



MARK TWAINE'S

THE FACTS CONCERNING THE RECENT
CARNIVAL OF CRIME
IN CONNECTICUT

ADAPTED BY: JEROME TILLER ILLUSTRATED BY: MARC JOHNSON-PENCOCK

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“Mark Twain’s The Facts Concerning the Recent
Carnival of Crime in Connecticut”

Adapted by Jerome Tiller

Illustrated by Marc Johnson-Pencook

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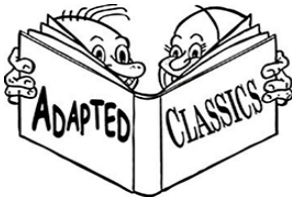
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(AND OLDSTERS)

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PREFACE

This is an adapted version of a story written by Mark Twain, one of the world's all-time greatest authors. Some changes (paragraph breaks, rearrangements, minor additions and omissions, etc.) were made to accommodate the illustration of characters and critical scenes in the story. Some changes (additions, omissions, word choice, word order, etc.) were made to expand its accessibility and appeal, keeping modern youth in mind. No change was made with the notion it would improve the text or the story.

The original version is a classic—please make a point to read it sooner or later. You are bound to enjoy it when you do!

Among other places, the original version of The Facts Concerning the Recent Carnival of Crime in Connecticut can be found at:

<http://www.gutenberg.org/>



This morning as I put a match to my cigar, Aunt Mary came to mind. I was hungry to see her again. Outside of my own household, she was the person I loved and honored most in all the world. She had been my boyhood's idol, and time had not dislodged her from her pedestal. Rather, it had only justified her right to be there and placed her dethronement permanently among the impossibilities.

Her influence over me was so strong that long after everybody else's "do-stop-smoking" had ceased to affect me in the slightest degree, Aunt Mary still could stir my dormant conscience into faint signs of life whenever she mentioned my smoking habit.

But all things have their limit in this world. A happy day came at last when even Aunt Mary's words about smoking could no longer move me. That day arrived during her visit one winter ago, and I was more than glad it did; for when the sun had set on that happy day, the one thing that could mar my enjoyment of my aunt's company was gone. The remainder of her stay with us that winter was in every way a delight. Of course, even after that blessed day she pleaded with me to quit my hurtful habit just as earnestly as she ever had, but to no purpose whatever. The moment she opened the subject, I at once became calmly, peacefully, contentedly indifferent—absolutely unbudgingly indifferent. Consequently, I could not have enjoyed my pet vice more if my gentle tormentor had been a smoker herself, and an advocate of the practice.

As I smoked my cigar while recalling these things, the morning mail came in. Quite coincidentally, the first envelope I noticed was addressed in Aunt Mary's handwriting. The sight of it sent a thrill of pleasure through and through me. I easily guessed what I should find in her letter. I opened it. Good—just as I expected; she was coming! Coming this very day, too, and by the morning train; I might expect her any moment.

“Ah, what a wonderful life,” I said to myself as I launched a smoke ring into the air and watched it sail away. “I am so thoroughly happy and content now, that if my most pitiless enemy could appear before me at this moment, I would freely right any wrong I may have done him.”

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Straightaway the door opened, and a shriveled, shabby, itty-bitty man entered. He was not more than two feet high. He seemed to be about forty years old. Every feature and every inch of him was a trifle out of shape; and so while you could not put a finger upon any particular part and say, 'this is a conspicuous deformity', any spectator would perceive that this little person was a deformity as a whole—a vague, general, evenly blended, nicely adjusted deformity.

There was a fox-like cunning in the face and the sharp little eyes, and also alertness and malice. And yet, this vile bit of human rubbish seemed to bear a sort of remote and ill-defined resemblance to me! It was dully perceptible in the form and face, and even the clothes, gestures, manner, and attitudes of the creature. He was a far-fetched, dim suggestion of a burlesque upon me—a caricature of me in little. Two things about him struck me most unpleasantly: he was covered all over with a fuzzy, greenish mold, such as one sometimes sees upon mildewed bread, and he was sprouting fungi! The sight of him was nauseating.

