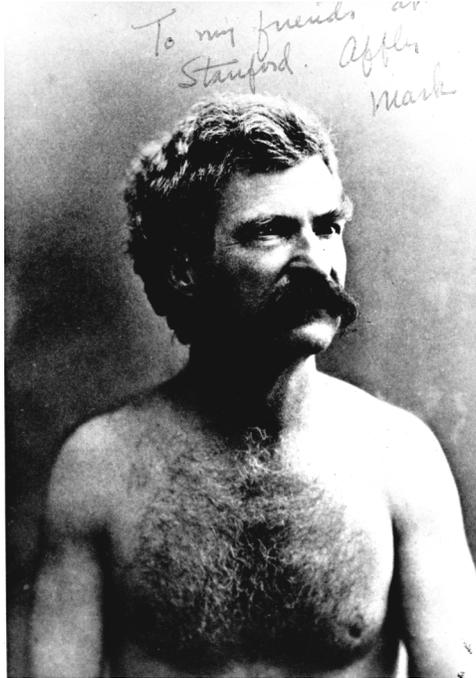


750 QUOTATIONS



Mark Twain

(Samuel Langhorne Clemens)

(1835-1910)

Selecting the best witticisms of Mark Twain is like panning for gold in a mother lode, casting aside the gravel and the mica. Statements that are not really very witty are excluded except for some that are particularly revealing as connective tissue, as are weaker variations of essentially the same statement, those of dubious origin and those that, if my assays are correct, have proven to be fool's gold. In some cases I have removed a little dross from the nuggets. Quotations from his fiction are mostly excluded to keep the totality from enlarging too much and because as a rule statements by characters should not be equated with authors. Here and there witticisms are taken out of context and juxtaposed with others for effects in the spirit of Twain, to evoke a performance on stage.

ORDER OF TOPICS: creation, monkeys, man, Adam and Eve, youth, indecency, nudity, sex, women, ladies, gentleman, love, live your dream, marriage, wives, adultery, New Woman, women's rights, conversion, two-headed girl, aristocracy, wealthy Americans and titles, ignorance, education, schools, history, psychology, head, heart, human nature, other animals, civilization, progress, getting ahead, work, virtue, morals, truth, memory, lies, honesty, principles, prosperity, money, talking, vices, vanity, malice, anger, swearing, reform, health, exercise, irreverence, Christianity, missionaries, preachers, prophecy, Providence, Faith, religion, God, Satan, Hell, Indians, loss of the sacred, science, weather, America, Thanksgiving, lawyers, race, equality, government, Democracy, Socialism, war, patriotism, politicians, Congress, reputation, advertising, newspapers, free speech, *Huckleberry Finn*, censorship, popular Romantic literature, Realism, conventional style, realistic style, telling stories, audience, the native novelist, genius, facts in fiction, dramatize, words, wit and humor, maxims, editing, publishers, critics, compliments, honors, fame, courage, friends, fools, lunatics, asses and optimists, literature, prose and poetry, poetry, Walter Scott, Cooper, Howells, Henry James, Kipling, Harte, Bierce, Austen, Poe, Milton, reading, Shakespeare and Bunyan, travel, Nevada, San Francisco, Hawaii, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Chicago, New York, Boston, southerners, English language, Englishman, Irishman, France, Italy, German, German

culture, Russians, Communism, Cuba, ancient Greece, India, old age, the future, death, last words, memorials, immortality, Heaven:

CREATION

Man was made at the end of the week's work when God was tired.

If man had created man he would be ashamed of his performance.

To create man was a quaint and original idea, but to add the sheep was tautology.

In the first place God made idiots. This was for practice. Then he made school boards.

When the Lord finished the world, he pronounced it good. That is what I said about my first work, too. But Time, I tell you, Time takes the confidence out of these incautious opinions.

MONKEYS

I believe that our Heavenly Father invented man because he was disappointed in the monkey.

In the matter of slavish imitation, man is the monkey's superior all the time.

French are the connecting link between man and the monkey.

MAN

Man—a figment of God's imagination.

The noblest work of God? Man. Who found it out? Man.

While the rest of the species is descended from apes, redheads are descended from cats.

We need not worry so much about what man descends from; it's what he descends to that shames the human race.

ADAM AND EVE

It was not a Southern watermelon that Eve took; we know it because she repented.

Adam and Eve had many advantages, but the principal one was that they escaped teething.

The Garden of Eden I now know was an unendurable solitude. I know that the advent of the serpent was a welcome change—anything for society.

Whoever has lived long enough to find out what life is, knows how deep a debt of gratitude we owe to Adam, the first great benefactor of our race. He brought death into the world.

If you wish to confer upon a human being something which he is not sure he wants, the best way is to make it apparently difficult for him to get—then he is no son of Adam if the apple does not assume an interest in his eye which it lacked before.

Adam was but human—this explains it all. He did not want the apple for the apple's sake, he only wanted it because it was forbidden. The mistake was in not forbidding the serpent.

In fact, the more things are forbidden, the more popular they become.

The funniest things are the forbidden.

Adam was not alone in the Garden of Eden, however, and does not deserve all the credit; much is due to Eve, the first woman, and Satan, the first consultant.

I see that I was mistaken about Eve in the beginning; it is better to live outside the Garden with her than inside it without her.

YOUTH

The heart is the real fountain of youth.

My parents moved to Missouri in the early thirties; I do not remember just when, for I was not born then and cared nothing for such things.

I was too young then to really hurt the place.

I can call it all back and make it real as it ever was, and as blessed.

Youth is such a priceless commodity that it is a shame to waste it on children.

During [church] service I felt like a heretic in heaven.

It is good to obey all the rules when you're young, so you'll have the strength to break them when you're old.

Always obey your parents, when they are present. Most parents think they know more than you do, and you can generally make more by humoring that superstition than you can by acting on your own better judgment.

The California rush for wealth in '49 introduced the change and begot the lust for money which is the rule of life today, and the hardness and cynicism which is the spirit of today.

In myself I find in big or little proportion every quality and every defect that is findable in the mass of the race. [echo of Walt Whitman]

INDECENCY

Modesty died when clothes were born.

I was born modest; not all over, but in spots.

Nature knows no indecencies; man invents them.

The first thing a missionary teaches the savage is indecency.

The man who is ostentatious of his modesty is twin to the statue that wears a fig leaf.

Indecency, vulgarity, obscenity—these are strictly confined to man; he invented them. Among the higher animals there is no trace of them.

Don Quixote is one of the most exquisite books that was ever written...but neither it nor Shakespeare are proper books for virgins to read until some hand has culled them of their grossness. [1869]

NUDITY

Clothes make the man. Naked people have little or no influence on society.

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

About the most becoming get up I ever saw in my life was out in the Sandwich Islands thirty years ago, where a native who wanted to appear at his best usually appeared in a pair of eyeglasses.

At noon I observed a bevy of nude native women bathing in the sea, and I went and sat down on their clothes to keep them from being stolen.

SEX

Familiarity breeds contempt—and children.

It is not immoral to create the human species—with or without ceremony.

Of all the delights of this world man cares most for sexual intercourse. He will go to any lengths for it—risk fortune, character, reputation, life itself, and what do you think he has done? He has left it out of his heaven! Prayer takes its place.

WOMEN

What, Sir, would the people of the earth be without women? They would be scarce, sir, almighty scarce.

There are three things men can do with women: love them, suffer them, or turn them into literature.

Never allow somebody to be your priority while allowing yourself to be their option.

I do not believe I could learn to like her [wife of poet Thomas Bailey Aldrich] except on a raft at sea with no other provisions in sight.

They talked it over, and they was going to rule me out... I was most ready to cry; but all at once I thought of a way, and so I offered them Miss Watson—they could kill her.

A river without islands is like a woman without hair. She may be good and pure, but one doesn't fall in love with her very often.

It made my eyes water a little, to remember her crying there all by herself in the night, and them devils laying there right under her own roof, shaming her and robbing her...she had more sand in her than any girl I ever see; in my opinion she was just full of sand.

LADIES

Slang in a woman's mouth is not obscene it only sounds so.

No real gentleman will tell the naked truth in the presence of ladies.

A sincere compliment is always grateful to a lady, so long as you don't try to knock her down with it.

One frequently only finds out how really beautiful a woman is, until after considerable acquaintance with her.

A delightful woman—looks just as if she'd stepped out of the new testament, and hadn't got used to her surroundings yet.

Distance lends enchantment to the view.

GENTLEMAN

A gentleman is someone who knows how to play the banjo and doesn't.

A man's character may be learned from the adjectives which he habitually uses in conversation.

The most beautiful costume is the human skin, but since it isn't conventional or polite to appear in public in that garb alone, I believe in wearing white... It betokens purity and innocence.... I don't know anything more hideous or disgusting in man's attire than the black clawhammer coat. A group of men thus adorned remind me more of a flock of crows than anything else.

LOVE

Forgive quickly, kiss slowly. Love truly.

Any emotion, if it is sincere, is involuntary.

Love is a madness; if thwarted it develops fast.

Love is an irresistible desire to be irresistibly desired.

When you fish for love, bait with your heart, not your brain.

Don't wake up a woman in love. Let her dream, so that she does not weep when she returns to her bitter reality. Denial ain't just a river in Egypt.

LIVE YOUR DREAM

Don't dream your life, but live your dream.

Reality can be beaten with enough imagination.

Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see.

Forgiveness is the fragrance that the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it.

Don't part with your illusions. When they are gone you may still exist, but you have ceased to live.

Dance like nobody's watching; love like you've never been hurt. Sing like nobody's listening; live like it's heaven on earth.

