



CHAPTER IV.

Artemus Ward—Exhibitor of Moral Wax-Works.

One night in the old Louisville Journal days—that's right, too—one night in those days—it may sound contradictory—perhaps I should have said "paradoxical," but paradoxical has already been used several times in these chronicles and it is too good a work to be overworked—Artemus Ward came into the editorial rooms. He had been there before, but his business was not so important as on the occasion under consideration. Previously he had been there simply to see about something connected with his lecture that was to be given at the Masonic Temple Hall. Now he had come to ask us all to go around the corner, to the United States Hotel, and "take something." One of us said we would "take something" with us—our hats, for instance. And Artemus smiled. He was good-natured and would smile at almost anything if he thought it was expected of him. His lecture had been a success—artistic and financial. The *Journal* had been a helpful factor in this and Artemus was grateful. There was a great difference in the personnel and ways of newspaper folks in those days from what they are in these days. Besides, the locale had much to do with the conditions.

After reaching the "United States," now only a place of pleasant memory, the party of six or eight ranged in front of the refreshment bureau, told stories, emitted jokes and genialized generally. Artemus had invited the persons of the party to "nominate," respectively, their choice of "pet pizen" and out of the hilarious hubbub came requests for "brandy smash, please," "gimme a gin sling," "mix me an apple toddy," "little Bonnekamp, in mine," "peach and honey, if you don't mind," etc., etc., and this was in Kentucky.

Artemus being at the foot of the class, and being, also, the gentleman who was doing the honors, the man in white on the other side of the transaction, said: "And what will you have Mr. Ward?"

Artemus seemed perturbed, bewildered and perplexed. He scratched his head and ruminated, turned inquiring glances this way and that, at persons and things. Then he said, in that quaint drawl of his:

"Before I came to Kentucky I had heard a great deal about a famous beverage that was said to prevail here, and I had laid off to try it if I ever happened to be in the state, but since I have been here I have not heard it mentioned." Then suddenly he bethought himself of his memorandum book. This he fished out of a side pocket and after running his finger searchingly up and down several pages, at last he exultingly exclaimed:

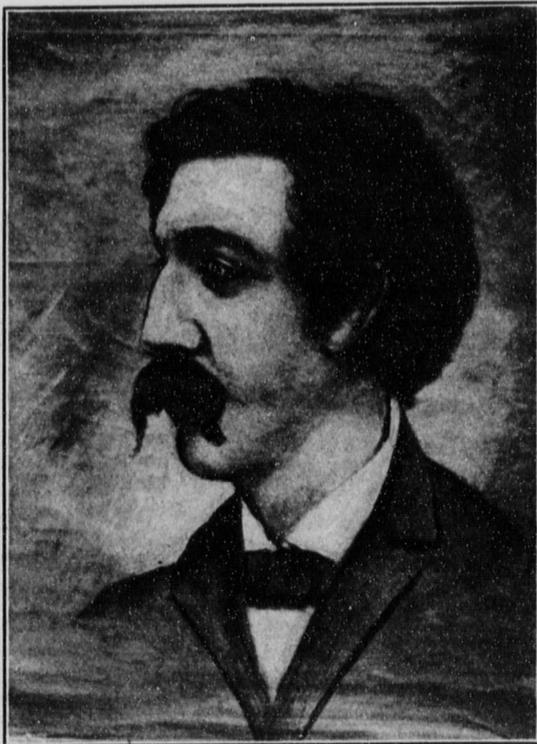
"Ah, here it is! Just a little whiskey, if you please. A little whiskey if you happen to have it."

The generation of English speaking people that is now lingering in the sixth and seventh decades of its time in these vales of sunshine and shadow remember "Artemus Ward" as the greatest of American humorous writers. This with regard to

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persons of that generation who had, or have, a sense of humor and care to remember its fabricators.

Artemus Ward's real name was Charles Farrar Browne. He was born at Waterford, Oxford County, Maine, April 26, 1834, and died of consumption at Southampton, England, March 6, 1867. His father, Levi Browne, was a Justice of the Peace and a land surveyor. His mother was Caroline E. Brown and she was a descendant of the Puritan settlers of New England.



Artemus Ward.

Speaking one time of his descent, Browne said: "I sometimes think that possibly we came from Jerusalem, for my father's name was Levi and we had a Moses and a Nathan in the family. But my poor brother's name was Cyrus, and thus we may be Persians. But let that pass."

Charles learned something of the "three Rs" in the Waterford school but he was early apprenticed to the "black art of printing" in the office of the Skowhegan *Clarion*, but did not remain there

long enough to fulminate upon that thunderous trumpet. When he was fifteen he fell into the *Carpet Bag*, of Boston, edited by P. B. Shillaber, who is known to the history of humor as "Mrs. Partington," and there are reasons for believing that Charles furnished much of the inspiration that produced Mrs. Partington's hopeful son "Isaac." Charles G. Halpine—"Miles O'Reilly," of happy memory—and John G. Saxe, the poet and another Tom Hood, were frequent contributors to the *Carpet Bag*, and Browne, whom Saxe was fond of calling a "typographical error," "stuck the type" that first began to make them great. Browne's predisposition to humor, and this sort of contagion, soon caused him to break out and he wrote in a disguised hand a funny thing concerning a Fourth of July celebration in Skowhegan. This he slyly slipped into the "copy box" and chuckled over it next day while putting it into type. Shillaber discovered the authorship and praised it. That was the beginning of this delightful writer's work in the line that gave him world-wide fame. Speaking of the incident in after years, Browne said:

"I went to the theatre that night; had a fine time and felt that I was the greatest man in Boston."

Browne was regularly engaged for a time as both writer and printer on the *Carpet Bag* and he was particularly fond of the theatre. He courted the people of the stage and learned enough of the "show business" to make it valuable to him in his work.

Browne was nothing if not peripatetic, and with his living at his finger ends, as a journeyman printer, he tramped New England and New York but suddenly brought up one day in Tiffin, Ohio, where he labored a season as reporter and compositor on the county paper at the more or less princely salary of four dollars per week. Then he drifted to Toledo and made a local reputation on the *Commercial*. The reporters on the *Blade* undertook to make fun of him, but he made fun of them, and fun for everybody else in the city. As a news reporter he was a distinct failure but his department was always brimming full and running over with facetious stuff that people liked, and in 1859, when Browne was twenty-four, J. W. Gray of the Cleveland *Plaindealer* engaged him as a local reporter at the unheard of salary of twelve dollars per week and it was here his fame began to reach out until it had no bounds within the sphere of humor. It became international and his work is classic.

When Browne went to work in Cleveland he was the most uncouth looking youth in Ohio—and that is saying a great deal for those days, under this head. His clothes looked as if they had been made for a younger brother who was also a horse jockey. Indeed he seemed to be more outside of his clothes than in them for they were evidently too short at both ends. But his humorous writing improved all the time in funniness. He took the