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Reprise

After one reaches the age of 80, almost everything is a reprise. Earliest childhood events, so often repeated in one way or another. Pappa, a figure of power, uncannily bright, loving, often impossible. Mamma, the prototypical mother figure, wise, surprisingly sophisticated and always in my corner.

School and a fight every day. Always fist fights. Knives and firearms were virtually unknown.

High school, known as City College. Editing the paper and yearbook. Johns Hopkins for an A.B., Ph.D., M.D., House Staff, faculty, Trustee.

Honored as one of six Distinguished Medical Alumni at Johns Hopkins' one-hundredth anniversary.

A wonderful daughter and two fine grandchildren. Still married to the same girl I eloped with sixty years ago and still full of pizzazz.

Not too bad. Not too bad at all, come to think of it.

Martin B. Macht

THE DAMNED HUMAN RACE AND OTHER MATTERS

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Good evening Gentlemen and fellow members of the Literary Club.

During these past two years I have been privileged to listen, thoroughly enjoy and learn, and not worry

about having to get up before this august body and demonstrate how truly little I knew on some subject, but more on that later.

Moreover, another benefit of this, my first paper, may be that it prompted a venerable member of this organization into hosting an admirable repast this evening at our neighboring University Club, and since the annual minimum at that fine institution has just recommenced, I feel certain that there was no suspect motive in that invitation. The subject of this deliverance and whether it had yet been completed may have figured in however, as those were the very first topics of the dinner conversation, in that order, before even the first round of drinks materialized. Mine was a tall iced tea, while all the others enjoyed their liquids in much shorter glasses. The better for all concerned, I'd guess.

I explained to my host that I thought it would be a good idea to discuss humor, and that was what I'd set about to do. He ordered another round of drinks, the same for everybody, mine tall iced tea, and theirs shorter, but darker for them this time. I ventured that humor would be a safer topic in some ways than other topics and of course if you could find a good brand of it, it would be an excellent tonic to attempt to sprinkle liberally throughout the reading. If it produced the desired response, loud and long uproarious bouts of laughter, that would leave a correspondingly shorter time I would have to be talking on stage, and then there is also the fact that such uncontrolled responses would thus disguise at least the reason for that response, be it those items being discussed, or the reporter himself. My host looked much relieved at this explanation, I feel certain, although a third round of drinks came before the main course. Again I got the tall glass.

The following quotation started me on this particular journey:

"There is no character, howsoever good and fine, but it can be destroyed by ridicule, howsoever poor and witless. Observe the ass, for instance; his character is about perfect, he is the choicest

spirit among all the humbler animals, yet see what ridicule has brought him to. Instead of feeling complimented when we are called an ass, we are left in doubt."

So as not to waste this opportunity, and to bring the very best before this most elevated of associates, this speaker interviewed many candidates. One who may yet make the grade at a future event, and would probably seem a natural, hails from some hundred odd miles northeast of here, which really isn't as dreadful a place as I've been instructed since moving to this fair city, but that is another story. Anyway that fellow observed just so you'll know I might be on the right track here that "People are funnier than anybody." Now that quote from James Thurber is a very good start, but I really wanted a little more and so went looking further.

Lest any of you feels slighted tonight, examples from some of the other losing candidates will also be given right up front. One happens to be arguably the greatest man of this past century, who when asked how his weekend as a guest at a fine country estate went, responded. "All would have been fine, if the wine had been as old as the chicken, and the chicken as young as the maid, and maid as willing as the duchess."

This very same world leader when seated next to a particularly opinionated, self-important lady of diametrically opposed political and perhaps moral views, proclaimed to one and all at a large dinner table, that were she married to her dinner partner, she would be forced to poison his wine. To which Sir Winston Churchill immediately responded: "And Madam, were I married to you, I should be forced to drink it."

Another under consideration was a man of true wit and interest who lived a relatively short life and has been dead sufficiently long, yet most of his writings and the way he developed his humor consists of very short observations, often aimed at the same targets. He too failed to make this cut, but the following indicates he was still in the game:

"I have a scheme for stopping war. It is this - no nation is allowed to enter a war till they have paid for the last one." or "I don't make jokes, I just watch the government and report the facts."

"Never blame a legislative body for not doing something. When they do nothing, that don't hurt anybody. When they do something is when they become dangerous."

"The income tax has made more liars out of the American people than golf has." I am sure you have recognized Will Rogers.

