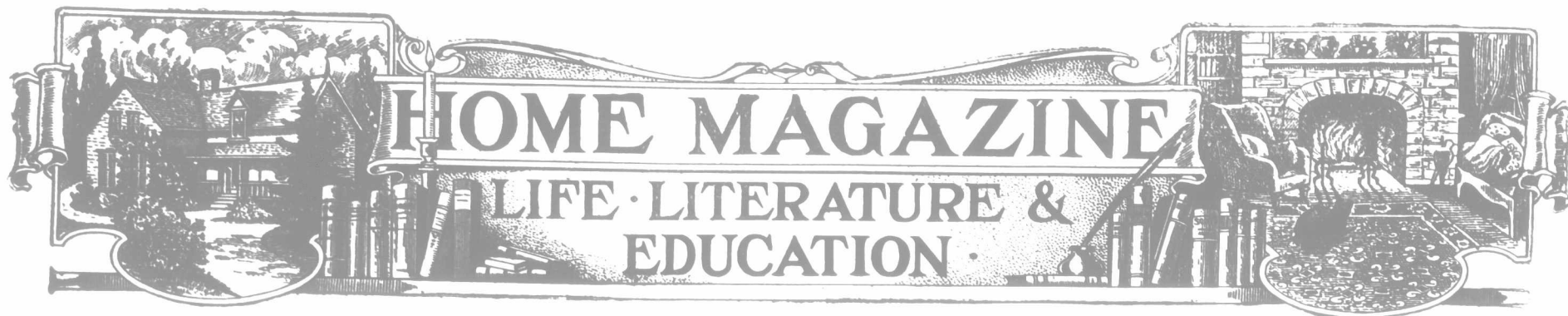




Little Trips Among the Eminent.

Mark Twain.

When, in April of last year, word was flashed round the world by cable and telegraph that Mark Twain was dead, expressions of regret were universal and profound. Everywhere one heard the simple expression of sorrow, "I feel as though I had lost a personal friend." For, the man who had made cabin and palace laugh was dead; the man who had brought a ripple of sunshine across this bustling, hurrying old earth by his sometimes riotous fun, yet who had endeared himself, too, by his frank, warm, human sympathy and his practical philosophy of life. For Mark Twain was much more than the mere humorist and story-teller. Above all things, especially in his later years, he was the earnest man, fully impressed with the importance of his self-appointed mission to urge the real needs of humanity, and to laugh down, or scathe down, what appeared to him shams and injustices and stupidities. If he sometimes trampled ruthlessly upon some of our ideals or reverences, he left it to us to at least give him credit for his sincerity, and pass over that which might not please for the sake of the much that could.

Samuel Langhorne Clemens was born November 30th, 1835, in the little town of Florida, Mississippi, the son of a man of some education and prominence in his district. Three years later, however, the family moved to Hannibal, on the Mississippi, and so the future Mark Twain grew up close to the great tawny river which he so loved, and which gave him the locale for so much of his literary work.

Here, too, according to glimpses afforded by the loopholes of his and other people's reminiscences, he developed at an early age the strong sense of humor and fancifulness of exaggeration (a quality that appeals strongly to American risibilities) which proved so strong a stock-in-trade for him at a later day. Years later, he tells us, he questioned his mother in regard to his sickly childhood:

"I suppose that all the time you were uneasy about me?"

"Yes, the whole time."

"Afraid I would not live?"

"No,"—after a reflective pause,—"afraid you would"—a sidelight, by the way, that reveals, perhaps, the especial hereditary influence that dominated Mark Twain.

At another time someone asked Mrs. Clemens, "Do you ever believe anything that boy says?"

"He is a well-spring of truth," she replied, "but you can't bring up the whole well with one bucket. I know his average, therefore he never deceives me. I discount him 30 per cent. for embroidery, and what is left is pure and priceless truth."

Leaving out of consideration a possible touch of "embroidery" in this last account—also Twain's own—the fact of its truth remains. The boy, in his case, was truly father of the man. During all of his life Mark Twain was most barefacedly truthful. "I have known, I suppose," says William Deans Howells, "men as truthful, but not so absolutely, so positively, so almost aggressively truthful." He "embroidered," it is true, he "exaggerated horribly"—that was his humor—but his exaggerations were such as all but stupidity must recognize; they were

ever palpable, as he intended they should be. It is necessary, it seems, to explain this, since a few European critics, even at the time of his death, almost ludicrously revealed that they had missed the whole spirit of Mark Twain, seeing in his riotous stretches of imagination or satire but wilful prevarication or dull stupidity.

To return: At the age of twelve, on account of the death of his father, young Clemens left school and went into a printing-office. Having learned the trade, he determined to be a "tramp printer" and see the world, and, accordingly, he wandered to St. Louis, to Cincinnati, to Philadelphia, and to New York, everywhere storing up impressions, and laying unconsciously a foundation for his future building.

But the great river was calling him, so in 1851 he returned to Hannibal, filled with the aspiration to become a river-pilot. During the years that immediately followed, he worked now at printing, now as clerk on the river-boats, as opportunity offered; then, at last, in 1859, he took out his pilot's license, and was appointed pilot aboard the Alonzo Child.

