Note to participants of the FACE classes in November 2020: if you wish to read the shortened version of the play that will be presented on November 8, read the Abridged Version on page 7. And if you want to read the full text as it will be performed someday in Ashland, then read the full text version beginning on page 29. Happy reading!

Clark/Twain in Portland

By Clark Colahan

Meddlesome improvements by Giles Colahan

Script editing by Michael Nicholson

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Abridged in one act for Zoom or old-time radio theater 2020

Followed by the complete version for the stage in two acts

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ABRIDGED IN ONE ACT

Big Decisions Made by Mark Twain and E.A. Clark

Before you read the play, I invite you to ask yourself what, in each of these situations that arose in their lives, motivated them to make the decisions they did? What do you suspect, or think or know was the outcome of the decision?

Mark

Quit his career as a steamboat pilot after his brother was killed in an explosion on board ship.

Joined the confederate militia at the beginning of the Civil War.

Quit the militia and went to Nevada, where he worked as a reporter.

Worked as an aide to a US senator, but soon quit.

Wrote the anti-slavery novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.*

Allowed himself to be cheated for many years by the inventor of a typesetting machine.

Made a long lecture tour around the world to pay off debts he incurred with bad investments.

Actively and politically opposed the creation of the American empire around the world.

In later life, after the death of his wife and two daughters, when asked about his religious life, he often replied that his relation with God was under a cloud.

E.A.

For two years he left his wife, daughter and unmarried sister back East to join the Gold Rush in California.

Chose not to join his neighbors in street rioting when he lost all his farm land near San Jose after the courts ruled in favor of the Mexican owner of a large ranch that had been subdivided illegally.

Acted as the judge that conducted trials for the Vigilance Committee in San Luis Obispo.

Became superintendent of public education in San Jose and fought to improve education for young women.

Wrote several thousands of editorials for the *San Jose Mercury*.

Practiced experimental medicine, including treatment with electricity and vaccines.

After his first wife died, he became active in the International Society of Psychics.

As a matter of principle, he stopped practicing law.

Preached to large crowds for the Unitarians, but refused to join the church.

Established the People's Party in San Jose, then ran for mayor representing that party.

Cast

One woman and two men

ANNA CLARK COLAHAN

Reporter for the *San Jose Mercury*. Her lines appear in green.

E. A. Clark

Well known doctor, lawyer, educator, editorialist and orator. His lines appear in blue.

MARK TWAIN

Humorist, novelist, moralist and icon of American literature. His lines appear in yellow.

In this abridgment, only the highlighted lines spoken by these three characters are used. All other lines and stage directions are omitted.

Author's Forward

Mark Twain's around-the–world lecture tour in 1895-96 included an evening in Portland, Oregon, described by his friend and manager J.B. Pond as a grand success. After the show was over, Twain continued his storytelling for two hours more at the Portland Club, doubtless enjoying the liberty of bringing out fresh anecdotes not included on the same program he used at every stop on the tour. Pond wrote enthusiastically in his diary, "They will all remember that evening as long as they live. There is surely but one Mark Twain."

Next morning, he was interviewed for five minutes and given a write-up by a young reporter for the *Oregonian* that, as Pond wrote, 'Mark' declared was the most accurate and the best that had ever been reported of him." It touched briefly on how much he liked the look of the city, bicycles, government monopolies, how to write a travel guidebook, and more thoroughly on creating and naming literary characters. With that range of subjects, no wonder Twain liked it.

The questions discussed in the fictional debate that follows revolve around Twain's real-life contribution to a projected series of essays by prominent writers addressing the question of whether or not there is a turning point that shapes people's lives. We make use of passages borrowed from Twain's autobiography and other writings. The theatrical inspiration has been twofold, Hal Holbrook's *Mark Twain Tonight* for one. For that reason, it is built on lots of quotes and paraphrases taken from Twain, but it adds more characters and, in the two-act version, a narrator/stage manager that provides further historical context. The conversation explores and questions Twain's ideas on how inherited personality traits and historical circumstances generate the way a life is constructed, in opposition to Clark's faith in reason and progress. This exchange of convictions expands to other issues that include empire, politics, marriage, and minorities.

The second historical character is Major James B. Pond. Though appearing only briefly, he was the manager of Twain's trip around the world to pay his debts at a time of crisis in his career. The third is Eleutheros Americus Clark, who was, in addition to an MD, a teacher, a lawyer, a prolific writer of editorials for the *San Jose Mercury*, and a reporter for two of the same San Francisco newspapers that Twain was. Like Twain, he published pieces in Bret Harte's *Overland Monthly*, and wrote a novel serialized in the *Mercury*. Many, but not all, of his highly independent and liberal views were in sync with Twain's, and he experienced similar tragedies with death in his family. In the abridgment we include also Anna Clark Colahan, who with her father's encouragement bravely supported herself and her two young children after the early death of her husband William Colahan, Recorder of Santa Clara County, who had contracted tuberculosis as a volunteer in the Civil War.

A second inspiration for what we've put together is a recent play by Sabina Berman entitled *Molière*. It juxtaposes the comic and the tragic reactions to life, vividly showing the human urge to both laugh (dominant in Molière) and to weep (primary to Racine). The eventual friendship between these two rivals, beacons of competing philosophies, is also an underlying theme of *Clark/Twain in Portland*.

Setting: Portland, Oregon, 1895.

'The Hanging Judge' is what our friend municipal magistrate Sam Tucker said emphatically when he got his first look at an old oil portrait of him. But two California brothers, growing up under that stern and intimidating gaze that seemed to emanate from their ancestor's light blue eyes following them around the living room, always knew he was the revered great, great grandfather, Dr. Clark of sainted memory. Years later the name connected to that oversized gilt frame expanded to Eleutheros Americus Clark, 'Free American' in Latin and Greek, as you might well have guessed if you, too, had been born and gone to school in the 1820's. But then, after shooting more rapids in the river of life, the brothers were bemused to learn that his wives and children often called him affectionately Old Crooked Jaw. Finally, when the two young men reached the age of immunity to abject prostration at the feet of authority, he turned out to be less terrifying than his bushy blonde eyebrows had led them to believe - even though he's still banished to a permanent exhibition in the garage - and to offer the most fascinating nesting spot in their Ponderosa of a family tree.

The brothers had read his diaries and many of his literally thousands of eloquently worded editorials in San Jose's leading newspaper, the *Mercury*. They knew his two extensive articles (one on legal reform and another on the chances of life after death) in Bret Harte's magazine *The Overland Monthly*. It was the San Francisco echo of the highbrow *Atlantic Monthly,* enlivened with outdoor adventure and colorful characters. Its pages came to include work by successful writers – Jack London, William Saroyan, Willa Cather, John Muir, Ambrose Bierce and many more - and by a young reporter who signed his pieces Mark Twain. But they never discovered any evidence that Dr. Clark's path had crossed that of Sam Clemens. It's true that Clark's diaries record that he attended a lecture given by Mark Twain in San Jose in 1866, and that he had worked as a writer for two of the same San Francisco newspapers as Twain, the *Call* and the *Alta,* but that wasn't at exactly the same time.

So we have chosen to imagine that among the bushel basket of unsorted manuscripts that our great grandmother saved from her father's papers was a sheaf of pages that would have been anything but routine. They were her account, written as a reporter for the *San Jose Mercury*, of a debate set up to kick off a series of essays by literary figures of the time, a project organized by *Harper's Monthly* magazine on the subject of "The Turning Point of My Life." Twain's piece in the 'symposium,' as he called it, though not published until much later, still was the first to appear in print, and that fact we did not have to imagine. The magazine eventually chose to abandon the project, and the essay was followed by only one other contribution, that of Clemens' distinguished friend William Dean Howells, who himself had suggested the series.

The debate seems to us an event that could have been hastily set up by telegraph by the magazine's editor, Elizabeth Jordan, to take place in Portland, Oregon, on August 9 as part of the 1895 round-the-world lecture tour. The location could have been seized on as the closest to San Jose after the decision was made not to go as far south as San Francisco. Her idea would have been to prod the series into action by getting on record Twain's advance comments before he set sail for Asia. The magazine hoped, we preferred to suppose,

that quotes from the lively give-and-take of an informal debate could be used in publicity while the great man was on the other side of the globe. It would also provide him with a break from the same program he used in every city on the tour.

Anna: Welcome friends. I am happy that you want to share this memory of my father with me. My recall of it is still clear, and it's helped along by the draft of a newspaper article I wrote about it. Since his recent death of a heart attack while running for mayor of San Jose, I haven't had the courage to look at it again. Kindly allow me simply to read it to you. Portland, OR.. August 9, 1895. In front of a large audience, this reporter having been pressed into service as the mistress of ceremonies, she greeted the large audience. Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen. Welcome to Portland's Grand Marquam, which is generously providing the venue for tonight's debate between Mark Twain and San Jose's Dr. E. A. Clark. I am Anna Clark Colahan, Dr. Clark's daughter, reporting on tonight's event for the *San Jose Mercury*. Unfortunately, Mr. Twain's train from Tacoma was delayed and is just now arriving. He will be here very shortly. But we have here Dr. Clark, ready to speak with you…. He seems lost in thought…. Father.

Dr. Clark immediately looked up and smiled, then arose with a determined look in his eye and remarked with characteristic earnestness.

E.A: Good evening, citizens of Portland. Mr. Twain's delay, while unexpected, has a good explanation, and I'm sure anyone who has an appointment to meet him often encounters these contretemps. A man of his prominence may often get caught up in demands on his time. A writer of his stature, even though a humorist, isn't consulted by governors and presidents without good cause. As I like to say, there's always a reason - for everything. Indeed, that's my motto, but more of that in a moment. And while we are dancing attendance on the witty, if indeed tardy sage of Hannibal, allow me to sketch out for you this evening's program. (Glancing somewhat apprehensively at the back of hall, then continuing in a robust tone of voice). But I am, so to speak, putting the jaunting cart of the agenda before the tout sheet of the race horses. While you unquestionably know who Mark Twain is, and that is why you have come, my name and ideas may not have made any impression on you at all. I am Dr. E.A. Clark of San Jose, in the fruitful Santa Clara Valley of California. Advanced medicine, bringing education to all, and a cornucopia of editorials in the city's leading daily, *The Mercury*, are my stock and trade. My goal and my pledge is to serve the common good.

E.A: What brings me here over immense prairies and mountains? You may well wonder, and even more at my astonishing appointment to speak on the same stage with the author of *Innocents Abroad*, *Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn*, *The Prince and the Pauper. Harper's Monthly* is what and who.

Anna: Throughout these preliminary remarks Dr. Clark continually checked his pocket watch but stalwartly persevered.

E.A: Now why would they do something like that? In the 60's Mark Twain, or as he was better known at the time outside the newspaper world, Sam Clemens, and I worked as reporters for two of the same San Francisco papers, the *Morning Call* and the *Alta Californian*, though unfortunately not at the same time so we didn't have the pleasure of meeting. *The Bazaar* has now undertaken to organize an essay contest, and they know that Mark, as the whole adoring nation calls him, and I, who am merely a West Coast phenomenon, hold

antithetical and competing views on the subject they have chosen, which is, to wit, is there a turning point in the course of one's life.

Anna: At this point Dr. Clark looked around yet again, then ventured forth upon his thesis. He continued reading while Mr. Twain entered the auditorium, clearly hurrying. But hearing the voice of his opponent for the evening's entertainment, he reigned in his haste to give his full attention to the remarks he needs must refute shortly thereafter, and with his legendary verve and charm.

E.A: For my part, I am convinced that many people decidedly and permanently change their manner of living after grasping the importance, indeed the transforming power, of a compelling idea. What, then, is an idea? I have been unable to find any definition which satisfies me, so I will make my own definition. An idea is a definite, distinct and clear-cut mental perception of some thing or principle. It is a force. It is the immediate resultant product of cerebro-chemical action, of the explosion in a certain number of cerebral cells. Ideas are generated, liberated and started on their wonderful mission by the vital chemism of the most wonderful battery known to science - the human brain. Many thoughts are vague, shadowy, indistinct, purposeless: mere bubbles as we might say, rising from this constantly active battery of the brain.

Anna: This idea of Dr Clark regarding what an idea is, or rather is not, produced a certain confusion on the faces of the audience, not shadowy but entirely distinct and full of puzzlement. None the less he stuck to his train of thought, even though it was one that many of his listeners weren't able to catch.

E.A: But when we once see, then comes to the surface a clear-cut, distinct idea. It is a force for ever. It may be, apparently, buried from sight, but it never dies. It cannot die. It is indestructible.

Anna: Mr. Twain startled the speaker by rising from a seat he had taken and heading for the stage.

M.T: Indeed, Dr. Clark. I can verify for you in my own life that an idea is indestructible and endures forever. But will it create a change in one's *behavior*, a turning point in one's life? I have forever and a fortnight had the idea that I should cease smoking, and I can assure you that it will be with me for the rest of my days. But just because it is an idea, cast and polished in bronze, it does not mean I will *act* upon it and have it alter the course of my life.

How well I remember my grandmother's asking me not to use tobacco, good old soul! She said, "You're at it again, are you, you whelp? Now, don't ever let me catch you chewing tobacco before breakfast again, or I lay I'll blacksnake you within an inch of your life!" I have never touched it at that hour of the morning from that time to the present day.

Practice restraint, my good doctor, in using any indestructible idea as a compass when searching for a turning point in life. It's enough that I have *resolved* to stop smoking cigars, a prudent idea I grant you, one of your so-called bubbles of chemism that is with me always. I *have* stopped smoking. But I've done it a thousand times.

Anna: By then Mr. Twain stood before the hall, looking intensely into Clark's eyes with a fiery sparkle in his own. The good doctor managed to sputter out,

E.A: Ah, Mr. Twain. Mark, if I may call you that, as so many Americans do, and with deep and merited affection.

M.T: Dr. Clark, many thanks for that kind thought. My apologies for being tardy. As it turned out my train of thought departed this morning on time but jumped its track and delayed me considerable. I beg your indulgence.

E.A: Not at all, Mark. Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me to introduce a man you know already, your witty friend and beloved neighbor of your inmost thoughts, Mr. Mark Twain. In the 60's Mr. Twain and I worked as reporters for two of the same San Francisco newspapers, though unfortunately not at the same time. I know I just told you that, but my years as Superintendent of Public Instruction have left an indelible mark on me, you know, just to be sure my pupils are paying attention. Now, where was I? Oh. yes. Mark has risen from his early days as a typesetter….

Anna: But here Mr. Twain abruptly interrupted, quickly staving off what he deemed a superfluous, or perhaps even dull, formality.

M.T: Dr. Clark, I consider introductions unnecessary. It's not that I don't enjoy compliments. We all do, humorists, burglars, congressmen – all of us in the trade. But if it is the custom to have them, I prefer to do the act myself, so that I can rely on getting in all the facts. I was born modest; not all over, but in spots.

E.A: Of course, but your contributions?

M.T: Why I was once presented to an audience by a lawyer, who kept his hands in his pockets. He introduced me as 'Mark Twain, a humorist who is really funny – a rare creature indeed.' Why, I was struck speechless by this complimentary thunderbolt. I had scarcely in my lifetime listened to an introduction so beautifully phrased, or so well deserved. But we had a much rarer creature in our midst than a humorist who was really funny. We had a lawyer who kept his hands in his own pockets.

