

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

### No.5 Mark Twain's 'Author's National Edition' and Multiple Signatures

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From the dawn of the craft, printers have included on the published page various pieces of information of significance only to themselves or to binders (i.e. as opposed to readers): such things as catchwords, volume designators, press figures, paper-quality marks and indicators of cancellantia. Today the only such information likely to be found is signatures, though even unsigned books are in fact nowadays not uncommon, particularly if produced in the United States, and the same purpose – ensuring that the gatherings are assembled in the correct order – may be achieved by printing collation marks and/or signatures on the back folds. Typically, the printing-house information appears below the type page, in the direction line, and typically (and by intent) it will go unnoticed by readers of the finished volume (collation marks and signatures on the back folds will normally be invisible to readers and may indeed have been cut off in the process of 'unsewn/perfect binding'). Historians of printing, however, are so accustomed to using such information in the process of bibliographical analysis that – untypically – they may indeed notice these 'non-textual' elements, even when reading volumes in which they have no prior bibliographical or textual interest. Thus, when seeking a text of Mark Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson* – and with no thought for its textual condition (it might be noted that the appropriate volume in the California edition of Twain has yet to appear) – I picked up vol.XIV of the 25-volume 'Author's National Edition'.

Prompted by *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, I have examined two sets designated the Author's National Edition, one at Monash University (VMoU), the other at Melbourne University (VU).<sup>1</sup> The thing that strikes the historian of printing in this edition is the excess of signatures: in some volumes each eight-leaf gathering contains two signatures, in others three, and in yet others four. The presence of more than one signature in a gathering is in itself puzzling, but even more puzzling is the employment of 20 systems within the set, presumably all designed to achieve the same ends (whatever they may be).

1. VMoU 810.4 C625 A2/A, lacking vol.XXII; VU B810.44th, lacking vol.XV.

Given the presence of such a large number of systems, however, one might well wonder why 25 were not employed, thus distinguishing each volume from all the others, if such was indeed the intent, though obviously there would have been much easier ways of achieving that particular end – e.g. by including volume designators in the direction line of as many pages as required in each gathering. Following is a record of the various systems, specifically as exemplified – with the exception of vol.XXII, which is inferred from VU – by the VMoU set. I have used the tenth gathering to typify the system, even though in some volumes the tenth gathering may be aberrant; the date given in parentheses is the latest copyright date found on the verso of the title page.

1. vol.I *The Innocents Abroad*, vol.I (1899)  
1<sup>r</sup>: 10 3<sup>r</sup>: 10\* 4<sup>r</sup>: J\*
2. vol.II *The Innocents Abroad*, vol.II (1899)  
2<sup>r</sup>: 10\*\* 3<sup>r</sup>: 10\*\* 4<sup>r</sup>: J\*\*
3. vol.III *A Tramp Abroad*, vol.I (1907)  
1<sup>r</sup>: 10\* 3<sup>r</sup>: 10\* 4<sup>r</sup>: J\*
4. vol.IV *A Tramp Abroad*, vol.II (1907)  
vol.VI *Following the Equator*, vol.II (1899)  
1<sup>r</sup>: 10\*\* 3<sup>r</sup>: 10\*\* 4<sup>r</sup>: J\*\*
5. vol.V *Following the Equator*, vol.I (1899)  
1<sup>r</sup>: 10\* 3<sup>r</sup>: 10\* 4<sup>r</sup>: J\*
6. vol.VII *Roughing It*, vol.I (1899)  
3<sup>r</sup>: 10\* 4<sup>r</sup>: J\* 8<sup>r</sup>: 11
7. vol.VIII *Roughing It*, vol.II (1899)  
1<sup>r</sup>: 10\*\* 2<sup>r</sup>: 10\*\* 3<sup>r</sup>: J\*\*
8. vol.IX *Life on the Mississippi* (1903)  
1<sup>r</sup>: 10 3<sup>r</sup>: 10 4<sup>r</sup>: J
9. vol.X *The Gilded Age*, vol.I (1901)  
vol.XVII *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc*, vol.I (1899)  
1<sup>r</sup>: 10\* 3<sup>r</sup>: 10\* 4<sup>r</sup>: J\*

