MARK TWAIN’S participation in the Congo reform movement, although it was his final and most intensive anti-imperialist effort, has received little attention. The first serious study of Twain’s anti-imperialism, by William Gibson in The New England Quarterly (1947), reviewed his role as a leading critic of the turn-of-the-century wars for empire in the Philippines, South Africa, and China. Gibson’s fine review, however, stopped with 1902 and did not consider the later involvement with the Congo, perhaps because he limited himself to published sources while most of Twain’s Congo writing has remained unpublished. Several books have since mentioned the topic briefly, the most extended discussion being in Philip Foner’s scholarly but partial Mark Twain: Social Critic. A full examination of Twain’s Congo involvement is valuable not

* For aid and encouragement in this study, I am grateful to Frederick Anderson, Editor of the Mark Twain Papers, and Professor Hamlin Hill, University of New Mexico. Grateful acknowledgment for financial support is due to the Mabelle McLeod Lewis Memorial Fund. All previously unpublished material of Samuel L. Clemens copyright 1977 by Thomas G. Chamberlain and Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company as trustees under the will of Clara Clemens Samossoud.
only because it helps complete his life story, but also because it reveals much about the author.¹

Mark Twain first announced, "I am an anti-imperialist," when he spoke with a reporter from the New York Herald on his return from Europe on October 16, 1900. This conviction—developed during his around-the-world lecture tour—was confirmed by his reading the Treaty of Paris in which Spain ceded the Philippines to the United States, and was to be strengthened by renewed contact with William Dean Howells, an officer of the Anti-Imperialist League. During the next six years Twain wrote a series of anti-imperialist articles concerning the Spanish-American War, the Boer War, and the Boxer Rebellion. His final anti-imperialist effort on behalf of the Congo may be dated from October 17, 1904, when he was visited in New York by E. D. Morel, head of the English Congo Reform Association, until February 10, 1906, when he wrote his second and last letter of resignation as vice-president of the American Congo Reform Association to Dr. Thomas Barbour, one of its leaders. During these sixteen months, Twain wrote King Leopold's Soliloquy, his longest anti-imperialist work, and two shorter Congo pieces which have remained unpublished. He gave a lengthy newspaper interview about the Congo, mentioned it in several speeches, and made three trips to Washington to talk in favor of reform with President Theodore Roosevelt and high officials in the State Department.

This record of involvement seems remarkable for a man who had no direct contact with the Congo. In 1896 Twain had visited South Africa, but never the heart of the continent. His chief motive for joining the Congo movement was surely a humanitarian concern sparked by Morel's appeal. Twain's

feelings of sympathy and guilt toward black people in the United States must also have contributed to his desire to help blacks in Africa. Finally, his commitment to democratic principles, which his 1901 sketch, “The Stupendous Procession,” underlaid his anti-imperialist efforts, undoubtedly led him to protest colonial rule in the Congo where the most fundamental rights were denied.

Twain’s reasons for abandoning the movement after more than a year of activity were numerous. In his Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain, Justin Kaplan suggests that Twain’s devotion to Congo reform was limited by fear of offending his audience and risking another financial failure: “By 1905 his celebrity had become addictive and had begun to blunt his purpose as a public conscience.”2 But while Twain was certainly shaken by his bankruptcy twelve years earlier, no evidence indicates that his withdrawal from the Congo movement turned on such narrow concerns. Twain did have some personal reasons for quitting, but, to his credit, they did not include anxiety over his popularity and income. Acting overzealously, the leaders of the C.R.A., who saw the beloved author as their best instrument for influencing public opinion, began putting inordinate demands on his time. At the age of seventy, Twain simply lacked the physical strength to keep going. Moreover, as an artist, he felt he could not allow himself to become trapped into a single political interest. He was, he said, a “lightning- bug,” not a “bee.”

Another, less personal, consideration finally sealed his resignation. At the beginning of 1906, the reform movement was making discouragingly little progress. Despite reformers’ pleas, the United States government refused to intervene in the Congo. Throughout his involvement, Twain had believed the United States was a party to the Berlin Act of 1885 and therefore had a legal obligation to supervise Congo rule. In January, 1906, the State Department told him he was mistaken; the United States Senate had never ratified the Berlin Act. Twain

2 Justin Kaplan, Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain (New York, 1966), 366.
consequently got angry with the reformers, who he believed had misinformed him, and he abruptly decided that no basis for a reform movement existed in the United States.

Even before the State Department's declaration that it would do nothing, however, Twain seemed doubtful about chances for reform. His pessimism about human nature increasingly dominated his last years, and his anti-imperialist efforts, while chivalrous, were felt to be futile because cowardly, selfish, unthinking humanity would never act to pull down oppressors. Eventually Twain counted himself among the craven band. In 1907 he wrote, "The human race is a race of cowards; and I am not only marching in that procession but carrying a banner." Twain was harsh on himself, but his departure from the Congo reform movement may be seen as the moment in his life when his pessimism finally overwhelmed his urge to ease human suffering. In his last letter about the Congo, written six months before his death, he wondered why the atrocities there had not roused Christendom to "a fury of generous indignation." His own indignation had been strongly aroused, but his fury at the crimes in the Congo, and the seeming indifference of the rest of the world, became more than he could bear and turned to despair.

Twain's involvement with the Congo movement is particularly fascinating because it illuminates the action of *Huckleberry Finn* published two decades earlier. At times Twain trying to save the Congo black people reminds us of Tom Sawyer "freeing" Jim from the Phelps farm in Arkansas. Twain was occasionally moved by a vain sense of his own heroism, understood the situation superficially, and lost interest when the crusade failed to be quick, romantic, and glorious. But he was


4 Twain's last letter on the Congo was to Arthur Conan Doyle and is in the Mark Twain Papers letter file. Twain did not date the letter; Albert B. Paine dated it erroneously "early 1900's." The letter was actually in reply to one from Doyle dated Oct. 9, 1909. All letters hereafter mentioned in the text are in the MTP letter file unless otherwise stated. The Mark Twain Papers are in the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
neither as callous nor as self-centered as Tom. His compassion was more akin to that of Huck Finn. Despite moments of egotism, he felt the suffering of the Congolese and wanted to end it. Ironically, this same compassion provided one reason for his eventual withdrawal from the movement. After the State Department told him about the Berlin Act, he decided, out of sympathy for his own countrymen, that the reformers were wrong to continue agitating American emotions if nothing could be done.

In *Huckleberry Finn* neither Tom’s antics nor Huck’s compassion succeeded in rescuing Jim. In order to end a book trapped between the conflicting imperatives of a desire for freedom and the inexorable movement of the Mississippi River into slave territory, Twain had to resort to the trick of Miss Watson’s manumission. The novel is pessimistic, especially considering that it was written after the Civil War, because it views a society based on slavery as essentially inescapable. For Twain, the antebellum South was only an extreme instance of what all society was like. Cowardly humanity would always acquiesce in a society ruled by masters, and society would infect individuals with a “conscience” which overruled natural sympathy in favor of social norms. “‘Republics and democracies are not for such as he,’” Twain wrote of mankind in 1907, “‘they cannot satisfy the requirements of his nature.’” In the Congo, as on the lower Mississippi, Twain confronted an order which enslaved black people and he again decided it was unalterable. In his two personae as Tom and Huck, he could effect no change, and this time he was unable to resort to authorial tricks. Twain’s decision to abandon the reform movement was prefigured in his fiction twenty years earlier by Huck’s decision to abandon “civilization” and light out for the Territory. It was a choice to flee social involvement rather than struggle forever to change evils which were seen as inherent in human nature. Unfortunately, the Congo issue touched such a deep well of anger in Twain that after his resignation, he avoided news of it. Thus he apparently never learned that United

6 *Mark Twain in Eruption*, Bernard DeVoto, Editor (New York, 1940), 67-68.
States policy eventually reversed itself and the reform movement, advanced mainly by Twain's contribution, ended successfully.

I

The need for reform in the Congo was due to its exploitation by King Leopold II of Belgium. The United States became the first to recognize Leopold's claim to the region, based on 450 treaties signed with local chiefs by his agent Henry Stanley, on April 22, 1884. General Henry Sanford, a former United States minister to Belgium who was a partner of Leopold, convinced President Chester Arthur to recognize the Congo, not as a colony belonging to Belgium, but as an independent country with Leopold as its ruler. It was thus held open for American trade. Sanford also persuaded John Tyler Morgan, an influential senator from Alabama on the Foreign Relations Committee, to recognize Leopold's claim because the Congo might, like Liberia, become a place to repatriate American blacks.

On November 15, 1884, Chancellor Otto von Bismarck of Germany convened the Berlin Conference to avoid conflicts among the imperialist powers by laying down rules for the division of Africa. Fourteen nations participated, including the United States. One of the most important actions of the conference was its recognition of Leopold's claim to the Congo. According to the General Act, Leopold was pledged to keep his country neutral and open to free trade, to improve the "moral well-being" of the natives, and to suppress the slave trade by the Arabs.

The United States delegate, John Kasson, who had sup-

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ported Leopold throughout the conference, signed the General Act. However, by the time the conference ended on February 25, 1885, administrations had changed in Washington, and President Grover Cleveland opposed American involvement in European politics because it might encourage European nations to disregard the Monroe Doctrine. Consequently, Cleveland retained the treaty and did not submit it to the Senate for ratification. Therefore the United States was not an official signer of the General Act. Only the remaining thirteen European nations were.

Leopold soon began to abuse his trust in Africa. At the Brussels Anti-Slavery Conference of 1889-1890, he gained the right to tax imports into the Congo. The United States officially signed the Declaration of this conference. Then on October 30, 1892, Leopold issued a decree which virtually ended free trade. He restricted private traders to a small area of the Kasai River and gave the rest of the territory to concession companies in which he owned a majority of the shares. In order to exploit the Congo, Leopold resorted to a system of forced labor, instituting a labor tax of forty hours per month. If the people refused to satisfy their tax by gathering ivory and raw rubber, they were harassed and mutilated by the Force Publique, Leopold’s army of native soldiers. It has been estimated that between 1895 and 1905 as many as three million were killed.7

In 1903, as a result of increasing protests, the British government sent its consul in the Congo, Roger Casement, on a mission of inquiry. His report specifying atrocities was published by the Foreign Office on February 11, 1904, and prompted creation of the English Congo Reform Association by Edmund Dene Morel on March 23, 1904. The Association counted among its supporters ten Peers, including the Earl of Norbury, and some forty members of Commons.

Meanwhile, a protest movement was being organized in the

7 Morel gave the estimate of three million killed in his preface to the British edition of Twain’s King Leopold’s Soliloquy (London, 1907), xvi-xvii. He corrected Twain’s estimate of ten million.
United States by William Morrison, a Presbyterian missionary from Virginia who returned in 1903 after seven years in the Congo. On April 19, 1904, a *Memorial Concerning Conditions in the Independent State of the Kongo* was presented to the Senate by a “Conference of Missionary Societies” which included Morrison as representative for the Southern Presbyterian Board. The chairman was Dr. Thomas Barbour, foreign secretary of the American Baptist Missionary Union. When the government declined to act, Dr. Barbour asked Morel to visit the United States to help form a stronger American protest movement.

Morel sailed on September 21, 1904. In Washington, he presented a memorandum to President Roosevelt and spoke with Secretary of State John Hay. He then went to Boston where he addressed the thirteenth International Peace Conference; during Morel’s visit, the American branch of the C.R.A. was formed by the journalist and sociologist, Robert Park.

At the same time the reform movement was being organized in America, King Leopold was forming a lobby favorable to himself. The head was Baron Ludovic Moncheur, the Belgian minister in Washington. Under him were Henry Kowalsky, a San Francisco lawyer; Alfred Nerincx, a lecturer at George Washington University; Henry Wellington Wack, a publicity agent and author; and James Whiteley, consul for the Congo in Baltimore.

