

### Mark Twain as an Orator.

Never before have we thought of Mark Twain as an orator until T. P., in T. P.'s Weekly, tells us in his own inimitable style that the world-famed humorist is, along with his many other accomplishments, an Orator. The peroration of Mark Twain's speech at a banquet, presided over by Mr. Birrell, is said by T. P. to have been among the finest things he had ever heard. Here it is :

Home is dear to us all, and I am now departing for mine on the other side of the ocean. Oxford has conferred upon me the loftiest honor that has fallen to my fortune, the one I should have chosen as outranking any and all others within the gift of men or States to bestow upon me. And I have had, in the four weeks that I have been here, another lofty honor, a continuous honor, an honor which has known no interruption in all these twenty-six days, a most moving and pulse stirring honor ; the hearty hand-grip and the cordial welcome which does not descend from the pale gray matter of the brain, but comes up with the red blood out of the heart ! It makes me proud, and it makes me humble. Many and many a year ago I read an anecdote in Dana's "Two Years Before the Mast." A frivolous little self-important captain of a coasting sloop in the dried-apple and kitchen furniture trade was always hailing every vessel that came in sight, just to hear himself talk and air his small grandeurs. One day a majestic Indianman came ploughing by, with course on course of canvas towering into the sky, her decks and yards swarming with sailors, with macaws and monkeys and all manner of strange and romantic creatures populating her rigging, and thereto her freightage of precious spices lading the breeze with gracious and mysterious odours of the Orient. Of course the little coaster-captain hopped into the shrouds and squeaked a hail : "Ship ahoy ! What ship is that, and whence and whither ?" In a deep and thunderous bass came the answer back, through a speaking-trumpet : "The Begum of Bengal, a hundred and twenty-three days out from Canton—homeward bound ! What ship is that ?" The little captain's vanity was all crushed out of him, and most humbly he squeaked back : "Only the Mary Ann—fourteen hours out from Boston, bound for Kittery Point with—nothing to speak of !" The eloquent word "only" expressed the depths of his stricken humbleness.

And what is my case ? During perhaps one hour in the twenty-four—not more than that—I stop and reflect. Then I am humble, then I am properly meek, and for that little time I am "only the Mary Ann," fourteen hours out, and cargoed with vegetables and tinware ; but all the other twenty-three my self-satisfaction rides high, and I am the stately Indianman, ploughing the great seas under a cloud of sail, and laden with a rich freightage of the kindest words that were ever spoken to a wandering alien, I think ; my twenty-six crowded and fortunate days seem multiplied by five, and I am the Begum of Bengal, a hundred and twenty-three days out from Canton—homeward bound !

A wonderful bit of literature you will see at once, says "T. P.," but that is not the reason I transfer it to these columns ; it is because of the extraordinary way in which it was delivered, and its marvelous effect.

The audience sat in spell-bound and almost painful silence, and the voice rang out in the stillness—very quiet, very self-controlled, but clear as the bells whose chimes reach you on a far-off hill from the belfry in the chapel of your native town. And at last the audience could restrain itself no longer ; and when in rich, resonant, uplifted voice Mark Twain sang out the words : "I am the Begum of Bengal a hundred and twenty-three days out from Canton," there burst forth a great cheer from one end of the room to the other. It seemed an inopportune cheer, and for a moment it upset Mark Twain, and yet it was felicitous in opportuneness. Slowly, after a long pause, came the last two words—like that curious detached and high note in which a great piece of music sometimes suddenly and abruptly ends—"Homeward Bound." Again there was a cheer ; but this time it was lower ; it was subdued ; it was the fitting echo to the beautiful words—with its double significance—the parting from a hospitable land ; the return to the native land—wail and pæan, pæan and wail. It is only a great *littérateur* that could conceive such a passage ; it is only a great orator that could so deliver it.