Mark Twain as Critic

Krause, Sydney J.

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Twain's addiction for strong-arm criticism did not dull the sensitive, appreciative side of his nature. On the contrary, a good case can be made for its having been enlivened by that criticism. It was, after all, because he was so negatively exacting that his praise hovered just short of the lyrical when he saw how steadily lucid, precise, and alive with images Howells' descriptive prose could be. Plainly, he was able to admire with the same passion that he hated. This is not to say that appreciation made him less critical—Macaulay, for example, was invoked in contraposition to Goldsmith—but rather that being hard to please increased his readiness to embrace the rare real thing. There was, of course, as I have pointed out earlier, much greatness (such as James's) to which he was crassly immune, and there were some minor lights upon whom his enthusiasm was wasted. However, Twain's admiration can by and large be trusted when it is not wholly detached from the hardheadedness of his grumbling, the habit of which, if anything, made him sharper than he might otherwise have been, more selective, and more prone to judge by lasting standards.

Another contribution of his experience as grumbler was that he did not hesitate to applaud writers who were experimenting with novelty of form and idea, as were, in their several ways, Edgar Watson Howe, Émile Zola, and Adolph Wilbrandt. On reading The Story of a Country Town, he was impressed by the attained sense of life, and only wished Howe had more faithfully persevered in his endeavor to portray the unchronicled realities of small-town America. In the case of Zola, whose sordidness had
stung the small, dark prude in him—and battened the Franco-phobe—Twain made the new a test of his own prejudices, and confessed that Zola's dim view of human nature illuminated and catalyzed certain of his repressions. With Wilbrandt's play, Der Meister von Palmyra, he entered so completely into the telescopic presentation of history that the curiously mystic and pessimistic lesson it adduced became a palpable symbol energized by the novelty of discovered knowledge. An interesting consequence of the revelation of Meister, with its deflation of pride and hope of progress, was that in discussing the play Twain's thinking seemed to gyrate from radical rebellion to a traditionalist despair that change could accomplish anything: an evil fate was the one certainty, stoicism the one course of honor.

The racking depression Twain had suffered in the aftermath of going broke and losing his dearest daughter had predisposed him to glorify Wilbrandt's paradigm of history. It was under the spell of the same general depression that in 1896, a few years before he saw the play, he wrote one of his infrequent tributes to a member of the Victorian establishment, Thomas Babington, Lord Macaulay, whom people by the end of the century were beginning to consider parochial, mannered, and old-fashioned. Wilbrandt's was generalized, ideal history. Macaulay's was real. It was drenched with the sights and smells and common sense of diurnal reality. Yet Macaulay, no less than Wilbrandt, gave Twain intimations of timelessness with which to shore up his intellectual defenses against the ravages of time. This meant a great deal to Twain, and, as with Howells, he was induced to eulogize Macaulay because he thought he was insufficiently esteemed.

Among the qualities that pleased Twain most, the realization of history as life stood highest. It is with variations on that achievement, as seen in certain works of Macaulay, Howells, Howe, Zola, and Wilbrandt, that this section of Twain's appreciative criticism will be concerned. Since his evaluations of Macaulay, Howe, and Zola were private, there was no reason for him to work obliquely through a critical persona. Similarly, as appreciation, by its very nature, needs no protective point of view, the persona was also proportionately less perceptible in his public approbation of Howells and Wilbrandt.
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II

If there was one writer Twain would rather have been other than himself, I believe it would have been Macaulay. He read and reread him early and late, in season and out, and never tired of what he called the "glittering pageantry" of his prose.1 "Macaulay is present," Twain observed, "when we follow the march of his stately sentences" (I A II 245). When George Otto Trevelyan’s Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay appeared in 1876, Twain discussed it before his Saturday Morning Club in Hartford. He quoted liberally from Macaulay’s essay on Bacon in "Is Shakespeare Dead?" in an attempt to show that Bacon was qualified to have written the plays, and he alluded to "Horatius at the Bridge" in A Connecticut Yankee (314). Particular favorites were Macaulay’s History of England and the essays on Warren Hastings and Robert Clive. He used a passage from the essay on Hastings in Following the Equator and commended the History in the journal from which he wrote that book. It is quite possible that Twain’s tributes to British colonial rule in FE, in some ways his most anti-imperialist, anti-occidental, and at times anti-British book, may owe something to his acquaintance with Macaulay’s idea that England had brought order, justice, education, and, in short, the true fruits of civilization to a barbarous and chaotic India—a judgment backed by Macaulay’s own laudable service there. Perhaps the best demonstration of the kind of appeal Macaulay had for Twain is to be inferred from his having come under Macaulay’s influence, both aesthetically and philosophically. A reading of the essays on Hastings and Clive inspired him to write a lyric and symbolic poem (no small feat for Twain). In addition, all three of Twain’s historical novels, The Prince and the Pauper, A Connecticut Yankee, and Joan of Arc, were composed on the Macaulayan theory that history should provide an imaginative vivification of the past. With reference to A Connecticut Yankee, he said, "I am only after the life of that day, that is all: to picture it; to try to get into it; to see how it feels & seems" (MTMF 258). Or, as he remarked about The Prince and the Pauper, "my idea is to afford a realizing sense

