

My Author's League with Mark Twain

DOROTHY QUICK

When Dorothy Quick was a child of eight long years, she met Samuel Clemens on a boat returning from England where the American writer had gone to receive a degree from Oxford University. Mark Twain's heart went out to her, partially because she had already read and remembered every story he had written. For a few years after this happy meeting, until he died, Mark Twain kept the little girl by his side as much as he could. She stayed with him twice in Tuxedo Park where he had rented a house to rest and write, in New York City, and in Redding, Connecticut. Now Miss Quick has written her memories of this charming companionship. We are publishing her description of the end of one visit to him at Tuxedo, and some of his letters to her after her return. The letters are printed for the first time with the permission of the Mark Twain Company, the estate of Samuel L. Clemens, and Harper and Brothers.

I THINK the most outstanding moments of my visit were those I spent, quiet as a mouse, listening to Mr. Clemens dictate. He didn't mind having an audience. In fact, he was so absorbed in what he was doing that half the time he did not know I was there.

I would tiptoe in and sit in the far corner of the room and watch and listen to him. The watching would be equally as fascinating as the listening; in fact more so as I didn't know the connected threads of the story he was weaving and though the patches were interesting and amusing, as any sentence of his was sure to be, the manner in which they were delivered was even more so.

Nothing interfered with the steady flow of his thought.

Mr. Clemens would walk up and down the room while he was dictating as though he were talking conversationally rather than creating a story. He would pace

back and forth, his hands behind his back, speaking continuously in his slow drawling way. Often he would say things that the stenographer would think were just funny little by-comments on the story, but which he meant to be in the completed manuscript. Thinking they were Mr. Clemens' personal observations, the stenographer would leave them out of the script.

Later, when he had finished dictating and turned to correcting the typed manuscript of the work of the day before, he would discover this and break out into fiery explosions. His anger would last several minutes and then he would calm down very suddenly and dismiss it entirely from his mind.

He had a very difficult time getting it through his stenographers' heads that *every* word he said must go in the story and that they mustn't do any deleting.

One morning when I had overslept and came down too late for the dictation, I found him out on the round porch correcting his manuscript. He was seated on a wicker chair with the pages on his lap and his ever-ready fountain pen in his hand. I have never seen him with a pencil. He always wrote his corrections on the margins of his manuscript in ink. A fountain pen was as much a part of his life as his cigars were. He always had one or the other in his hand.

This morning, when I saw him sitting there working, I tiptoed away and got my camera and tiptoed back and snapped two photographs of him as he corrected his manuscript.

I took them just in time, too, for he had barely read more than a few lines on a fresh page when he got up and threw the manuscript down on the chair.

"That girl's done it again!" he exclaimed, and would have followed the exclamation with much more ex-

pressive language, only just at that moment he caught sight of me standing in the doorway and "toned it down considerably," as he said later. But he did remark that the stupidity of stenographers was the bane of his life, during a long discourse on the subject in which he worked off a good deal of steam even though he did watch his adjectives.

I've often wondered if this difficulty of making his stenographers understand that nothing he said must go unrecorded was why he took to writing himself, instead of dictating, because after Tuxedo I never heard him dictate. In both New York and Redding he wrote his own stories by hand. . . .

I had had five glorious days at Tuxedo. But at last it came time to go home. The four manuscript boxes which contained the butterflies collected during my visit were carefully tied up; my bags were packed and all my little stories put away to be shown to Mother at the same time I told her the news that Mark Twain had said I was going to be an author some day. The photographs I had taken were safely locked in my best bag as the most precious part of my luggage.

A jigger came puffing to the door and Mr. Clemens and I climbed aboard, followed by his Secretary who was taking me down to New York where Mother was going to meet me. We were quite early arrivals at the station so Mr. Clemens and I sat on one of the long benches to wait for the train.

We were both silent and in a few minutes I believe I should have been crying. I was just on the verge of tears at the idea of parting from my friend when a turtle saved me from making an exhibition of myself. Quite unconscious of being a rescuer, it crawled across the platform directly in front of where we were sitting. Mr.

Clemens spied him first and said, "Now, there comes an addition to your menagerie."

The turtle was captured by him without much difficulty. Then, while paper, string and box were being secured, he picked it up. By this time the turtle had retreated into its shell. Mr. Clemens took out his fountain pen and wrote the date and his own name across his back. On the light tan with green markings, his signature showed plainly. "What are you going to call it?" he asked when he had finished writing.

