



# King Leopold's Soliloquy: A Defense of His Congo Rule (1905)

*Mark Twain*

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Samuel Langhorne Clemens (1835 – 1910), better known by his pen name Mark Twain, was an American author and humorist.

King Leopold's Soliloquy is a 1905 pamphlet by Mark Twain. Its subject is King Leopold's rule over the Congo Free State. A work of political satire harshly condemnatory of his actions, it ostensibly recounts Leopold speaking in his own defense.

King Leopold raves madly about the good things that he says he has done for the people of the Congo Free State, including the disbursement of millions on religion and art. He says he had come to Congo with piety "oozing" from "every pore," that he had only wanted to convert the people to Christianity, that he had wanted to stop the slave trade.

Leopold says that he did not take any of the government money, that he did not use the revenues as his personal "swag", and that such claims by the "meddlesome American missionaries", "frank British consuls", and "blabbing Belgian-born traitors" are wholly false. He asserts that for a King to be criticized as he has been is blasphemy — surely, under the rule of God, any King who was not doing God's will would not have been helped by God.

The book mentions the critical report by the missionary William Henry Sheppard on an 1899 massacre of over eighty people by Zappo Zaps sent to collect taxes.[1] Leopold claims that his critics only speak of what is unfavorable to him, such as the unfair taxes that he levied upon the people of the Congo, which caused starvation and the extermination of entire villages, but not of the fact that he had sent missionaries to the villages to convert them to Christianity. Nothing, Leopold complains, can satisfy the English.

The book was published in English, French, German and Italian.

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