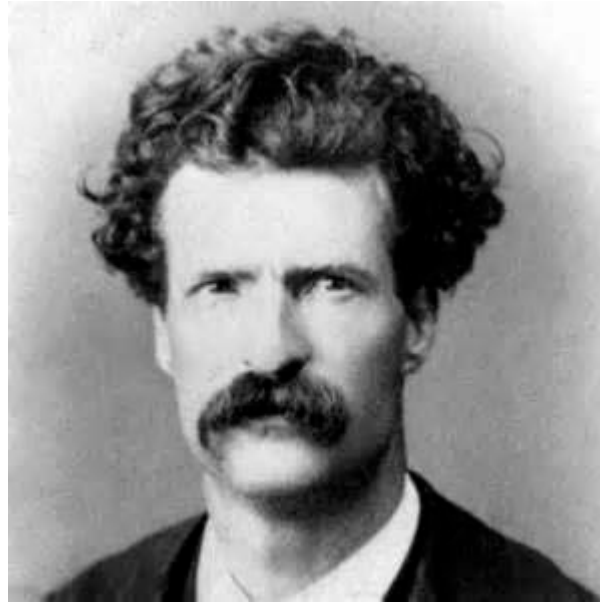


PARODY



Mark Twain

(1835-1910)

Ode to Stephen Dowling Bots, Dec'd (1884)

from *Huckleberry Finn*

And did young Stephen sicken,
And did young Stephen die?
And did the sad hearts thicken,
And did the mourners cry?

No; such was not the fate of
Young Stephen Dowling Bots;
Though sad hearts round him thickened,
'Twas not from sickness' shots.

No whooping-cough did rack his frame,
Nor measles drear, with spots;
Not these impaired the sacred name
Of Stephen Dowling Bots.

Despised love struck not with woe
That head of curly knots,
Nor stomach trouble laid him low,
Young Stephen Dowling Bots.

O no. Then list with tearful eye,
Whilst I his fate do tell.
His soul did from this cold world fly,
By falling down a well.

They got him out and emptied him;
Alas it was too late;
His spirit was gone for to sport aloft
In the realms of the good and great.

COMMENTARY

Dec'd. was a common abbreviation for *deceased*. Emmeline's poetry was inspired by the obituary verse of the period, especially the work of Julia A. Moore, known as the "Sweet Singer of Michigan." Mrs. Moore's first book, *The Sentimental Song Book*, appeared in 1876 and won widespread acclaim. "Shakepeare, could he read it," said one reviewer, "would be glad that he was dead." Walter Blair, a close student of Clemens' sources, has concluded that the Bots elegy was chiefly influenced by two of Mrs. Moore's poems. A parallel appears between these lines from "Little Charles Hades" and the opening of Emmeline's "Ode":

Little Charles Hades has gone
To dwell with God above,
Where live the angel throng
In perfect peace and love.

In Mrs. Moore's "Little Libbie," the heroine meets a fate as desperate as young Bots's:

While eating dinner, this dear little child
Was choked on a piece of beef,
Doctors came, tried their skill awhile
But none could give relief.

Leo Marx, ed.
Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
(Bobbs-Merrill 1967) 122-23