10. vol.XI *The Gilded Age*, vol.II (1901)  
1<sup>r</sup>: 10\*\* 3<sup>r</sup>: 10 4<sup>r</sup>: J
11. vol.XII *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1903)  
1<sup>r</sup>: 10 8<sup>r</sup>: 11
12. vol.XIII *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1899)  
vol.XVI *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1899)  
1<sup>r</sup>: 10 3<sup>r</sup>: 10 4<sup>r</sup>: J 8<sup>r</sup>: 11
13. vol.XIV *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins* (1899)  
1<sup>r</sup>: 10 3<sup>r</sup>: 10 4<sup>r</sup>: J 5<sup>r</sup>: 11
14. vol.XV *The Prince and the Pauper* (1909)  
vol.XXIII *The Man that corrupted Hadleyburg* (1903)  
1<sup>r</sup>: 10 3<sup>r</sup>: 10 4<sup>r</sup>: J
15. vol.XVIII *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc*, vol.II (1899)  
1<sup>r</sup>: 10\*\* 3<sup>r</sup>: 10\*\* 4<sup>r</sup>: J\*\*
16. vol.XIX *Sketches Old and New* (1903)  
1<sup>r</sup>: 10S 3<sup>r</sup>: 10 4<sup>r</sup>: J
17. vol.XX *Tom Sawyer Abroad* (1910)  
2<sup>r</sup>: 10 3<sup>r</sup>: 10\*\* 4<sup>r</sup>: J\*\* 8<sup>r</sup>: 11\*\*
18. vol.XXI *The American Claimant* (1899)  
1<sup>r</sup>: 10A 3<sup>r</sup>: 10\*\*\* 4<sup>r</sup>: J\*\*\*
19. vol.XXII *Literary Essays* (1899)  
1<sup>r</sup>: 10E 3<sup>r</sup>: 10\*\*\* 4<sup>r</sup>: J\*\*\*
20. vol.XXIV *The \$30,000 Bequest* (1906)  
vol.XXV *Christian Science* (1907)  
1<sup>r</sup>: 10

The copyright dates provide a *terminus a quo* for the printing of individual volumes, but there appears to be no way of establishing precise dates of

printing from the volumes themselves. The two sets are manifestly from separate impressions (or issues?), differing in setting apparently only in their title leaves: the VMOU set has title pages in black, without a border, while the VU set has title pages in red and black, enclosed in a typographic frame, and some volumes have revised copyright information on the verso (vol.I:1911, vol.II:1911, vol.VII:1913, vol.VIII:1913, vol.IX:1911, vol.XIII:1912). In both sets the title-page imprints read simply 'HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS | NEW YORK AND LONDON', and on the verso VMOU's '(All rights reserved)' is replaced by 'Printed in the United States of America'. At the foot of the title-page verso in the VU volumes there is the notation 'E-N', or occasionally 'D-N'; though I have seen such pairs of capitals elsewhere I am unaware of their significance. Apart from two volumes in VU which have been rebound, the two sets are in original cloth bindings. The VMOU is a dark red rib over stamped with morocco grain backstrip and corners to give the appearance of a half binding; the backstrip is lettered in three panels – 1. 'MARK TWAIN'S | WORKS', 2. [volume title], 3. 'AUTHOR'S | NATIONAL | EDITION' – with, at the tail, [double rule] | HARPER'S | [single rule]. The VU is a brick red ungrained with, on the front board, both in blind, a rule frame and, in the centre, a bust of Twain in profile; the backstrip is lettered 'MARK | TWAIN | [short rule] | [volume title] | [small ornament]' with, at the tail, 'HARPER'S'. Being unfamiliar with Harper bindings all that I can say is that both styles suggest – as the copyright dates might also imply – that the two sets were published no later than the 1920s (all ten entries in *NUC* have the Harper imprint except the 1896-1922, 1899-1922 and '192-', which have the imprint of P.F. Collier, New York – see below – which in turn may suggest publication dates for the Harpers sets of no later than 1922).

The bibliographical account of collected editions of Twain has, as far as I can readily determine, not been written, and it is not the aim of this note to provide such an account. What does appear likely, though, is that the Author's National Edition descends from the 'Autograph Edition', published by the American Publishing Company, Hartford, Connecticut – certainly all volumes of the Author's National Edition have on the verso of the half title a facsimile inscription reading 'This is the authorized Uniform Edition of all my books. Mark Twain'. *BAL* (No.3456)<sup>2</sup> dates the Autograph Edition '[1899-1907]' (presumably on the basis of copyright notices in the first and last volumes, as in the VMOU set of the Author's National Edition, a correspondence which may suggest that VMOU represents an early issue/impression); at least it too is

2. Joseph Blanck, *Bibliography of American Literature*, Vol.2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957).

in 25 volumes, each agreeing in content with the corresponding volume in the Author's National Edition. *BAL* also notes that 'The plates used for the production of the above set [the Autograph], the first of many, were used in the production of some other and later sets', though it does not describe (or even name) any others; Merle Johnson, on the other hand, does give a list of 14 collected editions, a list not exhaustive but 'both representative and inclusive of the most important set collections', with the comment on the Author's National Edition confined to 'Published by *Harpers* as a "trade" edition consisting of twenty-five volumes.'<sup>3</sup> The Author's National Edition is, to judge from *NUC*, common enough: there are 60 locations, dispersed over 10 entries, variously dated 1869-1909, 1896-1911, n.d., 1896-1922, 1899-1910, 1899-1917, 1899-1922, 1907-1918, 1911 and '192-'. The dates are (explicitly in most entries) copyright dates, the '1869' being explained by the *earliest* copyright date for vols. I and II rather than the *most recent* (1899 in VMOU).

Within the 25 volumes there are numerous aberrations, mostly involving the omission of a signature, particularly (though not invariably) on short pages, but also including instances of erroneous signatures (like H for M in the thirteenth gathering) and the omission or misplacement of asterisks. Notes on those aberrations which bear on the 'systems' follow (the locations of the signatures are those of the VMOU set; in VU the locations differ in some volumes, although the signatures themselves are part of the same (plated) pages, which have been re-imposed):

- The first two gatherings of vol.I are signed according to a different system from the remainder of the volume:  
     18<sup>r</sup>: 2  
     21<sup>r</sup>: 2   22<sup>r</sup>: 2\*   23<sup>r</sup>: B\*   28<sup>r</sup>: 3
- The first nine gatherings of vol.XXIII are signed only on \$1<sup>r</sup>, gathering 10 being the first to contain three signatures.
- Odd signatures which may be relics of another system appear on:  
     vol.IV, 146<sup>r</sup>: T   vol.VIII, 214<sup>r</sup>: 11   vol.IX, 295<sup>r</sup>: U
- In vol.XVI, 64<sup>r</sup> and 64<sup>v</sup> are both signed F.
- In vol.XVII, 174<sup>r</sup> and 175<sup>r</sup> are both signed Q\*.

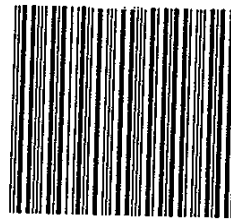
3. Merle Johnson, *A Bibliography of the Works of Mark Twain*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper, 1935), 150-51.

- In vol. XXIII, 184<sup>f</sup> is signed R-23 [i.e. the volume number].
- In vols. II, XX and XXIV, \$2<sup>f</sup> is the first page to be signed, and in vol. VII, \$3<sup>f</sup> – here the fundamental purpose of signatures in identifying gatherings seems to have been lost.

Twain's Author's National Edition is not unique in containing more than one series of signatures: a number of instances were reported in *The Library* nearly fifty years ago.<sup>4</sup> What most of these instances have in common is that they appear in books printed from stereo plates, and the purpose of the duplicate series of signatures is to allow the plates to be imposed for gathering in, for example, eights or twelves – thus the 1868 Boston edition of George Eliot's *The Spanish Gypsy*, comprising 144 leaves, is, in the copy reported on, gathered in twelves, collating 1-12<sup>12</sup>, but it is also signed in such a way that it could equally be gathered in eights, as A-R<sup>8</sup>. In passing, it might be noted that before the exploitation of the stereotyping process in the early nineteenth century volumes with two complete series of signatures are unlikely to be found, since in reimposing type pages (as opposed to plates) it is a simple matter to remove one set of signatures and replace them by a new set, so that in unplated books the evidence of reimposition is likely to be found in the presence of vestigial signatures – i.e. the odd signature which has inadvertently *not* been removed. Thus in several books printed by the Foulis brothers in Glasgow in the second half of the eighteenth century there are vestigial signatures (not all of them identified as such by Gaskell)<sup>5</sup> – for example, in the Shakespeare of 1752-66 (Gaskell 460) the duodecimo issue of *All's Well* is signed A-H<sup>6</sup> I<sup>2</sup>, the octavo issue A-M<sup>4</sup> N<sup>2</sup>, but with N1 signed T, thus demonstrating additionally that, as other instances confirm, the 'smaller' format preceded the 'larger'.

