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*A Connecticut Yankee  
in King Arthur's Court*

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**by Johnny Simons**

*Adapted from the Novel by  
Mark Twain*

**Dramatic Publishing Company**

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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(A CONNECTICUT YANKEE IN KING ARTHUR'S COURT)

ISBN: 978-0-88680-484-8

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## ABOUT THE PLAY

Have you ever wanted to turn back the clock and visit days gone by? Do you wish that you could have seen Waterloo with your own eyes or stood in the Colosseum on your own two feet? For a modern day factory worker named Hank, it's no wish. He finds himself unexpectedly dropped into a land where wizards still roam the earth, knights joust in the cause of honor, and the most remembered of kings, Arthur himself, reigns in all his glory. He is given a shaky greeting as he steps into this unknown land, but he quickly finds himself elevated to a position of prestige and immediately proceeds to turn everything completely upside down. Armed with merely the basic knowledge of a man of the twentieth century, Hank becomes the man who breathes fire and blots out the sun, or at least that's how he appears to the locals. Soon, he comes to be known far and wide as "The Boss." Things don't go smoothly for Hank forever, though, and he quickly finds out that things work very differently in Camelot. About 70 minutes.

**CAST**

*Hank*  
*Sandy (Miss Sands)*  
*Clarence*  
*Arthur (Doctor)*  
*Guenever*  
*Launcelot*  
*Merlin*  
*Sir Sagramour (Executioner)*  
*Sir Kay*  
*Hercules*  
*Workman*  
*First Nobleman*  
*Second Nobleman*  
*Huntsman*  
*Guard*  
*Swineherd*

*Additional Knights, Court Crowd, & Huntsmen as desired*

***Time:*** 528

***Place:*** The Kingdom of Camelot

# A CONNECTICUT YANKEE IN KING ARTHUR'S COURT

## Prologue

*[A distant SOUND OF MACHINES...motors throbbing, engines pounding...combines with the metallic clank and zing of a thousand tools in the hands of perspiring workmen. The smell, if there could be a smell, would be of oil and rags and gasoline. The SOUND builds steadily, then slowly fades to a respectable hum. The FLARE of a match illuminates Hank's face. He smokes casually and silently as one spot of LIGHT grows warm around him. Smiling, HANK addresses the audience while wiping his hands clean on an oil-soaked rag.]*

HANK. I am an American. I was born and reared in Hartford, in the state of Connecticut. So I'm a Yankee. My father was a blacksmith, my uncle was a horse-doctor, and I was both. Then I went over to my real trade. Learned all there was to it. Learned to make everything: guns, revolvers, cannons, boilers, engines, all sorts of labor-saving machinery. Why, I could make anything a body wanted. Anything in the world, it didn't make any difference what. And if there wasn't any quick new-fangled way to make a thing, I could invent one...and do it as easy as rolling off a log. Soon I became head superintendent and a foreman. Had a couple of thousand men under me.

*[A GANG of brooding, sweaty workmen appear.]*

HANK. Well, a man like that is a man that's full of fight. That goes without saying. With a couple of thousand rough men under one, one has plenty of that sort of amusement. I had anyway.

*[The MEN mutter to each other as they crowd onto the stage. Some have their hands thrust deep into their pockets. Others are holding hammers, wrenches, crow bars, and the like. HANK speaks above the ever increasing din.]*

HANK. At last I met my match, and I got my dose. It was during a misunderstanding conducted with crow bars with a fellow we used to call...

WORKMAN. Hercules!

*[Hank is interrupted by ONE OF THE WORKMEN who has just been jostled and shoved by a barrel-chested giant with trouble on his mind and grease on his undershirt. HERCULES bellows at the workman.]*

HERCULES. Get out of my way!

WORKMAN. Cut the rough stuff, Hercules. *[The OTHERS join in urging him to stop.]*

HERCULES. Shut up! *[He knocks the workman to the ground. A fight breaks out. HANK steps in and breaks apart the growling mob.]*

HANK. All right, that's enough. Get back and settle down. We'll have no more fighting. Hercules, I've had enough of your trouble making. Draw your pay and get out of here. You're fired.

