

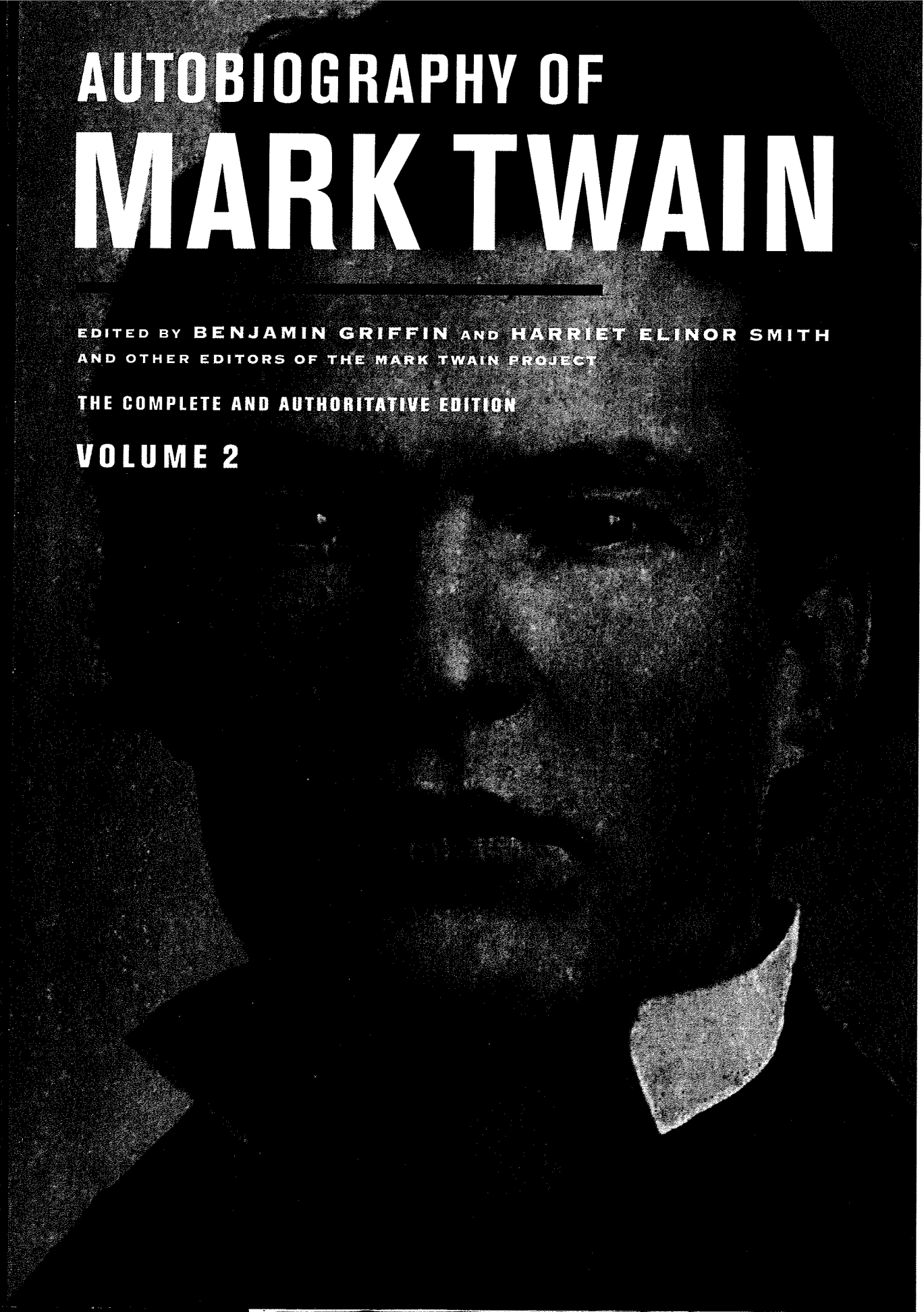
# AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MARK TWAIN

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THE COMPLETE AND AUTHORITATIVE EDITION

**VOLUME 2**



All my sympathies and my compassion are for the betrayed and abused ignorant and trusting young widow, who was as yet too young to know the human race, and I hope that she and her children are long ago dead—a wish and a prayer which I reserve for the good and the deserving alone. I believe every word she says. I think No. 1 is a scheming old malignant. I have already said what I think of No. 2. I discover neither lies nor furtivenesses in the young woman's letter, but only straight and open sincerities—except in one or two particulars which I am unwilling to regard as serious possible departures from cast-iron fact. When she says she has always led a quiet life and has worked hard, I believe it. When she says her conscience absolves her, I believe that too. I think she means that she was tempted beyond her strength by a man whom she had known familiarly in her early girlhood, and that by some inborn instinct she realized that *she did not create her own nature*, that *she did not create its limitations*, and that when those limitations were overpassed she was *not strictly responsible for the consequences*. There are human laws against her conduct, but her conduct transgresses no law of Nature, and the *laws of Nature take precedence of all human laws*. The purpose of *all* human laws is one—to *defeat the laws of Nature*. This is the case among all the nations, both civilized and savage. It is a grotesquerie, but when the human race is not grotesque it is because it is asleep and losing its opportunity.

That young woman's letter exhibits the fact that she has had very little schooling. It is unlikely that she has had much practice with the pen, yet how moving and convincing are her simple phrases, her unstudied eloquence! Her letter is *literature*—good literature—and the most practised pen cannot surpass it, out of the best-trained head. She speaks from the heart; and the heart has no use for the artifices of training or education or dramatic invention when it has a tale to tell.

