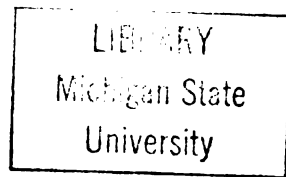


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"The Relation of Mark Twain's Adventures
of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn to
Contemporary Juvenile Literature."

presented by

William Douglas Potter

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

M. A. degree in English

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Date December 13, 1946

THE RELATION OF MARK TWAIN'S
ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER AND HUCKLEBERRY FINN
TO CONTEMPORARY JUVENILE LITERATURE

by

William Douglas Potter

A THESIS

Submitted to the Graduate School of Michigan
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CHAPTER I.

THE EFFECT OF MARK TWAIN'S LIFE AND ENVIRONMENT ON THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER AND HUCKLEBERRY FINN

I Clemens' Life

It is not the purpose of this introductory biography to give a complete and detailed biography of Samuel Clemens. Rather, a selection will be made of those events in the life of Clemens that laid the foundation for his spirit of independence and his reaction against the conventionalized juvenile hero.

Samuel Clemens was born in Florida, Missouri, on November 30, 1835. His father, John Marshall Clemens, was a lawyer by training, but was making a none too prosperous living as a merchant. Samuel was the fifth child. Shortly after Samuel's birth the family moved to Hannibal, Missouri. There, on the banks of the Mississippi, young Samuel spent his early years.

In 1847 his father died and young Clemens was left to shift for himself. He immediately quit school and worked in his brother's printing office. From 1853 until 1857 he lived a wanderer's life, working first in a New York printing office setting type. In 1857, however, this period of wandering came to a halt when he fell under the tutelage of Horace Bixby, Mississippi steamboat pilot. Under Bixby and in the piloting years

after until the opening of the Civil war which closed the Mississippi, Clemens became personally and familiarly acquainted with all of the types of characters found in fiction. Clemens stated later in his Autobiography that this brief schooling on the river would have required forty years of shore employment.

Next, he worked as private secretary to his brother in Nevada. A year of fortune hunting followed in the silver mines of the Humboldt and Esmeralda regions. This year is described in Roughing It. As editor of the Virginia City Territorial Enterprise Clemens assumed the pen name of "Mark Twain", the Mississippi leadsmen's call for two fathoms of water. Samuel Clemens will be referred to as "Mark Twain" in this paper as it was his favorite appellation, the name by which he signed his writings and the name by which he is most widely known .

By now Mark Twain had turned to reporting. Happy circumstance had given him the opportunity to travel as far as the Sandwich Islands. He returned and began to lecture about his travels and, of course, to write about them. This was what Mark Twain had been born for. His whole education had been pointed towards it..

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There was no variety of pungent sarcasm with which his head had not been filled; no rich lingo of profanity that he had not at his tongue's end; no hyperbole of sage-brush exaggeration that was not his. When he wrote he had sense enough to turn on the whole accumulation.¹

Here was a man who was to make American literature really national for the first time. He was the first literary man of any distinction to be born west of the Mississippi, a river which was the boundary between that part of America which was known and that part which was unknown. Since his early youth and young manhood were spent along this river it is important to consider the influence which the Mississippi exerted in his life.

It was the path of adventure, the gateway to the world. The river with its islands, its great slow-moving rafts, its marvelous steam-boats that were like fairyland, its stately current swinging to the sea! He would sit by it for hours and dream. He would venture out on it in a surreptitiously borrowed boat when he was barely strong enough to lift an oar out of the water. He learned to know all its moods and phases. He felt its kinship. In some occult way he may have known it as his prototype.²

DeVoto's description is even more picturesque:

All of the life that swarmed westward was borne by the packets...commerce, the factory system and the machine age...traders, drovers, farmers, homesteaders, tinmen, miners, masons, shipwrights, actors, minstrels, mesmerists, phrenologists, bear leaders, circus men, gamblers, prostitutes, and prophets. All the world, quite

1 J.E. Chamberlain, "The Self Revelation of Mark Twain," Boston Evening Transcript (October 18, 1924), p.8.

2 Albert Bigelow Paine, Mark Twain, A Biography, p.50.

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all of it, paused while roustabouts hustled bales and cases down the gangplank to a coon-jine song, and while Sam Clemens gaped, seeing strange clothes and hearing stranger tongues. ³

It is not surprising, then, that his The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, and Huckleberry Finn should be built about the Mississippi. From the accounts of his biographers and information within reach it would probably be safe to say that a continuation of Tom Sawyer would have resulted in an autobiography of Mark Twain. Twain himself points out the autobiographical element contained in the two books:

Most of the adventures recorded in this book really occurred; one or two were experiences of my own, the rest those of boys who were schoolmates of mine. Huck Finn is drawn from life; Tom Sawyer also, but not from an individual---he is a combination of the characteristics of three boys whom I knew, and therefore belongs to the composite order of architecture.

The odd superstitions touched upon were all prevalent among children and slaves in the West at the period of this story--that is to say, thirty or forty years ago.....⁴

The Tom Sawyer days began about 1844, and Mark Twain's youth was filled with a series of terrifying experiences. He saw an old man shot down on a street of Hannibal and carried into a house. There young Clemens watched in fascination as the victim expired

3 Bernard DeVoto, Mark Twain's America, p. 50.

4 Harper & Brothers, The Family Mark Twain, p. 286.

with a huge family Bible crushing his chest. He witnessed the death of a young immigrant stabbed with a bowie-knife. He saw a widow shoot a drunken tough who had shouted to the world that he was going in and rape her daughter.⁵ These and other experiences less gory possibly, but vivid, would be sifted and used in his writings.

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn are the most significant when they are examined in this light, that is, as autobiography. Wagenknecht tells that in a letter to a Mrs. Fairbanks, in 1868, Mark Twain expressed the belief that the whole capital of a novelist is a slow accumulation of "unconscious observation--absorption."⁶ Aunt Polly is Clemens' mother. Judge Thatcher is his father; Sid, his brother; Cousin Mary, his sister Pamela; Nigger Jim, a slave called "Uncle Dan'l" owned by Clemens' Uncle John Quarles; Huckleberry Finn, Tom Blankenship; and Huck's dad was young Blankenship's father, who was the town drunkard.⁷

5 Albert Bigelow Paine, Mark Twain, A Biography, p.49.

6 Edward Wagenknecht, Mark Twain, The Man and His Work, p.107.

7 Ibid.

In regard to "Injun Joe" Mark Twain has this to say in his Autobiography:

"Injun Joe," the half-breed, got lost in there (the cave) once, and would have starved to death if the bats had run short. But there was no chance of that; there were myriads of them. He told me all his story. In the book called Tom Sawyer I starved him entirely to death in the cave, but that was in the interest of art; it never happened. "General" Gaines, who was our first town drunkard before Jimmy Finn got the place, was lost in there for the space of a week, and finally pushed his handkerchief out of a hole in a hilltop near Saverton, several miles down the river from the cave's mouth, and somebody saw it and dug him out. There is nothing the matter with his statistics except the handkerchief. I knew him for years and he hadn't any. But it could have been his nose. That would attract attention. 8

The autobiographical incident of the Bible award is told by Laura Hawkins, the "Becky" Thatcher of The Adventures of Tom Sawyer; in an interview with the Rev. Henry M. Wharton:

"Sam was always up to some mischief," said Mrs. Frazer to me. "We attended Sunday school together and they had a system of rewards for saying verses after committing them to memory. A blue ticket was given for ten verses, a red ticket for ten blue, a yellow for ten red, and a Bible for ten yellow tickets. If you will count up, you will see it makes a Bible for ten thousand verses. Sam came up one Sunday with his ten yellow tickets, and everybody knew he hadn't said a verse, but had just got them by trading with the boys. But he received his Bible with all the serious air of a diligent student. 9

8 Harper & Brothers, The Family Mark Twain, p.107.

9 Rev. Henry M. Wharton, "The Boyhood Home of Mark Twain," The Century Magazine, Vol.42(1902), p.675.

Young Sam did not fare too well with Mrs. Horr, his first teacher. Like any normal boy he set out to find just how close to the border line he could go with her--he got too close and was sent out for a switch. "Everything looked too big and competent. Even the smallest switch had a wiry, discouraging look."¹⁰ He returned with a shaving which he hoped would satisfy Mrs. Horr's requirements. It didn't. She sent out another boy who had no personal interest in the matter, except a sadistic one. After the awful scene Clemens was determined to quit school, become a pirate, or an Indian and scalp people like Mrs. Horr.¹¹

All of Mark Twain's youthful escapades were not so innocent. Paine tells that young Clemens and Tom Blankenship finally found "borrowing" boats too tiresome. Deciding to own a boat, they gave a "borrowed" one a coat of red paint over its green and hid it for a season.

They borrowed the paint also, and the brush, though they carefully returned these the same evening about nightfall so the painter could have them Monday morning. Tom Blankenship rigged up a sail for the new craft, and Sam Clemens named it "Cecilia", after which they didn't need to borrow boats any more, though the owner of it did; and he sometimes used to observe as he saw it pass that, if it had been any other color but red, he would have sworn it his. ¹²

10 Albert Bigelow Paine, Mark Twain, A Biography, p.38

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid., p.56.

Later, both Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn would be willing to compromise with honesty. It is worth noting that Mark Twain never allowed either Tom or Huck to steal, but they did borrow any article that happened to fit into their projects of the moment:

We went down the hill and found Joe Harper and Ben Rogers, and two or three more of the boys, hid in the old tanyard. So we unhitched a skiff and pulled down the river two miles and a half, to the big scar on the hillside and went ashore. ¹³

On one of their pirate escapades they have stolen a ham. In this one instance their consciences will not allow them to sidestep the moral issue:

They tried to argue by reminding conscience that they had purloined sweetmeats and apples scores of times; but conscience was not to be appeased by such thin plausibilities; it seemed to them, in the end, that there was no getting around the stubborn fact that taking sweetmeats was only "hooking", while taking bacon and hams and such valuables was plain simple stealing and there was a command against that in the Bible. So they inwardly resolved that so long as they remained in the business, their piracies should not again be sullied with the crime of stealing. Then conscience granted a truce, and these curiously inconsistent pirates fell peacefully to sleep. ¹⁴

The line of reasoning here sounds curiously like Caliban's. Huck Finn's philosophy when it came to Conscience was as follows:

It don't make no difference whether you do right or wrong, a person's conscience ain't got no sense, and just goes for him anyway. If I had a yaller dog that didn't know

¹³ Harper & Brothers, The Family Mark Twain, p.348.

¹⁴ Ibid.

no more than a person's conscience does
I would pison him. It takes up more room
than all the rest of a person's insides and
yet ain't no good nohow. Tom Sawyer, he says
the same! 15

15 Harper & Brothers, The Family Mark Twain, p.606.

II The Influence of the Frontier on Mark Twain

There is a tendency to forget how thoroughly American Mark Twain was and think of him only as a humorist. He was also a Westerner. His whole early literary training was obtained in the boom camps of Nevada and California during a period in which the West was utterly independent of the East and where the public "demanded their intellectual fare dressed with the hottest, strongest condiments."¹ Primitive and elemental though Mark Twain's work might be when compared to the literature of Europe and the East, Mark Twain knew men and he wrote with no allegiance to false standards.² He represents the West as it was in the 1860's and his themes and forms were a logical development of that period and locale.

For the future in America he is the author of Roughing It, The Gilded Age, Life On The Mississippi, The Man Who Corrupted Hadleyburg, Pudd'nhead Wilson, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, and The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. But these books exist as satire and realism to which the frontier humorist attained. They are the humor of the frontier in its grandest incandescence, realizing its fullest scope and expressing its qualities on the level of genius. In them an American civilization

1 George T. Ferris, "Mark Twain," Appleton's Journal, Vol. 112 (1874), p.18.

2 R.E. Phillips, "Mark Twain: More Than Humorist," The Book Buyer, Vol. 22 (1901), p. 199.

sums up its experience; they are the climax of a literary tradition. But from the laughter of anonymous frontier story tellers to the figure of Huckleberry Finn a clearly traced line exists, and Huckleberry Finn could have been arrived at along no other path..³

If Europe's institutions were unable to stand the test of Mark Twain's fearless analysis it was because its culture for the first time was being examined by a man who had learned to judge things, not by appearances or by traditions, but by intrinsic worth. If things were sham this hard-headed westerner was disgusted.. He would not exclaim over a thing simply because the whole world had "gushed" over it. ⁴

Mark Twain was the first man to look upon the catacombs as a joke. Turner's "Slave Ship" reminded him of a tortois shell cat having a fit in a platter of tomatoes as he looked at the ship floundering about in that fierce conflagration of reds and yellows. ⁵

Mark Twain might have his limitations, but he was unawed. In his testing of Europe's past and present he was unfamiliar with the conventional approach. He plunged into the job "an unawed Philistine with no background, but at any rate his opinions were formed after he had seen things and not before." ⁶

3 Bernard DeVoto, Mark Twain's America, p. 241.

4 Fred Lewis Pattee, American Literature Since 1870, p. 56.

5 R.E. Phillips, "Mark Twain: More Than Humorist," The Book Buyer, Vol. 22 (1901), p.200.

6 William Lyon Phelps, Essays On Books, p. 221.

In later life this independence of spirit spilled over into his personal life. As his huge shock of red hair turned white he wore clothes which matched "appearing in Washington drawing rooms in evening clothes the colour of snow." ⁷ Phelps remarks that Mark Twain's hatred of convention, both literary and social resulted in books "which were so original that although received with rapture, they were too strange for classification, which is the curse of criticism... Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn were stories about boys that had all the queer shock of truth." ⁸

Woven into this fierce spirit of independence is Mark Twain's great capacity for indignation, about which, Phelps has this to say:

Indignation was a fundamental quality in his whole intellectual attitude. His philosophy of democracy was largely inspired by this emotion; and his uncompromising pessimism was built on it. Such a book as The Mysterious Stranger sprang directly from it. The chronic folly of mankind infuriated him; and he hated also the Idea of God, as it appeared in orthodox religious thought; for if God were really responsible for such a world as Mark believed this to be, He ought to be treated like any other capricious and cold hearted tyrant. ⁹

⁷ William Lyon Phelps, "The American Humorist," Some Makers of American Literature, p. 165.

