

**MARK TWAIN: HIS LIFE
AND WORK. A
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

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Mark Twain: his life and work. A biographical sketch by Willi M. Clemens

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WILLI M. CLEMENS

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HIS LIFE AND WORK

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

BY

WILL M. CLEMENS

1892

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I.

PREFACE.

From the days of "Yankee Doodle" and the "Frogs of Windham," two gems of early American humor written in the Revolutionary period, until near the close of the war of the Rebellion, the recognized American humorist, the wit who could cause a laugh to go rippling, bubbling around the world, was a creation unknown to American literature. However, out of respect and admiration for their genius, their wit and humor, we must not fail in giving proper credit to Francis Hopkinson, Samuel Peters, John

Trumbull, George F. Hopkins, William T. Thompson, Seba Smith, Joseph C. Neal, Orpheus C. Kerr, George H. Derby and a host of others, for bringing out in the American prints, those native characteristics, the drollness of the yankee and the wit of the early days, but not until after the Rebellion did America produce a humorist of world-wide reputation. When civil strife was ended, and the American began a new career, almost a new existence, there came to the surface a new school of native humor. The names of Mark Twain, Artemus Ward, Josh Billings and one or two others, became household words. Their funny sayings caused the Englishman to smile between his bites of beef. Their droll humor forced our German cousin to shake his sides with laughter. Their witty bon mots occasioned prolonged mirth from our friends in France. Not until then did we become known as a nation of humorists, and from that day the fame of our wits has extended throughout the entire world. To-day a ripple of mirth

starting on the banks of Mud Flat Creek, will end in a hurricane of laughter on the Thames or the Seine.

There was something so purely American in the humor of Mark Twain, that his work soon made for him a place in native literature. As a representative of American life and character his name extended even beyond the confines of the continent of Europe, into all lands and among all peoples. In Paris one cannot purchase a Bible at the book stall, but one may find "Roughing It" at every corner. In Rome, "The Innocents Abroad" is one of the staples in the book marts. In Hongkong you will find Mark Twain. Everywhere they read him.

The career of Mark Twain is a romance. His life is a curious medley of pathos and poverty, with an occasional laugh to help along over the rough places. He was a wild, reckless boy, a poor printer, not even a good journalist, an adventurer, a wanderer. He was a sort of human kaleidoscope. He then became a wit, a scholar, a public speaker, a man of

family and a millionaire. All this is but typical of America, of American life and American character.

Mark Twain is more than a mere Punch and Judy show. With his droll humor there comes information. He gives the reader a full dinner, not merely dessert. He tells you more about the Mississippi river than an old steamboatman. He gives you a world of information about Germany and Switzerland. He is better than a guide book for the Holy Land. What that greater genius Charles Dickens has done for fiction, Mark Twain does for humor. He is an ideal reporter. He minutely tells us all about a thing, tells us what he sees and hears, describes a man, a mule or a monarchy in excellent form, and makes one laugh at the same time.

Some years ago I was prompted to write the genial Mr. Clemens for an introduction or preface to a little volume of mine, long since buried by the sands of time. His reply was this: