

**mark twain,
“the doctor” and
a guidebook by dickens**

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Howells called Mark Twain “the Lincoln of our literature.” If one were to turn that comparison into a conceit, *The Innocents Abroad* might well be called the Emancipation Proclamation of American prose, or (at the risk of likening Mark Twain to a Founding Father) its Declaration of Independence, its Monroe Doctrine. The book, Mark Twain tells us in the Preface, “has a purpose, which is, to suggest to the reader how *he* would be likely to see Europe and the East if he looked at them with his own eyes instead of the eyes of those who have travelled in those countries before him.”¹ *The Innocents Abroad*, Henry Nash Smith observes, “depends to a considerable degree on the existence of a body of earlier writing about the subject which the reader is now invited to perceive as unauthentic.”² Mark Twain tacitly confesses his use of standard guide-books and of the Bible, of course, but when he mentions the books of the travel-writers who had preceded him, it is invariably to challenge them and to take to task the American tourists who allow such books to prepare and prejudice their vision. “See for yourself” could be the book’s motto: if you fail to do so, you are subject to the hegemony of the dead past, to serfdom to an unauthentic tradition. Mark Twain is determined to be free, and to set his readers free.

The Innocents Abroad makes no secret of its abolitionist, revolutionary intent, yet some have tried to prove that the book belies the freedom and independence it so consistently proclaims. This essay will examine one allegation of Mark Twain’s literary dependence and of the specific charge it will find him innocent. It will also uncover new evidence for affirming that *The Innocents Abroad*, a book which effected a revolution in American prose, is true to the great principles of the *French* Revolution: it proclaims liberty from domination, whether from abroad or above; it affirms the equal value of each individual’s

perceptions; and it gives full credit to the strengthening bond of fraternity among free and equal Americans.

i

When the steamship *Quaker City* left New York on 3 June 1867 with Samuel Clemens and seventy-odd other journalists, pilgrims and pleasure-seekers bound for Europe and the Holy Land, she carried somewhere—perhaps in her highly-touted library, more probable in a passenger's personal luggage—a copy of Charles Dickens' *Pictures from Italy* (1846). The little book was to become one of the most fragile of many small links between the two great humorists who shared so much of temperament, of technique and of subject-matter. Edgar Johnson likened Dickens' impressions of Italy to those contained in Mark Twain's *The Innocents Abroad*, but without suggesting dependence.³ Subsequently Joseph H. Gardner went a step further and listed *Pictures from Italy* among "works Clemens probably read":

Mrs. Browning might find Dickens "vulgar" because he called Michelangelo a "humbug," but Mark Twain did not. Indeed, in a letter to Emeline Beach written 31 January 1868, he himself uses the word to describe "the whole gang of Old Masters." Clemens, at work on *Innocents Abroad*, may have been reading *Pictures from Italy* for background and delighting to find an ally in his refusal to accept canting art criticism.⁴

The one word "humbug"—a slender thread of evidence, certainly—is all that Gardner has to offer in support of his contention that Clemens "probably read" Dickens' *Pictures*.

In 1970, in an exemplary book, Howard G. Baetzhold went a step—for him a rare false step—beyond Gardner and asserted without qualification that Clemens' treatment of the most famous of the Old Masters' works, Leonardo's *Last Supper*, demonstrates "borrowing" from Dickens: in Chapter XIX of *The Innocents Abroad* "the debt to Dickens stands revealed," he assures us.⁵ Baetzhold, like Gardner, attributes the "borrowing" to 1868, when Clemens was revising and expanding the travel letters he had sent back to the San Francisco *Alta California* (and a few he had sent to New York papers) to produce his first real book, *The Innocents Abroad*. In point of fact, however, the excerpts Baetzhold presents from the book as evidence of an indebtedness to Dickens are all but word for word identical with the version of the same material which Clemens had posted to the *Alta* in the summer of 1867. I shall, nevertheless, quote both the newspaper and the book versions of what Baetzhold sees as a "borrowing," since he and Gardner have made a point of the date of the debt, and since there is not, in any case, much that needs quoting. In the *Alta* letter published on 22 September 1867, Clemens had written:

In Milan, [in] an ancient tumble-down ruin of a church, is the mournful wreck of the most celebrated painting in the

world—"The Last Supper," by Leonardo da Vinci. We don't know any more about pictures than a kangaroo does about metaphysics, but of course we went to see the wonderful fresco, once so beautiful, always so worshipped by masters in art. . . .

And now forevermore I am down on the old masters. "The Last Supper" is painted on a dilapidated wall of what was once a little chapel attached to the main church in ancient times, I suppose. It is battered and scarred in every direction, and stained and discolored by time, and Napoleon's horses kicked the legs off most of the disciples when they were stabled there more than half a century ago.⁶

And here is the revised version Baetzhald quotes from *The Innocents Abroad*:

Here, in Milan, in an ancient tumble-down ruin of a church, is the mournful wreck of the most celebrated painting in the world—"The Last Supper," by Leonardo da Vinci. We are not infallible judges of pictures, but of course we went there to see this wonderful painting, once so beautiful, always so worshipped by masters in art. . . .

"The Last Supper" is painted on the dilapidated wall of what was a little chapel attached to the main church in ancient times, I suppose. It is battered and scarred in every direction, and stained and discolored by time, and Napoleon's horses kicked the legs off most the disciples when they (the horses, not the disciples,) were stabled there more than half a century ago. (Ch. XIX, 190)

The revisions are minor: the kangaroo, which may have been judged too rambunctious a figure for the book's more refined audience, has disappeared; *fresco* has been corrected to *painting*; and the parenthesis turns a blunder into a pleasant touch. But these slight changes are not to the point, for neither the newspaper nor the book version bears much resemblance to the passage by Dickens from which Baetzhald contends Mark Twain borrowed:

In the old refectory of the delapidated Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie, is the work of art, perhaps, better known than any other in the world: the Last Supper, by Leonardo da Vinci—with a door cut through it by the intelligent Dominican friars, to facilitate their operations at dinner-time.