of the exceeding severity of the laws of that day by inflicting some of their penalties upon the king himself” (T-H I 291). He was trying, as Macaulay had, to offset the idealization and sentimentality of the historical romances, with which nineteenth-century historians felt themselves to be in competition. While working on *Joan*, for example, he at one point “tore up the fragment of history” he had written because it “sounded too much like a romance.”2 In *A Connecticut Yankee*, he specifically relied on the Whiggish concept of progress, which Macaulay had done so much to popularize, and on a moral interpretation of history which William Hartpole Lecky had directly inherited from Macaulay. There was a like equivalence in method, for in noting how he wanted to deal with history in the *Yankee*, Twain asserted that his main object (like Macaulay’s) had been to present a “contrast”; modern times being a commentary on ancient times, with the “juxtaposition emphasiz[ing] the salients of both” (MTMF 257f.).

All told, one would be hard put to find another writer who suited Twain more completely than Macaulay did. Merely to list some of the peculiar virtues and vices generally ascribed to Macaulay is to draw up a profile of Twain’s literary alter ego. Macaulay has been called a common-sense moralist and the very personification of Whiggery; a Philistine and hater of art (the prince of Philistines, according to Arnold), a man without sensibility, and, some believed, without spiritual idealism or refined sentiments either (Carlyle, as might be expected, said he lacked “vision”); an opinionated observer, a good hater, a fluent talker, a feared disputant, and expert at vituperation; a lover of details with a gift for graphic description, an excellent raconteur, the master of a lucid style having the flavor and ease of speech; an enemy of romance and theoretical philosophy; a writer who preferred experience to abstraction and scorned the speculative mind; a political liberal, an advocate of the cult of progress, a rationalist, a man of incurable prejudices; a partisan historian, who took no great trouble to conceal his opinions, who wrote history as if it were fiction, and who loved facts and was guilty of much inaccuracy in their use; and an imaginative literary

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critic who gave a lively impression of the writers he described, but did not much like writing criticism.

No doubt Twain was, before the turn of the century, as enchanted as any other “liberal” might have been with the informing thesis of the *History of England*, which, if it did not quite show, as charged, that God was on the side of the Whigs, had at least succeeded in tracing all of the blessings of nineteenth-century life back to the Glorious Revolution and its Lockean innovations. Moreover, in a manuscript in which he tried to work out the “laws” of history, Twain took up a doctrine that had been acted on by Macaulay, as well as Carlyle: the doctrine that, in Twain’s words, “to write a minute history of persons of all grades and callings, is the surest way to convey the intelligible history of the time.”

But the key artistic interest Macaulay had for Twain lay in his genius for transforming history into life, a gift which he thought had also empowered Howells to write an expressive description of Venice. Few of Twain’s experiences were so aesthetically satisfying as those in which he felt himself to be pervaded by the restored past, teeming with its former life and color. Realism in this exalted sense (over and above authenticity of details and the faithful representation of experience) had no higher calling for either Twain or Macaulay. Its importance in the total breadth of Twain’s concept of realism, which, as we have seen, could otherwise be rather narrow, has never really been appreciated.


4. It would be well to keep in mind that the broader view of realism that Twain appreciated for itself and in Macaulay’s work co-existed with his appreciation for the lesser aspects of realism, and that it was by no means a new-found interest with him. Apparently, it was influential in making his own past available to him for the uses of fiction. Reminiscences stirred by a letter from Will Bowen in 1870 put the Hannibal years before him as the embryonic basis of the world of Huck and Tom. “The fountains” of his “great deep” having been “broken up,” he said:

