

TWO ANGRY MEN

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Introduction:

"There is no humor in heaven." In the perfect world to come, justice reigns, men and women have no faults, and there is no greed, envy, hatred, lust, cruelty, betrayal or war - in short, nothing to laugh at. Lincoln understood the gravity which underlies humor. Freud saw humor's excellence as a necessary ego defense. But it was one of America's best beloved humorists, Samuel Langhorne Clemens, who made this remark and demonstrated on earth the savagery which fed his outraged and outrageous guffaws. Clemens had a close associate, Mark Twain, with whom he shared most but not all perceptions. The two of them became famous for their anger at the human condition.

Who were this pair, and how did they develop into the talented, boisterous, overwhelming, imprudent, idealistic, skeptical, bitter idols of America and Europe which they became by the end of the 19th century? A clue is that reason and consistency were not their strong suits. Experience was.

Life Stories:

Samuel Clemens was born in 1835, when Halley's Comet visited the American night sky, and died, as he predicted, when the comet returned in 1910. His family were poor farmers who moved hungrily from Tennessee to Missouri and settled in Hannibal when Clemens was four. Hannibal had less than five hundred souls, but it was a substantial town for

its proximity to the frontier's forests, and it was on the Mississippi River. St. Louis was 80 miles upstream, and the commerce of a growing nation passed its banks on the way to New Orleans. Clemens had a happy boyhood there, rafting, fishing, playing hookey from school, creating fantasies with his young comrades and watching the great river steamers paddlewheel by. Although he left school at the age of twelve, his education as an apprentice to a printer included a chance to read. He knew the Bible, and the classics of English literature which have become politically incorrect. At eighteen he went to St. Louis, and then on to New York, Philadelphia, Muscatine, Keokuk and Cincinnati, supporting himself by setting type for printers and newspapers. At age twenty-two, in 1857, he fulfilled the boyhood dream of all Mississippi River boys and apprenticed himself to a river pilot. This dream ended with the coming of the War Between the States.

Clemens was briefly an officer in a Confederate regiment, but he opted out of the war and went with his brother Orion to the Territory of Nevada where he expanded his experience as a prospector, speculator, silver miner and newspaperman. For The Territorial Enterprise in Virginia City he reported the news and introduced Mark Twain as the author of pungent, extravagant, misanthropic humor. In 1864 he moved on to California, met Bret Harte, Charles William Stoddard and other Bohemians, and began to write humor for the Californian and the Golden Era, literary newspapers of the

time. In December, 1865, the New York Saturday Press published "Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog" (later "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County"), to immediate acclaim. A trip to the Sandwich Islands for a newspaper led to his first appearances as a story teller on the public stage. Clemens was a born ham, and Twain encouraged him.

In 1866, at the age of 31, Clemens sailed East via Nicaragua and landed in New York, more experienced in more kinds and conditions of Americans than any writer of his time. By June 1867 he had persuaded the Daily Alta Californian to send him as its correspondent on a five month voyage to Europe and the near East. The steamship, the Quaker City, held seventy-six well to do citizens, most of them from the East. Twain wrote 58 letters home during this voyage, and in 1869 he cleaned up their grammar and their cruder bits of humor and published them as *The Innocents Abroad*. As of thirty years ago, this unusual travel book had sold more copies than any other such volume by an American. It made Mark Twain famous, and enabled Clemens to marry Miss Olivia Langdon of Elmira, New York (a wealthy coal merchant's daughter), cut back his tiring travels on the lecture circuit, and move to Hartford, Connecticut, to pursue his writing among an established middle class. There he fathered three daughters, after the death in infancy of a son, built a garish Victorian Mansion, now a museum of his effects, and was productive and happy in a life style which constantly challenged affordability.

Clemens enjoyed his family and friends, and Twain produced successful books, during this period of their lives, from 1874 to 1891. To this time belong, in sequence, *Roughing It*, *The Gilded Age* (with Charles Dudley Warner), *Tom Sawyer*, *A Tramp Abroad*, *The Prince and the Pauper*, *Life on the Mississippi*, *Huckleberry Finn* (begun, set aside, then finished eight years later), *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, and lesser stories. Articles which became *Life on the Mississippi* were eagerly published by the prestigious *Atlantic Monthly*, and Clemens became a close friend of the editor, William Dean Howells, and a visitor accepted by Boston's literary brahmins.

