

The Student's Scrap-book.

SAMUEL L. CLEMENS.

Ours is a practical age and a practical land. The Nineteenth century will not be remembered for the production of master pieces in art and literature, but for the advancement of practical ideas and scientific methods to a place more important than that held by the still indispensable beautiful. American life is preeminently practical. In the conditions brought about by the development of a new continent the contrary is an impossibility. Among the many tendencies fostered by this practical word-a-day life of ours, not the least important is the demand for humor—the cheerful, sunny fun which bubbles up continually from the most common and homely circumstances, and which asks only to be noticed and enjoyed. The active, working citizen, with wits sharpened by contact with his little world, is the one who most fully appreciates a well-pointed joke or droll narrative;—without means and in many cases without inclination to explore the hidden treasures of our literature, he turns to smiles for mental recreation. Practical life, then, creates a demand for humor and is in itself a source of supply.

Remembering these facts, we are not surprised that America, with her great body of intelligent, thinking people—people who know neither riches nor poverty—should lead the world in humorous productions. That she has gone still farther and given birth to a new school of humor; a school as charitable as our ideal religion, as cheerful and bright as midday.

Among the many who have risen to prominence as its representatives are Artemus Ward, Mrs. Partington, Josh Billings, R. J. Burdette, and last but not least Samuel L. Clemens, more familiarly known as "Mark Twain." Wherever the English language is spoken the works of this true genius may be found. In our land the party who has not read "Roughing It," "The Gilded Age," "Innocence Abroad," or "Tom Sawyer" can not converse intelligently on literature of this class, while the bare announcement of a new book bearing the signature of Mark Twain is sufficient to bring in thousands of orders. To read but a few pages is to understand the wonderful success of the author. To read all his works is to know Samuel L. Clemens—his history, thoughts, joys and sorrows and his frailties as thoroughly as you know a life-long friend. In his writings he has given us the history of his life; not egotistically, but he insensibly weaves himself into the fabric of the story in a manner as unaffected as it is charming.

Of his boyhood a thorough knowledge may be acquired by a perusal of "Tom Sawyer." In this intensely interesting story of southwestern life of three decades ago Mr. Clemens figures as the ubiquitous Tom. The experiences of this young hopeful are to a certain extent the experiences of every American boy, no matter what his condition, and when woven into a plot, and told in Mark Twain's unique style, find a responsive chord in the breast of every person whose early youth is not entirely forgotten.

The story which closes like a fairy tale would be much more in harmony with the general plan of the other works of the author if, instead of finding the hidden treasure, Thomas Sawyer had gone to work as boys in his condition must, to earn a livelihood. Instead of follow-

ing himself to the printing office and then on his travels as a journeyman printer, afterwards to become a steam-boat pilot, Mr. Clemens closed this book with the sudden acquisition of wealth by Tom, and used the latter events as material for "The Gilded Age" and "Piloting on the Mississippi."

Appointed as private secretary to the lieutenant governor of the then territory of Nevada, when twenty-four years of age, he crossed the plains in the early days. His experience here as miner, journalist and correspondent were used in "Roughing It," which gave him a reputation. His subsequent life has been quietly and comfortably spent in the eastern states, with the exception of two or three years on the continent, the events of which he has used in his characteristic and happy manner in "Innocence" and "Tramp Abroad."

Mark Twain is the humorist of the people. Eschewing all eccentricities in orthography and style, upon which many depend for the ludicrousness of their effects, he gives his own experiences in his own way and in his own mother-tongue. He never strains a point to make his narrative funny. All is as natural as nature, and this is the secret of his success.

Nor have all the contributions of Mr. Clemens to the literature of the day been in the line of humor. He handles the pathetic in a masterly manner, although assuming nothing in that direction; and while making no pretensions in philosophy, the strong undercurrent of sound reasoning and common sense in all his writings gives him a place as a philosopher, if not a moralist. Although not at present recognized as such, for the masses care not to go below the sparkle and foam of the surface, in time Mark Twain will receive credit for much in addition to that which now gives him his reputation.

When the fashion of fun changes, as it surely will, making the jokes of to-day insipid, if not stupid, his books will still be read for the homely philosophy and accurate reflection of human nature which they contain. '87.

NAPOLEON.

Near the beginning of the 19th century the sea of continental politics was much troubled, and each nation looking into those broken waters seemed to see itself shattered and destroyed—its individuality utterly lost. It seemed that no power could still those waves save the hand of the mighty magician who had caused all this commotion, and his wand glittered steel-blue, and its edge was stained with red from point to hilt. Even this possible fiat of "Peace be still" would not leave tranquillity—it would bring only that calm which follows the wreck of a vessel, the crash of a thunder-bolt; it would leave Europe crushed and destroyed; ground down under the iron heel of one mighty power.

At one time indeed there appeared a ray of hope; the enchanter was imprisoned and closely watched, and all things began to assume their normal condition. France breathed easily for some months after Napoleon was sent to Elba, and the prospects looked bright.

The Little Corporal had departed with a nation's curse ringing in his ears, and one would think his very life in danger if he ever ventured within the boundaries of his adopted country as a simple citizen. What then thought the world when it saw this solitary man, with a mere handful of attendants in three little vessels, invading