Courtship lifts a fellow far and away above his common earthly self and by an impulse natural to those lofty regions he puts on his halo and his heavenly war paint and plays archangel as if he were born to it. He is working a deception, but is not aware of it.

MARRIAGE

Polygamy: No man can serve two masters.

Both marriage and death ought to be welcome: the one promises happiness, doubtless the other assures it.

Grief can take care of itself, but to get the full value of a joy you must have somebody to divide it with.

Let us make a special effort to stop communicating with each other so we can have some conversation.

If we were supposed to talk more than listen we would have been given two mouths and one ear.

There is nothing so annoying as having two people talking when you're busy interrupting.

Women cannot receive even the most palpably judicious suggestion without arguing it; that is, married women.

Repartee is something we think of twenty-four hours too late.

No man or woman really knows what perfect love is until they have been married a quarter of a century.

WIVES

Arguments are unsafe with wives, because they examine them; but they do not examine compliments. One can pass upon a wife a compliment that is three-fourths base metal; she will not even bite it to see if it is good; all she notices is the size of it, not the quality.

I prized my wife's respect and approval above all the rest of the human race's respect and approval. I dreaded the day when she should discover I was but a whited sepulcher freighted with suppressed language.

My experience with Providence has not been of a nature to give me great confidence in His judgment, and I consider that my wife crept in while his attention was occupied elsewhere.

ADULTERY

Many men are goats and can't help committing adultery when they get a chance; whereas there are numbers of men who, by temperament, can keep their purity and let an opportunity go by if the woman lacks attractiveness.

THE NEW WOMAN

It would shock me inexpressibly for an angel to come down from above and ask me to take a drink with him (though I should doubtless consent); but it would shock me still more to see one of our blessed earthly angels [Victorianism] peddling election tickets among a mob of shabby scoundrels she never saw before.

It is more satisfactory to be pretty than right.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Women go your ways! Seek not to beguile us of our imperial privileges...let your natural bosses do the voting... We will let you teach school as much as you want to, and we will pay you half wages for it too, but beware! we don't want you to crowd us too much.

CONVERSION

All that we require of a voter is that he shall...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...he may even be a consummate scoundrel. No matter. While he can steer clear of the penitentiary his vote is as weighty as the vote of a president, a bishop, a college professor, a merchant prince. We brag of our universal unrestricted suffrage; but we are shams after all, for we restrict when we come to the women.

I know that since the women started out on their crusade they have scored in every project they undertook against unjust laws. I would like to see them help make the laws... I would like to see the whiplash in women's hands.

TWO-HEADED GIRL

The wonderful two-headed girl is still on exhibition in New England. She sings duets by herself. She has a great advantage over the rest of her sex, for she never has to stop talking to eat, and when she is not eating, she keeps both tongues going at once. She has a lover, and this lover is in a quandary, because at one and the same moment she accepted him with one mouth and rejected him with the other. He does not know which to believe. He wishes to sue for breach of promise, but this is a hopeless experiment, because only half of the girl has been guilty of the breach.... Now is she her own sister? Is she twins? Or, having but one body (and consequently but one heart) is she strictly but one person? If the above-named young man marries her will he be guilty of bigamy? Does she expect to have one vote or two?

ARISTOCRACY

They say the Sultan has eight hundred wives. That almost amounts to bigamy.

“Mos’ likely dey has rackety times in de nussery. En I reck’n de wives quarrels considable; en dat ‘crease the racket.” [Jim]

I have admired Henry VIII. He married pretty nearly every one who came along.

If you cross a king with a prostitute the resulting mongrel perfectly satisfies the English idea of nobility.

Solomon, who was one of the Deity’s favorites, had a copulation cabinet of seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines. To save his life he could not have kept two of these young creatures satisfactorily refreshed, even if he had fifteen experts to help him. Necessarily almost the entire thousand had to go hungry for years and years on a stretch. Conceive of a man hardhearted enough to look daily upon all that suffering and not be moved to mitigate it.

Monarchy has speech, and by it has been able to persuade man that it differs somehow from the rattlesnake, has something valuable about it somewhere, something worth preserving, something even good and high and fine...entitling it to protection from the club of the first comer who catches it out of its hole.

A royal “right” stolen five hundred years ago is called a “divine” right to-day. God himself is made a conspirator, an accessory to the theft.

A monarch when good is entitled to the consideration which we accord to a pirate who keeps Sunday School between crimes; when bad he is entitled to none at all.

A robber is much more high-toned than what a pirate is—as a general thing. In most countries they’re awful high up in the nobility—dukes and such.

The blunting effects of slavery upon the slaveholder’s moral perceptions are known and conceded the world over; and a privileged class, an aristocracy, is but a band of slaveholders under another name.

Good breeding consists in concealing how much we think of ourselves and how little we think of the other person.

He was well born, as the saying is, and that’s worth as much in a man as it is in a horse.

When red-headed people are above a certain social grade their hair is auburn.

WEALTHY AMERICANS AND TITLES

Prosperity is the surest breeder of insolence.

Titles—another artificiality—are part of clothing.

Never be haughty to the humble, never be humble to the haughty.

Some instinct tells me that eternal vigilance is the price of supremacy.

Man will do many things to get himself loved; he will do all things to get himself envied.

We adore titles and heredities in our hearts and ridicule them with our mouths. This is our democratic privilege.

Unquestionably the person that can get lowest down in cringing before royalty and nobility, and can get the most satisfaction out of crawling on his belly before them, is an American.

In public we scoff at titles and hereditary privilege but privately we hanker after them, and when we get a chance we buy them for cash and a daughter.

An American girl would rather marry a title than an angel.

IGNORANCE

When I was a boy of 14, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be 21, I was astonished at how much the old man had learned in seven years.

The older we grow the greater becomes our wonder at how much ignorance one can contain without bursting one's clothes.

I have a prodigious quantity of mind; it takes me as much as a week sometimes to make it up.

When we know a thing we have only scorn for other people who don't happen to know it.

His ignorance covered the whole earth like a blanket, and there was hardly a hole in it anywhere.

His head was an hour-glass; it could stow an idea, but it had to do it a grain at a time, not the whole idea at once.

All you need in this life is ignorance and confidence, and then success is sure.

We are all stupid, just on different subjects.

EDUCATION

80 per cent of life is showing up.

Don't let schooling interfere with your education.

Education: the path from cocky ignorance to miserable uncertainty.

Everything has its limit—iron ore cannot be educated into gold.

A person who won't read has no advantage over one who can't read.

A man who carries a cat by the tail learns something he can learn in no other way.

It ain't what you don't know that gets you into trouble. It's what you know for sure that just ain't so.

Education consists mainly of what we have unlearned.

Education: that which reveals to the wise, and conceals from the stupid, the vast limits of their knowledge.

The most interesting information comes from children, for they tell all they know and then stop.

When we are young we generally estimate an opinion by the size of the person who holds it, but later we find that is an uncertain rule, for we realize that there are times when a hornet's opinion disturbs us more than an emperor's.

SCHOOLS

When a teacher calls a boy by his entire name it means trouble.

It is noble to teach oneself; but still nobler to teach others—and less trouble.

All schools, all colleges, have two great functions: to confer, and to conceal, valuable knowledge.

Training is everything. The peach was once a bitter almond; cauliflower is nothing but cabbage with a college education.

Every time you stop a school, you will have to build a jail. What you gain at one end you lose at the other. It's like feeding a dog on its own tail. It won't fatten the dog.

HISTORY

History doesn't repeat itself, it rhymes.

Apparently there is nothing that cannot happen.

The very ink with which history is written is merely fluid prejudice.

An historian who would convey the truth must lie. Often he must enlarge the truth by diameters, otherwise his reader would not be able to see it.

It is not worthwhile to try to keep history from repeating itself, for man's character will always make the preventing of the repetitions impossible.

Every year expeditions went out holy grailing, and next year relief expeditions went out to hunt for them.

PSYCHOLOGY

The skin of every human being contains a slave.

We all do no end of feeling, and mistake it for thinking.

Loyalty to petrified opinion never yet broke a chain or freed a human soul.

Between believing a thing and thinking you know is only a small step and quickly taken.

HEAD

Man is a Reasoning Animal. Such is the claim.

The world will not stop to think—it never does, it is not its way; its way is to generalize from a single example.

If you build a person without any bones in him he may look fair enough to the eye, but he will be limber and cannot stand up; and I consider that evidence is the bones of an opinion.

Mind is plainly an ass, but it will be many ages before it finds out, no doubt... Why do I respect my own? Well—that is different.

HEART

You can't reason with the heart; it has its own laws, and thumps about things which the intellect scorns.

I wish that I could make him understand that a loving good heart is riches enough, and that without it intellect is poverty.

HUMAN NATURE

The average man's a coward.

Etiquette requires us to admire the human race.

Man is the only animal that blushes—or needs to.

The more I learn about people the better I like my dog.

If everybody was satisfied with himself there would be no heroes.

God puts something good and lovable in every man His hands create.

By trying we can easily learn to endure adversity—another man's I mean.

Everyone is a moon, and has a dark side which he never shows to anybody.

The universal brotherhood of man is our most precious possession—what there is of it.

You should never do anything wicked and lay it on your brother, when it is just as convenient to lay it on some other boy.

The human race is a race of cowards; and I am not only marching in that procession but carrying the banner.

We are offended and resent it when people do not respect us; and yet in his private heart no man much respects himself.

At our best and stateliest we are not suns, as we pretend, and teach, and believe, but only candles; and any bumper can blow us out.

The fact that man knows right from wrong proves his intellectual superiority to the other creatures; but the fact that he can do wrong proves his moral inferiority to any creature that cannot.

OTHER ANIMALS

The dog is a gentleman; I hope to go to his heaven not man's.

