

cially when one must be stooping in a twilight jungle to keep the track of such a creature. In the highroad off the Ocean I had seen killed one of these grim monsters that was nearly eight feet in length. To meet one in the Ocean's jungles might be an encounter too exciting to be comfortable. Out of the dense copse I flushed a covey of quail; they

whirled away wildly. Back on the ridge once more, I felt that I could probably make no farther progress into the Ocean itself. The sun was getting close to the black barrier of pines, far to the westward. With a species of reluctant relief I turned down the ridge; before dusk set in I was in the plantation highroad once more.

Had I really explored the Ocean? Far from it. I had merely blundered along the margins of an enchanted land. Despite my ride, I feel that the Ocean is still unviolated; and so it is likely to remain—a wide woodland sea of silent, shimmering country, dewy, veiled, sequestered, eternal and virgin in some mystic, spiritual springtime.

The Book Table

Huckleberry and Sherlock

Reviews by EDMUND LESTER PEARSON

THE autobiographies of two world-famous authors have appeared within a week or two. The son of Irish parents, who was born in Scotland, and has been all his life a loyal son of the British Empire, is officially Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, but is affectionately known everywhere as Conan Doyle. He has written thirty or forty books of varying merit, but with this mark of distinction—that there is not a dull one in the lot. If he was made a knight for his pamphlet "The Cause and Conduct of the War in South Africa," he should, as Mr. Arthur Maurice says, have been made a Duke for writing "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes." He is in the prime of life, and will live, we all hope, to write another book as good as "Sir Nigel." If Sherlock Holmes, as one humble reader told his creator, has not been quite the same man since he fell over that cliff (and, remembering some of the stories, I am not prepared to agree), there is no reason why Sir Arthur Doyle should not write another of his cracking good historical novels. And his autobiography¹ is readable from the first word on the first page to the last word of all.

Although he has invented one character whose very name has passed into the language, nay, into almost all the languages of the world, as hardly any character of Dickens or Shakespeare has done, and although he has written two or three historical novels of the first rank, it is nevertheless improbable that he has written one book which will endure as long as either "Tom Sawyer" or "Huckleberry Finn." It is not a mere narrow feeling of patriotism which makes Americans estimate those books as works of art which will still be enjoyed when Sherlock Holmes is forgotten. Mark Twain, whose autobiography² appears

this week, was for many years a personality of world-wide interest. It slowly dawned upon many of his countrymen that he was not a mere "funny man," but a philosopher; and that his romance about that vagrant of the Mississippi with the absurd name was not a dubious yarn about a ragamuffin, but one of the chief glories of American literature. It is true that the supercilious critic has sometimes tried to win distinction by affecting to despise Mark Twain, and that a new type of critic has pitched upon the pessimism of his old age and tried to prove that this was the dominant characteristic of his life. And one of the unfortunate things about the "Autobiography" is that it will strengthen this error.

The creator of Huckleberry Finn and the creator of Sherlock Holmes have had in their careers many points of similarity. To both, their literary abilities came as somewhat of a surprise; the discovery was made in mature years that each was a born teller of tales. Both had a fair amount of adventure in early life, Twain as pilot, and afterwards as miner in the far West; and Doyle as ship's surgeon on an Arctic whaler and on the African coast. Both were great travelers in later years. Neither led the life of the typical "literary man," detached from the world, living in an ivory tower, and talking perpetually about art. Each was, in some sense, a citizen of the world, eagerly fighting at one time or another for various causes which seemed right to him; causes political, humanitarian, or religious. The books of both have had, and still have, enormous popularity and great sales, and this fact has caused their reputations to suffer in the eyes of critics who accept the fallacy that what almost every one enjoys is invariably bad, and that excellence in art vanishes as soon as it finds favor outside a small circle consisting of the critic and his friends.

Mark Twain's genius is a mystery, as

genius is apt to be. By the way, why shouldn't the lack of hereditary influences and educational advantages to explain his work pave the way for the theory, two or three hundred years from now, that his books were really written, say, by William James or by President Eliot? No Baconian (and Mark Twain, among other vagaries of his later life, inclined to this one) ought to find anything too difficult to swallow in this belief. For, of course, it would be beneath the dignity of scholars like James and Eliot to acknowledge Twain's works, just as it was impossible for the learned Francis Bacon to admit the authorship of a vulgar play like "Hamlet."

Conan Doyle was the descendant, however, of a family of artists. He was a pugnacious schoolboy; Mayne Reid was his favorite author and "The Scalp Hunters" his favorite book. Among the particularly interesting things which is revealed in "Memories and Adventures" is that Professor Rutherford, of Edinburgh, was the original for the enormously amusing Professor Challenger of "The Lost World," one of the most spirited adventure stories ever written. The chapter of whaling adventure is excellent, and practically all new. The autobiographic nature of "The Stark Munro Letters" and the fact that "Cullingworth" is a portrait are interesting revelations. The book is anything but the tepid memoirs of a literary man, but is a lively narrative of travel, of sport, of adventure in two wars, and of meetings with famous men and women in a dozen different countries.

I wish I could say as much for "Mark Twain's Autobiography." Instead, it is a great and grievous disappointment, and his biographer, Mr. Paine, his daughter, and his publishers would have done well if they could have found it possible to prevent its publication. It comes out fourteen years after his death, and it opens with the solemn announcement, from Mark Twain himself, that "I am writing from the grave." Much more is said about the possibility of being frank under these circumstances. But the

¹ *Memories and Adventures*. By Arthur Conan Doyle. Little, Brown & Co., Boston. \$4.50.

² *Mark Twain's Autobiography*. With an Introduction by Albert Bigelow Paine. 2 vols. Harper & Brothers, New York. \$10.



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book consists of a great deal that was printed years ago in the "North American Review," together with other pages which are superfluous after Mr. Paine's magnificent biography, Mark Twain's own letters and books, and the biographical material from Mr. Howells and many others. I found myself turning page after page of the two volumes, reading stories that are so old, so old (like the two meetings with General Grant), and wondering when something new, something startling and frank, was coming. Rarely did I find anything new; never anything which needed publication so badly as to justify these two large volumes, with their preponderance of old yarns.

After about 1895, the date of the "Joan of Arc," or possibly 1898 ("The Man Who Corrupted Hadleyburg"), Mark Twain's literary career was practically ended. There were flashes of the old style, as in "Eve's Diary," but there was little more to be said. The author himself could not be expected to see this, but his literary executors have done him poor service in bringing out these two volumes, wherein what is good is warmed over and what is new is trivial. A large part of one volume consists of comments, dictated in 1906, about news of the day. Pages and pages are devoted to reprinting newspaper accounts of the "Mrs. Minor Morris Incident"—a regrettable affair when a mentally afflicted lady had to be forcibly removed from the White House. Persons like Senator Tillman, of South Carolina, together with some of the newspapers, endeavored to magnify this into cause for an attack upon the President's secretary, and indirectly upon the President. It has not the remotest connection with Mark Twain, nor any interest to-day. And Mark Twain directed that all this rubbish should be reprinted in his Autobiography, and nobody has had the wisdom to stop it!

There are a very few pages in these two volumes which are worth reading. There are a few which appear to be new, although they are not important. But here is one reader of Mark Twain, one who "honors his memory, on this side idolatry as much as any," who regrets that the book has been published.

The New Books

FICTION

DEVONSHERS (THE). By Honoré Willson Morrow. The Frederick A. Stokes Company, New York. \$2.

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