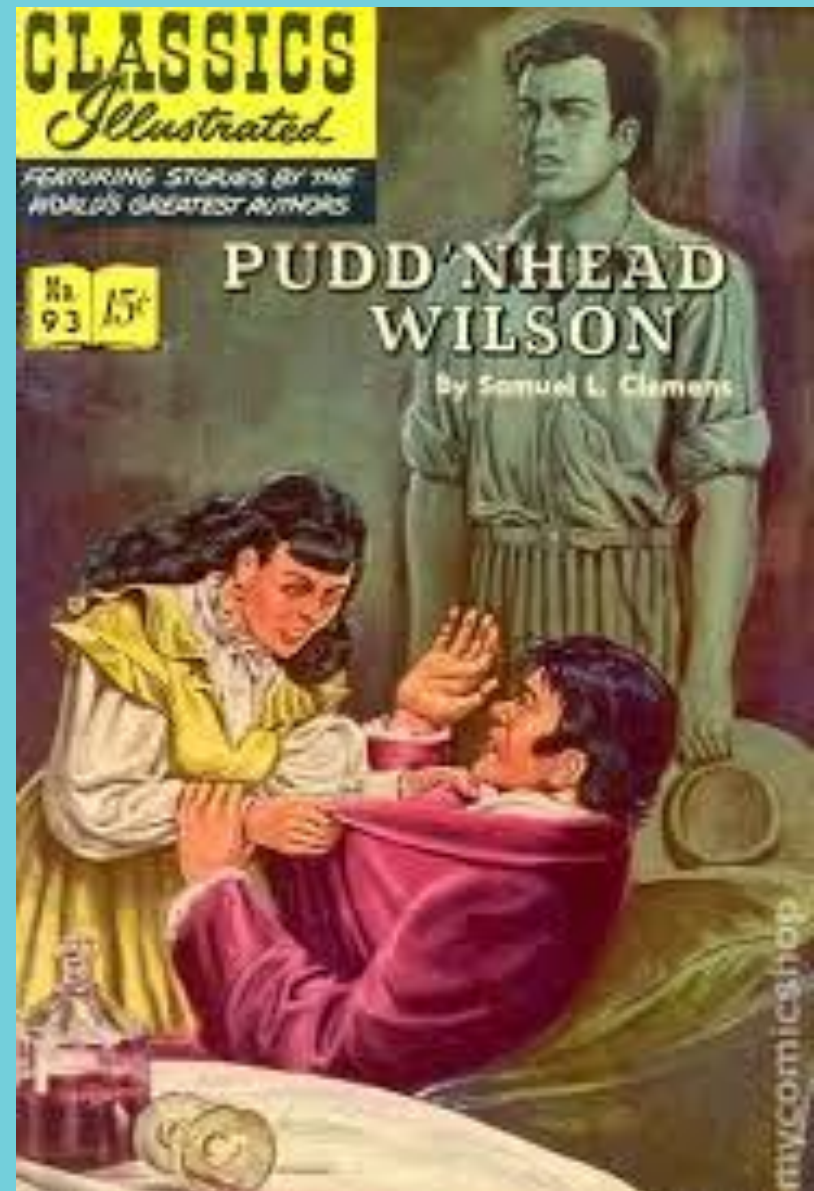
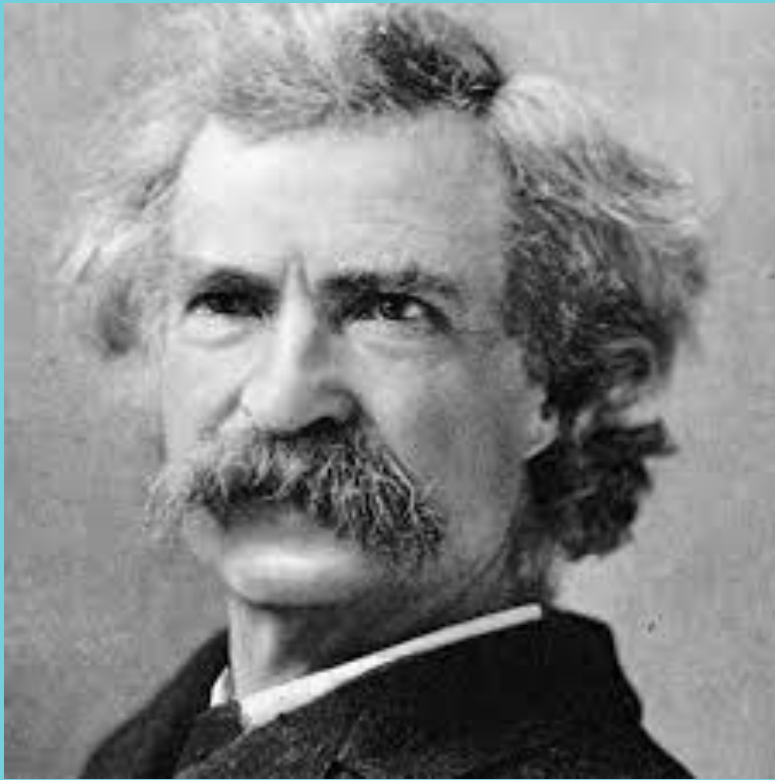