⁸ Ibid., p. 169.

⁹ Ibid., p. 186

An example of how frontier anecdotes have a habit of blending into Mark Twain's autobiographical tales is the story about the coon skin. Sam and Huck desired money, but had only one skin, the value of which was ten cents. So they sold it over and over again at Selms' store, stealing it out of an open window after each sale. Although the data of the story sound legitimate, the story had been told about the frontier before Samuel Clemens' birth, had been told about every sharp dealing personage figuring in frontier humor and folklore. DeVoto found what is believed to be the earliest reference to David Crockett in the anonymous Sketches and Eccentricities (1833).¹⁰

If Mark Twain was outspoken in his criticism of the sacred European institutions, conventions and traditions, he was even more independent in his personal indulgences. In his Autobiography is this delightful statement which clearly shows his individualism:

It seems a pity that the world should throw away so many good things merely because they are unwholesome. I doubt if God has given us any refreshments which, taken in moderation, are unwholesome, except microbes.. Yet there are people who strictly deprive themselves of each and every eatable, drinkable, and smokable which has in any

¹⁰ Bernard DeVoto, Mark Twain's America, p.79.

way acquired a shady reputation. They pay
this price for health. And health is all
they get for it. How strange it is!
It is like paying out your whole fortune
for a cow that has gone dry.¹¹

¹¹ S.L. Clemens, Mark Twain's Autobiography, p.99.

CHAPTER II

THE STATE OF JUVENILE LITERATURE IN THE 1870'S

I General Conditions

By 1874 the state of juvenile literature had become so deplorable that an official communication was prepared by the Ladies' Commission on Sunday-school Books at the request of the editors of the Unitarian Review . This body of ladies had been organized nine years previously to select, for recommendation to Sunday schools and to families, suitable books for the young. The group was such a solemn body that the editors' note concerning them published at this time is worthy of quotation: :

We desire to call especial attention to this article as an official communication prepared, at our request, by the Ladies' Commission on Sunday school books. Only those among our readers who are unfamiliar with the activities of the Unitarian denomination will need to be informed that the ladies are of the highest literary and religious culture. During all these years they have devoted themselves, with the most painstaking assiduity to the work, of which they have realized more and more the importance as they have learned to know more completely with what a mass of unprofitable or pernicious reading

our generation is being flooded. By their wise judgment and taste and fairness they have won the confidence of other denominations as well as of our own; and we anticipate as the result of their labors, when these shall have become more generally known, not only a service to those who may avail themselves of their catalogues in the purchase of books, but an influence on publishers and authors in the production of this class of literature. If one public sentiment shall be fairly aroused to the importance of the right sort of reading for the young--and to the poisoning nature of much that is now most widely circulated, the makers of books will be compelled to conform to a higher moral and religious and literary standard. ¹

Surveying the "mass of unprofitable" reading the young people were being flooded with, the Ladies' Commission on Sunday school books found that contemporary literature for the young was incompetent in style. Authors, they pointed out, had fitted people out with a name, a few remarkable features apiece, and put them into vehement actions which lacked sequence. Choleric old gentlemen become mild as lambs. Shrewish old maids advise children to marry..

In the middle of the story they will be worked upon by motives to which, according to all previous showing, they should have been insensible...Nobody would believe, without examining scores of such productions annually, what use is made of stereotyped figures and stereotyped experiences. With each book of this class we are haunted by the idea that we must have read it before. It is a pity that so many persons have tried to make a book. ²

1 Editor's Note, "Literature for the Young," The Unitarian Review, Vol. 1 (1874), p.354.

2 Ibid., p.356.

Another common fault was the mixed character of books. Books appealing to very young readers had their characters put into "hot beds to ripen for marriage." Still other books they found to be mixed all the way through "so that, alternately, the older classes growl, 'How babyish,' and the little ones cry, 'We can't understand that!'" ³

The Commission found books in which children were being taught "conceit and self-assertion, with contempt for age and experience and a total disbelief that anybody knows more than they do." ⁴ In books of this type elders were portrayed as stupid and silly until taught and reformed by "young wiseacres, who combine the sagacity of sages with the unruffled goodness of seraphs." ⁵

The Ladies' Commission on Sunday school Books found sensationalism to be the most serious fault of all.

In the story books of a generation ago, if a naughty child pushed another child till it tumbled down, the consequences were torn clothes, or a bump, a natural amount of crying or wrath, and a reasonable punishment; but nowadays if a six year old urchin pushes a four year old, the precocious victim must needs "hit its head against a sharp stone," and "the angel face" grow deathly pale," while a "dark red stream trickles slowly over the golden tresses." Then follows a brain fever at least, and the poor baby who pushed waits through days of agonized suspense, to learn if he is a murderer.....

3 "Literature for the Young," Unitarian Review, Vol 1 (1874), p. 356

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

We ask ourselves sometimes if there are authors who consider it desirable to familiarize the mind with images of blood of crime, of ghastliness, as early as possible. Are they afraid the little inhabitants of the kingdom of heaven will linger there too long, that they hasten to pull them out into the glare of earthly passions.... And love, the holiest of human powers, they profane by making out of it that silly offspring of artificial society which deserves no name but its vulgar one of flirtation. They will not allow children to love one another without saying that they are in love, and the old fashioned "play fellow" becomes the "beau".⁶

From October, 1873, to May, 1874, the Ladies' Commission on Sunday-school Books read and approved eighty-two books out of 343. Their Supplement is not available. The principal reasons for their rejections were incompetency as to style, ignorance of human life and character, general injudiciousness, and sensationalism.

They also discovered "will" used for "shall".

The plaint of the Ladies' Commission on Sunday-school Books was followed in 1879 by an article in The National Quarterly Review attacking the papers in New York City, twenty-five of which were classed as "sensational, or flashy."⁷ The article, pointing out that the condition existed throughout the United States, singled out New York City as particularly offensive. The stories featured by the newspapers of this city were designed to appeal to young readers. The titles of these stories are indicative of their character: Dashing Dolores, or Chincapin Dick on the Border ;:

6 "Literature for the Young," Unitarian Review, Vol. 1 (1874), p. 356.

7 "Pernicious Juvenile Literature," The National Quarterly Review, (July, 1879), p. 136.

Spider and Stump, the Plagues of the Village ; Number Six, or the Young Fireman of Carbondale.

The article continues, giving a summary of one of the stories:

A small steamer lying amid other vessels in a harbor on the Pacific coast, blows up and sinks. A canoe, with a young girl in it, was approaching the steamer just before the fatal moment. An elderly man who was on the steamer utters a cry as he sinks, which is responded to by the occupant of the canoe. When she reaches the place, she at once dives where the man had disappeared. The hero of the story had, in the meanwhile, started in a boat from another vessel, and in a minute or two comes to the spot. He dives, of course, to rescue the girl, and finds, when he reaches the bottom, that the girl has been grasped by the man and they are both about to perish. The hero wrenches the man's grasp from the girl, catches at a "long rope" which the unfortunate man had "dangling from his waist" (when you are blown up on a steamer, always attach a long rope to your waist; it may be your salvation!) and fastens it to his arm....Then, the man, who proves to be the girl's father, is pulled up; a physician from a sloop-of-war (everything is convenient in these stories!) is at once at hand, and the half-drowned persons are speedily resuscitated. ⁸

This is not all. It is only the beginning, for the story is to be continued in the next issue.. In commenting, The National Quarterly Review gives a sharp picture of the highly flavored serials:

Probabilities are scouted, possibilities are recklessly lost sight of, the laws of nature are set aside with the utmost abandon.. The adventures must be thrilling at any cost; the young adventurer must be a hero.

Any interest that attaches to them, however, comes solely from their staple characteristic---their narrative of adventures.

8 "Pernicious Juvenile Literature," The National Quarterly Review, (July, 1879), p. 136.

It would be an abuse of language to speak of their literary style. The dialogue is of the baldest sort. There is no picturesque description to elevate the literary taste of the reader. There is no real portrayal of character. There is no sweet, pure sentiment. There is nothing but the recital of thrilling exciting, blood-curdling adventure after adventure. But of that there is abundance. ⁹

Sports and sportsmen of the professional variety are attacked by the article:

In several of these papers some space is given to extended accounts of croquet matches, base-ball games, rowing contests, and the like, together with sketches of ball-players and other sporting young men. We are told how a young man, for example, became a member of a professional nine, the amount of salary he receives, and various other pleasant particulars. The effect of such reading is to put before a boy's mind pastimes, innocent enough in themselves, in the light of a business for life, and a business too, possessing all the attractions of sport.

If this is business, however, the ordinary occupations of sober and laborious men soon come to be regarded as distasteful in the extreme. ¹⁰

The article then traces the "evil results that must come from an acquaintance with this literature." ¹¹ The ability of a generation nourished on this literature to appreciate "delicate flavor" is destroyed by "high seasoning." It is given false values and "unworthy views

9 "Pernicious Juvenile Literature," The National Quarterly Review, (July, 1879), p. 136.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

of life." Life, according to these stories is a time for self-gratification. Where the moral rule of life is to "work doggedly and persistently" for a living, the heroes of these stories take any position and do a good job with no training or experience behind them.¹²

Fortunately, the article continues, a great deal is being done to combat this situation by the religious publishing societies, as well as private houses, in sending out wholesome reading. Although much of this may be "goodish" it is better to be "goodish" than dirty.

Possibly the work of the Ladies' Commission on Sunday-school Books is bearing fruit, for the article opines:

If we are capable of judging, moreover, there is of late a decided improvement in these publications. The periodicals and the books of our Sabbath-school libraries, in point of view of literary style, of common-sense, of manliness in piety, are better than they used to be. We are glad to feel assured that in the religious juvenile literature that circulates so widely through our Sabbath-schools, there is much that antidotes pernicious publications. ¹³

This is highly important, the article points out, for the completed product of pernicious literature is not a pleasant one to have in society:

¹² "Pernicious Juvenile Literature," op. cit., p.149.

¹³ Ibid.

Brought forth as the result of these publications is a foul-mouthed bully, a cheat, a thief, a desperado, a libertine. Instead of a clean-minded, high-toned, honorable young man, not afraid of work, and knowing that whatever is of value in this world is gained by work, a young man of courage in which the moral element is greater than the physical, a young man respecting the law and other men's rights, a young man worthy of the love of a good woman, we should have one, who, when the fictitious gloss, the stage-tinsel, the mock-heroic glamour had been rubbed off, would be found preferring to live by his wits, rather than his labor; rotten at heart, and hence foul in speech; as likely as not, a betrayer of innocence; a pest and a plague in society. ¹⁴

As an antidote the article recommended a library and reading room to any community trying to ~~stamp~~⁺ out the effects of pernicious reading. The books should be wisely selected in order to "counteract, rather than increase the evil." ¹⁵ In reference to fiction the free library of Germantown, Pennsylvania, was mentioned. Germantown had excluded all fiction and reported "excellent results in interesting even youth in more substantial literature." ¹⁶ Literature, even good literature, was an evil if too much of it were read:

The superintendent of the Hartford Library Association recently reported that the accounts of that institution show that one boy had taken out 102 story books in six months, and one girl 112 novels in the same time! ¹⁷

14 "Pernicious Juvenile Literature," op.cit., p.150.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

Not all of the juvenile literature was being attacked, however. Thomas Bailey Aldrich's Story of a Bad Boy, 1869, had been thoroughly approved. Horatio Alger, who had moved to New York in 1866 to seek his fortune in writing for boys, had already published his first piece in 1865---"Squire Pitman's Peaches." During the same year he had published in Student and Schoolmate "Deacon Baxter's Cow," which had received great praise from the editor:

Your style is admirably suited to the taste of our young readers. I am exceedingly delighted with the result of your first story for us. It strikes the right chord and will be received with enthusiasm. Of that I am certain. Apparently you are blessed with an unusual knowledge of the boy Mind. Chapter VIII of Ragged Dick (submitted at the same time) is an inspired episode. The boys sound natural and nothing is of greater importance than this. 18

The "naturalness" of Horatio Alger will be examined later.

