



A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON FARCE & HUMOUR IN THE SELECT CHARACTERS OF CHARLES DICKENS AND MARK TWAIN

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ABSTRACT

Dickens's humour differs in his novels *Oliver Twist* and *David Copperfield*. Dickens used humour as a way of satire and criticism of society in both novels; however, he was more aggressive in the novel *Oliver Twist*. In this work Dickens criticizes the social system and the judiciary through his comments. He was allowed to do that this way because *Oliver Twist* is written in the third person narrative. Through this way of narrating Dickens was able to express his opinion better than in *David Copperfield*, which was written in the first narrative form and Dickens tried to depict his child's feelings realistically when he wrote about his childhood. Although he had only a limited scope of activity, Dickens satirically depicted his opinion on the judiciary in connection with the problem of financial debtors and the treatment with these debtors. On the other hand, Dickens used a sort of kind humour which sourced from naive view of the world. This humour is used in both his novels and is typical of children – Oliver and David. This humour occurs in situations which are interpreted by these boys and it is caused by misapprehension of that given situation.

The sense of humour is essential for the work of Twain. His humour in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* is rather sincere but not cruel. It is closer to childlike humour and due to this type of humour Twain observes and depicts his memories of his childhood. He characterizes the society and its hypocrisy but subtly through the eye of an innocent child. Twain's humorous tone is getting sharpen in *The Adventures of Huckleberry*

Finn. Twain still shows that his sense of humour is very good and has class however he turns his humour into irony and sarcasm. Through these acts of inexplicit negation Twain comments on historical events and depicts the then society in full detail. Due to his humour and satire readers recognize his attitude towards American Civil War and his feelings for it. The most significant it is in the episode with two feuding families which is typical allegory of the Civil War. Thanks to the satire Twain shows his opinion on black people and he tells readers that although there are black and they are slaves, they are still human beings and the white society, which has Christianity that says that all people are equal, this white society denies the fact about black and this is the root of their hypocrisy. Despite the fact that humour of Twain in both novels is different, it still tries to point out what was wrong with the then society and shows the problems which are actual even nowadays.

Keywords: Humour, Satire, Black humour, Farce, Comparative study, Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn, David Copperfield, Oliver Twist

SATIRE AND HUMOUR

The way of Dickens's humour – Charles Dickens

Charles Dickens wrote his novels *Oliver Twist* and *David Copperfield* in a realistic way. He showed the then society with all its everyday problems as well as he presented his main heroes' feelings and attitudes. Dickens criticized the then society through his works – in *David Copperfield* through realistic depiction and in *Oliver Twist* through humour and satire. Dickens's satire reaches its top in comments on situations which Oliver must face. Dickens shows the hypocrisy of society through his comments and shows it on concrete behaviour of chosen characters (such as Mr Bumble in *Oliver Twist* or Mrs Murdstone in *David Copperfield*). However, Dickens even used a sort of kind humour for expressing the naive view of his children characters. Through this humour Dickens presents the innocence and purity of his heroes Oliver and David.

Oliver Twist *Oliver Twist* is not only the adventure story. Dickens tried to depict the then Victorian England in its 1830s. He used humour and irony as well; the most satirical depiction is used on characterization of the charity system. The most satirical criticism is laid on passages which deal with an official capacity and the state judiciary. Dickens expresses the situation of poor people contrary to the people who are responsible for the poor. He used contrast in behaviour as well as in appearance. Poor people are emaciated, soiled and they wear torn clothes in contrast to Mr Bumble and his colleagues who are fat and clean and their suit is always neat. However, the behaviour of those who are not poor is often worse than the acting of the poor ones. In chapter 2 there are a few allusions to English law system: ... "on a rough hard bed, he sobbed himself to sleep. What a noble illustration of the tender laws of England! They let the paupers go to sleep!". Another situation is very ironical, when members of the board ask Oliver whether he prays for the people

who feed him and take care of him. What is worse, poor people are often humiliated by their orderlies such as Oliver in chapter 3: “Oliver remained a close prisoner in the dark and solitary room to which he had been consigned by the wisdom and mercy of the board.” This scene emphasizes the previous matter (asking Oliver on his prayers for the members of the board) and describes the moment when Oliver was allowed to go to dining hall: As for society, he was carried every other day into the hall where the boys dined, and there sociably flogged as a public warning and example. And so far from being denied the advantages of religious consolidation, he was kicked into the same apartment every evening at prayer-time and there permitted to listen to, and console his mind with, a general supplication of the boys, containing a special clause, therein interested by authority of the board, in which they entreated to be made good, virtuous, contented, and obedient, and to be guarded from the sins and vices of Oliver Twist: whom the supplication distinctly set forth to be under the exclusive patronage and protection of the powers of wickedness, and an article direct from the manufactory of the very Devil himself.

