

# TWAIN'S PLAN TO BEAT THE COPYRIGHT LAW

## Will Run Autobiography in New Editions of His Old Works

### TO PUT PIRATES TO ROUT

#### His Task as a Lobbyist Finished, So He Will Return to New York To-day.

*Special to The New York Times.*

WASHINGTON, Dec. 11.—Mark Twain has the copyright law beaten to a frazzle. It is from pure altruism, pure interest in authorship as a profession, that he is here booming the Copyright Extension bill; it doesn't affect him. He has a scheme which puts his children beyond the reach of want till they shall be old ladies and makes the present copyright law look like a very sick and discomfited pirate, indeed.

The weapon whereby Mark Twain has vanquished the copyright law is his much-heralded autobiography. Hitherto the manner of publication of that work has been shrouded in mystery. It has been given out that it would not be published in book form or published at all in its entirety until after Mark Twain's death. He consented to the publication of a few extracts in *The North American Review*, where it is now running.

Mark Twain looks upon the copyright law as pure robbery. He believes that it is not designed in the interest of the public, but is simply a mechanism whereby after the author has enjoyed the fruits of his labor for forty-two years his property can be taken from him and handed over to a lot of publishers who had nothing to do with it. He considers it a law for the robbery of an author's children in the interest of the publishers. This is a tolerably conservative statement of his views—a radical statement of them would cause this issue of *THE TIMES* to be excluded from the mails.

For years Mark Twain has devoted his intellect to the question how to beat this law, how to foil this robbery, how to insure to his children the profit of their father's labor, and prevent it from being handed over by the Government to some publishers who have never done anything for Mark.

#### How the Scheme Is Worked.

And he has devised a way. He has written between a quarter and half a million words of his autobiography, and is adding to it continually. As soon as the copyright expires on one of his books Mark Twain or his executors will apply for a new copyright on the book, with a portion of the autobiography run as a footnote. For example, when the copyright on "Tom Sawyer" expires, a new edition of that book will be published. On each page a rule will be run about two-thirds of the way down the page, and below these lines will be printed the autobiography, or so much of it as is designed for publication in that volume. About one-third of this new edition of "Tom Sawyer" will be autobiography, separated from the old text only by the rules or lines. The same course will be followed with each book, as the copyright expires.

So far as possible the part of the autobiography will be germane to the book in which it appears. For instance, the part which is printed with "Innocents Abroad" will be mostly that section which relates to the trip of the Innocents and to Mark Twain's other European visits. The part printed with "Tom Sawyer" will be made up chiefly of Mark Twain's early life in the little Missouri town where he, the real Tom Sawyer, lived. The part printed with "Roughing It" will consist largely if not entirely of the author's life in the West.

All arrangements and provisions for the carrying out of this plan, which Mark Twain means as seriously as any man ever meant anything, have been made, and long after his death the autobiography will continue to appear in this form. It is not true that no part will be published in his lifetime. If he is living in 1910, and he certainly looks as if he intended to be alive and lusty then, the first part of the autobiography will appear in that year, for in 1910 the copyright on his first book, "Innocents Abroad," will expire. It is true that "The Jumping Frog" was published first, but that was only a collection of sketches not lending itself to Mark Twain's present purpose. The copyright on "Innocents Abroad" will expire late in that year, and the new edition will appear as soon as it does.

A new copyright can be obtained on each of these books. Of course it will not entirely prevent piracy, but Mark Twain figures that it will vitiate the sale of editions which do not contain the autobiography and make them worthless. He calculates that it will be as difficult to sell an edition of "Innocents Abroad" which does not contain any of the autobiography as it would be to sell an edition which contained only half or two-thirds of the chapters in the original "Innocents Abroad."

#### Got the Idea from Scott.

He is confirmed in this by the experience of Sir Walter Scott, from whom he got the germ of his idea. Scott kept his copyrights alive by publishing new editions with commentaries. The result was that all editions which did not contain the commentaries were a drug on the market; nobody would buy them. Mark Twain is certain that what was done with mere commentaries can be done in a much surer fashion with an autobiography.

There is no compunction in Mark Twain's mind for the dismay his scheme will spread among the publishers. He holds that they are waiting for his copyrights to expire to rob his daughters, and that after much thought he has devised a way to save his daughters. About its success he has no doubt in the world, and he has planned its execution in the most methodical and elaborate way. He believes his scheme will insure a copyright of eighty-four years instead of forty-two, and, as he said the other day: "The children are all I am interested in; let the grandchildren lock out for themselves."

He finished his legislative work in behalf of the Copyright bill to-day and will return to New York to-morrow morning.

"My duties as an occasional, unsalaried, professional lobbyist are at an end for the present," he said.

He spent the day seeing Senators, Mr. Lodge having turned over his committee room for the purpose, as Mr. Cannon had turned over his own room yesterday. In the afternoon he and Albert Bigelow Paine, his secretary, went out to Rock Creek Cemetery for a drive.

#### Strangers Paw Him.

His stay here has been a sort of triumph. Wherever he has gone crowds of people have hurled themselves upon him to shake his hand. He cannot appear in the lobby of the Willard without becoming instantly the centre of a swarm of men and women, strangers to him, who fairly paw him in the exuberance of their joy.

This morning he registered his opinion of the elaborate thingumbobs out of which one has to pour cream in high-toned hotels.

"Paine," he said, after he had tried to pour some cream into his cup and had landed it in the saucer, "Damn this—damn—Paine, I am frightfully short of adequate profanity."