



CHAPTER 1

 WAS BORN THE 30TH OF NOVEMBER, 1835, in the almost invisible village of Florida, Missouri. My parents removed to Missouri in the early 'thirties; I do not remember just when, for I was not born then and cared nothing for such things. The village contained a hundred people and I increased the population by one per cent. It is more than many of the best men in history could have done for a town. There is no record of a person doing as much—not even Shakespeare. But I did it for Florida.

Recently someone in Missouri has sent me a picture of the house I was born in. Heretofore I have always stated that it was a palace but I shall be more careful now.

The village has two streets, each a couple of hundred yards long, covered with stiff black mud in wet times, deep dust in dry. Most of the houses were of logs. There were none of brick and none of stone. There was a log church, which was a schoolhouse on week days. There were two stores in the village. My uncle owned one of them. It was very small, with a few rolls of cloth; a few barrels of salt fish, coffee, and sugar, brooms, axes, and other tools here and there; a lot of cheap hats and tin pans strung from the walls. At the other end of the room there were bags of shot, a cheese or two, and a barrel or so of **whisky**. If a boy bought five or ten cents' worth of anything he was entitled to a handful of sugar from the barrel; if a woman bought a few yards of cloth she was entitled to some thread; if a man bought something he was at liberty to swallow as big a drink of whisky as he wanted.