



The Prince and the Pauper

Mark Twain (1835 - 1910)

Read by:	John Greenman	Format:	MP3 CD in DVD case
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The Prince and the Pauper was Mark Twain's first attempt at historical fiction, published in Canada, 1881, and in America, 1882. Twain's attempt was a marked success with the public and the critics. The story relates the experience of two boys from very different backgrounds, who, because of their identical physical resemblance, are able to exchange places. They then experience and respond to the kind of lives they otherwise never would have known. What energizes the Shakespearean twist is the fact that Tom Canty is a pauper and Prince Edward is the only son of Henry VIII and heir to the throne of England. The story takes place in 1547 London when the Tudors ruled and excesses at court and within the judicial system called out for reform and moderation. Prince Edward's time with Canty family and its drunken, abusive

father, informs the future king of the underside of London society, the stress of poverty, and the punitive system that executes, tortures, and maims in the name of justice. Tom's experience is no less enlightening as he is called upon to mediate claims and then to take the reins of a grand and powerful kingdom. Of course, by the novel's end all is set aright with characters returning to their prior stations, though with the well-deserved advancements gained through their respective experiences as a prince and as a pauper. (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.