On October 10, 1904, nine days before he left for England again, Morel first wrote Mark Twain. He said the Earl of

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10 The Twain letter quoted in this paragraph, SLC to EDM, Oct. 15, 1904, is in the Morel Papers, London School of Economics and Political Science. I am grateful to C. G. Allen, Keeper of Manuscripts, for helping me find the Twain letters in this collection. The Morel letters quoted in this paragraph, EDM to SLC, Oct. 10 and Oct. 17, 1904, are in the MTP letter file.
Norbury had suggested a meeting between them and promised to “seek, if able, to interest you and enlist your sympathies in the question of Congo misrule.” Undoubtedly, the Congo reformers were drawn to Twain because of his reputation as an anti-imperialist. On October 15, Twain replied to Morel, “I received Lord Norbury’s letter, & I hope you can dine here in a private way with me at 7:45 on one of the days of your sojourn.” Morel went to Twain’s home at 21 Fifth Avenue in New York on the evening of October 17, when Twain promised “to use his pen for the cause of the Congo natives.” He said he would “write an article on the Congo.” Before leaving the country, Morel sent Twain a “packet of Congo literature” and promised to send a copy of his recent book, *King Leopold’s Rule in Africa*.

During the winter of 1904-1905 Twain set to work on *King Leopold’s Soliloquy* which he finally finished, after a bout of bronchitis, near the end of February. He read it aloud to his secretary Isabel V. Lyon and his sister-in-law Mrs. Crane. On February 22, 1905, Miss Lyon recorded in her journal:

It was yesterday that Mr. Clemens read King Leopold’s Soliloquy to Mrs. Crane & me. Breathless we sat & were weak with emotion when he finished the bald truthful statements that rolled from Leopold’s vicious lips. Horribly—too horribly picturesque it is, & Mr. Clemens will cut out some of it—It’s a pity too—but I suppose it would be too strong a diet for people & governments.\(^{13}\)

Miss Lyon may have overresponded, but the revised *Soliloquy* was apparently still “too strong a diet” for Harper and Brothers. When Twain submitted it to them to be published in the *North American Review* as his other anti-imperialist articles had been, they turned it down. Twain wrote Morel that “the corporation” was “doubtful about the commercial

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11 E. D. Morel in his preface to the 1907 British edition of *King Leopold’s Soliloquy*, xii.


13 Isabel V. Lyon’s journal, *Daily Reminder*, is in the MTP.
wisdom of dipping into Leopold's stinkpot." He noted with
disgust, "They are so situated, by the contract between us, that
I cannot make them do right." 14 According to Miss Lyon,
Twain also initially thought they rejected the Soliloquy be-
cause Frederick Duneka, an editor, was Catholic and therefore
sympathetic to the Catholic monarch, Leopold. Later Twain
angrily decided it was "much more likely that Leopold has
bought up the Harper silence, along with hundreds of other
papers." 15

Following the rejection, Harper and Brothers released the
Soliloquy at Twain's request to the American C.R.A. for pub-
lication as a pamphlet. Twain by this time was getting impa-
tient. He wrote Duneka on June 16, 1905, "I hope they will
get it out soon and force it to a wide circulation. I shall feel
sweeter inside after I have spread out my opinion of Leopold."
After several delays, the first edition was published in late
September, 1905. 16 Following Twain's suggestion, it contained
several photographs of mutilated Congolese. The pamphlet
sold for twenty-five cents, and Twain donated all proceeds to
the C.R.A.

Twain wrote King Leopold's Soliloquy just after he finished
"The Czar's Soliloquy," published in March, 1905, in the
North American Review. Both were dramatic monologues in
which a villain gave an outrageously inadequate defense of
himself. In conveying the political history of the Congo in
King Leopold's Soliloquy, Twain did commendably except for
a serious error concerning the parties to the Berlin Act. The
error came when he had Leopold say, "America and thirteen
great European states wept in sympathy with me ... their
representatives met in convention in Berlin and made me

14 SLC to EDM, April 11, 1905. This letter has been published in Robert
Wuliger, "Mark Twain on King Leopold's Soliloquy," American Literature,
xxv, 294-287 (1953).
15 IVL to Mr. Howe, April 2, 1938, in the Berg Collection. The letter is based
on Miss Lyon's entry for July 7, 1905 in her Daily Reminder.
16 This information derived from three letters in the MTP letter file: Bar-
bour to SLC, Sept. 15, 1905; Barbour to SLC, Sept. 22, 1905; and Morel to SLC,
Nov. 27, 1905.
Head Foreman and Superintendent of the Congo State.'"\textsuperscript{17} Twain mistakenly assumed that the United States had officially signed the Act; actually President Cleveland had withheld it from Senate ratification.

It is hard to see how Twain made this mistake. His library at the time of the writing of the \textit{Soliloquy} included at least Morel's \textit{King Leopold's Rule in Africa}, which Morel had sent him in October, 1904, and the \textit{Memorial Concerning Conditions in the Independent State of the Kongo}, which William Morrison sent him along with a letter on October 28, 1904. Both works clearly stated that the United States never ratified the Berlin Act. Twain's copy of Morel has been lost, but his copy of the \textit{Memorial} in the Mark Twain Papers is well annotated (although no marks are on page nineteen dealing with the United States and the Act). Twain probably read these books hastily and fell into a popular misconception at the time.

As a political instrument, \textit{King Leopold's Soliloquy} was aimed at an American audience. Twain cleverly had Leopold gibe at the United States:

\begin{quote}
I was a shade too smart for that nation that thinks itself so smart. Yes, I certainly did bunco a Yankee—as these people phrase it. Pirate flag? let them call it so—perhaps it is. All the same \textit{they were the first to salute it}. (p. 7)
\end{quote}

The obvious intention of these sentences was to anger Americans and stop their salute of Leopold's flag.