Another under consideration was revealed by one S.J. Perlman, no slouch himself when it comes to humor, who related that the publisher for his first book prevailed upon this world class wit to donate a comment for the book cover of Perlman's first collection of witticisms. It goes like this:

"I laughed from the moment I picked this book up until the moment I put it down. Some day, I intend on reading it." Signed Grocho Marx.

The winner in my view, however, was born in 1835 in Missouri and although undoubtedly not early enough for many, died in 1910. This man has inspired many of us here tonight, entertaining, cajoling, harassing and driving to complete and total madness and even violent action, substantial numbers of his contemporaries, but, as can be said of him, he did make a difference, he spoke his mind, and he had no price.

My personal interest in the man stems from his mythical status as well as from his various dimensions. He was a doer and a liver, a man of action whose chief effect and primary reputation was made as a writer. In my early years I was fascinated by his stories; later revisiting those same stories, I found so much more in them even marveling at the extent to which these writings had improved during the intervening years.

He was a child of rather humble and primitive beginnings located in the interior of the very primitive United States. He worked as a prospector, a

common laborer, a printer, a writer and a reporter. He worked in California and other western areas at a time when those areas were not yet states or had just become states. He also worked in shipping as a river boat pilot, and was even for a short time a Confederate soldier.

Later he became an extremely popular author, perhaps the most popular in the entire country and probably the most feared as well. He was a man of his times, recognized as such, and was an astute observer of the human condition. From his birth in Missouri and childhood spent in Hannibal through his ownership of a Buffalo newspaper to his finally settling in Hartford, Connecticut for the last 40 years of his life, Samuel Clemens or Mark Twain has left his imprint on America.

Among my very favorite works and, also among the very earliest that I had read, was the story of a certain Mr. Wilson. This book satisfies on many levels, with its twists and turns as an entertaining mystery. It is also a tale about cutting-edge technology, before there was such a term, the tale of a person open to change, thinking in a new fashion, and willing to act regardless of consequences. Furthermore the tale is delightfully written, containing phraseology and wit that even the very young can understand and enjoy discovering.

There have been several occasions to revisit this novel, including preparation for this paper, and still the book painfully delights and provides insights in our age of political sensitivity and political correctness.

In this novel, Mr. Wilson is better known as "Pudd'nhead" and how he got his name has always stayed with me. The story is set in Dawson's Landing, described as a "snug little collection of one and two story frame dwellings, a half a day's journey by steamboat below St. Louis on the Missouri side of the Mississippi" to which location young David Wilson, then 25, "college bred and just finished with a post college course at an eastern law school a couple of years before" made his "fatal remark". He had just made the acquaintance of a group of Dawson's Landing's best,

when a dog began to yap and snarl, disrupting all around. Wilson mused aloud, "I wish I owned half of that dog." "Why?" somebody asked. "Because I would kill my half." It was not enough for Samuel Clemens to have this simple observation at that, but as was his habit, (why be satisfied with half a loaf when there is more to be had?), he used the situation to make yet other points, and poke even more fun at those about him, and finish the job up right. He went on to describe the next series of events among those gentlemen of the village. As they could ascertain no smile nor any expression, whatsoever to betray what if anything Wilson meant, they gradually receded to meet in private and discuss this strange event and newcomer.

"Pears to be a fool."

"Pears?" said another. "Is, I reckon you better say."

"Said he wished he owned half of the dog, the idiot," said a third.

"What did he reckon would become of the other half if he killed his half? Do you reckon he thought it would live?"

"Why he must have thought it, unless he is the downrightist fool in the world; because if he hadn't thought it, he would have wanted to own the whole dog, knowing that if he killed his half and the other half died, he would be responsible for that half just the same if he had killed that half instead of his own. Don't it look that way to you, gents?"

"Yes, it does. If he owned one half of the general dog, it would be so; if he owned one end of the dog and another person owned the other end, it would be so, just the same; particularly in the first case, because if you kill one half of a general dog, there ain't any man that can tell you whose half it was, but if he owned the one end of the dog, maybe he could kill his end of it and-"

"No, he couldn't, either; he couldn't and not be responsible if the other end died, which it would. In my opinion the man just ain't in his right mind."

"In my opinion he hain't got any mind."

No. 3 said: "well, he's a lummoX, anyway."

"That's what he is," said No. 4, "he's a labrick-

"Yes, sir, he's a damn fool."

