Sam Clemens Starts for the Amazon

B. Scott Holmes

Start for the Amazon

On returning to the Mississippi River Valley, Sam possibly visited with his sister, Pamela, in St. Louis before heading for Muscatine, Iowa. Scharnhorst writes: "But Sam had no future in Muscatine. For that matter, neither did Orion, ... half owner of a Whig newspaper, but as soon as he settled there, he had changed his party affiliation from Whig to Republican to signal his opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska Act. The act effectively repealed the Missouri Compromise and opened the western territories to “popular sovereignty” —that is, to settlement by slaveholders. Opponents of slavery, including Orion, were outraged, and passage of the act led to border ruffians like William Quantrill and a rehearsal for the Civil War , 'Bloody Kansas.'" R.F. Burton noted that in 1860 Kansas was still bloody.

Scharnhorst goes on to say that Sam worked for Orion’s *Muscatine Journal* for a few weeks and then returned to St. Louis by early August 1854.

It’s possible that Clemens remained in Muscatine several months before going to St. Louis, and that he worked for a time at the Journal office. The first letter to the Muscatine Journal from St. Louis is dated as 16 February 1855.

To the Editors of the Muscatine Tri-Weekly Journal (Orion Clemens and Charles E. H. Wilson)
16 February 1855 • St. Louis, Mo.
(Muscatine Tri-Weekly Journal, 28 Feb 55, UCCL 00008)

To the Muscatine Tri-Weekly Journal
24–26 February 1855 • St. Louis, Mo.
(Muscatine Tri-Weekly Journal, 9 Mar 55, UCCL 09994)

> The negro girl Chlo Ann Harris, who was arrested and brought before the Criminal Court as a runaway slave, some three weeks since, and discharged by that Court, on the ground that the proper forms of law were not carried out in making the arrest, was yesterday taken before the Law Commissioner’s Court on a writ of habeas corpus, tried, and again discharged. It was proved beyond a doubt that she was a free girl. She had entered the State without a license, and was passing as a slave to avoid the consequences of this breach of the law. She will doubtless be more careful in the future.

The Missouri statutes of 1855 “in regard to free colored persons were very severe”:
No colored person could live in this State without a license, and these licenses were to be issued only to certain classes of them; moreover, bond, not exceeding a thousand dollars, had to be given in security for good behavior. The negro was not allowed to retain in his possession the license or other free papers, though he could obtain them in the event of his moving from one county to another, as they had

to be filed with the clerk of the county court where he resided. No free negro or mulatto could emigrate into the State or enter the State unless in the service of a white man, or for the purpose of passing through. In either case the time that he could remain in the borders was limited. If he stayed longer he was liable to arrest, a fine of $10, and expulsion. If the fine was not paid he was further liable to not more than twenty lashes, and the court could either order that he immediately leave the State or else hire him out until the fine, costs and expenses of imprisonment had been paid for by his labor.

Chloe Ann Harris's release came on 23 February when her papers arrived from Mount Pleasant, Ohio (St. Louis Evening News: "Slave Case," 1 Feb 55, 3; "Interesting Slave Case," 24 Feb 55, 3). Clemens probably had the 1855 laws in mind in 1876, while writing chapter 6 of Huckleberry Finn. There Pap Finn inveighs against the "govment" for refusing to sell "a free nigger" from Ohio "till he's been in the State six months"

To the Muscatine Tri-Weekly Journal
1 March 1855 • St. Louis, Mo.
(Muscatine Tri-Weekly Journal, 12 Mar 55, UCCL 09995)

To the Muscatine Tri-Weekly Journal
5 March 1855 • St. Louis, Mo.
(Muscatine Tri-Weekly Journal, 14 Mar 55, UCCL 00009)

St. Louis, March 5th.

> Business on the levee to-day was rather brisk, and several boats went out. Yesterday and to-day were as bright and pleasant as any one could wish, and fires were abolished, I hope for the season. March has "come in like a lamb," but many fear it will "go out like a lion." The river is on a stand at present, but not a particle of ice visible. The James Trabue was lost on the Red River on the 17th ult.
> …
> The Hospital returns for the past week number 52; the cemetery report I have not seen, though I think sickness is on the increase. There is some small pox in the city, but the number of cases is unimportant. Persons afflicted with this disease are immediately conveyed to the pest hospital, and it is thus prevented from spreading.
> …
> ST. LOUIS MARKET.
>
> Hemp $95 to $105. Lead $5 50. Flour ranges from $8 to $9 50. Wheat, fair white, from $1 65 to $1 80; red, from $1 70 to $1 85. Oats 50c. Barley $1 45. Mess Pork $12 50. Prime Lard 8c. Hay 85 to 90c per 100 lbs. Potatoes $2 to $2 25 per bushel. Navy Beans range from $1 50 to 2 per bushel. Eggs (retail) 30c per dozen—other articles in proportion.
>
> S. L. C.