In 1861 he enlisted in the Confederate Army, but the regiment was not ordered into action, so, after a few months, he went with his brother to Carson City, Nevada. Shortly, however, the gold rush hurried him to California, where he succeeded in mining little save the stuff that went to the making of "Roughing It" and other Western stories. A year later he was back east of the mountains again, working on the staff of

his notes sent to a paper in New Orleans.

"Twain," however, seemed possessed of the wanderlust. Again he went to San Francisco, where for a short time he worked with Bret Harte on *The Californian*, a periodical whose early demise sent him adrift again in the streets. At one time he had but ten cents in his pocket, and was obliged to sleep under the trees. He pawned; he engaged again in profitless mining, which he forsook at last to work in a quartz mill at ten dollars a week, fleeing from this new "job," in turn, in a few days. Finally there came a chance to go as reporter to Honolulu, and so he set off in high spirits, his lucky star again in the ascendant.

On his return he gave a lecture which was successful enough to open before him a new door of endeavor; then, with the following year, 1867, came the publication of his book of short sketches, named, for the first, "The Jumping Frog of Calaveras County"—and the threshold of his fame. Upon the reputation of this book, he was selected to go as reporter for a sort of syndicate, with a party of tourists, on a trip through the Mediterranean and the Holy Land, and so were thrown before him the materials from which were to be built his "Innocents Abroad." Trips abroad were not as common in those days as in ours. Twain was already fairly well known. The public, eager alike for information and entertainment, and all the more ready to absorb the information if it were

land, "America as represented by Longfellow and Lowell," at first held aloof.

Another event of no small moment to Clemens hung upon this voyage. In the stateroom of a fellow passenger he chanced to see a portrait of a young girl which so attracted him that he made inquiries. It proved to be that of the fellow passenger's sister, and so there was no reason that the vision should not remain with Mark Twain. On his return, he lost little time in seeking the original, and the result was his speedy marriage with Miss Olivia Langdon, a young woman of beauty and wealth, and such exceeding sweetness of disposition that henceforth the bluff humorist was her joyous slave.

Just here it may be pertinent to ask what manner of man was this wanderer, this young reporter who was setting two continents a-talking, and marrying a beautiful heiress off-hand? "A young man," says one biographer, "strongly-built, ruddy in complexion, his hair of a sunny hue, his eyes light and twinkling, in manner hearty, and nothing of the student about him, but very much of the miner—one who looked as if he could take his own part in a quarrel, strike a smart blow as readily as he could say a telling thing, bluffly jolly, brusquely cordial, off-handedly good-natured." William Deans Howells gives a yet more picturesque description, touching upon his clothes, which were usually careless, often bizarre. Mr. Howells first met him, he tells us, in 1869, in the office of the *Atlantic Monthly*, Boston, upon which occasion the humorist was wearing a seal-skin coat, fur side out, in defiance of all fashions of the time. "With his crest of dense red hair, and the wide sweep of his flaming moustache, Clemens was not discordantly clothed in that seal-skin coat, which afterward, in spite of his own warmth in it, sent the cold chills through me when I once accompanied it down Broadway and shared the immense publicity it won him."

After his marriage, Clemens lived for a short time in Buffalo, where he was editor of the *Buffalo Express*; then he went to Hartford, Conn., and set himself seriously to the writing of books. Here, in rapid succession, appeared "Roughing It," "The Gilded Age" (written in collaboration with Charles Dudley Warner), "Adventures of Tom Sawyer," "A Tramp Abroad," "The Prince and the Pauper," "Life on the Mississippi," "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," and others. Every book sold well, and additional gains came in through the successful presentation on the stage of an adaptation from "The Gilded Age," with Raymond as "Colonel Sellers."

As a result, Mr. Clemens was enabled to build and maintain the palatial residence in which he so delighted, and which was for some years a home loved not only by the Clemens family, but by the friends who came up from Boston and New York to visit the humorist and his family. Mr. Howells, in his new book, affectionately entitled "My Mark Twain" (from which we have already quoted), has told of some of these visits. "Our next meeting," he says, "was at Hartford, or, rather, at Springfield, where Clemens greeted us on the way to Hartford. Aldrich (Thomas Bailey Aldrich) was going to be his guest, and I was going to be Charles Dudley Warner's, but Clemens had come



Mark Twain, in His Favorite Attitude of Writing in Bed.

"He did much to break the dullness of a drab world for millions of people,"

The *Enterprise*, Virginia City, Nevada, and scribbling the first of those humorous sketches signed "Mark Twain," which directed the attention of newspaper men towards him, and were widely copied. His signature, by the way, had been happily and characteristically—all redolent, as it was, of the Mississippi—taken from the sounder's call on the river boats. "By the mark one (fathom), by the mark twain!" And it was none the less effective that it had previously been used as the signature of an old river reporter to

spiced by such drolleries as Mark Twain could give, received the book joyously, and so rapid were the sales that Clemens himself realized from it, before three years had passed, as much as \$25,000, although, of course, the lion's share went to the publishers. "It sells right along," he said, "just like the Bible." It may here be remarked, however, that, for many a year, Mark Twain was acclaimed only by the general public in America. In England he was immediately received in "refined society," but in his own