

The Mark Twain Edition

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Mark Twain continues to be one of our best-read American authors. Copies of his works already printed number in the millions. *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, and *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* remain among the best sellers, and there is a renewed interest in such works as *Roughing It*, *Life on the Mississippi*, and *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, as well as in some of the short stories and satirical sketches. In short, Mark Twain for the foreseeable future promises to remain the leading spokesman for Americans of the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Yet there is not a single major work of Mark Twain's in print that is as he wrote it.

There has never been a complete and correct edition of his works, or of any one of his major works. Minor changes have crept into the texts through printers' errors and major changes through the ill-advised activities of his editors. Sometimes the changes seem almost incredible. Since 1916, for example, "The Mysterious Stranger" has been printed and reprinted as authentic Mark Twain. Yet the story as it stands is a manufacture of Twain's literary executor, Albert Bigelow Paine. Paine took most of the story from one manuscript (there are four basic manuscript versions of the story) and the last chapter from another manuscript. More than that, because he was afraid Twain's version would offend certain religious groups, he changed some of the events so that they would be more innocuous. There are changes in other works almost as serious. And the list of printers' errors in every major text is surprisingly long. Many of these errors change the meanings of the sentences.

Clearly an authoritative text is needed. Yet to put together such a text—a text that carries Twain's authority insofar as that authority is possible to determine—is a lengthy process. Such a process involves a number of steps that vary depending upon the circumstances. When a

manuscript is available it serves as a starting point. Normally it must first be collated with a copy of the first American edition since this edition is most likely to reflect the manuscript plus changes made by Twain in galley proof. But just any copy of the first edition will not do. Because of replating made necessary by breakage or disfigurement all copies of any first edition are not the same. Resetting and replating were frequently done hurriedly and carelessly. The editor must, therefore, determine which of sometimes many variants represents the first printing of the first edition and use only that for collating purposes. Fortunately, the *Bibliography of American Literature* is of some help in determining the first printing but it cannot be unreservedly relied upon.

Collating the manuscript and the first printing of the first edition is no simple task. In the instance of *Tom Sawyer* there are over 450 differences in phrasing alone between the manuscript and the first printing. Presumably most of these changes represent revisions Twain made on galley sheets. But it cannot be assumed that they all are, and thus each must be studied to see whether it may be the result of a lapse on the part of the typesetter.

Occasionally Twain made changes from one American edition to another, and there are differences possibly attributable to Twain between American and English, American and Canadian editions. Thus either the manuscript or the first printing, whichever is selected as copy text, must be collated with all other editions with which Twain could conceivably have had anything to do. In short, the business of discovering what Twain finally intended a work to be is a slow and arduous process. Yet it is one that should be undertaken, first out of fairness to Twain and second for the benefit of the millions of persons, both here and abroad, who will read Twain in the future and who will be interpreting American life and thought through his works.

All of this is simply a prelude to the announcement that the University of Iowa has become the headquarters for a new, authoritative edition of Mark Twain to be published by Harper and Row and to be edited by twenty-four scholars located in such universities as New York University, Pennsylvania, Duke, Texas, and California at Berkeley. Each of the twenty-four volumes in the new edition will contain a clear text, or one as close as possible to Twain's last intention. The text will be preceded by a short factual introduction telling the circumstances of composition and something of the immediate reception. Following the text in each volume will be a section of explanatory notes that will identify obscure persons, places, and objects. And following these notes will be

a section of textual notes in which the editor explains his principles and lists the important variants he has discovered—and rejected. This edition together with the *Mark Twain Papers*, now being edited at the University of California in Berkeley, will make available everything of importance that Twain wrote in accurate readable volumes.

Those in the Department of English at the University of Iowa who are working on the new edition are Professor John C. Gerber, Chairman of the Editorial Board, Associate Professor Paul Baender, Secretary of the Board, and Assistant Professor Warner Barnes, Director of the Center for Textual Study.

Although Iowa is fortunate in having first editions of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *Life on the Mississippi*, and *The Gilded Age*, gifts by *Friends of the Library* of any other of Mark Twain's first editions will be deeply appreciated. The following represent our most immediate needs:

The Innocents Abroad. Hartford, 1869.

Roughing It. Hartford, 1872.

A Tramp Abroad. Hartford, 1880.

The Prince and the Pauper. Boston, 1882.

The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson and the Comedy of Those Extraordinary Twins. Hartford, 1894.

Following the Equator. Hartford, 1897.

Christian Science. New York and London, 1907.