



Small Worlds Around Us

By Lynn M. Watkins

And Life Goes On—According to Plan

Years ago the mighty tree had fallen; now the prostrate trunk was being reduced to dust by the complex synchronization of various natural agencies, all working silently together.

What had been the heavy tree trunk was now the home for a varied assortment of creatures and a host of associated plants. On the old trunk the rains of summer patted delicately; the moisture, penetrating the now spongy wood, benefited each and every one, each in its own way.

The steady beat of the raindrops does not lull the inmates to slumber; most of them work around the clock; for them there is so little time.

First Workers

Shortly after the tree fell, the first of the workers began; up from the forest floor came the termites. This army of workers tunneled through the tissues of the dead tree trunk. Bit by tiny bit they swallowed the wood, allowing and depending on tiny organisms inside their elongated bodies to reduce the woody material to digestible food.

In the mouldy bark, wood boring insects burrowed, throwing out tiny streams of wood-dust. Fungi, mildew and mould began the slow, steady process of disintegration. Beetles pushed and shoved their hard bodies under the loosening bark, excavating tunnels and cavities for the disposition of their eggs.

Vines clambered over the old trunk, sending their roots down into the softening wood, gathering strength and moisture from the porous bark—pulling, pushing and silently tearing at the spongy tissues of the dead wood.

Even the hitherto hard heart-wood was no longer impervious to the tearing-down process that was at work. A cavity developed, running almost the entire length of the old trunk. Once this tunnel appeared, the attack on the wood occurred from the inside as well as from the outside.

Animals Moved In
One end of the tunnel became a den. Small animals moved in, digging with sharp claws at the softening wood, making for themselves living compartments.

Ants scurried inside, some carrying bits of fungus that would grow in the warm, dark interior and would hasten the decomposition. In the length and thickness of the old trunk, a galaxy of living creatures, great and small, had found a home.

And each was contributing its individual bit to the furtherance of Nature's plan. A tree that once grew and lived and plunged its roots deep into the forest floor, raising its mighty crown above the forest, was now prostrate and undergoing decomposition. As far as usefulness was concerned it had completed its purpose. Now, Nature with all the forces at her command was reducing it back to dust, turning it back to mould and humus so that succeeding generations of trees could feed upon its tissues.

Old Plan
Nature employs the sun and the rain, the growing of animals, the tunneling of insects, and the chemistry of disintegration. It is a plan worked out eons ago; a combination of many agencies working toward a definite end.

And all the hosts of living things that make their homes in the old trunk; what of them, when the job is done? Feverishly they work, by their labors they destroy the sanctuary they discovered. In the complex plan this, too, is foreseen. Provisions have already been made; by the time the trunk is reduced to dust other trees will have fallen.

Other hordes of animals,

insects and plants will be there, ready to carry on the work of creation.

He who gives so lavishly, and He who takes away, oversees the plan and controls the outcome—the great, pulsing heart of Life beats rhythmically—all according to plan.

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Mark Twain Was Hated in U.S., Red China Says

Tokyo—(UPI)—Mark Twain was hated by U.S. ruling reactionaries because he was a "progressive" author who exposed America's "imperialism" and "aggressive outrages," according to the Chinese Communists.

The allegations were made at a gathering of literary workers in Peiping to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the famed novelist and essayist. The Communist New China News Agency broadcast the report of the meeting.

Twain was described as a "world cultural giant and progressive" of the 19th century who "exposed the 'Dollar Empire'."

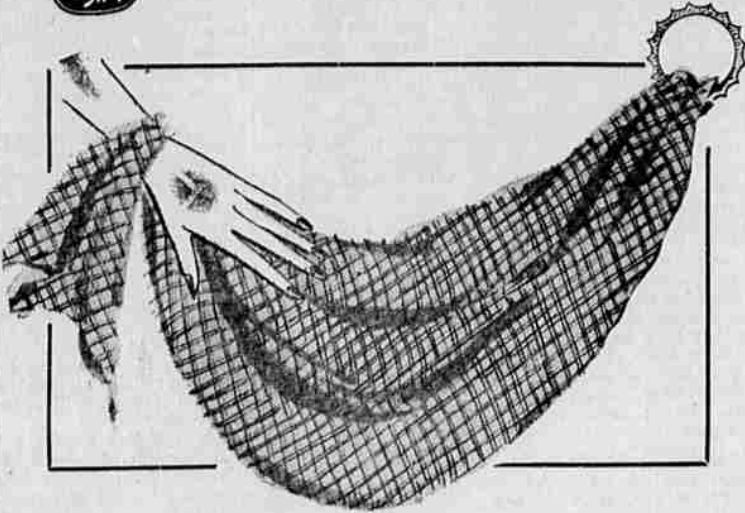
Unceasingly Exposed
The Red Agency quoted Lao Sheh, vice chairman of the Communist Chinese Writers' Union, as saying: "From the day the U.S. became an imperialist power in the 1890's, Mark Twain unceasingly exposed its aggressive outrages against the underdeveloped countries of Asia and Africa and also the false civilization of U.S. capitalism."

"The so-called democracy, freedom and equality of which U.S. capitalism were wont to boast provided material for his highly satirical short stories, prose and essays . . . therefore Mark Twain's works were scorned and hated by the U.S. reactionary ruling class," he said.

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Patients Can't Be Forced Under Knife

Salem—(UPI)—A tuberculosis patient confined to a state institution by an order of the State Health Board cannot be compelled to submit to surgery, according to Attorney General Robert Y. Thornton. He advised the State Board of Control that even though the superintendent of the state hospital has the statutory power to prescribe care and treatment of its patients, the state cannot compel a tuberculosis patient to undergo an operation against his will.

This is the case, Thornton said, even where state medical experts recommend chest surgery as being to the patient's personal welfare.

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