MARK TWAIN AS A POLITICAL SATIRIST

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MARK TWAIN AS A POLITICAL SATIRIST

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Samuel Langhorne Clemens was of English middle-class and Irish ancestry. His grandparents on both sides were proud, self-respecting frontier folk who had been small slaveholders in Virginia and Kentucky. The Lamptons were his maternal grandparents. The father, John Marshall Clemens, was named after the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, who was also a Virginian. Marshall's father died in 1805 when he was only seven, and the boy left his step-father's home to become self-supporting at the age of fourteen. His initial step toward a career of his own was apprenticeship to the law. Clemens settled in Columbia, Kentucky, to study with an attorney named Cyrus Walker. He was granted a license to practice in the Kentucky courts on October 29, 1822.

John M. Clemens was described at that time as follows:

> John M. Clemens. . . having produced to us a certificate of the County court of Adair, that he is a young man of honesty, probity, and good demeanor; and it appearing to us, upon a critical examination as to his legal knowledge, that he is duly qualified for the practice.[1]

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[1] Quoted in D. Wecter, Sam Clemens of Hannibal, p. 14.

On May 6, 1823, Jane Lampton and John M. Clemens were married in Adair County. The Clemens family made a series of moves toward the frontier, and Samuel L. Clemens, their fifth child, was born in Florida, Missouri, the farthest point of their westward migration, on November 30, 1835.

The Clemens family had moved to Florida in the hope that the Salt River would become a navigable stream rivalling the Mississippi. It was in Florida that Sam's father enjoyed his first and only bloom of fortune.[2] In 1837 he was appointed first on a board of sixteen commissioners to take subscriptions to the capital stock of the Salt River Navigation Company. He also headed a commission of six members to promote a Florida and Paris Railroad and later became a trustee on the board of Florida Academy.[3] John Marshall Clemens on November 6, 1837, took the oath of office as a judge of the Monroe County Court. This was the "zenith of his professional life," and he kept the title of "Judge" for the rest of his life.[4] Wecter stated that it was an office of more prestige than profit.

The panic of 1837 had serious effects in Florida and the neighboring county. The Salt River lost its prospects of becoming a navigation center, for railroad rumors had

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[2] Ibid., p. 47.

[3] Ibid., p. 48.

[4] Ibid., p. 48.

ruined the river, and a Democratic Congress had turned its back on the proposed improvements.[5] John Clemens decided that he had made a mistake and should attempt a fresh start in Hannibal, which was thirty miles away on the Mississippi. He purchased a quarter of a city block in the business section of Hannibal in 1839, borrowing the money to stock a general store.

The last ten years of John Clemens's life were years of extreme poverty. At least two men who had borrowed money from him took the bankruptcy law and left his finances in a critical condition. Mark Twain later said that Ira Stout ruined his father.[6] The family home and furniture were auctioned in payment of their debts in 1842. John M. Clemens was a stern, austere person who never veered from the code of a Virginia gentleman. He felt he must satisfy all claims against him, even offering the silverware and furniture to clear his debts. This presaged a similar act in Mark Twain's life fifty years later.[7]

Clemens tried to meet expenses by practicing law. From August, 1844, until July, 1845, he served as road districting

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[5] S. L. Clemens, The Writings of Mark Twain, Definitive Edition (37 Vols.), XXX, 20. (Hereinafter referred to as Works.)

[6] Wecter, op. cit., p. 66.

[7] Ibid., p. 66.

justice of the peace for his township. Wecter, in studying the county records, found that he held inquests, aided the court in criminal prosecutions, issued subpoenas, and took depositions for meager fees. In Life on the Mississippi, Mark Twain said, "My father was a justice of the peace, and I supposed he possessed the power of life and death over all men, and could hang anybody that offended him."[8]

An old undated clipping from the St. Louis Republican was pasted in a scrapbook owned by Samuel Webster. It describes John M. Clemens, Justice of the Peace of Hannibal, as follows:

> a stern, unbending man of splendid common sense. . . the autocrat of the little dingy room on Bird Street where he held his court. . . . Its furniture consisted of a dry-goods box which served the double purpose of a desk for the Judge and table for the lawyers, three or four rude stools and a puncheon bench for the jury. And here on court days when the Judge climbed upon his three-legged stool, rapped on the box with his knuckles and demanded 'Silence in the court' it was fully expected that silence would reign supreme.[9]

In the spring of 1846 Judge Clemens was host to a group of business men who were interested in building a railroad from Hannibal to St. Joseph. As chairman of the citizens' committee in November of that year he published a report advocating the construction of a macadamized road

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[8] Works, XII, 35.

[9] Wecter, op. cit., pp. 104-105.

from Hannibal to St. Joseph. He also worked on getting a projected Masonic college for the state of Missouri located in Hannibal.[10] In addition to all of these other civic duties, John Clemens was president of the Hannibal Library Institute.

The Hannibal Gazette announced his candidacy for Clerk of the Circuit Court on November 5, 1846. Clemens is alleged to have resembled Old Hickory, but in politics he was a firm Henry Clay Whig, befitting his Federalist name.[11] The Gazette, a Democratic paper, praised Clemens for his "public spirit" and his "high sense of justice and moral rectitude." Both parties endorsed him, and the Whigs were urged not to be too partisan in their campaign in order not to alienate the Democrats who also planned to support Clemens.

Mark Twain wrote in his Autobiography that his father died from over-exposure after his return on horseback from a trip to Palmyra to take the oath of office.[12] Wecter states that John M. Clemens died of pneumonia on March 24, 1847, at least four months before the election was to take place.[13] His last request was to urge his family to cling to the Tennessee land. Samuel Clemens's father was buried on March 25, 1847, in the old Baptist Cemetery on a hill about

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[10] Ibid., p. 111.

[11] Ibid., p. 15.

[12] Works, XXXVII, 274-275.

[13] Wecter, op. cit., p. 115.

a mile and a half north of the village, with his family, friends, and members of the Library Institute present.[14]

The biographical facts show that Mark Twain's father was a very conscientious public officer and a civic-minded citizen. The pattern of his father's integrity was in such contrast to the actual political practices of his day that it made Mark Twain a cynic. Although John Clemens and Orion were perfect examples of honesty as public servants, both were complete financial failures. At heart Mark Twain was a moralist and a reformer, but many of his biographers have said that he did not reveal his innermost thoughts in his published works. As he grew older, he wrote in his notebook and letters more and more bitterly about the shams and hypocrisies of his century.

Mark Twain always felt a certain constraint for his father's memory, because of his suffering and humiliation over their extreme poverty, but he admired his father's unbending integrity in financial matters. Twain was early impressed with his father's recognition of moral obligation. The code of honor of Judge Clemens must have remained in Mark's mind and rankled in his conscience, as evidenced by his use of it in Pudd'nhead Wilson.

> In Missouri a recognized superiority attached to any person who hailed from Old Virginia; and this

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[14] Ibid., p. 118.

> superiority was exalted to a supremacy when a person of such nativity could also prove descent from the First Families of that great commonwealth.
>
> 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.
>
> Honor stood first; and the laws defined what it was and wherein it differed in certain details from laws and customs of some of the minor divisions of the globe that had got crowded out when the sacred boundaries of Virginia were staked out. 15

Mark Twain's personal introduction to politics came in Nevada where corruption and political intrigue were rampant. Later, as a reporter in San Francisco and in Washington, he ridiculed the antics of professional politicans. Twain took an active interest in national affairs during the twenty years that his home was in Hartford. There are numerous references to politics in his writing. This thesis is intended to develop several phases of his ever-changing political beliefs.

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15 Works, XVI, 101.

CHAPTER II

POLITICS IN NEVADA

The trip of Sam and Orion Clemens to Nevada by stagecoach in 1861 has been thoroughly described in Roughing It. Orion Clemens had campaigned for Lincoln and consequently, had received his appointment as Secretary of the Territory of Nevada through the help of his friend Judge Bates of St. Louis who was the new Attorney-General. Sam had agreed to furnish the money for the fares, in return for a position as Orion's private secretary.

When the brothers arrived in Carson City, they found a room at Murphy's boardinghouse with the members of Nye's Irish Brigade:

> It was a jolly company, the fourteen. They were principally voluntary camp-followers of the Governor, who had joined his retinue by their own election at New York and San Francisco, and came along, feeling that in the scuffle for little territorial crumbs and offices they could not make their condition more precarious than it was, and might reasonably expect to make it better. They were popularly known as the 'Irish Brigade,' though there were only four or five Irishmen among all the Governor's retainers. His good-natured Excellency was much annoyed at the gossip his henchmen created--especially when there arose a rumor that they were paid assassins of his, brought along quietly to reduce the Democratic vote when desirable.[1]

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[1] Works, III, 150.

The Governor had to find employment for these men until the legislature could meet. He first instructed them to survey a railroad from Carson City westward, but remembering the Sierra Nevada Mountains, he reversed the direction of the road, promising, "When the legislature meets, I will have the necessary bill passed and the remuneration arranged."[2] The surveying crew was turned loose in the desert until they advanced so far that they finally had to set up camp in the field. The query was made, "How far eastward?" The Governor wired back: "To the Atlantic Ocean, blast you! And then bridge it and go on!"[3]

Nye did not get rid of his retainers, however; most of them stayed in Carson City until after the legislature met. Some of the "carpetbaggers" got offices; some became miners; and others went on to California or returned home. From the time that he arrived in Nevada in August, 1861, until December of that year, Sam Clemens was a member of the Brigade.[4]

The territorial legislature met on October 1, 1861, and Sam helped Orion arrange a meeting-place (Curry's Warm Springs Hotel) two miles from the city. The hall was donated, but Orion had to buy some canvas to separate the room into

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[2] Ibid., p. 151.

[3] Ibid., p. 151.

[4] E. M. Mack, Mark Twain in Nevada, p. 75.

meeting-places for the two houses. Although Orion had saved the rental fee, the price of the cloth was deducted from his salary.

Mark Twain's mother had written after this incident, "It looks like a man can't hold office and be honest." Sam replied as follows:

> Why certainly not, Madam. A man can't hold public office and be honest. Lord bless you, it is common practice with Orion to go about town stealing little things that happen to be lying around loose. And I don't remember having heard him speak the truth since we have been in Nevada. He even tries to prevail on me to do these things, Ma, but I wasn't brought up that way, you know. You showed the public what you could do in that line when you raised me, Madam. But then you ought to have raised me first, so that Orion could have had the benefit of my example. Do you know that he stole all the stamps out of an eight-stamp quartz mill one night, and brought them home under his over-coat and hid them in the back room? [5]

Also in Roughing It Mark Twain referred several times to the fact that Orion saved money for the government just to have it subtracted from his salary. There were the incidents of trouble over the cost of printing, the vouchers for getting the wood sawed, and the office rent.

The next time that wood had to be sawed for heating the legislative hall, Sam took charge of the contract, employed the same Indian, and taught him to make a cross. When the work was finished and a voucher made, the Indian affixed an "X" that "looked like it had been drunk a year." The

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[5] Works, XXXIV, 68.

procedure was witnessed by Sam, and the voucher went through unquestioned. He commented upon his own and Orion's habits:

> Orion kept his office in his bedroom and charged the United States no rent, although his 'instructions' provided for that item, and he could have justly taken advantage of it (a thing which I would have done with more than lightning promptness if I had been Secretary myself). But the United States never applauded this devotion. Indeed, I think my country was ashamed to have so improvident a person in its employ. [6]

As for himself, Sam said, "The government of my country snubs honest simplicity, but fondles artistic villainy, and I think I might have developed into a very capable pick-pocket if I had remained in the public service a year or two."[7]

Twain never received a cent in actual salary for his assistance to Orion, but he got a great deal of experience and knowledge of the politicians, their conceit and chicanery, egotism and incompetency. The humorous articles that he wrote about these political "big-shots" helped to obtain for him his first job as a reporter on the Territorial Enterprise.[8] All the time that he was in Nevada he was interested in territorial politics and enjoyed reporting the meetings of the Nevada legislature and the first State Constitutional Convention. He watched the rise of

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[6] Works, XXX, 180.

[7] Ibid., p. 181.

[8] Mack, op. cit., p. 92.

the new government in the territory with all its imperfections, and said, "There is something solemnly funny about the struggles of a new-born territorial government to get a start in this world."[9] The people of the territory resented having outsiders interfere in their government and wanted to work out their own problems of government. Mark Twain commented, "The people were glad to have a legitimately constituted government, but did not particularly enjoy having strangers from distant states put in authority over them--a sentiment that was natural enough."[10]

After Mark's attempts at making a fortune in mining proved unsuccessful, he accepted a position as local reporter for the Territorial Enterprise under Joe Goodman. Life in Virginia City was wild and rough; murders occurred daily, and it was Mark Twain's duty to write about these crimes of violence. Much of the material for Roughing It was taken from the crime conditions on the Comstock. He particularly abhorred the jury system, because it was hampered with so many useless formalities. Twain believed the usual custom of selecting a jury was a waste of time, energy, and expense. The jurors had to swear that they had not read about, discussed, or formed any opinions regarding the case to be tried. The result was that usually a group of uneducated, unthinking men served on the jury, for any

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[9] Works, III, 177. [10] Ibid., p. 176.

one else was automatically disqualified. The author stated that had Alfred the Great known how conditions would change in the nineteenth century, he would never have invented such a system, for "it had become the most infallible agency for defeating justice that human wisdom could contrive."[11] "The jury system excludes honest men and men of brains."[12] "The jury system puts a ban upon intelligence and honesty, and a premium upon ignorance, stupidity, and perjury."[13]

Most of the territorial judges had very little knowledge of legal matters; however, they were often required to rule upon cases involving millions of dollars. Many of them were "carpetbaggers" appointed by Lincoln at eighteen-hundred dollars a year, and they were highly susceptible to bribery. The lawyers came in for some of the graft, too, for they drew exorbitant fees from the mining companies. (It is reported that Bill Stewart was a millionaire when he left Nevada for Washington.)[14] There is also historical datum to the effect that the verdicts of juries were purchased and troublesome witnesses killed or spirited out of the territory. The greatest trouble that the lawyers had with the judges was getting them paid off before a higher bid was accepted. Judges even sent out brokers who demanded a

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[11] Works, IV, 55-56.

[12] Ibid., p. 56.

[13] Ibid., p. 57.

[14] Mack, op. cit., p. 337.

specific price for a favorable decision, this sometimes running as high as ten to twenty-five thousand dollars.[15]

Is there any wonder that Mark Twain states that out of the two to three hundred persons who had been murdered in Nevada, only two murderers had suffered the death penalty? He adds, ". . . four or five who had no money and no political influence have been punished by imprisonment--one languished in prison as much as eight months, I think. However, I do not desire to be extravagant--it may have been less."[16]

Sam wrote lightly about the activities of desperadoes in Virginia City, but he was experiencing a growth of resentment against the injustice of certain aspects of the social system.[17] Sam Clemens delighted in lambasting some politician or small-town office-holder or exposing some miscarriage of justice that he thought needed correcting. Rollin M. Daggett, a forceful writer, taught Clemens many valuable lessons in the job of fighting corruption in high places with the printed word. "The Petrified Man," published in the Enterprise on October 12, 1862, is an example of Sam's ridicule. He chose Judge G. T. Sewall, Justice of the Peace and ex-officio Coroner, as his object of satire, and after the

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[15] Ibid., p. 191.

[16] Works, IV, 67.

[17] I. Benson, Mark Twain's Western Years, p. 74.

sketch had been widely printed in California, and finally even as far away as London, he added insult to injury by marking every copy of the story "with a prominent belt of ink" and sending it to the Judge.[18]

Late in 1862 Sam suggested to Joseph Goodman that he be permitted to report the coming proceedings of the Territorial Legislature at Carson City. Although Clemens was untrained in parliamentary procedure, Goodman consented for he knew that whether Clemens got the reports right or not, he would at least make them readable.[19] The reporter's job had formerly been held by William Gillespie who had advanced to clerk of the house. He coached Mark Twain on legislative and parliamentary matters, while Jack Simmons, Speaker of the House, and Billy Clagget, the Humboldt delegate, were his special cronies and kept him informed about the political intrigues.

Clemens's articles were not all on the passage, discussion, or defeat of bills. The members came in for their share of burlesque. After the delegates from Washoe City had been particularly active during one session, Sam decided to polish them off with a little badinage in the form of an

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[18] Mack, op. cit., p. 213.

[19] Works, XXX, 218.

article entitled "A Big Thing in Washoe City" or "The Grand Bull Drivers' Convention."[20] For example, one delegate at the convention is described as follows:

> The Hon. John K. Lovejoy arose in his place and blew his horn. He made honorable mention of the Legislature and the Committee on Internal Improvements. He told how the fountains of their great deep were broken up, and they rained forty days and forty nights, and brought on a flood of toll roads over the whole land. He explained to them that the more toll roads there were, the more competition there would be, and the roads would be good, and tolls moderate in consequence.[21]

The activities of the group are burlesqued, and in concluding, Mark states that it was a convivial occasion. He said,

> . . . When I went to bed this morning, Mr. Lovejoy arrayed in fiery red night clothes, was dancing the war dance of his tribe (he is President of the Paiute Association) around a spittoon and Colonel Howard, dressed in a similar manner, was trying to convince him that he was a humbug. A suspicion crossed my mind that they were partially intoxicated, but I could not be sure about it on account of everything appearing to turn around so. I left Washoe City this morning at nine o'clock, fully persuaded that I would like to go back there again when the next convention meets.[22]

Not many of these early letters written about Nevada's politicians are now extant.

Many of the articles in the Enterprise were copied and widely quoted in other papers. Sam Clemens was building a reputation, and on February 2, 1863, he first signed a

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[20] Mack, op. cit., p. 224.

[21] Quoted in Mack, op. cit., p. 225.

[22] Ibid., p. 227.