I am not mechanically acquainted with the art of painting, and have no other means of judging of a picture than as I see it resembling and refining upon nature, and presenting graceful combinations of forms and colours. . . . Of the Last Supper, I would simply observe, that in its beautiful composition and arrangement, there it is, at Milan, a wonderful picture; and that, in its original colouring, or in its original expression of any single face or feature, there it is not.⁷

Baetzhold is not specific about where in these passages he wishes us to remark similarities. Perhaps we are to hear an echo of Dickens' "judging" in Mark Twain's "judges." Perhaps we are to conclude that "dilapidated Convent" inspired "dilapidated wall." This is not much to hang a case on, though one must admit that it is more than Gardner's "humbug." Baetzhold goes on to liken Dickens' and Clemens' reactions to the sham ecstasies of the tourists who view the no-longer-impressive Last Supper, "who fall into what" Dickens describes as "mild convulsions, at certain minute details of expression which are not left in it."⁸ "What would you think," Mark Twain asks, "of a man who stared in ecstasy upon a desert of stumps and said: 'Oh, my soul, my beating heart, what a noble forest is here!'" (Ch. XIX, 192). One could in this manner piece together a whole paragraph on art enthusiasts by alternating sentences from the two humorists, so similar are their attitudes. But matching sentence for sentence would be impossible, for neither in word nor in detail does Clemens correspond with Dickens.

The correspondences between them are of other sorts: both prefer observing people to observing monuments, and so it is not the dilapidated *Last Supper* but the convulsive viewers of *The Last Supper* they both focus upon; and in this scene as in others both of them revel in incongruity and irony rather than in sublimities. An additional example will underscore these points. In a chapter on Genoa, Dickens observes that

The Peasant women, with naked feet and legs, are so constantly washing clothes, in the public tanks, and in every stream and ditch, that one cannot help wondering, in the midst of all this dirt, who wears them when they are clean.⁹

And one of Mark Twain's letters, this one written for the *New York Tribune*, from Civita Vecchia, comments that

The women wash clothes half the day at the public fountains, but they are probably somebody else's; or, maybe, they keep one suit to wear and another to wash, because they never wear any that have been washed.¹⁰

The similarities here in focus of vision and in ironic perception are worth noting, but the public washing and the universal filth are items most Anglo-Saxon travelers in Mediterranean countries could be counted on to observe. Mark Twain and Dickens are indeed alike in the tenor of their observations, but that hardly demonstrates that the one had copied the other.

They share also, of course, the pose of the art-ignoramus—which was not purely a pose for either of these autodidacts. That pose, however, was nothing new for Mark Twain in the summer of 1867. Two years earlier he had begun "An Unbiased Criticism" of a show at the California Art Union this way:

I do not know anything about Art and very little about music or anatomy, but nevertheless I enjoy looking at pictures and listening to operas, and gazing at handsome young girls, about the same as people do who are better qualified by education to judge of merit in these matters.¹¹

Long before he would have had occasion to encounter *Pictures from Italy*, Clemens had assumed a Dickensian posture—one of his many Dickensian postures—as art-ignoramus.

The question which initiated this inquiry was not one of similarities but of “borrowing.” To put that charge to the test it will be well for us to look closely again at Dickens’ and Clemens’ descriptions of *The Last Supper*, this time with particular attention to differences in the two authors’ reports. In matters of what might be called “information” at least two differences are salient. Dickens says that the building containing the mural had been a refectory, Clemens that it had been a chapel. Dickens was right, of course. (Is it possible that Clemens heard from his guide or read in his guidebook that *The Last Supper* had, appropriately, decorated a refectory, but that the point failed to register with him because he did not know what a refectory was?) And Dickens calls attention to the damage the opening of a doorway through the wall had done to the mural—an atrocity from which he elicits more of a smile than a groan by making its motive the facilitating of the serving of supper to the friars. (Would Mark Twain the anti-clerical humorist have let that delicious detail slip past him if he had been borrowing from Dickens? I think not.)

The question of whether Mark Twain may have filched a notion or two from Dickens’ *Pictures* hardly seems weighty enough to merit the attention it has already received. Who would so much as raise an eyebrow if he were proved guilty as charged? Yet the fact that he did *not* borrow from a source so readily available to him—how readily I shall show—deserves our attention. His failure, or better, his refusal to borrow is symbolic of the essential point of his book: that the American Innocent should see the Old World “with his own eyes”—New World eyes. The book is a manifesto of American cultural independence. In Italy, as I shall remind you, Mark Twain and his friends “persecute” guides who try to show them what to see and how to see; those are scenes of waggery and high jinks, but they convey a serious meaning: the new American will not venerate the relics of the colonial past. In the Holy Land Mark Twain tasks the Americans he derisively labels “Pilgrims”—travelers bursting with veneration—for letting guidebooks prepare their vision. Through Europe, through the Holy Land, through all experience, this great book insists, Americans can and must go it alone. Committed to that idea, Mark Twain could not bow to any authority; he could not follow any guidebook; and, most emphatically, he could not borrow from such a Victorian magnifico, such a British recolonizer, as Charles Dickens. Yet he could borrow, we shall discover, from an equal, fraternal American. Facing the Old

World, the cultural colonialists, Americans could go it alone—together. To reach a more complete understanding of that point, I propose to take an unexplored, and apparently uninviting, byway. It will lead us, I promise, directly to our destination, and it may furnish us along the way with some amusement. We shall start with a third traveler's account of Milan's most famous art-treasure.

At the church of *Santa Maria delle Grazie* we saw the magnificent Cenacola, or "Last Supper" by Leonardo da Vinci. It is painted on the wall of a Refectory, is 30 feet long and 15 in height. It has suffered dreadfully from damp, age and violence, but still remains the most celebrated painting in the world. The monks cut a door through the wall, cutting away the feet of the principal figure, and it was violated still more when Napoleon had possession of Milan, the monastery being used as a barrack and this room as a stable. The work was one of Da Vinci's first, and he was engaged upon it sixteen years. The face of our Redeemer, meek and grave, shows and almost shades his deep anguish, which, however, does not in the least detract from his beauty, greatness and majesty.

