

Mark Twain in the Red River Valley of the North

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JULY OF 1895 was not significantly different from any other summer in the Red River Valley of the North. The weather was hot. The crops looked promising although some cases of wheat smut were reported. People were chewing Lorillard's Climax Plug tobacco, restoring and coloring their hair with Ayer's Hair Vigor, purifying their blood with Hood's Sarsaparilla, and taking advantage of such opportunities as the "Daring and Destructive ATTACK ON PRICES" at Platky's Department Store in Grand Forks, North Dakota.¹

People read in their newspapers about the strike (and attendant "RIOT AND BLOODSHED") of 20,000 tailors in New York and Brooklyn, of the severe thunderstorm in St. Louis ("T'WAS A SNORTER"), and of the continuing story of the accused mass murderer in Chicago named H. H. Holmes, who would admit only to having set fire to a body that was already dead ("Terrible Tale"). They read of the "COON KILLING" — the rout by a baseball team in Grand Forks of a visiting team of

Minneapolis Blacks — and of the "SAD ACCIDENT" that occurred during the game when a small child received a "Terrible Blow from a Base-Ball" and was said to be near death. And if they lived in Winnipeg, Grand Forks, Crookston, or any of the surrounding small towns, they read about Mark Twain, who had come to the Red River Valley to lecture on the regeneration of mankind.

In 1895, Mark Twain (born Samuel L. Clemens) was discouraged, ill, and financially ruined. He was tormented by frequent attacks of bronchitis, gout, carbuncles, and creditors. The Paige typesetting machine, in which he and his wife Olivia had invested at least \$160,000 of their savings, had failed. His publishing house, Charles L. Webster and Company of New York, was bankrupt. His creditors were calling for their money. For Twain the year marked the beginning of a decade of trouble and tragedy which would see the death of his favorite child Susy in 1896, the death of his wife in 1904, and more illness for himself. But Twain faced the immediate problem — the financial one — with courage and integrity. He resolved to repay his creditors, not at legal bankruptcy rates, but dollar for dollar. He resorted to the quickest and surest way that he knew to make money — lecturing.²

In spite of his considerable doubt that he could still "fetch an audience," Twain began to negotiate in February or March of 1895 with the noted impresario R. S. Smythe of Australia for a far eastern lecture tour. In May he contacted his friend and former manager Major James B. Pond to arrange appearances in America on the first

¹Information contained here and in the next paragraph was found in articles and advertisements in the *Grand Forks Daily Herald*, July 30, 1895, p. 1-4.

²For details of Twain's financial and physical troubles in 1895, see Fred W. Lorch, *The Trouble Begins at Eight: Mark Twain's Lecture Tours, 183-184, 190, 353* notes 1, 2 (Ames, Iowa, 1966).

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leg of his tour. Twain probably wanted to test his powers on American audiences before embarking for foreign climes.³

Twain's tour began in mid-July when he, his wife, his daughter Clara, and Major and Mrs. Pond set out from Olivia's family home in Elmira, New York, where Twain had been laid up with a variety of illnesses for the last forty-five days. His first lecture was to be in Cleveland, a city where he knew he could expect a good reception. He had many influential friends of long standing in the city, and the newspapers there had reviewed him favorably in the past.⁴

The lecture that he offered in Cleveland and which he revised continually on the tour consisted of readings from his works tied together by the unifying theme — the regeneration of mankind through the improvement of morals. It was Twain's facetious theory that "moral vaccination" was the solution to the problem. He asserted that there were 462 possible crimes, the commission of which, one by one, would "vaccinate" the offender against ever being tempted by the same crime again. (For example, he said that when as a child he had stolen a green watermelon, it had immediately inoculated him against stealing "that kind of watermelon" again.) He further observed that he, himself, was more than two-thirds of the way to moral perfection using this method. Each of the selections from his works that he gave in his lecture was offered as an example of a crime and its attendant moral principle. The audience could thus be vicariously vaccinated against a few of the 462 possible crimes.⁵

It should be noted that Twain did not read directly from the printed text of his works. He had tried that earlier and had discovered that too often the reading fell flat. Instead, he usually "yarned off" the story, sometimes modifying it on the spot.

