

# MARK TWAIN'S SECRET BOOK GIVES STARTLING VIEWS

HERE is a surprise for those who think they know their Mark Twain well.

A few years ago the man whom all the world knew as a humorist wrote a book the philosophical drift of which was thus characterized by the author in one of the closing chapters: "It is a desolating doctrine; it is not inspiring, ennobling, uplifting, takes the glory out of man, it takes a pride out of him, it takes the heroism out of him, it denies him all personal credit, all applause; it not only degrades him to a machine, but allows him no control over the machine; makes a mere coffee mill of him, and neither permits him to supply the coffee nor turn the crank; his sole and piteously humble function being to grind coarse or fine, according to his make, outside impulses doing all the rest."

A strange philosophy for a humorist! but it represented Mark Twain's real view of life. Why did he keep it hidden during all the years that he was addressing—nearly always with a smile—the public? In a prefatory note to the book, he answers the question in this wise:

February, 1905. The studies for these papers began twenty-five or twenty-seven years ago. The papers were written seven years ago. I have examined them once or twice per year since and found them satisfactory. I have just examined them again, and am still satisfied that they speak the truth.

Every thought in them has been chosen (an unpalatable truth) by millions upon millions of men—and concealed, kept private. Why did they not speak out? Because they dreaded (and could not bear) the disapproval of the people around them. Why have I not published them? The same reason, has restrained me, I think. I can find no other.

Mark Twain really never published the book. He had 250 copies printed for private circulation only. The book was anonymous, the author distributing it only among his intimate friends. "What Is Man?" is the title, and the only inscription on the book cover. On the second fly leaf are printed, "Copyright, 1906, by J. W. Bothwell." (Mr. Bothwell was at that time Mark Twain's private secretary.) and "Printed by the De Vinne Press. 1906." The matter in the book fills 140 pages.

This is an illustration of how well the secret has been kept: "The Times" reporter interviewed a man who is an expert in Mark Twain's bibliography. Said he: "I had never even heard of the book until a few days ago, when I received a note from a man asking if I could give him any information about an alleged Clemens secret book, of which he had heard a rumor. I had to reply that I was even more in the dark than he."

A few years ago Mr. Mitchell Kennerley of this city was a passenger on the ocean liner on which Mark Twain was traveling to England to receive his degree of Doctor of Laws from Oxford University. They had many conversations on the subject of man's moral and spiritual makeup—a subject that seemed to be very close to the humorist's heart.

At the close of their last conversation Mark Twain said: "I have written down my thoughts on this subject and put them in book form. I have presented this book only to friends, and I am glad to give you a copy. When I am dead—well, when a man is dead the public will forgive him most anything."

It is through Mr. Kennerley's courtesy that "The Times" is able to give the following extracts from the book, which summarize Mark Twain's hitherto concealed philosophy of life.

The book is in the form of a dialogue between an Old Man and a Young Man. The Old Man had asserted that a human being is merely a machine and nothing more. The Young Man objected and asked him to go into particulars and furnish his reasons for his position.

The Old Man begins the conversation by comparing the relative merits of a steam engine made of steel and of one made of stone. The young man naturally admits that the steel steam engine would do far superior work. The Old Man then asks the question:

Would the steel steam engine be personally entitled to the credit of its own performance?

YOUNG MAN—Certainly not. OLD MAN—Why not?

YOUNG MAN—Because its performance is not personal. It is the result of the law of its construction. It is not a merit that does the things which it is set to do—it can't help doing them.

OLD MAN—And it is not a personal demerit in the stone machine that it does so little?

YOUNG MAN—Certainly not. It does no more and no less than the law of its make permits and compels it to do. There is nothing personal about it; it cannot choose. Is it your idea to work up to the proposition that man and the machine are about the same things and that there is no personal merit in the performance of either?

OLD MAN—Yes, but do not be offended. I am meaning no offense. What makes the grand difference between the stone engine and the steel one? Shall we call it training, education? Shall we call a stone engine a savage and the steel one a civilized man? The original rock contained the stuff which the steel was made, but along with it to do sulphur and stone and other obstructing inborn virtues, brought down from the old geologic ages—prejudices, let us call them, prejudices, which nothing in the rock itself had either power to remove or any desire to remove. Prejudices which must be removed by outside influences or not removed by outside influences or not

The Old Man points out that the iron is absolutely indifferent whether the rock be removed or not, and that it is an outside influence that beguiles it into the Bessemer furnace and refines it into steel of a first quality; but that by no possible process can it be refined or educated into gold.

