

A CONNECTICUT YANKEE IN KING ARTHUR'S COURT.

BY MARK TWAIN.

[Here follow a few incidents from an impending book of mine which bears the above title.¹ The Yankee tells his own story, and in his own language, beginning with this brief description of himself.]



AM an American. I was born and reared in Hartford, in the State of Connecticut — anyway, just over the river, in the country. So I am a Yankee of the Yankees — and practical; yes, and nearly barren of sentiment, I suppose — or poetry, in other words. My father was a blacksmith, my uncle was a horse-doctor, and I was both along at first. Then I went over to the great Colt Arms factory and learned my real trade; learned all there was to it; learned to make everything — guns, revolvers, cannon, boilers, engines, all sorts of labor-saving machinery. Why, I could make anything a body wanted — anything in the world, it did n't make any difference what; and if there

was n't any quick, new-fangled way to make a thing, I could invent one — and do it as easy as rolling off a log. I became head superintendent, and had a couple of thousand men under me. Well, a man like that is a man that has got plenty of sand — that goes without saying.

[The first chapter explains how, by a curious accident, he was flung back thirteen centuries and landed, whole and sound and very much surprised, in the midst of the quaint and primitive England of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table; the five succeeding chapters relate his first adventures at Arthur's court, and close with his escape from death at the stake by means of a "miracle" — at least he passes the thing off on those simple and superstitious people as a miracle. And of so mighty a sort is his miracle that it raises him at once to the dignity of chief minister and executive, and at the same time so damages Merlin's stock as an enchanter that Merlin becomes his enemy, and a bitter struggle for supremacy in magic ensues between the two which lasts to the end of the book, Merlin using the absurd necromancy of the time, and the Yankee beating it easily and brilliantly with the more splendid necromancy of the nineteenth century — that is, the marvels of modern science.]

Inasmuch as I was now the second personage in the kingdom, so far as political power and authority were concerned, much was made of me. My raiment was of silks and velvets and cloth of gold, and in consequence was very showy, also uncomfortable. But habit would soon reconcile me to my clothes; I was aware of that. I was given the choicest suite of apartments in the castle, after the king's. They were aglow with loud-colored silken hangings, but the stone floors had nothing but rushes on them for a carpet, and they were misfit rushes at that, being not all of one breed. As for conveniences, properly speaking, there were n't any. I mean *little* conveniences; it is the little conveniences that make the real comfort of life. The big oaken chairs, graced with rude carvings, were well enough, but that was the stopping-place. There was no soap, no matches, no looking-glass — except a metal one, about as powerful as a pail of water. And not a chromo. I had been used to chromos for years, and I saw now, that without my suspecting it a passion for art had got worked into the fabric of my being, and was become a part of me. It made me homesick to look around over this proud and gaudy but heartless barrenness and remember that in our house at East Hartford, all unpretending as it was, you could n't go into a room but you would find an insurance chromo, or at least a three-color "God Bless Our Home" over the door; and in the parlor we had nine. But here, even in my grand room of state, there was n't anything in the nature of a picture, except a thing the size of a bed-quilt, which was either woven or knitted (it had darned places in it), and nothing in it was the right color or the right shape; and as for proportions, even Raphael himself could n't have botched them more formidably after all his practice on those nightmares they call his "Celebrated Hampton Court Cartoons." We had several of his chromos; one was his "Miraculous Draught of Fishes," where he puts in a miracle of his own — puts three men into a canoe which could n't have held a dog without turning over. I always admired to study R.'s art, it was so fresh and unconventional.

¹ Now in press — Charles L. Webster & Co., publishers.

There was n't even a bell or a speaking-tube in the castle. I had a great many servants, and those that were on duty lolled in the ante-rooms; and when I wanted one of them I had to go and call for him. There was no gas, there were no candles; a bronze dish half full of boarding-house butter with a blazing rag floating in it was the thing that produced what was regarded as light. A lot of these hung along the walls and modified the dark — just toned it down enough to make it dismal. If you went out at night, your servants carried torches. There were no books, pens, paper, or ink, and no glass in the openings they believed to be windows. It is a little thing, glass is, until it is absent; then it becomes a big thing. But perhaps the worst of all was, that there was n't any sugar, coffee, tea, or tobacco. I saw that I was just another Robinson Crusoe cast away on an uninhabited island, with no society but some more or less tame animals, and if I wanted to make life bearable I must do as he did, invent, contrive, create; reorganize things, set brain and hand to work, and keep them busy. Well, that was in my line.

One thing troubled me along at first — the immense interest which people took in me. Apparently the whole nation wanted a look at me. It soon transpired that the eclipse had scared the British world almost to death; that while it lasted the whole country, from one end to the other, was in a pitiable state of panic, and the churches, hermitages, and monk-eries overflowed with praying and weeping poor creatures who thought the end of the world was come. Then had followed the news that the producer of this awful event was a stranger, a mighty magician at Arthur's court; that he could have blown out the sun like a candle, and was just going to do it when his mercy was purchased, and he then dissolved his enchantments and was now recognized and honored as the man who had by his unaided might saved the globe from destruction and its peoples from extinction. Now, if you consider that everybody believed that, and not only believed it, but never even dreamed of doubting it, you will easily understand that there was not a person in all Britain who would not have walked fifty miles to get a sight of me. Of course I was all the talk; all other subjects were dropped; even the king became suddenly a person of minor interest and notoriety. Within twenty-four hours the delegations began to arrive, and from that time onward for a fortnight they kept coming. The village was crowded, and all the countryside. I had to go out a dozen times a day to show myself to these reverent and awe-stricken multitudes. It came to be a great burden as to time and trouble, but of course it was at the same time

compensatingly agreeable to be so celebrated and such a center of homage. It turned Brer Merlin green with envy and spite, which was a great satisfaction to me. But there was one thing I could n't understand — nobody had asked for an autograph. I spoke to Clarence, the page, about it. By George, I had to explain to him what it was! Then the lad said nobody in the country could read or write but a few dozen priests. Land! think of that.

There was another thing that troubled me a little. Those multitudes presently began to agitate for another miracle. That was natural. To be able to carry back to their far homes the boast that they had seen the man who could command the sun, riding in the heavens, and be obeyed, would make them great in the eyes of their neighbors and envied by them all; but to be able also to say they had seen him work a miracle themselves — why, people would come a distance to see *them*. The pressure got to be pretty strong. There was going to be an eclipse of the moon, and I knew the date and hour, but it was too far away — two years. I would have given a good deal for license to hurry it up and use it now when there was a big market for it. It seemed a great pity to have it wasted so, and come lagging along at a time when a body would n't have any use for it, as like as not. If it had been booked for only a month away, I could have sold it short; but as matters stood I could n't seem to cipher out any way to make it do me any good, so I gave up trying. Next, Clarence found that old Merlin was making himself busy on the sly among those people. He was spreading a report that I was a humbug, and that the reason I did n't accommodate the people with a miracle was because I could n't. I saw that I must do something. I presently thought of a plan.

By my authority as executive I threw Merlin into prison, — the same cell I had occupied myself, — and I did n't thin out the rats any for his accommodation. Then I gave public notice by herald and trumpet that I should be busy with affairs of state for a fortnight, but about the end of that time I would take a moment's leisure and blow up Merlin's ancient stone tower by fires from heaven; in the mean time whoso listened to evil reports about me, let him beware. Furthermore, I would perform but this one miracle at this time and no more; if it failed to satisfy and any murmured, I would turn the murmurers into horses and make them useful. Quiet ensued.

I took Clarence into my confidence to a certain degree, and we went to work privately. I told him that this was a sort of miracle that required a trifle of preparation, and that it

would be sudden death ever to talk about these preparations to anybody. That made his mouth safe enough. Clandestinely we made a few bushels of first-rate blasting powder, and I superintended my armorers while they constructed a lightning-rod and some wires. That old stone tower was very massive, and rather ruinous, too, for it was Roman, and four hundred years old. Yes, and handsome, after a rude fashion, and clothed with ivy from base to summit as with a shirt of scale mail. It stood on a lonely eminence, in good view from the castle, and about half a mile away.

Working by night, we stowed the powder in the tower — dug stones out on the inside, and buried the powder in the walls themselves, which were fifteen feet thick at the base. We put in a peck at a time in a dozen places. We could have blown up the Tower of London with these charges. When the thirteenth night was come we put up our lightning-rod, bedded in one of the batches of powder, and ran wires from it to the other batches. Everybody had shunned that locality from the day of my proclamation; but on the morning of the fourteenth I thought best to warn the people, through the heralds, to keep clear away — a quarter of a mile away. They added, by command, that at some time during the twenty-four hours I would consummate the miracle, but would first give a brief notice; by flags on the castle towers if in the daytime, by torch-baskets in the same places if at night.

