



Dickens and Gad's Hill Place

Takeshi TERAUCHI

Charles Dickens took two heavy traumas in his life; one was in his poor childhood, the other in the period of 1857-58. He raised his status in life by the first trauma, and purged his own spirit by the second, and at the core of the traumas there was Gad's Hill Place. This will be revealed in the present paper.

1 The first trauma

John Dickens, a clerk in the Royal Navy Pay Office, was very sloppy with money. He borrowed £200, though his salary rose to £441, during the period of 1817-22 when he was posted to Chatham Dockyard, Kent; he spent too much money on parties, social gatherings, the theater, and things like clothes, furnishing, food and drink for his growing family. It was at such a hard time that he often brought his eldest son Charles to the Gad's Hill of Higham by Rochester, and he often said, looking up at the Place on the summit of the Hill, to Charles, 'If you were to be very persevering, and were to work hard, you might some day come to live in it' (Forster 1: 4-5; *Letters* 8: 265-66 and nn; Dickens, *Traveller*, Ch. 7). The Place had been built by a self-made who rose from an ostler into a brewer of Rochester and into Mayor of Rochester (*Letters* 7: 531n; *Letters* 8: 265 and n).

John, who was transferred back to London in 1822, wasted more and more money, and, in debt for £40, he was arrested and imprisoned in the Marshalsea Debtors' Prison in February 1824; soon his wife Elizabeth with her four small children moved into his prison room. So Charles had to work at Warren's Blacking warehouse, and on Sundays he and his elder sister Fanny would visit them in the Prison. At a certain time John broke down in tears in front of Charles, and so did Charles from his despair. In April 1824 John's mother happened to die, and he inherited £450 through her Will, all of which he had to spend paying his creditors to be released in May 1824.

In June, Charles was able to leave the warehouse to go into the Wellington House

Academy, but in November 1826 his family's financial difficulties grew worse, and John could pay neither rent nor schooling expenses for Fanny and Charles. In 1827 the family moved into a cheaper lodging at Somers Town, and Charles, fifteen years old, left the Academy to go out into the world. He could never forget these hard, dreadful days all his life: viz, it was a great trauma, in which Gad's Hill Place occupied a great space, he later recalled it as 'a dream of [his] childhood' (*Letters* 7: 531).

2 Marriage

Charles Dickens worked very hard following his father's words; he, during the period of 1827–34, had jobs such as a clerk at solicitor's office, a freelance reporter at Doctor's Commons, a reporter of Parliamentary proceedings, a polling clerk for a Parliament member, a regular contributor to the *Monthly Magazine*, and a Parliamentary reporter for the *Morning Chronicle* in 1834. At the *Morning Chronicle* he met George Hogarth (1783–70), who was to be editor of the *Evening Chronicle*, and in those days Dickens earned £275 a year.

Hogarth urged him to write sketches, and adopted his twenty sketches in the *Evening Chronicle* by September 1835, and often invited him to his home. It was thus that Dickens got engaged to his eldest daughter Catherine Thomson Hogarth at the age of 19, and married her in 1836.

Dickens was proud of the Hogarth family; George Hogarth, when in Edinburgh, was not only the legal adviser of Sir Walter Scott, but also an amateur violoncellist and music critic. He had married in 1814 Georgina Thomson (1793–1863), whose father was George Thomson (1757–1851), a musician, publisher of collections of Scottish, Welsh and Irish songs, and friend of Robert Burns (*Letters* 1: 134n; Schlicke 270 and 507). In 1830 George Hogarth decided to be a journalist, wishing to extricate his big family from financial difficulties, and finally settled in 1834 in London to get a job as a music critic of the Liberal *Morning Chronicle* (*Letters* 1: 54–55n).

Dickens, before the marriage, had begun to write *Pickwick Papers*, being continuously assisted in his career by George Hogarth, who, for instance, introduced him to the publisher Richard Bentley in 1836 (*Letters* 1: 54–55n). Within the year Dickens got the editorship of *Bentley's Miscellany* for one year. In this way Hogarth was a benefactor in Dickens's youth.

