



马克·吐温 幽默小说赏析

朱丽萍◎译著



西南交通大学出版社
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而且一天快似一
病得发起高烧，
到150度。到了两
的大小钟表统统

抛到后面，比历书上的日子超出13天还有
余。它早已提前入冬，独自个儿去赏雪，不
管人间仍在晚秋，落叶飘零。在它的带动
下，我不得不赶凑房租，赶结账目，赶办一
切事务，弄得自己焦头烂额，狼狈不堪。实
在忍无可忍，我只好将它拿到一家钟表店去
修理。钟表匠问我这表以前修理过没有。我
回答说没有，它一直好好的，不用修理。听
到此话他得意洋洋、一脸奸笑地撬开表壳，
抓起个小骰子盒戴到眼上，便仔细瞅了起
来。瞅罢便说，“需要擦泥上油，另外还得
调——一周后来取。”



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· 成 都 ·

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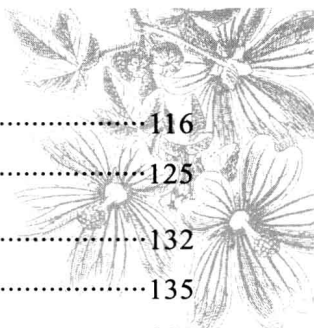


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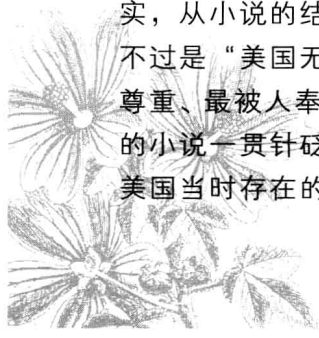
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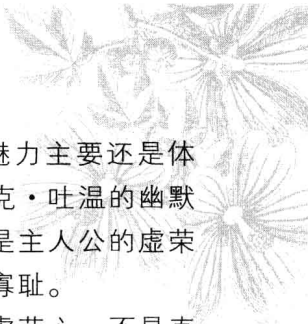




《神秘的访问》赏析

《神秘的访问》讲述了这样一个令人啼笑皆非的故事：小说中的主人公“我”和一位先生聊天时谈到自己的收入，“我”虚荣心大发，不断地将自己的收入夸大，炫耀不已。先生临走时留下一个信封。“我”打开一看，差点晕倒，原来是一张报税单，算下来“我”需要交纳一笔数额巨大的个人收入所得税。“我”气愤地发泄一通后，找到本市的一个阔朋友，前去登门请教。这位朋友大笔一挥，“我”顿时变成了穷光蛋。原来这位朋友巧妙地伪造了一份“应予扣除数”的清单，这样下来，“我”这一年的纯利收入由二十一万元暴跌为一千多元，“我”需要交纳的税就微乎其微了。第二天“我”便来到税务局，厚着脸皮撒谎到底，直到良心、羞耻心消失殆尽。然而，小说中的“我”并不是个特例。小说虽然用了夸张手法，但毕竟根源于现实，反映现实，从小说的结尾可以看出，发生在“我”身上的故事只不过是“美国无数最富有、最自豪，而且最体面、最受人尊重、最被人奉承的人每年都在玩弄的把戏”。马克·吐温的小说一贯针砭时弊，这篇也不例外。小说揭露并讽刺了美国当时存在的一个社会现象，即逃税。逃税集中在富人

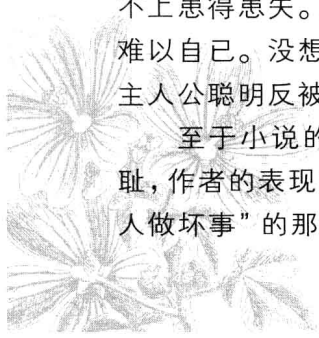




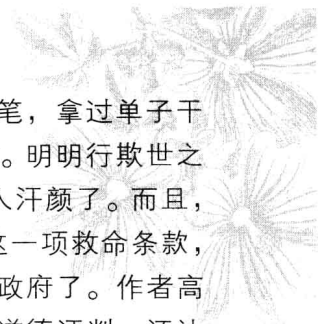
社会，更犀利地指明了当时的社会矛盾。

抛去小说的主题，《神秘的访问》的魅力主要还是体现在它的表现形式上。这当然又离不开马克·吐温的幽默了。这篇小说的讽刺集中体现在两点：一是主人公的虚荣心；二是主人公所代表的富人阶层的鲜廉寡耻。