Thunder-showers had been tolerably frequent of late, and I was not much afraid of a failure; still, I should n't have cared for a delay of a day or two: I should have explained that I was busy with affairs of state yet, and the people must wait.

Of course we had a blazing sunny day — almost the first one without a cloud for three weeks; things always happen so. I kept secluded and watched the weather. Clarence dropped in from time to time and said the public excitement was growing and growing all the time, and the whole country filling up with human masses as far as one could see from the battlements. At last the wind sprung up and a cloud appeared — in the right quarter, too, and just at nightfall. For a little while I watched the distant cloud spread and blacken, then I judged it was time for me to appear. I ordered the torch-baskets to be lighted and Merlin liberated and sent to me. A quarter of an hour later I ascended to the parapet and there found the king and the court assembled and gazing off in the darkness towards Merlin's tower. Already the gloom was so thick that one could not see far; these people, and the old turrets, being partly in deep shadow and

partly in the red glow from the great torch-baskets overhead, made a good deal of a picture.

Merlin arrived in a sinister mood. I said:

"You wanted to burn me alive when I had not done you any harm, and latterly you have been trying to injure my professional reputation. Therefore I am going to call down fire and blow up your tower, but it is only fair to give you a chance. Now if you think you can break my enchantments and ward off the fires, step to the bat; it's your innings."

"I can, fair sir, and I will. Doubt it not."

He drew an imaginary circle on the stones of the roof, and burnt a pinch of powder in it which sent up a small cloud of aromatic smoke, whereat everybody fell back and began to cross himself and get uncomfortable. Then he began to mutter and make passes in the air with his hands. He worked himself up slowly and gradually into a sort of frenzy, and got to thrashing around with his arms like the sails of a windmill. By this time the storm had about reached us; the gusts of wind were flaring the torches and making the shadows swash about, the first heavy drops of rain were falling, the world abroad was black as pitch, the lightning began to wink fitfully. Of course my rod would be loading itself now. In fact, things were imminent. So I said:

"You have had time enough. I have given you every advantage, and not interfered. It is plain your magic is weak. It is only fair that I begin now."

I made about three passes in the air, and then there was an awful crash and that old tower leaped into the sky in chunks, along with a vast volcanic fountain of fire that turned night to noonday and showed a thousand acres of human beings groveling on the ground in a general collapse of consternation. Well, it rained mortar and masonry the rest of the week. This was the report; but I reckon they added on a couple of days.

It was an effective miracle. That great bothersome temporary population vanished. There were a good many thousand tracks in the mud the next morning, but they were all outward bound. If I had advertised another miracle I could n't have raised an audience with a sheriff.

Merlin's stock was flat. The king wanted to stop his wages; he even wanted to banish him, but I interfered. I said he would be useful to work the weather, and attend to small matters like that, and I would give him a lift now and then when his poor little parlor-magic soured on him. There was n't a rag of his tower left, but I had the government rebuild it for him, and advised him to take boarders; but he was too high-toned for that. He was a



THE YANKEE'S RECEPTION IN ARTHURDOM.

rather hard lot, take him how you might ; but then you could n't fairly expect a man to be sweet that had been set back so.

[A few chapters are here devoted to the events of the next two or three years. The closing incident is a misunderstanding at a tournament, where the Yankee makes a remark about Sir Dinadan the Humorist which Sir Sagramour le Desirous imagines was meant for him, wherefore he challenges the Yankee to mortal combat, this fight to take place when Sir Sagramour gets back from seeking the Holy Grail—an expedition which usually occupies several years and does n't result in any Holy Grail, either. Meantime the Yankee is very busy; for he has privately set himself the task of introducing the great and beneficent civilization of the nineteenth century, and of peacefully replacing the twin despotisms of royalty and aristocratic privilege with a "Republic on the American plan" when Arthur shall have passed to his rest.]

I was pretty well satisfied with what I had already accomplished. In various quiet nooks and corners I had the beginnings of all sorts of industries under way—nuclei of future vast factories, the iron and steel missionaries of my future civilization. In these were gathered together the brightest young minds I could find, and I kept agents out raking the country for more, all the time. I was training a crowd of ignorant folk into experts—experts in every sort of handiwork and scientific calling. These nurseries of mine went along smoothly and privately undisturbed in their obscure country retreats, for nobody was allowed to come into their precincts without a special permit.

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Yes, I had made pretty handsome progress when Sir Sagramour's challenge struck me.

