

MARK TWAIN

Mark Twain (1835-1910) (born Samuel Langhorne Clemens) is one of the best-known American writers, recognized almost anywhere in the world. He spent his childhood in a small town on the banks of the Mississippi River. Later, in his books "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" (1876) and "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" (1884) Twain made the Mississippi a place of light, happiness and adventure, one of the most wonderful countries of the imagination, and a myth of everyone's childhood. These two famous books were Twain's hymn to boyhood, in which he described boyhood's deepest wishes for fame, heroism, treasure, and admiration.

Samuel's schooling ended very early. At the age of 11, after his father's death, he was apprenticed to a printer. This occupation gave him a useful education. The print shop was to Twain a college. It was a world of the printed word which awakened his mind and a thirst for knowledge. He picked up a lot of information when printing and learned to tell good writing from bad.

Mark Twain had changed many jobs before he became a writer. He was a steamboat pilot, took up silver mining, prospected for gold in California gold fields, tried speculation in timber and land, and finally became a journalist, the author of humorous stories, the most famous being "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County". Then he went on tours to Hawaii, Europe, and the Middle East as a correspondent. Later his adventures served as the subject of several books. On his return he became a successful humorous lecturer.

Twain felt a call for humorous literature. But with years, his humour changed. Once light and amusing, it later became sharp and bitter. He often showed people as 'a museum of diseases' and attacked society with all its wrong.

Twain's story "How I Edited an Agricultural Paper" was published in 1870.

Exercise 1 Read the words and guess their meaning. Pay attention to the suffixes and prefixes:

un-: healthy - - unhealthy; popular- unpopular; comfortable -uncomfortable.

dis-: believe - disbelieve; able - disable; grace - disgrace; order - disorder; interesting -isinterested; pleased - displeased.

-y: luck - lucky; risk — risky; cheer — cheery.

-ly: secret - secretly; practical - practically; perfect — perfectly; final — finally.

-ism: journal - journalism; commercial - commercialism; exhibition - exhibitionism; impression - impressionism.

Exercise 2 Read the word combinations and translate them:

to hear cheery voices

to have experience in agriculture

an unhealthy-looking man

to become unpopular

to feel a little uncomfortable

a disgrace to journalism

Read the story **How I Edited an Agricultural Paper** and find out why the issue of the newspaper edited by the author caused so much excitement among the readers.

How I Edited an Agricultural Paper

I had some doubts when I agreed to edit an agricultural paper. But I needed money. The regular editor of the paper was going off for a holiday, and I accepted his offer, and took his place.

The sensation of being at work again was great, and I worked hard all the week with pleasure. We went to press, and I waited a day with a hope that my effort was going to be noticed. As I left the office, a group of men and boys at the foot of the stairs gave me passageway, and I heard one or two of them say:

"That's him!" I was naturally pleased with their attention. The next morning I found a similar group at the foot of the stairs, standing here and there in the street, and over the way, watching me with interest. I heard a man say, "Look at his eye!" I pretended not to notice their attention, but secretly I was pleased with it. I went up the short flight of stairs, and heard cheery voices and a ringing laugh as I drew near the door, which I opened, and saw two young men jumping out of the window with a great crash. I was surprised.

In about half an hour an old gentleman, with a fine but rather strict face, entered, and sat down at my invitation. He seemed to have something on his mind. He took off his hat and set it on the floor, and got out of it a red silk handkerchief and a copy of our paper.

He polished his spectacles with his handkerchief and said, "Are you the new editor?" I said I was. "Have you ever edited an agricultural paper before?"

"No," I said; "this is my first attempt."

"Very likely. Have you had any experience in agriculture practically?"

"No; I believe I have not."

"Some instinct told me so," said the old gentleman. "I wish to read you what made me have that instinct. It was this editorial. Listen, and see if it was *you* who wrote it: - 'Turnips should never be pulled, it injures' them. It is much better to send a boy up and let him shake the tree'. Now, what do you think of that? - for I really suppose you wrote it?"

"Think of it? Why, I think it is good. I think it is sense. I have no doubt that every year millions and millions of turnips are spoiled by being pulled in a half -ripe condition, when if you send a boy up to shake the tree" -

"Shake your grandmother! Turnips don't grow on trees!"

Then this old person got up and tore his paper all into small pieces, and broke several things with his cane, and said I did not know as much as a cow; and then went out and banged the door after him, and, in short, acted in such a way that I thought he was displeased about something. But not knowing what the trouble was, I could not be any help to him.

Soon after this a long, pale, unhealthy-looking man ran into the room, stopped at some distance from me, and, after examining my face with interest for a while, drew a copy of our paper from his jacket, and said:

"There, you wrote that. Read it to me -quick! Relieve² me. I suffer."

"I read as follows; and as the sentences fell from my lips I could see the relief come, I could see the excitement go out of the face, and rest and peace change the features:

"The guano³ is a fine bird, but great care is necessary in looking after it. In the winter it should be kept in a warm place, where it can hatch out its young.

Concerning the pumpkin. This berry is a favorite with the people of New England, who prefer it to the gooseberry for the making of fruitcake, and who give it the preference over the raspberry for feeding cows. The pumpkin is the only plant of the orange family that will grow in the North, but planting it in the yard is becoming unpopular because it does not give shade..."