Of Mark Twain's The Adventures of Tom Sawyer the New York Evening Post observed that the first half of the book was 'fairly entitled to rank with Mr. Aldrich's Story of a Bad Boy.' The second half, however, was very poor and the Post issued a grave warning: 'Certainly it will be in the last degree unsafe to put the book into the hands of imitative youth.' 19 This view was shared by almost every other American journal.

18 Hubert R. Mayes, Alger, A Biography Without a Hero, p.45.

19 Allan Nevins, The Evening Post, A Century of Journalism, p.417.

With the publication in 1876 of The Adventures of Tom Sawyer libraries rushed to protect the children from the evils of the book. Huckleberry was deceitful. He lied. He itched and scratched. Tom said "sweat" instead of "perspiration."

Upon learning that the book had been banned by a Brooklyn library, Clemens dispatched this letter:

Dear Sir:

I am greatly troubled by what you say. I wrote Tom Sawyer for adults exclusively, and it always distresses me when I find that boys and girls have been allowed access to them. The mind that becomes soiled in youth can never again be washed clean; I know this by my own experience, and to this day I cherish an unappeasable bitterness against the unfaithful guardians of my young life, who not only permitted, but compelled me to read an unexpurgated Bible through before I was fifteen years old. None can do that and ever draw a clean sweet breath again this side of the grave. Ask that young lady--she will tell you so.

Most honestly do I wish I could say a softening word or two in defense of Huck's character, since you wish it, but really in my opinion it is no better than God's (in the Ahab chapter and ninety-seven others) and those of Solomon, David, Satan and the rest of the sacred brotherhood.

If there is an unexpurgated Bible in the Children's department won't you please help that young woman remove Huck and Tom from the questionable companionship?

Sincerely yours,
(signed) S.L. Clemens 20

20. Asa Don Dickinson, "Huckleberry Finn is Fifty Years Old---Yes; But is He Respectable?" Wilson Bulletin for Librarians (November, 1935).

Asa Don Dickinson, the librarian, had written to Mark Twain informing him of the board's decision and requesting him to make a statement as to his views. Although Dickinson favored retention of the book, he was powerless against the wrath of the ladies on the board.

Reporters somehow got wind that something was afoot at the library. They stormed Dickinson for a story. Had Mark Twain actually written a letter in defense of his book? If so, who had it? When would it be released for publication. Dickinson handed the letter to the board without comment, for comments or threats were unnecessary. They read; the book was reinstated.

II The Work of Horatio Alger, Jr.

The story of Horatio Alger, Jr., who wrote stories about boys who were on their own and making their way in the big city, is the story of a boy whose own boyhood was protected and regimented in the extreme.. Born in Revere, Massachusetts, in 1832, Horatio was guided from childhood towards the ministry by his father, Horatio Alger, Sr., a Unitarian minister.

His course of study was so strict and his playmates and playtime so scarce that at the age of eight he could discuss the Revolutionary War causes, compute fractions in his head, paraphrase his father's sermons, and had become such a little prig that his acquaintances called him "Holy Horatio." Although he left home to go away to school at the age of fourteen and learned the joys of mischief, his primness remained even after he entered Harvard.

At nineteen, he fell in love with a Cambridge girl, Patience Stires, and wanted to marry her. His father's indignation at the mention of such a thing made him give her up and continue on in his preparation for the church. Even then his preparation for the ministry was a reluctant one. Horatio wanted to write. He planned to write a great novel, a book that would

perpetuate his name. He sketched out plans for the novel continually. Even in Paris while attending a theological school, and, incidentally, having an affair with one Elise Monselet, he tried to write, but failed. By 1866, he had broken away from his theological studies forever, had taken up lodgings at the Newsboys' Lodging House, in New York City, and was launched on a career of writing that would result in an avalanche of 20,000,000 copies of rags-to-riches books. His work showed industry, certainly, but one cannot very well label it as the product of genius.

It has been taken for granted that Alger wrote for boys because of the income he received. Herbert R. Mayes points out that this was not true:

Alger wrote books for boys because he could not write books for men. The implication is not that the author of juvenile fiction is inferior, but that Alger was. Besides, boys interested him. He liked to be in their company. The greatest love in his life was his love for a Chinese boy, Wing, though Patience Stires was first to cross his path and her influence, therefore, was greater.. He did not write down to boys. He never had to for he never was above them. While waiting for a masterpiece it was necessary for him to be occupied. Doggedly, oftentimes with disgust, he did his stories, cultivating his muse, eternally hoping. ¹

1 Hubert R. Mayes, Alger, A Biography Without a Hero, p.38.

Year after year Horatio Alger ground away on his books. He dreamed of becoming a man of letters; he always failed, for his mind was too naive, unimaginative, and bewildered by the world in which he was living.

A short discussion of Alger's method of writing a story is found in Munsey's Magazine, 1892. The article shows great respect for Mr. Alger's work, and a comparison is being made here between Alger's style and the method of writing a story employed by William Taylor Adams, author of the Boat Club Series, Great Western Series, Army and Navy Series, and Yacht Club Series.

His stories are quite unlike Mr. Adams' both in handling and conception. Mr. Alger has not the faculty of working up the strong situations that are so congenial to Mr. Adams. Their methods of treatment are entirely different. Mr. Adams maps out his plot in detail, draws a chart of the situations and then proceeds to write out his story on a typewriter, which he operates at great speed.

Mr. Alger chooses an incident for opening a story and at once begins work upon it without regard to further chapters. In writing the first few thousand words he becomes acquainted with his characters, and gradually sees combinations and adventures ahead, making the ones an integral part of the others. Thus, he builds from day to day. While his books lack the involved plots of Mr. Adams' they have the charm and genuine humor that make them share the other's popularity.

But in one respect, and that the essential one, the books of these two authors are the same. They are alike founded on the theory of containing an abundance of healthful adventure. In this regard Alger is a follower of Mr. Adams, than whom he could have had no better model. He once remarked to the writer that his publisher advised him, when he first began writing juvenile stories, to study the easy straight forward style of Mr. Adams. "I did," said he, "and with the best results. An academic style is not the popular style with boys." ²

The tone of dignity in this review is almost startling. Today, although his books are not banned, they have simply disappeared. The mention of his name in public libraries results in amused and tolerant smiles that shade into faint irritation.

It is true that Horatio Alger commenced his stories with an incident. It is also true and very obvious that Alger never knew just where the story would lead, but there was never any doubt in his or in his reader's mind as to how the story would end. There could be only one ending---"Reading an Alger story was like watching a foot ball game in which you knew all the players and the home team made all the touchdowns."³ One was not deterred by subtleties of character from distinguishing the character of each person in the story. Our hero had "a frank, manly expression, and a prepossessing (sic) face," and was without fail, "well-knit and vigorous." Mortgage holders were usually Deacons or Squires and

2 "Horatio Alger's Method of Writing a Story," Munsey's Magazine, Vol. 8 (1892), p.59.

3 "Horatio Alger," Reader's Digest, (Nov., 1938), p.37.

"had the reputation of living very penuriously." Their wives never had new bonnets. They spoke "maliciously", "dryly", or "coldly".

As Mayes points out, Alger was the hero of every book he wrote, and he wrote 119 books.

Local color, it is true, he secured at first hand---saw his characters and lived among them. It is true, too, that he describes in his tales the actual lives of some of the boys he met---up to a certain point. The boys are in his stories up to the point where they graduate from boot blacks and baggage smashers into quite noble creatures. At the place of transition Horatio steps in, usurps the hero role, and when the last chapter arrives, achieves the proper degree of fame and fortune. Thus did his subconscious control the destiny of his fiction.⁴

Only once did Horatio Alger overcome his lack of confidence in himself and plunge into city affairs. This was occasioned by his interest in and pity for young Italian immigrant boys who were kept in virtual slavery by Italian "padrones", who lived on their earnings and thrashed them for not earning more. Alger exposed this system in Phil the Fiddler , and conducted a campaign of public protest. He had a great deal to do in ending the system although he was often beaten himself by the padrones. Mayes refers to this book as "a sort of minor-key Uncle Tom's Cabin."

4 Hubert R. Mayes, Alger, A Biography Without a Hero, p.49.

Whatever opinion one may form of the "rags-to-riches" books one cannot overlook the fact that over 20,000,000 copies were sold and had a profound influence on the lives and ambitions of an entire American generation. And, paradoxically enough, the heroes were the product of a man who was an easy mark for sharpers and imposters.

Mayes does a concise job of summing up Alger's place in the American scene:

Alger was mid-Victorianism in America, part and parcel of a Sunday-school era, swathed in sentiment, zealous in his preachments. Though he failed to grasp the significance of his position he was in truth the leader of the moral forces of his day. His stories were called masterful, the churches lauded them, and the magazines in which they appeared prospered by their aid. Staid men recommended them to their children. In juvenile literature he loomed as a Moses and his texts were revered as commandments.⁵

To allow "our reader" an opportunity to renew his acquaintance with Horatio Alger's work, the finale of Bob Burton is "presented". "This writer hastens to assure" the "gentle reader" that he found the book "most thrilling as the jacket prophesied. The conclusion of the novel gives an opportunity to study Alger's dialogue which, "our reader" will recall, was famous for its "naturalness".

⁵ Hubert R. Mayes, op.cit., p.49.

There was another arrival at Burton's Ranch the next day. Sam Wolverton came in charge of his new found relative, Robert Granger (our hero's young friend). They took a carriage, and reached the ranch without attracting the attention of Aaron Wolverton.

Mrs. Burton welcomed her visitors, and expressed great pleasure at the discovery that Sam's fortunes were likely to be improved. Mr. Granger proposed to make a call upon the faithless guardian, but was saved the necessity, as Mr. Wolverton called early in the afternoon of the same day. He was in a hurry to show his power, and foreclose the mortgage. It was arranged that Sam and Mr. Granger should remain out of sight at first.

Robert answered the knock at the door.

"Is your mother at home?" asked Wolverton.

"Yes, sir; will you walk in?"

"I believe I will."

He entered the sitting-room, and Mrs. Burton soon made her appearance.

"I see your son has returned, widder," remarked the agent.

"Yes; it seems pleasant to have him back. I missed him greatly."

"Humph! I s'pose so. It's a pity he went at all."

"I don't know that."

"Why, it stands to reason," said Wolverton impatiently. "He went on a fool's errand."

"What makes you say that?"

"He might have known a boy like him couldn't succeed in such an enterprise. If he had taken up with my offer, he would have been all right."

"He said you offered him much less than the market price for wheat."

"And so he started off to do better, and lost his whole cargo," sneered Wolverton, smiling unpleasantly.

Mrs. Burton was silent.

"I came to tell you that I should require not only the interest, but a payment of half the mortgage, according to the conditions. It is due next Saturday."

"Won't you wait, under the circumstances, Mr. Wolverton?"

"No, I will not."

"Do you think that is kind?" asked Mrs. Burton.

"Kindness is kindness, and business is business, Mrs. Burton. Still, I am willing to spare you on one condition."

"What is that?"

"That you become Mrs. Wolverton."

Mrs. Burton made a gesture of repulsion.

"That is entirely out of the question," she said.

"Then, I shall show no mercy."

Mrs. Burton went to the door and called, "Robert."

Bob entered.

"Mr. Wolverton demands his interest and the payment of half the mortgage, according to the terms."

"It is not due yet."

"It will be, next Saturday," said the agent triumphantly. "And I won't listen to any palaver or any entreaties to put off the payment. As you have made your bed you can lie upon it."

"What do you propose to do if we don't pay?"

"Foreclose the mortgage," exclaimed the agent, bringing down his fist upon the table before him.

"In that case, I think, mother, we will pay," said Bob, quite calmly.

"You can't pay!"

"That is where you are mistaken, Mr. Wolverton. I will not only pay you what you ask, but I am ready to take up the whole mortgage."

"Is the boy crazy?" ejaculated Wolverton.

"Not that I am aware of," answered Bob, smiling.

"You haven't got the money."

"Mistaken again."

"When did you get it?" gasped Wolverton. "Wasn't your cargo stolen?"

"Yes, by emissaries of yours," was Bob's unexpected reply, "but I recovered it, and sold the grain for two dollars and a quarter a bushel."

"You recovered it?" said Wolverton, turning pale.

"Yes; and the men who stole it are now in jail. I have a letter from one of them, declaring that he was employed by you."

"It's a lie!" hastily exclaimed the agent; but he looked frightened.

"I have reason to believe it is true.. Mr. Wolverton, your base conspiracy failed."

"I guess I'll go," said Wolverton, rising. He wanted time to think.

"Not just yet. Here are two persons wo wish to see you," and, to Wolverton's surprise, Sam and Robert Granger entered the room.

"You didn't expect to see me, Aaron Wolverton," said Captain Granger. "I have come here with your nephew to demand restitution of the property which you have appropriated to your own use, giving him to understand that he was living on charity."

Wolverton looked like a man in a state of collapse. He didn't care to deny what he knew Captain Granger would have no difficulty in proving. He glared at Sam as if he would like to have him in his power for a short time.

"Are you coming back with me?" he asked.

"I will answer for him," said Captain Granger. "Sam is of an age when the law authorizes him to select his own guardian.. I have accepted the trust, and I demand the transfer of his property to me."

If there had been any chance of success, Wolverton would have contested the matter, as it was, he interposed all the obstacles in his power. Finally, Sam got his own, however, much to Wolverton's disappointment.....