3 Becoming rich

Dickens became highly popular as a very talented writer, getting rich rapidly, as we can know from his houses. He was a tenant of Furnival's Inn in 1834–37, moved to 48 Doughty Street in 1837, and to 1 Devonshire Terrace in 1839 for which he paid £800 for a 14-year lease and £160 for rent per year.

One of the works he wrote in Devonshire Terrace was *Personal History of David Copperfield* (1849–50), a rather autobiographical novel with a first-person narrator, in which he described the narrator David Copperfield as 'The Eminent Author' (Ch. 63). Then he moved in 1851 to Tavistock House for which he paid £1,542 for a 45-year lease.

4 Happy days

He wrote *Bleak House* during the period of 1851–53 and *Hard Times* in 1854 in Tavistock House. He peacefully spent the new-year days of 1855 at his home, writing to his friend W. W. F. De Cerjat of Lausanne in Switzerland a letter dated 3 January 1855: 'The whole nine (i. e. his nine children) are well and happy. Ditto Mrs. Dickens. Ditto Georgina.' They were very busy with preparing for the fairy play of *Fortunio and his Seven Gifted Servants* by James Robinson Planché. The play was to come off five days later at the House, which was full of 'spangles, gas, Jew theatrical tailors, and Pantomime Carpenters' (*Letters* 7: 497). In the Playbill were introduced actors and actresses like Charles Dickens, all his children including two-year-old Edward Bulwer Lytton Dickens, and 14-year-old Mark Lemon, Jr. and 10-year-old Betty Lemon. The Dickenses were all filled with happiness, joy and hope.

Among the guests of the Performance of January 8th were James Robinson Planché, who had received an invitation from Dickens, and undoubtedly Mrs. Dickens, Georgina, and Mr. and Mrs. Mark Lemon, and the neighbors, too (*Letters* 5: 616n; *Letters* 7: ii, xxi, and 510 & nn; M. Dickens, *CD* 132). How blissful those days of the Dickens family!

5 Victory and release from trauma

On February 1, 1855, the Rev. James Lynn (1776–1855), the then-owner of Gad's Hill Place, died, and his daughter Miss Eliza Lynn (1822–98) decided to sell the Place, though it was rented those days to the Rev. Joseph Hindle, vicar of Higham (?1795–1874; vicar of Higham, 1829–74). Naturally, it was Dickens who bought the Place, which was 'a dream of [his] childhood,' for £1,790. He paid the money on Friday, 14

March 1856, which Dickens, born on Friday, himself believed to be a lucky day. The motive of his for the purchase was for an investment and for summer residence. The Rev. Joseph Hindle, who had abided there for 26 years, desired to stay until Lady Day the next year, i. e. March 25 (*Letters* 8: 53).

With the coming of the year 1857 Dickens's amateur theatricals performed Wilkie Collins's *The Frozen Deep* at Tavistock House four times in January.

His forty-fifth birthday came round on February 7, when he held a party at Tavistock House with guests like Thomas Beard and Wilkie Collins, and on February 13 Dickens at last did possess Gad's Hill (*Letters* 8: xxiii and 292). How bright a smile he showed!

On April 9, 1857 he was at Waite's Hotel, Gravesend, with Mrs. Dickens, Georgina, and his two little boys, staying there until April 15; during which time he went out to watch the little repairs at Gad's Hill carefully (*Letters* 8: 310–11).

On May 12 he finished *Little Dorrit*, and on May 19, when it was Mrs. Dickens's birthday and her first visit day to Gad's Hill Place, he held a house-warming party there with guests like Thomas Beard, Wilkie Collins, and William Wills (*Letters* 8: 326–27; Page, *Chronology* 94). Dickens, who was 'very persevering' and 'work[ed] hard,' was now 'the Inimitable Kentish Freeholder' and a man of 'Victory' (*Letters* 8: 327).

