haleakala and the Wailuku Valley. He climaxed a tour of the island of Hawaii with a night visit to the crater of Kilauea, an active volcano. A reporter's good luck accompanied him on his travels: he was able to visit the Hawaiian legislature in session; he was on hand to witness the elaborate funeral of Princess Victoria; and he was able to scoop the other West Coast newspapers with his story on the burning of the clipper Hornet.

¹⁰Edgar M. Branch, The Literary Apprenticeship of Mark Twain (Urbana, 1950), p. 158.

Clemens wrote twenty-five letters for the Sacramento Daily Union on the Sandwich Islands. Three of them, concerning general Hawaiian trade, the sugar industry, and the whaling industry, were written specifically to fulfill his contract with the newspaper. Twenty-one of the letters were travel articles, filled with description, anecdotes, and topics of human interest. The other letter was the full massive report of the Hornet disaster. According to Walter Frear, "The Union made no fanfare over the publication of the letters."¹¹ When the first letter appeared, it was prefaced by this introduction: "We publish letters from special correspondents at Boston, New York, Washington, and Honolulu."¹² Some of the letters were given front page space, including the Hornet story. The dates on the letters cannot be trusted, because at least eight of them were published after Clemens' return to California, some being written then but dated earlier. For example, the last letter was published on November 16, but carried the date of his visit to the volcano, June 3.

Since Clemens was writing about scenes unfamiliar to himself and his readers, he felt intensely his responsibility as reporter. None of the background could be taken for granted; his reports had to be clear and accurate. DeLancey Ferguson notes that this realization put Clemens "on his mettle. It was not enough to see and feel things himself; he must make his readers see and feel them too. To this stimulus, more

¹¹Frear, Hawaii, p. 95.

¹²Ibid.

than to any other circumstance, must be ascribed the literary superiority of the Sandwich Islands letters over any of his previous work."¹³ Although the letters still contained flaws, they were truly far above any of his previous writings, both in literary achievement and in quality reporting. James J. Ayers, the editor of the Daily Hawaiian Herald at the time and Clemens' former employer on the San Francisco Call, recognized their merit. He noted that they "exhibited a novel and penetrating study of the native characters and displayed an acuteness of foresight as to the value of the islands to the United States as a naval outpost on the Pacific, which was instinct with prophetic acumen."¹⁴ Although Clemens had no predetermined plan for his writings, Edgar M. Branch observes that he had three purposes in mind for the papers:

He wanted to report Hawaiian industry and trade, with particular reference to American commercial enterprise. He wanted to explain the islands and their populations: the natives' surroundings and traditions, and their social and political life. Finally, he wanted to amuse his readers with the personal, sensational, and fictitious. In doing these things, he hoped to catch the already eager interest of Californians in the romantic islands.¹⁵

The structure of the letters was loose, informal, and well adapted to a varied content.¹⁶ For the first time in his newspaper writing, he had a kind of continuity in that he was

¹³DeLancey Ferguson, Mark Twain, Man and Legend (Indianapolis, 1943), p. 107. Hereafter cited as Ferguson, Man and Legend.

¹⁴Frear, Hawaii, p. 96.

¹⁵Branch, Apprenticeship, p. 161. ¹⁶Ibid., p. 179.

giving observations and impressions of a foreign people and land. He dramatized characters and incidents of his travel and information which he wished to convey. No longer was he concerned with contrived situations as he had been in his Nevada hoaxes and burlesques, for here in the islands wonders were readymade and his task was simply to record them.

Some of the weaknesses of his Nevada journalism are evident, however. The letters contained some examples of his crude humor, as when Brown lost everything he had eaten for three days after hearing Clemens sing. The description was also marred at times by Clemens' fumbling for words. Edgar M. Branch notes that "the writing became stiffly self-conscious as when he described the hula hula."¹⁷ As a whole, however, the letters were, as Walter Frear said, "both informing and entertaining, serious and light. They combined factual statements, beautiful descriptions, satire, burlesque, anecdote, and abounded in humor, not always, especially at first, of the highest order."¹⁸

The three trade papers were statistical reports, showing a diligent investigation and a serious attempt at thorough reporting. These articles, dealing with the industries of the islands and their economic potential, were specialized reports, semi-technical at times. Clemens presented his mass of data

¹⁷Ibid., p. 169.

¹⁸Frear, Hawaii, p. 96.

with clarity and force. These three letters are important in that they demonstrate his ability as a reporter, but they contribute nothing to the study of his development as a writer. They do show the growing maturity of Samuel Clemens as a sociologist and a moralist, dealing with international and class relationships in the commercial world.¹⁹ These trade letters, Branch says "reveal some of his working assumptions about the social order; they preface the emotional and factual content of later writing."²⁰

The two letters concerning the Hawaiian legislature were similar to his coverage of the Nevada Territorial Legislature. Again he criticized the faults of lawmaking bodies and the intelligence of the lawmakers: their manners were poor, their bills were foolish, and their procedure was haphazard. However, his satire was superficial in that he dealt mostly with surface matters and avoided profound social issues. He carefully avoided the relationship between the legislature and the powerful dominating ministers from the United States, England, and France. Perhaps he felt that travel letters should not be concerned with such domestic issues. Clemens did attack one minister, however, C. C. Harris from the United States. His attack was of a personal nature, not a political one. Clemens found absolutely nothing redeeming about Harris and continued his invective for years in his lectures.

¹⁹Branch, Apprenticeship, p. 173.

²⁰Ibid.

Clemens' letters were filled with picturesque descriptions of the physical beauty of the islands, but the subject that fascinated him most was the people. He commented on their appearance, their religion, their personalities, their legends, their history, their morals--their culture in general. He found them to possess "many excellent characteristics--splendid physique, rich brown color, hospitality, addiction to music, religion, and education, horsemanship, seamanship, expertness in the water, etc., as well as some uncommendable qualities--sexual weakness, trickiness in horse dealing, superstition, etc."²¹ He observed that the two strong characteristics were that the men would have saddles and horses and that the women would fornicate.²²

The Hawaiian language also fascinated him, and he thought it to be the most beautiful in the world. He peppered his articles with Hawaiian words, followed by an English phonetic pronunciation, so much that the Californians reading the letters felt that he could speak the language. Speaking of a forthcoming lecture in Sacramento several months later, the Union said: "Familiar as he is with the Kanaka tongue, he will on this occasion tell the story in his best California English."²³

²¹Frear, Hawaii, p. 33.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid., p. 11.

One characteristic of the letters which must be noted was Clemens' invention of a traveling companion, Brown. Brown first appeared in the Quintus Curtius Snodgrass papers and again briefly in a Californian sketch in 1865. In the Sandwich Islands correspondence he became a full flowered individual. He continued in the later travel letters from New York and Washington and on the Quaker City excursion. In the Sandwich Islands letters, he offers a kind of continuity that Clemens used in several ways. Brown uttered the vulgar comments about the unpleasant smells, the seasickness, the insects, and the other discomforts. Clemens was becoming aware of his crudities, but he could not give them up altogether yet. Therefore, Brown became the projection of the coarser side of Clemens' humor, while Clemens was pictured as having finer tastes and higher appreciations. Branch finds the men to be comic complements, "dramatizing in their constant exchanges a wide range of reaction to Hawaiian scenes and traditions."²⁴ Brown was also Clemens' satirical mouthpiece. Clemens voiced his disapproval of the pagan mourning rites through Brown's observations. It was Brown who ridiculed the absurdities of some of the native traditions and exposed the "false hero-worship in the Captain Cook legend."²⁵ But Brown is more than just a spokesman for Clemens' cruder reactions: he is a comic figure with rigid attitudes and distorted values.

²⁴Branch, Apprenticeship, p. 163.

²⁵Ibid.

Branch calls him a "callous, literal-minded materialist."²⁶ His eccentricities which are so vividly portrayed make him a comic figure. Clemens' skill at characterization was improving.

At the time he made this trip, Samuel Clemens was an experienced newspaper man capable of handling most situations with the self-assurance of a good reporter, but ironically his big scoop of the Hornet disaster was made possible by the efforts of Anson Burlingame, the United States minister to China. Burlingame, accompanied by his eighteen-year-old son, Edward, who later became the editor of Scribner's Magazine, stopped in Honolulu on his way to China. When his son heard that the editor of the "Jumping Frog" was in the city, he insisted on seeing him. Clemens, who was in bed suffering from saddle sores acquired on his recent trip to Hawaii, was embarrassed to be found in such a predicament, so he got up, dressed, and called on the Burlingames at their hotel. They were delighted with Clemens, and the minister recognized his great talent. He gave the writer advice which, according to Albert Bigelow Paine, greatly influenced Clemens.²⁷ After urging him to travel, Burlingame said: "You have great ability; I believe you have genius. What you need now is the refinement of association. Seek companionship among men of superior intellect and character. Refine yourself and your work.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 164.

²⁷ Paine, Biography, I, 287.

Never affiliate with inferiors; always climb."²⁸ The effect of this advice has probably been over emphasized because Clemens was already aspiring in the directions Burlingame suggested; but the minister was responsible for helping him with the Hornet story.

The Hornet, captained by Josiah A. Mitchell, was a fast clipper en route from New York to California with a full cargo, mostly of oil and candles--ship and cargo insured for \$400,000. Two brothers, Samuel and Henry Ferguson, aged twenty-eight and eighteen respectively, of Stamford, Connecticut, were the only two passengers. When a hundred and eight days out and a little above the equator on the Pacific side, one of the mates disregarded orders and went into the hole with an open light to draw some varnish. An explosion followed and fire quickly raced through the ship. The long boat and two quarter boats were lowered in such haste that two of them were stove in the process and had to be bailed out constantly. Provisions included navigation instruments, some tobacco and ten days' rations.²⁹ Four of the men were sick; and no extra clothing was taken except for the overcoats of the passengers. After a night of "superb fireworks,"³⁰ the men watched the ship, still in flames, sink at five in the morning, May 4, 1866. Provisions were

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Frear, Hawaii, p. 102.

³⁰ Ibid.

distributed and the boats set off in search of some islands they thought were near. Finally, they separated in the hope that one of the boats would reach land and send help for the others. The Captain commanded the long boat which also held the Fergusons. These three men kept diaries during the ordeal that followed. The other two boats, one commanded by the first mate and the other by the second mate, were never heard from again. Wind conditions prevented their seeking the nearest shores, so finally the long boat headed for the Sandwich Islands. On June 14, two days after the Captain's fifty-fourth birthday, a rainbow appeared at twilight, and the Captain saw it as a "bow of promise."³¹ The next day, after forty-three days and four thousand miles of sea, the men saw the summit of Mauna Kea of Laupahoehoe Island emerge through the clouds. Winds were beating the sea against the rocks of the island, and the men were too weak to change the course the boat was following. Two natives, seeing that the boat was being swept away, swam out, took control and directed the boat into a small bight in the rocks, the only landing place on that side of the island. The men were cared for on Laupahoehoe until they were strong enough to be moved to Hilo and then finally to the hospital in Honolulu. They, especially the Captain and the Ferguson brothers, were exuberant in their praise of the care they received in these three places.

³¹Frear, Hawaii, p. 105.

The news of their rescue spread quickly through the islands, and Clemens closed the fourteenth letter to the Union with a meager report of the disaster and the arrival of the survivors at Laupahoehoe, which he had visited just three days before their rescue. That letter also mentioned the arrival on the Islands of Burlingame and General Van Valkenburg, the United States minister to Japan.

When the first eleven men were moved to the Honolulu hospital, Clemens was again in bed himself. His haste to visit Burlingame had caused a relapse of suffering with the saddle sores. He realized the news importance of the event and he also knew that a vessel was leaving the next morning for San Francisco, but he was bedridden. Burlingame stepped in. He had Clemens carried to the hospital on a cot, escorted by the two ministers.³² As Burlingame interviewed the castaways who told him the details of their tragic experience, Clemens scribbled notes. He omitted dinner and stayed up all night, arranging his notes and writing the story. The next morning just as the Milton Badger floated away from the dock heading for the United States, a messenger hurled onto the deck a bulky envelope addressed to the Sacramento Daily Union. The Hornet story was on its way. A three-and-one-half-column article, it appeared on the front page of the July 19 issue of the Union and was declared a newspaper sensation. Clemens'

³² Paine, Biography, I, 286.

longest letter from the Sandwich Islands, it was copied far and wide and carried over the telegraph to other areas in the states. In the Bookman in 1910, Baily Millard said that "this occasion was really the only one on which Mark Twain distinguished himself as a newsgatherer and some of the old timers in California are still wondering how he did it."³³

The Hornet event was the kind that would appeal to Clemens' interest in human conduct and tragedy, and his version reflects this interest. Edgar Branch says, "He wrote as though he had a personal stake in understanding how men reacted under conditions of extreme hardship. The result is a narrative remarked by all the thoroughness and colorful detail that he could command in the short time at his disposal"³⁴ At the beginning of the letter, he set the stage through dramatic description of the fire and the resulting confusion. The remainder of the letter dealt with the men's efforts to stay alive, their personal reactions at sea, and finally their rescue by the natives. Clemens played down the thoughts of cannibalism and avoided the mutiny planned a few days before the rescue, but instead told a direct unsensational story, filled with convincing details "which permit emotional responses pitched at other keys."³⁵ He dramatized the hardships endured

³³Frear, Hawaii, pp. 110-111.