Anna: To this clever anecdote Clark responded with his own *bon mot*,

E.A: in humor veritas, unlike the so-called truth in wine and other mind-numbing intoxicants.

M.T: We understand each other, then, at least up to a certain degree – or a certain proof. But to the subject at hand. What was it?"

E.A: "Why, Mark, I should have thought your friends at *Harper's* had informed you, "The Turning Point of My Life"!

M.T: Ah, yes, I recall it. Now there's an idea that is unbearable, I mean unsupportable. For the sake of giving our audience their money's worth I hope you disagree with me.

E.A: Without a doubt, Mark.

M.T: Excellent. Proceed.

Anna: Mr. Twain thereupon closed his eyes, evidently to listen harder. Some in the audience, though, rudely tittered as though thinking his aim was to sleep.

E.A: Well, yes, of course. 'The Turning Point of My Life" is a burning question that each of us should consider if we are to be fully conscious of our destiny and the impact we may have on our civilization. To put it in no uncertain terms, each man's Turning Point resides with glowing intensity in the Eureka shout that signals the grasping of the power of an idea!

Anna: He paused, eventually quite a long while, awaiting some sign of response from his opponent, who at last replied

M.T: Continue.

E.A: Allow me to illustrate the power of a momentous idea fully assimilated. Consider a concept we both embrace - human liberty. Far back in the past history of the human race the only rule was the law of force: might was right. In the fierce struggle for existence against the wild forces of nature, the savagery of other animals and the still fiercer savagery of our own kind there could be no ideal of anything but strength and force and savage power. But by and by in some quiet mood, some thinker conceived the idea of equal rights and of justice. The idea was born. The force, weak and feeble, was set in motion and today our country has, within our own lifetime, brought to an end the primitive abuse of power that was slavery. The triumphant life of the remarkable statesman yet former slave Frederick Douglass testifies to that reality. He has shown that culture, brilliant intellect and impassioned eloquence may be possessed by the African race. If any youth thinks there are insurmountable obstacles in the way of future success or usefulness, let him or her read the life of Frederick Douglass, the born slave, and see what gigantic hindrances he climbed over to greatness and usefulness, and so profit by the lesson. No one who has heard him speak will ever doubt it, Mark. Or the empowering ideas that he transmitted to those many students.

M.T: All we require of a voter is that he shall be forked, wear pantaloons instead of petticoats, and bear a more or less humorous resemblance to the reported image of God. He need not know anything whatever; he may be wholly useless and a cumberer of the earth. He may even be known to be a consummate scoundrel. We brag of our universal, unrestricted suffrage; but we are shams after all, for we restrict when it comes to the women. "Dr. Clark, when I went to California and Nevada in the early 60's and worked as a reporter, and even more when I worked on the staff of a member of Congress in Washington - mercifully not too long -my moral sensibilities were painfully abraded by the day- to- day manner of conducting the nation's business. The bleeding saddle sores inflicted on my sense of ethics overflowed into a slop bucket that furnished the sources for my novel *The Gilded Age.* As for governors, I have grappled at close quarters with them out West in their comparatively primitive form as rulers of lands not yet sufficiently civilized to be called states. Territorial

governors are nothing but politicians who go out to the outskirts of countries and suffer the privations there in order to build up stakes and come back as United States Senators.

E.A: I venture to say, Mark, that you've found those personages soon squeezed into ethical lemonade by the greater temptations that assail them as they attempt to keep their balance on the slippery heights of power. You will further assert that our deep-rooted commitment to human liberty should not allow us to claim an empire.

M.T: My readers know what my Connecticut Yankee thought of the murky beginnings of Queen Victoria's.

E.A: There's nothing worse than a Know-Nothing. That's why you will remind us that as at home, or at least in all the enlightened regions of it, we are all now treated as free Americans, and so we should we not enslave any other nation of the world. You will certainly maintain that the Monroe Doctrine, when dissected with the powerful scalpel of reason, applies to ourselves as much as to Britain, France or Germany. Truly, my worthy opponent, already in the early innings of our ballgame you are playing to the grandstand on the merits of our shared principles, which are the long balls that we both hit.

M.T: That accusation might well be directed at you, doctor. My aversion to Americans enslaving those who were born elsewhere is well-known. And what of their masters' lives? When I wrote *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* I had already realized that I feel more sorry for kings and emperors than dazzled by their ostentation or outraged by their tyranny. Norton I of San Francisco often returns to my mind's eye. It was always a painful thing to see him begging. Nobody has ever written him up who was able to see any but his grotesque side; but I think that with all his dirt and unsavoriness there was a pathetic side to him. I have seen the Emperor when his dignity was wounded; and when he was both hurt and indignant at the dishonoring of an imperial draft; and when he was full of trouble and bodings on account of the presence of the Russian fleet, he connecting it with his refusal to ally himself with the Romanoffs by marriage. I have seen him in *all* his various moods and tenses, and there was always more room for pity than laughter. But our shared belief and question remains. Should we, then, lend our support to such sad delusions of grandeur enlarged to rule on a national scale? I say nay, but I fear many Americans may be swayed by calls to ambitious crimes issuing from the mouths of grandstanding politicians.

E.A: You are a dramatic Cassandra and a gloomy woe-sayer, Mark. We must all remember that new enlightened principles, grand conceptions, are slow of growth and sure of opposition if not of persecution. In fact it seems to have been in the past almost necessary that new and valuable ideas should have a baptism of scorn and contempt and persecution and oft times of blood in order to give them strength and power. The natural inertia of humanity is always hostile to new ideas. The crank of today is the philosopher of tomorrow. The radical of this age is the conservative of the next.

Anna: At this boldly outrageous proposition some of the city's solid citizens present in the audience, gentlemen advanced in age, wealth and girth, rose to their feet and made gestures of disbelief and disgust, but Mr. Twain signaled to them to calm themselves and take their seats.

E.A: I can see that my conviction regarding the perpetually directive power of a life-giving idea, once it is deeply instilled in the mind, may strike you as excessively dogmatic, but consider the good soil whence I spring. I was fortunate enough to be born in Ohio at the height of our nation's Classical Revival and given a Greek name that means liberty. No slave to blind dogma, my turning point came as a young man when I adopted a motto taken from my reading, and that motto, as I stated while we all awaited your arrival, is still, and forever will be, "there's always a reason."

M.T: Yes, even though supposing is often pleasant and good, I concede that finding out is better. But can you point out to me in detail how this thunderous apothegm of yours has invariably guided your life?

E.A: I can, certainly. Examples of that dedication to reason in my own life are not limited to my formal medical studies, interrupted for marriage but completed in San Francisco years later. Consider my interaction with electricity. I have grasped the fact – and turned to follow where it leads - that electricity is much more than lights and the telegraph. It offers previously inconceivable avenues for medical study and even treatment. Now while some of these new procedures prove more effective than others, I am glad to have conducted such trials of healing methods.

M.T: When someone feeling poorly doesn't question a quick fix, any mummery cures for as long as a hound can tree a possum.

E.A: In '82 and '83 I often 'gave my patients electricity,' as we said at that time, following an experimental method in which no shocks or unpleasant sensations were experienced, the doctor taking in the current with one hand and then administering it to the patient with the other. This advanced method was no less of a scientific experiment than the introduction of vaccination, another treatment that I pioneered in San Jose.

M.T: As a man of science, doctor, you must be aware that it takes a *thousand* men to invent a telegraph, or a steam engine, or a phonograph, or a photograph, or a telephone, or any other Important thing--and the last man gets the credit and we forget the others. He added his little mite--that is all he did. Now I am told you also practice law. Has your search for reasons prospered in the intricate thicket of the law?

E.A: My legal practice was based entirely on home study, and in spite of that for a while in the newly settled lands around San Luis Obispo I was appointed District Attorney. But when I returned to San Jose I felt disgust welling up in me for the selfish motives behind many law suits, and worse, the predatory and combative manner in which legal counsel conducts itself as a matter of course.

M.T: I agree with you there, Doctor. A great many law suits present all the features of a duel. As a newspaper editor in gold-rush Nevada I did soon learn just how dangerous the frontier could be. But as a student of history, doctor, you must not forget that desperate men have since time immemorial resorted to hunting for

each other, and it's often a painful business when the law of retribution reigns supreme. There are many indications that the Thug often hunted men for the mere sport of it; that the fright and pain of the quarry were no more to him than are the fright and pain of the rabbit or the stag to us; and that he was no more ashamed of beguiling his game with deceits and abusing its trust than are we when we have imitated a wild animal's call and shot it when it honored us with its confidence and came to see what we wanted.

E.A: True, my family and I, and our relatives, too, lived in the hills as homesteaders. A red badge of courage, indeed. But nothing invalidates the use I made of reason and the necessity that moved me to act in accordance with the power of the idea of self-defense.

Anna: Many heads in the hall here nodded in agreement.

E.A: So let us turn to my later public service in San Jose as schools superintendent. In contrast to some who merely and idly carp at the practical steps taken by public officials, I improved the curriculum with courses grounded in practical skills, for both boys and girls. There are enough talkers, and writers, who have been encouraged to think of themselves as literary men, but can bring forth nothing of uncontestable usefulness.

M.T: Are you perhaps thinking of a typesetting contraption whose inventor's promises outdid those of the self-proclaimed owner of the Brooklyn Bridge? Or batteries that can rejuvenate you merely by touching your hand? Our race, in its poverty, has one truly effective resource whose efficacy you will not question--laughter. Power, Money, Persuasion, Supplication, Persecution--these can lift at a colossal humbug, -push it a little-- crowd it a little--weaken it a little, century by century: but only laughter can blow it to rags and atoms at a blast. Against the assault of Laughter nothing can stand. What more should we both have brought forth?

E.A: You will not evade my determined pursuit, Mark. Speak as honestly as your reputation says you do. Was there no turning point, no change of course, that took you from hardscrabble Hannibal, Missouri, to the wittily enunciated ideals of Hartford, Connecticut? Was it not fleeing the war that preserved the Union and freed the slaves?

M.T: For a couple of weeks at the beginning of the war I was a rebel. Later I became a Republican. Change is the handmaiden Nature requires to do her miracles with.

But no, that long-ago decision did not alter my nature. My love of Huck Finn and hatred for his captive condition lived already in me. No passing circumstance turns one's nature from its fixed course. It is my conviction that a person's temperament is a law, an iron law, and has to be obeyed, no matter who disapproves; manifestly, as it seems to me, temperament is a law of God and is supreme and takes precedence of all human laws.

That temperament came to me in my bloodline, from my mother and my father, though he died when I was quite young. He was scrupulously honest, a county judge and a moralist by nature, although in the family he was known for his customarily taciturn and irritable ways - and eventually for his resultant shattered nerves. My mother, on the other hand, possessed a sunny temperament. Lively, affable, and a general favorite. I

affectionately turned her into Aunt Polly in *Tom Sawyer*. I've no flicker of a doubt that those who know my writings can see both my parents alive in me as I laugh and cry and scold through the decades.

E.A: Mark, who can deny that the temperament of one's parents is the shore from which our life's journey sets sail? But who can doubt, as well, that each of us has reason and freewill, and so can change the compass setting that we follow when the guiding power of an idea shows us the way? My own father was a failed shopkeeper in a small town in Michigan. After protracted ill health in a harsh climate that he found no road to leave, my mother and he died in poverty, and the consumption that infected the lungs of a sister, a wife and a daughter eventually took their lives, too.

M.T: You must be aware, Doctor, that man starts in as a child and lives on diseases to the end as a regular diet. We draw them in with our mother's milk, made more sour by a harsh climate. How have you thrived and taken on your glow of preternatural optimism?

E.A: For me there was a life-giving elixir, my grandfather William. He adopted my two sisters and me, gave us a thorough, in fact a classical, education that equipped Sarah Mariah to support herself, as it did me, as a teacher. Having been an Ohio pioneer himself, Judge Clark gave us also the abiding conviction that we could, by the use of our minds and our courage, rise above hardships. That conviction, shining brightly against the foil of our parents' long suffering and their dark death, turned around what might have been a grim destiny.

M.T: I rejoice that you can see it that way. I, on the contrary, find bleak the verified fact that the ignorant and unreflecting so often and so undeservedly succeed when the informed fail.

E.A: But hope should never be allowed to die. My sister Lovina, as she coughed up more and more blood, went to her end trusting that God would care for her husband and children. She looked as well for more material support for them, for the help of nearby relatives, and for the bonanza of glittering mining claims her husband Harrison had filed. When my first wife, too, collapsed beneath the weight of consumption, I myself , more scientifically inclined, had a spiritscope made for me to communicate with her. It brought me but a faint hope, yet still one that sustained me in a hard time.

M.T: If Livy precedes me in death, there will have to be fair weather in Heaven, indeed, to cast any ray of sun into my life.

E.A: So I felt as well. But following the dictates of logic I turned my thoughts to a new helpmeet and a new, healthier home for my remaining children. Reason, the guiding force of my youth, has remained with me over the years. Even though the Unitarians often have me lecture at their meetings, I keep my freedom of thought strong by declining to join their church.

M.T: It puts me in mind of something that happened many years ago. It was the introduction of Mark Twain, lecturer, to an audience of gold-miners at Red Dog, California, in 1866, by one of themselves. It was in a log house, there were no ladies present, and they didn't know me then; but all just miners with their breeches tucked into their boot-tops. And they wanted somebody to introduce me to them, and they pitched upon this

miner, and he objected. He said he had never appeared in public, and had never done any work of this kind; but they said it didn't matter, and so he came on the stage with me and introduced me in this way: 'I don't know anything about this man, anyway. I only know two things about him. One is, he has never been in jail; and the other is, I don't know why.'

E.A: A penetrating commentary, and concisely put, that serves me better than you in our contest of wits. But I must concede the truth of what you imply: to observe is to know – something – or at least to feel one has been vouchsafed an insight. But it's going one step too many to draw hasty conclusions, to make rash decisions; it is the urge to rely on the flash of self-deception that carries us into one of those dreary bayous that you call before our averted eyes in *Life on the Mississippi.* You've known them well.

M.T: To speak candidly, many on the riverboats produced but one certainty in my mind - that old question about the nature of the Creator. On the occasions when my relationship to Him is under a cloud I wonder whether or not the Marquis de Sade was closely related to him.

E.A: In the swamp of despair, I, too, have cried out in my soul, "When will this farce of life end?" So have we all. Hamlet lives still in us. But science and its well-muscled disciplines pull us out from those dark, stagnant pools and set us on the demanding, daily pilgrimage that at last climbs to a spacious viewpoint where we glimpse understanding. Is the bitter smile of devastating disillusionment with a supposed truth better for the soul than the satisfying construction of a lens to see an authentic truth previously unknown? Socrates knew he was a gadfly, Mark. He was perhaps the best, and a useful one in fact, but without methodical Plato, not to mention laborious Aristotle, could we today stand on his shoulders? I'm no peripatetic philosopher, though as a homesteader too poor to own a horse I walked countless miles to reach my goals.

M.T: Right you are. And there's nothing but an open mind to be gaped at in my being a member of the English society for Psychical Research and avidly reading their journal. As I recall, doctor, you yourself are a longtime member of the International Society of Psychics, while your present wife Alice is a medium.

