

MARK TWAIN.

The mere chronology of Mark Twain's life is soon told. Like most dwellers in the imagination, his significance to posterity lies not, as with men of action, in how he wrought upon events but rather in how events wrought upon him; for from such reactions resulted his imaginative output—one of the most considerable of his time and, as it now seems, one of the securest.

Briefly, then, Mark Twain was born Samuel Langhorne Clemens in Florida, Mo., on November 30, 1835. "My parents," he writes, in his own Burlesque Autobiography, "were neither very poor nor conspicuously honest. . . . The earliest ancestor the Twains have any record of was a friend of the family by the name of Higgins." The county chronicles have it that the elder Clemens failed in business and died, leaving his son the ample world to make his fortune in.

Accordingly, Mark Twain's acquaintance with literature began in putting words into type, not ideas into words. Educated only in the public schools, he was apprenticed to a printer at thirteen and worked at his trade in St. Louis, Cincinnati, Philadelphia and New York, until at eighteen he could gratify a boyish ambition to become cub to a Mississippi river pilot. Both these desperate happenings reacted profoundly on his later life. Varied and eventful as that life was, it might almost be said that only two things happened to Mark Twain—he learned the river and he learned to set type.

His knowledge of river life, acquired when he was a pilot took form in "Tom Sawyer," "Huckleberry Finn" and "Life on the Mississippi" regarded abroad as his surest title to fame. It even suggested his pseudonym for "Mark Twain" is a linesman, a cry to the pilot in shallow stages. And his familiarity with printing turned him naturally first into newspaper work, then into creative writing, and finally into the publishing business wherein, like Sir Walter Scott, he suffered a bankruptcy disastrous to everything but his honor, and like Sir Walter again, paid off by his pen debts not of his own making.

In due time Mark Twain became a full-fledged pilot. He tells the rest himself, in a chapter of "Life on the Mississippi."

"By and by the war came, commerce was suspended, my occupation was gone.

"I had to seek another livelihood. So I became a silver miner, in Nevada; next, a gold miner, in California; next, a reporter in San Francisco; next, a special correspondent in the Sandwich islands; next, a roving correspondent in Europe and the East; next, an instructional torchbearer on the lecture platform, and, finally, I became a scribbler of books, and an immovable fixture among the other rocks of New England."

This was in 1872, a year after he had married Miss Olivia L. Langdon of Elmira, N. Y., who brought him an independent fortune. At that time, his writings were in growing demand, he had an assured income, his own home, and seemed indeed a fixture. But in 1885 his popularity as an author and his acquaintance with the mechanics of the publishing trade—besides being a practical printer he had been part owner of The Buffalo Express before his marriage—drew him into the firm of C. L. Webster & Co., publishers. The firm brought out the memoirs of General Grant and paid his widow \$350,000, but its prosperity was shortlived, and it failed with liabilities of \$96,000. The failure had already sucked in \$65,000 of Mark Twain's cash, but he determined also to shoulder the debts, and to pay them off undertook in 1895-6 a lecture trip around the world.

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Mark Twain was an inveterate smoker and one of the most leisurely men in the world. An old pressman who was once printer's devil in an office where Mark was editorial writer tells this anecdote of his habits or work: "One of my duties was to sweep the room where editors worked. Every day Mark would give me a nickel to get away from him. He would rather die in the dust than uncross his legs. One day he gave me a nickel to dot an 'I' in his copy for him. He certainly did enjoy life, that man did."

Yet this easy-going dawdler acquitted himself of a prodigious deal of work in his life, and bound himself voluntarily to pay off debts that he could have discharged without hurt to his good name by passing through bankruptcy. He did not practice as he preached. "It don't make no difference," he had Huck Finn say, "whether you do right or wrong, a person's conscience ain't got no sense, and just goes for him anyway. If I had a yaller dog that didn't know more than a person's conscience did, I'd pison him. It takes up more room than all the rest of a person's insides, and yet ain't no good nohow."

With Mark Twain's lecture trip around the world began his international celebrity, and his gradual rise into a figure taken in some sense to typify the American spirit. From humorist he became the kindly but mocking moralist and philosopher of Puddinhead Wilson. His literary output became more occasional and, though written with more finesse, more critical and less creative. His public appearances grew more frequent, his whimsical utterances gained greater currency, and a whole literature of anecdotes about him grew up.

Yale gave him the degree of M. A. and later of L.H.D. in 1901; the University of Missouri, his native State, followed with

(Continued on page six.)

Over 40 victims of worthless dogs are being treated at the new State Pasteur institute at Columbia, S. C. There are cases from every section of the State and it is feared that with the advent of summer the number will increase.

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Saved From the Grave.

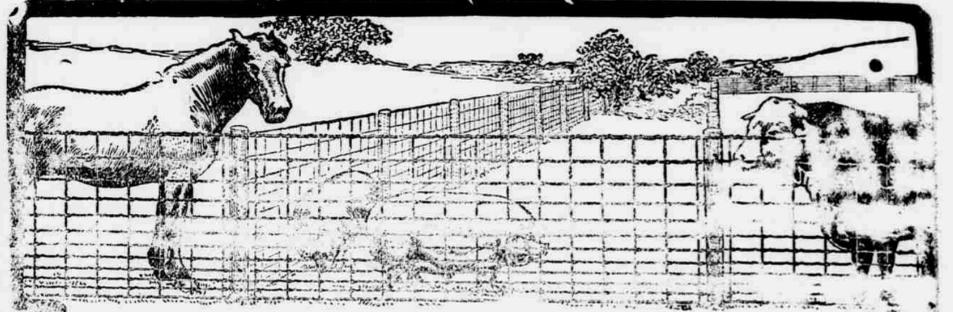
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