Four years more rolled by—and then! Well, you would never imagine it in the world. Unlimited power *is* the ideal thing when it is in safe hands. The despotism of heaven is the one absolutely perfect government. An earthly despotism would be the absolutely perfect earthly government if the conditions were the same; namely, the despot the perfectest individual of the human race, and his lease of life perpetual. But as a perishable, perfect man must die, and leave his despotism in the hands of an imperfect successor, an earthly despotism is not merely a bad form of government, it is the worst form that is possible.

My works showed what a despot could do with the resources of a kingdom at his command. Unsuspected by this dark land, I had the civilization of the nineteenth century booming under its very nose! It was fenced away from the public view, but there it was, a gigantic and unassailable fact—and to be heard from yet, if I lived and had luck. There it was, as sure a fact and as substantial a fact as any serene volcano standing innocent with its smokeless summit in the blue sky and giving no sign of the rising hell in its bowels. My schools and churches were children four years before; they were grown-up now; my little shops of that day were vast factories now; where I had a dozen trained men then, I had a thousand now; where I had one



A MAN-AT-ARMS.

brilliant expert then, I had fifty now. I stood with my finger on the button, so to speak, ready to press it and flood the midnight world with intolerable light at any moment. But I was not going to do the thing in that sudden way. It was not my policy. The people could not have stood it.

No; I had been going cautiously all the while. I had had confidential agents trickling through the country some time, whose office was to undermine knighthood by imperceptible degrees, and to gnaw a little at this and that and the other superstition, and so prepare the way gradually for a better order of things. I was turning on my light one-candle power at a time, and meant to continue to do so.

I had scattered some branch schools secretly about the kingdom, and they were doing very well. I meant to work this racket more and more as time wore on, if nothing occurred to interrupt me.

Clarence was twenty-two now, and was my head executive, my right hand. He was a darling; he was equal to anything; there was n't anything he could n't turn his hand to. Of late I had been training him for journalism, for the time seemed about right for a start in the newspaper line; nothing big, but just a small weekly for experimental circulation in my civilization nurseries. He took to it like a duck; there was an editor concealed in him, sure. Already he had doubled himself in one way; he talked sixth century and wrote nineteenth. His journalistic style was climbing steadily; it was already up to the back-settlement Alabama mark, and could n't be told from the editorial output of that region by either matter or flavor.

[The next thirty chapters tell the adventures of a trip which the king and the Yankee make on foot through England disguised as peasants; the statesman's idea being to observe with his own eyes the condition of the masses, instead of putting up with doubtful, second-hand evidence in planning for their weal; and the king's idea being that here was a romantic new deal in the line of adventure, and doubtless a perilously good time to be got out of it. After long absence they at last wander back to the Capital, and find that Sir Sagramour, minus the Grail, has just got back too.]

Home again, at Camelot. A morning or two later I found the paper, damp from the

press, by my plate at the breakfast-table. I turned to the advertising columns, knowing I should find something of personal interest to me there. It was this:

DE PAR LE ROI.

Know that the great lord & illustrious knight, SIR SAGRAMOUR LE DESIROUS having descended to meet the King's Minister, Hank Morgan, the which is surnamed The Boss, for satisfaction of offence anciently given, these will engage in the lists by Camelot about the fourth hour of the morning of the sixteenth day of this next succeeding month. The pattle will be a l'ouTrance, sith the said offence was of a deadly sort, admitting of no composition.

DE PAR LE ROI.

Clarence's editorial reference to this affair was to this effect:

It will be observed, by a glance at our advertising columns, that the community is to be favored with a treat of unusual interest in the tournament line. The names of the artists are warrant of good entertainment. The box-office will be open at noon of the 13th; admission 3 farthings, reserved seats 5; proceeds to go to the hospital fund. The royal dair and all the Court will be present. With these exceptions, and the press and the clergy, the free list is strictly suspended. Parties are hereby warned against buying tickets of speculators; they will not be good at the door. Everybody knows and likes The Boss, everybody knows and likes Sir Sag.; come, let us give the lads a good send-off. Remember, the proceeds go to a great and free charity, and one whose broad benevolence stretches out its helping hand, warm with the blood of a loving heart, to all that suffer, regardless of race, creed, condition or color—the only charity yet established in the earth which has no politico-religious stop-cock on its compassion, but says Here flows the stream, let all come and drink! Turn out, all hands! fetch along your doughnuts and yout gum-drops and have a good time. Pie for sale on the grounds, and rocks to crack it with; also circus-lemonade—three drops of lime juice to a barrel of water.

N. B. This is the first tournament under the new law, which allows each combatant to use any weapon he may prefer. You want to make a note of that.