Five years have passed. The mortgage on Burton's Ranch has long since been paid, and Bob is making a handsome profit every year for his mother and himself. Clip is still with the family, and, though he cannot be called a model of industry, his loyalty is true to the Burtons, and he hates Wolverton as much as it is in his nature to hate anybody. Wolverton is getting worse in temper as he grows older, and his ill-gotten gains



do not bring him happiness. The sight of Bob's prosperity is gall and wormwood to him; but for this Bob cares little. Sam is employed in a store under his new guardian's charge, but every summer he comes to Burton's Ranch and stays a month, where he and Bob have fine times. Mrs. Burton is happy in her prosperity, and is thankful to God for having given her so good a son. Bob has made more than one trip down the river, but none so eventful as the one described in this story. 6

III Thomas Bailey Aldrich's Story of a Bad Boy

The Story of a Bad Boy , which according to Thomas Bailey Aldrich's own statement is autobiographical, was written as the result of an original notion of "describing an ordinarily healthy and natural boy's ear~~ly~~lier life and ending the story with his boyhood" ¹ according to the Critic in a brief review of the story in 1881. Since then, the Critic continues, this method has been imitated, "notably by two of our most popular authors." ² There is no reason to doubt that one of these authors must have been Mark Twain.

The stories of boys written by Mark Twain and Aldrich lend themselves readily to comparisons as so many of the incidents of the books are similar. An attempt to point out some of these will be made, for it is my opinion that Mark Twain, out of personal pride, deliberately introduced some of his scenes in order that an involuntary comparison of the books would result. By his own admission Mark Twain did not regard Aldrich's prose too highly; the many

¹ George Parsons Lathrop, "Thomas Bailey Aldrich," The Critic, Vol. 1 (April, 1881), p. 97.

² Ibid.

similarities between The Story of a Bad Boy and The Adventures of Tom Sawyer are too studied to be accidental.

Aldrich in his very first paragraph of The Story of a Bad Boy makes certain that the reader will learn that he (Aldrich) is not really a bad boy: "This is the story of a bad boy. Well, not such a very bad boy, but a pretty bad boy; and I ought to know, for I am, or rather I was, that boy myself." ³ Here the difference between Mark Twain and Thomas Bailey Aldrich is obvious. Though Mark Twain might wander off in asides occasionally, he never took the spice out of his stories by introductory postscripts. To know that Jack Harris, stalwart friend of young Aldrich, has been killed in the Civil War; to learn that "Pepper" Whitcomb is a judge, "sedate and wise with spectacles balanced on the bridge of that remarkable nose which, in former days, was so plentifully sprinkled with freckles," makes it certain that no reader will lose himself completely in the story.

Aldrich's use of the term "bad" is worth examining. Aldrich was not wicked; he was not evil; he was not hurtful. Possibly the term at that time meant simply mischievous, for during the recounting of an incident

3 Thomas Bailey Aldrich, The Story of a Bad Boy, p.9.

in which one of the boys put a firecracker under Mr. Grimshaw's desk we have the boy instantly "regretting his badness and after school confessing the whole thing to Mr. Grimshaw, who heaped coals of fire upon the nameless boy's head by giving him five cents for the fourth of July. If Mr. Grimshaw had caned this unknown youth the punishment would not have been half so severe." 4

What kind of boys are these who confess to teachers; what kind of boys are these who are even unable to slide down a rope properly?

I had neglected to knot the rope; the result was, that, the moment I swung clear of the pediment, I descended like a flash of lightning, and warmed both my hands smartly. The rope, moreover, was four or five feet too short; so I got a fall that would have proved serious had I not tumbled into the middle of one of the big rose-bushes growing on either side of the steps. 5

Aldrich's use of the first person was unfortunate. This method forces the author either to assume an undue modesty in recounting his story, or leaves him open to the lack, or the accusation of the lack of it. In The Story of a Bad Boy the method serves constantly to remind the reader that the boy is not a boy, but a man and that the man is simply stirring his memories around

4. Thomas Bailey Aldrich, op. cit., p.76.

5 Ibid., p.67.

and coming out with incidents of his youth. Thomas continually intrudes upon the boy Tom. He speaks of developing his muscles: "I developed my muscles until my little body was as tough as a hickory knot." Boys never refer to their "little bodies", but simply say, "I got muscles." In my judgment Thomas Bailey Aldrich failed to capture the spirit of Youth, and the use of the first person style contributed to that failure. Aldrich was simply presenting a sentimental picture of youth through the eyes of an amused and slightly tolerant adult; the result was not Boy.

Constant reference to "the reader" serves to detract from the force of the story:

But I have been gossiping too long,--
and yet not too long if I have impressed upon
the reader an idea of what a rusty, delightful
old town it was to which I had come to spend
the next three or four years of my
boyhood. ⁶

Coupled with remarks such as, "You may be sure, gentle reader," the effect is unfortunate. Possibly this "gentle reader" was not only ungentle, but grumpy, and too partial to Huck and Tom Sawyer to have any sympathy for Tom Bailey. Certainly, passages such as the following are not found in The Adventures of Tom Sawyer :

6 Thomas Bailey Aldrich, op. cit., p.39.

With the old school formula I commence these sketches of my boyhood. My name is Tom Bailey, what is yours, gentle reader? I take for granted it is neither Wiggins nor Spriggins, and that we shall get on famously together, and be capital friends for ever....It is with no ungentle hand that I summon back for a moment that Past which has closed upon them and upon me. How pleasantly they live again in my memory! Happy magical Past, in whose fairy atmosphere even Conway, mine ancient foe, stands forth transfigured with a sort of dreamy glory encircling his bright red hair. 7

The claim has been continually set forth that Aldrich was unable to recapture the intensity and color that is Youth. He admits it here:

Let each reader take his lead pencil and remorselessly correct the orthography, the capitalization, and the punctuation of the essay. I shall not feel hurt at seeing my treatise cut all to pieces; though I think highly of the production, not on account of its literary excellence, which I candidly admit is not overpowering, but because it was written years and years ago about Gypsy, by a little fellow who, when I strive to recall him, appears to me like a reduced ghost of my present self. 8

This passage comes as one of the ~~asides~~ which are so frequent in the story. While Aldrich does not admit that he has difficulty in recalling his youth in all of its vigor, he never lets the reader forget that he is now Tom Aldrich, the Man, sitting in the parlor

7 Thomas Bailey Aldrich, op. cit., p.126.

8 Ibid., p.226.

and telling a story about a little boy of long ago:

When a young boy gets to be an old boy, when the hair is growing rather thin on the top of the old boy's head, and he has been tamed sufficiently to take a sort of chastened pleasure in allowing the baby to play with his watch-seals,--when, I say, an old boy has reached this stage in the journey of life, he is sometimes apt to indulge in sportive remarks concerning his first love.

Now, though I bless my stars that it wasn't in my power to marry Miss Nelly, I am not going to deny my boyish regard for her nor laugh at it. As long as it lasted it was a very sincere and unselfish love, and remained so, rendering me proportionately wretched. I say as long as it lasted, for one's first love doesn't last forever.

I am, reader, however, to laugh at the amusing figure I cut after I had really ceased to have any deep feeling in the matter. It was then I took it into my head to be a Blighted Being.⁹

The kicking of the negro boy was a strange touch by Aldrich in The Story of a Bad Boy. Upon learning that he was to go North to his grandfather's home to be educated he "instantly kicked over the little negro boy who happened to be standing by me at the moment, and, stamping violently on the floor of the piazza, declared that I would not be taken away to live among a lot of Yankees."¹⁰

Although Huck Finn played a practical joke on Nigger Jim, he was instantly overcome with remorse and shame and apologized. I have been unable to discover any reference or incident in Mark Twain's books in which a negro is the object of a petulant display of temper.

⁹ Thomas Bailey Aldrich, op.cit., p.220.

¹⁰ Ibid., p.57.

This passage of Aldrich's is interesting because it is so out of harmony with the rest of his book.

Aldrich's characters, like Alger's, are distinguished by "tags". The villain is a "sallow boy with bright red hair" who slinks around with "scowls of defiance". His friends speak in a "clear voice", and if we meet a "handsome, frank looking lad" we are safe in assuming that young Tom Bailey will find him "true". Their emotions are exaggerated; their delight is "unspeakable" at finding a turtle with Harry Blake's initials carved on it. ¹¹

Tom Bailey's fondness for prayer forms another basis for comparison of young Bailey and Tom Sawyer. Here, Tom Bailey includes his pony, Gypsy, in his evening prayer:

I should fail if I tried to tell you how dear the pony was to me. Even hard unloving men become attached to the horses they take care of; so I, who was neither unloving nor hard, grew to love every glossy hair of the pretty little creature that depended on me for her soft straw bed and her daily modicum of oats. In my prayer at night I never forgot to mention Gypsy with the rest of her family,--generally setting forth her claims first. ¹²

¹¹ Thomas Bailey Aldrich, op.cit., p.57.

¹² Ibid., p.124.

It will be recalled that Tom Sawyer prayed only when coaxed and wheedled by his sister, but young Tom Bailey not only prayed for his horse, which both Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn would probably have accepted, but prayed for the rest of his family too!

There always seems to be either a slightly sentimental slushiness to Aldrich's choice of adjectives, or an exaggerated simplicity of emotion which writers seem prone to use when attempting to recapture the intensity of youth. This is one fault which Clemens avoided; for he was still Tom Sawyer at heart when he wrote the book. He could still enjoy a fight and the fighting positions of the participants which Aldrich called absurd.

In fact, Aldrich continually avoided description of action. In the fight scene with young Conway who has been picking on Tom through the first few chapters is another example of this tendency to shy away from active description in favor of a more leisurely and passive narration. The boys are face to face in what Mr. Aldrich terms an "absurd position." He continues:

Look at us as long as you may; for this is all that you shall see of the combat. According to my thinking, the hospital teaches a better lesson than the battlefield. I will tell you about my black eye, and my swollen lip, if you will, but not a word of the fight.

You will get no description of it from me simply because I think it would prove very poor reading, and not because I consider my revolt against Conway's tyranny unjustifiable.¹³

In the following passage Tom Sawyer had met and was testing a new boy. As yet, the method of testing was in the verbal stage. There remained lines to be drawn in the dust with sticks, chips to be placed on shoulders and final exasperation before the blows would occur. This was recorded faithfully by Mark Twain. It will be noted that this ceremony has changed little with the ensuing years.

An uncomfortable pause. Then Tom said,
 "What's your name?"
 "'Tisn't any of your business, maybe."
 "Well, I 'low I'll make it my business."
 "Well, why don't you?"
 "If you say much, I will."
 "Much--much--much. There, now."
 "Oh, you think you're mighty smart, don't you? I could lick you with one hand tied behind me, if I wanted to."¹⁴

The attitudes of the two authors are strikingly different towards "playing hookey". Aldrich speaks of the "purchase" of a boat. Tom Sawyer obtained his in another manner. After the purchase young Tom Bailey ran into difficulty over getting enough time off from school to go on a cruise:

13 Thomas Bailey Aldrich, op.cit., p.111.

14 Harper and Brothers, The Family Mark Twain, p.290.

We planned to go on an excursion to Sandpeep Island, the last of the islands in the harbor. We proposed to start early in the morning, and return with the tide in the moonlight. Our only difficulty was to obtain a whole day's exemption from school, the customary half-day holiday not being long enough for our picnic. Somehow we couldn't work it; but fortune arranged it for us. I may say here, that, whatever else I did, I never played truant, "hookey", we called it, in my life. ¹⁵

Here again The Adventures of Tom Sawyer follows closely in the similarity of the incidents, although the handling is far different. Tom Bailey planned a "picnic" and an "excursion." Tom Sawyer and his crew start off to be pirates:

"Who goes there?"
 "Tom Sawyer, The Black Avenger of the Spanish Maine. Name your names."
 "Huck Finn, The Red-Handed; and Joe Harper, The Terror of the Seas."
 "'Tis well. Give the countersign!"
 "Blood." ¹⁶

Tom Bailey was initiated into the Centipede Club. In his narrative of a ceremony which is dear to the heart of every boy Aldrich "tells" , but does not "show."

Finally, I was led up a steep plank to what appeared to me an incalculable height. Here I stood breathless while the by-laws were read aloud. A more extraordinary code of laws never came from the brain of man.. The penalties attached to the abject being who should reveal any of the secrets of the society were enough to make the blood run cold. ¹⁷

15 Thomas Bailey Aldrich, op.cit., p.47.

16 Harper & Brothers, The Family Mark Twain, p.343.

17 Thomas Bailey Aldrich, op.cit., p.100.

When The Adventures of Tom Sawyer appeared it contained a similar oath sworn by the members of Tom's robber band. The penalties are much more specific. Unlike Aldrich, who was careful to omit anything that might offend watchful parents, or warp the sensitive minds of the children, Mark Twain did not leave this important part of the ceremony~~y~~ to the imagination:

So Tom got out a sheet of paper that he had wrote the oath on, and read it. It swore every boy to stick to the band, and never tell any of the secrets; and if anybody done anything to any boy in the band, whichever boy was ordered to kill that person and his family must do it, and he mustn't eat and mustn't sleep 'till he had killed them and hacked a cross in their breasts, which was the sign of the band. And nobody that didn't belong to the band could use that mark and if he did he must be sued; and if he done it again he must be killed. And if anybody that belonged to the band told the secrets, he must have his throat cut, and then have his carcass burnt up and the ashes scattered all around, and his name blotted off the list with blood and never mentioned again by the gang, but have a curse put on it and be forgot forever. 18

Here, again, is the tendency of Aldrich to generalize and avoid getting right down into the details of his story, contrasting strongly with the delight and gusto Mark Twain found in the fondness of the juvenile mind for details. The Aldrich of Portsmouth simply could not unbend. The conventional had too strong a hold on him.