This situation depicted by Dickens shows the hypocrisy and sufficiency of the members of the board, as well as their cruelty and perversity. In chapter 3 there is a perfect characterization of people who decided about placement of poor children to work: “[...] the magistrate was half-blind and half-childish, so he couldn't reasonably be expected to discern what other people did.” The portrayal of Mr Bumble is probably the one of the most satirical character in the novel. He is fat and arrogant and although he wears a coat which is embellished by buttons that depict “the Good Samaritan healing sick and bruised man” (the same picture is placed on the parochial seal), he shows no mercy with his wards – he does not help sick and bruised people, he is the one who makes people sick and bruised: [...] it was nice cold weather, and Oliver was allowed to perform his ablutions every morning under the pump, in a stone yard, in the presence of Mr Bumble, who prevented his catching cold, and caused a tingling sensation to pervade the frame, by repeated applications of the cane. Mr Bumble belongs to characters who are developing during the novel. He married Mrs Corney. Before marriage Mrs Corney behaves kindly towards Mr Bumble and Mr Bumble acts like a hero: “[...] but as Mr Bumble accompanied the threat with many warlike gestures, she was much touched with his proof of his devotion, and protested, with great admiration, that he was indeed a dove.”, but their relationship is changing after marriage. Mrs Bumble uses violence for gaining her ambitions and during one altercation Mr Bumble says to Mrs Bumble that “the prerogative of a man is to command and the prerogative of a woman is to obey.” This statement will become fatal to Mr Bumble because at the end of the novel, when the truth transpires this statement turns over him when he blames his wife on stealing the jewellery: [...] ‘It was all Mrs Bumble. She would do it,’ urged Mr Bumble, first looking certain that his partner had left the room. ‘That is no excuse,’ replied Mr Brownlow. ‘You were present on the occasion of the destruction of these trinkets, and, indeed, are the more guilty of the two, in the eye of law; for the law supposes that your wife acts under your direction.’ [...] For the first time, the law goes against Mr Bumble and he recognizes unpleasant consequences of judicial system. He cannot believe that this could happen to him and he denies the truth: “If the law supposes that, the law is a ass – a idiot. If that's the eye of the law, the law's a bachelor; and the worst I wish the law is, that his eye may be opened by experience – by

experience.”. In other parts of the novel there can be found humour as well but this humour, especially when it is used in scenes with Maylies’ and Mr Brownlow’s family, is kind and polite.

For instance, Mr Losberne who is depicted as a hot-tempered but warm hearted person, caused few humorous moments just like when he confused Mr Giles with regard to his testimony about breaking-in or when he travels to London with Oliver, Oliver thinks that he recognized the house where he hid with Sikes and alarms Mr Losberne. Mr Losberne sinks into his hot-blooded nature and he starts to attack on the owner of the cabin. When he recognizes that he was probably mistaken, he apologizes and then he tells Oliver: “...I am an ass! Did you know that before, Oliver?” ‘No, sir.’ ‘Then don’t forget it another time.’...” When Dickens wrote about the world of thieves, he used humour for completion of stereotypes of his characters such as in chapter 13 when Fagin and his gang need to know what happened to Oliver but they do not want to go to the police station: [...] there was one very strong objection to its being adopted – and this was, that the Dodger, and Charley Bates, and Fagin, and Mr William Sikes, happened, one and all, to entertain a most violent and deeply-rooted antipathy to going near a police-office on any ground or pretext whatever. In chapter 43 the Artful Dodger is arrested and convicted of pick-pocketing.

During the trial he behaves like a noble gentleman who is seriously offended by the tribunal. He ridicules each statement of the tribunal and when he is convicted he comments the statement on: I’ll come on! Ah! (to the Bench) it’s no use your looking frightened; I won’t show you no mercy, not a ha’porth of it. You’ll pay for this, my fine fellers. I wouldn’t be you for something! I wouldn’t go free, now, if you was to fall down on your knees and ask me. Here, carry me off to prison! Take me away! By this expression the Artful Dodger ridicules the court of law completely and shows the stupidity of the system. James R. Kincaid depicts the scene from chapter 2 in the novel *Oliver Twist*, when Oliver stands at the board, in the article *Oliver Twist: Laughter and the Rhetoric of Attack*. He explains the function of laughter in this situation.