He stepped along with a chipper air, and flung himself into a doll's chair in a very free-and-easy way, without waiting to be asked. He tossed his hat into the waste-basket. He picked up my old chalk pipe from the floor, gave the stem a wipe or two on his knee, filled the bowl from the tobacco-box at his side, and said to me in a tone of pert command: "Gimme a match!"

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I blushed to the roots of my hair, partly with anger, but mainly because it seemed to me that his whole performance was an exaggeration of conduct I had sometimes been guilty of myself. I wanted to thrash him for that mockery, but a strange sense of being under his control forced me to obey his order.

He applied the match to my pipe, took a thoughtful whiff or two, and remarked, in an irritatingly familiar way: "Seems to me it's devilish odd weather for this time of year."

I flushed again in anger and humiliation, for the language he used was just like some that I have uttered in my day. Moreover, he spoke in a tone of voice and with a drawl that seemed to deliberately distort my style. Now there is nothing that so disturbs me as a mocking imitation of my slow, drawling speech. I spoke up sharply and said:

"Look here, you miserable ash-cat! You will have to pay a little more attention to your manners or I will throw you out of the window!"

The despicable creature smiled a smile of malicious content and security. Puffing a whiff of smoke toward me with contempt, he said, in a still more elaborate drawl: "Come—go gently now. And don't put on too many airs with your betters."

This cool snub grated me all over. But it also seemed to conquer me for a moment. The measly one looked me over for awhile with his weasel eyes and then said in a sneering way:

“You turned a poor man away from your door this morning, didn’t ya?”

I replied harshly: “Perhaps I did and perhaps I didn’t. How do you know?”

“Well, I know. It doesn’t matter how I know.”

“Very well. Suppose I did turn a hobo away from the door—what of it?”

“Oh, nothing in particular. Only you lied to him.”

“I didn’t! That is, I—”

“Yes. Yes, you did. You lied to him.”

I felt a guilty pang. In truth, I had felt guilty forty times before that poor man had walked a block from my door. Still, I made a show of feeling slandered, saying: “This is a baseless insult. I said to the man—”

“There—hold on. You were about to lie again. I know what you said to him. You said the cook was gone and there was nothing left from breakfast. Two lies. You knew the cook was behind the door and you knew there were plenty of provisions behind her.”





This astonishing accuracy silenced me, and it filled me with wondering speculations, too. How could he have gotten his information? Of course he could have spoken with the man, but by what sort of magic could he have found out about the cook concealed behind the door?

Now the mini-man spoke again: "It was rather pitiful, rather small, of you to refuse to read that poor young woman's story the other day and give her your opinion on its literary value. And she had come so far and with so much hope."

I felt like a dog! And I had felt so every time the thing had recurred to my mind, I may as well confess. I flushed hotly and said: "Look here, have you nothing better to do than prowl around prying into other people's business? Did that girl tell you that?"

"Never mind whether she did or not. The main thing is that you did a mean thing. And you felt ashamed of it afterward. Aha! You feel ashamed of it now!"

He said this with a sort of devilish glee. With fiery earnestness I responded:

"I told that girl, in the kindest, gentlest way, that I could not deliver judgment upon anyone's written work because an individual's verdict was worthless. I might underrate a work of high merit and lose it to the world, or I might overrate a trashy production and open the way

for it to be inflicted upon the world. I told her that the great, general public was the only jury competent to sit in judgment upon a literary effort, and therefore it would be best to lay her work before the public at the outset, since in the end it must stand or fall by their decision anyway."

"Yes, you said all that. So you did, you juggling, small-souled shuffler! And yet when the happy hopefulness faded out of that poor girl's face, when you saw her slowly sneak beneath her shawl the scroll she had so patiently and honestly scribbled at—so ashamed of her darling now, so proud of it before—when you saw the gladness go out of her eyes and the tears well up there, when she, who had come so far, crept away so humbly—"

"Oh, peace! Peace! Peace! Blister your merciless tongue! Haven't all these thoughts tortured me enough without your fetching them back again!"

Remorse! Remorse! Remorse! It seemed to me that remorse would eat the very heart out of me! And yet that small fiend only sat there leering at me with joy and contempt, chuckling peacefully.