Sam's return to St. Louis lasted only a few months before moving to Keokuk and rejoining his brother, Orion. Sam delivers his first public speech and comes across Herndon 's book about exploring the Amazon and the unregulated trade in coca.

No letters are known to survive for the next fourteen and a half months. Sam likely remained in St. Louis, working as a typesetter, until mid-June 1855 before moving to Keokuk, Iowa. Keokuk was a bustling frontier town, population about sixty-five hundred, some two hundred miles above St. Louis on the Mississippi River. Orion married Mary Eleanor (Mollie) Stotts, a Keokuk native, on 19 December 1854, On 9 June 1855 , after Orion sold his share in the Muscatine Journal to James W. Logan earlier that week, the couple moved to Keokuk. There, on 11 June, Orion became the new owner of the Ben Franklin Book and Job Office.

By mid-June Sam had left St. Louis for Keokuk. His name appeared in a 16 June "List of Letters" unclaimed at the St. Louis post office.

He made mid-July visits to Hannibal and the nearby villages of Paris and Florida on a downriver trip after settling in Keokuk. Sam arranged for the care and disposition of family property before continuing downriver to St. Louis. There he attempted to become a Mississippi River cub pilot. He had with him a letter from Orion introducing him to wealthy James Clemens, Jr., a distant cousin who had helped finance Sam's father. Sam hoped James would help him realize that ambition. James Clemens later told Orion that only illness prevented him from interceding with a friend "who is Pilot of one of the large boats," despite a conviction that "your brother should stick to his present trade or art".

Sam returned to Keokuk and Orion's print shop. There is evidence that briefly toward the end of 1855, and perhaps into 1856, he left Orion's employ to set type on a newspaper published across the Mississippi in Warsaw, Illinois. But by 17 January 1856 at the latest, when he spoke at the Keokuk printers' celebration of Franklin's birth, Clemens was back in Orion's shop, working alongside their brother Henry and earning, according to Paine, "five dollars a week and board".

SLC to Mollie Clemens, 20 April 1856 · Keokuk, Iowa
SLC to Ann V. Ruffner, May 1856 · Keokuk, Iowa
SLC to Ann V. Ruffner, 7 May 1856 · Keokuk, Iowa

To Ann E. Taylor
21 and 25 May 1856 • Keokuk, Iowa
(Kansas City Star Magazine, 21 Mar 1926, UCCL 00010)

> … Bugs! Yes, B-U-G-S! What of the bugs? Why, perdition take the bugs! That is all. Night before last I stood at the little press until nearly 2 o'clock, and the flaring gas light over my head attracted all the varieties of bugs which are to be found in natural history, and they all had the same praiseworthy recklessness about flying into the fire. They at first came in little social crowds of a dozen or so, but soon increased in numbers, until a religious mass meeting of several millions was assembled on the board before me, presided over by a venerable beetle, who occupied the most prominent lock of my hair as his chair of state, while innumerable lesser dignitaries of the same tribe were clustered around him, keeping order, and at the same time endeavoring to attract the attention of the vast assemblage to their own importance by industriously grating their teeth. It must have been an interesting occasion—perhaps a great bug jubilee commemorating the triumph of the locusts over Pharaoh's crops in Egypt many centuries ago. At least, good seats, commanding an unobstructed view of the scene, were in great demand; and I have no doubt small fortunes were made by certain delegates from Yankee land by disposing of comfortable places on

my shoulders at round premiums. In fact, the advantages which my altitude afforded were so well appreciated that I soon began to look like one of those big cards in the museum covered with insects impaled on pins.

The big “president” beetle (who, when he frowned, closely resembled Isbell when the pupils are out of time) rose and ducked his head and, crossing his arms over his shoulders, stroked them down to the tip of his nose several times, and after thus disposing of the perspiration, stuck his hands under his wings, propped his back against a lock of hair, and then, bobbing his head at the congregation, remarked, “B-u-z-z!” To which the congregation devoutly responded, “B-u-z-z!” Satisfied with this promptness on the part of his flock, he took a more imposing perpendicular against another lock of hair and, lifting his hands to command silence, gave another melodious “b-u-z-z!” on a louder key (which I suppose to have been the key-note) and after a moment’s silence the whole congregation burst into a grand anthem, three dignified daddy longlegs, perched near the gas burner, beating quadruple time during the performance. Soon two of the parts in the great chorus maintained silence, while a treble and alto duet, sung by forty-seven thousand mosquitoes and twenty-three thousand house flies, came in, and then, after another chorus, a tenor and bass duet by thirty-two thousand locusts and ninety-seven thousand pinch bugs was sung—then another grand chorus, “Let Every Bug Rejoice and Sing” (we used to sing “heart” instead of “bug”), terminated the performance, during which eleven treble singers split their throats from head to heels, and the patriotic “daddies” who beat time hadn’t a stump of a leg left.

