

「とびきり上等」だったミシシッピ川の蒸気船——トウェインのディケンズ評 井川真砂

はじめに

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おわりに

<Quotations>

1. **San Francisco *Alta California* (February 5, 1868)**

(1) 演壇のディケンズを正直に評す——トウェインの但し書き

(1)-1 I only heard him read once. It was in New York, last week. I had a seat about the middle of Steinway Hall, and that was rather further away from the speaker than was pleasant or profitable.

(1)-2 I have given “first impressions.” Possibly if I could hear Mr. Dickens read a few more times I might find a different style of impressions taking possession of me. But not knowing anything about that, I cannot testify.

(2) 壇上の生身のディケンズに失望——その動きや姿にみる滑稽さ

(2)-1 Promptly at 8 P.M., unannounced, and without waiting for any stamping or clapping of hands to call him out, a tall, “spry,” (if I may say it,) thin-legged old gentleman gotten up regardless of expense, especially as to shirt-front and diamonds, with a bright red flower in his button-hole, gray beard and moustache, bald head, and with side hair brushed fiercely and tempestuously forward, as if its owner were sweeping down before a gale of wind, the very Dickens came! He did not emerge upon the stage—that is rather too deliberate a word—he strode. He strode—in the most English way and exhibiting the most English general style and appearance—straight across the broad stage, heedless of everything, unconscious of everybody, turning neither to the right nor the left—but

striding eagerly straight ahead.

(2)-2 That fashion he has of brushing his hair and goatee so resolutely forward gives him a comical Scotch-terrier look about the face, which is rather heightened than otherwise by his portentous dignity and gravity.

(3) ディケンズの朗読の拙さに失望——「私はとてもがっかりした」

(3)-1 He read David Copperfield. He is a bad reader, in one sense—because he does not enunciate his words sharply and distinctly—he does not cut the syllables cleanly, and therefore many and many of them fell dead before they reached our part of the house. [I say “our” because I am proud to observe that there was a beautiful young lady with me—a highly respectable young white woman.] I was a good deal disappointed in Mr. Dickens’ reading—I will go further and say, a great deal disappointed. The Herald and Tribune critics must have been carried away by their imaginations when they wrote their extravagant praises of it.

(3)-2 Mr. Dickens’ reading is rather monotonous, as a general thing; his voice is husky; his pathos is only the beautiful pathos of his language—there is no heart, no feeling in it—it is glittering frostwork; his rich humor cannot fail to tickle an audience into ecstasies save when he reads to himself. And what a bright, intelligent audience he had! He ought to have made them laugh, or cry, or shout, at his own good will or pleasure—but he did not. They were very much tamer than they should have been.

(4) 大作家ディケンズへの敬意——生身のディケンズとの落差

(4)-1 But that queer old head took on a sort of beauty, bye and bye, and a fascinating interest, as I thought of the wonderful mechanism within it the complex but exquisitely adjusted machinery that could create men and women, and put the breath of life into them and alter all their ways and actions, elevate them, degrade them, murder them, marry them, conduct them through good and evil through joy and sorrow, on their long march from the cradle to the grave, and never lose its godship over them, never make a mistake! I almost imagined I could see the wheels and pulleys work. This was Dickens—Dickens.

(4)-2 There was no question about that, and yet it was not right easy to realize it. Somehow this puissant god seemed to be only a man, after all. How the great do tumble from their high pedestals, when we see them in common human flesh, and know that they eat pork and cabbage and act like other men.

(4)-3 Mr. Dickens’ reading is rather monotonous, as a general thing; his voice is husky; his pathos is only the beautiful pathos of his language—there is no heart, no

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2. Life on the Mississippi, ch. 38.

(1) 表現の仕方の違い——アメリカ東部地域と西部地域

We took passage in a Cincinnati boat for New Orleans; or on a Cincinnati boat—either is correct; the former is the eastern form of putting it, the latter the western (399).

(2) ミシシッピ川の蒸気船——「とびきり上等」だろうか？

Mr. Dickens declined to agree that the Mississippi steamboats were “magnificent,” or that they were “floating palaces,”—terms which had always been applied to them: terms which did not over-express the admiration with which the people viewed them. Mr. Dickens’s position was unassailable, possibly; the people’s position was certainly unassailable (399).

(3) 比較対象の差異による判断基準の違い——ディケンズとミシシッピ川流域の人びと

If Mr. Dickens was comparing these boats with the crown jewels; or with the Taj, or with the Matterhorn; or with some other priceless or wonderful thing which he had seen, they were not magnificent—he was right. The people compared them with what they had seen; and thus measured, thus judged, the boats were magnificent—the term was the correct one, it was not at all too strong. The people were as right as was Mr. Dickens. The steamboats were finer than anything on shore. Compared with superior dwelling-houses and first class hotels in the Valley, they were indubitably magnificent, they were “palaces.” To a few people living in New Orleans and St. Louis, they were not magnificent, perhaps; not palaces; but to the great majority of those populations, and to the entire populations spread over both banks between Baton Rouge and St. Louis they were palaces; they tallied with the citizen’s dream of what magnificence was, and satisfied it (399).

<参考> Christopher Gair, “The ‘American Dickens’: Mark Twain and Charles Dickens.”

Of even more significance, at least in terms of Twain’s continuing canonical status in the twenty-first century, the *Alta California* report indicates the impact that Dickens’s

fiction had made on him well before he saw the stage show. The satirical description of the Englishman's physical appearance—itsself doubly Dickensian in its attention to the comic possibilities inherent in physical quirkiness, since Dickens is described as if he is one of his own creations—does not conceal the reverence with which Twain esteems Dickens's fiction. Although the old man on stage is faintly ridiculous in appearance, in Twain's report this serves only to emphasize the American's sense of awe that “this puissant god seemed to be only a man, after all.” The disappointment he feels is with the performance, never—most certainly—with the work itself, and he leaves the hall as impressed by the fiction as when he entered. Further, it is easy to speculate that this recognition spurred on Twain in his own writing—his well-known anxieties about his own merits as a “serious” writer are likely to have been soothed somewhat by the thought that the “exquisitely adjusted machinery” of Dickens's creative mind (itself, a quintessential example of Twain's search for the ideal combination of body and machine) was stored within a rather ordinary head (142).

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