Carson dispatch with the pseudonym, "Mark Twain." Mark's influence grew rapidly in the year 1863, and as he wrote about the merits of each law passed, the members of the legislature began to fear the ridicule at which he was becoming adept. When he learned the way to get things done in the legislature, he put his influence to good advantage for Orion. He wrote later of the influence he enjoyed:

> Orion was soon very popular with the members of the legislature, because they found that whereas they couldn't usually trust each other, nor anybody else, they could trust him. He easily held the belt for honesty in that country, but it didn't do him any good in a pecuniary way, because he had no talent for either persuading or scaring legislators. But I was differently situated. I was there every day in the legislature to distribute compliment and censure with evenly balanced justice and spread the same over half a page of the Enterprise every morning; consequently I was an influence. 23

Under the law the Secretary of State had been required to record all mining-corporation and toll-road franchises, and for this work he received a recording fee. Mark helped to get an amendment to the law providing that every corporation doing business in Nevada must record its charter in full in a record to be kept by the Secretary. The rate of forty cents a folio for one hundred words and five dollars for furnishing a certificate of each record was charged, and the Secretary was allowed to keep the fees. Orion's remunerations from this source were as high as one thousand dollars a month in gold.[24]

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[23] Works, XXXVII, 307-308.

[24] Ibid., p. 308.

There are several humorous references to the Nevada legislators in Roughing It; three of the best known ones are on economy, expenditures, and the granting of franchises. Twain said,

> Nevada legislators levied taxes to the amount of thirty or forty thousand dollars and ordered expenditures to the extent of about a million. Yet they had little periodical explosions of economy like all other bodies of the kind. A member proposed to save three dollars a day to the nation by dispensing with the Chaplain. And yet that short-sighted man needed the Chaplain more than any other member, perhaps, for he generally sat with his feet on his desk, eating raw turnips during the morning prayer.[25]

On the subject of expenditures, he ridiculed the group:

> They had got to raising pumpkins and potatoes in Washoe Valley, and of course one of the first achievements of the legislature was to institute a ten-thousand dollar agricultural fair to show off forty dollars' worth of those pumpkins in--however, the territorial legislature was usually spoken of as the 'asylum.'[26]

Again on the granting of toll-road franchises, Mark Twain pokes fun at the legislature:

> The legislature sat sixty days, and passed private toll-road franchises all the time. When adjourned--every citizen owned about three franchises--'it was believed that unless Congress gave the territory another degree of longitude there would not be room enough to accommodate the toll-roads. The ends of them were hanging over the boundary line everywhere like a fringe.'[27]

Political influence in the Territory is explained by the author. A saloon-keeper held a shade higher rank than any other member

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[25] Works, III, 181-182.

[26] Works, IV, 113.

[27] Works, III, 182.

of society; his opinion had weight. "It was his privilege to say how elections should go. . . . It was a high favor when the chief saloon-keeper consented to serve in the legislature or the board of aldermen."[28]

After becoming well versed in legislative matters, Mark Twain observed very closely the activities of the legislature. When a bad law was passed, the members knew there would be adverse publicity, for Mark always rushed to print his denunciation.[29] In his article "The Great Prize Fight" Twain satirized the politicians of California and Nevada. The two contestants in the fight, according to the sketch, were Governor Leland Stanford, Governor of California, and the Honorable F. F. Low, Governor-elect of California. Stephen Field, Supreme Court Justice of California, was Low's second, and the Honorable William M. Stewart (commonly called Bully-ragging Bill Stewart), the most popular and distinguished lawyer in Nevada, served on the part of Governor Stanford.[30]

Another of his articles, "The Empire City Massacre," was written to satirize the owner of the Magnolia Saloon in Carson City. Twain also made A. G. Gasherie, the Sheriff of Ormsby, an object of ridicule, and bitterly attacked the San Francisco papers.[31] Mark blamed the papers for keeping silent

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[28] Works, IV, 55.

[29] Benson, op. cit., p. 102.

[30] Mack, op. cit., p. 240.

[31] Ibid., p. 264.

about the Spring Valley Water Company's borrowing money and cooking dividends. The story was published in the Enterprise on October 28, 1863, and caused a great deal of trouble because it was not recognized as a hoax. Some of the California papers demanded Mark's resignation, or they would not quote another line from the Enterprise. The chief attack had been on the San Francisco Bulletin:

> He(Hopkins) had been a heavy owner in the best mines of Virginia and Gold Hill, but when the San Francisco papers exposed the game of cooking dividends in order to bolster up our stocks, he grew afraid and sold out, and invested to an immense amount in Spring Valley Water Company of San Francisco. He was advised to do this by a relative of his, one of the editors of the San Francisco Bulletin, who had suffered pecuniarily by the dividend cooking system as applied to the Daney Mining Company. . . . It is presumed that this misfortune drove him mad and resulted in his killing his family.[32]

Editor Goodman backed Mark Twain, who for the rest of his stay in the West struck out boldly and fiercely when he wanted to take a stand for human justice.

There was only one political party of any consequence in Nevada in 1863; that was the Union party. Two factions arose within the party, causing bitter feuds to develop in Virginia City. The fight culminated in an editorial rivalry between Tom Fitch of the Union and Joe Goodman of the Enterprise.[33] Fitch had previously walked out of a party meeting, and as

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[32] Quoted in Mack, op. cit., p. 270.

[33] Ibid., p. 271.

a result, was barred from the convention. He became very abusive in his editorials, while Bill Stewart and Sandy Baldwin expressed the opposing views in the Territorial Enterprise. Fitch challenged Goodman to a duel and was crippled for life when Goodman shot him in the leg.

The Goodman faction of the Union party sent delegates to the Constitutional Convention in Carson City on October 26, 1863. Mark Twain went along to report the proceedings, a job which he did very carefully, commenting on the discussions and the measures adopted. His opinions had begun to carry weight, for the politicians eagerly sought his friendship. Benson states that, "He had developed a certain repression in his articles; he was experiencing for the first time the effectiveness of social satire; he was prepared to develop the new vein he had discovered in his Carson City prospecting."[34]

Taxation was the controversial issue at the Convention, for there were few industries in the Territory. The burden of taxation for statehood had fallen on the mines; therefore, Bill Stewart, legal counsel for the largest mines on the Lode and a member of the convention, tried to have the tax clauses amended, but he was unsuccessful. When the Constitution was submitted to the people, Stewart and Sandy Baldwin toured

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[34] Benson, op. cit., p. 105.

the territory and helped to overwhelmingly defeat it.[35] These two presented Mark Twain with a two hundred dollar gold watch in an effort to obtain favorable publicity in the most powerful political organ in the Territory, the Enterprise.

Twain had this to say about the convention in Roughing It:

> A convention had framed a state constitution; nine men out of ten wanted an office; I believed these gentlemen would 'treat' the moneyless and the irresponsible among the population into adopting the constitution and thus well-nigh killing the country (it could not well carry such a load as a state government since it had nothing to tax that could stand a tax). . . and it did seem as if nobody was ever going to think of the simple salvation of inflicting a money penalty on murder.[36]

The work of the Constitutional Convention was completed at eleven o'clock on the night of December 13. A Third House or burlesque meeting was organized immediately, and Mark Twain was unanimously elected "Governor of the Third House." The proceedings were hilarious, especially, the way in which Mark made parliamentary rulings. After having thoroughly ridiculed the members of the First House, Governor Mark Twain adjourned the Third House with this address:

> Gentlemen: Your proceedings have been exactly similar to those of the Convention which preceded you. You have considered a subject which you knew nothing about; spoken on every subject but the one before the House, and

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[35] Mack, op. cit., p. 278.

[36] Works, IV, 113.

> voted, without knowing what you were voting for, or having any idea what would be the general result of your action. I will adjourn the Convention for an hour, on account of my cold, to the end that I may apply the remedy prescribed for it by Dr. A. W. Tjader --the same being gin and molasses. The Chief Page is hereby instructed to provide a spoonful of molasses, and a gallon of gin for the use of the President. 37

Twain again reported the legislature of 1864. During this session a law was passed restricting the number of notaries whom Governor Nye could appoint. Many people had sought appointments, because the position was lucrative. In a sketch "Concerning Notaries," written early in 1864, Mark ribbed the legislature and the applicants for notarial appointments. The sketch was reprinted in the Golden Era on February 28, 1864, along with a reference to Mark Twain as the "wild humorist of the Sage Brush Hills" who writes from Carson City "telling all about the Legislature, Governor Nye, and the rest of mankind at Nevada's Capital." He says:

> A strange, strange thing occurred here yesterday, to wit:
>
> A MAN APPLIED FOR A NOTARY'S COMMISSION.
>
> Think of it. Ponder over it. He wanted a notarial commission--he said so himself. He was from Storey County. He brought his little petition along with him. He brought it on two stages. It is voluminous. The County Surveyor is chaining it off. Three shifts of clerks will be employed night and day on it, decyphering the signatures and testing their genuineness. They began unrolling the petition at noon, and people

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37 Quoted in Mack, op. cit., p. 276.

> of strong mining proclivities at once commenced locating claims on it. We are too late, you know. But then they say the extensions are just as good as the original. I believe you. 38

In the course of the article Mark states that there are already seventeen-hundred and forty-two applications for notaryships on file in the governor's office. He then runs into several people with petitions who ask for his help through his influence with the governor. Eventually, he finds himself in a saloon "upon a billard table in a torpid condition," with a stranger who has sworn that he does not want a notaryship.

> . . . at last my exile rose up and muttered in a sepulchral voice, 'I feel it--O heavens, I feel it in me veins!' 'Feel what?' says I, alarmed. 'I feel it--O sainted mother! I feel--feel--a hankering to be a Notary Public!' And he tore down several yards of wall-paper, and fell to writing a petition on it. Poor devil--he had got it at last, and got it bad. I was seized with the fatal distemper a moment afterward. I wrote a petition with frantic haste, appended a copy of the Directory of the Nevada Territory to it, and we fled down the deserted streets to the Governor's office.
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> But I must draw the curtain upon these harrowing scenes--the very memory of them scorches my brain. Ah, this Legislature has much to answer for in cutting down the number of Notaries Public in this Territory, with their infernal new law. 39

Mark Twain left Nevada before the Second Constitutional Convention met in July of 1864. The new constitution was framed in less than three weeks and was overwhelmingly

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38 Quoted in Benson, op. cit., pp. 178-181.

39 Ibid., p. 181.

adopted. On October 31, 1864, President Lincoln proclaimed Nevada a state. Governor Nye and Bill Stewart became the first United States Senators while Sandy Baldwin became Nevada's United States District Judge. There were several candidates for almost all of the state offices, but Orion Clemens felt that he was sure of the post of Secretary of State. However, on the day that the Republican party convention met to name its candidates, Orion was seized with "one of his spasms of virtue" and absolutely refused to go near the convention. From the Autobiography follows Mark Twain's description of his brother's actions:

> It had been his habit for a great many years to change his religion with his shirt, and his ideas about temperance at the same time. He would be a teetotaler for a while and the champion of the cause; then he would change to the other side for a time. On nomination day he suddenly changed from a friendly attitude toward whiskey--which was the popular attitude--to uncompromising teetotalism, and went absolutely dry. His friends besought and implored, but all in vain. He could not be persuaded to cross the threshold of a saloon. The paper next morning contained the list of chosen nominees. His name was not in it. He had not received a vote. [40]

With Mark in San Francisco and Orion out of his influential position in the Territory, the prestige of the Clemens family in Nevada declined.[41]

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[40] Works, XXXVII, 318.

[41] Mack, op. cit., p. 326.

Mark Twain had an opportunity to learn about the intricacies of government while he was in Nevada. First, when he had helped Orion in getting the territorial government set up, he noticed that Washington did not seem to appreciate honesty and integrity in its public officials. Jim Nye and Bill Stewart, professional politicians, profited from their positions much more than Orion did from his. Later, as a reporter for the state legislature and for the state constitutional convention, Mark had discovered the political intrigues of the legislators through the assistance of his friends, Jack Simmons and Billy Clagget.

On the frontier Mark Twain observed the inadequacy of the jury system, the mistreatment of the Chinese, the corruption of public officials, particularly the judiciary, and was moved to ridicule these evils. He wrote humorously about the political figures and lashed out at all the injustices which he saw while in the West. His style of writing improved; he learned to tone down the burlesque and to sharpen his satire. As a successful journalist, he began to build a reputation under the pseudonym of "Mark Twain."

CHAPTER III

POLITICS AND THE GILDED AGE

While he was on the Quaker City tour, a letter came to Mark Twain offering him a post as private secretary in Washington, D. C., for Senator Stewart of Nevada. He knew the job would give him a chance to maintain his newspaper connections in the guise of a Washington correspondent, and that may be why Stewart made the offer. A popular correspondent with free entry into leading newspapers of the West would probably be useful to the Senator.[1] In November, 1867, when he returned to New York, Mark Twain remained there only one day on his way to the capital, where the arrangements were completed.

However, Twain stayed in the capacity of private secretary only a short time. (Ferguson says it was one week.) His temperament was not suited for the work, and he let Senator William Stewart with a strong dislike for the author.[2] It was not long before Mark was writing humorous accounts of "My Late Senatorial Secretaryship" and "Facts Concerning the Recent Resignation," all good-natured burlesque.[3] In the former he caricatured the noncommital

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[1] D. Ferguson, Mark Twain, Man and Legend, p. 137.

[2] Ibid., p. 137. [3] Works, XXXI, 478-479.

letters with which congressmen are wont to pacify the demands of their constituents back home, by seeming to promise everything while actually promising nothing. In the articles he named Senator Nye as his employer, for Jim Nye could take a joke, but Bill Stewart could not.[4]

Twain's winter in Washington well acquainted him with life there, its political intrigues, and the disrepute of Congress. Mark was very popular socially and was also well liked as a reporter. His sense of humor, entertaining conversation, and lovable personality made him much in demand. He began a regular contract with the New York Tribune and the Herald. Twain was elected to the Correspondents' Club soon after he arrived, and within one month after his return to America he was an accepted member of a group of influential and nationally known journalists.[5] Some biographers feel that he might have settled permanently into this type of work as a humorous commentator on national affairs if something bigger had not come along.

This was an epoch of industrial pioneering in the United States. The whole energy of the American people was absorbed in the exploitation of the material resources of the continent.[6] Business enterprise was virtually the only recognized sphere of action. According to most historians,

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[4]Ferguson, on. cit., p. 138. [5]Ibid., p. 137.

[6]V. F. Calverton, The Liberation of American Literature, p. 326.

the pursuit of wealth became a sacred duty. People gave up their individual tastes and beliefs to follow the herd. Speculation, lobbying, and greed were rampant in Washington. Mark Twain saw evidences of all this during his short stay there, and he developed a disillusioned attitude toward Congress and politicians, in general. He refused a post with Mr. Fairbanks as political editor of the Cleveland Herald in 1869, because he said he "hated" politics.

When in 1871 Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner surveyed the ground for a novel of their time, they decided that the title The Gilded Age covered their view of the social structure from top to bottom.

> In the guise of fiction they displayed the new plutocrats, ignorant in mind and vulgar of tongue, assuming the airs of the grand style, a raw, rough, uncouth nation obsessed by the acquisitive passion; a scrawny country of villages striving to rival New York and Chicago with the aid of congressional plunder; corrupt politicians municipal, state, and national; given to high sounding verbalism and low pillage; the roaring mobs of great cities fed on murder and scandal by a sensational press— an unlovely mess without beauty and prospect of taste.[7]

Mark Twain had hit upon the stupidity of Congress as early as The Innocents Abroad, but there has never been a more appalling picture of government corruption than The Gilded Age. Charles Dudley Warner and Twain make the following statement in the preface:

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[7] C. A. Beard and Mary Beard, The Rise of American Civilization, II, 436-437.

> It will be seen that this book deals with an entirely ideal state of society; and the chief embarrassment of the writers in this realm of the imagination has been the want of illustrative examples. In a State where there is no fever of speculation, no inflamed desire for sudden wealth, where the poor are all simple-minded and contented, and the rich are all honest and generous, where society is in a state of primitive purity and politics is the occupation of only the capable and the patriotic, there are necessarily no materials for such a history as we have constructed out of an ideal commonwealth.[8]

In The Gilded Age all the open bribery and the black corruption were brought to light. Every individual in public employment inside the Capitol represented political influence. Mere merit, fitness, and capability were useless baggage without influence. The definition of Washington was given as follows: "There is something good and motherly about Washington, the grand old benevolent National Asylum for the Helpless."[9]

Most of the people in the capital city were there to receive some kind of handout; therefore, the atmosphere around Congress was always tense and charged with secret promise:

> Love, travel, even death itself waited on the chances of the dies daily thrown in the two Houses and the committee rooms there. Love could ripen into marriage, and longing for travel would have fruition; and it must have been only eternal hope springing in the breast that kept alive numerous old claimants who for years and years had beseiged

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[8] Works, V, Preface, xxi.

[9] Ibid., p. 239.

> the doors of Congress, and who looked as if they needed not so much an appropriation of money as six feet of ground. And those who stood waiting for success to bring them death were usually those who had a just claim. 10

The tie-up among speculators, lobbyists, and Washington politicians was minutely detailed. For example, an original appropriation of two hundred thousand dollars was spent in paying off House committees, Senate committees, and lobbyists, with a "high moral Congressman or Senator here and there--the high moral ones cost more, because they give tone to a measure."[11]

Colonel Sellers was hurt when Washington Hawkins suggested that he ought to be in Congress:

> I have always been a friend of your family, Washington, and I think I have always tried to do right as between man and man, according to my lights. Now I don't think there has ever been anything in my conduct that should make you feel justified in saying a thing like that. 12

Mark Twain, at heart a moralist, believed that the Congress should be populated with men of high morals since the business of a nation was of first importance. The fact that the opposite was too often true made him singularly unhappy.

The authors also presented the complete pattern of the ward-heel system in which the candidates are picked according

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10 Works, VI, 126.

11 Works, V, 277.

12 Works, VI, 209.

their bootlicking service to the party rulers. They made clear, however, that the public was to blame.

> The publicans and their retainers rule the ward meetings (for everybody else hates the worry of politics and stays at home); the delegates from the ward meeting make up a list of candidates--and then the great meek public come forward at the proper time and make unhampered choice and bless Heaven that they live in a free land where no form of despotism can intrude. 13

The history of two fictitious Congressmen is related in The Gilded Age as being typical of politicians of the period. One, Patrique Oreille, was a wealthy Frenchman from Cork, who, incidentally, was poor when he arrived in America--illegally. He became a hod carrier and voted the Democratic ticket; evenings, he studied politics. Soon he had a foul rum shop and with it, some political influence.