Week 7 – *Pudd'nhead Wilson*
English 213



“with exchanges of infants in the cradle, a hero with negro taint in his blood substituted for the legitimate white heir, midnight encounters in a haunted house between the false heir and his colored mother, murder by the villain of his supposed uncle and benefactor, accusation of an innocent foreigner, and final **sensational** acquittal and general unraveling of the tangled skein - if, I say, anybody else had had the hardihood to utilize afresh this venerable stage machinery of fiction, we should have been tempted to class his work with such cheap stuff as that of ... the **dime novelists**. But Mark Twain, somehow, has lifted it all into the region of literature”

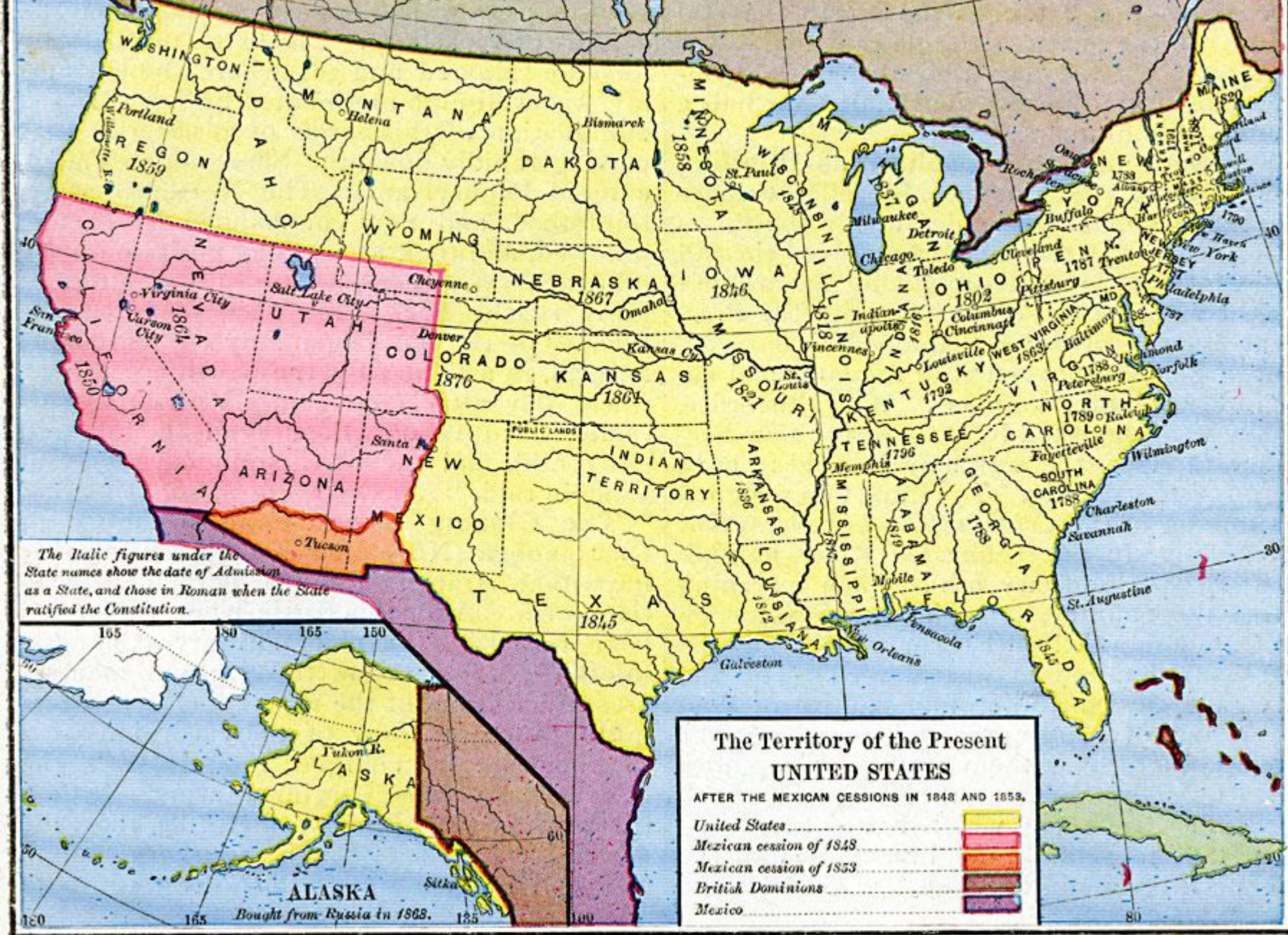
1894 review by author and critic Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen



- Mark Twain
 - 1835-1910
 - Raised in Hannibal, Missouri (near Missouri), on the Mississippi river
 - Twain works as a printer and then as a cub pilot on a Mississippi steam boat.
 - He serves briefly in 1861 for a Confederate militia group, before moving to Nevada where he prospected for silver, speculated in mining stocks, and was a popular journalist, before moving to New York to become a lecturer, western humourist, and writer.
 - He specializes in regional fiction and humour
 - He marries Olivia Langdown, a kind of heiress of a coal mining family and spends the next 20 years in Hartford Connecticut.
 - Most famous for *Huckleberry Finn* (1884) and *Tom Sawyer* (1876)
 - *Pudd'nehead Wilson* (1894) is his only “adult” novel



Twain's Connecticut home



“Tom’s cheek blanched and she saw it. Disturbing thoughts began to chase each other through his head. ‘How can she know? And yet she must have found out – she looks it. I’ve had the will back only three months, and am already deep in debt again, and moving heaven and earth to save myself from exposure and destruction, with a reasonably fair show of getting the thing covered up if I’ve let alone, and now this find has gone and found me out somehow or other. I wonder how much she knows?’” (48)

Plessy vs Ferguson

“We consider the underlying fallacy of the plaintiff’s argument to consist in the assumption that the enforced separation of the two races stamps the colored race with a badge of inferiority. If this be so, it is not by reason of anything found in the act, but solely because the colored race chooses to put that construction upon it. The argument necessarily assumes that if, as has been more than once the case and is not unlikely to be so again, the colored race should become the dominant power in the state legislature, and should enact a law in precisely similar terms, it would thereby relegate the white race to an inferior position. We imagine that the white race, at least, would not acquiesce in this assumption. The argument also assumes that social prejudices may be overcome by legislation, and that equal rights cannot be secured to the negro except by an enforced commingling of the two races. We cannot accept this proposition. If the two races are to meet upon terms of social equality, it must be the result of natural affinities, a mutual appreciation of each other’s merits, and a voluntary consent of individuals.”

“The chief citizen was York Leicester Driscoll, about forty years old, judge of the county court. He was very proud of his old Virginian ancestry, and in his hospitalities and his rather formal and stately manners he kept up its traditions. He was fine and just and generous. To be a gentlemen – a gentlemen without stain or blemish – was his only religion, and to it he was always faithful” (6-7)

“To all intents and purposes Roxy was as white as anybody, but one sixteenth of her which was black outvoted the other fifteen parts and made her a negro. She was a slave, and saleable as such. Her child was thirty-one parts white, and he, too, was a slave and, by a fiction of law and custom, a negro” (13)



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“The false heir made a full confession and was sentenced to imprisonment for life. But now a complication came up. The Percy Driscoll estate was in such a crippled shape when its owner died that it could pay only sixty per cent of its great indebtedness, and was settled at that rate. But the creditors came forward now, and complained that inasmuch as through an error for which *they* were in no way to blame the false heir was not inventoried at that time with the rest of the property, great wrong and loss had thereby been inflicted upon them. They rightly claimed that ‘Tom’ was lawfully their property and had been so for eight years [...] if he had been delivered to them in the first place, they would have sold him and he could not have murdered Judge Driscoll, therefore it was not he that had really committed the murder, the guilt lay with the erroneous inventory [...] As soon as the Governor understood the case, he pardoned Tom at once, and the creditors sold him down the river” (144-5)

- “Tom’s cheek blanched and she saw it. Disturbing thoughts began to chase each other through his head. ‘How can she know? And yet she must have found out – she looks it. I’ve had the will back only three months, and am already deep in debt again, and moving heaven and earth to save myself from exposure and destruction, with a reasonably fair show of getting the thing covered up if I’ve let alone, and now this find has gone and found me out somehow or other. I wonder how much she knows?’ (48)