After the first lecture in Cleveland, Twain and his party went by steamer to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and from there to Duluth. He arrived in that city on the evening of July 22, and immediately on his arrival was rushed to the First Methodist Church where he was scheduled to speak that very evening. The audience had been waiting an hour for his arrival and "started into laugh at once as though they were there for that purpose and thought they ought to." As soon as the lecture was over, Twain and his party continued on to Minneapolis on the night train. He spent the following day there in bed, nursing the carbuncle on his leg. That evening (July 23) he gave his lecture at the Metropolitan Opera House. On July 24, he went on to St. Paul, where the *Dispatch* reported he was still suffering from the carbuncle "that insists on being his campagnon de voyage." But, said the newspaper, "he is in trim to amuse and he is able to do it as few men can." After his lecture in St. Paul, Twain went on to Winnipeg for two lectures.⁶

MARK TWAIN and his works were no strangers in Canada. His books had been widely pirated by Canadian presses. In fact, the proofs for *Roughing It* (1872) were in the hands of a Canadian publisher before Twain's own American publishers could get it off the press (a typical example of publishing espionage for that day). Because of such piracies, in 1881 and 1883, Twain had taken trips to Canada in order to secure the Canadian copyright of several of his books. On both trips he had lectured and had received many invitations and honors.⁷ On this trip, he was cordially received and favorably reviewed by the *Winnipeg Daily Tribune*. On July 26, the *Tribune*, after reporting his arrival, remarked:

"Probably the only people who have not read some of Mark Twain's stories are those who can't read, and as this class is a very small one in Manitoba, there are but few who are not deeply interested in the personality of the most original mirth-maker since the time of the lamented husband of Mrs. B. J. Ward, Artemus, the 'amoosin' showman. The perennial freshness of Mark Twain's fun leads one, unnaturally and unreasonably, to expect the author to be perennially young. This is about the only thing which the interviewer finds about Mr. Clemens that he did not expect. Mark Twain is now a man of 60 years, and his ample supply of hair has begun to grow silvery. His moustache has more of a droop about it than when, as a steamboat man, he waxed it to give it a military look. Under his shaggy brows, however, his eyes sparkle as of yore, showing that passing years have not dried up the fount of humor. Once he enters into conversation the old Mark Twain of the books is discovered, and the interviewer has no doubt, but that if occasion arose he could tell again as good a story as Tom Sawyer. In fact, the way in which he retells jokes that he meets with on his travels shows that his humor is spontaneous and natural, not something

³Lorch, *Trouble Begins at Eight*, 184. The phrase "fetch an audience" is from Albert Bigelow Paine, ed., *Mark Twain's Letters*, 1:193, 2:685 (New York, 1917).

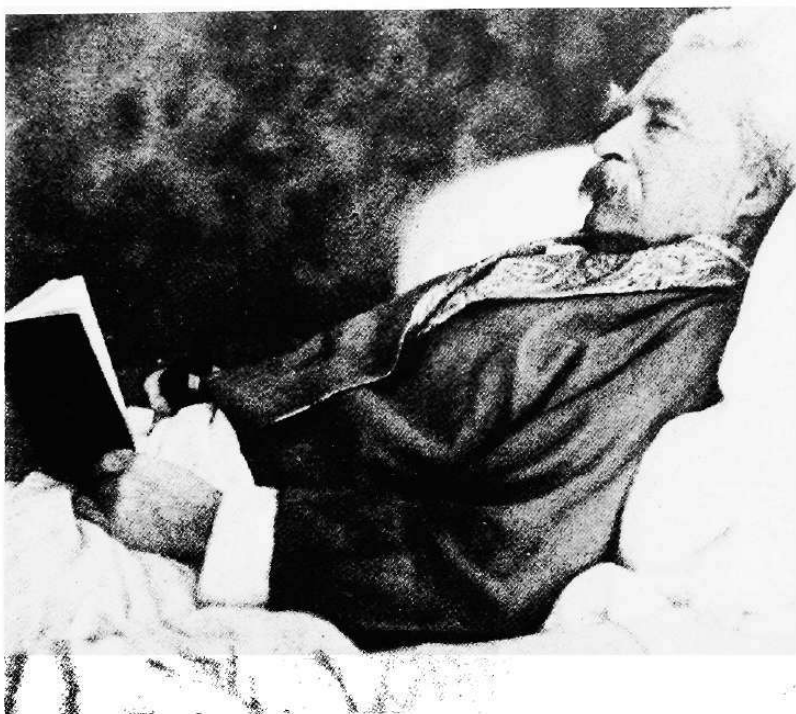
⁴Lorch, *Trouble Begins at Eight*, 185, 188.