I am forgetting Bret Harte—but let him go until another time. This new interest has superseded him, and by the law of this biography the newest and warmest interest always has the floor, and takes precedence of all other matters. I shall finish with Bret Harte by and by, for I am prejudiced against him and feel that I can talk about him impartially. In some of his characteristics he reminds me of God. I do not mean of any and every god among the two or three millions of gods that our race has been manufacturing since it nearly ceased to be monkeys—I mean our own God. I do not mean that Mighty One, that Incomparable One that created the universe and flung abroad upon its horizonless ocean of space its uncountable hosts of giant suns—fleets of the desert ether, whose signal lights are so remote that we only catch their latest flash when it has been a myriad of years on its way—I mean the little God whom we manufactured out of waste human material; whose portrait we accurately painted in a Bible and charged its authorship upon Him; the God who created a universe of such nursery dimensions that there would not be room in it for the orbit of Mars (as it is now known to the infant class in our schools) and put our little globe in the centre of it under the impression that it was the only really important thing in it.

**Tuesday, June 19, 1906**

**About the character of God, as represented in  
the New and the Old Testaments.**

Our Bible reveals to us the character of our God with minute and remorseless exactness. The portrait is substantially that of a man—if one can imagine a man charged and overcharged with evil impulses far beyond the human limit; a personage whom no one, perhaps, would desire to associate with, now that Nero and Caligula are dead. In the Old Testament His acts expose His vindictive, unjust, ungenerous, pitiless and vengeful nature constantly. He is always punishing—punishing trifling misdeeds with thousand-fold severity; punishing innocent children for the misdeeds of their parents; punishing unoffending populations for the misdeeds of their rulers; even descending to wreak bloody vengeance upon harmless calves and lambs and sheep and bullocks, as punishment for inconsequential trespasses committed by their proprietors. It is perhaps the most damnatory biography that exists in print anywhere. It makes Nero an angel of light and leading, by contrast.

It begins with an inexcusable treachery, and that is the keynote of the entire biography. That beginning must have been invented in a pirate's nursery, it is so malign and so childish. To Adam is forbidden the fruit of a certain tree—and he is gravely informed that if he disobeys he shall die. How could that be expected to impress Adam? Adam was merely a man in stature; in knowledge and experience he was in no way the superior of a baby of two years of age; he could have no idea of what the word death meant. He had never seen a dead thing; he had never heard of a dead thing before. The word meant nothing to him. If the Adam child had been warned that if he ate of the apples he would be transformed into a meridian of longitude, that threat would have been the equivalent of the other, since neither of them could mean anything to him.

The watery intellect that invented the memorable threat could be depended on to supplement it with other banalities and low grade notions of justice and fairness, and that is what happened. It was decreed that all of Adam's descendants, to the latest day, should be punished for the baby's trespass against a law of his nursery fulminated against him before he was out of his diapers. For thousands and thousands of years, his posterity, individual by individual, has been unceasingly hunted and harried with afflictions in punishment of the juvenile misdemeanor which is grandiloquently called Adam's Sin. And during all that vast lapse of time, there has been no lack of rabbins and popes and bishops and priests and parsons and lay slaves eager to applaud this infamy, maintain the unassailable justice and righteousness of it, and praise its Author in terms of flattery so gross and extravagant that none but a God could listen to it and not hide His face in disgust and embarrassment. Hardened to flattery as our Oriental potentates are, through long experience, not even they would be able to endure the rank quality of it which our God endures with complacency and satisfaction from our pulpits every Sunday.

We brazenly call our God the source of mercy, while we are aware, all the time, that

there is not an authentic instance in history of His ever having exercised that virtue. We call Him the source of morals, while we know by His history and by His daily conduct, as perceived with our own senses, that He is totally destitute of anything resembling morals. We call Him Father, and not in derision, although we would detest and denounce any earthly father who should inflict upon his child a thousandth part of the pains and miseries and cruelties which our God deals out to His children every day, and has dealt out to them daily during all the centuries since the crime of creating Adam was committed.

We deal in a curious and laughable confusion of notions concerning God. We divide Him in two, bring half of Him down to an obscure and infinitesimal corner of the world to confer salvation upon a little colony of Jews—and only Jews, no one else—and leave the other half of Him throned in heaven and looking down and eagerly and anxiously watching for results. We reverently study the history of the earthly half, and deduce from it the conviction that the earthly half has reformed, is equipped with morals and virtues, and in no way resembles the abandoned, malignant half that abides upon the throne. We conceive that the earthly half is just, merciful, charitable, benevolent, forgiving, and full of sympathy for the sufferings of mankind and anxious to remove them. Apparently we deduce this character not by examining facts, but by diligently declining to search them, measure them, and weigh them. The earthly half requires us to be merciful, and sets us an example by inventing a lake of fire and brimstone in which all of us who fail to recognize and worship Him as God are to be burned through all eternity. And not only *we*, who are offered these terms, are to be thus burned if we neglect them, but also the earlier billions of human beings are to suffer this awful fate, although they all lived and died without ever having heard of Him or the terms at all. This exhibition of mercifulness may be called gorgeous. We have nothing approaching it among human savages, nor among the wild beasts of the jungle. We are required to forgive our brother seventy times seven times, and be satisfied and content if on our death-bed, after a pious life, our soul escape from our body before the hurrying priest can get to us and furnish it a pass with his mumblings and candles and incantations. This example of the forgiving spirit may also be pronounced gorgeous.

We are told that the two halves of our God are only seemingly disconnected by their separation; that in very fact the two halves remain one, and equally powerful, notwithstanding the separation. This being the case, the earthly half—who mourns over the sufferings of mankind and would like to remove them, and is quite competent to remove them at any moment He may choose—satisfies Himself with restoring sight to a blind person, here and there, instead of restoring it to all the blind; cures a cripple, here and there, instead of curing all the cripples; furnishes to five thousand famishing persons a meal, and lets the rest of the millions that are hungry remain hungry—and all the time He admonishes inefficient man to cure these ills which God Himself inflicted upon him, and which He could extinguish with a word if He chose to do it, and thus do a plain duty which He had neglected from the beginning and always will neglect while time shall last. He raised several dead persons to life. He manifestly regarded this as a kindness. If it was a kindness it was not just to confine it to a half a dozen persons. He

should have raised the rest of the dead. I would not do it myself, for I think the dead are the only human beings who are really well off—but I merely mention it, in passing, as one of those curious incongruities with which our Bible history is heavily overcharged.

