

“Views of Mark Twain”: Antics and Annexation in Twain’s New York Tribune Letters on Hawai’i



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Twain's Letters to the New York *Daily Tribune*

VIEWS OF MARK TWAIN.

A CHARACTERISTIC LETTER FROM THE HUMORIST.
To the Editor of The Tribune.

SIR: When you do me the honor to suggest that I write an article about the Sandwich Islands, just now when the death of the King has turned something of the public attention in that direction, you unbonnet a man whose modesty would have kept him in hiding otherwise. I could fill you full of statistics, but most human beings like gossip better, and so you will not blame me if I proceed after the largest audience and leave other people to worry the minority with arithmetic.

Jan. 6, 1873

THE SANDWICH ISLANDS.

CONCLUDING VIEWS OF MARK TWAIN
THE GOVERNMENT—PRINCE BILL—WHISKY AND
AWA—A SPECIMEN MINISTER—REASONS FOR
ANNEXATION.

To the Editor of The Tribune.

SIR: Having explained who the 3,000 whites are, and what sort of people the 50,000 natives are, I will now shovel in some information as to how this toy realm, with its toy population, is governed. By a constable and six policemen? By a justice of the peace and a jury? By a mayor and a board of aldermen? Oh, no. But by a King—and a Parliament—and a Ministry—and a Privy Council—and a standing army (200 soldiers)—and a navy (steam ferry-boat and a raft)—and a grand bench of supreme justice—and a lord high sheriff on each island. That is the way it is done. It is like propelling a sardine dish with the Great Eastern's machinery.

Jan. 9, 1873

Savage Laughter: American Humor and the Pacific, 1840-1880

Right: "Jonathan's Talk With The King of the Sandwich Islands: Or Young American Diplomacy."
Yankee-Notions, February 1, 1854. 36-360.



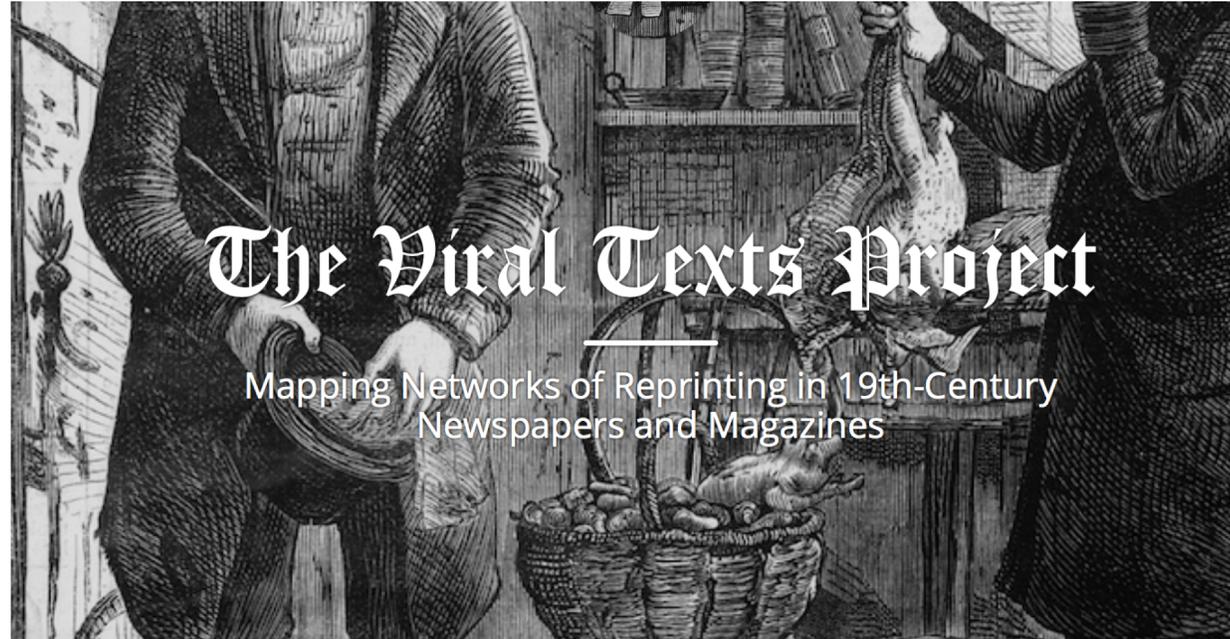
Jonathan's talk with the King of the Sandwich Islands ; or Young American Diplomacy.

"Yer see, General—yer Majesty, I meant to say—I'm sent as a depitation, I am, from Young America. We want to buy you eout, we do, stock, lock, and barril. Say, now, what'll yer take, old feller, for them ere melon patches of Islands, with all the improvements? Yer know yer can't hold 'em long—must give up. Now, we'll give yer a nice annuity, and send yer the Notions free, and take the hull consarn off yer hands. Come, now, what will yer take?"

Twain's Lecture, "Our Fellow Savages of the Sandwich Islands", 1866-1873



Periodical Studies and the “culture of reprinting”



“...circulation itself was an essential, organizing technology that mediated experiences of textual production and reception.”