It would take a ream of paper to give all the ceremonies of this great mass meeting. Suffice it to say that the little press “chawed up” half a bushel of the devotees, and I combed 976 beetles out of my hair the next morning, every one of whose throats was stretched wide open, for their gentle spirits had passed away while yet they sung—and who shall say they will not receive their reward? I buried their motionless forms with musical honors in John’s hat. ...

To Jane Lampton Clemens and Pamela A. Moffett
10 June 1856 • Keokuk, Iowa
(MS: NPV, UCCL 00011)

To Henry Clemens
5 August 1856 • Keokuk, Iowa
(MS: NPV, UCCL 00012)

Keokuk, August 5th

My Dear Brother:

Annie is well . ot your letter, postmarked 5th about two hours ago—come d—d quick, (to be a little profane.) Ward and I held a long consultation, Sunday morning, and the result was that us two have determined to start to Brazil, if possible, in *six weeks* from now, in order to look carefully into matters there (by the way, I forgot to mention that *Annie* is well,) and report to Dr. Martin in time for him to follow on the first of March.

The proposed expedition reflected Clemens's recent reading. Joseph S. Martin, a Keokuk physician, board-of-health member, and "Lecturer on Chemistry and Toxicology" at the Iowa Medical College in Keokuk, was evidently to be one of his companions. The 1856–57 Keokuk directory has partial listings for three persons named Ward, but it is impossible to say which was Clemens's prospective partner. Paine reported that Martin and Ward "gave up the plan, probably for lack of means"; Clemens, however, apparently nursed his interest in Brazil until 1857, when he became a cub pilot.

> We propose going via. New York. Now, between you and I and the fence you must say nothing about this to Orion, for he thinks that Ward is to go clear through alone, and that I am to stop at New York or New Orleans until he reports. But that don't suit me. My confidence in human nature does not extend quite that far. I won't depend upon Ward's judgment, or anybody's else.—I want to see with my own eyes, and form my own opinion. But you know what Orion is. When he gets a notion into his head, and more especially if it is an erroneous one, the Devil can't get it out again. So I knew better than to combat his arguments long, but apparently yielded, inwardly determined to go clear through. Ma knows my determination, but even she counsels me to keep it from Orion. She says I can treat him as I did her when I started to St. Louis and went to New York—I can start to New York and go to South America.! (This reminds me that—Annie is well.) Although Orion talks grandly about furnishing me with fifty or a hundred dollars in six weeks, I am not such an ass as to think he will retain the same opinion such an eternity of time—in all probability he will be entirely out of the notion by that time. Though I don't like to attribute selfish motives to him, you could see yourself that his object in favoring my wish was that I might take all the hell of pioneering in a foreign land, and then when everything was placed on a firm basis, and beyond all risk, he could follow himself. But you would soon discover, when the time arrived, that he couldn't leave Mollie and that "love of a baby." With these facts before my eyes, (I must not forget to say that Annie <u>is</u> *well*,) I could not depend upon Orion for ten dollars, so I have "feelers" out in several directions, and have already asked for a hundred dollars from one source (keep it to yourself.)

The potential source mentioned here has not been identified. By the time Clemens left Keokuk in mid-October 1856, however, he had made an arrangement to write travel letters for the Keokuk Post. He was to be paid five dollars per letter, a rate he subsequently negotiated up to seven and a half dollars . In fact he wrote only three letters, dated 18 October 1856 from St. Louis, and 14 November 1856 and 14 March 1857 from Cincinnati. Written in the guise of a loutish bumpkin, Thomas Jefferson Snodgrass, the letters were among his first efforts to sustain the vernacular voice that he perfected in his mature writings. Not long after the last of them appeared, Clemens gave up the idea of a Brazilian excursion in favor of becoming a pilot.

> I will lay on my oars for a while, and see how the wind sets, when I may probably try to get more. Mrs. Creel is a great friend of mine, and has some influence over with Ma and Orion, though I reckon they would not acknowledge it. I am going up there to-morrow, to press her into my service. I shall take care that Ma and Orion are plentifully supplied with South American books. They have Herndon's Report. Now.