Whereas the God of the Old Testament is a fearful and repulsive character, He is at least consistent. He is frank and outspoken. He makes no pretense to the possession of a moral or a virtue of any kind—except with His mouth. No such thing is anywhere discoverable in His conduct. I think He comes infinitely nearer to being respectable than does His reformed self, as guilelessly exposed in the New Testament. Nothing in all history—nor even His massed history combined—remotely approaches in atrocity the invention of hell.

His heavenly self, His Old Testament self, is sweetness and gentleness and respectability, compared with His reformed earthly self. In heaven He claims not a single merit, and hasn't one—outside of those claimed by His mouth—whereas in the earth He claims every merit in the entire catalogue of merits, yet practised them only now and then, penuriously, and finished by conferring hell upon us, which abolished all His fictitious merits in a body.

**Wednesday, June 20, 1906**

**The defects about Bibles—Remarks about  
the Immaculate Conception.**

There are one or two curious defects about Bibles. An almost pathetic poverty of invention characterizes them all. That is one striking defect. Another is that each pretends to originality, without possessing any. Each borrows from the others, and gives no credit, which is a distinctly immoral act. Each, in turn, confiscates decayed old stage-properties from the others, and with naïve confidence puts them forth as fresh new inspirations from on high. We borrow the Golden Rule from Confucius, after it has seen service for centuries, and copyright it without a blush. When we want a Deluge we go away back to hoary Babylon and borrow it, and are as proud of it and as satisfied with it as if it had been worth the trouble. We still revere it and admire it, to-day, and claim that it came to us direct from the mouth of the Deity; whereas we know that Noah's flood never happened, and couldn't have happened. The flood is a favorite with Bible-makers. If there is a Bible—or even a tribe of savages—that lacks a General Deluge it is only because the religious scheme that lacks it hadn't any handy source to borrow it from.

Another prime favorite with the authors of sacred literature and founders of religions is the Immaculate Conception. It had been worn threadbare before we adopted it as a fresh new idea—and we admire it as much now as did the original conceiver of it when his mind was delivered of it a million years ago. The Hindoos prized it ages ago when they acquired Krishna by the Immaculate process. The Buddhists were happy when they acquired Gautama by the same process twenty-five hundred years ago. The Greeks of the same

period had great joy in it when their Supreme Being and his cabinet used to come down and people Greece with mongrels half human and half divine. The Romans borrowed the idea from Greece, and found great happiness in Jupiter's Immaculate Conception products. We got it direct from Heaven, by way of Rome. We are still charmed with it. And only a fortnight ago, when an Episcopal clergyman in Rochester was summoned before the governing body of his Church to answer the charge of intimating that he did not believe that the Savior was miraculously conceived, the Rev. Dr. Briggs, who is perhaps the most daringly broad-minded religious person now occupying an American pulpit, took up the cudgels in favor of the Immaculate Conception, in an article in the *North American Review*, and from the tone of that article it seemed apparent that he believed he had settled that vexed question, once and for all. His idea was that there could be no doubt about it, for the reason that the Virgin Mary knew it was authentic because the Angel of the Annunciation told her so. Also, it must have been so, for the additional reason that Jude—a later son of Mary, the Virgin, and born in wedlock—was still living and associating with the adherents of the early Church many years after the event, and that he said quite decidedly that it was a case of Immaculate Conception; therefore it must be true, for Jude was right there in the family and in a position to know.

If there is anything more amusing than the Immaculate Conception doctrine, it is the quaint reasonings whereby ostensibly intelligent human beings persuade themselves that the impossible fact is proven.

If Dr. Briggs were asked to believe in the Immaculate Conception process as exercised in the cases of Krishna, Osiris, Buddha, and the rest of the tribe, he would decline, with thanks, and probably be offended. If pushed, he would probably say that it would be childish to believe in those cases, for the reason that they were supported by none but human testimony, and that it would be impossible to prove such a thing by human testimony, because if the entire human race were present at a case of Immaculate Conception they wouldn't be able to tell when it happened, nor whether it happened at all—and yet this bright man with the temporarily muddy mind is quite able to believe an impossibility whose authenticity rests entirely upon human testimony—the testimony of but one human being, the Virgin herself, a witness not disinterested, but powerfully interested; a witness incapable of knowing the fact as a fact, but getting all that she supposed she knew about it at second-hand,—at second-hand from an entire stranger, an alleged angel, who could have been an angel, perhaps, but also could have been a tax collector. It is not likely that she had ever seen an angel before, or knew their trade-marks. He was a stranger. He brought no credentials. His evidence was worth nothing at all to anybody else in the community. It is worth nothing, to-day, to any but minds which are like Dr. Briggs's—which have lost their clarity through mulling over absurdities in the pious wish to dig something sane and rational out of them. The Immaculate Conception rests wholly upon the testimony of a single witness—a witness whose testimony is without value—a witness whose very existence has nothing to rest upon but the assertion of the young peasant wife whose husband needed to be pacified. Mary's testimony satisfied him, but that is because he lived in Nazareth, instead of New

York. There isn't any carpenter in New York that would take that testimony at par. If the Immaculate Conception could be repeated in New York to-day, there isn't a man, woman, or child, of those four millions, who would believe in it—except perhaps some addled Christian Scientist. A person who can believe in Mother Eddy wouldn't strain at an Immaculate Conception, or six of them in a bunch. The Immaculate Conception could not be repeated successfully in New York in our day. It would produce laughter, not reverence and adoration.

To a person who doesn't believe in it, it seems a most puerile invention. It could occur to nobody but a god that it was a large and ingenious arrangement, and had dignity in it. It could occur to nobody but a god that a divine Son procured through promiscuous relations with a peasant family in a village could improve the purity of the product, yet that is the very idea. The product acquires purity—purity absolute—purity from all stain or blemish,—through a gross violation of both human law and divine, as set forth in the constitution and by-laws of the Bible. Thus the Christian religion, which requires everybody to be moral and to obey the laws, has its very beginning in immorality and in disobedience to law. You couldn't purify a tomcat by the Immaculate Conception process.

