

INTRODUCTION

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

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his accumulation of false starts and decided which to incorporate into the newer dictation series and which to leave unpublished.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 He declared the work done, but insisted that it should not be published in its entirety until a hundred years after his death, which occurred less than four months later, on 21 April 1910.

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

moment; drop it the moment its interest threatens to pale, and turn your talk upon the new and more interesting thing that has intruded itself into your mind meantime.”¹

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

But if delaying publication failed to make him into a confessional autobiographer, it did free him to express unconventional thoughts about religion, politics, and the damned human race, without fear of ostracism. In January 1908 he recalled that he had long had “the common habit, in private conversation with friends, of revealing every private opinion I possessed relating to religion, politics, and men”—adding that he would “never dream of *printing* one of them.”³ The need to defer publication of subversive ideas seemed obvious to him. “We suppress an unpopular opinion because we cannot afford the bitter cost of putting it forth,” he wrote in 1905. “None of us likes to be hated, none of us likes to be shunned.”⁴ So having the freedom to speak his mind (if not confess his sins) was still ample justification for delaying publication until after his death.

1. “The Latest Attempt,” one of the prefaces written to introduce the final form of the autobiography.

2. “Mark Twain’s Bequest,” *London Times*, 23 May 1899, 4, in Scharnhorst 2006, 334.

3. Autobiographical Dictation, 13 Jan 1908.

4. “The Privilege of the Grave,” written in 1905, published in SLC 2009, 56.

History of Publication: Paine, DeVoto, and Neider

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

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

DeVoto was critical of Paine’s acceptance of “the arrangement Mark Twain originally gave” the dictations, “interspersed as they were with trivialities, irrelevancies, newspaper clippings, and unimportant letters—disconnected

5. These words came at the end of the editorial note that preceded each of the twenty-five selections in the *Review*.

6. *Mark Twain’s Autobiography*, edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1924), 1:1; hereafter *MTA*.

7. Paine told a reporter in 1933 that the “complete autobiography . . . would fill about six volumes, including the two already published, and probably would not be made public for ‘many, many years’” (“Canard Blasted by Biographer of Mark Twain,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 8 July 1933, clipping in CU-MARK).

and without plan.” Instead he chose to print only passages that Paine had left unpublished, drawn from “the typescript in which everything that Mark wanted in his memoirs had been brought together” (the *Autobiographical Dictations*). He then arranged the selections by topic, “omitting trivialities and joining together things that belonged together.” And he said with great satisfaction that he had “modernized the punctuation by deleting thousands of commas and dashes, and probably should have deleted hundreds more.” He was confident that he had “given the book a more coherent plan than Mark Twain’s” and he was unapologetic about having “left out” what seemed to him “uninteresting.”⁸

Neider, too, was unhappy with Paine’s acceptance of Mark Twain’s plan to publish the autobiography “not in chronological order but in the sequence in which it was written and dictated. What an extraordinary idea! As though the stream of composition time were in some mysterious way more revealing than that of autobiographical time!”⁹ Neider had permission from the Mark Twain Estate to combine some thirty thousand words from the unpublished dictations with what Paine and DeVoto had already published. Like DeVoto, he omitted what he disliked, and was obliged to exclude portions that Clara Clemens Samossoud, Clemens’s daughter, disapproved of publishing. Neider then (figuratively) cut apart and rearranged the texts he had selected so that they approximated a conventional, chronological narrative—exactly the kind of autobiography Mark Twain had rejected.

The result of these several editorial plans has been that no text of the *Autobiography* so far published is even remotely complete, much less completely authorial. It is therefore the goal of the present edition to publish the complete text as nearly as possible in the way Mark Twain intended it to be published after his death. That goal has only recently become attainable, for the simple reason that no one knew which parts of the great mass of autobiographical manuscripts and typescripts Mark Twain intended to include. In fact, the assumption had long prevailed that Mark Twain did not decide what to put in and what to leave out—that he left the enormous and very complicated manuscript incomplete and unfinished. That assumption was wrong. Although Mark Twain left no specific instructions (not even documentation

8. “Introduction,” *Mark Twain in Eruption*, edited by Bernard DeVoto (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1940), vii–ix; hereafter *MTE*.

