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OF MARK TWAIN.

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CABBAGES AND PEMMICAN:  
ESSAYS ON THE STYLE OF MARK TWAIN

by

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A THESIS

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**TITLE**

CABBAGES AND PEMMICAN:

ESSAYS ON THE STYLE OF MARK TWAIN

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In one of his frequent moments of insight, Pudd'nhead Wilson wrote: "Do not undervalue the headache. While it is at its sharpest it seems a bad investment, but when relief begins the unexpired remainder is worth four dollars a minute." Though I wish to savor my relief thoroughly and long, I would also like to express appreciation to those who made the headache tolerable. I will not thank them all here, for a list of their names would make it appear that the author's only contribution was his name to the title page. Therefore, I shall name only a few of my mentors and benefactors.

I wish to thank Professors Dudley Bailey, Gene Hardy, and Ned Hedges for their encouragement throughout my years as a graduate student. I wish also to thank the members of my committee who offered valuable advice in the preparation of the thesis.

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PREVIEW

There is an old book by Thomas Fuller--I have forgotten its name, but I think Charles Lamb devotes a chapter to it & therefore has doubtless mentioned its name . . . Just read it--or part of it--not for the pleasure of reading it but for the pleasure of searching out what I call "pemmican sentences." (Pemmican, you know, is great quantities of food compressed into a very small compass--it is the essential virtue of the meat with all useless matter discarded.) Old Fuller, who wrote in Charles I's time, boils an elaborate thought down & compresses it into a single crisp & meaty sentence. It is a wonderful faculty. When I had the book I purposed searching out & jotting down a lot of these pemmican sentences, partly for the teaching it would be toward learning the art of compressing (which is one of the very greatest of the arts of speech, either written or oral) but I neglected it, of course.

(Mark Twain to Molly Fairbanks)

With a hundred words to do it with, the literary artisan could catch [an] airy thought and tie it down and reduce it to a concrete condition, visible, substantial, understandable and all right, like a cabbage; but the artist does it with twenty, and the result is a flower.

(Mark Twain, "William Dean Howells")

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Do you reckon Tom Sawyer would ever go by this thing? Not for pie, he wouldn't. He'd call it an adventure--that's what he'd call it; and he'd land on that wreck if it was his last act. And wouldn't he throw style into it?--wouldn't he spread himself, nor nothing? Why, you'd think it was Christopher C'lumbus discovering Kingdom-Come. I wish Tom Sawyer was here.  
--Huckleberry Finn

Everything was all right now. The girls wouldn't say nothing because they wanted to go to England; and the king and the duke would rather Mary Jane was off working for the auction than around in reach of Doctor Robinson. I felt very good; I judged I had done it pretty neat--I reckoned Tom Sawyer couldn't a done it no neater himself. Of course he would a throwed more style into it, but I can't do that very handy, not being brung up to it.  
--Huckleberry Finn

I never said nothing, because I warn't expecting nothing different; but I knowed mighty well that whenever he got his plan ready it wouldn't have none of them objections to it.

And it didn't. He told me what it was, and I see in a minute it was worth fifteen of mine, for style, and would make Jim just as free a man as mine would, and maybe get us all killed besides.  
--Huckleberry Finn

As I begin these investigations into the literary style of Mark Twain I feel something like the way Huck feels toward Tom Sawyer, for one has difficulty not standing in absolute awe of his subject. And like Huck I'm not sure that I can define what I mean by "style" but I recognize it when I see it. That comparison may be a kind of self flattery; the investigation of his style, however, would not seem flattering to Twain, for whom the term "style"

means, as often as not, everything meaningless, hypocritical, hollow and false. On the other hand, Twain's own style (i.e., "life style") was not unlike that of Tom Sawyer, as witness the magnificent white suit first worn with great dramatic effect before a congressional committee, and his platform antics before and during his lectures.