E.A: The spirit of inquiry, Mark, plays the midwife at the birth of new ideas of unsuspected power. Darwin's "Origin of Species," published in 1859, astonished the world's mind forty years ago. It deepened and broadened the human intellect, brought it in rapport with the thought of the Infinite, as it were, and opened great vistas of Nature's handiwork on a scale which made any former conceptions of the Universal Force seem childish.

M.T: It now seems plain to me, as someone from the Show-me state, that that theory ought to be vacated in favor of a new and truer one...the Descent of Man from the Higher Animals.

E.A: So far has your courage fallen, Mark? Many other ideas are in motion trying to find expression and elevate the human race. We have time to allude to only one or two. The idea of cooperative industry is striving hard to work out realization in a practical and equitable way. When it accomplishes its work this cut-throat, competitive system of labor and business will be abolished, and men and women will be real friends

and neighbors instead of gladiatorial combatants for bread and butter. The realization of this idea must be preceded by the full fruition of the idea of industrial education, by means of which our boys and girls shall be completely educated - head, hand, eyes, feet and both the perceptive as well as the reflective intellect. Our schools churn out too many men who think they are equipped to write for a living. Only a few of us are – don't you agree, Mark?

M.T: It's especially a problem among editorialists. Or lecturers. which is a dismal sort of business, even to a lazy man like me. The one hope I see for it is the appearance of well-informed and sprightly women on the platform in recent years. They have supplied us with a moment like the parting of the clouds and the awakening of birds on a long winter's afternoon, times when we are besieged by the endless booming of a fulling mill under leaden skies.

E.A: Of course the education of women, like that of men, is a fundamental human right and a great good. And with it logically, unquestionably in a Republican form of government, goes the right to vote. Committees of Congress have listened with rapt attention to arguments from the advocates of this movement, and before long, those that have opposed us will take another new departure and say that they always favored us, but didn't know that the women wanted to vote. I claim that they have as much right to do so as the men, and I don't think we have much to brag of. They tell us that if the movement succeeds, families will be broken; anarchy, ruin and a general state of cussedness will prevail; free love will run riot; fathers will wear the aprons and go out as dry nurses, - in short, the consequences will be terrible. Now the women go everywhere, and if they go to the ballot it will be to make it decent.

A certain class of cheap writers seem to have a decided preference for old ladies as butts for their stupid jokes. There is no reason in the world why old age should be dull, unlovely or useless. Encouragement to do whatever they choose should be given the old. They will be happy, and so will those around them.

M.T: Yes, my longwinded doctor. Gather ye rosebuds while you may. Strange to say, I feel obliged to agree.

E.A: I will allude to but one more idea already mentioned, the idea of the complete emancipation of humans, not only of African-Americans. I am thinking specifically of women. By this I do not mean alone the political freedom and equality of woman, but her liberation from herself, from the most grinding, cruel and conscienceless despot of earth, the tyrant of fashion. Reason, argument, policy, health, decency, have no more weight against an edict of this tyrant, fashion, than has a feather against a tornado.

Anna: At this, nearly every man present, and many women as well, sent forth a restorative peal of laughter that rang in the rafters and punctured the overly solemn tone that the evening had taken.

M.T: But, Doctor, you are more harsh than a crow in a High Sierra meadow, more calamitous than Buffalo Bill's Jane. We must allow our listeners a seventh-inning stretch, the way we do in Hartford. I'm growing as plum tuckered out as that possum treed by an exceptionally persistent hound on the edge of a Missouri bayou. Ten minutes for something restorative from the bar!

E.A: There's nothing finer than coffee, the drink that enlivens without intoxicating! At this, both Olympic athletes of the mind, as we may well call them if we can believe that the ancient games will indeed be revived next spring, came down from the heights of the stage to seek a beverage, each according to his tastes.

M.T: Doctor, you have not convinced me that there is a single event in a person's life that can accurately be called a turning point, that somehow set in motion all those that followed. But these stories of happenings thought to be tragedies, though sometimes we realize they are better called grim realities, lead me to reflect on the lasting impression made in our early years by explanations of why we all suffer and whether or not we have deserved that pain.

The drunken tramp – that I mentioned in *Tom Sawyer* or *Huck Finn* – who was burned up in the village jail, lay upon my conscience a hundred nights afterward and filled them with hideous dreams, dreams in which I saw his appealing face as I had seen it in the pathetic reality, pressed against the window-bars, with the red hell glowing behind him - a face which seemed to say to me, 'If you had not given me the matches, this would not have happened; you are responsible for my death.' I was *not* responsible for it, for I had meant him no harm, but only good, when I let him have the matches; but no matter, mine was a trained Presbyterian conscience, and knew but one duty –to hunt and harry its slave, myself, upon all pretexts and on all occasions; particularly when there was no sense nor reason in it. The tramp – who was to blame – suffered ten minutes; I, who was not to blame, suffered three months. Those years when I was driven toward needlessly blaming myself were perhaps turned toward pain by what you call a powerful idea, my own guilt, but I would not call that a permanent or beneficial change in me.

E.A: Mark, how can our national humorist so lose his perspective on his own bad dreams? Do we all not sigh at times with Stephen Foster, 'Hard times come again no more'? But if then we redirect our attention to the clarion declaration of John Donne, 'No man is an island,' we are recalled to awareness of our mutual dependence. We remember that if we fall into the slough of despond we shall be unable to help our neighbor regain his footing on life's steep path.

When gold was discovered in California I saw an opportunity to act, boldly, yes, but not irresponsibly; rather it was an obligation to strive for my family's welfare. Not too long after arriving through the Golden Gate and bending my back with pick and shovel in the Sierra Nevada, I settled down to farm on land I bought in the Santa Clara Valley. My wife, children and sisters all successfully navigated in my wake across Lake Nicaragua and up the Pacific Coast to California. J.J. Owens and I founded the area's branch of the newly established Republican Party and helped elect Lincoln. Then a catastrophe descended on us. The federal courts established to arbitrate land claims ruled that the speculator who had sold us our farm, and those of many other pioneers, too, was a greedy charlatan. He never owned it; he had stolen it on paper. The Mexican land grant it formed part of had been valid all along, and solidly documented.

M.T: We have been speaking of pain and it drives its horns into me again as your familiar tale of big land deals fallen through and ephemeral castles in the air brings back the memory of the monster tract of land which my

family owned in Tennessee, purchased by my father over forty years ago. If any penny of cash came out of my father's supposedly wise investment, I have no recollection of it. No, I am overlooking a detail. In my novel *The Gilded Age* it furnished me a field for Col. Sellers. Out of my half of the book I got $15,000 or $20,000; out of the play I got $75,000 or $80,000 – just about a dollar an acre. I was the only member of the family that ever profited by it, yet it influenced our life in one way or another during more than a generation.

It kept us hoping and hoping, during forty years, and forsook us at last. It put our energies to sleep and made visionaries of us – dreamers, and indolent. We were always going to be rich next year – no occasion to work. It is good to begin life poor; it is good to begin life rich – these are wholesome; but to begin it *prospectively* rich! The man who has not experienced it cannot imagine the curse of it.

E.A: But over me, perhaps because I'm no southerner, land speculation and the idea of possessing a feudal fief had no such hold. I would not be turned from the future that reason and diligence had shown me. My neighbors in the Santa Clara Valley, swept away by indignation and ungoverned feelings of hopelessness, paraded threateningly through the streets to force the government to reverse its decision. Naturally, and rightly, the Californio's rights under the law were upheld. During the time that dramatic conflict was playing itself out, I, instead, applied myself to studying the situation that faced me. I was active in local politics and learned where and when the land commission was next going to open tracts to homesteaders. I organized my kinsmen, then we arrived and filed claims at San Simeon Creek before nearly any other land seekers, who were mostly still back near San Jose wailing and gnashing their teeth.

M.T: Why you self-righteous Californian, do you think that land speculation can claim no more hold on northerners than an old bachelor has on a greased Maypole? Do you think you are exempt from the wise saying, 'There are two times in a man's life when he should not speculate: when he can't afford it and when he can'? The Oklahoma land rush that happened just six years ago is pretty fresh evidence that the dream of owning your own fief – at a rock bottom bargain price that includes self-congratulation for one's business acumen – is universal and old as the hills. In *The Gilded Age* I painted the details of getting rich in the American railroad business by inducing fools to speculate on which parcels of land might turn out to be located next to the road's right-of-way. The gospel left behind by the stock manipulator Jay Gould is doing giant work in our days. Its message is 'Get money. Get in quickly. Get it in abundance. Get it in prodigious abundance. Get it dishonestly if you can, honestly if you must.'

E.A: Wait, Wait. Hold your horses, you son of a Presbyterian judge. There's no need to stampede over the cliff of fiery rhetoric and hyperbole. Not all northerners feel money is the center of their universe, as you can see by how I put in perspective the land swindle I suffered. By far a harder blow to my commitment to a calm mind was the death of my first wife, Lydia Helen, mother of my children. When the consumption took her, grief-stricken I gave way before an upwelling of feelings of guilt. I knew I had often left her for long periods to travel on business. She endured countless days and nights with the children at the homestead in the cramped cabin. The endless work making cheese to sell had denied her the fresh air and vigorous exercise that spared me.

But again reason came to rescue me, reminding me of the strains under which I had labored to support us all. Calm reflection rescued me, and I realized that I needed to return to San Jose, where my education would stand me in good stead.

M.T: Your utilitarian attitude toward the departed, especially ones so near the beating center of your existence, fill me with wonder, even envy for your cold-blooded calm. My role in the death of my young son Langdon, though equally secondary, still haunts my dreams. I was the cause of the child's illness. His mother trusted him to my care and I took him a long drive in an open barouche for an airing. It was a raw, cold morning, but he was well wrapped about with furs and, in the hands of a careful person, no harm would have come to him. But I soon dropped into a reverie and forgot all about my charge. The furs fell away and exposed his bare legs. By and by the coachman noticed this, and I arranged the wraps again, but it was too late. The child was almost frozen. I hurried home with him. I was aghast at what I had done, and I feared the consequences. I have always felt shame for the treacherous morning's work and have not allowed myself to think of it when I could help it. Will we all not vanish from a world where we were of no consequence? Where we have achieved nothing, where we were a mistake and a foolishness?

E.A: Oh! You must confess it, Mark. No one would believe for a moment that your life has done no good.

M.T: Well, a great consolation, I must in all fairness add, has always been my daughter Susy. Like other children, she was blithe and happy, fond of play; *un*like the average of children she was at times much given to retiring within herself and trying to search out the hidden meanings of the deep things that make the puzzle and pathos of human existence. Still, there always hangs in the brooding light of my memory her question, "Mamma, what is it all for? The Indians believed they knew, but now we know they were wrong. By and by it can turn out that we are wrong. So now I only *pray* that there may be a God and a heaven."

E.A: Is that the best you can do, Mark? I think your gloomy frame of mind is the product of financial reverses and the fatigue of your travel. Or perhaps addiction! Addictions, you know, are deadly for the brain. Brandy, cigars, philosophical resentments on a cosmic scale. You should sweep away those clouds of stifling sentiment and look into the future. The glass through which you gaze, and here I speak from salutary experience, should not be smudged with conventional opinions of guilt, or even propriety. Remember the principles of the Society for Free Thought. My second wife, whom I must confess I selected in haste to provide care for my children, quickly proved to have weak health, and a most unstable nature, incapable of caring for anyone. I recall often writing in my diary during these years: "Hell at home again. And with no cause at all!' I had to encourage her to visit friends and relatives out of town; following the dictates of good intellectual and emotional hygiene, I attended educational events, occasionally dances, with brighter, more even- tempered women. Once when a shocked neighbor objected, I briskly set her straight. Those of us of in a more advanced and wiser time of life should be allowed to do as we wish, and everyone will be happier.

M.T: To be quite honest with you, I have ruminated on what the cold reality of widowhood might well be, should that ever afflict me. A semblance of a cure seems, at least to some old men, to exist in pursuing younger

women. I suppose we are all collectors. As for me, I might collect pets: not women but young girls -- girls from ten to sixteen years old and well chaperoned; I am in the age of grandparenthood, and I need grandchildren to allow me to recapture childhood's wonder, girls who like the angel fish I see on my vacations in Bermuda are pretty and sweet and naive and innocent -- dear young creatures to whom life is a perfect joy and to whom it has brought no wounds, no bitterness, and few tears.

But as for you, you reckless Bohemian, I'll tell you what I wish for the most. To be back at home when our children were small and we all played as a family at charades and amateur home theatricals. Once, in the midst of a reading-campaign, I returned to Hartford from the Far West, reaching home one evening just at dinner time. I was expecting to have a happy and restful season by a hickory fire in the library with the family, but was required to go at once to George Warner's house across the grounds. This was a heavy disappointment, and I tried to beg off but did not succeed. I couldn't even find out why I must waste this precious evening in a visit to a friend's house when our own house offered so many and superior advantages. There was a mystery somewhere, but I was not able to get to the bottom of it. So we tramped across in the snow, and I found the Warner drawing-room crowded with seated people. There was a vacancy in the front row, for me – in front of a curtain. At once the curtain was drawn, and before me, properly costumed was the little maid, Margaret Warner, clothed in Tom Canty's rags, and beyond a railing was Susy Clemens, arrayed in the silks and satins of the prince. Then followed with good action and spirit the rest of that first meeting between the prince and the pauper. It was a charming surprise, and to me a moving one. Other episodes of the tale followed, and I have seldom in my life enjoyed an evening so much as I enjoyed that one. This lovely surprise was my wife's work.

E.A: You are unquestionably right. There are no more peaceful joys than those brought by affectionate times spent with one's family. So two years after the death of my second wife I married once more. Here there was long reflection and observation before I bound myself again in wedlock. My wife Alice, whose family I had known for many years before, shares my interests in many ways. For some years she has run a shop as an artist. We both investigate psychic phenomenon from beyond the grave, and, as you pointed out earlier, she is even a medium. Though many years younger than I, already when first entering into womanhood she traveled repeatedly from Santa Cruz on the coast to my medical office to be treated, or sometimes to my home in San Jose. She saw the benefits of the recently introduced procedure I made available that I have mentioned already, the giving of electricity directly from the physician to the patient.

M.T: Now there's the California embrace of all that's new and different, Doctor. We do need – and who can deny it? – whatever supplies our natural wants, and alleviates our sufferings. Man seems to be a rickety poor sort of a thing, any way you take him; a kind of British Museum of infirmities and inferiorities. He is always undergoing repairs. A machine that was as unreliable as he is would have no market.

Anna: Then amid the titter rippling through the audience a raised voice and a knocking were heard off stage announcing a telegram for Dr. Clark.

E.A: Now that's something unexpected. Excuse me, Mark. I'll be with you in a moment.

Anna: Mr. Twain then turned to the audience and remarked sagely, although not without a twinkle in his eye …

M.T: That telegram may well be from the inventor of another patent medicine, similar to the urgent letters doctors, and even I, are always receiving with the request for an endorsement. I have now composed and committed to memory a standard reply that Dr. Clark may find useful: "Dear Sir (or Madam):--I try every remedy sent to me. I am now on No. 67. Yours is 2,653. I am looking forward to its beneficial results."