Up to the day set, there was no talk in all Britain of anything but this combat. All other topics sunk into insignificance, and passed out of men's thoughts and interest. It was not because a tournament was a great matter; it was not because Sir Sagramour had found the Holy Grail, for he had not, but had failed; it was not because the second (official) personage in the kingdom was one of the duelists; no, all these features were commonplace. Yet there was abundant reason for the extraordinary interest which this coming fight was creating. It was born of the fact that all the nation knew

that this was not to be a duel between mere men, so to speak, but a duel between two mighty magicians; a duel not of muscle, but of mind; not of human skill, but of superhuman art and craft; a final struggle for supremacy between the two master enchanters of the age. It was realized that the most prodigious achievements of the most renowned knights could not be worthy of comparison with a spectacle like this; they could be but child's play contrasted with this mysterious and awful battle of the gods. Yes, all the world knew it was going to be in reality a duel between Merlin and me, a measuring of his magic powers against mine. It was known that Merlin had been busy whole days and nights together imbuing Sir Sagramour's arms and armor with supernal powers of offense and defense, and that he had procured for him from the spirits of the air a fleecy veil which would render the wearer invisible to his antagonist while still visible to other men. Against Sir Sagramour, so weaponed and protected, a thousand knights could accomplish nothing; against him no known enchantments could prevail. These facts were sure; regarding them there was no doubt, no reason for doubt. There was but one question: might there be still other enchantments, *unknown* to Merlin, which could render Sir Sagramour's veil transparent to me, and make his enchanted mail vulnerable to my weapons? This was the one thing to be decided in the lists. Until then the world must remain in suspense.

So the world thought there was a vast matter at stake here, and the world was right; but it was not the one they had in their minds. No, a far vaster one was upon the cast of this die — *the life of knight-errantry*. I was a champion, it was true, but not the champion of the frivolous black arts; I was the champion of hard, unsentimental common sense and reason. I was entering the lists either to destroy knight-errantry or to be its victim.

Vast as the show-grounds were, there were no vacant spaces in them outside of the lists at ten o'clock on the morning of the 16th. The mammoth grand stand was clothed in flags, streamers, and rich tapestries, and packed with several acres of small-fry tributary kings, their suits, and the British aristocracy; with our own royal gang in the chief place, and each and every individual a flashing prism of gaudy silks and velvets — well, I never saw anything to begin with it but a fight between an Upper Mississippi sunset and the aurora borealis. The huge camp of beflagged and gay-colored tents at one end of the lists, with stiff standing sentinels at every door and a shining shield hanging by him for challenge, was another fine sight. You see, every knight

was there who had any ambition or any caste feeling; for my feeling towards their order was not much of a secret, and so here was their chance. If I won my fight with Sir Sagramour, others would have the right to call me out as long as I might be willing to respond.

Down at our end there were but two tents — one for me and another for my servants. At the appointed hour the king made a sign, and the heralds, in their tabards, appeared and made proclamation, naming the combatants and stating the cause of quarrel. There was a pause, then a ringing bugle-blast, which was the signal for us to come forth. All the multitude caught their breath, and an eager curiosity flashed into every face.

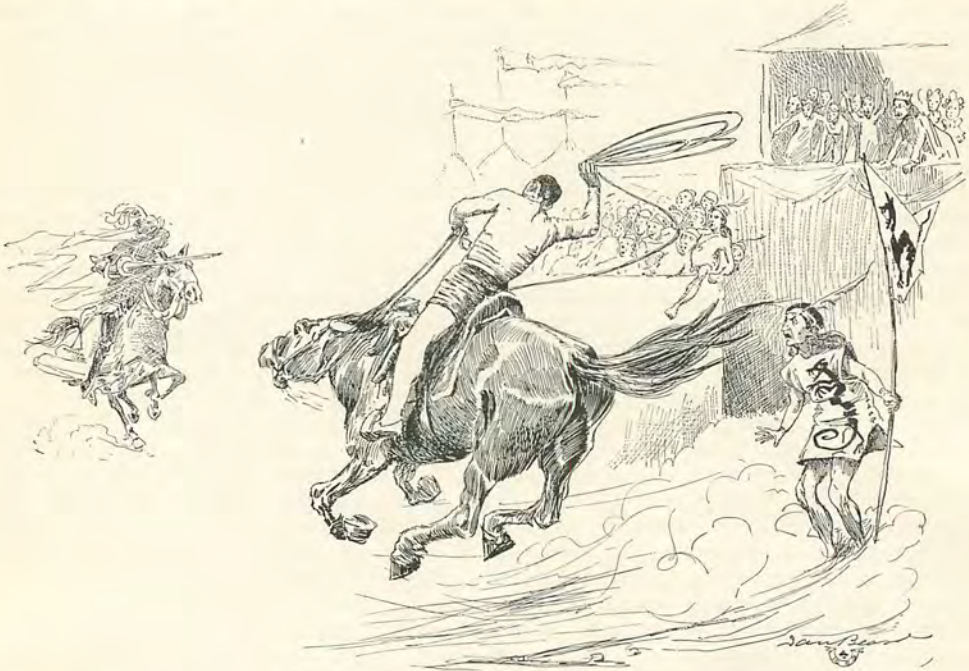
Out from the tent rode great Sir Sagramour, an imposing tower of iron, stately and rigid, his huge spear standing upright in its socket, and grasped in his strong hand, his grand horse's face and breast cased in steel, his body clothed in rich trappings that almost dragged the ground — oh, a most noble picture! A great shout went up, of welcome and admiration.

