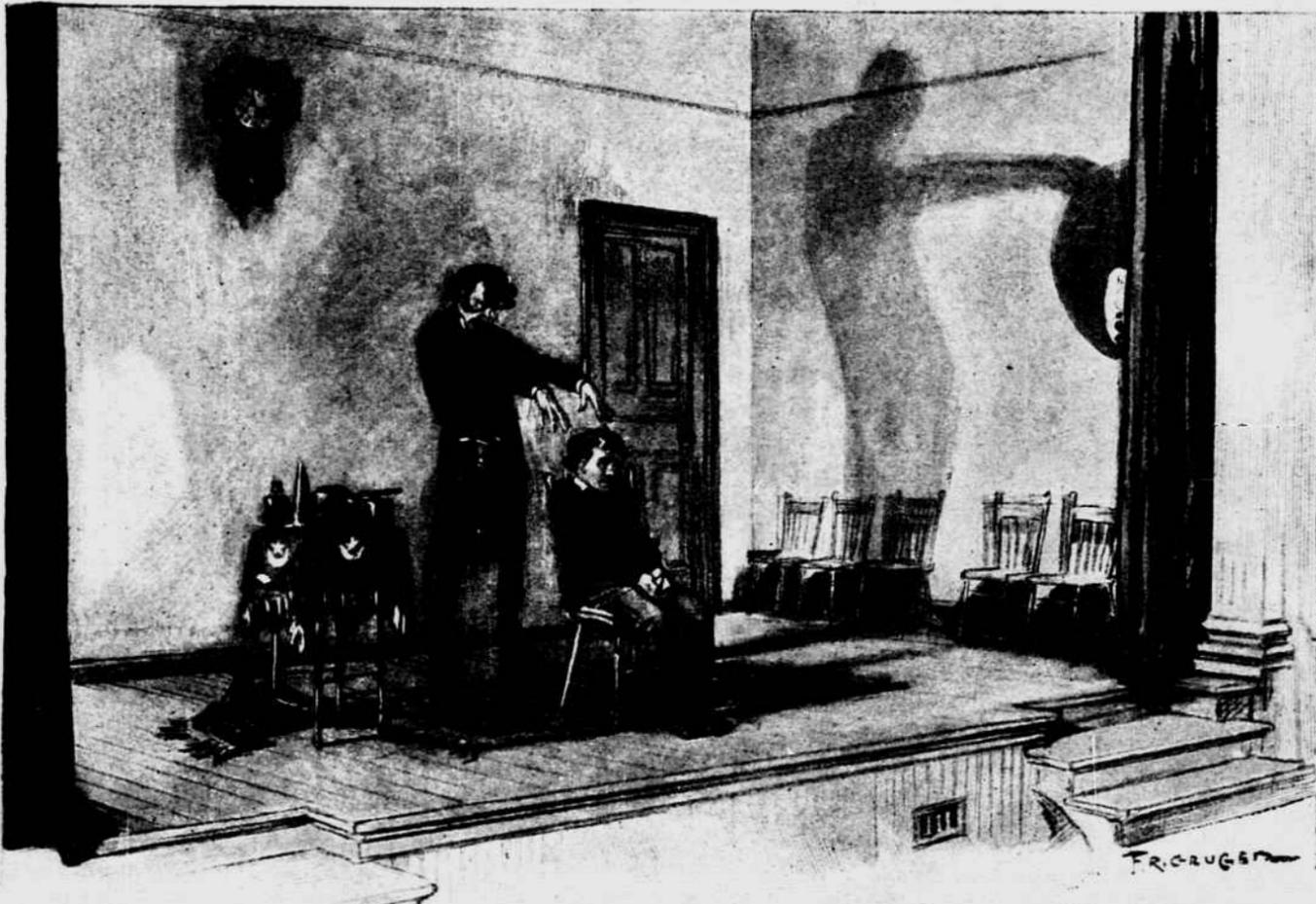


THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MARK TWAIN

The Coming American Monarchy--Fooling a Mesmerizer



I Perceived That Simmons Was "Willing" Me with All His Might.

[DICTATED DECEMBER 13, 1906.]

AS regards the coming American monarchy: It was before the Secretary of State had been heard from that the chairman of the banquet said:

"In this time of unrest it is of great satisfaction that such a man as you, Mr. Root, is chief adviser of the President."

Mr. Root then got up and in the most quiet and orderly manner touched off the successor to the San Francisco earthquake. As a result, the several State governments were well shaken up and considerably weakened. Mr. Root was prophesying. He was prophesying, and it seems to me that no shrewder and surer forecasting has been done in this country for a good many years.

He did not say in so many words that we are proceeding in a steady march toward eventual and unavoidable replacement of the Republic by monarchy; but I suppose he was aware that that is the case. He notes the several steps, the customary steps, which in all the ages have led to the consolidation of loose and scattered governmental forces into formidable centralizations of authority; but he stops there, and doesn't add up the sum. He is not unaware that heretofore the sum has been ultimate monarchy, and that the same figures can fairly be depended upon to furnish the same sum whenever and wherever they can be produced, so long as human nature shall remain as it is; but it was not needful that he do the adding, since anyone can do it; neither would it have been gracious in him to do it.