Through the 1880s Clemens vigorously indulged the speculator in himself, hoping for millions by pouring thousands of dollars into the Paige typesetter, a marvellous, automatic typesetting machine which performed brilliantly in short bursts before again breaking down. Clemens also established his own publishing house when he wheedled from the dying Ulysses S. Grant the contract to print his *Personal Memoirs*. Although this book succeeded, the firm did not, and Clemens had to declare bankruptcy and close his house in Hartford. In 1891 the family moved to Europe to live intermittently for nine years in rented houses in Germany, Italy, Switzerland and France. Twain the experienced platform performer paid all of his debts through a worldwide lecture tour. During the 1890s his novels, *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson*, and *Personal Recollections of*

Joan of Arc, were published. As Twain completed his lecture tour in 1896, he received a cable from America informing him that his favorite daughter, 24 year old Susy, had died of meningitis, demented and blind.

Clemens returned to America in 1900, to spend a decade being lionized for the productions of Mark Twain, and honored by every conceivable literary society. No American was better known in his own country or in Europe. His opinion was sought on every major event. The University of Missouri gave him an honorary degree, as did Yale and Oxford. But his wife died, hyperthyroid and in congestive heart failure, in 1904. In 1909, a treasured reconciliation with his epileptic daughter Jean was cut short when she had a seizure in her bath and drowned on the day before Christmas. Clemens survived her for four months. His last important work, *The Mysterious Stranger*, was published posthumously in 1916. His struggles with autobiography produced voluminous scratchings and dictations, a chaos which has puzzled researchers for decades. The bulk of his collected papers is in the Bancroft library.

Personality and Character:

Reviewing *The Innocents Abroad*, Bret Harte pointed out that "The irascible pilgrim, 'Mark Twain', is a very eccentric creation of Mr. Clemens." The creation referred to combined what had been two separate characters in the original letters to the *Daily Alta Californian* - an initially bookish, refined Mark Twain and a fictitious character named Brown, who drank much and washed little, was gullible, outraged, raucous and derisive, and spoke vulgar slang. The new Mark Twain absorbed Brown, and the result was truer to life. It was no wonder that when Clemens was wooing Olivia Langdon, her puzzled parents asked him for references concerning his past. "Clemens is a humbug," a San Francisco clergyman named Stebbins reported, "a man who has talent, no doubt, but will make trivial use of it." A Sunday school teacher predicted that Clemens "would fill a drunkard's grave." Clemens protested to Livy, "I do not live backwards...I have been through the world's mill ... and I know ... its follies, its frauds and its vanities - all by personal experience and not through dainty theories culled from nice moral books in luxurious parlors where temptation never comes." Livy's father came to admire Clemens refusal to apologize for what he had been and concluded, "Take the girl. I know you better than they do."

Bret Harte was famous before Mark Twain, and for years they were friends, collaborating on an unsuccessful play, but Clemens later became obsessed with Harte's failure to

repay his chronic borrowings and attacked him viciously in conversation and in print. This impulse to avenge slights, real and imagined, was strong. The wife of Thomas Bailey Aldrich had patronized Clemens one evening in Boston. When Aldrich and his wife later visited Clemens in Hartford, Clemens rapped on their door early in the morning, pointed out that the guestroom was directly over his own bedroom, claimed that Livy had headaches, and said, "Do try to move more quietly, though Livy would rather suffer than have you give up your game on her account." The shaken couple apologized to Livy, who denied headaches and revealed that the Clemens bedroom was in another wing. Yet at the conclusion of this visit, hosting Boston dinner guests, Twain stood before the drawingroom fire, closed his eyes, smiled, and crooned, with obvious nostalgia for Hannibal, "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," "Golden Slippers" and "Go Down Moses." He then stepped out to the village, drank whiskey, returned excited and hilarious, and mimicked Negro dances at a hoedown. Howells always remembered the joyous astonishment of the guests, and Livy's patient dismay.

