

# SIDE - TWAIN 1

AUDIO DRAMA - 10 PLAYS FOR RADIO AND PODCAST

MARK TWAIN: And so it is -- now. And that's how it was way back in 1875, when it was still known as Hadleyburg.

HARRIET: But something happened in between?

MARK TWAIN: It certainly did. And that's what I want to tell you about.

## START

MARK TWAIN: Well, in 1875 every man, woman and child in Lorrain County would have sworn that the citizens of Hadleyburg were more upright, honest and decent than any you could find in the whole United States of America. What's more, the inhabitants of Hadleyburg were fiercely proud of their reputation. After all, it stretched back three generations.

HARRIET: ~~Too proud?~~

MARK TWAIN: ~~Maybe.~~ Anyway, at some point -- nobody knows quite how, or indeed why -- someone in Hadleyburg managed to offend a passing stranger. Not just offend. Mortally offend.

HARRIET: ~~Who was that stranger?~~

MARK TWAIN: You know, Harriet, that never did exactly come to light. But it was so hurtful, such a deeply wounding incident, that the stranger determined to make the town pay.

THE MAN THAT CORRUPTED HADLEYBURG

HARRIET: ~~What was his revenge on the whole town?~~

MARK TWAIN: ~~Exactly.~~ Of course, like everyone else in the region he knew of Hadleyburg's renowned reputation for honesty and straightforward dealing. So this was what he decided to attack. Hadleyburg thought itself incorruptible? Well, he was going to show them up for the hypocrites he believed them to be. He was going to corrupt them.

HARRIET: ~~Goodness gracious. So how did he go about it?~~

MARK TWAIN: Well, in those days Hadleyburg wasn't a very large town. Taking the inhabitants as a whole, only six families stood out in terms of status and position. The heads of these households considered themselves the leading citizens of Hadleyburg.

HARRIET: ~~So I suppose the stranger picked one one of these six?~~

MARK TWAIN: ~~Not at all.~~ To set his scheme working, he selected a poor, elderly couple -- the Richards. Edward and Mary Richards. Ed was a salesman on a pittance of a wage, and poor Mary scrimped and saved, and stretched his meagre salary to make ends meet. One evening the old lady was sitting by the stove, reading *The Lorrain County Herald*, when there was a knock on the door..

(KNOCKING ON WOODEN DOOR)

# END

# SIDE - TWAIN 2

AUDIO DRAMA - 10 PLAYS FOR RADIO AND PODCAST

he wished he could have a fortune to leave when he died, for he would bequeath it to you. Now if it was indeed you, you are his legitimate heir, and you are entitled to the sack of gold. So I'm going to reveal the remark he made to the stranger, well satisfied that if by chance you are not the right man, you will seek and find him, and see that poor Goodson's debt of gratitude is paid. This is the remark. "You are far from being a bad man. Go and reform." - Yours truly, Howard L. Stevenson.

(FADE OUT. FULL UP)

HARRIET: I can imagine Mary's reaction to that.

MARK TWAIN: She was ecstatic. At one stroke they'd been lifted from abject poverty. They'd be wealthy - as wealthy as the most prosperous family in Hadleyburg. Then a thought struck her.

MARY: Oh Edward, how lucky that you did poor Godson that great service. And how noble of you never to have mentioned it, but you should have told me. What was it?

EDWARD: Er... er... er...

MARK TWAIN: And there, of course, poor Edward Richards was quite stumped. Not for the life of him could he recall any such incident.

EDWARD: I can't, Mary.

THE MAN THAT CORRUPTED HADLEYBURG

MARY: Why not?

EDWARD: Er... Well, he made me promise. I swore on the Holy Book never to reveal it.

MARY: Oh well, in that case, Edward, I won't press you. But it must have been a wonderful service you did him - and knowing you, I'm sure it was.

~~HARRIET: How did Edward sleep that night?~~

START

MARK TWAIN: To be honest, he didn't. What kept him awake was his conscience and his memory. The outright lie he'd told his wife troubled him greatly - but worse was trying to remember what on earth he had done for Barclay Goodson. Round and round in his mind he went, trying to puzzle it out. At one moment he remembered that Howard L. Stevenson had not been one hundred per cent sure that Edward Richards was indeed the name that Goodson had mentioned. A second later he comforted himself with the thought that Edward Richards was the only name that Mr. Stevenson had in fact recalled.

~~HARRIET: So I suppose in the end he convinced himself that he was indeed entitled to the sack of gold?~~

MARK TWAIN: Exactly. The only problem was that for the life of him he couldn't remember what precisely he had done to earn Goodson's gratitude without, as the Stevenson letter went, "knowing the full value" of what he'd done. And then his mind went back



nearly fifty years, and he remembered sweet and pretty Nancy Hewitt, the girl that young Barclay Goodson had fallen in love with, and intended to marry. She'd been a newcomer to Hadleyburg - had arrived in response to an advertisement placed by Bill Benson in the *Lorrain County Times* for an assistant in his drugstore. She'd told Goodson that she was an orphan, brought up in a children's home, without a relative in the world. And then Ed had discovered, purely by chance, that she indeed had a mother, languishing at that very time in the County jail charged with prostitution.

~~HARRIET:~~

~~Oh my goodness. Any woman who crossed the boundary of charity back in the 1840s became known as a "fallen woman" - and a fallen woman bore a stigma that could never be wiped away. Upright citizens like those of Hadleyburg refused to associate with such women - or their offspring. So what did Ed Richards do?~~

MARK TWAIN:

He told Bill Benson, who instantly fired Nancy Hewitt. The story spread like wildfire, and the town made it perfectly clear to Barclay Goodson that any liaison between him and Nancy - who was certainly illegitimate, since her mother wasn't married - was out of the question. This, decided Ed, must be the service he'd rendered Goodson - saving him from marrying a tainted girl. Goodson must have realized what a narrow escape he'd had, and so went to the grave eternally grateful to his benefactor.

(CROSSFADE TO MUSIC. HOLD A LITTLE.  
DOWN FOR FOLLOWING AND OUT)

MRS COX: Oh my goodness me, Harry. Oh my goodness me.

COX: What is it, Wilhelmina?

MRS COX: Read this. Just read this.

(FADE IN)

STRANGER: Dear Mr. Cox. I have just learned of the extraordinary events taking place in Hadleyburg, ever since a stranger left a sackful of gold in your town. Well, I happen to know who it was that passing stranger had begged for help. What's more, I know precisely what his generous benefactor said as he handed him the twenty dollars...

(CROSSFADE TO MARK TWAIN)

MARK TWAIN: Yes, indeed, my dear Harriet. Virtually the selfsame letter that the Richards had received.

HARRIET: You don't mean...?

MARK TWAIN: I do. That identical letter went to each of the six leading citizens of Hadleyburg, and their wives. And all night long, six prominent members of the community tossed and turned, trying desperately to recall what special service they might have done for Barclay Goodson many years before.