Exploration of the Valley of the Amazon, Made under Direction of the Navy Department (1853–54), in two volumes, by William Lewis Herndon and Lardner Gibbon. Clemens evidently read only the first volume, by Herndon. In 1910, in "The Turning Point of My Life," he recalled that it "told an

astonishing tale about coca, a vegetable product of miraculous powers; asserting that it was so nourishing and so strength-giving that the native of the mountains of the Madeira region would tramp up-hill and down all day on a pinch of powdered coca and require no other sustenance." As a result, Clemens "was fired with a longing to ascend the Amazon. Also with a longing to open up a trade in coca with all the world. During months I dreamed that dream, and tried to contrive ways to get to Para and spring that splendid enterprise upon an unsuspecting planet". This ambition must also have been fed by newspaper reports of the Amazon Valley. Between 1853 and 1856 dozens of articles published in the cities where Clemens lived extolled the wonders and opportunities of the region and urged that it be opened to commerce.

> Ward and the Dr. and myself will hold a grand consultation to-night. at the office. We have agreed that no more shall be admitted into our company.
>
> Emma Graham has got home, and Bettie Barrett has gone up the country. I may as well remark that Annie is well. I spent Sunday afternoon up there, and brought away a big bouquet of Ete's d—d stinking flowers, (I mean no disrespect to her, or her taste,). Any single one of the lot smells worse than a Sebastopol "stink-pot."
>
> Between you and I, I believe that the secret of Ma's willingness to allow me to go to South America lies in the fact that she is afraid I am going to get married! Success to the hallucination. Annie has not heard from the girls yet. I believe the Guards went down to Quincy to-day to escort our first locomotive home.

Escorted by the Keokuk Guards and welcomed by a booming cannon and exultant speeches by the city fathers, Keokuk's first steam locomotive, the J. K. Hornish, arrived at the levee at 9:00 A.M. on 8 August, via barge from Quincy, Illinois. The Hornish was intended for the Keokuk, Mount Pleasant, and Muscatine Railroad. It was named for the company's general agent, who had been instrumental in obtaining construction financing for the line. By reducing the cost of transporting freight around the Keokuk rapids from two dollars to fifty cents per ton, the railroad greatly benefited the town's economy

> The report that Belle and Isbell are about to be married, is still going. Dick was engaged in sticking up Whig office hand bills at last accounts.13

Richard Higham's new employer was James B. Howell, one of Orion's competitors. Howell and Company edited and published two Whig newspapers in Keokuk, the daily Gate City and the weekly Des Moines Valley Whig

> Write soon.
>
> Your Brother,
>
> Sam
>
> P. S. I will just add that *Annie* is WELL.

In a letter to Jacob H. Burrough in November of 1876, Mark Twain characterized himself from this time: *(MS, in pencil: MoCgS, UCCL 01384)*

Clemens and Jacob H. Burrough (1826–83) were St. Louis boarding-house acquaintances in the early 1850s, when Clemens was a journeyman printer and Burrough a journeyman chairmaker. In 1900 Clemens recalled that Burrough "was fond of Dickens, Thackeray, Scott & Disraeli, & was the only reading-man in the establishment, & the only one equipped with fine literary appreciations & a sound & competent literary judgment". Burrough had since become an attorney in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. The letter that Clemens answered has not been found.

My Dear Burrough

> As you describe me I can picture myself as I was, 22 years ago. The portrait is correct. You think I have grown some; upon my word there was room for it. You have described a callow fool, a self-sufficient ass, a mere human tumble-bug, stern in air, heaving at his bit of dung & imagining he is re-modeling the world & is entirely capable of doing it right. Ignorance, intolerance, egotism, self-assertion, opaque perception, dense & pitiful chuckle-headedness—& an almost pathetic unconsciousness of it all. That is what I was at 19–20; & that is what the average Southerner is at 60 to-day. Northerners, too, of a certain grade. It is of children like this that voters are made. And such is the primal source of our government! A man hardly knows whether to swear or cry over it.
>
> I think I comprehend there position there—perfect freedom to vote just as you choose, provided you choose to vote as other people think—social ostracism, otherwise. The same thing exists here among the Irish. An Irish republican is a pariah among his people. Yet that race find fault with the same spirit in Know-Nothingism.