9. “Introduction,” *The Autobiography of Mark Twain, Including Chapters Now Published for the First Time*, arranged and edited, with an introduction and notes, by Charles Neider (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), ix, xvi, xx–xxiii; hereafter *AMT*.

for the instructions that Paine professed to follow), hidden within the approximately ten file feet of autobiographical documents were more than enough clues to show that he had in fact decided on the final form of the *Autobiography*, and which of the preliminary experiments were to be included and which omitted.

Autobiography of Mark Twain, Volume 1 (the hardcover critical edition) was published in 2010. The complete text of that first volume is also available at *Mark Twain Project Online (MTPO)*. Two more volumes will follow, in both print and digital formats. Exhaustive documentation of all textual decisions will be published *only* at *MTPO*.¹⁰ The first volume consists of two parts. The first, Preliminary Manuscripts and Dictations, comprises the short works written between 1870 and 1905 which Clemens intended for the autobiography, but reviewed and rejected from his final plan in June 1906. The second part begins with that final plan, the *Autobiography of Mark Twain* proper, starting with the several prefaces he created at the same time to frame the preliminary writings he had selected as opening texts, followed by the almost daily Autobiographical Dictations from 9 January through the end of March 1906—all that would fit into the volume. The dictations are arranged in the chronological order of their creation. The remaining volumes will include all the dictations he created between April 1906 and October 1909, likewise arranged chronologically, the whole concluding with the “Closing Words of My Autobiography.”

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

“Scraps” and “Chapters” from the Autobiography

Each of his major books took Clemens between three and seven years to complete. He required that much time chiefly because he always encountered stretches during which he was unable to proceed, and composition came to a

10. *MTPO* (<http://www.marktwainproject.org>) is an open access website maintained by the Mark Twain Project in order to make all of its editions available online. *Autobiography of Mark Twain* is the first work to be published there simultaneously with the print edition, and the first to publish the textual apparatus in electronic form only.

complete halt. Since at least 1871 he had found it necessary, when his “tank had run dry” in this way, to “pigeonhole” his manuscripts. Beginning in the 1870s Clemens turned his attention to writing his autobiography, but only intermittently. Until January 1906 the tank seemed to “run dry” after relatively brief stints of writing or dictating, because he grew dissatisfied with his method of composing the work, or with its overall plan, or both.

The first indication that he had such a plan survives only in the report of a conversation that took place when he was forty, while Mrs. James T. Fields and her husband were visiting the Clemenses in Hartford. She recorded in her diary that at lunch, on 28 April 1876, Clemens

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

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

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

11. Annie Adams Fields Papers, diary entry for 28 Apr 1876, MHi, published in Howe 1922, 250–51.

12. This sketch is commonly known as “Early Years in Florida, Missouri,” the title Paine assigned it, which is adopted here (see the Appendix, Preliminary Manuscripts and Dictations).

if the author suddenly lost interest. As he recalled in 1904, “I resolved to begin my autobiography . . . but the resolve melted away and disappeared in a week.”¹³

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

Two of the chapters are suggestive in a related way. Chapter II (“My Autobiography [Random Extracts from It]”) begins with a somewhat facetious discussion of the Clemens family’s forebears, continues with an incident that occurred in Berlin in 1891, and concludes with an evocative description of Clemens’s idyllic summers on his uncle’s farm near Florida, Missouri. And “Scraps from My Autobiography. From Chapter IX” recounts two stories from Clemens’s youth, when he was fourteen (1849–50), but concludes each story with much later events—the first in Calcutta in 1896 when he was sixty-one, and the second in London in 1873 when he was thirty-eight.¹⁵ In both cases it seems that to follow the stories to what Clemens regarded as

13. See “John Hay.”

14. That is, there are two dozen works known to survive; others may have been destroyed.

15. “Random Extracts,” originally subtitled “From Chapter II,” is the first sketch in this volume. The chapter number is no longer in the text, because Clemens deleted it in the process of revision. “From Chapter IX” is reprinted in the Appendix, Preliminary Manuscripts and Dictations.

their natural conclusion, it was necessary to skip over several decades of his life. This preference for juxtaposing early memories with later experiences helps to explain why Clemens would reject the idea of a completely chronological narrative.