Presently he began to speak again. Every sentence was an accusation and every accusation a truth. Every clause was loaded with sarcasm and derision, every slow-dropping word burned like acid. The miniature man reminded me



of times when I had flown at my children in anger and punished them for bad deeds that, with just a little inquiry, I would have known they had not committed. He reminded me of how I had disloyally allowed old friends to be slandered in my hearing without uttering a word in their defense. He reminded me of many dishonest things I had done and many others that I had gotten children and other irresponsible persons to do for me, and of others that I had planned, thought upon, and longed to do, and been kept from doing by fear of consequences only. With exquisite cruelty he recalled to my mind, item by item, wrongs, unkindnesses, and humiliations I had inflicted upon friends since dead, "who died thinking of those injuries, maybe, and grieving over them," he said, adding poison to the stab.

"For instance," said he, "take the case of your younger brother. Many a long year ago when you two were boys together, he lovingly trusted you with a faithfulness that your many and varied treacheries were not able to shake. He followed you about like a dog, content to suffer wrong and abuse if he might only be with you and patient under these injuries so long as it was your hand that inflicted them. Remember when you pledged your honor that, if he would let you blindfold him, no harm should come to him. And then, giggling and choking over the rare fun of the joke, you led him to a brook thinly glazed with ice

and pushed him in. And oh, how you did laugh! Man, if you live a thousand years you will never forget the gentle, reproachful look he gave you as he struggled shivering out of that brook. Oh! You see it now! You see it now!"

"Beast, I have seen it a million times over and shall see it a million more! And may you rot away piecemeal and suffer till doomsday what I suffer now for bringing it back to me again!"

The mini-man chuckled contentedly and went on with his accusing history of my life. I dropped into a moody, vengeful state, and suffered in silence under the merciless lash, until a remark that gave me a sudden awakening!

"Two months ago, on a Tuesday, you woke up in the middle of the night and fell to thinking, with shame, about a peculiarly mean and pitiful act of yours toward a man you abandoned in the—"

"Stop a moment, devil! Stop! Up until now you've been telling me about my actions. Do you mean to tell me now that even my very thoughts are not hidden from you?"

"It seems to look like that. Didn't you think the thoughts I have just mentioned?"

“If I didn’t may I never breathe again! Look here, friend—look me in the eye. Who are you?”

“Well, who do you think?”

“I think you are Satan himself. You are the devil.”

“No.”

“No? Then who can you be?”

“Would you really like to know?”

“Indeed I would.”

“Well, I am your Conscience!”

In an instant I was in a blaze of joy and exultation. I sprang at the creature, roaring:

“Curse you, I have wished a hundred million times that you were tangible and that I could get my hands on your throat just once! Oh, but now I will wreak a deadly vengeance on—”

Folly! Lightning does not move more quickly than my Conscience did! He darted aloft so suddenly that, in the moment my fingers clutched the empty air, he was already perched on the top of the high bookcase thumbing his nose at me in a token of derision.





I flung the poker at him, and missed. I fired the bootjack. In a blind rage I flew from place to place, and snatched and hurled any missile that came handy. A storm of books, inkstands, and chunks of coal filled the air and beat about the measly munchkin's perch relentlessly.

But all to no purpose; the nimble figure dodged every shot. And not only that, he burst into a cackle of sarcastic and triumphant laughter as I sat down exhausted. While I puffed and gasped with fatigue and excitement, my Conscience talked to me.

"My good slave, you are characteristically witless—always consistent, always yourself, always a fool. Otherwise you would have known you needed to attempt this murder with a sad heart and a heavy conscience. You could have brought me down low if you had felt pangs of guilt. I would have drooped under the burden instantly. I would have weighed a ton and could not have budged from the floor."

"You mean to tell me that—"

"You are so anxious to destroy me that your conscience is as light as a feather. Hence, I am away up here out of your reach, in the air and free as a bird.

I would have given anything right then to be heavy-hearted so I could get this creature down from up there and do away with him. But I could no more be heavy-

hearted over a desire to thrash him than I could have been sorrowful over doing it. As it was, I could only look longingly up at my master and rave at the ill luck that denied me a heavy conscience the one and only time I had ever wanted such a thing in my life.