³⁴Branch, Apprenticeship, p. 171.

³⁵Ibid., p. 172.

by the men: their watching the ship sink, their strict rationing of food, their attempts to catch fish, their dreams of home, their shattered hopes. He praised the courage of the men, especially the leadership of Captain Mitchell and the conduct of the third mate and the Ferguson brothers. The letter was marred by flaws, most of which seem to be the result of hasty writing, but the story is effectively told. Branch observes:

The scrappy assembling of details in a few parts and some inappropriate humor are perhaps indications of the hurried composition. Nevertheless the story makes convincing use of physical and psychological detail. It still carries the original sense of urgency, and it has a power of climax. The letter is one of Mark's best accomplishments in dramatic reporting.³⁶

On July 19, Clemens sailed for California on the Smyrnoite, arriving in San Francisco on August 3. Also on the ship headed for the United States were several of the Hornet survivors, including Captain Mitchell and the Fergusons. Clemens spent a great deal of time talking to these men and copying their diaries. He used this additional information for a magazine article which appeared in Harper's New Monthly Magazine in December, 1866, with the signature, "Mark Swain." Upon arriving in Sacramento, he visited the office of the Union and told its proprietors that he thought he deserved a bonus for the Hornet story. They agreed and asked him how much he thought

³⁶Ibid., p. 173.

it was worth. He jokingly replied, "Oh, I'm a modest man; I don't want the whole Union office. Call it a hundred dollars a column."³⁷ Everyone in the office laughed, but the Union met his proposal. In "My Debut As A Literary Person," Clemens said that the cashier almost fainted when he presented his bill for payment.

After his four months in the islands, Clemens found San Francisco to be dreary, and he dreaded the idea of resuming his daily newspaper correspondence. He declared later that he was so despondent he even put a pistol to his head but did not have the courage to pull it.³⁸ In Roughing It he said the reason for his unhappiness was lack of employment, but that seems unlikely. He returned to California a famous reporter because of his Sandwich Islands letters and especially because of the Hornet story. Almost any newspaper on the Coast would have been proud to add him to its staff. Joseph Goodman would certainly have welcomed his correspondence again. The truth is probably that Clemens had been spoiled by his leisurely four months in the Islands and did not want to return to the drudgery of daily letter writing. He decided he could use the Sandwich Islands material for a series of magazine articles which could ultimately become a book, but he had to live while he wrote. That's when he conceived the idea of a lecture.

³⁷Paine, Biography, I, 289.

³⁸Ferguson, Man and Legend, p. 111.

When he mentioned the possibility of lecturing on Hawaii to John McComb, editor of the Alta California, McComb thought it splendid and suggested that Clemens rent the largest theatre in the city, Maguire's Academy of Music. Clemens prepared his lecture and advertised it with the famous handbill which closed: "Doors open at 7 o'clock. The trouble to begin at 8 o'clock."³⁹

On October 2, 1866, seven weeks after his return to California, Samuel Clemens stepped onto a stage before a vast auditorium that was packed, even the aisles, with a sea of faces and applauding hands. At first, stage fright seized him, and he mumbled the first few words. Then he realized these people were his friends, and he began to embrace the crowd, which reacted enthusiastically to his humor and his presentation. Thus, Mark Twain launched a lecturing career. It began as an outgrowth of his Western journalism, and it too would have a great influence on his later writing. Through Clemens' attempting to perfect his stage presentation, Ferguson notes,

he began the process of infusing into his writing the charm of his drawling speech. Where his writing was crude or stiff, the test of oral utterance exposed the weakness and taught him how to mend it. Though time was still needed to make his finished utterance second nature, his apprenticeship to the craft of letters was complete.⁴⁰

³⁹Ibid., p. 112.

⁴⁰Ibid.

Clemens did some newspaper writing after returning from the islands. At least five articles other than the contracted correspondence for the Union appeared in Western publications. The Virginia City Territorial Enterprise published a "Card to the Highwayman," after Samuel was robbed as a joke by some of his friends following a lecture in that city. Another was his farewell letter to the editor of the Alta California as he departed for the East. The San Francisco Bulletin published on November 30, December 6 and December 7, three travel letters called "Interior Notes," which were reports of communities he visited on his lecture tour through the mining districts.⁴¹

Another article called "A Strange Dream" was published in the New York Saturday Press on June 2, 1866, and was reprinted in the Californian on July 7, 1866. Dated April 1 to indicate that it was intended as a spoof, the story concerned a search under spirit guidance for the bones of the great Kamehameha in the bowels of the volcano Kilauea. Supposedly it was dreamed and written at the Volcano House because it was recorded in the register there, but the story appeared in the Saturday Press one day before Clemens arrived at the volcano.

Clemens sent one letter to the Daily Hawaiian Herald after his return to the states. The letter was dated San Francisco,

⁴¹Ivan Benson, Mark Twain's Western Years (Stanford, 1938), p. 149.

September 24, and told of the arrival of Queen Emma and her suite in the California city. In this correspondence, Clemens also recorded the fact that John Quincy Adams (Alphabet) Warren, formerly of the islands, had snubbed him in Sacramento. He closed the letter with a vicious attack on Whitney, the editor of the Commercial Advisor of Honolulu. Claiming to be extremely hungry, he purposed to return immediately to the Islands to eat Whitney because the editor had accused him of failing to write the truth about the islands and for stealing Father Damon's book on the History of the Islands. Whitney, angered by Clemens' ridicule of the government official, Harris, had attacked Clemens on the day of his departure, but his comments on Clemens were mild indeed compared to the reply.

Although his magazine articles on the Sandwich Islands did not materialize, Clemens did use his travel letters for part of a book. Five years later, when he needed some material to fill out Roughing It to the required length for a subscription book, he devoted sixteen chapters to his visit to Hawaii. From the ninety thousand words of the Union correspondence, he used thirty thousand in Roughing It and added about five thousand. Most of what he included from the newspaper letters was unchanged or altered slightly. What few changes do occur seem to have been caused by a desire to smooth the writing. The crude Brown, however, was left out. Many of the spirited critical sections were omitted, and some very good descriptive sections were left out, probably for lack of room. No new

subjects were introduced. The additional material simply presented fuller details. For example, the main story of the voyage was told in Roughing It, as well as more information on the nighttime adventure at the volcano.

In December of 1866, after a successful lecture tour of the West including a reunion with his Nevada friends, Samuel Clemens left San Francisco and headed east. He had acquired a commission from the Alta California for travel letters from around the world, but he was going east to visit his family first. Although for several years to come he claimed San Francisco as his residence, he was never again to be at home there. He had left the West as a journalist and soon would become a writer for the world.

The Sandwich Islands letters were the end of Samuel Clemens' Western journalism. They were the turning point in his career: they proved to him that he could earn his living as a travel writer. Although he did not know it at the time, they actually set the pattern for his later travel books.⁴² The letters were his first sustained effort at writing. They had a uniform purpose and a continuity of subject. Consequently, they represent a degree of achievement that Clemens had not previously reached in his short, unrelated stories. The Sandwich Islands letters represent a transition from his cruder

⁴²Ferguson, Man and Legend, p. 111.

early attempts to his more refined and eloquent writings.⁴³ Also, they introduced him to a new people and a new culture, consequently broadening his outlook and perception. His ambition found new horizons. "In this new and auspicious environment Mark Twain was thinking himself out and was finding himself,"⁴⁴ says Walter Frear. The letters prepared him for the Quaker City trip which ultimately resulted in Innocents Abroad. They also brought him fame and indirectly introduced him to a new lucrative profession--that of lecturer. Samuel Clemens had good reasons for loving the Sandwich Islands--not only did they charm him with their beauty but they influenced another thrust forward in his career as Mark Twain.

⁴³Frear, Hawaii, p. viii.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 98.

CHAPTER V

TRAVELING CORRESPONDENT

Samuel L. Clemens was thirty-one years old when on December 15, 1866, he sailed from San Francisco for the East. He had completed five and one half years of varied experience in the West. He had come in 1861 with skills in printing and piloting. After completing apprenticeships as miner, reporter and lecturer, he was leaving as a seasoned newspaper man on a special assignment. Little did he know that this special correspondence would indirectly launch him into another kind of writing career. As a travel writer for the Alta California of San Francisco, Samuel Clemens intended to take a trip around the world after he visited his family. Well-known for his humor and his satire since the Nevada days, Clemens had solidified his reputation as a responsible reporter and keen observer with the Sandwich Island letters, and particularly with the Hornet scoop. Thus, the Alta editors were willing to invest in his travel letter scheme. In a lead article, the newspaper noted his departure, concluding:

"Mark Twain" goes off on his journey over the world as the Traveling Correspondent of the Alta, not stinted as to time, place, or direction--writing his weekly letters on such subjects and from such places as will best suit him. . . . That his

letters will be read with interest needs no assurance from us--his reputation has been made here in California, and his great ability is well known; but he has been known principally as a humorist, while he really has no superior as a descriptive writer--a keen observer of men and their surroundings--and we feel confident his letters to the Alta, from his new field of observation, will give him a world-wide reputation.¹

Even the Alta editors could not realize how prophetic this last statement would prove to be.

From January 18 to August 18, 1867, twenty-six letters appeared in the Alta California from Mark Twain. Seven concerned the voyage East, two came from St. Louis, and the remaining seventeen concerned the sights of New York City. This mass of correspondence is known today as the American Travel Letters, Series I.²

The trip to the East was an eventful one. Just out of San Francisco, a brief tempest hit the steamer, the America, captained by Ned Wakeman, whom Clemens used later in several stories. The storm was of such an intensity, the passengers stirred from their berths to the decks praying. After crossing the Nicaragua Isthmus, Clemens changed ships at Greytown and sailed from there on the San Francisco on

¹Philip S. Foner, Mark Twain, Social Critic (New York, 1958), p. 23.

²Edgar M. Branch, The Literary Apprenticeship of Mark Twain (Urbana, Illinois, 1950), p. 189. Hereafter cited as Branch, Apprenticeship.

January 1, 1867. Two cases of Asiatic cholera were reported in the steerage the next day. Three deaths occurred before the ship reached Key West, Florida, on January 6. Strangely enough, the ship was not quarantined, and twenty-one passengers, accompanied by Clemens' vivid condemnation, deserted the vessel. The idea of deserting apparently never occurred to him. Two more deaths occurred before the San Francisco reached New York. Clemens was furious when a few days later he read in a New York newspaper a company denial that cholera had been evident on the ship. The deaths supposedly were caused by tropical fruits.

Clemens' letters of the voyage and his first two months in New York were vivid, amusing accounts of his impressions. His fictitious traveling companion of the Sandwich Islands, Brown, reappeared in these letters and continued to serve as a humorous vulgar contrast to Clemens' sentimentality. For instance, Brown, whose sweetheart picked her nose with a fork, suggested that the Nicaraguan maidens would no longer be enticing if one prospected them with a fine tooth comb. He remained a "bitter enemy to sentiment."³

Clemens' first letters from New York mirror his shock at the growth of the city. He complained bitterly of the traffic,

³Samuel L. Clemens, Mark Twain's Travels With Mr. Brown, edited by Franklin Walker and G. Ezra Dane, (New York, 1940), p. 5. Hereafter cited as Samuel Clemens, Mr. Brown.

the street numbering system, the transportation, the inhuman attitude of the people, the tradesmen and the prices. He reported that the newspapers of the city were filled with murders, trials, and sensational divorce cases.⁴ Beggars dotted the streets, and city residents complained of the voting habits of downstaters. Women's fashions were very distressing, especially the waterfall hairdress. Clemens told the Californians that the fashion had progressed from what looked like a bladder of Scotch snuff, to something resembling a canvas-covered ham, then to a counterfeit turnip on the back of the head, and now stuck straight out like a wire muzzle on a greyhound.⁵ The latest style in dresses, a wide hem ruffle of red or black, was "bewitching enough to set a man wild."⁶ These letters show an effort to adjust to a familiar city changed by growth.

In his last letter to the Alta before departing for a family visit in St. Louis in early March, Clemens devoted considerable space to the announcement of a sight-seeing voyage to Europe and the Holy Land. A first in pleasure excursions, the trip was to consist of a select group of individuals, led by Henry Ward Beecher, who would use the Quaker City, a side-wheel ocean steamship, as their home as they

⁴Walter Blair, "Mark Twain, New York Correspondent," American Literature, XI (November, 1939), 249. Hereafter cited as Blair, "New York Correspondent."

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

took short overland trips through Europe and the Holy Land. General William T. Sherman and the actress, Maggie Mitchell, were rumored as among the prospective passengers. In his letter to the Alta, Clemens spoke of booking his passage, subject to veto from the Alta owners. Noah Brooks who was managing editor of the newspaper at the time, recorded later that the proprietors were dubious of the scheme. Col. John McComb, however, spoke so highly of Clemens that he convinced the others that the trip was a sound investment.⁷ They published Clemens' letter about the excursion with this editor's note in brackets: "No veto. He has been telegraphed to 'go ahead.'⁸ They paid his entire passage of \$1,250 and contracted with him for a series of letters about the trip at twenty dollars apiece, the same price they were paying for his letters from the East.