If you notice, most folks don't go to church only when they've got to; but a hog is different.

Consider the flea! Incomparably the bravest of all the creatures of God, if ignorance of fear were courage.

If you pick up a starving dog and make him prosperous, he will not bite you. This is the principal difference between a dog and a man.

Of all God's creatures, there is only one that cannot be made slave of the leash. That one is the cat. If man could be crossed with the cat it would improve the man, but it would deteriorate the cat.

We should be careful to get out of an experience only the wisdom that is in it—and stop there; lest we be like the cat that sits down on a hot stove lid. She will never sit down on a hot stove lid again—and that is well; but also she will never sit down on a cold one anymore.

Concerning the difference between man and the jackass: Some observers hold that there isn't any. But this wrongs the jackass.

CIVILIZATION

Golf is a good walk spoiled.

All the modern inconveniences.

Get a bicycle. You will not regret it. If you live.

Civilization is a limitless multiplication of unnecessary necessities.

A human being has a natural desire to have more of a good thing than he needs.

It's good sportsmanship to not pick up lost golf balls while they are still rolling.

There is no salvation for us but to adopt Civilization and lift ourselves down to its level.

Civilization largely consists in hiding human nature. When the barbarian learns to hide it we account him enlightened.

PROGRESS

To place man properly at the present time, he stands somewhere between the angels and the French.

How solemn and beautiful is the thought that the earliest pioneer of civilization, the van-leader of civilization, is never the steamboat, never the railroad, never the newspaper, never the Sabbath-school, never the missionary—but always whiskey!... The missionary comes after the whiskey.

I was the first person in the world to apply the typewriter to literature... After a year or two I found that it was degrading my character, so I thought I would give it to Howells... He took it home to Boston and my morals began to improve, but his have never recovered.

Confound a telephone, anyway. It is the very demon for conveying similarities of sound that are miracles of divergence from similarity of sense.

GETTING AHEAD

Tell the truth or trump—but get the trick.

Buy land, they're not making it anymore.

The secret to getting ahead is getting started.

There are two times in a man's life when he should not speculate: when he can't afford it and when he can.

A banker is a fellow who lends you his umbrella when the sun is shining, but wants it back the minute it begins to rain.

When we were finishing our house, we found we had a little cash left over, on account of the plumber not knowing it.

WORK

Let us save tomorrows for work.

Work is a necessary evil to be avoided.

I do not like work even when someone else does it.

Never put off until tomorrow what may be done day after tomorrow just as well.

Work consists of whatever a body is obliged to do. Play consists of whatever a body is not obliged to do.

Wisdom teaches us that none but the birds should go out early, and that not even birds should do it unless they are out of worms.

I am no lazier now than I was forty years ago, but that is because I reached the limit forty years ago. You can't go beyond possibility.

I have seen slower people than I am—and more deliberate...and even quieter, and more listless, and lazier people than I am. But they were dead.

VIRTUE

Be good and you will be lonesome.

Be virtuous and you will be eccentric.

Be careless in your dress if you will, but keep a tidy soul.

The weakest of all weak things is a virtue that has never been tested in the fire.

There are several good protections against temptations, but the surest is cowardice.

Be respectful to your superiors, if you have any; also to strangers, and sometimes to others. If a person offends you, and you are in doubt as to whether it was intentional or not, do not resort to extreme measures; simply watch your chance and hit him with a brick. That will be sufficient. If you shall find that he had not intended any offense, come out frankly and confess yourself in the wrong when you struck him; acknowledge it like a man, and say you didn't mean to.

MORALS

A clear conscience is a sure sign of a bad memory.

We ought never to do wrong when people are looking.

Always do right. This will gratify some people, and astonish the rest.

Few things are harder to put up with than the annoyance of a good example.

Morals consist of political morals, commercial morals, ecclesiastical morals, and morals.

History shows that the moral sense enables us to see morality and how to avoid it, and that the immoral sense enables us to perceive immorality and how to enjoy it.

The political and commercial morals of the United States are not merely food for laughter, they are an entire banquet.

It is easy to find fault, if one has that disposition. There was once a man who, not being able to find any other fault with his coal, complained that there were too many prehistoric toads in it.

No one is willing to acknowledge a fault in himself when a more agreeable motive can be found for the estrangement of his acquaintances.

Always acknowledge a fault frankly. This will throw those in authority off their guard and give you opportunity to commit more.

Let us endeavor so to live that when we come to die even the undertaker will be sorry.

I have been on the verge of being an angel all my life, but it's never happened yet.

TRUTH

When in doubt, tell the truth.

Truth is more of a stranger than fiction.

A half-truth is the most cowardly of lies.

If you tell the truth you don't have to remember anything.

All of us contain Music and Truth, but most of us can't get it out.

A man is never more truthful than when he acknowledges himself a liar.

A man's private thought can never be a lie; what he thinks, is to him the truth, always.

Truth is stranger than fiction, but it is because fiction is obliged to stick to possibilities. Truth isn't.

Most writers regard the truth as their most valuable possession, and therefore are economical in its use.

The reason we hold truth in such respect is because we have so little opportunity to get familiar with it.

"Here's a case where I'm blest if it don't look to me like the truth is better, and actually *safer* than a lie. I must lay it by in my mind, and think it over some time or other, it's so kind of strange and unregular."

MEMORY

When I was younger I could remember anything, whether it happened or not.

I've lived through some terrible things in my life, some of which actually happened.

It isn't so astonishing, the number of things that I can remember, as the number of things I can remember that aren't so.

LIES

There are lies, damned lies, and statistics.

It was enough to make a body ashamed of the human race.

Carlyle said "a lie cannot live." It shows that he did not know how to tell them.

It is often the case that the man who can't tell a lie thinks he is the best judge of one.

The history of our race, and each individual's experience, are strewn thick with evidence that a truth is not hard to kill, and that a lie well told is immortal.

The highest perfection of politeness is only a beautiful edifice, built, from the base to the dome, of graceful and gilded forms of charitable and unselfish lying.

When a person cannot deceive himself the chances are against his being able to deceive other people.

One of the most striking differences between a cat and a lie is that a cat has only nine lives.

Lie: an abomination before the Lord and an ever present help in time of trouble.

Necessity is the mother of taking chances.

HONESTY

I could never use money I had not made honestly—I could only lend it.

There are people who think that honesty is always the best policy. This is superstition. There are times when the appearance of it is worth six of it.

Yes, even I am dishonest. Not in many ways, but in some. Forty-one, I think it is.

Honest poverty is a gem that even a King might be proud to call his own, but I wish to sell out. I have sported that kind of jewelry long enough.

PRINCIPLES

I find that principles have no real force except when one is well fed.

Principles is another name for prejudices.

PROSPERITY

Prosperity is the best protector of principle.

Few of us can stand prosperity. Another man's I mean.

I am opposed to millionaires, but it would be dangerous to offer me the position.

How unfortunate and how narrowing it is for a man to have wealth who makes a god of it instead of a servant.

Being rich ain't what it's cracked up to be. It's just worry and worry, sweat and sweat, and a-wishing you was dead all the time.

MONEY

Let your sympathies and your compassion be always with the underdog in the fight—this is magnanimity; but bet on the other one—this is business.

Do good when you can, and charge when you think they will stand it.

Honesty is the best policy—when there is money in it.

Virtue has never been as respectable as money.

The lack of money is the root of all evil.

Necessity knows no law.

TALKING

Few slanders can stand the wear of silence.

Drawing on my fine command of language, I said nothing.

The unspoken word is capital. We can invest it or we can squander it.

All the talk used to be about doing people good, now it is about doing people.

He gossips habitually; he lacks the common wisdom to keep still that deadly enemy of man, his own tongue.

I was gratified to be able to answer promptly, and I did. I said I didn't know.

VICES

Chastity—you can carry it too far.

Sometimes too much to drink is barely enough.

All things in moderation, including moderation.

I have made it a rule never to smoke more than one cigar at a time.

I haven't a particle of confidence in a man who has no redeeming petty vices.

Giving up smoking is the easiest thing in the world. I know because I've done it a thousand times.

As an example to others, and not that I care for moderation myself, it has always been my rule never to smoke when asleep and never to refrain when awake.

Intemperate temperance injures the cause of temperance, while temperate temperance helps its fight against intemperate intemperance.

Total abstinence is so excellent a thing that it cannot be carried to too great an extent. In my passion for it I even carry it so far as to totally abstain from total abstinence itself.

To make a pledge of any kind is to declare war against nature; for a pledge is a chain that is always clanking and reminding the wearer of it that he is not a free man.

The system of refusing the mere act of drinking and leaving the desire in full force, is unintelligent war tactics, it seems to me.

Under our free institutions anybody can poison himself that wants to and will pay the price.

Taking the pledge will not make bad liquor into good, but it will improve it.

Better a broken promise than none at all.

VANITY

One never ceases to make a hero of oneself in private.

In me you have Missouri morals, Connecticut culture; that, gentlemen, is the combination which makes the perfect man.

Human pride is not worthwhile; there is always something lying in wait to take the wind out of it.

I don't mind what the opposition say of me so long as they don't tell the truth about me. But when they descend to telling the truth about me I consider that this is taking an unfair advantage.

There are no grades of vanity, there are only grades of ability to conceal it.

MALICE

They do say that when a man starts downhill everybody is ready to help him with a kick, and I suppose it's so.

There is more real pleasure to be gotten out of a malicious act, where your heart is in it, than out of thirty acts of a nobler sort.

ANGER

Anger is an acid that can do more harm to the vessel in which it is stored than to anything on which it is poured.

It takes me a long time to lose my temper, but once lost I could not find it with a dog.

When angry, count four; when very angry, swear.

