

THE BOSTON  
**Medical and Surgical Journal.**

THURSDAY, APRIL 28, 1910

*A Journal of Medicine, Surgery and Allied Sciences, published at Boston, weekly, by the undersigned.*

SUBSCRIPTION TERMS: \$5.00 per year, in advance, postage paid, for the United States, Canada and Mexico; \$6.50 per year for all foreign countries belonging to the Postal Union.

All communications for the Editor, and all books for review, should be addressed to the Editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, 809 Paddock Building, 101 Tremont Street, Boston.

All letters containing business communications, or referring to the publication, subscription or advertising department of this Journal, should be addressed to the undersigned.

Remittance should be made by money order, draft or registered letter payable to

W. M. LEONARD,  
 101 TREMONT STREET, BOSTON, MASS.

MARK TWAIN AND CHRISTIAN SCIENCE.

THE death on April 21 of Samuel Langhorne Clemens took from the world one of its real men of letters. For though Mr. Clemens was himself typically American, it is characteristic of his writings, as it is of Mr. Kipling's, that they are read and enjoyed wherever the English tongue is known. The reason for this is the same in both cases: that each has eyes to see through the surface, and that each speaks the truth as he sees it, in his own peculiar fashion, without fear of the consequences. Great as is the service Mark Twain has done to American literature by perfecting the style of humorous expression originated by Artemus Ward, his work would perish had he not been, like Dean Swift and Cyrano de Bergerac and other of the world's critics, a hater of sham and every form of dishonesty. That he chose to laugh mankind out of its fallacies rather than berate them makes him none the less a teacher, for one of the best ways of ridding a friend of a fault is by making it appear ridiculous.

All classes of people like so well to read Mark Twain that perhaps it cannot be said doctors are particularly fond of him. If they are, it may be partly because they need more than others the relief which his always consoling humor affords from the overwhelming seriousness of their work, more likely because they have better opportunity than others of seeing as he does through the fustian and foibles of life.

Much as a doctor may relish "Huckleberry Finn" and "Tom Sawyer" and the "Yankee at King Arthur's Court," there is one portion of Mark Twain's writings that is perhaps even more delightful, namely, the series of essays which he published in 1902 and 1903 in the *North American Review* on "Christian Science." It is here that

his character as an honest hater of humbug is revealed to the fullest. The exquisite humor, the delicate satire, the genial mirth, with which he writes are all but instruments of his zeal for truth and desire to unmask falsehood. Like all humorists, he sees things in the obverse, but by depicting that he shows the undistorted image of verity. Moreover, his honesty compels him to reflect the truth that is in Christian Science as well as its shams. "Every time the Science captures one of these" converts "and secures to him lifelong immunity from imagination-manufactured disease, it may plausibly claim that in his person it has saved three hundred lives. Meantime, it will kill a man every now and then. But no matter; it will be ahead on the credit side."

It is impossible to quote adequately from these essays. Perusal of them, however, inevitably suggests comparison with the delectable passage in "The Professor at the Breakfast Table," by our Yankee humorist and fellow-physician, on "Phrenology and the Pseudo-Sciences": "A pseudo-science consists of a nomenclature, with a self-adjusting arrangement, by which all positive evidence, or such as favors its doctrines, is admitted, and all negative evidence, or such as tells against it, is excluded. It is invariably connected with some lucrative practical application. . . . The believing multitude consists of women of both sexes, feeble-minded inquirers, poetical optimists, people who always get cheated in buying horses, philanthropists who insist on hurrying up the millenium, and others of this class, with here and there a clergymen, less frequently a lawyer, very rarely a physician, and almost never a horse-jockey or a member of the detective police. I do not say that phrenology is one of the pseudo-sciences. A pseudo-science does not necessarily consist wholly of lies. It may contain many truths, and even valuable ones. The rottenest bank starts with a little specie. It puts out a thousand promises to pay on the strength of a single dollar, but the dollar is very commonly a good one. . . . I did not say that it was so with phrenology."

In this passage one might substitute Christian Science for phrenology without any alteration in its wit or applicability. Holmes, like Clemens, was a sworn foe of sham, and had he lived to the present day it is hard to see how Christian Science would have withstood the onslaughts of two such adversaries. When the bubble of its paranoia finally bursts, we can laugh even more heartily at Mark Twain's ludicrous picture of its world-empire.

Whether for his wit or his pathos or his pictures of American life or his diatribes against untruth, Mark Twain will always be read to delectation and profit. Above all, his writing deserves immortality because it is the record of a clean, honest life, whose picturesque and tragic incidents only gave him deeper insight into those subtle relations that constitute its comedy, and because he wrote not solely for fun's sake, but with a serious purpose to pillory falsehood and make the truth prevail.