—Ryan Cordell, “Reprinting, Circulation, and the Network Author in Antebellum Newspapers,” *American Literary History* 27.3 (2015)

New York *Daily Tribune*, Jan. 6, 1873

THE SANDWICH ISLANDS.

SCHEMES OF ANNEXATION.

A PROPOSITION FROM ENGLAND TO COUNTER-
BALANCE AMERICAN INFLUENCE IN THE SAND-
WICH ISLANDS.

LONDON, Saturday, Jan. 4, 1873.

The Standard this morning says the annexation of the Sandwich Islands to the United States would be no menace to England but to Australia, and urges, as a means of restoring the equilibrium in the event of such transfer of territory taking place, the annexation of the Fiji Islands to Australia.

VIEWS OF MARK TWAIN.

“Views of Mark Twain,”
New York *Daily Tribune*, Jan. 6, 1873

“SIR: When you do me the honor to suggest that I write an article about the Sandwich Islands, just now when the death of the King has turned something of the public attention in that direction, you unkennel a man whose modesty would have kept him in hiding otherwise. I could fill you full of statistics, but most human beings like gossip better, and so you will not blame me if I proceed after the largest audience and leave other people to worry the minority with arithmetic.”

Whitelaw Reid to Samuel Clemens, Dec. 28, 1872

I want very much to have The Tribune recognised at once as the medium of communication with the public to which men of note in letters or politics generally resort. Why wont you write me something, no matter what, over your own signature within the next week? Say your say on any topic on which you want to say it. I cannot pay you the prices which those subscription publishers pay, but I can pay enough to make it worth your while, and you will value a great deal more than the money the fact that you are doing a kindness to

Faithfully Yours,
Whitelaw Reid

New York *Daily Tribune*, Jan. 6, 1873

“Mark Twain, in a letter to THE TRIBUNE, gives some curious facts touching a subject which is just now attracting a great deal of notice. The humorous and grotesque features of life in the Sandwich Islands are naturally those which first caught his attention; but he might have made for this letter the same apology which he made for his latest book, that, in spite of all he could do, it contained a great deal of information. Mr Clemens, as those who know him will testify, is not only a wit, but a shrewd and accurate observer; and so our readers will find, in the pithy communication published to-day, not merely food for laughter but subjects for reflection.”

From Reprints of Twain's First Letter to the *Tribune*

“The death of King Kamehameha has attracted public attention to the Sandwich Islands, and the interest in that ‘paradise for the indolent man,’ as Mark Twain calls it, is heightened by the annexation talk. Mark spent some months in these islands, in the center of the Pacific ocean...six years ago, and has written to the New York Tribune a characteristic letter about his experiences, which has some interesting data mixed with its humorous sallies. It is like his late book, for which he apologizes that it contains considerable information, in spite of all he could do to the contrary.”

Sources: *Washington Evening Star* (Jan. 7, 1873), *Richmond Daily Dispatch* (Jan. 9, 1873), *Alexandria Daily State Journal*, (Jan. 10, 1873)

Praise of Twain's Expertise in Reprint Introductions

“The articles give much valuable information, spiced with the inimitable humor of the author.” —*Mower County Transcript* (Lansing, MI, Jan. 23), *Tennessee Herald* (Columbia, TN, Jan. 31)

“As the annexation of the Sandwich Islands to the United States is now a theme of public discussion, some information on the subject, from MARK TWAIN, who has the rare faculty of blending truth and humor in attractive form, will afford pleasure and profit.” —*Street and Smith's New York Weekly* (Feb. 10)

“[V]ast deal of sound sense conveyed in the satire of the following extracts from a recent letter by Mark Twain, which we find in the *New York Daily Tribune* of January 9th.” —*Pacific Commercial Advertiser* (Honolulu, HI, Feb. 10)

Twain “so eloquently and somewhat truthfully discoursed about us in the *Tribune*.” —*Pacific Commercial Advertiser* (Feb. 22)

“Views of Mark Twain,” New York *Daily Tribune*, January 6, 1873

“I would like to know why your [the Tribune’s] correspondents calmly ignore the true heir to the Sandwich Islands throne, as if he had no existence and no chances; and I would like to heave in a word for him. I refer to our staunch American sympathizer, Prince William Lunalilo, descendant of eleven generations of sceptered savages—a splendid fellow, with talent, genius, education, gentlemanly manners, generous instincts, and an intellect that shines through floods of whisky as if that fluid but fed a calcium light in his head. All people in the islands know that William—or ‘Prince Bill,’ as they call him, more in affection than otherwise—stands next the throne; and so why is he ignored?”

New North-west (Deer Lodge, MT, Oct. 18, 1873)

“The old King died a year or two ago, you know, and Mark Twain succeeded in getting an old friend of his, Bill Lunalillo, who took care of Mark’s wardrobe when he was over there writing up Fashion articles, elected King. Everything went swimmingly for a while and Mark Twain wrote up his friend in the New York Tribune until he was almost as famous as the King of the Cannibal Islands....Full particulars of the conflict [between Lunalillo and Kalakaua] will be looked for with interest, and unless Mark mediates or threatens to deliver a lecture on the battle field there seems nothing to prevent the clash of contending clubs.”