The Know Nothing (or American) party, whose basic tenet was opposition to immigrants and Catholics, had been active in the 1850s. It was responsible for riots in St. Louis at the time that Burrough and Clemens were living there

Dissatisfied with his position in Orion Clemens's mismanaged Ben Franklin Book and Job Office and hoping to venture profitably into Brazil, Clemens decided to abandon Keokuk. His own account of his departure, elliptical and influenced by time and imagination, occurs in his autobiography (Thursday, March 29, 1906)

> One day in the mid-winter of 1856 or 1857—I think it was 1856—I was coming along the main street of Keokuk in the middle of the forenoon. It was bitter weather—so bitter that that street was deserted, almost. A light dry snow was blowing here and there on the ground and on the pavement, swirling this way and that way and making all sorts of beautiful figures, but very chilly to look at. The wind blew a piece of paper past me and it lodged against a wall of a house. Something about the look of it attracted my attention and I gathered it in. It was a fifty-dollar bill, the only one I had ever seen, and the largest assemblage of money I had ever encountered in one spot. I advertised it in the papers and suffered more than a thousand dollars' worth of solicitude and fear and distress during the next few days lest the owner should see the advertisement and come and take my fortune away. As many as four days went by without an applicant; then I could endure this kind of misery no longer. I felt sure that another four could not go by in this safe and secure way. I felt that I must take that money out of danger. So I bought a ticket for Cincinnati and went to that city. I worked there several months in the printing-office of Wrightson and Company. I had been reading Lieutenant Herndon's account of his explorations of the

> Amazon and had been mightily attracted by what he said of coca. I made up my mind that I would go to the head-waters of the Amazon and collect coca and trade in it and make a fortune. I left for New Orleans in the steamer Paul Jones with this great idea filling my mind. One of the pilots of that boat was Horace Bixby.

From a second dictation (Tuesday, October 2, 1906):

> and by this time I was twenty-one years old. I was likely to remain in Keokuk forever, but another accident, decreed by Adam's first act and thereby made unavoidable, came to my rescue. I had been longing to explore the Amazon River and open its head-waters to a great trade in coca, but I hadn't any money to get to the Amazon with. But for the accident thrown in my way, at this time, by Adam's first act, I should never have even got started toward the Amazon. That accident was a fifty-dollar bill. I found it in the street on a winter's morning. I advertised it in order to find the owner, and then I immediately left for Cincinnati for fear I might succeed if I waited. At Cincinnati I took passage in the Paul Jones for New Orleans, on my way to the Amazon. When I had been in New Orleans a couple of days my money was all gone and I had found out that there was no ship leaving for the Amazon that year, nor any likelihood that a ship would be leaving for the Amazon during the next century.

Sam planned to work his way down the Mississippi and board a ship for Brazil. He got Orion to use his influence with the head manager, George Rees, who agreed to pay $5 each for some humorous travel sketches he would send to the Keokuk Daily Post. Sam then departed Keokuk, bound for the Amazon.

Clemens left Keokuk in October 1856, not in "midwinter." He made a brief visit to St. Louis, where he evidently attended the opening day, 13 October, of the St. Louis Agricultural and Mechanical Association Fair and wrote a sketch about it.

October 18 Saturday – Still in St. Louis, Sam wrote the first Thomas Jefferson Snodgrass letter. Sam used dialect, and grammatical and spelling errors to characterize a country bumpkin getting the worst of it in the big city. Snodgrass was the last pen name Sam used prior to Mark Twain, in Nevada, Feb. 1863. Sam earned five dollars each for these letters, his first payments for freelance writing. "It is likely that he departed on Oct. 18 and arrived in Keokuk the following day".

Sam took the Snodgrass letter to Keokuk on the day after it was written, arriving on 19 October. Fred Lorch says he spent "a day or two" in Keokuk. That would put him on the river packet to Quincy on 22 October, arriving by train in Chicago that night, where he stayed in the Massasawit House. Then the train for Indianapolis on the 23rd and from Indianapolis to Cincinnati, arriving on the morning of 24 October 1856. William Baker references a letter he received from Frederick Anderson, an editor of the Mark Twain Papers: "

> So far as I know there are no letters at all written by Clemens while he was in Cincinnati--and very few indeed for the period of his travels before returning to the Mississippi. This fact, combined with the absence of any notebooks, his lack of use of his observations in fictional form or in his autobiographical writing makes these years of mystery most compelling.

Baker writes:

> Where did he get the money for that steamer trip and the subsequent train passage to Cincinnati? Perhaps he found fifty dollars, as he reports, although he might have borrowed it from his sister Pamela's husband, William A. Moffett, with the request to keep it a secret; hence the invention of finding fifty dollars. River travel to Cincinnati via Cairo and then east on the serpentine Ohio River, a distance of 600 miles, would have cost only nine dollars, while the trip by railroad via Terre Haute and Indianapolis, a distance of 350 miles, would have cost about fifteen dollars. But parts of the Ohio were too low for steamers in the fall of 1856, though he probably could have made a steamer trip as far as Louisville. And although the trip by railroad would have necessitated three changes of rail lines (the direct 322-mile route was not open until April 1857), the rail route was clearly the logical alternative. He ended up by taking a crazy zig-zag route that cost about thirty dollars (about $25.24 fare plus food, hotel, and porterage). It was a sizeable expense for a man who had been working for five dollars a week plus room and board, even more remarkable since he claims he never got any money at all.