⁵Lorch, *Trouble Begins at Eight*, 186, 321–332. Lorch lists many of the stories that Twain used in his "morals" lecture and also gives a partial text of the lecture that Twain gave as the opening performance of his tour in Cleveland.

⁶A more detailed account of Twain's visits to Duluth and the Twin Cities in 1895 is in John T. Flanagan, "Mark Twain on the Upper Mississippi," in *Minnesota History*, 17:378–384 (December, 1936). Flanagan mistakenly says that Twain's last lecture in Minnesota that year was in St. Paul, neglecting to mention his later lecture in Crookston.

⁷Albert Bigelow Paine, *Mark Twain: A Biography*, 2:715, 748 (New York and London, 1912); Paul Fatout, ed., *Mark Twain Speaking*, 157–161, 178–180 (Iowa City, 1976).

MARK TWAIN in a characteristic pose — at least at this dismal period in his life, when, despite illness, he toured the world to give lectures to help pay his debts. The photograph, by Alvin Langdon Coburn, is from *Mark Twain by Archibald Henderson* (New York, 1912).



put on and off like an ill-fitting garment. Among the other items in this evening's programme will be the famous story of the jumping frog. This is one of the most characteristic pieces of Mark Twain's humor, and, though it lacks in print the force of his inimitable method of telling it, it cannot fail to interest as indicative of his style. Here it is.⁸

Then follows the story of the jumping frog, not the version published years earlier as "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" but the version that Twain had been telling from the platform. Perhaps the *Winnipeg Daily Tribune* had covered the lecture in Minneapolis or St. Paul or Duluth, or perhaps Major Pond had given the *Tribune* a copy of the lecture. Twain would probably not have been pleased to find part of his lecture reprinted in the newspaper. Such piracies had annoyed him all his life.

In the same issue of the *Winnipeg Daily Tribune*, there appears an interview with Mark Twain, accomplished, according to the reporter, as Twain alighted from a hack at the door of his hotel. To the interviewer, Twain looked "more like a sea captain than a river pilot," dressed as he was "in blue serge with a flat peaked cap of the same material."

The interviewer was aware of Twain's recent illnesses and thought he was "looking much better." He upbraided Twain for having cheated his readers "out of a good story" (the story of the "yaller cow with the bob-tail," alluded to at the end of the story of the jumping

frog by the narrator, Simon Wheeler). Twain answered, "Oh, well, you took it too seriously and besides if the old man [Wheeler] had told the story you might have been more bored than I was."

The reporter wanted to know whether Twain had noticed any improvement in the mud since his last visit, to which Twain replied, "I have never seen real mud since I left the Missouri till to-day. Then when I looked out and saw the mud in the side streets I said 'Here I am at home again.' In the east either the poverty of the soil or the extent of the pavements precludes the possibility of real mud, and I am rather glad to see it again. In Hartford [Connecticut], where I have lived for many years, we are strangers to it, even on the country roads."

The interviewer then asked Twain whether or not a man "down the river" named Clemens might be a relative, and Twain replied with a brief account of Clemens family history, at which point "Major Pond and the ladies, reinforced by a porter and two blue coated bell boys bore down on the twain that were not one flesh and put them asunder, carrying off the author to his delayed lunch. He had only time to say that they would remain in the city till Sunday, when they leave for the south and west."

On the next day, July 27, the *Winnipeg Daily Tribune* reviewed Mark Twain's lecture of the previous night. The review, printed below in toto, is a favorable one with perhaps a slight implication (in the reviewer's choice of words) that there was something wrong with being only a humorist:

"Selkirk hall was full of well-dressed people (badly dressed folks do not go to lectures) last

⁸ *Winnipeg Daily Tribune*, July 26, 1895, p. 5.

night to listen to 'Mark Twain' deliver himself of a few of the many colored episodes, which, fathered in a brain teeming with thought, have been given to an admiring world in fuller shape in the form of seven volumes of the most entertaining stories ever penned.