By and by I got to musing over the hour's strange adventure, and of course my human curiosity began to work. I set to framing in my mind some questions for this fiend to answer. Just then one of my girls entered, leaving the door open behind her.

"My! What has been going on here? The bookcase is all one riddle of—"

I sprang up in panic and shouted: "Out of here! Hurry! Shut the door! Quick, or my Conscience will get away!"

The door slammed, and I locked it. I glanced up and was grateful, to the bottom of my heart, to see that my owner was still my prisoner.

"Hang you, I might have lost you! Children are the most carefree creatures. But look here, friend, the girl did not seem to notice you at all. How is that?"

"For a very good reason. I am invisible to all but you."

I made a mental note of that piece of information with a good deal of satisfaction: I could destroy this villain now,

if I got a chance and no one would know it. But this happy thought made me so lighthearted that my Conscience could hardly keep himself seated atop the bookcase—he was like to float aloft toward the ceiling like a toy balloon.

“Come, my Conscience, let us be friendly. Let us fly a flag of truce for a while. I am suffering to ask you some questions.”

“Very well. Begin.”

“Well, then, in the first place, why were you never visible to me before?”

“Because you never asked to see me before. That is, you never asked in the right spirit and proper form before. You were in just the right spirit this time when you sat back in your chair, blew smoke rings in the air, and called out for your most pitiless enemy. Although you didn't suspect it, that person was me by a very large majority, and so I appeared.”

“Well, did my remark turn you into flesh and blood?”

“No. It only made me visible to you. I am without substance, the same as other spirits.”

This remark prodded me with a sharp misgiving. If he was bodiless, how was I going to kill him? But I dissembled, and said persuasively:

“Conscience, it isn’t sociable of you to keep at such a distance. Come down off that bookcase and take another smoke.”

This was answered with a look that was full of derision: “Come where you can get at me and kill me? The invitation is declined, with thanks.”

“All right,” said I to myself; “so it seems a spirit can be killed, after all. Good! There will be one spirit lacking in this world, presently, or I lose my guess.” Then I said aloud: “Friend—”

“There, wait a bit. I am not your friend. I am your enemy. I am not your equal, I am your master. Call me ‘my lord,’ if you please. You are being too familiar.”

“I don’t like such overblown titles. I am willing to call you sir. That is as far as—”

“We will have no argument about this. Just obey, that is all. Go on with your chatter.”

“Very well, my lord—since nothing but ‘my lord’ will suit you—I was going to ask you how long you will be visible to me?”

“Always!”

“This is simply an outrage. That is what I think of it! You have dogged and dogged and dogged me all the days of my life, invisible. That was misery enough! But now to

have such a foul-looking thing as you tagging after me like another shadow all the rest of my days? That is an intolerable prospect!"

"My lad, there was never so pleased a conscience in this world as I was when you made me visible. It gives me an inconceivable advantage. Now I can look you straight in the eye and call you names, and leer at you, jeer at you, and sneer at you. And you know what eloquence there is in visible gesture and expression, especially when the effect is heightened by audible speech. Henceforth I will always address you in your own s-n-i-v-e-l-i-n-g d-r-a-w-l, baby!"

I let fly with the coal-hod. No result. My lord said:

"Come, come! Remember the flag of truce!"

"Ah, I forgot that. I will try to be civil, and you try it, too, for a novelty. The idea of a civil conscience! It is a good joke; an excellent joke. All the consciences I have ever heard of were nagging, badgering, fault-finding, detestable savages! Yes; and always in a sweat about some poor little insignificant trifle or other. May destruction catch the lot of them, I say! I would trade mine for the smallpox and seven kinds of consumption and be glad of the chance. Now tell me, why is it that a conscience can't haul a man over the coals once, for an offense, and then let him alone? Why is it that a conscience wants to keep on pegging at him, day and night and night and day, week in and week out, forever and ever, about the same old thing? There is no sense in

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that. I think a conscience that will act like that is meaner than the very dirt itself."

"Well, *we* like it; that suffices."

"Do you do it with the honest intent to improve a person?"