This description, which shares several elements with Mark Twain's, was written and published by Abraham Reeves Jackson, M.D., ship's surgeon aboard the *Quaker City*.¹² Dr. Jackson follows Dickens—although the evidence I have thus far presented would hardly support a charge that he borrowed from him—in noting that the Dominicans' door had cut away part of the mural. On the other hand, Jackson's tone is reverential, if not quite ecstatic. And the details which link his account and Dickens' could well have come from guides or guide-books. Nevertheless, I am convinced that when they wrote their descriptions of *The Last Supper*, Jackson and not Clemens had a copy of *Pictures from Italy* open before him. Before presenting my reasons for holding that opinion, I must provide some information on Jackson and his relations, personal and literary, with Clemens.

ii

A. Reeves Jackson was nine days shy of his fortieth birthday when the *Quaker City* stood out of New York harbor. He had left his wife and children in Stroudsburg, Monroe County, Pennsylvania, where he had practiced medicine since 1849. Active in civic and church organizations, he was, according to a contemporary notice, "a remarkably social person, and a favorite in all society wherever he makes his entrance."¹³ He was quickly to become one of Mark Twain's favorites and to make his entrance into the group called "the boys," "the unregenerated," or "the sinners" in *The Innocents Abroad*. With Mark Twain and Daniel Slote—"Dan" in the book—he was to tour Gibraltar, Tangier, Marseilles, Paris and the cities of Italy. He would be

one of three venturesome men with whom Mark Twain would make a stealthy midnight visit to the Acropolis from the quarantined ship in the harbor of Piraeus. Through more than half of the book, pronouns in the first-person plural almost invariably denote Mark Twain, the doctor and one or two other men, thus setting the fraternal “boys” apart from third-person plural groups, sometimes Europeans, but more often the sanctimonious, superannuated “Pilgrims.” Dr. Jackson was not to be with Mark Twain’s party for the long overland excursion through the Holy Land; by then the philandering physician would have developed another, more compelling alliance with Miss Julia Newell, correspondent of the Janesville, Wisconsin, *Gazette*, who in 1871, two years after the death of the first Mrs. Jackson, would become his second wife. As a finale to the Mediterranean excursion, however, Dr. Jackson, Miss Newell, Clemens and John A. Van Nostrand—the book’s “Jack”—made a four-day horseback and rail tour of Southern Spain.¹⁴ Of those days neither Mark Twain nor Dr. Jackson was to provide the readers at home (including Mrs. Jackson) an account, but even without appearances in the East and in Spain, his role as “the guide-persecuting ‘Doctor’ in ‘Innocents Abroad’ ”¹⁵ is a large and memorable one. In his newspaper letters Mark Twain does not represent the doctor as a guide-persecutor, but Jackson’s antics, we can be reasonably assured, lie behind this exchange between a guide and a character named Brown:

“Is this fellow dead?”

“Who?”

“That dobbed this.”

“Da Vinci? Oh, yes, Monsieur—three hundred year.”

This information seemed to give Brown great satisfaction, and the gloom passed away from his countenance.¹⁶

That brief exchange is the seed from which all the guide-persecuting high jinks, properly attributed to “the doctor,” were to be developed in Chapters XIII and XXVII of *The Innocents Abroad*.

Dr. Jackson was not a literary man (although in later years, as a prominent Chicago gynecologist, he was to contribute extensively to the scientific literature of his specialty) but like Clemens and many other *Quaker City* excursionists he had arranged to send travel-letters home for newspaper publication. Professionals and amateurs alike, these travel-journalists were ever on the lookout for material to fill up the columns of the papers back home. Sometimes they found it together: the references Clemens and Jackson both make to the damage Napoleon’s horses had done to *The Last Supper* is probably a case in point. Sometimes they appear to have found it in each other’s conversation, even in each other’s manuscripts. From Rome on 31 July 1867, for example, Dr. Jackson wrote the *Monroe Democrat* that

We reached the Eternal City . . . by rail. A railroad to Rome!
Shades of Cesar and Horatius Cocles! What would be your

thought if, Rip Van Winkle-like you were to awaken from your long sleep and behold the iron steed coursing over *your* Campagna, rending the air with its demonical screechings, and making it arid with its hot breath?

It was probably about a week later—his letter bears only the dateline “Naples, Italy, August, 1867”—that Mark Twain headed a section of his report on Pompeii “Rip Van Winkle.” He had been day-dreaming in “This city of the Venerable Past,” he says,

till a shrill whistle and the cry of “All aboard—last train to Naples!” woke me up and reminded me that I belonged to the nineteenth century. . . . The Transition was startling. The idea of a railroad train actually running to the old dead Pompeii, and whistling irreverently, and calling for passengers in the most bustling and business-like way, was as strange a thing as one could imagine, and as unpoetical and disagreeable as it was strange.¹⁷

The two Rip Van Winkle passages suggest that Clemens had access to Dr. Jackson’s letter from Rome before he wrote his own letter from Naples. We cannot, of course, say who borrowed from whom: the juxtaposition of Rip and the railroad may have begun with Clemens as an idea he tried out on Dr. Jackson in conversation; but the available documentary evidence points to Jackson as donor, Clemens as recipient of this idea. The same presumption is justified in the case of a single sentence from Jackson’s Venice letter, which is dated 22 July: “Venice is a very Paradise for cripples, there being no use for a gentleman’s limbs.” A week later Clemens was to report to the *Alta* that Venice “must be a paradise for cripples, for verily a man has no use for legs here.”¹⁸

There are equally convincing indications that Dr. Jackson read some of Clemens’ letters, or that Clemens read them to him, before they were posted. Dr. Jackson adopted and exploited for comic interest Mark Twain’s imaginary traveling-companion Mr. Brown—Brown’s characteristic traits and even his name—in his letters from Genoa and Naples. In the first appearance of Jackson’s Brown (in a letter from Genoa, dated 16 July 1867) the comic traveling-companion responds to a guide’s claim that an emerald vase he showed the tourists had been used at the Last Supper and that an agate dish was the same one which had held the head of John the Baptist.

Brown, who joined our party at this place, and who appears to have but little credulity and no ve[ne]ration, informed our guide that he did not believe a word of it, whereupon the latter, who was a devout Catholic, *looked* as though he did not like Brown.