From June 1 to July 17 Dickens and his family enjoyed the summer holidays at Gad's Hill, during which he, it is likely, often got drunk not only on spirits but on the feeling of Victory, remembering the looks of his father who had died in 1851. During the holidays he frequently went over to London to prepare for the next performances of *The Frozen Deep*.

On July 4 he played it before the Queen and Prince Consort, and the King of Belgium at the Gallery of Illustration. The Queen, after the performance, begged Dickens to 'go and see her and accept her thanks' (*Letters* 8: 366), and further she recorded in her Journal, 'The Play was admirably acted by Charles Dickens,' and Colonel Phipps in a letter, dated July 5th, 1857, to Dickens from Buckingham Palace for the Queen, wrote that 'the Queen and Prince Consort, and the whole of the Royal party were delighted with the rich dramatic treat of last night. I have hardly ever seen Her Majesty and HRH so much pleased' (*Letters* 8: 366n). Another Victory to Dickens!

Now he was admired not only as a novelist and editor of *Household Words* but as a stage director and actor; furthermore he was respected as a moralist and philanthropist, and was even called 'a man of genius' (*Letters* 8: 748). He, having got sufficient fortune, station and reputation, had been entirely disengaged from the trauma he had

suffered in his poor childhood, though the trauma itself had been the source of his diligence, morals and faith.

6 Peripeteia and a second trauma

There were performances of *The Frozen Deep* following on July 11, 18, 25, and August 8, bringing him more and more cheers and applause; for which he was made up over and over into the self-sacrificing hero, Richard Wardour, who threw out his life for the rival lover Frank Aldersley.

The last performances were to be played on August 21, 22, and 24 at the big Manchester Free Trade Hall, for which Dickens hired the three professional actresses, Mrs. Thomas Lawless Ternan (1803–73), her second daughter Maria Susannah Ternan (1837–1904), and her third Ellen Lawless Ternan (1839–1914), instead of the amateur ones.

It went without saying that the actresses brought him a great success. The Ternan family, made up of Mrs. Ternan and her three daughters, was rather poor; and Dickens, now a hero of self-sacrifice, assisted them as a matter of course; more than that, he, 45 years old, was flattered by Ellen Ternan who was 18 years old, the same age as his second daughter Kate, and made her a mistress secretly.

For nearly a year he could not but struggle against his wife Catherine and the Hogarths, the problem having become a scandal by journalism; he persistently insisted on his innocence, sending a letter of 25 May 1858 to his intimate friend Arthur Smith, with a note giving his permission to show it to any one who wished to do him right:

Two wicked persons who should have spoken very differently of me, in consideration of earned respect and gratitude, have (as I am told, and indeed to my personal knowledge) coupled with this separation the name of a young lady for whom I have a great attachment and regard. I will not repeat her name—I honour it too much. Upon my soul and honour, there is not on this earth a more virtuous and spotless creature than this young lady. I know her to be innocent and pure, and as good as my own dear daughters. Further, I am sure quite that Mrs. Dickens, having received this assurance from me, must now believe it, in the respect I know her to have for me, and in the perfect confidence I know her, in her better moments to repose in my truthfulness. (*Letters* 8: 741; emphases added)

The 'young lady' referred to above was none other than Ellen Ternan (Forster 2: see

note 19 of page 454; Wagenknecht 373), whom he was to hide for the rest of his life from the world.

In June his relation with Ellen Ternan was known among the 'literary and artistic circles,' as *Reynolds's Weekly News* reported on June 13:

The names of a female relative, and of a professional young lady, have both been, of late, so freely and intimately associated with that of Mr. Dickens, as to excite suspicion and surprise in the minds of those who had hitherto looked upon the popular novelist as a very Joseph in all that regards morality, chastity, and decorum. (*Letters* 8: 745n)

Catherine left Tavistock House around the middle of May with her eldest son Charley, who chose to live with her, to go to a new home (70 Gloucester Crescent, Regent's Park), which was near Tavistock House. At that time Dickens was 'like a madman' (Storey 94) though he had blamed her cruelly in some letters. Catherine, who had borne him ten children plus two miscarriages, signed the Deed of Separation in June 1858. Dickens, 46 years old; Catherine 43.