Early in March of 1867, he traveled to St. Louis to visit his family. In the six weeks before his return to New York, he lectured twice in St. Louis, once each in Hannibal, Keokuk, and Quincy, and wrote two letters to the Alta California. Although dated March 15 and 25, these letters did not appear until May 13 and 19, because, no doubt, of the slow mail service. G. Ezra Dane and Franklin Walker observed that the

⁷Noah Brooks, "Mark Twain in California," Century, LVII (November, 1898), 98. Hereafter cited as Brooks, "California."

⁸DeLancey Ferguson, Mark Twain, Man and Legend (Indianapolis, 1943), p. 118. Hereafter cited as Ferguson, Man and Legend.

"account of the visit home to Missouri is valuable in giving an idea of rail travel in the mid-sixties, in presenting postwar St. Louis, still divided into enemy camps, and in reflecting the changes brought about by the shift from water to rail transportation."⁹

While in St. Louis, Clemens caused a row with a series of articles on women's suffrage, professing that the woman's desire for the vote made it "time for all good men to tremble for their country."¹⁰ Besides discussing female suffrage in his May 19 letter to the Alta, he published three articles on the subject in the St. Louis Daily Missouri Democrat and one in the New York Sunday Mercury. His first satirical attack charged that if women were given the vote, they would neglect everything to run for "State Milliner."¹¹ Pretending he had a wife, he objected greatly for fear his family would "go to destruction; for I am not qualified for a wet nurse."¹² As he had done on the Hannibal Journal, Clemens wrote an indignant reply to his own letter, signed by Mrs. Mark Twain, Mrs. Zeb Leavenworth, and Miss Augusta Josephine Maitland, all ardent feminists. After calling him a variety of unpleasant names, like "wretch," "whelp" and "flippant ass," Mrs. Leavenworth, the "Originator and President of the Association for the

⁹Samuel Clemens, Mr. Brown, p. 7.

¹⁰Branch, Apprenticeship, p. 191.

¹¹Ibid.

Establishment of a Female College in Kamsohatka," promised to snatch out his hair until he should be "as bald as a phrenological bust."¹³ Because of his opinions, his own wife, the "Secretary of the Society for Introducing the Gospel into New Jersey," supposedly "combed him with a piano stool."¹⁴ A legislature dominated by women was the subject of the third St. Louis sketch. One male lawmaker was lynched, and the others were not allowed to participate in the discussions which centered on restrictive measures for husbands. Clemens probably penned these letters, not out of true conviction, but because he recognized the subject to be ideal for satire. Before leaving for St. Louis, he had been favorably impressed by a speech by Miss Anne Dickinson at the Cooper Institute in New York, in which the well-known feminist uttered an eloquent plea for new types of work for women. Regardless of his reasons, Clemens caused quite a stir in St. Louis.

Upon his return to New York, he went to the Quaker City headquarters to book passage and discovered that the Alta California had already done so. Since the ship did not leave until June, he set about amusing himself and fulfilling his obligation to the San Francisco newspaper. The seventeen letters he penned from New York vividly display the city of 1867 because they are an account of the adventures of an experienced journalist in the process of rediscovering a city.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

Feeling his position as paid observer, Clemens tried to cover all aspects of New York life which he felt would be of interest to the broad section of California readers. In the variety of subjects and the narrative structure, the letters do not differ much from the Sandwich Islands correspondence. Brown continued to insert his realistic comments into the midst of Clemens' factual and descriptive material, but Clemens seems less concerned with Brown's dramatics than with recording the bustle of New York life.

His meandering took him to an assortment of places, and he described all the entertainments of the city from the low theatricals to the churches. At the Century Club, he estimated that the average member wore a size eleven hat; he posed as a king at the Bal d'Opera in the new Academy of Music; he enjoyed the antique New England jokes at a Nantucket reunion he wandered into.¹⁵ He frequented the Traveller's Club¹⁶ where he listened to the tall tales of the members and probably spun a few of his own. On Sundays, he started attending Henry Ward Beecher's church, which was always filled to capacity. Clemens described in detail the physical appearance of Beecher, his eloquent sermons, and his dramatic presentation. When

¹⁵Blair, "New York Correspondent," p. 251.

¹⁶Ibid.

Beecher started parading and stomping his foot three times to emphasize a point, Clemens was sure that one clap would have started the house in applause; he had a "suffocating desire"¹⁷ to slap his hands together to see the outcome.

His nighttime amusements included a visit to Harry Hill's Club House, near Broadway, where Clemens and his friends watched couples whirl in a "giddy waltz" and read the moralistic signs on the wall: "People Who Are Drunk Must Leave the Premises" and "All Sociable--No Lovers Allowed."¹⁸ The top billed entertainer for the evening was a young male dancer in a Highland costume who, according to Clemens, ought "to have danced modestly because he had nothing in the wide world on but a short coat and stockings. This was apparent every time he whirled around."¹⁹ Clemens reported the new system of reserving seats at the most expensive theatres, most of which provided the best entertainment of the city including some acts from the Pacific Coast. The cheap theatres were frequented by the apprentices of New York, who, to the delight of Samuel Clemens, "applauded ranting speeches furiously and scornfully howled down sentimental passages."²⁰ Not all of the theatrical productions aroused Clemens' praise; in fact, he was shocked by the production of The Black Crook. Clemens claimed to be still blushing when he wrote that the play included seventy

¹⁸Ibid., p. 257.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 257-258.

²⁰Ibid., p. 255.

clipper-built beauties "displaying all possible compromises between nakedness and decency."²¹ He also highly disapproved of Sallie Hinkley who in the last act of another play made a statue of herself and "stood aloft, about as naked as she could be."²²

The famous Barnum's Museum was also a subject for Clemens' criticism. The whole display was "dirty, moth-eaten, and tawdry"²³ and abounded in peanut stands and impudent Negro servants sweeping up hulls. He found the freaks unexciting; and when he heard that one was missing, he quipped that it had probably been moved to make room for another peanut vendor. The Christian Martyr, the play being presented on the Museum stage was also a disappointment because in the last act when the martyr was tossed into the cage, the two lions were asleep. Although the martyr punched the lions and cursed them under his breath, the animals would not "forget that they preferred fresh beef to martyrs."²⁴ An art show at the Academy of Design prompted Clemens to make the remark: "I am glad that the old masters are all dead, and I only wish they had died sooner."²⁵ He found the Academy building itself to look like a "preposterous stable, invented by some vulgar sporting man who has grown suddenly rich."²⁶ He was also infuriated when

²¹Ibid., p. 257.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid., p. 255.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid., p. 254.

²⁶Ibid.

he saw Stewart's Palace on Fifth Avenue, "the noblest street in America."²⁷ The building destroyed the cheer of the avenue, making people think of "the grave, and death, and the hereafter."²⁸

Clemens, on the whole, liked the people of New York City, but he was indignant over the poverty and depression of the lower classes. Upon spending a night in jail for disorderly conduct, he alternated between rage and desperation as he talked to the derelicts in his company. The congested slums of the city were prime for an outbreak of cholera, he warned. He commented on many of the urban problems caused by the shifting class relationships, by the absorption into civilian life of the Civil War veterans, and by the mounting crime wave.²⁹

He found a goodly number of his California friends in New York; and always mindful of his reading audience, he included notes about them in his dispatches to the Alta. A large number of these people were popular entertainers of the West Coast who had gone East in search of greater fame. Others were former editors like Joe Lawrence of the Golden Era and Inigo Webb of the Californian. Still others were Comstock

²⁷Ibid., p. 256.

²⁸Branch, Apprenticeship, p. 190.

²⁹Ibid.

friends who traveled to the city out of curiosity as Clemens had done at age eighteen. Regardless of their status, they were good copy for the Western readers. Occasionally, Clemens would contrast California with New York; and as he adjusted to the pace of the eastern city, quite often it received the more favorable endorsement. For instance, although the New York weather made him angry at times, he decided he preferred it to that of San Francisco because it at least provided variety instead of being eternally fair.

In his final letter to the Alta before sailing on the Quaker City, he reviewed what he had written about New York, claiming that he had done the town from end to end. Truly, he had covered the major aspects of the teeming city life and its assortment of entertainments. These letters tell much about the business of New York in the sixties. Informal and personal, they are accurate reports and repeat the haphazard manner of his travel letters to the Sandwich Islands. They include vivid descriptions, a great deal of humor, and a generous amount of social comment. But, as Edgar Branch notes, Clemens "lacked the incentive and the fresh expectations that had counted so heavily in his Hawaiian correspondence."³⁰ He was eager to leave for Europe; he seems to have looked upon the letters simply as a routine assignment and felt enthusiasm in composing them. As he prepared for his departure on the

³⁰Ibid., p. 189.

Quaker City, he described them as "the stupidest letters . . . ever written from New York."³¹ His own evaluation seems too harsh, but the correspondence does lack the freshness of the earlier travel letters.

While in New York, Clemens wrote a number of burlesques for eastern and midwestern journals, in addition to his Alta California articles. These were probably written primarily for pocket money because they are not distinctive in style. Five of them appeared in the New York Sunday Mercury: "The Winner of the Medal" on March 3, "A Curtain Lecture Concerning Skating" on March 17, "Barbarous" on March 24, "Official Physic" on April 21, and "A Reminiscence of Artemus Ward" on July 7.³² "'Mark Twain' on Barnum" appeared in the New York Express before being reprinted in the Alta California on April 10.³³ "Cruelty to Strangers" appeared in the St. Louis Daily Republican on March 17.³⁴ After Clemens had sailed, the New York Sunday Mercury published on July 14, 1867, "Jim Wolf and the Tom-Cats," which was his first use of a memory of his childhood.³⁵ This story could easily have appeared in The Adventures of Tom Sawyer and shows his first literary awareness of his past as potential story material.

³¹Ibid., p. 190.

³²Ibid., p. 301.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid., p. 193.

On Saturday, June 8, the Quaker City, captained by C. C. Duncan, sailed from its New York pier only to anchor until Monday in the harbor because of a storm in the Atlantic. At the time of sailing in 1867, the Quaker City, registered at nineteen hundred tons, was just over thirteen years old. She had served briefly with the Collins lines for North Atlantic service between New York and Liverpool and then later as a supply ship during the Civil War.³⁶ Ten knots, with twelve for short periods, was her service speed. She was one of the early ocean paddle-wheel steamers which could not rely wholly on steam for long distances; thus, fore and aft she carried fully rigged masts.³⁷ Her cabins were large but not luxurious, and the entire ship sported a new coat of paint.

The passengers numbered seventy-six, including the captain's family and Bloodgood H. Cutter, a Long Island farmer who rowed out about noon Monday as the ship was gathering steam to leave. Beecher, General Sherman, and Miss Mitchell were not on board. Among the other contributing journalists were Moses E. Beach, proprietor of the New York Sun, with his daughter Emma; Mrs. Mary Mason Fairbanks, wife of the owner of the Cleveland Herald; and Mrs. Solon L. Severance with her husband. Mrs.

³⁶Dewey Ganzel, Mark Twain Abroad, Cruise of "The Quaker City" (Chicago, 1968), p. 11. Hereafter cited as Ganzel, Twain Abroad.

³⁷Ibid., p. 12.

Stephen Griswold later published a book on the excursion, as Clemens did. Clemens' "splendid, immoral, tobacco-smoking, wine-drinking, godless rommate,"³⁸ as the correspondent described him, was Dan Slote of New York City. Other passengers who became Clemens' companions on the various inland excursions included John A. Van Nostrand of New York; Dr. A. Reeve Jackson, the ship's surgeon; Colonel W. R. Denny of Virginia; J. W. Davis of New York; Julius Moulton of St. Louis; and Dr. G. B. Birch of Hannibal, Ohio. Dr. E. Andrews of Albany became known as the Oracle, and Cutter was tagged the Poet Larriat [sic]. Among the passengers was eighteen-year-old Charles J. Langdon of Elmira, New York, the son of a wealthy coal merchant. Although young Langdon was not Clemens' intimate on this voyage, he influenced Clemens' future by showing the journalist an ivory miniature of his sister Olivia. Clemens supposedly was struck instantly by the beauty and refinement of the young woman and eventually married her in February of 1870.

A complete itinerary of all the places Clemens toured would be impossible here. In summary, he visited Horta on Fayal Island in the Azores, Gibraltar, Tangier, Marseilles, Paris, Versailles, Genoa, Milan, Lake Como, Venice, Florence, Pisa, Leghorn, Civita Vecchia, Rome, Naples, Athens (illegally

³⁸Samuel L. Clemens, Traveling With the Innocents Abroad, edited by Daniel Morley McKeithan (Norman, Oklahoma, 1958), p. viii. Hereafter cited as Samuel Clemens, Traveling.

at night since the ship had been quarantined), Constantinople, Sebastopol, Odessa, Yalta, Smyrna, Syria, and Palestine (traveling from Beirut to Jerusalem by horseback in the scorching summer heat), Egypt, Spain, and Bermuda.

