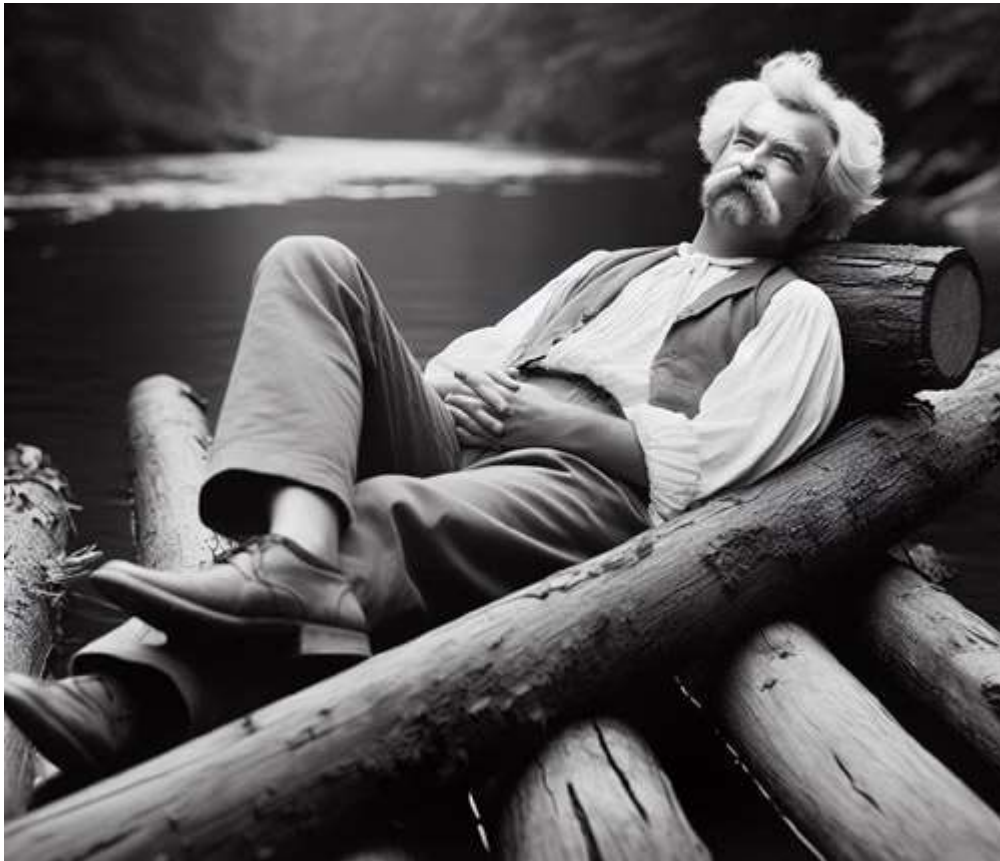


May 2024



"It's your New York!"