Despite Twain's eye to the political effects of the \textit{Soliloquy}, he made several impolitic comments. First, he included a number of antireligious statements. Many were justified in that they destroyed Leopold's facade as a bringer of Christianity to Africa. Twain's strategy of pointing to hypocritic imperialist piety followed his famous 1901 essay "To the Person Sitting in Darkness." But he added several antireligious remarks

\textsuperscript{17} Samuel L. Clemens, \textit{King Leopold's Soliloquy: A Defense of His Congo Rule}, 2nd edition (Boston, 1905), 6. All page references to \textit{King Leopold's Soliloquy}, unless otherwise stated, are to this edition (dated 1905, but which appeared on Jan. 1, 1906).
which were politically superfluous. Leopold says about his acts:

God has observed them from the beginning and has manifested no dissatisfaction with them, nor shown disapproval of them, nor hampered nor interrupted them in any way. By this sign I recognize his approval of what I have done; his cordial and glad approval, I am sure I may say. (p. 8)

Here, as in Letters from the Earth, Twain the "atheist" was simply railing at God's apparent indifference to human suffering. The missionaries in the C.R.A. could hardly have approved such a statement.

Other intrusions of Twain's pessimism had the effect of undercutting the whole reformist intention of the Soliloquy. One of his ideas was that democracy would inevitably degenerate into dictatorship, a notion realized in the fact that the democratic United States had been instrumental in setting up Leopold as the Congo's absolute monarch. Twain went on in the Soliloquy, as he had done much earlier in Colonel Sherburn's speech in Huckleberry Finn, to point to the cowardice of men in obeying a ruler. Men would always be on their knees before rulers like Leopold and the Czar. Leopold said of the human race:

A curious race, certainly! It finds fault with me and with my occupations, and forgets that neither of us [Leopold and the Czar] could exist an hour without its sanction. It is our confederate and all-powerful protector. It is our bulwark, our friend, and our fortress. (p. 36)

If men were indeed sheep, there could be no point in writing reformist pamphlets to them. The Soliloquy ended with Leopold reading from a supposed reformist pamphlet (actually invented by Twain and confirming his pessimistic opinion rather than expressing a reformist argument):

*We do not wish to look;* for he is a king, and it hurts us, it troubles us, by ancient and inherited instinct it shames us to see a king degraded to this aspect, and we shrink from hearing the particulars
of how it happened. We shudder and turn away when we come upon them in print.

Leopold then commented:

Why, certainly—THAT IS MY PROTECTION. And you will continue to do it. I know the human race. (pp. 41-42)

One possible interpretation is that this ending was intended to goad people to prove they were not sheep. Underlying this intention, however, one can sense Twain’s pessimism about reform.

His pessimism is partially indicated by the fact that nowhere in the Soliloquy did Twain tell his readers what they might do about Leopold. He presented no program of action. At that time, even the leaders of the C.R.A. had very little in way of a program. They were merely pushing for an independent international inquiry into conditions in the Congo. The solution they eventually settled on was to remove the Congo from Leopold’s personal rule and place it under the administration of the Belgian parliament.

On October 25, 1905, Twain’s friend Thomas Bailey Aldrich wrote him, “That King Leopold Soliloquy is a noble piece of work!” The public response to the Soliloquy was strong, but it was difficult to gauge since reviewers at first ignored the pamphlet. Leopold was blamed for the lack of reviews: on October 7, 1905, Dr. Thomas Barbour, now a member of the C.R.A., wrote Twain, “I think there is no question that an adverse influence is holding back editorial comment in some quarters, but it will have much to do to keep the work from the public.”

While Leopold’s forces may not have stopped the reviews, they did take action against Twain. When the British edition of the Soliloquy came out, an anonymous forty-seven-page pamphlet, An Answer to Mark Twain, appeared in an attempt to discredit it. Published by Bulens Brothers in Brussels, the pamphlet consisted of quotations from the Soliloquy followed by photographs and statements by travelers supposedly refut-
ing Twain's accusations. The introduction claimed, "Truth shines forth in the following pages, which summarily show what the Congo State is—not the hell depicted by a morbid mind" (p. 6). But the pamphlet was not convincing. For example, in order to refute Twain's statement "The Black Soldiers directed by the Belgians burn their native villages," the pamphlet presented photographs of four unburnt villages (pp. 24-25).

About the time the Soliloquy was published, Twain concocted a Tom Sawyerish scheme to make the Congo a religious issue in the United States. He ordered copies sent to one hundred prominent Protestant clergymen and offered to pay the costs himself. His note specified, "Let all the copies go as if they did not come from me." On September 15, 1905, Barbour replied that he would send the copies at the expense of the C.R.A. In a fragmentary manuscript Twain explained he also planned to send the pamphlet to "every Catholic priest in the country." He said the United States would never "declare war in the interest of its honor; but you can rouse it to the war-point in 12 months, with slight labor, in the interest of its religion" (p. 4).

Twain was apparently thinking of the arguments of Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore who defended Leopold against the Protestant reformers. Twain felt that in a fight on that basis the Protestants would win:

Therefore: make this a religious issue between our 68,000,000 Protestants & our 12,000,000 Roman Catholics, & carry it to the polls. . . . The Catholics can be depended upon to cast a solid vote for Leopold, slavery, robbery, mutilation, starvation, murder & American dishonor, & the Protestants can be depended upon to line up & snow the whole thing under & out of sight. (p. 4)

While it was true that the Congo controversy had a religious

19 Pages 2 through 6 of this manuscript survive in DV370-370A, MTP. This quotation is from page 6.
dimension, Twain overestimated it and was disappointed by the Catholic response to the Soliloquy. On December 27, 1905, Isabel Lyon recorded in her journal, "A little attack from a Roman Catholic priest came this morning—'good enough, as far as it goes' Mr. Clemens said—but one attack isn't enough to stir up Romanism against Protestantism."

During the four months following publication of the Soliloquy, Twain engaged in intense activity for Congo reform. On November 23, 1905, he was made first vice-president of the C.R.A. The president was G. Stanley Hall, psychologist and president of Clark University. The list of vice-presidents included Lyman Abbott, Congregational minister and author; David Starr Jordan, president of Stanford University; Henry Van Dyke, Presbyterian minister and professor of English at Princeton; and Booker T. Washington, founder of Tuskegee Institute.