"It was, therefore, a genuine tribute to the abilities of Mr. Clemens as an author, that so many of the leading citizens of Winnipeg assembled to hear him lecture, and the laughter and applause which greeted his efforts from time to time must have shown the lecturer that his pungent and witty remarks were thoroughly appreciated.

"The humor of Mark Twain is peculiar, and requires peculiarly built up audiences to thoroughly comprehend the whimsical situations he places before them so unconventionally.

"A short, slightly built man, with a heavy mass of iron gray hair, a fierce looking moustache, wide, open, massive forehead, bushy eye-brows, under which scowl at you a couple of fierce eyes, firm looking chin, but alas, with the fatal droop thereto so common with impulsive, easy-going natures.

"The chin looks firm enough, but the droop of the under lip is there.

"An easy manner and a nonchalant style places Mr. Clemens at once in full sympathy with the people before him. The rest is simple.

"After not a few of his sentences there was silence; then a dribble of laughter, then a crescendoing to mighty applause, then a diminuendo, drooping off to solitary cackling for some minutes, evidenced the struggle for supremacy between mind and matter on the part of many present, and it was precious difficult at times to distinguish betwixt the two.

"Mark Twain has made a success in Winnipeg.

"A new programme this evening."⁹

Note the reference to "seven volumes of . . . *entertaining stories*" (italics mine), and the "alas" fatal droop of Twain's lower lip that identify him as "impulsive" and "easy-going." Mark Twain smarted all his professional life under the stigma that would not allow a humorist — a man who makes jokes, who finds something laughable in every aspect of the human condition — to make a serious statement. For Twain, humor was a serious calling and his most recent books — *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889) and *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1892) — had been, for many readers, baffling mixtures of comedy and tragedy. They continue to baffle many modern readers.

It was not easy for lecture-hall and opera-house audiences of the nineteenth century, conditioned to expect

formal and usually oratorical lectures, to become accustomed to the Mark Twain manner. Frequently, Twain walked nonchalantly onto the stage, hands in pockets, as if he had wandered in from the street and appeared surprised to find himself facing an audience. Unlike the loud, haranguing, even hell-fire-and-brimstone voice of the average circuit speaker, Twain's voice was quiet. He spoke slowly, in a drawl described abroad as "Yankee." He did not hide himself behind the lecturn but strolled about the stage from time to time. Though he had his talk memorized, he delivered it as if it were coming to him on the spot. It took an audience a while to become attuned to this peculiar sort of lecture. Perhaps in fear of misunderstanding among audiences, Major Pond was reluctant to call Twain's performances lectures. The Winnipeg advertisement promised "Two 90 Minutes' Chat and Character Sketches," advertising in most American towns called them simply "talks," and the Australian manager Smythe advertised them as "At Homes," hoping, no doubt, to prepare audiences for Twain's informal delivery.¹⁰

The Winnipeg interviewers got one more chance to question Twain before his departure for Crookston, Minnesota. The second (and perhaps the same) *Tribune* reporter was curious about Twain's feeling for the Mississippi. Twain's reply underscores the importance of that part of his life:

"By a series of events — accidents — I was the only one who wrote about old times on the Mississippi. Wherever else I have been some better have been there before and will come after, but the Mississippi was a virgin field. No one could write that life but a pilot, because no one else but a pilot entered into the spirit of it. But the pilots were the last men in the world to write its history. As a class they did not naturally run to literature, and this was made more unlikely by another reason. Every pilot had to carry in his head thousands of details of that great river. Details, moreover, that were always changing, and in order to have nothing to confuse those details

⁹Winnipeg Daily Tribune, July 27, 1895, p. 5.