A little later Patrick O'Riley (as he was then called) gained more political influence because he would always give straw bail or an alibi for his customers if they had been caught beating anyone to death on his premises. Next, O'Riley obtained a petty city government office and presently had enough money to open a stylish saloon and faro bank uptown. The position of alderman, which was forced upon him, proved a gold mine; soon he had many houses and carriages and closed up the liquor mill.

O'Riley then became a large contractor and a friend to the great William M. Weed,

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[13] Ibid., p. 17.

> . . . who had stolen $20,000,000 from the city and was a man so envied, so honored, so adored, indeed, that when the sheriff went to his office to arrest him as a felon, that he 'blushed and apologized,' and one of the illustrated papers made a picture of the scene and spoke of the matter in such a way as to show that the editor regretted that the offense of an arrest had been offered to so exalted a personage as Mr. Weed. [14]

Mr. O'Riley's fortunes rose when he furnished shingle nails to the new court house at three thousand dollars a keg, and sixty-cent thermometers at fifteen hundred dollars a dozen. After receiving a large diamond pin from his admirers, Mr. O'Riley retired from active service and amused himself by buying up real estate in other people's names. When the newspapers exposed O'Riley, the people rose as one man and elected him and Weed to their proper theatre of action, the New York Legislature.

The newspapers demanded a trial, and the authors deseribe the procedure:

> Our admirable jury system enabled the persecuted ex-officials to secure a jury of nine gentlemen from the neighboring asylum and three graduates from Sing Sing, and presently they walked forth with characters vindicated. The legislature was called upon to spew them forth--a thing which the legislature declined to do. It was like asking children to repudiate their own father. It was a legislature of the modern pattern. [15]

The second Congressional figure was a little newspaper editor from a small town "who was the menial of every

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[14] Ibid., p. 18.

[15] Ibid., p. 19.

tradesman in the village and under bonds to him for frequent 'puffs,' except the undertaker, about whose employment he was recklessly facetious."[16] But in Washington he was quite an important man, being correspondent and clerk for two house committees, a "worker" in politics, and a confident critic of every woman and man in Washington.

> He would be a consul, no doubt, by and by, at some foreign port, of the language of which he was ignorant; though, if ignorance of language were a qualification, he might have been consul at home. His easy familiarity with great men was beautiful to see, and when Philip Sterling (a Washington neophyte) learned what a tremendous underground influence this little ignoramus had, he no longer wondered at the queer appointments and queerer legislation. 17

One of the privileges all Congressmen enjoy is that of franking. Laura reported to Senator Dilworthy that she had seen Senator Balloon packing a number of large dry goods boxes with all manner of old clothes. She went on to suggest that he would probably paint "Pub. Docs." on them since that was good economy. The Senator answers, "Yes, yes; but child, all Congressmen do that. It may not be strictly honest; indeed, it is not unless he had some public documents mixed in with the clothes."[18]

Abuse of the franking privilege gets further satire as revealed in a conversation between Hicks and Sellers

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16 Ibid., p. 127. 17 Ibid., p. 127. 18 Ibid., p. 42.

concerning Balloon. The latter, besides normally abusing this privilege, also puts fifteen cents worth of stamps on his boxes of old clothes and thereby contrives to make the government responsible for his rubbish. This humbuggery elicits open-mouthed admiration from Hicks and Sellers, and the former says:

> I think there is more real talent among our public men of today than there was among those of old times--a far more fertile fancy, a much happier ingenuity. Now Colonel, can you picture Jefferson, or Washington, or John Adams franking their wardrobes through the mails and adding the facetious idea of making the government responsible for the cargo for the sum of one dollar and five cents? Statesmen were dull in those days. I have a much greater admiration for Senator Balloon. 19

Sellers agrees, and he and Hicks discuss admiringly how Balloon had once cheated the ignorant Indians and had given the graft to his brother-in-law. The Colonel concludes that the Senate is full of Balloons and that few countries in the world are so blessed. Hicks agrees completely, and he also concludes in the following words:

> To be sure, you can buy now and then a Senator or Representative; but they do not know it is wrong, and so they are not ashamed of it. They are gentle and confiding and childlike, and in my opinion, these are qualities which ennoble them far more than any sinful sagacity could. I quite agree with you, Col. Sellers. 20

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19 Ibid., p. 44.

20 Ibid., p. 46.

Mark Twain also creates another incident in The Gilded Age, furnishing himself with ammunition for satire against members of Congress when he portrays the indignation that Mr. Biglar, a political lobbyist, feels when an honest Senator is actually elected. He says petulantly to his colleague, Mr. Bolton: "Things have got pretty mixed up when a legislature will give away a United States Senatorship."[21]

Perhaps the most sickeningly realistic caricature of a United States Senator in The Gilded Age is that of Senator Dilworthy when he goes about electioneering for his next term of office. During this time, the Senator turns his attention to spiritual matters; he attends church, takes a leading part in prayer meetings, and faithfully attends Sunday School. In a talk to the Sunday School in the miserable hamlet of Cattleville, Dilworthy makes the following statement:

> That poor little boy that loved his Sunday-School became that man (United States Senator). That man stands before you! All that he is, he owes to his Sunday-School. My precious children, love your parents, love your teachers, love your Sunday-School, be pious, be obedient, be honest, be diligent, and then you will succeed in life and be honored of all men. Above all things be pure-minded as the snow. Let us join in prayer. [22]

That same night Dilworthy buys off his rival. When his opponent charges him with bribery, the Senator reacts with

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[21] Ibid., p. 168.

[22] Ibid., p. 220.

admirable good sense. He puts into practice a plan long used by public servants who are so accused. His strategy is threefold: (1) he asks for a suspension of public opinion; (2) he moves to Washington, demands an investigation, and organizes his colleagues for an assault on his accuser; (3) he lies on the stand at the trial and asks "mercy" for his accuser. The result is--nothing, as usual.[23]

The outcome of these Congressional trials was summarized as follows:

> They just say 'charge not proven.' It leaves the accused in a kind of shaky condition before the country, it purifies Congress, it satisfies everybody, and it doesn't seriously hurt anybody. It has taken a long time to perfect our system, but it is the most admirable in the world now.[24]

Colonel Sellers boasted, "There is no country in the world whose representatives try each other as much as ours do, or stick to it as long at a stretch. I think there is something great in being a model for the whole civilized world."[25]

Ferguson states that if The Gilded Age had merely pictured the tie-up between speculators, lobbyists, and politicians whereby government grants on a huge scale were obtained for the benefit of private individuals and corporations, it would have been an excellent book. Instead

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[23] Ibid., pp. 276-298. [24] Ibid., p. 204. [25] Ibid., p. 203.

it hawked at everything from Washington society at large to the illiterate bookstore clerks. "What might have been a high-powered bullet piercing to the heart of a corrupt political system, became a charge of bird-shot which peppered at everything in sight but left no permanent scars."[26]

The account of the "Gilded Age" given by leading historians coincides with the picture drawn by Clemens and Warner. The southern profiteers lost most of their ill-gotten gains, but the northern capitalists grew fat on Caesar's meat.[27] The Civil War corruption in high places, the cold and cynical profiteering, the reckless extravagance were odious to a large number of people, especially to a group of intellectuals including James Russell Lowell, George William Curtis, and Edwin L. Godkin. The scandals became so unbearable that a group calling themselves the Liberal Republicans broke away from the party in 1872 and united with the Democrats favoring Horace Greeley as a candidate. They met such a humiliating disaster at the polls in their desperate effort to prevent the reelection of Grant that many of them returned to the Republican fold.

Nook Farm, Mark Twain's home from 1871 to 1891, remained prevailingly Republican after the war. Many of the

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[26] Ferguson, op. cit., p. 170.

[27] Beard and Beard, op. cit., p. 94.

residents relaxed their wartime interests in national political affairs and concentrated on local contests for Senate seats or for the governorship. However, Harriet Beecher Stowe and Charles Dudley Warner carefully watched the Reconstruction and protested against the harsh treatment of the South.[28]

Republicanism was the only party in Hartford for two reasons. First, the Democrats had accepted slavery, and next, the Democratic Party catered to the ignorant, uneducated workingmen and to the immigrants who came to work in the factories in Hartford.[29] The rise of theoretical communism in Europe also led the Nook Farm community away from the radical Republicanism of the late 1850's, and the group became generally conservative.

During his first five years in Hartford, Mark Twain was not particularly interested in party politics; despite his personal devotion to General Grant, he stayed aloof from political campaigns. In 1875 he wrote to Orion that the era of corruption was not Republican or Democratic, but national, and he named a number of "moral ulcers" (among them was Henry Ward Beecher). "Politics are not going to cure moral ulcers like these nor the decaying body they fester on."[30]

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[28] K. R. Andrews, Nook Farm, Mark Twain's Hartford Circle, p. 110.

[29] Ibid., p. 111. [30] Quoted in Andrews, op. cit., p. 112.

About this time Mark Twain began to exhibit his more serious side in the advocacy of public reforms. His paper on "Universal Suffrage" sounded a note, and his copyright petitions were of the same spirit. In later years he said that he had always felt it was his mission to teach and to carry the banner of moral reconstruction, and at forty years of age, there is evidence of this inclination.[31] In the Atlantic for October, 1875, there was published an unsigned three-page article entitled "The Curious Republic of Gondour." The Republic of Gondour was a Utopia where a plan had been established to base the voting privilege on intellectual qualifications and on the amount of property that each person had. The intellectual group was to be a check on the wealthy; mortal votes were based on money and property; immortal votes, on intellect and education. Office-holders would be required to pass competitive examinations, and their selection would be based upon high character and good education.

In this paper we see a more nearly perfect type of democracy contrasted with the present one which, to Mark Twain, "seemed to deliver all the power into the hands of ignorant and non-paying classes," and whose responsible

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31 Works, XXXI, 554.

officers were, of necessity, "filled from these classes also."[32] In Gondour, however, property, character, and intellect were able to wield political influence, and

> . . . for once, money, virtue, and intelligence took a vital and united interest in a political question. For once, the powers went to the primaries in strong force; for once, the best men in the nation were put forward as candidates for that parliament whose business it should be to enlarge the suffrage. 33

Seeing that universal suffrage was impractical, the people of Gondour enlarged their suffrage and gave each man from one to ten potential votes, depending upon his education and property wealth. More votes might be had for possessing an education with no wealth than for possessing wealth with no education. Therefore,

> . . . learning, being more prevalent and more easily acquired than riches, educated men became a wholesome check upon wealthy men, since they could outvote them. Learning usually goes with uprightness, broad views, and humanity; so the learned voters, possessing the balance of power, became the vigilant and efficient protectors of the great rank of society. 34

The results of such a system were so significant that one could not easily ignore them. In noting these results, Mark Twain makes a left-hand sally at one of our own dubious practices:

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[32] S. L. Clemens, "The Curious Republic of Gondour," Representative Selections (edited by F. L. Pattee), pp. 407-413.

[33] Ibid., p. 407.

[34] Ibid., p. 408.

> . . . incompetence and inefficiency had no place in the government. Brains and property managed the state. A candidate for office must have marked ability, education, and high character, or he stood no sort of chance of election. If a hod-carrier possessed these, he could succeed, but the mere fact that he was a hod-carrier could not elect him, as in previous times. 35

As he continues his praise of the Gondourian office-holding system, Twain declares that, in Gondour, to be an office holder was actually an honor, whereas,

> . . . under the old system such distinction had only brought suspicion upon a man and made him a helpless mark for newspaper contempt and scurrility. Officials did not need to steal now, their salaries being vast in comparison with the pittances paid in the days when parliaments were created by hod-carriers, who viewed official salaries from a hod-carrying point of view and compelled that view to be respected by their obsequious servants. Justice was wisely and rigidly administered; for a judge, after once reaching his place through the specified line of promotions, was a permanency during good behavior. He was not obliged to modify his judgments according to the effect that they might have upon the temper of a reigning political party. 36

Even the minor officials were honest, and they, too, advanced through well-earned promotions, "and not by a jump from gin-mills or the needy families and friends of members of parliament."[37]

The judiciary in Gondour consisted of several judges rather than one, such as we have--the theory being that several judges are more difficult to corrupt than only one. He reminisces sadly that, under the old regime, this

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35 Ibid., p. 410. 36 Ibid., p. 411. 37 Ibid., p. 411.

important power was vested in a single official, and "he usually took care to have a general jail delivery in time for the next election."[38]

After a brief discussion of the educational system employed in Gondour, wherein the free public schools and colleges were always overflowing, Mark Twain ends his essay on a patriotic note. He becomes weary of his host's way of speaking because the voice had a "loving pride of country" in it which was annoying. Besides, "The Gondour national airs were forever dinning in my ears; therefore, I was glad to leave that country and come back to my dear native land, where one never hears that sort of music."[39]

In a paper before the Monday Evening Club in Hartford Twain had urged woman suffrage. He sincerely believed that the teaching of good citizenship would raise the standards of politics. Mark also thought that women would get rid of the political scum and that a candidate selected by women would be fit to vote for.

> Our marvelous latter-day statesmanship has invented universal suffrage. That is the finest feather in our cap. All that we require of a voter is that he . . . wear pantaloons instead of petticoats and bear a more or less humorous resemblance of God. He need not know anything. He may be a scoundrel. If he can steer clear of the penitentiary, his vote will be as

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[38] Ibid., p. 411.

[39] Ibid., p. 413.

> weighty as that of a president, a bishop, a college professor or a merchant prince. We brag of our universal unrestricted suffrage; but we are shams, after all, for we restrict when we come to women.[40]

Mark Twain wanted equality between the sexes--something not realized until a decade following his death. He thought that equality between the sexes was one sign of the civilized state, and conversely, that the absence of such equality was a sure sign of savagery. He once said, "We are so stupid that we can't see that we thus plainly admit that no civilization can be perfect until exact equality between man and woman is included."[41] In a speech called "Votes for Women" he remarked, "I should like to see the time come when women shall help make the laws. I should like to see that whip-lash, the ballot, in the hands of women."[42]

A curious perversity asserted itself when the American citizen prepared to utilize his noble right to vote.

> There are two kinds of Christian morals, one private and the other public. These two are so distinct, so unrelated, that they are no more akin to each other than are archangels and politicians. During three hundred and sixty-three days in the year, the American citizen is true to his Christian private morals, and keeps undefiled the nation's character and highest principles; then, in the other two days of the year he leaves his Christian private morals at home and carries

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[40] Works, XXXI, 541-542.

[41] Mark Twain's Notebook, edited by A. B. Paine, p. 256.

[42] Works, XXVIII, 223-224.

> his Christian public morals to the tax office and to the polls, and does the best he can to damage and undo his whole year's faithful and righteous work.[43]

The practice of choosing public officials from only two or three major political parties was tyrannical, for it was not parties that saved countries or built them to greatness. Rather, Twain thought, it was clean citizens from the rank and file who were interested in clean government. As Mark put it, "I think a man's first duty is to his own honor, not to his country and not to his party"[44] and ". . . no country can be well governed unless its citizens as a body keep religiously before their minds that they are the guardians of the law, and that the law officers are only machinery for its execution, nothing more."[45]

The Tilden-Hayes election of 1876 woke Mark Twain and the rest of the Hartford community to intense concern over Republican fortunes. In regard to the presidential campaign, on August 9, 1876, Mark wrote to W. D. Howells, "Get your book out quick, for this is a momentous time. If Tilden is elected, I think the entire country will go pretty straight to--Mrs. Howells' bad place." Howells promptly wrote again, urging Clemens to enter the campaign for Hayes. "There is not another man in this country," Howells said,

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[43] Works, XXVIII, 276-277.

[44] Works, XXXV, 445.

[45] Works, V, 291.

"who could help him so much as you." Mark replied on August 23, 1876:

> I am glad you think I could do Hayes any good, for I have been wanting to write a letter or make a speech to that end. I'll be careful not to do, either, however, until the opportunity comes in a natural, justifiable and unlugged way. . . When a humorist ventures upon the grave concerns of life he must do his job better than another man or he works harm to the cause. [46]

Later Twain presided at a political rally and made a speech on civil service reform which was the most widely quoted of the campaign. Regardless of party affiliations, nearly all of the papers quoted the speech, and the readers thoroughly enjoyed it.

There was a dispute which raged for months over the returns while the fate of the two candidates was undecided. Finally, Congress submitted the matter to a committee of fifteen men. Eight were Republicans, and the election was awarded to Hayes. Mark Twain, Twichell, and Warner watched the fraudulent counts and recounts and were fervently thankful and inclined to ask no questions when Hayes was installed in March of 1877 with no uprising.[47]

In the same year there was an uprising of railroad workers to protest the fourth ten per cent cut in the

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[46] Works, XXXIV, 283.

[47] Andrews, op. cit., p. 113.

railroad industry in seven years. One hundred thousand men went on strike, and the number of unemployed reached four million. Mark Twain began to reconsider his earlier ideas of restricting the vote of the laboring classes. He began to reassess his own attitude toward suffrage and later actually progressed from a reactionary viewpoint to a final questioning of capitalism itself.[48] Sympathy for the downtrodden and oppressed modified his theoretical Republicanism and made him receptive to political development during the next few years.

Mark Twain was an ardent Republican campaigner after the nomination of Garfield in 1880. He addressed a local rally in Hartford with Henry C. Robinson and Charles Dudley Warner. Mark happily welcomed his old hero, U. S. Grant, to the city and helped him urge the people of Hartford to elect the Republican candidate. The city was very much in favor of Garfield, and in 1881 when he was shot by a disappointed office seeker, the grief was almost as deep as that for Lincoln.[49]

There was a great deal of turmoil in the community in 1884 when Blaine won the Republican nomination. Mark, Henry C. Robinson, Charles E. Perkins, E. M. Bunce, and F. G. Whitmore were in the billiard room at a regular meeting of

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[48] Ibid., p. 114.