> The old life has swept before me like a panorama; the old days have trooped by in their old glory again; the old faces have looked out of the mists of the past; old footsteps have sounded in my listening ears; old hands have clasped mine; old voices have greeted me, & the songs I loved ages & ages ago have come wailing down the centuries! Heavens what eternities have swung their hoary cycles about us since those days were new! (*Letters to Will Bowen*, p. 17.)
realism of historical realization Twain projected in the meditative passages of *Following the Equator*. As he tried, for example, to account for the inscrutable fascination of India, in a period when he was more often morose than not, Twain alluded to a consciousness that the very pulsations of living history were all around him, that if India could not be called beautiful, it could cast a beguiling spell which one felt to be "*history*":

> it is that that affects you, a haunting sense of the myriads of human lives that have blossomed, and withered, and perished here, repeating and repeating and repeating, century after century, and age after age, the barren and meaningless process; it is this sense that gives to this forlorn, uncomely land power to speak to the spirit and make friends with it; to speak to it with a voice bitter with satire, but eloquent with melancholy. (II 153.)

Transcending Twain’s intuition here is the state of mind which induced it—i.e., his attitude towards history—and its ultimate source. This attitude, whether or not he was fully aware of it at this point, as he was at others, harks back directly to the most significant change in nineteenth-century historiography, which is none other than the change inaugurated by Macaulay. For it was in opposition to the method of classical eighteenth-century historians like Hume and Gibbon, who wanted to define broad historical movements, chart political changes, and characterize the tone and *Weltanschauung* of an age, that Macaulay both advocated and wrote a new imaginative history, where the emphasis fell on social history, the routine of daily life, and the interaction of the personalities of influential men. Above all, the Macaulayan method, as exemplified by Twain, produced a sensory awareness of the passage of man through time and of the particular things he touched and that touched him en route. In this way did the technical realism of details serve the larger realism at work in the recreation of history.

III

Macaulay’s concept of history and his reputation should be pursued a little further before we take fuller note of Twain’s enthusiasm for him, because Macaulay saw his own historical method as the historians’ hope for reclaiming a lost province that
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had been taken over by such brilliant usurpers as Sir Walter Scott. In this context, what Twain's separate remarks about Macaulay and Scott signify is that the former's history became the reagent of the latter's historical romances.

The Macaulayan concept of history as set forth in his essay on "History" (1828) is that it "begins in novel and ends in essay." Since it comes "under the jurisdiction of two hostile powers"—"the Reason and the Imagination"—instead of being shared between them, it has alternately fallen under "the sole and absolute dominion" of one or the other and consequently has sometimes been "fiction" and sometimes "theory." The fault of "modern" histories, he held, is that they tended to be dryly factual, and too general and theoretical. What ensued in his own times, Macaulay argued, was that the dominantly imaginative and, to his way of thinking, the superior species of history was falling by default into the hands of rank amateurs—the writers of historical romances. The example of Scott had become well-nigh overpowering: "Sir Walter Scott . . . has used those fragments of truth historians have scornfully thrown behind them in a manner which may well excite their envy." It is therefore necessary for "a truly great historian" to "reclaim those materials which the novelist has appropriated." Indeed, just prior to this statement, he had put the case more strongly: the historian should give "to truth those attractions which have been usurped by fiction."5

When he came to write his History of England from the Accession of James II many years later (the first volume appeared in 1848 and the last in 1861), Macaulay avowed that his aim had been "to write a history so popular in its appeal that it would supersede the latest novel on the tables of young ladies. . . ." And so vast was its success that that is just about what his

5. My italics. "History," Critical and Historical Essays (Boston, 1900), I, 235ff., 272-78, 281ff. The Critical and Historical Essays are in six volumes (X-XVI) of The Complete Writings of Lord Macaulay, in the Houghton, Mifflin Standard Library edition (Boston, 1900). In all references to the Essays, I use the symbol CHE and the subnumeration I to VI. The famous essay "History" was a review of Henry Neele's book, The Romance of History. Views similar to those here cited were set forth in Macaulay's review in the same year (1828) of Hallam's Constitutional History (CHE I 285ff.).
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*History* did. Although Macaulay never completely lost his large popular following, romantic critics with strong theoretical leanings—as, for example, Poe, Carlyle, and Emerson—were generally dismayed by his materialism and superficiality, finding him optimistic for the wrong reasons; whereas after the 1860’s there was a gradual waning in his once-dazzling popularity. Meanwhile, his slight favor among literary critics and the advent of a new breed of “scientific” historians led to an increasing scorn of his method, or rather of his seeming lack of a correct one. A definite trend against Macaulay was discernible in the 1880’s. Historians saw him as an example of how not to write history, and genteel critics objected that he could not comprehend “piety of mind.”