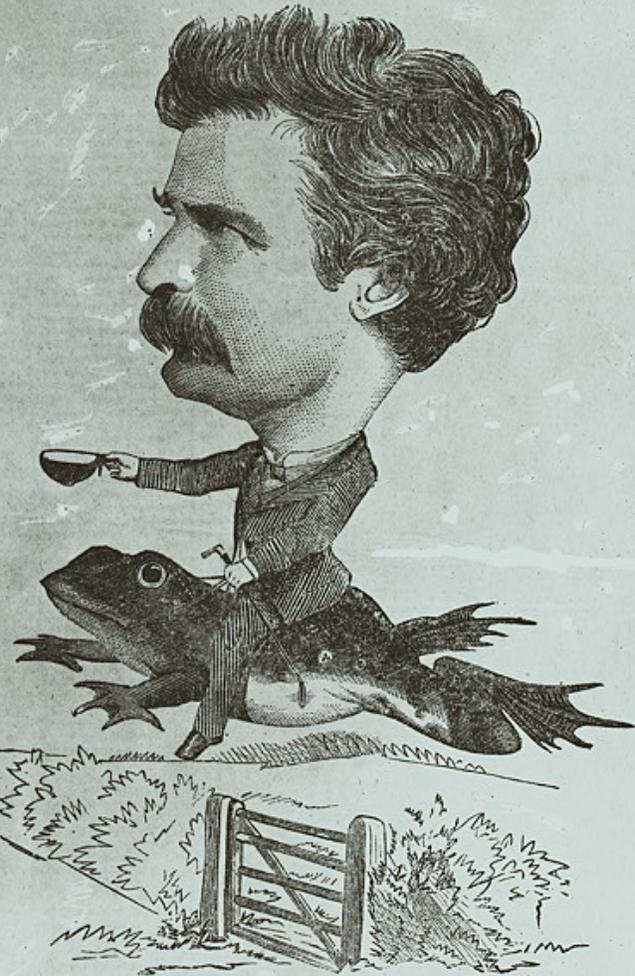
Periodical Complaints about Twain's *Tribune* Letters

“[Writers] like that eminent humorist, ‘Mark Twain,’ compromise between fact and fiction, rather than spoil an intended joke.” —New York *Herald* (Feb. 1, 1873)

“Then Mark Twain gets up. He says, this morning, that you are all drunk except the missionaries and merchants; that the merchants wish the missionaries were not there, and the missionaries wish the merchants would migrate. He says your sugar planters are very rich, and want to be annexed to the U.S...Twain does not know much.” —*Hawaiian Gazette* (Honolulu, HI, Feb. 19, 1873)

Twain on Sandwich Islands Lecture, Jan. 1873

“Sandwich Islands—the old lecture a little bit altered, & (I think) a little bit improved. Shall close it seriously instead of with a joke—which I know is the best way, but I have never had pluck enough to do it, heretofore. It used to win in San Francisco, where I wasn’t afraid.” —
to James Redpath, Jan. 24, 1873



BROOKLYN ACADEMY OF MUSIC, FEB. 7th

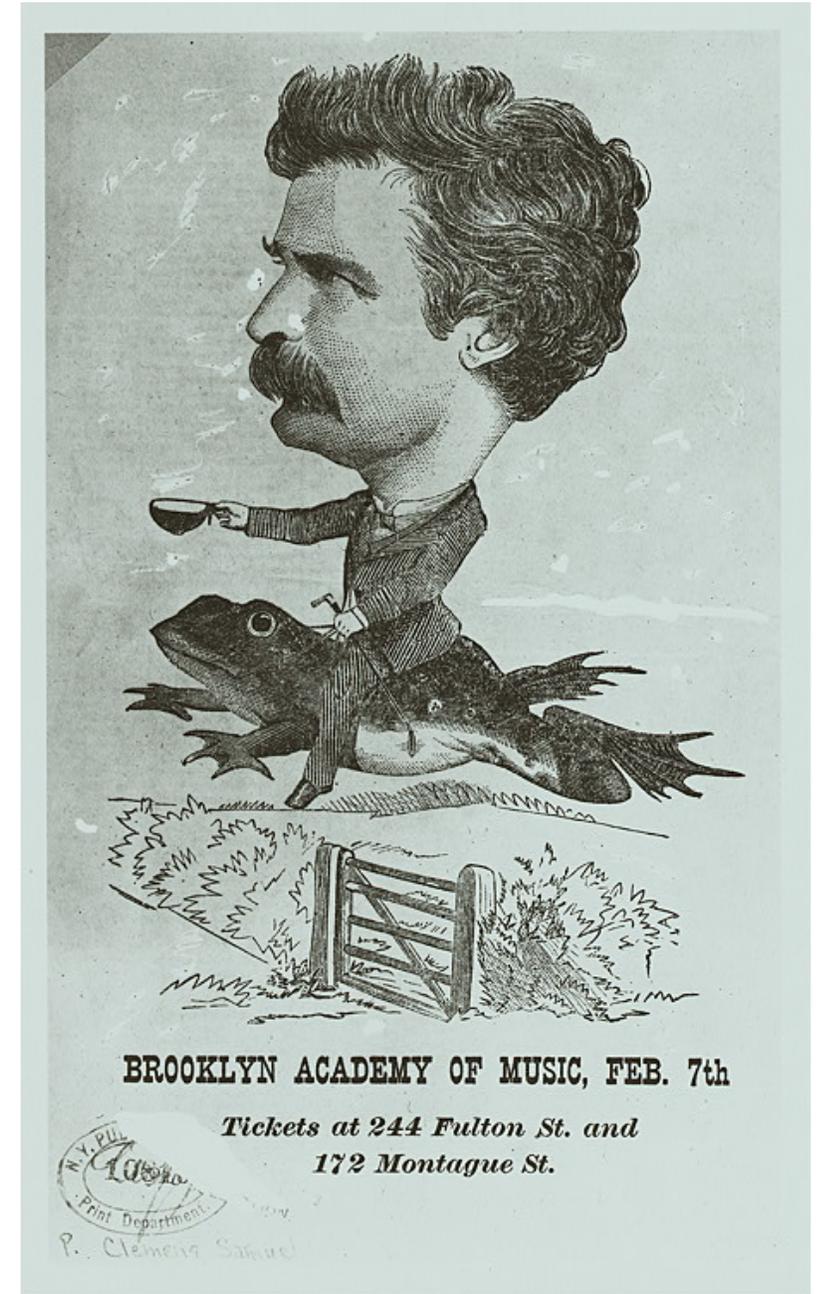
*Tickets at 244 Fulton St. and
172 Montague St.*