"I'm with you, gentlemen," said No. 6. "Perfect jackass - yes, and it ain't going too far to say he is a pudd'nhead. If he ain't a pudd'nhead, I ain't no judge, that's all."

Mr. Wilson stood elected. The incident was told all over the town, and gravely discussed by everybody. Within a week he had lost his first name; Pudd'nhead took its place."

It is hard to imagine that this bit of story-telling could not have impact upon its readers, and this young reader could not have discovered this and not felt that impact. This discovery was exciting, something was happening here, something new, something old, and it has continued over the course of this speaker's life.

In my opinion, however the true merit and significance of Pudd'nhead Wilson is not to be found in its humor or its cleverness in relating a plot or characters, all of which simply constitute the vehicle bearing the message. That message is to be found in his observations, how he dealt with life and his times and societal behavior, and recognizing that even if he could not correct a situation, he could and would report them. Twain realized that he could not affect audiences were he to preach, or were he to appear to judge those actions, and so he simply related his observations as fact in accepted everyday occurrences, allowing the reader to decide in the reader's own good time and at the reader's own speed whether to act or

not act. Thus Clemens accomplishes his purpose in the telling.

On the same day that Pudd'nhead arrived at Dawson's Landing, an infant boy was born to a scion of the town, and another boy to one of his slave girls, Roxanna. Roxy is only 1/16th black and from all outward appearances that condition is indiscernible, it only being from her dress of course, and her manner and method of speech, which Twain relates in the dialect and topics of discussion and other personality traits. Thus Twain suggests that from outward observations the races are indistinguishable, at least in this instance.

"To all intents and purposes Roxy was as white as anybody but the one-sixteenth of her which was black outvoted the other 15 parts and made her a Negro. She was a slave, and saleable as such. Her child was thirty-one parts white, and he too, was a slave, by fiction of law and custom a Negro. He had blue eyes and flaxen curls like his white comrade, but even the father of the white child was able to tell the children apart - little as he had commerce with them - by their clothes; for the white babe wore white muslin and a coral necklace, while the other wore merely a course linen shirt and no jewelry."

Never one to leave opportunity to its own devices, Clemens then went on to observe that the white child in this primitive Mississippi river village was named Thomas a'Beckett Driscoll. The Clemens brand of humor was in full force in the name of the other boy: "Valet de Chambre; no surname - slaves hadn't the privilege. Roxana had heard that phrase somewhere, the fine sound of it had pleased her ear, and as she had supposed it was a name, she loaded it on to her darling. It soon got shortened to "Chambers," of course." Roxy cared for both boys and all three went to live with Judge Driscoll, Percy Driscoll's childless brother, and his wife, shortly after the early deaths of Percy Driscoll and his wife.

Clemens never lacked for targets to skewer, nor was he encumbered by restraint. As he continued with

his observations of slavery, Clemens related that the worst thing that could happen to a slave was to be sold by the white master down the river, meaning to those states of the old Confederacy where slaves were traded with less humanity than they were in the newer and more moderate states such as Missouri, or north of the Mason Dixon line where slavery was outlawed of course. When money and items were missing from Judge Driscoll's household, he threatened all three of his slaves, and Roxy too, with sale down the river, relenting only if they would confess, in which case he would simply sell them in Missouri.

So dreaded was the thought of being sold down the river that all three who had separately stolen items from the judge, immediately confessed. When he told them that he would sell them in Missouri, they fell upon their knees blessing him, and saving Roxy from such a fate. Clemens related the judge observed his own actions as "like a God he had stretched forth his mighty hand and closed the gates of Hell against him. He knew himself, that he had done a noble and gracious thing, and was privately well pleased with his magnanimity, and that night, he sat the incident down in his diary so that his son might read it in after years and thereby be moved to deeds of gentleness and humanity himself."

In order to save herself and her child from the fate of being sold down the river, Roxy secretly vows first to kill them both, but not wanting to be found dead in her shabby clothing, dresses herself in finery, and then not wishing her son to be likewise dishonored in death, dresses him in finery too. She then discovers that he is indistinguishable from his master, whereupon the switch is made, and as Sherlock Holmes later was to observe "the game is afoot." The boys grow to manhood, Tom, coming to demonstrate ignoble characteristics in the extreme, while Chambers displays superior strength, athletic ability and, at first will and pride which is beaten into submission and subservient behavior.

On another front, Pudd'nhead Wilson determines to make a living in the community and gain personal acceptance, even though he is unable to practice law.