Later that month Twain wrote his second piece about the Congo, "A Thanksgiving Sentiment." The first half of this short piece calls the United States the "official godfather of the Congo Graveyard" because it was the first power to recognize its flag. The second half stresses even more strongly the relationship between the United States and Leopold:

We have much to be thankful for; most of all, (politically,) that America's first-born son, sole & only son, love-child of her trusting innocence, & her virgin bed, Leopold King of the Undertakers, has been spared to us another year, & that his Cemetery Trust in the Congo is now doing a larger business in a single month than the Russo-Japanese War did in the whole seventeen that it lasted.

Late in 1905, Twain wrote yet another essay on the subject.


21 The first half was published in Foner, 297-298. The second half has never been published. Both are in DV370-370A, MTP. Paine mistakenly dated the piece "1904." I am grateful to Professor Louis J. Budd, Duke University, for spotting Paine's error.
This unpublished thirteen-page manuscript was titled "On Leopold, About 1906," by Albert Bigelow Paine, Twain's biographer and literary executor. In it Twain dealt mainly with the history of the Congo, again mistakenly assuming the United States had ratified the Berlin Act. He strongly criticized the United States government for its inaction:

The Government of the United States, by its years & years of silence & its indolent neglect of its official duty, stands responsible with the other Xn powers for its share of this stupendous crime, the most prodigious crime in all human history. The Government, the slow & contemplative though unmalicious Government, I say, not the people of the U. S.—for if you could put our people in the place of the Government, they would rise in their strength & abolish this sceptered fiend in 15 minutes. (p. 8)

The manuscript ended hopefully. Since a special King's Commission of Investigation had condemned Leopold in November, 1905, Twain thought England and the United States now had a warrant to bring him before a tribunal at the Hague.

On December 3, 1905, Twain gave a lengthy interview about Leopold to the New York World, once more mistakenly assuming the United States had ratified the Berlin Act. He explained his own interest on the basis of his country's supposed legal obligation:

My interest in the Congo and the Belgian King's connection with that state is not personal further than that I am a citizen of the United States and am pledged, like every other citizen of the United States to superintend that King as foreman and superintendent of that property. Thirteen Christian nations stand pledged like our own... Our whole nation has a personal interest in the matter and is under written engagement to look after it.

In the interview Twain was again optimistic about action

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22 This manuscript is in DV370-370A, MTP. It can be dated on internal evidence. In it, Twain refers to the report of the King's Commission of Investigation as already published. Thus the manuscript was written in Nov., 1905 or later. However, Twain also says the Commission was appointed "last year." Since the Commission was appointed in 1904, the manuscript, if Twain's accuracy can be trusted, was written before the end of 1905.
against Leopold: "The outlook is that England will presently invite the other powers to join her in demanding a searching inquiry into Leopold's performance." He believed the United States would "take a hand."

During this four-month period, Twain also made at least three trips to Washington, entering into discussions with the State Department and President Theodore Roosevelt. The first was on November 24-27, 1905; the second, during the last half of December, 1905; and the third, January 25-30, 1906.23 On all these trips Twain visited the State Department and spoke with either Secretary of State Elihu Root or Assistant Secretary Robert Bacon.

On his first trip Twain lunched with Roosevelt on November 27, when the president showed interest in the Congo and said he would ask Bacon to make a thorough report. Twain apparently inferred that Roosevelt would act against Leopold if he were first sure England would also act. On November 28, after his return to New York, Twain sent Bacon some documents about the Congo and wrote encouragingly, "In England the matter is in the hands of John Morley and some strong peers and bishops, & I feel pretty sure that they will push it along to a point where America can drop in & take a hand without much embarrassment." On December 4, Bacon wrote Twain to request more information: "If you could tell us some time just what has been done in times past by England, and how, it would help us a great deal in deciding what we might do most effectively."

When faced with this request, Twain faltered. On December 6, he wrote Bacon that he lacked the information but would try to obtain it: "When I returned from Washington I set on foot (privately) an inquiry into the present English attitude. Answers will come in due time." Then he fell back on name-dropping and inappropriate humor. After mentioning John Morley and Bryce, he said, "These are friends of mine—

23 Two of the trips may be dated exactly from Isabel Lyon's Daily Reminder, but the date of the other may only be inferred. See the autobiographical dictation for April 3, 1906 in the MTP in which Twain says he visited the State Department three times.
so also is Campbell-Bannerman." He signed the letter, "S. L. Clemens (oldest person in America)."

Twain next turned to Thomas Barbour for help. On December 7, Barbour wrote Morel about the Twain-Roosevelt luncheon meeting:

Mr. Clemens believes that if the President could have quietly trustworthy assurance that the British government is ready to take action if the American government will follow suit, he would be inclined to act. In any case Mr. Clemens will see the President anew if you can privately get for him such assurance. Can you manage this?24

Morel soon contacted the British government. On December 21, he wrote Lord Edmund Fitzmaurice, Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs in Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's new Liberal government, which had come to power following Arthur Balfour's resignation on December 4. Morel now stated in slightly stronger form what Barbour had told him:

Three weeks ago Mr. Clemens lunched with the President, and had a long conversation with him, and he gathered from that conversation "that if the President could have quietly trustworthy assurances that the British Government is ready to take action if the American Government will follow suit, he would be inclined to act."