[49] Ibid., p. 115.

the Friday Evening Club, when the news was announced. Joe Twichell and Mark said they were determined not to vote for Blaine. Earlier Twichell had disapproved of Blaine when the latter had sponsored anti-Chinese bills in Congress. The following statement was made by Mark Twain about his choice:

> No party holds the privilege of dictating to me how I shall vote. If loyalty to party is a form of patriotism, I am no patriot. If there is any valuable difference between a monarchist and an American, it lies in the theory that the American can decide for himself what is patriotic and what isn't. I claim that difference. I am the only person in sixty millions that is privileged to dictate my patriotism. 50

It was such a bitter campaign that politics divided neighbors, families, and congregations. The problem for Hartford was that of voting for a Republican with a record of dishonesty or for Cleveland, a Democrat with a mistress. Mark vigorously campaigned in Hartford, presided at mass meetings, and made political speeches which invited the laughter of both parties. He argued his point also in letters to friends. The majority of thinking men who held principle above party in their choice were against Blaine, but when he was nominated, most of them decided to stay with the party. Twain delivered a paper to the Monday Evening Club in which he stated, "The atrocious doctrine of allegiance to party plays directly into the hands of politicans of the

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50 Works, XXXI, 779.

baser sort."[51] Presiding at Mugwump rallies in the fall of 1884, Twain ridiculed Hartford for using long range party loyalty as a justification for voting Republican. He criticized Hawley and Warner for eating crow in their paper and for planning to vote for Blaine, whom they privately despised.

Mark and Twichell signed an "Appeal to the Republican Voters of Connecticut," which cited five charges against Blaine and made the following statement: "His defeat may save our party, by freeing it from the control of the camp followers and office-seekers, who have too often dictated its policy."[52]

Mark Twain voted for Grover Cleveland, although Paine says, up to the eve of the election, he was ready to support a Republican nominee in whom he had faith. Hartford voted for Blaine, but the "Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion" slogan defeated him nationally. When the returns were in Mark was jubilant, and he stated in his autobiography that this election "confirmed the political independence in which he found a spiritual comfort and a peace of mind quite above price."[53] The entire campaign had stirred more

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[51] Andrews, op. cit., p. 116.

[52] Ibid., p. 115.

[53] Works, XXXVII, 15.

voters to think about political affairs than any since 1876, and it defined the Hartford prejudice against sexual transgression as stronger than its considerable aversion to corrupt politicians. It crystallized the community's unrest under the national record of public dishonesty.[54]

Many faults and evidences of corruption in his country's political system were seen by Twain. He often advocated a plan for a "Casting Vote Party" whose main object was to compel the two great parties to nominate their best man. This was to be an organization of a large number of clubs throughout the nation. No member should seek or accept a nomination for office in any political appointment, but in each case should cast his vote for the candidate of one of the two parties, requiring that the man be of clean record and of honest purpose. This was one of Twain's Utopian ideas full of native optimism, but this faith left him in the latter part of his life. The closing lines of his proposed plan contain unselfish hope:

> If in the hands of men who regard their citizenship as a high trust this scheme shall fail upon trial, a better must be sought, a better must be invented; for it cannot be well or safe to let the present political conditions continue indefinitely. They can be improved, and American citizenship should arouse up from its disheartenment and see that it is done. [55]

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[54] Andrews, op. cit., p. 115.

[55] Works, XXXII, 1148.

Mark Twain entered the campaign for the mayoralty of New York City in the fall of 1901 to try to defeat Tammany Hall. He both wrote and spoke in favor of clean city government and police reform. He joined a society called The Acorns and delivered a denunciatory speech against Croker, the Tammany leader. Hundreds of thousands of copies of this Acorn speech were printed and circulated. The original "Edmund Burke on Croker and Tammany" had been written as an article for the North American Review. Twain joined a procession that marched up Broadway and made another speech against Edward M. Shepard, the Tammany candidate. The campaign was a success, and Tammany was defeated. One of the papers ran this poem.

> Who killed Croker?
> I, said Mark Twain,
> I killed Croker,
> I, the Jolly Joker![56]

Mark Twain was without personal political ambitions. He early discouraged a movement to name a political party after him. When the writer of a New York newspaper asked in an editorial, "Who is our ablest and most conspicuous private citizen?" Joseph Hallister replied that Mark Twain was "the greatest man of his day in private life, and entitled to the fullest measure of recognition."[57] Twain replied only with

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[56] Ibid., p. 1147.

[57] Ibid., p. 1201.

a word of thanks, and did not, even in jest, encourage that tiny seed of a Presidential boom. He has been called a knight-errant, because his sole purpose for being in politics was to do what he could for the betterment of his people.

CHAPTER IV

POLITICS AND SLAVERY

Slavery had a profound influence upon American life ~~From 1820 to 1860~~, and the Civil War and Reconstruction extended its effects throughout the lifetime of Mark Twain. This period in American history had two major characteristics. The first was the rapid growth and expansion, for the frontier of settlement which in 1820 touched Lake Erie, ran across Ohio, southern Indiana and Illinois and into Missouri, and then sharply back to middle Tennessee and Alabama, had by 1860 reached Minnesota, Kansas, Nebraska, Arkansas, Texas and had jumped to the Pacific.[1]

A second characteristic of the period was the sharp development of sectionalism. Throughout the middle period of the nineteenth century the sections of the United States struggled to secure from a common central government legislation favorable to their varied and conflicting interests. Slavery was the most outstanding of these conflicting interests. The leaders of each section sought combinations with other sections and fanned sectional consciousness to new heat.[2]

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[1] Avery Craven, The Coming of the Civil War, p. 3.

[2] Ibid., p. 10.

Bitterness increased with each sectional conflict; feelings became more intense until at last compromise was no longer possible.

Unparalleled expansion only served to magnify and intensify sectional differences and to raise the question of Constitutional rights in the spread of slavery to the new territory. Political parties became sectional, rather than national in character. From 1840 to 1860 every presidential campaign involved the slavery question.

Aristocrats or large plantation owners in the South were not numerous. In 1860 only 48,566 persons held twenty or more slaves--a number sufficient to have constituted a plantation force or to have required an overseer.[3] The great body of Southerners belonged to the middle class in both an economic and a social sense. Some of these Southerners acquired a few slaves to help them, using them much as hired help was used elsewhere. Gradually, under the Northern attack on slavery and slaveholders, the large group of middle-class Southern people came to defend the interests and institutions of the comparatively few aristocrats at the top and to permit them to symbolize all southern values.[4] The presence of the Negro made a race problem and made the determination to keep this region a white man's country the central theme of Southern history, for the South was ever race-conscious.[5]

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[3] Ibid., p. 28. [4] Ibid., p. 29. [5] Ibid., p. 32.

Mark Twain's recognition of these conditions is indicated by his statement in A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court that the poverty-stricken subjects of feudal England reminded him of the economic conditions of his own country:

> The 'poor whites' of our South who were always despised and frequently insulted by the slave-lords around them, and who owed their base condition simply to the presence of slavery in their midst, were yet pusillanimously ready to side with the slave-lords in all political moves for the upholding and perpetuating of slavery, and did also finally shoulder their muskets and pour out their lives in an effort to prevent the destruction of that very institution which degraded them.[6]

The first indication that slavery might become a sectional issue appeared in the debates in Congress over the Missouri Compromise. The anti-slavery movement was divided into two distinct centers of action. One developed in the industrial areas of New England led by William Lloyd Garrison. The result of the Garrison movement was that hatred of the South supplanted love of the Negro.[7]

The other group of anti-slavery workers centered in upper New York and the farther Northwest and was directed by Theodore Weld. The latter group believed in action, so anti-slavery soon organized a political party and launched a propaganda campaign. The Wilmot Proviso, the Compromise

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[6] Works, XIV, 298.

[7] Craven, op. cit., p. 138.

of 1850, the Dred Scott decision, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the Lincoln-Douglas debates all express slavery as a political issue. The movement against slavery had been taken out of the hands of those idealists who had started it and turned over to the politicians.

The Republican Party could draw to its support all the moral forces behind the opposition to slavery and phrase its political programs in terms of "right" and "wrong." It could also represent the material interests of the sections now in conflict with the South.[8] Abraham Lincoln regarded the Republican Party, rather than the pro-slavery Democrats, as the true exponents of Jefferson's doctrine of putting "the man before the dollar." Yet within twenty years after Lincoln's assassination his own political brethren, having meanwhile entered into a partnership with Big Business, had reversed the emphasis between man and dollar.[9]

Mark Twain was not at the time mature enough either in mind or moral outlook to sense the true meaning of the struggle.[10] He was involved very briefly in the Civil War in 1861 when as a loyal son of Missouri, he enrolled in a Confederate regiment. His active service lasted only about

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[8] Ibid., p. 226.

[9] A. Schlesinger, Paths to the Present, p. 80.

[10] W. C. S. Pellowe, Pilgrim from Hannibal, p. 195.

two weeks, and he spent the remaining war years in Nevada where the conflict seemed remote. After going West, he joined the rest of his family in becoming pro-Union. Twain has been called a de-Southernized Southerner, a Republican, and a person who was completely northern in his attitude. He was not strictly any of these, because he had grown up in the ante-bellum South where slavery was accepted as an institution. He had a deep sympathy for and an understanding of the colored race. Twain's hatred for the institution of slavery was very deep and bitter, but he did not completely condemn the South. He understood the situation there, for in Hannibal the Negroes had been content with their status and fairly well treated. A slave was very seldom separated from his family, and a "nigger trader was loathed by everybody."[11]

Sam Clemens said he never forgot the sight of a coffle of slaves in Hannibal, lying on the pavement waiting shipment down the river, with the "saddest faces I have ever seen."[12] Mark's writings reveal his thoughts on the slavery question. For example, elsewhere in his Autobiography he refers to slavery as "a bald, grotesque, and unwarrantable usurpation."[13] Slavery harmed not only the slave himself,

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[11] Works, XXXVI, 124.

[12] Ibid., p. 124.

[13] Ibid., p. 125.

but Twain believed that "it stupefied everybody's humanity," as several of the quotations from his published works will show.

Being sold "down the river" was a fate worse than death. In Puddn'head Wilson when the slaves who had stolen a small amount of money from Percy Driscoll were told they would be sold locally instead of to a slave trader, they were overjoyed and kissed Driscoll's feet. The author explained, "They were sincere, for like a god he had stretched forth his mighty hand and closed the gates of hell against them."[14]

In explaining the petty thievery of the slaves, Twain said, "They had an unfair show in the battle of life, and they held it no sin to take military advantage of the enemy --in a small way. . ."[15] He continues, saying that the Negro "is perfectly sure that in taking this trifle from the man who daily robbed him of an inestimable treasure--his liberty --he was not committing any sin that God would remember against him in the last Great Day."[16]

After Roxy's son had sold her down the river and she had managed to escape, she explained the plantation system:

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[14] Works, XVI, 17.

[15] Ibid., p. 15.

[16] Ibid., p. 16.

> Dat overseer wuz a Yank, too, outen New Englan'; en anybody down South kin tell you what dat mean. Dey knows how to work a nigger to death, en dey knows how to whale 'em, too--whale 'em till dey backs is welted like a washboard. 17

William Dean Howells said, "No man more perfectly sensed and more entirely abhorred slavery. . . ."[18] The practice of the ministers' justifying slavery by the Bible was merely a means of denying human rights to an oppressed race. Mark Twain made this statement in his Autobiography:

> In my schoolboy days I had no aversion to slavery. I was not aware that there was anything wrong about it. No one arraigned it in my hearing; the local papers said nothing against it; the local pulpit taught us that God approved it, that it was a holy thing, and that the doubter need only look in the Bible if he wished to settle his mind--and then the texts were read aloud to us to make the matter sure; if the slaves themselves had an aversion to slavery, they were wise and said nothing. 19

Mark's father had always owned slaves, and his mother accepted the institution as "righteous and sacred," because she had heard it upheld in the pulpit. Jane Clemens was a very kind-hearted woman; therefore, she tempered the operations of the system with a kindly heart.[20] When Mark complained about the singing of the little slave boy who worked for the family in Hannibal, his mother said,

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[17] Ibid., pp. 152-153.

[18] W.D. Howells, My Mark Twain, p. 35. [19] Works, XXXVI, 101.

[20] D. Wecter, Sam Clemens of Hannibal, p. 74.

> 'Think; he is sold away from his mother; she is in Maryland, a thousand miles from here, and he will never see her again, poor thing. When he is singing it is a sign that he is not grieving; the noise of it drives me almost distracted, but I am always listening and always thankful; it would break my heart if Sandy should stop singing.' 21

On the treatment of slaves, in Mark Twain's Notebook he explains that cuffing was the usual way of explaining one's desires to a slave, and that these cuffs were never resented. Seeing a white man hitting a native bell-hop in India, Mark said,

> I hadn't seen the like of this for fifty years. It carried me back to my boyhood....I was able to remember that the method seemed right and natural in those days. I being born to it and unaware that elsewhere there were other methods; but I was also able to remember that those unresented cuffings made me sorry for the victim and ashamed for the punisher. My father was a refined and kindly gentleman, very grave, rather austere, and of rigid probity, a sternly just and upright man....He punished me only twice and the other members of the family not at all....yet he commonly cuffed our harmless slave boy Lewis for any little blunder or awkwardness and even gave him a lashing now and then, which terrified the poor thing nearly out of his wits. My father had passed his life among his slaves, from his cradle up, and his cuffings proceeded from the customs of the times, not from his nature. 22

In a similar passage in the original script of Following the Equator Judge Clemens had lashed Lewis, but in the margin Livy had penciled, "I hate to have your father pictured as lashing a slave boy."

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21 Works, XXXVI, 101-102.

22 Mark Twain's Notebook, edited by A. B. Paine, pp. 270-271.

Mark Twain replied, "It's out, and my father is whitewashed."[23]

John M. Clemens in 1841 had sat on a Circuit Court jury at Palmyra and sent to the penitentiary for twelve years three abolitionists, who had tried to help five slaves escape. Years later Mark Twain wrote "A Scrap of Curious History," about the way in which martyrdom nourished the cause of abolition in Missouri in the 1840's.[24] Also in that year Clemens had made a long trip, expecting to sell a slave, Charley, in New Orleans or Vicksburg, but he could not get enough for the Negro. The judge had written a letter home telling of his plans, and when Mark Twain saw the letter in the family papers many years later, he commented wryly on his father's mention of Charley as if the man had been

> an ox--and somebody else's ox. It makes a body homesick for Charley, even after fifty years. Thank God I have no recollection of him as house servant of ours; that is to say, playmate of mine; for I was playmate to all the niggers, preferring their society to that of the elect, I being a person of low-down tastes from the start, notwithstanding my high birth, and ever ready to forsake the communion of high souls if I could strike anything nearer my grade.[25]

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[23] Wecter, op. cit., p. 73.

[24] Ibid., p. 74.

[25] Quoted in Wecter, op. cit., p. 75.

When the finances of the Clemenses were in such straitened circumstances, it was necessary to sell Jennie, the slave girl who had served as "Mammy" to Mark and the younger children. She had been a "sassy" Negro and had been whipped a time or two by Judge Clemens. Mark Twain paid the tuition through Yale for at least one Negro student as his part of the reparation due from every white to every black man.[26]

The tragic irony of these relations between black slaves and white masters might never have revealed itself to Sam Clemens' mind if he had not spent several summers at his uncle's farm.[27] His own family had grown too poor to own slaves after Sam was seven or eight years old, but at John Quarles' farm there were many Negroes whom the boy grew to know and love. "It was on the farm that I got my strong liking for his race and my appreciation of certain of its fine qualities," Mark said in speaking of Uncle Dan'l, his model for Nigger Jim.[28] The children were entertained with old tales, gossip, and superstition, so that they believed in spells, charms, and bad-luck signs. Many examples of Negro folklore appear in Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn.

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[26] Howells, op. cit., p. 35.

[27] Wecter, op. cit., p. 99.

[28] Works, XXVI, 100.

Besides Nigger Jim, Roxy is Twain's best-known Negro character, and probably the strongest woman in any of his books. In Pudd'nhead Wilson she has changed places with her own baby and the Driscoll baby. Her son becomes very arrogant and mistreats her as the young master, and the author describes her actions. Roxy approached her son with all the "wheedling and supplicating servilities that fear and interest can impart to the words and attitudes of the born slave."[29] However, she was happy; happy and proud, "for this was her son, her nigger son, lording it among the whites and securely avenging their crimes against her race."[30]

After Roxy has told Tom Driscoll that he is her son, the plaintive query is made by Tom,

> Why were niggers and whites made? What crime did the uncreated first nigger commit that the curse of birth was decreed for him? And why is this awful difference made between white and black?...How hard the nigger's fate seems, this morning--yet until last night such a thought never entered my head.[31]

The satire is bitter in the same book when Tom, the murderer, is granted a pardon by the Governor as soon as he understands the case. The creditors explain to him that the man is worth at least a thousand dollars if he can be sold down the river.

At the age of ten Sam Clemens had seen a white overseer "fling a lump of iron-ore at a slave-man in anger, for merely

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[29] Works, XVI, 76.

[30] Ibid., p. 62.

[31] Ibid., p. 34.

doing something awkwardly...He was dead in an hour...it seemed a pitiful thing and somehow wrong. Nobody in the village approved of that murder, but of course no one said much about it."[32] He is more harsh in a canceled passage in the Autobiography about the same incident...."everybody seemed indifferent about it--as regarded the slave--though considerable sympathy was felt for the slave's owner, who had been bereft of valuable property by a worthless person who was not able to pay for it."[33]

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, usually considered Mark Twain's greatest book, was published in 1886. Much of the satire in Huck is moral and social, rather than political. However, the theme of the story is Huck's struggle to win freedom for himself and for Jim. This struggle causes conflict between Huck's moral intuition and his conventional conscience. In his Notebook Mark Twain had this to say about slavery:

> This is to suggest that the thing in man which makes him cruel to a slave is in him permanently and will not be rooted out for a million years. To admit that slavery exists in any country is to admit that you may describe any form of brutal treatment which you can imagine and go there and find it has been imagined and applied before you. [34]

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[32] Works, XXI, 18-19.

[33] Quoted in Wecter, op. cit., p. 290.

[34] Mark Twain's Notebook, p. 198.

Nigger Jim becomes the most admirable character in the book, a figure of dignity and heroism. The evils of slavery and the virtue and depravity of man's heart are emphasized; in addition, the ironies of white Christian supremacy are satirized by Twain, the emancipated Southerner.[35] Huck Finn's report to Aunt Sally Phelps about a steamboat explosion in which, luckily, no one was hurt, although it "killed a nigger," is his most famous comment on slavery.