18 Harper & Brothers, The Family Mark Twain, p.447.

David Masters writing in The Chautauquan in 1897 discusses the art of Mark Twain from this standpoint. While he admits that Mark Twain was certainly not a master of literary technique, he asserts that Mark Twain was above all of his contemporaries in the art of strong description and the ability to "present a picture that glows with a certain light that brings in bold relief every point that the writer wants the reader to see." ¹⁹ Mark Twain was preeminent in the ability to write plainly and understandingly:

With no artificial cultivation, his genius took its own bent, and proved strong enough to tower into a sturdy tree, in a soil where the more delicately nurtured plant, first propagated in the city hot-house would have died.

With the writer of weak individuality and small self-confidence there is an inevitable tendency to imitate the style of some great writer of the past, and this inclination soon disposes of its victim. Twain, with his early poverty and uninviting environments, had but little opportunity to study the works of the standard writers and was thus saved from the endeavor to imitate them, had he been so disposed. ²⁰

Aldrich, however, was more delicately nurtured. His reaction to the death of Binny Wallace is in the literary vein which so distressed the Ladies' Commission on Sunday-school Books. It was the

¹⁹ David Masters, "Mark Twain's Place in Literature," The Chautauquan, Vol. 25 (1897), p.612.

²⁰ Ibid.

customary reaction to sadness found in the books of the day:

The excitement over, I was in a forlorn state, physically and mentally. Captain Nutter put me to bed between hot blankets, and sent Kitty Collins for the doctor. I was wandering in my mind, and fancied myself still on Sandpeep Island: now we were building our brick-stove to cook the chowder, and, in my delirium, I laughed aloud and shouted to my comrades; now the sky darkened, and the squall struck the island; now I gave orders to Wallace how to manage the boat, and now I cried because the rain was pouring in on me through the holes in the tent. Towards evening a high fever set in and it was many days before my grandfather deemed it prudent to tell me that the Dolphin had been found floating keel upwards, four miles southeast of Mackerel Reef.

Poor little Binny Wallace! How strange it seemed when I went to school again, to see the empty seat in the fifth row! How gloomy the playground was, lacking the sunshine of his gentle sensitive face! One day a folded sheet slipped from my algebra; it was the last note he ever wrote me. I couldn't read it for the tears.

What a pang shot across my heart the afternoon it was whispered through the town that a body had been washed ashore at Grave Point,--the place where we bathed. We bathed there no more! How well I remember the funeral, and what a piteous sight it was afterwards to see his familiar name on a small headstone in the Old South Burying Ground! ²¹

²¹ Thomas Bailey Aldrich, op.cit., p.164.

Mark Twain's own opinion of Thomas Bailey Aldrich as a writer was not high. They were personal friends and saw much of each other, but Mark Twain's respect for Aldrich did not include, to any great extent, an admiration for his writings. Possibly this negative attitude was influenced to a great part by Mark Twain's dislike for Aldrich's wife. He wrote his opinion of Aldrich in "The Memorial to Thomas Bailey Aldrich Aldrich" in Mark Twain in Eruption, edited in 1940 by Bernard DeVoto. This material was given a marginal note in pencil by Albert B. Paine which read: "Not to be used for seventy-five years from 1908," but has since been published with consent. The material is so pungent that the entire passage is quoted:

Last Monday (July 3, 1908) Albert Bigelow Paine personally conducted me to Boston, and next day to Portsmouth, New Hampshire, to assist at the dedication of the Thomas Bailey Aldrich Memorial Museum.

As text and basis I will here introduce a few simple statistics. The late T.B.A. was born in his grandfather's house in the little town of Portsmouth, N.H., seventy-two or seventy-three years ago. His widow has lately bought that home and stocked it with odds and ends that once belonged to the child Tom Aldrich, and to the schoolboy Tom Aldrich, and to the old poet Tom Aldrich, and turned the place into a memorial museum in honor of Aldrich and for the preservation of his fame. She has instituted an Aldrich Memorial Museum Corporation under the laws of the State of New Hampshire, and has turned the museum over to this corporation which is acting for the city of Portsmouth, the ultimate heir of the benefaction, and she has injected the mayor

of Portsmouth and other important people into that corporation to act as advertisement and directors. A strange and vanity-devoured, detestable woman! I do not believe I could ever learn to like her except on a raft at sea with no other provisions in sight.

The justification for an Aldrich Memorial Museum for pilgrims to visit and hallow with their homage may exist, but to me it seems doubtful. Aldrich was never widely known; his books never attained to a wide circulation; his prose was diffuse, self-conscious, and barren of distinction in the matter of style; his fame as a writer of prose is not considerable; his fame as a writer of verse is also very limited, but such as it is it is a matter to be proud of. It is based not upon his output of poetry as a whole but upon half a dozen small poems which are not surpassed in our language for exquisite grace and beauty and finish....When it came to making fun of a folly, a silliness, a windy pretense, a wild absurdity; Aldrich, the brilliant; Aldrich, the sarcastic; Aldrich, the ironical; Aldrich, the merciless was a master. It was the greatest pity in the world that he could not be at that memorial function in the Opera House at Portsmouth to make fun of it. Nobody could lash it and blight it and blister it and scarify it as he could.

However, I am overlooking one important detail: he could do all this, and would do it with enthusiasm, if it were somebody else's foolish memorial, but it would not occur to him to make fun of it if the function was in his own honor, for he had very nearly as extensive appreciation of himself and his gifts as had the late Edmund Clarence Stedman, who believed that the sun merely rose to admire his poetry....Aldrich was a good fellow; but vain?--bunched together they were as vain as I am myself, which is saying all that can be said under that head without being extravagant..22

22 Mark Twain, "The Memorial to Thomas Bailey Aldrich," Mark Twain in Eruption, p.294.

CHAPTER III

MARK TWAIN'S JUVENILE LITERATURE

I Estimates of Mark Twain

William Lyon Phelps was able at the time of his book, Essays on Modern Novelists, 1910, to remember when Mark Twain was regarded merely as a humorist. Very few were of the opinion that he actually belonged in literature. A "complete, uniform edition of his Works would perhaps have been received with something of the mockery that greeted Ben Jonson's folio in 1616." ¹ Professor Richardson's American Literature, which is still a standard work, appeared originally in 1886. Phelps remarks that Mark Twain received but two references in the index, while Mr. Cable received ten. One of the two references follows as quoted from Professor Richardson by Phelps:

But there is a class of writers, authors ranking below Irving or Lowell, and lacking the higher artistic or moral purpose of the greater humorists, who amuse a generation and then pass from sight. Every period demands a new manner of jest after the current fashion The reigning favorites of the day are Frank Stockton, Joel Chandler Harris, the various newspaper jokers, and "Mark Twain". But these writers must make hay while the sun shines.... Twenty years hence

¹ William Lyon Phelps, Essays on Modern Novelists, p.100.

unless they chance to enshrine their wit in some higher literary achievement, their unknown successors will be the privileged comedians of the republic. Humour alone never gives its masters a place in literature; it must coexist with literary qualities, and must usually be joined with such pathos as one finds in Lamb and Holmes.²

This was after The Adventures of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn had been read by thousands. Mark Twain was excluded from the department of fiction entirely.

Possibly the lack of any standard of excellence, that is, of a uniform excellence influenced Richardson. Mark Twain's creative energy was never completely under control. Wagenknecht remarks that "Tom Sawyer is both an idyll of remembered childhood experiences and a dime novel. Huckleberry Finn starts uncertainly, achieves magnificence in the great days on the river, the feud, the killing of Boggs, and kindred episodes, then dies slowly in the tiresome, long-drawn-out account of the rescue of Nigger Jim...Structure was his Waterloo."³

Phillips adds to this by stating what is clear to anyone who reads the two books, that Mark Twain cared practically not at all for effective construction. There is no climax in either of the two books. They

² William Lyon Phelps, op.cit., p. 100.

³ Edward Wagenknecht, Mark Twain, The Man and His Work, p.61.

might have continued indefinitely. They end when the book ends.⁴

One thing is sure: Mark Twain cared only for the past. His tendency to write in the past, to return into a world that he knew and understood was so strong that it cannot be overlooked. Hicks advances a theory as to the cause of this tendency to write in the past:

It was a world Mark Twain knew and understood and in which he had once had a recognized place. When he returned to that world, he escaped from the strain of conventional society, from the fear of treachery, from the everlasting demand for money. So strong was the temptation that it could have been resisted only if he had mastered for literary purposes, the complex life of industrial America as he had mastered life on the Mississippi. If he had understood, if he had been at home in, the world of his own social interests, his own investments, his own ambitions, he might have written about it. The frontier humorist and realist might have become a great social novelist....⁵

Hicks does not intend, by pointing out the possibilities in Mark Twain, to disparage the work that he did. He continues by bringing out the point that it was only by developing as a realist that Mark Twain could develop at all; the alternative was stagnation. "In minor ways Mark Twain made progress,

4 R.E. Phillips, "Mark Twain, More Than Humorist," The Book Buyer, Vol.22(1901), p.197.

5 Granville Hicks, The Great Tradition, p.46.

but he never transcended the limitations of his tradition. He was forced to rely on the humorous elements. He was, and knew he was, merely an entertainer." ⁶ Mark Twain made no attempt to come to grips with the world in which he was living. "Life was so much simpler in the Missouri of the forties and fifties, and in a way so much finer. If there was poverty, no one realized it. If there was a caste system, there was no bitter competition on a pecuniary level...there was beauty in the woods and on the river." ⁷

Van Wyck Brooks' "psychological" approach to Mark Twain precipitated the most exciting furor. Mr. Brooks advanced the theory that Mark Twain had been stifled by his early life in Missouri. He had discovered that Mark Twain had been delicate as a boy and high strung. "Therefore: God had fashioned him to be one of the most profound artists that the world had ever known, a combination of American Dostolevsky and American Rabelais." ⁸ These biographers held that Mark Twain's life in the country about Hannibal, "his adventures

6 Granville Hicks, op.cit., p.46.

7 Ibid.

8 James Oscar Campbell, "Twain Versus Clemens," 1936 Essay Annual, p.154.

as a wandering compositor; the perils of existence during the early gold-rush days in Nevada, when gambling, drinking and murder flourished; his journey to Europe on the same boat with Henry Ward Beecher and Austin Burlingame, and his career as a husband of a proper conventional woman---all these experiences were futile and uncongenial modes of living." 9

The "psychological" approach to Mark Twain held that he had been "forced" into the career of a humorist. They insisted that his audiences were the motivating source and not the inner spirit of his humor.

His restlessness, his superficial materialism and its attendant pessimism, his interest in strange philosophical and religious cults...all these characteristics of the man so say these biographers, were the product of a tragic maladjustment in his personality. With their assumptions of boundless potentialities in the man, they could not admit that these intellectual blemishes were an expression of precisely those limitations in personality and in culture which produced his positive and distinctive literary qualities....Did the world in which he was born stifle in him a potential Dostoevsky, or did it fashion and liberate Mark Twain's native powers until he became the perfect expression of the culture of western America? The second view is the sound one. 10

9 James Oscar Campbell, op.cit., p.154.

10 Ibid.

Raised in the swirl of characters that found refuge in the world of the great river at the edge of civilization, Mark Twain could have but small use for the accepted characters in fiction of juveniles. For Mark Twain was the real and eternal boy, a boy with a lot more freedom than that given boys today, but the logic and motives of boys have not changed; conditions have changed, but the "show off" motive, for example, is as strong today as it was in Mark Twain's time. It is because he understood and captured the basic motives of boys in Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn that his humor is as effective now as it was then.

When giving his audiences to Mr. Albert Bigelow Paine in 1906 Mr. Clemens told Paine a dramatic story of his apprenticeship to the printer, Mr. Ament. His mother led him into the room containing the open coffin of his father and there, with Clemens' conscience beset by past misdeeds, made him promise to reform. According to the story told by Clemens the scene made such an impression on him that he was attacked by somnambulism for several nights in succession after that. Although it is, as DeVoto

points out, the only incident in Samuel Clemens' memory which "endows Jane Clemens with dramatic technique", and although the coffin and dreadful oath strongly suggest the imagination of Tom Sawyer, Van Wyck Brooks uses this instance to form a theory concerning Clemens' entire life, according to which his genius was destroyed in his twelfth year. ¹¹

Four years after recounting this incident of the coffin Mark Twain referred to the turning point of his life as the acquiring of measles. "Everyone believed I would die, but on the fourteenth day a change came for the worse and they were disappointed." Upon his recovery, he continued, his mother having grown tired of trying to keep him out of mischief, took him out of school and put him "into more masterful hands". He became a printer and "began to add one link after another to the chain which was to lead me into the literary profession." ¹²

The two stories, but four years apart, are another reason for DeVoto's skepticism of Brooks' views. It is not hard to see that DeVoto puts little

¹¹ Bernard DeVoto, Mark Twain's America, p.83.

