

# How Mark Twain Was Found in Nevada.

(By Sam P. Davis.)

In 1881, Samuel Clemens, now known all over the world as Mark Twain, was the deputy territorial secretary of Nevada, having been appointed to that office by his brother, Orion Clemens, who was secretary of the territorial government.

Carson people of that decade speak of Clemens as a man of lazy, easy-going temperament, whom they never supposed would amount to much. He told good stories with a peculiar drawl to his speech, and occasionally got drunk.

When his term of office expired he was next heard of in Dayton. In those days the Territorial Enterprise, edited by Joseph T. Goodman, was at the zenith of its fame. It was not only the leading journal of Nevada, but editorially it was in advance of anything on the coast.

### His First Article.

One day Mr. Goodman received a communication from Clemens, the first thing (as near as I can learn) that he ever wrote for publication. It was the report of a lecture delivered in Dayton by a man who must have had a fairly good opinion of himself, for it was his everlasting use of the personal pronoun that excited the ire of Mr. Clemens, and induced him to furnish the Enterprise with a lucidly funny and satirical account of his lecture. The manner of handling the subject struck Goodman, who had the keenest possible scent for a good thing of that kind. He published the communication, and sent a letter to Clemens offering him a lucrative situation on the staff of the Enterprise.

Clemens was glad of a chance to better himself, and lost no time in getting to Virginia City.

### His Humor Pleaseth.

His new brand of humor tickled the fancy of the Comstockers, and he at once became a popular man with everybody.

It was soon discovered, however, that as a reporter he was unreliable and abnormally lazy. Sometimes Goodman, who was a hard worker himself, would fall on to Clemens and curse him for his mental and physical inactivity, and those who have heard Goodman in a state of maledictive eruption will doubtless recall that he might easily be classified as a past master of profanity.

But Clemens was not affected by those periodical snowdrifts of Goodman's temper, for he knew that in the bottom of his heart Joe loved him like a brother, and in a few minutes the two men would be burying "the cares that fret the day" in liberal schooners of beer at the corner saloon.

### Good in "Spots."

Clemens worked for some time on the Enterprise. He was what one might call "good in spots." He was wont to write when he felt like it, and, while his work was irregular and sometimes not in evidence at all, there was an occasional burst of speed that made up for all past deficiencies. When he "struck his gait," as Steve Gillis used to put it, he was regarded as simply a wonder on wheels.

He wrote remarkable things, in which his wonderful imagination and keen humor gave evidence of what he was to be in later years.

His work, however, hit the public fancy of the Comstockers, and was forgotten in a day or so. There was so much else to attract the attention of the people that they paid little attention to the literary nugget that lay at their feet. Homicides of almost daily occurrence, tragic accidents, sensational mining developments, and surging stock markets smothered the lesser affairs of the ledge.

### Changed His Life.

One day a thing happened that changed the whole life of the man who is now recognized as the dean of American literature.

Clemens was standing on the corner of "c" and Union streets—other corners have claimed the honor, but this is the generally accepted one—when a mangy dog—presumed to be a cast-off friend of Steve Gillis—came up and nipped at its itching side against Clemens' leg.

Sam did not move; he merely looked down and drawled out: "Well, if I have become a scratching post for Steve Gillis' dogs, I'd better hit the trail."

He was as good as his word, and left town that night. He next appears in San Francisco and from there went to the Sandwich Islands, where he acted as a newspaper correspondent, and wrote a series of letters which attracted general attention. Next he appears as a lecturer, and made some money, and his trend was steadily upward.

### His Literary Name.

He got his name "Mark Twain" while in St. Louis, on the Republican. Mark Twain was a call, when the man heaving the lead made the soundings in a dark night on the Mississippi river. As the steamer forged slowly along, feeling its way, the man heaving the line would call out: "By the mark twain," indicating the depth.

His first book to set the whole of America in a roar was "Innocents Abroad," and his popularity has never waned since that time.

Success acted as a stimulus to the author, and his books were produced in rapid succession. It is unnecessary to enumerate them here. They form a library by themselves. They have become a part of modern literature, and appeal to the universal public taste wherever the English language is spoken.

### Uses Best English.

Clemens is generally designated as the great American humorist, but he has many other great literary qualities. He has the faculty of using the best and most expressive English. No other writer approaches the lucidity of his style. One never reads a line of Twain's that is in the remotest degree ambiguous. He packs his meaning into the smallest possible space, and there is always some very expressive word in each sentence that, as it were, tacks itself on the reader's mind and impresses him as being the only word in the language that would fit just where it is.

