

THE NEW LITERARY SENSATION.

Amid the immensities of Western nature, men are cast in a larger mould. Under their broader skies is developed a magnificent largeness in speech and thought, now finding vent in heroic enterprise, and again in coining the queerest slang. They fondly proclaim that a new literary type is arising on the Pacific slopes, instinct with energy and life. The charms of mining with its alternate gifts of opulence and penury attracts the choicer specimens of the new race to the little mining settlements, where there is that reckless ease begot of fatalism mingled with buoyant hope. For while the hearty life of the west pulses through their limbs, it is worth while to live merely for the pleasure of living.

There is one point on which the Western community is touchy, and that is the supposed higher culture of the East. In their own vigorous way they will prove conclusively to you that the East is effete in literature as well as in men, and show that it is in the hardier West that America must find its future writers. For there the mountains, skies and grand processes of nature are never-failing sources of inspiration. At last the West has found a fit exponent of its views.

Through the kindness of a friend there has reached me the first issue of the *Lone Gulch Sanhedrim* (a quiet reference perhaps to subscription list), a literary and political weekly. Lone Gulch is a flourishing mining settlement in a spur of the Nevada Mountains. I am enabled to give a short description, because the *Sanhedrim* has for title piece a wood-cut of Lone Gulch embowered in the rays of the Western sun. About a dozen wooden shanties, all but two decorated with legends to the effect that this was the A1 Saloon, and a number of old army tents occupy a fairly level plateau at the mouth of the gulch. A fringe of tasseled pines forms a background.

The "Prospectus" is worthy of our attention, as it embodies the platform of the promoters of the new enterprise. An extract or two will convey a better idea than any description:—

"The slip-slop of Eastern Journalism is disgusting. In their periodicals there is no longer manly vigour. Men do not write what they think in good, wholesome Saxon. They seek elegance and finish at the expense of strength. The result is a nerveless sweetness only palatable to an enervated public.

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We intend to say what we mean every time, no roundaboutisms with us. If we think a man is a skunk we intend to let the public know it.

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We intend to show these Eastern galoots that just as good writing can be done with our dialect, as they choose to call it, as with the cold lisping language of the East. Where can you find such picturesqueness in epithet and images so forcible as in that despised Western speech. . . . &c., &c."

May they succeed. As the *genre* painters grew up in defiance of all rules, as the realist school in literature started up in France and England to protest against artistic fetters, so America is to see a natural school grow up on the slopes of the Rockies. And what better champion than the Lone Gulch *Sanhedrim*.

The *Sanhedrim* is a four-page weekly, printed from old type, battered and broken, on gray wrapping paper. Its contents are a curious mixture. An account of a dance and supper up at Red Mike's Saloon, "where all the beauty and fashion of Lone Gulch were gathered on this festive occasion." An account that glows with all the imagery of a western reporter is cheek by jowl with an editorial utterance of a true frontier flavour. "Two-fingered Bill, which his other name is Short, is warned to stop loafing about the stampers, trying to steal, for the eyes of the intelligent citizens of Lone Gulch are upon him, and they will tender him a surprise party," which surprise, it is not obscurely hinted, would be in the nature of bringing his neck into sympathetic contact with a rope and an oak limb.

The election of a sheriff is coming off and, of course, the *Sanhedrim* pushes its candidate powerfully, remarking that if the other party felt aggrieved, he "could make known his objections at this office," but, at the same time, quietly suggested that it would be as well if his friends had ready a barrow to remove the remains.

In literature there is the first instalment of a story, some verse, and a singular piece entitled "A Gargoyle," which I shall quote. It seems to have a personal bearing on some "soak" of the Gulch, and is introduced by a line or two of jolly old Falstaff.

"I have maintained that salamander of yours with firr any time these two and thirty years; God reward me for it."

—Falstaff.

The carbuncular richness of his phiz was an outward and visible sign, a very beacon rather, of an inward and proof-spirit grace. By such token you might guess he was of the most noble order of toss-pots—your devil-may-care fellows who swig off their lush with the ease that only a lifetime of practise can bestow. For some five and forty years he had dandled and petted his rubicund member, and great was his reward. A mellow glow wreathed the massy structure, in which a swollen vein here and there gleamed portentous—dark purple on a sanguine field. With its fiery sheen it lighted up the ambush of his hairy muzzle, for all the world like an angry sunset in a squalid forest. Gnarled and knotted, as sometimes is the patriarch among trees, not a knob but chronicled some great effort in the service of the wine-god. This blossom—he would say, laying his finger respectfully on a particularly vicious looking excrescence that shaded its rich tones into the encircling brassy tints—cost me a good twelvemonth's devotion to a prime article of Bordeaux brandy. For as a pine by its rings marks the march of time, did his bulbous ornament in itself serve for annals. In days of old, when faith was young our sires were wont to garnish their churches with grotesque figures—*gargoyles*, that from coigns of vantage upspread to the four winds of heaven their quaint hideousness, to fright away what bad spirits ranging abroad might chance to prowl near the fold. Like fair service was rendered our jolly toper by the dazzling effulgence of his generous organ. For, overcome at sight thereof, the tapster—he who calls spirits from the vasty deep—would forget his knavish cunning and turn true man. So for the nonce there was no lime in the sack. H.

JEAN JACQUES :

A TALE OF A FRENCH REVOLUTION.

CHAPTER I.

Jean Jacques was a Frenchman.
So were his father and grandfather before him.
Jean Jacques was of noble birth.
His father was a French Count.
His full name was: Jean Jacques de la Rochejacquelin
Leon Michel de Haut-Ton.
But he was always familiarly called Jean Jacques, in imitation of another celebrated Frenchman.

CHAPTER II.

In the Revolution of six months before, Jean Jacques had staked high, and had lost.

The hated Republic had been established, and the Government had been returned with an increased majority.

But his hopes and wishes for the ultimate destiny of France were not extinguished by the inactivity of the Revolution business.

"France shall yet live," he often used to say, "Even though I die for her."

In the horoscope of political destiny Jean Jacques saw that a Revolution must come.

He was ready.

CHAPTER III.

Jean Jacques had been forced *malgre lui*, to accept a position in the Bureau of Finance.

He had to live somehow, and "why not gain some departmental knowledge? who knows but that some day—"

His salary was 1,000 francs a year,—a mere pittance—but what was sordid gold to him if France might yet be saved!

The position was respectable; and though he scorned to be employed by the Republic—bah!—he had sense enough not to starve.

CHAPTER IV.

With the characteristic love of his nation, Jean Jacques was fond of showy dress.

And so far as his salary would allow, he dressed himself in a manner becoming a true son of France, and the son of a French Count.

He usually wore a tight-fitting *surtout* of blue serge, adorned