The decline in Macaulay’s reputation was one factor behind Twain’s defending him in the notebook diary he used for writing *Following the Equator*. Another factor was the specifically pietistic disapproval of Macaulay, an attitude which may have had some bearing on Twain’s directly contrasting Macaulay’s *History* with Goldsmith’s *Vicar* (his praise of the *History* was written on the verso of the diary page that contained his squib on Goldsmith). The library of the ship carrying him from India to Mauretius (where he would be reminded of the cloying *Paul et Virginie*) was to be saluted, he declared, both for its not having a copy of the *Vicar* (with its “long waste-pipe discharge of goody-goody

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6. Harper’s, for example, competing with five other editions, reported, after an initial sale of sixty thousand copies of the first two volumes of its edition: “Probably, within three months of this time, the sale will amount to two hundred thousand copies. No work, of any kind, has ever so completely taken our whole country by storm” (George Otto Trevelyan, *The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay* [London, 1893], p. 509). Not since *Waverley* had a book had such a sale. In 1861, when the entire five volumes were out, the two-hundred-thousand-copy figure was reached within a few months (Hart, *The Popular Book*, p. 116).

7. Emerson held that Macaulay “explicitly teaches that good means good to eat, good to wear, material commodity . . .” (*English Traits* [Boston, 1903], p. 247).


9. Said James Cotter Morrison in his *Macaulay*: “We never leave him conscious that we have been raised into a higher tone of feeling, chastened and subdued into humility, courage, and sacrifice” (‘*English Men of Letters*”; New York, 1883], p. 55).
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puerilities and dreary moralities") and for its having a copy of Macaulay’s History, in reading which one became oblivious to the present ills of the world. A third factor was that historical romances, with which Macaulay had originally vied, were mushrooming anew in the nineties and their extravagance seemed more flagrant than ever. In particular, Twain had made some notes on several of Stanley Weyman’s historical romances, which he read on the next leg of his sea voyage, on leaving Mauretius; and though he was entertained by Weyman (the English Dumas), he felt that he was careless with facts and had his Frenchmen pretentiously behaving like Englishmen. Furthermore, according to Twain, those who criticized Macaulay were much like those who praised Goldsmith, in that it would take a person with a fairly dull mind, or someone who had not really read them, to do either. This is his statement on the History, the ideal of absorption it embodies, and the absorbing reading it affords:

[one can say a] hearty good word for even this poor smirking, sniveling, hypocritical little library; for it has Macaulay’s England; & a library can not justly be called dull which has that in it. In our day people say its style is too studied, too precise, too trim, ornate, dress-paradish; but how do they find that out? For the moment one opens any volume of the five, at any place in the volume, he sinks into a [cosy trance of enjoyment] into profound unconsciousness of everything this worldly—flights of time, [duties, suffering neglect] & waiting duties, the [pangs] [usurpation] pains of disease, of hunger [& thirsts], the [grievses] burdens of life, the encroachments, the insurts of age,—everything vanishes out of his consciousness except the [happy & satisfied sense of being entertained; entertained pungent & pervasive tingling] sense of being pervasively content, satisfied, happy. I have read that History a [good many] number of times, & I believe [it has no dull places in it].

10. Twain alluded to The Red Cockade (1896) and Under the Red Robe (1894). His criticism was deleted from the FE manuscript, 1593f., Berg; in the published text the corresponding place from which it was cut was II 331. Other novels he mentioned reading on the trip were Stevenson’s Prince Otto (1885), Henry Kingsley’s Geoffry Hamlyn (1859), Israel Zangwill’s Master (1895), and Marcus Clarke’s For the Term of His Natural Life (1874). He disliked the first two and liked the last two (Unpublished Notebook No. 29 I [January–April, 1896], 3-5).

11. FE MS, 1549, Berg (Copyright ©1967, Mark Twain Company). Here as in other manuscript material brackets indicate cancellations. Twain’s
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In coming under the influence of Macaulay’s essays on Clive and Hastings, Twain merged his own bias with Macaulay’s and built creatively on it, both in subject and in the structuring of ideas. This occurred in a poem and in the Indian section of Following the Equator.