It is fitting I think that we talk and write about the literary style of Mark Twain not only because he had so much of it, but also because this style has been a subject of almost constant comment and controversy since Twain rose to prominence. Many qualities of Mark Twain's style have come in for extended and continual praise; first among them is his use of the vernacular as literary medium. The following statement about the part played by Twain and Howells in this literary revolution is not exceptional in its praise:

. . . these letters [between Twain and Howells] help to clarify the outlines of a vernacular tradition in the Gilded Age, which has exerted a powerful influence on a number of the best writers of tales and novels in the twentieth century. Howells fostered the tradition by altering the style of the Atlantic Monthly as a whole in the direction of colloquial freedom and ease, and by writing his own distinguished version of the style. . . . and the new department which he founded in the Atlantic in January 1877, "The Contributors' Club," is filled with fine examples of it, all unsigned but several sent in by Clemens himself. Howells's grounds for initiating or supporting this revolution in diction, tone, and manner were impressive: Emerson's theory of language in "The American Scholar" and "The Poet," Lowell's use of the New England vernacular in his "Biglow Papers," and Dante's defense of the "Illustrious Vernacular" with his use of vulgar Italian in the Divine Comedy. Emerson had called for an American poet speaking "the language of the street"; Whitman in his poems consciously responded to the challenge; but it was Mark Twain who made the common speech into an instrument of narrative prose having lyric and epic as well as comic



potentialities. Howells was aware of the vitality and power of his friend's colloquial style, and advised him to "yarn it off as if into my sympathetic ear" when Clemens was writing the first papers of his "Old Times on the Mississippi" series.<sup>1</sup>

Thus has Twain's style been recognized as a landmark in the development of prose fiction, first by Howells and no less enthusiastically by later critics. Others have hailed Twain's achievement as equal to Wordsworth's theory expressed in the "Preface" to the Lyrical Ballads.<sup>2</sup> A successor to Twain in the vernacular tradition maintains that "all modern American literature comes from . . . Huckleberry Finn."<sup>3</sup> And still another critic lends the blessing of the best of American traditions by calling Twain's style "Lincolnian," comparing it with Lincoln's Gettysberg Address.<sup>4</sup>

But Mark Twain is not without his detractors, sometimes the same critics who have praised him. They are frequently disappointed because he does not live up to the promise of his best works. Many object to his penchant for burlesque and effects (much like Tom's or Henry Morgan's) that they label "cheap" or "in bad taste." But Mark Twain wrote for "everybody":

I haven't as good an opinion of my work as you hold of it, but I've always done what I could to secure and enlarge my good opinion of it. I've always said to myself, "Everybody reads it and that's something--it surely isn't pernicious, or the most acceptable people would get pretty tired of it." And when a critic said by implication that it wasn't high and fine, through the remark "High and fine literature is wine" I retorted (confidentially to myself,) "yes, high and fine literature is wine, and mine is only water; but everybody likes water."<sup>5</sup>

In a way it is too bad that the study of Twain has fallen into the hands of the minority of the intellectual

aristocracy, for their standards of taste are all too frequently established to keep their secret society closed to those for whom Twain wrote. The following is fairly typical of Twain's detractors:

Twain's prose style has often been praised, perhaps too often. He wrote an easy, fluid, idiomatic English, but it is a spoken English that gets its effects the way a raconteur does. The texture is coarse--the ear accepts things the eye rejects--and the individual phrases are rarely memorable and often infected with cliché. But when he is going right, they fall together to convey the general sense. Most of the time he wasn't going quite right, and the result is watery and verbose; squads of adjectives and platoons of subordinate clauses could be mustered out without altering the line of march.<sup>6</sup>

Dwight MacDonald is typical in that he maintains that Twain's style is essentially an "oral" style, and in that he is undoubtedly correct. But he mistakenly condemns this quality of Twain's writing and fails to note the artistry of oral techniques:

. . . the notion of literary effort was foreign to Mark Twain. In a way, he wasn't a writer at all. He was a speaker, an actor, who paid much more attention to the niceties of delivering a lecture than to literary technique.<sup>7</sup>

It seems to me that MacDonald has ignored one of the necessary assumptions of his premise that Twain's is an oral style: the signals (written signals) that serve to identify prose as "oral" are on the page along with the words, and constitute (I maintain) a literary technique--one of a number of literary techniques that Twain was aware of and used.