That question produced a sarcastic smile, and this reply: "No, sir. Excuse me. We do it simply because it is 'business'. It is our trade. The purpose of it is to improve the person, but we are merely disinterested agents. We are appointed by authority and haven't anything to say in the matter. We obey orders and leave the consequences where they belong. But I am willing to admit this much: we do crowd the orders a trifle when we get a chance, which is most of the time. We enjoy it. We are instructed to remind a man a few times of an error, and I don't mind acknowledging that we try to give pretty good measure. And when we get hold of a man of a peculiarly sensitive nature, oh, but we do haze him! I have had consciences come all the way from China and Russia to see a person of that kind put through his paces, on a special occasion."

"Well, aren't you a precious crew, not to put it too strongly. In your anxiety to get all the juice you can out of a sin, you make a man repent of it in three or four different ways."

"That does please us a bit, I admit"

"And that explains why you have always been a trifle inconsistent! You found fault with me for lying to that

hobo, and I suffered over it. But it was only yesterday that I told a charity worker the square truth. I told him that it was regarded as bad citizenship to encourage welfare, so I would give him nothing. What did you do then? Why, you made me say to myself, 'Ah, it would have been so much kinder and more blameless to ease him off with a little white lie about being out of cash and send him away feeling that, if he could not get any money out of me, then at least my compassion toward his cause was something to be grateful for!'"

"And that bothered you?"

"I suffered all day about it. But three days before that, I gave money freely to a charity worker, supposing it a virtuous act. Straight off you said to me, 'Oh, false citizen, to have supported welfare!' And I suffered, as usual. Then I gave a poor man a job for pay and you objected to that—after the contract was made, of course; you never speak up beforehand. Next, I refused a poor man work. You objected to that. Next, I proposed to kill a persistent beggar, and you kept me awake all night, oozing remorse at every pore. Then, positively sure that I was going to be right, I sent the next beggar away with my benediction; I wish you may live as long as I do if you didn't make me smart all night again because I didn't thrash him. Is there any way of satisfying that malignant invention which is called a conscience?"

"Ha, ha! This is luxury! Go on!"

"But come now, answer me. Is there any way?"

"Well, none that I propose to tell you, my son. I don't care what act you may turn your hand to, I can straightway whisper a word in your ear and make you think you have committed a dreadful meanness. It is my business—and my joy—to make you repent of everything you do. If I have fooled away any opportunities, it was not intentional!"

"Don't worry; you haven't missed a trick that I know of. I never did a thing in all my life, even virtuous things, that I didn't repent of in twenty-four hours. In church last Sunday I listened to a charity sermon. My first impulse was to give three hundred and fifty dollars; I repented of that and reduced it a hundred; repented of that and reduced it another hundred; repented of that and reduced it another hundred; repented of that and reduced the remaining fifty to twenty-five; repented of that and came down to fifteen; repented of that and dropped it to two dollars and a half. When the plate came around at last, I repented once more and contributed ten cents. Well, when I got home, I wished to goodness I had that ten cents back! You never did let me get through a charity sermon without having something to sweat about."

"Oh, and I never shall, I never shall. You can always depend on me."



"I think so. Many and many is the restless night I've wanted to take you by the neck. If I could only get hold of you now!"

"Yes, no doubt. But I am not a dumb ox. I am only the yoke of a dumb ox. But go on, go on. You entertain me more than I like to confess."

"I am glad of that. (You will not mind my lying a little to keep in practice.) Look here; not to be too personal, I think you are about the shabbiest and most contemptible little shriveled-up reptile that can be imagined. I am grateful enough that you are invisible to other people, for I should die with shame to be seen with such a mildewed monkey of a conscience as you are. Now if you were five or six feet high, and—"

"Oh, come! Who is to blame?"

"I don't know."

"Why, you are—nobody else."

"Confound you, I wasn't consulted about your height or personal appearance."

"I don't care. You had a good deal to do with it, nevertheless. When you were eight or nine years old, I was seven feet high, and as pretty as a picture."

“I wish you had died young! So you have grown the wrong way, have you?”