Sad it was for the once boisterous, uproarious Mr. Brown to fall victim to Dr. Jackson’s leaden touch, but as bad as the passage is, it is in-

teresting. For the fictitious Mr. Brown who had traveled to Hawaii, Nicaragua, New York, Missouri¹⁹ and now the Mediterranean with Mr. Twain had all along been, in a partial but real sense, a self-portrait of Samuel Clemens from which every trait of credulity and veneration had been expunged. And Dr. Jackson's Brown, in this brief paragraph, is something quite similar—a partial self-portrait, or a portrait of the self wearing a mask of imbecility. The mask Brown wears is in fact the one Dr. Jackson had frequently assumed in his little episodes with guides. Mark Twain's description of "the doctor" in *The Innocents Abroad* is drawn from life:

The doctor asks the questions, generally, because he can keep his countenance, and look more like an inspired idiot, and throw more imbecility into the tone of his voice than any man that lives. It comes natural to him. (Ch. XXVII, 290)

Was the doctor playing the role of Mr. Brown—Mark Twain's role? Which came first, the antic role or the doctor's antics? The evidence is too scanty for a positive answer, but we can discern that the doctor's performance was contributing to the development of Mark Twain's "inspired idiot," who would emerge after Mr. Brown was deleted from the text in the roles played by three "Innocents": the imperfectly realized Blucher, Mark Twain *in propria persona*, and preeminently "the doctor." Mark Twain had, therefore, good reason to be grateful to the doctor for his contributions to the comedy of *The Innocents Abroad*; surely he could spare him Mr. Brown in return. Theirs was a symbiotic relationship.

And it was a fraternal one, which lasted beyond the excursion. Early in 1868, when he was engaged in what was proving the difficult task of turning his newspaper letters into *The Innocents Abroad*, Clemens wrote to some of his *Quaker City* favorites asking if he might see their journals or the clippings of their newspaper letters. "I have Dr. Jackson's letters," he told Mary Mason Fairbanks in a letter requesting hers. From her clippings, and by implication from Jackson's, he assured her, "I only want to steal the *ideas*—I'm not going to steal the language."²⁰ His hope, it appears, was that those journals and clippings would serve him much as his own notebook did, reminding him of topics he might exploit to flesh out his letters into a much longer book. From Mrs. Fairbanks he was to steal neither ideas nor language: she had not been with him through the phases of the excursion he needed help recalling. Dr. Jackson *had* been with him through those phases.

The French phase of the trip proved a particular problem for him. All but one of his own newspaper letters from France (if in fact he had posted more than one) had miscarried in the mails. Jackson's clippings proved especially helpful here. From two of Jackson's letters Clemens was at this stage of the composition of *The Innocents Abroad* to draw suggestions I can identify. In his letter of 11 July 1867, Dr. Jackson

tells how the party interviewed prospective guides: "The first one who introduced himself was a Swiss, who looked so exceedingly like a retired pirate that we dismissed him." Mark Twain, covering the same topic, says: "One looked so like a very pirate that we let him go at once," and he spins the topic of guides, which had occupied Jackson for one short paragraph, out for six pages (Ch. XIII, 118-23). After an intervening paragraph on the Paris Exposition, Jackson devotes a few lines to the mourning for the Emperor Maximilian. Those lines may well have prompted Mark Twain's reference to the same topic, although in this case there are no verbal echoes to assure us of the indebtedness (Ch. XVI, 158). Before going to Paris, Jackson had written from Marseilles a letter dated 5 July. Clemens was to follow his account of Paris in *The Innocents Abroad* with a chapter on Marseilles in which several particulars may have been suggested by Jackson's clippings. Lamenting in chorus with all American travelers the absence of soap in European hotel rooms, Jackson says, "If you wish soap you call for it and it appears in your bill as an extra charge. Combs and brushes are not furnished at all." Mark Twain adds only one small touch—the substitution of tooth-brushes for [hair]-brushes—but it is a small touch which gives a dull commonplace a comic edge: "We are not getting used to carrying our own soap. We are sufficiently civilized to carry our own combs and tooth-brushes; but this thing of having to ring for soap every time we wash is new to us, and not pleasant at all" (Ch. XI, 98).

A more interesting example of Clemens' probable reliance on Jackson occurs in an earlier passage of *The Innocents Abroad*. In Gibraltar, we learn from Mark Twain's Notebook, Clemens had bought a pair of kid gloves from a "seductive Spanish wench . . . who said *I* knew how to put a glove on, & few did—(when I was tearing the worthless thing to pieces with my awkwardness) and taking this fearful sarcasm for a compliment I paid the price (50 cents) for a torn pair of Spanish gloves."²¹ Clemens was not to use this incident in the letter he sent the *Alta* from Gibraltar. Jackson, however, made much of it in his letter dated 30 June 1867 to the *Democrat*. He reported, for example, that the proprietress of the glove-shop, having covertly observed the tearing of the glove, said "that she could in a moment tell whether a gentleman was accustomed to wearing kid gloves by witnessing his manner of [putting them on]." In *The Innocents Abroad*, as Mark Twain and his party are approaching Tangier, he reports that "every now and then my glove purchase in Gibraltar last night intrudes itself upon me." His version of the incident echoes the doctor's: the proprietress exclaims, "Ah! I see *you* are accustomed to wearing kid gloves—but some gentlemen are *so* awkward about putting them on" (Ch. VII, 73). Jackson's account concentrates on the fun he and two other men who witnessed the incident had at Clemens' expense, as the version in *The Innocents Abroad* does but the version in Mark Twain's Notebook does not. And he concludes, "We laughed at him, but the

following morning when we saw our purchases by daylight we discovered that they were fearfully spotted, and that the amiable lady had cheated us all." This would seem to be the source for Mark Twain's conclusion of the incident in *The Innocents Abroad*:

They let me alone then, for the time being. We always let each other alone in time to prevent ill feeling from spoiling a joke. But they had bought gloves, too, as I did. We threw all the purchases away together this morning. They were coarse, unsubstantial, freckled all over with broad yellow splotches, and could neither stand wear nor public exhibition. We had entertained an angel unawares, but we did not take her in. She did that for us. (Ch. VII, 75)

Here again Mark Twain has transformed Jackson's material into something quite his own, but there can be little question that the material was in the first instance Jackson's.