Baker continues with speculation on Sam's travel itinerary to Cincinnati:

> Fred Lorch says he spent "a day or two" in Keokuk, if we say two days, 20 and 21 October, that would put him on the river packet to Quincy on 22 October, arriving by train in Chicago that night, where he stayed in "the Massasawit House, " entraining for Indianapolis on the 23rd. Then he took "the midnight thunder and lightning train" from Indianapolis to Cincinnati, arriving on the morning of 24 October 1856. If my assumptions are correct, he arrived in the center of the western publishing industry about five weeks before his twenty-first birthday on 30 November.

Baker then considers why Sam went to Cincinnati:

> I assume that Clemens, approaching his majority, ready to try his own wings, and having already experienced New York, Philadelphia, and St. Louis during his apprentice printing years, was now eager to try his hand in the center of the western printing trade, Cincinnati, population almost 150,000. It is possible he arrived without a job, without contacts, without even a place to stay--the action of a man with some gumption, and with considerable self-confidence.

Cincinnati, Ohio:

The several Cincinnati newspapers have nothing to say about the twenty-one-year-old journeyman printer. Cincinnati has no Twain tradition, except perhaps for his alleged statement, probably apocryphal, "When the end of the world comes, I want to be in Cincinnati--it is always ten years behind the times."

One of Sam's closest friends several years later, William D. Howells, was in this city for some of this period of time. They never met there and in the hundreds of letters between Howells and Clemens, the Cincinnati of 1857 was never mentioned. The twenty-year old Howells was working a block away from Clemens.

In Cincinnati Sam found employment as a typesetter for T. Wrightson and Co., one of the city's leading printers. He boarded at 145 West Third Street, a few blocks from Wrightson's.

Sam's time in Cincinnati is one of the "least documented of his life…" but he did write two more Snodgrass letters. Cincinnati is also the location of a significant controversy regarding Twain's later years. In researching Sam's days in the city William Baker identified John J. McFarland, a printer at Wrightson's who also boarded at 145 West Third Street. Albert Bigelow Paine, in his biography of Mark Twain and later in *Mark Twain's Autobiography,* wrote of a fellow boarder named Macfarlane. Paine had misidentified what was most likely a character sketch as autobiographical.

> WHEN I was turned twenty I wandered to Cincinnati, and was there several months. Our boarding-house crew was made up of commonplace people of various ages and both sexes. They were full of bustle, frivolity, chatter, and the joy of life, and were good-natured, clean-minded, and well-meaning; but they were oppressively uninteresting, for all that —with one exception. This was Macfarlane, a Scotchman. He was forty years old—just double my age —but we were opposite in most ways and comrades from the start. I always spent my evenings by the wood fire in his room, listening in comfort to his tireless talk and to the dulled complainings of the winter storms, until the clock struck ten. At that hour he grilled a smoked herring, after the fashion of an earlier friend in Philadelphia, the Englishman Sumner. His herring was his nightcap and my signal to go.
>
> He was six feet high and rather lank, a serious and sincere man. He had no humor, nor any comprehension of it. He had a sort of smile, whose office was to express his good nature, but if I ever heard him laugh, the memory of it is gone from me. He was intimate with no one in the house but me, though he was courteous and pleasant with all. He had two or three dozen weighty books—philosophies, histories, and scientific works—and at the head of this procession were his Bible and his dictionary. After his herring he always read two or three hours in bed.
>
> Diligent talker as he was, he seldom said anything about himself. To ask him a personal question gave him no offense—nor the asker any information; he merely turned the matter aside and flowed placidly on about other things. He told me once that he had had hardly any schooling, and that such learning as he had, he had picked up for himself. That was his sole biographical revelation, I believe. Whether he was bachelor, widower, or grass widower, remained his own secret. His clothes were cheap, but neat and caretakingly preserved. Ours was a cheap boarding house; he left the house at six, mornings, and returned to it toward six, evenings; his hands were not soft, so I reasoned that he worked at some mechanical calling ten hours a day, for humble wages—but I never knew. As a rule, technicalities of a man's vocation, and figures and metaphors drawn from it, slip out in his talk and reveal his trade; but if this ever happened in Macfarlane's case I was none the wiser, although I was constantly on the watch during half a year for those very betrayals. It was mere curiosity, for I didn't care what his trade was, but I wanted to detect it in true detective fashion and was annoyed because I couldn't do it. I think he was a remarkable man, to be able to keep the shop out of his talk all that time.
>
> There was another noteworthy feature about him: he seemed to know his dictionary from beginning to end. He claimed that he did. He was frankly proud of this accomplishment and said I would not find it possible to challenge him with an English word which he could not

promptly spell and define. I lost much time trying to hunt up a word which would beat him, but those weeks were spent in vain and I finally gave it up; which made him so proud and happy that I wished I had surrendered earlier.