Despite such antics, Clemens was afraid of playing the fool. He sometimes wrote low comedy, but when he thought a lecture audience considered him a low comedian, his high spirits would suddenly turn to self-hatred and hatred of his audience. Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson of Boston dined with Clemens in Hartford, and dined out in England on the strength of this. It was fortunate that Higginson's private

opinion of Clemens did not get back to him - that he was "something of a buffoon."

In 1872 Henry Ward Beecher, the most prominent preacher of his day, was detected in an adulterous affair with Mrs. Theodore Tilton. Clemens was shocked and unforgiving. He saw around him "an era of incredible rottenness", reflected in Beecher, Whitelaw Reid, Jay Gould and Boss Tweed. Of a Beecher protege, Captain Charles C. Duncan of the Quaker City, Clemens later wrote "I think I have good reason for believing him to be wholly without principle, without moral sense, without honor of any kind ... I know him to be a canting hypocrite, filled to the chin with sham godliness, and forever oozing and dripping false piety and pharisaical prayers." He probably also had Beecher in mind.

Clemens had done legislative reporting at the Congress and, in his words "thus learned to know personally three sample bodies of the smallest minds and the selfishest souls and the cowardliest hearts that God makes." Twain named The Gilded Age and intended no compliment. The business world to him was typified by publishers who, he was certain, swindled him. He sued his enemies regularly, for copyright infringement, breach of contract and libel.

In 1886 Clemens wrote to his friend Howells, "Yesterday a thunderstroke fell on me. I found that all their lives my children have been afraid of me! have stood all their days in uneasy dread of my sharp tongue and uncertain temper."

His daughter Clara, who alone survived him, remembered that this was true. He could be charming and entertaining, but his mood could shift without warning to anger and Victorian severity at its most controlling. He expected perfection of Susy, his eldest and favorite daughter, and she repaid him with the wish that Mark Twain, the humorist, would vanish and be replaced by a moral philosopher of gentility and high sentiments. "How I hate that name! I should never like to hear it again," she told a friend. She felt that her father's fame was poorly grounded in humor.

Clemens was ten years older than his wife and sometimes called her "my child." He adored her and was faithful to her, but he expected her to bear and tutor the children and to arrange heroic entertainments during his prosperous years in Hartford. She was frequently exhausted and ill. During a months-long illness in 1902 her doctors attributed her nervous state to him and, with her consent, prevented him from visiting her room. He had wooed her, maintaining the religious observance which meant so much to her, but later he all but announced his agnosticism. When she lay dying, he told her "I more believe in the immortality of the soul than misbelieve in it," but she knew he said this for her sake. After her death in 1904 he confessed to Clara the "crime ... which causes me bitterness now", the violation of her "spiritual shelter and refuge."

Clemens was a man of extreme moods - at his ebullient best a magnet to his friends, an unsurpassed teller of tales

and after-dinner speaker, the kind, sensitive, generous leader of any gathering. Yet he could be unjustly suspicious, vindictive, disgusted and despairing. "I am full of malice, saturated with malignancy," he wrote eight months before his death. He hated cruelty and injustice, held a deep sense of human evil and was quick to accuse himself and to see the split within his own personality. The problem of identity fascinated him; his fiction is full of twins and look-alikes. Today a psychiatrist would call Clemens manic-depressive, with a touch of paranoia. His emotions and his intuitions led him, with little help from any analytical intelligence.

Clemens was frustrated by the increasingly apparent limitations to democracy, by the abuses of its freedoms (which he dated from the Gold Rush), and by the failure of the human race to live up to its own decencies. After the middle period of his life, these pessimistic preoccupations poisoned his art.

Writings and Messages:

Mark Twain's work has received much scholarly study, notably by Bernard DeVoto and Justin Kaplan, and certain comments on its importance have become cliches. He was the "Lincoln of our literature", who, even more than Emerson, freed American writing from dependence on European models. His was a fresh, irreverent, native voice, an imagination planted in the American heartland and watered by the great Mississippi River. Twain's writing had its own rhythms and dialects; no European could have written as Mark Twain wrote. Twain did not admire European culture.