And then out I came. But I did n't get any shout. There was a wondering and eloquent silence, for a moment, then a great wave of laughter began to sweep along that human sea, but a warning bugle-blast cut its career short. I was clad in the simplest and comfortablest of gymnast costumes, flesh-colored tights from neck to heel, with blue silk puffings about my loins, and bareheaded. My horse was not above medium size, but he was alert, slender-limbed, muscled with watch-springs, and just a greyhound to go. He was a beauty, glossy as silk, and naked as he was when he was born, except for bridle and ranger-saddle.

The iron tower and the gorgeous bed-quilt came cumbrously but gracefully pirouetting down the lists, and we tripped lightly up to meet them. We halted; the tower saluted, I responded; then we wheeled and rode side by side to the grand stand and faced our king and Guenevere, to whom we made obeisance. The queen exclaimed:

“Alack, Sir Boss, wilt fight naked, and without lance or sword or —”

But the king checked her and made her understand, with a polite phrase or two, that this was none of her business. The bugles rang again, and we separated and rode to the ends of the lists, and took position. Now old Merlin stepped into view and cast a dainty web of gossamer threads over Sir Sagramour which turned him into Hamlet's ghost; the king made a sign, the bugles blew, Sir Sagramour laid his great lance in rest, and the next moment here he came thundering down the course with his veil flying out behind, and I went whistling through the air like an arrow to meet



"GREAT SCOTT! BUT THERE WAS A SENSATION."

him, cocking my ear, the while, as if noting the invisible knight's position and progress by hearing, not sight. A chorus of encouraging shouts burst out for him, and one brave voice flung out a heartening word for me — said:

"Go it, slim Jim!"

It was an even bet that Clarence had procured that favor for me — and furnished the language too. When that formidable lance-point was within a yard and a half of my breast, I twitched my horse aside without an effort and the big knight swept by, scoring a blank. I got plenty of applause that time. We turned, braced up, and down we came again. Another blank for the knight, a roar of applause for me. This same thing was repeated once more; and it fetched such a whirlwind of applause that Sir Sagramour lost his temper, and at once changed his tactics and set himself the task of chasing me down. Why, he had n't any show in the world at that; it was a game of tag, with all the advantage on my side. I whirled out of his path with ease whenever I chose, and once I slapped him on the back as I went to the rear. Finally I took the chase into my own hands; and after that, turn, or twist, or do what he would, he was never able to get behind me again; he found himself always in front at the end of his manoeuvre. So he gave up that business and retired to his end of the lists. His temper was clear gone now, and he forgot himself and flung an insult at me which disposed of mine. I slipped my lasso from the

horn of my saddle, and grasped the coil in my right hand. This time you should have seen him come! It was a business trip, sure; by his gait there was blood in his eye. I was sitting my horse at ease, and swinging the great loop of my lasso in wide circles about my head. The moment he was under way I started for him. When the space between us had narrowed to forty feet, I sent the snaky spirals of the rope a-cleaving through the air, then darted aside and faced about and brought my trained animal to a halt with all his feet braced under him for a surge. The next moment the rope sprung taut and yanked Sir Sagramour out of the saddle. Great Scott! but there was a sensation.

Unquestionably the popular thing in this world is novelty. These people had never seen anything of that cowboy business before, and it carried them clear off their feet with delight. From all around and everywhere the shout went up:

"Encore! encore!"