It was not just India and Macaulay separately that had been entrancing to Twain, but also Macaulay on India—that is, on British rule in India. Whenever Twain wrote about a place he visited, he usually did his homework and read what the “authorities” had had to say about it, so that he could poke around for some impertinent details to embarrass them with. Not so with Macaulay and the heroic portrait he had drawn of Warren Hastings, a man whose reputation had been gravely impaired by Burke’s harrowing denunciation during the impeachment proceedings mounted by the Tories. Even when, playing devil’s advocate, Twain, in 1901, put the worst face on the activities of Hastings and the East India Company, he did so in order to make a searingly ironic comparison between the charges Burke had heaped upon Hastings—without regard for extenuating circumstances—and the fact that there was no Burke to press similar, overdue charges against Richard Croker and Tammany Hall,

reason for printing his opinion of The Vicar and withholding his opinion of Macaulay is partly that he wanted to be ironic—he loathed the boat and its library, and so would rather praise it for what it lacked than what it had—and partly structural, for the excitement of India, with which he had associated Macaulay, was now behind him and he was picking up where he had left off in Australia, with sardonic comments on “civilization.”

Macaulay, interestingly, had about as little use for Goldsmith as Twain had. In his Britannica article on Goldsmith (1856), Macaulay noted that “he knew nothing accurately”; and he did the same kind of job on “The Deserted Village” that Twain would do on The Luck of Roaring Camp, criticizing inconsistencies in Goldsmith’s description, where it bore “no resemblance to the originals.” Macaulay also disliked The Vicar as much as Twain did. He thought its “fable” was “one of the worst that ever was constructed,” that it was “wanting in probability and consistency,” and that its conclusion was “a tangle of absurdities” (Miscellanies [Standard Library ed.; Boston, 1900], III, 43-46).
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whose guilt, unlike Hastings’, was a dead certainty. 12 On the whole, Twain rather took to heart Macaulay’s brilliant vindication of Clive and Hastings against their stay-at-home maligners. 13 Both men had had to stand up to charges of corruption and venality in their declining years, with Clive broken in health and Hastings bankrupted by the effort to defend himself, when almost singlehandedly, as Macaulay had it, each man had risen from the rank of clerk to subdue the entire subcontinent, institute political and fiscal reforms, and hold India for England while she was losing her American colonies.

When Twain, in 1893, under the shadow of financial failure, read aloud to his wife and daughter from Macaulay’s essays on Clive and Hastings, he brooded over “how great they were and how far they fell,” and conjured up “an imaginary case . . . of some old demented man mumbling of his former state” (Biog III 1499). As Twain described the man and repeated some of his mumblings, Livy and Susy asked that he write the situation up, and he did, producing a poem called “The Derelict.”

The importance of the poem (outside of its biographical implications) is that, while scarcely remarkable as poetry, the basic allegory contains a pattern implicit in the essays on Clive and Hastings. Into them Macaulay had injected a familiar dramatic formula in compensation for the insipid biographies he was reviewing: the rise of a seeming nondescript to high position and his fall when, after honorable service, he has to withstand charges

12. In “Edmund Burke on Croker and Tammany.” This was first presented as a speech before the Organization Committee of the Acorns (a reform movement in New York municipal politics) at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel on October 17, 1901, and shortly thereafter it appeared as a fifteen-page pamphlet.


Macaulay was not an uncritical adulator of his subjects. He thought Gleig’s book was full of “undiscerning panegyric,” and he would not gloss over the fact that Hastings did not have a stainless character, having engaged, as he did, in such devious practices as putting out the British army to the Nabob of Bengal for hire, and conspiring with Chief Justice Impey to remove a political enemy. The essay on Clive appears in CHE IV 314–406; the essay on Hastings in CHE V 114–242.
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of malfeasance. It was typical of Macaulay to make history yield a compelling literary motif, and rather typical of Twain to be sensitively aroused by such a motif. He constructed a metaphor that might express the Macaulayan protagonist’s rebuke to his detractors and memorialize a heroic moment in history. On a more specific level, the contrast he developed exactly parallels the content of the passage from the Hastings essay cited in Following the Equator, wherein Macaulay had noted how “the natives” had turned on Hastings when he was down. The basic situation is unfolded in Twain’s opening stanza:

You sneer, you ships that pass me by,
Your snow-pure canvas towering proud!
You traders base!—why, once such fry
Paid reverence, when like a cloud
Storm-swept I drove along,
    My Admiral at post, his pennon blue,
Faint in the wilderness of sky, my long
Yards bristling with my gallant crew,
My ports flung wide, my guns displayed,
    My tall spars hid in bellying sail!
—You struck your topsails then, and made
Obeisance—now your manners fail.14

14. Paine published the first stanza with a few minor changes (Biog III 1499f.). All but the last stanza of the poem was given by Jervis Langdon in his pamphlet, Samuel Langhorne Clemens: Some Reminiscences and Some Excerpts from Letters and Unpublished Manuscripts. The last stanza is supplied by Arthur L. Scott. Here, then, is the rest of the poem (Scott’s text, On the Poetry of Mark Twain, pp. 105–7), in which the theme and metaphor of the first stanza are further developed:

Well, go your way, and let me dream
Of days long past, when I, like you,
Was strong and young, and life did seem
Made all for joy; when I, like you,
Did skim the sea all bravely clad,
    And whether skies in splendor shone,
Or palled the world in gloom, was glad:
    O golden days, where are ye flown!

