

a broadly comic intent on the part of its author. The suggestion in its name of humorous disaster, is borne out by the picture of a red-nosed, bald-headed, hard-luck philosopher which adorns the cover. The book consists of sundry experiences of Mr. Scraggs related by him to one Red Saunders, a previous and far more fortunate creation of Mr. Phillips, who evidently relies upon his hero's grotesque name to indicate that his adventures will be funny.

Not content with calling him "Ezekiel George Washington Scraggs" and occasionally alluding to him as "Scraggsy," the author further intensifies the humour of the situation by making him a Mormon, with several wives left behind him in Utah. Now there is nothing in the least funny in the fact of a man being a Mormon, except to those simple souls who consider the existence of a mother-in-law as an intrinsically humorous fact, and to such persons a multiplicity of those connections would naturally be the high-water mark of wit. In the early days of American comedy, Mormonism was a favourite theme with the comic opera librettist as well as with the humorous writer but Artemus Ward was the only man who succeeded in making anything of it.

We follow Mr. Scraggs through various adventures. He goes to New York, meets a green-goods man and purchases from him counterfeit money of the face value of two thousand dollars, but as he pays for it with some nuggets of gilded lead, the transaction leaves all concerned very much as it found them. He visits a "Prohibition, Presbyterian, Vegetarian Colony" where Christmas is considered a Pagan festival, and there plays the part of Santa Claus to a set of unfortunate children, "the offspring of cold water and vegetables"; and adds many kindly offices to the round of drinking, fighting and gambling, so inseparable from the Western novel.

The stories are by no means dull and if they were not so obviously intended to be funny, if our smiles were not literally held up and challenged on every page, they could be read with real enjoyment. Obnoxious as Mr. Scraggs is when seen on the cover, he does say one or two

IV

H. W. PHILLIPS' "MR. SCRAGGS"

Henry Wallace Phillips' *Mr. Scraggs* bears upon its cover ample indications of

good things and we recall Red Saunders when we read such bits as "There is a time in the affairs of men . . . when a pair of cold feet beats any hands in the deck," or "Any woman will love any man that bothers her enough." His threat to the Chinaman, "You call me 'Sclaggsee' oncet more, and I won't leave nothin' of you but a rim," is certainly picturesque, and he describes accurately the feeling induced by a protracted drink of *crème de menthe* as "a sensation 'sif I'd been turned inside out

and exposed to the wintry blasts," but on the whole the note is forced and we feel it throughout.

We have had a superfluity of these unlettered philosophers of late. They have started up from every woodpile and mining camp from Maine to California, and while we have come to feel that the New England brand may be true to life, we have not yet learned to take the drunken, gambling, red-shirted miner or cowboy as the best exponent of the higher life.

Mary K. Ford.