Although it was a pleasure trip for Clemens, filled with new sights and adventures, his travel writing involved plenty of hard work. Once the ship reached Horta, he became a reporter rather than just a passenger. The Alta California had paid him in advance for fifty letters, and he had agreed to send at least twenty more to the New York Tribune. Through a sub rosa agreement, the New York Herald expected a few also.³⁹ Therefore, Clemens intended to write at least seventy-five letters, or approximately four a week for the twenty weeks remaining after the group reached Europe. Time to write became a major problem. He had virtually no free time because when he was not touring, he was scribbling. Unable to write while traveling on land, Clemens would lock himself in his cabin and write furiously when back on board ship. For instance, in the two days after the Quaker City left Gibraltar, he wrote over 7500 words to the Alta about Gibraltar and Tangier.⁴⁰ Bloodgood

³⁹Dewey Ganzel, "Samuel Clemens, Sub Rosa Correspondent," English Language Notes, I (June, 1964), 270.

⁴⁰Ganzel, Twain Abroad, p. 87.

Cutter remembered him to be curt and ungracious to interrupters when he was writing.⁴¹ Clemens' obligation was compounded when in Alexandria he learned that fourteen of his letters to the Alta had miscarried and had to be replaced. Because of the time element, he had not made copies of the originals. Such literary requirements made great demands on his talent.⁴² Although the letters have a casual tone, the writing was not easy. Clemens was a conscious artist, despite what some critics may state, and he was writing for a special audience. Thus, the references to California, which some critics have charged as weaknesses in his letters, were made deliberately since he realized his editors would expect such local interest items. The fact that Clemens called the letters "newspaper matter, not book matter,"⁴³ indicates that he knew what he was doing.

Clemens met his quota for the Alta California, contributing fifty-three letters to their pages. These articles were headed thus:

⌈Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1867, by Fred'k MacCrellish and Co., in the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the District of California.⌋

⁴¹Ferguson, Man and Legend, p. 120.

⁴²Ganzel, Twain Abroad, p. 61.

⁴³Ibid.

THE HOLY LAND EXCURSION.

LETTER FROM "MARK TWAIN."

[SPECIAL TRAVELLING CORRESPONDENT OF THE ALTA.]⁴⁴

The number of the letter and a list of subjects treated in it usually followed.⁴⁵ The letters would usually average about two columns nonpareil each, which is approximately four thousand words each.⁴⁶ Disregarding the copyrights on the letters, other California newspapers reprinted them after they appeared in the Sunday Alta. Noah Brooks recalled that Clemens' letters were not exactly the "talk of the town; but it was very rarely that readers of the paper did not come into the office on Mondays to confide to the editors their admiration of the writer and their enjoyment of his weekly contributions."⁴⁷

Clemens' ambitions were evident as he prepared his correspondence. Before the Quaker City sailed, he had told Mortimer Neal Thomason, a humorist who wrote under the name of Philander Q. Doesticks, that he was planning to write a book about the trip "if there is any book matter there."⁴⁸

⁴⁴Samuel Clemens, Traveling, p. ix.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. x.

⁴⁶Albert Bigelow Paine, Mark Twain, A Biography, (New York, 1912), I, 331. Hereafter cited as Paine, Biography.

⁴⁷Brooks, "California," p. 98.

⁴⁸Justin Kaplan, Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain (New York, 1966), p. 37. Hereafter cited as Kaplan, Clemens and Twain.

He had investigated the economics of subscription publishing and decided that was the kind of book writing he would do since there was no sense in writing a book if it did not earn a good deal of money.⁴⁹ He kept this possible undertaking in mind as he composed.

Clemens had two purposes in his correspondence: to recount the trip for American readers and to entertain those readers by commenting in an amusing manner on what he saw. In fulfilling these purposes, he kept his audience foremost in mind. Once again, as in his Sandwich Islands travels, he was concerned with subjects which were unreal to his readers, and in a great sense, unreal to him too. The stories circulating in the United States about Europe and the Middle East were cloaked in romance, fantasy, and illusion. Even the guidebooks which he scoured for statistical information spoke of the romance of these foreign shores rather than the hard reality of travel. Clemens understood how his audience viewed such subjects because he saw them in the same light; therefore, the tasks of accurate reporting and satirical comment were difficult.

His accounts were not encyclopedic in information; they were filled with experience. The consciousness of the narrator and his reactions were foremost in the writing; thus, the letters contain a vividness, a freshness, an expectancy, an appeal that

⁴⁹Ibid.

other travel letters of the period and of the voyage did not have. For instance, in writing of Genoa, Clemens included few of the tourist attractions he visited. The Castellaccio, the Palazzo Doria, the Palazzo Rosso and the Palazzo Municipale--all of which he visited-- were ignored completely. Instead, the Genoese women and their immense beauty, the beggars who retrieved his cigars from the gutters, and his obnoxious guide claimed his attention.⁵⁰ His zest for experience and for fun was evident. He satirized the churches and art galleries of Europe because he refused to pretend to admire something he did not understand.⁵¹ But as he amused his California readers with mockery of the cultures of other peoples, he was, as DeLancey Ferguson points out,

genuinely and profoundly impressed by the continuity of human experience when it was so expressed that he could visualize Whatever he could translate into terms of his own life came alive for him.

Sometimes, for all his mockery, this tendency brought him closer to the truth than the starry-eyed reverence of more conventional pilgrims. He constantly visualized the stories of Scripture in terms of the ragged and verminous vagabonds whom he found inhabiting the holy places in 1867. It was not reverent, but it was probably nearer reality than the odorless reports of the pious. And his readers ate it up.⁵²

Clemens found the structure for his letters in the progress of the travels. He tried desperately to make his reader a

⁵⁰ Ganzel, Twain Abroad, p. 123.

⁵¹ Ferguson, Man and Legend, p. 124.

⁵² Ibid.

companion to his experience by writing letters as soon after the events described as possible so that the immediacy of the occasion would come through. Because of the rigors of travel, his composition did not always follow immediately the events he was discussing, but he still attempted to incorporate a sense of spontaneity.

Guidebook information of the dimensions, the age, the history, and the significance of the tourist attractions dominated most travel letters of the period. They were mainly stilted, unrealistic accounts of what the places of interest should mean to visitors; consequently, these travel articles sounded alike. Clemens' were different, however. By concentrating on impression and experience rather than tourist attractions, Clemens presented a strictly American point of view. His letters reveal a typical American tourist who relates his trip in the light of his American attitudes. Dewey Ganzel observes that "Clemens was one of the first to embody in his account a national consciousness no longer restrained by geographical isolation and cultural adolescence, a consciousness intellectually vital and magnificently brash, the evidence of America's coming of age."⁵³ For example, when he wrote of Tangier, he was speaking of a locale which was historically ancient. His life had been spent in frontiers: he had been born in an area just a generation old and had

⁵³Ganzel, Twain Abroad, p. 32.

grown up in the "youngest part of the youngest country of the world."⁵⁴ Thus, he reflected the self-consciousness of a typical American traveler when he wrote of Tangier: "It seems like profanation to laugh, and jest, and bandy the frivolous chat of our day amid its hoary relics. Only the stately phraseology and measured speech of the sons of the Prophet are suited to a venerable antiquity like this."⁵⁵ A new sense of perception grew as he trooped through ancient lands. "There is a crumbling wall that was old when Columbus discovered America,"⁵⁶ he wrote. His American sensitivity is evident in his account of the pilgrims' audience with the Czar and Czarina of Russia, who were "politeness itself and the genuine article."⁵⁷ He did not even ridicule the actions of the pilgrims, which offered a perfect subject for his satirical comment. At the time he could not see the comedy in their awe and their elaborate strutting; his own feelings were too similar for ridicule. The definite American tone in his observations was partly responsible for the popularity of the travel letters and The Innocents Abroad.

Clemens did not confine himself to factual experience; nor did he record every significant event of the voyage. He knew his California audience; therefore, his letters are peppered with fictitious little tales based, for the most

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 92.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 201.

part, on fact. Sometimes these little dramas were written for the purpose of injecting into his letters some information or personal opinions which experience alone did not readily suggest. Often, he simply felt that his letters needed a dramatic amusing tone to liven the material. Also, some geographical areas would have no interest for his readers unless, through humor, he showed some intrinsic value. Thus, he had no qualms about exaggerating or fabricating an event. He was writing for a special audience which he understood.

Again briefly, Clemens made comic use of his traveling companion, Brown. In the early Quaker City letters, Brown was just as asinine as he had been in the Sandwich Island dispatches and the American Travel series. He belittled the art of the old masters as he had done in New York and said he knew a painter on the coast who could produce a picture forty feet long in two weeks that would be better than the Titian he was viewing.⁵⁸ With a great deal of effort, Mark Twain found a dog with which to test the gases at the Grotto del Cane; but after smelling Brown's breath the animal laid down and died.⁵⁹ In the first letter to the Tribune, Clemens created a person with Brown's personality, but named Blucher. Clemens used the Brown-Blucher combination to express his own ribald nature, but his use of this comic standin was brief

⁵⁸Ferguson, Man and Legend, p. 121.

⁵⁹Ibid.

and incidental in these letters. Blucher appeared only in the one letter to the Tribune. In the last half of the letters, less burlesque comedy of the type which would include Brown-Blucher appeared. When it did, Clemens often used the growing personality of the literary Mark Twain to express what in New York Brown would have uttered. The persona of Mr. Twain assumed some of Brown's bad taste as was shown in his vehemently Protestant mockery of relics, and his skepticism regarding miracles.⁶⁰ That Clemens was able to dismiss the device of Brown shows that he was growing confident in his ability to express what he thought as his own.

For comic effect, Clemens often deflated the typical American attitudes toward the subject of his discussion. For example, after identifying the Venetian gondola as the "fairy boat in which the princely cavaliers of the olden times were wont to cleave the waters of the moonlit canals and look the eloquence of love into the soft eyes of patrician beauties," he said that in reality the craft was "an inky, rusty, old canoe with a sable hearse-body clapped onto the middle of it."⁶¹ Also, the gondolier's singing was so nerve-shattering that Clemens threatened to throw him overboard. He used this technique especially in his dispatches about the Holy Land.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Henry Nash Smith, Mark Twain: The Development of a Writer (Cambridge, 1962), p. 31. Hereafter cited as Smith, Development of a Writer.

Of course, by the time he got to Palestine, he was accustomed to seeing new lands and new people and much of the wide-eyed wonder that was evident in the early letters was missing. Even some of the most pious travelers, he remarked, had become "a little glassy-eyed."⁶² The very difficult overland trip through the Holy Land, made usually in the wee hours of the morning so as to avoid the intense heat of midday, may have had some effect on his mocking attitude. By this time, he was tired of sight-seeing, disgusted with the pilgrims, and very unromantic about the filth and poverty of the Promised Land. Therefore, he unleashed his discontent in irreverent ridicule and mockery of holy lands and articles. A coat of paint would do wonders for Palestine, he thought. Moses took forty years to lead the children of Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land, but the Overland Stage could have done it in thirty-six hours. After reporting that an Arab boatman was willing to take a party sailing on the Sea of Galilee for eight dollars, Clemens quipped, "Do you wonder now that Christ walked?"⁶³ He recklessly mocked the Bible stories and ridiculed the persons of those tales, including Joseph, Gideon and the Prodigal Son. His irreverence was even greater in his farewell to the Holy Land: "No second Advent--Christ

⁶²Kaplan, Clemens and Twain, p. 54.

⁶³Ibid.

been here once, will never come again."⁶⁴ Remarks like these are reminiscent of the Comstock, and most of his California readers enjoyed the ribald humor of them. However, the pilgrims and their religious counterparts in the States were shocked. After reading Clemens' letters on the Holy Land, one San Francisco clergyman denounced him in the pulpit as "that son of the devil, Mark Twain."⁶⁵

DeLancey Ferguson erroneously attributes these indelicacies to the absence of Mrs. Mary Fairbanks who did not travel with Clemens through the Holy Land.⁶⁶ Ferguson's assumption is based, no doubt, on Albert Bigelow Paine's contention that early in the voyage Mrs. Fairbanks, supposedly an accomplished writer herself, assumed the editing and refining of Clemens' writing. This opinion is untrue and is, in a sense, derogatory to Clemens' ability. First, Mrs. Fairbanks was not an accomplished writer; her accounts of the Quaker City trip are definitely inferior to Clemens'. Her main claim to literary recognition lay in the fact that she was married to the owner of the Cleveland Herald and for that reason only was serving as its correspondent on the voyage. Secondly, she did not assume editing privileges early in the trip; she and Clemens did not become close associates until the middle of the

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ferguson, Man and Legend, p. 122.

⁶⁶Ibid.

excursion,⁶⁷ and their friendship deepened more after they returned to the States than on the Quaker City.

Although Mrs. Severance reported that she found Clemens once tearing up a letter and throwing it overboard because Mrs. Fairbanks did not like it, the Cleveland writer served more as a proofreader than editor. She searched his pages for slang and sometimes corrected his diction. Perhaps she sometimes criticized his approach to a subject as she did his manners. In later life he encouraged her critical comments, but followed his own inclinations.⁶⁸ No doubt this was also his attitude toward her on the ship. The remarks about her editing in later letters, which some critics cite as proof, were, Clemens admitted, his own brand of teasing her.