This is the entire passage:

> 'It warn't the grounding--that didn't keep us back but a little. We blowed out a cylinder-head.'
> 'Good gracious! anybody hurt?'
> 'No'm. Killed a nigger.'
> 'Well, it's lucky; because sometimes people do get hurt...' [36]

Huck admits to Tom that black Uncle Jake has befriended him and adds,

> 'That's a mighty good nigger, Tom. He likes me, becuz I don't ever act as if I was above him. Sometime I've set right down and eat with him. But you needn't tell that. A body's got to do things when he's awful hungry he wouldn't want to do as a steady thing.' [37]

Huck and Nigger Jim have only one disagreement and that is on the occasion of their separation by the fog. Jim has mourned Huck as dead, but when he awakes, he finds that Huck has returned and is overjoyed. Huck tricks Jim into

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[35] Wecter, on. cit., p. 100.

[36] Works, XIII, 306.

[37] Works, VIII, 228.

believing that the incident was a dream until dawn when the evidence of the debris of leaves and the broken oar prove the joke; then Jim's pride is hurt.

> Jim looked at the trash, and then looked at me, and back at the trash again. He had got the dream fixed so strong in his head that he couldn't seem to shake it loose and get the facts back into its place again right away. But when he did get the thing straightened around he looked at me steady without ever smiling, and says:
>
> 'What do dey stan' for? I'se gwyne to tell you. When I got all wore out wid work, en wid de callin' for you, en went to sleep, my heart wux mos' broke bekase you wuz los', en I didn' k'yer no mo' what became er me en de raf'. En when I wake up and fine you back again, all safe en soun', de tears come, en I could a got down on my knees en kiss yo' foot, I's so thankful. En all you wuz thinkin' 'bout wuz how you could make a fool uv ole Jim wid a lie. Dat truck dah is trash; en trash is what people is dat puts dirt on de head er dey fren's en makes 'em ashamed.'
>
> Then he got up slow and walked to the wigwam, and went in there without saying anything but that. [38]

Huck's one last dim vestige of pride of status, his sense of his position as a white man, wholly vanishes: "It was fifteen minutes before I could work myself up to go and humble myself to a nigger; but I done it, and I warn't sorry for it afterwards either."[39]

When Jim thought the raft had almost reached Cairo, he talked about what he would do after getting to free territory. Huck's version of this reveals his Southern outlook:

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[38] Works, XIII, 119-120.

[39] Ibid., p. 120.

> Jim talked out loud all the time while I was talking to myself. He 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, which was owned on a farm close to where Miss Watson lived; and then they would both work to buy the two children, and if their master wouldn't sell them, they'd get an Ab'litionist to go and steal them.
>
> It most froze me to hear such talk. He wouldn't ever dared to talk such talk in his life before. Just see what a difference it made in him the minute he judged he was about free....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.[40]

The climax of Huck Finn comes when Huck discards the code of a Southern boy and decides to help Jim in his escape from slavery. The satiric brilliance of the episode lies in Huck's solving his problem, not by doing "right" but by doing "wrong." His conscience tells him that he must return Jim to slavery. He believes that he detests Abolitionists; he does not openly condemn slavery, but his moral crisis makes him question the respectable morality of his day. He thinks about some of the things which accompany "so-called" civilization and wonders why these things "don't seem right" according to his moral sense of decency and humanitarianism.

Huck said, upon seeing that paper with his note to Miss Watson:

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[40] Ibid., pp. 123-124.

> It was a close place. I took it up, and held it in my hand. I was a-trembling, because I'd got to decide, forever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it. I studied a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself:
>
> 'All right, then, I'll go to hell'--and tore it up. And I know it was awful thoughts and awful words, but they was said. And I let them stay said; and never thought no more about reforming. I shoved the whole thing out of my head, and said I would take up wickedness again, which was in my line, being brung up to it, and the other warn't....' [41]

In the section where Huck's "old man goes for the govment," Mark Twain expresses his idea of the ignorant, illiterate piney-woods law-breaker who is always criticizing the government. This type of "poor white trash" opposed both the freeing of the Negroes and any improving of their living conditions. The ignorant and uninformed were allowed the right to vote in many states where the educated Negro was not given that right. Speaking of the Negro professor, Pap said,

> They said he was a p'fessor in a college, and could talk all kinds of languages, and knowed everything. And that ain't the wust. They said he could <u>vote</u> when he was at home. Well, that let me out. Thinks I, what is the country a-coming to? It was 'lection day, and I was just about to go and vote myself if I warn't too drunk to get there; but when they told me there was a state in this country where they'd let that nigger vote, I drawed out. I says I'll never vote again. [42]

Pap inquired as to why the Negro was not put up at auction and sold. He was told that he could not be sold until he

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[41] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 297.

[42] <u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 37-38.

had been in the state six months. To which Pap Finn replied,

> There, now--that's a specimen. They call that a govment that can't sell a free nigger till he's been in the state six months. Here's a govment that calls itself a govment, and yet's got to set stock-still for six whole months before it can take a-hold of a prowling, thieving, infernal, white-shirted free nigger, and-- [43]

Mark Twain himself speaks out against the jury system and mob violence through Colonel Sherburn's speech to the lynching party, one of the bitterest parts of the book. In regard to lynching, the colonel tells the mob,

> The pitifulest thing out is a mob; that's what an army is--a mob; they don't fight with courage that's born in them, but with courage that's borrowed from their mass, and from their officers. But a mob without any man at the head of it is beneath pitifulness. Now the thing for you to do is to droop your tails and go home and crawl in a hole. If any real lynching's going to be done it will be done in the dark, Southern fashion; and when they come they'll bring their masks, and fetch a man along. [44]

Just as the book Huckleberry Finn is an eloquent protest against slavery, so is A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court a satire on oppression and rule by the privileged few. The latter outlines Mark Twain's fundamental ideas about the foundations of organized society. It was a deliberate and sustained effort to write satire and contains a complete statement of Mugwump beliefs, a satire on high

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[43] Ibid., p. 38.

[44] Ibid., p. 203.

tariffs, the practices of corporations, and on the squalor of "poor whites." Twain struck at the caste system of his day, for he was appalled at the callous attitude of the wealthy classes toward the poor, starving children in the world. The book is a "noble and passionate expression of an ideal of freedom."[45]

De Voto states that one purpose of A Connecticut Yankee is to confront privilege with humanity and to display the conditions of slavery wrought by the King and the Catholic Church. Mark Twain urges revolution as the solution:

> This dreadful matter brought from these down-trodden people no outburst of rage against their oppressors. They had been heritors and subjects of cruelty and outrage so long that nothing could have startled them but a kindness. Yes, here was a curious revelation, indeed, of the depth to which these people had sunk in slavery.[46]

Mark Twain described the subjects as follows:

> The most of King Arthur's British nation were slaves, pure and simple, and bore that name, and wore the iron collar on their necks; and the rest were slaves in fact, but without the name; they imagined themselves men and freemen, and called themselves so. The truth was, the nation as a body was in the world for one object, and one only: to grovel before king and Church and noble, to slave for them, sweat blood for them...And for all this, the thanks they got were cuffs and contempt; and so poor-spirited were they that they took even this sort of attention as an honor.[47]

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[45] Works, XIV, Preface, xiii.

[46] Ibid., p. 170.

[47] Ibid., p. 63.

Speaking of the inherited prisoners about whom nothing was known and who were considered of no value by the queen, the Yankee asked, "Then why in the world didn't you set them free?" She did not know why she hadn't; the thing had never come up in her mind. "It seemed plain to me now, that with her training, those inherited prisoners were merely property--nothing more, nothing less."[48] This statement is an echo of what Mark Twain said about slavery in his own country.

A terrible description of the lashing of a young mother, which occurs as the pilgrims ride by, brings forth bitter comments from the Yankee:

> All our pilgrims looked on and commented--on the expert way in which the whip was handled. They were too much hardened by lifelong every-day familiarity with slavery to notice that there was anything else in the exhibition that invited comment. This was what slavery could do, in the way of ossifying what one may call the superior lobe of human feeling; for these pilgrims were kind-hearted people, and they would not have allowed that man to treat a horse like that.
>
> If I lived and prospered I would be the death of slavery, that I was resolved upon; but I would try to fix it so that when I became its executioner it should be by command of the nation.[49]

The slave girl is separated from her husband; this was one of the conditions of slavery which seemed unendurable to Mark Twain. He said,

> ....And the husband and father, with his wife and child gone, never to be seen by him again in life?--well, the look of him one might not bear at all, and so I turned away; but I knew I should never get his picture out of

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[48] Ibid., p. 160.

[49] Ibid., p. 189.

> my mind again, and there it is to this day, to wring my heart-strings whenever I think of it. 50

Mark Twain realized that when a social system such as feudalism or slavery had been destroyed, the roots of exploitation had not been destroyed. The tendency to exploitation was a permanent part of human nature, and it was from these roots that slavery and other evil institutions sprang. Twain believed that the processes of selfishness and corruption could never be eliminated; but neither could the processes of democracy and reason.

The Connecticut Yankee goes on to explain the evils of slavery in any form: "The blunting effects of slavery upon the slaveholder's moral perceptions are known and conceded the world over; and a privileged class, an aristocracy, is but a band of slaveholders under another name."

> The repulsive feature of slavery is the thing, not its name. One needs but to hear an aristocrat speak of the classes that are below him to recognize--and in but indifferently modified measure--the very air and tone of the actual slaveholder; and behind these are the slaveholder's spirit, the slaveholder's blunted feeling. They are the result of the same cause in both cases: the possessor's old and inbred custom of regarding himself as a superior being. 51

Mark Twain stated that the "poor white" who helped the slave-lord during the Civil War secretly detested the aristocrat. He says through the Yankee:

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50 Ibid., p. 190.

51 Ibid., pp. 233-234.

> And there was only one redeeming feature connected with that pitiful piece of history; and that was, that secretly the 'poor white' did detest the slave-lord, and did feel his own shame. That feeling was not brought to the surface, but the fact that it was there and could have been brought out, under favoring circumstances was something--in fact, it was enough; for it showed that a man is at bottom a man, after all, even if it doesn't show on the outside. 52

Ironically the Yankee tells of his feelings at the slave auction:

> The earl put us up and sold us at auction. This same infernal law had existed in our own South in my own time, more than thirteen hundred years later, and under it hundreds of freemen who could not prove that they were freemen had been sold into life-long slavery without the circumstance making any particular impression upon me; but the minute law and the auction block came into my personal experience, a thing which had been merely improper before became suddenly hellish. Well, that's the way we are made. 53

Mark Twain's comparison of sixth century England and nineteenth century America showed that slavery in any form is odious, for it crushes the spirit and ignores the individual worth of man. Mark was bitter over men's inhumanity to man. He felt that the Negro's position after emancipation seemed unfair. The Republican Party had been founded for the stated primary purpose of abolishing slavery, but soon after the war, the Negroes were little better off as serfs than as slaves. Twain believed that slavery had acted on the lethargy of the poor whites and had produced something

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52 Ibid. pp. 298-299.

53 Ibid., p. 351.

of the mob's cruelty as well as the gentry's foolish chivalry.[54] He felt that enlightenment could make no headway against ignorance and brutality. A democracy should allow equal opportunities to all men, regardless of race. He would often lecture for a colored congregation after refusing to do so for a white group. His wife once suggested, "Consider everyone colored until he is proved white."[55]

Human slavery obviously had violated democratic institutions more than any other evil of the day. As long as the slavery controversy had remained out of politics it did not portend a national disaster, but when slavery and expansion were linked, the fight over the extension of slavery began. Because of the intensity of the sectional rivalry, every great politician of the day was forced to take a stand on the slavery issue. The political maneuvering which gave James K. Polk the presidency widened the rifts in an already badly divided Democratic Party. Civil War became practically inevitable when the northern and southern wings of the Democratic Party split in 1860. The Republican Party platform was clear on the issue of slavery expansion, and the Party owed much of its early strength to the dissenting Democrats who joined it. Freedom and slavery

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[54] B. De Voto, Mark Twain's America, p. 294.

[55] Mark Twain's Notebook, p. 170.

became the distinguishing features of the North and of the South. The irreconcilable conflict of the politicians finally erupted in war.

In speaking of the effects of the war between the states, Mark Twain recognized that the settlement of the slavery issue had a much more profound influence in the South than in the North. The Northern women were very far removed from the war, and only about one man in every five had participated in the fighting. In the South nearly every man fought, and most of the women saw the war first hand. As a topic of conversation in the South the war dwarfed all others. Mark Twain once said, "In the South the war is what A.D. is elsewhere; they date from it."[56]

Twain felt that slavery in the politics of his own day was the result of man's tendency to follow the herd. His comments on this characteristic of mankind are bitter:

> Look at the tyranny of party--at what is called party allegiance, party loyalty--a snare invented by designing men for selfish purposes--and which turns voters into chattels, slaves, rabbits, and all the while their masters, and they themselves, are shouting rubbish about liberty, independence, freedom of opinion, freedom of speech, honesty, unconscious of the fantastic contradiction; and forgetting or ignoring that their father and the churches shouted the same blasphemies a generation earlier when they were closing their doors against the human slave, beating his handful of human defenders with Bible

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[56] Works, VII, 363.

texts and bullies, and pocketing insults and licking the shoes of his Southern master. 57

Mark Twain felt that the greatest good was liberty, and the greatest evil was slavery--whether it was the slavery of Negroes in the South, or the slavery of the minions of a monarch, or the spiritual slavery of church-goers, or the slavery of a corrupt nation.[58] In his writings, as in his life, Twain consistently assailed all types of bondage.

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57 Works, XXXVII, 10-11.

58 A. Cowie, The American Novel, p. 632.

CHAPTER V

DEMOCRACY AND MONARCHY

Mark Twain wrote much on the subject of aristocracy and monarchy. While he was young, he was the champion of democracy, but becoming disillusioned as he grew older, he finally began to fear that America might become a monarchy. The sum total of the influence of his early environment was anti-aristocratic. Since boyhood, he had felt a sympathy with the oppressed, rebellion against tyranny, and scorn for the divine right of kings.[1] Twain's faith in democracy died, because he realized the corruptness of America during the period which he named "the Gilded Age." However, he felt that a nation's strength lies in its common people. He had hope that the education of the masses would help democracy to endure. Mark Twain wrote that once these peasants are educated they "will rise up and demand to be regarded as part of the human race."[2]

In The Innocents Abroad Twain had thought that democracy was the greatest system of government ever devised and that monarchy based on hereditary titles was the most stupid and

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[1] Works, XXX, 82.

[2] Works, XVIII, 66.

disgraceful form of government. There are numerous strong denunciations of monarchy in A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, and The Prince and The Pauper. Twain's private notes are full of scathing remarks on this subject. Beginning with his earlier writing, many of these comments will be cited.

The Emperor of Morocco is described in The Innocents Abroad as a soulless despot who confiscates the property of his subjects. In order to escape his greed, all of the rich men in the empire are forced to bury their money and dress in rags to counterfeit poverty.[3] Upon seeing Abdul Aziz, the Sultan of Turkey, in a parade in Paris, Mark Twain calls him "the representative of a people by nature and training filthy, brutish, ignorant, unprogressive, superstitious and a government whose Three Graces are Tyranny, Rapacity, Blood."[4] Further on in the same book, a very bitter denunciation of this sultan is made:

> He is a man who sees his people robbed and oppressed by soulless tax-gatherers, but speaks no word to save them--a man who found his great empire a blot upon the earth--a degraded, poverty-stricken, miserable, infamous agglomeration of ignorance, crime, and brutality, and will idle away the allotted days of his trivial life, and then pass to the dust and the worms and leave it so! [5]

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[3] Works, I, 71.

[4] Ibid., p. 120.

[5] Ibid., p. 122.

Mark Twain, the democrat, is shocked by the story told of the building of the Gardens at Versailles, for hundreds of poor peasants had died in order to make this splendor possible.

> He (Louis XIV) took a tract of land sixty miles in circumference and set to work to make this park and build this palace and a road to it from Paris. He kept 36,000 men employed daily on it, and the labor was so unhealthy that they used to die and be hauled off by cart-loads every night. The wife of a nobleman of the time speaks of this as an 'inconvenience', but naïvely remarks that 'it does not seem worthy of attention in the happy state of tranquillity we now enjoy.' 6

In Italy the author condemns the Florentine princes and the artists for using these unworthy persons as subjects for their paintings:

> The dead and damned Medicis who cruelly tyrannized over Florence and were her curse for over two hundred years, are salted away in a circle of costly vaults, and in their midst the Holy Sepulchre was to have been set up....
>
> Raphael pictured such infernal villains as Catherine and Marie de Medici seated in heaven and conversing familiarly with the Virgin Mary and the angels (to say nothing of higher personages), and yet my friends abuse me because I fail sometimes to see the beauty that is in their productions. I cannot help but see it, now and then, but I keep on protesting against the groveling spirit that could persuade those masters to prostitute their noble talents to the adulation of such monsters as the French, Venetian, and Florentine princes of two and three hundred years ago, all the same. 7

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6 Works, II, 164.

7 Works, I, 267-268.

The chivalrous code of the Old South was blamed upon Sir Walter Scott by Mark Twain. He accused Scott of creating the reverence for rank and caste in the South. Twain said in Life on the Mississippi that Scott was in large measure responsible for the Civil War. This code of chivalry was as merciless and deadly as any feudal system. The duels and feuds were ridiculous as well as horrible. Pudd'nhead Wilson and Huckleberry Finn contain satires on this aristocratic code of the Old South.

The aristocracy is depicted in Huck Finn in the story of the Grangerford-Shepherdson feud. Twain calls Colonel Grangerford a "gentleman all over," and so was his family.

> He was well born, as the saying is, and that's worth as much in a man as it is in a horse, so the Widow Douglas said, and nobody ever denied that she was of the first aristocracy in our town; and pap he always said it, too, though he warn't no more quality than a mudcat himself.[8]

Huck tells of another clan of aristocracy nearby, "They was as high-toned and well-born and rich and grand as the tribe of Grangerfords."[9]

The story of the feud itself is one of the most pathetic passages in the book. The merciless killing makes Huck conclude, "I wished I hadn't ever come ashore that night to see such things. I ain't ever going to get shut of them...."[10]

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[8] Works, XIII, 146.

[9] Ibid., p. 148.

[10] Ibid., p. 160.