The Rondout Reader



AI image created by R. Kent Rasmussen

MEETING MARK TWAIN

A **NY GNOME** Adventure

By Kevin Ahearn



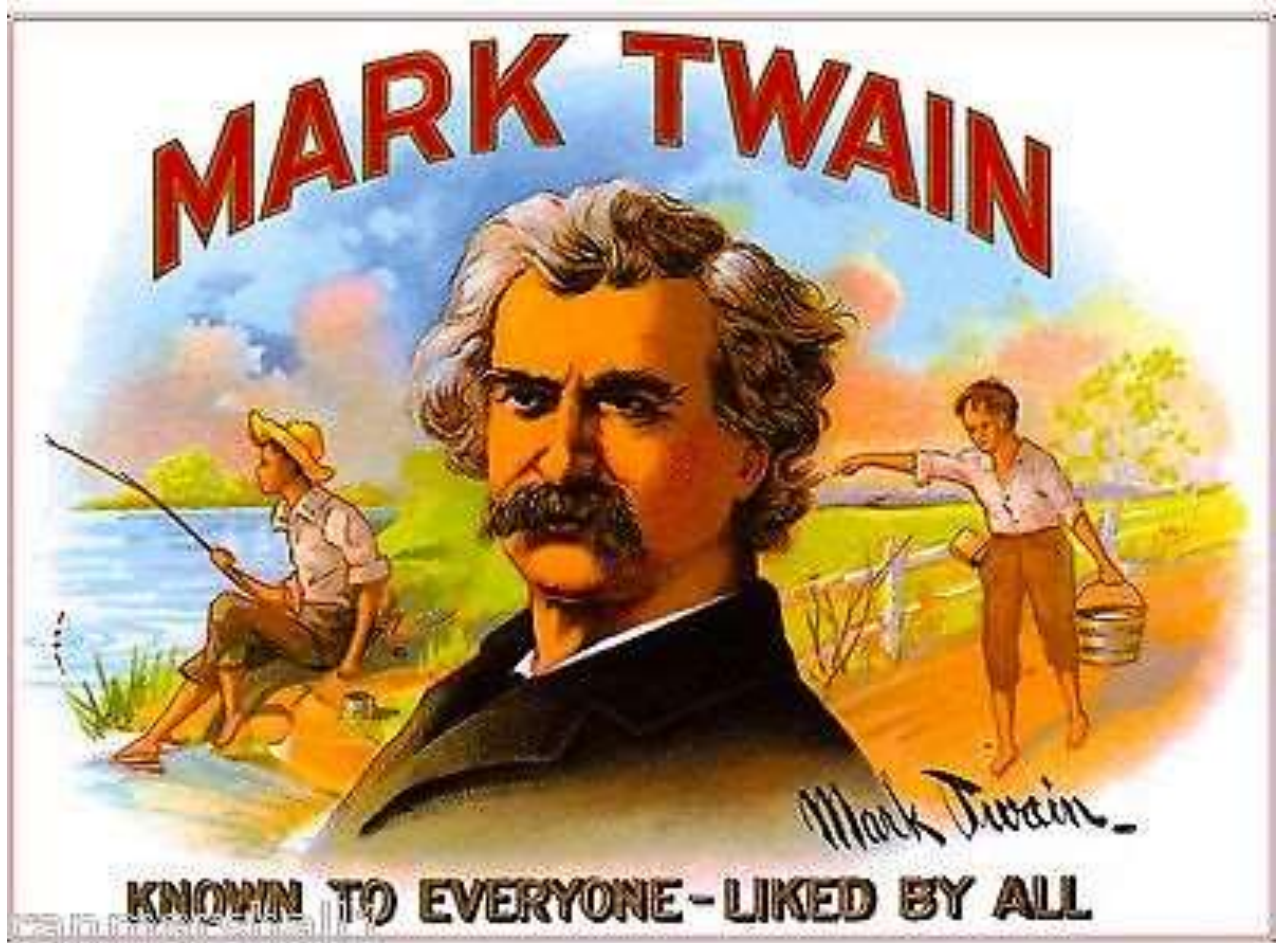
New York Gnome

(Larger-than-life statue //Kerhonkson, NY)



ELMIRA, NEW YORK

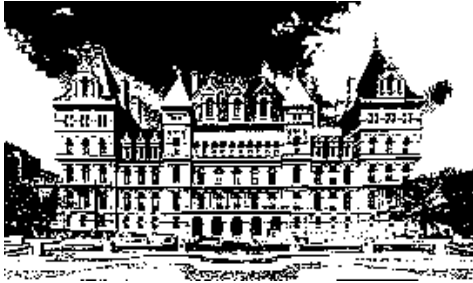
1885



1



*“By the breadth of the High Falls Aqueduct!
With the ‘Trunk of Deeds’, I’ve
owned New York State since
the middle of a Revolution and
I still can’t grasp the spirit of New Yorkers.
“But there is someone who might help me!”*



“Albany may be the most misunderstood city in the world. That’s right, folks, Albany is the capital of New York State, NOT New York City!”

“Albany’s got the second best libraries in the State, after New York City!”

“So when I found out a writer working in New York had published a novel drawing national and international attention, I just had to get it!”



“In the middle of the night, when no one was looking, I ‘borrowed’ the novel and then headed for the Royal Birthplace, Kerhonkson, on the Rondout!”





Deep underground...