¹² Ibid., p.85.

faith in Van Wyck Brooks' theory. DeVoto objects to it on the grounds that Brooks bases the theory on this one scene.

In Mr. Brooks' hands the scene tells the whole story. It creates Mark Twain and damns him. By promising to be a better boy young Sam has thrown away his birthright as an artist (undetectable in anything available to biography). John Marshall Clemens, dying, has molded in the shape of respectability a boy who might have been the greatest of American writers. Jane Clemens, the goddess Nemesis in linsey-woolsey, seals on him the mark of the mother image, and creates the retribution of self-betrayal for this acceptance of false values, thus strangling genius in its twelfth year. ¹³

13 Bernard DeVoto, op.cit., p.82.

II The Adventures of Tom Sawyer

An attempt has already been made to show the similarities between The Adventures of Tom Sawyer and The Story of a Bad Boy . The moment one attempts to analyze the character of Tom Sawyer one is faced with a most difficult task. For the qualities that made Tom Sawyer what he is were evolved from the themes and feelings that meant most to Mark Twain as a literary artist. The society in which Tom moved, his freedom and security in the life on the river, as well as the darker fear and insecurity caused by his superstitions and dread terror were Mark Twain's fullest expression of the spirit that is Boy.

The Dictionary of American Biography states that Mark Twain would have been surprised if anybody at the time had called his turning to boyhood reminiscences "an evidence that he had been intimidated by his conservative friends and had for that reason shirked his obligations to be drastic." ¹ It speaks of his "immense delight in life in general, an omnivorous relish for all phases of comedy, a tenderness too quick to be invariably well judged, and an

1 Dictionary of American Biography, IV, p.195.

eager disposition to please his hearers and readers as well as he pleased himself with the exercise of this robust art...Comic energy was his nature, rather than his purpose or his weapon." 2)

Mark Twain himself was at times doubtful about the value of the "Huck" Finn and Tom Sawyer books. Wagenknecht quotes from a letter written by Mark Twain to Joel Chandler Harris, in November, 1885, thanking him "for the good word about Huck, that abused child of mine who has had so much mud thrown at him. Somehow I can't help believing in him, and it's a great refreshment to my faith to have a man back me up who has been where such boys live, and knows what he is talking about." 3 It is not surprising that Mark Twain was unable to sense the full merit of the two books. He was too close to them to judge their value. Later, in 1887, he said of The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, "Tom Sawyer is simply a hymn, put into prose form to give it a worldly air." 4

2 The Dictionary of American Biography, IV, p.195.

3 Edward Wagenknecht, op.cit., p.66.

4 Ibid.

Throughout the book one is impressed by the shrewdness of Tom Sawyer. Mark Twain discusses this trait in connection with the fence painting incident, but the comments he makes at this time apply throughout the book:

In order to make a man or boy covet a thing it is only necessary to make the thing difficult to attain. If he had been a great and wise philosopher, like the writer of this book, he would now have comprehended that Work consists of whatever a body is obliged to do, and that Play consists of whatever a body is not obliged to do.... There are wealthy gentlemen in England who drive four-horse passenger coaches twenty or thirty miles on a daily line, in the summer, because the privilege costs them considerable money, but if they were offered wages for the service, that would turn it into work and then they would resign. ⁵

Mention has already been made concerning Thomas Bailey Aldrich's inability to lie in school. He confessed his sins, received a small coin from the smiling teacher and rushed away, tears of shame in his eyes, to buy some firecrackers. School to Tom Aldrich, while not a place of joy, was, nevertheless, not a place for mischief either. He respected his teacher and did not dream of playing "hookey".

Horatio Alger's heroes were of the same mold. They were "A" students who could not have skipped if such a thought had ever entered their minds; they either acted as janitors after school hours, or were

5 Harper & Brothers, The Family Mark Twain, p.296.

hard at work in a dingy store making money for their widowed mothers.

Tom Sawyer, however-----Tom Sawyer:

The harder Tom tried to fasten his mind on his book the more his ideas wandered. So at last, with a sigh and a yawn, he gave it up. It seemed to him the noon recess would never come. The air was utterly dead. There was not a breath stirring. It was the sleepest of sleepy days. The drowsing murmur of the five and twenty studying scholars soothed the soul like the spell that is in the murmur of bees. Away off in the flaming sunshine Cardiff Hill lifted its soft green sides through a shimmering veil of heat, tinted with the purple of distance; a few birds floated on lazy wing high in the air; no other living thing was visible but some cows and they were asleep. Tom's heart ached to be free, or else to have something of interest to do to pass the dreary time. His hand wandered into his pocket and his face lit up with a glow of gratitude that was prayer, though he did not know it. Then, furtively, the percussion-cap box came out. He released the tick and put him on the long flat desk. The creature probably glowed with a gratitude that amounted to prayer, too, at this moment, but it was premature; for when he started thankfully to move off, Tom turned him aside with a pin and made him take a new direction. ⁶

In taking the whipping which was rightfully deserved by Becky Thatcher, Tom reasoned in an interesting manner. Tom Bailey would have denied it truthfully. Horatio Alger's young gentlemen would have denied it, but taken the licking like a man without the least quivering of lips. Tom Sawyer

6 Harper & Brothers, op.cit., p.318.

however, "took his whipping and went back to his seat not at all broken-hearted, for he thought it was possible that he had unknowingly upset the ink on the spelling book himself, in some skylarking bout---he had denied it for form's sake and because it was custom, and had stuck to the denial from principle." ⁷

Such was the code of Tom Sawyer. The code of Tom Sawyer did not stop at the limits of the school grounds. It extended out into all of his associations. It permeated his adventures and formed a basis for mutual trust and honor among all his friends. True, his guarantee might not be measured in dollars, but how many treasures of that age can?

It is significant that when Tom, afflicted with homesickness, left his fellow pirates on the island he left sufficient security. In fact, they were treasures---a lump of chalk stolen from school, a ball made of India-rubber, three rusty fish hooks, and a marble known as a "sure'nough crystal". These he reclaimed in spectacular fashion, stepping out from the shadows at the last moment. Had Tom left without this security he would have been in disgrace.

⁷ Harper & Brothers, The Family Mark Twain, p.318.

Had he not returned for them the boys would have been free to return to civilization with jeers and with their pockets full of riches.

For sheer joy of living and expression of animal spirit there is nothing in either Aldrich's or Alger's work that can compare with Mark Twain's scene on the sand bar. In fact, there is nothing in The Story of a Bad Boy or in the Alger books dealing with nudity. The claim is not being set forth here that the sand bar scene, presently to be quoted, was a deliberate attempt by Mark Twain to outdo the other two authors. It is simply another sample of Mark Twain's ability to pick out those details that are eternal in the lives of boys.

After breakfast they went whooping and prancing out on the bar, and chased each other round and round, shedding clothes as they went, until they were naked, and then continued the frolic far away up the shoal water of the bar, against the stiff current, which latter tripped their legs from under them from time to time and greatly increased the fun. And now and then they stooped in a group and splashed water in each other's face with their palms, gradually approaching each other, with averted faces to avoid the strangling sprays and finally gripping and struggling 'till the best man ducked his neighbor, and then they all went under in a tangle of white legs and arms, and came up blowing, sputtering, laughing, and

gasping for breath at one and the same time.⁸

Mark Twain continually held that Youth was superior to Age in regard to happiness. In the following passages he again captures and holds the emotion that is Boy:

Saturday morning was come, and all the summer world was bright and fresh, and brimming with life. There was a song in every heart; and if the heart was young the music issued at the lips.⁹

From a Negro Tom had learned a difficult method of whistling, a liquid warble produced by a rapid movement of the tongue against the roof of the mouth. Clemens remarks, "the reader probably remembers how to do it if he has ever been a boy." Tom strides down the street whistling:

He felt much as an astronomer feels who has discovered a new planet--no doubt, as far as strong, deep, unalloyed pleasure is concerned, the advantage was with the boy, not the astronomer.¹⁰

Prayer formed a definite part of Tom Sawyer's life, and although it was never as firmly entrenched as Tom Aldrich's, it was a handy thing to have, even if prayers didn't seem to get results. It will be recalled that Tom Sawyer and his comrades considered omitting

8 Harper & Brothers, op.cit., p.357.

9 Ibid., p.293.

10 Ibid., p.290.

prayers altogether on the island, but were afraid to for fear of calling down a special thunderbolt from Heaven; prayers, when performed by Tom, were from the standpoint of supersition and fear. Huck Finn was a confirmed skeptic. His prayers for fishing tackle had come to nothing but thread. He couldn't use the thread without the hooks and it wasn't very strong thread anyway. "Prayers don't work," he said, "for only just the right kind."

Possibly Horatio Alger's youth gave him a deep aversion to prayer; he seems to shie away from it and his mentions of religious matters seem to be concerned chiefly with the economic instability of a minister's lot. In Helping Himself young Grant Thornton asks Deacon Gridley for two hundred dollars, but does not get it. Grant, as the young son of the local minister, has to go to New York. There, of course, he finally earns far more than two hundred dollars. He does not, however, have to attend Sunday school to get it, nor does he of his own volition.

Thomas Bailey Aldrich speaks of the "gloomy Sundays" spent in the living room listening to Grandpa Nutter read from the family Bible, but nowhere is there any open rebellion beyond the uncontrollable restlessness of youth.

In real life Mark Twain's sister Pamela was the only one who could influence him to such an extent that he would exert himself in memorizing verses. Tom Sawyer tackled the verses of the Sermon on the Mount under the "double pressure of curiosity and prospective gain." ¹¹ He received for his torture a brand new Barlow Knife.

"Blessed are the--a--a--."

"Poor."

"Yes--poor; blessed are the poor--a--a."

"In spirit--."

"In spirit; blessed are the poor in spirit, for they--they--." ¹²

Mark Twain handled the scenes in church in a manner that Aldrich might secretly have agreed with, but certainly never found the courage to express. The swapping of the yellow, red, and blue tickets for the prize Bible which was "so attractive that on the day it was given out every scholar's heart was fired with a fresh ambition that often lasted a couple of weeks," was not the work of a religious young man. ¹³ Nor was the naming of David and Goliath as the first two disciples the work of a scholarly young man.

Mark Twain gives one of those delightful bits of descriptive writing in a picture of a fly which

11 Harper and Brothers, The Family Mark Twain, p.301.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., p.303.

alighted in front of Tom during a sermon which Tom was enduring. Tom was fascinated. He longed to cup his palm and sweep it in, although he did not dare, for he knew that that would mean the instantaneous destruction of his soul.

A fly had lit on the back of the pew in front of him and tortured his spirit by calmly rubbing its hands together, embracing its head with its arms, and polishing it so vigorously that it seemed to almost part company with the body, and the slender thread of a neck was exposed to view; scraping its wings with its hind legs and smoothing them to its body as if they had been coat-tails; going through its whole toilet as tranquilly as if it knew it was perfectly safe...But with the closing sentence his hand began to curve and steal forward; and the instant the "Amen" was out the fly was a prisoner of war. His aunt detected the act and made him let it go. ¹⁴

Later on in the sermon Tom is responsible for the hilarious dog and pinchbug scene which broke up the church meeting.

Tom went home quite cheerful, thinking to himself that there was some satisfaction about divine service when there was a bit of variety to it. He had but one marring thought; he was willing that the dog should play with his pinchbug, but he did not think it was upright of him to carry it off. ¹⁵

It will be remembered that the pinchbug, while admittedly carried off by the dog, was carried unwillingly and as a grim passenger; it had fastened its pincers securely in the fleshy part of the dog's nose. This, however, is a small point and was ignored

14 Harper & Brothers, The Family Mark Twain, p.309.

15 Ibid., p.311.

by Tom Sawyer, who saw in the event the loss of a valuable bug.

If young Sam Clemens was unable to find inspiration in religious services he did find it elsewhere. Sam at one time was so inspired that he became a member of the Christian Sons of Temperance. Paine, in his biography of Mark Twain, records that, like Tom Sawyer, Sam Clemens loved the glare and trappings of leadership:

When the Christian Sons of Temperance came along with a regalia, and a red sash that carried with it rank and the privilege of inventing pass-words the gaud of these things got into his eyes, and he gave up smoking (which he did rather gingerly) and swearing (which he did only under heavy excitement), also liquor (though he had never tasted it yet) and marched with the newly washed and pure in heart for a full month---a month of splendid leadership and servitude. Then even the red sash could not hold him in bondage. He looked up Tom Blankenship and said, "Say, Tom, I'm blamed tired of this. Let's go somewhere and smoke!" 16

Mark Twain's views on the merits of treats honestly come by and treats acquired by skill are expressed in his autobiography. They are not views which are shared by his "Annt Polly" in the Tom Sawyer book. In praise of Tom's fence painting

16 Harper & Brothers, The Family Mark Twain, p.60.

accomplishment Aunt Polly took him into the closet and, selecting a fine apple, gave it to him along with an improving lecture upon "the added value and flavor a treat took to itself when it came without sin through virtuous effort." ¹⁷ As she closed with a flourish of Scripture, Tom "hooked" a doughnut.