Anna: Dr Clark strode back to the center of the platform with a bounce in his step.

E.A: Listen to this. Just as I hoped. It's from the executive secretary of San Jose's People's Party. He says, "I am pleased to inform you that today you have been chosen by the party's caucus to be our candidate for mayor in the coming election. There is no more eloquent or more dedicated spokesman for the cause of the working men and women of California." I say, instead, there's nothing better than being useful in a good cause!"

M.T: And I think the one thing better is hope. Dr. Clark's unflagging optimism, no matter how much it goes across the grain of a man who, like me, is in bankruptcy, is beginning to revive me. Hope is a blessed provision of nature at times like these. As soon as a man's mercury has got down to a certain point there comes a revulsion, and he rallies. Hope springs up, and cheerfulness along with it, and then he is in good shape to do something for himself, if anything can be done. In spite of all the ailments of the human race, and of everyone's minds and bodies, we should always remember what I've discovered that the English like to say, 'Keep a stiff upper lip and your pecker up.' You will have to excuse me for a moment.

Anna: Mr. Twain and his tour manager, Major Pond, MT then conferred inaudibly off the platform.

E.A: I wish I could claim a manager who had so much urgent news to give me. Being the nation's humorist attracts a lot of attention from one's aficionados

Anna: Dr. Clark concisely but enviously observed. Immediately thereafter Mr. Twain called out exuberantly.

M.T: It's a summons. Now imagine that! To the governor's mansion in Ohio. Governor McKinley knows my strong feelings against creating an American empire overseas. He's been writing me recently because he sees that President Cleveland is winning people's respect with policies along those lines. He says he passionately wants to avoid a war between the United States and Spain over their colonies in Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, and hopes I'll teach him a trick or two about how to use outrageous humor to win the applause of the people. But all that will have to wait for a later time. I am engaged around the world to establish an empire of laughter.

E.A: Congratulations, Mark. May you guide our nation's policies in the paths of wisdom and moderation. You are indeed the nation's most celebrated gadfly. You recall our moral shortcomings with laughter. I wish I, too,

could more consistently call it forth from my listeners to aid my fervent wish to teach our country better ways. But have I convinced you about the subject of our debate? Have I won? Is there a turning point for you?

Anna: Then Twain sprung to his sleigh, to Major Pond gave a whistle, and away they both flew, like the down of a thistle. But I heard him exclaim, ere he strode off the stage …

M.T: The hope in your words, declares you're a sage.

Acknowledgements

To Anna Clark Colahan, a great grandmother, and Pauline Colahan, an aunt, for saving all those family manuscripts, letters and photos.

To our parents, who introduced us to Mark Twain by encouraging us to read the family copy of *Roughing It* when were so young we were just starting to rough it ourselves in the mountains of California.

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Lute Pease of the Portland Oregonian and Clemens, Portland, August 9, 1895. Photo by James B. Pond, Courtesy of the Center for Mark Twain Studies at Quarry Farm, Elmira, New York

Eleutheros Americus Clark

FULL-LENGTH VERSION IN TWO ACTS

Big Decisions Made by Mark Twain and E.A. Clark

Before you read the play, I invite you to ask yourself what, in each of these situations that arose in their lives, motivated them to make the decisions they did? What do you suspect, or think or know was the outcome of the decision?

Mark

Quit his career as a steamboat pilot after his brother was killed in an explosion on board ship.

Joined the confederate militia at the beginning of the Civil War.

Quit the militia and went to Nevada, where he worked as a reporter.

Worked as an aide to a US senator, but soon quit.

Wrote the anti-slavery novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.*

Allowed himself to be cheated for many years by the inventor of a typesetting machine.

Made a long lecture tour around the world to pay off debts he incurred with bad investments.

Actively and politically opposed the creation of the American empire around the world.

In later life, after the death of his wife and two daughters, when asked about his religious life, he often replied that his relation with God was under a cloud.

E.A.

For two years he left his wife, daughter and unmarried sister back East to join the Gold Rush in California.

Chose not to join his neighbors in street rioting when he lost all his farm land near San Jose after the courts ruled in favor of the Mexican owner of a large ranch that had been subdivided illegally.

Acted as the judge that conducted trials for the Vigilance Committee in San Luis Obispo.

Became superintendent of public education in San Jose and fought to improve education for young women.

Wrote several thousands of editorials for the *San Jose Mercury*.

Practiced experimental medicine, including treatment with electricity and vaccines.

After his first wife died, he became active in the International Society of Psychics.

As a matter of principle, he stopped practicing law.

Preached to large crowds for the Unitarians, but refused to join the church.

Established the People's Party in San Jose, then ran for mayor representing that party.

Cast

One person and three men.

STAGE MANAGER

Who sets the historic scene.

E. A. Clark

Well known doctor, lawyer, educator, editorialist and orator.

MARK TWAIN

Humorist, novelist, moralist and icon of American literature.

MAJOR JAMES B. POND

Manager of Mark Twain’s lecture tour.

Author's Forward

Mark Twain's around-the–world lecture tour in 1895-96 included an evening in Portland, Oregon, described by his friend and manager J.B. Pond as a grand success. After the show was over, Twain continued his storytelling for two hours more at the Portland Club, doubtless enjoying the liberty of bringing out fresh anecdotes not included on the same program he used at every stop on the tour. Pond wrote enthusiastically in his diary, "They will all remember that evening as long as they live. There is surely but one Mark Twain."

Next morning, he was interviewed for five minutes and given a write-up by a young reporter for the *Oregonian* that, as Pond wrote, 'Mark' declared was the most accurate and the best that had ever been reported of him." It touched briefly on how much he liked the look of the city, bicycles, government monopolies, how to write a travel guidebook, and more thoroughly on creating and naming literary characters. With that range of subjects, no wonder Twain liked it.

The questions discussed in the fictional debate that follows revolve around Twain's real-life contribution to a projected series of essays by prominent writers addressing the question of whether or not there is a turning point that shapes people's lives. We make use of passages borrowed from Twain's autobiography and other writings. The theatrical inspiration has been twofold, Hal Holbrook's *Mark Twain Tonight* for one. For that reason, it is built on lots of quotes and paraphrases taken from Twain, but it adds more characters and, in the two-act version, a narrator/stage manager that provides further historical context. The conversation explores and questions Twain's ideas on how inherited personality traits and historical circumstances generate the way a life is constructed, in opposition to Clark's faith in reason and progress. This exchange of convictions expands to other issues that include empire, politics, marriage, and minorities.

The second historical character is Major James B. Pond. Though appearing only briefly, he was the manager of Twain's trip around the world to pay his debts at a time of crisis in his career. The third is Eleutheros Americus Clark, who was, in addition to an MD, a teacher, a lawyer, a prolific writer of editorials for the *San Jose Mercury*, and a reporter for two of the same San Francisco newspapers that Twain was. Like Twain, he published pieces in Bret Harte's *Overland Monthly*, and wrote a novel serialized in the *Mercury*. Many, but not all, of his highly independent and liberal views were in sync with Twain's, and he experienced similar tragedies with death in his family. In the abridgment we include also Anna Clark Colahan, who with her father's encouragement bravely supported herself and her two young children after the early death of her husband William Colahan, Recorder of Santa Clara County, who had contracted tuberculosis as a volunteer in the Civil War.

A second inspiration for what we've put together is a recent play by Sabina Berman entitled *Molière*. It juxtaposes the comic and the tragic reactions to life, vividly showing the human urge to both laugh (dominant in Molière) and to weep (primary to Racine). The eventual friendship between these two rivals, beacons of competing philosophies, is also an underlying theme of *Clark/Twain in Portland*.

Setting: Portland, Oregon, 1895.

'The Hanging Judge' is what our friend municipal magistrate Sam Tucker said emphatically when he got his first look at an old oil portrait of him. But two California brothers, growing up under that stern and intimidating gaze that seemed to emanate from their ancestor's light blue eyes following them around the living room, always knew he was the revered great, great grandfather, Dr. Clark of sainted memory. Years later the name connected to that oversized gilt frame expanded to Eleutheros Americus Clark, 'Free American' in Latin and Greek, as you might well have guessed if you, too, had been born and gone to school in the 1820's. But then, after shooting more rapids in the river of life, the brothers were bemused to learn that his wives and children often called him affectionately Old Crooked Jaw. Finally, when the two young men reached the age of immunity to abject prostration at the feet of authority, he turned out to be less terrifying than his bushy blonde eyebrows had led them to believe - even though he's still banished to a permanent exhibition in the garage - and to offer the most fascinating nesting spot in their Ponderosa of a family tree.

The brothers had read his diaries and many of his literally thousands of eloquently worded editorials in San Jose's leading newspaper, the *Mercury*. They knew his two extensive articles (one on legal reform and another on the chances of life after death) in Bret Harte's magazine *The Overland Monthly*. It was the San Francisco echo of the highbrow *Atlantic Monthly,* enlivened with outdoor adventure and colorful characters. Its pages came to include work by successful writers – Jack London, William Saroyan, Willa Cather, John Muir, Ambrose Bierce and many more - and by a young reporter who signed his pieces Mark Twain. But they never discovered any evidence that Dr. Clark's path had crossed that of Sam Clemens. It's true that Clark's diaries record that he attended a lecture given by Mark Twain in San Jose in 1866, and that he had worked as a writer for two of the same San Francisco newspapers as Twain, the *Call* and the *Alta,* but that wasn't at exactly the same time.

So we have chosen to imagine that among the bushel basket of unsorted manuscripts that our great grandmother saved from her father's papers was a sheaf of pages that would have been anything but routine. They were her account, written as a reporter for the *San Jose Mercury*, of a debate set up to kick off a series of essays by literary figures of the time, a project organized by *Harper's Monthly* magazine on the subject of "The Turning Point of My Life." Twain's piece in the 'symposium,' as he called it, though not published until much later, still was the first to appear in print, and that fact we did not have to imagine. The magazine eventually chose to abandon the project, and the essay was followed by only one other contribution, that of Clemens' distinguished friend William Dean Howells, who himself had suggested the series.

The debate seems to us an event that could have been hastily set up by telegraph by the magazine's editor, Elizabeth Jordan, to take place in Portland, Oregon, on August 9 as part of the 1895 round-the-world lecture tour. The location could have been seized on as the closest to San Jose after the decision was made not to go as far south as San Francisco. Her idea would have been to prod the series into action by getting on record Twain's advance comments before he set sail for Asia. The magazine hoped, we preferred to suppose,

that quotes from the lively give-and-take of an informal debate could be used in publicity while the great man was on the other side of the globe. It would also provide him with a break from the same program he used in every city on the tour.

ACT I

Setting: Portland, Oregon

Year: 1895

SM: [enters stage left]: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen of the jury. 'The Hanging Judge' is what municipal magistrate Sam Tucker said emphatically when he got his first look at an old oil portrait of him. But two California brothers, growing up under that stern and intimidating gaze that seemed to emanate from their ancestor's light blue eyes following them around the living room, always knew he was the revered great, great grandfather, Dr. Clark of sainted memory. Years later the name connected to that oversized gilt frame expanded to Eleutheros Americus Clark, 'Free American' in Latin and Greek, as you might well have guessed if you, too, had been born and gone to school in the 1820's. But then, after shooting more rapids in the river of life, the brothers were bemused to learn that his wives and children often called him affectionately Old Crooked Jaw. Finally, when the two young men reached the age of immunity to abject prostration at the feet of authority, he turned out to be less terrifying than his bushy blonde eyebrows had led them to believe - even though he's still banished to a permanent exhibition in the garage - and to offer the most fascinating nesting spot in their Ponderosa of a family tree.

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So the discovery came like a September Santana blowing through El Cajon Pass. Among the bushel basket of unsorted manuscripts that their great grandmother had saved from her father's papers was a sheaf of pages in Old Crooked Jaw's own unmistakable handwriting. On the outside of the folded pages he had scribbled "For the Overland", something not surprising in itself since the magazine continued to publish throughout his life and well beyond. The pages' contents, though, were anything but routine. They were a reporter's account of a debate set up to kick off a series of essays by literary figures of the time, a project organized by *Harper's Monthly* magazine on the subject of "The Turning Point of My Life." Twain's piece in the 'symposium,' as he called it, though not published until much later, still was the first to appear in print. The magazine eventually chose to abandon the project, and the essay was followed by only one other contribution, that of Clemens' distinguished friend William Dean Howells, who himself had suggested the series.

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While it may appear strange that the exchange between the two men never appeared in *The Overland Monthly*, no doubt Clark came to realize – or was made to realize - that *Harper's* was prepared to intervene should he recklessly attempt to scoop the magazine. What's more, Clark was running for mayor of San Jose on the People's Party ticket in the mid- 90's, and some political advisor of his may have objected on the grounds that the frank views he had expressed in Portland would stir up controversy in the election. Having thought it over for a while, then, it seems clear he decided not to rush to send in his rather emotional account of the conversation. What's more, Twain was notoriously preoccupied with copyright issues and made a habit of being sure that nothing he said or wrote was published without his permission and the right to make revisions.

In any case, Clark died of a heart attack before the election, and the manuscript was lost to view among the many handwritten papers left behind in his office. As a close friend of the editor of the *Mercury*, the much respected J.J. Owens, he sometimes traveled to events and then wrote stories for the paper under the pen name of "A reporter for the *San Jose Mercury*." For obvious reasons, primarily his own role as one of the two contestants in the debate, he opted for the same more objective and anonymous format in this case even though writing for submission to the *Overland Monthly.* Owens wouldn't have begrudged that to him, especially as his newspaper would have benefited from its own share of the Twain publicity. [Looks to his left as EA enters] But here's Dr. Clark himself. [Pause] He seems lost in his memories. Oh, I see, he's going to read you his report on the debate. [Stage manager exits stage right]

EA: Pardon my distraction. Looking at this again brings the whole evening back to me most vividly. Here's what I wrote: A CONVERSATON WITH MARK TWAIN by a reporter for the *San Jose Mercury.* On August 10 Samuel Clemens made an unscheduled stage appearance in Portland, Oregon, at the request of Mrs. Elizabeth Jordan, editor of *Harper's Monthly.* Mrs. Jordan has projected the publication of a series of essays on the controversial question of whether or not there is a turning point in everyone's life. As Mr. Clemens was on the verge of sailing for the Orient to carry out an around-the world lecture series, the magazine considered it advantageous to obtain some parting thoughts from him for use in advance advertising. His train from Tacoma, though it left the station there 45 minutes late, had orders to deliver the people's favorite to Portland on time at 8:22 pm in defiance of the usual railway speed limits, and the engineer at the throttle made that a reality. By a stroke of bad luck, or perhaps by a case of bad nerves brought on by the pressures of so many weeks of

racing against the clock, Clemens reached the station indisposed and asked for ten minutes of rest before proceeding to the Marquam Grand. The manager of his tour, Major Pond, quickly hailed a cab and so was there to greet the standing-room-audience at the announced starting time. [Takes a seat up stage]

MP: [Enters stage right] Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen. You will have observed that America's greatest humorist, our Santa Claus of wit and ironic good humor, is not on the platform. It seems not a creature is stirring, not even a mouse. No stockings are hung by the lectern with care - a bad sign I fear - in hopes that St. Mark soon will be here. But he will. Don't give up hope. At this moment he is in the station and probably chasing down a cab to join us. The essayist selected by Mrs. Jordan to spar with him, Dr. E.A. Clark of San Jose, you see seated behind me. He feels it is best, and I concur - to preclude any impatience on your part for words of wisdom - for him immediately to begin his comments with his usual alacrity.