MacDonald is also typical of this kind of criticism in that he ignores the facts, or perhaps mistakes them:

He [Twain] says nothing on the craft of writing to match the subtle analysis, in the autobiography, of the timing

of The Pause, as illustrated in his platform experiences with the "Grandfather's Old Ram" monologue and the Negro ghost story "The Golden Arm." He gave Browning readings at his home in Hartford. "It is very enjoyable work," he wrote a friend, "only it takes three days to prepare an hour's reading." There is no record of such effort being spent on anything he wrote.<sup>8</sup>

Some critics' reading of Twain's correspondence has apparently been selective, and they have missed such remarks from his letters as the following:

My Dear Howells,--All right my boy, send proof sheets here. I amend dialect stuff by talking and talking and talking it till it sounds right--and I had difficulty with this negro talk because a negro sometimes (rarely) says "go in'" and sometimes "gwyne," and they make just such discrepancies in other words--and when you come to reproduce them on paper they look as if the variation resulted from the writer's carelessness. But I want to work at the proofs and get the dialect as nearly right as possible.<sup>9</sup>

Twain usually tested his prose on his family and on anyone else who would listen, and he revised according to their reactions and according to his own after he had listened to himself deliver his prose aloud. His methods of revision were certainly unorthodox--they often included simply destroying a manuscript and beginning anew, revising orally, before writing anything--but he did revise.

Finally MacDonald's criticism is typical for its use of the jargon of impressionistic stylistics. "Easy," "fluid," "idiomatic"; "course" texture, "watery," "verbose" are all from a tradition of stylistic description that nowadays we no longer trust, and rightly so. One is hard put to imagine what "easy" prose is like (some students would mean easy to read and so, indeed, may MacDonald). "Fluid" prose is even less descriptive; "idiomatic" I know, but it

is of little value in describing prose; "coarse," "watery" and "verbose" likewise avoid what is at issue--the accurate and relevant description of what is on the page, of words, phrases, clauses and their peculiar combinations.

Then there are those who come to Twain with expectations much the same as the suppositions of some of Twain's lecture audiences: they come for matter and get manner. They are disappointed because, they say, Twain is not a great philosopher; they despair that he is not a scholar even when his topic calls for scholarship. And they ignore his manner. It was this ignorance that prompted him to write the essay "How to Tell a Story" in which he maintains that manner, style, is everything. What he does not tell us, indeed he should not have to, is that a good part of the matter is in the manner, that his style is frequently his best expression of theme. And that is significant and relevant.

There can be little question that Mark Twain's style is a valid topic for consideration. But style is too broad a topic for consideration in one work or even by one writer. It includes groundwork studies such as the apprenticeship of Mark Twain--a topic already covered with some thoroughness by Edgar Branch in his study The Literary Apprenticeship of Mark Twain. But as Branch's title suggests, his study is not primarily stylistic: mainly, it traces some of the ideas used for incidents in Twain's works and is further handicapped by its lack of an apparatus

for the analysis of style. However, Branch is not primarily interested in stylistics and we should not expect a complex apparatus from him. His study is based upon sound scholarship and is a valuable beginning for work on Twain's style. My study will not do any primary work on Twain's apprenticeship but, if the need arises, I shall rely on Branch with confidence for the most part.

Influences upon the style of Mark Twain is another topic of considerable interest. The problems in doing such a study are similar to those involved in the apprenticeship study: the scope is too great for the length of work that I project here; no one, to my knowledge, has developed a satisfactory apparatus for the definite identification of influences on the style of a writer. About all we can do is suggest possible influences and speculate about others. Both Edgar Branch<sup>10</sup> and Walter Blair,<sup>11</sup> among others, have listed possible influences on the style of Twain, and both have fairly consistently discounted the importance of most of them. The truth of the matter is that we have not achieved the knowledge that would allow us to say with any certainty how and from whom a man learns to write. In the course of this study I will add a few speculations of my own to those of Branch and Blair, and though such ideas are only side issues here, no treatment of a writer's style can be without them.