Also, Clemens' vivid style began at the first of the letters, not after his acquaintanceship with Mrs. Fairbanks. Although he often padded his correspondence with easy parody and straight guidebook information, it, as Justin Kaplan notes, "has a vividness and responsiveness, a versatile style and a flexible point of view that his New York correspondence (which he complained had been a 'perfect drag') often lacked."⁶⁹ In fact, if Mrs. Fairbanks had any definite influence on his writing, it was not necessarily a good one. His letters after

⁶⁷Ganzel, Twain Abroad, p. 274.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 275.

⁶⁹Kaplan, Clemens and Twain, p. 50.

Palestine were obviously inferior to these he wrote before. Vividness and freshness declined. However, Mrs. Fairbanks probably had nothing to do with this. Several factors, no doubt, contributed, the first being that he was tired of sight seeing and tired of writing. The rugged demands of riding horseback through such hot country, attempting to sleep in tents that were in danger of bandits and twice attacked, and the intense disillusionment with the barren squalor of the Holy Land probably tainted Clemens' emotions as he attempted to record these events. He was so tired of authorship after Jerusalem that he wrote nothing for the Alta about the last six weeks of the cruise. He even took few notes and had a difficult time later in attempting to reconstruct these weeks for The Innocents Abroad. Although he completed the tour with a week's jaunt through Andalusia, he wrote nothing about it in the letters. Very little of Egypt was recorded in the correspondence and commanded only twenty-two of the 642 pages of the book.⁷⁰

Another important contribution to his decline in authorship was the knowledge that fourteen of his early letters had gone astray and had to be replaced. When he received this news, he still owed the Alta four, so he had to complete twenty-two letters in the five week return trip across the Atlantic.

⁷⁰Ganzel, Twain Abroad, p. 253.

Since he had accepted a position in Washington, D. C., immediately after his return, he had to complete his obligation before he reached New York. After all, he had been paid in advance. Writing conditions on the ship were far from ideal and the pressure of such a large block of composition at one time was depressing. It was probably at this time that Mrs. Fairbanks assumed proofreading duties. Instead of attempting to recreate impressions of the places mentioned in the lost letters, Clemens decided to pen new ones about the Holy Land. Consequently, his trip through Palestine comprised a much larger segment of the correspondence than he had intended. Since he had been writing the letters more or less as he went, each one seemed an installment in a longer chronicle. Also, each had a vitality derived from the understanding that there was more to come. This sense of expectation was lost in the later letters; with it went also the rhythm of the early articles. His notebook contained enough information for five or six letters on the Holy Land, and the events of the trip were mixed in his mind. Thus, he had to fabricate his writing to stretch the amount of information to twenty-two letters. Obviously, his inspiration waned, and the writing lost its sense of immediacy. His narratives became vague; even the datelines became general (month and year) rather than specific (actual day) as they had been before. Clemens padded the Palestine correspondence with Bible stories that did not

necessarily pertain to the subjects being discussed⁷¹ and with information taken directly from Josias Leslie Porter's Murray's Guide (A Handbook for Travellers in Syria and Palestine.)⁷² Although these letters are informative and amusing, they show the distress of their author.

His last letter, the summary of the trip published in the New York Herald, was a critical evaluation of the voyage, which Clemens thought should be called the "Grand Holy Land Funeral Procession," instead of the "Grand Holy Land Pleasure Excursion."⁷³ In a gaily satirical style, the letter was hilariously funny in its dissatisfaction with the pilgrims and the trip in general. The pilgrims, not knowing that Clemens had been ridiculing them all along in his correspondence, were highly insulted, and a controversy about the trip, which lasted throughout Clemens' lifetime, resulted. Paine suggested that the letter "might better have been left unwritten, for it would seem to have given needless offense to a number of goodly people, whose chief sin was the sedateness of years."⁷⁴ Clemens strongly felt the intense disgust with the tour which he expressed in the letter, however; and after James Gordon Bennett Jr.'s personal request, he wrote it partly out of guilt for not having

⁷¹Ibid., p. 265.

⁷²Ibid., p. 266.

⁷³Ferguson, Man and Legend, p. 126.

⁷⁴Paine, Biography, I, 345.

contributed more letters to the Herald as he had promised he would.⁷⁵ Others were displeased with the trip too. The day after Clemens' letter, another, signed only "A Passenger," but probably written by Moses Beach, also appeared in the Herald. After attacking the discipline of the crew, and charging the passengers with cliquishness, backbiting and gossip, the writer summed up the whole affair as a failure.⁷⁶ Clemens' letter caused a greater stir, however, because it was witty, insulting, irreverent, and reproduced almost verbatim in The Innocents Abroad.

In general, Clemens' travel letters were unique in their approach to their subjects, just as the trip itself was unique in its purpose. They were not overburdened with dull statistics, but peppered with impressions, descriptions, and satirical comments. They were informative, yet honest. They were concerned more with the events of traveling through foreign locales, rather than with the typical tourist sites. They were amusing and, at the same time, literary. Samuel Clemens had reached another level of literary achievement in the travel letters; they were superior to anything he had written yet. Because of them, he was well-known when he disembarked in New

⁷⁵Ganzel, Twain Abroad, p. 296.

⁷⁶Ferguson, Man and Legend, p. 126.

York.⁷⁷ But he did not have time to bask in his new near-fame. After a few days in New York, he left for Washington to assume his position as secretary to Senator William Stewart.

When the excursion ship arrived in New York, November 19, 1867, a letter from Elisha Bliss Jr., manager of the American Publishing Company of Hartford, awaited Samuel Clemens. The letter stated that Bliss wished to publish a book of his, and suggested a compilation of his letters of the Quaker City tour. On December 2, Clemens replied that he could write a book from his letters, and he went to Hartford the latter part of January to confer with Bliss. Agreeing to pen the book for a five percent royalty, Clemens returned to Washington and began to revise his letters while he earned his living as special correspondent for half dozen newspapers, since he no longer worked on the Senator's staff. Complications were in store, however.

The proprietors of the Alta California heard of Clemens' intention through an Associated Press story and they were infuriated. They regarded the letters as their private property.⁷⁸ After all, they had paid for the author's passage and for the letters and they held the copyrights. Clemens should have known that the notice printed before each letter indicated copyright. According to Noah Brooks, there had been

⁷⁷Paine, Biography, I, 345.

⁷⁸Brooks, "California," p. 99.

no thoughts of making a book of the letters until the newspaper owners learned of Clemens' plans. Then, they started making preparations to publish a cheap paperback edition of the correspondence. Brooks stated that an advance press notice sent from California "was regarded as a sort of answer to the alleged challenge of Mark Twain and his publishers. This sent the perplexed author back to San Francisco in quest of an ascertainment of his real rights in his own letters."⁷⁹ Daniel Morley McKeithan records that Joseph Goodman informed Clemens that the Alta editors had copyrighted the letters and were planning a book.⁸⁰ Regardless of the informant, Clemens left for San Francisco in March to confer with the Alta editors. An agreement was reached by which the Alta relinquished all rights to the letters, and Clemens stayed on the West Coast until early July. He finished his book there, conducted a successful lecture tour, and allowed some of the chapters to be published by Bret Harte in the new Overland Monthly. He reached New York again on July 28, and gave Bliss the manuscript a few days later at Hartford. The first copy of The Innocents Abroad or The New Pilgrims' Progress appeared on July 20, 1869, and four hundred and seventeen bound volumes were shipped around the country that month.⁸¹

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Samuel Clemens, Traveling, pp. x-xi.

⁸¹Paine, Biography, I, 380.

Leon T. Dickinson noted that as he revised, Clemens kept two facts in mind: "(1) he was addressing a different audience from the one he had addressed in his newspaper letters, and (2) he was now writing, not newspaper articles, but a book."⁸² Since his audience would no longer be a particular section of the country, he had to eliminate some of the indelicacies of expression and omit entirely all references to the West Coast.

In writing Innocents Clemens made great use of all the letters. His memory was again faulty when in the Autobiography, he thought he had used them little. He said there: "I found that they were newspaper matter, not book matter. . . . They were loosely constructed and needed to have some of the wind and water squeezed out of them. I used several of them--ten or twelve perhaps."⁸³ DeLancey Ferguson contends that the Alta letters made up more than half of the book and parts of all the letters were used.⁸⁴ Since all but one of his letters about France were lost in the mails, the chapters dealing with this country are new. About half of the Italian chapters are expanded with more detail. Few additions were

⁸²Leon T. Dickinson, "Mark Twain's Revisions in Writing Innocents Abroad," American Literature, XIX (May, 1947), 139. Hereafter cited as Dickinson, "Revisions."

⁸³Samuel L. Clemens, The Autobiography of Mark Twain (New York, 1961), p. 245.

⁸⁴Ferguson, Man and Legend, p. 136.

made to the Palestine section, the most noticable one being the scathing comments on William C. Prime's Tent Life in the Holy Land. From Alexandria to the conclusion, however, the chapters are new since the letters did not deal with these places. Clemens again left out his week in Spain. The information contained in these new chapters was based partly on Clemens' notebook, partly on his memory, and partly on material in other travelbooks. The final chapter is a copy of the summary letter that appeared in the Herald.

Ferguson noted that in some whole chapters, "scarcely a word was altered."⁸⁵ This observation is not quite true. There is no single letter reprinted without some changes. Daniel Morley McKeithan stated that Clemens "went through every letter with careful scrutiny--deleting, substituting, revising, often toning down harsh passages, making others more accurate, or moderating praise that seemed too high when read calmly a year later in San Francisco."⁸⁶ For one thing, in order to achieve a continuity, Clemens added paragraphs that united the places visited.⁸⁷ For example, the Azores were discussed in one letter, Gibraltar in another, with nothing written about the trip from one to the other. Therefore, in the book, Clemens included a paragraph about the

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 137.

⁸⁶Samuel Clemens, Traveling, p. xii.

⁸⁷Dickinson, "Revisions," p. 140.

passage which connected the two.⁸⁸ He also reorganized a number of passages in an attempt to repair his loose construction. The order of the letters was the order of his experience, but for the book he attempted to place together all the information on a subject, rather than as it occurred to him. For instance, in one Alta letter, he broke into a discussion of Naples and Mount Vesuvius with information on Venice. In The Innocents Abroad he relocates this tidbit with the other material on Venice.⁸⁹ The progress of the tour itself provides the continuity and structure of the book. Consequently, Innocents is much clearer in its organization and information than the letters. Calder M. Pickett concludes that the book's greater narrative sense, better transition, and increased restraint, indicate the "developing fiction sense of Sam Clemens, for he included much apparently fictional material, as well as giving universal meaning to situations that had only special, local connotations in the letters."⁹⁰

Variety is also more evident in the book than in the letters. Clemens omitted the repetition of words in the same passage and particularly in the same sentence.⁹¹ Because he

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 141.

⁹⁰ Calder M. Pickett, "Mark Twain as Journalist and Literary Man: A Contrast," Journalism Quarterly, XXXVIII (Winter, 1961), 60. Hereafter cited as Pickett, "Contrast."

⁹¹ Dickinson, "Revisions," p. 143.

had more time for revision in writing the book, he sought exact and picturesque wording,⁹² and played with synonyms. Also, Dickinson observed that the book appeals to many tastes: "It includes personal adventure, fresh descriptions of famous places, snatches of history, interesting retelling of stories, humorous anecdotes."⁹³ In revising the letters, Clemens consciously shifted passages and added information to deliberately create a "motley effect" in the arrangement of material.⁹⁴ As the book progresses, fewer shifts in material are noticed, but the additions that Clemens made were for the sake of a diverse presentation.

Since he was writing for the East as well as the West, he made some significant changes for the sake of decorum.⁹⁵ For the readers in the West, he could be "harsh, careless or suggestive" because "he could not offend their delicacies as easily as he could those of his New England publishers, or Olivia Langdon,"⁹⁶ whom he was courting by this time. Clemens' language became more formal, and he raised the level of his diction. Slang and colloquialisms were eliminated or revised. Words which he thought would offend, such as "mangy" and "jackass," were changed to more polite expressions.⁹⁷ Some

⁹²Ferguson, Man and Legend, p. 136.

⁹³Dickinson, "Revisions," pp. 143-144.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 144.

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 143.

⁹⁶Pickett, "Contrast," p. 63.

⁹⁷Dickinson, "Revisions," p. 146.

subjects were left out. For example, he deleted all references to gambling, an ungentlemanly remark about the ladies' skirts,⁹⁸ and a description of a mixed, nude bathing party in Odessa.⁹⁹ However, he did not alter enough irreverent comments on the pious pilgrims and the Holy Land to suit his publishers. In fact, even today, people with a delicate religious temperament will still find The Innocents Abroad to be sacrilegious in parts. Although the book is mild in comparison with the newspaper letters, Clemens did include a great many blunt criticisms of the superstition, corruption, and hypocrisy of the Church and its devout followers.¹⁰⁰ He included at least eighty-nine Biblical allusions in Innocents,¹⁰¹ but he burlesqued the Bible almost as often as he referred to it.

The improvement in the humor is the greatest difference between the book and the Alta letters. According to Dickinson, Clemens "made three significant revisions: (1) he cut out much harsh criticism inappropriate in a work predominantly humorous; (2) he cut out the weaker humor and the broader humor of the letters; and (3) he developed a humor that is

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 147.

