

Mark Twain's Lightning Rod Story

Outdone.

He called in all his radiant beauty and infinite cheek. Unfortunately we were in a healthy condition, and he was not denied admittance. We knew at once that he was the lightning rod man, and we grieved in anticipation of the coming affliction. "The editor has just gone out to kill a life insurance man." — Well, & can explain the matter so? Being a gentleman of literary attainments, you undoubtedly take an interest in science, which is a few years has covered the earth with railroads and telegraphs, which has filled the rivers with steamboats and the sea with floating palaces, which has found means to defy the lightning of heaven?" — We take not the slightest interest in science. We regret Robert Fulton as an impostor, Stephenie as a poseuse, Michel as an unmitigated scoundrel, and think that Benjamin Franklin should have tied to the tail of his pen kite, and sent on a voyage of discovery among the thunderbolts. He it was who originated lightning rod men, the most wretched who encounter the earth. A law should be at once passed, giving every man in the community a right to kill any lightning rod man on sight, or to pull him to the chamber, and stick a lightning rod down his throat, so that the first spontaneous thunderbolt that came that way should annihilate him." We were getting angry, and we always mild-spoken in our anger. He now planted himself in a chair, as severe and calm as though we had been calling him a benefactor to the human race. "You don't understand this lightning rod! It is the most recent invention, unlike anything ever before produced. It will yet take rank with such inventions as printing, the steam engine and the telegraph. The world will yet reverse the inventor as a benefactor, second to no one man who has ever lived. The lightning rod is protecting the person, not dwellings. It is a composition of India-rubber, iron, and a chemical known only to the inventor. It is to be wound around the body, and run from the crown of the head to the foot heel. Lightning will have no power to harm the man who wears it. The rod is also a protection against violence. A man in Nevada wore one of them. In a drunken row he was shot at seventeen times without being injured, a Bowie-knife was shivered to pieces when it struck him, and a hatchet exploded and killed the man whose hands it was being attempted to strike. The man who wears the Charmed Lightning Rod—that is the name it bears. He took up the voyage to San Francisco. On the way the train on which he was travelling was pitched down a gauge which had fallen far in depth. Everybody else on the train was killed, and the cars and locomotive were dashed to pieces, and he walked to San Francisco without experiencing the slightest inconvenience. The man who uses the Charmed Lightning Rod cannot die by violence—is doomsday indeed, if I will ever die, as no person who has purchased one has yet died." He would continue, but we interrupted him with: "You wear one of them?" — "I wouldn't be without one of them for sum'ntid—would sooner do without food and sleep." — And it would be impossible to hurt you while you wear it?" — "As impossible as it would be for a fly to eat up the Rocky Mountains." — Will you wait for us a few minutes while we give some necessary directions?" we asked. "Certainly," was his pleasant reply. "My entire afternoons is at your service." We went out and collected all the men in the building, and told them the circumstances, and each man armed himself at once. None of them had ever killed a man, and each was anxious to enjoy the luxury of trying to do so. We got a neighbor who owns a Russian bloodhound as big as a Shetland pony to bring him into the building. We then marched double file into the recessed rooms. The man with the dog led the way. The noise caused the Lightning-Rod Man to turn his head. He gave one howl and fled through the back door, followed by a volley of shot and the Russian bloodhound. He could run well—so could the bloodhound. We followed them up Franklin street and across the Park to Broadway. There we stopped. But the bloodhound followed the L. R. M., while our forces returned in triumph to the Doyen's office. The bloodhound did not return for two days, and there was a foolish glint in his eye, though he had been enjoying himself in his savage way. We much fear that the L. R. M. has been corrupted by this. The fate of this wretched man should be a lesson to all agents who think of invading the sacred precincts of our sanctum, or who try to impose on the credulity of the editor. — *N. F. Dodge.*

The Boy who SWALLOWED A MUSIC BOX.—It was an awful fate for such a little boy. His father had bought for him a miniature music box which played four tunes. It was long and narrow, and not much larger than a ten-cent note. One day, just after the music box had been wound up, Thomas got to fooling with it, and placed it in his mouth, and accidentally swallowed it. When Thomas was down to dinner, certain strange strains of mysterious music seemed to be wafted from under the table, and the food became cold while the family gaped around the flour trying to discover whence the sound came. But the truth was discovered at last. While the family was at prayers that evening Thomas got the hiccup, and the music box started off all of a sudden, with "Listen to the Mocking Bird." Whereupon his father rose from his knees, and grasped Thomas by the hair, and shook him up a lot, and asked him what he meant. They tried their best to get the music box up, but it stuck fast, and every time they would pour some new kind of an emetic down, Thomas' throat the machine would give a sort of a fresh spurt, and grind out "Home Sweet Home," or "There's Never Cease to Love." And so they were compelled to permit that music box to remain upon the interior, and it made him miserable, because just as likely as not while he was lying asleep in bed in the middle of the night, the melody works inside would begin to revolve and would play "Kathleen Macmillan" for two or three hours, unless the peg happened to slip, when it would switch back again to "Listen to the Mocking Bird," and retires that tune out until Tommy's brother would kick him out of bed in wild despair and make him feel miserable. And the same way when he went to church. Very likely, right in the middle of the most solemn part of service, when every thing has hushed, that wretched harmonium would give a preliminary burst and out of "There's Never Cease to Love" And it will kill him. Unless that music box can be got out Thomas will die.

