

Olivia and Susy on “Momma, what is it all for?” *Mrs. Mark Twain: The Life of Olivia Langdon Clemens, 1845-1904*

Twain, feeling helpless, waited and grieved in England. Twain would remember, decades later, that once, at Quarry Farm, when Susy was little, she seemed perplexed about the meaning of life, so she asked Livy, “Mamma, what is it all for?” Livy each night would go to the nursery to listen to Susy pray, but once, because of illness, she could not go for about a week. She told Susy she would definitely come on a particular night and she saw that Susy was having difficulty in saying something she wanted to, so Livy asked her what the matter was and Susy said that the governess, a Miss Foote, had been teaching her about the religions of the Indians and said that while it appeared they had only one God, in reality they had many. As a result, Susy had made changes in the way she prayed. Livy said, “Tell me about it, dear.” “Well, Mamma, the Indians believed they knew, but now we know they were wrong. By and by it can turn out that we are wrong. So now I only pray that there may be a God and a heaven, or something better.”⁷