For thirty years I served the wars
    And trod the deep in sinful pride
Begot of my brave battle-scars
    And cherished stains where heroes died.
Remotest oceans knew my fame,
    Remotest lands paid court to me
With thundering guns and spouting flame
    And welcoming hosts on bended knee.

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On rereading “The Derelict” some sixteen years after he wrote it, Twain remarked, “it is like reading another man’s work.” He was quite aware of having extrapolated Macaulay’s dramatic method along with his subject: “There is no figure for the storm-beaten human drift as the derelict—such men as Clive and Hastings could only be imagined as derelicts adrift, helpless, tossed by every wind and tide” (Biog III 1500).15

For thirty years. Then came a day
When all my pride full low was laid,
And all my honor men did slay
As ’twere a worthless thing. They said
“This ship is old, and fails apace;
“Her form is warp’d, her spars astrain,
“Her sails but rags—it were disgrace
“To let her bear the flag again.”

The ingrates sold me! and I sank
From that high service of the State
To sordid commerce; taking rank
With your sort; bearing freight
Of hams and soap and corn and hay,
And manned by sloven longshore clods
Profaning decks where once held sway
The Nelson breed of warrior gods.

Some while I wistful watched to see
If my wide world had me forgot:
If fleets would dip their flags to me,
And fortresses salute. O lot
Full hard to bear was mine! No soul
Remembered me! No topsail strikes,
No color dips! My humble rôle
Now ’twas, to dip to these, and strike my kites!

Well, thirty years I wrought in trade,
And alway shabbier I grew;
And then once more I fell a grade,
And carried swine—as freight and crew.
Full forty years I bore this cross
And led this life of nameless shame,
Then foundered in a happy gale,
And derelict became.

The years they come and the years they go,
As I drift on the lonely sea,
Recking no more than the winds that blow,
What is in store for me;
For my shames are over, my soul at peace,
At peace from loathsome strife,
And I wait in patience for my release
From the insult of this world’s life.

15. For the personal reference of his sense of being a “derelict,” one should consult his letter to Howells of January 22, 1898. It was because he and
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To return now to *Following the Equator*, one finds it a strangely irreverent book for Twain to have been writing so close upon the completion of his most reverent book, *Joan of Arc*. The differing treatments of history in these two works are equally surprising. In the one, he had made a typically Macaulayan heroine of his central figure, a valiant young derelict who, glowing with the finest spirit of her age, was beset by a pettifogging officialdom. In the other, the writing of which was therapy for his sorrow over losing Susy, he dethroned the Whig concept of history as a record of "Bright Improvement" (I 87) and kicked the dust of his disillusionment over it. His attack on "civilization" could not have been more scathing. It began at Hawaii, the first Pacific landfall (where he observed that, thanks to Captain Cook and American missionaries, the island paradise had exchanged its native evils for those of civilization, which had decimated its population); and the attack deepened as it spread through the accounts of sadism in the Australian "convict dumps," the annihilation of the peaceable Tasmanians, the murder lust of Thuggee cultists and other religious horrors in India; until, about two thirds of the way around the world, Twain could hardly stand it any more, and sighed like an aged Huck Finn: "If I had my way I would sail on forever and never go to live on solid ground again" (II 314). In the Indian section, by far the most complex part of the book, sheer unassimilated bewilderment resulted in contradictory reactions and a problem in structure. To resolve it Twain availed himself, interestingly, of the one rhetorical device most commonly used by Macaulay and of the realistic, worldly-wise bias of his essays on Clive and Hastings.

In brief, the problem was that with almost everything he saw Twain could at one and the same moment be both revolted and stirred to the depths of his being. In the earlier Indian chapters, however, he was decidedly more stirred than revolted, at times almost against his will and assuredly against the major emphasis of previous sections of the book, in which he had positively refused to find anything good in any society. As he looked back on Bombay during composition and at some "distance" in time, his

Howells had each lost a daughter that Twain said they were "a pair of derelicts" (*T-H* II 670).
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mind reeled with visual imagery, in which the past became all too hectically present, so that he was powerless to give it meaning: "I seem to have a kaleidoscope at my eye; and I hear the clash of the glass bits as the splendid figures change, and fall apart, and flash into new forms, figure after figure, and with the birth of each new form I feel my skin crinkle and my nerve-web tingle with a new thrill of wonder and delight" (II 37).