SWEARING

We begin to swear before we can talk.

Profanity provides a relief denied even to prayer.

Let us swear while we may, for in Heaven it will not be allowed.

My swearing doesn't mean any more to me than your sermons do to you.

I was blaspheming my luck in a way that made my breath smell of brimstone.

If God is as vast as that, He is above blasphemy; if He is as little as that, He is beneath it.

If I cannot swear in Heaven I shall not stay there.

REFORM

Nothing so needs reforming as other people's habits.

My habits protect my life but they would assassinate you.

Habit is habit and not to be flung out the window by any man, but coaxed downstairs a step at a time.

There can be no reform without reflection. If you don't reflect when you commit a crime then that crime is of no use. It might just as well have been committed by someone else.

The judge he felt kind of sore. He said he reckoned a body could reform the ole man [Pap Finn] with a shot-gun, maybe, but he didn't know no other way.

In my early manhood and in middle life I used to vex myself with reforms every now and then. And I never had occasion to regret these divergences for, whether the resulting deprivations were long or short, the rewarding pleasure which I got out of the vice when I returned to it always paid me for all that it cost.

You can straighten a worm, but the crook is in him and only waiting.

HEALTH

Part of the secret of a success in life is to eat what you like and let the food fight it out inside.

Eat a live frog first thing in the morning and nothing worse will happen to you the rest of the day.

The only way to keep your health is to eat what you don't want, drink what you don't like, and do what you'd rather not.

There are people who strictly deprive themselves of each and every eatable, drinkable, and smokeable which has in any way acquired a shady reputation. They pay this price for health. And health is all they get for it. How strange it is. It is like paying out your whole fortune for a cow that has gone dry.

EXERCISE

I have never taken any exercise except sleeping and resting.

I take my exercise acting as a pallbearer at the funerals of my friends who exercise regularly.

IRREVERENCE

I never could stand a saint.

Martyrdom covers a multitude of sins.

Sacred cows make the best hamburger.

Martyrdom is the luckiest fate that can befall some people.

Irreverence is the champion of liberty and its only sure defense.

A discriminating irreverence is the creator and protector of human liberty.

I cannot call to mind a single instance where I have ever been irreverent, except toward the things which were sacred to other people.

CHRISTIANITY

If Christ were here now there is one thing he would not be—a Christian.

There has been only one Christian. They caught him and crucified him—early.

A man is accepted into a church for what he believes and he is turned out for what he knows.

The Christian's Bible is a drug store. Its contents remain the same; but the medical practice changes.

It ain't those parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me; it is the parts that I do understand.

The revitalized convert who is scared in the direction of heaven because he sees hell yawn suddenly behind him, not only regains confidence when his scare is over, but is ashamed of himself for being scared, and often becomes more hopelessly and malignantly wicked than he was before.

MISSIONARIES

O kind missionary, O compassionate missionary, leave China! Come home and convert these Christians.

Almost every convert runs the risk of catching our civilization.

I do not know why we respect missionaries. Perhaps it is because they have not intruded here from Turkey or China or Polynesia to break our hearts by sapping away our children's faith and winning them to the worship of alien gods.

So the king went all through the crowd with his hat, swabbing his eyes, and blessing the people and praising them and thanking them for being so good to the poor pirates away off there; and every little while the prettiest kind of girls, with the tears running down their cheeks, would up and ask him would he let them kiss him, for to remember him by; and he always done it; and some of them he hugged and kissed as

many as five or six times—and he was invited to stay a week...he was in a sweat to get to the Indian Ocean right off and go to work on the pirates.

PREACHERS

All that soul-butter and hogwash.

Preachers are always pleasant company when they are off duty.

No sinner ever is saved after the first twenty minutes of a sermon.

To be good is noble, but to show others how to be good is nobler and no trouble.

It is not a new thing for a thoroughly good and well-meaning preacher's soft heart to run away with his soft head.

A solemn, unsmiling, sanctimonious old iceberg who looked like he was waiting for a vacancy in the Trinity.

It was the most earnest ambition I ever had... Not that I ever really wanted to be a preacher, but because it never occurred to me that a preacher could be damned. It looked like a safe job.

PROPHECY

Prophecy is a good line of business, but it is full of risks.

A man who goes around with a prophecy-gun ought never to get discouraged. If he will keep his heart and fire at everything he sees he is bound to hit something by and by.

“You gwyne to have considerable trouble in yo' life, en considerable joy. Sometimes you gwyne to git hurt, en sometimes you gwyne to git sick; but every time you's gwyne to git well agin.” [Jim interpreting the hairball oracle]

Prophecy: two bull's eyes out of a possible million.

PROVIDENCE

There are many scapegoats for our sins, but the most popular is Providence.

I never count any prospective chickens when I know that Providence knows where the nest is.

Indeed, none but the Deity can tell what is good luck and what is bad before the returns are all in.

Trusting in Providence is a very good thing, as far as it goes, but a chart and a compass are worth six of it, any time.

The proverb says that Providence protects children and idiots. This is really true. I know it because I have tested it.

I judge I could see that there was two Providences, and a poor chap would stand a considerable show with the widow's Providence, but if Miss Watson's got him there warn't no help for him any more. I thought it all out, and reckoned I would belong to the widow's, if he wanted me.

FAITH

Faith without works is a risky doctrine.

Faith is believing what you know ain't so.

You may have noticed that the less I know about a subject the more confidence I have, and the more new light I throw on it.

I am not one of those who in expressing opinions confine themselves to facts.

RELIGION

Man is a Religious Animal.... He is the only animal that has the True Religion —several of them.

If man continues in the direction of enlightenment, his religious practice may, in the end, attain some semblance of human decency.

India has two millions gods, and worships them all. In religion all other countries are paupers; India is the only millionaire.

Hinduism: It is a good and gentle religion—but inconvenient.

The easy confidence with which I know another man's religion is folly teaches me to suspect that my own is also.

The altar cloth of one aeon is the doormat of the next.

GOD

God, so atrocious in the Old Testament, so attractive in the New—the Jekyll and Hyde of sacred romance.

The two testaments are interesting, each in its own way. The Old one gives us a picture of these people's Deity as he was before he got religion, the other one gives us a picture of him as he appeared afterward.

More than once I have been humiliated by my resemblance to God the father; He is always longing for the love of His children and trying to get it on the cheapest and laziest terms.

I am plenty safe enough in His hands; I am not in any danger from that kind of Deity. The one that I want to keep out of the reach of, is the caricature of Him which one finds in the Bible. We (that one and I) could never respect each other, never get along together. I have met his superior a hundred times—in fact I amount to that myself.

None of us can be as great as God, but any of us can be as good...being made merely in the image of God, but not otherwise resembling Him enough to be mistaken by anybody but a very near-sighted person.

What God lacks is convictions—stability of character. He ought to be a Presbyterian or a Catholic or something—not try to be everything to everybody.

Within certain judicious limits we trust in God, and if there isn't enough room on the coin for this, why enlarge the coin.

SATAN

But who prays for Satan? Who, in eighteen centuries, has had the common humanity to pray for the one sinner that needs it the most?

Satan must have been pretty simple, even according to the New Testament, or he wouldn't have led Christ up on a high mountain and offered him the world if he would fall down and worship him. That was a manifestly absurd proposition, because Christ, as the Son of God, already owned the world; and besides,

what Satan showed him was only a few rocky acres of Palestine. It is just as if some one should try to buy Rockefeller, the owner of all the Standard Oil Company, with a gallon of kerosene.

I have no special regard for Satan; but I can at least claim that I have no prejudice against him. It may even be that I lean a little his way, on account of his not having a fair show. All religions issue bibles against him, and say the most injurious things about him, but we never hear his side. We have none but the evidence for the prosecution and yet we have rendered the verdict. To my mind, this is irregular. It is un-English. It is un-American; it is French... I would like to see him. I would rather see him and shake his tail than any member of the European concert.

How curious and interesting is the parallel—as far as poverty of biographical details is concerned—between Satan and Shakespeare... They are the best-known unknown persons that have ever drawn breath upon the planet.

HELL

It is easier to stay out than get out.

The streets of hell are paved with good intentions.

[Miss Watson] told me all about the bad place, and I said I wished I was there.

INDIANS

How much finer is the Indian's God... Our illogical God is all-powerful in name, but impotent in fact; the Great Spirit is not all-powerful, but does the very best he can for his injun and does it free of charge.

The priest explained the mysteries of the faith "by signs," for the saving of the savages; thus compensating them with possible possessions in heaven for the certain ones on earth which they had been robbed of.

No tribe, howsoever insignificant, and no nation, howsoever mighty occupies a foot of land that was not stolen.

There is not one acre of ground on the globe that is in possession of its rightful owner, or that has not been taken away from owner after owner, cycle after cycle, by force and bloodshed.

Wm. Penn achieved the deathless gratitude of the savage by merely dealing in a square way with them—well, kind of a square way, anyhow—more rectangular than the savage was used to, at any rate. He bought the whole State of Pa. from them and paid for it like a man. Paid \$40 worth of glass beads and a couple of second-hand blankets. Bought the whole State for that. Why you can't buy its legislature for twice the money now.

Years ago I was accused of loading an Indian up with beans lubricated with nitro-glycerine and sending him in an ox wagon over a stumpy road. This was impossible, on its face, for no one would risk oxen in that way.

Soap and education are not as sudden as a massacre, but they are more deadly in the long run; because a half-massacred Indian may recover, but if you educate him and wash him, it is bound to finish him some time or other.

It is a mistake that there is no bath that will cure people's manners. But drowning would help.

A round man cannot be expected to fit in a square hole right away. He must have some time to modify his shape.

Knowledge of Indians and humanity are seldom found in the same individual.