After the two carpetbaggers came aboard the raft, the old man is not to be outdone by the Duke of Bridgewater. He makes this startling statement: "Yes, my friend, it is too true--your eyes is lookin' at this moment on the pore disappeared Dauphin, Looy the Seventeen, son of Looy the Sixteen and Marry Antonette."[11] Huck philosophizes that these liars were not kings or dukes at all, but just "low-down humbugs and frauds," which was Mark's own opinion of all titles.[12]

The argument between the two members of royalty about the corn shuck and the straw tick bed is classic. The king tells the duke,

> 'I should a' reckoned the difference in rank would a sejested to you that a corn-shuck bed warn't just fitten for me to sleep on. Your Grace'll take the shuck bed yourself.'
>
> The duke replies, ''Tis my fate to be always ground into the mire under the iron heel of oppression. Misfortune has broken my once haughty spirit; I yield, I submit; 'tis my fate. I am alone in the world--let me suffer. I can bear it.' 13

Mark Twain's democratic background is shown in the following conversation between Jim and Huck. Jim asked Huck if it didn't surprise him the way those kings carried on. Huck answers:

> 'Well, it don't, because it's in the breed. I reckon they're all alike.'

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[11] Ibid., p. 172.

[12] Ibid., p. 174.

[13] Ibid., pp. 176-177.

> 'But, Huck, dese kings o' ourn is reglar rapscallions; dat's just what dey is; dey's reglar rapscallions.'
>
> 'Well, that's what I'm a-sayin'; all kings is mostly rapscallions, as fur as I can make out.' [14]

Huck explains to Jim what he has read about the different kings in history, saying,

> 'You don't know kings, Jim, but I know them, and this old rip of ourn is one of the cleanest I've struck in history....All I say is, kings is kings, and you got to make allowances. Take them all around, they're a mighty ornery lot. It's the way they're raised.... Sometimes I wish we could hear of a country that's out of kings.' [15]

By contrast, in A Connecticut Yankee the people are the quaintest, simplest, trustingest race, because they had inherited the idea that all men without title and a long pedigree were creatures of no more consideration than so many animals, bugs, or insects.[16] The Yankee mourns,

> It was pitiful for a person born in a wholesome free atmosphere to listen to their humble and hearty outpourings of loyalty toward their king and Church and nobility; as if they had any more occasion to love and honor king and church and noble than a slave has to love and honor the lash, or a dog has to love and honor the stranger that kicks him! [17]

He believes it is enough to make him ashamed of the human race to think of the sort of froth that has always occupied its thrones without shadow of right or reason, and the seventh rate people that have always figured as its

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[14] Ibid., pp. 214-215.

[15] Ibid., p. 215.

[16] Works, XIV, 63-64.

[17] Ibid., p. 62.

aristocracies--"a company of monarchs and nobles, who, as a rule, would have achieved only poverty and obscurity if left, like their betters, to their own exertions."[18]

The Yankee explains his status in King Arthur's Court:

> I was admired, also feared; but...I was not even respected. I had no pedigree, no inherited title; so in the king's and nobles' eyes I was mere dirt; the people regarded me with wonder and awe, but there was no reverence mixed with it; through the force of inherited ideas they were not able to conceive of anything being entitled to that except pedigree and lordship. 19

The monarchial form of government would be most satisfactory if the despot were the most perfect individual of the human race and his lease on life were perpetual. However, Mark Twain points out,

> But as a perishable perfect man must die and leave his despotism to an imperfect successor, an earthly despotism is not merely a bad form of government, it is the worst form that is possible. 20

A modification of the "Clothes Philosophy," similar to that of Carlyle in Sartor Resartus is outlined by the Yankee in the next passage:

> You see my kind of loyalty was loyalty to one's country, not to its institutions or its office-holders. The country is the real thing, the substantial thing, the eternal thing; it is the thing to watch over, and care for, and be loyal to; institutions are extraneous, they are its mere clothing, and clothing can wear out, become ragged, cease to be comfortable, cease to protect the body in winter, disease, and death. To be

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[18] Ibid., pp. 62-63. [19] Ibid., p. 64. [20] Ibid., p.78.

> loyal to rags, to shout for rags, to worship rags, to die for rags--that is a loyalty of unreason, it is pure animal; it belongs to monarchy, was invented by monarchy; let monarchy keep it. 21

Twain believes that the citizen who thinks that the commonwealth's political clothes are worn out, even if he is the only one in the country to do so, should agitate for a new suit of clothes. If he holds his peace, he is disloyal and a traitor. It is the duty of the other citizens to vote him down if they do not agree.[22] This was intended for nineteenth century America as well as for the English.

A new deal was first suggested by Mark Twain, when he compared the form of government in the Britain of King Arthur's day with a corporation.

> So to speak, I was a stockholder in a corporation where nine hundred and ninety-four of the members furnished all the money and did all the work, and the other six elected themselves a permanent board of direction and took all the dividends. It seemed to me that what the nine hundred and ninety-four dupes needed was a new deal. 23

The author always resented the phrase which referred to this or that country's people as being "capable of self-government." Such a phrase implied that somewhere, sometime, a nation had existed which was not capable of governing itself according to certain self-appointed specialists. The Yankee supposed that the people in Arthur's kingdom were poor

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21 Ibid., p. 107. 22 Ibid., pp.107-108. 23 Ibid., p. 108.

material for a republic, because they had been so long degraded by monarchy, but he insisted, "The master-minds of all nations have sprung from the masses of the nation, not from its privileged classes."[24] Twain repeats the idea of democracy's superiority,"...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, all the way down to the lowest."[25]

The practice of giving the federal government power to meddle with the private affairs of its citizens, Twain believed, was a dangerous one. Such a practice would result in the loss of the people's independence, the source of America's greatness. Man is essentially the important thing; he should overthrow his oppressors.

> A man is a man, at bottom. Whole ages of abuse and oppression cannot crush the manhood clear out of him. Whoever thinks it a mistake is himself mistaken. 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. [26]

In speaking of the helplessness of the Frenchman or the German, Mark Twain said each of them "expects his government

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[24] Ibid., p. 237.

[25] Ibid., pp. 237-238.

[26] Ibid., p. 301.

to feed him when hungry, clothe him when naked, to prescribe when his child may be born and when he may die, and, in fine, to regulate every act of humanity from the cradle to the tomb, including the manner in which he may seek future admission to Paradise."[27]

> Rome's liberties were not auctioned off in a day, but were bought gradually, slowly, furtively, little by little; first, with a little corn and oil for the exceedingly poor and wretched, later with corn and oil for voters who were not quite so poor, later, still with corn and oil for pretty much every man that had a vote to sell--exactly our own history over again.[28]

The importance of training cannot be too strongly emphasized. In A Connecticut Yankee Twain propounds the theory that training is everything:

> ....training is all there is to a person. We speak of nature; it is folly; there is no such thing as nature what we call by that misleading name is merely heredity and training. We have no thoughts of our own, no opinions of our own; they are transmitted to us, trained into us. All that is original in us, and therefore fairly creditable or discreditable to us, can be covered up and hidden by the point of a cambric needle, all the rest being atoms contributed by, inherited from a procession of ancestors that stretches back a billion years to the Adam-clan or grasshopper or monkey from whom our race has been so tediously and ostentatiously and unprofitably developed. [29]

The queen felt that to kill the page was no crime, because it was her right, just as it had been for all previous monarchs.

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[27] Mark Twain's Notebook, edited by A. B. Paine, p. 84.

[28] Mark Twain in Eruption, edited by B. De Voto, p. 68.

[29] Works, XIV, 150.

"She was the result of generations of training in the unexamined and unassailed belief that the law which permitted her to kill a subject when she chose was a perfectly right and righteous one."[30] Another incident was that of the prisoner whose crime had been the following remark:

> He said he believed that if you were to strip the nation naked and send a stranger through the crowd, he couldn't tell the king from a quack doctor, nor a duke from a hotel clerk. Apparently, here was a man whose brains had not been reduced to an ineffectual mush by idiotic training. 31

This was one of Mark Twain's pet ideas, because it is repeated in several places; one is in his notebook. He said to have an absolute democracy in America would be an impossibility, for the following reason:

> Strip the human race, absolutely naked, and it would have a real democracy. But the introduction of even a rag of tiger skin, or cowtail, would make a badge of distinction and be the beginning of a monarchy.[32]

Twain gradually came to believe that in America the politicians and the newspapers are the makers of an American's patriotism. The American is given his patriotism "cut and dried at the public trough," while an absolute monarchy "feeds its subjects patriotism in a dehydrated form" from the throne. England and America have been training the people against independence in political thought.[33] In the

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[30] Ibid., p. 151.

[31] Ibid., p. 157.

[32] Mark Twain's Notebook, p. 337.

[33] Works, XXIX, 301.

essay, "As Regards Patriotism," Mark reiterates that training can turn bad morals to good, destroy principles or recreate them. In the republican form of government neither the government nor the nation is privileged to dictate to the individual what his patriotism shall be. In the United States, the people have accepted the Gospel of Monarchical Patriotism, "The King can do no wrong," and changed it to read, "Our Country, right or wrong."[34] He continues, "It is by the goodness of God that in our country we have those three unspeakably precious things: freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, and the prudence never to exercise either of them."[35]

Independence of thought must be developed in the citizens of a democracy. A person who follows his party's leadership regardless of his own opinion, is the same as a slave in a monarchy. "People seem to think they are citizens of the Republican Party and that that is patriotism and sufficiently good patriotism," wrote Twain. "I prefer to be a citizen of the United States."[36]

One of Mark Twain's apprehensions concerned his belief that the American government showed positive tendencies toward becoming highly centralized. Even so, he offered some encouragement:

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[34] Mark Twain's Notebook, p. 394.

[35] Ibid., p. 337.

[36] Ibid., p. 202.

> I suppose we must expect that unavoidable and irresistible circumstances will gradually take away the powers of state and concentrate them in the central government, and that the republic will then repeat the history of all time and become a monarchy; but I believe that if we obstruct these encroachments and steadily resist them, the monarchy can be postponed for a while yet. 37

One reason why he believed that America would drift into despotism was simply that such was the nature of Americans:

> It is a saddening thought, but we cannot change our nature--we are all alike, we human beings; and in our blood and bone, ineradicably, we carry the seeds out of which monarchies and aristocracies are grown: worship of gauds, titles, distinctions, power. We have to worship and envy or we cannot be content. In America we manifest this in ancient and customary ways. In public we scoff at titles and hereditary privilege, but privately we hanker after them and when we get a chance, we buy them for cash and a daughter....
>
> Like all other nations, we worship money and the possession of it--they being our aristocracy, and we have to have one. 38

Even Mark Twain himself admitted a desire for a title. Writing in his Notebook in 1897, he tells of a visit with members of royalty in Europe and says,

> There are princes which I cast in the Echte (princely) mold, and they make me regret--again--that I am not a prince myself. It is not a new regret but a very old one. I have never been properly and humbly satisfied with my condition. I am a democrat only on principle, not by instinct--nobody is that. Doubtless some people say they are, but this world is grievously given to lying. 39

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37 Mark Twain in Eruption, p. 64. 38 Ibid., pp. 64-65.

39 Mark Twain's Notebook, p. 357.

Another reason for expecting the trend toward monarchy is the impermanency of republics. "In time they perish and in most cases stay under the sod, but the overthrown monarchy gets back into the saddle by and by."[40] Mark Twain explains this in the following comment from Mark Twain in Eruption, written in 1908.

> Men do not deliberately desire the destruction of their republic, but circumstances created unknowingly by them are compelling that destruction. First, it is the nature of man to want a something definite to love, honor, and obey; God and King, for example. Second, little republics have lasted long, protected by their poverty and insignificance, but great ones have not.[41]

The condition which causes great danger to a large republic is the accumulation of vast power and wealth, which breed commercial and political corruption and incite public favorites to dangerous ambitions.[42] Mark Twain had written previously, "We Americans worship the almighty dollar! Well, it is a worthier god than Heredity Privilege."[43]

Mark Twain was bitterly opposed to the long Republican regime and particularly to Theodore Roosevelt. He said,

> For fifty years our country has been a constitutional monarchy, with the Republican party sitting on the throne. Mr. Cleveland's couple of brief interruptions do not count; they were accidents and temporary, they made no permanent inroad upon Republican supremacy.[44]

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[40] Mark Twain in Eruption, p. 2.

[41] Ibid., p. 2.

[42] Ibid., p. 3.

[43] Mark Twain's Notebook, p. 209.

[44] Mark Twain in Eruption, p. 3.

He continues, "Ours is not only a monarchy but a hereditary monarchy--in the one political family. It passes from heir to heir as regularly and as surely and as unpreventably as any throne in Europe."[45]

The author abhorred the way Theodore Roosevelt was idolized by the masses. His own opinion of the President was expressed in this way:

> Mr. Roosevelt is the most formidable disaster that has befallen this country since the Civil War--but the vast mass of the nation loves him, is frantically fond of him, even idolizes him. This is the simple truth. It sounds like a libel upon the intelligence of the human race, but it isn't; there isn't any way to libel the intelligence of the human race. [46]

He detested Roosevelt mainly because the latter was a hypocrite:

> Certainly he (Roosevelt) is popular....and with the best of reason. If the twelve apostles should call at the White House, he would say, 'Come in! Come in! I am delighted to see you. I've been watching your progress, and I admire it very much.' Then if Satan should come, he would slap him on the shoulder and say, 'Why, Satan, how do you do? I'm so glad to meet you. I've read all your works and enjoyed every one of them.' Anybody could be popular with a gift like that. [47]

One thing Mark Twain asked of his fellow Americans was that they not act blindly, hastily, and therefore foolishly in all things. American boys should not be taught, for example, to take their patriotism at second hand. To shout with

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[45] Ibid., p. 3. [46] Ibid., p. 18. [47] Works, XXXIII, 1340.

the crowd, without examining the right or wrong of the matter, he believed, smacked remarkably of monarchy. Such, however, was the custom of his age, for he laments:

> We teach them to regard as traitors, and hold in aversion and contempt, such as do not shout with the crowd, and so here in our democracy we are cheering a thing which of all things is most foreign to it and out of place--the delivery of our political conscience into someone else's keeping. This is patriotism of the Russian plan. [48]

Irreverence, then was the champion of democracy and its only sure defense. Those who practiced irreverence most loudly were the American newspapers, and Mark Twain always respected them for this peculiarity. An irreverent press can overcome shams, hypocrisies, and oppression. Europe had existed for a thousand years, merely for the advantages of "half a dozen seventh-rate families called monarchs and some hundreds of riff-raff sarcastically called nobles," because of the absence of a free press.[49] Our American newspapers were praised, for they had the nerve to be irreverent toward almost everything, and "where they laugh one good king to death, they laugh a thousand cruel and infamous shams and superstitions into the grave, and the account is squared."[50] Nobility is the only class which is exempt from being ridiculed. Mark Twain believed, "No god and no religion can

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[48] Works, XXXII, 1118.

[49] Mark Twain's Notebook, p. 195.

[50] Ibid., p. 195.

survive ridicule. No church, no nobility, no royalty or other fraud, can face ridicule in a fair field and live."[51]

During the 1880's Mark Twain went through a period of special hatred for monarchies, probably while he was collecting the material for and writing A Connecticut Yankee, but there are some rather rare instances of his praise of monarchs. For instance, Napoleon Bonaparte is lauded for setting merit above birth and also for stripping the divinity from royalty. Twain related that before Napoleon, the crowned heads of Europe were gods and that since the time of Napoleon, they have become figure-heads and are answerable for their acts, just as any other person. Mark Twain states, "Such benefactions as these compensate the temporary harm which Bonaparte and the Revolution did and leave the world in debt to them for these great and permanent services to liberty, humanity, and progress."[52]

In Europe and Elsewhere in an essay entitled "Queen Victoria's Jubilee" the accomplishments of Victoria are enumerated. She is praised for the moral and material advancement made during her reign. Some of the laudatory deeds are listed: the modification of English criminal law; the broadening of the governing and law-making powers to the people; the creation of the public educator, the newspaper;

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[51] Ibid., p. 198.

[52] Works, XII, 374.

the freeing of women from oppression; and the extension of the right to organize trade unions to the workmen.[53]

One of the great principles which American government is supposed to be founded upon is the principle of equality of men before the law. Mark Twain realized the idiocy of such an idealistic assumption and somewhat sneeringly exposed its fallacy in The American Claimant. In the story the young Viscount Berkeley determines to renounce his rank and proceed to America "where all men are created equal and all have an equal chance" in order to try his own mettle without benefit of title. The book displays the disillusionment of the young idealist as he comes to realize the wide disparity between American democratic theory about which he has heard and the reality that he experiences. When he applies for a clerkship in Washington, his university training and his obvious fitness for the post count for nothing; he finds that "political background" is the thing most important.[54]

"The Czar's Soliloquy" in 1905 was a violent attack upon the Russian monarchy. Twain had disapproved of Theodore Roosevelt's intervening in the Russo-Japanese War, because the author thought there might be a chance for a revolution

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[53] Works, XXIX, 203-204.

[54] Gladys C. Bellamy, Mark Twain as a Literary Artist, p. 303.

in Russia to overthrow the oppression of the Czar. This essay begins with a full explanation of the Clothes Philosophy, previously mentioned. Mark Twain gives the Czar's thoughts as he stands at his mirror before dressing:

> Naked, what am I?....There is nothing imperial about this, nothing imposing, impressive, nothing to invoke awe and reverence....Is it this that a hundred forty million Russians kiss the dust before and worship? Manifestly not!....It is my clothes. [55]

The Czar by the sheer might of clothes and title can become a deity to his people and can exile them, harry them, destroy them, "just as he would so many rats if the accident of birth had furnished him a calling better suited to his capacities than empering."[56] Yet the individual knows that every hereditary regal dignity commemorates a usurpation, a power illegitimately acquired. Monarchs have been chosen and elected by aristocracies only; a nation has never elected one.

Mark Twain attacks the moralists who say it would be a crime to assassinate the czar. The common trade of the Czar's family has been crime, the common pastime murder, the common beverage blood--the blood of the nation. Millions of murders lie upon the heads of the Russian royalty.

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[55] S. L. Clemens, "The Czar's Soliloquy," North American Review, DLXXX (March, 1905), 322-326.