小说的第一个讽刺焦点——“我”的虚荣心，不是直白地写出来的。这先要从小说的叙述手法说起。无一例外，这篇小说又应用了马克·吐温惯常使用的第一人称，而且“我”既是叙述者，又是小说的主人公。由于第一人称叙事法，我们可以很自然地追溯“我”的心理轨迹，可以看出，“我”并不是一个如何狡猾奸诈、无恶不作的人，而是个天真、无城府的普通人。俗话说“幽默是种善意的嘲弄”，惟其是个普通人，才更容易引起读者的共鸣，他身上体现的人性弱点才更具有幽默效果。“我”和陌生人见面，本不应该透漏自己的收入，无奈在虚荣心的挑逗下，“我”说得越来越深，还故意夸大了数字。这本是不智之举，“我”还自欺欺人地说这是用妙计引蛇出洞，把对方的隐私全给套出来。结果滔滔不绝地说了好久，对方只是倾听微笑，自己的事情却是丝毫未说。“我”的虚荣心既然得到满足，也顾不上患得患失。直到对方告辞，“我”还陶醉在他的奉承中难以自己。没想到接着就看到报税单，发觉自己中了套。主人公聪明反被聪明误，误就误在了自己的虚荣心上。



至于小说的第二个讽刺焦点——富人阶层的寡廉鲜耻，作者的表现手法也别具一格。这里的幽默主要源自“坏人做坏事”的那种淡漠态度。“我”拿到报税单，惊慌失措，



去找一位阔朋友请教。那位朋友真是大手笔，拿过单子干净利落地挥上几笔，“我”就变成了穷光蛋。明明行欺世之举，却做得如此面不改色心不跳，这就令人汗颜了。而且，他还气愤地说，要不是有“应予扣除数”这一项救命条款，他得当乞丐去供奉这个可恨的敲诈勒索的政府了。作者高明在非但不小说人物的所作所为做任何道德评判，还让叙事的声​​音发自一些毫无道德观的人之口，是是非非自让读者去评论，这种空白更增添了小说的魅力。

小说中的几处伏语也用得巧妙。在小说的一开始，在陌生人自报职业时，“我”不知道“估税员”为何物，问他店里生意怎么样，他回答说“我们会十分喜欢那个地方，以后会专门去那儿”还说，“只要谁跟他打过一次交道，他从来没见过哪个人会抛弃了他，另去找一个干他那一行的。”这一回答含蓄而巧妙，暗指“我”作为收入阶层，以后必然要纳税，也免不了和他打交道。这都为后面的真相大白埋好伏笔，也表现了作者思路之缜密。

从《神秘的访问》这篇小说可以看出，马克·吐温作为现实主义批判家，他的作品极具现实意义，但单靠这一点他不可能脱颖而出。他作为幽默大师的高超手法才赋予其作品鲜活的生命和独特的魅力，使之得以流传百世。



A Mysterious Visit

The first notice that was taken of me when I “settled down” recently was by a gentleman who said he was an assessor, and connected with the U. S. Internal Revenue Department. I said I had never heard of his branch of business before, but I was very glad to see him all the same. Would he sit down? He sat down. I did not know anything particular to say, and yet I felt that people who have arrived at the dignity of keeping house^① must be conversational, must be easy and sociable in company. So, in default of^② anything else to say, I asked him if he was opening his shop in our neighborhood.

He said he was. [I did not wish to appear ignorant, but I had hoped he would mention what he had for sale.]