LOSS OF THE SACRED

We have not the reverent feeling for the rainbow that the savage has, because we know how it is made. We have lost as much as we have gained by prying into that matter.

SCIENCE

How empty is theory in the presence of fact.

Name the greatest of all inventors. Accident.

Facts are stubborn, but statistics are more pliable.

Get your facts first, then you can distort them as you please.

You can't depend on your eyes when your imagination is out of focus.

A scientist will never show any kindness for a theory which he did not start himself.

Scientists have odious manners, except when you prop up their theory; then you can borrow money of them.

There is something fascinating about science. One gets such wholesale returns of conjecture out of such a trifling investment of fact.

The scientist. He will spend thirty years in building up a mountain range of facts with the intent to prove a certain theory; then he is so happy in his achievement that as a rule he overlooks the main fact of all—that his accumulation proves an entirely different thing.

WEATHER

Climate is what we expect, weather is what we get.

Everyone talks about the weather, but no one does anything about it.

Cold! If the thermometer had been an inch longer we'd all have frozen to death.

Winter is begun here, now, I suppose. It blew part of the hair off the dog yesterday and got the rest this morning.

A genuine expert can always foretell a thing that is 500 years away easier than he can a thing that's only 500 seconds off.

New England weather report: Probable nor-east to sou-west winds, varying to the southward and westward and eastward and points between; high and low barometer, sweeping round from place to place; probable areas of rain, snow, hail, and drought, succeeded or preceded by earthquake with thunder and lightning.

The more you explain it, the more I don't understand it.

AMERICA

It was wonderful to find America, but it would have been more wonderful to miss it.

In America we prefer to kindle the fire with the kerosene can and chance the inquest.

We are called a nation of inventors. And we are. We could still claim that title and wear its loftiest honors if we had stopped with the first thing we ever invented, which was human liberty.

THANKSGIVING

Thanksgiving Day, a function which originated in New England two or three centuries ago when those people recognized that they really had something to be thankful for—annually, not oftener—if they had succeeded in exterminating their neighbors, the Indians, during the previous twelve months instead of getting exterminated by their neighbors, the Indians. Thanksgiving Day became a habit, for the reason that in the course of time, as the years drifted on, it was perceived that the exterminating had ceased to be mutual and was all on the white man's side, consequently on the Lord's side; hence it was proper to thank the Lord.

Thanksgiving: Let us all give humble, hearty, and sincere thanks now, but the turkeys. In the island of Fiji they do not use turkeys; they use plumbers. It does not become you and me to sneer at Fiji.

LAWYERS

We have an insanity plea that would have saved Cain.

Laws control the lesser man... Right conduct controls the greater one.

To succeed in other trades, capacity must be shown; in the law, concealment of it will do.

We have a criminal jury system which is superior to any in the world; and its efficiency is only marred by the difficulty of finding twelve men every day who don't know anything and can't read.

A country without a patent office and good patent laws was just a crab, and couldn't travel any way but sideways or backwards.

Lawyers are like other people—fools on the average; but it is easier for an ass to succeed in that trade than in any other.

They all laid their heads together like as many lawyers when they are gettin' ready to prove that a man's heirs ain't got any right to his property.

There is something so disagreeable in having a personal contact with a publisher. So it is better to work through a lawyer—and lose your case.

RACE

The only very marked difference between the average man and the savage is that one is gilded and the other painted.

All I care to know is that a man is a human being—that is enough for me; he can't be any worse.

“I do believe he cared just as much for his people as white folks does for their'n.”

Nearly all black and brown skins are beautiful, but a beautiful white skin is rare.

I have no race prejudice.

EQUALITY

Not all horses are equal. A few were born to win.

There isn't a Parallel of Latitude but thinks it would have been the Equator if it had had its rights.

GOVERNMENT

To a man with a hammer, everything looks like a nail.

No man's life, liberty, or property are safe while the legislature is in session.

The government is merely a servant... Its function is to obey orders, not originate them.

That's the difference between governments and individuals. Governments don't care, individuals do.

What is the difference between a taxidermist and a tax collector? The taxidermist takes only your skin.

I think I might have developed into a very capable pickpocket if I had remained in the public service a year or two.

Sometimes I wonder whether the world is being run by smart people who are putting us on or by imbeciles who really mean it.

Enlarging his sphere of influence. This is a curious modern phrase which means robbing your neighbor—for your neighbor's benefit.

Words will answer as long as it is only a person's neighbor who is in trouble, but when that person gets into trouble himself, it is time that the King rise up and do something.

Those people...the departmental interpreters of the laws in Washington...can always be depended on to take any reasonably good law and interpret the common sense all out of it.

It would not be possible for Noah to do in our day what he was permitted to do in his own... The inspector would come and examine the Ark, and make all sorts of objections.

Often it does seem such a pity that Noah and his party did not miss the boat.

The everlasting compelling of honesty, morality, justice and law to bend the knee to policy, is the rottenest thing in a republican form of government. It is cowardly, degraded and mischievous; and in its own good time it will bring destruction upon this broad-shouldered fabric of ours. I believe the Prince of Darkness could start a branch hell in the District of Columbia (if he has not already done it), and carry it on unimpeached by the Congress of the United States, even though the Constitution were bristling with articles forbidding hells in this country.

DEMOCRACY

Everybody's private motto: It's better to be popular than right.

A man never reaches that dizzy height of wisdom that he can no longer be led by the nose.

Sometimes the noisy handful is right, sometimes wrong, but no matter, the crowd follows it.

Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it is time to reform (or pause and reflect).

If we would learn what the human race really is at bottom, we need only observe it in election times.

Principles aren't of much account, anyway, except at election time. After that you hang them up to let them season.

All Democrats are insane, but not one of them knows it. None but the Republicans. All the Republicans are insane, but only the Democrats can perceive it. The rule is perfect: in all matters of opinion our adversaries are insane.

SOCIALISM

Don't go around saying the world owes you a living. The world owes you nothing. It was here first.

There is something good and motherly about Washington, the grand old benevolent National Asylum for the helpless.

The mania for giving the Government power to meddle with the private affairs of cities or citizens is likely to cause endless trouble, through the rivalry of schools and creeds that are anxious to obtain official recognition, and there is a great danger that our people will lose their independence of thought and action which is the cause of much of our greatness, and sink into the helplessness of the Frenchman or German who expects his government to feed him when he is hungry, clothe him when naked, to prescribe when his child may be born and when he may die, and, in fine, to regulate every act of humanity from the cradle to the tomb.

WAR

War: a wanton waste of projectiles.

Terror is an efficacious agent only when it doesn't last. In the long run there is more terror in threats than in execution, for when you get used to terror your emotions get dulled.

If the bubble of reputation can only be obtained at the cannon's mouth, I am willing to go there for it, provided the cannon is empty.

Before I had a chance in another war, the desire to kill people to whom I had not been introduced had passed away.

Peace by persuasion has a pleasant sound, but I think we should not be able to work it. We should have to tame the human race first, and history seems to show that that cannot be done.

No people in the world ever did achieve their freedom by goody-goody talk and moral suasion; it being immutable law that all revolution that will succeed must be in blood, whatever may answer afterward.

Man has not a single right which is the product of anything but might. Not a single right is indestructible: a new might can at any time abolish it, hence, man possesses not a single permanent right.

PATRIOTISM

If loyalty to party is a form of patriotism, I am no patriot.

Patriot: the person who can holler the loudest without knowing what he is hollering about.

The true patriotism, the only rational patriotism, is loyalty to the Nation ALL the time, loyalty to the Government when it deserves it.

In the beginning of a change the patriot is a scarce man, and brave, and hated and scorned. When his cause succeeds, the timid join him, for then it costs nothing to be a patriot.

POLITICIANS

Do right and you will be conspicuous.

An honest man in politics shines more than he would elsewhere.

The new political gospel: public office is private graft.

Public servant: person chosen by the people to distribute the graft.

Senator: a person who makes laws in Washington when not doing time.

It's so hard to find men of a so high type of morals that they'll stay bought.

Politicians are like diapers; they need to be changed often and for the same reason.

What a talker he is. He could persuade a fish to come out and take a walk with him.

History has tried hard to teach us that we can't have good government under politicians. Now, to go and stick one at the very head of the government couldn't be wise.

It is strange the way the ignorant and inexperienced so often and so undeservedly succeed while the informed and the experienced fail.

CONGRESS

Fleas can be taught nearly anything that a Congressman can.

To my mind Judas Isacriot was nothing but a low, mean, premature Congressman.

Whiskey is carried into committee rooms in demijohns and carried out in demagogues.

Suppose you were an idiot. And suppose you were a member of Congress. But I repeat myself.

It could probably be shown by facts and figures that there is no distinctively native American criminal class except Congress.

I think I can say, and say with pride that we have some legislatures that bring higher prices than any in the world.

REPUTATION

Reputation is a hall-mark: it can remove doubt from pure silver, and it can also make the plated article pass for pure.

Why waste your money looking up your family tree? Just go into politics and your opponent will do it for you.

If you can't get rid of the family skeleton, you might as well make it dance.

ADVERTISING

Action speaks louder than words but not nearly as often.

Many a small thing has been made large by the right kind of advertising.

The thug is aware that loudness convinces sixty persons where reasoning convinces but one.

Sir, I have been through it from Alpha to Omaha, and I tell you that the less a man knows the bigger the noise he makes and the higher the salary he commands.

Noise proves nothing. Often a hen who has merely laid an egg cackles as if she laid an asteroid.

NEWSPAPERS

The more newspapers the worse morals.

I became a newspaperman. I couldn't find honest employment.

Advertisements contain the only truths to be relied on in a newspaper.

A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes.