N.Y. P.M.
1873
Print Department
P. Clemens Samuel

Press on Twain's Sandwich Islands Lecture

“Mark Twain is placarding the dead walls with the announcement that he is going to lecture on the Sandwich Islands. He has been there, and has written about them in his last book, and has described them over again in recent numbers of the Tribune. Consequently he feels competent to reel off lots of yarns about our prospective possessions in the mid-ocean.” —*Charleston Daily News* (SC, Jan. 29, 1873)

“Mark Twain has written a lecture, which he proposes to deliver at \$800, or so, a night, on his rights to the vacant Sandwich Islands throne. He lays no claim to kinship with the deceased King Kamehameha, but rests his title in the fact that he has no other means of support.” —*Reserve Chronicle* (Warren, OH, Jan. 29, 1873)



Twain's Sandwich Islands Lectures in England



“Mr Clemens can lecture and get money to pay out debts and get us home—Now Mother don't you and Charlie laugh at that, lecturing is what Mr C. always speaks of doing when their [sic] seems any need of money.” —Olivia Clemens to her mother, Sept. 25, 1873

Fall 2873 Sandwich Island Lecture dates:
London (October 13 through 18),
Liverpool (October 20), London
(December 1 through 6).

Mark Twain, "To The Editor of the London *Standard*," Oct. 7, 1873

"SIR,—In view of the prevailing frenzy concerning the Sandwich Islands, & the inflamed desire of the public to acquire information concerning them, I have thought it well to tarry yet another week in England & deliver a lecture upon this absorbing subject. And lest it should be thought unbecoming in me, a stranger, to come to the public rescue at such a time, instead of leaving to abler hands a matter of so much moment, I desire to explain that I do it with the best motives & the most honorable intentions. I do it because I am convinced that no one can allay this unwholesome excitement as effectually as I can, & to allay it, & allay it as quickly as possible, is surely the one thing that is absolutely necessary at this juncture. I feel & know that I am equal to this task, for I can allay any kind of excitement by lecturing upon it. I have saved many communities in this way. I have always been able to paralyze the public interest in any topic that I chose to take hold of & elucidate with all my strength."



To The Editor of the London *Standard*," American Reprints

JOURNAL.

MARK TWAIN ON THE SANDWICH ISLANDS.—Mr. Twain writes as follows to the editor of the London Standard :

SIR : In view of the prevailing frenzy concerning the Sandwich Islands, and the inflamed desire of the public to acquire information concerning them, I have thought it well to tarry yet another week in England, and deliver a lecture upon this absorbing subject. And lest it be thought unbecoming in me, a stranger, to come to the public rescue at such a time, instead of leaving to abler hands a matter of so much moment, I desire to explain that I do it with the best of motives and the most honorable intentions. I do it because I am convinced that no one can allay the wholesome excitement as effectually as I can ; and to allay it, and allay it as quickly as possible, is surely the one thing that is absolutely necessary at this juncture. I feel and know that I am equal to the task for I can allay any kind of an excitement by lecturing upon it. I have saved many communities in this way. I have always been able to paralyze the public interest by any topic that I chose to take hold of and elucidate with all my strength.

Hoping that this explanation will show that if I am seeming to intrude I am at least doing it from a high impulse, I am, sir, your obedient servant.

MARK TWAIN.

London, October 7.