I am asked whether I can obtain such an assurance, and communicate it in confidence to Mr. Clemens, who will then again see the President.25

This initiative resulted in disappointment. On January 17, 1906, Barbour wrote Morel to correct the impression that Roosevelt had actually promised to act. Twain had merely inferred such a disposition. Barbour asked Morel to clarify the situation with Lord Fitzmaurice so neither Roosevelt nor Twain would be embarrassed. Barbour further wrote he would tell Twain that definite assurance could not be secured from

24 Letter in the E. D. Morel Papers.
the British government, but that Morel had "the strongest confidence that the government is favorably disposed."²⁶

By this time, however, Twain was becoming estranged from the C.R.A., an estrangement which would be complete at the end of January when the State Department finally told him the United States had not ratified the Berlin Act, and therefore had no legal connection with the matter. In the meantime, Twain was growing increasingly impatient with the reformers. On December 27, 1905, Isabel Lyon wrote in her journal, "The slowness of the Congo movement is troubling Mr. Clemens very much. There is no leadership to it & he can do no more than he has done in giving to the cause King Leopold's Soliloquy."

In his *Mark Twain: A Biography* Paine gave his explanation of the author's disengagement:

Various plans and movements were undertaken for Congo reform, and Clemens worked and wrote letters and gave his voice and his influence and exhausted his rage, at last, as one after another of the half-organized and altogether futile undertakings showed no results. His interest did not die, but it became inactive. Eventually he declared: "I have said all I can say on that terrible subject. I am heart and soul in any movement that will rescue the Congo and hang Leopold, but I cannot write any more."

His fires were likely to burn themselves out, they raged so fiercely. (v. iii, p. 1231)

Twain's energy certainly became exhausted. At the end of 1905 he was seventy years old and troubled with recurrent bronchitis and angina. He had never fully recovered from the death of his wife Olivia during the summer of 1904: even in his first letter to Morel on October 15, 1904, he had said, "All days are alike to me in these black days of my bereavement." Thus it is understandable why he finally decided he had over-committed himself. On January 8, 1906, Twain wrote Dr. Barbour, "I have retired from the Congo."²⁷ The letter conveys

²⁶ Letter in the E. D. Morel Papers.
²⁷ Letter in the Berg Collection.
Twain’s feeling that he had been captured and was being used excessively by the reformers:

What have I been doing? Dreaming? Walking in my sleep? It looks so. I wake up & find myself tacitly committed to journeys, & speeches, & so on—perfectly appalling [sic] activities. To do those things would infallibly lay further burdens upon me, & presently I should find myself tangled up in the Congo matter, permanently, exclusively, & beyond hope of honorable escape. It freezes the blood in my veins to think of it. These energies, these persistencies, are entirely out of my line & foreign to my make. My instincts & interests are merely literary, they rise no higher; & I scatter from one interest to another, lingering nowhere. I am not a bee, I am a lightning-bug.

Twain’s insistence that he was a literary person unsuited for political activity resembled Joseph Conrad’s reasons for refusing to aid the British C.R.A. a little more than two years earlier. On December 26, 1903, Conrad wrote his friend R. B. Cunninghame Graham about a request for aid from Roger Casement: “I would help him, but it is not in me. I am only a wretched novelist inventing wretched stories and not even up to that miserable game.”

Twain was more cheerful than Conrad, but he still conceived himself too uncommitted to be an activist. He concluded his letter to Barbour, “If I had Morel’s splendid equipment of energy, brains, diligence, concentration, persistence—but I haven’t; he is a ‘mobile, I am a wheelbarrow.”

Two days later Barbour replied, begging Twain to stay and promising not to be overzealous in putting demands on him. Barbour argued that Twain’s own sympathy and conscience would not let him leave:

I do not think you can leave the Congo until you take the people with you. That hour has seemed to me not far away. It has seemed near because you are there. For you seem to me not like the fire-fly or even the bee but like Orpheus. So long as you stay in Africa the

people of other lands will come, in an ever increasing multitude, and they will see and act.

Although Barbour’s Orpheus image is clumsy, he was trying to provide a more political metaphor for the artist than a lightning bug. As a reformer and missionary, Barbour wanted the artist to lead the Congolese out of hell.

On January 27, 1906, Morel wrote urging Twain, “Don’t ‘retire from Congo’ . . . altogether.” Twain had sent Morel a copy of his letter to Barbour. In a cover letter, Twain praised Barbour but complained about the weakness of the American C.R.A. He said the enterprise “needs an organization like U. S. Steel.”

Morel’s reply is interesting because at that time he himself was losing faith in the reform movement. In his letter he wrote (using remarkably mixed metaphors) about his own hardships and loneliness:

It is not all beer and skittles for those of us who have put hand to plough in this matter. In fact, most of it is stale water and the tread mill! Why do we do it? I don’t know. Why should we be called upon to do it? I know less. . . . My home life is reduced to microscopic proportions. I have never finished, and I have declined payment for my services. Thus you see personally I am at the end of my tether, so far as doing more is concerned. I go on doing all the time what I can; but to flog the slumbering soul of a nation into life? Can one man do it, even with help, who is not a genius? I doubt it.

Morel, however, could see no alternative. He felt he had to go on because “those wretched people out there have no-one but us after all. And they have the right to live.” He persisted even though he knew the African people would never thank the reformers or even know what they were doing. “What a curious thing it all is.”

Morel had made one change in his strategy. He had given up trying to arouse the general public and instead sought to reach

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29 SLC’s undated cover letter to Morel is in the E. D. Morel Papers.
the people in power. He agreed with Twain that they needed a rich man to finance the movement, and also wanted to direct the movement toward a few individuals. “If we cannot influence the great, our fight is a lost one.” Consequently, he did not press Twain to write or give any lectures, but he did want him to stay interested:

You can, perhaps—nay, undoubtedly—influence by speech the men of eminence with whom you come in touch, and this I fervently trust you may continue to do, for the simple reason that you will want to do it, being you.

After Twain’s initial resignation from the movement on January 8, 1906, he still maintained his interest in Leopold. He mentioned the king briefly in his autobiographical dictation for January 12, 1906. Then on January 23 he was inspired anew. Isabel Lyon noted in her journal for that date:

Tonight Mr. Clemens had such a good letter from Mrs. Ella Howland. She had read the “King Leopold’s Soliloquy” & after she paid her tribute to the power of the pamphlet she wrote—“Money have I none, but I’ll work like ‘Hell’ to help the cause.” Her zeal moved Mr. Clemens almost to tears. He shouted with joy & then read it all over again—& said he’d “take that letter to Washington next week.”