Kincaid states that details are very funny on their own; however, the situation as the whole is far more complicated. Oliver is not aware of the seriousness of the problem and it may seem funny, but the readers feel sad for him. Kincaid shows that Dickens urged readers “to decide against laughing in favour of crying” and he continues that readers are forced to decide frequently during the novel and then he presents the scene with Mr Gamfield during his defence of using boys as chimney sweeps. At this point Kincaid expresses the idea that readers may almost identify themselves with Mr Gamfield. However, Kincaid states that Dickens had the absolute control over humour and for thus he was able to persuade readers to sympathize with Oliver. Nevertheless, he used humour as a shift of our attention from serious problem and by this enticing away Dickens points out our inner callousness. Kincaid continues with the interpretation of a special technique which Dickens used in the novel and this technique is based on the duality – Dickens presents two different worlds which are in a clash somehow. Kincaid illustrates this method on Nancy and Sikes: Nancy is connected with the social world and Bill symbolizes the torturous world “Two orders of reality, connected only by a startling and accidental relevance of referents, are violently contrasted here: the order which contains the social world, easy jokes and thoughtlessness, and the horribly intense and torturous world.”. Kincaid concludes this idea this way: “The novel’s humour, in other words, maintains that the real

conflict is between the outcasts and the establishment, even after the plot itself has introduced a new theme which seems to provide a sanctified society and which turns against the outcasts.” In the next part Kincaid interpreters the character of Mr Bumble and his comic meaning in the story.

He states that the most essential part of humour about Mr Bumble is inserted in his role of henpecked husband. Kincaid presents Bumble as a person with two faces, one is brutal and cruel contrary to the other one which provides some sort of sympathy with Oliver and for thus this is the reason why Mr Bumble cannot be seen as a frozen monster such are Mrs Mann and Mrs Corney. Kincaid points out, in association with Mr Bumble, that there is a divide at the centre of the novel and masters and victims switch their places. This transformation heads for the change in attitude on some characters such as Mr Bumble or Sikes. Finally, Kincaid works with the character of the Artful Dodger and expresses his idea that Mr Bumble and the Dodger are similar in many ways. Kincaid concludes his article that the humour of the novel was directed to these ends: to make us see how incomplete and hostile a reaction our laughter is, to force us by this recognition briefly to see in ourselves the shadow of Fang, Mrs. Corney, and the gentleman in the white waistcoat, and to direct us through this insight into a participation in the vital action of the novel which is, at once, more complete and much more intense.

David Copperfield

Dickens did not use humour as an instrument of criticism in his novel David Copperfield as frequently as he did in his novel Oliver Twist. His humour in this novel is light and gentle because it is created by David child's view of the world. James R. Kincaid interprets the comic aspects of the novel David Copperfield in the article David Copperfield: Laughter and Point of View. Kincaid states that David Copperfield is Dickens's funniest novel. He comments on the use of comic characters and presents their importance in the novel – these characters (Micawbers, Traddles, Peggottys and Mr Dick) appear strategically on significant places during the story. Their importance is hidden in their comic nature and they were used for establishment of “a strong value system directly opposed to David's (and Murdstone's) firmness.” Kincaid states that “the novel is never ironic in the sense of attacking its hero; it is never critical of David's decisions.” He continues with the idea that the novel is split into two different worlds and he depicts these two worlds as one which is comic and imaginative and the second, which is hostile and commercial.

Kincaid mentions Dickens kind of humour which is rhetorical and he states that through this humour Dickens reached the complexity of the novel. Kincaid concludes that “Laughter is used to establish values, themes, and, paradoxically, the atmosphere of melancholy.” In chapter 2 David describes a church service. David depicts the strange behaviour of Peggotty and he feels confused when Peggotty is angry that he behaves the same way as she does. David does not feel well that he is watching the preacher because he thinks that staring on anyone for a long time is impolite. Then he observes the other people in church and he recognizes that there is a sheep at the door which is about to enter the church. After a little while David thinks that the pulpit could be a great place for playing and then he is so bored that he falls asleep. David was once asked by Mr Barkis to pass the message on to Peggotty. Mr Barkis learns about Peggotty from

David narration when he takes David to Yarmouth. After knowing that Peggotty has never been married Barkis asks David whether he write to Peggotty that “Barkis was willing.”.