However, the Author's National Edition cannot be easily reconciled with an intention to facilitate imposition for gathering in different numbers of

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4. Simon Nowell-Smith, 'Signatures in some nineteenth-century Massachusetts duodecimos: a query', 5th ser., 3 (1948-9), 58-62; Wm. A. Jackson, 'Signatures in nineteenth-century American printing', 5th ser., 3 (1948-9), 224; A.T. Hazen, 'Signatures in nineteenth-century American printing', 5th ser., 3 (1948-9), 224-9.
  5. Philip Gaskell, *A Bibliography of the Foulis Press* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1964; 2nd ed., Winchester: St Paul's, 1986), *passim*. In the present context it is worth noting that the Foulis Press may have been responsible for printing several volumes from plates in the eighteenth century, and that the second edition of Gaskell's bibliography, which is a re-issue of the first with 'Additions and Amendments', is gathered in sixteens though signed for gathering in eights, as in the first edition.



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leaves, because in each of the 20 systems the interval between adjacent signatures in each sequence is always the same: eight leaves. One possible explanation for the phenomenon is that this edition was intended always to be imposed for gathering in eights but that provision was made for varying the point which the first page of text would occupy within the first (or subsequent) gathering – i.e. the actual imposition would depend on the extent of the preliminaries in a particular impression. At first sight one of Hazen's examples affords a parallel: Henry James's *Embarrassments* (New York: Macmillan, 1897), in the copy reported on, is signed for gathering in eights and is indeed gathered in eights, but with \$4 signed, not \$1, on account of three preliminary leaves having been imposed with A1-5 to form the first gathering (the signatures obviously were inserted on the assumption that the preliminaries would be imposed separately, but whether impressions so imposed were ever produced Hazen does not report). In the James example, though, there is only *one* sequence of signatures – it is just that the inclusion of the preliminaries has upset the pattern.

The volumes of Twain's Author's National Edition are clearly not to be accounted for so readily. If the signatures are to be explained by the need to accommodate preliminaries of varying extent it must follow that such variations were anticipated and thus provided for in the plates, but why then do some volumes have two systems while others have three or four? None the less, the VU set indicates that in certain volumes the gatherings were indeed imposed in a way different from that employed in VMoU. The circumstances in which re-imposition took place were where a volume in VMoU ended in a gathering of fewer than eight leaves – i.e. rather than always *starting* with a gathering of eight leaves, in VU the volumes always *end* in a gathering of eight leaves; why there should be a preference for one method over the other is not at all obvious. The twelve volumes which have been reimposed are these:

vol.II: VMoU:[1]<sup>8</sup> 2-28<sup>8</sup> [29]<sup>2</sup> VU: π<sup>2</sup> [1]<sup>8</sup> 2-28<sup>8</sup>

vol.IV: VMoU:[1]<sup>8</sup> 2-20<sup>8</sup> 21<sup>2</sup> VU: π<sup>2</sup> [1]<sup>8</sup> 2-20<sup>8</sup>

vol.VII: VMoU:[1]<sup>8</sup> 2-20<sup>8</sup> 21<sup>6</sup> VU:[1]<sup>8</sup> 2-21<sup>8</sup>

vol.IX: VMoU:[1]<sup>8</sup> 2-30<sup>8</sup> 31<sup>4</sup> VU: π<sup>2</sup> (π+1) 1-30<sup>8</sup>

vol.X: VMoU:[1]<sup>8</sup> 2-22<sup>8</sup> 23<sup>2</sup> VU: π<sup>2</sup> [1]<sup>8</sup> 2-22<sup>8</sup>

vol.XI: VMoU:[1]<sup>8</sup> 2-22<sup>8</sup> 23<sup>6</sup> VU: π<sup>2</sup> [1]<sup>8</sup> 2-23<sup>8</sup>

vol.XIII: VMoU:[1]<sup>8</sup> 2-23<sup>8</sup> 24<sup>6</sup> VU:[1]<sup>8</sup> 2-24<sup>8</sup>

vol.XIV: VMoU:[1]<sup>8</sup> 2-20<sup>8</sup> 21<sup>4</sup> VU:[1]<sup>4</sup> 2-21<sup>8</sup>

vol.XVIII: VMoU:[1]<sup>8</sup> 2-20<sup>8</sup> 21<sup>2</sup> VU: π<sup>2</sup> [1]<sup>8</sup> 2-20<sup>8</sup>

vol.XX: VMoU:[1]<sup>8</sup> 2-27<sup>8</sup> 28<sup>6</sup> VU:[1]<sup>8</sup> 2-28<sup>8</sup>

vol.XXII: [VMoU:[1]<sup>8</sup> 2-21<sup>8</sup> 22<sup>2</sup>] VU: π<sup>2</sup> [1]<sup>8</sup> 2-21<sup>8</sup>

vol.XXIV: VMoU:[1]<sup>8</sup> 2-20<sup>8</sup> [21]<sup>2</sup> VU: π<sup>2</sup> [1]<sup>8</sup> 2-20<sup>8</sup>

