

tion of his mischances and adventures, his *TRUE* opinions of life as he has seen it and his *absolutely honest* deductions, comments and views upon the different phases of life that he passes through.

I do not remember ever having read an autobiography, a biography or a piece of fiction that told the *TRUTH*. Of course, I have read stuff such as Rousseau and Zola and George Moore and various memoirs that were supposed to be window-panes in their respective breasts; but, mostly, all of them were either liars, actors or posers. (Of course, I'm not trying to belittle the greatness of their literary expression.)

All of us have to be prevaricators, hypocrites and liars every day of our lives; otherwise the social structure would fall into pieces the first day. We must act in one another's presence just as we must wear clothes. It is for the best.

The trouble about writing the truth has been that the writers have kept in their minds one or another or all of three thoughts that made a handicap—they were trying either to do a piece of immortal literature, or to shock the public or to please editors. Some of them succeeded in all three, but they did not write the *truth*. Most autobiographies are insincere from beginning to end, and about the only chance for the truth to be told is in fiction.

It is well understood that "all the truth" cannot be told in print—but how about "nothing but the truth?" That's what I want to do.

I want the man who is telling the story to tell it—not as he would to a reading public or to a confessor—but something in this way. Suppose he were marooned on an island in mid-ocean with no hope of ever being rescued; and, in order to pass away some of the time he should tell a story *to himself*, embodying his adventure and experiences and opinions. Having a certain respect for himself (let us hope) he would leave out the "realism" that he would have no chance of selling in the market; he would omit the lies and self-conscious poses, and would turn out to his one auditor something real and true.

So, as truth is not to be found in history, autobiography, press reports (nor at the bottom of an H. G. Wells), let us hope that fiction may be the means of bringing out a few grains of it.

The "hero" of the story will be a man born and "raised" in a somnolent little Southern town. His education is about a common school one, but he learns afterward from reading and

life. I'm going to try to give him a "style" in narrative and speech—the best I've got in the shop. I'm going to take him through all the main phases of life—wild adventure, city, society, something of the "under world" and among many characteristic planes of the phases. I want him to acquire all the sophistication that experience can give him, and always preserve his individual honest *human* view and have him tell the *truth* about everything.

It is time to say now, that by the "truth" I don't mean the objectionable stuff that so often masquerades under the name. I mean true opinions, a true estimate of all things as they seem to the "hero." If you find a word or a suggestive line or sentence in any of my copy, you cut it out and deduct it from the royalties.

I want this man to be a man of natural intelligence, of individual character, absolutely open and broad minded; and show how the Creator of the earth has got him in a rat trap—put him here "willy nilly" (you know the Omar verse); and then I want to show what he does about it. There is always the eternal question from the Primal Source—"What are you going to do about it?"

Please don't think for the half of a moment that the story is going to be anything of an autobiography. I have a distinct character in my mind for the part, and he does not at all—

One evening a few years ago Brander Matthews and Francis Wilson were dining together at the Players Club of New York, when the former made the suggestion that they write a letter to Mark Twain. "But," objected Mr. Wilson, "we don't know where he is," for it was at a time when Mr. Clemens was away travelling somewhere. "Oh," said Professor Matthews, "that does not make any difference. It is sure to find him. I think he is some place in Europe so we had better put on a five-cent stamp." So the two sat down and composed a letter which they addressed to:

MARK TWAIN,

GOD KNOWS WHERE.

Within three weeks they received a reply from Mr. Clemens which said briefly: "He did." The letter had been sent by the New York Post Office to Harper and Brothers; thence to Chatto and Windus

of London; thence to a bank in Vienna, and from the bank to the small town in Austria in which Mark Twain happened to be staying.

By the way, in all that has been written about Mark Twain since his death we have seen no mention of the fact that he and Bret Harte once collaborated on a play entitled *Ah Sin, Heathen Chinnee*, which was presented on the New York stage. We asked the friend of Clemens and Harte who recently recalled the incident whether it had been a success. "Well," he replied, "it had a run of one consecutive week."

A writer in the London *Sketch* has an article entitled "The Bookshelf of Two Kings," the gist of which is that neither Edward VII nor his successor has had a very strong interest in literature. Novels, it is true, engaged a certain portion of King Edward's time, and Marie Corelli's fiction is popularly associated with the bookshelf of the royal residences. It is less generally known that Edward perused the more knotted pages of George Meredith. Before the master novelist had reached the height of his repute the King had read *The Egoist* and expressed a desire to meet the author. Thackeray and Dickens, according to the writer, were known personally to King Edward and the list of his literary friends was exceedingly long. One discovery he made without knowing the writer personally. When staying at Leigh Court he asked for a book to beguile possible hours of sleeplessness. Hugh Conway's *Called Back*, an obscurely issued book, was given him. He liked it, praised it, and caused it to be the most read novel of its year. All of which is very far from being impressive. His example, however, is one for monarchs to emulate rather than that of his royal mother. Queen Victoria's published journal contains some of the dreariest doggerel ever penned. Take the following typical passage from *Our Life in the Highlands*:

We got up at a quarter to six o'clock. We breakfasted. Mamma came to take leave of us; Alice and the baby were brought in, poor

little things, to wish us "good-bye." Then good Bertie came down to see us, and Vicky appeared as *voyageuse*, and was all impatience to go. At seven we set off with her for the railroad, Vicomtesse Canning and Lady Caroline Cocks in our carriage. A very wet morning. We got into the carriage again at Paddington and proceeded to Woolwich, which we reached at nine. Vicky was safely put into the boat, and then carefully carried on deck of the yacht by Renwick, the sergeant-footman, whom we took with us in the boat on purpose.

Mr. Clement K. Shorter writing in the London *Sphere* makes the comment: "Certainly the Edwardian period has produced great writers and has produced some startling literary reputations, notably those of Mr. George Bernard Shaw and Mr. Gilbert Chesterton."

"So far as actual accomplishment in literature is concerned," says the English *Bookman*, "it must be admitted that the nine years of Edward's reign look poor and meagre by comparison of the seven years of William IV or the first nine years of Victoria. To say nothing of older and equally or more famous writers who were then at the height of their fame, Robert Browning, Harrison Ainsworth, Captain Marryat, Dickens, and Carlyle published their earliest work under William's rule, and Tennyson and Elizabeth Barrett Browning their first books of moment; while the first nine years of Victoria, with Dickens, Carlyle, Wordsworth, Tennyson among the greatest of living writers, saw the appearance of the first books of Thackeray, Kingsley, Macaulay, Lever, Gladstone, Matthew Arnold, Charlotte Brontë, John Stuart Mill, Froude, Freeman, and Ruskin."

"Nearly all the most popular and the most important authors of the late reign were also among the most important and the most popular of the latter years of Victoria. One could make a very long and a notable list of these, but of poets, novelists, miscellaneous writers who have had their rise in Edward's time—how many are there? There is Chesterton; his first book dates a little farther back,