David seems confused but he keeps on his promise to write this message to Peggotty. Peggotty refuses Mr Barkis but finally she accepts after the trip to Yarmouth. During the whole journey Mr Barkis asks whether Peggotty is feeling “pretty comfortable” over and over again and he tries to enchant and captivate Peggotty, and when they arrive to Yarmouth Mr Barkis comments the whole situation on “it was all right.”. Peggotty then asks David whether he agrees with the marriage and he does: I should think it would be a very good thing. For then, you know, Peggotty, you would always have the horse and cart to bring you over to see me, and could come for nothing, and be sure of coming [...].[...]Look at me, Peggotty, and see if I am not really glad, and don't truly wish it! Peggotty is glad to hear it and she adds with humour: “Barkis is a good plain creetur, and if I tried to do my duty by him, I think it would be my fault if I wasn't – if I wasn't pretty comfortable.”. David continues on describing Mr Barkis's wooing which is quite humorous as well. Mr Barkis hardly says a word and it seems that he is satisfied with observing of Peggotty. Mr Barkis wears for wedding a brand new suit [...] of which the tailor had given him such good measure that the cuffs would have rendered gloves unnecessary in the coldest weather, while the collar was so high that it pushed his hair up on end on the top of his head. His bright buttons, too, were of the largest size.

Rendered complete by drab pantaloons and a buff waistcoat, I thought Mr Barkis a phenomenon of respectability. Their wedding is a surprise for David and Peggotty glosses her wedding that “she was very glad it was over.”. After wedding Peggotty learns that Mr Barkis is a kind of skinflint and if Peggotty needs some money for shopping, she must “prepare a long and elaborate scheme, a very Gunpowder Plot.” Mr Barkis is obviously money-minded contrary to Micawber's family. Micawber family took care of David when he worked in London. They behaved very kindly towards David. However, their greatest problem was money – they were in debt all the time and Mr Micawber was put in prison for debtors. Mr Micawber lobbies to eliminate the then establishment there. Through this little rebellion Dickens criticized the then society, mainly the Establishment. Mrs Micawber confides in David about their problems and she sends him to pawn with books and silver cutlery. David feels embarrassed but he likes Micawber and when they refused his financial help, he tries to help them this way. Nevertheless, both Mr and Mrs Micawbers are incorrigible. After every visit of creditor and left with failure although he tried hard, they act the same way: At these times, Mr Micawber would be transported with grief and mortification, even to the length of making motions at himself with a razor; but within half an hour afterwards, he would polish up his shoes with extraordinary pains, and go out, humming a tune with a greater air of gentility than ever. Mrs Micawber was quite as elastic. I have known her to be thrown into fainting fits by the king's taxes at three o'clock, and to eat lamb-chops, breaded, and drink warm ale (paid for with two teaspoons that had gone to the pawnbroker's) at four.

Micawbers were forced to move from place to place and they did not get rid of their debts, however, Mr Micawber does not yield and always keeps his motto: “in case that something will turn up.”

The way of Twain's humour – Mark Twain

Mark Twain belongs to realistic writers who depict the real life of American white society and their attitude towards everyday life (Tom Sawyer) and black society (Huckleberry Finn), although Twain is focused on the relationship of two outsiders and their comparison. Their common craving for free is seen as the central theme which contradicts the system but the novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* gains the sense of humour and the hue of innocence through the naivety and immaturity of that desire. Twain collects dialects of English among people from different social classes which emphasize authenticity of his novels. He also trustworthily describes everyday life of his characters and shows the way of living in the middle of the 19th century. Jim Hunter in *College English* Vol. 24, No. 6 (1963) calls Twain as the author of boybooks or Romantic realist. Hunter rationalizes that Twain's characters of Tom and Huck are children who are realistically depicted but their behaviour is rather romantic and he compares it with Golding's *Lord of the Flies* where he says that Twain's characters keeps their innocence and sense for fair play. These characters, especially Huck, are not selfish and their instinct against injustice is fully developed. Twain also uses humour in his works. This humour is quite ethical and often veers towards satire. Episodic composition is typical of humoristic prose and Twain uses this composition as well as situation comic of everyday life. Through his satire Twain shows the hypocrisy of white society and expresses his experience and attitude towards political happenings in the then United States.