Apparently, as a pious stage-property, it is still useful, still workable, although it is so bent with age and so nearly exhausted by overwork. It is another case of begats. What's-his-name begat Krishna, Krishna begat Buddha, Buddha begat Osiris, Osiris begat the Babylonian deities, they begat God, He begat Jesus, Jesus begat Mrs. Eddy. If she is going to continue the line and do her proper share of the begatting, she must get at it, for she is already an antiquity.

There is one notable thing about our Christianity: bad, bloody, merciless, money-grabbing and predatory as it is—in our country, particularly, and in all other Christian countries in a somewhat modified degree—it is still a hundred times better than the Christianity of the Bible, with its prodigious crime—the invention of hell. Measured by our Christianity of to-day, bad as it is, hypocritical as it is, empty and hollow as it is, neither the Deity nor His Son is a Christian, nor qualified for that moderately high place. Ours is a terrible religion. The fleets of the world could swim in spacious comfort in the innocent blood it has spilt.

**Friday, June 22, 1906**

**The brutal Russian massacres of the Jews—Compares  
ancient and modern massacres—Tendency of present generation  
to turn its attention to war—Evil influence of the Bible upon  
children—Present God and religion will not last.**

For two years, now, Christianity has been repeating, in Russia, the sort of industries in the way of massacre and mutilation with which it has been successfully persuading Christendom in every century for nineteen hundred years, that it is the only right and

true religion—the one and only religion of peace and love. For two years, now, the ultra-Christian Government of Russia has been officially ordering and conducting massacres of its Jewish subjects. These massacres have been so frequent that we have become almost indifferent to them. The accounts of them hardly affect us more than do accounts of corners in a railroad stock in which we have no money invested. We have become so used to their described horrors that we hardly shudder now when we read of them.

Here are some of the particulars of one of the latest efforts of these humble twentieth century disciples to persuade the unbeliever to come into the fold of the meek and gentle Savior.

Horrible details have been sent out by the correspondent of the Bourse Gazette, who arrived in Bialystok in company with Deputy Schepkin on Saturday, and who managed to send his story by a messenger Sunday afternoon. The correspondent, who accompanied Schepkin directly to the hospital escorted by a Corporal's guard, says he was utterly unnerved by the sights he witnessed there.

"Merely saying that the bodies were mutilated," the correspondent writes, "fails to describe the awful facts. The faces of the dead have lost all human resemblance. The body of Teacher Apstein lay on the grass with the hands tied. In the face and eyes had been hammered three-inch nails. Rioters entered his home, killing him thus, and then murdered the rest of his family of seven. When the body arrived at the hospital it was also marked with bayonet thrusts.

"Beside the body of Apstein lay that of a child of 10 years, whose leg had been chopped off with an axe. Here also were the dead from the Schlachter home, where, according to witnesses, soldiers came and plundered the house and killed the wife, son, and a neighbor's daughter and seriously wounded Schlachter and his two daughters.

"I am told that soldiers entered the apartments of the Lapidus brothers, which were crowded with people who had fled from the streets for safety, and ordered the Christians to separate themselves from the Jews. A Christian student named Dikar protested and was killed on the spot. Then all of the Jews were shot.

"From the wounded in the hospital the correspondent heard many pitiable stories, all of the same general tenor. Here is the account of a badly wounded merchant named Nevyazhiky:

"I live in the suburbs. Learning of the pogrom, I tried to reach the town through the fields, but was intercepted by roughs. My brother was killed, my arm and leg were broken, my skull was fractured, and I was stabbed twice in the side. I fainted from loss of blood, and revived to find a soldier standing over me, who asked: 'What, are you still alive! Shall I bayonet you?' I begged him to spare my life. The roughs again came, but spared me, saying: 'He will die; let him suffer longer.'"

The correspondent, who adopts the bitterest tone toward the Government, holds that the pogrom undoubtedly was provoked, and attributes the responsibility to Police Lieutenant Sheremetieff. He declares that not only the soldiers, but their officers, participated, and that he himself was a witness as late as Saturday to the shooting down of a Jewish girl from the window of a hotel by Lieut. Miller of the Vladimir Regiment. The Governor of the Province of Grodno, who happened to be passing at the moment, ordered an investigation.



The pulpit and the optimist are always talking about the human race's steady march toward ultimate perfection. As usual, they leave out the statistics. It is the pulpit's way—the optimist's way.

Is there any discoverable advance toward moderation between the massacre of the Albigenses and these massacres of Russian Jews? There is one difference. In elaborate cruelty and brutality the modern massacre exceeds the ancient one. Is any advance discoverable between Bartholomew's Day and these Jewish massacres? Yes. The same difference again appears: the modern Russian Christian and his Czar have advanced to an extravagance of bloody and bestial atrocity undreamed of by their crude brethren of three hundred and thirty-five years ago.

The Gospel of Peace is always making a good deal of noise with its mouth; always rejoicing in the progress it is making toward final perfection, and always diligently neglecting to furnish the statistics. George III reigned sixty years, the longest reign in English history, up to his time. When his revered successor, Victoria, turned the sixty-year corner—thus scoring a new long-reign record—the event was celebrated with great pomp and circumstance and public rejoicing in England and her colonies. Among the statistics fetched out for general admiration were these: that for each year of the sixty of her reign, Victoria's Christian soldiers had fought in a separate and distinct war. Meantime, the possessions of England had swollen to such a degree, by depredations committed upon helpless and godless pagans, that there were not figures enough in Great Britain to set down the stolen acreage and they had to import a lot from other countries.

There are no peaceful nations now, except those unhappy ones whose borders have not been invaded by the Gospel of Peace. All Christendom is a soldier-camp. During all the past generation, the Christian poor have been taxed almost to starvation-point to support the giant armaments which the Christian Governments have built up, each to protect itself from the rest of the brotherhood and, incidentally, to snatch any patch of real estate left exposed by its savage owner. King Leopold II of Belgium—probably the most intensely Christian monarch, except Alexander VI, that has escaped hell thus far—has stolen an entire kingdom in Africa, and in fourteen years of Christian endeavor there has reduced the population of thirty millions to fifteen, by murder, mutilation, overwork, robbery, rapine—confiscating the helpless native's very labor, and giving him nothing in return but salvation and a home in heaven, furnished at the last moment by the Christian priest.

