

ARTEMUS WARD.
BY JAMES PARTON.

In the beautiful town of Cleveland, Ohio, eleven years ago, I was introduced one Sunday morning, to Mr. Charles F. Browne, who had recently acquired celebrity by his Artemus Ward letters, in the Cleveland Plaindealer. He was then twenty-five years of age; of somewhat slender form, but with ruddy cheeks and a general appearance of health and vigor. He was local editor of the Plaindealer, and had the ready, cordial and off-hand manner of the members of the Western press. Like other professional humorists, he was not particularly funny in ordinary conversation; on the contrary he was less so than Western editors usually are. I was far from anticipating the career that was in store for him; still less could I have foreseen the premature death of a young man who presented an exceptional appearance of good health. If he were alive to-day he would be only thirty-nine years of age.

He was born at Waterford, in Maine, where his father was a surveyor. His native village, as he says in one of his papers, "does contain over forty houses all told; but they are milk-white, with the greenest of blinds, and for the most part are shaded with beautiful elms and willows. To the right of us is a mountain; to the left a lake. The village nestles between. Of course it does. I never read a novel in my life in which the village did not nestle. Villages invariably nestle." In this secluded nook in New England he passed the first fourteen years of his life, during which he acquired such education as a rather idle and sport-loving boy could acquire in the common and high schools.

He was sent to learn the printing business at a neighboring town, called Skowhegan, where, in the office of the Skowhegan Clarion he learned to set type and work a hand-press. To the last days of his life he held this place in abhorrence. One of his friends has recorded that he was accustomed "to set up a howl of derision" whenever its name was mentioned; and that whenever he desired to express the least degree of contempt for any person or thing, he would speak of them as worthy of Skowhegan. How many a boy has reaped a full revenge upon a teacher or an employer by turning out to be a genius, and consigning him to universal ridicule!

At sixteen he found his way to Boston, where he obtained employment as a compositor in the office of the funniest periodical then published in Boston, the Carpet Bag, to which Shillaber, Halpine and Saxe contributed. As he set up, from week to week, the humorous contributions of these writers, the conviction grew upon him that he too could write a piece that would make people laugh. I think he must have been reading Franklin's Autobiography, or the preface to "Pickwick," for in putting his talent to the test, he employed a device similar to that used by Franklin and Dickens in offering their productions to the press. Having written his piece in a disguised hand, he put it into the editor's box. Great was his joy when it was handed to him soon after, to set in type.

The first piece, I believe, was in the style of Major Jack Downing, whose letters, he once said, had more to do with making him a humorist than the productions of any other writer.

About this time he happened to read Bayard Taylor's "Views Afoot," in which that popular author gave an account of his making the tour of Europe, and paying his way by working at his trade, which was that of a printer. Captivated by this great example he started for the Great West. When his money was exhausted, he would stop for a while in some large town where there was a printing office and replenish his purse; which done, he would continue his journey.

He stopped short of China, however. At the town of Tiffin, Ohio, he obtained a place as compositor and assistant editor, at four dollars a week. From Tiffin he removed to Toledo, where he procured a similar position on the Toledo Commercial at five dollars a week. It was upon this paper that his talent as a humorist first attracted attention, and he was soon permitted to devote his whole time to filling the local column with amusing abuse of the rival paper. He acquired so much celebrity in Ohio as a facetious paragrapher, that he was offered at length the place of local editor of the Cleveland Plaindealer, at a salary, munificent at the time and place, of twelve dollars a week.

Most of the noted humorists—and the great master of humor himself, Charles Dickens—have shown a particular fondness of persons who gain their livelihood by amusing the public—showmen of all kinds and grades from the tumbler in the circus to the great tragedian of the day. In the performance of his duty as local editor, Charles Browne had abundant opportunity of gratifying his taste, and he gradually became acquainted with most of the traveling showmen of the Western country. He delighted to study their habits, and he used to tell many a good story of their ingenious devices for arousing the enthusiasm of the public. Much of this showman's lore he turned to account in the letters of Artemus Ward.

There are dull times in a place like Clevela—and times when the local editor is hard put to fill his columns. N. H. W. no cart, no accident, no fashionable wedding, no surprise party, no police report, no trotting match, no anything. One

day, in 1859, when the local editor of the Plaindealer was in desperate want of a topic, he dashed upon paper a letter from an imaginary showman, to which he affixed the name of a Revolutionary General, which always struck him as being odd—"Artemus Ward." The letter ran thus:

To the Editor of the Plaindealer:
"Sm: I'm moving along—slowly along—down towards your place. I want you to write me a letter, esin' hows the show bizness in your place. My show at present consists of three moral Bears, a Kangaroo—a amoozin little Raskel; I would make you lart to deth to see the little cuss jump up and squeal—wax—eggars of G. Washington, Gen. Taylor, John Bunyan, Dr. Kidd, Dr. Webster in the act of killin' Dr. Parkman, besides several miscelanyus moral wax stutcoots of celebrated pirats and murderers, etc., ekalled by few and excelled by none."