“Some of us grow one way and some the other. It depends on how successful we are. You had a large conscience once; there are reasons you have a small conscience now. However, both of us are to blame for it, you and I. You see, you used to be conscientious about a great many things. Excessively so, I may say. That was a great many years ago; you probably do not remember it now. Well, I took a great interest in my work and so enjoyed the anguish you suffered over certain pet sins that I kept pelting you with more anguish until I rather overdid the matter. You began to rebel, which caused me to shrink a little, then I shrunk still more as you persisted to rebel.”

Then it’s all on you! You shrunk because you overdid the matter! But you are so disgustingly ugly as well! Who is to blame for that?

I shriveled when I shrunk—that’s part of it. As for the callouses, it was your precious pet sins that caused them to grow. Yes, I pelted anguish at you unmercifully for your pet sins trying to get you to reform—or at least improve. But you rebelled so strongly, so often, that I weakened. Not only did I shrivel, I got moldy, pushed up mushrooms, and grew deformed in other ways. And the more I weakened and deteriorated, the more stubbornly you fastened onto your pet sins, until at last the places on my person that

mark your pet vices became as callous as armadillo-skin. Take smoking for instance. I played that card too long, you rebelled, and I surrendered. Of late when people plead with you to quit smoking, you instinctively close your mind and ignore their pleas. That spurs your smoking-vice callous to grow, which smothers me, and I go sound asleep. Sound asleep? Sound is no name for it. I couldn't hear it thunder at such a time. You have developed some few other vices—perhaps eighty, or maybe ninety—that affect me in much the same way.”

“This is flattering! You must be asleep a good part of your time.”

“Yes, of late years. I should be asleep all the time but for the help I get.”

“Who helps you to stay awake?”

“Other consciences. If a conscience I know is assigned to a person who begins pleading with you about a vice you are callous to, I get my colleague to give the pleading person a pang of guilt concerning a vice that he or she has. That usually stops the meddling and restores my wakefulness. On my own, without the help of other consciences, my useful advocacy with you is about trimmed down to the fields of giving: generosity, kindness, helpfulness—that line of goods. But don't you worry—I will harry you about your social obligations as long as I can! You just put your trust in me.”

"I think I can. But if you had only been good enough to mention these facts some thirty years ago, I would have turned my particular attention to sin of all kinds. I think that by this time I would not only have had you permanently asleep on the entire list of human vices, but shrunk to the size of a pill at that. That is about the style of conscience I am pining for. And if I had shrunk you down to a pill and could get my hands on you, then what do you think? Would I put you in a glass case for a keepsake? No, sir. I would feed you to a snake in the grass! That is where you ought to be—you and all your tribe. You are not fit to be in society, in my opinion. Now another question. Do you know a good many consciences in this section?"

"Plenty of them."

"I would give anything to see some of them! Could you bring them here? And would they be visible to me?"

"Certainly not."

"I suppose I ought to have known that without asking. But no matter, you can describe them. Tell me about my neighbor Thompson's conscience, please."

"Very well. I know him intimately—have known him many years. I knew him when he was eleven feet high and a faultless figure. But he is very pasty and tough and misshapen now, and hardly ever interests himself about anything. As to his present size—well, he sleeps in a cigar-box."

"Likely enough. There are few smaller, meaner men in this region than Hugh Thompson. Do you know Robinson's conscience?"

"Yes. He is a shade under four and a half feet high. He used to be a blond. He's a brunette now, but still shapely and handsome."

"Well, Robinson is a good fellow. Do you know Tom Smith's conscience?"

"I have known him from childhood. He was thirteen inches high and rather sluggish when he was two years old—as nearly all of us are at that age. He is thirty-seven feet high now, firmly grounded, and the stateliest figure in America. Never sleeps. He is the most active and energetic member of the New England Conscience Club. Night and day you can find him pegging away at Smith, panting with his labor, sleeves rolled up, face alive with enjoyment. He can make poor Smith imagine the least little thing he does is a disgusting sin, then he sets to work and almost tortures the soul out of him about it. Smith's conscience has attained his height and fame because he is so effective at making Smith a righteous, yet humble man. He has got his victim whipped into splendid shape, but still he persists, growing larger and larger. His legs are racked with growing-pains, but he has a good time, nevertheless."