"I love to read, and to learn by reading! But this was fiction, every word a lie! Yet as I held this story, the story held me!"



"Great men have great dreams; we Kings have royal fantasies! And one glorious day, I want my story read in a library, on the Rondout!"

"Oh, the rapture!"



"I read through to the end without stopping, then snuck aboard a train bound for the Capitol!"



Governor David Bennett Hill was surprised when I told him...



"Taking a trip, Your Majesty?"

"Do you require transportation?"



"That I am, Guv-nerr! An Educational quest. Things I don't know and must find out!"

"Thank you. I've made my own arrangements!"



*“As much as I miss my horses and unicorn,
I love my new mechanical ‘Royal Steed’!*”



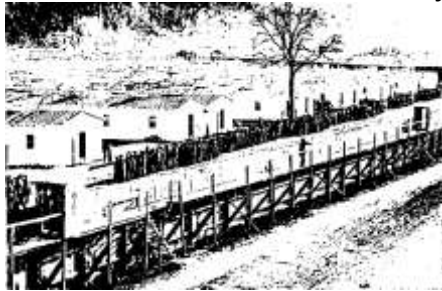
*“What a trip! Had to navigate roads barely fit
for horses. Rode all night. Good thing I packed a
couple of petrol bottles. Finally...”*



“Nice town for a summer vacation! What do they make here?”



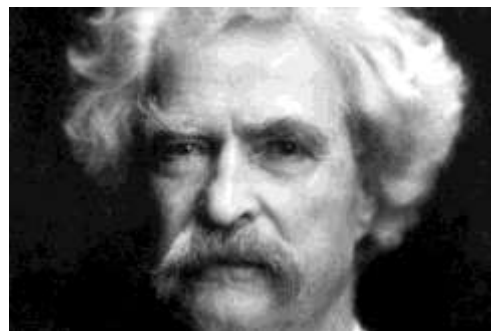
“This small city used to house Confederate prisoners of war. ‘Hellmira’ the POWs called it. And they just opened a youth reformatory!”



*“New York’s greatest writer confined to Elmira – the ‘Prison City’?
“There’s the main house...and his study! I sure hope he’s home!”*



“Nice and easy. No Royal entrance. Don’t want to scare him.”



“Good morning, Mr. Twain.”

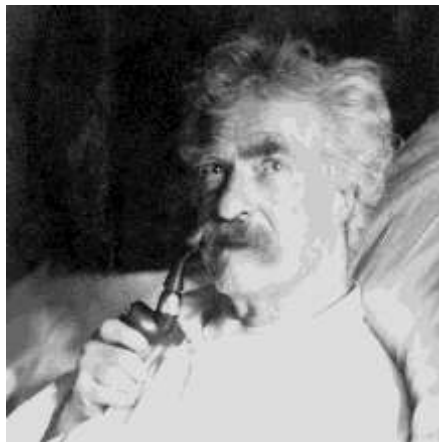
“Dog my cats! It’s the New York Gnome!”



*“Your Majesty, I’ve always believed in you!
Not the Loch Ness ‘Monster’ nor the Irish Leprechauns!
But Albany’s immortal legend was too funny to be false!”*



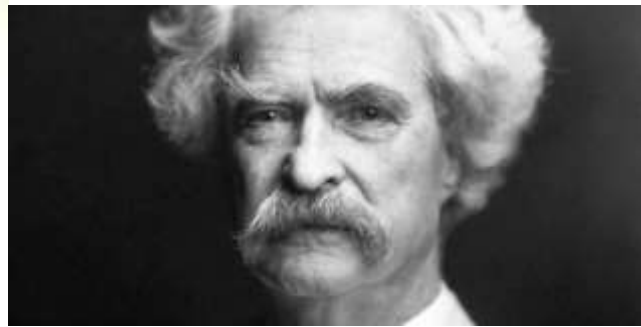
*“Is that a fact, Mr. Twain? Because I just finished
floating down your big, muddy river with Huck and Jim,
and then you gave us the “Duke” and the “King” a pair of
no-account frauds! No respect for royalty at all!”*



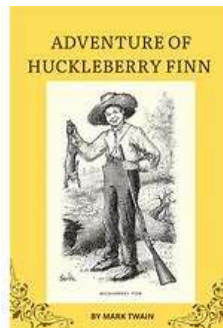
*“Relax, Your Majesty, I’m setting the stage for
my next novel. I’m going to take on King Arthur’s Court
by connecting’ a man of my time to the Age of Chivalry!
Shake up Camelot but good!”*



“Why would you do that? You would defame the fabled Camelot? What could possibly benefit your readers about it?”



