

though not thoroughbred, I believe. I have also committed scores of crimes, of various kinds, and have enjoyed my work exceedingly, whereas it would formerly have broken my heart and turned my hair gray, I have no doubt.

In conclusion I wish to state, by way of advertisement, that medical colleges desiring assorted tramps for scientific purposes, either by the gross, by cord measurement, or per ton, will do well to examine the lot in my cellar before purchasing elsewhere, as these were all selected and prepared by myself, and can be had at a low rate, because I wish to clear out my stock and get ready for the spring trade.

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from Selected Stories
 Writing of Mark Twain,
 ed. Walter Blair.
 Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1902.

The Whittier Birthday Speech

MR. CHAIRMAN,—This is an occasion peculiarly meet for the digging up of pleasant reminiscences concerning literary folk, therefore I will drop lightly into history myself. Standing here on the shore of the Atlantic, and contemplating certain of its biggest literary billows, I am reminded of a thing which happened to me fifteen years ago, when I had just succeeded in stirring up a little Nevadian literary puddle myself, whose spume-flakes were beginning to blow thinly Californiawards. I started an inspection tramp through the southern mines of California. I was callow and conceited, and I resolved to try the virtue of my *nom de plume*. I very soon had an opportunity. I knocked at a miner's lonely log cabin in the foothills of the Sierras just at nightfall. It was snowing at the time. A jaded, melancholy man of fifty, barefooted, opened to me. When he heard my *nom de plume*, he looked more dejected than before. He let me in—pretty reluctantly, I thought—and after the customary bacon and beans, black coffee and a hot whiskey, I took a pipe. This sorrowful man had not said three words up to this time. Now he spoke up and said, in the voice of one who is secretly suffering, "You're the fourth—I'm a-going to move." "The fourth what?" said I. "The fourth literary man that has been here in twenty-four hours—I'm a-going to move." "You don't tell me!" said I; "who were the others?" "Mr. Longfellow, Mr. Emerson, and Mr. Oliver Wendell Holmes—dad fetch the lot!"

You can easily believe I was interested. I supplicated—three hot whiskeys did the rest—and finally the melancholy miner began. Said he—

They came here just at dark yesterday evening, and I let them in, of course. Said they were going to Yosemite. They were a rough lot, but that's nothing; everybody looks rough that travels afoot. Mr. Emerson was a seedy little bit of a chap, red-headed. Mr. Holmes was as fat as a balloon; he weighed as much as three hundred, and had double chins all the way down to his stomach.

Mr. Longfellow was built like a prize fighter. His head was cropped and bristly, like as if he had a wig made of hairbrushes. His nose lay straight down his face, like a finger with the end joint tilted up. They had been drinking; I could see that. And what queer talk they used! Mr. Holmes inspected this cabin, then he took me by the buttonhole and, says he —

“Through the deep caves of thought
I hear a voice that sings,
Build thee more stately mansions,
O my soul!”

Says I, “I can’t afford it, Mr. Holmes, and moreover I don’t want to.” Blamed if I liked it pretty well, either, coming from a stranger, that way. However, I started to get out my bacon and beans, when Mr. Emerson came and looked on awhile, and then he takes me aside by the buttonhole and says —

“Give me agates for my meat;
Give me cantharids to eat;
From air and ocean bring me foods,
From all zones and altitudes.”

Says I, “Mr. Emerson, if you’ll excuse me, this ain’t no hotel.” You see it sort of riled me — I warn’t used to the ways of littery swells. But I went on a-sweating over my work, and next comes Mr. Longfellow, and he buttonholes me, and interrupts me. Says he,

“Honor be to the Mudjekeewis!
You shall hear how Pau-Puk-Keewis —”

But I broke in, and says I, “Begging your pardon, Mr. Longfellow, if you’ll be so kind as to hold your yawp for about five minutes and let me get this grub ready, you’ll do me proud.” Well, sir, after they’d filled up I set out the jug. Mr. Holmes looks at it and then he fires up all of a sudden and yells —

“Flash out a stream of blood-red wine!
For I would drink to other days.”