The showman proceeds to urge the editor to prepare the way for his coming, and promises to have all his handbills "dun at your office."

"We must fetch the public somehow," he continues. "We must work on their feelings—come the moral on 'em strong. If it's a temperance community, tell 'em I sined the pledge fifteen minutes arter Ise born. But on the contrary, if your people take their 'tods, say that Mister Ward is as genteel a fellow as we ever met—full of conviviality, and the life and sole of the soshul Bowl. Take, don't you!"

Mister Ward concludes his epistle by condensing its whole meaning in a very short postscript:

"You scratch my back, and I'll scratch your back."

This letter made a wonderful hit. It was immediately copied into many hundreds of newspapers, and was generally taken as the genuine production of a showman. Other letters in the same vein followed, which carried the name of Artemus Ward and the Cleveland Plaindealer to the end of the earth. For two or three years they figured in the funny column of most of the periodicals of America, England and Australia.

But except the reputation which the letters gave, they were of little advantage to the author. His salary may have been increased a few dollars a week, and he added a little to his income by contributions to the comic papers of New York. No man, indeed, is so cruelly plundered as the writer of short, amusing pieces, easily clipped and copied. He writes a comic piece for a trifling sum, which amuses perhaps five millions of people, and no one compensates him except the original purchaser. There are, for example, comic dialogues which have done service for fifteen years at negro minstrel entertainments, and now make thousands of people laugh every night, for which the author received three dollars.

Artemus Ward, anxious to buy back the family homestead in which to shelter the old age of his widowed mother, soon discovered that he could never do it by making jokes unless he could sell them over and over again. So he tried comic lecturing. The first night the experiment was a failure. A violent storm of snow, sleet and wind thinned the audience—in Clinton Hall, N. Y.—to such a degree, that the lecturer lost thirty dollars by the enterprise. A tour in New England, however, had better results. He lectured a hundred nights, by which he cleared nearly eight thousand dollars; and he was soon able to establish his mother in the comfortable village home in which he was born.

I thought I ought not to conclude this article without letting the reader know why this bright and genial spirit is no longer here to add to the world's harmless amusement. Well this is the reason: Wherever he lectured, whether in New England, California or London, there was sure to be a knot of young fellows to gather round him, and go home with him to his hotel, order supper, and spend half the night in telling stories and singing songs. To any man this will be fatal in time; but when the nightly carouse follows an evening's performance before an audience, and is succeeded by a railway journey the next day, the waste of vitality is finished rapidly. Five years of such a life finally poor Charles Browne. He died in London in 1867; aged thirty-three years; and now lies buried at the home of his childhood in Maine. He was not a hard drinker. He was not a man of strong appetites. It was the nights wasted in conviviality which his system needed for sleep, that sent him to his grave forty years before his time. For men of his profession and character, for all editors, literary men and artists, there is only one safety—teetotalism. He should have taken the advice of a stage driver on the plains, to whom he offered some whisky; and I commend it strongly to the countless hosts who see this paper every week: "I don't like to see anybody else drink. I'm of the opinion of those mountains—keep your top cool. They've got snow, and I've got brains; that's all the difference."

The Bank of England covers five acres of ground and employs 900 clerks. There are no windows on the street. Light is admitted through open courts; no mob could take the bank, therefore, without cannon to batter the immense walls. The clock in the center of the bank has fifty dials attached to it. Large cisterns are sunk in the court, and engines in perfect order are always in readiness in case of fire. This bank was incorporated in 1694. Capital, \$80,000,000.

A LIGHTNING TRIP.
A Car Breaks Loose on an Inclined Plane.

From the Elmira Gazette, we learn that there were lively times at the McIntyre mines a few days ago. A train of cars, loaded with coal, were just starting for the down trip on the inclined plane, when one of them broke loose, and all alone and unchecked commenced the twenty-five hundred feet run. The velocity it attained was inconceivably swift, and the runaway car must have looked like a streak of greased lightning as it flew along the down hill track.

As it reached the bottom of the plane the safety-car of the mines just reached the mouth of the pit. A terrific collision was the result. The safety-car, weighing 2500 pounds, was struck by the coal car and hurled up into the air many feet and crashed down through a house over the track.

There was not enough left of either the coal or safety car to make a decent sized toothpick. While the car was on its destructive down trip one of the wheels flew off, and crashed through a house in its line of travel, going clean through it like a cannon ball fresh from a hundred pounder. In this house were two men, who fortunately were not injured, but the scare they sustained was about as bad as death.

No one was hurt about the mines, which, under the circumstances, is remarkable.

How Drinking Causes Apoplexy.

