

to-day the most successful, because he exaggerates." He tries to make out his case by adding, that in a population made up, as theirs is, of immigrants from every older nation and remote corner of the world, there must necessarily be elements as curious as they are variable, incongruous and grotesque; and what to an outsider might appear an exaggeration, is in reality a truthful mirroring of nature. No doubt there is a great deal of truth in this statement, but yet it cannot be gainsaid that the American humourist exaggerates, and exaggerates, too, in a greater degree than any other humourist of the present day. Anyone who has read Dickens's *American Notes* and *Martin Chuzzlewit* or Max O'Rell's *Jonathan* and *His Continent*, or has himself travelled through that wonderful country, and observed the various types of character among its population their habits, weaknesses, follies, and ludicrous peculiarities, can judge of the adaptability of the soil to the growth of this species of literature. The logging camps of the North, and the negro plantations of the South, that part of the country which is familiarly known as "down East," and the mining camps of the "Far West," the Indian trails and the prairies of the Central States, have all furnished unique characters for the pen of the literary comedian. Immigrant Chinese, Germans, Italians, Irishmen and English "swells" have all their peculiarities painted in the most glowing colours.

I haven't space in this short paper to run over the whole list of American humourists, but will only glance at a few of the leading representatives. Artemus Ward (Charles Farrar Browne)—the American Rabelais—during the eight years in which he was before the public, convulsed two continents with his humorous parodies and quaint satirical descriptions of the prevailing customs of his day. To the "Homo Ridens" of the present day, *Artemus Ward—His Book* is a veritable storehouse of humour of the most refined and classical nature. Since his death in London in 1867, Mark Twain (Samuel L. Clemens) has been the nation's accepted

prince of humourists. Old life on the Mississippi, where he himself spent some of his earlier years as a pilot on one of the steamboats, has been well portrayed by him in *Tow Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*. Here do we see his art at its best, and it may well be regretted that he has not oftener entertained us with the comicallities of his own native country. The bulk of his productions consists of books of travel which are all masterpieces of their kind. His latest venture in the literary world is *A Connecticut Yankee at the Court of King Arthur* which has not met with the success of his earlier work. I may mention *en passant*, that he took his pseudonym from a term used by the leadmen on the Mississippi steamboats, meaning the fathom of water. Bret Harte has long been amusing us with his realistic descriptions, nearly all written in dialect, of life in the mining camps and on the frontiers of the Pacific States. *The Luck of Roaring Camp* in prose, and *The Heathen Chinee*, and *Her Letter* in verse, have a world-wide reputation. The eccentricities and national peculiarities of the New England Yankee have had their chief exponents in the persons of James Russell Lowell in his *Biglow Papers*—the best of American humorous productions—and of our own countrymen Thomas Chandler Haliburton in that immortal work *Sam Slick the Clockmaker*. Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes has been characterized as one of the "funniest fellows" of that brilliant company of New England literary celebrities which are to be found at the gatherings of the old alumni of Harvard and the authors' clubs of his native city of Boston. In his three volumes, *The Autocrat*, *The Poet* and *The Professor at the Breakfast Table* he has given the world a series of essay-aboundings in humorous pleasantries and keen observations on men, manners, and things. Interspersed here and there throughout the collection is a number of remarkably witty poems of which *The Wonderful One-Hoss Shay* and the *Height of the Ridiculous* are perhaps the most noted. He has lately bid farewell to literary