Wheeling Daily Register (WV, Oct. 28)

Carson City Daily Appeal (NV, the Oct. 31)

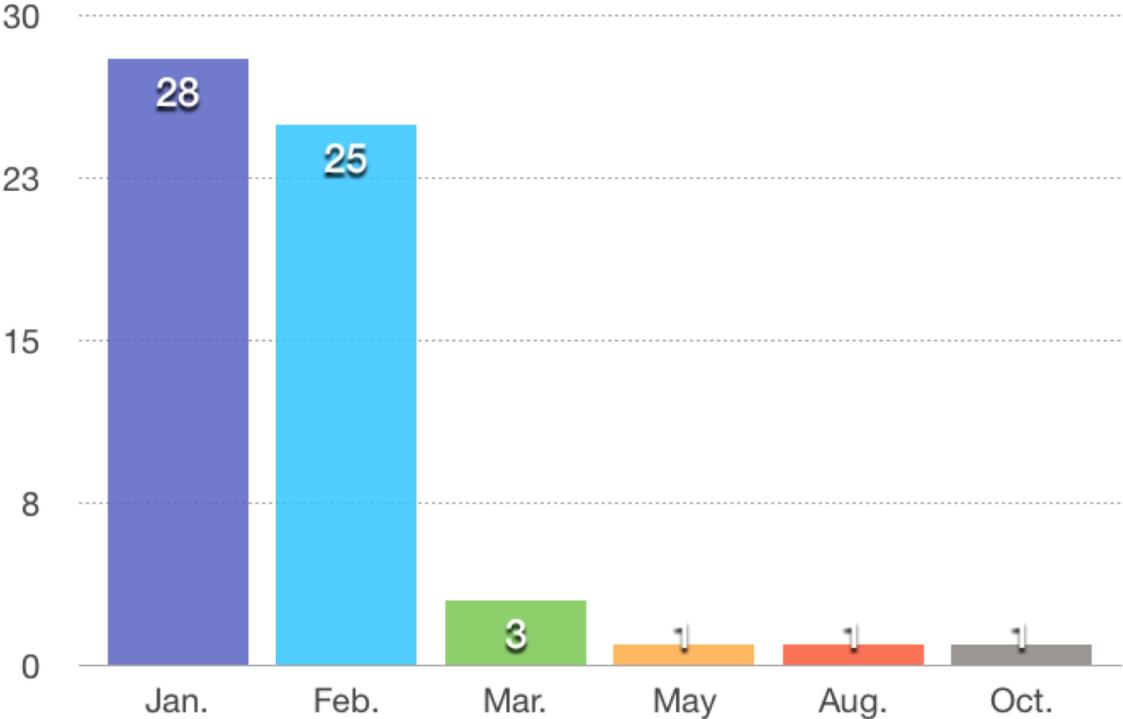
Cambria Freeman (PA, Oct. 31, left)

Chicago Daily Tribune (Nov. 2)

New Orleans Republican (Dec.28)

Tracking 1873 Reprints of Twain's *Tribune* Letters

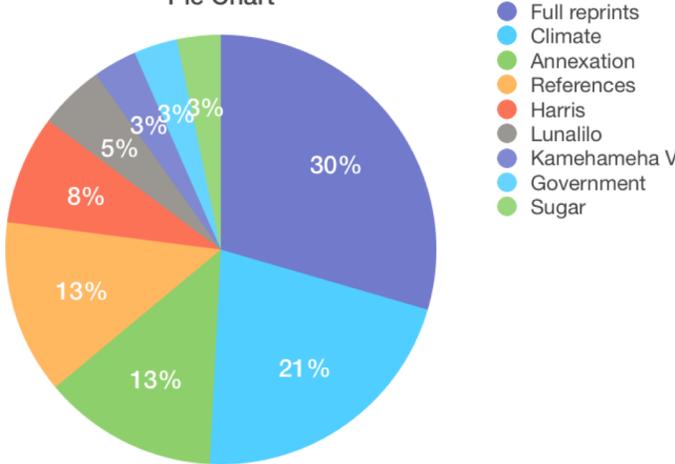
Twain's Tribune Letters, 1873 Reprints by Month



Twain's Tribune Letters, Reprints by Topic

TOPIC	REPRINTS
Full reprints	18
Climate	13
Annexation	8
References	8
Harris	5
Lunalilo	3
Kamehameha V	2
Government	2
Sugar	2

Pie Chart



Reprints of Twain's *Tribune* Letters: Climate

MARK TWAIN says you cannot find as much climate bunched together anywhere in the world as you can in the Sandwich Islands. You take a thermometer and mark on it where you want the mercury to stand permanently, with the privilege of ranging five or six degrees at long intervals, and you may select the spot that will exactly accommodate you. At Honolulu it is always about 82 deg.; five hundred feet higher up the mountain you can have it permanently at 70 deg.; go higher, and your mercury falls to the exact point you like. If you want snow and ice forever, go to the summit of Mauna Kea; if you want it hot, go to Lahaina, "where they do not hang the thermometer on a nail, because the solder might melt."

