

TWAIN VERSUS O'RELL.

MR. STRANGE DEFENDS THE AMERICAN HUMORIST.

The French Wit's Caustic Remarks Concerning Other Nations Severely Criticised—Max O'Rell's Remarks Concerning the Hotel Cake of Soap.

It would almost seem as if the French nation had taken upon themselves the pleasant task of reforming England, so determinedly have French litterateurs devoted themselves lately to showing the English people just how ridiculous they appear to enlightened—French—eyes! In fact England herself never took a greater interest in the welfare of the benighted savages who disport themselves with undraped eirontery, and in heathen darkness "where Africa's sunny fountains, roll down their golden sand," than the modern French writer takes in setting the English nation right.

The good work was begun by a gentleman who wrote many clever books under a pen-name which showed a curious compound of Germany and Ireland—Max O'Rell, and in three of these brilliant volumes he devoted his best energies to showing England what a fool she was, and how ignorant and vulgar, not to say brutal. He did not handle that "right little island" who has always had such a good opinion of herself, that she was sure whatever she did must be as right as herself—with gloves, and his language was sometimes plain to the verge of indecency, especially in "John Bull's Daughters." He criticised the very people who were entertaining him, and found fault with most of their dearest institutions contrasting them greatly to their disadvantage with his own countrymen and, proudly holding them up to the contempt and ridicule of other nations.

But the clever criticism took wonderfully well with the public, and Max O'Rell won fame, and shekels to such a degree that his reputation is now world wide, and he is known everywhere as "The Gilted Frenchman." M. Blouet was so successful with England that he turned his attention to other countries after a while, and gave the English a rest, in the hope, no doubt, that they would lay his advice and his criticisms to heart, and "not do so any more" until he had time to look after them again.

The people of the United States were the next objects of his attention, and he gave the world one more bitterly clever book, "Jonathan and His Continent," and made the Americans fond of him. He stated in a little preface addressed to Jonathan himself, that the book was not to be taken seriously; but some parts were difficult to look at in the light of a joke. Lately he has been turning the strong light of his observation upon Canada, and the Canadians, and only last month he lectured in Montreal, so it is now our turn to tremble; perhaps our youth may serve us in good stead, however, and be accepted as an extenuating circumstance, as well as a reason for our ignorance.

M. Blouet is a clever man, as I said before, and one must render homage to genius wherever it is found, and even when it shows a disposition to trample on one's most cherished ideals with hob-nailed boots. But still there is a limit to the allowance which ordinary mortals are prepared to make, for the little eccentricities of genius, and when the gilted Frenchman undertakes to dance upon that darling of all lovers of pure sparkling humor, and good natured fun, Mark Twain—we feel that the limit has been reached and the genius needs to be sat upon. Of course it is much to be regretted that the fun loving Mark should have incurred the disapproval of Max O'Rell, but it is due to the great American humorist to say that he died so in defending his countrymen against criticisms which he considered unfair, and this, if I remember aright was the way the trouble began.

A compatriot of Max O'Rell's, M. Paul Bourget, wrote a book called "Outre-Mer, in which he criticised American's, and American ways in such a manner that Mark Twain felt called upon to resent what he considered the unfair light in which his countrymen had been placed; and the veteran humorist wrote a scathing criticism of M. Bourget's book. This in turn called forth a spirited defence of M. Bourget, by Max O'Rell, with many slighting references to Mark Twain himself, thrown in. M. Blouet goes out of his way to refer to his own countryman as "one of the brightest ornaments of modern literature" and to Mark Twain as "professional humorist," in the same sentence, with crushing effect, and probably feels that he has disposed of the once irrepressible Mark for good and all. But somehow I think Mark Twain can stand it, and that long after "John Bull and his Island" is out of print and forgotten the children of the next generation will be laughing themselves to pieces over the picture of Tom Sawyer getting his aunt's front fence whitewashed by contract, and Huckleberry Finn and his chum listening to their own funeral service.