OLD MAN—There are gold men and tin men and copper men and leaden men and steel men, and so on; and each has the limitations of his nature, his hereditary aptitudes and his environment. You are a hard engine out of each of these metals, and they will all perform, but they will not perform the same way. You cannot require the steel engine to do

what the copper engine does. In each

case, to get the best results, you must free the metal from its obstructing prejudicial ores by education—smelting, refining, and so forth.

YOUNG MAN—You have arrived at man, now?

OLD MAN—Yes. Man the machine—man the impersonal machine. Whatever a man is due to his make and to the influences brought to bear upon it by his hereditaries, his habitat, his association. He is moved, directed, commanded by exterior influences solely. He originates nothing—not even a thought.

YOUNG MAN—Oh, come! Where did I get my opinion that this which you are talking is all foolishness?

OLD MAN—It is a quite natural opinion—indeed, an inevitable one—but you did not create the materials out of which it is formed. They are odds and ends of thoughts, impressions, feelings, gathered unconsciously from a thousand books, a thousand conversations, and from streams of thought and feeling which have flowed down into your heart and brain out of the hearts and brains of centuries of ancestors. Personally, you did not create even the smallest microscopic fragment of materials of which your opinion is made, and personally you cannot claim even the slender merit of putting the borrowed materials together. That was done automatically by your mental machinery in strict accordance with the law of that machinery's construction. And you not only did not make that machinery, yourself, but you have not even any command over it.

In the argument which follows, the Young Man finally says:

It is an exasperating subject. The first man had original thoughts, anyway; there was nobody to draw from.

OLD MAN—It is a mistake. Adam's thoughts came to him from the outside. You have a fear of death. You did not invent that—you got it from the outside, from thought and teaching. Adam had no fear of death, none in the world.

YOUNG MAN—Yes he had.

OLD MAN—When he was created?

YOUNG MAN—No, when he was threatened with it.

OLD MAN—Then it came from the outside. Adam is quite big enough; let us not try to have you set him up as a god. None but gods have ever had a thought which did not come from the outside. Adam probably had a good head, but it was no sort of use to him until it was filled up from the outside. He had not a shadow of a notion between good or evil. Neither he nor Eve was able to originate the idea that it was unimposed to go naked. The knowledge came in with the apple from the outside.

YOUNG MAN—Well, never mind Adam; but certainly Shakespeare's creations—

OLD MAN—No, you mean Shakespeare's imitations. Shakespeare created nothing. He correctly observed, and he bravely extolled and cowardly derved, and he created none himself. Let us spare him the slander of charging him with trying. Shakespeare could not create. He was a machine, and machines do not create.

YOUNG MAN—Where was his excellence, then?

OLD MAN—In this. He was not a sewing machine, like you and me. He was a Gobeelin loom. The threads and colors came into him from the outside; and so framed the patterns in his mind, and put up its complex and admirable machinery; and it automatically turned out that pictured and gorgeous fabric which still compels the astonishment of the world. If Shakespeare had been born and bred on a barren rock in the ocean, Shakespeare would have produced nothing.

YOUNG MAN—And so we are mere machines. And machines may not boast, nor feel proud of their performance, nor claim personal merit for it, nor applause and praise. It is an infamous doctrine, it is merely a fact.

YOUNG MAN—I suppose, then, there is no more merit in being brave than in being a coward?

OLD MAN—Personal merit? No. A brave man does not create his bravery. He is entitled to no personal credit for possessing it. It is born to him.

## The Humorist Wrote His Serious Thoughts on Religion and Life and Had Them Printed for Private Circulation Among His Intimates.



The Caricature of Himself That Mark Twain Liked Best.

(Reproduced from the New York Times of Sunday, Sept. 2, 1906.)

When this sketch appeared in The Sunday Times Mark Twain wrote expressing a desire to obtain the original if possible. Upon its receipt he wrote to Mr. Cox, saying: "I do not know how to sufficiently thank you for the original of that caricature. I prize it and shall honorably frame it and keep it, for it is the best one I have ever seen of myself."

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The Young Man then asks what is to be said of a timid man who sets himself the task of conquering his cowardice and succeeds. To this the old man replies that such a one is entitled to no credit; that it was his make and the influences which wrought upon it from the outside; that this timid man was not utterly and completely a coward, and the influences would have had nothing to work upon. There was a seed, but it was no merit of his that the seed was there. Neither is he entitled to credit for his resolution to cultivate this seed. The idea of doing so came whence all impulses, good or bad, come—from outside. If that timid man had lived all his life in a community of human rabbits; had never read of brave deeds; had never heard any one praise them or express envy of the heroes that had

done them, he would have had no more idea of bravery than Adam had of modesty, and it could never by any possibility have occurred to him to resolve to become brave. He could not originate the idea—it had to come to him from the outside. And so, when he heard nothing that he felt that he heard didn't relieve the old woman he would not get any sleep. He must buy some sleep—still thinking of himself, you see. Thus, to sum up, he bought himself free of a sharp pain in his heart, he bought himself free of the tortures of a waiting conscience, he bought a whole night's sleep—all for 25 cents! It should make Wall Street ashamed of itself.