HERCULES. Oh, yeah? Sez who?

HANK. Sez me, the boss. Now hit the road.

HERCULES. I'll hit the road as soon as I crack your head and spring every joint in your skull. *[He strikes out, landing a crushing blow to the head that sends HANK sprawling. The MEN help him to his feet and HANK shakes himself back to consciousness.]* Gimme that crowbar. I'll make fast work of this shrimp. *[He wrestles a crowbar away from one of the men and swings it at Hank. HANK manages to escape but encounters another attack almost immediately.]*

WORKMAN. Here you go, Hank. Have at him. *[A CROWBAR is tossed to Hank. The MEN cheer and growl as the SOUNDS of the machines increase in volume. HERCULES and HANK battle it out. The CROWBARS clang together amid the mighty engines' roar. Suddenly, HANK is disarmed and pushed to the ground. The CROWD closes in as HERCULES raises his weapon high, then brings it down hard and fast. All SOUNDS stop abruptly. The MEN are frozen. The MACHINES are dead.]*

*[A moment of silence. A cold WIND begins to blow and reverberates through Hank's unconscious mind. A thin, piercing WHISTLE that spirals in and out and through a thousand yesterdays. The present fades away, as do the hushed workmen. Hank's body is alone in space as the WIND SOUND builds into an ear-splitting roar and the LIGHT is extinguished.]*

## ACT I, Scene 1

*[HANK is sprawled out, unconscious, on a grassy mound. SIR KAY enters and approaches cautiously. He draws his weapon and tilts it down toward Hank's chest.]*

SIR KAY. Fair sir, will ye joust?

HANK. Will I which?

SIR KAY. Will ye joust? Will ye try a passage of arms for land or lady?

HANK. What are you giving me? Get along back to your circus, or I'll report you.

*[SIR KAY omits a grunt and backs up a few yards. Then he rushes at Hank with his long sword pointed straight ahead. HANK screams and leaps aside.]*

HANK. What are you trying to do, kill me?

SIR KAY. For sooth sir, that is exactly what I am trying to do.

HANK. Good Lord, man! Are you crazy?

SIR KAY. Stand fast, knave. Thou jumpeth like a frog. *[SIR KAY begins to hack about wildly with his sword. HANK dodges the blows with forced agility.]*

HANK. Stop! Stop it! *[SIR KAY continues to swat at him.]* For God's sake, won't you stop?

SIR KAY. Marry, sir, I will stop...for God's sake. *[Both men are out of breath and panting heavily. They sink to the ground.]*

HANK. Now then, will you please explain to me what is going on?

SIR KAY. Thou art my property, sir.

HANK. Your what?

SIR KAY. Thou art my property...the captive of my blade.

HANK. Now wait a minute...

SIR KAY. Hold, fair sir, or I will bare my blade against thee.

HANK. What are you...some kind of nut?

SIR KAY. Prithee, I do not understand thy words.

HANK. Well, don't feel like you're by yourself, friend! I can't unscramble half the things you're saying. *[HANK looks him over from head to toe.]* Brother, take a look at you. Why they must have just let you out.

SIR KAY. "Let me out?"

HANK. Yeah, you know...out of the booby hatch.

SIR KAY. "Hatch?"

HANK. Coop.

SIR KAY. "Coop?"

HANK. Asylum. [*SIR KAY dumpy cocks his head from side to side.*] Insane asylum! That is where you're from, isn't it? [*HANK reaches for a cigarette and matches.*]

SIR KAY. Insane asylum? Nay, sir, I be not from that town, and know not of it. My home is yonder...in Camelot. [*HANK strikes a match and starts to light his cigarette.*]

HANK. Camelot? You mean this isn't Hartford? [*SIR KAY crumbles backward and swiftly draws his weapon, ready to strike.*]

SIR KAY. Odsbodikins!

HANK. Hold it, hold it, friend! How was I to know that you hated Hartford?

SIR KAY. Ye hellish fiend, stand fast or I will smite thee down!

HANK. "Hellish fiend?" Me?

