CHAPTER VIII
CONCLUSION

Oh, this is the joy of a rose.
That it blows,
And goes.
—Willa Cather, *In Rose-Time*

In view of the treatment of themes and techniques of Mark Twain's short stories in the preceding chapters, it is easy to conclude that short story was the most congruous form for Mark Twain. The main points of the study are being summed up below in order to corroborate the point of conclusion.

Mark Twain's favourite branch of literature is the humorous oral story. Even in its written shape, it retains its oral character. This type of story proved to be very congenial for Mark Twain because it was in this field of activity that he could apply to the maximum extent his own critical theories. He stressed the fact that the humorous story has its own nub which is latent and evasive. In its tendency towards self-conscious use of language, allegory, dramatic form and its frequent reportorial tone, the short story offered Twain, a field, much in conformity with his beliefs about fiction. The short story was a form to which Twain could devote himself with ease, because it responded
spontaneously to his inherently conscious artistic self.

The short story enabled Twain to exploit his native artistic capacities to do things, which, as a writer he introduced into his art. It also allowed him to emphasize the dramatic confrontation and to concentrate upon a limited cast of characters. The short story provided Twain an opportunity to work out the scenes which consist, many times, almost entirely of dialogue.

It was in his short stories that Twain could avoid his weakest area as a writer of fiction; it allowed him to escape the demands of extended and complex plotting. In the short stories plots could be lurking, relatively limited and well defined in scope. In a very real sense the short story placed unconscious restraints on Twain which considerably lessened the chances of his drifting into a direction which generally prove disastrous for the compactness of art.

Mark Twain's short stories on varied themes made it possible for him to offer a good many deductions from his study of human nature; and his style shows that he has noted the added pleasure it gives to an audience to laugh at the mishaps and follies of the speaker. He seldom fails to make himself the hero of his thrilling, impossible adventures, in others he turns to laugh against himself with natural ease and gracious simplicity.
It has been said that his humour is sometimes hard and unsympathetic, that a cynical strain is found in it. But even in the most satirical moments, Mark Twain maintains good faith. Katy Leary, the family maid who was more than thirty years in Twain's home remembered, "I have never known a happier household."

Twain's idea was that there is a moral lesson in every tresspass, in every violation. His good-humoured idea was to let all the people commit all the sins they could, and then everybody having suffered at the bitter school of experience would become moral. This is the reason that he gives humour tinged with pathos or melancholy. His sole aim is to make a person happy with the instinct of a master and he often leads us to the verge of tears to make the anti-climax more effective.

The short story is also a congenial form for Twain because of its felicity towards allegory, satire and apocalypse. Its limited range made it an effective vehicle for Twain's later philosophical aphorisms.

There is an undefinable charm in the unsophisticated deliberateness of his mature stories. They chain the attention and demand applause and appreciation which would not be conceded to rhetorical artifice only. His way of narration is singularly quaint and entertaining. When Mark Twain reached his fiftieth birthday, Andrew Lang addressed a poem to him, the closing stanza of which reads:
Spirit of mirth, whose chime of bells
Shakes on his cap, and sweetly swells
Across the Atlantic main,
Grant that "Mark's laughter never die,
That men, through many a century,
May chuckle o'er Mark Twain!"

Posterity has been saying hearty 'Amen' to this prayer. Its judgment has proved that Mark Twain stands among the literary great. The oral story established by Twain found its way into literature, is being revived to-day in the form of radio and television story. Babatunde Agiri says that the oral traditions have become so widespread that "one is tempted to describe it as a movement." The ball set in motion by Twain has now run a circuit and stands on fascinating thresholds. The short story, as a literary genre has proved to be most agreeable to Twain's nature, tastes and outlook and has also enabled American short story to find its own voice in the twentieth century.
REFERENCES