It is difficult to see how Aunt Polly could ever "get to" Tom, but by Tom's own brusque admittance she could, and his statement shows that Tom, rascal though he was, had an innate goodness and a certain ethical standard beyond which he could not pass. This is revealed in a remark of his concerning his Aunt's method of punishing him:

"She! She never licks anybody--whacks 'em over the head with her thimble--and who cares for that, I'd like to know. She talks awful, but talk don't hurt--anyways it don't if she don't cry." ¹⁸

And then Tom got back to the problem at hand:

"I'll give you a marvel. I'll give you a white alley." ¹⁹

Here, then, is a boy who takes us through the gamut of intense, painful, youthful emotions. In subtle

17 Harper & Brothers, op.cit., p.293.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

derision of the melodramatic actions of juvenile characters of the time Mark Twain shows the difference between the real and the "type".

There is the "martyr complex" in which Tom, in a reverie of self-pity over being punished wrongly for the breaking of a sugar bowl by his brother, Sid, sees himself "sick unto death":

He knew that in her heart his Aunt was on her knees to him, and he was morosely gratified by the consciousness of it. He would hang out no signals, he would take notice of none...He pictured himself lying sick unto death and his Aunt bending over him beseeching one little forgiving word, but he would turn his face to the wall, and die with that word unsaid. Ah, how would she feel then? And he pictured himself brought home from the river, dead, with his curls all wet, and his sore heart at rest. How she would throw herself upon him, and how her tears would fall like rain, and her lips pray God to give her back her boy and she would never, never abuse him any more! But he would lie there cold and white and make no sign---a poor little sufferer, whose griefs were at an end.

And Tom worked himself up so, that shortly the tears were running down the side of his nose and his eyes swam in a blur of water. And such a luxury to him was this petting of his sorrows, that he could not bear to have any worldly cheeriness or any grating delight intrude upon it; it was too sacred for such contact; and so, presently, when his cousin Mary danced in, all alive with the joy of seeing home again after an

an age-long visit of one week to the country,
 he got up and moved in clouds and darkness out
 at one door as she brought song and sunshine
 in at the other. ²⁰

This tragic picture is presented without comment
 by Mark Twain. In such a scene of sorrow none is
 needed, but in a similar scene in which Tom Bailey's
 love was spurned the tone was amused and tolerant.
 Alger, of course, had no time for such passages. His
 characters were never tainted by emotions of this
 type.

There is the supreme optimism of youth as
 expressed by Tom after hours of futile digging for
 "the treasure":

"Oh, I know what the matter is!
 What a blamed lot of fools we are! You
 got to find out where the shadow of the
 limb falls at midnight, and that's where
 you dig!" ²¹

This, of course, made it necessary to come back
 at night and dig, but first they had to conceal their
 labor for "they'd know in a minute what's here and
 they'd go for it." ²² This whole episode had a strangely
 familiar ring to it, as though Mark Twain were giving
 us a juvenile "Gold Bug" story in the style of Poe.
 Paine states that this episode was autobiographical.

20 Harper & Brothers, The Family Mark Twain, p.299.

21 Ibid., p.391.

22 Ibid.

although the original differs considerably from the digging incident in the book. 23

Although the exuberance of Tom Sawyer is delightful in reasonable amounts, thirty-two pages of it in the rescue of Jim in Huckleberry Finn become tiresome. There is a bit of human weakness in this episode. The rescue is not so much a matter of moral right or friendship as it is romance and excitement. Where Jim's chain can be lifted over the leg of the bed to free him , it takes thirty-two pages of pure unadulterated fantasy for Tom to accomplish the rescue.. With a little fortitude on the part of Jim, Tom believed that the rescue could be strung out to eighty years---the best time on record:

Tom was in high spirits. He said it was the best fun he ever had in his life, and the most intellectual (sic); and said if he only could see his way to it we would keep it up all the rest of our lives and leave Jim to our children to get out; for he believed Jim would come to like it better and better the more he got used to it. He said that in that way it could be strung out to as much as eighty year, and would be the best time on record. And he said it would make us all celebrated that had a hand in it. 24

This rescue seems to be something of a record in itself. Aldrich's conservatism and self-conscious style and Alger's stiffness do have their advantages

23 Albert Bigelow Paine, Mark Twain, A Biography, p.63.

24 Harper & Brothers, The Family Mark Twain, p.619.

over such uncontrolled flights of fancy:

"Well, if that ain't just like you, Huck Finn. You can get up the infant-schooliest ways of going at a thing. Why hain't you ever read any books at all? Like Baron Trenck, nor Casanova, nor Benvenuto Cheeleeny, nor Henry IV, nor none of them heroes? Who ever heard of getting a prisoner loose in such an old maidy way as that? No; the way all the best authorities does is to saw the bed-leg in two, and leave it just so, and swallow the sawdust, so it can't be found, and put some dirt and grease around the sawed place so the very keenest seneskal can't see no sign of its being sawed, and thinks the bed-leg is perfectly sound. Then the night you're ready, fetch the leg a kick, down she goes; slip off your chain, and there you are. Nothing to do but hitch your rope ladder to the battlements, shin down, break your leg in the moat---because a rope ladder is nineteen foot too short, you know---and there's your horses and your trusty vassles, and they scoop you up and fling you across a saddle, and away you go to your native Langudoc, or Navarre, or wherever it is. It's gaudy, Huck. I wish there was a moat to this cabin. If we get time, the night of the escape we'll dig one." 25

During the rescue Tom scolds Huck for not entering into the rescue properly. Huck is complaining that there is no object in digging down to China if "Nigger Jim" doesn't know anybody there:

"Jim don't know anybody in China."
 "What's that got to do with it? Neither did that other fellow. You're always a-wandering off on a side issue. Why can't you stick to the main point?" 26

25 Harper & Brothers, op.cit., p.612.

26 Ibid., p.615.

III Huckleberry Finn

It was not until Mark Twain wrote Huckleberry Finn that he really hit his stride. True, in the dramatization of the rush, the sound and fury of boyhood The Adventures of Tom Sawyer gives loosely connected episodes of boyhood, but as Erskine points out: Mark Twain gets a picture of life that is "out of focus, and makes it difficult for us to interpret the exceptional events in terms of the normal parts of his story."¹ Huckleberry Finn, however, tells a lot more than he realizes about his world. Through his eyes a sharply defined picture can be obtained that is not out of focus, but is an objective picture of ourselves.

The superstitions, memories of boyhood, and the middle west of the 1850's are presented as in The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, but in addition to these qualities appears a satirical picture in which Mark Twain

1 John Erskine, The Delight of Great Books, p.263.

presents the adults of the community with their virtues and their vices.

There can be no doubt that Mark Twain, unlike his contemporaries, was not writing the stories of Huck and Tom to further moral growth in children. He was writing in the vein in which he liked to write, and he was writing to earn a living. He was deeply outraged, however, and his feelings were definitely hurt when librarians saw in his books sources of corruption for children. His daughter Susy tells of Mark Twain, sulky, but dutiful, submitting Huckleberry Finn to Mrs. Clemens for censorship:

Ever since papa and mamma were married papa has written his books and then taken them to mama in manuscript, and she has expurgated (sic) them. Papa read Huckleberry Finn to us... He would leave parts of it with mama to expurgate while he went off to the study to work....We used to see her turn down the leaves of the pages, which meant that some delightfully terrible part must be scratched out. ²

Huckleberry is not a good boy. He was "idle", "lawless", "vulgar", and "bad", to use the expressions of the mothers of the town. In the opening pages of The Adventures of Tom Sawyer a clear picture of Huck

2 Asa Don Dickinson, "Huck Finn is Fifty Years Old--Yes; But is He Respectable?" Wilson Bulletin for Librarians, December, 1935.

is given:

All of the children admired him, and delighted in his forbidden society, and wished they dared to be like him. Tom was like the rest of the respectable boys, in that he envied Huckleberry his gaudy out-cast condition, and was under strict orders not to play with him. So he played with him every time he got a chance. Huckleberry was always dressed in the cast-off clothes of full-grown men, and they were in perennial bloom and fluttering with rags. His hat was a vast ruin with a wide crescent lopped out of its brim; his coat, when he wore one, hung nearly to his heels and had the rearward buttons far down the back; but one suspender supported his trousers; the seat of the trousers bagged low and contained nothing; the fringed legs dragged in the dirt when not rolled up.

Huckleberry came and went, at his own free will. He slept on doorsteps in fine weather and in empty hogsheads in wet; he did not have to go to school or to church, or call any being master or obey anybody; he could go fishing or swimming when and where he chose, and stay as long as it suited him; nobody forbade him to fight; he could sit up as late as he pleased; and he was always the first boy that went barefoot in the spring and the last to resume leather in the fall; he never had to wash nor put on clean clothes; he could swear wonderfully. In a word, everything that goes to make life precious, that boy had. So thought every harassed, hampered, respectable boy in St. Petersburg. ³

The result of such a bringing-up, or lack of one produced a character whose approach to life could not possibly have been the normal and average approach.

3 Harper & Brothers, The Family Mark Twain, p.313.

Mark Twain, therefore, had an agent who could view even the most outrageous situation with complacency and present it as matter of fact while remaining absolutely unaccountable to any living person. That Mark Twain relished this, as well as realized it, is readily apparent when the passages dealing with the vices and the narrow virtues of the community are read.

Contrast the scrubbed and neatly patched Alger hero with Huck, who, rich and the possessor of an income for life, has been dragged into the home of the widow Douglas. His lament at such a fate is not at all like the proud and clean Algerian character. Prodded out of an empty hogshead behind the slaughterhouse by Tom Sawyer, who has been searching for the fugitive, Huck emerged unkempt, uncombed, and clad in his ruin of rags. His plea was pitiful:

"Don't talk about it, Tom. I've tried it, and it don't work; it don't work, Tom. It ain't for me; I ain't used to it. The widder's good to me, and friendly; but I can't stand them ways. She makes me git up just at the same time every morning; she makes me wash, they comb me all to thunder; she won't let me sleep in the wood shed; I got to wear them blamed clothes that just smothers me, Tom; they don't seem to let any air git through 'em, somehow; and they're so rotten nice that I can't set down, nor lay down, nor roll around anywhers; I hain't slid on a cellar- door for--well, it seems like

years; I got to go to church and sweat and sweat--I hate them ornery sermons! I can't ketch a fly in there, I can't chaw. I got to wear shoes all Sunday. The widder eats by a bell; she goes to bed by a bell; she gits up by a bell--everything's so awful reg'lar a body can't stand it." ⁴

This is Huck Finn; this is Boy. His morality, his strange religion that is not religion, his complete freedom from restraint of any kind, his trips along the great river, his traffic with the devil during the rescue of Nigger Jim give a glimpse of a land that is not only pastoral, but a land that is filled with violence and terror on every hand. And through this violence and terror the shrewd Huck Finn threads his way, sizing up mankind and not being very much impressed with what he finds. For he finds that men are senseless and cruel as he views the Grangerford-Shepherdson feud; he learns that liquor can make them do strange and horrible things as he watches his father through the night and falls asleep holding a shotgun; he learns that fear in man is stronger than humanity and plays upon that trait when he invites the boatload of armed slave hunters aboard his raft to give aid to a "man suffering small-pox" , and thus,

4 Harper & Brothers, The Family Mark Twain, p.433.

saves Jim from capture.

Brander Matthews compares Mark Twain to Cervantes because he makes us laugh first and think afterwards. Unlike Cervantes' work, it has not taken a full century for readers to find out that The Adventures of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn were more than funny books:

It is perhaps rather with the picaresque romances of Spain that Huckleberry Finn is to be compared than with the masterpiece of Cervantes; but I do not think it will be a century or three generations before we Americans generally discover how great a book Huckleberry Finn really is, how keen its vision of character, how close its observation of life, how sound its philosophy, and how it records for us once and for all certain phases of Southwestern society which it is very important for us to perceive and to understand. The influence of slavery, the prevalence of feuds, the conditions and the circumstances that make lynching possible--all these things are set before us clearly and without comment. It is for us to draw our own moral, each for himself, as we do when we see Shakespeare acted. ⁵

Phillips brings out the same point, but goes a step further. Pointing out that Huck Finn is more than Lazarillo of the picaresque novel; even superior than Hugo's Gavroche, "the immortal ragamuffin of fiction."

For they were only gamins, the outcasts of the lowest round of society. Huck Finn is the equal not only of all the characters

⁵ Brander Matthews, "Mark Twain-His Work," The Book Buyer, Vol. 13 (1896), p.977.

of the book, but of all readers. In spite of his birth he is human; he has our sympathy; we must own him brother. It is the consummate art of the author that has brought this result to bear. But it is the broad spirit of equality, the result of actual experience and long familiarity with the ideas and ideals of that early southwestern life, that, in the first instance made the conception of such a character possible. ⁶

6 R.E. Phillips, "Mark Twain; More Than Humorist," The Book Buyer , Vol. 22 (1901), p.199.

IV The Character of Huckleberry Finn

Mark Twain felt that humorous story-telling was distinctly an American creation. The basis of this art was to "string incongruities and absurdities together in a wandering and sometimes purposeless way and seem innocently unaware that they are absurdities."¹ He practiced this in his mannerisms on the stage and in his writing..