Only the night before Mr. Clemens had told me how when he was in the publishing business he had brought out General Grant's book and made a tremendous sum of money for Mrs. Grant. He had enlarged on what a wonderful man the General was; how, while literally dying of a painful affliction, he had held on to life by sheer will power long enough to finish the book of his memoirs so that there would be a nest egg to secure the future of his family. "I admired his spunk, his stick-to-itiveness in the face of such terrible odds more than anything I've ever come across," he had said. It was all very fresh in my mind so I gave the turtle the first name that came into my head.

"I'm going to call it General Grant."

"Now, there's a good name!" Mr. Clemens exclaimed.

By this time the box had arrived. We punched it full of air holes and deposited General Grant within, and then wrapped him up — one more package to go down to New York.

General Grant didn't stay with me long. I carried him home safely and proudly displayed him to all my friends who, I must confess, were infinitely more interested in the autograph he bore than in General Grant himself.

Unfortunately, the General never developed an affec-

tionate disposition like my other pets. I had had the turtle less than a week when in an unguarded moment it strayed away. "Turtles are not cut out for household companions," Mr. Clemens said by way of consolation, "and General Grant, like his illustrious namesake, preferred to strike out for himself."

Nevertheless, I felt very badly over the General's loss. Turtles live a long time and somewhere in New Jersey General Grant is probably still crawling about with a very precious autograph, "S. L. Clemens (Mark Twain)" upon his back. I have always felt that for poetic justice, General Grant will some day return to me, and I still closely regard the shells of any turtles I come across—especially in New Jersey.

We had hardly tied General Grant up in his box that summer day in Tuxedo, when there came the warning hoot of the railroad train. . . .

The very day after I had returned home I received a letter from Mark Twain.

Tuxedo Park,
Friday Evening.

Dorothy dear,

One of these days I am going to write you a letter the first time I write my other children, but not now, for I haven't anything to do and I can't write letters except when I am rushed.

I went to bed as soon as you departed, there being nothing to live for after that, and the sunshine all gone. How do you suppose I am going to get along without you? For five hours this has been a dreary place, a sober and solemn place, a hushed and brooding and lifeless place, for the blessed spirit of youth has gone out of it and left nothing that's worth while. Aren't you sorry for me, you fresh breeze blown from fragrant fields of flowers? I thought this was a home. It was a superstition. What is home without a child? Particularly a home that's had such a child as you in it. It isn't a home at all, its merely a wreck. *Now* I hope you see what you've done by going away, you little witch.

Its odd: this morning I dated that "recommend" [To Dorothy's mother, because she had been a good girl] August 5 instead of 9. I think it is because you seemed to have been here only one day — just one short beautiful day — without a break in it. I am very grateful to your Mother for loaning you to me, you dear sweet child. I am aware that you can't come again in August but I hope you can come after Sept. 2nd and stay a *whole* week, not a broken one. I mean to expect it and count upon it and I do hope I shall not have to make any engagements that would interfere.

Are you an idol? I suspect it, for I know you have left a lot of idolators behind you in this house, of whom the very principalest one is the undersigned.

Please give my kindest regards to all your household.

S.L.C.

At the time my letter came, Mother received one from him in which he said: "Every day and hour of her brief stay Dorothy was a delight and a blessing and every night it cost me a pang to let her go to bed," and finished up with how pleased he had been that I hadn't been homesick, as they had been afraid I might be. "Home-sickness," he wrote, "is a dreadful malady. I can still remember the nostalgia of it after all these years."

In this letter he also made the arrangements for my next visit which was planned for September 3. As I didn't want to be away from Mother on my birthday, which was the first day of the month, we chose the nearest date to it.

A day or two later another note came.

Tuxedo Park, New York

Sunday, Aug. 11.

This isn't a letter, Dorothy Dear. Yet I know I ought to write you a letter because I said I would write you every time I wrote the other children, and I've just finished a letter to Clara. But I never *could* keep promises very well. However, I shall certainly write you a letter before very long.

I wrote to Clara:

“When Dorothy went away she took the sun and the moon and the constellations with her and left silence and solitude and night and desolation behind her.”

And *that's* a true word, if ever *I've* spoken a true word!