SIR KAY. I know thee now, dark creature! Marry, I know thee!

HANK. You do?

SIR KAY. Thou art no less a dragon in disguise!

HANK. A dragon in disguise? Oh, God! Look, it's only a cigarette...

SIR KAY. Stand fast, I say. Dragon, thou art my prisoner... I have captured thee. [*SIR KAY pokes Hank with his blade.*]

HANK. Now listen, stop it!

SIR KAY. Advance, I say!

HANK. Advance to where? The insane asylum?

SIR KAY. Nay...to Camelot. [*Another jab of Sir Kay's sword sends HANK hopping down the path, as the LIGHTS black out.*]

## ACT I, Scene 2

[*A BLARE OF TRUMPETS announce the arrival of the king and queen. CLARENCE, a little snub-nosed page, steps forward and cries out...*]

CLARENCE. Their royal highnesses, the king and queen of Camelot...Arthur and Guenevere. [*More TRUMPETS. The entire COURT bows low as KING ARTHUR and his QUEEN enter. They mount their thrones and nod to their respectful subjects. The SUBJECTS formally arrange themselves in their proper places. When this is done, the KING speaks.*]

ARTHUR. Today was to have been a holiday...a day of games and feasting. What manner of business hath postponed such merriment, and who within this royal assemblage hath dared to call this court into session?

*[MERLIN, the magician, oozes from his place.]*

MERLIN. It was I, sirs, and I most humbly beg the pardon of my noble king, but such action was necessary.

ARTHUR. Ah, Merlin. My pardon may be granted only if thy reason for this action be of warrant. Speak now, and tell us of the nature of this “necessary” business that interrupts the holiday of kings.

MERLIN. So shall I, sire. This morning Sir Kay returned to Camelot.

ARTHUR. So? We were expecting him back for the holiday. What of it?

MERLIN. He was not alone.

ARTHUR. Oh?

MERLIN. Sir Kay hath captured a most fearsome beast, sire...a beast that demands thy immediate judgement and attention, lest it prove itself a menace and destroy us all.

*[The COURT is startled by these words. They begin to murmur low and stir about.]*

ARTHUR. Destroy us all, you say? Nonsense. Bring forth this menace. Let me look it in the eye.

*[MERLIN calls out loudly...]*

MERLIN. Bring forth the beast. *[The hallway resounds with the cry.]*

FIRST KNIGHT. Bring forth the beast.

SECOND KNIGHT. Bring forth the beast.

THIRD KNIGHT. Bring forth the beast. *[Silence...then, FOOTSTEPS echoing from within the dark corridor, coming closer and closer. All eyes are riveted to the passageway. The COURT draws back in terror as SIR KAY enters with the captive. HANK is pushed into the center of the room and a SHUDDER OF FEAR runs throughout the crowd.]*

SIR KAY. Behold, good sire, the monster I have brought to thee. It looketh like a man but breatheth fire like a prodigious giant. It is, in fact, sire, a dragon. *[The COURT gasps.]*

ARTHUR. Marry, Sir Kay, how came thee upon such a creature? Where did ye have the first encounter?

SIR KAY. It was in a far land of barbarians, sire. All wore this same unseemly garb.

MERLIN. Forsooth, Sir Kay, the garment is but a disguise.

GUENEVER. How so, good Merlin? Why is it that this dragon hath draped itself in such peculiar fashion?

MERLIN. Oh, la! My queen...the clothing doth but hide the scales.

*[Another GASP from the court. GUENEVER shivers.]*

GUENEVER. Scales! Oh, slimy! Slimy! *[She hides her face in her hands.]*

ARTHUR. Come, come, Guenever. Fear not. We will see if such a thing be true or no. Page... *[CLARENCE hops forward.]* Strip the dragon.

CLARENCE. Me, sir?

ARTHUR. Thee, sir. *[CLARENCE swallows hard, then cautiously approaches the "dragon."]*

HANK. Now wait a minute...couldn't we discuss this like civilized people? Boy...you've got to be joking! You can't do it. This sort of thing simply isn't done. It's a joke, isn't it? Sure, that's what it is...a big practical joke! *[HANK backs slowly toward the direction of an exit, then suddenly bolts for freedom...but he is not fast enough. The GUARDS engulf him.]*

MERLIN. Strip him!

