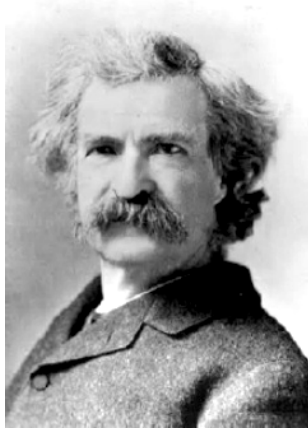


T. S. ELIOT PSYCHOANALYZES TWAIN



Mark Twain
(1835-1910)



T. S. Eliot
(1888-1965)

It would seem that Mark Twain was a man who--perhaps like most of us--never became in all respects mature. We might even say that the adult side of him was boyish, and that only the boy in him, that was Huck Finn, was adult. As Tom Sawyer grown up, he wanted success and applause (Tom himself always needs an audience). He wanted prosperity, a happy domestic life of a conventional kind, universal approval, and fame. All of these things he obtained. As Huck Finn he was indifferent to all these things; and being composite of the two, Mark Twain both strove for them, and resented their violation of his integrity. Hence he became the humorist and even clown: with his gifts, a certain way to success, for everyone could enjoy his writings without the slightest feeling of discomfort, self-consciousness, or self-criticism. And hence, on the other hand, his pessimism and misanthropy. To be a misanthrope is to be in some way divided; or it is a sign of an uneasy conscience. The pessimism which Mark Twain discharged into "The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg" and "What is Man?" springs less from observation of society, than from his hatred of himself for allowing society to tempt and corrupt him and give him what he wanted.

T. S. Eliot
Introduction
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
(Cresset, London 1950) vii-viii