"Smith is the noblest man in all this section, and the purest. Yet he is always breaking his heart because he cannot be good enough! Only a conscience could find pleasure in heaping agony upon a man like that. Do you know my Aunt Mary's conscience?"

"I have seen her at a distance, but I'm not acquainted with her. She lives altogether in the open air because no door is large enough to admit her."

"I can believe that. Let me see. Do you know the conscience of that adapter Jerome Tiller who once stole some sketches of mine for a 'series' of his and left me with nothing in royalties?"

"Yes. That conscience is totally infamous. He was exhibited a month ago. Tickets and fares were high, but I traveled for nothing by pretending to be the conscience of a politician, then got in for half-price by representing myself to be the conscience of a clergyman. However, the adapter's conscience, which was to have been the main feature of the entertainment, was a failure as an exhibition. He was there, but what of it? Management had provided a microscope with a magnifying power of only thirty thousand diameters, so nobody got to see him, after all. There was great and general dissatisfaction, of course, but—"

Just here there was an eager footstep on the stair. I opened the door and my Aunt Mary burst into the room. It was a joyful meeting and a cheery bombardment of questions and answers concerning family matters ensued.

By and by my aunt said: "I am going to abuse you a little now. You promised me, the day I saw you last, that you would look after the needs of the poor family around the corner as faithfully as I had done it myself. Well, I found out by accident that you failed of your promise. Is that right?"

In simple truth, I never had thought of that family a second time! And now such a splintering pang of guilt shot through me! I glanced up at my Conscience high upon the bookcase. Plainly, my heavy heart was weighing on him. His body was drooping forward; he seemed about to fall. My aunt continued:

"And think how you have neglected the poor girl I sponsor at the almshouse, you dear, hard-hearted promise-breaker!"

I blushed scarlet, and my tongue was tied. As the sense of my guilty negligence waxed sharper and stronger, my Conscience began to sway heavily back and forth.

And then my aunt, after a little pause, said in a grieved tone, "Since you never once went to see her, maybe it will not bother you now to know that poor child died, months ago, utterly friendless and forsaken!"

My Conscience could no longer bear up under the weight of my suffering guilt. He tumbled headlong from his high perch and struck the floor with a dull, leaden thump. He lay there writhing with pain and quaking with apprehension, but straining every muscle in frantic efforts to get up.



In a fever of expectancy I sprang to the door, locked it, placed my back against it, and bent a watchful gaze upon my struggling master. Already my fingers were itching to begin their murderous work.

“Oh, what can be the matter!” exclaimed my aunt, shrinking from me and following with her frightened eyes the direction of my gaze. My breath was coming in short, quick gasps now, and my excitement was almost uncontrollable. My aunt cried out:

“Oh, do not look so! You appall me! Oh, what can the matter be? What is it you see? Why do you stare so? Why do you work your fingers like that?”

“Peace, woman!” I said, in a hoarse whisper. “Look elsewhere; pay no attention to me; it is nothing—nothing. I am often this way. It will pass in a moment. It comes from smoking too much.”

My injured lord was up, wild-eyed with terror, and trying to hobble toward the door. I could hardly breathe, I was so wrought up. My aunt wrung her hands, and said:

“Oh, I knew how it would be—I knew it would come to this at last! Oh, I implore you to crush out that fatal smoking habit while it may yet be time! You must not, you shall not be deaf to my pleas any longer!”

My Conscience ceased struggling and showed sudden signs of weariness—this pointless meddling with my hardened vice was having a smothering, tranquilizing effect!



“Oh, promise me you will throw off this hateful slavery of tobacco!”

My Conscience began to reel drowsily, and grope with his hands. What an enchanting spectacle!

“I beg you, I beseech you, I implore you! Your reason is deserting you! There is madness in your eye! It flames with frenzy! Oh, hear me, hear me, and be saved! See, I plead with you on my very knees!”

As Aunt Mary sank to her knees, my Conscience reeled again and then drooped feebly to the floor, blinking toward me with heavy eyes a plea of his own—for mercy!

“Oh, promise, or you are lost! Promise, and be redeemed! Promise! Promise and live!”