Another interesting kind of study, related to both apprenticeship and influences, is the treatment of Twain's reading, the study of which might shed light on apprenticeship

and stylistic influence but only a dim light at best. Many critics and biographers have commented upon Twain's favorite books: Lecky's History of European Morals (with which he constantly, and with great pleasure, quarreled), Darwin's Origin of Species, Carlyle's History of the French Revolution (he read much Carlyle); the list goes on and no doubt there are additions still to be made. There are on the list some predictable items, some disappointments, and some surprises. Such a list is of some use to the scholar reconstructing the recurrent themes of Twain's works and seeking precedents for them but of little value to the stylistician, for reasons already mentioned.

What is left among topics on style is of course the description of style, which though still too broad a topic can be limited by a stipulative definition. I have no new or scholar-shaking definition to offer. My definition is, I suppose, simplistic and naive, but that seems to me the way to begin: any writer's style, I think, consists of those discernible and describable characteristics of his prose that should enable a fairly sophisticated reader, when confronted with a piece of typical prose that he has not seen before, to say with confidence, "That is Mark Twain, or Henry James or Edgar Allan Poe." In other words the style of a man's prose consists of its distinctive features.

Obviously one cannot hope to treat all the distinctive features of a writer's style, including rhetorical

devices (parallelism, balance, antithesis, periphrasis, parenthesis, etc.), figures of speech (metaphor, simile), patterns of diction and imagery and so on. From among this stylistic hodge-podge I shall try to choose only one or two distinctive features of Twain's prose and since this work is meant to be a beginning of the description of Twain's style, I shall try to choose very basic and essential ones. Several resources have guided my choice. In the first place there is Twain himself who was absolutely fascinated with language--so fascinated at times that he experimented at the expense of an otherwise fine effect, and thereby alienated generations of critics with easily-offended sensitivities. One could, I think, do a long and interesting study of Twain as linguist or philologist. I have not undertaken such a piece of research: my survey of Twain's remarks on language and style is extensive enough however to identify those features of style that he cared most about and will suggest several distinctive features.

In addition to the help of Twain himself, I shall rely on several critics to help me select distinctive characteristics. Most of the work available on Twain's style is wholly of an impressionistic nature, but the impressions of a sensitive critic are frequently valid working hypotheses: if a work or passage is written in a "fluid" prose, we ought to be able to say what makes it so. So it is with all the other impressions and metaphors that have been used for stylistic description. Critics are helpful in other ways. Almost without exception they have

noted the "oral" nature of Mark Twain's style or they have said that his written prose was strongly influenced by his platform manner. This would lead to the guess that at least some of the distinguishing marks of the Twain manner are of an oral nature. I shall both assume and attempt to prove that this is the case.

Finally, and perhaps most accurately, I have not attempted to cover all facets of Twain's style--I have picked and eliminated according to my own observations and interests. For example, Twain was clearly interested in the sound of language, manipulated sound. Chapters three and four attempt to identify and explain some of the devices of sound that Twain uses, mainly rhythmic devices.

Such an approach to style as the one outlined above seems simplistic and, to say the least, ignorant of more elaborate definitions of style and more ancient and traditional ones. Yet I can see little purpose in identifying Twain's prose as "high," "middle," or "low," or in being led into side excursions by the terminology and paraphernalia of classical rhetoric and later rhetorics based upon it. I think it to my advantage to have as little material between myself and the text as possible. Where traditional terminology is helpful I shall use it but only after observation, not before. The same applies to the apparatus and terminology of linguistics--I wish to fashion my own pair of glasses, if I need them.