He seemed to be as familiar with his Bible as he was with his dictionary. It was easy to see that he considered himself a philosopher and a thinker. His talk always ran upon grave and large questions; and I must do him the justice to say that his heart and conscience were in his talk and that there was no appearance of reasoning and arguing for the vain pleasure of hearing himself do it.

Of course his thinking and reasoning and philosophizings were those of a but partly taught and wholly untrained mind, yet he hit by accident upon some curious and striking things. For instance. The time was the early part of 1856—fourteen or fifteen years before Mr. Darwin's Descent of Man startled the world—yet here was Macfarlane talking the same idea to me, there in the boarding house in Cincinnati.

The same general idea, but with difference. Macfarlane considered that the animal life in the world was developed in the course of æons of time from a few microscopic seed germs, or perhaps one microscopic seed germ deposited upon the globe by the Creator in the dawn of time, and that this development was progressive upon an ascending scale toward ultimate perfection until man was reached: and that then the progressive scheme broke pitifully down and went to wreck and ruin!

He said that man's heart was the only bad heart in the animal kingdom; that man was the only animal capable of feeling malice, envy, vindictiveness, revengefulness, hatred, selfishness, the only animal that loved drunkenness, almost the only animal that could endure personal uncleanliness and a filthy habitation, the sole animal in whom was fully developed the base instinct called patriotism, the sole animal that robs, persecutes, oppresses, and kills members of his own immediate tribe, the sole animal that steals and enslaves the members of any tribe.

He claimed that man's intellect was a brutal addition to him and degraded him to a rank far below the plane of the other animals, and that there was never a man who did not use his intellect daily all his life to advantage himself at other people's expense. The divinest divine reduced his domestics to humble servitude under him by advantage of his superior intellect, and those servants in turn were above a still lower grade of people by force of brains that were still a little better than theirs.

[Written in 1898]

Mark Twain never references either Macfarlane nor McFarland. The sketch was not a dictation but originated in 1894 or 1895, not 1898 as Paine noted. The editors at the Mark Twain Project have identified the paper on which the original copy was made as the same as that used for correspondence from those years and is also associated with Twain's work on *Joan of Arc*. There is little or no reason to believe Mark Twain would have retained "*the germ of the deterministic pessimism to which he held.*." My own reading of Mark Twain is that the "determinism" came naturally to Mark Twain, exhibited in

his earliest works. That which may be considered as “pessimism” becomes apparent following his anti-imperialism stance. See “To the Person Sitting in Darkness”:

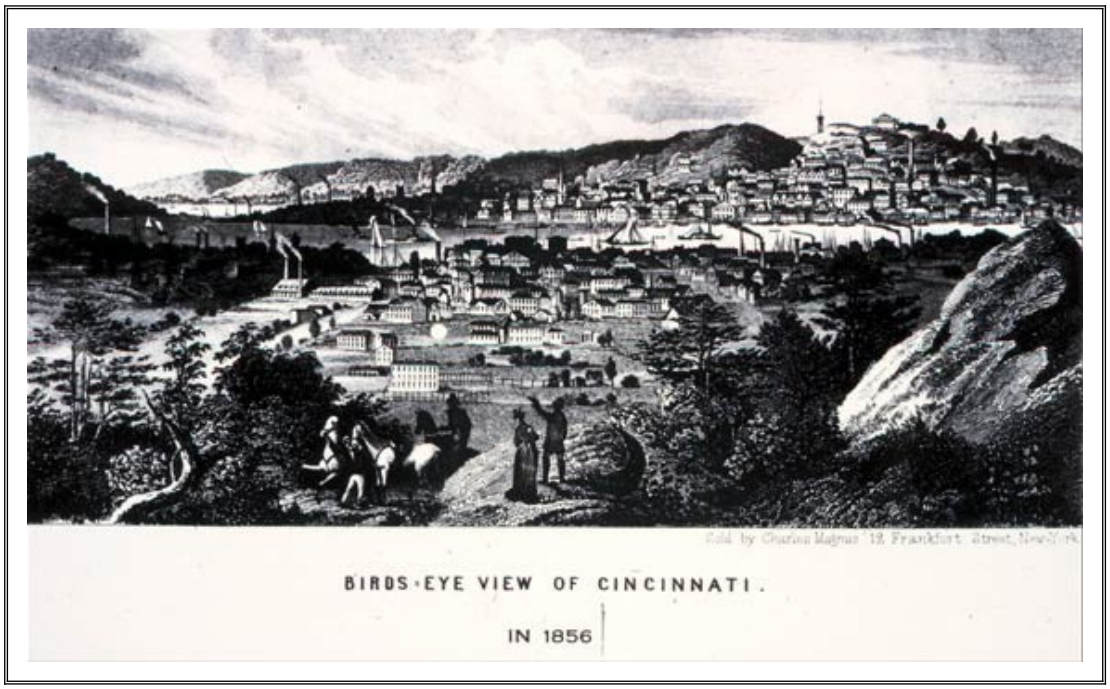
> True, we have crushed a deceived and confiding people; we have turned against the weak and the friendless who trusted us; we have stamped out a just and intelligent and well-ordered republic; we have stabbed an ally in the back and slapped the face of a guest; we have bought a Shadow from an enemy that hadn't it to sell; we have robbed a trusting friend of his land and his liberty; we have invited clean young men to shoulder a discredited musket and do bandit's work under a flag which bandits have been accustomed to fear, not to follow; we have debauched America's honor and blackened her face before the world. . .

