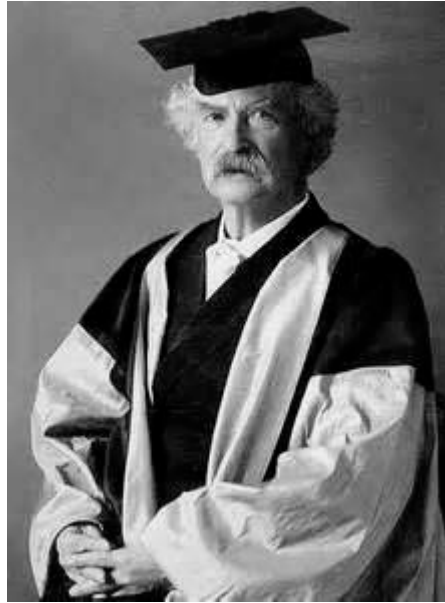


HUMOR



Mark Twain

(1835-1910)

from “English as She Is Taught” (1887)

I have just now fallen upon a darling literary curiosity. It is a little book, a manuscript compilation, and the compiler sent it to me with the request that I say whether I think it ought to be published or not. I said, Yes; but as I slowly grow wise I briskly grow cautious; and so, now that the publication is imminent, it has seemed to me that I should feel more comfortable if I could divide up this responsibility with the public by adding them to the court. Therefore I will print some extracts from the book, in the hope that they may make converts to my judgment that the volume has merit which entitles it to publication.

As to its character. Every one has sampled “English as She Is Spoke”; and “English as She Is Wrote”; this little volume furnishes us an instructive array of examples of “English as She Is Taught”--in the public schools of--well, this country. The collection is made by a teacher in those schools, and all the examples in it are genuine; none of them have been tampered with, or doctored in any way. From time to time, during several years, whenever a pupil has delivered himself of anything peculiarly quaint or toothsome in the course of his recitations, this teacher and her associates have privately set that thing down in a memorandum-book; strictly following the original, as to grammar, construction, spelling, and all; and the result is this literary curiosity....

SELECTED ANSWERS FROM STUDENTS

Aborigines, a system of mountains.
Alias, a good man in the Bible.
Amenable, anything that is mean.
Ammonia, the food of the gods.
Capillary, a little caterpillar.
Demagogue, a vessel containing beer and other liquids.
Equestrian, one who asks questions.
Eucharist, one who plays euchre.

Franchise, anything belonging to the French.
Idolater, a very idol person.
Irrigate, to make fun of.
Parasite, a kind of umbrella.
Plagiarist, a writer of plays.
Republican, a sinner mentioned in the Bible.
Tenacious, ten acres of land.

The marriage was illegible.
He was totally dismayed with the whole performance.
He enjoys riding on a philosopher.
She was very quick at repertoire.
He prayed for the waters to subsidize.
The leopard is watching his sheep.
The men employed by the Gas Company go around and speculate the meter.
He preached to an egregious congregation.
The captain eliminated a bullet through the man's heart.
You should take caution and be precarious.
We should endeavor to avoid extremes--like those of wasps and bees.
Some of the best fossils are found in theological cabinets.
Gender is the distinguishing nouns without regard to sex.
A verb is something to eat.
Every sentence and name of God must begin with a caterpillar.
A straight line is any distance between two places.
Parallel lines are lines that can never meet until they run together.
A circle is a round straight line with a hole in the middle.
Things which are equal to each other are equal to anything else.
To find the number of square feet in a room you multiply the room by the number of feet.
North America is separated by Spain.
The capital of the United States is Long Island.
The five seaports of the U.S. are Newfunlan and Sanfrancisco.
The Alaginnies are mountains in Philadelphia.
Cape Hateras is a vast body of water surrounded by land and flowing into the Gulf of Mexico.
Mason and Dixon's line is the Equater.
In Austria the principal occupation is gathering Austrich feathers.
Russia is very cold and tyrannical.
Ireland is called the Emigrant Isle because it is so beautiful and green.
The width of the different zones Europe lies in depend upon the surrounding country.
Climate lasts all the time and weather only a few days.
The two most famous volcanoes of Europe are Sodom and Gomorrah.
Washington wrote the Declareation of Independence in 1492.
The Indians pursued their warfare by hiding in the bushes and then scalping them.
The Puritans found an insane asylum in the wilds of America.
Gorilla warfare was where men rode on gorillas.
John Brown was a very good insane man...
Alfred the Great reigned 872 years. He was distinguished for letting some buckwheat cakes burn.
Henry Eight was famous for being a great widower...
Lady Jane Grey studied Greek and Latin and was beheaded after a few days.
The Middle Ages come in between antiquity and posterity.
Julius Casar is noted for his famous telegram dispatch I came I saw I conquered.
Cleopatra was caused by the death of an asp which she dissolved in a wine cup.
The only form of government in Greece was a limited monkey.
The Persian war lasted about 500 years.
Socrates...destroyed some statues and had to drink Shamrock.
By the Salic law no woman or descendant of a woman could occupy the throne.
Abraham Lincoln was born in Wales in 1599.

Edgar A. Poe was a very curdling writer.
Cotton Mather was a writer who invented the cotton gin...
Beowulf wrote the Scriptures.
Ben Johnson survived Shakespeare in some respects.
In the Canterbury Tale it gives account of King Alfred on his way to the shrine of Thomas Bucket.
Chaucer was the father of English pottery.
Chaucer was a bland verse writer of the third century.
Lord Byron was the son of an heiress and a drunken man.
Wm. Wordsworth wrote...Imitations on Immortality.
George Eliot left a wife and children who mourned greatly for his genius.
A sort of sadness kind of shone in Bryant's poems.
Holmes is a very prolific and amusing writer.
A bill becomes a law when the President vetoes it.
The first conscientious Congress met in Philadelphia.
The Constitution of the United States was established to ensure domestic hostility.
The Constitution of the United States is that part of the book at the end which nobody reads.
Congress is divided half civilized and savage.
An interval in music is the distance on the keyboard from one piano to the next.
Emphasis is putting more distress on one word than another.
Occupations which are injurious to health are cabolic acid gas which is impure blood.
The body is mostly composed of water and about one half is avaricious tissue.
The stomach is a small pear-shaped bone situated in the body.
The gastric juice keeps the bones from creaking.
The salivary glands are used to salivate the body.
The growth of a tooth begins in the back of the mouth and extends to the stomach.
We have an upper and a lower skin. The lower skin moves all the time and the upper skin moves when we do.
The theory that intuitive truths are discovered by the light of nature originated from St. John's interpretation of a passage in the Gospel of Plato.
Luther introduced Christianity into England a good many thousand years ago. His birthday was November 1883. He was once a Pope. He lived at the time of the Rebellion of Worms.

On Girls

Girls are very stuck up and dignified in their maner and be have your. They think more of dress than anything and like to play with dowls and rags. They cry if they see a cow in a far distance and are afraid of guns. They stay at home all the time and go to church on Sunday. They are al-ways sick. They are al-ways funy and making fun of boy's hands and they say how dirty. They cant play marbels. I pity them poor things. They make fun of boys and then turn round and love them. I dont beleave they ever kiled a cat or anything. They look out every nite and say oh ant the moon lovely. Thir is one thing I have not told and that is they al-ways now their lessons bettern boys.