The Old Man then sums up the law which governs both our noblest and our basest impulses in these words: From his cradle to his grave a man never does a single thing which has any first and foremost object but one—to secure peace of mind, spiritual comfort, for himself.

YOUNG MAN—What detail is that?

OLD MAN—The impulse which moves a person to do things—the only impulse that ever moves a person to do a thing. The impulse to content his own spirit—the necessity of contenting his own spirit and winning its approval.

YOUNG MAN—Oh, come, that won't do! It puts a man in the attitude of always looking out for his own comfort and advantage; whereas an unselfish man often does a thing solely for another person's good when it is a positive disadvantage to himself.

OLD MAN—It is a mistake. The act must do him good, FIRST, otherwise he will not do it. He may think he is doing it solely for the other person's sake, but

than it would be if he remained at home. Public opinion can force some men to do anything.

YOUNG MAN—I don't believe that. Can it force a right-principled man to do a wrong thing? Or a kind man to do a cruel thing?

OLD MAN—Yes. Alexander Hamilton was a conspicuously high-principled man. He regarded dueling as wrong, and as opposed to the teachings of religion—but in deference to public opinion he fought a duel. He deeply loved his family, but to buy public approval he treacherously deserted them and threw his life away, ungenerously leaving them to lifelong sorrow in order that he might stand well with a foolish world. In the then condition of the public standard of honor he could not have been comfortable with the stigma upon him of having refused to fight.

YOUNG MAN—Some noble souls have refused to fight duels, and have manfully

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account) a man's conscience is totally wrong, and he must be taught it.

YOUNG MAN—You spoke of trained consciences. You mean that we are not born with consciences competent to guide us aright?

OLD MAN—If we were, children and savages would know right from wrong, and not have to be taught it.

YOUNG MAN—But consciences can be trained? By parents, teachers, the pulpit, and books?

OLD MAN—Yes—they do their share; they do what they can.

YOUNG MAN—And the rest is done by—

OLD MAN—Oh, a million unnoticed influences—for good or bad; influences which work without rest during every waking moment of a man's life, from cradle to grave.

YOUNG MAN—Do you believe that many of the dumb animals can think?

OLD MAN—Yes—the elephant, the monkey, the dog, the macaw, and many others. Could you teach an idiot the manual of arms, and to advance, retreat, and go through complex field manoeuvres at the word of command? Well, canary birds can learn all that; dogs and elephants learn all sorts of wonderful things. Fleas can be taught nearly anything that a Congressman can.

YOUNG MAN—Oh, come! You are abolishing the intellectual frontier which separates man and beast.

OLD MAN—One cannot abolish what does not exist.

YOUNG MAN—It elevates the dumb beasts to—

OLD MAN—Let us drop that lying phrase, and call them the Unrevealed Creatures: so far as we know, there is no such thing as a dumb beast. "Dumb" beast suggests an animal that has no thought machinery, no understanding, no speech, no way of communicating what is in his mind. It is just like man's vanity and impertinence to call an animal dumb because it is dumb to his dull perceptions.

A little further on, the Old Man remarks: You must remember and always distinguish the people who can't bear certain things from the people who can. It will throw light upon a number of apparently "self-sacrificing" cases.

YOUNG MAN—Oh, dear, it's all so disgusting!

OLD MAN—Yes, and so true.

The Old Man then goes on to give instances that illustrate his theory. He mentions an infidel who taught his infidelity to a dying child, and who repented on seeing the mother's anguish and being pained by it. He tells of an Adirondack wood chopper who left his home and family in the mountains and became a missionary in New York's slums—"sacrificing" himself and his family to gain the approbation of his fellow-workers in the slums.

YOUNG MAN—You keep using that word—training. By it do you particularly mean—

OLD MAN—Study, instruction, lectures, sermons? That is a part of it—but not a large part. I mean all the outside influences. There are millions of them. From the cradle to the grave, during all his waking hours, the human being is under training. In the very first rank of his trainers stands association. It is his human environment which influences his mind and his feelings, furnishes him with his ideals, and sets him on his road and keeps him in it. If he leave that road he will find himself shunned by the people whom he most loves and esteems and whose approval he most values. He is a chameleon; by the law of his nature he takes the color of his piece of resort. The influences about him create his preferences, his aversions, his politics, his tastes, his morals, his religion. He creates none of these things for himself. You have seen Presbyterians?

YOUNG MAN—Many.