Twain’s final trip to Washington in connection with the Congo occurred late in January, 1906. During the trip, as Twain reported in his unpublished autobiographical dictation for April 3, 1906, the State Department informed him they had found “that of the fourteen Christian Governments pledged to watch over Leopold and keep him within treaty limits, our Government was not one. Our Government was only sentimentally concerned, not officially, not practically, not by any form of pledge or promise.” Therefore it could take no action. Secretary of State Root officially took this position on February 15, 1906, in a letter to Congressman Edwin Denby of Michigan.

On February 10, 1906, Twain wrote Dr. Barbour a second

letter disengaging himself from the movement. He told Barbour that Root and Bacon held that "our Government is so entirely outside of the Congo matter that it could by no means initiate a move in it, nor even second a move made by one or all of the other Governments concerned." Bacon had also told Twain that view had been left on record by the former Secretary of State, John Hay, one of Twain's old friends. Consequently Twain doubted that the movement could ever get the government to do anything. He wrote Barbour:

The strength of the Reform movement in America lay in the apparent fact that our Government was one of the responsible parties and therefore could be persuaded to come forward and do its duty. The above verdict relieves it and sets it free. I think it most unlikely that it will ever throw away the pleasant advantages of that verdict.

According to Twain's political understanding, the fact that the United States had not ratified the Berlin Act completely destroyed the basis for an American reform movement. In an emotional letter written to Barbour about the same time, Twain went so far as to consider withdrawing his pamphlet, *King Leopold's Soliloquy.* He asked what to do with the pamphlet:

It still has value,—as an exposure of the butcher Leopold—but the rest of it is now not only valueless but pernicious, since it in effect charges our government with an unfaithfulness to a duty where no duty existed.

In the same letter Twain told Barbour he believed that:

The American branch of the Congo Reform Association ought to go out of business, for the reason that the agitation of the butcheries can only wring the people's hearts unavailing—unavailingly, because the American people unbacked by the American government cannot achieve reform in Congo.

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31 Letter in the Berg Collection.
32 An incomplete draft of this undated letter is in the MTP letter file. Since the letter was written "some weeks" after Twain's "last visit to the State Department," it was probably written in middle or late Feb., 1906. Twain mentions the letter in his dictation for April 3, 1906.
Twain's mood was one of despair and anger. He was in despair because he wanted reform but saw no way it could be achieved. And he was angry with the C.R.A. because they were agitating for a hopeless cause and because he believed they had misinformed him about the Berlin Act. In his autobiographical dictation for April 3, 1906, Twain complained he had discovered the "Association's conviction that our Government's pledged honor was at stake in the Congo matter was an exaggeration; that the Association was attaching meanings to certain public documents connected with the Congo which the strict sense of the documents did not confirm."

Many instances show Twain's continued bitterness, not only against Leopold, but the reformers and mankind in general. When Herbert Welsh, a vice-president of the Anti-Imperialist League, wrote on December 15, 1906, to reinterest him in the cause of the Philippine people, Twain penciled on the back of the letter: "The woes of the wronged & the unfortunate poison my life & make it so undesirable that pretty often I wish I were 90 instead of 70."

Twain expressed his universalized bitterness and despair to a young Liberian, Dihdwo Twe, who was studying at Cushing Academy in Ashburnham, Massachusetts. They had first met during the last week of October, 1905, at the Boston home of S. B. Pearmain, one of Twain's summertime neighbors at Dublin, New Hampshire.33 Twe said he had been to the Congo before coming to the United States. Like Twain, he had become disenchanted with the C.R.A. He expressed his impatience in a letter to Twain on February 8, 1906:

Though I don't want this to known [sic] openly, yet to speak the truth, I am dissatisfied with the method of the "Congo Reform Association"; they are trying to influence this great country by distribution of printed circulars. This will take too much money,

33 Information about their initial meetings may be found in five letters in the MTP letter file: Twe to SLC, Dec. 7, 1905; Twe to SLC, Dec. 13, 1905; Twe to SLC, Dec. 15, 1905; SLC to Twe, Dec. 11, 1905; and Ernest H. Abbott (son of Lyman Abbott) to SLC, Dec. 26, 1905. A letter to me from Mrs. Edna Lattinen, Alumni Secretary at Cushing Academy, indicates that Twe was a sophomore in 1905-1906.
THE CONGO REFORM MOVEMENT

too long time, and besides the result will always remain uncertain. Twe's idea was to go to the Congo and return with two or three little children who had been mutilated. He wanted the C.R.A. to support this scheme. The Association, at that time about $5,000 in debt, refused.³⁴ A note by Isabel Lyon on the back of Twe's letter indicates Twain considered the scheme "excellent, but that he doubts if it is really worthwhile to continue the agitation in America with the idea of getting help from our Government."

On the advice of Twain, however, Twe wrote an article about the Congo and submitted it to Edward Clement, editor in chief of the Boston Transcript and a member of the C.R.A.³⁵ Clement rejected the article. An entry in Isabel Lyon's journal explained the reason: "The article is a crude affair."³⁶ Nevertheless, on October 23, 1906, Twain wrote Twe about the hopelessness of trying to tell the truth in this world.³⁷ He said that mankind consists of humbugs and hypocrites who think they love the truth but actually fear it. He advised Twe to read his essay to "marble images" and "the dead in the cemeteries" to know how it would be received. He then said:

If you will go inside the lions' cage at the zoo & read it to the lions you will then know how it would be received by the human truth seeker when a truth is exposed which contains damage for some fad of his.