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"MARK TWAIN says you cannot find as much climate brushed together anywhere in the world as you can in the Sandwich Islands." —*True Northerner* (Paw Paw, MI, Feb. 28, 1873, left)

Paul Lyons, from *American Pacificism* (2006)

Oceania is often “imagined as ends-of-the-earth, cultural limit-cases unencumbered by notions of sin, antitheses to the industrial worlds of economic and political modernity, whose unfamiliar natives are compared for a variety of purposes to African and Native Americans”

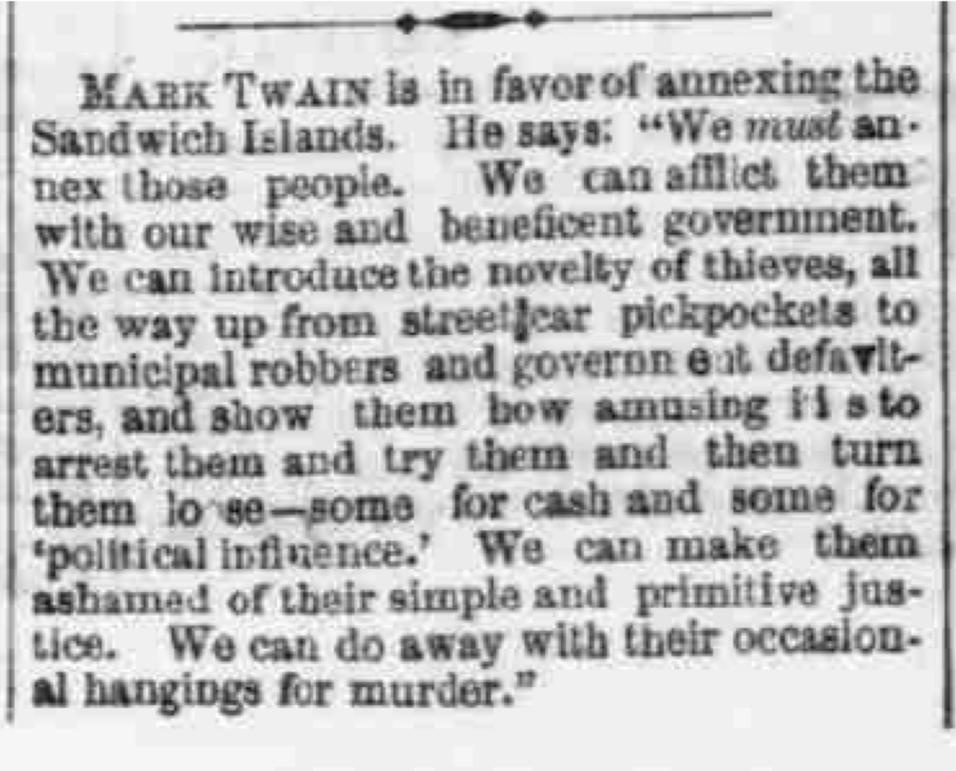
“The double logic that the islands are imagined at once as places to be civilized and as escapes from civilization informs at all points what I describe in this book as American Pacificism. This involves the co-presence of the nationalistic stepping-stones narrative with a nostalgic, oneiric, cover story that it never displaces; rather, the two hands wash each other clean. The weave of narratives at once naturalizes and neutralizes knowledge of the effects of U.S. trajectories into Oceania.”

Ryan Cordell on “viral texts”

“Like some viral content online today, which can become noteworthy because of its virality, the system of newspaper exchanges produced a kind of feedback loop, in which texts circulated because of their perceived value to readers, while that perceived value was frequently tied to a given piece’s wide circulation.”

—Ryan Cordell, from “Reprinting, Circulation, and the Network Author in Antebellum Newspapers” (2015)

Reprints of Twain's *Tribune* Letters: Annexation



MARK TWAIN is in favor of annexing the Sandwich Islands. He says: "We must annex those people. We can afflict them with our wise and beneficent government. We can introduce the novelty of thieves, all the way up from street-car pickpockets to municipal robbers and government defaulters, and show them how amusing it is to arrest them and try them and then turn them loose—some for cash and some for 'political influence.' We can make them ashamed of their simple and primitive justice. We can do away with their occasional hangings for murder."

"We *must* annex those people. We can afflict them with our wise and beneficent government. We can introduce the novelty of thieves, all the way up from street-car pickpockets to municipal robbers and Government defaulters, and show them how amusing it is to arrest them and try them, and then turn them loose—some for cash and some for 'political influence.' We can make them ashamed of their simple and primitive justice. We can do away with their occasional hangings for murder." —Nashville *Union and American* (Jan. 15, 1873, left), *Daily Phoenix* (Columbia, SC, Jan. 17, 1873), *Anderson (SC) Intelligencer* (Jan. 30, 1873)

Twain in New York *Daily Tribune*, Jan. 9, 1873

“We *must* annex those people. We can afflict them with our wise and beneficent government. We can introduce the novelty of thieves, all the way up from street-car pickpockets to municipal robbers and Government defaulters, and show them how amusing it is to arrest them and try them, and then turn them loose—some for cash and some for ‘political influence.’ We can make them ashamed of their simple and primitive justice. We can do away with their occasional hangings for murder, and let them have Judge Pratt to teach them how to save imperiled Avery-assassins to society. We can give them some Barnards to keep their money corporations out of difficulties. We can give them juries composed entirely of the most simple and charming leatherheads. We can give them railway corporations who will buy their Legislatures like old clothes, and run over their best citizens and complain of the corpses for smearing their unpleasant juices on the track. In place of harmless and vapping Harris, we can give them Tweed. We can let them have Connolly; we can loan them Sweeny; we can furnish them some Jay Goulds who will do away with their old-time notion that stealing is not respectable. We can confer Woodhull and Claflin on them. And George Francis Train, We can give them lecturers! I will go myself.