He demonstrates a curiosity in and affinity with things scientific. His vocations include taking fingerprints of all about him at different times in their lives and on different occasions placing upon small pieces of glass those impressions gained by having residents of Dawson's Landing run their fingers through their hair and leave their impressions upon his glass slide collection which he labels during the next 20 years. So that which caused Pudd'nhead to be so named and that which destroyed his budding legal career, (for who would hire a Pudd'nhead as a lawyer?), and that which is the latest in experimentation and knowledge, come to be the determining mechanism in the intrigue that follows. Throughout the remainder of the tale, the course of events and the efforts of Pudd'nhead, lead invariably to justice and truth while providing Mark Twain targets for his acerbic wit, allowing him to skewer many of those customs and pretenses which he finds so repugnant, and all of which we find so entertaining.

In that effort he depicts Negro speaking habits and dialects, Negro stereotypes and even educability; but it's not as if he leaves alone the white race, its heritage or its religion.

He delights in poking fun at those from the aristocratic South and describes the Driscoll and the Howard family members recalling their days as

"boys together in Virginia when that state still ranked as the chief and most imposing member of the Union, and they still coupled the proud and affectionate adjective "old" with her name when they spoke of her. In Missouri a recognized superiority attached to any person who hailed from Old Virginia; and this superiority was exalted to supremacy when a person of such nativity could also prove descent from the First Families of that great commonwealth. The Howards and the Driscolls were of this aristocracy. In their eyes it was a nobility. It had its unwritten laws, and they were as clearly defined and as strict as any that could be found among the printed statutes of the land. The F.F.V. was born a gentleman. His highest duty in life was to watch over that great

inheritance and keep it unsmirched. These laws required certain things of him which his religion might forbid; then his religion must yield. The laws could not be relaxed to accommodate religions or anything else."

If that were not enough assistance in determining who was who, and what was what in Dawson's Landing, Tom, it is related, now grown and back in Dawson's Landing from a foray into eastern education that did not take, was approached by Roxy in supplication. She had been freed upon the death of Tom's father, and after the boys were raised through childhood, had spent years working on paddle wheelers on the New Orleans to Cincinnati run along the Mississippi and Ohio rivers. She had been careful with her earnings and faithfully placed the bulk of them with a bank in New Orleans, that just before she arrived to claim her savings, had gone bust, causing her to become penniless. Tom, quite profligate and with huge gambling debts to boot, at first refuses to give her any money. Roxy changes tactics and advises him that she will tell what she knows to Judge Driscoll who will thereupon "bust" his will and disinherit his nephew once again. Tom is fearful and believes Roxy means to reveal his gambling. Roxy informs him that what she knows is nothing so benign as that, but that he is "her child and a Negro and a slave, then and now and capable of being sold today, tomorrow, here or down the river and no will busting would be necessary." Tom relents, shaken to his very being by this news. He knows in his heart that terrible as it is, what she says is true. Later, inquiring as to his father, Roxy denies any embarrassment in the question and responds:

"Does I mine tellin' you? No, dat I don't! You ain't got no 'casion to be shame' o' yo' father, I kin tell you. He wuz the highest quality in dis whole town - ole Virginny stock. Fust famblies, he wuz. Jes as good stock as de Driscolls en de Howards, de bes' day dey ever seed." She put on a little prouder air, if possible, and added impressively: "Does you 'member Cunnel Cecil Burleigh Essex, dat died de same year yo' young Marse Tom Driscoll's pappy died, en all de Masons en Odd Fellers en Churches turned out en give him

de bigges' funeral dis town ever seed? Dat's de man. . .Dey ain't another nigger in dis town dat's as high-bawn as you is."

Later Roxy devises a plan for Tom to acquire sufficient funds to pay his gambling debts and thus avoid yet another breaking of the will. She tells Tom to sell her, his own mother, back into slavery using the money to pay off his debts and to keep the balance and its earnings, along with half of the monthly allowance provided by Judge Driscoll that she has secretly forced Tom to pledge to her, and accumulate this money to rebuy her in a year's time. Tom, not wanting to trouble himself, or expose the situation, sells her to an Arkansas farmer he happens to meet and thus Roxy is sold down the river. Should you mistakenly believe Mark Twain reserved his wit for Southerners, Roxy discusses the plantation owner:

"Dat man dat bought me ain't a bad man; he's good enough, as planters goes; en if he could 'a' had his way I'd 'a' be'n a house-servant in his famiby en be'n comfortable; but his wife she was a Yank, en not right down good-lookin', en she riz up agin me straight off; so den dey sent me out to de quarter 'mongst de common fiel' han's. Dat woman warn't satisfied even wid dat, but she worked up de overseer ag'in' me, she 'uz dat jealous en hateful; so de overseer he had me out befo' day in de mawnin's en worked me de whole long day as long as dey 'uz any light to see by; en man's de lashin's I got 'ca'se I couldn't come up to de work o' de stronges'. Dat overseer wuz a Yank, too, outen New Englan', en anybody down South kin tell you what dat mean - dey warn't no mercy for me no mo'."

When two new visitors, twins from Italy, came to Dawson's Landing, they are fawned over by all the citizens. In fact they are counts of no particular lineage and impoverished, while the interesting twins, Chambers and Thomas a' Beckett, languish in obscurity. Judge Driscoll as a leading star of the city wanted to attempt to reflect the interest in these visitors upon himself and "be the first to display them in public, paraded down the main street, everybody flocking to the window and sidewalks to see."

Taking hold of the twins and placing them in his carriage, the "Judge showed the strangers the new graveyard, and the jail, and where the richest man lived and the free masons hall and the Methodist church and the Presbyterian church and where the Baptist church was going to be when they got some money to build it with. He showed them the town hall and the slaughter house and got out the independent fire company in uniform and had them put out an imaginary fire."

While Clemens was on the subject of the fire company, he relates a hilarious donny brook occurring at a meeting of the local strong rum party (as opposed to the anti-strong rum party) whereupon fire ensued which required the actual efforts of the hook and ladder company. This resulted in the hall being flooded "with water enough to annihilate 40 times as much fire as there was there. For a village fire company does not often get a chance to show off. So when it does get a chance, it makes the most of it. . . Such citizens of that village who were of thoughtful and judicious temperament did not insure against fire, they insured against the fire company."

All were truly fair game, all of the time, Northerner, southerner, tea-totaler, or drinker, the various religions and races, even women and the French were all in season. As were so called public servants, especially legislator types and of course business men in order of money and reputation, this latter which Clemens saw simply as the natural course of expenditure of the former. There simply was no group or human condition that escaped his rapier.

Clemens observed, "When I reflect upon the number of disagreeable people who I know have gone to a better world, I am moved to lead a different life." A further observation about the condition of his fellow men is: "April 1, this is the day upon which we are reminded of what we are upon the other three hundred sixty four."

At various times Clemens demonstrated spectacularly deficient investing skills, and more than once lost his entire investment, and was not a stranger to the Bankruptcy Court. Regardless of the reason, he

was not reticent to blame the Jay Goulds, Commodore Vanderbilts or other of the era for these setbacks, often justifiably. He even gave the title of his novel, The Gilded Age to the entire era. Many of his chapter prefaces from Pudd'nhead Wilson, shouted these prejudices: "October - this is one of the peculiarly dangerous months to speculate in stocks. The others are July, January, September, April, November, May, March, June, December, August and February."

So as not to spoil Pudd'nhead Wilson for those of you who may not yet have and want to visit it, I'll leave further revelations of that story and instead relate some of the other humorous examples from this author's arsenal. One particularly enjoyable account involved a tale Twain alleged was a personal experience.

Upon one occasion two travelers were in a railroad car, when the first said to his companion, "We have a problem, there is only one ticket and no additional money. The way we will handle this is you will hide under the seat and when the conductor comes I will hand him my ticket and then you may sit up as soon as he passes." The companion was dubious at first but was finally persuaded and folded himself under the seat. The conductor came along taking tickets and was puzzled. He said "Sir there are two tickets here but only one of you." The traveler pulled the conductor down to speak softly in his ear. "The other is for my friend. He is trying to hide under the seat and escape paying, but let's just play along and humor him. Here take both tickets and we will call it even."

His opinion of religion never rose much above that of Congress but he was a little gentler with the former and in discussing the lives of some youthful residents of Austria and members of the Catholic church:

"Us boys, we were not much pestered with schooling, mainly we were over trained to be good Christians, to revere the Virgin, the church and the saints above everything. Beyond these matters, we were not required to know much, and in fact not allowed to. Knowledge was not good for the common people, and in fact could make them

discontented with the lot which God had appointed for them. And God would not endure discontentment with His plans."