EA: [Steps forward and resumes reading from his report.] Dr. Clark arose with a determined look in his eye and remarked with characteristic earnestness. [lowering the hand holding the report and looking intently at the audience] Good evening, citizens of Portland. Mr. Twain's delay, while unexpected, has a good explanation, and I'm sure anyone who has an appointment to meet him often encounters these contretemps. A man of his prominence may often get caught up in demands on his time. A writer of his stature, even though a humorist, isn't consulted by governors and presidents without good cause. As I like to say, there's always a reason - for everything. Indeed, that's my motto, but more of that in a moment. And while we are dancing attendance on the witty, if indeed tardy sage of Hannibal, allow me to sketch out for you this evening's program. [Glancing somewhat apprehensively at the back of hall, then continuing in a robust tone of voice] But I am, so to speak, putting the jaunting cart of the agenda before the tout sheet of the race horses. While you unquestionably know who Mark Twain is, and that is why you have come, my name and ideas may not have made any impression on you at all. I am Dr. E.A. Clark of San Jose, in the fruitful Santa Clara Valley of California. Advanced medicine, bringing education to all, and a cornucopia of editorials in the city's leading daily, *The Mercury*, are my stock and trade. My goal and my pledge is to serve the common good.

What brings me here over immense prairies and mountains? You may well wonder, and even more at my astonishing appointment to speak on the same stage with the author of *Innocents Abroad*, *Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn*, *The Prince and the Pauper. Harper's Monthly* is what and who. [Resumes reading from his report] Throughout these preliminary remarks Dr. Clark continually checked his pocket watch but stalwartly persevered. [Again lowering the report] Now why would they do something like that? In the 60's Mark Twain, or as he was better known at the time outside the newspaper world, Sam Clemens, and I worked as reporters for two of the same San Francisco papers, the *Morning Call* and the *Alta Californian*, though unfortunately not at the same time so we didn't have the pleasure of meeting. *The Bazaar* has now undertaken to organize an essay contest, and they know that Mark, as the whole adoring nation calls him, and I, who am merely a West Coast phenomenon, hold antithetical and competing views on the subject they have chosen, which is, to wit, is there a turning point in the course of one's life. [Resumes reading from his report] At this point Dr. Clark looked

around yet again, then ventured forth upon his thesis. [MT enters the audience and slowly walks toward the stage unobserved by EA. The latter continues reading] Immediately thereafter, though unobserved by Dr. Clark, Mr. Twain entered the auditorium, clearly hurrying. But hearing the voice of his opponent for the evening's entertainment, he reigned in his haste to give his full attention to the remarks he needs must refute shortly thereafter, and with his legendary verve and charm. [Lowering the report and resuming his oration] For my part, I am convinced that many people decidedly and permanently change their manner of living after grasping the importance, indeed the transforming power, of a compelling idea. What, then, is an idea? I have been unable to find any definition which satisfies me, so I will make my own definition. An idea is a definite, distinct and clear-cut mental perception of some thing or principle. It is a force. It is the immediate resultant product of cerebro-chemical action, of the explosion in a certain number of cerebral cells. Ideas are generated, liberated and started on their wonderful mission by the vital chemism of the most wonderful battery known to science - the human brain. Many thoughts are vague, shadowy, indistinct, purposeless: mere bubbles as we might say, rising from this constantly active battery of the brain. But when we once see, then comes to the surface a clear-cut, distinct idea. It is a force for ever. It may be, apparently, buried from sight, but it never dies. It cannot die. It is indestructible.

MT: [Startling the speaker by rising from a seat he has taken and heading for the stage]

Indeed, Dr. Clark. I can verify for you in my own life that an idea is indestructible and endures forever. But will it create a change in one's *behavior*, a turning point in one's life? I have forever and a fortnight had the idea that I should cease smoking, and I can assure you that it will be with me for the rest of my days. But just because it is an idea, cast and polished in bronze, it does not mean I will *act* upon it and have it alter the course of my life.

How well I remember my grandmother's asking me not to use tobacco, good old soul! She said, "You're at it again, are you, you whelp? Now, don't ever let me catch you chewing tobacco before breakfast again, or I lay I'll blacksnake you within an inch of your life!" I have never touched it at that hour of the morning from that time to the present day.

Practice restraint, my good doctor, in using any indestructible idea as

a compass when searching for a turning point in life. It's enough that I have *resolved* to stop smoking cigars, a prudent idea I grant you, one of your so-called bubbles of chemism that is with me always. I *have* stopped smoking. But I've done it a thousand times.

EA: [Reading] By then Twain stood before the hall, looking intensely into Clark's eyes with a fiery sparkle in his own. The good doctor managed to sputter out. [Lowering his report] Ah, Mr. Twain. Mark, if I may call you that, as so many Americans do, and with deep and merited affection.

MT: Dr. Clark, many thanks for that kind thought. My apologies for being tardy. As it turned out my train of thought departed this morning on time but jumped its track and delayed me considerable. I beg your indulgence.

EA: Not at all, Mark. Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me to introduce a man you know already, your witty friend and beloved neighbor of your inmost thoughts, Mr. Mark Twain. [Resumes reading] In the 60's Mr. Twain and I worked as reporters for two of the same San Francisco newspapers, though unfortunately not at the same time. [Looking up at the audience] I know I just told you that, but my years as Superintendent of Public Instruction have left an indelible mark on me, you know, just to be sure my pupils are paying attention. Now, where was I? Oh. yes. [Resumes reading] Mark has risen from his early days as a typesetter…. But here Mr. Twain abruptly interrupted, quickly staving off what he deemed a superfluous, or perhaps even dull, formality.

MT: Dr. Clark, I consider introductions unnecessary. It's not that I don't enjoy compliments. We all do, humorists, burglars, congressmen – all of us in the trade. But if it is the custom to have them, I prefer to do the act myself, so that I can rely on getting in all the facts. I was born modest; not all over, but in spots.

EA: Of course, but your contributions?

MT: Why I was once presented to an audience by a lawyer, who kept his hands in his pockets. He introduced me as 'Mark Twain, a humorist who is really funny – a rare creature indeed.' Why, I was struck speechless by this complimentary thunderbolt. I had scarcely in my lifetime listened to an introduction so beautifully phrased, or so well deserved. But we had a much rarer creature in our midst than a humorist who was really funny. We had a lawyer who kept his hands in his own pockets.

EA: [Reading] To this clever anecdote Clark responded with his own *bon mot*, [Stops reading] in humor veritas, unlike the so-called truth in wine and other mind-numbing intoxicants.

MT: We understand each other, then, at least up to a certain degree – or a certain proof. But to the subject at hand. What was it?"

EA: "Why, Mark, I should have thought your friends at *Harper's* had informed you, "The Turning Point of My Life"!

MT: Ah, yes, I recall it. Now there's an idea that is unbearable, I mean unsupportable. For the sake of giving our audience their money's worth I hope you disagree with me.

EA: Without a doubt, Mark.

MT: Excellent. Proceed.

EA: [Reading] Mr. Twain thereupon closed his eyes, evidently to listen harder. Some in the audience, though, rudely tittered as though thinking his aim was to sleep. [Stops reading] Well, yes, of course. 'The Turning Point of My Life" is a burning question that each of us should consider if we are to be fully conscious of our destiny and the impact we may have on our civilization. To put it in no uncertain terms, each man's Turning Point

resides with glowing intensity in the Eureka shout that signals the grasping of the power of an idea! [He pauses, eventually quite a long while, awaiting some sign of response from his opponent, who at last replies]

MT: Continue.

EA: Allow me to illustrate the power of a momentous idea fully assimilated. Consider a concept we both embrace - human liberty. Far back in the past history of the human race the only rule was the law of force: might was right. In the fierce struggle for existence against the wild forces of nature, the savagery of other animals and the still fiercer savagery of our own kind there could be no ideal of anything but strength and force and savage power. But by and by in some quiet mood, some thinker conceived the idea of equal rights and of justice. The idea was born. The force, weak and feeble, was set in motion and today our country has, within our own lifetime, brought to an end the primitive abuse of power that was slavery. The triumphant life of the remarkable statesman yet former slave Frederick Douglass testifies to that reality. He has shown that culture, brilliant intellect and impassioned eloquence may be possessed by the African race. If any youth thinks there are insurmountable obstacles in the way of future success or usefulness, let him or her read the life of Frederick Douglass, the born slave, and see what gigantic hindrances he climbed over to greatness and usefulness, and so profit by the lesson.

MT: Good advice, doctor, but you forget the liberating education made possible for many former slaves and their children by Mr. Booker T. Washington.

EA: Indeed, Sir, I do not.

MT: But let me tell you, and our listeners, what a deep impression has been made upon me by knowing him personally It was a Fourth of July reception in Ambassador Choate's house in London that I first met Washington. He has accomplished a wonderful work in this quarter of a century. When he finished his education at the Hampton Colored School twenty-five years ago, he was unknown, and hadn't a penny, or a friend outside his immediate acquaintanceship. But by the persuasions of his carriage and address and the sincerity and honesty that look out of his eyes, he has been enabled to gather money by the hatful here in the North, and with it he has built up and firmly established his great school for the colored people of the two sexes in the South. In that school the students are not merely furnished a book education, but are taught thirty-seven useful trades. A most remarkable man is Booker Washington. And he is, unlike some who drone on, a fervent and effective speaker on the platform.

EA: No one who has heard him speak will ever doubt it, Mark. Or the empowering ideas that he transmitted to those many students.

MT: Far more powerful and able to turn things around would those ideas be under another system of government, not as here where the ignorant and selfish vote on the basis of equality - if not one of fraudulent privilege - with the educated of all races. All we require of a voter is that he shall be forked, wear pantaloons instead of petticoats, and bear a more or less humorous resemblance to the reported image of God. He need

not know anything whatever; he may be wholly useless and a cumberer of the earth. He may even be known to be a consummate scoundrel. We brag of our universal, unrestricted suffrage; but we are shams after all, for we restrict when it comes to the women.

EA: Boldly spoken, Mark, when you decry the dangers of letting every man, no matter how ignorant and full of blind emotion, vote on an equal basis with the thoughtful and educated. But let's face the painful concessions of democracy with a smile, and even a knowing laugh. I'm reminded of a ludicrous incident in California politics a few years ago. There is a card game called "dumb muggins," the rules of which are that no person playing must laugh aloud or speak an audible word, except to say "muggins" to someone making a mistake in playing his cards. Even if wrongfully accused of an error, that is, "mugginsed" by the others, the injured party cannot defend what he has done or subsequently laugh at others' mistakes. It is hugely enjoyable to all who are not victims of being unjustly mugginsed.

MT: I've seen cases, even recently, where it would have been right on the money.

EA: The California bosses had set the grave, dignified and egotistic old General Stoneman at a game of political "dumb muggins" which was to last until after election. Every time he opened his mouth, from the silly speech he made in the convention when nominated until his trainers sealed up his mouth, he made such a consummate muggins of himself that he was shut up for good. His only occupation from that to election time was to sit up straight, look wise and benign, pass around cheap cigarettes and let the railroad men work for his election. Really, it must have been terribly mortifying to the few men of brains in the party to have such a stupid and brainless figurehead on their ticket.

MT: Most horses find themselves obliged to accustom themselves to being cinched up too tight by empty-headed cowpokes.

EA: The wonder is that his overweening egotism did not cause him to break away from his keepers and run around the country exhibiting himself and repeating his brilliant speech made when congratulated on his nomination: 'Congratulate the people! Congratulate the people!'

MT: "Dr. Clark, when I went to California and Nevada in the early 60's and worked as a reporter, and even more when I worked on the staff of a member of Congress in Washington - mercifully not too long -my moral sensibilities were painfully abraded by the day- to- day manner of conducting the nation's business. The bleeding saddle sores inflicted on my sense of ethics overflowed into a slop bucket that furnished the sources for my novel *The Gilded Age.* As for governors, I have grappled at close quarters with them out West in their comparatively primitive form as rulers of lands not yet sufficiently civilized to be called states. Territorial governors are nothing but politicians who go out to the outskirts of countries and suffer the privations there in order to build up stakes and come back as United States Senators.

EA: I venture to say, Mark, that you've found those personages soon squeezed into ethical lemonade by the greater temptations that assail them as they attempt to keep their balance on the slippery heights of power.

You will further assert that our deep-rooted commitment to human liberty should not allow us to claim an empire.

MT: My readers know what my Connecticut Yankee thought of the murky beginnings of Queen Victoria's.

EA: There's nothing worse than a Know-Nothing. That's why you will remind us that as at home, or at least in all the enlightened regions of it, we are all now treated as free Americans, and so we should we not enslave any other nation of the world. You will certainly maintain that the Monroe Doctrine, when dissected with the powerful scalpel of reason, applies to ourselves as much as to Britain, France or Germany. Truly, my worthy opponent, already in the early innings of our ballgame you are playing to the grandstand on the merits of our shared principles, which are the long balls that we both hit.

MT: That accusation might well be directed at you, doctor. My aversion to Americans enslaving those who were born elsewhere is well-known. And what of their masters' lives? When I wrote *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* I had already realized that I feel more sorry for kings and emperors than dazzled by their ostentation or outraged by their tyranny. Norton I of San Francisco often returns to my mind's eye. It was always a painful thing to see him begging. Nobody has ever written him up who was able to see any but his grotesque side; but I think that with all his dirt and unsavoriness there was a pathetic side to him. I have seen the Emperor when his dignity was wounded; and when he was both hurt and indignant at the dishonoring of an imperial draft; and when he was full of trouble and bodings on account of the presence of the Russian fleet, he connecting it with his refusal to ally himself with the Romanoffs by marriage. I have seen him in *all* his various moods and tenses, and there was always more room for pity than laughter. But our shared belief and question remains. Should we, then, lend our support to such sad delusions of grandeur enlarged to rule on a national scale? I say nay, but I fear many Americans may be swayed by calls to ambitious crimes issuing from the mouths of grandstanding politicians.

EA: You are a dramatic Cassandra and a gloomy woe-sayer, Mark. We must all remember that new enlightened principles, grand conceptions, are slow of growth and sure of opposition if not of persecution. In fact it seems to have been in the past almost necessary that new and valuable ideas should have a baptism of scorn and contempt and persecution and oft times of blood in order to give them strength and power. The natural inertia of humanity is always hostile to new ideas. The crank of today is the philosopher of tomorrow. The radical of this age is the conservative of the next.

MT: Who can deny that hope springs eternal, and that we stand on the shoulders of giants, as I'm sure *you* would say? But don't you think it odd that we should take a spasm, every now and then, and go spinning back into the dark ages once more, after having put in a world of time and money and work toiling up into the high lights of modern progress?

EA: I can see that my conviction regarding the perpetually directive power of a life-giving idea, once it is deeply instilled in the mind, may strike you as excessively dogmatic, but consider the good soil whence I spring. I was

fortunate enough to be born in Ohio at the height of our nation's Classical Revival and given a Greek name that means liberty. No slave to blind dogma, my turning point came as a young man when I adopted a motto taken from my reading, and that motto, as I stated while we all awaited your arrival, is still, and forever will be, "there's always a reason."