OLD MAN—How did they happen to be

entirely sincere persons who thought they were (permanent) seekers after truth. They sought diligently, persistently, carefully, cautiously, profoundly, with perfect honesty and nicely adjusted judgment—until they believed that without doubt or question they had found the truth. That was the end of the search. The man spent the rest of his life hunting up shingles wherewith to protect his truth from the weather. If he was seeking after political truth he found it in one or another of the hundred political gospels which govern men on the earth; if he was seeking after the only true religion he found it in one or another of the 3,000 that are in the market. In any case, when he found the truth he sought no further; but from that day forth, with his soldering iron in one hand and his budget in the other, he tinkered its leaks and reasoned with objectors. There have been innumerable temporary seekers' after truth—have you ever heard of a permanent one? In the very nature of man such a person is impossible. However, to drop back to the text—training; all training is one form or another of outside influence, and association is the largest part of it. A man is never anything but what his outside influences have made him. They train him downward or they train him upward—but they train him; they are at work upon him all the time.

YOUNG MAN—Then if he happen by the accidents of life to be evilly placed, there is no help for him—he must train downward.

OLD MAN—No help for this chameleon? It is a mistake. It is in his chameleon-ship that his greatest good fortune lies. He has only to change his habitat—his associations. But the impulse to do it must come from the outside. Sometimes a very small and accidental thing can furnish him the initiatory impulse and start him on a new road with a new ideal. The history of man is full of such accidents. The accident of a broken leg brought a profane and ribald soldier under religious influences and furnished him a new ideal. From that accident sprang the Order of the Jesuits, and it has been shaking thrones, changing policies, and doing other tremendous work for 200 years—and will go on. The chance reading of a book or a newspaper paragraph can start a man on a new track, and make him renounce his old associations and seek new ones that are in sympathy with his new ideal.

YOUNG MAN—Are you hinting at a new scheme of procedure?

OLD MAN—Not a new one—one as old as mankind. Merely the laying of traps for people. Traps baited with initiatory impulses toward high ideals. It is what the tract distributor does. It is what the missionary does. It is what governments ought to do.

YOUNG MAN—Don't you believe that God could make an inherently honest man?

OLD MAN—Yes, I know He could. I also know that He never did make one. God makes a man with honest or dishonest possibilities in him, and stops there. The man's associations develop the possibilities.

YOUNG MAN—Now, then, I will ask you why, after all the training in training people to lead virtuous lives. What is gained by it?

OLD MAN—The man himself gets large advantages out of it, and that is the main thing to him. He is not a peril to his neighbors, he is not a damage to them—and so they get an advantage out of his virtues. That is the main thing to them. It can make this life a really comfortable one to the parties concerned.

YOUNG MAN—If you were going to condense into an admonition your plan for the general betterment of the race's condition, how would you do it?

OLD MAN—Diligently train your ideals upward and still upward toward a summit where you will find your chiefest pleasure in conduct which, while contenting you, will be sure to confer benefits upon your neighbor and the community.

The Old Man goes on to say that this is not a new gospel—that it has been taught by all the great religions. But the Old Man's gospel has this advantage over the old gospels, says the Old Man: The others offer you a hundred bribes to be good, thus conceding that the Master inside of you must be conciliated and contented first, and that you will do nothing at first hand but for his sake; then they turn square around and require you to do good for others' sake chiefly; and to do duty for duty's sake chiefly; and to do acts of self-sacrifice. Thus at the outset we all stand upon the same ground—recognition of the supreme and absolute Monarch that resides in man, and appeal to him. Then the others dodge and shuffle and face around and unfrankly and illogically change the form of their appeal and direct its persuasions to man's second-place powers and to powers which have no existence in him, thus advancing them to first place; whereas in my Admonition I stick logically and consistently to the original position; I place the Interior Master's requirements first, and keep them there. My scheme has this advantage: it has no concealments, no deceptions. When a man leads a right and valuable life under it he is not deceived as to the real chief motive which impels him to it—in those other cases he is.

But a little further on the Old Man himself takes a whack at his own theory. He says: I have been a humble, earnest, and sincere Truth Seeker. I am not that now. There are now but temporary Truth Seekers; a permanent one is a human impossibility; as soon as the Seeker finds what he is thoroughly convinced is the Truth, he seeks no further, but gives the rest of his days to hunting junk to patch it and to talk it and prop it with, and make it weather-proof and keep it from coming in on him. Hence the Presbyterian remains a Presbyterian, the Mohammedan a Mohammedan, the Democrat a Democrat; and if a humble, earnest, and sincere Seeker after Truth should find it in the proposition that the moon is made of green cheese nothing could ever budge him from that position; for he is nothing but an automatic machine to must obey the laws of his construction.

YOUNG MAN—And so—