By George, I was getting kind of worked up. I don’t deny it, I was getting kind of worked up. I turns to Mr. Holmes, and says I, “Looky here, my fat friend, I’m a-running this shanty, and if the court knows herself you’ll take whiskey straight or you’ll go dry.” Them’s the very words I said to him. Now I didn’t want to sass such famous littery people, but you see they kind of

forced me. There ain’t nothing onreasonable ’bout me; I don’t mind a passel of guests a-tread’n on my tail three or four times, but when it comes to *standing* on it it’s different, and if the court knows herself you’ll take whiskey straight or you’ll go dry. Well, between drinks they’d swell around the cabin and strike attitudes and spout. Says Mr. Longfellow:

“This is the forest primeval.”

Says Mr. Emerson:

“Here once the embattled farmers stood,
And fired the shot heard round the world.”

Says I, “O, blackguard the premises as much as you want to — it don’t cost a cent.” Well, they went on drinking, and pretty soon they got out a greasy old deck and went to playing cut-throat euchre at ten cents a corner — on trust. I begun to notice some pretty suspicious things. Mr. Emerson dealt, looked at his hand, shook his head, says —

“I am the doubter and the doubt —”

and calmly bunched the hands and went to shuffling for a new lay out. Says he —

“They reckon ill who leave me out;
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep. I pass and deal *again!*”

Hang’d if he didn’t go ahead and do it, too! O, he was a cool one! Well, in about a minute, things were running pretty tight, but all of a sudden I see by Mr. Emerson’s eye that he judged he had ’em. He had already corralled two tricks and each of the others one. So now he kind of lifts a little in his chair, and says —

“I tire of globe and aces! —
Too long the game is played!”

— and down he fetched a right bower. Mr. Longfellow smiles as sweet as pie and says —

“Thanks, thanks to thee, my worthy friend,
For the lesson thou hast taught”;

— and dog my cats if he didn’t down with *another* right bower! Well, sir, up jumps Holmes, a-war-whooping as usual, and says —

“God help them if the tempest swings
The pine against the palm!”

— and I wish I may go to grass if he didn't sweep down with another right bower; Emerson claps his hand on his bowie, Longfellow claps his on his revolver, and I went under a bunk. There was going to be trouble; but that monstrous Holmes rose up, wobbling his double chins, and says he, "Order, gentlemen, the first man that draws I'll lay down on him and smother him!"

All quiet on the Potomac, you bell

They were pretty how-come-you-so, now, and they begun to blow. Emerson says, "The bulkiest thing I ever wrote was 'Barbara Fritchie.'" Says Longfellow, "It don't begin with my 'Biglow Papers.'" Says Holmes, "My 'Thanatopsis' lays over 'em both." They mighty near ended in a fight. Then they wished they had some more company, and Mr. Emerson points at me and says —

"Is yonder squalid peasant all

That this proud nursery could breed?"

He was a-whetting his bowie on his boot — so I let it pass. Well, sir, next they took it into their heads that they would like some music; so they made me stand up and sing, "When Johnny comes marching home" till I dropped — at thirteen minutes past four this morning. That's what I've been through, my friend. When I woke at seven, they were leaving, thank goodness, and Mr. Longfellow had my only boots on, and his own under his arm. Says I, "Hold on there, Evangeline, what are you a-going to do with *them*?" He says, "Going to make tracks with 'em; because —"

"Lives of great men all remind us

We can make our lives sublime;

And, departing, leave behind us

Footprints on the sands of Time."

As I said, Mr. Twain, you are the fourth in twenty-four hours — and I'm a-going to move; I ain't suited to a littery atmosphere."

I said to the miner, "Why, my dear sir, *these* were not the gracious singers to whom we and the world pay loving reverence and homage; these were impostors."

The miner investigated me with a calm eye for a while; then said he, "Ahl imposters, were they? are you?" I did not pursue the subject, and since then I haven't traveled on my *nom de plume* enough to hurt. Such was the reminiscence I was moved

to contribute, Mr. Chairman. In my enthusiasm I may have exaggerated the details a little, but you will easily forgive me that fault, since I believe it is the first time I have ever deflected from perpendicular fact on an occasion like this.

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