M. Blouet wrote a number of brilliant books, but he dipped his pen in caustic as well as ink, he saw things to be satirized not laughed at, and I am afraid the adulation he is receiving now is in danger of spoiling him. It would be a pity if his national failing of intense egotism, should develop in him thus early and dim the

brilliance of his career; therefore it might be just as well to remind him that Mark Twain was a great man before Max O'Rell was ever heard of, and that with all his cleverness and all his success, he can never hope to touch the "professional humorist" far less overtake him. Mark Twain is getting to be an old man now, and probably he has done his best work, but if Max O'Rell should ever write a book like either "The Innocents Abroad" or "A Tramp Abroad", he can afford to rest upon his laurels, and not work very hard in his old age. The witty Frenchman has made many people smile, a number more wince under the lash of his sharp criticism and he has taught more than one nation to dread his caustic pen, but so far I do not think he has ever learned the secret which nature herself seems to have taught Mark Twain, the secret of making people laugh till the tears roll down their cheeks, without saying one sharp or bitter word! There is no such medicine in the world as healthy laughter, and I have seen a weary invalid, whose life contained little enough of brightness or cheer, forget his own troubles for hours at a time and laugh as if he had not a care in the world, because some tactful friend came in and read how Mark "took it out" of his friend Harris in repeating the conversation he had with their fair traveling companion; how they both viewed an Alpine sunrise arrayed only in red blankets, at six o'clock in the evening, or how the "doctor" and his travelling companions worried their long-suffering guide, "Ferguson," and requested that "nice fresh corpses" should be substituted for the shop-worn Egyptian mummies he was so very enthusiastic over.

M. Blouet says that "Mark Twain as a professional humorist does not appreciate other people's jokes. Professional humorists never do." Pray what is M. Blouet himself? Surely he would not wish to be ranked in literature as a mere amateur, a dilettante. He has been before the public quite long enough to have now his spurs as a full fledged professional man of letters; and that being the case we have no further to seek for the cause of his failure to appreciate Mark Twain. Being a professional humorist himself he cannot see the general Mark's jokes! I don't think any of us, who have the least spark of love of country in our hearts like to hear our native land ridiculed, and M. Blouet writes very eloquent over Mark Twain's surprise at not finding any soap on the washstand in a first class French hotel, and his remark to the waiter that soap was indispensable to an American, and only a Frenchman could do without it. He tells Mark, and the whole American nation whom he represents, that Frenchmen carry their own soap about with them when they are travelling, and would no more think of using the soap on a hotel washstand, than an old stray tooth-brush they might find on the same piece of furniture! What shocking soap they must supply in the best French hotels, when they supply any, if a Frenchman speaks of it in such strong terms! It may surprise the gilted author of "Jonathan and his Continent" to know that Americans are also in the habit of carrying cakes of soap about with them when they travel, but that at the same time when they stay at a first class hotel they expect to be supplied with the best of everything, including a fresh cake of the very best soap on their washstand; and they are never disappointed.

In short Max O'Rell cannot stand one word of criticism for his own country, but he expects other countries to stand unlimited criticism from French writers in return. His Frenchman's joke about the American's lack of a grandfather is a "good humored bit of chaffing," but Mark Twain's retort about the Frenchman's father is "a gross insult" and Mr. Blouet proceeds to give proof of his utter intolerance of all criticism by a few remarks on the aristocracy of America and one anecdote in particular which I confess I find it hard to believe is founded on fact, unless Max O'Rell's experience of the upper classes of American society was singularly unfortunate.

I believe it is a fact very generally conceded by those who are well qualified to judge, that an American gentleman, is a very perfect gentleman indeed, and the same may be said in all truth of an American lady; she is a lady in every sense of the word, so Max O'Rell's millionaires must have been one of the parvenu class, who are not even related to the true aristocracy, and it is scarcely fair for him to judge the many by the one! Fortunately Mark Twain is not condemned to stand or fall according to M. Blouet's judgment, and it is also a matter of congratulation that we cannot see ourselves always, just as others see us: else all the people about whose national manners customs and feelings Max O'Rell has written, would be clamoring to renounce their own countries at once, and become naturalized citizens of the one perfect country in the world—La Belle France!

PARROTS AS RAILWAY PORTERS. Parrots are being put to a practical use in Germany. They have been introduced into the railway stations, and trained to call out the name while the train stands there, thus saving people the trouble of making inquiries.

THE CITY'S CHARITIES.

Facts and Figures in Which all St. John Should be Interested.

A comparison of church and charitable work in and about the city shows that the latter form of benevolent effort receives very nearly as much attention as the former. The articles and statistics respecting the churches which appeared in PROGRESS showed that the churches in the city proper possessed nearly \$1,400,000 worth of property. Of this the protestant bodies owned a million dollars worth. About \$150,000 was raised yearly for the various forms of church work, of which the protestant churches raised about \$110,000. The number of communicants enrolled in the protestant churches is about 8000.

The figures relating to the charitable institutions show nearly as large results. Against the fifty churches in the city there are seventeen charitable institutions and societies. Some of the most important ones are a short distance outside the city limit and some of them are supported by the province or municipality but that does not prevent them being reckoned in the list.