HANK. Stop it. You can't do this to me!!! Keep your hands off!!! There are ladies present. *[When the MOB parts, HANK is standing in his underwear.]* Alright, you've got me. Now what do you plan to do with me?

GUENEVER. Arthur, hearest thou? This creature speaketh. And, prithee, look upon its body. Hath a monster such thin and spindle-legs? Methinks this is no dragon.

ARTHUR. Quite so, Guenever. A dragon hath more beauty than this lean and scrawny stalk.

HANK. Well, you're no prize yourself.

MERLIN. Quiet, fool! Ye are no more than a slave.

HANK. ●kay, have your fun. But look, old man, if I could see the head keeper for just a minute...

MERLIN. Quiet. Will ye permit this knave to address thy court in such a manner? Away with him. Throw him in the dungeon!

ARTHUR. Hold thy peace, Merlin. Stranger, hast thou friends who may ransom thee?

HANK. Why, sure I have friends. Of course I do. Just lead me to the nearest telephone, and I'll gladly call them.

MERLIN. The knave is mad.

GUENEVER. Hast friends near Camelot? Hast gold to offer for thy freedom?

HANK. Gold? Well, now, let me see... *[HANK grabs his pants and fumbles through his pockets.]* Here's the key to my car...guess that won't help much. My social security card...what else is in here...my almanac, cigarettes, matches...

MERLIN. Stop him, sire! He doth possess tokens of the devil! He carries with him the blackest of magic! Hear me, your highness...he must be burned at the stake!

*[The COURT responds with a murmur.]*

HANK. Burned at the stake! I'd just like to see you try it!

MERLIN. Ye heard him, Majesty! Ye heard his very words! What manner of man be this that challengeth his doom?

ARTHUR. Verily, I do not know. It is not wise that such a creature be loosed in Camelot.

MERLIN. Of a surety, no. Ye know not whether to believe me, your highness? Thy mind harbors doubt? Come...come, my liege. I would speak with thee in private concerning the fate of this corrupt and evil stranger.

ARTHUR. So be it, Merlin. This puzzleth me greatly. Come, Guenever. Join us my queen.

GUENEVER. An odd creature, me thinks. Forsooth he is very odd.

MERLIN. Page... *[CLARENCE again hops forward.]* Keep thine eye upon the prisoner whilst we converse. He must not escape, thou knowest that well.

CLARENCE. As you command, my Lord. *[ALL exit except Clarence and Hank. They eye each other suspiciously.]*

HANK. What do you call yourself?

CLARENCE. Amyas Le Poulet.

HANK. Thanks just the same, but I think I'll call you Clarence. Do you belong to this asylum, or are you just here on a visit or something like that?

CLARENCE. Marry, fair sir, me seemeth...

HANK. That will do. You're a patient. Listen...if I could see the head keeper for just a minute...

CLARENCE. Prithee do not attempt escape!

HANK. Alright, alright...calm down. I'm not going to hurt you. So...you're a "page" are you? You don't look like more than a paragraph to me. How old are you?

CLARENCE. Fifteen, my lord.

HANK. Fifteen, eh? What year were you born?

CLARENCE. Yeah, sir?

HANK. Yeah...what was the date of your birth?

CLARENCE. I was born in the beginning of the year 513, my lord.

HANK. Maybe I didn't hear you right. Say it again...and say it slow. What year was it?

CLARENCE. 513.

HANK. Now listen, boy, be honest and honorable with me...are you in your right mind?

CLARENCE. Marry, sir, I am.

HANK. Are these other people in their right minds?

CLARENCE. Of a surety, yes, good my lord.

HANK. And this isn't an asylum? I mean, it isn't a place where they cure crazy people? [*CLARENCE shakes his head.*] Oh, God. Well then, either I am a lunatic, or something just awful has happened. Now tell me, honest and true, where am I?

CLARENCE. In King Arthur's court.