Dickens broke with his close friends Mark Lemon, editor of *Punch*, and Frederick Evans, a partner of Bradbury and Evans, because they, who both were Catherine's trustees, refused to print the 'Personal' statement, which Dickens wrote to justify the separation, in *Punch*, whose owner was Bradbury and Evans. Dickens distinctly committed a great sin; he was one of those who 'know not what they do.'

The problem was not finished yet; *New York Tribune* dated August 16 exposed the Letter to his friend Arthur Smith without Smith's permission, and criticized Dickens severely. The Letter, which Dickens later called the 'Violated Letter,' was reprinted by English newspapers on 31 August (*Letters* 8: xxv).

Dickens, in those days, was earnestly urging George Eliot, whose principal publisher was Blackwood's, to write for his new magazine *All the Year Round*. One of the examples of how Dickens was discussed behind his back can be found in a letter of 16 Nov 59 to Joseph Munt Langford, Blackwood's London manager, by George Simpson, Blackwood's Edinburgh manager, who wrote: 'I have no doubt the tempter is that fallen angel C.D.' (Haight 310; *Letters* 6: 461n; *Letters* 9: 160–61n; emphasis added).

Thus Dickens, who might be said to have known nothing but praise, was exposed to the harshest criticism and the deepest disgrace he had never experienced, which could not but have caused a new trauma within him.

7 Dickens's defeats and conversion

Dickens's third boy Frank, who was studying in Germany to be a doctor, came home at the latest by August 1859, giving up being a doctor because of his stammering. So Dickens was in deep affliction for him, writing in September to the Rev. Matthew Gibson, Frank's teacher in France, 'I am a little puzzled to know what to do with Frank' (*Letters* 9: 120). His anguish was doubled by his beloved daughter Kate's engagement, of which she told him by October 1859, to the sickly painter and writer Charles Allston Collins (1828–73), a younger brother of Wilkie Collins and eleven years older than she. It would perhaps be those days that she often spent days with boy-friends and was talked about as 'a flirt' or 'the fast Miss Dickens' (Hawksley 142).

Annie Adam Fields, who was invited on May 6, 1860, with her husband to Tavistock House, wrote in her diary, 'A shadow has fallen on that house, making Dickens seem rather the man of labor and of sorrowful thought than the soul of gaiety we find in all he writes' (Curry 5). A month later, i. e. around on July 2, Dickens moved into Gad's Hill Place, putting up Tavistock House, near which Catherine lived, for sale, and on July 17 Kate married Charles Collins despite her father's opposition, to escape from the 'unhappy house' (Storey 105). After the couple's departing for a honeymoon, Dickens, who was in her bedroom, sobbed 'with his head buried in Katie's wedding-gown,' saying, 'But for me, Katey would not have left home' (Storey 106).

He would have been obliged to gaze at his own inward ugliness, which he himself had often criticized in his works. Dickens suffered severe defeats, which would have made his second trauma much greater.

On September 3 Dickens burnt 'the accumulated letters and papers of twenty years' in the field at Gad's Hill, making Kate and her two brothers help in the work (*Letters* 9: 304 and n; Storey 106–07). Obviously, two big spiritual changes would have happened within him. One was a complete separation from Catherine, following Christ's preaching: 'No man can serve two masters'; the other was to purge his tainted, sinful, ungodly soul, through which he wished to regenerate himself. He had expressed his will in *A Tale of Two Cities* (30 Apr.–26 Nov. 1859) through Sydney Carton, who had 'deep wounds in' his heart: 'I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die' (*TC* 198).

Dickens became clearly conscious of his sin and was converted. Tavistock House was sold on August 21, 1860, and the Dickens's family transferred to Gad's Hill completely in October.