This last round of my Aunt Mary’s meddling did it! With a long-drawn sigh, my conquered Conscience closed his eyes and fell fast asleep!

With an exultant shout I sprang past my aunt, and in an instant I had my lifelong foe by the throat. After so many years of waiting and longing, he was mine at last.

I tore him to shreds and fragments. I shredded the fragments to bits. I cast the bleeding rubbish into the fire, and drew into my nostrils the grateful incense of my burnt offering. At last, and forever, my Conscience was dead!





I was a free man! I turned upon my poor aunt, who was almost petrified with terror, and shouted:

“Out of here with your paupers, your charities, your reforms, your annoying morals! You behold before you a man whose life-conflict is done, whose soul is at peace; a man whose heart is dead to sorrow, dead to suffering, dead to remorse; a man WITHOUT A CONSCIENCE! In my joy I spare you, though I could throttle you and never feel a pang of guilt! Off with you! Fly! Be gone!”

She fled. Since that day my life is all bliss. Bliss, pure bliss. Nothing in all the world could persuade me to have a conscience again. I settled all my old outstanding scores, and began the world anew. I killed thirty-eight persons during the first two weeks—all of them on account of ancient grudges. I burned a house that interrupted my view of the horizon. I swindled a widow and some orphans out of their last cow, which is a very good one, though not, I believe, a thoroughbred. I have also committed scores of crimes, of various kinds, and have enjoyed my work exceedingly, whereas before it would have broken my heart and turned my hair gray, no doubt.

In conclusion, I wish to state, by way of advertisement, that medical colleges desiring assorted cadavers for scientific purposes, either by the gross or per ton, will do well to examine the lot of former missionaries, charity workers, petitioners, carolers, beggars, and peddlers in my cellar before purchasing cadavers elsewhere, as these were all selected and prepared by myself and can be had at a low rate, because I wish to clear out my stock and get ready for the spring trade.





the end

MARK TWAIN

(1835-1910)

Mark Twain was born in Florida, Missouri on November 30, 1835 and he was raised in Hannibal, Missouri, a small town on the Mississippi River. But that's not exactly true. For Mark Twain's legal name was Samuel Clemens, and socially Mark Twain was always just plain Sam to family and friends. Mark Twain didn't exist until 1863 when Sam adopted this pen-name while working as a newspaper reporter in Nevada. Soon Mark Twain, author, was writing humorous stories and thought-pieces for readers across the nation, while Mark Twain, lecturer, was cracking up audiences with finely-polished stories, delivered to perfection. Blessed with remarkable talent for both written and oral story-telling, talents he cultivated with diligent practice, Mark Twain became a famous author and lecturer almost all at once. It didn't take long before Mark Twain's fame spread internationally or until it became permanent as gold with the publication of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in 1884.

Mark Twain was a courageous speaker and writer. He spoke and wrote in a quaint, authentic American dialect with pride and self-assurance at a time when almost all authors thought they needed to stick to high-tone English to earn respect and acclaim. But Mark Twain was not only courageous in how he said things, he was courageous in what he said; he consistently spoke his exact thoughts on real matters large and small and was likewise unafraid to publish often daring and irreverent fiction. *The Facts Concerning the Recent Carnival of Crime in Connecticut* is a good example of the latter. It was published in the Atlantic Monthly magazine in June 1876, just months preceding publication of the mischievous, but essentially tame *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. Anything but tame, *Carnival of Crime* clearly shows Mark Twain was unafraid to bare his wild side to the world, fully and seemingly without pangs of conscience.

Yet there was something even more crucial to Mark Twain's fame than his literary style and courage; he perfected a method to make people laugh. A serious man at heart, Mark Twain took serious subjects and situations and exaggerated them to a point where potential drama turned into hilarious comedy. His perfection of this comic method caused tears of laughter to wet the cheeks of countless listeners and readers in his day, as it has for generations of readers ever since. Mark Twain became and remains an international treasure mostly because he was so darn funny.

After a long and abundant career, Mark Twain succumbed to heart disease and died in Redding, Connecticut on April 21, 1910. Many millions of fans world-wide mourned his death.



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