MT: Yes, even though supposing is often pleasant and good, I concede that finding out is better. But can you point out to me in detail how this thunderous apothegm of yours has invariably guided your life?

EA: I can, certainly. Examples of that dedication to reason in my own life are not limited to my formal medical studies, interrupted for marriage but completed in San Francisco years later. Consider my interaction with electricity. I have grasped the fact – and turned to follow where it leads - that electricity is much more than lights and the telegraph. It offers previously inconceivable avenues for medical study and even treatment. Now while some of these new procedures prove more effective than others, I am glad to have conducted such trials of healing methods.

MT: When someone feeling poorly doesn't question a quick fix, any mummery cures for as long as a hound can tree a possum.

EA: In '82 and '83 I often 'gave my patients electricity,' as we said at that time, following an experimental method in which no shocks or unpleasant sensations were experienced, the doctor taking in the current with one hand and then administering it to the patient with the other. This advanced method was no less of a scientific experiment than the introduction of vaccination, another treatment that I pioneered in San Jose.

MT: As a man of science, doctor, you must be aware that it takes a *thousand* men to invent a telegraph, or a steam engine, or a phonograph, or a photograph, or a telephone, or any other Important thing--and the last man gets the credit and we forget the others. He added his little mite--that is all he did. Now I am told you also practice law. Has your search for reasons prospered in the intricate thicket of the law?

EA: My legal practice was based entirely on home study, and in spite of that for a while in the newly settled lands around San Luis Obispo I was appointed District Attorney. But when I returned to San Jose I felt disgust welling up in me for the selfish motives behind many law suits, and worse, the predatory and combative manner in which legal counsel conducts itself as a matter of course.

MT: I agree with you there, Doctor. A great many law suits present all the features of a duel. When I first came West, in those early days, dueling suddenly became a fashion in the new Territory of Nevada, and by 1864 everybody was anxious to have a chance in the new sport, mainly for the reason that he was not able to thoroughly respect himself so long as he had not killed or crippled somebody in a duel or been killed or crippled in one himself. When I was the city editor on Mr. Goodman's Virginia City *Enterprise* I was twenty-nine years old. I was ambitious in several ways, but I had entirely escaped the seductions of that particular craze. I had no desire to fight a duel; I had no intention of provoking one. I did not feel respectable, but I got a certain

amount of satisfaction out of feeling safe. I was ashamed of myself; the rest of the staff were ashamed of me – but I got along well enough. I bore it very well.

EA: Courage under fire is a laudable quality, Mark. I trust you know that.

MT: A young man named Joe Goodman asked Major Graves to be his second after having successfully challenged someone to mortal combat. The major came over to instruct Joe in the dueling art. He had fought under Walker, the so-called 'gray-eyed man of destiny,' all through that remarkable man's piratical campaign to turn Spanish Central America into his personal kingdom, I mean, his republic. There was around mid-century a well-established tradition of that sort of thing. Graves' son was killed at his side while exchanging fire with the locals. The father received a bullet through the eye. The old man – for he was an old man at the time – wore spectacles, and the bullet and one of the glasses went into his skull and remained there – but often, in after years, when I boarded in the old man's home in San Francisco, whenever he became emotional I used to see him shed tears and *glass*, in a way that was infinitely moving. It is wonderful how glass breeds when it has a fair chance. This glass was all broken up and ruined, so it had no market value; but in the course of time he exuded enough to set up a spectacle shop with. The city's lawyers who were in the know liked making purchases there. They felt the products he made gave them the unflinching nerve necessary to confront one's adversary under fire.

EA: Your facetious anecdote might well serve as a parody of the urban practice of law, but in rural and wild San Luis Obispo County the need for law and order was no laughing matter. While you, running off to Nevada out of danger and carefree on the top of a stagecoach, fled the struggle against slavery in the embattled state of Missouri, I brought safety and justice to the frontier of the Union. The trials I cobbled-together and conducted to protect the citizenry of the area never condemned an innocent man. The massacres often committed by bandits against defenseless Americans and native-born Californios, who were usually remotely situated ranching families, were instigated by murderous outlaws from all over the world that were drawn to the Gold Rush but later driven out of the Mother Lode Country. The barely established system of federal marshals, county judges and courts were overwhelmed; something better had to be found. Only clear thinking and homemade frontier justice preserved the area as a place where homesteaders could live without fearing for their lives.

MT: As a newspaper editor in gold-rush Nevada I did soon learn just how dangerous the frontier could be. But as a student of history, doctor, you must not forget that desperate men have since time immemorial resorted to hunting for each other, and it's often a painful business when the law of retribution reigns supreme. There are many indications that the Thug often hunted men for the mere sport of it; that the fright and pain of the quarry were no more to him than are the fright and pain of the rabbit or the stag to us; and that he was no more ashamed of beguiling his game with deceits and abusing its trust than are we when we have imitated a wild animal's call and shot it when it honored us with its confidence and came to see what we wanted.

EA: True, my family and I, and our relatives, too, lived in the hills as homesteaders. A red badge of courage, indeed. But nothing invalidates the use I made of reason and the necessity that moved me to act in accordance with the power of the idea of self-defense. [He returns to reading his report] Many heads in the hall here nodded in agreement. [He stops reading again] So let us turn to my later public service in San Jose as schools superintendent. In contrast to some who merely and idly carp at the practical steps taken by public officials, I improved the curriculum with courses grounded in practical skills, for both boys and girls. There are enough talkers, and writers, who have been encouraged to think of themselves as literary men, but can bring forth nothing of uncontestable usefulness.

MT: Are you perhaps thinking of a typesetting contraption whose inventor's promises outdid those of the self-proclaimed owner of the Brooklyn Bridge? Or batteries that can rejuvenate you merely by touching your hand? Our race, in its poverty, has one truly effective resource whose efficacy you will not question--laughter. Power, Money, Persuasion, Supplication, Persecution--these can lift at a colossal humbug, -push it a little-- crowd it a little--weaken it a little, century by century: but only laughter can blow it to rags and atoms at a blast. Against the assault of Laughter nothing can stand. What more should we both have brought forth?

EA: You will not evade my determined pursuit, Mark. Speak as honestly as your reputation says you do. Was there no turning point, no change of course, that took you from hardscrabble Hannibal, Missouri, to the wittily enunciated ideals of Hartford, Connecticut? Was it not fleeing the war that preserved the Union and freed the slaves?

MT: For a couple of weeks at the beginning of the war I was a rebel. Later I became a Republican. Years farther on, when I was supporting the campaign of the Republican Senator Hawley, I got a bitter letter from St. Louis written by Sherrard Clemens, a relative who during the War was a Republican congressman from West Virginia but later a warm rebel. He said that the Republicans of the North –no, the 'mudsills of the North' – had swept away the old aristocracy of the South with fire and sword, and it ill became me, an aristocrat by blood, to train with that kind of swine. Did I forget that I was a Lambton? So you see the Clemenses I come from have always done the best they could to keep the political balances level, no matter how much it might inconvenience them. Change is the handmaiden Nature requires to do her miracles with.

But no, that long-ago decision, practical in the family tradition and not out of sympathy with my natural moral inclinations, did not alter my nature. My love of Huck Finn and hatred for his captive condition lived already in me. No passing circumstance turns one's nature from its fixed course. It is my conviction that a person's temperament is a law, an iron law, and has to be obeyed, no matter who disapproves; manifestly, as it seems to me, temperament is a law of God and is supreme and takes precedence of all human laws.

That temperament came to me in my bloodline, from my mother and my father, though he died when I was quite young. He was scrupulously honest, a county judge and a moralist by nature, although in the family he was known for his customarily taciturn and irritable ways - and eventually for his resultant shattered nerves. My mother, on the other hand, possessed a sunny temperament. Lively, affable, and a general favorite. I

affectionately turned her into Aunt Polly in *Tom Sawyer*. I've no flicker of a doubt that those who know my writings can see both my parents alive in me as I laugh and cry and scold through the decades.

EA: Mark, who can deny that the temperament of one's parents is the shore from which our life's journey sets sail? But who can doubt, as well, that each of us has reason and freewill, and so can change the compass setting that we follow when the guiding power of an idea shows us the way? My own father was a failed shopkeeper in a small town in Michigan. After protracted ill health in a harsh climate that he found no road to leave, my mother and he died in poverty, and the consumption that infected the lungs of a sister, a wife and a daughter eventually took their lives, too.

MT: You must be aware, Doctor, that man starts in as a child and lives on diseases to the end as a regular diet. We draw them in with our mother's milk, made more sour by a harsh climate. How have you thrived and taken on your glow of preternatural optimism?

EA: For me there was a life-giving elixir, my grandfather William. He adopted my two sisters and me, gave us a thorough, in fact a classical, education that equipped Sarah Mariah to support herself, as it did me, as a teacher. Having been an Ohio pioneer himself, Judge Clark gave us also the abiding conviction that we could, by the use of our minds and our courage, rise above hardships. That conviction, shining brightly against the foil of our parents' long suffering and their dark death, turned around what might have been a grim destiny.

MT: I rejoice that you can see it that way. I, on the contrary, find bleak the verified fact that the ignorant and unreflecting so often and so undeservedly succeed when the informed fail.

EA: But hope should never be allowed to die. My sister Lovina, as she coughed up more and more blood, went to her end trusting that God would care for her husband and children. She looked as well for more material support for them, for the help of nearby relatives, and for the bonanza of glittering mining claims her husband Harrison had filed. When my first wife, too, collapsed beneath the weight of consumption, I myself, more scientifically inclined, had a spiritscope made for me to communicate with her. It brought me but a faint hope, yet still one that sustained me in a hard time.

MT: If Livy precedes me in death, there will have to be fair weather in Heaven, indeed, to cast any ray of sun into my life.

EA: So I felt as well. But following the dictates of logic I turned my thoughts to a new helpmeet and a new, healthier home for my remaining children. Reason, the guiding force of my youth, has remained with me over the years. Even though the Unitarians often have me lecture at their meetings, I keep my freedom of thought strong by declining to join their church.

MT: Well done, true and faithful servant. But I am quite sure now that often, very often, in matters concerning religion and politics a man's reasoning powers are not above the monkeys. India has two million gods, and impulsively worships them all.

EA: Impulsiveness has certainly marked your winding path. Like your father, you've put your money in one rash speculation after another, and only your strength of character, the willingness to work hard that you are now showing once again in this world tour - and of course your great talent - has kept you afloat. And yet paradoxically you've many times been stubborn when you should have thoughtfully reconsidered. Why in the world did you cling so tenaciously, and so disastrously, to throwing away good money year after year into that impractical typesetting contraption that you've mentioned? [Reading from his report] At this forceful reproach a murmur blending stern agreement with tender-hearted sympathy ran through the crowd.

MT: I'm a writer by trade, and a convinced believer in American freedom of the press and individual enterprise, so I foolishly allowed Paige to sell me a very long bridge. During ten years he led me on with fantastical promises. I went on footing the bills, and got the machine really perfected at last, at a full cost of about $150,000, instead of the original $30,000. Ward tells me that Paige tried his best to cheat me out of my royalties when making a contract with the Connecticut Co. Now Paige and I always meet on effusively affectionate terms; and yet he knows perfectly well that if I had his nuts in a steel-trap I would shut out all human succor and watch that trap till he died.

EA: [Reading from his report] A distinct gasp was heard from the ladies. [No longer reading]

That wasn't the power of an idea, not one based on solid evidence and given reality by the hard work we both learned from our New England ancestors. It was not unlike the family dream of your father's Tennessee land, or the emotional attachment of my sister Lovina and Harrison to their glittering mining claims. In '49 and the following years those were the magnets that lured countless people to the West. I went there thinking of my family, but even I was lured into spending months prospecting in the Sierra, and later bought stock in a gold mine venture.

MT: Gold mines can attract a usually prudent, observant sort of folks. Even doctors, like you, rush into investing in them with the illusion of owning a piece of El Dorado. The miners themselves have taken a good look at nothing more than a soft dream and a hard pick and shovel. It puts me in mind of something that happened many years ago and well illustrates my contention. It was the introduction of Mark Twain, lecturer, to an audience of gold-miners at Red Dog, California, in 1866, by one of themselves. It was in a log house, there were no ladies present, and they didn't know me then; but all just miners with their breeches tucked into their boot-tops. And they wanted somebody to introduce me to them, and they pitched upon this miner, and he objected. He said he had never appeared in public, and had never done any work of this kind; but they said it didn't matter, and so he came on the stage with me and introduced me in this way: 'I don't know anything about this man, anyway. I only know two things about him. One is, he has never been in jail; and the other is, I don't know why.'

EA: A penetrating commentary, and concisely put, that serves me better than you in our contest of wits. But I must concede the truth of what you imply: to observe is to know – something – or at least to feel one has been vouchsafed an insight. But it's going one step too many to draw hasty conclusions, to make rash decisions; it

is the urge to rely on the flash of self-deception that carries us into one of those dreary bayous that you call before our averted eyes in *Life on the Mississippi.* You've known them well.

MT: When I find a well-drawn character in fiction or biography I generally take a warm personal interest in him, for the reason that I have known him before--met him, and observed him, on the river. But to speak candidly, many on the riverboats produced but one certainty in my mind - that old question about the nature of the Creator. On the occasions when my relationship to Him is under a cloud I wonder whether or not the Marquis de Sade was closely related to him.

EA: In the swamp of despair, I, too, have cried out in my soul, "When will this farce of life end?" So have we all. Hamlet lives still in us. But science and its well-muscled disciplines pull us out from those dark, stagnant pools and set us on the demanding, daily pilgrimage that at last climbs to a spacious viewpoint where we glimpse understanding. Is the bitter smile of devastating disillusionment with a supposed truth better for the soul than the satisfying construction of a lens to see an authentic truth previously unknown?

MT: Have it your way then. But only a complacent fool thinks he can find everything he would like. Still a man has no business to be depressed by a disappointment, anyway; what he needs to do is to make up his mind to get even - by knowing himself better than his adversary does. Remember the words of Socrates, 'Know thyself.'

EA: Socrates knew he was a gadfly, Mark. He was perhaps the best, and a useful one in fact, but without methodical Plato, not to mention laborious Aristotle, could we today stand on his shoulders? I'm no peripatetic philosopher, though as a homesteader too poor to own a horse I walked countless miles to reach my goals.

MT: I'll meet you and raise you there. I've walked through the door to the Monday Evening Club in Hartford since '71. I must confess that I am puffed up with pride to say that the other members are men of large intellectual caliber and more or less distinction, local or national. Once a fortnight one of us reads an essay of his and then we argue about it until midnight.

EA: Consider the mental weight of San Jose's Liberal Lyceum, The Society of Free Thought, the annual Thomas Paine celebration, the Cosmos Club, and the Lecticonians. I have founded all these associations to foster the ongoing exchange of well-informed ideas necessary for the improvement of the city.

MT: Well done again, true and faithful servant of progress. But you convince me that the one thing we may not doubt is that society in heaven consists mainly of undesirable persons.