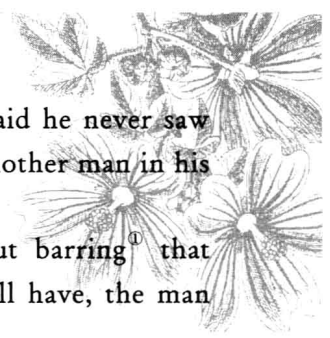
I ventured to ask him “How was trade?” And he said “So-so.”

I then said we would drop in, and if we liked his house as well as any other, we would give him our custom.

He said he thought we would like his establishment

① keep house: 管理家务，当家；这里是成家立业的意思。

② in default of: 在缺少……的情况下；因没有



well enough to confine ourselves to it—said he never saw anybody who would go off and hunt up another man in his line after trading with him once.

That sounded pretty complacent, but barring^① that natural expression of villainy which we all have, the man looked honest enough.

I do not know how it came about exactly, but gradually we appeared to melt down^② and run together, conversationally speaking, and then everything went along as comfortably as clockwork.

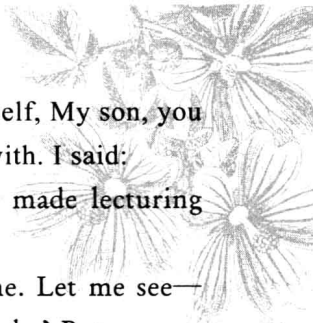
We talked, and talked, and talked—at least I did; and we laughed, and laughed, and laughed—at least he did. But all the time I had my presence of mind about me—I had my native shrewdness turned on “full head,” as the engineers say. I was determined to find out all about his business in spite of his obscure answers—and I was determined I would have it out of him without his suspecting what I was at. I meant to trap him with a deep, deep ruse^③. I would tell him all about my own business, and he would naturally so warm to me during this seductive burst of confidence^④ that he would forget himself, and tell me all about his affairs before he

① **barring**: ['bɑ:riŋ] 除……之外

② **melt down**: 关系变融洽

③ **ruse**: [ru:s; ru:z] 诡计，计策

④ **confidence**: 这里是“知心话、私房话”的意思。



suspected what I was about. I thought to myself, My son, you little know what an old fox you are dealing with. I said:

“Now you never would guess what I made lecturing this winter and last spring?”

“No—don’t believe I could, to save me. Let me see—let me see. About two thousand dollars, maybe? But no; no, sir, I know you couldn’t have made that much. Say seventeen hundred, maybe?”

“Ha! ha! I knew you couldn’t. My lecturing receipts for last spring and this winter were fourteen thousand seven hundred and fifty dollars. What do you think of that?”

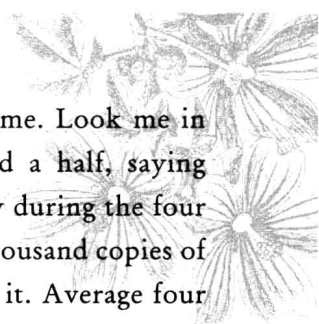
“Why, it is amazing—perfectly amazing. I will make a note of it. And you say even this wasn’t all?”

“All! Why bless you, there was my income from the Daily Warwhoop for four months—about—about—well, what should you say to about eight thousand dollars, for instance?”

“Say! Why, I should say I should like to see myself rolling in^① just such another ocean of affluence. Eight thousand! I’ll make a note of it. Why man!—and on top of all this am I to understand that you had still more income?”

“Ha! ha! ha! Why, you’re only in the suburbs of it, so to speak. There’s my book, The Innocents Abroad price \$3.50

① roll in: 滚滚而来；拥有大量钱财



to \$5, according to the binding. Listen to me. Look me in the eye. During the last four months and a half, saying nothing of sales before that, but just simply during the four months and a half, we've sold ninety-five thousand copies of that book. Ninety-five thousand! Think of it. Average four dollars a copy, say. It's nearly four hundred thousand dollars, my son. I get half."