If you don't read the newspaper, you're uninformed. If you read the newspaper, you're misinformed.

I learned to pull wires in the Washoe Legislature, and my experience is, that when a bill is to be put through a body like that, the only thing necessary to insure success is to get the reporters to log-roll for it.

That awful power, the public opinion of a nation, is created in America by a horde of ignorant, self-complacent simpletons who failed at ditching and shoe-making and fetched up in journalism as their way to the poorhouse.

Like all other nations, we worship money and the possessors of it—they being our aristocracy, and we have to have one. We like to read about the rich in the papers; the papers know it, and they do their best to keep this appetite liberally fed.

All conscientious scruples—all generous feelings must give way to our inexorable duty—which is to keep the public mind in a healthy state of excitement, and experience has taught me that blood alone can do this.

By the etiquette of war, it is permitted to none below the rank of newspaper correspondent to dictate to the general in the field.

There are laws to protect the freedom of the press's speech, but none that are worth anything to protect the people from the press.

FREE SPEECH

Frankness is a jewel; only the young can afford it.

The man with a new idea is a crank until the idea succeeds.

If a man doesn't believe as we do, we say he is a crank and that settles it. I mean, it does nowadays, because now we can't burn him.

It is by the goodness of God that in our country we have those three unspeakably precious things: freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, and the prudence never to practice either of them.

As an active privilege [free speech] ranks with the privilege of committing murder; we may exercise it if we are willing to take the consequences.

In America—as elsewhere—free speech is confined to the dead.

Huckleberry Finn (1884)

I like it only tolerably well...& may possibly pigeonhole or burn the MS. when it is done.

A book of mine where a sound heart and a deformed conscience come into collision and conscience suffers defeat.

High and fine literature is wine, and mine is only water; but everybody likes water.

CENSORSHIP

Censorship is telling a man he can't have steak because a baby can't chew it.

I wrote *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* for adults exclusively, and it always distresses me when I find that boys and girls have been allowed access to them. The mind that becomes soiled in youth can never again be washed clean. I know this by my own experience, and to this day I cherish an unappeasable bitterness against the unfaithful guardians of my young life, who not only permitted but compelled me to read an unexpurgated *Bible* through before I was 15 years old. [Letter to librarian, Brooklyn Public Library, after *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* were banned from the children's room]

It were not best that we should all think alike; it is difference of opinion that makes horse-races.

POPULAR ROMANTIC LITERATURE

Heroine: girl who is perfectly charming to live with, in a book.

Hero: a person in a book who does things which he can't and the girl marries him for it.

Heroine: girl in a book who is saved from drowning by a hero and marries him next week, but if it was to be over again ten years later it is likely she would rather have a life-belt and he would rather have her have it.

O no. Then list with tearful eye, / Whilst I his fate do tell. / His soul did from this cold world fly, / By falling down a well.

If Emmeline Grangerford could make poetry like that before she was fourteen, there ain't no telling what she could a done by-and-by. Buck said she could rattle off poetry like nothing. She didn't even have to stop to think.

I did wish Tom Sawyer was there, I knowed he would take an interest in this kind of business, and throw in the fancy touches.

REALISM

That book was made by Mr. Mark Twain, and he told the truth, mainly. There was things which he stretched, but mainly he told the truth.

My nose begun to itch. It itched till the tears come into my eyes. But I dasn't scratch. Then it begun to itch on the inside. Next I got to itching underneath.

CONVENTIONAL STYLE OF *Tom Sawyer* (1876)

All Nature was awake and stirring now.

[Two squirrels] skurry along...to inspect and to chatter at the boys.

Long lances of sunlight pierced down through the dense foliage far and near.

REALISTIC STYLE OF *Huckleberry Finn* (1884)

I could see the sun out at one or two holes.

A couple of squirrels set on a limb and jabbered at me very friendly.

It was big trees all about, and gloomy in there [and] there was freckled places on the ground where the light sifted down through the leaves. [Impressionism]

TELLING STORIES

It usually takes me more than three weeks to prepare an impromptu speech.

I like a story well told. That is the reason I am sometimes forced to tell them myself.

There is only one right form for a story and if you fail to find that form the story will not tell itself.

Sometimes my feelings are so hot that I have to take the pen and put them on paper to keep them from setting me afire inside.

The humorous story is told gravely; the teller does his best to conceal the fact that there is anything funny about it. ["How to Tell a Story"]

AUDIENCE

Do not tell fish stories where the people know you; but particularly, don't tell them where they know the fish.

I conceive that the right way to write a story for boys is to write it so that it will not only interest boys but strongly interest any man who has ever been a boy. That immensely enlarges the audience.

But language is a treacherous thing, a most unsure vehicle, and it can seldom arrange descriptive words in such a way that they will not inflate the facts—by help of the reader's imagination, which is always ready to take a hand and work for nothing, and do the bulk of it at that.

THE NATIVE NOVELIST

There is only one expert who is qualified to examine the souls and the life of a people and make a valuable report—the native novelist. And when a thousand able novels have been written, there you have the soul of the people; and not anywhere else can these be had.

GENIUS

Hunger is the handmaid of genius.

Thousands of geniuses live and die undiscovered—either by themselves or by others.

Genius itself succeeds only by arduous self-training. To play on the fiddle it is not merely necessary to take a bow and fiddle with it.

FACTS IN FICTION

Facts contain a great deal of poetry, but you can't use too many of them without damaging your literature.

Nothing breaks up an author's progress like having to stop every few pages to fuss-up the weather. Thus it is plain that persistent intrusions of weather are bad for both reader and author... Thus weather will be found over in the back part of the book, out of the way. The reader is requested to turn over and help himself from time to time as he goes along.

DRAMATIZE

Words are only painted fire; a look is the fire itself.

Don't look at the world with your hands in your pockets. To write about it you have to reach out and touch it.

Don't say the old lady screamed. Bring her on and let her scream.

WORDS

You have seen that kind of people who will never let on that they don't know the meaning of a new big word. The more ignorant they are, the more pitifully certain they are to pretend you haven't shot over their heads.

A powerful agent is the right word: it lights the way and makes it plain; a close approximation to it will answer, and much traveling is done in a well-enough fashion by its help, but we do not welcome it and applaud it and rejoice in it as we do when the right one blazes out on us.

The difference between the almost right word and the right word is really a large matter—it is the difference between the lightning-bug and the lightning.

Thunder is good, thunder is impressive; but it is lightning that does the work.

You thunder and lightning too much; the reader ceases to get under the bed, by and by.

No word was ever as effective as a rightly timed pause.

WIT AND HUMOR

It takes a heap of sense to write good nonsense.

The human race has one really effective weapon, and that is laughter.

Against the assault of laughter, nothing can stand.

The best way to cheer yourself up is to try to cheer somebody else up.

Everything human is pathetic. The secret source of humor itself is not joy but sorrow.

Wit and Humour—if any difference it is in duration—lightning and electric light. Same material, apparently, but one is vivid, brief, and can do damage—the other fools along and enjoys the elaboration.

There is no character, howsoever good and fine, but it can be destroyed by ridicule, howsoever poor and witless. Observe the ass, for instance: his character is about perfect, he is the choicest spirit among all the humbler animals, yet see what ridicule has brought him to. Instead of feeling complimented when we are called an ass, we are left in doubt.

Humor must not professedly teach and it must not professedly preach, but it must do both if it would live forever.

Explaining humor is a lot like dissecting a frog, you learn a lot in the process, but in the end you kill it.

Wit is the sudden marriage of ideas which, before their union, were not perceived to have any relation.

Wit, by itself, is of little account. It becomes of moment only when grounded on wisdom.

The wit knows that his place is at the tail of the procession.

MAXIMS

What are the proper proportions of a maxim? A minimum of sound to a maximum of sense.

EDITING

The dictionary is the only place where success comes before work.

Writing is easy. All you have to do is cross out the wrong words.

Anyone who only can think of one way to spell a word obviously lacks imagination.

Substitute “damn” every time you’re inclined to write “very”; your editor will delete it and the writing will be just as it should be.

When you catch an adjective, kill it. No, I don’t mean utterly, but kill most of them—then the rest will be valuable. They weaken when they are close together. They give strength when they are wide apart.

Yesterday Mr. Hall wrote that the printer’s proofreader was improving my punctuation for me, and I telegraphed orders to have him shot without giving him time to pray.

How often we recall, with regret, that Napoleon shot at a magazine editor and missed him and killed a publisher. But we remember with charity, that his intentions were good.

PUBLISHERS

Robbery of a publisher: I said that if he regarded that as a crime it was because his education was limited. I said it was not a crime and was always rewarded in heaven with two halos.

CRITICS

Don’t explain your author, read him right and he explains himself.

The public is the only critic whose judgment is worth anything at all.

COMPLIMENTS

It is human to like to be praised; one can even notice it in the French.

When you cannot get a compliment any other way pay yourself one.

It is better to take what does not belong to you than to let it lie around neglected.

An author values a compliment even if it comes from a source of doubtful competency.

I have been complimented many times and they always embarrass me; I feel that they have not said enough.

The longing of my heart is a fairy portrait of myself; I want to be pretty; I want to eliminate facts and fill up the gaps with charms.

There are three infallible ways of pleasing an author, and the three form a rising scale of compliment: 1, to tell him you have read one of his books; 2, to tell him you have read all his books; 3, to ask him to let you read the manuscript of his forthcoming book. No. 1 admits you to his respect; No. 2 admits you to his admiration; No. 3 carries you clear into his heart.

HONORS

There are basically two kinds of people. People who accomplish things, and people who claim to accomplish things. The first group is less crowded.

It is better to deserve honors and not have them than to have them and not deserve them.