Huck, unspoiled, uneducated, and yet blessed with the vivid and almost pictorial imagination that so often is given to the uneducated, was the product of a literary genius who had developed the art of humorous story telling to the highest. Where Tom Sawyer was smart, self-assertive, and inclined to take hold of any situation in a grandiose and highly melodramatic way, Huck always avoided making direct comments in telling his story. Although this clever literary device is well known, the principle is a lot

1 R.E. Phillips, op.cit., p. 196.

easier to state than to follow. Mark Twain's Huck Finn is the first of the juvenile characters to break away from the traditional "story with a lesson" and "story with opportunities for moral growth." He broke from the traditional manner of presentation because he realized that Huck Finn's reactions would bring about the desired response in his readers. Some of the greatest passages of satire ever written are in the oratory of the "Duke" and the "Dolphin" aboard the raft. There is no comment on any of this, either by Huck or Jim. There is no necessity for it.

Tom Bailey would have hastened to reassure the "gentle reader" that he realized the two were imposters and scoundrels. Horatio Alger, who never allowed his readers' minds to do any heavy lifting, would have devoted a paragraph of editorial writing to the cause. Religious publications for the betterment of children's minds and other juvenile publications would not have allowed such a scene to be printed.

Huck is definitely a skeptic, but he does have a conscience. At times it bothers him. "Borrowing" was the term he applied to stealing. It was usually necessary for Huck to borrow whenever he wished to eat. This fact

was particularly troublesome during the trip down river with Nigger Jim.

Mornings before daylight I slipped into corn-fields and borrowed a watermelon, or a mushmelon, or a punkin, or some new corn, or things of that kind. Pap always said it warn't no harm to borrow things if you was meaning to pay them back some time; but the widow said it warn't anything but a soft name for stealing, and no decent body would do it. Jim said he reckoned the widow was partly right and pap was partly right; so the best way would be for us to pick out two or three things from the list and say we wouldn't borrow them any more---then he reckoned it wouldn't be no harm to borrow the others.

So we talked it over all one night, drifting along down the river trying to make up our minds whether to drop the watermelons, or the cantelopes, or the mushmelons, or what. But towards daylight we got it all settled satisfactory, and concluded to drop crabapples and p'simmons. We warn't feeling just right before that, but it was all comfortable now. I was glad the way it come out, too, because crabapples ain't ever good, and the p'simmons wouldn't be ripe for two or three months yet..²

Prayers were "interruptions" that cooled the food and made it taste like "cold cannibal".³

However, Huck could be genuinely shocked by un-Christian conduct. This is shown by his reaction to the Grangerford-Shepherdson feud:

2 Harper & Brothers, The Family Mark Twain, p.506.

3 Ibid., p.605.

Next Sunday we all went to church, about three mile, everbody a-horseback.. The men took their guns along, so did Buck and kept them between their knees or stood them handy against the wall. The Shepherdsons done the same. It was pretty ornery preaching, all about brotherly love, and such-like tiresomeness; but everybody said it was a good sermon, and they all talked it over going home, and such a powerful lot to say about faith and good works and free grace and predestination, and I don't know what all, and yet it turned out to be one of the roughest Sundays I had run across yet. ⁴

Huck's decision to help Jim escape from slavery brings on another struggle with his conscience. Stealing was bad enough, but it could be rationalized. Nigger-stealing, however, was another thing. It was the most dastardly ~~act~~ known to man. It was a sure ticket to Hell; he would not only go to Hell, he would be despised by all men. Even Huck had a horror of those who aided niggers in their escape. Balanced against these emotions were his relations with Jim, the terror evinced by Jim at the thought of being sold, and the adventures that the two had had together. Hell still seemed like a bad place in which to live, so Huck wrote out the following note:

Miss Watson,

Your runaway Nigger Jim is
down here two mile below Pikesville, and Mr. Phelps

4 Harper & Brothers, The Family Mark Twain, p. 519.

has got him and he will give him up
for the reward if you send.

Huck Finn ⁵

This done, Huck felt "all washed clean of sin for the first time," ⁶ and sat there thinking how good it was all this happened so, and how near I come to being lost and going to hell." ⁷ As he sits there feeling so good about having reformed and turning Jim in, his mind takes that curious turn it so often does and his innate sense of justice, a revolt against the laws and customs of men begins to struggle with his conscience. His mental struggle is acute:

...and I see Jim before me all the time: in the day and in the night-time, sometimes moonlight, sometimes storms, and we a-floating along, talking and singing and laughing. But somehow, I couldn't seem to strike no places to harden me against him, but only the other kind. I'd see him standing my watch on top of hisn't, 'stead of calling me, so I could go on sleeping; and see him how glad he was when I come back out of the fog; and when I came to him again in the swamp, up there where the feud was; and such-like times; and would always call me hone, and pet me, and do everything he could think of for me, and how good he always was; and at last I struck the time I saved him by telling the men we had smallpox aboard, and he was so grateful, and said I was the best friend old Jim ever had in the

5 Harper & Brothers, The Family Mark Twain, p.593.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

world, and the only one he's got now; and then I happened to look around and see that paper.

It was a close place. I took it up, and held it in my hand. I was a-trembling because I'd got to decide, forever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it. I studied for a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself: "All right, then, I'll go to hell," and tore it up.

It was awful thoughts and awful words, but they was said. And I let them stay said and never thought no more about reforming. I shoved the whole thing out of my head, and said I would take up wickedness again, which was in my line, being brung up to it, and the other warn't. And for a starter I would go to work and steal Jim out of slavery again; and if I could think up anything worse, I would do that, too; because as long as I was in, and in for good I might as well go the whole hog.⁸

Previously Huck had had to assuage his conscience when the slave hunters had approached the raft. At that time he had passed it off by saying that "a body that don't get started right when he's little ain't got no show."⁹ He had had quite a talk with himself over the situation:

Then I thought a minute, and says to myself, hold on; s'pose you'd 'a' done right and give Jim up, would you felt better than what you do now? No, says I, I'd feel bad---I'd feel just the same way I do now. Well, then, says I in my head, what's the use you learning to do right when it's troublesome to do right and ain't no trouble to do wrong, and the wages is just the same? I was stuck. I

8 Harper & Brothers, op.cit., p.593.

9 Ibid., p.506.

couldn't answer that. So I reckoned I wouldn't bother no more about it, but after that always do whichever come handiest at the time.¹⁰

There is no questioning the fact that Huck felt outside the pale of civilization. He knew that he had no "upright folks" who were a part of the community in which he lived. He felt of himself as "lowdown" and not worth mentioning. He felt no strength of character in his decision to help Nigger Jim at the expense of going to Hell, and his complete simplicity is brought out when he puzzles over Tom's willingness to help in the dastardly crime:

Here was a boy that was respectable and well brung up; and had a character to lose; and folks at home that had characters; and he was bright and not leather-headed; and knowing and not ignorant; and not mean, but kind; and yet, here he was, without any more pride, or rightness, or feeling, than to stoop to this business, and make himself a shame, and his family a shame, before everybody. I couldn't understand it no way at all. It was outrageous, and I knowed I ought to just up and tell him so, and so be his true friend, and let him quit the thing right where he was and save himself, and I did start to tell him; but he shut me up and says....¹¹

10 Harper & Brothers, op.cit., p.506.

11 Ibid., p.607.

Huck, it is true, was only the trampish son of a drunkard. He stole his food, he lied his way out of any difficulty into which his carefree life of drifting down the river led him. He despised his conscience for the weak thing that it was in his eyes. Mention has been made of his statement to the effect that if he had a "yaller" dog worth what his conscience was worth he would shoot it. He has been "brung up" to wickedness. It was his lot and he did not, could not rebel against it, but somehow, out of low station, ignorance and wickedness his loyalty to Nigger Jim, as well as to the strange code by which he lived, always rose above the problems that beset him.

And as he drifted down the Mississippi burdened with the flailings of his conscience, frightened by the supersitions on every hand, he experienced the joys of life to the point of saturation; he squeezed the very juice out of life.

CHAPTER IV

Conclusion

Mark Twain's early life gave him complete independence of thought. Living along the banks of the Mississippi river he was exposed to all of the influences of its bustling excitement during the era of expansion.

His lack of a formal education along traditional lines of thought gave him a clarity of judgment that refused to accept anything except at its face value. He refused to be abashed or intimidated when he came into contact with both European thought and works, or the work of his contemporaries.

When this complete independence of thought was brought into contact with the traditional type of writing as represented in the current periodicals and the juvenile literature of Thomas Bailey Aldrich and Horatio Alger, a sympathetic reaction on the part of Mark Twain could not be expected. His very nature rebelled against it.

Although he was too politic to give vent openly to his opinions of the juvenile literature of the time, a study of the incidents in The Adventures of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn shows that Mark Twain followed

closely the pattern set by his friend Aldrich, not with a view of imitation, but with the idea of putting his characters into similar situation in order that he might handle those situations with the same impudence that made him wear a white tuxedo to match his hair. It was this impatience with restrictions that made it impossible for Mark Twain to conform to the current style.

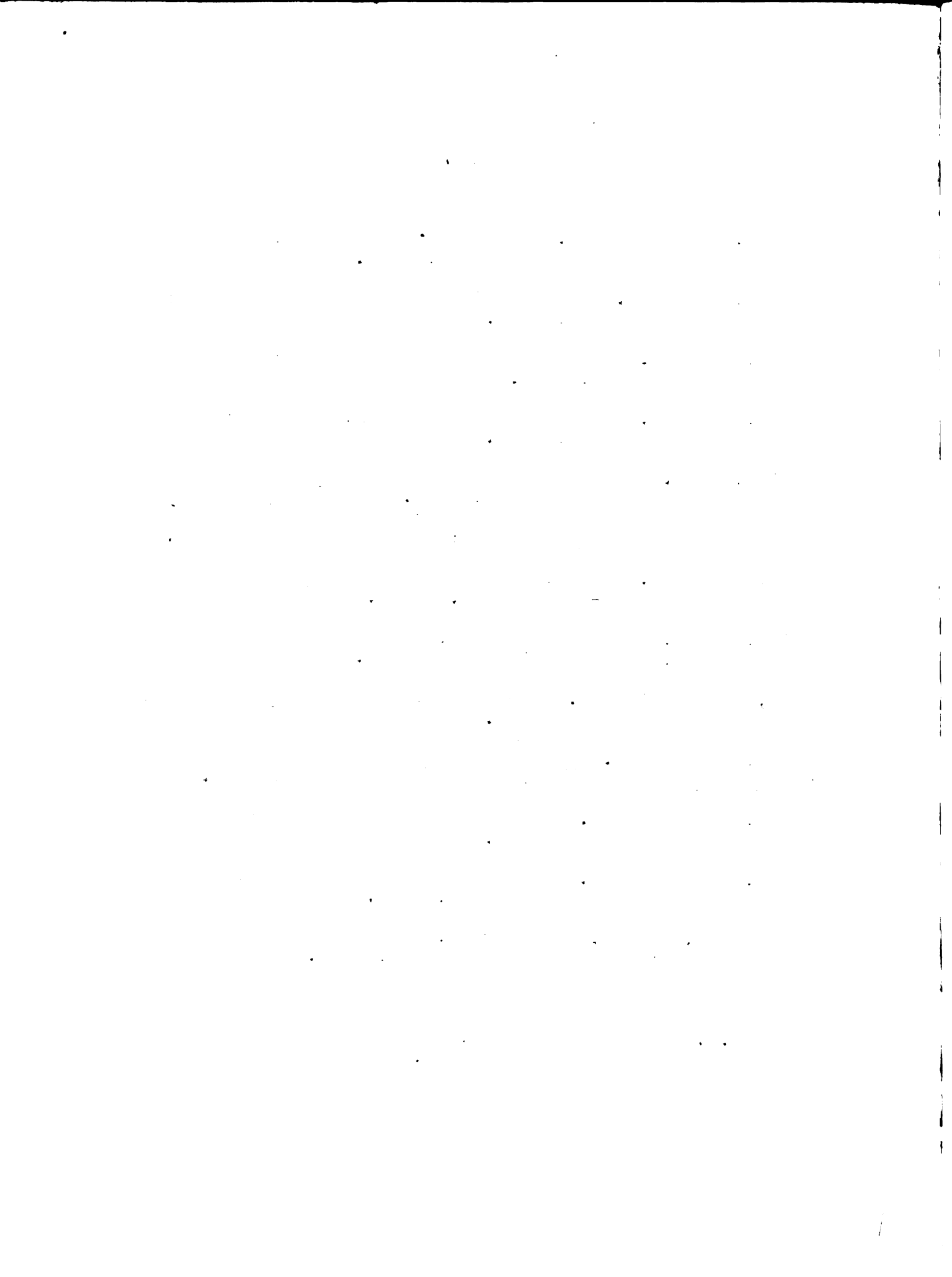
It was never Mark Twain's habit to remark when he could make the reader form his own conclusions. Huckleberry and Tom were characters used as a powerful medium for satire of man's inner weakness and the docility with which he follows accepted patterns of behavior and of writing. No comment on contemporaneous juvenile writing was given by Mark Twain. His flair for descriptive writing, his presentation of action, and his choice of material made it unnecessary.

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