[In explanation of the changes which are not simply instances of shifting the 'short' gathering to the front:

vol.VII: in VMoU 216 is blank; in VU a blank leaf has been introduced as 11 and a further blank as 218.

vol.IX: in VMoU 314 is blank; VU has been rebound and the leaf containing "THE "BODY OF THE NATION"" is lacking, though it appears that it and the half title were conjugate and that the title leaf was tipped in, thus accommodating the remaining three leaves.

vol.X: in VMoU 232 is blank; in VU a blank leaf has been introduced as π1.

vol.XIII: in VU a blank leaf has been introduced as 11 (actually lacking) and a further blank as 248.

vol.XX: in VU a blank leaf has been introduced as 11 and a further blank as 288.

vol.XXII: conjecturally in VMoU 222 is blank; in VU a blank leaf has been introduced as π1.

vol.XXIV: in VMoU 212 is blank; in VU a blank leaf has been introduced as π1.

In all instances, in both issues/impressions, gatherings of two leaves are not sewn but are tipped in.]

The effect of imposing differently does not, however, invariably result in a signature from one of the sequences appearing on \$1, and even then it is hard to believe that the multiple signatures were designed to accommodate changes of this nature – and remember that there are three volumes (XII, XXIV and XXV) which have only one sequence of signatures, though the effect of re-imposition in XXIV is (fortuitously?) to bring the signature onto \$1. In highlighting the changes in the collation of volumes in the VU set I have used VMoU as the norm, but vols.IX and X illustrate what might be regarded as the irrelevance of the signatures: in IX, depending on whether you regard the first gathering as π or 1, the tenth gathering is signed 1<sup>f</sup>:I 6<sup>r</sup>:10 8<sup>r</sup>:10 or 1<sup>f</sup>:J 6<sup>r</sup>:11 8<sup>r</sup>:11. In other words the alphabetic and the numeric sequences are at odds, and the total of 20 signature 'systems' identified above is itself subject to variation as a consequence of re-imposition. As Hazen noted (p.224), there was a tendency



'to rely more on accurate pagination and less on signatures' from the later nineteenth century, though such an observation does nothing to explain the *multiple* signatures.

There is no doubt that the VMoU and the VU sets (with the exception of vol.XII, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, which in the two are from different settings, despite their title leaves being consistent with those in the remaining volumes in the set of which they form a part – note that VU has been rebound) are from the same plates (or just possibly from the same parent plate): any plate damage in VMoU is also found in VU, with the addition of further damage in VU, particularly in vol.VI. (Damage is less widespread in the later volumes, suggesting perhaps that the plates for the earlier, more popular, volumes were used independently of the set – and that those for vol.XII had to be replaced. It is also possible that the plates used for the Author's National/Autograph Editions originated in earlier separate 'editions' of individual titles and thus were already worn when they came to be used in the collected editions.) The only obvious change to the plates is that in VMoU there is a large P on the last page of text or on a final blank in all volumes except III and XXV. The only volume in VU which has the P is XVII; one cannot but conclude that this last is a vestigial occurrence and that the P had been *removed* from those plates in which it was present at the stage of printing VMoU. Whatever its significance the P is clearly not a signature – but what *is* it?

This note is tentative, being based on only two sets, of unknown position within the series of impressions/issues. We are left finally, I think, having made little progress in explaining the peculiarities in the signatures of the Author's National Edition of Mark Twain. Would that I could claim with Brucoli and Rheault to have provided 'an example of how the bibliographer's pursuit of the seemingly trivial can lead to the uncovering of useful information about printing-shop techniques.'<sup>6</sup> *Can* anyone shed any light on the purpose of these multiple signatures, explaining in what circumstances they may 'make sense'? *Would* the evidence of the Autograph Edition be helpful in the process?

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6. Matthew J. Brucoli and Charles A. Rheault, 'Imposition and Plate Gangs in *The Rescue*', *Studies in Bibliography*, 14 (1961), 258-62 (p.258).