“Spoken like a literary critic eager to eat me alive! Then have a chair and rock with me, Your Majesty! And do help yourself to my tobacco. It is loose and dry and black, and looks like tea-grounds.”



“That rowdy young boy of yours took the whole world on a an incredible adventure!”

“I had the technology, Sire! Mine was the first manuscript ever submitted that was typed on a machine!”



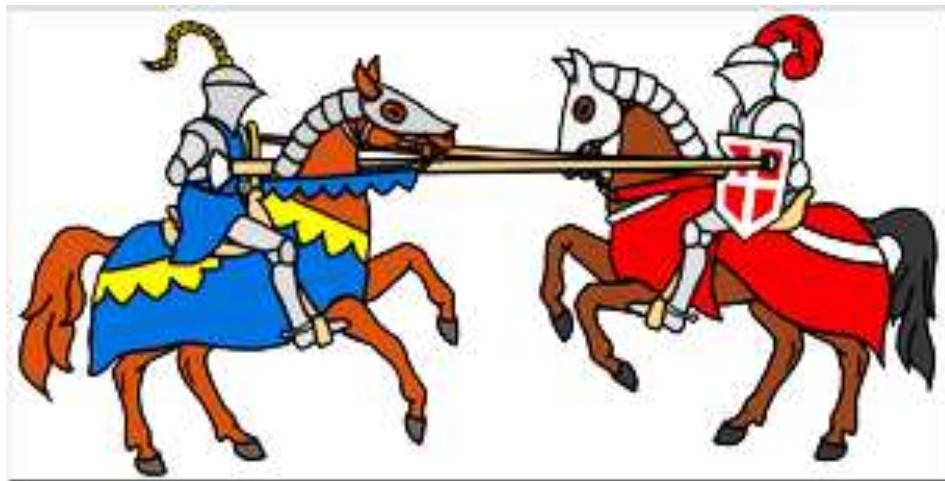
“The beginning of the end of longhand? Will, one day, everything be written by machine?”

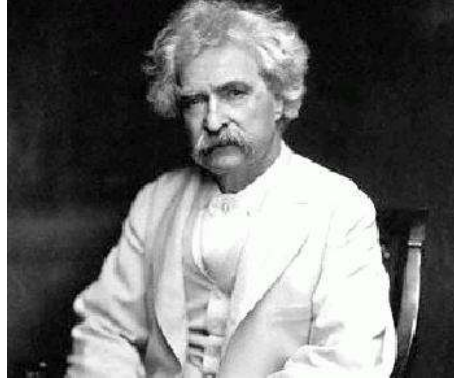
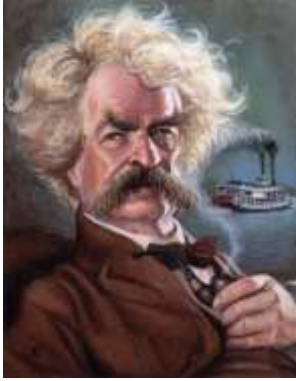
“Not so fast, Your Majesty! America, this great country of ours, is like a river, always flowin’, on the move, goin’ somewhere!”



*“And you’ll be going back to King Arthur’s Kingdom
To show us what?”*

*“What have you got against royalty?
Or do you just want to joust us?”*





“As you would joust with me, Your Highness? Understand, Sire, that a story is a journey to a place my readers have never been, like Huck and Jim braving the mighty Mississippi, to discover a new truth.”



“The river was a character in itself! With Huck and Jim riding her flow, I felt...free!”



“The river has a bubbly magic of its own! The Mississippi took all of America for a ride! You wouldn’t have it any other way, would you, Mr. Twain?”