HANK. And according to your notions, what year is it now?

CLARENCE. 528...the twenty-first of June. [*HANK is stupefied.*]

HANK. But...this is impossible! I've got to be dreaming! Things like this simply don't happen. You...go along...scatter! This has got to be a dream!

CLARENCE. Prithee, what dream?

HANK. What dream? Why, the dream that I am in King Arthur's court...a person who never existed, and that I'm talking to you...nothing but a work of the imagination.

CLARENCE. Oh, la, indeed! And is it a dream that you're to be burned at the stake? Ho-ho, answer me that!

HANK. Now listen, Clarence my boy. You're the only friend I've got. You are my friend, aren't you? Don't fail me. Help me to devise some way of escaping from this place!

CLARENCE. Escape? Why, man, the corridors are in guard and keep of men-at-arms.

HANK. No doubt, no doubt. But how many, Clarence? Not many, I hope?

CLARENCE. Full a score. One may not hope to escape. [*HANK collapses.*]

HANK. Oh, Lord! I need a doctor.

CLARENCE. A doctor, fair sir? Lo, Merlin is the one they calleth doctor.

HANK. Merlin?

CLARENCE. Merlin, the mighty magician...the one who screecheth at thee when thou didst show thy tokens of the devil.

HANK. So that is Merlin, eh?

CLARENCE. Aye, good sir. They all do fear him, for at his beck and call he hath the storms and lightnings and all the devils that be in hell.

HANK. That cheap old humbug? That maundering old fool? Bosh! Pure bosh! The silliest bosh in the world!

CLARENCE. Oh, beware! These are awful words. Any moment these walls may crumble upon us! [*CLARENCE falls to the floor and covers his head, as HANK laughs.*]

HANK. Get up. Pull yourself together. Now look here, Clarence, I'm your friend, right? So in return you must be mine. I want you to do me a favour. I want you to get word to the king that I am a magician myself... "The Supreme Grand High Muckamuck." And I want him to be made to understand that I am quietly arranging a little calamity here that will make fur fly if any harm comes to me.

CLARENCE. What kind of calamity, my Lord?

HANK. What kind? Well...now let's see. I have several to choose from. What would be most effective? [*HANK paces the floor. He suddenly remembers something.*] That's it! I've got it! [*He grabs the almanac.*] What year did you say this was?

CLARENCE. 528, sire. The twenty-first of June.

HANK. [*Thumbing through the almanac.*] 528...528...here it is! Let's see now...the twenty-first of June... Yes, here it is! I was right.

CLARENCE. Right, sire?

HANK. There is going to be an eclipse today, Clarence! An eclipse!

CLARENCE. "Eclipse?" Prithee, my lord, I...

HANK. No time to explain, boy. Just listen to me. Tell King Arthur that if he doesn't release me, I'm going to smother the whole world in the dead blackness of midnight; I will blot out the sun, and it will never shine again; the fruits of the earth shall rot for lack of light and warmth, and the peoples of the earth shall famish and die, to the last man! Will you get that to the king for me? [*CLARENCE turns green and exits.*] Oh, boy! If this will only work...if it will only work...if it will only work! [*He sighs a mighty sigh.*] It's got to work! If I can only put on a big enough show, they'll believe me. [*Off Stage VOICES are heard. HANK quickly lights a cigarette, as CLARENCE bounds into the room.*]

CLARENCE. It is done, my lord... [*HANK nods in gratitude and strikes a noble pose, as ARTHUR and THE ENTIRE COURT enter.*]

MERLIN. So, thou injurious wizard, thou has dared to threaten the realm of King Arthur with thy calamitous powers, eh?

HANK. Got the picture. [*HANK blows a puff of smoke directly into Merlin's face. He responds with a cough.*]

MERLIN. Make haste! Make haste ere he consume us with fire and brimstone! Quick, my liege!

ARTHUR. Are ye sure, Merlin?

MERLIN. I implore, ye, my king! Pass sentence on this wizard before thy kingdom is turned to ashes!