He did, however, borrow techniques from writers he loved. No one since Shakespeare has depended more on the mistaken identities of look-alikes. All of Twain's novels look back into history, and several depend on his familiarity with European history. Twain considered Cervantes a great writer and loved to send his characters on journeys, like Don Quixote's, so that they could have encounters with people and places crucial to Twain's purposes. His novels are truly picaresque. What remains unexplained is Twain's view of sex. His novels contain almost no young women of marriageable age, and none is shown arousing or responding to sexual desire. Perhaps, despite Clemens' rough and tumble early years in the mid-West and West, and the happy sexuality of his marriage, Twain preferred the posture of an inhibited Victorian. Three great, overlapping themes appear in Twain's fiction:

- o The simpler time of boyhood and young manhood in mid-America before the War Between the States.

- o His assault on Europe's culture and traditions.

- o The evil in human nature.

As a boy Clemens spent summers with his cousins on his uncle's farm outside Hannibal. His autobiography recalls:

"I remember the squirrel hunts and prairie-chicken hunts and wild-turkey hunts ... and how we turned out, mornings, while it was still dark to go on these expeditions, and how chilly and dismal it was and how often I regretted that I was well enough to go. A toot on a tin horn brought twice as many dogs as were needed, and in their happiness they raced and scampered about and knocked small people down and made no end of unnecessary noise. At the word they vanished away toward the woods, and we drifted silently after them in the melancholy gloom. But presently the gray dawn stole over the world, the birds piped up, then the sun rose and poured light and comfort all around, everything was fresh and dewy and fragrant, and life was a boon again. ... We arrived back ... overladen with game, very hungry, and just in time for breakfast."

Tom Sawyer's St. Petersburg presented a similar picture, especially when there was no school.

"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. There was cheer in every face and a spring in every step. The locust-trees were in bloom and the fragrance of the blossoms filled the air. Cardiff Hill, beyond the village and above it, was green with vegetation, and it lay just far enough away to seem a Delectable Land, dreamy, reposeful, and inviting.

Tom appeared on the sidewalk with a bucket of whitewash and a long-handled brush. He surveyed the fence, and all gladness left him and a deep melancholy settled down upon his spirit..."

Explaining his decision to apprentice himself to a

Mississippi River pilot, Clemens wrote:

"When I was a boy there was but one permanent ambition among my comrades in our village on the west bank of the

Mississippi River. That was to be a steamboatman. We had transient ambitions of other sorts but they were only transient. When a circus came and went, it left us all burning to become clowns; the first Negro minstrel show that ever came to our section left us all suffering to try that kind of life; now and then we had a hope that, if we lived and were good, God would permit us to be pirates. These ambitions faded out, each in turn; but the ambition to be a steamboatman always remained."

In four years Clemens memorized 1200 miles of river bank, in all conditions of day, night and weather, upstream and down, at flood or low water. He could read the river's surface for dangers beneath it as though the muddy waters were clear.

Clemens' and Twain's letters from the Quaker City brashly avoided the pieties of conventional guidebooks. The *Innocents Abroad* is a misnomer. Clemens and Twain were not innocent. They simply believed that although they were untrained in the appreciation of classical art, they were entitled to their own opinions.

"And now forevermore I am down on the old masters. '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 of the disciples when they were stabled there more than half a century ago. So, what is left of the once miraculous picture? Simon looks seedy; John looks sick, and half of the other blurred and damaged apostles have a general expression of discouragement about them. To us, the great uncultivated, it is the last thing in the world to call a picture. Brown said it looked like an old fire-board. ... He said [to the guide], 'Is this fellow dead?' 'Who' 'That dobed this.' 'Da Vinci? Oh, yes, Monsieur - three hundred years.' This information seemed to give Brown great satisfaction. ..."

"I don't think much of the Mosque of St. Sophia. ... It is the rustiest old barn in heathendom. ... Everywhere was dirt, and dust, and dinginess, and gloom. ... The people who go into ecstasies over St. Sophia get them out of the guide book (where every church is spoken of as being 'considered by good judges to be the most marvelous structure, in many respects, the world has ever seen.') Or else they are these

old-master worshippers from the wilds of New Jersey, who can't tell a fresco from lath-and-plaster, and don't know any more about pictures than a kangaroo does about astronomy."