“I’ve always wanted a river to write by. Back in my youth I was a pilot on a Mississippi riverboat, got those muddy waters in my blood. Here in Elmira, I’ve got the Chemung. Not as big or as strong, yet it moves me every day.

“And according to the Albany legend, Your Highness, you’ve got your own magical waterway!”



“I most certainly do, Mr. Twain! Not a mighty river, but a beautiful, romantic ‘Crick, the Rondout!’



“Oh, the Rondout, her fierce falls and her long slow stretches, she’s the very artery of my soul!”



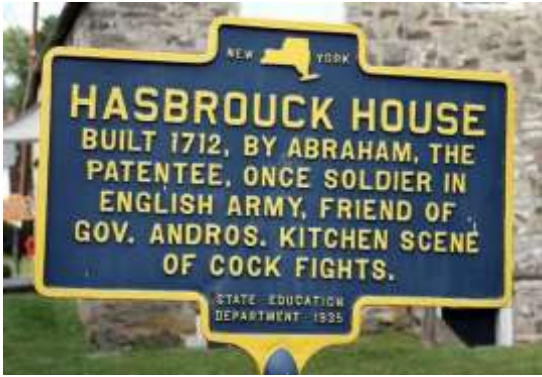
“Now what’s your royal objection to my Camelot novel? I’ll treat my ancient bluebloods with all the sarcasm and ridicule they deserve!”



“You’ll make a fool of yourself, Mr. Twain! You know nothing of the feel of those times! But I do! Because I was there!”

“I knew Merlin and King Arthur!”

“I came from Camelot!”



History meets Luxury



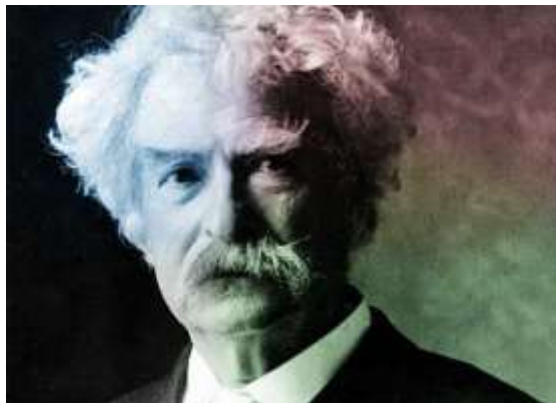
<https://www.hasbrouckhouse.ny.com/#welcome>

Romantic Retreat on the Rondout!



*"I highly recommend the **Hasbrouck House**, but please don't tell anyone that I did so."*

2



"You...from Camelot?"
"No, I don't believe!"
"I can't believe!"
"I won't believe!"



“You don’t, can’t and won’t, yet you expect your readers to believe that your hero is suddenly, inexplicably, transported across an ocean and half a millennium or so back to King Arthur’s court?”



*“And why not? Mr. Dickens had a pair of ghosts, **Ghosts, Your Majesty,** to take Mr. Scrooge back into the past and forward into the future!”*





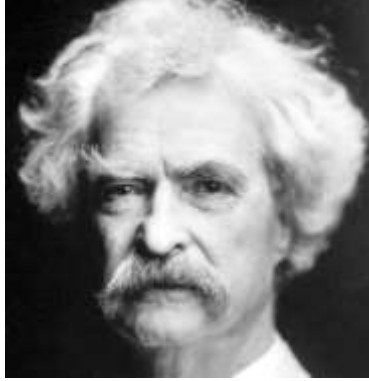
*“Blast the English and their ‘superiority’!
We’ve been the United States for a little
more than a century and every blessed
day we’ve been creeping up on The Royals!
My next novel is aimed at the most
respected stronghold of the British Empire...
The **LIBRARY!**”*

*“And what must be an equally incredible
tale, Your Majesty...How in Sam Hill
did you get here?”*



“I will answer your question, Mr. Twain and then I’ll have one for you!

*“My long, hard and dangerous journey began when
the wizard Merlin sculpted a what he called a ‘Gnome’.
Then he went to his magic,
smoke, fire, and brimstone. I was to be the ultimate,
Royal Guard!”*



“The Royal Guard...of what?”