His first attempt to organize his impressions and deal with their incoherence was deceptively simple. The "remembered pictures" floated past him "in a sequence of contrasts," and he merely put down the conjoined marvels and horrors in sets of antitheses:

This is indeed India; the land of dreams and romance, of fabulous wealth and fabulous poverty, of splendor and rags, of palaces and hovels, of famine and pestilence . . . the country of a hundred nations and a hundred tongues, of a thousand religions and two million gods, cradle of the human race, birthplace of human speech, mother of history, grandmother of tradition, whose yesterdays bear date with the mouldering antiquities of the rest of the nations. . . . (II 26.)

Twain would come to find, as we have seen earlier, that India was more than the "mother of history." She was, in an appropriately Hindu setting, its perpetual avatar. Throughout the Indian journey that was one of the main things her contradictions seemed to mean to Twain, and, for him, to experience them was to get the feel of living history. Not only was Twain's idea the object of Macaulayan historiography, its very form—the summational juxtaposition of antithetical qualities—was Macaulay's trademark, as may be gathered, for example, from the way he reacted to an alarmingly callous murder. It sounded to him like "a terribly realistic chapter out of the 'Arabian Nights,' a strange mixture of simplicities and pieties and murderous practicalities, which brought back the forgotten days of Thuggee and made them live again; in fact, even made them believable" (II 76).

However quietly Twain may at first seem to have appropriated the famed Macaulayan antithesis, if one looks carefully enough, his borrowing becomes more and more apparent. In no other part
of the book is his style so conspicuously punctuated by antitheses. And, with respect to content, there are a number of interpretive references in Macaulay’s essays on Clive and Hastings that are echoed by Twain with varying degrees of specificity—such as that Bengal was Eden-like and its people languid and “thoroughly fitted ... for a foreign yoke” (CHE IV 344f.; FE II 217, 243); that the cruelty of the Surjah Dowlah, who was responsible for the Black Hole, brought on Clive’s revenge and ultimately inclined him to use devious strategems to counter Eastern deviousness (CHE IV 347-53; FE II 218f.); that Britain’s veracity formed the backbone of her oriental empire (CHE IV 362; FE II 217), while the Indian was born to deceit (CHE V 130, 149; FE II 80) and the Indian nobility to treachery and luxury (CHE V 188; FE II 51f., 66-68); that the sacred Benares was honeycombed with superstition, hypocrisy, and commercialism (CHE V 179; FE, chaps. lx, lxi, lxii); and that the Indians, a child-like race (CHE V 201; FE II 27f.), benefited from British rule (CHE V 201; FE II 202). Twain’s criticism of the educational system in India also resembled Macaulay’s criticism of the legal system (CHE V 168f.; FE II 298-307). More than anything else, though, one notices the regularity with which Twain represented his ambivalence in antitheses, eventually needing only catchwords from them to categorize his feelings (see FE II 243).

Not all of Twain’s Macaulayan antitheses were the same, however. The second such full-scale catalogue of balancing contrasts was expressly different from the awed tone of the first one. The change was in part due to experience and the return of Twain’s earlier mood; in part it may also have been due to certain hints derived from Macaulay. The catalogue was followed by assessments of Hastings and of British rule that were clearly taken from Macaulay and that repeat his antithetical form; and its tone harks back to that of a quote from the essay on Hastings which Twain had used shortly after the first catalogue. To some extent, therefore, Macaulay would seem to have given Twain a basis for the more consistently realistic and morally critical tone of the latter parts of his Indian section, which brought it into line with other sections of his book.
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The second catalogue has the function of moral stock-taking at Allahabad ("Godville") preliminary to the recklessly irreverent chapters on Benares, the site of priapus worship and pestilential holy waters, and also, as Twain sees it, of the ultimate in antitheses: a religiosity whose intensity is matched only by the smell of the noisome sump where its rites are held. In anticipation of this satire, the unfavorable members of Twain’s antitheses provide a destructive comment on each of the more favorable members, and vice versa:

It is the Land of Contradictions, the Land of Subtlety and Superstition, the Land of Wealth and Poverty, the Land of Splendor and Desolation, the Land of Plague and Famine, the Land of the Thug and the Poisoner, and of the Meek and the Patient, the Land of the Suttee, the Land of the Unreinstatable Widow, the Land where All Life is Holy, the Land of Cremation, the Land where the Vulture is a Grave and a Monument, [and] the Land of the Multitudinous Gods. . . . (II 160.)