8 Improvement

After the purchasing of Gad's Hill Place, Dickens got to work on repairs, additions, alterations, and refurbishments, often superintending those renovations himself (Forster 2: 211). In relation to them he frequently used words like 'improve' or 'improvement.' According to his eldest daughter Mary, he was constantly making improvements to the House from 1860 until his death, as she wrote,

but in 1860 Tavistock House was sold, and all the pictures and ornaments, &c., were removed to Gad's Hill, which now became the one permanent home. And from this time until his death Charles Dickens was constantly making some improvement to "the little freehold" he was so fond of [. . .]. (M. Dickens, *CD* 140–41)

And as each was completed he showed it to Kate, who was a constant visitor. So Kate had to come down and 'inspect'; he would say to her, 'Now, Katie, you behold your parent's latest and last achievement,' and the 'last improvements' became quite a joke between them (M. Dickens, *My Father* 132). In fact he was pleased with 'showing [her] the beauties of his "improvement"' (M. Dickens, *My Father* 136).

The truly last 'improvement' was the building of a conservatory, which was completed around on January 13, 1870 (*Letters* 12: 464–65), and the partitioning of the Vinery in the conservatory would have been finished around June 5. Dickens was very proud of the conservatory, and showed the beauties of it, on June 5, to Kate, who had visited the Place the day before, saying, 'Well, Katey, now you see POSITIVELY the last improvement at Gadshill' (Forster 2: 213; M. Dickens, *CD* 166; Storey 133).

Here we should not overlook that it was to his own improvement or his self-improvement that he had tacitly referred through the 'improvement.' He had surely been doing his self-improvement, which we could perceive from a speech he made at the Birmingham Midland Institute on September 27, 1869, as President for the year:

To the students of your industrial classes generally, I have had it in my mind, first, to commend the short motto, in two words, 'Courage, Persevere'. [*Applause*] This is the motto of a friend and worker. Not because . . . ; nor because . . . ; not because . . . ; not because self-improvement is at all certain to lead to worldly success, but because it is good and right of itself [hear, hear]; and because, being so, it does assuredly bring with it, its own resources and its own rewards. (Fielding 405; emphasis added)

His sixth son Henry ('Harry'), who followed his father then, wrote, 'he told his audience "that they should value self-improvement, not because it led to fortune, but because it was good and right in itself"' (H. Dickens, *Memories* 21; *Recollections* 59). The very speech could not have been made to the students unless he himself had practiced his self-improvement; he, it can be said, was improving himself by identifying the Place with himself.

We might find some of his self-improvements in cases like the reconciliations with William Makepeace Thackeray in 1863 and with Mark Lemon in 1867, in the words 'I don't forget that this is Forster's birthday—or that it is another anniversary [i. e. his own wedding one]!' in a letter to Georgina of 2 April 1868 from Boston (*Letters* 12: 89 and n), and a much politer letter of 5 November 1867 to Catherine than in the former two letters of 6 August 1863 and 11 June 1865:

To Mrs Charles Dickens, 6 August 1863

Dear Catherine

When I went to America (or to Italy: I cannot positively say which, but I think on the former occasion) I gave your mother the paper which established the right in perpetuity to the grave at Kensal Green. [. . .] The Company's office used to be in Great Russell Street Bloomsbury.

CHARLES DICKENS.

To Mrs Charles Dickens, 11 June 1865

Dear Catherine

I thank you for your letter.

I was in the carriage that did not go over the bridge, but which caught on one side and hung suspended over the ruined parapet. I am shaken, but not by that shock. Two or three hours work afterwards among the dead and dying surrounded by terrific sights, render my hand unsteady.

Affectionately
CHARLES DICKENS

To Mrs Charles Dickens, 5 November 1867

My Dear Catherine

I am glad to receive your letter, and to accept and reciprocate your good wishes. Severely hard work lies before me; but that is not a new thing in my life, and I am content to go my way and do it.

Affectionately Yours
CHARLES DICKENS
(emphases added)

The last letter was too short, but he could not write more than what was needed because he was with Ellen following Christ's words.