*“**Excalibur**, his magical sword that Arthur pulled from the stone! I, ‘Merlin’s Mercenary’ would be with it day and night! I was to secure **Excalibur** when the King died.”*



*“But it was not to be! When Arthur was dying of his wounds following his battle with Mordred, **Excalibur** had to be returned to its source, the Lady of the Lake, rather than being entrusted to me.*

*“Instead, Arthur gave **Excalibur** to Sir Gawain, his most trusted and loyal knight, and carried out his the request of the king’s magical adviser.”*

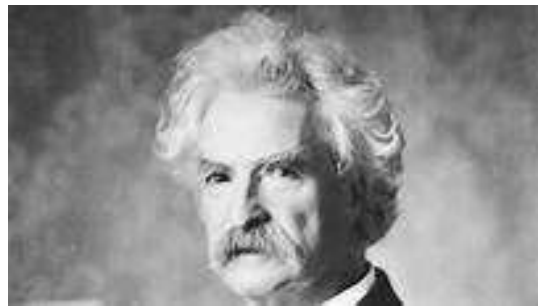


“Betrayed by Arthur and Merlin! What could you do?”



*“My creation was a blessing that came with a curse!
The purpose and destiny of the Gnome:’ to guard a treasure
or to search for one to guard!”*

“A Gnome doing neither is quickly doomed to dust!”



“Oh, boy! Bet you got out of Dodge real quick!”



“To avoid turning to dust, I went looking for a job all over!”



“But every time I came upon an undiscovered horde, Gnomes were already on guard.

“And they wanted no part of me!”



“Desperate, I stowed aboard a sailing ship. A whole New World awaited me!”



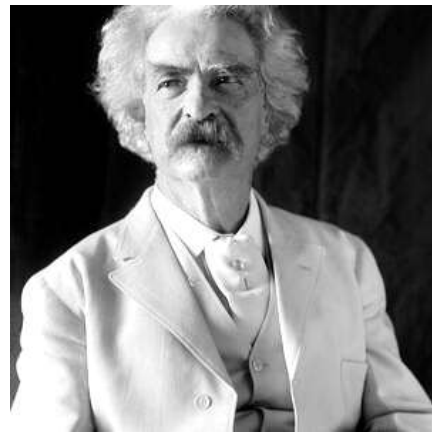
“The American Revolution was raging. I got to Kingston while New York’s first capitol was still ablaze.”



“The ‘Trunk of Deeds’! There was treasure in New York!”



"I tracked the treasure trunk down the Rondout to the village of Middleport. I 'secured' the trunk while the Colonies won their freedom!"



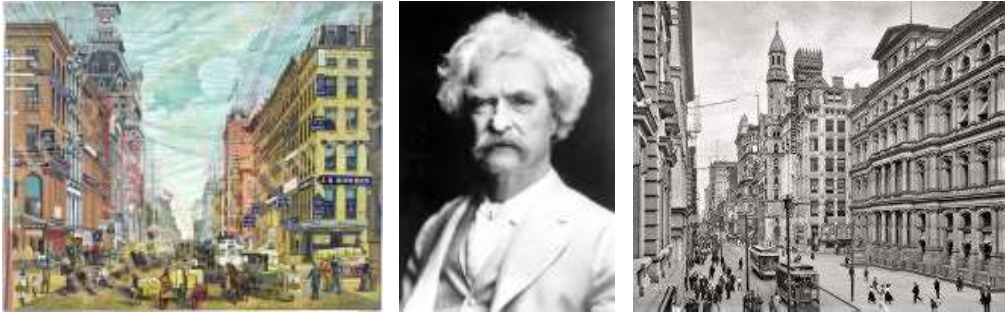
"Now that's a tale the public would pay to read! Tell you what, allow me the privilege of tying down my typewriter to the back of your motor-bicycle."

"You'll have your book done in a New York Minute!"



No, no, NO! Mr. Twain, I came to see you about neither your book nor mine!