¹⁰Winnipeg Daily Tribune, July 26, 1895, p. 5; Lorch, *Trouble Begins at Eight*, 191. For another probable sample of Major Pond's advance promotion of Twain's lecture tour, see *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, July 24, 1895, p. 8, which contains a humorous interview with Twain, reprinted from the *Washington Post* and written, I suspect, by Twain himself. The article, printed under the headline "TWIN'S OBITUARY MUSEUM," contains several Twain poems, described as a "little nest of mortuary sentiment," which bring tears to Twain's eyes as he reads them. One example will suffice:

"Father's in heaven: his body is dead,

And silent, cold and still.

When we orphans get back from the graveyard,

We're going to bust the will.

—By His Children."

they entered into a compact never to read anything. Thus if they had thought of writing, they would have no connected style, no power of describing anything; and moreover, they were so engrossed in the river that there was nothing in life unusual to them. Here, then was my chance, and I used it."¹¹

One might guess that what interested Twain most as he traveled up the Red River Valley was the river itself and its history of steamboating that was analogous to his own experiences on the Mississippi. And perhaps he did become nostalgic as he rode the train southward, recalling that it had been the railroad that in effect had killed river commerce and with it his favorite profession.

But Mark Twain seemed more impressed with the landscape of the valley when he wrote from Crookston to his friend Henry Huttleston Rogers: "You *must* hire a private car some day and take a swing through this splendid country."¹² He elaborated on his impression of the beauty of the countryside in a hurried interview in his train car when the train stopped in Grand Forks, North Dakota, on July 29. The reporter from the *Grand Forks Herald* found Mark Twain "a very entertaining conversationalist, very willing to answer questions as to his opinion of this part of the country, and he asked a great many in return." The article then quoted several of Twain's opinions:

"This country of yours out here," he said, "astonished me beyond all imagination. Never in my life have I seen such fields of grain extending in all directions to the horizon. This country appears to me to be as it were a mighty ocean; my conception of it is the same as that of a man who has never seen the ocean before, he sees nothing but water as far as the eye can reach; here I see nothing but oceans of wheat fields. Why it is simply miraculous." He asked a great many questions regarding our city as to its population, buildings, schools, etc. He very much regretted not being able to lecture in Grand Forks, as he had heard that we had a splendid opera house."¹³

The same *Herald* reporter spoke to Major Pond, who told him that Twain was lecturing in Crookston instead of Grand Forks because no one in Grand Forks had responded to his letter of inquiry about an appearance there. A possible reason for this was suggested by a newspaper in rival East Grand Forks which, in noting Twain's nonappearance in Grand Forks, remarked that no one had responded to Pond's letter because they

learned that Twain "couldn't play ball or a banjo." It went on to say that if Mark Twain had come to Grand Forks, his experience "would have been similar to that felt by Henry Ward Beecher when he lectured in Grand Forks at a time when wheat was worth \$1.25 per bushel. He talked to empty chairs."¹⁴

WHEN Mark Twain arrived in Crookston the same day as his interview in Grand Forks, his coming had not been entirely unheralded. As early as July 8, the *Crookston Times* was filling several small slots per issue with the modest announcement, "Mark Twain July 29th," and on July 18 an advertisement appeared announcing that "Reserve Seat Sale opens at Tom Morris' Monday, July 22, at 10:00 o'clock a.m." Seats were to be sold at fifty cents, seventy-five cents and \$1.00, for an opportunity — "perhaps the last" — to hear "the most popular writer in the

AS EARLY AS July 8, the *Crookston Times* began announcing Mark Twain's visit. This notice, undoubtedly written in part by Major Pond, billed the lecturer as "the most popular writer in the English language," and also suggested that it would be Twain's last tour.

MARK TWAIN

The Great American Humorist will stop at Crookston on his tour around the world.

Mark Twain is today the most popular writer in the English language. Few men have ever written whose humor has so many sides, such breadth and reach as a reader and story teller is utterly outside and beyond the reach of all conventional rule. It is nearly ten years since he has appeared before an American audience and Major J. B. Pond under whose management he appears in Crookston, congratulates the public upon the opportunity—perhaps the last—that this lecture affords.

GRAND OPERA HOUSE

Crookston, July 29.

Reserve Seat Sale opens
at Tom Morris' Monday,
July 22, at 10:00
o'clock a.m.

SEATS

50c, 75c, \$1.00

¹¹Winnipeg Daily Tribune, July 28, 1895.