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer

The novel *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* is more humorous than satirical novel. The source of humour can be found in Tom's relationship. When Tom falls in love with Becky, his love and many attempts to gain Becky are always depicted in a soft sense of humour. Tom shows different relation towards a boy who is rich. They are in a row and the whole issue ends with yelling at each other. Even relationship between Tom and his Aunt Polly is the source of humour in the novel. Tom always tries Aunt Polly's patience ("The switch hovered in the air - the peril was desperate"). Aunt Polly is quite creative and does not use only corporal punishment "Like many other simple-hearted souls, it was her pet vanity to believe she was endowed with a talent for dark and mysterious diplomacy, and she loved to contemplate her most transparent devices as marvels of low cunning." She often recognizes Tom's tricks too late and she is not ashamed to laugh at herself. The last significant relation is between Tom and Huck. Tom adores Huck because Huck is someone who is at the edge of society and for this reason everybody is scared of him and thus Huck is so attractive for Tom. There is a criticism of the Church in the story when villagers are in Church and they pay attention to a beetle and a poodle dog more than preaching. Adults act the same way as children and their worlds are connected at this point. They all are bored and they give preference to funny animals over serious preaching. Not only the Church is criticized. Twain exposed the Sunday school to ridicule. He depicts Tom as he exchanges yellow tickets with friends. These tickets contain verses from the Bible and children learn them by heart. When they have enough tickets of specific colour they gain their own Bible. But Tom does not learn the verses, he only barter them, because he wants the Bible however he has no intention in reading it.

Tom managed to gain all the ticket which he had needed and showed them to Mrs Walters “It was the most stunning surprise of the decade, and so profound was the sensation that it lifted the new hero up to the judicial one’s altitude, and the school had two marvels to gaze upon in place of one.” Tom is so proud that he deceived everyone but finally when he is asked the question who were the first two disciples he replied that David and Goliath. Sarah Dickey in her review of *Mark Twain: The Fate of Humor* by James Cox presents that Twain showed his full humour potentiality in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. Cox interprets that Twain revealed his childhood experience although he did not appear as a central figure. Cox even stands that Twain “created a character to impose it on a form.” Twain burlesqued many topics such as romantic love between Tom and Becky or the adult world but he created it as an unbiased observer, he left his characters to create the humour.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

Mark Twain used humour in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* as well. However the humour in this novel is stronger, more ironic and satiric. Twain primarily criticizes social problems of his era. The source of humour is often set in misunderstandings between Huck and the society. This misunderstanding appears right at the beginning of the story when Miss Watson holds forth about the Hell and Huck replies her that he wants to go there, but it is because he only wanted to do something and did not understand Miss Watson and her worries “Then she told me all about the bad place, and I said I wished I was there. She got mad then, but I didn’t meanno harm. All I wanted was to go somewheres; all I wanted was a change, I warn’t particular” Another topic which Twain criticizes white society through humour is education. In chapter 14 Huck and Jim debate King Solomon. Although Huck knows this story and he is able to tell Jim the main point, he cannot defend his opinion. Huck only repeats the most commonly used phrases in contrast to Jim who scrutinizes the problem deeper; he uses his common sense and personal experience and goes into details. It is obvious that intelligence does not depend on social class and status because Huck is white and can read and it is not a proof that he is smarter than Jim. Twain even deals with the racism and its stupidity in chapter 14.

Huck and Jim speculate on equality of Frenchmen and Americans because they do not share the same language. At this point Jim explains that Frenchmen speak different language as well as cows have their own language and cats have different one. However Jim’s idea is deeper. He wants to show Huck that a human being is still human being no matter what language he speaks. At this point it is obvious that Jim tends to unity contrary to Huck whose perception of the world is more diverse Why, Huck, doan’ de French people talk de same way we does?”

“Looky here, Jim; does a cat talk like we do?”/

“No, a cat don’t.”/

“Well, does a cow?”/

“No, a cow don’t, nuther.”/

“Does a cat talk like a cow, or a cow talk like a cat?”/

“No, dey don’t.”/

“It’s natural and right for ‘em to talk different from each other, ain’t it?”/

“Course.”/

“And ain’t it natural and right for a cat and a cow to talk different from us?”/

“Why, mos’ sholy it is.”/

“Well, then, why ain’t it natural and right for a Frenchman to talk different from us? You answer me that.”/

“Is a cat a man, Huck?”/

“No.”/

“Well, den, dey ain’t no sense in a cat talkin’ like a man. Is a cow a man? - er is a cow a cat?”/