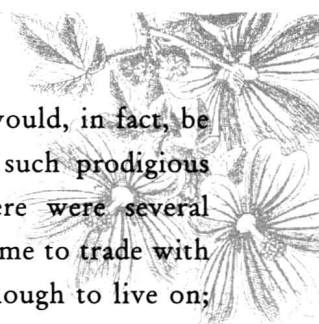
"The suffering Moses! ^① I'll set that down. Fourteen-seven-fifty—eight-two hundred. Total, say—well, upon my word, the grand total is about two hundred and thirteen or fourteen thousand dollars! Is that possible?"

"Possible! If there's any mistake it's the other way. Two hundred and fourteen thousand, cash, is my income for this year if I know how to cipher."

Then the gentleman got up to go. It came over me most uncomfortably that maybe I had made my revelations for nothing^②, besides being flattered into stretching them considerably by the stranger's astonished exclamations. But no; at the last moment the gentleman handed me a large envelope, and said it contained his advertisement; and that I would find out all about his business in it; and that he

① the suffering Moses: 受苦难的摩西。摩西为《圣经》中的先知，他领导以色列人逃出埃及。这里作惊叹语。

② for nothing: 白白地，徒劳地

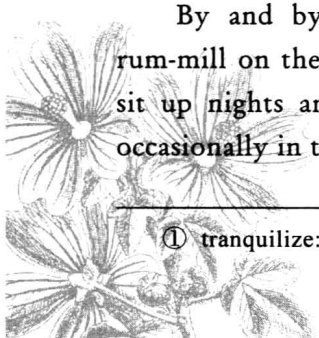


would be happy to have my patronage—would, in fact, be proud to have the custom of a man of such prodigious income; and that he used to think there were several wealthy men in the city, but when they came to trade with him he discovered that they barely had enough to live on; and that, in truth, it had been such a weary, weary age since he had seen a rich man face to face, and talked to him, and touched him with his hands, that he could hardly refrain from embracing me—in fact, would esteem it a great favor if I would let him embrace me.

This so pleased me that I did not try to resist, but allowed this simple-hearted stranger to throw his arms about me and weep a few tranquilizing^① tears down the back of my neck. Then he went his way.

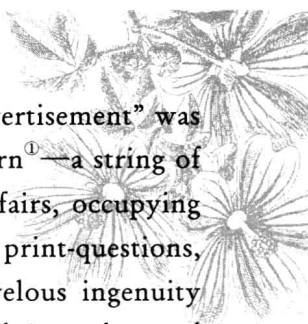
As soon as he was gone I opened his advertisement. I studied it attentively for four minutes. I then called up the cook, and said:

“Hold me while I faint! Let Marie turn the griddle-cakes.”



By and by, when I came to, I sent down to the rum-mill on the corner and hired an artist by the week to sit up nights and curse that stranger, and give me a lift occasionally in the daytime when I came to a hard place.

① tranquilize: ['træŋkwilaɪz] 使平静，使安静



Ah, what a miscreant he was! His “advertisement” was nothing in the world but a wicked tax-return^①—a string of impertinent questions about my private affairs, occupying the best part of four fools-cap pages of fine print-questions, I may remark, gotten up with such marvelous ingenuity that the oldest man^② in the world couldn’t understand what the most of them were driving at—questions, too, that were calculated to make a man report about four times his actual income to keep from swearing to a falsehood. I looked for a loophole^③, but there did not appear to be any. Inquiry No. 1 covered my case as generously and as amply as an umbrella could cover an ant-hill:

What were your profits, during the past year, from any trade, business, or vocation, wherever carried on?

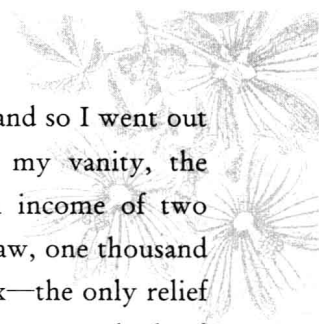
And that inquiry was backed up by thirteen others of an equally searching nature, the most modest of which required information as to whether I had committed any burglary or highway robbery, or, by any arson or other secret source of emolument had acquired property which was not enumerated in my statement of income as set opposite to inquiry No. 1.