Among such fads, Twain included "that least excusable of

³⁴ See the letter of John Daniels to SLC, June 7, 1906, in the MTP letter file.
³⁵ Twain's advice to Twe to write the article was in a letter now recorded on a tape in the possession of Mrs. John Rae Ross of San Marcos, California. The contents of the tape are described in a letter in the MTP letter file from her to Frederick Anderson on June 4, 1967. Mrs. Ross and the mysterious tape have since disappeared.
³⁶ IVL Daily Reminder entry for Oct. 23, 1906.
³⁷ Letter in the Berg Collection. Apparently Twe did not heed Twain. After returning to Liberia, he was elected to the legislature. In 1951 he ran for president as a representative of the Kru tribe against the incumbent William Tubman, a member of the Americo-Liberian elite. Tubman charged Twe with treason, forcing him to flee to Sierra Leone. He was finally pardoned in 1960 after being stricken with paralysis.
all the spiritual petty larceny industries—the missionary business.”

On January 18, 1907, Morel sent Twain a copy of the second edition of his Red Rubber, hoping that the first edition had reached Twain safely. At the bottom of Morel's letter, Twain wrote, “Yes—it has been in constant use as a window prop.” He added, “Tell him Didhwo Twe that darkey has got a saner head on him than any missionary that ever went to that country or any other.”

In his autobiographical dictation for December 5, 1906, Twain again expressed his hostility toward Leopold. After talking about A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, he said conditions in the Middle Ages, though hard, were “heaven itself as compared with those which have obtained in the Congo State for these past fourteen years.” He was apparently recalling the date of Leopold's decree of 1892. As in his “fable of progress” which ended with Hank Morgan becoming a mass murderer, Twain found himself questioning the superiority of nineteenth-century civilization which had produced Leopold, a “bloody monster whose mate is not findable in human history anywhere.” This dictation was significant because it at last stated correctly that only thirteen Christian powers were party to the Berlin Act, and went on to say that of all countries only England was trying to do something about Leopold.

Actually, Twain was wrong. He apparently never knew it, but during the course of 1906, United States policy toward Leopold reversed itself. The State Department had told Twain at the end of January, 1906, that the United States had no basis for interference. On February 14, however, John Harris wrote Morel from Washington that enormous public pressure was being applied to the government and that Secretary of State Root was wavering. In June the United States ap-

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38 This section of the autobiography has been published in Mark Twain in Eruption, 211-212.
pointed a consul general to the Congo to obtain independent information.

On December 10, 1906, Hearst's New York *American* exposed the existence of Leopold's lobby in the United States. The head of the lobby, Baron Moncheur, after investigating Henry Kowalsky's background, had dismissed this agent for being "only a Jew of ill-repute." In revenge, Kowalsky sold to the *American* his confidential papers revealing that the lobby had bribed Colonel Thomas Garrett, a secretary to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The ensuing scandal moved the United States further against Leopold. On December 11, 1906, President Roosevelt wrote a note to British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, saying the United States would be willing to act for Congo reform. Roosevelt referred to public pressure by saying he was "moved by the deep interest shown by all classes of the American people in the amelioration of conditions in the Congo State." Pushing aside the supposed problem caused by nonparticipation in the Berlin Act, Roosevelt cited the Declaration of Brussels of 1890 as the legal basis for United States interference. This note, as Leopold himself realized, was the decisive turning point in the campaign against him. A conference of the Berlin powers was never called, but the Belgian parliament took up the campaign in order to rid itself of an embarrassment. On November 15, 1908, Belgium finally annexed the Congo.

This solution for the Congo problems was far from perfect.\(^40\) Conditions did not radically improve because Belgium failed to rescind most existing Congo legislation, and over half the members of the new ruling Colonial Council were appointed by Leopold. Four large monopoly companies created by Leopold in 1906, including *Forminière* controlled by American capital, continued to operate. The worst abuses, however, were ended. In July, 1912, Leopold's decree of 1892 was revoked and the labor tax was changed to a lesser money tax.

Mark Twain seems never to have known about the change

\(^{40}\) The material in this paragraph derived from Ascherson, 280-281, and Slade, 190-191 and 210-214.
in United States policy or the ultimate success of the reform movement. Leopold's misrule, and the seeming impossibility of stopping it, aroused such rage in him that he purposely cut himself off from all news of it. Almost a year after annexation, Twain received one more appeal for help. The movement was now trying to put pressure on Belgium to improve conditions. On October 9, 1909, Arthur Conan Doyle, a 1907 convert to the C.R.A., wrote Twain:

I know that you feel as I do about the Congo. You have magnificently proved it by your book.

I am sending you mine "The Crime of the Congo" which brings the facts up to date.

Referring to Belgium's rule over the Congo, Doyle said that England and America should be urged to "interfere to control that which they have themselves helped to form."

Twain had met Doyle at a dinner given by United States Ambassador Whitelaw Reid in London on June 21, 1907.41 Doyle's letter was answered by Albert Paine, who was staying with Twain at "Stormfield" in Redding, Connecticut. Paine's letter of October 29, 1909, said Twain no longer read or wrote anything about the Congo because "any intimate consideration of it excites and distresses him to a degree which we think dangerous." He added that Twain's physician "believes him to have an organic affection of the heart." Paine closed, "He wishes you to know that he would lend a hand if he could."42

Twain had read Doyle's letter, and attempted to reply, but his draft broke off in uncontrolled anger.43 It was clear he had not read Doyle's book and was unaware the Congo had been taken away from Leopold. Twain spent his first paragraph storming against the Belgian king, who was to die only two months later. Then he wrote:

43 The incomplete undated draft of Twain's reply to Doyle is in the MTP letter file. It is now dated "about October 15, 1909."
It seems curious that for about thirty years Leopold & the Belgians have been daily & nightly committing upon the helpless Congo natives all the hundred kinds of atrocious crimes known to the heathen savage & the pious inquisitor without rousing Christendom to a fury of generous indignation; all Christendom: statesmen, journalists, philanthropists, women, children. Even the Church, even the pulpit, even the rest of the cemeteries.

Twain's career as a Congo reformer was marred by many mistakes. In his unfinished letter to Doyle, he made yet another. Apparently Twain, isolated finally by his despairing view of human nature, never learned it, but Christendom had been roused to a "fury of generous indignation," and that public indignation had helped bring about reform in the Congo. One of the men who created the public indignation had been Mark Twain himself.