All of these cases testify to Clemens' readiness to borrow from the doctor, his brother in adversity and an unprofessional and unknown writer whose literary "properties" were not his "stock in trade." His sending his clippings to Clemens suggests that the doctor was as ungrudging as Clemens about their mutual borrowings. Furthermore, since Jackson's *Democrat* letters were unlikely to attract a national public, Clemens could be pretty certain that nobody would detect his "crime." But stealing from another literary man, and especially from one so famous that the theft might be detected—that was quite another matter. When he was taken to task for borrowing a few lines from Oliver Wendell Holmes for the Dedication of *The Innocents Abroad*, he confessed abjectly (although his guilt is by no means clear) and insisted that the crime was inadvertent (which is surely the worst that could be said of it). "I knew one thing," he was to declare later, "that a certain amount of pride always goes along with a teaspoonful of brains, and that this pride protects a man from deliberately stealing other people's ideas."²² That sums up Clemens' conviction about borrowing from other professional, well-known writers. Yet, in spite of his convictions, when Clemens borrowed from A. Reeves Jackson he may have run the risk of borrowing something Charles Dickens had in copyright. For it was Dr. Jackson who traveled through Italy with a copy of Dickens' *Pictures* in his luggage.

iii

Dr. Jackson's first use of Dickens' *Pictures from Italy* occurs in his letter of 26 July 1867, concerning Florence and Pisa. Here is his third paragraph:

We first catch a view of Florence from a tolerably high point, and see it lying before us in a rich sun-lighted valley, bright with the winding Arno, and encircled by swelling hills;

its domes, and towers and palaces rising from the surrounding landscape in a glittering heap and shining like gold.

And here is Dickens on the same prospect:

But, how much beauty . . . is here, when, on a fair clear morning, we look, from the summit of a hill, on Florence! See where it lies before us in a sun-lighted valley, bright with the winding Arno, and shut in by swelling hills; its domes, and towers, and palaces, rising from the rich country in a glittering heap, and shining in the sun like gold!²³

I should not want to discount the invigorating Americanism of Dr. Jackson's phrase "a tolerably high point," but the rest of the passage belongs to Dickens, even though his contribution is in no way acknowledged. Two paragraphs later Dr. Jackson offers his readers a badly garbled version of Dickens' brilliant description of the Ponte Vecchio, and after eight paragraphs almost free of Dickensian echoes, he takes Dickens' description of the Museum of Natural History in Florence and expands it with observations of his own.²⁴

Two more paragraphs bring Dr. Jackson to Pisa. The beggars are his first concern, and to deal with them he flips back two chapters in his copy of *Pictures from Italy* and finds the observation that "The beggars seem to embody all the trade and enterprise of Pisa." Dr. Jackson says that "They seem to constitute the business portion of the community and their business is not neglected." A sentence earlier, Dickens had commented that the beggars "waylay the unhappy visitor at every turn, escort him to every door he enters at, and lie in wait for him, with strong reinforcements, at every door by which they know he must come out."²⁵ Dr. Jackson's recasting of this follows immediately after his remark on Pisa's "business": "They escort the visitor to every door he wishes to enter, and kindly remain waiting for him when he comes out." Immediately before discoursing on Pisa's beggars, Dickens had described the Leaning Tower:

In the course of the ascent to the top (which is by an easy staircase), the inclination is not very apparent; but, at the summit, it becomes so, and gives one the sensation of being in a ship that has heeled over, through the action of an ebb-tide. The effect *upon the low side*, so to speak—looking over from the gallery, and seeing the shaft recede to its base—is very startling; and I saw a nervous traveller hold on to the Tower involuntarily, after glancing down, as if he had some idea of propping it up. The view within, from the ground—looking up, as through a slanted tube—is also very curious. It certainly inclines as much as the most sanguine tourist could desire.²⁶

And here is Dr. Jackson's impression of the same edifice:

We succeeded in reaching the great Tower, which leans quite enough to satisfy the most exacting traveller. Looking up

through the slanting tube, from the bottom to the top, the effect is very curious. But the glory of the sensation is felt when, after gaining the summit, (which is done by a very easy staircase) one looks down from the leaning side to the ground below and realizes the airy nothingness that intervenes. Casting the eye from the point along the light and graceful shaft to the receding base, the effect is very startling, and one almost involuntarily grasps the iron railing as with an intention of assisting to keep the structure from toppling over.

As curious as the view up the slanting tube is the rearrangement Dr. Jackson made of his borrowings from Dickens here. If we number the borrowed items as they occur in *Pictures from Italy* (1. the sensations at the top of the Tower, 2. the very curious view from the ground up through the Tower's interior, 3. the Tower's leaning enough to satisfy anyone, 4. the escort of beggars, and 5. begging as a business) the sequence in Dickens (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) is precisely reversed in Jackson (5, 4, 3, 2, 1). It suggests that the doctor was reading from the bottom of the page up. Very curious.

What does Mark Twain borrow from the doctor's borrowings? Not a word, not an image, not a perception. He does not mention the distant prospect of Florence, or the Ponte Vecchio, or the Museum of Natural History. In his *Alta* letters he does not even mention Pisa and its famous Tower.³⁶ He does describe the Tower in *The Innocents Abroad*, but his description is completely, arrestingly different from the Dickens/Jackson versions. For example, his interior view is downward from the top of the tower. Here and everywhere his viewpoint is his own. Jackson's letters may have helped him recall what he had seen; perhaps even some of Jackson's plagiarisms from Dickens may occasionally have served that purpose; but what Mark Twain presents in *The Innocents Abroad* is what he himself had seen (Ch. XXIV, 249-51).

Clemens and Jackson almost certainly toured Rome together, yet the things the two chose to speak of in their reports of the city differ so appreciably as to demand comment. If Clemens mailed a letter from Rome, it was lost, and so we must judge his reactions wholly on the basis of *The Innocents Abroad*. He opens the Roman section of the book with a lament which is both comic and heartfelt: "What is it that confers the noblest delight? . . . To be the *first*—that is the idea. To do something, say something, see something, before *any body* else—these are the things that confer a pleasure compared with which other pleasures are tame and commonplace, other ecstasies cheap and trivial." And what chance has an American travel-writer in Rome "to be the *first*?" Better to be a Roman writer visiting America. To that fancy Mark Twain devotes four novel and diverting pages. In the next half-dozen pages he risks sketching some Roman scenes, but even here he insists, "I prefer not to describe St. Peter's. It has been done before." Instead, he devotes five pages to his celebrated "playbill" of the

gladiatorial games—a playbill printed by “Diodorus Job Press” which he claims to have found “among the rubbish of the ruined Coliseum” (Ch. XXVI, 266, 267-271, 275, 279-283). The next chapter opens with a Nevada anecdote and moves directly from that to the persecution of guides—and they are not even Roman guides. And so it goes for three chapters. Some of the sights Mark Twain treats with irony, some with veneration, but in all cases his objective is to share his fresh impressions of what he himself has seen, felt, and thought with his readers. When what he has seen is too well-known, when he fears that his readers will have read other accounts of the same places—perhaps in particular an account by Charles Dickens—he knows that a simple presentation of his impressions will lack the virtue of novelty. And so he digresses, and makes of digression itself an art. This was so in Paris, where a political sketch of Louis Napoleon and Abdul Aziz occupies the space other travelers devoted to the Bois de Boulogne. And it would be true also of the Ascent of Vesuvius (Ch. XIII, 125-29; Chs. XXIX, XXX).