Thursday, 15th. I have been away several days but am home again — and no Dorothy! And so I go mourning around, like an old cat that's lost her kitten. But you are coming soon again and that is a large comfort to me. You are the best reader of your age I have yet encountered, and when I finish teaching you and drilling you, you will read still better than you do now. It's a great accomplishment, a very great and very rare accomplishment and *I'm* the expert that knows how to teach it! There'll be grand times in my class of one pupil, Dorothy Dear!

Thank you for your letter which was very sweet and welcome. I am glad you arrived safe — you and the other butterflies, and the turtle with the warlike name.

A wonderful thing has happened here. You remember the central bed of nasturtiums, the round one? Well, we planted some seeds there and raised a family of rabbits. The nest is under the nasturtiums in the middle of the bed. There are three little rabbits and they are about the size of mice. Their eyes are not open yet. I hope they will still be there when you come. I have named them Dorothy. One name is enough for all of them. They are so little. Your friend

SLC.

In a letter dated Wednesday, August 21, Mr. Clemens mentions both the proposed visit and my birthday.

At the top is a fascinating picture of a bee chasing something — just what, even “the gifted artist” himself wasn't quite sure.

About tomorrow or the next day there'll be a note from the same I hope containing that picture of the same and me which the same kodaked when the same was here.

I suppose you will return to Plainfield for your birthday.

That thing the bee is chasing is a dog or a rat or something of that kind, I think, but there is room for conjecture. This does not settle it. What do you think it is if you've got time.

You are coming Tuesday, the 3rd. Now, then, *that's* settled, Lassie. Shall you be welcome? There isn't any doubt about it dear.

Afternoon

The Harpers have sent the books here. It's just as well. I will write my name in them, then forward them.

Thursday, August 22

I'm collecting old cigar belts for you against your coming — but I love you notwithstanding.

SLC

One of the letters Mr. Clemens wrote me after I left Tuxedo mentioned the butterfly hunting, which had gone on in the daytime as well as at night. The letter began with a picture of a butterfly drawn by Mr. Clemens himself.

Saturday.

Do you know what that is? It is a butterfly, drawn by the artist, the gifted artist. I am the gifted artist, self-taught.

No. I find it is a grasshopper. It is for your collection. I have nailed it to a box with pins. It took more chloroform than was good for it. And so it is "sleeping with its fathers."

Monday, A.M.

"Just a week" since I saw you! Why, you little humbug, it is over three months. Even my Secretary, who never gets anything straight but cork screws and potato peelings and things like that, concedes that it's upwards of *two* months. What is the matter with your veracity mill?

Night

It is a good idea to choose a name in advance and then fit the literature onto it when it comes. I will keep on the lookout for a fortunate name, dear. Write another little story now and send it to me. It will take you several years to learn to do a story even *tolerably* well. Attention and close observation, and ever so much tearing up and rewriting, but no matter, it's worth the trouble and no trade is ever learned well on any other terms.

Good night — it's sleep time.

SLC.

The books of which he spoke arrived shortly after his letter and although it wasn't my birthday, I couldn't re-

sist opening the big package. There were revealed ten of Mark Twain's own books, all autographed. He had picked out the ones he thought most suitable for me — those I already knew and loved. There were *Tom Sawyer*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, *Innocents Abroad*, *A Tramp Abroad*, *The Prince and The Pauper*, *Eve's Diary*, and *Joan of Arc* which of all the books he had written was not only his favorite but "the one I want to be remembered by" he had told me on the steamer; also two collections of his short stories.

I wrote Mr. Clemens how much I loved his gift and at the same time asked if I might read *The Dog's Tale*, and in reply came another of his illustrated letters.

Tuxedo Park

New York

Monday, Aug. 26/07

At last, you dear little tardy rascal! This morning I was going to stick up a notice on the back porch:

LOST CHILD!

Answers to the name of Dorothy.

Strayed, stolen or mislaid.

DISAPPEARED

on or about the 9th of August

Anyone returning this inestimably precious asset to the

SORROWING

will be richly

REWARDED

and right away this evening came your letter and takes every bit of the uneasiness out of me! I had gone to bed but my secretary brought it anyway because she knew I would break her furniture and throw all her things out of the window if she delayed it till morning.

Very well, you have been having good times; so I am satisfied and will go to sleep now.

But wait! Where is that picture of you and me? You have forgotten it dear, but I must have it.

Tuesday

Yes. Wednesday will be perfectly convenient and we'll have you for a whole week, which is grand! Provided you don't get homesick — and we do hope you wont. We'll do our best to keep you happy and content.

My secretary will arrange about the trains with your Mother by telegraph if she can, otherwise by letter.