[56] Ibid., p. 322.

The Czar continues his soliloquy:

> We and our uncles are a family of cobras set over a hundred and forty million rabbits, whom we torture and murder and feed upon all our days, yet the moralist urges that to kill us is a crime, not a duty. 57

Mark Twain states that no regal tyranny has been overthrown except by violence.

> How little the academical moralist knows of the tremendous moral forces of massacre and assassination.... The nation is in labor; and by and by there will be a mighty birth--Patriotism! 58

The Czar concludes by wondering about the nature of the human race. He gives Twain's ideas of determinism similar to those in "What is Man?" and "The Mysterious Stranger."

> With one hand I flogged unoffending women to death and tortured prisoners to unconsciousness: and with the other I held up the fetish toward my fellow deity in heaven and called down His blessing upon my adoring animals whom, and whose forbears, with His holy approval, I and mine have been instructing in the pains of hell for four lagging centuries.
>
> Is the human race a joke? Was it devised and patched together in a dull time when there was nothing important to do? Has it no respect for itself? 59

The cause then for our political and social evils is the nature of man. Twain does not deny virtue, decency, and courage, but through his characterizations, he shows that in the main the race is ignorant, stupid, and cowardly.[60] Toward

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57 Ibid., p. 323.

58 Ibid., p. 324.

59 Ibid., p. 326.

60 Bernard De. Voto, Mark Twain's America, p. 294.

the end of his lifetime, Mark Twain saw little hope for real moral progress, but in specific cases he called vehemently for improvements and reform. At heart a moralist and a satirist, he was miserably unhappy because of the vast difference between the real and the ideal. The author had seen democracy struggling during a difficult period in history; he felt that his own republic had succumbed to the evils of the Gilded Age. Monarchy and aristocracy were wrong because they were based upon shams and hypocrisies and denied freedom of thought and action to their citizens. Mark Twain realized that a nation's strength lies in its common people, but he did not impute to the masses any sort of mystical and spiritual wisdom which would guide their actions and make them always right. He believed that independence of thought for the individual and education for the populace were essential to the continuance of democracy.

CHAPTER VI

IMPERIALISM AND WAR

As the nineteenth century drew to a close and the twentieth dawned, there were many saw-toothed events which depressed and disgusted Mark Twain. The Spanish-American War, the annexation of the Philippines, the Boer War in South Africa, the Belgian Congo atrocities, the Boxer Rebellion in China, the frantic competition among the nations for world markets, the emergence of Theodore Roosevelt, the rise of yellow journalism, the abortive attempts on the part of Russia's serfs to gain freedom--all of these evidenced the trend toward imperialism.[1] To sum up Mark Twain's reation to these events, he wrote:

> A Greeting from the Nineteenth to the Twentieth Century
>
> I bring you the stately nation named Christendom, returning, bedraggled, besmirched, and dishonored, from pirate raids in Kiao-Chou, 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 towel, but hide the looking-glass. [2]

About the same time Twain finished an unpublished document entitled "Stupendous International Procession," a

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[1] W. C. S. Pellowe, Pilgrim from Hannibal, p. 241.

[2] Works, XXIX, Introduction, xxxvi.

gruesome pageant. The Twentieth Century is pictured as a fair young creature, drunk and disorderly, borne in the arms of Satan, carrying a banner bearing the motto, "Get What You Can, Keep What You Get."[3] Christendom is a majestic matron dressed in flowing robes drenched with the blood of patriots who died for their countries--Boers, Boxers, and Filipinos. A bottle in her pocket bears the inscription, "We bring you the blessings of civilization," and her banner reads, "Love Your Neighbor's Goods as Yourself."[4]

Mark Twain had severely criticized the part played by the United States in the Spanish-American War. The Filipinos had been mistreated; the purpose of the war, just as of all other wars, turned out to be greed and commercial gain. President Cleveland had refused to intervene in the Cuban revolt, assumed an attitude of correct neutrality, and denied to the insurgents the status of belligerents.[5] The newspapers kept popular sentiment at the boiling point by vividly describing Spanish General Weyler's concentration camps. The vast economic interests of Americans in Cuba brought pressure upon McKinley, and two spectacular events in 1898 forced the President to a decision on a declaration of war.[6]

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[3] Ibid., p. 1149.

[4] Ibid., p. 1149.

[5] Beard and Beard, The Rise of American Civilization, II, 369.

[6] Ibid., p. 370.

In February, 1898, the Hearst papers published a letter written by the Spanish minister criticizing President McKinley. This letter had been stolen from the mails, and a furor raged for several days. Soon afterward, the destruction of the battleship Maine in the harbor of Havana killed two hundred and sixty men. Although the cause of the disaster was unknown, the American public blamed the local Spanish officials. The government of Spain was more than solicitous in its attempt to do the proper thing, but nothing could overcome the popular cry, "Remember the Maine." Overwhelmed by such pressure, the President sent a militant message to Congress, on April 11, 1898, and a week later the United States was at war with the most "decrepit and powerless imperial nation in all Europe."[7]

Within two weeks Commodore Dewey had shattered the enemy's fleet in Manila Bay and had rung the doom of the Spanish dominion in the Pacific. While attempting to escape from Santiago, the Spanish ships in the Atlantic also were destroyed. On August 12, 1898, Porto Rico and an island in the Ladrones were ceded to the United States, and the Philippines were to be held under American authority pending the final settlement. The French mediator reported from the White House that the victorious power was "resolved to procure all the profit possible from the advantages it had obtained."[8]

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[7] Ibid., p. 372.

[8] Ibid., p. 373.

Mark Twain wrote a great deal on the Philippine situation, much of which remained unpublished. One outstanding article, "A Defense of General Funston" was printed in the February 22, 1902, North American Review. After the annexation of the Philippines and the payment of twenty million dollars to Spain, Twain wrote:

> We have bought some islands from a party who did not own them; with real smartness and a good counterfeit of distinterested friendliness we coaxed a weak confiding nation into a trap and closed it upon them; we went back on an honored guest of the Stars and Stripes when we had no further use for him and chased him to the mountains; we are as indisputably in possession of a wide-spreading archipelago as if it were our property; we have pacified some thousands of the islanders and buried them; destroyed their fields, burned their villages, turned widows and orphans out-of-doors; furnished heartbreak by exile to some dozens of disagreeable patriots; subjugated the remaining ten million by Benevolent Assimilation, which is the pious new name of the musket; we have acquired property in three hundred concubines and other slaves of our business partner, the Sultan of Sulu, and hoisted our protecting flag over that swag.
>
> And so, by these providences of God--the phrase is the government's, not mine--we are a World Power; and are glad and proud, and have a back seat in the family.... We must maintain our dignity for people are looking. We are a World Power; we cannot get out of it now, and we must make the best of it. 9

The author had been criticized by many, because he had stated that the Philippine situation had polluted our flag --that the white stripes should be black with a skull and cross-bones to replace the stars. He further comments on the flag in an unpublished article:

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9 Works, XXXII, 1164.

> I am not finding fault with this use of our flag, for in order not to seem eccentric I have swung around now and joined the nation in the conviction that nothing can sully a flag. I was not properly reared, and had the illusion that a flag was a thing which must be sacredly guarded against shameful uses and unclean contacts, lest it suffer pollution; and so when it was sent out to the Philippines to float over a wanton war and a robbing expedition I supposed it was polluted, and in an ignorant moment I said so. But I stand corrected. I concede and acknowledge that it was only the government that sent it on such an errand that was polluted. Let us compromise on that. I am glad to have it that way. For our flag could not well stand pollution, never having been used to it, but it is different with the administration. 10

The article on General Funston was caused by the publicity over the capture of a native Filipino chief, Aguinaldo, by a Brigadier-General in the United States army through a ruse of disguise, treachery, and forgery. Funston was promoted, lauded, and made the speaker in a tour around the country. Mark Twain begins his essay with praise for George Washington who laid the basis for our patriotism for ninety-nine years. Twain states that doubt is arising in the nation as to whether we were unfair to the Filipinos. Twain expresses this hope:

> Some day we shall right such unfairnesses as we have done....We shall let go our obsequious hold on the rear skirts of the sceptered land-thieves of Europe, and be what we were before, a <u>real</u> World Power, and the chiefest of them all, by right of the only clean hands in Christendom, the only hands

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10 <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 1165.

> guiltless of the sordid plunder of any helpless people's stolen liberties, hands recleansed in the patriotism of Washington. 11

The exploits of Funston and his party are described in detail. Twain ridicules some of the customs of war, but he claims that the general has violated one rule--betraying his enemy after begging that enemy for food, receiving and eating the food which is holy by the precept of all ages and all nations. The satirist comments,

> It was left to a Brigadier-General of Volunteers in the United States Army to put shame upon a custom which even the degraded Spanish friars had respected. We promoted him for it. 12

However, Twain sarcastically points out that Funston cannot be blamed.

> /His disposition/ took as naturally to moral slag as Washington's took to moral gold, but only It was to blame--not Funston. Its moral sense--if It had any--was color-blind. 13

This character in the person of Funston has come to teach Americans what Patriotism is! "Some may not believe it, but it is nevertheless true, that there are now public-school teachers and superintendents who are holding up Funston as a model hero and Patriot in the schools," wrote Mark Twain.[14]

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[11] S. L. Clemens, "A Defence of General Funston," North American Review, DXLII (1902), 613-624.

[12] Ibid., p. 621. [13] Ibid., p. 621. [14] Ibid., p. 623.

The moralist deplores the imitators of Funston, who have tortured Filipinos by the awful "water cure" and committed other atrocities which the war office has been hiding.

> General Smith's world-celebrated order of massacre was: 'Kill and burn; this is no time to take prisoners--the more you kill and burn the better. Kill all above the age of ten--make Samar a howling wilderness!'
>
> Funston's example has advanced our civilization ever so far, fully as far as Europe advanced it in China. [15]

Twain concludes by saying that Aguinaldo is not rightfully our prisoner and is entitled to his freedom. He adds:

> If he were the king of a Great Power, or an ex-president of our republic, instead of an ex-president of a destroyed and abolished little republic, Civilization (with a large C) would criticize and complain until he got it. [16]

The United States government took an active part in the invasion of China and the settlement that followed. The Boxer Rebellion offered us an excellent opportunity to bring the United States' own special policies and claims to the attention of the world.[17] The government of the United States had been interested in the economic situation in China; and the "Open Door" policy was our suggestion to the other world powers after the Boxer Rebellion. Upon settlement of the

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[15] Ibid., p. 623.

[16] Ibid., p. 624.

[17] Beard and Beard, op. cit., p. 493.

claims levied on China by the other countries, the United States found that her indemnity was far in excess of the damages incurred, so she returned the remainder to China in the form of a fund dedicated by secret negotiations to the education of Chinese students in American schools.[18]

Secretary of State John Hay had commented, "We do not think that the public opinion of the United States would justify this government in taking part in the great game of spoilation now going on."[19] Therefore, our policy had demonstrated to the other countries that while it had profited from British aggression and treaty-port rights,

> ...it would not approve any more seizures of Chinese territory or any more monopolies within the boundaries of the empire. Though devised with realistic and practical ends in mind, the policy of the open door also had a lofty moral flavor, pleasing to Chinese, missionaries, anti-imperialists, and pacifists. 20

This complete situation was recognized by Mark Twain. He had been a champion of the Chinese since he had seen them mistreated on the west coast in the 1860's. In November, 1900, he made this point in an address to the Public Education Association:

> Why should not China be free from the foreigners, who are only making trouble on her soil? If they would only all go home, what a pleasant place China would be for the Chinese! We do not allow Chinamen to come here,

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18 Ibid., p. 494. 19 Ibid., p. 495. 20 Ibid., p. 494.

> and I say in all seriousness that it would be a graceful thing to let China decide who shall go there.
>
> China never wanted foreigners any more than foreigners wanted Chinamen, and on this question I am with the Boxers every time. The Boxer is a patriot. He loves his country better than he does the countries of other people. I wish him success. The Boxer believes in driving us out of his country. I am a Boxer, too, for I believe in driving him out of our country. 21

Again in December of the same year Twain spoke on "China and the Philippines:"

> Behold America, the refuge of the oppressed from everywhere (who can pay fifty dollars' admission)--anyone except a Chinaman--standing up for human rights everywhere, even helping China let people in free when she wants to collect fifty dollars upon them. And how unselfishly England has wrought for the open door for all! And how piously America has wrought for that open door in all cases where it was not her own! 22

Certain missionary activities in China completely outraged Mark Twain, who had never particularly liked missionaries, anyway. An article, "To the Person Sitting in Darkness," published in the 1901 North American Review was his sarcastic exposition of the indemnities collected for the Boxer damages. Reverend Mr. Ament of the American Board of Foreign Missions was supposed to have collected "full payment for all destroyed property belonging to Christians, and national fines amounting to thirteen times the indemnity." 23

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21 Works, XXVIII, 212.

22 Mark Twain's Speeches, Introduction by W. D. Howells, p. 128.

23 Works, XXIX, 251.

The Catholics were reported to have demanded a life for each Catholic killed, or head for head, as Mark Twain expressed it. He gives all the facts on the case quoted from the New York Sun; then he asks,

> Shall we go on conferring our civilization upon the peoples that sit in darkness, or shall we give these poor things a rest? [24]

The satire in the following passage is biting:

> Extending the Blessings of Civilization to our Brother who Sits in Darkness has been a good trade and has paid well, on the whole; and there is money in it yet, if carefully worked--but not enough, in my judgment, to make any considerable risk advisable. The People that Sit in Darkness are getting to be too scarce--too scarce and too shy. And such darkness as is now left is really of but an indifferent quality, and not dark enough for the game. The most of the People that Sit in Darkness have been furnished with more light than was good for them or profitable for us. We have been injudicious. [25]

Inside the package labeled Civilization is the "Actual Thing that the Customer Sitting in Darkness buys with his blood and tears and land and liberty." [26] The rest of the essay brings definite charges against the world powers for their imperialistic acts of aggression. Twain continues:

> We all know that the Business is being ruined. The reason is not far to seek. It is because our Mr. McKinley, and Mr. Chamberlain, and the Kaiser, and the Tsar and the French have been exporting the Actual Thing with the outside cover left off. This

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[24] Ibid., p. 255.

[25] Ibid., pp. 255-256.

[26] Ibid., p. 256.

is bad for the Game. It shows that these new players of it are not sufficiently acquainted with it. 27

Chamberlain is satirized for his hypocrisy in the Boer War. The Person Sitting in Darkness inquires:

> 'These harryings and burnings and desert-makings in the Transvaal--is this an improvement on our darkness? Is it possible that there are two kinds of Civilization--one for home consumption, and one for the heathen market?' 28

Twain thinks the Kaiser's high-handed methods in China caused the Boxer Rebellion. Speaking of the unreasonable indemnities charged the Chinese, the Person in Darkness reasons:

> 'Civilization is gracious and beautiful for such is its reputation. But can we afford it? There are rich Chinamen, perhaps they can afford it; but this tax is not laid upon them, it is laid upon the peasants of Chantung; it is they that pay this mighty sum, and their wages are but four cents a day. Is this a better civilization than ours, and holier and higher and nobler? Is not this rapacity? Is not this extortion?' 29

The imperialism of Russia was especially obnoxious to Mark Twain, for he felt that she had the moral assistance of France and Germany when she robbed Japan of Port Arthur, at the expense of a great loss of Chinese blood. Next, Russia seized Manchuria, raided its villages, and choked its river with the "swollen corpses of countless massacred peasants." Shocked, Mark Twain through the Person observes and notes:

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27 Ibid., p. 257. 28 Ibid., p. 257. 29 Ibid., p. 260.

> 'It is yet another Civilized Power, with its banner of the Prince of Peace in one hand and its loot basket and its butcher knife in the other. Is there no salvation for us but to adopt Civilization and lift ourselves down to its level?' 30

McKinley, called our Master of the Game, did the same thing in the Philippines that Chamberlain had done in South Africa.

> The game was in our hands. If it had been played according to the American rules, Dewey would have sailed away from Manila, as soon as he had destroyed the Spanish fleet--after putting up a sign on shore guaranteeing foreign property and life against damage by the Filipinos, and warning the Powers that interference with the emancipated patriots would be regarded as an act unfriendly to the United States...
>
> Dewey could have gone about his affairs elsewhere, and left the competent Filipino army to starve out the little Spanish garrison and send it home, and the Filipino citizens to set up the form of government they might prefer, and deal with the friars and their doubtful acquisitions according to Filipino ideas of fairness and justice--ideas which have since been tested and found to be of as high an order as any that prevail in Europe or America. 31

The treachery of the United States in the Philippines caused Mark Twain to suggest that the Person Sitting in Darkness will surely say:

> There is something curious about this--curious and unaccountable. There must be two Americas: one that sets the captive free, and one that takes a once-captive's new freedom away from him, and picks a quarrel with him with nothing to found it on; then kills him to get his land. 32

There was another international incident which aroused a great deal of resentment throughout the world. An American

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30 Ibid., pp.261-262. 31 Ibid., p. 263. 32 Ibid., p. 264.

representative shared in the discussions of the Berlin Congress which dealt with the economic affairs of the Congo Free State and the trading rights of other countries within that territory in 1884.[33] President Cleveland advised the Senate not to ratify the Berlin agreements, and at the second assembly on the subject Cleveland refused to do more than permit American agents to appear as observers. The Senate merely ratified the conventions respecting slavery and tariffs.[34] The Congo was made the ward of Belgium, and Leopold promptly seized the country for his personal advantages.

Mark Twain wrote voluminously and bitterly on the subject of Leopold's atrocities; his best known article was "King Leopold's Soliloquy " a withering satire giving the reflections of the fiendish sovereign. Leopold had slaughtered millions of African subjects in his greed--"gentle, harmless blacks--men, women, and little children whom he had butchered and mutilated in his Congo rubber-fields."[35] Twain's article was so bitter and full of morbid details that it was regarded as not suitable for magazine publication. The author gave the material to the Congo Reform Association, who issued it as a pamphlet for distribution.

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[33] Beard and Beard, op. cit., p. 364.

[34] Ibid., p. 364.

[35] Works, XXXII, 1230.