Jackson, in marked contrast, was content to see Rome through the eyes of others, principally through Dickens’ eyes, whenever possible. The Rome Dickens saw on his first day there

was no more *my* Rome: the Rome of anybody’s fancy, man or boy; degraded and fallen and lying asleep in the sun among a heap of ruins; than the Place de la Concorde in Paris is.⁴³

And in the doctor’s initial impression of Rome, immediately following his Rip Van Winkle paragraph, we read:

I did not find my Rome—the Rome of my fancy. I found only busy throngs of ordinary people, walking in commonplace streets, lined with just such shops and houses as may be seen in any European city.

But more arresting than this or his borrowings of whole sentences from Dickens—and such borrowings are not rare in this letter—is his visit to St. Peter’s for Sunday Mass (“On Sabbath morning I attended High Mass at St. Peters”) which models itself on Dickens’ paragraph beginning “On Sunday, the Pope assisted in the performance of High Mass at St. Peter’s.”²⁸ For Jackson had not been in St. Peter’s—Jackson had not even been in Rome—on Sunday.

News that quarantine was threatened had reached the *Quaker City* where she lay at anchor at Leghorn on Monday 29 July. Some of the passengers resolved to leave the ship at once, make their own way to Rome, and then continue by rail to Naples, where they would rejoin the ship: thus they would escape the strict health regulations which applied to travelers on foreign ships but not to travelers by land. Clemens and Jackson, probably with Slote, took a coastal steamer to Civitate Vecchia and went from there by rail to Rome. They arrived in Rome not earlier than the morning of Tuesday 30 July. Jackson dated his let-

ter to the *Democrat* "Rome, July 31, 1867"—Wednesday. It is of course possible that the letter was commenced on the thirty-first and was finished and mailed a day or two later, but nothing warrants the opinion that the paragraph about Sunday mass at St. Peter's—the letter's eleventh paragraph—was written long after the first. Jackson had seen little when he started writing; but no matter—his sources were seeing the sights for him and enabling him to enjoy a Sunday in Rome at mid-week.²⁹

Occasionally the results of his dependence are particularly discordant. In an unnamed church—not St. Peter's—Dickens had commented on

The same monotonous, heartless, drowsy chanting, always going on; the same dark building, darker from the brightness of the street without; the same lamps dimly burning; . . . the same priest's back, with the same large cross embroidered on it. . . .³⁰

In St. Peter's, Jackson says,

The congregation was small, and there seemed to be the same monotonous, heartless, drowsy chanting; the same amount of darkness; the same dimly-burning lamps; the same priest's back, with the cross embroidered on it. . . .

But he leaves Dickens in mid-paragraph and turns to some of his own observations—at any rate, some observations from a different source—and these are singularly at odds with Dickens' opinion of Roman church-music:

However different these edifices may be in architecture, in size, in shape, in wealth, it is the same thing still, the music of the choristers was really fine, and their voices rolling and vibrating through the immense space, in perfect accord, produced an effect solemnly impressive.

If Clemens read this he made no use either of its strictures on plainsong or its praise of it, but the three paragraphs on Vatican art treasures which Jackson lifted almost word for word from *Pictures from Italy* may have elicited a reaction from him. Dr. Jackson had begun, "I am not an artist. But I cannot, when entering an art-gallery, leave at its door my perceptions of what is natural and true." The passage he is quoting, one of Dickens' most vigorous and typical, opens,

I unreservedly confess, for myself, that I cannot leave my natural perception of what is natural and true, at a palace-door, in Italy or elsewhere, as I should leave my shoes if I were travelling in the East. I cannot forget that there are certain expressions of face, natural to certain passions, and as unchangeable in their nature as the gait of a lion, or the flight of an eagle.³¹

In the expansion of his reactions to the Last Supper he wrote for *The Innocents Abroad*, Mark Twain takes to task the enthusiasts who

talk so glibly of “feeling,” “expression,” “tone,” and those other easily acquired and inexpensive technicalities of art that make such a fine show in conversations concerning pictures. There is not one man in seventy-five hundred that can tell *what* a pictured face is intended to express. There is not one man in five hundred that can go into a court-room and be sure that he will not mistake some harmless innocent of a jurymen for the black-hearted assassin on trail. Yet such people talk of “character” and presume to interpret “expression” in pictures. There is an old story that Matthews, the actor, was once lauding the ability of the human face to express the passions and the emotions hidden in the breast. He said the countenance could disclose what was passing in the heart plainer than the tongue could.

“Now,” he said, “observe my face— what does it express?”

“Despair!”

“Bah, it expresses peaceful resignation! What does *this* express?”

“Rage!”

“Stuff! it means terror! *This?*”

“Imbecility!”

“Fool! It is smothered ferocity! Now *this!*”

“Joy!”

“Oh, perdition! *Any* ass can see it means insanity!”

Expression! (Ch. XIX, 193-94)

At this point the passage is illustrated— Clemens took an active part in the design and direction of the illustrations for *The Innocents Abroad*—with four farcical drawings of “Facial Expression.” Is Dickens’ insistence that “certain expressions of face” are “natural to certain passions” (“certain expressions of face . . . belong to certain passions” in Dr. Jackson’s redaction) being travestied in Mark Twain’s anecdote about the actor Matthews? I strongly suspect that it is, although the evidence is not conclusive enough to support anything more than suspicion. There is, however, no other place in Mark Twain’s letters from Italy or in *The Innocents Abroad* that presents equally convincing evidence for Clemens’ having read any part of Dickens’ *Pictures from Italy*, either in the original or in Jackson’s adaptations.