¹²Lewis Leary, ed., *Mark Twain's Correspondence with Henry Huttleston Rogers, 1893-1909*, 177 (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969).

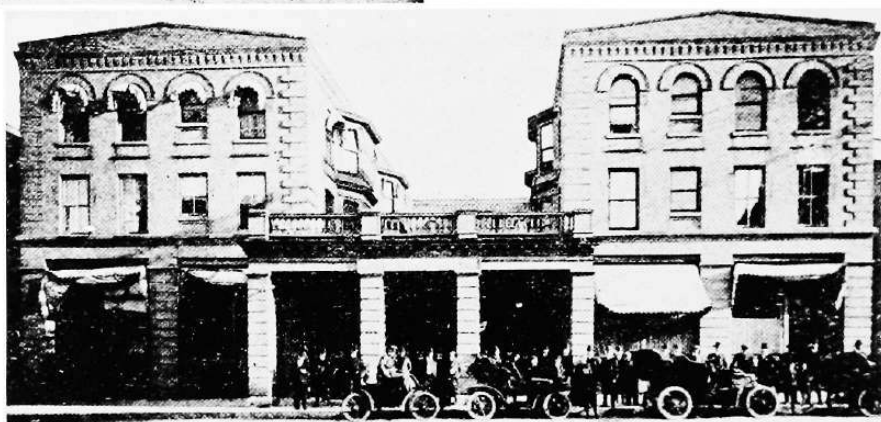
¹³Grand Forks Herald, July 30, 1895, p. 4.

¹⁴East Grand Forks Courier, August 2, 1895, p. 5.



CROOKSTON, with its unpaved streets and wooden sidewalks, looked about like this to Twain when he visited it in 1895. This view looks southwest from the corner of Second Street.

MARK TWAIN was the first guest to stay at the Hotel Crookston, although it did not officially open until July 31. Sumptuous ceremonies, including visits by such dignitaries as Minnesota's governor, marked that event. A reporter for the Crookston Times who looked through the hotel's "elegant interior" predicted that "it will be far the finest hotel building in the northwest" and "will stand for a century." The hotel is no longer standing.



English language." It was Major Pond, his eye always on ticket sales, who spread the word to newspapers along the route of the tour that this would probably be Mark Twain's last lecture tour. The phrase, "the most popular writer in the English language," is also Pond's.¹⁵

The *Crookston Times* had done its research with greater care than the *Winnipeg Daily Tribune*, for the Crookston reporter had a better sense of what to expect from this unusual man. To be sure, Twain was first a humorist. But the *Times* also knew that the audience should expect something more than mere funny stories:

"Mark Twains rank [*sic*] easily as the foremost humorist of the age. His style is graceful and easy; his language simple and elegant, and under his sayings that apparently have no other mission than to move the reader to smiles, there is an undercurrent of subtle wisdom that is strongly

marked by sound common sense, and is worthy of more than a passing notice."¹⁶

And the *Times* reporter was well aware of Mark Twain's unorthodox platform manner:

"As a lecturer Mr. Clemens is beyond any conventional rules. He does not seek for elocutionary efforts, but his attitude is rather that of a man with a good story to tell and who is fairly confident of his ability to tell it well. A more delightful manner in which to spend an hour than in hearing the readings of Mr. Clemens will give can scarcely be imagined. Laughter invariably greets the first sentence and attends him to the end, and

¹⁵*Crookston Daily Times*, July 8, 1895, p. 4, July 18, 1895, p. 2.

¹⁶*Crookston Daily Times*, July 22, 1895, p. 4.

ceases with a sense of his hearers having been captivated by a genius mirth as good to remember as it was to hear."

