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“Is he living or is he dead?” made me think of something that I did not think before. Some people can read it as a story, but I read it as a philosophical issue.

Mark Twain wants to convey to the reader that often people do not know who the famous artist is, either if he is alive or dead or, much less the value of his or her paintings in fact. Similarly, people do not want anyone to doubt their education, they do not want to be suspected as people of ignorance, and it is true, albeit quite miserable. The story tells of four starving artists who are desperately trying to find a way of making a living, while they did not have a single client who wanted to buy their paintings. By joining forces, they decide to try out a well-known statement that death often makes the author or artist famous, while he or she could not somehow achieve this status in life. (This is really sad that talent of an artist feed just some people that did not make anything of those masterpieces.) Confident of the success of this idea, they make Mille an artist who allegedly dies (in fact, in his plan, he retreats to live alone, hiding, performing his share of proceeds), and therefore the "Great Mile" paints many pictures. The other three make it clear that he is dying or close to death when they try to sell their pictures and their own research, and, of course, the trick works, and they all become not only respected, but also much richer than otherwise. These four friends were clever, because they knew when they should stop.

I liked the story, because it didn't just make me enjoy, but also made me think and discuss with myself this clever idea and this axiom that we do not appreciate true talents while they live.