Within this last generation each Christian power has turned the bulk of its attention to finding out newer and still newer, and more and more effective ways of killing Christians—and, incidentally, a pagan now and then—and the surest way to get rich quickly, in Christ's earthly kingdom, is to invent a gun that can kill more Christians at one shot than any other existing gun.

Also, during the same generation, each Christian Government has played with its neighbors a continuous poker game, in the naval line. In this game France puts up a battleship; England sees that battleship, and goes it one battleship better; Russia comes in and raises it a battleship or two—*did*, before the untaught stranger entered the game and reduced her stately pile of chips to a damaged ferry-boat and a cruiser that can't

cruise. We are in it, ourselves, now. This game goes on, and on, and on. There is never a new shuffle; never a new deal. No player ever calls another's hand. It is merely an unending game of put up, and put up, and put up; and by the law of probabilities, a day is coming when no Christians will be left on the land, except the women. The men will be all at sea, manning the fleets.

This singular game, which is so costly and so ruinous, and so silly, is called statesmanship—which is different from assmanship on account of the spelling. Anybody but a statesman could invent some way to reduce these vast armaments to rational and sensible and safe police proportions, with the result that thenceforth all Christians could sleep in their beds unafraid, and even the Savior could come down and walk on the seas, foreigner as He is, without dread of being chased by Christian battleships.

Has the Bible done something still worse than drench the planet with innocent blood? To my mind it has—but this is only an opinion, and it may be a mistaken one. There has never been a Protestant boy nor a Protestant girl whose mind the Bible has not soiled. No Protestant child ever comes clean from association with the Bible. This association cannot be prevented. Sometimes the parents try to prevent it, by not allowing the children to have access to the Bible's awful obscenities, but this only whets the child's desire to taste that forbidden fruit, and it does taste it—seeks it out secretly and devours it with a strong and grateful appetite. The Bible does its baleful work in the propagation of vice among children, and vicious and unclean ideas, daily and constantly, in every Protestant family in Christendom. It does more of this deadly work than all the other unclean books in Christendom put together; and not only more, but a thousand-fold more. It is easy to protect the young from those other books, and they are protected from them. But they have no protection against the deadly Bible.

Is it doubted that the young people hunt out the forbidden passages privately, and study them with pleasure? If my reader were here present—let him be of either sex or any age, between ten and ninety—I would make him answer this question himself—and he could answer it in only one way. He would be obliged to say that by his own knowledge and experience of the days of his early youth, he knows positively that the Bible defiles all Protestant children, without a single exception.

Do I think the Christian religion is here to stay? Why should I think so? There had been a thousand religions before it was born. They are all dead. There had been millions of gods before ours was invented. Swarms of them are dead and forgotten long ago. Ours is by long odds the worst God that the ingenuity of man has begotten from his insane imagination—and shall He and His Christianity be immortal, against the great array of probabilities furnished by the theological history of the past? No. I think that Christianity, and its God, must follow the rule. They must pass on, in their turn, and make room for another God and a stupider religion. Or perhaps a better than this? No. That is not likely. History shows that in the matter of religions, we progress backward, and not the other way. No matter, there will be a new God and a new religion. They will be introduced to popularity and acceptance with the only arguments that have ever persuaded any people in this earth to adopt Christianity, or any other religion that they were

not born to: the Bible, the sword, the torch, and the axe—the only missionaries that have ever scored a single victory since gods and religions began in the world. After the new God and the new religion have become established in the usual proportions—one-fifth of the world's population ostensible adherents, the four-fifths pagan missionary field, with the missionary scratching its continental back complacently and inefficiently—will the new converts believe in them? Certainly they will. They have always believed in the million gods and religions that have been stuffed down their midriffs. There isn't anything so grotesque or so incredible that the average human being can't believe it. At this very day there are thousands upon thousands of Americans of average intelligence who fully believe in "Science and Health," although they can't understand a line of it, and who also worship the sordid and ignorant old purloiner of that gospel—Mrs. Mary Baker G. Eddy, whom they do absolutely believe to be a member, by adoption, of the Holy Family, and on the way to push the Savior to third place and assume occupancy of His present place, and continue that occupancy during the rest of eternity.

**Saturday, June 23, 1906**

**Concerning the character of the real God.**

Let us now consider the real God, the genuine God, the great God, the sublime and supreme God, the authentic Creator of the *real* universe, whose remotenesses are visited by comets only—comets unto which incredibly distant Neptune is merely an outpost, a Sandy Hook to homeward bound spectres of the deeps of space that have not glimpsed it before for generations—a universe not made with hands and suited to an astronomical nursery, but spread abroad through the illimitable reaches of space by the fiat of the real God just mentioned; that God of unthinkable grandeur and majesty, by comparison with whom all the other gods whose myriads infest the feeble imaginations of men are as a swarm of gnats scattered and lost in the infinitudes of the empty sky.

When we think of such a God as this, we cannot associate with Him anything trivial, anything lacking dignity, anything lacking grandeur. We cannot conceive of His passing by Sirius to choose our potato for a footstool. We cannot conceive of His interesting Himself in the affairs of the microscopic human race and enjoying its Sunday flatteries, and experiencing pangs of jealousy when the flatteries grow lax or fail, any more than we can conceive of the Emperor of China being interested in a bottle of microbes and pathetically anxious to stand well with them and harvest their impertinent compliments. If we could conceive of the Emperor of China taking an intemperate interest in his bottle of microbes, we should have to draw the line there; we could not, by any stretch of imagination, conceive of his selecting from these innumerable millions a quarter of a thimbleful of Jew microbes—the least attractive of the whole swarm—and making pets of them and nominating them as his chosen germs, and carrying his infatuation for them so far as to resolve to keep and coddle them alone, and damn all the rest.