ARTHUR. It seemeth the only thing to do, I fear. Stranger...I know not whence thou comest, nor do I know thy strange powers. But since my guide and councilor hath told me of the ill omens, I must in sooth condemn thee to the fire! [*HANK consults his almanac and wrist watch.*]

CLARENCE. Oh, no, my lord. Dost thou not love the sun? Wishest thou that darkness rule this land in place of thee?

MERLIN. Silence, fool! Remove thyself. Guards...seize the prisoner! To the stake with him!

HANK. Stay where you are. If any man moves...even the king...I will blast him with thunder and consume him with lightning! I will blot out the sun.

*[The CROWD goes wild with fear.]*

ARTHUR. Name any terms, reverend sir, even to the halving of my kingdom, but banish this calamity, spare the sun!

HANK. I'll have to think it over.

ARTHUR. How long? How long, good sir? Be merciful. It groweth darker, moment by moment. Prithee how long?

HANK. Not long. Half an hour...maybe an hour.

GUENEVER. Oh, no! Forsooth, put an end to this calamity!

HANK. I have thought it over, Arthur. For a lesson, I will let this darkness proceed and spread night in the world. But whether I blot out the sun for good, or restore it, shall rest with you.

ARTHUR. Name thy terms. I will agree!

HANK. You shall remain king over all your dominions, and receive all glories and honours that belong to the kingship, but you shall appoint me your perpetual minister and executive.

ARTHUR. So be it. [*The ECLIPSE is at last total.*]

HANK. Let the enchantment dissolve and pass away!

*[There is no response, for a moment, in that deep darkness and graveyard hush. But when the SILVER RIM pushes itself out, the ASSEMBLEGE breaks loose with shouts. They come pouring down like a deluge, smothering Hank with blessings and gratitude.]*

MERLIN. I liketh not the turn of events.

ARTHUR. Cease thy prattle, Merlin! Thou hast deceived us with thy foolish words and wagging tongue. From this day forward thou art banished from Camelot. Begone and show thy face no more.

HANK. Hold it, Arthur. Hold it. Don't be too hard on the old man. Why, there are lots of jobs he might be able to tackle. I'm going to make some

changes around here, and there are going to be plenty of new job openings sprouting up every day. For instance...your people are ignorant. No offense, of course...but you're just plain stupid! How many of you know how to read or write? *[no response]* There...you see? A bunch of ninnies. Your educational program needs to be sped up.

ARTHUR. It does?

HANK. Yeah. How do you expect to advance if you don't have a good teaching program. Take this kid for an example...Clarence. *[CLARENCE hops to attention.]* How do spell "Connecticut"?

CLARENCE. Marry, Sir, I...

HANK. How much is fifteen divided by forty-six?

CLARENCE. Me seemeth...

HANK. You see? The kid's dense. Give him to me for a couple of weeks and he'll be spouting out answers like a parakeet. And as for Merlin...well, your people need a weather man. He could be useful in that capacity, and attend to small matters like that.

MERLIN. Thou maketh a jest of me?

HANK. Oh no, not at all. You'd be great for the job. And I could give you a lift now and then if you make a wrong prediction. Yes sir! There are going to be some changes made: Education, transportation, telephones! Why, your people have just begin to live. Oh, Arthur...there's just one more small detail.

ARTHUR. Yes, my liege? And what is that?

HANK. A man of my power and position deserves a title. From this day forward I wish to be known throughout the land as...The Boss. Agreed?

ARTHUR. Marry, sir thou art indeed...The Boss! *[The COURT applauds in admiration.]* Let us resume our holiday. Let us feast and enjoy the games in honor of this, my newly acquired minister and...uh...

HANK. Executive.

ARTHUR. Executive. Let the tournament begin!

*[The COURT cheers and TRUMPETS blare as the LIGHTS fade and MERLIN slinks away.]*

### ACT I, Scene Three

*[A DRUM ROLL heralds the approach of the first two contestants. They salute each other with their weapons, then let go with mighty cries as they rush together for the fray. The KNIGHTS collide like two armored beasts, slashing and ripping until at last the battle ends and the VICTOR stands triumphant. The CROWD goes wild.]*