



C H A P T E R 1 8

MY FATHER DIED IN 1847, JUST AT THE VERY MOMENT WHEN OUR fortunes had changed and we were about to be comfortable once more after several years of poverty which had been brought on us by the dishonest act of one Ira Stout, to whom my father had loaned several thousand dollars—a fortune in those days. My father had just been elected clerk of the Surrogate Court. This modest prosperity was not only quite sufficient for us and for our ambitions, but he was held in such high regard and honor throughout the county that his occupancy of that dignified office would, in the opinion of everybody, be his possession as long as he might live. He went to Palmyra County seat about the end of February. In returning home, twelve miles by horseback, a cold rainstorm soaked him and he arrived at the house in a half-frozen condition. He died on the 24th of March.

Thus our splendid new fortune was taken away from us and we were in the depths of poverty again. It is the way such things are accustomed to happen.

Orion did not come to Hannibal until two or three years after my father's death. He remained in St. Louis. Out of his wage as a printer he supported my mother and my brother Henry, who was two years younger than I. My sister Pamela helped in this support by taking

piano pupils. Thus we got along, but it was pretty hard going. I was not one of the problems, because I was taken from school at once upon my father's death and placed in the office of the newspaper, the *Hannibal Courier*, as printer's **apprentice**. Mr. Ament, the editor and owner of the paper, allowed me the usual pay of the office of apprentice—that is to say, board and clothes but no money. The clothes consisted of two suits a year but one of the suits always failed to materialize and the other suit was not purchased so long as Mr. Ament's old clothes held out. I was only about half as big as Ament, so his shirts gave me the uncomfortable sense of living in a tent.