Public shows of honor are pleasant, but private ones are pleasanter, because they are above suspicion.

To refuse awards is another way of accepting them with more noise than is normal.

FAME

Obscurity and competence—that is the life best worth living.

Fame is a vapor, popularity an accident; the only earthly certainty is oblivion.

COURAGE

Courage is the foundation of integrity.

Why not go out on a limb? That's where the fruit is.

Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear—not absence of fear.

It's not the size of the dog in the fight, it's the size of the fight in the dog.

It is sound judgment to put on a bold face and play your hand for a hundred times what it is worth; forty-nine times out of fifty nobody dares to call it, and you roll in the chips.

Be who you are and say what you want because those who mind don't matter, and those who don't mind matter.

Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the things that you did do.

A man has no business to be depressed by a disappointment, anyway; he ought to make up his mind to get even.

Why do you sit there looking like an envelope without any address on it?

FRIENDS

It's easy to make friends, but hard to get rid of them.

When you ascend the hill of prosperity may you not meet a friend.

Some people bring joy wherever they go, and some people bring joy whenever they go.

The holy passion of Friendship is of so sweet and steady and loyal and enduring a nature that it will last through a whole lifetime if not asked to lend money.

It takes your enemy and your friend, working together, to hurt you to the heart; the one to slander you and the other to get the news to you.

The proper office of a friend is to side with you when you are in the wrong. Nearly anybody will side with you when you are in the right.

The trouble is not in dying for a friend, but in finding a friend worth dying for.

“All right, then, I'll go to hell”—and tore it up. [Huck for Jim]

FOOLS

April 1. This is the day upon which we are reminded of what we are on the other three hundred and sixty-four.

The trouble ain't that there is too many fools, but that the lightning ain't distributed right.

Let us be thankful for the fools; but for them the rest of us could not succeed.

If all the fools in the world should die, lord God how lonely I should be.

He who asks is a fool for five minutes, but he who does not ask remains a fool forever.

Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak out and remove all doubt.

Ah, well, I am a great and sublime fool. But then I am God's fool, and all His work must be contemplated with respect.

Behold, the fool saith, "Put not all thine eggs in the one basket" —which is but a manner of saying, "Scatter your money and your attention"; but the wise man sayeth, "Put all your eggs in one basket and—*WATCH THAT BASKET!*"

A gold mine is a hole in the ground with a liar at the bottom of it.

LUNATICS

Sanity and happiness are an impossible combination.

Of course, no man is entirely in his right mind at any time.

When we remember we are all mad, the mysteries of life disappear and life stands explained.

There are three kinds of people—Commonplace Men, Remarkable Men, and Lunatics.

ASSES AND OPTIMISTS

I have been an author for 20 years and an ass for 55.

The sane man readeth first but the ass signeth without looking.

It is no harm to be an ass, if one is content to bray and not kick.

Optimist: person who travels on nothing from nowhere to happiness.

The man who is a pessimist before 48 knows too much; if he is an optimist after it, he knows too little.

At 50 a man can be an ass without being an optimist but not an optimist without being an ass.

That optimist of yours is always ready to turn hell's backyard into a play-ground.

There is not a sadder sight than a young pessimist, except an old optimist.

He is useless on top of the ground; he ought to be under it, inspiring the cabbages.

I didn't attend the funeral, but I sent a nice letter saying I approved of it.

LITERATURE

A room without books is like a body without a soul.

I have always imagined heaven as a kind of giant library.

Books are for people who wish they were someplace else.

Be careful about reading health books. You may die of a misprint.

Good friends, good books and a sleepy conscience: this is the ideal life.

In a good bookroom you feel in some mysterious way that you are absorbing the wisdom contained in all the books through your skin, without even opening them.

I like a thin book because it can steady a table, a leather volume because it will strop a razor, and a heavy book because it can be thrown at a cat.

The test of any good fiction is that you should care for the characters; the good to succeed, the bad to fail. The trouble with most fiction is that you want them all to land in hell together, as quickly as possible.

It grieves me to think how far more profound and reverent a respect...for literature [there would be] if a body could get drunk on it.

PROSE AND POETRY

Prose wanders around with a lantern and laboriously schedules and verifies the details and particulars of a valley and its frame of crags and peaks, then Poetry comes, and lays bare the whole landscape with a single splendid flash.

POETRY

War talk by men who have been in a war is always interesting, whereas moon talk by a poet who has not been to the moon is likely to be dull.

My usual style of ciphering out the merits of poetry, which is to read a line or two near the top, a verse near the bottom and then strike an average.

Poetry attacks all human beings sooner or later, and, like the measles, is mild or violent according to the age of the sufferer.

I have thought many times since that if poets when they get discouraged would blow their brains out, they could write very much better when they got well.

SIR WALTER SCOTT

Sir Walter [Scott] had so large a hand in making the Southern character as it existed before the war that he is in great measure responsible for the war.

Shut up on a wreck with such a gang as that! But it warn't no time to be sentimentering.

COOPER

It isn't worth while, in these practical times, for people to talk about Indian poetry—there never was any in them—except in the Fenimore Cooper Indians. But they are an extinct tribe that never existed.

HOWELLS

To Howells: Possibly you will not be a fully accepted classic until you have been dead a hundred years,—it is the fate of Shakespeare and of all genuine prophets,—but then your books will be as common as Bibles.

HENRY JAMES

[Of an acclaimed novel by Henry James]: Once you put it down, you simply can't pick it up.

Like the rest of the world, I still go on underrating men of gold and glorifying men of mica. Commonplace human nature cannot rise above that.

KIPLING

Kipling: I am not fond of all poetry, but there's something in Kipling that appeals to me. I guess he's just about my level... He is a stranger to me, but he is a most remarkable man—and I am the other one. Between us, we cover all knowledge; he knows all that can be known, and I know the rest.

Since England and America have been joined in Kipling, may they not be severed in Twain.

HARTE

In the early days I liked Bret Harte and so did the others, but by and by I got over it; so also did the others. He couldn't keep friends permanently. He was bad, distinctly bad; he had no feeling and he had no conscience... Harte is a liar, a thief, a swindler, a snob, a sot, a sponge, a coward...he is brim full of treachery, and he conceals his Jewish birth as if he considered it a disgrace...he was an inebriate without a country. He hadn't any more passion for his country than an oyster has for its bed; in fact not so much, and I apologize to the oyster.... I detest him, because I think his work is 'shoddy.' His forte is pathos but there should be no pathos which does not come from out of a man's heart. He has no heart, except his name, and I consider he has produced nothing that is genuine. He is artificial.

BIERCE

Ambrose Bierce: For every laugh that is in his book there are five blushes, ten shudders and a vomit. The laugh is too expensive.

AUSTEN

Jane is entirely impossible. It seems a great pity that they allowed her to die a natural death.

Jane Austen? Why I go so far as to say that any library is a good library that does not contain a volume by Austen. Even if it contains no other book.

Every time I read *Pride and Prejudice* I want to dig her up and beat her over the head with her own shin-bone.

Whenever I take up *Pride and Prejudice* or *Sense and Sensibility* I feel like a barkeeper entering the Kingdom of Heaven.

POE

Poe: To me his prose is unreadable—like Jane Austen's [sic]. No there is a difference. I could read his prose on salary, but not Jane's.

MILTON

I don't believe any of you have ever read *Paradise Lost* and you don't want to. That's something that you just want to take on trust. It's a classic...something that everybody wants to have read and nobody wants to read.

READING

I have no liking for novels or stories—none in the world; and so, whenever I read one—which is not oftener than once in two years, and even in these same cases I seldom read beyond the middle of the book—my distaste for the vehicle always taints my judgment of the literature itself, as a matter of course; and also of course makes my verdict valueless. Are you saying, “You have written stories yourself.” Quite true: but the fact that an Indian likes to scalp people is no evidence that he likes to be scalped.

I do not read anything but history and biography. You perceive that for me to presume to indicate the hundred authors which a person ought to read, would be folly. No, leave me out: My testimony would not be valuable. Nowadays, when a mood comes which only Shakespeare can set to music, what must we do? Read Shakespeare ourselves! Isn't it pitiful? It is like playing an organ solo on a Jew's-harp.

SHAKESPEARE AND BUNYAN

Comedy keeps the heart sweet; but we all know that there is wholesome refreshment for both mind and heart in an occasional climb among the pomps of the intellectual snow-summits built by Shakespeare and those others.

It would be a wonderful experience to stand there in those enchanted surroundings [Heaven] and hear Shakespeare and Milton and Bunyan read from their noble works...they would not care for me...they would say they had an engagement.

TRAVEL

All of us are always losing some pleasure that we might have if we could be everywhere at once.

I have found there ain't no surer way to find out whether you like people or hate them than to travel with them.

Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's life.

The gentle reader will never, never know what a consummate ass he can become until he goes abroad. I speak now, of course, in the supposition that the gentle reader has not been abroad, and therefore is not already a consummate ass.

Travel has no longer any charm for me. I have seen all the foreign countries I want to except heaven and hell and I have only a vague curiosity about one of those.

NEVADA

In Nevada, for a time, the lawyer, the editor, the banker, the chief desperado, the chief gambler, and the saloon-keeper, occupied the same level of society, and it was the highest.... The cheapest and easiest way to become an influential man and be looked up to by the community at large, was to stand behind a bar, wear a cluster-diamond pin, and sell whiskey... To be a saloon-keeper and kill a man was to be illustrious.

SAN FRANCISCO

The bulk of San Francisco's liberality seems sometimes to be activated by a love of applause.

The coldest winter I ever spent was a summer in San Francisco.