I've got a Birthday xxxxx for you xxx but I will keep it till you come, because it isn't the xxxx and I shall need to xxxx (*guess what it is*)

You've written me a good letter, simple, lucid, straightforward, well-expressed.

(Picture)

Flight of the rabbit family.

Alas! They have deserted us and I am so sorry. We were hoping to keep them for you and we never dreamed that they would go away and leave us. I am just as sorry as I can be.

That big one that has three ears and looks like an angel, isn't an angel at all. It is the Mother rabbit.

She isn't swimming. She is praying, praying for succor, I reckon. That is I *think* that that is her idea. No that isn't it! She is jumping — jumping over a rope, walk, or a stone wall, or something of that kind, and has bumped her stomach against it, poor thing. It is very difficult to tell what a rabbit is really trying to do, in a picture, because rabbits are so irrelevant. It is their nature when excited.

Do I mind? (That you read *The Dog's Tale*.) Indeed no. I don't mind anything you do, because you never mean any harm, and you are a dear, good child all the time.

You have written the *very letter* I was going to propose that you write; a letter telling me all about your activities and industries and enjoyments — all the things your busy hands and head find to interest themselves in. It is good practice for you, in observing and remembering and good entertainment for me be-

cause I am fond of you and so whatever you do and think and feel interests me.

Afternoon

You are coming Tuesday! It's fine. You will reach this house at 5.30 P.M. You will most certainly be welcome.

Evening

(Picture)

Deer.

There were several of them. They came down hill from the woods above the house and stopped awhile behind the kitchen to look at the cook. You can see by their eager expression and enthusiastic delight that they had never seen a cook before. Sometimes they go down through the woods below the house to get a drink at the Lake. If ever they come into the house you must be ready, for we will have them to luncheon and then photograph them in the act.

With love and good night

SLC

I was terribly sorry to hear of the flight of the rabbit family for I had been looking forward to seeing my namesakes. But I was so intrigued over the prospect of having Deer to luncheon that it quite took the edge off my disappointment over the rabbits.

One of the stories of Mark Twain's that I had most enjoyed hearing him read aloud was that delicious satire on detectives, *The Stolen White Elephant*, over which we had laughed and laughed. I told him of my first experience at a circus when I was only four. I had been terribly frightened by the clowns with their pistols and funny antics, so at the first opportunity I slipped out of the box and later my Mother to her great amazement found the child that had screamed in terror over the harmless clowns, sitting contentedly patting one of the elephants, with an amused keeper looking on. "That was very brave of you, Dorothy," Mr. Clemens had remarked,

“and I wouldn’t have thought it of you either, the way you ran away from that caterpillar!”

“Oh, that’s different. I can’t stand caterpillars, and I *like* elephants,” I told him very seriously. “I’d like to have an elephant for a pet if they only weren’t so big.”

And then the conversation had been changed and I’d forgotten all about it. But Mark Twain hadn’t for on the morning of my birthday I received a wire from him.

Western Union Telegraph Company
Night Message

Miss Dorothy Quick
Plainfield, New Jersey.

I tried to get some elephants for your birthday but they charged ten thousand dollars a piece. I can get one elephant and sixteen hundred monkeys for the same money if you prefer. Telephone answer.

S.L.C.

When I returned to Tuxedo, almost the first thing he gave me was the present he had been so mysterious about in his letter and it turned out to be a small white ivory elephant!

In October I received a letter in answer to one of mine complaining that I hadn’t heard from him for a whole long week, and telling me about a photograph I had sent him of myself on my way to school.

Oct. 2

It is a very good photograph, Dorothy dear, and I am very glad to have it. Wish I could have you here too. I miss you all the time. Goodness! What makes you think I have forgotten you? Indeed I haven’t, but I have been so busy lately that I haven’t written to my daughters and they are scolding me. I hope to do better now, and be good, for a while. It will attract attention. I like that.

I’ll be back in New York just at the end of this month and

then I hope you can come to us on Saturdays and stay over. We can have very good times together.

Oct. 3

Last night we played "Hearts" — a very good game, I think, because it is simple and doesn't require any mental labor. I wish we had thought of it when you were here. But next time we'll play it. It is more interesting than those other games.

You should see our cat. It is half grown and is gay and wise and courteous and very handsome. It has a tail at one end and two sets of legs, one set at the bow and the other at the stern and is just as astonishing in other ways.