⁹⁹Pickett, "Contrast," p. 64.

¹⁰⁰Dickinson, "Revisions," p. 147.

¹⁰¹Edward Wagenknecht, Mark Twain, The Man And His Work (Norman, Oklahoma, 1961), p. 62.

richer than that in the letters."¹⁰² First, he deleted entirely some of his abuse toward the passengers, especially some that dealt with their religious habits and beliefs. He continued to criticize the passengers of the Quaker City, but his jibes at their devotion received a lighter treatment than it had in the letters. Some of his jokes, he omitted entirely, or trimmed to their basic humor. In most cases, the editing provided a better effect. One of the major improvements in the humor was the complete elimination of Brown. With the loss of the person went most of his vulgar remarks. Brown had originally been the mouthpiece for Clemens' cruder remarks; but as the personality of Mark Twain developed, Brown was no longer needed.¹⁰³ In Innocents, Brown's ignorant remarks which were often humorous were attributed to the narrator, Mark Twain, to a "thoughtful old Pilgrim," to Jack, and usually to Blucher.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, by deleting Brown and the usual contrast between the roles of Brown and Twain, a more refined narrator emerged. He became a unifying device in the book. In developing the immature fragments of humorous anecdotes of the Alta letters, Clemens excelled as a story teller in The Innocents Abroad. He learned to present a vivid build-up for his readers before developing a hilarious predicament and often an ironic

¹⁰²Dickinson, "Revisions," pp. 149-150.

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 152.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

outcome. This ability probably grew as a result of his lecturing. His developing skill as a humorist is evident in the book.

As a whole, The Innocents Abroad displayed the best writing Clemens had done up to that time. His facts, for the most part, were true; his descriptions were more elaborate than any preceding; his characters with all their deplorable traits, were vivid; his construction was fairly compact; and his humor was sustained. As Henry Nash Smith says, "The Innocents Abroad is partly a journalist's account of what he saw on his travels, partly an autobiography with strong subjective coloring, and partly, because his artist's imagination responded to the challenge, a fictional narrative, an embryonic novel."¹⁰⁵

The book was an immediate success.¹⁰⁶ Dickinson attributes this success to a number of factors: a popular subject,¹⁰⁷ the manner in which it was sold,¹⁰⁸ and the elaborate publicity schemes of Bliss and Clemens.¹⁰⁹ In August, one month after the book's release, more than five thousand copies had been sold.¹¹⁰ By the end of the year,

¹⁰⁵Smith, Development of a Writer, p. 22.

¹⁰⁶Paine, Biography, I, p. 382.

¹⁰⁷Leon T. Dickinson, "Marketing A Best-Seller: Mark Twain's Innocents Abroad," Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America, XLI (April-June, 1947), 107.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 108.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 115.

¹¹⁰Ibid., 121.

thirty-one thousand copies were sold¹¹¹ and the number reached one hundred thousand by July 24, 1871, two years after publication.¹¹²

Although few reviewers gave the book much literary merit beyond its humor, Samuel L. Clemens had reached a turning point in his life. He still thought of himself as a journalist, and continued to earn his livelihood in that profession for two more years. But the popularity of The Innocents Abroad would soon affect the future of his writing career. He was to continue contributing to newspapers for the rest of his life, but soon he would abandon the newsroom to become a writer of books. As a journalist, he had sharpened his observations of life; he had developed skills as a writer. As a special correspondent, he had discovered other peoples of the world and deepened his perception of human nature. Through his travels he had found another lucrative means of expression: lecturing; and in his attempts to perfect his presentation in that medium, he had improved his skill as a writer. During his six and a half years of newspaper experience, Samuel L. Clemens had become a good journalist, with solid writing skills. The Innocents Abroad is proof of that ability.

¹¹¹Ibid.

¹¹²Ibid., 122.

CHAPTER VI

PROPRIETOR AND EDITOR

Samuel L. Clemens stayed in New York but one day after his summary letter in the Herald about the Quaker City trip. He went to Washington, D. C., in November, 1870, to assume a new berth as secretary to Senator William M. Stewart from Nevada whom Clemens had satirized there as "Bullyragging Bill, the champion of the honest miner."¹ For six dollars a day, Clemens was to perform some clerical duties and was allowed a great deal of time for his writing. In all probability, Stewart was more interested in the publicity connected with having the popular journalist in his office than in Clemens' ability as a secretary.

Mutual discontent seemed to have characterized the relationship from the beginning. Clemens could not take the Senator's new position nor his own secretaryship seriously. In his exaggerated reminiscences Stewart said that Clemens was slouchy and seedy in his dress, worried the land-lady with his smoking in bed, was careless about his debts, and helped himself

¹Justin Kaplan, Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain (New York, 1966), p. 58. Hereafter cited as Kaplan, Clemens and Twain.

to the whiskey and cigars in the Senator's house.² The threat of a thrashing from the older man supposedly inspired Clemens' resignation, but whether the threat was really issued is not known. DeLancey Ferguson states that Clemens worked for Stewart for only one week;³ Justin Kaplan says the relationship lasted "barely two months."⁴ In either case, it was not a lengthy arrangement and did prompt Clemens to write several burlesques of the Senator which only added to his ire. In fact, Stewart entertained a bitter distaste for Clemens for the rest of his life.

Following his dismissal, Clemens was not without resources. He had come to Washington with a contract to cover major capital events for Horace Greeley's New York Tribune, and he soon agreed to write two articles a week for James Gordon Bennett's New York Herald.⁵ He had other correspondence commissions for Western and Midwestern publications, including the Chicago Republican.⁶ These assignments paid him about eight hundred dollars a month at first,⁷ but in order to write The Innocents

²DeLancey Ferguson, Mark Twain, Man and Legend (Indianapolis, 1943), p. 128. Hereafter cited as Ferguson, Man and Legend.

³Ibid. ⁴Kaplan, Clemens and Twain, p. 58.

⁵Don C. Seitz, The James Gordon Bennetts (Indianapolis, 1928), p. 226.

⁶Cyril Clemens, "Mark Twain's Washington in 1868," Mark Twain Quarterly, V (Summer, 1942), 1. Hereafter cited as Cyril Clemens, "Washington."

⁷Samuel L. Clemens, Mark Twain to Mrs. Fairbanks, edited by Dixon Wecter (San Marino, 1949), p. 14. Hereafter cited as Samuel Clemens, Fairbanks.

Abroad, he reduced the load. In addition, he wrote occasional articles for the Galaxy, a literary monthly in New York. Cyril Clemens, speaking of the stories in the Chicago paper, said, "These letters present a fresh account of Congress,"⁸ including the attempt to impeach Justice Stephen J. Field, facts of the Chicago ship canal, the most stylish lady at General Grant's reception, Miss Chandler's gala coming out party, the spiteful discharge of Andrew Johnson's secretaries, and the loneliness of the President at a reception in his honor.⁹ Clemens' comments on Congress were similar to his observations of the Nevada Territorial Legislature. Congress, he wrote, "does more crazy things and does them with a graver earnestness than any state legislature."¹⁰ His election to the Correspondents' Club showed that he was recognized and accepted by the other members of the press. He gave a moving speech on womanhood at the organization's January 12, 1868, dinner meeting.

As was his habit, Clemens soon tired of routine reporting and probably welcomed the chance to travel to California to discuss with the Alta editors the confusion of publishing his book. When he returned to the East, he launched another lecturing tour.

Despite two refusals of marriage, he persisted in courting Olivia Langdon when he could fit Elmira, New York, into his

⁸Cyril Clemens, "Washington," p. 2.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

schedule. While on the road, he wrote letters to her frequently. On February 4, 1869, their engagement was announced. Clemens fell into a quandary about how he was going to properly support the daughter of a wealthy merchant; he was tired of correspondence work and feared a free-lancer's salary would not be stable enough for a family. Although his prospects for lecturing were quite promising, to pursue that profession, he must be on the road for four or five months of the year. Even though The Innocents Abroad would be published the following summer, Clemens still thought of himself as a journalist rather than an author. Then the idea of buying part ownership in a newspaper and becoming a contributing editor occurred to him.

His friends, the Fairbanks, were willing to sell him a quarter interest in the Cleveland Herald for fifty thousand dollars.¹¹ The price seemed too steep for him, so they then offered him a position as political editor with a good salary. At first he was tempted, but he did not particularly like politics, and he knew little about that kind of writing. So he declined the offer, explaining to Mrs. Fairbanks, "It just offered another apprenticeship--another one to be tacked on to the tailend of a foolish life made up of apprenticeships No, sir, I said, I'll prostitute my talents to something else."¹²

¹¹Samuel Clemens, Fairbanks, p. 101.

¹²Ibid., p. 103.

His interest turned to the Buffalo Express, a newspaper to which he had been contributing since January of 1869. It was owned at that time by three men: Col. George F. Selkirk who was the business manager, J. L. Larned who acted as political editor, and Thomas A. Kennett who served as a kind of general editor.¹³ Clemens bought Kennett's share for twenty-five thousand dollars and assumed his position as general editor, occasional contributor, and roving reporter. Clemens' future father-in-law, Jervis Langdon, provided the money. Albert Bigelow Paine said that the proprietors of the Express were hopeful that with Clemens as editor, the journal would grow in popularity and circulation as the Toledo Blade had done when David Ross Locke, another humorist known as Petroleum V. Nasby, had joined its staff.¹⁴

Clemens assumed his duties as editor on August 14, 1869, and was entertained that evening with a dinner by the members of the Buffalo press. Paine reported that there was no one in the office who knew Clemens when he arrived for work on the first day. A brisk young man asked if he would like to see someone, and Clemens supposedly replied, "Well, yes, I should like to see some young man offer the new editor a chair."¹⁵

¹³Albert Bigelow Paine, Mark Twain, A Biography (New York, 1912), I, 386. Hereafter cited as Paine, Biography.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 385.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 387.

Four days later, the Express carried his "Salutatory" to the newspaper readers. Peppered with humor, it proclaimed Clemens' intentions as editor. "I shall always confine myself to the truth, except when it is attended with inconvenience," he declared.¹⁶ In offering his reasons for addressing his readers, he said, "I only want to assure parties having a friendly interest in the prosperity of the journal that I am not going to hurt the paper deliberately and intentionally at any time. I am not going to introduce any startling reforms, not in any way attempt to make trouble."¹⁷ Probably thinking of Mrs. Fairbanks, he concluded his editorial platform with this:

I shall not make use of slang and vulgarity upon any occasion or under any circumstances, and shall never use profanity except when discussing house rent and taxes. Indeed, upon second thought, I shall not use it even then, for it is unchristian, inelegant, and degrading; though, to speak truly, I do not see how house rent and taxes are going to be discussed worth a cent without it. I shall not often meddle with politics because we have a political editor who is already excellent and only needs to serve a term or two in the penitentiary to be perfect. I shall not write any poetry unless I conceive a spite against the subscribers.¹⁸

Two days later, the Cleveland Herald reprinted the new editor's remarks and continued to frequently republish Clemens' articles from the Buffalo paper.

¹⁶Kaplan, Clemens and Twain, p. 109.

¹⁷Paine, Biography, I, 387.

¹⁸Ibid.

Clemens apparently approached his new job with a generous amount of enthusiasm. He saw his role to be similar to his former localizing on the Territorial Enterprise, leaving him free to comment about anything he wished in any manner he desired. His hours were irregular, but often long. Paine reports that he was often at his desk from eight in the morning to ten or eleven at night.¹⁹ His staff felt that he was a hard worker. John Harrison Mills, an associate on the Express, remembered no delay in Clemens' assuming his duties. "I think within five minutes the new editor had assumed the easy look of one entirely at home, pencil in hand and a clutch of paper before him, with an air of preoccupation, as of one intent on a task delayed."²⁰ Clemens' attitude seemed to be one of enjoyment, and J. L. Larned remembered that he frequently laughed as "some whimsicality or new absurdity came into his mind."²¹ He dressed for comfort too. As he lounged in his chair, poring over the exchanges or writing editorials and skits, he usually removed his coat, his vest, his collar, his tie, and often his shoes.

Clemens and Larned, who sat at opposite sides of the same table, complemented each other in their work. Soon after joining the staff, Clemens wrote to Livy Langdon that sometimes when he and Larned reached a mental obstacle in composing their

¹⁹Ibid., p. 398.

²⁰Ibid., p. 388.

²¹Ibid., p. 398.

work, they would exchange manuscripts and "scribble away without the least trouble, he finishing my article and I his. Some of our patchwork editorials of this kind are all the better for the new life they get by crossing the breed."²² The division of work was simple and very similar to Clemens' arrangement with Dan De Quille in Nevada. Larned handled the political and more serious news while Clemens concentrated on the feature material. Once when Larned contributed a whimsical sketch, Clemens advised him: "Better leave the humor on this paper to me, Larned."²³ Clemens felt inadequate as a political commentator, but occasionally felt obligated to comment on a situation that occurred in Larned's absence. On one such occasion, he wrote a humorous article in support of a candidate, warning his readers throughout the piece not to take his recommendation seriously because the political editor would return the next day. "When he gets back he will tell you all about these candidates as serenely as if he had been acquainted with them a hundred years, though, speaking confidentially, I doubt if he ever heard of any of them till to-day."²⁴ Larned spoke highly of his humorous colleague in later years: "My whole experience of association with him is a happy memory,

²²Samuel L. Clemens, The Love Letters of Mark Twain, edited by Dixon Wecter (New York, 1949), p. 105.