It is the essential nature of all wines and spirits to send an increased amount of blood to the brain. The first effect of taking a glass of wine or stronger form of alcohol, is to send the blood there faster than common, hence the circulation that gives the red face. It increases the activity of the brain, and it works faster, and so does the tongue. But suppose a man keeps on drinking, the blood is sent to the brain so fast, in such large quantities, that in order to make room for the arteries have to enlarge themselves; they increase in size, and in doing so they press against the more yielding and flaccid veins which carry the blood out of the brain and thus diminish their size their pores, the result being that the blood is not only carried to the arteries of the brain faster than is natural or healthful, but it is prevented from leaving it as fast as usual; hence a double set of causes, of death are in operation. A man may drink enough brandy or other spirits in a few hours, or in a few minutes, to bring on a fatal attack of apoplexy.

Josh Billings on February.

Josh Billings in his splanac costs, his horoscope over February thusly: "The man born in this month will be a looking, but too much prone to tow in when he walks. He will have two wives, and a small hand, except when he plays whist; then he will have a big won. His first wife will be cross eyed, but his 2d won will be cross awl over. He will have fore children, and they will awpass through the measles, with great credit to themselves and no disgrace to the measles. The young female born during this month will show grate judgment in the sorting or her lovers, and will finally marry a real estate agent. She will have a fu fallings; but who cares! she wouldn't be interesting if she didn't. At twenty-ate she will be a widow, and at stated intervals will be inclined to gush a little. (For the sake of variety we say, let her gush.)"

The Spanish papers give horrible details about the outrages perpetrated by the Carlist leaders in the northern part of the peninsula. They say that these horrors surpass in atrocity anything that has ever happened during the numerous civil commotions in Spain since the beginning of the century, and they demand that the government should inexorably exact reprisals.

One of the Japanese boys at school in New Haven received, a few days ago, what he considered a grievous insult from a white comrade. Instead of resenting it with violence, and anxious not to infringe in the slightest any of the rules of the school, he sent a polite note to the master, requesting permission, according to the custom in his country, to kill the boy who had insulted him. The request had to be denied, and there the matter dropped.

FELINO is a much slower sense than sight. It is said that if a man had an arm long enough to reach the sun, and were to touch that body with the tip of his finger, he would never find out whether it was hot or cold, as he would be dead before the sensation arrived at headquarters, which would require 100 years.

An exchange informs us that an intelligent foreigner recently wrote to his home friends that "when a great man dies in the United States the first thing done is to propose a fine statue in his honor; next, to raise part of the necessary money; next, to forget to order any statue; and last, to wonder what became of the money."

A New York paper complains that free love and divorce courts have terribly undermined the institution of marriage; and that now the last step toward emancipation has been taken by a man who has invented shirt buttons that can be put on with a screw-driver. With this device the last necessity for a wife is gone.

Among the gifts which have been made to humanity, none, in the lower sphere of virtues, should call forth our thankfulness more than the gifts of cheerfulness, and wit and humor. They civilize life. They carry with them a perpetual blessing. If any man have buoyancy, if he find himself given to wit, in the name of heaven do not suppress it. Multiply the drops which spring out of the precious fountain. There is life in it.—Becher.

A WELL KNOWN Hartford merchant, who paid a dollar for a stand-up seat in the top gallery at the opera the other night, was very much edified by seeing several young men, who had owed him many months, occupying four dollar seats in the parquet, with fashionably attired young ladies at their side. He thinks a few years hence they won't be able to buy even gallery tickets.

"WHAT do you call that?" indignantly asked a customer at a cheap restaurat, pointing at an object that he had discovered in his plate of hash. "Wristband with sleeve button attached, sir," said the waiter briskly. "Well do you consider that a proper thing for a man to find in his hash?" asked the customer in wrath. "Good heavens, sir!" cried the waiter, "would you expect to find a ten dollar silk umbrella in a fifteen cent plate of hash?"

"Now, my young friends, suppose twelve men buy twenty-four bushels of wheat to be divided equally, how many bushels is that for each?" Boldest of the boys—"Please, sir, we've not gone that far." "How is that? Your teacher told me you had learned all the first four rules!" Boy—"Yes, sir; but we have always done our sums in potatoes and turnips—we have never had wheat."

THERE is some talk of a geological survey of Rhode Island, but the work may be delayed on account of its expense. The professor who is expected to make it, says that if he is expected to go over the State, it will take him at least two days, and he won't do it for less than nine dollars and a half.

Not to him who sets out in the morning with resolution and gallantry, but to him who holds out till the evening of life, does the promise apply, "He that endureth to the end shall be saved."—Favel.

A NORTH CAROLINA man recently laughed a plum stone out of his nose that had been embedded there for six years. Moral: Always be merry when afflicted with plum stones in the nose.

A GENTLEMAN going to Texas asked a friend for a letter of introduction. The friend opened a drawer, took out a large and handsome spring-bladed dagger-knife and a six chambered revolver, and gave them to him.

WOMEN are like horses—the gaver the harness they have on, the better they feel. We got this from an old bachelor who was early crossed in love.

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