When we examine the myriad wonders and glories and charms and perfections of this infinite universe (as we know the universe now), and perceive that there is not a detail of it—from the blade of grass to the giant trees of California, nor from the obscure mountain rivulet to the measureless ocean; nor from the ebb and flow of the tides to the stately motions of the planets—that is not the slave of a system of exact and inflexible law, we seem to know—not suppose nor conjecture, but *know*—that the God that brought this stupendous fabric into being with a flash of thought and framed its laws with another flash of thought, is endowed with limitless power. We seem to know that whatever thing He wishes to do, He can do that thing without anybody's assistance. We also seem to know that when He flashed the universe into being He foresaw everything that would happen in it from that moment until the end of time.

Do we also know that He is a moral being, according to our standard of morals? No. If we know anything at all about it, we know that He is destitute of morals—at least of the human pattern. Do we know that He is just, charitable, kindly, gentle, merciful, compassionate? No. There is no evidence that he is any of these things,—whereas each and every day, as it passes, furnishes us a thousand volumes of evidence, and indeed proof, that he possesses none of these qualities.

When we pray, when we beg, when we implore, does He listen? Does He answer? There is not a single authentic instance of it in human history. Does He silently refuse to listen—refuse to answer? There is nothing resembling proof that He has ever done anything else. From the beginning of time, priests, who have imagined themselves to be His appointed and salaried servants, have gathered together their full numerical strength and simultaneously prayed for rain, and never once got it, when it was not due according to the eternal laws of Nature. Whenever they got it, if they had had a competent Weather Bureau they could have saved themselves the trouble of praying for that rain, because the Bureau could have told them it was coming, anyhow, within twenty-four hours, whether they prayed or saved their sacred wind.

From the beginning of time, whenever a king has lain dangerously ill, the priesthood and some part of the nation have prayed in unison that the king be spared to his grieving and anxious people (in case they were grieving and anxious, which was not usually the rule) and in no instance was their prayer ever answered. When Mr. Garfield lay near to death, the physicians and surgeons knew that nothing could save him, yet at an appointed signal all the pulpits in the United States broke forth with one simultaneous and supplicating appeal for the President's restoration to health. They did this with the same old innocent confidence with which the primeval savage had prayed to his imaginary devils to spare his perishing chief—for that day will never come when facts and experience can teach a pulpit anything useful. Of course the President died, just the same.

Great Britain has a population of forty-one millions. She has eighty thousand pulpits. The Boer population was a hundred and fifty thousand, with a battery of two hundred and ten pulpits. In the beginning of the Boer war, at a signal from the Primate of all England, the eighty thousand English pulpits thundered forth a titanic simultaneous

supplication to their God to give the embattled English in South Africa the victory. The little Boer battery of two hundred and ten guns replied with a simultaneous supplication to the same God to give the Boers the victory. If the eighty thousand English clergy had left their prayers unshed and gone to the field, they would have got it—whereas the victory went the other way, and the English forces suffered defeat after defeat at the hands of the Boers. The English pulpit kept discreetly quiet about the result of its effort, but the indiscreet Boer pulpit proclaimed with a loud and exultant voice that it was *its* prayers that had conferred the victory upon the Boers.

The British Government had more confidence in soldiers than in prayer—therefore instead of doubling and trebling the numerical strength of the clergy, it doubled and trebled the strength of its forces in the field. Then the thing happened that always happens—the English whipped the fight, a rather plain indication that the Lord had not listened to either side, and was as indifferent as to who should win as He had always been, from the day that He was evolved, down to the present time—there being no instance on record where He has shown any interest at all in any human squabble, nor whether the good cause won out or lost.

Has this experience taught the pulpit anything? It has not. When the Boer prayers achieved victory—as the Boers believed—the Boers were confirmed once more in their trust in the power of prayer. When a crushing finality of defeat overwhelmed them, later, in the face of their confident supplications, their attitude was not altered, nor their confidence in the righteousness and intelligence of God impaired.

Often we see a mother who has been despoiled, little by little, of everything she held dear in life but a sole remaining dying child; we have seen her, I say, kneeling by its bed and pouring out from a breaking heart beseechings to God for mercy that would get glad and instant answer from any man who had the power to save that child,—yet no such prayer has ever moved a God to pity. Has that mother been convinced? Sometimes—but only for a little while. She was merely a human being, and like the rest—ready to pray again in the next emergency; ready to believe again that she would be heard.

We know that the real God, the Supreme God, the actual Maker of the universe, made everything that is in it. We know that He made all the creatures, from the microbe and the brontosaur down to man and the monkey, and that he knew what would happen to each and every one of them, from the beginning of time to the end of it. In the case of each creature, big or little, He made it an unchanging law that that creature should suffer wanton and unnecessary pains and miseries every day of its life—that by that law these pains and miseries could not be avoided by any diplomacy exercisable by the creature; that its way, from birth to death, should be beset by traps, pitfalls, and gins, ingeniously planned and ingeniously concealed; and that by another law every transgression of a law of Nature, either ignorantly or wittingly committed, should in every instance be visited by a punishment ten-thousandfold out of proportion to the transgression. We stand astonished at the all-comprehensive malice which could patiently descend to the contriving of elaborate tortures for the meanest and pitifulest of the countless kinds of creatures that were to inhabit the earth. The spider was so contrived that she would

not eat grass, but must catch flies, and such things, and inflict a slow and horrible death upon them, unaware that her turn would come next. The wasp was so contrived that he also would decline grass and stab the spider, not conferring upon her a swift and merciful death, but merely half paralysing her, then ramming her down into the wasp den, there to live and suffer for days, while the wasp babies should chew her legs off at their leisure. In turn, there was a murderer provided for the wasp, and another murderer for the wasp's murderer, and so on throughout the whole scheme of living creatures in the earth. There isn't one of them that was not designed and appointed to inflict misery and murder on some fellow creature and suffer the same, in turn, from some other murderous fellow creature. In flying into the web the fly is merely guilty of an indiscretion—not a breach of any law—yet the fly's punishment is ten-thousandfold out of proportion to that little indiscretion.

The ten-thousandfold law of punishment is rigorously enforced against every creature, man included. The debt, whether made innocently or guiltily, is promptly collected by Nature—and in this world, without waiting for the ten-billionfold additional penalty appointed—in the case of man—for collection in the next.

This system of atrocious punishments for somethings and nothings begins upon the helpless baby on its first day in the world, and never ceases until its last one. Is there a father who would persecute his baby with unearned colics and the unearned miseries of teething, and follow these with mumps, measles, scarlet fever, and the hundred other persecutions appointed for the unoffending creature? And then follow these, from youth to the grave, with a multitude of ten-thousandfold punishments for laws broken either by intention or indiscretion? With a fine sarcasm, we ennoble God with the title of Father—yet we know quite well that we should hang His style of father wherever we might catch him.

The pulpit's explanation of, and apology for, these crimes, is pathetically destitute of ingenuity. It says they are committed for the benefit of the sufferer. They are to discipline him, purify him, elevate him, train him for the society of the Deity and the angels—send him up sanctified with cancers, tumors, smallpox, and the rest of the educational plant; whereas the pulpit knows that it is stultifying itself, if it knows anything at all. It knows that if this kind of discipline is wise and salutary, we are insane not to adopt it ourselves and apply it to our children.

Does the pulpit really believe that we can improve a purifying and elevating breed of culture invented by the Almighty? It seems to me that if the pulpit honestly believed what it is preaching, in this regard, it would recommend every father to imitate the Almighty's methods.

When the pulpit has succeeded in persuading its congregation that this system has been really wisely and mercifully contrived by the Almighty to discipline and purify and elevate His children whom He so loves, the pulpit judiciously closes its mouth. It doesn't venture further, and explain why these same crimes and cruelties are inflicted upon the higher animals—the alligators, the tigers, and the rest. It even proclaims that the beasts perish—meaning that their sorrowful life begins and ends here; that they go

no further; that there is no heaven for them; that neither God nor the angels, nor the redeemed, desire their society on the other side. It puts the pulpit in a comical situation, because in spite of all its ingenuities of explanation and apology it convicts its God of being a wanton and pitiless tyrant in the case of the unoffending beasts. At any rate, and beyond cavil or argument, by its silence it condemns Him irrevocably as a malignant master, after having persuaded the congregation that He is constructed entirely out of compassion, righteousness, and all-pervading love. The pulpit doesn't know how to reconcile these grotesque contradictions, and it doesn't try.

In His destitution of one and all of the qualities which could grace a God and invite respect for Him, and reverence, and worship, the real God, the genuine God, the Maker of the mighty universe, is just like all the other gods in the list. He proves, every day, that He takes no interest in man, nor in the other animals, further than to torture them, slay them, and get out of this pastime such entertainment as it may afford—and do what He can not to get weary of the eternal and changeless monotony of it.

**Monday, June 25, 1906**

**Only hearsay evidence that there is to be a heaven hereafter—  
Christ does not prove that He is God—Takes up the human race—  
Man a machine, and not responsible for his actions.**

It is to these celestial bandits that the naïve and confiding and illogical human rabbit looks for a heaven of eternal bliss, which is to be his reward for patiently enduring the want and sufferings inflicted upon him here below—unearned sufferings covering terms of two or three years, in some cases; five or ten years in others; thirty, forty, or fifty in others; sixty, seventy, eighty, in others. As usual, where the Deity is Judge, the rewards are vastly out of proportion to the sufferings—and there is no system about the matter anyhow. You do not get any more heaven for suffering eighty years than you get if you die of the measles, at three.

There is no evidence that there is to be a heaven hereafter. If we should find, somewhere, an ancient book in which a dozen unknown men professed to tell all about a blooming and beautiful tropical paradise secreted in an inaccessible valley in the centre of the eternal icebergs which constitute the Antarctic continent—not claiming that they had seen it themselves, but had acquired an intimate knowledge of it through a revelation from God—no Geographical Society in the earth would take any stock in that book; yet that book would be quite as authentic, quite as trustworthy, quite as valuable, evidence as is the Bible. The Bible is just like it. Its heaven exists solely upon hearsay evidence—evidence furnished by unknown persons; persons who did not prove that they had ever been there.

If Christ had really been God, He could have proved it, since nothing is impossible with God. He could have proved it to every individual of His own time and of our time,

and of all future time. When God wants to prove that the sun and the moon may be depended upon to do their appointed work every day and every night, He has no difficulty about it. When He wants to prove that man may depend upon finding the constellations in their places every night—although they vanish and seem lost to us every day—He has no difficulty about it. When He wants to prove that the seasons may be depended upon to come and go according to a fixed law, year after year, He has no difficulty about it. Apparently He has desired to prove to us beyond cavil or doubt many millions of things, and He has had no difficulty about proving them all. It is only when He apparently wants to prove a future life to us that His invention fails, and He comes up against a problem which is beyond the reach of His alleged omnipotence. With a message to deliver to men which is of infinitely more importance than all those other messages put together, which He has delivered without difficulty, He can think of no better medium than the poorest of all contrivances—a book. A book written in two languages—to convey a message to a thousand nations—which, in the course of the dragging centuries and eons, must change and change and become finally wholly unintelligible. And even if they remained fixed, like a dead language, it would never be possible to translate the message with perfect clearness into any one of the thousand tongues, at any time.

According to the hearsay evidence, the character of every conspicuous god is made up of love, justice, compassion, forgiveness, sorrow for all suffering and desire to extinguish it. Opposed to this beautiful character—built wholly upon valueless hearsay evidence—is the absolutely authentic evidence furnished us every day in the year, and verifiable by our eyes and our other senses, that the real character of these gods is destitute of love, mercy, compassion, justice, and other gentle and excellent qualities, and is made up of all imaginable cruelties, persecutions, and injustices. The hearsay character rests upon evidence only—exceedingly doubtful evidence. The real character rests upon proof—proof unassailable.