First Experiment with Dictation (1885)

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

Get short-hander in New York & begin my autobiography at once & continue it straight through the summer.

Which reminds me that Susie, aged 13, (1885), has begun to write my biography—solely of her own motion—a thing about which I feel proud & gratified. At breakfast this morning I intimated that if I seemed to be talking on a pretty high key, in the way of style, it must be remembered that my biographer was present. Whereupon Susie struck upon the unique idea of having me sit up & purposely *talk* for the biography!¹⁶

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

No doubt encouraged by Grant's experience, in early May Clemens asked his friend and former lecture manager James Redpath to serve as his stenographer. "I think we can make this thing blamed enjoyable," he wrote Redpath—an indication that he was beginning to intuit the need for a responsive, human audience when dictating. He made this idea quite explicit six years later in a letter to William Dean Howells, when he concluded that

16. *N&J* 3, 112. Clemens would eventually reproduce much of Susy's biography in the final form of his autobiography, beginning with the Autobiographical Dictation of 7 Feb 1906.

17. Autobiographical Dictation, 26 Feb 1906.

he could not “write literature” with Thomas Edison’s recording phonograph “because it hasn’t any ideas & it hasn’t any gift for elaboration, or smartness of talk,” and is just “as grave and unsmiling as the devil.”¹⁸ Over the next few weeks he dictated detailed accounts of his relationship with Grant and his negotiations to publish the *Memoirs* through Charles L. Webster and Co. (his own publishing firm), defending himself against accusations that he had unfairly deprived the Century Company of that opportunity. But when he read over some of the typescripts that Redpath had created from his stenographic notes, he found the result far from satisfactory. He told Henry Ward Beecher:

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

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

Vienna Manuscripts (1897–1899)

Between 1885 and 1897 Clemens produced only one autobiographical manuscript, “The Machine Episode” (written in two stages, in 1890 and 1893–94), a tirade against James W. Paige, inventor of the typesetting machine that was a major cause of Clemens’s bankruptcy.²⁰ But in 1897–98 his interest was again revived, and he produced a number of sketches about life in Vienna as well as two reminiscences of his early lecturing experiences.²¹ By late 1898, however, his interest had faded once again. On the manuscript of “My Debut as a Literary Person,” written in October, he inserted a footnote, “This is Chapter XIV of my unfinished Autobiography & the way it is getting along it promises to remain an unfinished one.”²² He published the piece in the

18. 5 May 1885 to Redpath, MiU-H; 4 Apr 1891 to Howells, NN-BGC, in *MTHL*, 2:641.

19. 11 Sept 1885 to Beecher, draft in CU-MARK. The first Grant Dictation, “The Chicago G. A. R. Festival,” is included in the Appendix, Preliminary Manuscripts and Dictations.

20. See *AutoMTI*, 101–6.

21. One of these, “Ralph Keeler,” is included in the Appendix, Preliminary Manuscripts and Dictations.

22. See *AutoMTI*, 127–44, and the Textual Commentary for this sketch at *MTPO*.

Century Magazine for November 1899, having removed any reference to his autobiography. Still, it was the first “chapter” to be published in fulfillment of his long-held plan to publish selections from it.

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

The Florentine Dictations (1904)

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

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

Two days later Clemens described his success to Howells:

23. 10 Oct 1898 to Bok, ViU; 6 and 7 Nov 1898 and 12 Nov 1898 to Rogers (2nd of 2), collection of Peter A. Salm, in *HHR*, 374, 376; 25 Feb 1899 to Gilder, CtY-BR.