One more instance may be added to prove his self-improvement by quoting a letter to his youngest son Edward of 26 September 1868:

Never take a mean advantage of anyone in any transaction, and never be hard upon people who are in your power. Try to do to others, as you would have them do to you, and do not be discouraged if they fail sometimes. It is much better for you that they should fail in obeying the greatest rule laid down by our Saviour, than that you should.

Here we should read his sincere repentances for those insolent, cruel attitudes he had taken towards the Hogarths including Catherine, Mark Lemon and Frederick Evans, and for the treacherous attitude he took towards the world. The letter continues,

I put a New Testament among your books, for the very same reasons, and with the very same hopes that made me write an easy account of it for you, when you were a little child; because it is the best book that ever was or will be known in the world, and because it teaches you the best lessons by which any human creature who tries to be truthful and faithful to duty can possibly be guided. As your brothers have gone away, one by one, I have written to each such words as I am now writing to you, and have entreated them all to guide themselves by this book, putting aside the interpretations and inventions of man.

You will remember that you have never at home been wearied about religious observances or mere formalities. I have always been anxious not to weary my children with such things before they are old enough to form opinions respecting them. You will therefore understand the better that I now most

solemnly impress upon you the truth and beauty of the Christian religion, as it came from Christ Himself, and the impossibility of your going far wrong if you humbly but heartily respect it.

Only one thing more on this head. The more we are in earnest as to feeling it, the less we are disposed to hold forth about it. Never abandon the wholesome practice of saying your own private prayers, night and morning. I have never abandoned it myself, and I know the comfort of it. (*Letters* 12: 187–88; emphasis added)

From this letter we could confirm that Dickens had been converted long before, asking Christ for salvation. The first of Edward's brothers who had 'gone away' was Sydney, the seventh child and fifth son of Dickens's, who, a midshipman or naval cadet, had left for America by Frigate Orlando in December 1861 (*Letters* 9: 309, 542–43 and 551). So we might specify the time of Dickens's conversion, as Mary had written 'from this time (i. e. from 1860),' as 1860 when he moved to Gad's Hill, when Kate departed from his home by marriage, and when he burnt his letters and papers.

9 Dickens's Reconciliation with Kate

Kate visited Gad's Hill on June 4, 1870, to get her father's advice on whether she, whose husband was ill in bed, should go on the stage to earn some money or not. It was at about eleven o'clock in the evening of June 5 that they could talk each other about the question in the new conservatory, and he dissuaded her from going on the stage '[w]ith great earnestness,' saying 'there are some who would make your hair stand on end' (Storey 133). This very advice, we could be sure, came from his own irrevocable, remorseful experience. He went on to speak of many other things that 'he had scarcely ever mentioned to her before [. . .] as though his life were over and there was nothing left' (Perugine 652), adding that he wished that he had been 'a better father—a better man' (Storey 134).

It was because of his being not 'a better father' that she had escaped from his 'unhappy house.' She could never be happy by the marriage; her husband Collins remained sickly; now he had stomach ulcer, and was even suspected of tuberculosis; besides he might have been impotent (Gasson 30).

Dickens's consciousness of sin had been made decisively clear by her; and then he would have resolved to improve himself or to purge his spirit, and he would have intimated his self-improvement and made her 'inspect' 'the beauties' of his own

improvements indirectly when showing her the 'the beauties' of the improvements of the Gad's Hill proudly. He, it seems, completed his 'self-improvement' by confessing his sin in the conservatory, which was 'POSITIVELY the last improvement,' and at the very moment he would have been wholly freed from his second trauma.