His great reputation as a writer of humor has in some respects dwarfed his remarkable skill as a word painter with the public.

The reader that is the average reader is looking for the fun in his books while they drift past some of the most vivid pen pictures in the language. He throws them in occasionally as if to show what he could do in that direction, and then his work is something dazzling. His powers of description cast all other American writers in the shade, and, in fact, there are few

writers living who are more striking and effective.

### Has Good Horse-sense.

Through all his works runs that strong vein of horse sense. He was ever a hater of shams and false pretense, and he has placed more public humbugs on the rack than any one. His contempt of all forms of public hypocrisy has grown with the years. He has scorned reputation, society, literature and religion have all fared alike with him.

His mind detects the smallest trace of cant and snivel as unerringly as the chemist detects a trace of poison when performing an autopsy.

His early training in Nevada where men are measured by themselves alone, and his association with Joseph Goodman, bent his mind in that direction.

When one recalls his days spent in Nevada, where he had little honor and scant reputation, and compares it with the splendid achievements of later years, one is lost in the wonder of it all.

A lazy and shiftless man on the Comstock, he puts himself together, makes up his mind to win, and afterwards becomes a monument to literary industry.

### Then and Now.

Nearly half a century has passed and the obscure reporter of the Comstock stands at the head of America's men of letters; the star that blazes the brightest in the literary firmament. Go to any public library in the United States and ask whose works maintain their popularity the most steadily with the great mass of readers, and the answer will invariably be "Mark Twain's."

It is because his characters are real men, women and boys. They are not fancy-horned mythical creatures, but are taken from everyday life, and his portraits are true. His hand never swerves in the drawing or coloring, and they stand out from his canvases as if of flesh and blood. They speak the real language and they do the real things.

Then, at times, he creates a character, and it is more lifelike than an original could ever be.

Above all he has never been puffed with his success. Like any great man he can well afford to be modest.

### Interesting Anecdote.

The following anecdote well illustrates his modesty and his humor combined. In his leisure days he resided in a small eastern town one afternoon and went before dinner to a barber's to be shaved.

"You are a stranger in the town, sir?" the barber asked.

"Yes, I am a stranger here," was the reply.

"We're having a good lecture here to-night, sir," said the barber. "A Mark Twain lecture. Are you going to it?"

"Yes, I think I will," said Mr. Clemens.

"Have you got your ticket yet?" the barber asked.

"No, not yet," said the other.

"Then, sir, you'll have to stand."

"Dear me!" Mr. Clemens exclaimed. "It seems to me as if I always do have to stand when I hear that man Twain lecture."

### Man Who Found Him.

Meanwhile, one inquires what has become of Joseph T. Goodman, the man who first discovered and encouraged Twain. He is now living in Alabama, and for some 20 years past has devoted his leisure time to that monumental work of archaeology, "The Biology of Central America."

It seems a superhuman task for a man living in the present century to delve into the ruins of the buried temples of Yucatan and translate inscriptions which are admitted to be over 200,000 years old.

Yet Goodman did this, and his great work is accepted the world over as standard authority. Where other archaeologists merely surface scratched the ground and passed by, Goodman sunk his shaft and brought up the priceless treasures that have made his work the wonder of the scientific world.

Some day the people of Nevada will erect a monument to each of these men, and they should be dedicated and unveiled together.

Possibly when that occasion arrives some Nevada orator, yet unborn, will tell the people in glowing language and fitting mystery of the literary achievements of these two men, who grew up together as brothers in the early days of the old ledge, and whose fame outlasted the ephemeral reputations of the sordid money-getters and kings of finance who were merely the bubbles upon the seething stream of wealth, which was Nevada's first bid for national recognition in those strenuous and never-to-be-forgotten days of its history.

### New Year's on the Nile.

In all ages and all lands much importance has attached to New Year's day. In Egypt the new year fell between the 15th and the 20th of June and was called the "night of the drop." The sacred Nile was thought to flow down from heaven and its lowest level about the middle of June—a year from then fell into the stream and caused it to rise. Consequently at this season the priests and people kept a sleepless vigil at the river's shore, watching for the miraculous rise which should bring such riches to the whole land. When the "night of the drop" came the priests cleared the altars of old ashes and lighted the sacred fires for the new year. Every one of the faithful carried a coil of rope from the altar to light his own hearth, and from end to end the land was ablaze with light. The people put their garments and ornaments and white cloths in white, anointing their heads with sacred oil, crowning themselves with flowers and bearing palms in their hands, while chants and songs and feasting and processions filled the homes.

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