When describing those about him as well as those of another area of the country he said:

"We of the north poke fun of the south for its fondness for titles - the fondness for titles pure and simple, regardless of whether they are genuine or not. We are all children, all children of the one Adam and we love toys. We can soon acquire that southern disease if someone will give it a start. In fact, I have been personally acquainted with over 48,000 persons who at one time or another in their lives had served for a year or two on the staffs of our multitudinous governors and through that fatality had been generals temporarily and colonels temporarily and judge advocates temporarily, but I have only known nine among them who could be hired to let the title go when it ceased to be legitimate. I know thousands and thousands of governors who ceased to be governors, way back in the last century, but I am acquainted with only three who would answer your letter if you failed to call them "governor". I know acres and acres of men who have time in a legislature in prehistoric days, but among them is not half an acre whose resentment you would not raise if you addressed them as "mister" instead of "honorable."

The first thing that a legislature does is to convene, and then get itself photographed. Each member frames his copy and takes it to the woods and hangs it up in the most aggressively conspicuous place in his house, and if you visit the house and fail to inquire what that accumulation is, the conversation will be brought around to it by the afore time legislator. And he will show you a figure in it which in the course of years he has almost obliterated with the smut of his finger marks, and say with a solemn joy, it's me."

As you would expect Mark Twain's novels, stories, opinions, writings and observations in many instances came from his personal experiences. At a time when the annexation of the Hawaiian Islands was topical he commented in this fashion:

"We must annex those people. We can afflict them with our wise and beneficent government. We can introduce the novelty of thieves, all the way up from street car pick pockets to municipal robbers and Government defaulters and show them how amusing it is to attest them, try them, and then turn them loose - some for cash, and some for "political influence". We can make them ashamed of their simple and primitive justice. . . We can give them juries composed of the most simple and charming leatherheads. We can give them railway corporations who will buy their Legislatures like old clothes, and run over their best citizens. We can furnish them with some Jay Goulds who will do away with their old-time notions that stealing is not respectable. . . We can give them lecturers! I will go myself. . ."

As the following exchange illustrates, Clemens did not exempt himself from his barbs. His rather brief military career provided fodder and was the subject of a speech he delivered at a reunion meeting of the Union Veterans of Maryland, as a Rebel veteran from Missouri. He described that career and the effect of the grand two weeks he spent in the Civil War:

"And during that time I rose from private to 2nd Lt. The monumental feature of my campaign was the one battle that my command fought in the summer of '61. If I do say it, it was the bloodiest battle ever fought in human history. There is nothing approaching it for destruction of human life in the field, if you take into consideration the forces involved and the proportion of death to survival. And yet you do not even know the name of the battle. Neither do I. It had a name, but I have forgotten it. . .

History. . .shouts its teeth loose over the Battle of Booneville and doesn't even mention

ours. . .Never even heard of it. . .In the Battle of Booneville there were 2000 engaged on the Union side and about as many on the other, supposed to be. The casualties all told were two men killed, and not all those were killed outright, but only half of them, the other man died in hospital the next day. . .All the others got away, on both sides.

Now then, in our battle there were just 15 men employed on our side, all brigadier generals, except me, and I was a 2nd Lt. On the other side there was one man. He was a stranger. We killed him. It was night and we thought he was an Army of Observation. He looked like an Army of Observation. In fact he looked bigger than an Army of Observation. . .Some of us believed he was trying to surround us. . .and so we shot him. Poor fellow. He probably wasn't an Army of Observation after all. That wasn't our fault. As I say he had all the look of it in that dim light.

He overestimated his fighting strength and he suffered the likely result. . .so we buried him with all the honors of war. . .and took his things.

So began and ended the only battle in the history of war when the opposing force was wholly exterminated, swept from the face of the earth to the last man, and yet you don't know the name of that battle, or the name of that man.

Now for the argument: Suppose I had continued in the war and gone on as I began, and exterminated the opposing force every time, every two weeks? Where would your war have been? Why, you see yourself the conflict would have been too one-sided. There was but one honorable course for me to pursue. I withdrew to private life and gave the Union cause a chance."

Coming into particular ridicule and contempt from Mark Twain were two categories, one was public officials, and the other the robber barons.

As to the former he once said "To my mind, Judas was nothing but a low, mean, premature Congressman" and "Reader, suppose you were an idiot. And suppose you were a member of Congress. But I repeat myself." And perhaps his most famous "It could probably be shown by facts and figures that there is no distinctly native criminal class except Congress."