24. Lyon 1903–6, entry for 28 Feb 1904.

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

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

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

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

Only six Florentine Dictations are extant, but it is clear that there were others that do not survive. In August 1906 Clemens said that he had created more than a dozen “little biographies,” of which we have almost none.

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

Clemens certainly “flayed” the Countess Massiglia in “Villa di Quarto,” and excoriated Charles L. Webster at length in the Autobiographical Dictation of 29 May 1906, but we can only guess who the other “deserving” men

25. 16 Jan 1904 to Howells, MH-H, in *MTHL*, 2:778.

26. “John Hay.”

27. Autobiographical Dictation, 6 Aug 1906.

were. The most likely candidates are Daniel Whitford, Clemens's attorney; Elisha Bliss, his publisher; James W. Paige, inventor of the failed typesetter; and of course Bret Harte.²⁸

The Autobiographical Dictations Begin (January 1906)

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

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

Before Clemens finished dictating in 1909, he and Hobby, along with three other typists, generated more than five thousand pages of typescript. This enormous body of material has, since Clemens's death, constituted the largest part of the work known as the "Autobiography." But probably since DeVoto's time as editor of the Mark Twain Papers, anyone who consulted that file was no doubt puzzled by two things. First, most of the Autobiographical Dictations between January and August 1906 were preserved in folders—one per

28. See the Autobiographical Dictations of 26 May (Whitford), 2 June (Paige), and 14 June 1906 (Bret Harte).

29. *MTB*, 3:1266.

30. *MTB*, 3:1267.

dictation—containing between two and four separate, distinct typed copies of essentially the same text. Second, the differences (if any) between these duplicate typescripts were not obvious or readily intelligible: pagination differed, seemingly without pattern; some contained handwritten authorial revisions, while others were unmarked; and many were extensively marked by at least half a dozen different (mostly unidentified) hands, in addition to the author's. These documents constituted the central puzzle confronting anyone who set out to publish the *Autobiography of Mark Twain*.

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

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

It was not until June that Clemens made a final decision about the contents of his autobiography. He returned to a task that he had begun the previous winter: reviewing his earlier writings, including his preliminary attempts at autobiography. He sent Paine to New York to fetch a "small steamer trunk" of manuscripts that he had gathered together for use in the biography.³¹ By the time he left Dublin in late June for a break from dictating, he had decided to include "My Autobiography [Random Extracts from It]"—the

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

“Chapter II” written in Vienna—and four of the 1904 Florentine Dictations. These earlier writings, not present in Hobby’s first typescript, were inserted at the beginning of the second typescript, before the 1906 Autobiographical Dictations. Clemens was particularly pleased with “Random Extracts,” as Lyon recorded in her journal on 22 June: “After luncheon we sat on the porch & M^r. Clemens read the very first autobiography beginning, written many years ago about 1879—44 typewritten pages, & telling of his boyhood days, & the farm. He was deeply moved as he read on & on.”³² To explain his reasons for selecting these pieces, Clemens wrote prefaces to introduce them. These manuscript prefaces, whose purpose was not entirely clear until now, are in the Mark Twain Papers. The first one, “An Early Attempt,” was intended to precede “Random Extracts.” It begins, “The chapters which immediately follow constitute a fragment of one of my many attempts (after I was in my forties) to put my life on paper,” and describes the sketch as an example of the “old, old, old unflexible and difficult” plan that “starts you at the cradle and drives you straight for the grave.” The second preface, “The Latest Attempt,” introduces the four Florentine Dictations: “Finally, in Florence in 1904, I hit upon the right way to do an Autobiography.” On the following page he wrote a subtitle, “The Final (and Right) Plan.” The manuscript ends with a three-part “Preface. As from the Grave,” which Clemens described to Howells on 17 June: “I’ve written a short Preface. I like the title of it: ‘Spoken from the Grave.’ It will prepare the reader for the solemnities within.”³³ This extensive front matter, complete and in the sequence that Clemens intended, was published for the first time in *Autobiography of Mark Twain, Volume 1* (2010).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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