

relation to his material, one of greater artistic selection and more subtle analysis.

These writers also venture to treat the subject of sexual love in a franker, more honest way, though here the purely juvenile sentimental conception of love which prevails in American literature, and the organized *Sittlichkeitschnüffelei* stand as dragons in the path. American love stories are still written only for the American *Backfisch*. Such writers as Gene Stratton Porter, Harold Bell Wright sell by the hundreds of thousands.

The names and works of the more famous and accepted American prose writers are known to most educated Germans the dreamy, tenderly melancholy tales of Hawthorne, the masterly short stories of Bret Harte with the glamour of the romanticized mining camp, the works of the great American humorist Mark Twain, with the typical element of exaggeration and comic self-deprecation converted into an irresistible formula. In Mark Twain, one of the most original geniuses America ever produced — and thwarted — we have an almost tragic instance of the disintegration of genius under the influence of a false ideal of success, of popularity and of the pioneer-puritan-ideas of respectability. In his fascinating but disheartening book, "The Ordeal of Mark Twain", Mr. Van Wyck Brooks proves how Mark Twain, a poet at heart and one with splendid capacity for great satire, was condemned through the fear of public opinion and the influence of his Philistine wife, to deny his true nature and to play the clown for the amusement of the million, for money, and for the fetish respectability. Twain thus became a frustrated artist and his bitterness in old age was merely due to his recognition of his lost years, to his grief over the fact that he had not been true to himself and his real genius.

Edith Wharton and Gertrude Atherton, Ellen Glasgow, Robert Herrick, Booth Tarkington, Mary Johnson are a few of the more prominent novelists of today. From California came Frank Norris with his unfinished trilogy of the epic, the romance and the tragedy of wheat — "The Octopus" and "The Pit", and Jack London, a strong, primitive talent and fire with the socialistic gospel and the worship of the great solitudes, the comradeship of the animal. In California, too, lived and sang Joaquin Miller, the poet of the Sierras. Ambrose Bierce, a writer, critic and satirist of remarkable originality and power, must also be counted among the Californians. For those who have strong nerves and who wish to enjoy a new sensation in literature and at the same time acquaint themselves with one of the greatest — and also most neglected artists in American literature — I would recommend the reading of that volume of Ambrose Bierce's short stories known by the title of "In the Midst of Life".