But Jackson’s enthusiasm for the book was approaching crescendo. His next (and last) letter from Italy is his most Dickensian. Three paragraphs from *Pictures from Italy* ornament Jackson’s survey of Naples’ attractions, and that is followed by a description of an ascent of Vesuvius—Charles Dickens’ ascent of Vesuvius. Problems confronted Dr. Jackson: Dickens had witnessed moonrise from the mountain; Jackson, Clemens, and their party witnessed sunrise. Dickens had made the ascent on a crisp evening in early spring; the *Quaker City* crew trudged up very early on an uncomfortably warm August morn-

ing. Dr. Jackson merely patched, changing the moon to the sun, deleting all references to frost and ice. In the Ascent of Vesuvius section of Jackson's letter, I count one hundred forty-six lines of Dickens, forty-two lines of Jackson. Mark Twain devoted three *Alta* letters to Vesuvius—ostensibly to the Ascent and the Descent, but in fact these letters merely use Vesuvius as a frame for extended comic digressions. In those letters he borrowed from Jackson/Dickens nothing whatsoever.

Of the charges and specifications, then, we must find Mark Twain not guilty. Perhaps he indirectly attacked Dickens in his anecdote about facial expression, but he borrowed not a word, unless by an inadvertency he borrowed from Jackson a word which had been borrowed from Dickens.

iv

Liberty and fraternity: these complementary principles of revolution are all but mutually exclusive. Liberty breaks bonds; fraternity forges them. It is equality, of course, which bridges the chasm and resolves the paradox: horizontal bonding dissolves vertical bondage. The bonds which bind "the boys" together in an egalitarian community liberate them from every dependence upon authority. These Americans can go it alone—together. This is the key theme of *The Innocents Abroad*, and it is this theme that justifies our regarding it as one of the representative books of American literature. Perhaps it was its forthright presentation of that theme which won it greater popularity through Mark Twain's lifetime than any of his other books achieved. The idea of the era, the American view of being American, is nowhere—not even in *Leaves of Grass*—more persuasively, more winningly advanced. To some extent Mark Twain's bizarre relation with A. Reeves Jackson and through Jackson with Dickens must have facilitated his discovery and definition of that theme; it may have revealed to him that, for both philosophic and artistic reasons, the author/persona of *The Innocents Abroad* should close the gap between himself and "the boys" while at the same time keeping his distance from any authoritative and authoritarian literary sources. In a letter to the *Alta* from Jerusalem Mark Twain had made a satiric reference to the authorities guides cited for the precise locations of Biblical events, in this case the mocking of Christ. "The guide said Saewulf was the first to mention it. I do not know as much about Saewulf as I do about Dickens, but still I cannot refuse to receive his evidence—none of us can." In *The Innocents Abroad* the remark survives, but without Dickens: "I do not know Saewulf, but still I cannot refuse to receive his evidence—none of us can" (Ch. LIII, p. 569). Even acknowledging an acquaintance with Dickens would blur the image of the American Innocent Mark Twain is presenting. Dickens is as irrelevant as Saewulf to that Innocent's perception of what he sees. He has

not thought—he could not think—of reading either. He can go it alone, even if, sadly enough, one of the other “boys” could not.

Did Clemens realize that his friend Jackson was borrowing from Dickens? Perhaps a less specific question will serve here quite as well: did he know that the doctor was borrowing from *some* literary source? Probably so, for the stylistic disparities are conspicuous. And one literary source was as menacing as another. Because Mark Twain refuses to be shown what he should see by “those who travelled . . . before him”—refuses on his own behalf and on ours to be rendered dependent to any kind of authority—his book is singularly free of echoes of earlier literature.

And he takes the pious among his fellow excursionists severely to task for their constant dependence on the authorities they had read:

Our pilgrims have brought *their* verdicts with them. They have shown it in their conversation ever since we left Beirut. I can almost tell, in set phrase, what they will say when they see Tabor, Nazareth, Jericho and Jerusalem—*because I have the books they will “smouch” their ideas from.* These authors write pictures and frame rhapsodies, and lesser men follow and see with the author’s eyes instead of their own, and speak with his tongue. (Ch. XLVIII, pp. 511-512)

Next he lists some of the books from which the pilgrims have borrowed “the idea—and the words—and the construction—and the punctuation” for “*their* verdicts.” Mark Twain begins, we should note, with a stricture on second-hand “phrases” in the pilgrims’ conversation, but he drifts into an attack on plagiarism in their writing: even the “punctuation” has been “smouched.” The ostensible targets of this attack are “our pilgrims,” meaning in this context the sober and sanctimonious members of the party of eight with whom he toured the Holy Land. Those men, however, were not writers: not one of them was corresponding with a newspaper or was subsequently to publish a book. Their “punctuation” could in no way be at issue. “Punctuation” points to another target: the *Quaker City* travel journalists and *all* travel journalists who borrow when they should create. Dr. Jackson, surely, was not the direct target of his friend’s attack: he enjoyed a fraternal immunity. Yet plainly Jackson’s letters, which Clemens had obtained to help him with the writing of *The Innocents Abroad*, did “smouch” their “ideas,” and their “words,” “construction,” “punctuation” from previous writers—from Dickens in Italy and in Palestine from the most obvious of sources, Murray’s *Handbook*, the Baedeker of the day. Thus Clemens’ reading of Jackson’s letters may have helped him formulate his views on originality in travel-writing, a theme of considerable saliency and of broad implication in *The Innocents Abroad*. In Jackson’s plagiarisms, Clemens could see the price dependence cost.

That Jackson escaped his friend’s direct or even indirect condemnation and retained his good will is somewhat surprising. Nowhere

does Mark Twain take the doctor to task or—this may be easier to imagine—take “one of our boys” to task for “smouching” his material from books. Having detected the doctor’s misfeasance, Mark Twain has transferred the blame to the poor, unoffending pilgrims. Well, not quite unoffending: we can hardly doubt that those ambulatory monuments of credulity and veneration traveled the Holy Land heavily laden with the books of previous travelers. They were guilty of letting those previous travelers prepare their vision and shape their responses, but they were not “guilty as charged”: they did not “smouch” their “punctuation.” Here we have one of the rare “stretchers” in a book that “told the truth, mainly.” The motive for this departure from fact may have been personal for Clemens, but it was also vitally thematic for Mark Twain’s great book. One of the most engaging themes of *The Innocents Abroad* is the development of the bond binding Mark Twain and Dan and the Doctor (and sometimes others) into a fraternal solidarity. I call this an *engaging* theme deliberately, for it operates in such a way as to engage the reader also in that company of radically “innocent” sinners. The bond between Mark Twain and the boys becomes an emblem and paradigm for the bond developing between the author/persona and the reader. It invites—it virtually compels—the reader to opt for membership in the society of these elect reprobates. Mark Twain insures that the reader will identify with him, even if that necessitates a readjustment of the reader’s self-concept. The choices before the reader are reduced to two: become one of “the boys” or become one of “the pilgrims,” those who seem to say, “Defile not Heaven’s anointed with unsanctified hands” (Ch. XI, p. 101).