1) to injure — повредить

2) to relieve — облегчить

3) guano — помет

The excited listener sprang toward me to shake hands, and said:

"There, there - that will do. I know I am all right now, because you have read it just as I did, word for word. But, when I first read it this morning, I said to myself I was crazy. I read your newspaper again and again, to be certain that I was crazy, and then I burned my house down and started. I have crippled¹ several people, and have got one fellow up a tree, where I get him if I want it. But I thought I would call in here as I passed along and make the thing perfectly certain; and now it is certain, and I tell you it is lucky for the fellow that is in the tree. Good-bye, sir; you have taken a great load off my mind."

I felt a little uncomfortable about the crippings², but soon stopped worrying, for the regular editor walked in!

The editor was looking sad and unhappy. He looked at the pieces of furniture broken by that old rioter³ and those two young farmers, and then said: "This is a sad business - a very sad business. But that is not the worst. The reputation of the paper is ruined, I fear. True, there never was such a call for the paper before, and it never sold such a large edition; but does one want to be famous for lunacy⁴? My friend, as I am an honest man, the street out here is full of people, waiting to have a look at you, because they think you are crazy. And well they might after reading your editorials. They are a disgrace to journalism. Why, who put it into your head that you could edit a paper of this nature? You know nothing about agriculture. I want you to throw up your situation and go. I want no more holiday. Certainly not with you in my chair. I want you to go. Nothing on earth could persuade me to take another holiday. Oh, why didn't you tell me you didn't know anything about agriculture?"

"Tell you, you corn-stalk, you cabbage, you son of a cauliflower⁵? It's the first time I ever heard such an unfeeling remark. I tell you I have been in editorial business for fourteen years, and it is the

first time I ever heard of a man's having to know anything in order to edit a newspaper. Your turnip! Who write the dramatic critiques for the second-rate papers? Why, shoemakers, who know just as much about good acting as I do about good farming and no more. Who review the books? People who never wrote one. Who write appeals to stop drinking? Those who are sober⁶ only in the grave. Who edit the agricultural papers? Men, as a general thing, who fail in the poetry line, adventure novel line, sensation drama line, city editor line, and finally fall back on agriculture. You try to tell me anything about the newspaper business! I take my leave, sir. Since I have been treated as you have treated me, I am perfectly willing to go. But I have done my duty. I said I could make your paper of interest to all classes - and I have. I said I could run your circulation up to twenty thousand copies and I have done it. And I have given you the best class of readers that ever an agricultural paper had. You are the loser in this situation, not me. Good-bye.

I then left.

1. to cripple — калечить

3. rioter — бунтовщик,

5. cauliflower — цветная капуста

2. crippling — калека

4. lunacy — сумасшествие

6. sober — трезвый

Exercise 4. Translate the following sentences:

1. The sensation of being at work again was great.
2. I have no doubt that every year millions and millions of turnips are spoiled by being pulled in a half-ripe condition.
3. As the sentences fell from my lips I could see the relief come, I could see the excitement go out of the face, and rest and peace change the features.
4. I felt a little uncomfortable about the crippings, but soon stopped worrying, for the regular editor walked in!
5. It is the first time I ever heard such an unfeeling remark.
6. It is the first time I ever heard of a man's having to know anything in order to edit a newspaper.

Exercise 5. Answer the questions on the story:

1. Why did the author agree to edit an agricultural paper?
2. How did the regular readers of the newspaper respond to the appearance of the first issue edited by the author?
3. Who visited the new editor?
4. Why did one of the visitors ask the author to read some articles to him?
5. What made the visitors so excited?
6. What made the regular editor come back from his holiday?
7. Why was the regular editor sure that the reputation of his newspaper was ruined?
8. In what way did the author speak to the editor?

Discussing the Theme of the Story

1. Speak about the impressions the paper produced when it came out.
2. Do you think the author was really ignorant and had no idea about how turnips grew or what guano was?
3. What, in your opinion, was the author's main aim when he began to edit an agricultural paper? How did he try to achieve his aim?
4. Do you agree with the author that it is not very important to know much about the things he mentions in his articles?
5. The author said that he had been in editorial business for fourteen years. What do you think those years taught him about journalism?
6. The regular editor called the author's editorials a disgrace to journalism. What do you think he meant by saying that?
7. The author made the agricultural paper more alive and certainly more exciting. He made it, as he said, of interest to all classes. He gave it the best class of readers that ever an agricultural paper had. Do you think his way of editing the paper was effective? Give your reasons.

8. The story shows two types of journalists. Think and describe their attitudes towards editing a newspaper. What were their principles?
9. Find some humorous lines in the story and explain why you think them funny. Try and explain why the new issue of the newspaper did not amuse anyone in the town described.
10. Mark Twain was famous for his disrespectful humour. What in the story "How I Edited an Agricultural Paper" demonstrates this quality of Twain's character?
11. Twain's humour is very often grotesque and the things he laughs at are very exaggerated. Look through the story one more time and show how the manner of telling it makes the story funny.
12. Say how you imagine the agricultural paper for which the author began to work. What kind of articles do you think it published? Were the articles exciting and their language colorful?
13. Make a list of things which, in your opinion, can make the circulation of a newspaper or a magazine wide.