As the date of Twain's lecture in Crookston approached, the *Times* continued to print advertisements and notices about it. Occasional paragraphs described the eagerness with which the people in the area awaited Twain's arrival. On July 24, the *Times* reported that "everybody in the city is reading up Mark Twain in anticipation of the lecture to be given by that prince of American humorists on Monday next. Not only his more noted books, but all the short sketches which he has written are in demand. One of the best sketches and most sought after is the Million Pound Bank Note published in the *Century* some years since."¹⁷

On July 26, under the headline "Mark Twain to Be Given a Flattering Reception on Monday Evening," the *Times* reported that the "interest in the Mark Twain entertainment has increased to such a pitch that it is now becoming exciting." The newspaper went on to say:

"The people along the Fosston line have caught the contagion, and are not to be outdone by the towns on the St. Vincent line who secured a special train to take their people home after the performance. The Fosston people have also arranged for an excursion rate and for transportation home after the performance. Through the courtesy of Supt. Jenks, the Fosston Flyer, which leaves here at 6 o'clock will be held until 11 o'clock Monday evening. This insures a large attendance from Fosston way, and already telegrams are pouring in for seats. There is now no question that the opera house will be packed with the largest and best audience ever assembled in Crookston."¹⁸

Finally, on July 29, the *Times* proclaimed in large type, "HE'S HERE." The reporter for the *Times* was disappointed in his fellow townsmen for their manners and their grammar:

"A short rather stout man with gray hair and heavy mustach clad in a blue coat and cap alighted from the Great Northern train last night closely followed by two ladies and a young girl and lastly by the imposing form of Major J. B.

Pond, the celebrated impressario. 'That's him' said a dozen people with as little regard for the proprieties as for their syntax."¹⁹

Twain and his party registered as the first guests in the elegant new Hotel Crookston, the grand opening of which would not take place until July 31.²⁰ Twain apparently spent the day of his lecture in his hotel room as was his custom. Part of the time he worked on his presentation for that evening. In a letter written that day he described the lecture, of which there seem to have been two versions:

"I'm stealing a moment to scribble this line. I have to *steal* my odd moments, for I am at work *all* the time on my lectures, on board the trains and everywhere. I've got No. 1 where I am no longer afraid of it or in doubt about it; and now for the past few days I am at work on No. 2. I tried it in Winnipeg Saturday night and found it was 35 minutes too long; and so at the end of an hour and a half I offered to let the audience go; but they said 'go on,' — so I did. To-day I have knocked out one long piece and put in a shorter one; and I hope the audience to-night will allow me to add the new piece to No. 1's program so that I can try it. But I won't without their consent, for a special trainload of them are coming 180 miles and I must not tire them. Thus far I have had more people in three opera houses than they've ever had in them before, winter or summer; and they swelter there with admirable patience; they all stay and see me through."²¹

The eagerness with which the people around Crookston anticipated Twain's lecture is evident from the local news columns for that day's *Times*. Inhabitants of Crookston and the surrounding area arranged their schedules so that they could attend the lecture, as indicated by such statements as "Prof. Hetler went to Fisher today for a short trip. He will return in time to hear Mark Twain," or "There was a general exodus of summer resorters from the lake this morning, thirty having come in, the greater number of whom will hear the Twain lecture tonight."²²

The Grand Opera House, where Twain lectured that evening, was filled to capacity. The audience at the lecture was described by the *Times* as "the finest in point of numbers, individuality and intellect which has ever assembled in the city. It contained the best citizens of the towns represented, and it was characterized by Mr. Clemens as a gathering which would do credit to a New England city."²³

The entire program of readings that Twain gave that evening is not known. The *Polk County Journal* reported that Twain, after doing six unnamed selections, "announced that he would give a few extracts from the 'diary of Adam,' something new to this audience, and which in

¹⁷*Crookston Daily Times*, July 24, 1895, p. 3.

¹⁸*Crookston Daily Times*, July 26, 1895, p. 3.

¹⁹*Crookston Daily Times*, July 29, 1895, p. 4. Evidently the reporter placed more stock in "syntax" than in punctuation, for his description of Twain would suggest that it was not Twain but Twain's moustache that wore a blue coat and cap.

²⁰*Crookston Daily Times*, July 27, 1895, p. 4. For an account of the hotel's gala grand opening, which was attended by the governor of Minnesota, David M. Clough, and other dignitaries, see *Crookston Daily Times*, August 1, 1895, p. 4.

²¹Leary, ed., *Mark Twain's Correspondence*, 177.

²²*Crookston Daily Times*, July 29, 1895, p. 4.