In the Benares sequence Twain set aside all pretense of wonderment over India, except in the ironic sense. (Adding to the idea of the holiness of life, for example, he said that “all life seems to be sacred except human life” [II 197]). It is at this point that he thinks again of Hastings. In his summary of Hastings’ activities at Benares, wonderment over the feats of small bands of courageous Englishmen replaces his wonderment over India. Relating the episode of Hastings’ collecting a huge fine from the Rajah of Benares with no more than a few hundred native troops and three young English lieutenants under his command, Twain marvelled at his sang-froid:

The incident lights up the Indian situation electrically, and gives one a vivid sense of the strides which the English had made and the mastership they had acquired in the land since the date of Clive’s great victory. In a quarter of a century, from being nobodies, and feared by none, they were become confessed lords and masters, feared by all, sovereigns included, and served by all, sovereigns included. It makes the fairy tales sound true. (II 200f.)

Although Twain went considerably beyond Macaulay in elaborating Hastings’ amazing feats in Benares and probably did not use Macaulay as his immediate source for this passage, his conclusions are Macaulay’s, gotten either at first or second hand;
and along with them, he also took over Macaulay's formulaic antithesis: a negative idea (A) is followed by a positive one (B), and then another positive one (C) is balanced by a negative one (D) that supports (C): "Some of [Hastings'] acts have left stains upon his name which can never be washed away, but he saved to England the Indian Empire, and that was the best service that was ever done to the Indians themselves, those wretched heirs of a hundred centuries of pitiless oppression and abuse" (II 202).

In terms of narrative method, the Macaulayan antithesis gave Twain a means of imposing the symmetry of historical perspective upon the disorder of recalcitrant, and often contradictory, facts. He got the feeling of having seen the totality of human experience, and of having encompassed the whole moral gamut. It was in this connection that the Macaulayan viewpoint seems to have been one of the first correctional influences, along with personal experience, on Twain's early attitude towards India. He was faced with the complex and structurally disruptive problem that he should elsewhere have found civilization to be only a more complicated and often more dread barbarism than the one it replaced; whereas in India, under an equable British surveillance, he seemed to reverse himself, finding native barbarities to be infinitely worse, but the culture infinitely more attractive, than occidentalism. What Macaulay supplied was a more realistic appraisal of the Indian character, which was more in keeping with Twain's disillusioning principle that human nature was pretty much the same the world over. The immediate provocation for his going to Macaulay was that it seemed utterly incomprehensible to him that mild-natured Indians could ever have been Thugs, and that there should be enough of that murderous spirit left among them "to keep it darkly interesting" (II 80). Finding it difficult even to believe the newspaper accounts of Indian depravity, he remembered that "Macaulay has a light-throwing passage upon this matter in his great historical sketch of Warren Hastings, where he is describing some effects which followed the temporary paralysis of Hastings' powerful government brought about by Sir Philip Francis and his party." The passage Twain then quotes describes a kind of moral baselessness that Twain was particularly averse to and which had in-
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spired his poem on the derelict: those who had formerly quailed before a great man fell upon him when he was deprived of some of his power. This is the quoted passage:

The natives considered Hastings as a fallen man; and they acted after their kind. Some of our readers may have seen, in India, a cloud of crows pecking a sick vulture to death—no bad type of what happens in that country as often as fortune deserts one who has been great and dreaded. In an instant all the sycophants, who had lately been ready to lie for him, to forge for him, to pander for him, to poison for him, hasten to purchase the favor of his victorious enemies by accusing him. An Indian government has only to let it be understood that it wishes a particular man to be ruined, and in twenty-four hours it will be furnished with grave charges, supported by depositions so full and circumstantial that any person unaccustomed to Asiatic mendacity would regard them as decisive. It is well if the signature of the destined victim is not counterfeited at the foot of some illegal compact, and if some treasonable paper is not slipped into a hiding-place in his house (II 80f.; CHE V 149.)

It may seem odd that Macaulay should have had to give Twain an ad hoc lesson in realism, but that was no small part of his appeal. As Harry Hayden Clark suggested, Macaulay’s democratic spirit “combined with his belief in material progress and common-sense intellectualism, all imbibed by a reading public running into millions, must have constituted a considerable force for the rise of realism in America.”