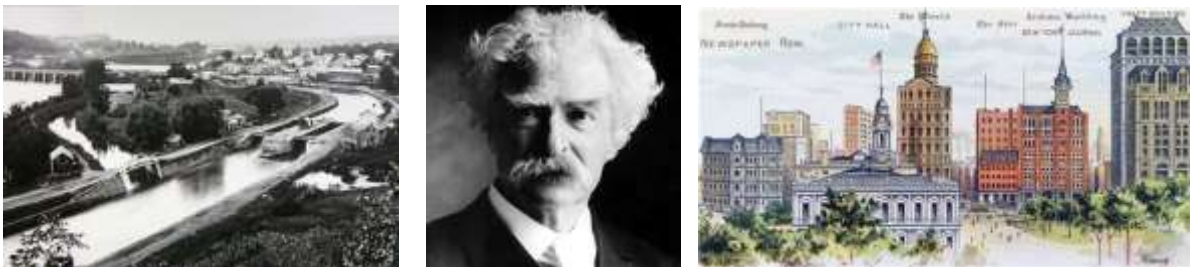
"Please tell me what makes New Yorkers...New Yorkers!"



“You’ve been here since the Revolution and you and I, Your Majesty, we’re both New York ‘time-travelers’ heading into a future picking up speed every day!”



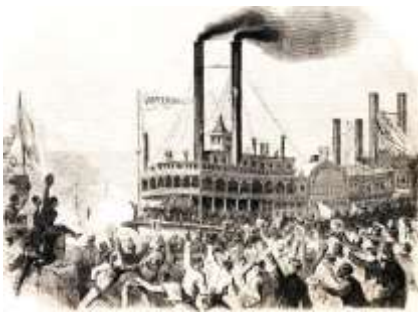
*“It’s impossible to keep up!
People playing a ball game and others trying to fly!
What can I do to do better?”*



*“What is you want exactly, Your Majesty?
You may be searching for the ‘unfindable!’”*



“Mr. Twain, your novel took me, Huck and Jim down the Mississippi, the veritable ‘Aorta of America’! What did you find/ What does that river mean to you?”



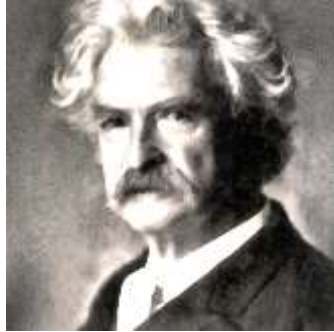
“Your Majesty, a book is but a book, but a river, ah, that unstoppable stream is freedom and independence!”

“You and I, we have different lives as we have different waters, but let’s not get swept away as we flow through life. We can make our own indelible currents!”.



“That’s the rollin’ Rondout! I’ve felt its life flowing all through me! But where is New York’ flowing to? The ‘Crick flows into the Hudson and then into the Atlantic!”

“The ‘Crick joins the Ocean!”



*“And where’s New York flowing, and America with her?
 You might ask this statue they’ll soon be unveiling in the middle
 of New York Harbor, but is legally in New Jersey!
 The figure of Libertas, the Roman goddess of liberty!*

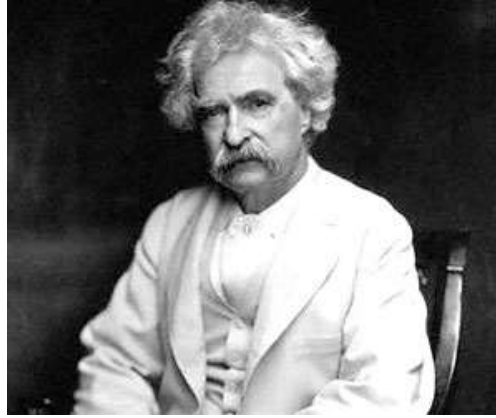
*“I think I know where she wants to go...
 wherever New Yorkers want to take us!”*



*“I’m a king, Mr. Twain. Not a fortuneteller,
 but as you are immersed in your river, so I am
 linked with my ‘Crick!”*



*“The way it used to be and the way it is now, but where
 and how will we flow into the future?”*



“The future, Your Majesty, as you would have me believe, you’ll be spending a lot more time there than I’ll ever dream of.

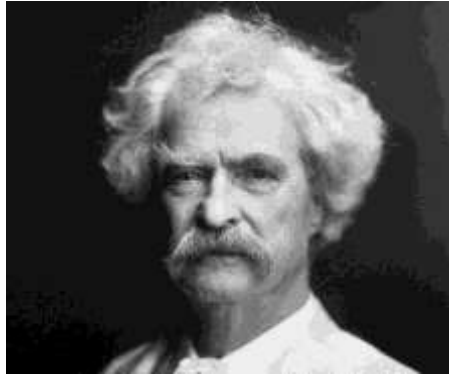
“Too often for too many the past is regret. But the future, New Yorkers with nerve and guts and brains will make this American experiment work beyond even my rosy hopes!

“Now it’s my turn to ask you a question, Your Majesty... What was Camelot like?”



“Not an unexpected question, Mr. Twain. From one of the ‘Founding Fathers of American Literature’, you must feel entitled to a Royal Proclamation of some kind. However I think it’s best you have a seat and relax.

“And get ready to understand as maybe only you can!”



“Understand”? What do you mean? I only ask that you describe King Arthur’s Court, the light and dark of this legendary kingdom!

“Well, Your Majesty...!”

A long pause...



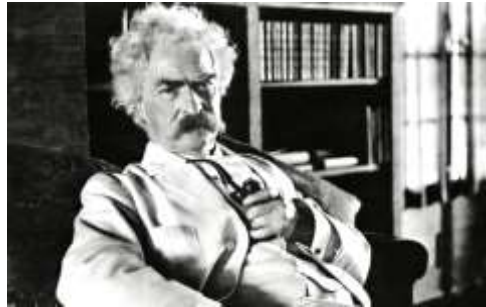
“Mr. Twain, some very influential dignitaries are calling you the ‘Founding Father of American Literature’! What would they think if you copied or embellished my experiences on that typewriter of yours, clattering away like one of those new machuineguns!”





“I’m not telling you anything because New Yorkers and Americans, rich and poor and of all ages and colors can’t wait to be thrilled by the magical imagination of Mark Twain, not the ramblings of some alleged Capitol Gnome!”

“In King Arthur’s Court, riverboat pilot, you’ll be on your own!”



“Your Majesty, you’re a much smarter king than I ever thought you were! Maybe even wiser than Arthur himself!”

“That’s right, world! Get ready for an American trip through time!”





We only talked for a little while after that, Then Mr. Twain retrieved a full five-gallon gas can, a necessity these days with more and more “horseless carriages” on the road. I filled up my tank and spare bottles.

Then it was time to go.

“Good bye. If we meet---“



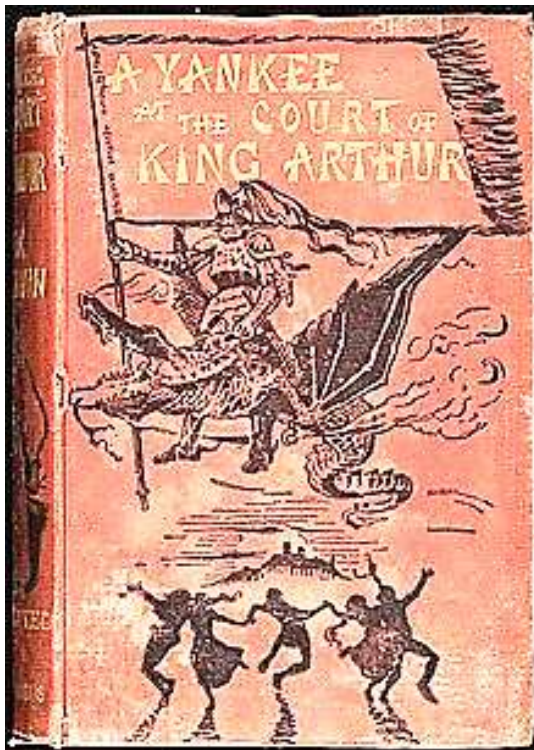
Those were the last words I heard before my roaring engine blotted out the rest.

But I was confident, absolutely positive that Mr. Twain and I would meet again!



1889

**KERHONKSON, NEW YORK
ON THE RONDOUT**



*“Oh, Mr. Twain, yet again
you’ve got me imagining!”*

Established 2024



"It's your New York!"

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