²³*Crookston Daily Times*, July 30, 1895, p. 4.

our opinion is the drollest of all his writings. This kept the audience in a continual uproar from start to finish and put them in excellent humor for 'The Golden Arm,' which wound up the entertainment." The *Crookston Times* was also impressed with the selections from "Adam's Diary," saying that they "showed probably more originality than any of the other selections," but also noted that "his 'Watermelon' story was probably the most humorous and the 'Ghost Story' brought out his wonderful ability as a story teller."²⁴

In addition to these selections, Twain probably read an excerpt from *Huckleberry Finn* — the scene in which Huck, in the throes of a battle between his public conscience and his private conscience, decides to obey personal feeling and not turn Nigger Jim over to the authorities, even if it means that he will go to hell for it. That piece was an important part of Twain's repertoire, and it would be nice to think that he used it.

When the lecture concluded at 10:30 P.M., Twain reportedly was so pleased with his audience — all those people from miles away, from towns along the St. Vincent and Fosston lines of the Great Northern, including such places as Hallock, Warren, McIntosh, and Mentor — that he "stepped down off the stage and was introduced to all who desired to grasp him by the hand."²⁵

Twain's appreciation of his audience was mirrored by their appreciation of him. The *Warren Sheaf* reported that "About eighty Warrenites went to Crookston Monday to see and hear the only and original Mark Twain, and to say that none of them were disappointed is putting it mildly. For almost two hours the large audience sat there interested and simmering with amusement, as he recited some of his best stories, unfolding gently the rich and varied stories of wit and humor for which he has become noted."²⁶

In Fosston, the reaction was just as enthusiastic. The *Fosston Thirteen Towns* said that "the lecture or rather 'story telling,' by Mark Twain at the Opera House, Crookston, last Monday evening attracted a large and appreciative audience. The droll manner in which Mr. Clemens tells his anecdotes are inimitable and holds the close attention of his listeners."²⁷

The *Crookston Times* also expressed its eloquent appreciation:

"Mr. Clemens spoke for fully an hour and a half, and the close attention he received must

have been very gratifying. Of course there were a few who had gone with the idea of hearing something on the negro minstrel order and these were disappointed. Mr. Clemens selections were all taken from his books and while humorous each contained some deep thoughts, which hidden perhaps at first reveal themselves in later examination, and furnished food for thought."²⁸

Mark Twain would have been gratified, for he wanted more than anything to be recognized as more than just a funny man. It is to the credit of the *Times* reporter that he recognized the deep seriousness of Mark Twain's humor, for other newspapers were not so perceptive. The *Crookston Daily Tribune*, for example, remarked after Twain's lecture, "Mark Twain has come and gone, but Blind Tom will execute 'Marching Through Georgia,' and other popular melodies at the merry-go-round to-night."²⁹

Twain left Crookston on Tuesday, July 30, and crossed the West by rail, stopping along the way to speak in small towns and cities. The tour that began in America and Canada took him to Australia, Tasmania, New Zealand, India, South Africa, and finally to London. Along the route of the "greatest lecture tour of the century," he met presidents and maharajas, generals and kings, great and famous people. But as thrilled as he was in the company of the great, it is doubtful that the democratic Mark Twain, when he reflected on it, prized those meetings with the great any more highly than he prized the laughter and appreciation of small-town folk such as those he met in the Red River Valley. He once observed:

"High and fine literature is wine, and mine is only water; but everybody likes water."³⁰

²⁴ *Polk County Journal*, August 1, 1895, p. 1; *Crookston Daily Times*, July 30, 1895, p. 4.

²⁵ *Polk County Journal*, July 30, 1895, p. 1.

²⁶ *Warren Sheaf*, August 1, 1895, p. 1.

²⁷ *Thirteen Towns* (Fosston), August 2, 1895, p. 7.

²⁸ *Crookston Daily Times*, July 30, 1895, p. 4.

²⁹ *Crookston Daily Tribune*, July 30, 1895, p. 3.

³⁰ The term "greatest lecture tour of the century" is quoted in Lorch, *Trouble Begins at Eight*, 188, from the Petoskey, Michigan, *Daily Reporter*, July 20, 1895. The concluding quotation is from Paine, ed., *Mark Twain's Letters*, 2:485.

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