When asked to attend a dinner at the Union League Club in New York Mark Twain accepted before he discovered that Senator Clark, newly appointed from the state of Montana, was to be present. Clark was ultimately denied a seat as the result of an investigation which found that he had paid members of the Montana Legislature in excess of \$400,000 to obtain his seat. The host had advised Clemens that Clark had income of 30 million dollars a year and had loaned the club the use of his \$1,000,000 art collection which was valued at a gift of \$100,000. To this Mark Twain observed that:

"Human beings have no sense of proportion. A benefaction of a hundred thousand dollars subtracted from an income of thirty million dollars is not a matter to go into hysterics of admiration and adulation about. [Even after] a contribution of twenty-five million dollars, . . . the Montana jailbird, would still have a hundred thousand dollars a week left over from his year's income to subsist upon. It reminded me of the only instance of benevolence exploded on the world by the late Jay Gould that I had ever heard of. When the first and most infamous corrupter of American commercial morals was wallowing in uncountable stolen millions, he contributed five thousand dollars for the relief of the stricken population of Memphis, Tennessee, at a time when an epidemic of yellow fever was raging in that city. Mr. Gould's contribution cost him no sacrifice; it was only the income of the hour which he daily spent in prayer - for he was a most godly man - yet the storm of worshipping gratitude. . . might have persuaded a stranger that for a millionaire American to give \$5,000 to the dead and dying poor - when he could have bought a

circuit judge with it - was the noblest thing in American history, and the holiest."

Finally I would be neglectful if I failed to include Twain's comments on the fair sex: "Even the clearest and most perfect circumstantial evidence is likely to be at fault, after all, and therefore ought to be received with great caution. Take the case of any pencil, sharpened by any woman: if you have witnesses, you will find she did it with a knife; but if you take simply the aspect of the pencil, you will say she did it with her teeth."

Although Mark Twain started life in Hannibal, Missouri under humble circumstances, he concluded his time in Hartford, Connecticut at a Louis Comfort Tiffany designed and decorated residence in what was then the latest style, and a next door neighbor to Harriett Beecher Stowe who occupied a similar residence. There he partook of the larger community along the eastern seaboard.

The residence is interesting and has now become a museum to Mark Twain where one can observe his lifestyle and take the flavor of some of his personality. For example in the entry way is a small closet containing one of the very first telephones. Beside the phone taped on the wall is what appears to be a score card. In fact Mark Twain used it to keep track of the failings of the Hartford phone company and recorded the dates that he informed the operators exactly of their failings and the grades he had given them.

Upstairs in his bedroom was a magnificent carved Italian sleigh bed. The headboard is large and contains garlands of flowers, grapes, animal heads, angels and the like, while the foot, at least the inside portion, is smooth and rounded. Overhead is a gas lit chandelier.

Since Mark Twain enjoyed reading and writing before falling asleep, snaking from one of the chandelier outlets is a separate rubber tube leading down to a single lamp on a pedestal beside the foot of

his bed. Twain (and his bride) slept so that when he sat up in bed his back was not disturbed by the carvings but could rest against the smooth curved inner surface of the foot portion of the sleigh bed, and the chandelier trailing light fixture would be behind him and illuminate his reading material or the paper upon which he was writing, all of which is very logical, very practical, quite advanced for the age, and contrary to what I dare say is the way 100% of the members of this club use their bed, and also probably a similar number of those acquainted with Mr. Clemens, without intending any overlap of the two groups.

When all is said and done, Mark Twain was an original American treasure and as George Bernard Shaw said: "Mark Twain and I are in very much the same position. We have to put things in such a way as to make people who would otherwise hang us, believe that we are joking."

THE CONFESSIONS OF A TWIN

October 11, 1999

Charles M. Judd

Identical Twins are a marvelous birth defect. For reasons unknown, about three and a half times out of every thousand conceptions, the developing embryo splits into two equal and viable halves sometime during the first ten days or so after conception. Then each continues to develop into, first, a fetus, and then a baby. The original fertilized ovum contained in its DNA the genetic blueprint for a unique human being, different from any other human being on earth. And when it splits, that same genetic blueprint now becomes the identical blueprint for each twin. I was and am a twin, sharing an identical genetic blueprint with my twin brother, Harry.

I've been talking about identical twins, of course. Fraternal twins are born from two different