EA: I have always opposed the narrowmindedness that hides behind religious self-righteousness to prevent the spread of new and valuable knowledge in the world. The object of science is to show the absolute universality of law in every realm of nature. It is the prerogative of astronomy alone to show this in space, as it is alone the prerogative of geology to show it in time. Two of the greatest epochs in the history of mankind have been the revelations of the ideas of astronomy and geology. Still, when distinguished geologists, such as LeConte and Denton, lectured in San Jose for the enlightenment of future teachers, an opportunity that as

Superintendent of Public Education I arranged for students of the Normal School, several young lady students who had asked permission of a preceptress had been forbidden to attend these lectures because Professor Denton was a Spiritualist.

MT: No doubt she thought he would have been more instructive as a dentist. That schoolmarm's display of knownothingism takes us back again to the ignorance and superstition that reigned supreme in that King Arthur's court I arranged for Hank Morgan to visit. And there's nothing but an open mind to be gaped at in my being a member of the English society for Psychical Research and avidly reading their journal. As I recall, doctor, you yourself are a longtime member of the International Society of Psychics, while your wife Alice is a medium.

EA: Right you are. The spirit of inquiry, Mark, plays the midwife at the birth of new ideas of unsuspected power. But the question involved in this case is not as to what religious views are the best, but whether the bedrock principle, upon which the whole superstructure of our Government is based, shall be carried out: Perfect liberty of opinion on all religious subjects. When we surrender that right, we surrender all the progress of the century.

MT: Alas! Those good old days are gone, when a murderer could wipe the stain from his name and soothe his trouble to sleep simply by getting out his blocks and mortar and building an addition to a church.

EA: "I'll let that stroke of Twainian humor pass for the sake of its grain of truth. Darwin's "Origin of Species," published in 1859, astonished the world's mind forty years ago. What terrible opposition this thought encountered. All the preconceived ideas of all men were opposed to it. All the religious theories of the whole civilized world stood like a solid wall across its track. Ridicule, sarcasm, sophistry and abuse were hurled against it from press, from forum, and from pulpit. Yet in less than half a century this living vital truth has conquered the world of mind. Why? Because it was a force born of reason and accounted for the facts of the world which hitherto had been impenetrable mysteries. It traced this world of ours into the abysmal depths of space, where it was spread out as nebular stardust and gave no apparent promise of its future destiny. In doing this it deepened and broadened the human intellect, brought it in rapport with the thought of the Infinite, as it were, and opened great vistas of Nature's handiwork on a scale which made any former conceptions of the Universal Force seem childish.

MT: It now seems plain to me, as someone from the Show-me state, that that theory ought to be vacated in favor of a new and truer one...the Descent of Man from the Higher Animals.

EA: So far has your courage fallen, Mark? Many other ideas are in motion trying to find expression and elevate the human race. We have time to allude to only one or two. The idea of cooperative industry is striving hard to work out realization in a practical and equitable way. When it accomplishes its work this cut-throat, competitive system of labor and business will be abolished, and men and women will be real friends and neighbors instead of gladiatorial combatants for bread and butter. The realization of this idea must be

preceded by the full fruition of the idea of industrial education, by means of which our boys and girls shall be completely educated - head, hand, eyes, feet and both the perceptive as well as the reflective intellect. As I said before, our schools churn out too many men who think they are equipped to write for a living. Only a few of us are [Winking to his fellow lecturer] – don't you agree, Mark?

MT: It's especially a problem among editorialists. Or lecturers. which is a dismal sort of business, even to a lazy man like me. The one hope I see for it is the appearance of well-informed and sprightly women on the platform in recent years. They have supplied us with a moment like the parting of the clouds and the awakening of birds on a long winter's afternoon, times when we are besieged by the endless booming of a fulling mill under leaden skies.

EA: Of course the education of women, like that of men, is a fundamental human right and a great good. And with it logically, unquestionably in a Republican form of government, goes the right to vote. Committees of Congress have listened with rapt attention to arguments from the advocates of this movement, and before long, those that have opposed us will take another new departure and say that they always favored us, but didn't know that the women wanted to vote. This is a convenient position and it reminds me of a little anecdote. There was once brought before a priest an Irishman charged with stealing a pig from a neighbor. "Patrick," said the priest, "what will you do when you get to Heaven and find Mrs. Mulloney and her pig there confronting you?" "Will, yer reverence," says Pat, "I"ll say, Mrs. Mulloney, there's yer pig." And just so it is with the men who now ridicule the movement. They say the women will abuse their rights. I claim that they have as much right to do so as the men, and I don't think we have much to brag of. They tell us that if the movement succeeds, families will be broken; anarchy, ruin and a general state of cussedness will prevail; free love will run riot; fathers will wear the aprons and go out as dry nurses, - in short, the consequences will be terrible. Now the women go everywhere, and if they go to the ballot it will be to make it decent.

And while the vote is unjustly denied to women, so, too, is the right to be respected for their personal worth and accomplishments, even and especially those of older women. Not too long ago, in my work as an editorialist, I found the following squib copied into many of our news exchanges: "In Connecticut an old lady aged seventy-two years is learning to play the piano. It is seldom that such a viciousness of spirit breaks out at that advanced age." A certain class of cheap writers seem to have a decided preference for old ladies as butts for their stupid jokes. There is a prevailing idea that old age, in women especially, is or should be a bar to all further acquisitions of knowledge or accomplishments, when in fact, if the inclination and ability remain, it is often in middle life that women are best fitted, both to acquire and enjoy special pursuits or accomplishments; and who has more need of them than the middle-aged and old, who must then turn back upon themselves for the peace and happiness of life's afternoon; and a long one it is to those who can only sit and brood over the failures and disappointments and hardships of earlier years. There is no reason in the world why old age should be dull, unlovely or useless. Encouragement to do whatever they choose should be given the old. They will be happy, and so will those around them.

MT: Yes, my longwinded doctor. Gather ye rosebuds while you may. Strange to say, I feel obliged to agree. It's good for the social fabric as well as the mental weather, and roses perfume the air in the industrial neighborhood around the fullingmills.

EA: You jest, but I will allude to but one more idea already mentioned, the idea of the complete emancipation of humans, not only of African-Americans. I am thinking specifically of women. By this I do not mean alone the political freedom and equality of woman, but her liberation from herself, from the most grinding, cruel and conscienceless despot of earth, the tyrant of fashion. She must forever put down and crush to death that terrible ogre and frightful hag, Old Mother Grundy. Woman forges her own chains and voluntarily obeys and worships her own oppressor. There is nothing so exacting, so tyrannical, so unreasonable, so destructive of all manhood and womanhood as this. There are no slaves so abject, so prone, so helpless, so imbecile, so brainless, so utterly prostrate and unquestioning before their master as are the poor slaves of fashion. Reason, argument, policy, health, decency, have no more weight against an edict of this tyrant, fashion, than has a feather against a tornado. Its victims unquestioningly and unhesitatingly sacrifice ease, good appearance, health, life, friends, anything and everything, at the command of this impersonal despot. There cannot be a personal distortion so ridiculous or hideous that these slaves will not at once copy and imitate. If it is the style, if it is tony, if it is fashionable, if the upper ten adopt and practice it, the following multitude at once hasten to imitate. I am not saying this with the idea that I can make the faintest impression towards changing these terrible and lamentable facts. I am saying it because I want to growl against the inconvenience and devilishness of one of the fashions now prevalent. Well I recall, from the years when you were reporting for the *Californian*, your expostulation against such foolish extravagances, though your ability to laugh them to scorn far exceeds mine.

I refer here to the prairie schooner, sky-scraping, scoop bonnet. I am suffering from a crick in the neck, produced recently in trying to look around, first one side and then another, of one of these infernal contrivances, to try and see a lecturer and his illustrations at a recent lecture. To have looked over this mountain of straw, feathers, flowers and vegetables generally would have been impossible without having a two-story stepladder. There may be no particular harm in a woman's getting under one of these contrivances and totting it around the street, unless there is some one behind her who wants to see the electric tower. But to mount one of these things on her head and back hair, and take it into a public assemblage where there are people behind her entitled equally with herself to see the speaker or performance, is simply infernal – that is hardly strong enough to express it, but I can't think of any word more emphatic at present. If women believe sky-scrapers are ornamental, and assist in beautifying their persons, and they are happy in exhibiting the monstrous things to the public gaze on the streets, I have no objection. But for heaven's sake, for my sake, for courtesy's sake, for justice's sake, remove them when you go into a public audience as men do their two-story stovepipe hats. How would you, my dear feminine friends, like at lecture or church, to sit behind a row of stovepipe hats on masculine heads?

MT: But, Doctor, you are more longwinded than a crow in a High Sierra meadow, more calamitous than Buffalo Bill's Jane. We must allow our listeners a seventh-inning stretch, the way we do in Hartford. I'm growing as plum tuckered out as that possum treed by an exceptionally persistent hound on the edge of a Missouri bayou. Ten minutes for something restorative from the bar!

EA: There's nothing finer than coffee, the drink that enlivens without intoxicating! [Taking up again his report and reading] At this, both Olympic athletes of the mind, as we may well call them if we can believe that the ancient games will indeed be revived next spring, came down from the heights of the stage to seek a beverage, each according to his tastes.

POND: [Entering from stage left] Your attention, Ladies and Gentleman. I have just received from Mrs. Jordan of the *Harper's Bazaar Magazine* a lengthy telegram that she wishes me to impart to you. As Dr. Clark, a Californian, may not be entirely known to residents of Oregon's metropolis, she obtained over the news wire from J.J. Owens, the beloved editor of the San Jose *Mercury*, anecdote and testimony from citizens of that city. This information will make you cognizant of the esteem in which they hold Dr. Clark, and of his many contributions to all that is best in that state. Allow me to read aloud. The first report comes directly from the pages of a *Mercury* story back in 1872 and recounts the events of a meeting of the Liberal Lyceum, on which Dr. Clark himself reported; I quote his own words:

> 'C.C. Stephens got up and proposed a debate on the following question: 'Resolved, that extermination is the best policy for dealing with hostile Indians.' I was to defend the negative, so I said I did not know which to admire most, the preceding speaker's wonderful flow of language and ability to speak on a moment's notice, or his sublime assurance. Then I pointed out the obvious, 'The Indians are here without any volition of their own, unlettered and uncivilized, and because another race, powerful in knowledge and keenness, sees fit to exterminate them – it is called justice. I hold that any race of men is capable of civilization. To deny this is to deny the absolute science of nature. The way to show our superiority and our boasted civilization is to elevate, not destroy them. This is the only policy of right, the only expedience of justice. No nation can progress and have self-respect that has not respect for justice and the rights of others. The most philosophical language in the world was invented by a Cherokee Indian. I deny that there is any more barbarism in the Cherokee elections than in San Francisco and New York.'

Dr. Clark loves his country, and its heritage of freedom of thought. Here is what another reporter for the *Mercury* reported on Thomas Paine's Birthday Celebration in 1881: "Notwithstanding the terrible storm of wind and rain on Saturday night, the seats in German Hall, Santa Clara, were filled with a large and intelligent audience. It was a great surprise to see such a numerous attendance on such a night. Dr. E.A, Clark then delivered an address about twenty minutes in length, which was very attentively listened to. Many of the audience, after the close of the literary exercises, expressed a wish to have the address published. Over the stage, which was decorated with flags, was a portrait of Thomas Paine, and underneath, painted in large letters, was his sentence, 'The world is my country; to do good is my religion.' The celebration, considering the weather, was a great success."

Dr. Clark's health, although to judge by his unceasing work on behalf of the city must be remarkably strong, has begun to worry some of his friends. Mr. Garnett, the Unitarian minister in San Jose, is one who is concerned about the doctor's well-being. He thinks his friend's indigestion means imminent heart trouble. He even has told Dr. Clark to give up his plans to run for mayor. Tonight's speaker laughed at him and said, 'Since you're so worried that I may suddenly, sometime soon, keel over while out on the stump, why don't you

write up my eulogy now when you get a minute. It'll save rushing around later. And I'm curious to know what you'll have to say about me. It's a shame the guest of honor at a funeral never gets to hear the speaker.' Well, Garnett did write it up, gave a copy to J.J. Owens and now, thanks to the miracle of electric telegraphy, I've got a copy right here for your light entertainment. Remember the very old saying, 'Nothing but kind words about the dead', though I suspect that in this case they paint an accurate portrait:

> "Dr. Clark was a radical man, in thought and in utterance. His intellectual life was more or less rugged. *Rugged*, hmm, perhaps he means to say *rough around the edges*. And possessed a positiveness and independence which were very prominent, but as is frequently the case with men of sternness of intellect, he had beside this much of heart, much of real delicacy of soul. I have seen him fill up with tearful emotion on occasions when other men passed unmoved. Dr. Clark was one of the youngest old men I ever knew. He was always abreast of his day. He was progressive in his whole mental structure. On no subject was he inclined to shut out truth, and nothing was more repulsive than the sanctity sometimes given to error. This made him seem a theorist and something of an idealist. He was a man of marked intelligence and information on many subjects. But he was not a dogmatist in matters where facts could not be given. He was willing at times to be an agnostic and say of this and that, 'I do not know. I am not convinced.'"

Now Mark Twain is in a class by himself, and his gift of penetrating observation and lively wit is the talk and the admiration of the whole nation. Yet he, too, movingly expresses compassion for the defenseless, particularly the slave and the orphan. There are two passages that I take with me wherever I travel, to read in the quiet of my hotel room on days when the great but exhausted traveler has grown pardonably ironic, not to say cranky. One, from *Tom Sawyer*, I doubt that you have let slip from your memory, but you, like me, could doubtless use a mental nudge. The other, written some years ago about his own childhood, shows how the events in a great writer's real life are much later transformed into art. Let's begin there:

> "'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.
>
> "There was, however, one small incident of my boyhood days which touched this matter, and it must have meant a good deal to me or it would not have stayed in my memory, clear and sharp, vivid and shadowless, all these slow-drifting years. We had a little slave boy whom we had hired from someone, there in Hannibal. He was from the Eastern Shore of Maryland, and had been brought away from his family and his friends, half way across the American continent, and sold. He was a cheery spirit, innocent and gentle, and the noisiest creature that ever was, perhaps. All day long he was

singing, whistling, yelling, whooping, laughing – it was maddening, devastating, unendurable. At last, one day, I lost all my temper, and went raging to my mother, and said Sandy had been singing for an hour without a single break, and I couldn't stand it, and *wouldn't* she please shut him up. The tears came into her eyes, and her lip trembled, and she said something like this –

"'Poor thing, when he sings, it shows that he is not remembering, and that comforts me; but when he is still, I am afraid he is thinking, and I cannot bear it. He will never see his mother again; if he can sing, I must not hinder it, but be thankful for it. If you were older, you would understand me; then that friendless child's noise would make you glad."

Now listen again to the weeping and laughing tale you know about Tom and the other pirates listening to their own funeral. 'The congregation became more and more moved, as the pathetic tale went on, till at last the whole company broke down and joined the weeping mourners in a chorus of anguished sobs, the preacher himself giving way to his feelings and crying in the pulpit.

'There was a rustle in the gallery, which nobody noticed; a moment later the church door creaked; the minister raised his streaming eyes above his handkerchief, and stood transfixed! First one and then another pair of eyes followed the minister's, and then almost with one impulse the congregation rose and stared while the three dead boys came marching up the aisle, Tom in the lead, Joe next, and Huck, a ruin of drooping rags, sneaking sheepishly in the rear! They had been hid in the unused gallery listening to their own funeral sermon!