It was plain that that stranger had enabled me to make

① tax-return: 报税表

② the oldest man: 这里理解为“最世故、最老练的人”。

③ loophole: ['lu:phəul] 漏洞, 空子



a goose^① of myself. It was very, very plain; and so I went out and hired another artist. By working on my vanity, the stranger had seduced me into declaring an income of two hundred and fourteen thousand dollars. By law, one thousand dollars of this was exempt from^② income tax—the only relief I could see, and it was only a drop in the ocean. At the legal five per cent, I must pay to the government the sum of ten thousand six hundred and fifty dollars, income tax!

[I may remark, in this place, that I did not do it.]

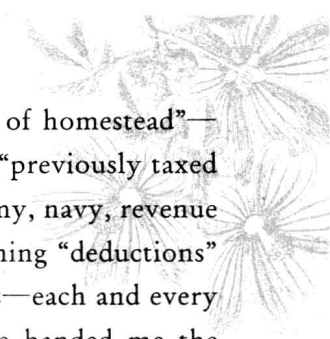
I am acquainted with a very opulent man, whose house is a palace, whose table is regal^③, whose outlays are enormous, yet a man who has no income, as I have often noticed by the revenue returns; and to him I went for advice in my distress. He took my dreadful exhibition of receipts, he put on his glasses, he took his pen, and presto^④! —I was a pauper! It was the neatest thing that ever was. He did it simply by deftly manipulating the bill of “DEDUCTIONS.” He set down my “State, national, and municipal taxes” at so much; my “losses by shipwreck; fire, etc.,” at so much; my “losses on sales of real estate”—on

① goose: 鹅；这里是“傻瓜、笨蛋”的意思。

② be exempt from: 被免除，可免除

③ regal: ['ri:gəl] 华丽的，堂皇的

④ presto: ['prestəu] (音)急板，急板乐段；这里是感叹词，意思为“一眨眼的功夫”。



“live stock sold”—on “payments for rent of homestead”—on “repairs, improvements, interest”—on “previously taxed salary as an officer of the United States army, navy, revenue service,” and other things. He got astonishing “deductions” out of each and every one of these matters—each and every one of them. And when he was done he handed me the paper, and I saw at a glance that during the year my income, in the way of profits, had been one thousand two hundred and fifty dollars and forty cents.

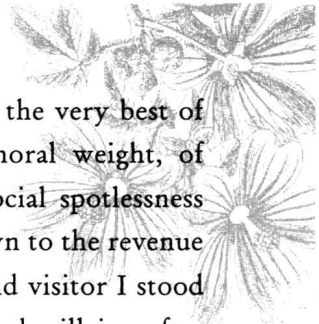
“Now,” said he, “the thousand dollars is exempt by law. What you want to do is to go and swear this document in and pay tax on the two hundred and fifty dollars.”

[While he was making this speech his little boy Willie lifted a two-dollar greenback out of his vest pocket and vanished with it, and I would wager; anything that if my stranger were to call on that little boy to-morrow he would make a false return of his income.]

“Do you,” said I, “do you always work up the ‘deductions’ after this fashion in your own case, sir?”

“Well, I should say so! If it weren’t for those eleven saving clauses under the head of ‘Deductions’ I should be beggared every year to support this hateful and wicked, this extortionate^① and tyrannical government.”


① extortionate: [ɪk'stɔːʃənɪt] 敲诈的



This gentleman stands away up among the very best of the solid men of the city—the men of moral weight, of commercial integrity, of unimpeachable, social spotlessness—and so I bowed to his example. I went down to the revenue office, and under the accusing eyes of my old visitor I stood up and swore to lie after lie, fraud after fraud, villainy after villainy, till my soul was coated inches and inches thick with perjury, and my self-respect gone for ever and ever.

But what of it? It is nothing more than thousands of the richest and proudest, and most respected, honored, and courted men in America do every year. And so I don't care. I am not ashamed. I shall simply, for the present, talk little and eschew^① fire-proof gloves, lest I fall into certain dreadful habits irrevocably.

神秘的访问



我最近在这里“定居”后，首次注意到我的是一位自

① eschew: [es'tʃu:] (尤指为道德或实际理由而)习惯性避开，回避