I wondered where they got the word; but there was no time to cipher on philological matters, because the whole knight-errantry hive was just humming now, and my prospect for trade could n't have been better. The moment my lasso was released and Sir Sagramour had been assisted to his tent I hauled in the slack, took my station, and began to swing my loop around my head again. I was sure to have use for it as soon as they could elect a suc-

cessor for Sir Sagramour, and that could n't take long where there were so many hungry candidates. Indeed, they elected one straight off—Sir Hervis de Revel.

Bzz! Here he came, like a house afire. I dodged; he passed like a flash, with my horse-hair coils settling around his neck; a second or so later, *fst!* his saddle was empty.

I got another encore; and another, and another, and still another. When I had snaked five men out, things began to look serious to the iron-clads, and they stopped and consulted together. As a result, they decided that it was time to waive etiquette and send their greatest and best against me. To the astonishment of that little world, I lassoed Sir Lamorak de Galis, and after him Sir Galahad. So you see there was simply nothing to be done, now, but play their right bower—bring out the superbest of the superb, the mightiest of the mighty, the great Sir Launcelot himself!

A proud moment for me? I should think so. Yonder was Arthur, King of Britain; yonder was Guenevere; yes, and whole tribes of little provincial kings and kinglets; and in the tented camp yonder renowned knights from many lands; and likewise the selectest body known to chivalry, the Knights of the Table Round, the most illustrious in Christendom; and, biggest fact of all, the very sun of their shining system was yonder couching his lance,

the focal point of forty thousand adoring eyes; and, all by myself, here was I laying for him. Across my mind flitted the dear image of a certain hello-girl of West Hartford, and I wished she could see me now. In that moment down came the Invincible with the rush of a whirlwind, the courtly world rose to its feet and bent forward, the fateful coils went circling through the air, and before you could wink I was towing Sir Launcelot across the field on his back, and kissing my hand to the storm of waving kerchiefs and the thunder-crash of applause that greeted me.

Said I to myself, as I coiled my lariat and hung it on my saddle-horn, and sat there drunk with glory, "The victory is perfect, no other will venture against me; knight-errantry is dead." Now imagine my astonishment, and everybody else's too, to hear the peculiar bugle-call which announces that another competitor is about to enter the lists! There was a mystery here; I could n't account for this thing. Next, I noticed Merlin gliding away from me; and then I noticed that my lasso was gone. The old sleight-of-hand expert had stolen it, sure, and slipped it under his robe.

The bugle blew again. I looked, and down came Sir Sagramour riding again, with his dust brushed off and his veil nicely re-arranged. I trotted up to meet him, and pretended to find him by the sound of his horse's hoofs. He said:



SIR SAGRAMOUR'S DISCOMFITURE.

"Thou 'rt quick of ear, but it will not save thee from this!" and he touched the hilt of his great sword. "An ye are not able to see it, because of the influence of the veil, know that it is no cumbrous lance, but a sword—and I ween ye will not be able to avoid it."

His visor was up; there was death in his smile. I should never be able to dodge his sword, that was plain. Somebody was going to die this time. If he got the drop on me, I could name the corpse. We rode forward together and saluted the royalties. This time the king was disturbed. He said:

"Where is thy strange weapon?"

"It is stolen, sire."

"Hast another at hand?"

"No, sire; I brought only the one."

Then Merlin mixed in:

"He brought but the one because there was but the one to bring. There exists none other but that one. It belongeth to the King of the Demons of the Sea. This man is a pretender, and ignorant; else he had known that that weapon can be used in but nine bouts only, and then it vanisheth away to its home under the sea."

"Then is he weaponless," said the king. "Sir Sagramour, ye will grant him leave to borrow."

"And I will lend," said Sir Launcelot, limping up. "He is as brave a knight of his hands as any that be on live, and he shall have mine."

He put his hand on his sword to draw it, but Sir Sagramour said:

"Stay, it may not be. He shall fight with his own weapons; it was his privilege to choose them and bring them. If he has erred, on his head be it."

"Knight," said the king, "thou 'rt overwrought with passion; it disorders thy mind. Wouldst kill a naked man?"

"An he do it he shall answer it to me," said Sir Launcelot.

"I will answer it to any he that desireth," retorted Sir Sagramour, hotly.

Merlin broke in, rubbing his hands and smiling his low-downest smile of malicious gratification:

"'T is well said, right well said! And 't is enough of parleying. Let my lord the king deliver the battle signal."