'Aunt Polly, Mary, and the Harpers threw themselves upon their restored ones, smothered the with kisses and poured out thanksgivings, while poor Huck stood abashed and uncomfortable, not knowing exactly what to do or where to head from so many unwelcoming eyes. He wavered, and started to slink away, but Tom seized him and said: 'Aunt Polly, it ain't fair. Somebody' got to be glad to see Huck.' 'And so they shall. I'm glad to see him, poor motherless thing!'

[MT and EA stand up from seats they have been occupying at the back of the auditorium and walk to the stage, where EA reads from his report]

EA: The two Demosthenes, visibly strengthened by the rest period and touched by the eloquence of each other's words that they had just heard, thanked Major Pond for his thoughtful framing of the evening's symposium and his kind mediation and intervention in their friendly quarrel.

MT: Doctor, you have not convinced me that there is a single event in a person's life that can accurately be called a turning point, that somehow set in motion all those that followed. But these stories of happenings thought to be tragedies, though sometimes we realize they are better called grim realities, lead me to reflect on the lasting impression made in our early years by explanations of why we all suffer and whether or not we have deserved that pain.

The drunken tramp – that I mentioned in *Tom Sawyer* or *Huck Finn* – who was burned up in the village jail, lay upon my conscience a hundred nights afterward and filled them with hideous dreams, dreams in which I saw his appealing face as I had seen it in the pathetic reality, pressed against the window-bars, with the red hell glowing behind him - a face which seemed to say to me, 'If you had not given me the matches, this would not have happened; you are responsible for my death.' I was *not* responsible for it, for I had meant him no harm, but only good, when I let him have the matches; but no matter, mine was a trained Presbyterian conscience, and knew but one duty –to hunt and harry its slave, myself, upon all pretexts and on all occasions; particularly when there was no sense nor reason in it. The tramp – who was to blame – suffered ten minutes; I, who was not to blame, suffered three months. Those years when I was driven toward needlessly blaming myself were perhaps turned toward pain by what you call a powerful idea, my own guilt, but I would not call that a permanent or beneficial change in me.

EA: Mark, how can our national humorist so lose his perspective on his own bad dreams? Do we all not sigh at times with Stephen Foster, 'Hard times come again no more'? But if then we redirect our attention to the clarion declaration of John Donne, 'No man is an island,' we are recalled to awareness of our mutual dependence. We remember that if we fall into the slough of despond we shall be unable to help our neighbor regain his footing on life's steep path.

When gold was discovered in California I saw an opportunity to act, boldly, yes, but not irresponsibly; rather it was an obligation to strive for my family's welfare. Not too long after arriving through the Golden Gate and bending my back with pick and shovel in the Sierra Nevada, I settled down to farm on land I bought in the Santa Clara Valley. My wife, children and sisters all successfully navigated in my wake across Lake Nicaragua and up the Pacific Coast to California. J.J. Owens and I founded the area's branch of the newly established Republican Party and helped elect Lincoln. Then a catastrophe descended on us. The federal courts established to arbitrate land claims ruled that the speculator who had sold us our farm, and those of many other pioneers, too, was a greedy charlatan. He never owned it; he had stolen it on paper. The Mexican land grant it formed part of had been valid all along, and solidly documented.

MT: We have been speaking of pain and it drives its horns into me again as your familiar tale of big land deals fallen through and ephemeral castles in the air brings back the memory of the monster tract of land which my family owned in Tennessee, purchased by my father over forty years ago. If any penny of cash came out of my father's supposedly wise investment, I have no recollection of it. No, I am overlooking a detail. In my novel *The Gilded Age* it furnished me a field for Col. Sellers. Out of my half of the book I got $15,000 or $20,000; out of the play I got $75,000 or $80,000 – just about a dollar an acre. I was the only member of the family that ever profited by it, yet it influenced our life in one way or another during more than a generation.

It kept us hoping and hoping, during forty years, and forsook us at last. It put our energies to sleep and made visionaries of us – dreamers, and indolent. We were always going to be rich next year – no occasion to

work. It is good to begin life poor; it is good to begin life rich – these are wholesome; but to begin it *prospectively* rich! The man who has not experienced it cannot imagine the curse of it.

EA: But over me, perhaps because I'm no southerner, land speculation and the idea of possessing a feudal fief had no such hold. I would not be turned from the future that reason and diligence had shown me. My neighbors in the Santa Clara Valley, swept away by indignation and ungoverned feelings of hopelessness, paraded threateningly through the streets to force the government to reverse its decision. Naturally, and rightly, the Californio's rights under the law were upheld. During the time that dramatic conflict was playing itself out, I, instead, applied myself to studying the situation that faced me. I was active in local politics and learned where and when the land commission was next going to open tracts to homesteaders. I organized my kinsmen, then we arrived and filed claims at San Simeon Creek before nearly any other land seekers, who were mostly still back near San Jose wailing and gnashing their teeth.

MT: Why you self-righteous Californian, do you think that land speculation can claim no more hold on northerners than an old bachelor has on a greased Maypole? Do you think you are exempt from the wise saying, 'There are two times in a man's life when he should not speculate: when he can't afford it and when he can'? The Oklahoma land rush that happened just six years ago is pretty fresh evidence that the dream of owning your own fief – at a rock bottom bargain price that includes self-congratulation for one's business acumen – is universal and old as the hills. In *The Gilded Age* I painted the details of getting rich in the American railroad business by inducing fools to speculate on which parcels of land might turn out to be located next to the road's right-of-way. The gospel left behind by the stock manipulator Jay Gould is doing giant work in our days. Its message is 'Get money. Get in quickly. Get it in abundance. Get it in prodigious abundance. Get it dishonestly if you can, honestly if you must.'

EA: Wait, wait. Hold your horses, you son of a Presbyterian judge. There's no need to stampede over the cliff of fiery rhetoric and hyperbole. Not all northerners feel money is the center of their universe, as you can see by how I put in perspective the land swindle I suffered. By far a harder blow to my commitment to a calm mind was the death of my first wife, Lydia Helen, mother of my children. When the consumption took her, grief-stricken I gave way before an upwelling of feelings of guilt. I knew I had often left her for long periods to travel on business. She endured countless days and nights with the children at the homestead in the cramped cabin. The endless work making cheese to sell had denied her the fresh air and vigorous exercise that spared me. But again reason came to rescue me, reminding me of the strains under which I had labored to support us all. Calm reflection rescued me, and I realized that I needed to return to San Jose, where my education would stand me in good stead.

MT: Your utilitarian attitude toward the departed, especially ones so near the beating center of your existence, fill me with wonder, even envy for your cold-blooded calm. My role in the death of my young son Langdon, though equally secondary, still haunts my dreams. I was the cause of the child's illness. His mother trusted him to my care and I took him a long drive in an open barouche for an airing. It was a raw, cold morning, but

he was well wrapped about with furs and, in the hands of a careful person, no harm would have come to him. But I soon dropped into a reverie and forgot all about my charge. The furs fell away and exposed his bare legs. By and by the coachman noticed this, and I arranged the wraps again, but it was too late. The child was almost frozen. I hurried home with him. I was aghast at what I had done, and I feared the consequences. I have always felt shame for the treacherous morning's work and have not allowed myself to think of it when I could help it. Will we all not vanish from a world where we were of no consequence? Where we have achieved nothing, where we were a mistake and a foolishness?

EA: Oh ! You must confess it, Mark. No one would believe for a moment that your life has done no good.

MT: Well, a great consolation, I must in all fairness add, has always been my daughter Susy. Like other children, she was blithe and happy, fond of play; *un*like the average of children she was at times much given to retiring within herself and trying to search out the hidden meanings of the deep things that make the puzzle and pathos of human existence. Still, there always hangs in the brooding light of my memory her question, "Mamma, what is it all for? The Indians believed they knew, but now we know they were wrong. By and by it can turn out that we are wrong. So now I only *pray* that there may be a God and a heaven."

EA: Is that the best you can do, Mark? I think your gloomy frame of mind is the product of financial reverses and the fatigue of your travel. Or perhaps addiction! Addictions, you know, are deadly for the brain. Brandy, cigars, philosophical resentments on a cosmic scale. You should sweep away those clouds of stifling sentiment and look into the future. The glass through which you gaze, and here I speak from salutary experience, should not be smudged with conventional opinions of guilt, or even propriety. Remember the principles of the Society for Free Thought. My second wife, whom I must confess I selected in haste to provide care for my children, quickly proved to have weak health, and a most unstable nature, incapable of caring for anyone. I recall often writing in my diary during these years: "Hell at home again. And with no cause at all!' I had to encourage her to visit friends and relatives out of town; following the dictates of good intellectual and emotional hygiene, I attended educational events, occasionally dances, with brighter, more even- tempered women. Once when a shocked neighbor objected, I briskly set her straight. Those of us of in a more advanced and wiser time of life should be allowed to do as we wish, and everyone will be happier.

MT: To be quite honest with you, I have ruminated on what the cold reality of widowhood might well be, should that ever afflict me. A semblance of a cure seems, at least to some old men, to exist in pursuing younger women. I suppose we are all collectors. As for me, I might collect pets: not women but young girls -- girls from ten to sixteen years old and well chaperoned; I am in the age of grandparenthood, and I need grandchildren to allow me to recapture childhood's wonder, girls who like the angel fish I see on my vacations in Bermuda are pretty and sweet and naive and innocent -- dear young creatures to whom life is a perfect joy and to whom it has brought no wounds, no bitterness, and few tears.

But as for you, you reckless Bohemian, I'll tell you what I wish for the most. To be back at home when our children were small and we all played as a family at charades and amateur home theatricals. Once, in the

midst of a reading-campaign, I returned to Hartford from the Far West, reaching home one evening just at dinner time. I was expecting to have a happy and restful season by a hickory fire in the library with the family, but was required to go at once to George Warner's house across the grounds. This was a heavy disappointment, and I tried to beg off but did not succeed. I couldn't even find out why I must waste this precious evening in a visit to a friend's house when our own house offered so many and superior advantages. There was a mystery somewhere, but I was not able to get to the bottom of it. So we tramped across in the snow, and I found the Warner drawing-room crowded with seated people. There was a vacancy in the front row, for me – in front of a curtain. At once the curtain was drawn, and before me, properly costumed was the little maid, Margaret Warner, clothed in Tom Canty's rags, and beyond a railing was Susy Clemens, arrayed in the silks and satins of the prince. Then followed with good action and spirit the rest of that first meeting between the prince and the pauper. It was a charming surprise, and to me a moving one. Other episodes of the tale followed, and I have seldom in my life enjoyed an evening so much as I enjoyed that one. This lovely surprise was my wife's work.

EA: You are unquestionably right. There are no more peaceful joys than those brought by affectionate times spent with one's family. So two years after the death of my second wife I married once more. Here there was long reflection and observation before I bound myself again in wedlock. My wife Alice, whose family I had known for many years before, shares my interests in many ways. For some years she has run a shop as an artist. We both investigate psychic phenomenon from beyond the grave, and, as you pointed out earlier, she is even a medium. Though many years younger than I, already when first entering into womanhood she traveled repeatedly from Santa Cruz on the coast to my medical office to be treated, or sometimes to my home in San Jose. She saw the benefits of the recently introduced procedure I made available that I have mentioned already, the giving of electricity directly from the physician to the patient.

MT: Now there's the California embrace of all that's new and different, Doctor. We do need – and who can deny it? – whatever supplies our natural wants, and alleviates our sufferings. Man seems to be a rickety poor sort of a thing, any way you take him; a kind of British Museum of infirmities and inferiorities. He is always undergoing repairs. A machine that was as unreliable as he is would have no market.

EA: [Reading from his report] Then amid the titter rippling through the audience a raised voice and a knocking were heard off stage [Immediately heard off stage] announcing a telegram for Dr. Clark. [He stops reading] Now that's something unexpected. Excuse me, Mark. I'll be with you in a moment. [Before disappearing off stage EA stops, turns to the audience, and resumes reading from his report] Mr. Twain then turned to the audience and remarked sagely, although not without a twinkle in his eye … [EA exits]

MT: [Smoothly picking up that cue] That telegram may well be from the inventor of another patent medicine, similar to the urgent letters doctors, and even I, are always receiving with the request for an endorsement. I have now composed and committed to memory a standard reply that Dr. Clark may find useful: "Dear Sir (or

Madam):--I try every remedy sent to me. I am now on No. 67. Yours is 2,653. I am looking forward to its beneficial results."

EA: [Striding back to center stage with a bounce in his step] Listen to this. Just as I hoped. It's from the executive secretary of San Jose's People's Party. He says [Reading], "I am pleased to inform you that today you have been chosen by the party's caucus to be our candidate for mayor in the coming election. There is no more eloquent or more dedicated spokesman for the cause of the working men and women of California." I say, instead, there's nothing better than being useful in a good cause!"

MT: And I think the one thing better is hope. Dr. Clark's unflagging optimism, no matter how much it goes across the grain of a man who, like me, is in bankruptcy, is beginning to revive me. Hope is a blessed provision of nature at times like these. As soon as a man's mercury has got down to a certain point there comes a revulsion, and he rallies. Hope springs up, and cheerfulness along with it, and then he is in good shape to do something for himself, if anything can be done. In spite of all the ailments of the human race, and of everyone's minds and bodies, we should always remember what I've discovered that the English like to say, 'Keep a stiff upper lip and your pecker up.' [Major Pond appears in the wings gesturing to MT] You will have to excuse me for a moment. [MT and Pond confer inaudibly stage left]

EA: I wish I could claim a manager who had so much urgent news to give me. Being the nation's humorist attracts a lot of attention from one's aficionados [Resumes reading from his report] Dr. Clark concisely observed.

MT: [Turning to EA and calling out] It's a summons. Now imagine that! To the governor's mansion in Ohio. Governor McKinley knows my strong feelings against creating an American empire overseas. He's been writing me recently because he sees that President Cleveland is winning people's respect with policies along those lines. He says he passionately wants to avoid a war between the United States and Spain over their colonies in Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, and hopes I'll teach him a trick or two about how to use outrageous humor to turn the applause of the people into enough electoral votes to outweigh even a majority of the ballots cast. But all that will have to wait for a later time. [Pause] I am engaged around the world to establish an empire of laughter."

EA: Congratulations, Mark. May you guide our nation's policies in the paths of wisdom and moderation. You are indeed the nation's most celebrated gadfly. You recall our moral shortcomings with laughter. I wish I, too, could more consistently call it forth from my listeners to aid my fervent wish to teach our country better ways. But have I convinced you about the subject of our debate? Have I won? Is there a turning point for you? [He reads from his report.]

Then Twain sprung to his sleigh, to Major Pond gave a whistle, and away they both flew, like the down of a thistle. But I heard him exclaim, ere he strode off the stage …

MT: [Smoothly picking up his cue] The hope in your words, declares you're a sage.

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Lute Pease of the Portland Oregonian and Clemens, Portland, August 9, 1895. Photo by James B. Pond, Courtesy of the Center for Mark Twain Studies at Quarry Farm, Elmira, New York

Eleutheros Americus Clark