²³Paine, Biography, I, 399.

²⁴Ibid., p. 400.

which I am fortunate in having What one saw of him was always the actual Mark Twain, acting out of his own nature simply, frankly, without pretense, and almost without reserve. It was that simplicity and naturalness in the man which carried his greatest charm!"²⁵

Clemens made some changes in the newspaper when he joined the staff. In a letter to Livy soon after his arrival, he told her that he was encouraging the reporters to "modify the adjectives, curtail their philosophical reflections and leave out the slang."²⁶ He had also been drilling the foreman on how he wanted the type-setting done and was pleased with the changes in the appearance of the paper. For example, he discontinued the "glaring thunder and lightning headings over the telegraphic news" so that department then looked "quiet and respectable."²⁷ Such a "grand display of headings" should be reserved for something special because if used everyday it would lose its force, he told her.²⁸

Clemens made frequent contributions to the paper: a Saturday series of sketches, satirical comments, and burlesques, most of which, Justin Kaplan notes, "reflected the strain of the regular grind."²⁹ In his editorials, he became the defender

²⁵Ibid., p. 399.

²⁶Samuel Clemens, Love Letters, p. 103.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Kaplan, Clemens and Twain, p. 110.

of the oppressed, savagely attacking human abuse. For example, he wrote about some farmers in Cohocton who had punished a couple they believed to be detrimental to the community. He evaluated them as being men who were "capable of doing any low, sneaking, cowardly villainy that could be invented in perdition. They are the very bastards of the devil."³⁰

After publishing a complete list of their names, he concluded, "If the farmers of Cohocton are of this complexion, what on earth must a Cohocton rough be like?"³¹ Some of his attacks had their humorous side. When two practical jokers sent in wedding announcements, Clemens quipped, "This deceit has been practiced maliciously by a couple of men whose small souls will escape through their pores some day if they do not varnish their hides."³²

One of the new features of the Buffalo paper was a series of travel letters, written in collaboration with Professor D. R. Ford who was escorting Charles Langdon on a tour around the world. The first appeared on October 16, 1869, with this introduction: "These letters are written jointly by Professor D. R. Ford and Mark Twain. The former does the actual traveling, and such facts as escape his notice are supplied by

³⁰Paine, Biography, I, 400-401.

³¹Ibid., p. 401.

³²Ibid.

the latter who remains at home."³³ This series was not a success, however. Twelve letters were published between October and March, with only two of them being based on material from Ford.³⁴ Clemens based the other ten on his own experiences in California, Nevada, and the Sandwich Islands. These served as a crude beginning for Roughing It.

Always quick to tire of routine, Clemens took a leave of absence after two months on the Express. Around the first of October, he went to Elmira for a visit with Livy and to work on his lecture about "Our Fellow Savages of the Sandwich Islands." Under the management of James Redpath, Clemens opened a lecture tour at the end of the month with an oyster supper in Pittsburgh. Sixty engagements later, the tour ended in Jamestown, New York, on January 21.³⁵ Because of the proceeds from the lectures and the increasing popularity of The Innocents Abroad, he was able to write Mrs. Fairbanks that same month that he would soon have fifteen thousand dollars of his debt to his father-in-law paid, besides sending his mother and sister a thousand dollars, and taking out a ten thousand dollar life insurance policy for his mother.³⁶ So far, he had not drawn any money from the Express.

³³Samuel Clemens, Fairbanks, p. 108.

³⁴Kaplan, Clemens and Twain, p. 110.

³⁵Ibid., p. 122.

³⁶Ferguson, Man and Legend, p. 145.

At the same time Clemens was writing Mrs. Fairbanks of his good fortune, Charles Dudley Warner was attempting to persuade him to leave the Express and buy into the Hartford Courant. Even Isabella Hooker informed Clemens that "public demand made it absolutely imperative for him to join the Hartford paper," and that she had informed Jervis Langdon to persuade Clemens to invest in the journal.³⁷ Clemens was tempted, but he did not feel he could afford the money he would lose by selling his interest in Buffalo so soon, and he remembered the snobbishness of these same people in their treatment of him the past June. Although his enthusiasm for Buffalo was subsiding, he declined the opportunity to move to Hartford. On February 2, 1870, he married Olivia Langdon and settled into an elegant Buffalo home, which was a surprise wedding gift from the Langdons. Then the routine of newspaper editing really began.

Few of Clemens' articles have been republished and little of his life as editor is known. Biographers have dealt mostly with the personal misfortunes of this period and ignored his newspaper experience. In 1875 when Clemens compiled Sketches New and Old, he included less than a half dozen of his Buffalo articles. Henry Duski in 1963 published a compilation of articles from the Buffalo journal which he felt that Clemens

³⁷Kaplan, Clemens and Twain, p. 109.

probably wrote. Some are known to be by Clemens, while others, although unsigned or signed with a different pseudonym, have his touch.

From the beginning of his association with the paper, Clemens wrote a column of brief humorous items. Subjects came from the exchange papers and from local citizens and conditions. In one issue, he wrote that "an entire jury of Smiths was recently empaneled in Sheffield, England," and "we believe that the Smiths originated that locality."³⁸ Another item read, "It is stated that the Hon. H. Greeley is not only a pillar of the Rev. Chapin's Church, but also one of its soundest sleepers."³⁹ That Missourians were becoming more refined, Clemens observed, was evident in the fact that "they drown horse thieves there now, instead of hanging them."⁴⁰ He also announced that there were nine million liars in Mexico: "At least the last census gives that as her population."⁴¹ Talking about a deluge of rain, he advised the city fathers to advertise for estimates for an ark instead of water works.⁴² His uncle, he reported, was not disturbed by the weather; he had forty acres in umbrellas. "He'll make a good thing of it if he don't lend the whole crop," Clemens thought.⁴³

³⁸ Samuel L. Clemens, The Forgotten Writings of Mark Twain, edited by Henry Duski (New York, 1963), p. 46. Hereafter cited as Samuel Clemens, Forgotten Writings.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 47.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

In March, 1870, Clemens published an article called "A Mysterious Visit," which was a facetious story of a visit by an agent of the Internal Revenue. In an attempt to find out the visitor's business, Clemens began to talk about his own investments and income. He reported that his lecturing receipts for the past season had brought in \$14,750; his newspaper, the Daily Warwhoop, had paid him \$8,000 in four months; and his royalties from The Innocents Abroad had totaled a little over \$190,000.⁴⁴ When Clemens discovered the visitor's occupation, he turned to one of the leading citizens for advice. This man, who lived like a prince, showed him how to falsify his figures and tally his deductions so that his taxable income was only two hundred and fifty dollars. So, Clemens went to the revenue office and, following the example of the upright citizens of the city, "swore to lie after lie, fraud after fraud, villainy after villainy, till my soul was coated inches and inches thick with perjury, and my self respect gone forever. But what of it? It is nothing more than thousands of the richest and proudest, and most respected, honored, and courted men in America do every year."⁴⁵

Another of his social satires was "A Curious Dream" in which he pictured the deceased leaving the city's graveyards because the cemeteries were in such neglected states.

⁴⁴Kaplan, Clemens and Twain, p. 116.

⁴⁵Ibid.

Carrying their coffins on their backs, they set out for neighboring towns. Paine remarked that this gruesome sight inspired a reform movement which spread to other cities.⁴⁶

Two of Clemens' favorite subjects of this period were Lord Byron and Andrew Johnson. He constantly ridiculed Johnson and seemed to be fascinated by the Byron scandal. A number of the articles on these two men were signed with the pseudonym "Hy Slocum." A hilarious story, entitled "Byron and the Worm," which told of bootlegging operations in Newstead Abbey, was signed simply "L."⁴⁷ Another frequent subject was agriculture. On November 12, 1870, Clemens signed "Agriculture Twaddle at the Institute Farmer's Club" with a new nom de plume, "Carl Byng."⁴⁸ After his making "Mark Twain" so famous, it seems odd that Clemens would want to use another name on his articles, especially since he hoped to popularize the newspaper by his association. Perhaps a clue occurs in a letter to Orion in which he said that he was sick of seeing his name in the paper constantly. He feared that by over exposure people might grow tired of his writing.⁴⁹ The use of other pseudonyms did not fool his readers, however.

⁴⁶Paine, Biography, I, 402.

⁴⁷Samuel Clemens, Forgotten Writings, p. 155.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 319.

⁴⁹Kaplan, Clemens and Twain, p. 120.

His use of "Hy Slocum" provided him an outlet in January, 1871, when he was accused of plagiarizing Bret Harte. Thomas Bailey Aldrich, the editor of Every Saturday magazine, commented that a poem in the Express was a "feeble imitation" of similar work by Harte.⁵⁰ In a fit of anger, Clemens fired off a reply to Aldrich asking for a correction and stating that the poem was not his but had been written by a "writer who has for years signed himself, 'Hy Slocum.'" I am not in the imitation business."⁵¹ After cooling down, Clemens wrote Aldrich an apology and asked that he not print the previous note, thus indirectly laying claim to the use of the name. However, forty-two thousand copies of the magazine with Clemens' angry reply were already off the press.

Not all of Clemens' humor was confined to articles. In September, 1869, he carved with his jackknife into a wooden printing block a map of the siege of Paris. Entitled "Fortifications of Paris," the map was a parody of the maps of the large daily papers and of the news of the Franco-Prussian War.⁵² Deliberately childish, it contained block letters which printed in reverse, misplaced rivers which meandered without direction, and military designations such as "Fence," "Erie Canal," and "Podunk."⁵³ Accompanying the

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 148.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid., p. 138.

⁵³Ibid.

drawing, which was printed from Clemens' original plate, were testimonials from Grant, Bismarck, and Napoleon III. Larned remembered that Clemens experienced great pleasure from his "half-day of whittling and laughter that went with it."⁵⁴

Not all of Clemens' editorials were funny or satirical, however. In February of 1870, he wrote an editorial in tribute to his friend, Anson Burlingame, who had helped him obtain the Hornet scoop in the Sandwich Islands. Burlingame, 47, had died on February 23, on a trip around the world as special ambassador for the Chinese Empire. In his editorial, Clemens recounted the minister's career and his noble character. His conclusion showed his high esteem: "He was a good man, and a very, very, great man. America lost a son, and all the world a servant, when he died."⁵⁵

By March of 1870, Clemens was tired of newspaper work. The routine of a daily publication had become a chore and he feared he would write himself out.⁵⁶ He complained that he had no "outlet for fine-spun stuff" and many of his sketch ideas were not suitable for newspapers.⁵⁷ Therefore, he was pleased in May to join the staff of the Galaxy, a New York literary magazine. He was commissioned to write a monthly

⁵⁴Paine, Biography, I, 399.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 401.

⁵⁶Kaplan, Clemens and Twain, p. 120.

⁵⁷Ibid.

ten-page department called "Memoranda" for twenty-four hundred dollars a year. The firm had the privilege of issuing the material in book form at the end of the year, with Clemens receiving a royalty of twenty cents on each copy sold.⁵⁸ He retained all other publishing rights.

The column became a miscellaneous sounding board for his ideas, all of which were not humorous. For example, the first column contained an account of the great beef contract; a backhanded tribute to a minister who had delivered a sermon against workingmen occupying pews in the fashionable churches; a presentation of the Chinese situation in California, showing the cruel treatment of the immigrant; a burlesque of the "good little boy"; and several shorter skits and anecdotes.⁵⁹ Agriculture and the treatment of the Chinese were frequent subjects for this publication. Clergymen also came into their share of ridicule in the Galaxy pages. He launched a bitter attack against the Rev. T. DeWitt Talmage, a Brooklyn minister who did not approve of workingmen attending his church because of their smell. A Reverend Sabine of New York was also satirized severely because he refused to hold a church burial service for an actor, George Holland. On this sketch, Clemens wrote an elaborate defense of drama. He also helped fix the name of "The Little Church Around the Corner" to the Church of the

⁵⁸Samuel Clemens, Fairbanks, p. 128.

⁵⁹Paine, Biography, I, 404.

Transfiguration on Twenty-ninth Street in New York. The Reverend supposedly told the old actor's friends that there was a "little church around the corner that will, perhaps, permit the service,"⁶⁰ and the impact of Clemens' comments on such behavior made the name stick. His map of Paris was reprinted from the Express, and a tall tale was published about Dan Slote's Arab tobacco pipe which he had bought in Palestine.

In the mood of his Nevada newspapering, Clemens wrote a hoax for the Galaxy pages, which, because of the repercussions which followed, was to be his last. Hearing that the Saturday Review of London had reviewed The Innocents Abroad and seeing a chance to use the Galaxy for personal publicity, he published an imaginary review. In it the English reviewer was supposedly devoid of a sense of humor and treated the entire book with seriousness and solemnity. Clemens thought American editors would think the review to be an example of the English lack of humor. But he overdid it. Most of the editors thought that the review was genuine and that Clemens had been fooled by it. In the next issue, he explained that it had been intended as a joke. The Cincinnati Enquirer did not accept his explanation, however, and declared that Clemens had been "intensely mortified at having been so badly taken in." and that his explanation in the Galaxy was "ingenius, but unfortunately not true."⁶¹ The paper also advised Clemens to admit

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 407.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 430.

he had been spoofed and say no more. Clemens, of course, was furious. He denounced the Enquirer's statement as "a pitiful, deliberate falsehood," and declared that the paper was edited by children.⁶² The incident might have progressed further had not Clemens' attention been focused on illnesses in his home.

