

TWAIN AND THE TELEPHONE.

He Hears the Telharmonium and Incidentally Tells a Story.

"The trouble about these beautiful, novel things is that they interfere so with one's arrangements. Every time I see or hear a new wonder like this I have to postpone my death right off. I couldn't possibly leave the world until I have heard this again and again."

Mark Twain said this as he lounged on the keyboard dais in the telharmonium music room in upper Broadway, swinging his legs, yesterday afternoon. The instrument had just played the "Lohengrin Wedding March" for him.

"You see, I read about this in THE NEW YORK TIMES last Sunday," said he, "and I wanted to hear it. If a great Princess marries, what is to hinder all the lamps along the streets on her wedding night playing that march together? Or, if a great man should die here—I, for example—they could all be tuned up for a dirge."

"Of course, I know that it is intended to deliver music all over the town through the telephone, but that hardly appeals as much as it might to a man who for years, because of his addiction to strong language, has tried to conceal his telephone number, just like a chauffeur running away after an accident.

"When I lived up in Hartford I was the very first man, in that part of New England at least, to put in a telephone, but it was constantly getting me into trouble because of the things I said carelessly. And the family were all so thoughtless. One day when I was in the garden, fifty feet from the house, somebody on the long distance wire who was publishing a story of mine, wanted to get the title.

"Well, the title was the first sentence, 'Tell him to go to hell.' Before my daughter got it through the wire and through him there was a perfect eruption of profanity in that region. All New England seemed to be listening in, and each time my daughter repeated it she did so with rising emphasis. It was awful. I broke into a cold perspiration, and while the neighborhood rang with it, rushed in and implored her to desist. But she would have the last word, and it was 'hell,' sure enough, every time."

"Soon after I moved to New York; perhaps that had something to do with my moving. When I got here and asked for a fire-proof telephone the company sent up a man to me. I opened up all my troubles to him, but he laughed and said it was all right in New York. There was a clause in their contract, he said, allowing every subscriber to talk in his native tongue, and of course they would not make an exception against me. That clause has been a godsend in my case."