Baseball Language and Symbolism in A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court

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As baseball grew in popularity, baseball language became part of the American vernacular. Mark Twain writes in "A Later Extract From Methuselah's Diary" that

> a certain ancient game, played with a ball hath come up again, yet already are all mouths filled with the phrases that describe its parts and movement; insomuch, indeed, that the ears of the sober and such as would busy themselves with weightier matters are racked with the clack of the same till they do ache with anguish.[1]

Twain was careful that his characters reflect the actual voices of average Americans. Take, for instance, Twain's attempt to re-create African-American slave dialects in the character Jim from *Huckleberry* Finn. In *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, Twain expressed the importance of using people's authentic voices, including colorful idioms such as baseball slang. He had expressed in *Life on the Mississippi* (1883) a strong dislike for Sir Walter Scott. In *Connecticut Yankee*, Twain wrote, "Suppose Sir Walter, instead of putting the conversations into the mouths of his characters, had allowed the characters to speak for themselves?"[2] Twain's query was

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1) Mark Twain, "A Later Extract From Methuselah's Diary," *Letters From The Earth*, ed. Bernard DeVoto (New York: Harper-Perennial, 1991) 70.

2) Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889; New York: Signet Classics, n.d.) 34.

a brief apologetic for his use of the language of real people and provides a partial explanation for his use of baseball language, which permeates the novel. Assuming that baseball slang was commonly used by Twain's contemporaries, as Twain himself indicated in "Methuselah's Diary," then Twain was honestly reflecting the language of his day. Baseball slang in *Connecticut Yankee* is, therefore, a reflection and a record of the linguistic trends Twain had observed in the day-to-day discussions of the average American citizen in the late nineteenth century. Baseball language, used most frequently by Hank Morgan, also serves to reflect Morgan's impression that his dealings with the people of the sixth century are just a game, a belief that undermines many of his humanistic sermons throughout the novel.

The first reference to baseball occurs in chapter four, "Sir Dinadan the Humorist." The occasion is Hank Morgan's first taste of court life at Camelot as he is brought in by Sir Kay and displayed before Arthur's court. Sir Kay regales the court with glorious tales of his conquest of the monster Hank Morgan and the horrors Sir Kay had to overcome in conquering the "vicious" Morgan. Hank thinks to himself, ".... Everybody took in all this bosh in the naivest way, and never smiled or seemed to notice that there was any discrepancy between these watered statistics and me."[3] Hank's mention of "watered statistics" sheds some light on Hank's character. Statistics are vital to baseball. Richard Skolnik in *Baseball and the Pursuit of Innocence*(1994) writes that statistics "both define and enrich the game."[4] Statistics are the ultimate record of

3) Twain, *Connecticut Yankee,* Signet 33.

4) Richard Skolnik, *Baseball and the Pursuit of Innocence* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M UP, 1994) 156.

an encounter and are seen as the undeniable, true account of that encounter. In this instance, Hank Morgan has expressed his concern that Sir Kay has watered the statistics, or filled them up with extraneous information. This concern would seem to imply that Hank Morgan is a man of truth and honesty, a man with no patience for a sham like Sir Kay who deceives his audience so readily. Hank is obviously not the hideous giant that Sir Kay describes. However, Hank Morgan soon learns that people in Arthur's land take words at face value, accepting what they are told simply because someone told them. He quickly turns this gullibility to his advantage, switching pitches, as it were, to readily deceive the people of Arthur's day with exaggerations and blatant lies.

The next instance of baseball language occurs in chapter seven, "Merlin's Tower." Here, Hank Morgan comes to Merlin with a challenge of magic. Hank claims that he will destroy Merlin's tower unless Merlin can stop him. Hank has, however, used his nineteenth-century intellect to his advantage. He has mined Merlin's tower with dynamite, a scientific force Merlin can not understand. After the duel begins, Hank says to Merlin, "Step to the bat, it's your innings."[5] Paul Dickson writes that an inning, when used in everyday speaking, is " [an] opportunity or chances."[6] Dickson continues:

> It is hard to tell whether or not the American use of the word inning outside of baseball is a product of baseball or cricket. It may well be cricket. In *Words and Idioms*, Logan Pearsall Smith listed "to have

5) Twain, *Connecticut Yankee,* Signet 51.

6) Paul Dickson, *The Dickson Baseball Dictionary* (New York: Avon Books, 1989) 221.

one's innings" as a borrowing from cricket.[7]

In saying that Merlin should step to the bat, it's his innings, Hank Morgan is merely indicating that it is Merlin's turn to defend the tower. Yet Hank's use of the vocabulary of baseball in this seemingly dire and violent situation is one of the first glimpses we get into his belief that all of his business in Arthur's court is just a game. Believing himself to be his opponents' intellectual superior, Hank Morgan cannot take Arthur's court seriously. Throughout the novel Hank's language shows the levity he feels in dealing with his rather weak foes.

Hank's foes give him the opportunity to use his baseball lingo many times. These foes felt that Hank must, as an honorable member of the court, proceed on some sort of quest. The opportunity for Hank's quest arrives when a damsel enters the court with the sad tale of her mistress's captivity. The damsel's mistress, and forty-four other beautiful princesses, had been held captive for twenty-six years by three giant brothers. Hank records the damsel's description of the monsters, "Each with four arms and one eye-the eye in the center of the forehead, and as big as a fruit."[8] No matter how much the damsel's story moves his compassion or frightens him with thoughts of facing such a foe, Hank does not fail to express his disappointment at the maiden's inability to report the facts: "Sort of fruit not mentioned; their usual slovenliness in statistics."[9] Hank

7) Dickson 221. The difficulty in pinpointing the origins of this phrase is indicative of the struggle over the origins of baseball itself.

8) Twain, *Connecticut Yankee,* Signet 68.

9) Twain, *Connecticut Yankee,* Signet 68.

again demonstrates his belief that statistics are to be kept accurately and honestly. In Hank's day, statistics were already being kept on all sorts of baseball information, from batting averages and runs batted in, to the weight of the players.[10] Thus, Hank is amazed at the laxity of the information the damsel gives compared to the exhaustive statistics kept on baseball players and the willingness with which the members of Arthur's court take the information. Hank's opinion of sixth-century citizens is again established through the terminology of baseball. To Hank, the people of the sixth century are characteristically incapable of delivering and comprehending the important details that a nineteenth-century citizen feels are essential. Hank once more establishes his superiority over the people of the sixth century. Yet, though he is an enlightened citizen of the nineteenth century, he is still subject to Arthur's whims and is given the damsel's quest.

Some of Twain's early sketches for the novel included a scene in which Sandy, the damsel whose quest Hank Morgan accepts, must help Hank get out of his unwieldy armor. James D. Williams writes that

> in the earlier version, Sandy threw rocks at Hank's helmet while he called balls and strikes, and only after braining the horse did she manage to jar the helmet loose with the shaft of a lance.[11]

Twain was most likely attempting to portray Sandy's accuracy or

10) Bill James, *Historical Baseball Abstract* (New York: Villard Books, 1988) 12-13.

11) James D. Williams, "Revision and Intention," *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court,* ed. Allison R. Ensor (1889, New York: Norton, 1982) 365.

inaccuracy in her attempts to hit Hank's helmet. A ball for Sandy, as pitcher, would be a miss, while a strike, a ball pitched into the strike zone, would be right where she would want to place it. However, Twain also could have been intending to make a pun on the word "strike," which in baseball is a swing and a miss, but in everyday language means "to hit."

The next distinct reference to baseball occurs at the end of the chapter, "'Defend Thee, Lord!'" It is another reference to "inning." Sandy, the damsel whose quest Hank Morgan has taken, goes to talk to some knights whom Hank has just impressed with a dragon-like display of smoking. Hank is concerned that the conversation was not going well for her, but when she returns after talking with the knights, who have ridden away, Hank breathes a sigh of relief. He "judged she had somehow failed to get the first innings"[12] in the conversation. Here Twain uses first innings as a means of showing the tactical advantage of opening a conversation. In baseball, where arguably the best tactical position goes to the home team, which bats last, and therefore has the last word, the opening of the first inning for the away team is crucial.[13] The away team must set the stage for the atmosphere of much of the game; its performance decides whether the game will be relaxed or aggressive. The first inning is also important to the home team pitcher, who can intimidate his opponents or put them at ease in the first few pitches. As Dickson reports "in referring to the work of a pitcher, inning .... refers to the opposition's time at bat."[14] So Sandy must, in Hank Morgan's

12) Twain, *Connecticut Yankee,* Signet 90.

13) Robert Smith, *Illustrated History of Baseball* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1973) 36.

14) Dickson 221.

mind, perform well from the start in order to claim victory over her opponents. Again we discover that Hank sees the interactions of the people of Arthur's court as a mere game.

At the beginning of the next chapter, "Sandy's Tale," Hank tries to get Sandy to tell him what happened in her debate with the knights. He asks her how many knights there were and where they "hang out."[15] Having never heard the term "hang out," Sandy is thrilled to practice the phrase once its meaning is explained. Impatient to get the details, Hank says to her, "You were going to tell me about them [the knights] . A while back, you remember. Figuratively speaking, game's called."[16] In baseball slang, "game's called" refers to the practice of an umpire declaring a game to be over because of inclement weather, or in the American League, because the game has gone past 1 a.m. local time. The first use of the term occurred sometime around 1866.[17] Hank is politely asking Sandy to stop rambling about the term "hang out" and get on with her version of what happened with the knights. Of course, "game's called" confuses her also, and Hank has to interrupt her with: "Yes, yes, yes! Go to the bat, I mean, get to work on your statistics...."[18] "Go to the bat" is simply a term meaning, "Get going, take a swing at your tale!" "Get to work on your statistics" would be a baseball person's way of saying that he wanted to hear the practical details of the events that occurred. Sandy, not being a practical baseball fan, starts an epic tale of what happened, much to Hank's dismay.

Another use of baseball language can be found in the valley of

15) Twain, *Connecticut Yankee,* Signet 90.
16) Twain, *Connecticut Yankee,* Signet 91.
17) Dickson 82.
18) Twain, *Connecticut Yankee,* Signet 91.

the hermits in the chapter "The Holy Fountain." Hank meets Sandy as she returns from viewing the hermits who show their piety through mortifying their flesh. Interested in seeing the hermits, Hank asks if they perform an afternoon show, a matinee. Seeing Sandy's confusion at "matinee," Hank goes into a vehement torrent of slang for closing down early: "Do they shut up shop, draw the game, bank the fires?"[19] "Draw the game" is apparently another term similar to "call the game." Based on the context of the words around it, "draw the game" means to stop early. Sandy finally breaks into tears at this, the latest of Hank's strings of unfamiliar words. Hearing her pleas, Hank is ashamed and realizes that it was not fair of him to use nineteenth-century words on a sixth-century citizen "and then rail at her because she couldn't get their drift; and when she was making the honest best drive at it she could, too, and no fault of hers that she couldn't fetch the home plate; and so I apologized."[20] "Drive" in baseball was first used in 1881 to mean a hard-hit ball[21]. Sandy's "drive," her best attempt at understanding the nineteenth century terms, is the first step on a journey to understanding. She is like a batter trying to return home. But, like many unfortunate batters, she can never quite make it to home plate; some obstacle, usually in the form of Hank's vocabulary, prevents her from fully completing her search for understanding.

The next baseball reference is found at the end of the chapter "A Rival Magician." In this scene, Hank discusses the embarrassment of a magician who had tried to outdo Hank, "The Boss." He states that a magician can make a name for himself in a land, but he

19) Twain, *Connecticut Yankee,* Signet 150.
20) Twain, *Connecticut Yankee,* Signet 151.
21) Dickson 139.

must work at it to keep it up: "he can't sit around and do it; he has got to be on deck and attending to business, right along."[22] The use of "on deck" here is a little problematic. Today, any baseball fan knows that if a batter is on deck, he is ready to be up at bat, perhaps taking a few practice swings and trying to gauge the pitcher. Dickson writes that the first recorded use of "on deck" as a baseball term appeared in 1881 in the August 23rd *New York Herald*.[23] However, the term obviously originated in nautical language. Twain's experience on steamboats would make him quite familiar with the nautical use of "on deck," which is similar to the baseball definition in that both imply a readiness for quick action. It is possible, based on the dates of the term's baseball origin (1881) and the date of publication of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889), that Twain would have been aware of the use of the term in baseball. However, based on the context, it is more likely that he put this term in his novel with the nautical connotations in mind. It is, therefore, difficult to say whether or not Twain's use of "on deck" serves in this instance as a record of baseball language, but it is not unlikely that he could have intended it as such.

Hank's frequent use of baseball lingo started to have an impact on the citizens of the sixth century, for the next baseball reference appears in the first newspaper, *The Camelot Weekly Hosannah and Literary Volcano*,[24] that is published in Arthur's kingdom. Hank, The Boss, having once more thwarted Merlin's plans to dethrone him, has caused the dry well at the valley of hermits to flow again. The headlines of the paper state: BRER MERLIN WORKS HIS

22) Twain, *Connecticut Yankee,* Signet 171,

23) Dickson 283.

24) Twain, *Connecticut Yankee,* Signet 186.

ARTS, BUT GETS LEFT! / But the Boss scores on his first Innings!"[25] Once more, "inning," The Boss's favorite baseball term, is mentioned. This time it is being used in the sense of turns taken by the magicians. Merlin failed after many attempts, but the boss succeeded on his first try.

Perhaps the most conspicuous use of baseball language and references to baseball occurs in the chapter "Three Years Later." In this chapter, Hank, seeking something other than tournaments with which the knights can let off steam, teaches the knights the game of baseball. One of the first peculiarities we learn of Hank's game is that the teams are chosen by rank, not talent. Thus, the teams are made up of kings and lords, not necessarily of players with natural ability. Hank refers to his teams as "nines," a term which first appeared in the minutes of the Knickerbocker Baseball Club in 1860. The term merely refers to the number of players that appear in the starting lineup.[26]

The knights in Hank's game refuse to give up their armor, but they do agree to wear different types of armor to differentiate between the teams--one team wears chain mail ulsters; the other wears plate armor made of Bessemer steel.[27] Their wearing armor has an important and rather unique effect on the game. Hank records that "being ballproof, they never skipped out of the way, but stood still and took the result."[28] Twain writes that when one of Hank's batters was hit by a wild pitch, the ball would ricochet. In the earlier rules of baseball, the ball was much softer, and throwing the ball at

25) Twain, *Connecticut Yankee,* Signet 187.
26) Dickson 275.
27) Twain, *Connecticut Yankee,* Signet 289.
28) Twain, *Connecticut Yankee,* Signet 289.

a runner was an acceptable method of getting him out.[29] Thus, Hank's runners would not have to dodge a ball to avoid a painful out. Hank's batters then also did not have to dodge to avoid a wild pitch.

Some readers may wonder why the apparently power-hungry Hank chooses a behind-the-scenes role somewhat like a manager and does not choose to act the role of umpire, giving the opportunity rather to Clarence. The umpire has virtually always been the person with the most power in a baseball game. However, Bill James writes that in the late 1800s the cry "kill the ump!" was shouted a little more violently than it is today. Frequent accounts report umpires being injured in the course of a baseball game. In his *Historical Baseball Abstract*, James records the horrible treatment of umpires. This mistreatment came to a head in the early 1890s, shortly after *Connecticut Yankee* was published, but the violence had been evolving for years. For quite some time, the crowds' and players' treatment of umpires had been getting worse and worse. James reports that "players shoved umpires, spat on them, abused them in every manner short of assault."[30] David Voight confirms, "Umpires were cursed, bombarded with beer bottles and rotten eggs, and subjected to beatings."[31] James's synopsis of the way umpires were treated is this:

> It was hell to be an umpire in the 1890's; it's a wonder anyone would do it .... But as nearly as I can figure out, the fans never actually did kill an umpire. They tried. There were countless incidents of um-

29) Smith 15.

30) James 38.

31) David Quentin Voigt, *American Baseball* vol 1. (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania UP, 1983) 192.

pires requiring police protection.[32]

Here again we see the underlying lack of concern for others that can frequently poison Hank Morgan's otherwise humanitarian speeches. Hank, as a nineteenth-century Yankee, is aware of the violence that fans can unleash on an umpire. Rather than risking harm himself, Hank chooses to let Clarence take the risk. No harm comes to Clarence, but as James and Voight have suggested, the possibility existed.

Once the kingdom has settled down, and baseball has replaced the joust, Hank is free to enjoy his family and retires with them to France. In the chapter "War," Hank, hearing the news that his carefully-crafted world has collapsed, returns to England. Discovering that the news is true, he wanders around England looking for any remains of the civilization that he had set up. He finally finds Clarence, who summarizes the events leading to the downfall of the kingdom. Clarence's report of the knights who were killed in skirmishes with the anti-civilization forces of the Church, is interrupted by Hank's interjections about those knights' baseball abilities:

> ".... Sir Tor, Sir Gauter, Sir Gillimer"—
> "The very best man in my subordinate nine. What a handy right fielder he was!"
> —"Sir Reynold's three brothers, Sir Damus, Sir Priamus, Sir Kay the Stranger"—
> "My peerless shortstop! I've seen him catch a daisy cutter in his teeth. Come, I can't stand this!"[33]

32) James 39.
33) Twain, *Connecticut Yankee,* Signet 296

"Subordinate nine" may refer to backup players. Like many baseball teams of Twain's time and ours, Hank's team of baseball playing knights probably had a backup team of second-string players. These players presumably spent most of their time sitting on the dugout bench and waiting for a first-string injury so that they might have a chance to play and prove themselves. "Right fielder" refers to the player who covers the right field territory. This term first appeared in the May 6, 1883, issue of *Sporting Life*,[34] so it was still a relatively young term when Twain used it here. "Shortstop" refers to the player who plays the position to the left of second base as the field is viewed from home plate. Tactically, shortstop is a very important position, as some of the shortstop's roles are to help the second baseman cover second base and to attack the opposing team with aggressively fielded double plays. By many accounts, shortstop "is the most physically demanding position in the field."[35] A "daisy cutter" is a "hard-hit ground ball that skims the grass without rebounding, presumably removing any daisies in its path."[36] Edward J. Nichols has traced the term back to an 1866 article in the *New York Herald*.[37]

Not only does Hank and Clarence's exchange reveal more of Twain's knowledge of baseball, but it also serves to reveal more of Hank's psyche. What is significant in Hank's references to his knights is that Hank's eulogy for the dead knights on whom Clarence reports is solely concerned with their ball playing abilities. Everything is still a game to him. He does not lament the loss of

34) Dickson 325.
35) Dickson 354-55.
36) Dickson 122.
37) Dickson 122.

human life; he does not grieve over the pain that we assume as modern readers the knights' families felt. He does not acknowledge every knight who has died, all of whom he should presumably know since he is Arthur's second-in-command. He acknowledges only the knights on his baseball team. These knights are dehumanized by Hank, for in his eyes they are valuable only insofar as they are fine baseball players. Hank has no feeling for others; he can only feel *his* loss, the loss of a heartless team manager.

At the end of the chapter "War," when Hank has decided to declare war on the Church for what it has done to his civilization, he posts a proclamation declaring a new republic. The proclamation is the opening blow in the war to follow, and one of its purposes is to rile Hank's opponents. Clarence is concerned that the proclamation gives away the location of Hank and his boys, and Hank replies that is exactly the plan: "That is the idea. We *strike*—by the Proclamation—then it's their innings (Twain's italics)."[38] Here again, one last time, Hank uses his favorite baseball word. His use of "inning" acknowledges that he has acted; now it is his opponents' turn. Hank's use of the word "inning" more frequently than any other baseball word gives some insight into the psyche of Hank Morgan. His preference for "innings" shows his love of order. In baseball, each team has its turn at playing in the field and at bat. Using "inning" also shows Hank's perceived sense of fairness. In baseball, not only does each team get its turn equally, but each team is also expected and allowed to do its best at the same contests of hitting balls, throwing balls, catching balls, and running bases. Twain's great civilizer, Hank Morgan, looks on baseball as an order-giving,

38) Twain, *Connecticut Yankee,* Signet 304.

democratic game, even though he chooses only aristocrats to play it.

In preparing for his half of the "inning" in "The Battle of the Sand Belt," Hank gives his boys an impressive pep-talk. After seeing his boys cheering and ready for the battle, Hank contemplates their preparedness: "I was ready for the enemy, now. Let the approaching big day come along-it would find us on deck."[39] Again, "on deck" is used to imply prepared.

The final written reference to baseball appears at the end of the chapter "The Battle of the Sand Belt." Hank Morgan wins his war against the nation of England. After slaughtering hundreds of knights, he congratulates his soldiers and delivers a speech to them. He declares that the nation of England has been utterly defeated: it "has retired from the field and the war."[40] Dickson has no entry for "retired from the field." He does however, mention that "retire" most likely has its origins in cricket or rounders. In baseball, the term means to put a runner or hitter out, basically defeating him.[41] Thus, in the final verbal reference to baseball, Hank refers to the enemy as retired from the field. Hank's interactions with the citizens of the sixth century are all still essentially a game for him.

Baseball does not appear only through verbal references in *Connecticut Yankee.* James Beard's illustrations for the first edition of *Connecticut Yankee* receive occasional attention from critics. Twain was thrilled with the drawings that Beard presented him. The illustrations are fascinating, and they, like the text, are filled with satire. There is one illustration that Beard drew that incorporates baseball. In the chapter "Three Years Later," Beard has included

39) Twain, *Connecticut Yankee,* Signet 308.
40) Twain, *Connecticut Yankee,* Signet 310.
41) Dickson 322

an illustration of one of the baseball-playing knights. This knight is apparently dressed in some sort of chain mail, and there are two interesting articles of clothing to note. The first is the knight's gloves. It may be that Beard drew the gloves as representative of the medieval gloves that he felt a knight would wear. The other theory could be that the gloves are a representation of early fielding gloves, as some fielders wore gloves to soften the blow of the ball on their hands. The knight is also wearing a pair of baseball spikes, wicked things that look like they could have been (and actually were) dangerous to other players.[42] The ball does not have the familiar stitching seams; rather it appears to be a nondescript spherical object, consistent with the fairly unregulated balls of Twain's day.[43]

In *Connecticut Yankee*, aside from baseball terminology, baseball rules, themes, and symbols also appear. In some instances Twain recreates elements of the game to tell his story and give it, perhaps, a sense of fun.

The first instance of baseball themes can be seen quite early in the novel. In "A Word of Explanation," Hank explains how he went back in time. By his account, Hank got into a fight with a man nicknamed Hercules; their weapons were crowbars. Hercules slams Hank on the side of the head, knocking him out cold.[44] Nicknames have long been a practice in baseball. Few sports place the emphasis on nicknames that baseball has. In the narrative of how Hank Morgan got to sixth century England, we read that a man with a

42) James 38.