It is true, my definition is not complete: it neglects to make any statement about the relationship between



style and content, manner and matter. Such a concern is important and later I will attempt to arrive at some conclusions about the relationship of some aspects of Twain's style to his themes. Generally, I am in sympathy with Susan Sontag who says:

To conceive of style as a decorative encumbrance on the matter of the work suggests that the curtain could be parted and the matter revealed; or, to vary the metaphor slightly, that the curtain could be rendered transparent. But this is not the only erroneous implication of the metaphor. What the metaphor also suggests is that style is a matter of more or less (quantity), thick or thin (density). And, though less obviously so, this is just as wrong as the fancy that an artist possess the genuine option to have or not to have a style. Style is not quantitative, any more than it is superadded. A more complex stylistic convention--say, one taking prose further away from the diction and cadences of ordinary speech--does not mean that the work has "more" style.

Indeed, practically all metaphors for style amount to placing matter on the inside, style on the outside. It would be more to the point to reverse the metaphor. The matter, the subject, is on the outside; the style is on the inside. As Cocteau writes: "Decorative style has never existed. Style is the soul, and unfortunately with us the soul assumes the form of the body." Even if one were to define style as the manner of our appearing, this by no means necessarily entails an opposition between a style that one assumes and one's "true" being. In fact, such a disjunction is extremely rare. In almost every case, our manner of appearing is our manner of being. The mask is the face.<sup>12</sup>

The manner is the matter, more so perhaps in Twain than in many another writer.

One further problem needs to be mentioned here because it bears on my stance in this paper and because it presents a problem for anyone who studies the style of Mark Twain. Mark Twain has many styles which are ostensibly as dissimilar as Milton and Artemus Ward. The urge to play a role, to play many roles, was very strong in him. If that

were not so he could hardly have achieved the success of Huckleberry Finn, and his other works would long since have dropped into an easy obscurity along with those of other southwestern humorists (Dan DeQuille, George Washington Harris and others). Time and again he played different roles in letters to friends and associates as letters like the following will testify:

Hartford  
4 March 1882

Dear Osgood--

I's gwyne to sen' you de stuff jis' as she stan', now; an' you an' Misto Howls kin weed out enuff o' dem 93,000 words fer to crowd de book down to one book; or you kin shove in enuff er dat ole Contri-Club truck fer to swell her up en bust her in two an' make two books outen her.

Dey ain't no use to buil' no index, ner plan out no 'rangement er de stuff ontwel you is decided what you gwyne to do.

I don't want none er dat rot what is in de small onvelups to go in, 'cepp'n jis' what Misto Howls say shel go in.

I don' see how I come to git sich a goddam sight er truck on han', nohow.

Yourn truly  
S L Clemns

P.S. I wrotened to Cholly Webster 'bout dem goddam plates en copyrights.<sup>13</sup>

Mark Twain slipped into a dialect as easily as most men pull on their trousers. Much to the chagrin of the fastidious Howells he was also fond of casting his friends into roles incongruous with their characters and inclinations:

October 4, 1907

To the Editor:

I would like to know what kind of a goddam govment this is that discriminates between two common carriers and makes a goddam railroad charge everybody equal and lets a goddam man charge any goddam price he wants to for his goddam opera box.

W D Howells

Howells it is an outrage the way the govment is acting so I sent this complaint to N. Y. Times with your name signed because it would have more weight.

Mark<sup>14</sup>

Quaker City excursion and read it through with interest and concentration. In his notebook we see first-hand evidence of his imitative faculty:

It was here that a remarkable meeting took place between Abner and Joab--they were generals of the armies of Israel and Judah--12 men of Judah were charged to fight 12 men of Israel. The whole 24 were slain. "For they caught every one his fellow by the head (got him in chancery) and thrust his sword in his fellow's side, so that they fell down together." And on that plain the subsequent battle took place. Abner was defeated and the swiftfooted Asahel slain.<sup>15</sup>

And in a later notebook entry further removed from his Bible reading:

But sorrow and disappointment must come to all; and thus also came it even to me . . . .<sup>16</sup>

The redundancy and inverted syntax are unmistakable echoes of the King James version.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, in part, developed the style of Mark Twain: from Missouri-river dialect, through countless modifications, conscious and unconscious, at times back to that original river dialect for artistic purposes (though never having really lost it), through efforts of conscious artistry in the writing of published and unpublished works, and finally to its culmination in his finest works--Huckleberry Finn, Connecticut Yankee, Pudd'nhead Wilson, and others.