"Now there was that wretched woman in the Vatican in Rome. ... she went into hysterics, pretty soon, over a picture marked 'Angelo', and called it a miracle of art, and a heavenly conception and a work such as none but inspired hands could have wrought ... but finally an officer of the institution came along and set her back. He said that that particular 'Angelo' was not Mike, but a certain other Angelo who used to be a butcher in Pisa - and that after painting until he found out it was not his best hold, he went back in the butchering business again."

As Twain moved from art to aristocracy in later books, his criticism became less humorous and more philosophical. The Yankee in A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court concludes:

"... to assert an always self-proven fact: ... even the best governed and most free and most enlightened monarchy is still behind the best condition attainable by its people; and that the same is true of kindred governments of lower grades. ... A man is a man, at bottom. Whole ages of abuse and oppression cannot crush the manhood clear out of him. ... Yes, there is plenty good enough material for a republic, in the most degraded people that ever existed - even the Russians; plenty of manhood in them - even in the Germans - if one could but force it out of its timid and suspicious privacy, to overthrow and trample in the mud any throne that ever was set up and any nobility that ever supported it."

In The Prince and the Pauper, Twain educates the prince, now consigned to a gang of hoboes, by having one of the gang ascribe his misery to the English law:

"... once a farmer and prosperous, ... now I am somewhat different in estate ... My good old blameless mother strove to earn bread by nursing the sick; one of these died, the doctors knew not how, so my mother was burnt for a witch, while my babes looked on and wailed... I begged from house to house - I and my wife - bearing the hungry kids; but it was a crime to be hungry in England, so they stripped us and lashed us through three towns.... My Mary's blessed deliverance came quick. She lies ... in the potter's field... And the kids - well ... they starved. I begged

again - ... and got the stocks and lost an ear... and was sold for a slave... here on my cheek ... see the red S the branding iron left... I have run from my master, and when I am found ... I shall hang."

Using the same method, the Connecticut Yankee exposes King Arthur, in disguise, to a peasant home from which the sons have been imprisoned on false charges of cutting down the lord's trees, and the peasants then fined for not supplying the manpower to gather the lord's crops. The wretched wife has fallen sick with smallpox, and in the presence of a priest sent to chide her for lack of humility under the chastening hand of God, she has uttered blasphemies.

"He [the priest] carried my trespass to his betters ... wherefore, presently upon my head and upon all heads that were dear to me fell the curse of Rome. Since that day, we are avoided, shunned with horror."

As the Yankee and King Arthur watch, the daughter dies. This angry book ends with the Yankee, equipped with dynamite, electricity and Gatling guns, slaughtering the knights of the aristocracy and the Church. He had hoped for a republic.

Perhaps this social protest, set centuries ago, is light hearted, but when Twain focused on the evil in human nature, he was not kidding. The Mysterious Stranger, published six years after Twain's death, brings Satan, as a charming youth, to an Austrian village in the 16th century. Satan offers to help. He allows an impoverished priest to find a purse full of gold in the road; three boys are witnesses. The resulting chain of events is manmade: the priest is imprisoned for stealing by a lying astrologer of whom the townsfolk are afraid; the priest's niece and servant are

considered witches; a young heretic is broken on the wheel; an innocent woman is burned at the stake; another is hanged, and stoned while hanging by villagers anxious to conceal that they sympathize with her. Satan explains two things to the boys he has befriended:

"It is like your paltry race - always lying, always claiming virtues which it hasn't got, always denying them to the higher animals, which alone possess them. No brute ever does a cruel thing - that is the monopoly of those with the Moral Sense. When a brute inflicts pain, he does it innocently; it is not wrong; for him there is no such thing as wrong. And he does not inflict pain for the pleasure of inflicting it - only man does that. Inspired by that mongrel Moral Sense of his! A sense whose function is to distinguish between right and wrong, with liberty to choose which of them he will do. Now what can be the advantage of that? He is always choosing, and in nine cases out of ten he prefers the wrong... he is such an unreasoning creature that he is not able to perceive that the Moral Sense degrades him to the bottom layer of animated beings and is a shameful possession."

"Among you boys you have a game: you stand a row of bricks on end a few inches apart, you push a brick, it knocks its neighbor over, the neighbor knocks over the next brick - and so on till all the row is prostrate. That is human life. A child's first act knocks over the initial brick and the rest will follow inexorably. If you could see into the future as I can, you would see everything that was going to happen to that creature, for nothing can change the order of its life after the first event has determined it."