43) James Beard, *Catcher of the Ulster Nine, A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court,* ed. Bernard L. Stein (1889, Berkeley: U of California P, 1983). 403.

44) Twain, *Connecticut Yankee,* Signet 15.

nickname, "Hercules," hits Hank (who will later earn his own nickname, The Boss) in the head (which, like a ball, is roundish) with a long, stick-like, metal object. Hank says that the blow made everything "crack,"[45] a word commonly used in baseball to describe the sound of a bat hitting a ball. Therefore, the narrative that we are most concerned with essentially begins with a ball being hit, the action necessary to begin a runner's journey around the bases. Hank, who in this case will play the part of the runner, will run around the bases to return home again to deliver his tale. At the end of the novel, Hank, on his deathbed, wishes to return to the joy of playing the game, missing the act of running the bases more than the joy of returning home. The narrator hears Hank crying out to Sandy and Hello Central on his deathbed; Hank dies and is apparently reunited with his game.

Yet nicknames and "ball" hitting aren't the only appearances of baseball themes in *Connecticut Yankee.* Baseball is traditionally a game that is obsessed with records and statistics. So it is with Hank Morgan. When he goes back in time to Arthur's court, he keeps a record of his activities, recording them for himself, then making them into a book, thus keeping a record for those who were to come after him.

The most fascinating scene using baseball themes and symbols occurs in the chapters "War" and "The Battle of the Sand Belt." In these chapters, Hank Morgan's final game is played on a deadly baseball field. Merlin's cave becomes a sort of home plate, from which electric fences are strung that enclose a circle of level ground a hundred yards in diameter. This circle is not a diamond and may

45) Twain, *Connecticut Yankee,* Signet 15.

not equal established baseball diamond measurements, but in Twain's day of largely unregulated field size (which extends in some part to our own), a hundred yards would make a serviceable baseball field and symbolically serves here as an actual baseball diamond. The posts sunk to string the fences are representative of the posts that were used as bases before today's sand bags were commonly accepted.[46] Around the fence is the sand belt; sand is a common material used for establishing base lines. In the center of this field on a six-foot-high platform are gatlin guns, whose position on a raised mound in the center of the field and their tendency to hurl things make them sound suspiciously like baseball pitchers. Also, Dickson points out that "battery" was a term that before the 1880s was used to refer to the pitcher.[47] It seems possible, therefore, that Twain, in positioning gatlin guns in the traditional position of the pitcher, is having fun with symbolic puns, "battery" being a word most usually associated with artillery pieces like gatlin guns, for example: a "battery" of guns.

The vast number of knights, like the playing field of Hank's deadly game, also have their correspondents in baseball history. In Twain's day, it was not uncommon to have twenty or thirty players on the field at once. Harold Seymour quotes Abner Graves when he writes about playing some of the, supposedly, first games of baseball: "From twenty to fifty boys took part in the game that I have described."[48] The number of players in this game, roughly 25,054, is large, perhaps a Twainian journey into hyperbole.

46) Smith 17.

47) Dickson 44-45.

48) Harold Seymour, *Baseball: The Early Years* (New York: Oxford UP, 1960) 10.

Twain's use of a baseball field as the staging ground for Hank's last battle once more effectively symbolizes Hank's degenerated views on war and human life. To Hank, this war is just a game, and all the knights who get "tagged out" running the baseline/minefield and electric fences are merely players who must heed the umpire's call, not horrible casualties in a bloody war.

Baseball language, rules, themes, and symbolism infuse A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court. Twain used baseball language as a means of letting his characters have their own voices, reflecting the voices of the Americans of his day. Twain uses baseball language and symbolism to show Hank's frequent lack of concern for human life. His vast, sweeping proclamations of human rights for all people must become suspect as well-meant, but crowd-pleasing, propaganda.

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