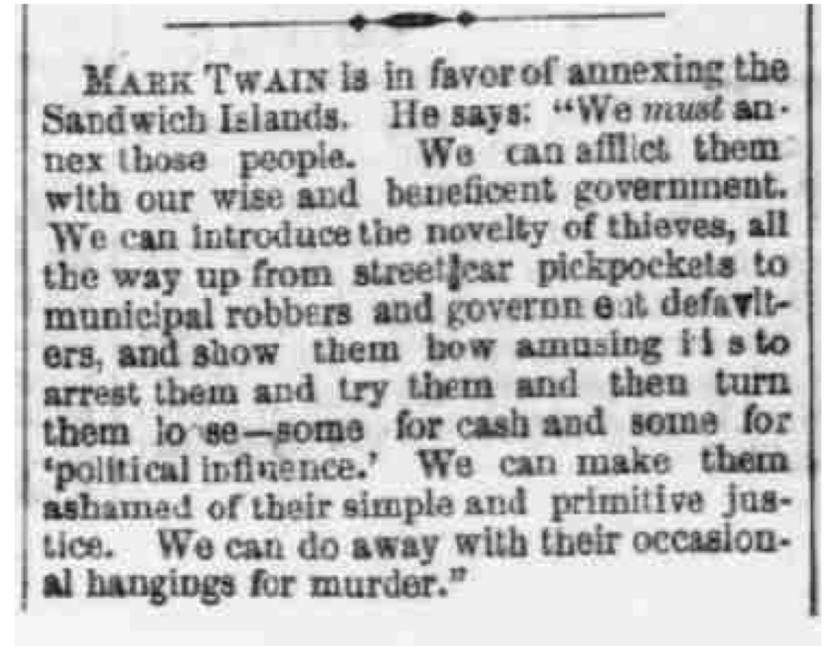
We can make that little bunch of islands the hottest corner on earth, and array it in the moral splendor of our high and holy civilization. Annexation is what the poor islanders need. ‘Shall we to men benighted, the lamp of life deny?’

MARK TWAIN”

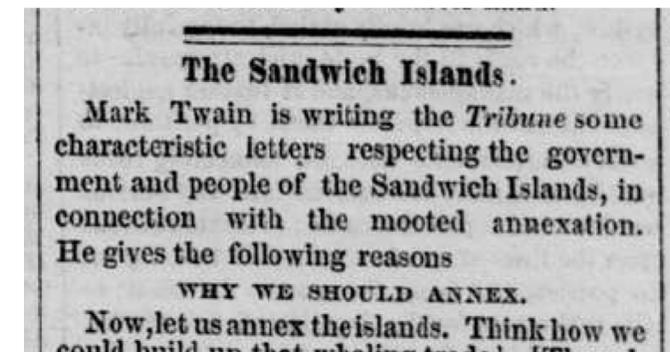
Reprints of Twain's *Tribune* Letters: Annexation

“Mark Twain is in favor of annexing the Sandwich Islands. He says...” —Nashville *Union and American* (Jan. 15, 1873, right), *Daily Phoenix* (Columbia, SC, Jan. 17, 1873), *Anderson Intelligencer* (Anderson Courthouse, SC, Jan. 30, 1873)

“Mark Twain is writing the *Tribune* some characteristic letters, respecting the government in connection with the mooted annexation. He gives the following reasons **WHY WE SHOULD ANNEX.**” —Portland *Daily Press* (Jan. 13, 1873, right)



MARK TWAIN is in favor of annexing the Sandwich Islands. He says: “We *must* annex those people. We can afflict them with our wise and beneficent government. We can introduce the novelty of thieves, all the way up from street-jear pickpockets to municipal robbers and government defaulters, and show them how amusing it is to arrest them and try them and then turn them loose—some for cash and some for ‘political influence.’ We can make them ashamed of their simple and primitive justice. We can do away with their occasional hangings for murder.”



The Sandwich Islands.

Mark Twain is writing the *Tribune* some characteristic letters respecting the government and people of the Sandwich Islands, in connection with the mooted annexation. He gives the following reasons

WHY WE SHOULD ANNEX.

Now, let us annex the islands. Think how we could build up that whaling trade!

Samuel Clemens to Whitelaw Reid to , Jan. 3, 1873

“To speak truly, I would rather those islands remained under a native king, if I were there, but you can easily see that that won’t suit those planters. Mr. Burlingame told me privately that he were minister there he would have the American flag flying on the roof of the king’s palace in less than two weeks. And he was in earnest, too. He hungered for those rich islands.”