Satan then proves his point by altering lives in the village by a minute or two, thus leading to inescapable, wholly new outcomes. One of the boys drowns, but Satan calmly remarks that his death saved him decades of suffering from incurable illness. His other solution for enduring life is madness. As he flashes the history of the world before the surviving boys' eyes, he comments:

"You perceive that you have made continual progress. Cain did his murder with a club; the Hebrews did their murders

with javelins and swords; the Greeks and Roman added protective armor and the fine arts of military organization and generalship; the Christian has added guns and gunpowder; a few centuries from now he will have so greatly improved the deadly effectiveness of his weapons of slaughter that all men will confess that without Christian civilization war must have remained a poor and trifling thing to the end of time.' Then he began to laugh in the most unfeeling way ..."

Conclusions:

When Clemens, Twain and their subject matter were in harmony - meaning an appropriate mix of nostalgia, story telling, fun, fascination with words and the American vernacular, and social commentary on the people and places of a bygone time - the books we have loved were written. Huckleberry Finn is generally regarded as Twain's masterpiece. Twain began the book, set it aside, returned to it sporadically over seven years, then rushed its completion in exuberant fascination with his own creation. Despite the repulsive rascality of the "pore, disappeared Dauphin, Looy the Seventeen" and the "Duke of Bilgewater", the South of small, river towns comes wonderfully alive, and even the ridiculous, prolonged rituals for Jim's escape from prison, after Tom Sawyer knows that Jim is already a free man, fail to spoil the drama of Jim's voyage to freedom and Huck's doubting whether he should be helping Jim. When the Library Committee of Concord, Massachusetts, decreed Huckleberry Finn too coarse for its shelves, Twain knew the book would sell. Here's Huck:

"Jim ... was saying how the first thing he would do when he got to a free State he would go to saving up money and never spend a single cent, and when he got enough he would buy his wife ... and then they would both work to buy the two

children, and if their master wouldn't sell them, they'd get an Abolitionist to go and steal them.

"It most froze me to hear such talk. ... Here was this nigger, which I had as good as helped to run away, coming right out flat-footed and saying he would steal his children - children that belonged to a man I didn't even know; a man that hadn't ever done me no harm.

"I was sorry to hear Jim say that, it was such a lowering of him. My conscience got to stirring me up better than ever, until at last I says to it, 'Let up on me - it ain't too late yet - I'll paddle ashore at the first light and tell.' I felt easy and happy and light as a feather right off."

But when men approach in a boat tracking down the runaway slave, Huck intercepts them in his canoe with the news that his father is sick with smallpox on the raft.

"They went off and I got aboard the raft, feeling bad and low, because I knowed very well I had done wrong... 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, what's the use you learning to do right and ain't no trouble to do wrong, and the wages is just the same? ... I couldn't answer that. So I reckoned I wouldn't bother no more about it, but after this always do whichever come handiest at the time."

There are ironies in the life and work of Clemens and Twain. Twain's native American humor was more immediately popular in Europe than in his own country. Bismarck and the Czarina of Russia read Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn. Twain wrote fantastic tales, judged best suited to children, and overburdened them with savage scenes and moral strictures. His idyllic boyhood, the wellspring of his best work, gave way to the Gilded Age, which he hated. His salutation to the twentieth century was:

"I bring you the stately matron Christendom, returning bedraggled, besmirched and dishonored from pirate raids in ... Manchuria, South Africa and the Philippines, with her

soul full of meanness, her pocket full of boodle, and her mouth full of pious hypocrisies. Give her soap and a towel, but hide the looking-glass."

How angry he would have been to find his masterpiece called racist and denied a place in 1990's classrooms because

"nigger" appears over 200 times! William Styron writes:

"Huckleberry Finn has never really struggled up out of a continuous vortex of discord, and probably never will, as long as its enchanting central figures, with their confused and incalculable feelings for each other, remain symbols of our own racial confusion."

Pudd'nhead Wilson, a lesser work, is probably also discredited, relying as it does on a black woman secretly bearing a prominent white man's child.

Clemens and Twain called humor the only effective weapon against the world's evil. They lacked, and needed, faith.

Richmond Prescott

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