Mark Twain: Man in Whte

"The report of my death was an exaggeration." Most people have heard this famous quote by one of our most beloved writers. Mark Twain: Man in White focuses on the last four years of Twain's life when his fame was at its peak, and the problems that dogged his life, including the bad health of loved ones and the stealing of his money by associates also continued.

But what a wonderful man Twain was--always up for a good practical joke, always putting his entire self into his writing and gosh, thoroughly addicted to playing pool. Not only addicted to it, but he was one of those hosts that had to beat you if only by a little.

During this time he wrote a few things: a scathing attack on Shakespeare, some short stories, and a heartfelt account of how his personal secretary and her husband had taken advantage of him. Twain had some insight into fame and could not understand why if Shakespeare had written so many great plays, the people of his time and posterity would not know more about his personal life.

Most endearingly, this book shows Twain as father. By this time in his life, he had lost two children and his dear wife Livvy. His two surviving daughters were the singer, Clara, and his epileptic daughter, Jean. Throughout the book Clara fights hard to achieve fame with her singing--but she wanted adulation based on her talent and not on her father's name, and Jean struggles to return home from time spent in sanitariums.

The title comes from Twain's famous white suit, the one he wore to the Library of Congress to testify for a new copyright law that eventually passed in 1908. He fought hard for a better law not only because he thought an author should receive fair compensation for his labor in the same way as a carpenter or tradesman did, but also because he wanted to provide for his daughters after his death. This book presents Twain in all his humor and humanity. It's an inspiring read for anyone.

If you love Mark Twain's voice, you might want to check out his autobiography, the one whose views he thought were so controversial that he would not allow it to be published for a century after his death--The Autobiography of Mark Twain. It will be a multi volume work; the first volume came out in 2010.
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Posted by Dory L. on Jul 7, 2011

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