HAWAII

[Hawaii] is the only supremely delightful place on earth.... The missionaries braved a thousand privations to come and make [the Hawaiians] permanently miserable by telling them how beautiful and how blissful a place heaven is, and how nearly impossible it is to get there.... How sad it is to think of the multitudes who have gone to their graves in this beautiful island and never knew there was a hell.

Palm tree: Nature's imitation of an umbrella that has been out to see what a cyclone is like and is trying not to look disappointed.

Beached whale: The whale was not a long one, physically speaking—say thirty-five feet—but he smelt much longer; he smelt as much as a mile and a half longer.

ST. LOUIS

If you send a damned fool to St. Louis, and you don't tell them he's a damned fool, they'll never find out.

CINCINNATI

When the end of the world comes, I want to be in Cincinnati because it's always twenty years behind the times.

CHICAGO

When you feel like tellin a feller to go to the devil—tell him to go to Chicago—it'll answer every purpose, and is perhaps, a leetle more expensive.

NEW YORK

All men in New York insult you—there seem to be no exceptions. There are exceptions of course—have been—but they are probably dead.

BOSTON

Tomorrow night I appear for the first time before a Boston audience—4,000 critics.

In Boston they ask, How much does he know? In New York, How much is he worth? In Philadelphia, Who were his parents?

SOUTHERNERS

A southerner talks music.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

To any foreigner English is exceedingly difficult. Even the angels speak it with an accent.

ENGLISHMAN

An Englishman is a person who does things because they have been done before. An American is a person who does things because they haven't been done before.

IRISHMAN

Give an Irishman lager for a month, and he's a dead man. An Irishman is lined with copper, and the beer corrodes it. But whiskey polishes the copper and is the saving of him.

FRANCE

A dead Frenchman has many good qualities.

Trivial Americans go to Paris when they die.

A Frenchman's home is where another man's wife is.

The objects of which Paris folks are fond—literature, art, medicine and adultery.

An isolated and helpless girl is perfectly safe from insult by a Frenchman, if he is dead.

France has neither winter nor summer nor morals—apart from these drawbacks it is a fine country.

A French married lady cannot enter even a menagerie without bringing the purity of that menagerie under suspicion.

M. de Lemester's new French dictionary just issued in Paris defines virtue as: "A woman who has only one lover and don't steal."

In Paris they just simply opened their eyes and stared when we spoke to them in French. We never succeeded in making those idiots understand their own language.

The average American may not know who his grandfather was. But the American was, however, one degree better off than the average Frenchman, who was in considerable doubt as to who his father was.

Let us say all bad Americans go to Paris when they die. No, let us not say it for this adds a new horror to Immortality.

There is nothing lower than the human race except the French.

Nothing so liberalizes a man and expands the kindly instincts that nature put in him as travel and contact with many kinds of people.

ITALY

Mona Lisa: There are no people that color.

They examine passports on the Italian frontier for fear an honest man may slip in.

They spell it Vinci and pronounce it Vinchy; foreigners always spell better than they pronounce.

We get almost all our wonders at second hand... By and by you sober down, and then you perceive that you have been drunk on the smell of somebody's else's cork.

Even popularity can be overdone. In Rome, at first you are full of regrets that Michelangelo died; but by and by you only regret that you didn't see him do it.

We have the notion in our country that Italians never do heavy work at all, but confine themselves to the lighter arts, like organ-grinding, operatic singing, and assassination.

One in 50 of those who attend our operas likes it already perhaps, but I think a good many of the other 49 go in order to learn to like it, and the rest in order to be able to talk knowingly about it. The latter usually hum to the airs while they are being sung, so that their neighbors may perceive that they have been to operas before. The funeral of these do not occur often enough.

We often feel sad in the presence of music without words, and often more than that in the presence of music without music.

Whenever I have ventured an entire opera the result has been the next thing to suicide.

GERMAN

These things are not words, they are alphabetical processions.

Never knew what eternity was made for. It is to give some of us a chance to learn German.

I understand German as well as the maniac that invented it, but I talk it best through an interpreter.

Mastery of the German language enables a man to travel all day in one sentence without changing cars.

In early times some sufferer had to sit up with a toothache, and he put in the time inventing the German language.

My philological studies have satisfied me that a gifted person ought to learn English (barring spelling and pronouncing) in thirty hours, French in thirty days, and German in thirty years.

The Germans have an inhuman way of cutting up their verbs... They take part of a verb and put it down here, like a stake, and then they take the other part of it and put it away over yonder like another stake, and between these two limits they just shovel in German.

Whenever the literary German dives into a sentence, that is the last you are going to see of him till he emerges on the other side of his Atlantic with his verb in his mouth.

It is easier for a cannibal to enter the Kingdom of Heaven through the eye of a needle than it is for any other foreigner to read the terrible German script.

GERMAN CULTURE

German laundry: Your collar is like a horse-collar; your shirt can stand alone and when you get it on you feel ready for crime. It is a wonder they do not have more crime here, but it is increasing as adoption of clean shirts spreads among the social democrats.

I thoroughly disapprove of duels... If a man should challenge me, I would take him kindly and forgivingly by the hand and lead him to a quiet spot and kill him.

RUSSIANS

Nature made thousands and thousands of now extinct species in her apprentice-days which turned out to be pure failures—like the flies and the Russians.

Of course I know that the properest way to demolish the Russian throne would be by revolution. But it is not possible to get up a revolution there; so the only thing left to do, apparently, is to keep the throne vacant by dynamite until a day when candidates shall decline with thanks. [1890]

COMMUNISM

Communism is idiocy. They want to divide up the property. Suppose they did it—it requires brains to keep money as well as make it. In a precious little while the money would be back in the owner's hands and the communist would be poor again.

CUBA

In a museum in Havana there are two skulls of Christopher Columbus, "one when he was a boy and one when he was a man."

ANCIENT GREECE

The Greeks surpassed us in artistic culture and in architecture five hundred years before the Christian religion was born.

INDIA

In India, "cold weather" is merely a conventional phrase and has come into use through the necessity of having some way to distinguish between weather which will melt a brass door-knob and weather which will only make it mushy.

OLD AGE

One is apt to overestimate beauty when it is rare.

Wrinkles should merely indicate where smiles have been.

Out of all the things I have lost, I miss my mind the most.

Soon I shall be so I cannot remember any but the things that never happened.

Age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter.

Life: we laugh and laugh, then cry and cry, then feeble laugh, then die.

What is a human life? The first third a good time; the rest remembering about it.

I am old now, and once was a sinner. I often think of it with a kind of soft regret.

Just when I thought I was learning how to live, 'twas then I realized I was learning how to die.

When your friends begin to flatter you on how young you look, it's a sure sign you're getting old.

Consider well the proportions of things. It is better to be a young June-bug than an old bird of paradise.

We chase phantoms half the days of our lives. It is well if we learn wisdom even then, and save the other half.

Forty years ago I was not so good-looking. A looking glass then lasted me three months. Now I can wear it out in two days.

Life would be indefinitely happier if we could only be born at the age of eighty and gradually approach eighteen.

It is the epitome of life. The first half consists of the capacity to enjoy without the chance; the last half consists of the chance without the capacity.

I didn't care much about evolution, but when they struck the doctrine of metempsychosis, I got interested. That doctrine accounts for me: I knew there was something the matter, but never knew what it was before. It's the passing off on a man of an old, damaged, second-hand soul that makes all the trouble.

THE FUTURE

For the majority of us, the past is regret, the future an experiment.

Plan for the future because that is where you are going to spend the rest of your life.

Unfortunately none of us can see far ahead; prophecy is not for us. Hence the paucity of suicides.

DEATH

The reports of my death are greatly exaggerated. [legend]

The report of my death was an exaggeration. [fact]

Pity is for the living, envy is for the dead.

Most men die at 27, we just bury them at 72.

Oh Death where is thy sting! It has none. But life has.

A person who has lived fully is prepared to die at any time.

Each person is born to one possession which outvalues all his others—his last breath.

Why is it that we rejoice at birth and grieve at a funeral? It is because we are not the person involved.

All say “how hard it is that we have to die”—a strange complaint to come from the mouths of people who have had to live.

It will be the greatest disappointment of my life if I don't go out with Halley's Comet. The Almighty has said, no doubt: “Now here are two unaccountable freaks; they came in together, they must go out together.”

I do not fear death. I had been dead for billions and billions of years before I was born, and had not suffered the slightest inconvenience from it.

We must take the position that burial is stuck to merely in the interest of the undertaker (who has his family cremated to save expense).

People ought to start dead, and they would be honest so much earlier.

All great men are dead and I am not feeling too well myself.

LAST WORDS

Good-bye. If we meet... [to daughter Clara]

MEMORIALS

“And so it's fitten that his funeral orgies h'd be public.”

When a blood relative sobs, an intimate friend should choke up, a distant acquaintance should sigh, a stranger should merely fumble sympathetically with his handkerchief.

More mourning is done by statue than any other way.

IMMORTALITY

I am silent on the subject of the afterlife because of necessity. I have friends in both places.

I have never seen what to me seemed an atom of truth that there is a future life...and yet—I am strongly inclined to expect one.

HEAVEN

What a hell of a heaven it will be when they get all these hypocrites assembled there!

Heaven goes by favor. If it went by merit, you would stay out and your dog would go in.

We may not doubt that society in heaven consists mainly of undesirable persons.

When I reflect on the number of disagreeable people who I know have gone to a better world, I am moved to lead a different life.

[Miss Watson] said all a body would have to do there was to go around all day long with a harp and sing, forever and ever. So I didn't think much of it.... I couldn't see no advantage in going where she was going, so I made up my mind I wouldn't try for it.

Dying man couldn't make up his mind which place to go to—both have their advantages, “heaven for climate, hell for company!”