“No, she ain’t either of them.”/

“Well, den, she ain’t got no business to talk like either one er the yuther of ‘em. Is a Frenchman a man?”/

“Yes.”/

“Well, den! Dad blame it, why doan’ he talk like a man? You answer me dat! (Twain 2001: 227-228)

Richard K. Barksdale in his publication *History, Slavery, and Thematic Irony in Huckleberry Finn* gives readers a thumbnail sketch of the States before the Civil War and presents that Jim’s escape and survival must be seen as a real miracle. Barksdale continues with the attitude of the white society towards slavery today and mentions that they often ignore this problem maybe because they want to forget that and the black society still deals with this cruel history and is traumatized by it even today and this society tries to ban racial cues in education. Their fight is focused on *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* as well because Twain used the word “nigger” more than 200 times. Barksdale depicts the problem that Twain seems racist for a number of today Americans. He asserts that Twain used fugitive Jim and poor Huck for a specific reason – “Twain obviously desired to explore the ironic implications of such an association in a “sivilization” riddled by racial division and prejudice.” – and continues with the idea that Twain wanted to show that two absolutely different people can be friends. This friendship could be arisen “only outside the normal areas of civil and social discourse”.

Barksdale even states that this friendship was hardly possible because poor white people strongly disrespected black people and there was a sharp boundary between them, but Twain was ironical about this problem and made it possible. At the end of the article Barksdale presents his idea that readers who think that Twain was racist do not see the irony which Twain used in his novel and are not able to recognize the ironic message of the novel. Twain even combines racism and religion together and depicts Silas Phelps satirically in chapter 33: He was the innocentest, best old soul I ever see. But it warn’t surprising; because

he warn't only just a farmer, he was a preacher, too, and had a little one-horse log church down back of the plantation, which he built it himself at his own expense, for a church and schoolhouse, and never charged nothing for his preaching, and it was worth it, too. There was plenty other farmer-preachers like that, and done the same way, down South. (Twain 2001: 340)

Uncle Silas works as a preacher who preaches for free so he is adored among people in the village. It is strange that even if Silas is the preacher, he owns many slaves as well. But the slavery, or better owning of a human being and make him into work, is forbidden in the Bible. However unclce Silas and Aunt Sally think that they do their best “Uncle Silas came in every day or two to pray with him, and Aunt Sally came in to see if he was comfortable and had plenty to eat, and both of them was kind as they could be [...]”

In chapter 23 Twain criticizes people who are able to do everything for money. The duke and the king had prepared the stage for their show and the king humiliates himself over and over again in order to gain some money. This scene depicts how people are desperate to gain money regardless of the cost and they do not hesitate to degrade each other: The people most killed themselves laughing; and when the king got done capering and capered off behind the scenes, they roared and clapped and stormed and haw hawed till he come back and done it over again, and after that they made him do it another time.”¹³⁷ . Twain’s attitude towards American Civil War is evident in the story about Grangerfords and Sheperdsons. From this point, when Huck meets Buck Grangerford, Twain began his satirical link. These two families, Grangerfords and Sheperdsons, symbolize the North/Union and the South/Confederacy. Huck learns that both families live in close proximity and both share the same steamboat landing and visit the same church. Nevertheless, these families are into a mutual long lived feud that spans generations. The worst fact is that nobody knows why they are in this mutual feud [...]

“Has this one been going on long, Buck?”

“Well, I should reckon! It started thirty year ago, or som’ers along there. There was trouble ‘bout something, and then a lawsuit to settle it; and the suit went agin one of the men, and so he up and shot the man that won the suit—which he would naturally do, of course. Anybody would.”/

“What was the trouble about, Buck?—land?”/

“I reckon maybe—I don’t know.”/

“Well, who done the shooting? Was it a Grangerford or a Shepherdson?”/

“Laws, how do I know? It was so long ago.”/

“Don’t anybody know?”/

“Oh, yes, pa knows, I reckon, and some of the other old people; but they don’t know now what the row was about in the first place.”(Twain 2001: 250)

Twain expressed opinion about The American Civil War in this story however the plot of the novel had happened earlier before the Civil War commenced. Twain characterized the feud of families as a stupid act

as well as he saw the Civil War because Grangerfords and Sheperdsons ignored similarities they shared (their honour, land or even history) and during years of their feud they even forgot the reason why they were fighting for.

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