The king had to yield. The bugle made proclamation, and we turned apart and rode to our stations. There we stood, a hundred yards apart, facing each other, rigid and motionless, like horsed statues. And so we remained, in a soundless hush, as much as a full minute, everybody gazing, nobody stirring. It seemed as if the king could not take heart to give the signal. But at last he lifted his hand, the clear note of the bugle followed,

Sir Sagramour's long blade described a flashing curve in the air, and it was superb to see him come. I sat still. On he came. I did not move. People got so excited that they shouted to me:

"Fly, fly! Save thyself! This is murder!"

I never budged so much as an inch till that thundering apparition had got within fifteen paces of me; then I snatched a dragoon revolver out of my holster, there was a flash and a roar, and the revolver was back in the holster before anybody could tell what had happened.

Here was a riderless horse plunging by, and yonder lay Sir Sagramour, stone dead.

The people that ran to see him were stricken dumb to find that the life was actually gone out of the man and no reason for it visible, no hurt upon his body, nothing like a wound. There was a hole through the breast of his chain-mail, but they attached no importance to a little thing like that; and as a bullet-wound there produces but little blood, none came in sight because of the clothing and swaddlings under the armor. The body was dragged over to let the king and the swells look down upon it. They were stupefied with astonishment, naturally. I was requested to come and explain the miracle. But I remained in my tracks, like a statue, and said:

"If it is a command, I will come; but my lord the king knows that I am where the laws of combat require me to remain while any desire to come against me."

I waited. Nobody challenged. Then I said:

"If there are any who doubt that this field is well and fairly won, I do not wait for them to challenge me, I challenge them."

"It is a gallant offer," said the king, "and well beseems you. Whom will you name first?"

"I name none, I challenge all! Here I stand, and dare the chivalry of England to come against me—not by individuals, but in mass!"

"What!" shouted a score of knights.

"You have heard the challenge. Take it, or I proclaim you recreant knights and vanquished, every one!"

It was a "bluff," you know. At such a time it is sound judgment to put on a bold face and play your hand for a hundred times more than it is worth: forty-nine times out of fifty nobody dares to "call," and you rake in the chips. But just this once—well, things looked squally! In just no time five hundred knights were scrambling into their saddles, and, before you could wink, a widely scattering drove were under way and clattering down upon me. I snatched both revolvers from the holsters and began to measure distances and calculate chances.

Bang! One saddle empty. Bang! another one. Bang-bang! and I bagged two. Well, it was nip and tuck with us, and I knew it. If I spent the eleventh shot without convincing these people, the twelfth man would kill me, sure.

And so I never did feel so happy as I did when my ninth downed its man and I detected the wavering in the crowd which is premonitory of panic. An instant lost now could knock out my last chance. But I did n't lose it. I raised both revolvers and pointed them; the halted host stood their ground just

about one good square moment, then broke and fled.

The day was mine. Knight-errantry was a doomed institution. The march of civilization was begun. How did I feel? Ah, you never could imagine it.

And Brer Merlin? His stock was flat again. Somehow, every time the magic of fol-de-rol tried conclusions with the magic of science, the magic of fol-de-rol got left.

[However, it is only fair to the late Merlin to say that he got one more chance at the Yankee—and made exceedingly good use of it, too.]



Mark Twain.

A THANKSGIVING HYMN.

FOR bud and for bloom and for balm-laden breeze,
 For the singing of birds from the hills to the seas,
 For the beauty of dawn and the brightness of noon,
 For the light in the night of the stars and the moon,
 We praise thee, gracious God.

For the sun-ripened fruit and the billowy grain,
 For the orange and apple, the corn and the cane,
 For the bountiful harvests now gathered and stored,
 That by thee in the lap of the nations were poured,
 We praise thee, gracious God.

For the blessing of friends, for the old and the new,
 For the hearts that are trusted and trusting and true,
 For the tones that we love, for the light of the eye
 That warms with a welcome and glooms with good-bye,
 We praise thee, gracious God.

That the desolate poor may find shelter and bread,
 That the sick may be comforted, nourished, and fed,
 That the sorrow may cease of the sighing and sad,
 That the spirit bowed down may be lifted and glad,
 We pray thee, pitying Lord.

That brother the hand of his brother may clasp
 From ocean to ocean in friendliest grasp,
 That for north and for south and for east and for west,
 The horror of war be forever at rest,
 We pray thee, pitying Lord.

For the blessings of earth and of air and of sky,
 That fall on us all from the Father on high,
 For the crown of all blessing since blessing begun,
 For the gift, "the unspeakable gift," of thy Son,
 We praise thee, gracious God.

S. E. Adams.