Those words are put into the beak of a “long-legged bird” the boys see in the Zoological Gardens in Marseilles, a bird of “such tranquil stupidity, such supernatural gravity, such self-righteousness, and such ineffable self-complacency” as to make their naming him “The Pilgrim” inevitable. The solidarity among the boys (and among the boys and the reader) is strengthened by an awareness of the gulf between the “unsanctified” and “Heaven’s anointed.” It is also strengthened by experiences of suffering endured together (the shaving scene which closes Chapter XXIII is a good example) and of embarrassments which pull down barriers of reserve, like the Gibraltar glove-buying incident. Together the boys turn these hostilities, discomforts and mortifications into laughter, and their laughter transforms them (and the reader with them) into a solidarity, a solidarity of independent Americans traveling light, without preconceptions and without such heavy books as *Pictures from Italy* in their luggage.

notes

1. *The Innocents Abroad, or The New Pilgrims' Progress* (Hartford, 1869), v. Robert H. Hirst's forthcoming *The Making of "The Innocents Abroad"* (Lincoln, Nebraska) makes a

convincing case for treating this edition as standard. All further references to this work appear in the text.

2. *Democracy and the Novel: Popular Resistance to Classic American Writers* (New York), 78.

3. *Charles Dickens: His Triumph and Tragedy* (New York, 1952), I, 561.

4. "Mark Twain and Dickens" *PMLA*, 84 (1969), 91.

5. *Mark Twain and John Bull: The British Connection* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1970), 310-12. Alan Gribben reports Gardner's and Baetzhold's views in *Mark Twain's Library: A Reconstruction* (Boston, 1980), I, 191. "In the 1860s," Gribben observes, "Clemens decided that certain authors were unfairly seeking immediate literary renown by 'ambitiously and undisguisedly imitating Dickens. . .'" (I, 186). Gribben's speculations on Clemens' reasons for disliking and avoiding Dickens are of particular interest.

6. Daniel Morley McKeithan, ed., *Traveling with the Innocents Abroad: Mark Twain's Original Reports from Europe and the Holy Land* (Norman, Oklahoma, 1958), 57; hereafter cited as *TIA*.

7. *American Notes and Pictures from Italy* (London, 1957), 346. The edition aboard the *Quaker City* may have been a piracy of the Philadelphia publisher T. B. Peterson, who presented *Pictures from Italy* in Dickens' *Christmas Stories* in about 1855 at \$1.50 and, somewhat earlier, alone, as a fifty-cent pamphlet ideal for the tourist.

8. Dickens, 346.

9. Dickens, 299.

10. *TIA*, 72.

11. *The Californian*, 18 March 1865; reprinted in *Sketches of the Sixties by Bret Harte and Mark Twain* (San Francisco, 1927), 158.

12. A copy of a scrapbook containing eighteen travel-letters Dr. Jackson published in the *Monroe* [County, Pa.] *Democrat*, obtained from a family member by Leon T. Dickinson, is on deposit in the Mark Twain Papers of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. I gratefully acknowledge the kindness of the late Frederick Anderson, Editor of the *Papers*, who made this notebook and journals and clippings by other *Quaker City* excursionists available to me. I am also grateful to Frederick Anderson's successor, Robert H. Hirst, who guided me through the intricacies of these materials. Since the Jackson scrapbook is unpagged and dates of publication have been cut away, datelines are the only available evidence for the sequence of the letters: these I provide in the text. Files of the *Democrat* for 1867 were destroyed by fire, but abundant evidence about the doctor is available in the other Stroudsburg newspaper, the *Jeffersonian*, and in the records of the Monroe County Historical Society, whose curator, Elizabeth D. Walters, greatly facilitated my inquiries.

13. Alfred Mathews, *History of Wayne, Pike, and Monroe Counties, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1886), 1003.

14. The only positive evidence of Dr. Jackson's joining Miss Newell's party is in occasional references to him in her *Gazette* letters from Palestine; but from Smyrna onward the sequence of places visited in Jackson's letters corresponds generally with Newell's but not with Mark Twain's, as had earlier been the case. The excellent account of the trip through Spain in Dewey Ganzel's *Mark Twain Abroad* (Chicago, 1968), 278-83, is based on Newell's *Gazette* letters. Jackson's first wife died 19 Jan. 1869 (obit., *Stroudsburg Jeffersonian*, 20 Jan. 1869), barely a month after Clemens had paid Jackson a visit (*Jeffersonian*, 17 Dec. 1868). The doctor left Stroudsburg three months later. On 8 Feb. 1871 he married Julia Newell (*Janesville Gazette*, 9 Feb. 1871).

15. On the back of an envelope which contained a letter from Jackson dated 27 March 1872, Clemens wrote that identification (Mark Twain Papers).

16. *TIA*, 58.

17. *TIA*, 82.

18. *TIA*, 59.

19. See *Mark Twain's Letters from Hawaii*, ed. A Grove Day (New York, 1966) and *Mark Twain's Travels with Mr. Brown*, ed. Franklin Walker and G. Ezra Dane (New York, 1940).

20. *Mark Twain to Mrs. Fairbanks*, ed. Dixon Wecter (San Marino, Calif., 1949), 22.

21. *Mark Twain's Notebooks & Journals*, I (Berkeley, California, 1966), 351.

22. *Mark Twain Speaking*, ed. Paul Fatout (Iowa City, 1976), 135.

23. Dickens, 429-30.

24. Dickens, 430-432.

25. Dickens, 358-59.

26. Dickens, 357-58.

27. Dickens, 365.

28. Dickens, 367.

29. Detailed documentation for the chronology presented here will appear in the notes for the edition of *The Shorter Travel Writings of Mark Twain* which I am preparing for the Iowa-California Edition of the *Works*.

30. Dickens, 382-83

31. Dickens, 392.

32. *TIA*, 278.