People will probably be surprised to learn how many people about the city are being supported by charity, either public or private. In the various institutions over 5000 people are cared for annually during the whole or portion of the year. A large number of them of course come from all parts of the county and province. The relief societies also give assistance to about 225 families. These are the well organized societies. There is also individual and church effort which accomplishes considerable. So it may be said that the poor are well looked after in this city and province.

The cost of maintenance of these charities is about the same as the cost of maintaining church work, about \$110,000 in both cases. The amount of money invested in the charities about the city is \$625,000.

The following table will show in brief what the various charities are doing:

Table with columns: Name of Charity, Number assisted during year, Cost of maintenance per year, Value of property possessed. Includes Public Charities, Private Homes, and Relief Societies.

A MILLER'S STORY.

HE WAS GIVEN JUST ONE MONTH TO LIVE.

First Attacked With Inflammation of Rheumatism, and Then Stricken With Paralysis—Hope Abandoned and He Longed For Death to Release Him From Suffering—At Last He Found a Cure and Relates His Wonderful Recovery.

The benefits arising from the use of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills are well known to the Gazette. It is a frequent occurrence that people come into the office and state that they have been restored to health by their use. It occasionally happens that extraordinary instances of their curative powers come to our notice, and one of these was related to us recently, so astonishing in its nature that we felt the closest investigation was required in order to thoroughly test the accuracy of the statements made to us. We devoted the necessary time for that purpose and can vouch for the reliability of the following facts, wonderfully passing belief as they may appear:

There are few men more widely known in this section than Mr. A. P. Hopkins, of Johnville, Que. Previous to his removal to Windsor Mills and was for three years a member of the municipal council of that place. When a young man Mr. Hopkins was noted for his strength and his activity as a wrestler. His strength stands him in good stead for he works hard at his business, carrying heavy sacks of flour in his mill for many hours during the day and frequently far into the night. Active as he is, and strong as he is, there was a time not long distant when he was as helpless as an infant and suffered intolerable agony. About three years ago, while residing at Windsor Mills, he was attacked by inflammatory rheumatism. It grew worse and worse until, in spite of medical advice and prescriptions, after a year's illness he had a stroke of paralysis. His right arm and leg became quite useless. Sores broke out on both legs. He suffered excruciating agony, and had rest neither day nor night. He sought the best medical advice that could be obtained, but no hopes were held out to him by the physicians. "He will certainly die within a month," one well known practitioner told his friends. "He will be a cripple for life," said two other doctors. It is no wonder that, as he says, life became a burden to him and he longed for death to relieve him from his sufferings. This was in August, 1892. About October of that year he heard of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills and as a forlorn hope determined to try them. He did so, and before long was able to take out door exercise. He persevered with the treatment, closely following the directions, and is to day nearly as strong as when a young man, and is able to follow successfully and without difficulty the laborious calling by which he gets a living.

Such was the wonderful story told the

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From Trivial Causes.

You would be surprised how often the most trifling accident prevents a man from winning big prizes at the shooting-ranges," said a marksman who has carried off certain great prizes.

I remember that in shooting for the Queen's Prize at Wimbledon a few years back, a celebrated marksman, at a most critical time for him, was wholly disconcerted and lost his aim through a wasp flying from his right hand full in the face just as he was pulling the trigger. A celebrated Scottish marksman was frustrated by a wretched crow, which rose from the ground straight in the line of fire just as he was firing the shot which would either make or mar him. He hit the crow, but he missed the prize.

At Bisley once a competitor's dog was tied up near its master's tent. It somehow got loose, and it rushed to where it saw groups of men, and jumped upon his recumbent master just as he was firing.

I have known even a sneeze from behind to completely "queer" a man, for contestants are far more highly strung than you would imagine. A sudden thunder-clap lost the winner's for a Middlesex man not ten years ago, and a flying mineral water cork was recently said to have done the same for one of the greatest shots this country ever produced.

Hospitable.

Sandy X, was a blunt old farmer who resided in Lanarkshire. A strange, eccentric sort of being, he was like famous for his penuriousness and his business. One afternoon on the minister of his parish had called at the farm on his customary pastoral visitation, when it came on a rain heavily, and in a short time the burgh which ran between the farm and the house became flooded. The only method of crossing the stream at this place was by stepping-stones, the nearest bridge causing a circuit of three miles.

The minister was nonplussed by the unexpected catastrophe, and after much cogitation, remarked—

"I think, Mr. X, I shall be obliged to spend the night here."

"Weel," returned the old fellow irascibly, "there's a burn between your house an' mine, an' it I was at your house as you're at mine, I'd gang home the night; The minister went home.

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