Is it logical to expect of gods whose unceasing and unchanging pastime is the malignant persecution of innocent men and animals, that they are going to provide an eternity of bliss, presently, for these very same creatures? If King Leopold II, the Butcher, should proclaim that out of each hundred innocent and unoffending Congo negroes he is going to save one from humiliation, starvation, and assassination, and fetch that one home to Belgium to live with him in his palace and feed at his table, how many people would believe it? Everybody would say "A person's character is a permanent thing. This act would not be in accordance with that butcher's character. Leopold's character is established beyond possibility of change, and it could never occur to him to do this kindly thing."

Leopold's character *is* established. The character of the conspicuous gods is also established. It is distinctly illogical to suppose that either Leopold of Belgium or the heavenly Leopolds are ever going to think of inviting any fraction of their victims to the royal table and the comforts and conveniences of the regal palace.

According to hearsay evidence, the conspicuous gods make a pet of one victim in a hundred—select him arbitrarily, without regard to whether he's any better than the



other ninety-nine or not—but damn the ninety-nine through all eternity, without examining into their case. But for one slight defect this would be logical, and would properly reflect the known character of the gods—that defect is the gratuitous and unplausible suggestion that one in a hundred is permitted to pull through. It is not likely that there will be a heaven hereafter. It is exceedingly likely that there will be a hell—and it is nearly dead certain that nobody is going to escape it.

As to the human race. There are many pretty and winning things about the human race. It is perhaps the poorest of all the inventions of all the gods, but it has never suspected it once. There is nothing prettier than its naïve and complacent appreciation of itself. It comes out frankly and proclaims, without bashfulness, or any sign of a blush, that it is the noblest work of God. It has had a billion opportunities to know better, but all signs fail with this ass. I could say harsh things about it, but I cannot bring myself to do it—it is like hitting a child.

Man is not to blame for what he is. He didn't make himself. He has no control over himself. All the control is vested in his temperament—which he did not create—and in the circumstances which hedge him round, from the cradle to the grave, and which he did not devise and cannot change by any act of his will, for the reason that he has no will. He is as purely a piece of automatic mechanism as is a watch, and can no more dictate or influence his actions than can the watch. He is a subject for pity, not blame—and not contempt. He is flung head over heels into this world without ever a chance to decline, and straightway he conceives and accepts the notion that he is in some mysterious way under obligations to the unknown Power that inflicted this outrage upon him—and thenceforth he considers himself responsible to that Power for every act of his life, and punishable for such of his acts as do not meet with the approval of that Power—yet that same man would argue quite differently if a human tyrant should capture him and put chains upon him and make him a slave. He would say that the tyrant had no right to do that; that the tyrant had no right to put commands upon him of any kind, and require obedience; that the tyrant had no right to compel him to commit murder and then put the responsibility for the murder upon him. Man constantly makes a most strange distinction between man and his Maker, in the matter of morals. He requires of his fellow man obedience to a very creditable code of morals, but he observes without shame or disapproval his God's utter destitution of morals.

God ingeniously contrived man in such a way that he could not escape obedience to the laws of his passions, his appetites, and his various unpleasant and undesirable qualities. God has so contrived him that all his goings out and comings in are beset by traps which he cannot possibly avoid, and which compel him to commit what are called sins—and then God punishes him for doing these very things which from the beginning of time He had always intended that he should do. Man is a machine, and God made it—without invitation from any one. Whoever makes a machine, here below, is responsible for that machine's performance. No one would think of such a thing as trying to put the responsibility upon the machine itself. We all know perfectly well—though

we all conceal it, just as I am doing, until I shall be dead, and out of reach of public opinion—we all know, I say, that God, and God alone, is responsible for every act and word of a human being's life between cradle and grave. We know it perfectly well. In our secret hearts we haven't the slightest doubt of it. In our secret hearts we have no hesitation in proclaiming as an unthinking fool anybody who thinks he believes that he is by any possibility capable of committing a sin against God—or who thinks he thinks he is under obligations to God and owes Him thanks, reverence, and worship.

### **New York, July 17, 1906**

Five or six weeks ago, when I was dictating those chapters of this autobiography which detail my disastrous adventures with Charles H. Webb, my first publisher; the American Publishing Company, my second publisher; and Charles L. Webster, my third publisher, I was by no means suspecting that I was on the eve of a disastrous adventure with still another publisher, the great corporation of Harper and Brothers. Perhaps disastrous is not just the term for this last adventure; possibly ridiculous is the better word. There was a sort of dignity about my adventure with Elisha Bliss, junior, of the American Publishing Company, in 1872, but that quality is quite lacking in this present one with Harper and Brothers. Bliss, in beguiling me into the belief that in changing the agreed wording of the contract for "Roughing It" from "half profit over and above cost of manufacture" to a specified royalty, was setting a trap for me, whereby he expected to rob me of about thirty thousand dollars, a trick which succeeded, as I have already explained. There was a sort of dignity about that, for the reason that thirty thousand dollars was a great sum of money to that poor little publishing company, and worth the sinful trouble which Bliss took to acquire it. In the present instance, the trap which Mr. Duneka set for me could result in a pecuniary advantage to Harper and Brothers of only ten or twelve thousand dollars, I imagine, and therefore, as I have suggested, the trick lacked dignity.

My experiences with Webb, and Bliss, and Webster stand as abiding proof that when it comes to examining a contract and understanding it, I am an incapable. I have shown that I misread and misunderstood those contracts in every instance. My present experience is excellent evidence that I have no more ability in understanding a contract to-day than I had then. I wonder who is really the man hurt in a swindle—eventually: the perpetrator of it or the confiding ass who suffers from it? Bliss captured my thirty thousand dollars, but I made it cost him a quarter of a million thirteen years afterward. However, never mind this conundrum, I must get to the beginning of my subject.

The beginning was three years ago. I was anxious to get my books concentrated in one publisher's hands. The Harpers had half of them, and the American Publishing Company had the other half. Collier wanted to publish a cheap edition of them by subscription, and he offered to guarantee a sale of forty thousand sets a year. A concentration of the books in one publisher's hands I presently found to be impossible, but Duneka said that he would be quite willing to give Bliss the subscription rights in the Harper