In the morning of July 6 Kate was waiting for the carriage in the porch to go home in London with her sister Mary, who was to spend a few days there, without saying good-bye to her father because he disliked the two words. But, suddenly seized with an irresistible impulse, she ran to him, who was writing *Edwin Drood* in the Châlet (Storey 134–35). He, seeing her, pushed his chair, and 'opened his arms, and took her into them . . .' (Perugini 654). The blank Kate left there would probably have been thus: 'Father . . . !' 'Katie, forgive me . . . !' He hugged Kate tightly, and they both would have shed all of the tears that would have been stored in their eyes for twelve years. He could be reconciled with her at last, though not with Catherine because he served Christ. But still we could imagine that Kate, who was the cordial sympathizer of her mother and continued to visit her, would have told her mother of her father's words, 'a better father—a better husband.' From the context, situation and dash, we could suppose that 'man' must have been 'husband,' whether by his word or in his mind, but Kate could not make Storey write so because there was Ellen.

Only on her deathbed did Catherine protest against the cruel treatment she had got from Dickens; and Kate may have 'succeeded' in a way in softening her feelings by telling her mother her father's words of 'a better father . . .' and what his last hug would have told Kate (Slater 158 and 411).

Two days later, on June 8, Dickens fell unconscious at dinner, and died on June 9, undoubtedly as a penitent Christian, as he had written in his Will, 'I commit my soul to the mercy of God through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and I exhort my dear children humbly to try to guide themselves by the teaching of the New Testament,' and also as a resurrectionist, as he had written 'the Resurrection and the Life' in *Two Cities* and in the chapter 23 of *Edwin Drood*, the chapter he wrote right before losing his consciousness.

Dickens had written in his Will to 'proceed to an immediate sale' of all his 'real and personal estate.' The destiny of Gad's Hill Place must have been done together with his; it was a symbol of his material desire in the first half of his life, and was the place for the purgation of his spirit in the latter by identifying the Place with himself. Dickens had two bad traumas in his life, and the first was dissolved by the Place; the second was healed by the Place; his life was with Gad's Hill Place.

Note

This paper is a development of part of the one read at the General Meeting of the Japan Dickens Fellowship held at Yamaguchi University on June 10, 2006, and some of the matter mentioned in the above '8 Improvement' and '9 Dickens's Reconciliation with Kate' was posted in a recapitulative form on 29 Nov. 2006 to the Dickens Forum conducted by Professor Patrick McCarthy of University of California, Santa Barbara.

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ディケンズと素人演劇活動

—演劇活動と創作の新領域—

Dickens and Amateur Theatricals:

Their Effects on his Novel Writing

西條 隆雄

Takao SAJO

1 素人演劇活動に使った脚本

ディケンズと演劇の関係は深い。幼い頃に打ち興じた紙芝居やパントマイムをはじめ、街灯で目にしたさまざまな芸当や余興、アストリー座の曲馬、マシューズのワンマンショー、あるいは『ボズのスケッチ集』に見られる小劇場での演劇風景、そしてまた自ら観劇した数え切れないほどの当時の芝居は、ディケンズ文学を形成する大きな基盤を成している。加えてディケンズは戯曲6点(うち2点は共同執筆)をも著している。

同時に、彼には俳優として、舞台監督として、また番組を編成し興行を成功させる座長として腕を振るった素人演劇活動のあることもよく知られている。ところで、この演劇活動については、脚本やスーリーをも含めて詳しく解説をした文献は少ない。実際に素人劇団の一員に加わり、回想録を残したカウデン・クラーク夫人(Mary Cowden Clarke, 1809–98)とか、その活動を目のあたりにして記録したR・H・ホーン(R. H. Horne, 1802–84)はいるが、いずれも部分的な記録に終わっている。ほぼその全貌を描いたのはW・デクスター(Walter Dexter, 1877–1944)であるが、これもディケンズの演技の巧みさ、采配ぶり、観客の反応は伝えるとして、創作と演劇活動の相互関係についてはさほど触れていない。

無謀ながら、ディケンズの素人演劇活動を追い、それと小説執筆がどのように関わっているかを調べてみたいと思いついたのは1980年代の半ばであった。何はさておき、ディケンズの用いた演劇脚本を手に入れるのが先決問題で、フォーセット(Fawcett)が作成した20数篇の演劇リスト(Fawcett 255–56)を片手