A violent lightning descended at a Detroit barber's shop the other day. An old negro rose from his seat to take one of the barber's chairs, when, looking at one of the large pair glasses he saw, as he supposed, another man about to take the chair. The old dandy at once apologized for using out of his turn, and was about to sit down, when he observed his mysterious image about to do the same. He again arose, and the mysterious stranger followed. This was repeated two or three times, much to the dandy's disgust, and he yelled out: "If it's your turn, why don't you sit down?" and shot a dart from the rest of the customers.

OPEN WINDOWS AT NIGHT.—Very much has been written on this subject, and written wisely; the facts are that whoever sleeps uncomfortably cool will get sick. To heat a window sky-high when the mercury is at zero, is an absurdity. The cooler a sleeping apartment is, the more unhealthy it becomes, because cold condenses carbonic acid, formed by the breathing of the sleeper. It settles near the floor, and is re-breathed. Hence, we must be governed by circumstances. The first thing in you must be comfortably warm during sleep, otherwise you are not refreshed, and inflammation of the lungs may be produced, and life destroyed within a few days. An open door and an open fire-place are sufficient for ordinary purposes in cold weather.

When outer windows are opened, it is well to have them down at the top for two or three inches, and up at the bottom for the same space. In climatic localities—and those are along watercourses, besides mill-ponds, marshes, bayous, river flats, land and the like—it is important, from the first of August until several weeks have been noticed, to sleep with all external doors and windows closed, because the cool air of sunset causes the condensation of the emanations which were caused by the heat of the noonday sun to rise far above the earth. This condensation makes the air "heavy" at sunset, yet heavier by the greater solidification of the emanations by cold; and these resting on the surface of the earth in their more concentrated and malignant form, are breathed into the lungs, and swallowed into the stomach, corrupting and poisoning the blood with great rapidity.

By daylight these condensations are made so compact by the protracted coolness of the night, that they are the air over the surface of the earth to be breathed into the system; but as the sun begins to ascend, these heavy condensations, masses, begin to rise again to the height of several feet above the ground, and are freely taken into the system by every breath, and swallow before the hours of sunrise and sunset are the most unwholesome of the twenty-four in the localities named; and nocturne, when the sun is hottest, is the most healthful portion of the day, because the mass is so much purified that it ascends rapidly to the upper regions.

The general lessons are, 1st. Avoid exposure to the out door air in miasmatic localities for the hours including sunrise and sunset. 2d. Have a blazing fire on the hearth of the family room at those hours, to rouse and send the massas upward. 3d. Take breakfast before going out of doors in the morning, and take tea before sunset; then, being out after night is not injurious.

KISSING MADE EASY.—They have been indulging in a singular custom, the past Easter holiday, in Russia. In that country, Easter is called the great kissing season. Among the unchristianized Russians the practice is universal between friends, or between masters and servants. It is doomsday indeed, if I will ever die, as no person who has purchased one has yet died." He would continue, but we interrupted him with: "You wear one of them?" — "I wouldn't be without one of them for sum'ntid—would sooner do without food and sleep." — And it would be impossible to hurt you while you wear it?" — "As impossible as it would be for a fly to eat up the Rocky Mountains." — Will you wait for us a few minutes while we give some necessary directions?" we asked. "Certainly," was his pleasant reply. "My entire afternoons is at your service." We went out and collected all the men in the building, and told them the circumstances, and each man armed himself at once. None of them had ever killed a man, and each was anxious to enjoy the luxury of trying to do so.

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REMARKABLE CONDUCT OF A HOUSE.—A regular French paper relates an extraordinary punishment inflicted by a house upon its master. Not an act of brutality by the latter to one of the master's dependents. A master caused his, at no time tender, in his treatment of his four-footed servants, returned one night in a state of semi-inconscience from Mountaiin to Graves. The man who presents the egg examine, "Christ is risen?" and the three kisses follow. Of course, the second one has generally an egg to present in return. Timid swains eagerly take advantage of this custom to obtain the privilege of embracing some fond object whom they would be otherwise too bashful to approach. These eggs are of all kinds—some simple hen's eggs gilded or silvered, or colored red, blue, or violet; some sugar eggs, embellished with all kinds of fanciful designs.

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