What significance does all this hold for these essays on the style of Mark Twain? It means that I have had to identify distinctive features of the Twain manner that are not only significant but also common to the bulk of Twain's literary utterances. A tall order. Nemmine, I'se gwyne ter try.

## NOTES FOR CHAPTER ONE

<sup>1</sup>Mark Twain-Howells Letters: The Correspondence of Samuel L. Clemens and William Dean Howells, 1872-1910, ed. Henry Nash Smith and William M. Gibson (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1960), I, xviif--hereafter cited as Twain-Howells Letters.

<sup>2</sup>Dwight MacDonald, "Mark Twain: An Unsentimental Journey," Discussions of Mark Twain, ed. Guy A. Cardwell (Boston, 1963), p. 121.

<sup>3</sup>Ernest Hemingway, Green Hills of Africa (New York, 1935), p. 22.

<sup>4</sup>Gladys Carmen Bellamy, Mark Twain as a Literary Artist (Norman, Oklahoma, 1950), p. 256. See also Roy P. Basler, "Abraham Lincoln's Rhetoric," AL, XI (May 1939), 167-82.

<sup>5</sup>Mark Twain's Letters, ed. Albert Bigelow Paine (New York, 1917), II, 485--hereafter cited as Letters.

<sup>6</sup>MacDonald, p. 122.

<sup>7</sup>MacDonald, p. 122.

<sup>8</sup>MacDonald, p. 122.

<sup>9</sup>Twain-Howells Letters, I, 227.

<sup>10</sup>Edgar Marquess Branch, The Literary Apprenticeship of Mark Twain, with Selections from His Apprentice Writing (Urbana, 1950).

<sup>11</sup>Walter Blair, Mark Twain and Huck Finn (Berkeley, 1962).

<sup>12</sup>Against Interpretation (New York, 1966), pp. 18f.

<sup>13</sup>Mark Twain's Letters to His Publishers, 1867-1894, ed. Hamlin Hill (Berkeley, 1967), pp. 152f--hereafter cited as Letters to Publishers.

<sup>14</sup>Twain-Howells Letters, II, 827.

<sup>15</sup>Mark Twain's Notebook, ed. Albert Bigelow Paine (New York, 1935), p. 108--hereafter cited as Notebook.

<sup>16</sup>Notebook, p. 173.

<sup>17</sup>For additional echoes of the King James version see Notebook, Chapter IX, pp. 102-110, where Twain writes a curious mixture of quotations from the Bible, his own imitation of biblical style and his own colloquial dialect.

PREVIEW

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE CONSCIOUS ARTIST AND CRITIC

. . . I am not sure that I have methods in composition. I do suppose I have--I suppose I must have--but they somehow refuse to take shape in my mind . . . .  
--"The Art of Authorship"

Words realize nothing, vivify nothing to you, unless you have suffered in your own person the thing which the words try to describe.

--Connecticut Yankee

Things which are outside of our orbit--our own particular world--things which by our constitution and equipment we are unable to see, or feel, or otherwise experience--  
cannot be made comprehensible to us in words.  
--"That Day in Eden"

What a lumbering poor vehicle prose is for the conveying of a great thought! It cost me several chapters to say in prose what Mildred [Howells] has said better with a single pen full of ink. Prose wanders around with a lantern and laboriously schedules & verifies the details & particulars of a valley & its frame of crags & peaks, then Poetry comes, & lays bare the whole landscape with a single splendid flash.

