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978-0-521-15380-5 - Mark Twain: The Contemporary Reviews

Edited by Louis J. Budd

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AMERICAN CRITICAL ARCHIVES 11

Mark Twain: The Contemporary Reviews

The American Critical Archives is a series of reference books that provide representative selections of contemporary reviews of the main works of major American authors. Specifically, each volume contains both full reviews and excerpts from reviews that appeared in newspapers and weekly and monthly periodicals, generally within a few months of the publication of the work concerned. There is an introductory historical overview by the volume editor, as well as checklists of additional reviews located but not quoted.

This book is the first systematic, comprehensive gathering of the reviews (primarily in the United States and Britain) of Mark Twain's books published through 1917. The reviews collected here give the reader an authentic sense of how Twain's books and his reputation looked to his audience at the time. In addition, by devoting attention to each of Twain's books, this volume avoids being restricted by the current, distorting emphasis on a small number of publications and thus provides a broader perspective on Twain's career.

Louis J. Budd, the editor of this volume, is James B. Duke Professor of English, Emeritus, at Duke University. He is an author or editor of several books on Mark Twain, including *Mark Twain: Social Philosopher* and *Our Mark Twain*.

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Series Editor's Preface

The American Critical Archives series documents a part of a writer's career that is usually difficult to examine, that is, the immediate response to each work as it was made public on the part of reviewers in contemporary newspapers and journals. Although it would not be feasible to reprint every review, each volume in the series reprints a selection of reviews designed to provide the reader with a proportionate sense of the critical response, whether it was positive, negative, or mixed. Checklists of other known reviews are also included to complete the documentary record and allow access for those who wish to do further reading and research.

The editor of each volume has provided an introduction that surveys the career of the author in the context of the contemporary critical response. Ideally, the introduction will inform the reader in brief of what is to be learned by a reading of the full volume. The reader then can go as deeply as necessary in terms of the kind of information desired—be it about a single work, a period in the author's life, or the author's entire career. The intent is to provide quick and easy access to the material for students, scholars, librarians, and general readers.

When completed, the American Critical Archives should constitute a comprehensive history of critical practice in America, and in some cases England, as the writers' careers were in progress. The volumes open a window on the patterns and forces that have shaped the history of American writing and the reputations of the writers. These are primary documents in the literary and cultural life of the nation.

M. THOMAS INGE

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My inventory of reviews benefited richly from the bibliographies of two Ph.D. dissertations: Robert M. Rodney, "Mark Twain in England: A Study of English Criticism of and Attitude toward Mark Twain: 1867–1940" (University of Wisconsin, 1945), and Durant Da Ponte, "American Periodical Criticism of Mark Twain, 1869–1917" (University of Maryland, 1953). Though not definitive, Clayton L. Eichelberger, *A Guide to Critical Reviews of United States Fiction, 1870–1910*, 2 vols. (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1971–4), was very helpful.

Victor Fischer, "Huck Finn Reviewed: The Reception of *Huckleberry Finn* in the United States, 1885–1897," *American Literary Realism 1870–1910*, 16 (1983), 1–57, is impressive for both its coverage and its precision. After making additions, Gary Scharnhorst's volume *Critical Essays on "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer"* (New York: G. K. Hall, 1993) prints all the known and accessible reviews of that novel. Though including more general essays, Frederick Anderson's *Mark Twain: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971) gives the best previous cross-section of contemporary reviews.