

MARK TWAIN TO REVEREND J.H. TWICHELL

July 28, 1901
Ampersand, NY

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CASSANDRA BATES
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DEAR JOE,

As you say, it is impracticable—in my case, certainly. For me to assist in an appeal to that Congress of land-thieves and liars would be to bring derision upon it; and for me to assist in an appeal for cash to pass through the hands of those missionaries out there, of any denomination, Catholic or Protestant, wouldn't do at all. They wouldn't handle money which I had soiled, and I wouldn't trust them with it, anyway. They would devote it to the relief of suffering—I know that—but the sufferers selected would be converts. The missionary-utterances exhibit no humane feeling toward the others, but in place of it a spirit of hate and hostility. And it is natural; the Bible forbids their presence there, their trade is unlawful, why shouldn't their characters be of necessity in harmony with—but never mind, let it go, it irritates me.

Later... I have been reading Yung Wing's letter again. It may be that he is over-wrought by his sympathies, but it may not be so. There may be other reasons why the missionaries are silent about the Shensi-2-year famine and cannibalism. It may be that there are so few Protestant converts there that the missionaries are able to take care of them. That they are not likely to largely concern themselves about Catholic converts and the others, is quite natural, I think.

That crude way of appealing to this Government for help in a cause which has no money in it, and no politics, rises before me again in all its admirable innocence! Doesn't Yung Wing know us yet? However, he has been absent since '96 or '97. We have gone to hell since then. Kossuth couldn't raise 30 cents in Congress, now, if he were back with his moving Magyar-Tale.

I am on the front porch (lower one—main deck) of our little bijou of a dwelling-house. The lake-edge (Lower Saranac) is so nearly under me that I can't see the shore, but only the water, small-pored with rain-splashes—for there is a heavy down-pour.

It is charmingly like sitting snuggled up on a ship's deck with the stretching sea all around—but very much more satisfactory, for at sea a rain-storm is depressing, while here of course the effect engendered is just a deep sense of comfort and contentment. The heavy forest shuts us solidly in on three sides there are no neighbors. There are beautiful little tan-colored impudent squirrels about. They take tea, 5 p.m., (not invited) at the table in the woods where Jean does my typewriting, and one of them has been brave enough to sit upon Jean's knee with his tail curved over his back and munch his food. They come to dinner, 7 p.m., on the front porch (not invited). They all have the one name—Blennerhasset, from Burr's friend—and none of them answers to it except when hungry.

We have been here since June 21st. For a little while we had some warm days—according to the family's estimate; I was hardly discommoded myself. Otherwise the weather has been of the sort you are familiar with in these regions: cool days and cool nights. We have heard of the hot wave every Wednesday, per the weekly paper—we allow no dailies to intrude. Last week through visitors also—the only ones we have had—Dr. Root and John Howells.

We have the daily lake-swim; and all the tribe, servants included (but not I) do a good deal of boating; sometimes with the guide, sometimes without him—Jean and Clara are competent with the oars. If we live another year, I hope we shall spend its summer in this house.

We have taken the Appleton country seat, overlooking the Hudson, at Riverdale, 25 minutes from the Grand Central Station, for a year, beginning Oct. 1, with option for another year. We are obliged to be close to New York for a year or two.

Aug. 3rd I go yachting a fortnight up north in a 20-knot boat 225 feet long, with the owner, (Mr. Rogers), Tom Reid, Dr. Rice, Col. A. G. Paine and one or two others. Judge Howland would go, but can't get away from engagements; Professor Sloane would go, but is in the grip of an illness. Come—will you go? If you can manage it, drop a post-card to me c/o H.H. Rogers, 26 Broadway. I shall be in New York a couple of days before we sail—July 31 or Aug. 1, perhaps the latter—and I think I shall stop at the Hotel Grosvenor, cor. 10th St and 5th ave.

We all send you and the Harmonies lots and gobs of love.

MARK