

**ARTEMUS
WARD, HIS BOOK**

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Artemus Ward, His Book by Charles Farrar Browne

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CHARLES FARRAR BROWNE

**ARTEMUS
WARD, HIS BOOK**

AT THE DOOR OF THE TENT.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Show is about to commence. You could not well expect to go in without paying, but you may pay without going in. I can say no fairer than that.

ARTEMUS WARD

HIS BOOK.

W. H. Brown.

WITH NOTES AND A PREFACE BY THE

EDITOR OF THE BIGLOW PAPERS.

LONDON:

JOHN CAMDEN HOTTEN, PICCADILLY.

1865.

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INTRODUCTION.

MUCH of the quaintness observable in American humour has come down from the old Puritans, whose sober treatment of comic things and comic treatment of sober matters give their talk a very different effect at the present time to what they intended. Old New England sermons abound in these inconsistencies, and instead of being dull reading are often the lightest, although the preachers were totally unaware of the comic touches they were giving to their outpourings. I have read somewhere a story of a pious but strong blacksmith—I think Mr. Dickens knows something of the authorship—who pummelled an unbeliever into a state of satisfactory conversion, timing his blows to the most awakening revival tunes that he was master of. The tale is not overdrawn, and I feel satisfied the occurrence has happened somewhere in America at one time or another.

Not many years since there was a famous preacher of the old Puritan school, in one of the New England States, who used to play such pranks in the pulpit as our Rowland Hill is said to have done, and as a cotemporary now occasionally indulges in at the Tabernacle, only the Rev. Lorenzo Dow was the more daring performer of the three. On one occasion he took a text from Paul, "*I can do all things.*" The preacher paused, took off his spectacles, laid them on the open Bible, and said, "No, Paul, you are mistaken for once; I'll bet you five dollars you can't, and stake the money." At the same time putting his hand into his pocket, he took out a five-dollar bill, laid it on the Bible, took up his spectacles again, and read, "*Through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" "Ah, Paul!" exclaimed Dow, snatching up the five-dollar bill and returning it to his pocket, "that's a very different matter; the bet's withdrawn."

The best stories I ever heard were those of a travelling American Methodist at a place called Council Hill, a few miles back from the Upper Mississippi. He used to draw the neighbourhood twice or three times a week to "class-meetings," but the great treat for the people were his comic tales and "experiences"—as he termed them—which he used to narrate at the brick-store opposite, always crowded

when Preacher Williams was in the way. He was a great man amongst the religious folk, and the most powerful revivalist in those parts, the whole village, on one occasion, being closed to business for three days, the community in their best clothes, and all given up to the work of the spirit, except two or three stubborn old bar-room keepers at the other end of the place who were loudly prayed for in the meeting-house day and night. Preacher Williams' great art in "fetching" the house was shedding tears, which usually brought up the handkerchiefs from the females and the sleeves of the men in sorrowing sympathy, with numerous *amens* from the deaf old people behind, who could only tell by the movement in handkerchiefs when it was their turn to begin; but crying had become so common to him that telling a story had much the same effect upon his eyes as a sermon, and the consequence was he always had a bleared, weak-eyed look. Otherwise he was not a bad-looking man. Gossipers did say that he would have been a bishop long ago but for this fatal gift at story-telling, which made the less talented ministers very jealous of him.

This mixing of sacred with secular matters, commenced by the Puritans, is now common in almost all American thought and expression. In a senator's