

TWAIN... ON STAGE

*Short works by Mark Twain
Dramatized by Dave Brandl*

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DEDICATION

To my beautiful daughters, Melissa, Alison, and Stephanie.

STORY OF THE PLAY

This collection of works by Mark Twain presents a multitude of possibilities. The entirety provides an evening's entertainment but individual selections can easily be performed independently.

"The £1,000,000 Bank Note" (two acts for 5m/5w, 60 minutes) is about two wealthy British siblings who bet whether a destitute man can survive a month in London if they give him a £1,000,000 bank note, which he can neither account for being in his possession, nor turn into cash.

Two one-act plays, "The Facts Concerning the Recent Carnival of Crime in Connecticut" (1m/2w, 20 minutes) and "An Encounter With an Interviewer" (1m/1w, 10 minutes), have Mark Twain himself as the central character, highlighting his wry sense of humor. In the first, he battles his conscience; in the second he is interviewed by a young newswoman.

In addition, two monologues are included to allow an actor and actress to take on unusual and challenging characters. In "A True Story Repeated Word for Word as I Heard It" (1w, 10 minutes), a former slave talks about the joys and troubles in her life. "The Undertaker's Chat" (1m, 5 minutes) presents unique views of life and death from someone who has seen a lot of both.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(7 M, 9 W, Doubling possible)

(In order of appearance)

MARK TWAIN: American author, about 40 years old.

VISITOR/CONSCIENCE: A small woman.

AUNT MARY: Mark Twain's aunt.

RACHEL: Former slave.

ANNABEL: Wealthy older woman.

EDWARD: Annabel's brother.

JULIE: Annabel's maid.

HENRY ADAMS: Young man, penniless.

MRS. HARRIS: Owner of a small diner.

TOD: A tailor's clerk.

MISS STEWART: Proprietress of a tailor shop.

CHARLES FORD: American ambassador to England.

LLOYD HASTINGS: Henry's friend.

PORTIA LANGHAM: Young woman.

UNDERTAKER: The only one in a small town.

YOUNG LADY: A newswoman.

TIME: Events probably take place during the late 1800s, but there are many things that haven't changed much since then.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I

Part 1: *The Facts Concerning the Recent Carnival of Crime in Connecticut* - At Mark Twain's home

Part 2: *A True Story Repeated Word for Word as I Heard It*
- At the home where Rachel works

Part 3: *The £1,000,000 Bank Note* (Act I)

Scene 1: Annabel's home in London

Scene 2: Mrs. Harris' diner in London

Scene 3: Annabel's home

Scene 4: Miss Stewart's shop in London

ACT II

Part 1: *The £1,000,000 Bank Note* (Act II)

Scene 1: Mrs. Harris' diner

Scene 2: Charles Ford's residence

Scene 3: A pub in London

Scene 4: Annabel's home

Part 2: *The Undertaker's Chat* - At a small town funeral home

Part 3: *An Encounter with an Interviewer* - At Twain's home

ACT I

Part 1

THE FACTS CONCERNING THE RECENT CARNIVAL OF CRIME IN CONNECTICUT

(AT RISE: MARK TWAIN is relaxing in one of the chairs in his parlor, feeling good. There is a KNOCK at the door. He rises and opens it.)

OFFSTAGE: Morning mail, Mister Twain.

MARK TWAIN: Ah, thank you. *(Accepts mail, closes door and looks at letters. One particular letter catches HIS attention. He puts the rest on the table.)* Ah, from dear Aunt Mary. Wonderful lady. *(Opens and starts to read letter.)* I do hope she's ... *(Reads letter.)* Good! Just as I expected; she is coming! Coming this very day, too, and by the morning train; I might expect her any moment. *(Puts letter on table with rest of mail. Returns to chair and sits, relaxed and satisfied.)* I am thoroughly happy and content now. If my most pitiless enemy could appear before me at this moment, I would freely right any wrong I may have done.

(The door opens. The VISITOR enters. She is a small woman, and like Twain, about 40 years old, and at least a head shorter than he. She is dressed the same as he, except her clothes are covered with fuzzy mold and cobwebs. Where his hair and clothes are neat and tidy, hers are disheveled. Her mannerisms mirror his. Her speech parrots his, especially his drawl. She has sharp eyes and a fox-like cunning in her face. She also has some deformities. She enters gaily, and flings herself into a nearby chair. She tosses her hat aside. She is altogether too comfortable and familiar in her actions. He is getting indignant.)

VISITOR: Seems to me it's devilish odd weather for this time of year.

MARK TWAIN: Look here, you miserable ash-cat! You will have to give a little more attention to your manners, or I will throw you out the window!

VISITOR: *(Smiling maliciously.)* Come. Be gentle now. Don't put on too many airs with your betters. *(HE starts to respond, but stops. VISITOR continues, after a pause, to study him.)* You turned a tramp away from your door this morning.

MARK TWAIN: Perhaps I did, perhaps I didn't. How do you know?

VISITOR: Well, I know. It isn't any matter how I know.

MARK TWAIN: Very well. Suppose I did turn a tramp away from the door. What of it?

VISITOR: Oh, nothing. Nothing in particular. Only you lied to him.

MARK TWAIN: I didn't! That is, I -

VISITOR: Yes, but you did. You lied to him.

MARK TWAIN: That ... is a baseless impertinence. I said to the tramp -

VISITOR: There, wait. You were about to lie again. I know what you said to him. You said the cook was gone downtown and there was nothing left behind the door. And plenty of provisions behind it.

MARK TWAIN: I ... I ...

VISITOR: And it was rather pitiful, rather small of you to refuse to read that poor young woman's manuscript the other day, and give her an opinion as to its literary value. And she had come so far, too, and so hopefully. Now wasn't it?

MARK TWAIN: Look here! Have you nothing better to do than prowl around prying into other people's business? Did that girl tell you that?

VISITOR: Never mind whether she did or not. The main thing is, you did that contemptible thing. And you felt ashamed of it afterwards. Aha! You feel ashamed of it now!

End of Freeview

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