Paine states that Mark would have written "a hundred times as much if he could have saved that unhappy race and have sent Leopold to the electric chair."[36]

From Mark Twain in Eruption is the following comment on Leopold:

> The royal palace of Belgium is still what it has been for fourteen years, the den of a wild beast, King Leopold II, who for money's sake mutilates, murders, and starves half a million of friendless and helpless poor natives in the Congo State every year, and does it by the silent consent of all the Christian powers except England, none of them lifting a hand or a voice to stop these atrocities, although thirteen of them are by solemn treaty pledged to the protecting and uplifting of those wretched natives. In fourteen years Leopold has deliberately destroyed more lives than have suffered death on all the battlefields of this planet for the past thousand years. In this vast statement I am well within the mark, several millions of lives within the mark. It is curious that the most advanced and most enlightened century of all the centuries the sun has looked upon should have the ghastly distinction of having produced this moldy and piety-mouthing hypocrite, this blood monster whose mate is not findable in human history anywhere, and whose personality will surely shame hell itself when he arrives there--which will be soon, let us hope and trust. 37

Many letters were written by Mark Twain in behalf of the plans and movements for Congo reform until he had exhausted his rage. Finally, he declared, "I have said all I can say on that terrible subject. I am heart and soul in

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[36] Ibid., p. 1230.

[37] Mark Twain in Eruption, edited by B. De Voto, p. 212.

the movement that will rescue the Congo and hang Leopold, but I cannot write any more."[38] His final paragraph on the subject was a proposed epitaph:

> Here under this gilded tomb lies rotting the body of one the smell of whose name will still offend the nostrils of men ages upon ages after all the Caesars and Washingtons and Napoleons shall have ceased to be praised or blamed and been forgotten--Leopold of Belgium. 39

As has been shown, most of Mark Twain's utterances on the subject of imperialism were written with a pen dipped in venom, but he did make a few humorous comments on the lighter aspects of governmental policy. For example, he said that one characteristic of all governments everywhere in the world is that of stealing. The foregoing remark taken to its logical conclusion appears to bear out the truth:

> All the territorial possessions of all the political establishments in the earth--including America, of course, consists in pilfering from other people's wash. No tribe, however insignificant, and no nation, howsoever mighty, occupies a foot of land that was not stolen. 40

Industrialism was in considerable degree responsible for the tidal wave of imperialism that inundated Europe and spilled over on the United States. Industry demanded fresh sources of raw materials and new markets, and after 1850 Europe embarked upon an imperialistic course aimed primarily

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[38] Works, XXXII, 1231. [39] Ibid., p. 1231.

[40] Works, XXI, 298.

at exploiting the native populations. Formerly the British had settled colonies with whites, but now the backward peoples were annexed.[41] Mark Twain commented, "There are many humorous things in the world; among them the white man's notion that he is less savage than the other savages."[42]

In speaking of the Tasmanian natives, Mark said,

> These were indeed wonderful people, the natives. They ought not to have been wasted. They should have been crossed with the whites. It would have improved the whites and done the natives no harm.[43]

He goes on to explain the status of the natives:

> But the natives were wasted, poor heroic wild creatures. They were gathered together in little settlements on neighboring islands, and paternally cared for by the government, and instructed in religion, and deprived of tobacco because the superintendent of the Sunday School was not a smoker, and so considered smoking immoral....
>
> The whites always mean well....but the kindest-hearted white man can always be depended on to prove himself inadequate when he deals with savages.[44]

Mark Twain explains that the white men were not used to savages and did not understand tribal law. He laments:

> Extermination seemed to be the proper medicine for such creatures as this. They did not kill all the blacks, but they promptly killed enough of them to make their own persons safe. From the dawn of civilization down to this day the white man has always used that very precaution.[45]

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[41] A. Schlesinger, Paths to the Present, p. 179.

[42] Works, XX, 192.

[43] Ibid., p. 247.

[44] Ibid., pp. 247-248.

[45] Ibid., pp. 186-187.

War was a hateful, terrible thing to Mark Twain; he felt that wars were usually started for the purpose of national greed or private gain. The foreign policy of Theodore Roosevelt was vigorously opposed by Twain, and he wrote in 1908:

> His Excellency leaves for Washington today, to interest himself further in his scheme of provoking a war with Japan with his battleships. Many wise people contend that his idea, on the contrary, is to compel peace with Japan, but I think he wants a war. He was in a skirmish once at San Juan Hill, and he got so much moonshine glory out of it that he has never been able to stop talking about it since....
>
> I think the President is clearly insane in several ways, and insanest upon war and its supreme glories. I think he longs for a big war wherein he can spectacularly perform as chief general and chief admiral, and go down in history as the only monarch of modern times that has served both offices at the same time. 46

The only time that bloodshed and warfare were justifiable was when the oppressed had an opportunity to overthrow a monarch and obtain freedom. When asked to comment on the treaty at the end of the Russo-Japanese War in which Roosevelt had been a mediator, Mark Twain belittled the agreement:

> Russia was on the highroad to emancipation from an insane and intolerable slavery. I was hoping there would be no peace until Russian liberty was safe. I think that this was a holy war, in the best and noblest sense of that abused term, and that no war was ever charged with a higher mission.

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46 Mark Twain in Eruption, p. 8.

> I think there can be no doubt that that mission is now defeated and Russia's chain riveted; this time to stay. I think the Tsar will now withdraw the small humanities that have been forced from him, and resume his medieval barbarisms with a relieved spirit and an immeasurable joy. I think Russian liberty has had its last chance and lost it. I think nothing has been gained by the peace that is remotely comparable to what has been sacrificed by it. One more battle would have abolished the waiting chains of billions on billions of unborn Russians, and I wish it could have been fought. I hope I am mistaken, yet in all sincerity I believe that this peace is entitled to rank as the most conspicuous disaster in political history. [47]

In April, 1906, Mark Twain wrote an item entitled "The American Gentlemen." In it he sarcastically calls Theodore Roosevelt the representative American gentleman of the day.

> He represents what the American gentleman ought not to be, and does it as clearly, intelligibly, and exhaustively as he represents what the American gentleman is. We are by long odds the most ill-mannered nation, civilized or savage, that exists on the planet today, and our President stands for us like a colossal monument visible from all ends of the earth. He is fearfully hard and coarse where another gentleman would exhibit kindliness and delicacy. Lately, when that creature of his, that misplaced doctor, that Governor of Cuba, that sleight-of-hand major-general, Leonard Wood, penned up 600 helpless savages in a hole and butchered every one of them, allowing not even a woman or child to escape, President Roosevelt--representative American gentleman, first American gentleman --put the heart and soul of our whole nation of gentlemen into the scream of delight which he cabled to Wood congratulating him on this 'brilliant feat of arms,' and praising him for thus 'upholding the honor of the American flag.' [48]

About this time Mark Twain was described as being so "unhappy and discontented with our government that he was not

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[47] Works, XXXII, 1242-1243.

[48] Mark Twain in Eruption, p. 33.

conscious of the least emotion of patriotism himself. He was overwhelmed with shame and confusion and wished he were not an American."[49]

"The War Prayer" completely explains Mark Twain's hatred for war. The essay pictures the young recruits about to march away to war, and at the final assembly in the church the minister gives a long prayer for victory for the nation's armies. As the prayer closes, a white-robed stranger enters, moves up the aisle, takes the minister's place and interprets the real meaning of the prayer.[50] Excerpts from this awful prayer follow:

> O Lord our God, help us to tear their soldiers to bloody shreds with our shells; help us to cover their smiling fields with the pale forms of their patriot dead; help us to drown the thunder of the guns with the shrieks of their wounded, writhing in pain; help us to lay waste their humble homes with a hurricane of fire; help us to wring the hearts of their unoffending widows with unavailing grief;.... for our sakes who adore Thee, Lord, blast their hopes, blight their lives, protract their bitter pilgrimage, make heavy their steps, water their way with their tears, stain the white snow with the blood of their wounded feet! We ask it, in the spirit of love, of Him Who is the Source of Love, and Who is the ever-faithful refuge and friend of all that are sore beset and seek His aid with humble and contrite hearts. Amen. 51

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[49] E. Wagenknecht, Mark Twain, The Man and His Work, p. 256.

[50] Works, XXXII, 1232.

[51] Works, XXIX, 398.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Samuel Langhorne Clemens was printer, pilot, miner, reporter, lecturer, author, publisher, and capitalist. His life was crowded full of adventure, travel, tragedy, and death. He had grown up on the frontier in the period preceding the Civil War. From his father and his brother Orion, who were both public officials, Mark Twain early learned a sense of political satire; he found that honesty in politics is seldom rewarded. Twain's productive years were those of the latter half of the nineteenth century, and he was, in many respects, a product of his time and place. Although few men have been more famous than he, few have been more unhappy. He knew how to laugh uproariously, but there was tragedy in his laughter.[1]

For many years Mark Twain concerned himself earnestly with the human race and wrote hopefully for its betterment. He has been called a born reformer. He was a child of an age of faith, having grown up on the frontier, and he could not breathe "the thin air of the modern self-styled intellectual."[2] This analysis of his dilemma is given by Lucy Hazard:

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[1] M. Thomas and D. L. Thomas, Fifty Great Americans, p. 220.

[2] E. Wagenknecht, Mark Twain the Man and His Work, p. 229.

> Mark Twain finds himself confronted by a spectacle of a world where the strong use their strength in brutal and unscrupulous domination, where the shrewd achieve their purposes by contemptible trickery, where the weak struggle in vain....he is too deeply involved in the hazards and triumphs of the Gilded Age to extricate himself from it and launch such an unqualified invective as was poured forth a generation later by the muckrakers. He takes refuge in a philosophy of fatalism which transfers the responsibility from the individual to the universal. [3]

Mark Twain once said that two things bred the deepest pessimism in him--politics and religion. By his own admission, these are "the two things which are the peculiar domain of the heart, not the mind."[4] Twain became more serious as he grew older. He had always resented social and political injustices. Having a sensitive nature, he felt in boyhood a deep sympathy for the slaves in Hannibal. The West had a spirit of democratic freedom that he liked, but even there he saw the greed, cowardice, and inhumanity of mankind. While he was young, he could laugh at these wrongs and even ridicule them to the point of burlesque; but in his older years he became so angry that he was often unable to write satire. He said:

> I wish I could give those sharp satires on European life which you mention, but of course, a man can't write successful satire except he be in a calm, judicial good humor....In truth I don't

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[3] L. L. Hazard, The Frontier in American Literature, pp. 229-230.

[4] Mark Twain's Notebook, edited by A. B. Paine, p. 307.

> ever seem to be in a good enough humor with anything to satirize it. No, I want to stand up before it and curse it and foam at the mouth, or take a club and pound it to rags and pulp...5

Mark Twain's feelings were frequently so strong that he could not detach himself sufficiently from his subject. Critics have pointed out the extent to which personal indignation mars artistic mastery in his writing.

Twain always felt that one sacred duty of man was the duty of rebellion against sham, unrighteous customs, and laws of caste. He usually was able to see through the hypocrisies of his day, whether they involved kings, small-time politicians, or the President of the United States. He believed that holding public office often led a man to give up his ideals and succumb to the corruption of bribery. To the end of his life he continued to attack those actions which seemed unfair, but he often withheld his outraged thoughts from publication. With a family to support, Twain said he was not free to express himself publicly at all times. Then, too, his wife and daughter Clara and lifetime friend, W. D. Howells, often urged him to withhold his most bitter works from publication.

Mark Twain raged over such abuses as Congressional stupidity, municipal graft, the inadequacy of the jury system, the corruption of the judiciary, the brutality of a civil

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5 Works, XXXI, 635.

mob, the evils and horrors of war. In his political doctrines he satirized the despots of the earth; he proclaimed the superiority of republics to monarchies; he expressed the hope that through individual freedom and public education the human race might be advanced to a plane never yet reached. He stated:

> I have never tried in even one single instance to help cultivate the cultivated classes. I was not equipped for it, either by native gifts or training. And I never had any ambition in that direction, but always hunted for bigger game--the masses. [6]

Yet, at last, he decided that the story of the generations is no more than a "sad drift between the eternities without purpose or meaning."[7] As he lowered his estimate of what mankind was capable of, he gradually discarded his high expectations of a glorious ending to the drama of human history. He looked into his own soul for the answer, and he wrote this on September 4, 1907:

> Every man is in his own person the Whole human race, with not a detail lacking. I am the whole human race without a detail lacking. I have studied the human race with diligence and strong interest all these years in my own person; in myself I find in big or little proportion every quality and every defect that is findable in the mass of the race....I knew I should not find a single original thought in any philosophy, and I knew I could not furnish one to the

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[6] Works, XXXV, 527.

[7] V. Parrington, Main Currents in American Thought, III, 95.

> world myself, if I had five centuries to invent it in ....The human race is a race of cowards; and I am not only marching in that procession but carrying a banner. 8

Many things have been said about Mark Twain's political satire. Edgar Lee Masters states that Mark Twain had no political principles and cites the following incidents to prove it: Twain joined the Confederate army and deserted; he allied himself with the post-Civil War Republican Party which "lent itself to every fraud and every ruin to the fair institution of the Republic;" he supported Garfield, regardless of the Credit Mobilier Scandal; he became a Mugwump and supported Cleveland. In conclusion, Masters says:

> Mark Twain walked amid the idiocy and stench of the times making faces, while standing with the putrid administration of Grant and with the questionable election of Hayes. He walked amid it all making fun and gathering in money for burlesqueing vermin-eaten mountebanks like the Duke and the King and letting the big thieves, the real enemies of liberty and beauty, go scot free....Twain was committed to silence by his social ties and did or said nothing to antagonize the bosses of the hour. 9

Van Wyck Brooks writes that Mark Twain suppressed his real beliefs, creating in himself a state of exasperation that was only partially relieved by private expression, often extremely profane, in conversation and letters, and concludes:

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8 Mark Twain in Eruption, edited by B. De Voto, Introduction, p. xxix.

9 E. L. Masters, Mark Twain, a Portrait, pp. 195-199.

> He deals one blow after another against the tendencies of American imperialism, against the Balance of Power, against the great power system ....All this in the privacy of his correspondence! In public, he could not question the popular drift of his age, the popular cry of his age.... 'Nothing succeeds like success! '....How could the man who invented in the market on tips from Henry Rogers arraign the capitalistic regime? 10

On the contrary, Bernard De Voto believes that research can find few elements of the age that Mark Twain did not burlesque, satirize, or deride. The whole obscene spectacle of government is passed in review--the president, Congress, the corruption of the electorate, bribery, and depravity. In the wide expanse of his books there are few social ulcers that Mark Twain does not probe.[11]

Chronology is perhaps the answer to Mark Twain's political satire, suggests Alexander Cowie. Most of Twain's early books reflected his radical views chiefly in the mirror of history, and the most violent criticism did not appear until the latter part of his life, some of the most cogent satire appearing posthumously.[12] It is possible that Mark Twain's wholesale cynicism about politics may have had its origin in his personal expectation of too much of mortal

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10 V. W. Brooks, The Ordeal of Mark Twain, pp. 175-176.

11 Bernard De Voto, Mark Twain's America, p. 267.

12 A. Cowie, The American Novel, p. 634.

man--including himself. He was almost fantastically idealistic in expecting men and nations to exhibit the noble attitude. He was aggrieved to see that men are not always altruistic, that governments engage in sordid dealings.[13]

Floyd Stovall rates Twain as the greatest American writer of his generation, but believes that he was not great enough to understand himself or his country. He was one of the few literary men who, like Whitman, saw and criticized the shallowness, effrontery, and corruption of American public and private life during the Gilded Age.[14] In his younger days he had faith and hope in the natural man, such as Huck Finn was, but as he grew old, he accepted scientific facts and threw that hope away.

This is Parrington's comment on Mark Twain as a product of his time and place:

> What an ending for a child of the Gilded Age! In his youth a complete frontiersman, with vast potential wealth within him, he hewed and hacked at his genius, working the easiest veins, exploiting the most accessible resources, wasting much to cash in on a little. And when in the end the fool's gold turned to ashes in his mouth, as a frontiersman still he pursued his way alone, a solitary pioneer exploring the universe, seeking a homestead in an ironical cosmos, until overwhelmed by the intolerable solitude he made mock at all the gods. What a commentary on the Gilded Age! [15]

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[13] Ibid., p. 635.

[14] F. Stovall, American Idealism, pp. 113-116.

[15] Parrington, op. cit., pp. 99-100.

I do not agree with those who are inclined to be too critical of Mark Twain. He was neither a scholar nor a political scientist, but he was a true humanitarian. He became terribly disillusioned because the democratic ideals did not work out in actual practice. Numerous quotations have been given to show that he did express himself on public issues. He was well-informed on current affairs, and he publicly attacked many evils of his time which deserved satire. On the Comstock, he lashed out at the evils of the frontier; and the sordid dealings in Washington were completely exposed in The Gilded Age. Two of his best-known books, Huckleberry Finn and A Connecticut Yankee are serious indictments against slavery, monarchy, and other social wrongs of his day. Mark Twain championed the rights of the Negroes and other oppressed races and urged equality of the sexes.

He owed allegiance to no political party after 1884, but based his personal choice upon the integrity of the man who was running for office. Twain considered the welfare of the nation of first importance; he believed that each citizen had a dual responsibility to his conscience and to his country. He hated blind allegiance either to party or to country. He believed that every individual must exercise independence of thought if we are to have a democracy. Above all, he hated imperialism, greed, and war, those awful examples of man's inhumanity to man.

A difference can be seen between the suggestion of political satire in The Innocents Abroad and the ideas expressed by the author in "The Czar's Soliloquy." Earlier Mark Twain seemed to blame the masses of the people for their filth, dirt, and oppression. In A Connecticut Yankee he told them to arise, to overthrow king and church. In his later years he grasped the relationship of cause and effect and placed the blame upon the monarchs. There was a definite growth both in his sympathy for the weak and oppressed and in his burning hatred for their despots.

Some critics have felt that Twain's satire was weakened by personal indignation and emotional instability--that he was unable to master the materials of his satire. In my opinion, however, Mark Twain is a more effective political satirist than his critics have generally considered him. While his writings lack objectivity and restraint, they, nevertheless, have vitality, strength, and penetration. The feeling of moral indignation is strong in Mark Twain, as it is in Molière and Swift. This quality more than any other gives to his political satire its lasting effectiveness.

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