--letter to W. D. Howells

Remarks expressing the inadequacy of the written word are not untypical of Mark Twain. He was frequently surprised and disappointed when words that rang so gloriously from the rostrum or the platform turned cold and flat when reduced to print. There are several reasons for his attitude. He was, among other things, a practiced speaker and raconteur; oral language in print is deprived of fine modulations of voice, carefully timed pauses, and expressive gestures. Twain was

once extremely upset over the printed outcome of an interview with a young journalist; he explained his chagrin in a letter to his interviewer, Edward W. Bok:

For several quite plain and simple reasons, an "interview" must, as a rule, be an absurdity and chiefly for this reason--it is an attempt to use a boat on land or a wagon on water, to speak figuratively. Spoken speech is one thing, written speech is quite another. Print is the proper vehicle for the latter, but it isn't for the former. The moment "talk" is put into print you recognize that it is not what it was when you heard it; you perceive that an immense something has disappeared from it. That is its soul. You have nothing but a dead carcass left on your hands. Color, play of feature, the varying modulations of the voice, the laugh, the smile, the informing inflections, everything that gave that body warmth, grace, friendliness and charm and commended it to your affections--or, at least, to your tolerance--is gone and nothing is left but a pallid, stiff and repulsive cadaver.

Such is "talk" almost invariably, as you see it lying in state in an "interview." The interviewer seldom tries to tell one how a thing was said; he merely puts in the naked remark and stops there. When one writes for print his methods are very different. He follows forms which have but little resemblance to conversation, but they make the reader understand what the writer is trying to convey. And when the writer is making a story and finds it necessary to report some of the talk of his characters observe how cautiously and anxiously he goes at that risky and difficult thing. "If he had dared to say that thing in my presence," said Hawkwood, with that in his eye which caused more than one heart in that guilty assemblage to quake, "blood would have flowed."

"If he had dared to say that thing in my presence," said the paltry blusterer, with valor on his tongue and pallor on his lips, "blood would have flowed."

So painfully aware is the novelist that naked talk in print conveys no meaning that he loads, and often overloads, almost every utterance of his characters with explanations and interpretations. It is a loud confession that print is a poor vehicle for "talk"; it is a recognition that uninterpreted talk in print would result in confusion to the reader, not instruction.

Now, in your interview, you have certainly been most accurate; you have set down the sentences I uttered as I said them. But you have not a word of explanation; what my manner was at several points is not indicated. . . . To add interpretations which would convey the right

meaning is a something which would require--what? An art so high and fine and difficult that no possessor of it would ever be allowed to waste it on interviews.

No; spare the reader and spare me, leave the whole interview out; it is rubbish. I wouldn't talk in my sleep if I couldn't talk better than that.<sup>1</sup>

Only a superwriter, to paraphrase Twain, could express in printed language the way a man says a thing and, evidently, in Twain's mind, Edward Bok was not such a writer. Later, in his finest piece of criticism, Twain was to praise Howells for being just such a writer, for his ability to exercise that "high and fine and difficult" art. Interestingly enough, it is Twain himself who achieved more of this high art than any of his contemporaries, in Huckleberry Finn where the words of Huck are reported by "Mr. Mark Twain, who told the truth, mainly." Indeed, Huck's words, mainly, are as true and warm as anything presented on a printed page.

Mark Twain was frequently impressed by silver-tongued oratory, especially from Robert Ingersoll, the great atheist/orator. After having attended the Reunion of the Army of Tennessee, actually a testimonial to General Grant, in Chicago and having listened to inflated political oratory most of the night, he was disappointed when he read some of it in print. He expressed his disappointment in a letter to Howells of 17 November 1879:

I wish you had gone out there--you would have been glad all your life. I doubt if America has ever seen anything quite equal to it; I am well satisfied I shall not live to see its equal again.--How pale those speeches are in print--but how radiant, how full of color, how blinding they were in the delivery! Bob Ingersoll's speech was sadly crippled by the proofreaders, but its music will sing through my memory always as the divinest that ever enchanted my ears. . . . "They fought that a