



The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today

Mark Twain (1835 - 1910) and Charles Dudley Warner (1829 - 1900)

Read by:	John Greenman	Format:	MP3 CD in DVD case
Length:	16 hours 8 minutes	Catalog:	DB-1068
Language:	English	UPC:	0684758936288
Style:	Solo	MSLP:	\$11.99
Genre:	Politics, Economics, History		

One gilds things to make them look better than they really are. Mark Twain, the same writer who turned a skeptical eye to the ostensible advancements made during the post-Civil War urbanization of America, had first focused on those pretensions attendant to the striving for and accumulation of wealth by the very few for the very few. Those in power, the wealthy few, the turn of that century's self-proclaimed elite, sought to title their time as being an American Golden Age, an age when the right people enjoyed the bounty of a Calvinist god, who, as far as they were concerned, finally got it right. Mark Twain saw through the pretense and laughed, and his target is equally those who've arrived, as well as those who want to arrive, the ones who feel the need to mimic the greats, all the while mistaking arrogance for class. Written with Charles Dudley Warner, Twain's Hartford neighbor and friend, *The Gilded Age: A*

Tale of Today (1873) is Twain's only collaborative work. Its title soon became synonymous with greed, graft, materialism, and corruption in public life. The benefit for us is that Twain, a master, used satire and humor to pull back the outer pretense and falsehoods, the gilded superficial surface, to lay bare the sad remnant underneath the shiny surface – human beings, flawed, greedy, fearful, and ultimately comical, though without any intention to be thought of as such. (*Summary by Michael Hogan*)

Mark Twain is the pen name of **Samuel Langhorne Clemens** (November 30, 1835 – April 21, 1910), an American novelist, essayist, and lecturer noted for his humor and biting satire. Born in Florida, Missouri to a poor family, his father failed in business repeatedly and died of pneumonia when Sam was eleven. He went to work as an apprentice typesetter and then for brother Orion's *Hannibal Journal*. He worked as a journeyman printer in the east and started writing humorous articles and sketches to fill space. He returned to Missouri and worked as riverboat pilot until the Civil War broke out in 1861. He avoided service in the Confederate Army by journeying to Nevada with his brother Orion, then secretary to the territorial governor. After a failed attempt to strike it rich as a miner he wrote for the paper in Virginia City, where he adopted the pen name Mark Twain. He began developed a specialty as a traveling correspondent, posting pieces from Hawaii for the *Sacramento Union* and then a journal from a six month excursion to Europe and the Holy Land that formed his first book in 1869, *The Innocents Abroad*, considered the most popular travel book ever written. He followed with *Roughing It* in 1872, a portrait of life on the American frontier, and *The Gilded Age* in that same year, a satirical treatise on the follies and foibles of the emerging elite in American culture.

Twain was happily married Olivia Langdon in 1870 and settled first in Buffalo and then Hartford. In spite of his success with *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885), he experienced substantial financial losses as an entrepreneur with the Paige typesetting machine and then a venture established to publish the memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant. He closed shop in Connecticut and embarked on a long tour of lecturing and writing abroad, which enabled him to retire his debts and return a conquering hero in 1900. Twain was born after a visit by Halley's Comet in 1835 and predicted he would "go out with it, too". True to his word, he died the day after its return in 1910.