Personal tragedies had stricken the Clemens' household. Clemens' contributions to the Express ended in January of 1871, and he missed two issues of the Galaxy because of family misfortunes. By April, 1871, when he published his last column in the Galaxy, two deaths had occurred and his wife and new-born son were in precarious health, although recovering slowly. In June of 1870, Clemens and his wife returned to Elmira to help nurse Jervis Langdon who died of cancer of the stomach on August 6.⁶³ Mrs. Clemens, pregnant at this time, was bedridden with a nervous collapse as a result of the strain of the summer months. In September a friend of Mrs. Clemens, Emma Nye, stopped by Buffalo for a short visit and within a week was taken ill with typhoid fever. Mrs. Clemens cared for her, but Miss Nye died on September 29 in Clemens' own bed.⁶⁴ Always a frail person, Mrs. Clemens was worn down by the deathbed watches of the past months. On November 7,

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Kaplan, Clemens and Twain, p. 121.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 136.

Langdon Clemens was born prematurely, and he and his mother remained in delicate health for many months.

Thus, in the April, 1871, issue of the Galaxy, Clemens listed the unhappiness of his personal affairs as his reasons for discontinuing his contributions to the journal. He said, "I think that some of the 'humor' I have written during this period could have been injected into a funeral sermon without disturbing the solemnity of the occasion To be a monthly humorist in a cheerless time is drearier" than "to be a pirate on a low salary."⁶⁵ During the same month, Clemens sold his interest in the Express at a loss of ten thousand dollars on the purchase price.⁶⁶ He received less than the original cost for his house, and the sales of The Innocents Abroad were dwindling to an average of about thirty-five hundred copies a year.⁶⁷ After moving his family to Elmira, he, therefore, returned to the lecture circuit.

His departure from the staff of the Express was his farewell to a formal journalism career. Although he was in a sense never to cease being a journalist and would continue to contribute to newspapers until his death, this ended any long binding association with newspapers. Much of the writing in the last months on the Buffalo paper were strained and

⁶⁵Paine, Biography, I, 430.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 434.

⁶⁷Kaplan, Clemens and Twain, p. 142.

unrefined, probably because of the distress of his personal life. Although his happiness with the Express had soured, he had enjoyed the unhampered freedom to write as he pleased on any subject. He was to continue using newspapers for this purpose.

Most of the articles he penned for newspapers in the following years were not necessarily the accurate accounts of a reporter, but rather the social commentary of an editor. Arthur L. Vogelback observed that in the decade following the Buffalo editorship, Clemens was "an incorrigible writer of letters to the press" and that "no incident at this stage of his career was too trifling to provoke him into print."⁶⁸ Many of his letters dealt with serious subjects. For example, in 1872, he took an active part in the struggle for the control of the New York Tribune, a paper for which he had written regularly since 1867. He was instrumental in helping Whitelaw Reed gain control of the paper with his "Who's To Be Editor of the Tribune?" written like the Mother Goose rhyme, "Who Killed Cock Robin?"⁶⁹ "The Revised Catechism," inspired by a Thomas Nast cartoon, appeared in the Tribune in September, 1871. Using a Sunday School setting for a satire of the Tammany

⁶⁸ Arthur L. Vogelback, "Mark Twain, Newspaper Contributor," American Literature XX (May, 1948), 111. Hereafter cited as Vogelback, "Newspaper Contributor."

⁶⁹ Arthur L. Vogelback, "Mark Twain and the Fight for Control of the Tribune," American Literature XXVI (September, 1954), 377.

Ring, Clemens wrote "a scathing denunciation of Boss Tweed and his associates . . . and at the same time an indictment of the age that permitted such men to thrive."⁷⁰ Public injustices provoked him to comment as he did on a New York murder trial which had been postponed two years. He felt the long wait for the trial had dimmed the impact of the facts involved.⁷¹ Also, he was quick to praise admirable action. In 1872 Clemens witnessed the rescue operations of nine seamen from the wrecked Charles Ward by sailors on the steamer Batavia. Deeply impressed by these courageous men, Clemens wrote from the ship to the Royal Humane Society in London, saying that the crew performing the rescue should be awarded the Royal Humane Society's medal.⁷² When the Atlantic sank a few months later with almost all the passengers, Clemens fired a letter to the Tribune suggesting that more people would be saved from shipwrecks if life rafts were used instead of boats.⁷³ Upon the death of Kamehameha V, King of the Sandwich Islands, in late 1872, Clemens wrote a series of letters about the Islands, discussing their history, their leadership, and their future. He ironically urged that the United States annex

⁷⁰Arthur L. Vogelback, "Mark Twain and the Tammany Ring," Publications of the Modern Language Association, LXX (March, 1955), 69.

⁷¹Vogelback, "Newspaper Contributor," p. 112.

⁷²Ibid., p. 114.

⁷³Ibid., p. 117.

the islands in order to "afflict them with our wise and beneficent government."⁷⁴ He knew when to produce timely features.

On two known occasions he again acted as reporter. In 1898 after his world lecture tour, he attended the stormy legislative sessions of the Austrian parliament in Vienna, which resulted from the German-Czech controversy of that fall and winter. His permanent records of those events were published in Harper's Magazine under the title "Stirring Times in Austria." He also contributed occasional dispatches of the happenings to various American newspapers.⁷⁵ In 1900 he was commissioned by a New York journal to serve as reporter of the Diamond Jubilee celebration in London. When approached by Frank Marshall White on the possibility of handling this assignment, he told White that he did not like writing for newspapers because of the hurry.⁷⁶ But since he was attempting to repay his bankruptcy debts, brought on by his investments in the Paige type-setting machine, he agreed. The price was three times more than what was usually paid for such special correspondence, but Clemens sent more than he had agreed to write. White reported that at the reviewing stand where Clemens sat with the other newsmen, he was as much an attraction

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 123.

⁷⁵Frank M. White, "Mark Twain As A Newspaper Reporter," Outlook XCVI (December, 24, 1910), 966.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 961.

as the celebration. He made many notes in a large pad on his knee and refused to be interviewed by the English reporters around him. "We reporters mustn't quote one another," he told them.⁷⁷ But as he attempted to retreat to a hotel room to write his stories, he did relent and made a complimentary statement about the celebration to the crushing crowd of admirers and newsmen.⁷⁸

Although Clemens' formal association with newspapering ended in Buffalo, he continued to perform as a journalist for the remainder of his life. Even sections in his Autobiography are primarily reporting.⁷⁹ DeLancey Ferguson sums up his contributions: "Some of his writing all through his life was potboiling, done because he needed extra funds, but much of it was the instinctive expression of a man who had learned at the editorial desk to speak his mind fully and promptly on whatever came up in the day's news."⁸⁰ This tendency began in the newspaper office in Hannibal; it did not end after Buffalo. The training had become instinctive.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 965.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Ferguson, Man and Legend, p. 150.

⁸⁰Ibid.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The scope of Samuel L. Clemens' journalism career involved every major position available in the profession at that time. Beginning as a printer's devil, Clemens progressed to journeyman, local reporter, legislative observer, metropolitan newsman, free lancer, special contributor, travel writer, foreign correspondent, Washington correspondent, proprietor and editor, and magazine columnist. The procession of these assignments indicates Clemens' growing ambition and mastery of the skills involved in each new undertaking. The authorship of books was the logical climax.

Newspaperdom had a lasting impact on Samuel Clemens, the man, and Mark Twain, the literary personality. The print shop of his youth was his elementary school, where, by setting type, making corrections and reading exchanges for possible copy, he learned the basic rules of writing. His skill as a journeyman provided him with a means of livelihood while he discovered a world beyond the limits of Hannibal, Missouri. During these first travels, he tasted a professionalism in printing that contributed to a dissatisfaction with what he had known before. The seeds of ambition began to sprout. The

idea of travel writing also occurred to him during this period.

After failing as a miner in Nevada, he attempted professional journalism, thus beginning the career he would follow most of his remaining years. In the process of learning the skills of a newspaper reporter, Clemens developed native abilities and interests which contributed to his success as an author. His letters to his family from the previous Eastern trip show that human action and experience had fascinated him from his youth. In the environment of an alert newspaper office, his tendency to study people matured, and he found an outlet for the expression of what he saw and felt. People became potential news copy. Also, through association with free thinkers like Joe Goodman and Rollin Daggett, Clemens learned to interpret human action in terms of its effect on other people and on mankind in general. Regardless of the feelings of his readers, he fearlessly spoke out against sham and corruption. His innate tendency for social comment rose to the surface and gained confidence.

Because he was writing constantly to fulfill his quota as reporter, the quality of his material improved. He experimented with techniques. He listened to the criticism of Dan De Quille, Joe Goodman, and Bret Harte. He learned to tell a good story. Although he would not reach its literary excellence again for some years, "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" is proof of his developing ability.

As a reporter, Samuel Clemens learned his trade well. His legislative dispatches prove his ability as an accurate recorder. His Hornet scoop is evidence of his acceptance of the responsibility of a newsman. Although he preferred writing feature material to the more humdrum routine assignments, he could perform them well when he had to. Through feature writing, he started using the pseudonym, Mark Twain. The preference for human interest material was, of course, his creative genius struggling to rise to the surface. His talent for the humorous viewpoint and satiric parenthetical remark delighted his Western audience and became a habit with him. This habit displeased the more sophisticated editors of San Francisco and marred some of his later works. He grew so accustomed to padding his writing with miscellaneous information and comment for humorous and satiric effect that it became instinctive to him. Therefore, much of the trouble he had with structure in his novels dates from his newspaper feature writing. Even in serious situations in his novels, Clemens often could not resist inserting an inappropriate tidbit of humor. He could handle the short item, but restricting his narrative direction in long works was difficult. Therefore, he revised some of his novels a great number of times, and depended on his wife and his good friend, William Dean Howells, to find the faults that he could not see.

Clemens quickly learned the preferences of his audience and wrote accordingly, except, as already noted, in the case

of corruption. Much of the criticism of his travel writings is unwarranted because he was writing for an audience he understood. He knew what he was doing. His traveling companion, Brown, was deliberately crude and vulgar because much of the reading audience of the West was still crude and vulgar, Clemens included. His writing and his outlook, especially in the Quaker City letters, were uninhibited, often irreverent, and coarse. But the Western readers laughed long over the crudity because Clemens' reactions were typical of their own; his humor was theirs. He knew what was newsworthy to them and provided it. The frontier was still maturing, and Clemens' journalistic efforts of that period reflect the taste and spirit of the people he wrote for. After all, he was one of them. Because so much of his formative writing was uninhibited, he never did become a good judge of literary taste. Therefore, he often relied on others to edit out the offensive. While he was in Nevada, Dan De Quille sometimes toned down his comments; in later years, Mrs. Clemens and Howells performed the task.

Clemens' newspaper reporting paved the way for his travel books. Because he was so successful as a writer on the West Coast, he obtained the Sandwich Islands assignment. His performance on that trip helped him acquire the Quaker City berth, which became the basis for his first travel book. Its popularity later proved to him that he could make a living

writing books. His special travel assignments also introduced him to lecturing, another profession which served him well.

The opportunity to write while traveling also broadened Clemens' perception of people. Different people in different cultures fed his curiosity of human experience. Having to record his reactions to new environments forced him to examine his true feelings and analyze what he had observed. He had to search for the exact expression for what he had encountered. Thus, he matured as a thinker, as an observer, and as a literary artist.

As editor of the Buffalo Express, he was a hard worker who enjoyed the free expression he found in the position. He improved the appearance of the newspaper, and attempted to teach his reporters some of the skills he had learned. Much of his own writing during this period reflects the burden of his personal problems, but he continued to speak out against corruption. Through his experience on newspapers in the West, he knew what a forceful, effective journal should be, and he helped the Buffalo paper reach that standard.

Although Samuel Clemens had the ability to be a good reporter and seemed to have been a diligent editor, he did not have the temperament for routine newspaper work. In the demanding shadow of daily production, his creative talent waned. He grew bored and restless. His work became lifeless because his interest was not in it. He was a free spirit which felt cramped under constant demand. Newspaper writing

which introduced him to a career with the pen was unsuitable for a lifelong commitment.

The training he received in that profession was vitally important to him, however. Facets of his talent and intellect found openings for expression. Untapped areas of his genius sprang forth with new incentive and greater confidence, as he mastered the ability to communicate his thoughts with the written word. Basic newspaper instruction laid the foundation for the development of the novelist. Some of the habits of his literary apprenticeship marred his later writings, but his newspaper training freed the creative genius within him by offering him an outlet and requiring that he produce. Journalism aimed Samuel Clemens in the direction of authorship and provided the basic training that helped mature Mark Twain into a great writer.

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