In observing the changed conditions which in the course of time have made certain and sure the eventual seizure by the Washington Government of a number of State duties and prerogatives which have been betrayed and neglected by the several States, he does not attribute those changes and the vast results which are to flow from them to any thought out policy of any party or of any body of dreamers or schemers, but properly and rightly attributes them to that stupendous power,—Circumstance,—which moves by laws of its own, regardless of parties and policies, and whose decrees are final, and must be obeyed by all—and will be. The railway is a Circumstance, the steamship is a Circumstance, the telegraph is a Circumstance. They were mere happenings; and to the whole world, the wise and the foolish alike, they were entirely trivial, wholly inconsequential; indeed silly, comical, grotesque. No man, and no party, and no thought out policy said, "Behold, we will build railways and steamships and telegraphs, and presently you will see the condition and way of life of every man and woman and child

in the nation totally changed; unimaginable changes of law and custom will follow, in spite of anything that anybody can do to prevent it."

Knows What He Talks About

THE changed conditions have come, and Circumstance knows what is following, and will follow. So does Mr. Root. His language is not unclear, it is crystal:

Our whole life has swung away from the old State centers, and is crystallizing about national centers.

The old barriers which kept the States as separate communities are completely lost from sight.

That [State] power of regulation and control is gradually passing into the hands of the national Government.

Sometimes by an assertion of the interstate commerce power, sometimes by an assertion of the taxing power, the national Government is taking up the performance of duties which under the changed conditions the separate States are no longer capable of adequately performing.

We are urging forward in a development of business and social life which tends more and more to the obliteration of State lines and the decrease of State power as compared with national power.

It is useless for the advocates of State rights to inveigh against the extension of national authority in the fields of necessary control where the States themselves fail in the performance of their duty.

He is not announcing a policy; he is not forecasting what a party of planners will bring about; he is merely telling what the people will require and compel. And he could have added—which would be perfectly true—that the people will not be moved to it by speculation and cogitation and planning, but by Circumstance, that power which arbitrarily compels all their actions, and over which they have not the slightest control.

The end is not yet.

It is a true word. We are on the march; but at present we are only just getting started.

If the States continue to fail to do their duty as required by the people—

... constructions of the Constitution will be found to vest the power where it will be exercised: in the national Government.

I do not know whether that has a sinister meaning or not, and so I will not enlarge upon it, lest I should chance to be in the wrong. It sounds like ship money come again; but it may not be so intended.

Can't Help Being Born So

HUMAN nature being what it is, I suppose we must expect to drift into monarchy by and by. It is a saddening thought; but we cannot change our

nature: we are all alike, we human beings; and in our blood and bone, and ineradicable, we carry the seeds out of which monarchies and aristocracies are grown: worship of gauds, titles, distinctions, power. We have to worship these things and their possessors,—we are all born so, and we cannot help it. We have to be despised by somebody whom we regard as above us, or we are not happy; we have to have somebody to worship and envy, or we cannot be content.

In America we manifest this in all the ancient and customary ways. In public we scoff at titles and hereditary privilege; but privately we hanker after them, and when we get a chance we buy them for cash and a daughter. Sometimes we get a good man and worth the price; but we are ready to take him anyway, whether he be ripe or rotten, whether he be clean and decent, or merely a basket of noble and sacred and long descended offal. And when we get him the whole nation publicly chafes and scoffs,—and privately envies,—and also is proud of the honor which has been conferred upon us. We run over our list of titled purchases every now and then in the newspapers, and discuss them and caress them, and are thankful and happy.

Like all the other nations, we worship money and the possessors of it—they being our aristocracy, and we have to have one. We like to read about rich people in the papers; the papers know it, and they do their best to keep this appetite liberally fed.

They even leave out a football bull fight now and then to get room for all the particulars of how, according to the display heading, "Rich Woman Fell Down Cellar—Not Hurt." The falling down the cellar is of no interest to us when the woman is not rich; but no rich woman can fall down cellar and we not yearn to know all about it and wish it was us.

In a monarchy the people willingly and joyfully revere and take pride in their nobilities, and are not humiliated by the reflection that this humble and hearty homage gets no return but contempt. Contempt does not shame them; they are used to it, and they recognize that it is their proper due. We are all made like that. In Europe we easily and quickly learn to take that attitude toward the sovereigns and the aristocracies; moreover, it has been observed that when we get the attitude we go on and exaggerate it, presently becoming more servile than the natives, and vainer of it. The next step is to rail and scoff at republics and democracies. All of which is natural: for we have not ceased to be human beings by becoming Americans, and the human race was always intended to be governed by kingship, not by popular vote.

I suppose we must expect that unavoidable and irresistible Circumstances will gradually take away the powers of the States and concentrate them in the central Government, and that the Republic will then repeat the history of all time and become a monarchy; but I believe that if we obstruct these encroachments and steadily resist them the monarchy can be postponed for a good while yet.

Coming of the Mesmerizer

[DICTATED DECEMBER 1, 1906.]

AN exciting event in our village (Hannibal) was the arrival of the mesmerizer. I think the year was 1850. As to that I am not sure; but I know the month—it was May; that detail has survived the wear of fifty-five years. A pair of connected little incidents of that month have served to keep the memory of it green for me all this time; incidents of no consequence, and not worth embalming, yet my memory has preserved them carefully and flung away things of real value to give them space and make them comfortable. The truth is, a person's memory has no more sense than his conscience, and no appreciation whatever of values and proportions. However, never mind those trifling incidents; my subject is the mesmerizer now.

He advertised his show, and promised marvels. Admission as usual: twenty-five cents, children and Negroes half price. The village had heard of mesmerism in a general way, but had not encountered it yet. Not many people attended the first night;