



MARK TWAIN

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AMOS LANGHORNE CLEMENS, best known by his familiar pen-name of “Mark Twain,” a famous American humorist, author, and lecturer, was born at Florida, Mo., Nov. 30, 1835. After receiving a common school education at Hannibal, Mo., at the age of thirteen he was apprenticed to a printer. After working at his trade he became a pilot on the Mississippi, where he adopted the sobriquet of “Mark Twain” from hearing the call used in taking soundings, signifying “Mark, two fathoms.” At the outbreak of the Civil War, he went to Nevada, where for a time he was engaged in silver-mining, and was appointed Territorial secretary and city editor of the Virginia City “Enterprise.” In Western journalism he found play for his delightfully eccentric gifts of humor, extravagant and grotesque, but “catchy” and memorable. In 1864, he removed to San Francisco and lectured there and in New York. In 1867, he paid a visit to Europe and the East, and out of the material he thus collected he wrote his most famous book, “The Innocents Abroad,” which was followed by “The Jumping Frog.” After a further spell of journalistic work at Buffalo and New York, he settled at Hartford, and in 1884 founded the publishing house of C. L. Webster & Co., which became bankrupt in 1895. By the proceeds of his lectures and books he succeeded in liquidating the large indebtedness thus brought upon him. Among his best-known books are “Roughing It”; “The Gilded Age”; “Tom Sawyer”; “The Prince and the Pauper”; “Huckleberry Finn”; “A Tramp Abroad”; “Life on the Mississippi”; “Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc” (which, published anonymously in 1896, realized its writer’s ambition, to be regarded as more than a mere humorist). In 1890, appeared one of his best books, “A Yankee at the Court of King Arthur.”

NEW ENGLAND WEATHER

ADDRESS DELIVERED BEFORE THE NEW ENGLAND SOCIETY,
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GENTLEMEN,—I reverently believe that the Maker who makes us all makes everything in New England but the weather.

I don’t know who makes that, but I think it must be raw apprentices in the Weather Clerk’s factory, who experiment and learn how in New England for board and clothes, and then are promoted to make weather for countries that re-

quire a good article and will take their custom elsewhere if they don't get it.

There is a sumptuous variety about the New England weather that compels the stranger's admiration—and regret.

The weather is always doing something there; always attending strictly to business; always getting up new designs and trying them on the people to see how they will go.

But it gets through more business in spring than in any other season. In the spring I have counted one hundred and thirty-six different kinds of weather inside of four and twenty hours.

It was I that made the fame and fortune of that man that had that marvellous collection of weather on exhibition at the Centennial that so astounded the foreigners. He was going to travel all over the world and get specimens from all the climes. I said, "Don't you do it; you come to New England on a favorable spring day." I told him what we could do in the way of style, variety, and quantity.

Well, he came, and he made his collection in four days.

As to variety—why, he confessed that he got hundreds of kinds of weather that he had never heard of before. And as to quantity—well, after he had picked out and discarded all that was blemished in any way, he not only had weather enough, but weather to spare; weather to hire out; weather to sell; to deposit; weather to invest; weather to give to the poor.

The people of New England are by nature patient and forbearing; but there are some things which they will not stand. Every year they kill a lot of poets for writing about "Beautiful Spring."

These are generally casual visitors, who bring their notions of spring from somewhere else, and cannot, of course,

know how the natives feel about spring. And so, the first thing they know, the opportunity to inquire how they feel has permanently gone by.

Old Probabilities has a mighty reputation for accurate prophecy and thoroughly well deserves it. You take up the papers and observe how crisply and confidently he checks off what to-day's weather is going to be on the Pacific, down South, in the Middle States, in the Wisconsin region; see him sail along in the joy and pride of his power till he gets to New England, and then,—see his tail drop.

He doesn't know what the weather is going to be in New England. He can't any more tell than he can tell how many Presidents of the United States there's going to be next year. Well, he mulls over it, and by and by he gets out something about like this: Probable nor'-east to sou'-west winds, varying to the southward and westward and eastward and points between; high and low barometer, sweeping around from place to place; probable areas of rain, snow, hail, and drought, succeeded or preceded by earthquakes, with thunder and lightning.

Then he jots down this postscript from his wandering mind to cover accidents: "But it is possible that the program may be wholly changed in the mean time."

Yes, one of the brightest gems in the New England weather is the dazzling uncertainty of it. There is only one thing certain about it, you are certain there is going to be plenty of weather—a perfect grand review; but you never can tell which end of the procession is going to move first. You fix up for the drought; you leave your umbrella in the house and sally out with your sprinkling-pot, and ten to one you get drowned.

You make up your mind that the earthquake is due; you

stand from under and take hold of something to steady yourself, and, the first thing you know, you get struck by lightning.

These are great disappointments. But they can't be helped. The lightning there is peculiar; it is so convincing! When it strikes a thing it doesn't leave enough of that thing behind for you to tell whether—well, you'd think it was something valuable, and a Congressman had been there.

And the thunder. When the thunder commences to merely tune up, and scrape, and saw, and key up the instruments for the performance, strangers say, "Why, what awful thunder you have here!" But when the baton is raised and the real concert begins, you'll find that stranger down in the cellar, with his head in the ash-barrel.

Now, as to the size of the weather in New England—lengthways, I mean. It is utterly disproportioned to the size of that little country. Half the time, when it is packed as full as it can stick, you will see that New England weather sticking out beyond the edges and projecting around hundreds and hundreds of miles over the neighboring States. She can't hold a tenth part of her weather. You can see cracks all about, where she has strained herself trying to do it.

I could speak volumes about the inhuman perversity of the New England weather, but I will give but a single specimen. I like to hear rain on a tin roof, so I covered part of my roof with tin, with an eye to that luxury. Well, sir, do you think it ever rains on the tin? No, sir; skips it every time.

Mind, in this speech I have been trying merely to do honor to the New England weather; no language could do it justice.

But, after all, there are at least one or two things about

that weather (or, if you please, effects produced by it) which we residents would not like to part with.

If we had not our bewitching autumn foliage, we should still have to credit the weather with one feature which compensates for all its bullying vagaries—the ice-storm—when a leafless tree is clothed with ice from the bottom to the top—ice that is as bright and clear as crystal; every bough and twig is strung with ice-beads, frozen dew-drops, and the whole tree sparkles, cold and white, like the Shah of Persia's diamond plume.

Then the wind waves the branches, and the sun comes out and turns all those myriads of beads and drops to prisms that glow and hum and flash with all manner of colored fires, which change and change again, with inconceivable rapidity, from blue to red, from red to green, and green to gold; the tree becomes a sparkling fountain, a very explosion of dazzling jewels; and it stands there the acme, the climax, the supremest possibility in art or nature of bewildering, intoxicating, intolerable magnificence! One cannot make the words too strong.

Month after month I lay up hate and grudge against the New England weather; but when the ice-storm comes at last I say, "There, I forgive you now; the books are square between us; you don't owe me a cent; go and sin some more; your little faults and foibles count for nothing; you are the most enchanting weather in the world!"