Then he drew a picture of the cat at a very "fetching" angle. And under the picture he went on to say,

This cat is trying to look like my secretary but I think it does not succeed very well — and won't until it has had more practice. It sits up like this. Always on the same end. Everybody admires it and thinks it is full of talent.

We drove over the Wigger Pond Road and all around the lake yesterday afternoon. Remember that road? It is very beautiful now. We'll make a longer drive today. I wish you were here to go with us.

Evening

Your letter and the pictures have come, dear. The one where you are standing by my chair is the very, *very* best one of you I have ever seen and you are next best in the one where I am a nice old white-headed nigger.

That little cat caught a bird today and brought it in and it got away and flew out of the window.

There is a heavenly dog here, but he is not ours. He came down the hill on a visit and will have to be sent back. He is the long kind. With love

SLC.

And then there was a picture of the dog which ran the whole length of the page.

Although I was busy at school and with my homework,

I hadn't forgotten the Authors' League and I still went on writing stories, keeping them to take in to Mr. Clemens when he came back to New York. One of these stories which I had worked over particularly hard, I was quite pleased with and I thought how wonderful it would be if I could get it published. If a magazine would take it and print it, how delighted SLC would be! How proud of his pupil! My knowledge of magazines was limited, but the one magazine with which I was thoroughly familiar was *St. Nicholas*, and it was running a contest for short stories by children under twelve! I wrote out the tale in my best "typewritten" handwriting and sent it in and waited with my heart in my mouth for the result.

At last the magazine arrived. I turned quickly to the contest announcements. I hadn't won a prize, so my story wasn't published, but I had won an honorable first mention for my story and there was my name, Dorothy Quick, in print for the first time. I was proud and excited over the anticipation of pleasing Mr. Clemens. I bought another copy of *St. Nicholas*, marked a red circle around my name and sent it to him.

Finally his reply came, the last letter I was to receive from him, postmarked Tuxedo.

Tuxedo Park
New York

Dorothy dear,

It is perfectly lovely here now, with brilliant skies, brilliant water, sleek as a mirror, and all the brilliant colors of the hills painted on it like a picture, and there's rabbits oh no end! They've got a nest in that tree that leans over the nasturtium bed and they scamper up and down it all day long and jabber. And as for squirrels and deer and Italians and other game, they're everywhere and nobody shoots them for it isn't allowed. I don't know why. And there are owls and cows and bears and

nights you can hear them hooting. Sometimes they make the kind of noise a preacher makes. It is awful, but I am not afraid. The others are afraid, but I am calm and go down cellar.

I believe that that is about all the news there is, except that we leave Tuxedo the 31st to live in town, 21 Fifth Avenue, where you must come and stay over Sundays every time you can be spared.

Dearheart, you mustn't send stories to St. Nicholas yet. It is too soon. You must learn the trade first and nobody can do that without a long and diligent apprenticeship — not anything short of ten years. Write the stories — write lots and lots of them for practice — and when the Literary League gets together again we'll examine into your progress and take note of such improvement as we find.

We have a very nice thoughtful little cat and it catches snakes and brings them into the house for us to play with.

3.30 P.M. — time to get up — SLC — who misses you, dear.

The Fugitive

MORLEY CALLAGHAN

AT MIDNIGHT Wallace was in his room in Mrs. Cosentino's house on Bank street making himself a cup of coffee when he heard a soft furtive knock on the door. He was startled because he hadn't heard anyone on the stairs. When he opened the door Anderson came in and closed the door quickly himself and stood with his winter coat collar turned up high around his ears, smiling with relief. "Quite a climb up those stairs," he said.

He leaned against the door getting his breath a moment and then as his big brown eyes shifted quickly all around the room, he stood lightly on the balls of his feet as if he were apt to disappear just as quickly as he had come. But when he saw that Wallace was glad to see him he grinned warmly and took off his hat. His hair had gone way back on his forehead and was white at the temples.

"Where did you come from, Anderson? I'm terribly glad to see you," Wallace said. He had known Anderson five years ago in Montreal when he had been doing commercial art there and Anderson had been in a stock-broker's office.

"I've been around here a little while," Anderson said.

"Have you got a place to stay?"

"No."

"Why don't you stay here with me? I can speak to Mrs. Cosentino."

"Are you sure you want me?"

"Why, I've never been so glad to see anybody," Wallace said, slapping him on the back enthusiastically and hardly noticing his shabby clothes, his peculiar pallor or his nervous movements.