It’s my thought that the two men, Macfarlane and McFarland, are indeed the same but only in the sense that Twain frequently modeled his fictional characters on those he had known: *ie* Tom Blankenship of Hannibal as Huck Finn or Henry Clay Dean of Keokuk as the “aged stranger” in “The War Prayer”.

Martin Zehr, in 2010, writes:

> Twain’s often caustic commentary regarding the behavior of the members of his species, “the damned human race,” himself included, was based on acute observation motivated by an empathy that he traced to his mother’s influence—she famously adopted every stray cat roaming the streets of Hannibal. Coupled with his lifelong study of what might loosely be termed “human nature” and his active interest in the sciences of his era, it is no surprise that his writings often have as their focus matters consonant with the budding formal discipline of psychology, as well as the psychology of our own era.

So it appears that the drudgery of a printer’s life was too much to bear for someone that valued independence and adventure. Samuel L. Clemens decided it was time to continue on to the Amazon.



George Magnus. Engraving. n.d. 3&9/16 x 7&4/16 in (9.05 x 18.42 cm). New York: George Mangus, 1850s. Cincinnati Historical Society Library.

Clemens took passage for New Orleans on the packet Paul Jones.

This points out another problem from Paine's work, when did Sam depart Cincinnati? Edgar Branch uncovered a lawsuit brought by Horace Bixby against the steamboat captain of the *Cora Anderson*. Branch, writing in 1992, notes that "court records conclusively show that Samuel Clemens began his river career two months earlier than heretofore supposed and that his initial ascent of the Mississippi River with Horace Bixby, from New Orleans to St, Louis, occurred not on the *Paul Jones* but on the *Colonel Crossman*, hitherto unverified as one of the steamers he steered for Bixby."

"...he boarded the *Paul Jones* on February 16 rather than April 15."

Probably the "great idea" of the Amazon journey was still alive in his mind as he later claimed, but within two weeks his old ambition to become a Mississippi pilot was rekindled. During daylight watches he began "doing a lot of steering" for Horace E. Bixby, pilot of the *Paul Jones*, whose sore foot made standing at the wheel painful. Bixby, later a noted captain as well as pilot, recalled after Clemens's death:

> I first met him at Cincinnati in the spring of 1857 as a passenger on the steamer Paul Jones. He was on his way to Central America for his health. I got acquainted with him on the trip and he thought he would like to be a pilot and asked me on what conditions he could become my assistant. I told him that I did not want any assistant, as they were generally more in the way than anything else, and that the only way I would accept him would be for a money consideration. I told him that I would instruct him till he became a competent pilot for $500. We made terms and he was with me two years, until he got his license.

February 16 Monday – Sam boarded the packet Paul Jones (353 tons), on its way from Pittsburgh, for passage to New Orleans, commanded by Hiram K. Hazlett and piloted by Horace E. Bixby and Jerry Mason.

Sam's impressions of the Paul Jones:

"I was in Cincinnati . . . I packed my valise, and took passage on an ancient tub called the *Paul Jones* for New Orleans. For the sum of sixteen dollars I had the scarred and tarnished splendors of 'her' main saloon principally to myself, for she was not a creature to attract the eye of wiser travelers".

Sam's description of the ship was another example of his creative (mis)remembering. The ship had been built only two years earlier; it was piloted by one of the most respected officers on the river; and contemporary newspapers praised it as a "magnificent," 'first class," and a "very staunch and pretty packet" with "finely furnished cabins' and "superb" dining.

Thus begins a new chapter, a "turning point", in the life of Samuel L. Clemens, aka Mark Twain.

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