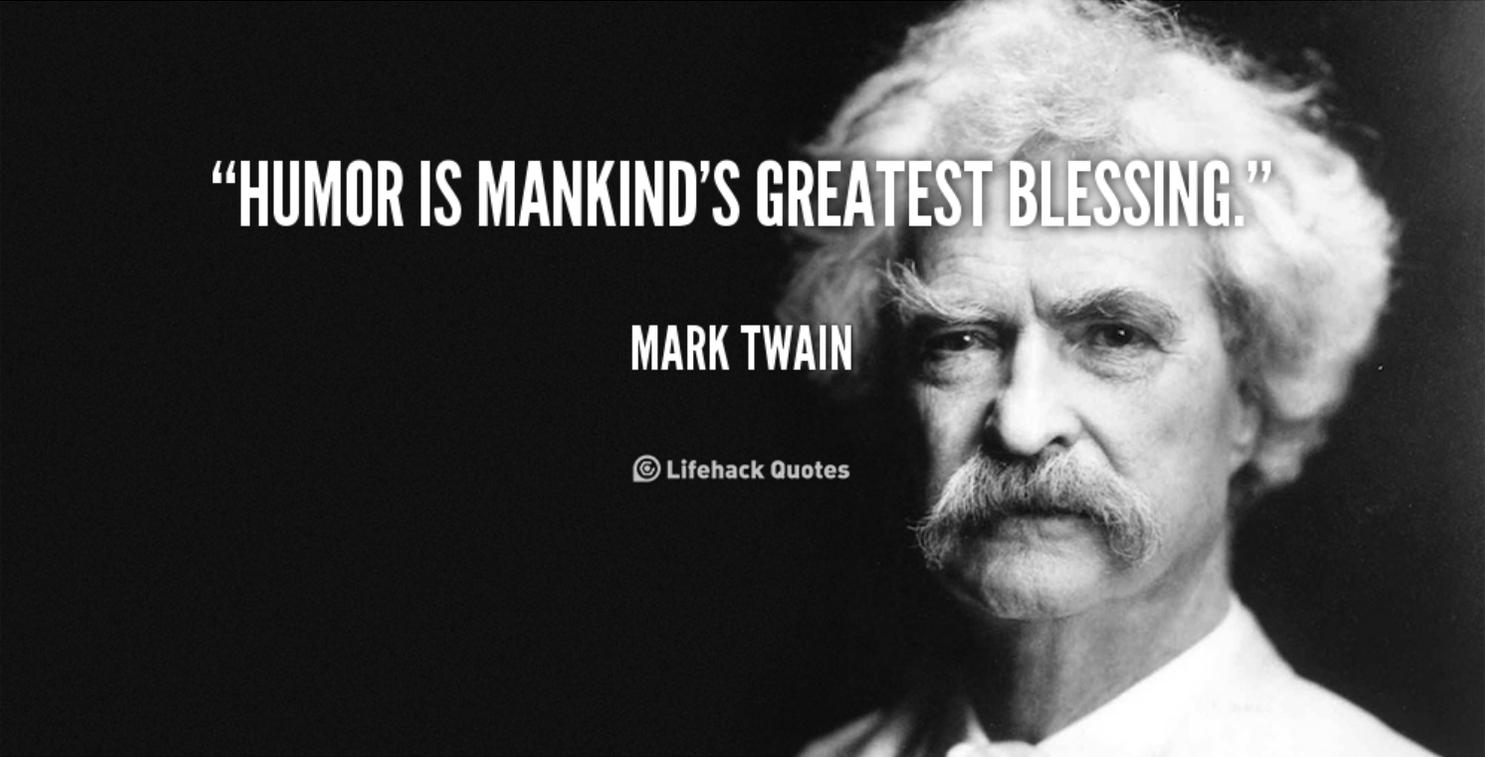
Reprints of Twain's *Tribune* Letters: "A Specimen Minister"

"In one of his articles in The Tribune on 'The Sandwich Islands,' Mark Twain thus comparatively describes a personage high in authority. The 'Royal Ministers' are natural curiosities. They are white men of various nationalities, who have wandered thither in times gone by. I will give you a specimen—but not the most favorable. Harris for instance. Harris is an American—a long-legged, vain, light weight village lawyer from New Hampshire. If he had brains in proportion to his legs, he would make Solomon seem a failure; if his modesty equaled his ignorance, he would make a violet seem stuck up; if his learning equaled his vanity, he would make Von Humbolt seem as unlettered as the back side of a tombstone; if his stature were proportioned to his conscience, he would be a gem for a microscope; if his ideas were as large as his words it would take a man three months to walk around one of them; if an audience were to contract to listen as long as he would talk, that audience would die of old age; and if he were to talk until he said something, he would still be on his hind legs when the last trump sounded. And he would have cheek enough to wait till the disturbance was over, and go on again."—*Prairie Farmer* (Feb. 22, 1873, right)

A ROYAL MINISTER.

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“HUMOR IS MANKIND’S GREATEST BLESSING.”

MARK TWAIN

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Thank you!

Contact me at
Todd.Thompson@iup.edu

Questions? Comments? Complaints?

NO REFUNDS!