

AS THE LIGHTNING FLASHES

A Humorous Reading

by
Mark Twain



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From the story "Mrs. McWilliams and the Lightning".

The fear of lightning is one of the most distressing infirmities a human being can be afflicted with. It takes the sand out of a person to an extent which no other fear can. A woman who could face the very devil himself--or a mouse--loses her grip and goes all to pieces in front of a flash of lightning.

"Mortimer! Mortimer!" (Wailing)

"Evangeline, is that you? What is the matter? Where are you?"

"Shut up in the closet. You ought to be ashamed to lie there and sleep so, and such an awful storm going on."

"Why, how can one be ashamed when he is asleep, Evangeline?"

"You never try, Mortimer--you know very well you never try." (Muffled sobs)

"I'm sorry, dear--I'm truly sorry. Come back and--"

"Mortimer! Do you mean to say you are in that bed yet? Come out of it instantly. I should think you would take some little care of your life, for my sake and the children's, if not for your own. You know there is no place so dangerous as a bed in a thunderstorm!"

"But, confound it, Evangeline, I'm not in bed now. I'm--"

"How can you swear at such a time as this?"

"I didn't swear, Evangeline."

"Oh, yes; now argue, and argue, and argue--I don't see how you can act so, when there is not a lightning-rod on the place! What are you doing?--Lighting a match at such a time as this! Are you stark mad?"

"Hang it, woman, the place is as dark as the inside of an infidel."

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