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双城记

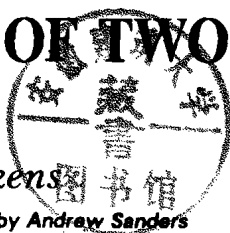
A TALE OF TWO CITIES
CHARLES DICKENS

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双城记

A TALE OF TWO CITIES

Charles Dickens
With an Introduction by Andrew Sanders



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查尔斯·狄更斯(1812—1870)生于英国普茨茅斯一个海军小职员家庭。姊妹兄弟8人,父亲因债台高筑而入狱。狄更斯曾到鞋油厂当童工,父亲出狱后才勉强上了两年学。狄更斯的广博知识全靠自学获得,他是大英博物馆的常客。1827年,他当了律师的缮写员和信差;此后还当过法院的速记员。1833年起,狄更斯担任伦敦《晨报》、《月刊》杂志、《晚报》等报刊的记者,同时发表了第一部小说《匹克威克外传》(1836),一举成名。从此狄更斯专事创作。1842年曾到美国访问,回国后写了《旅美札记》和小说《马丁·朱述尔维特》(1844),1846年创办了激进的《每日邮报》。狄更斯一生刻苦写作,终因健康原因和家庭烦恼,于1870年在写作侦探小说《埃德温·德鲁特》时逝世。

狄更斯一生创作19部长篇小说,大量中、短篇小说和散文、书信、时评及戏剧。其中著名的有:《雾都孤儿》(1838)、《大卫·科波菲尔》(1850)、《荒凉山庄》(1853)、《艰难时世》(1854)、《双城记》(1859)和《远大前程》(1861)等。

狄更斯是一位具有资产阶级民主主义思想的批判现实主义作家,也是继莎士比亚之后英国最伟大的作家之一。他的作品在思想上和艺术上都取得了极高的成就。他的文笔幽默诙谐,在描写人生的辛酸苦涩时,亦不忘各种纯朴自然的乐趣,形成一种独有的“笑中带泪”的风格。他还以生动的细节描写和细致入微的心理分析,塑造了许多富有鲜明个性的人物形象,真实地反映了英国19世纪初叶的社会面貌。

内容简介

法国大革命爆发前，一位白发苍苍的法国医生曼奈特被家人从巴士底狱接出，送到英国定居。18年前，这位医生一次乘马车经过巴黎街头时遭到劫持，被迫抢救一对伤病的农家姐弟。这位姐姐因横遭埃吾瑞蒙德侯爵之弟抢占，致使丈夫遇害，父亲气死；而弟弟也正是在复仇时被刺伤。姐弟二人终因救治无效，结果含恨而死。医生目睹惨剧，便写信告发，不料因此招致灾祸，被投入巴士底狱。18年中，妻子忧郁而死，本人精神恍惚。获释后，随女儿路丝侨居伦敦，逐渐康复。

路丝结识了法国青年查理斯·达奈，两人相爱结婚。其实达奈正是埃吾瑞蒙德侯爵的嗣子，但达奈不满本阶级的罪恶，放弃贵族爵位而出走英国。后来法国大革命爆发，埃吾瑞蒙德侯爵家虽然兄弟二人都已死去，但为他们看守产业的老管家却被捕入狱。达奈为营救无辜，特意从伦敦赶回正在革命恐怖笼罩之下的巴黎，但也是自投罗网，竟被判处死刑。在达奈关押巴士底狱等待行刑的日子里，一向爱慕其妻路丝的英国青年律师卡尔登利用自己与达奈酷似的面貌混入狱中，代替达奈，安然走上了绞刑架，成全了他真心爱慕的女子的幸福。

INTRODUCTION

AS a ruse to distract Charles Darnay's attention in the cell in the Conciergerie, Sydney Carton requests that he write as he dictates. 'If you remember . . . the words that passed between us, long ago, you will readily comprehend this when you see it. You do remember them, I know. It is not in your nature to forget them.' Darnay's letter is never finished, though the few words he has written will, we presume, hold meaning for him in the unknown future which Carton will not share. Words exchanged in the past are projected into the future and given a fresh import once they are understood in a proper context. Time, as so often in *A Tale of Two Cities*, will reveal meaning. The writing of letters by those condemned to the guillotine was by no means uncommon during the first French Revolution. Boxes of such letters survive in the Archives Nationales in Paris, all of them retained by the Public Prosecutor at the time of the Terror, Fouquier-Tinville. None reached its intended destination and most were probably filed away, unread, until a selection of them was published in 1984 by Olivier Blanc (*La Dernière Lettre: Prisons et Condamnés de la Révolution 1793-94*). Only the long last testaments of Marie-Antoinette and Mme Roland had become familiar to propagandists and historians; those of less notable victims were stored as dissociated relics, an archive detached from the original passions of the writers and the would-be recipients. The need to record something of import clearly pressed on many of those awaiting death in the Conciergerie (though that import is often lost on latter-day, dispassionate readers). A historian like Thomas Carlyle would have immediately recognized the significance of these letters had they been accessible to him in the 1830s, for they are precisely the kind of material out of which he moulded his great narrative *The French Revolution*, Dickens's primary source for his historical novel. Where he does use similar evidence it is telling. Carlyle

records that as Mme Roland awaited her turn to die, she asked for pen and paper 'to write the strange thoughts that were rising in her'. Her request was refused, presumably by one who feared the power of words. That imposed silence, however, did serve to inspire Dickens into articulating the thoughts that rise in Sydney Carton as he stands at the foot of the same guillotine. A historical hiatus becomes the stimulus of fiction.

Letter writing, recording, memorizing, and recalling are singularly important in *A Tale of Two Cities*, and our reading of the novel frequently depends on how both characters and readers interpret evidence. Darnay's supposed last letter is broken off, but Carton takes up its theme of remembering and being remembered in his last 'prophetic' utterance. Carton and Darnay are part of a fiction in which their resemblance to each other is the hinge of the plot, but as writers and speakers they are linked to the real and imagined figures of history. As with Carlyle's *The French Revolution*, the archival is shaped into the narrative, and the ephemeral takes on the weight of evidence. The prime instance of this in the novel is the hidden testimony of Dr Manette by means of which the past is brought dramatically into play in the present. It is likely that Dickens took his cue directly from Carlyle's quotation of the once-forgotten petition of a real Bastille prisoner, one Quéret-Démery, a pathetic instance of an undelivered letter discovered at the time of the demolition of the prison when its initial relevance had been lost. Manette's letter is both like and unlike Quéret-Démery's. The latter is addressed to a minister at court and appeals for mercy. Manette's is directed to an unknown future and to some discovering 'pitying hand'; it does not ask for mercy but for justice; it is accusatory not pathetic. Ironically, it will not be discovered by a 'pitying' hand, but by a vengeful one. It will not be published when, like Quéret-Démery, its author and his sorrows are dust, but when Manette has found new relations and established new responses. Manette outlives his bitterness, but the letter outlasts the passion which inspired it. The Doctor, who had once been forced to

retreat into unnatural silence, finds himself vocal when silence would have been preferred. As a forced witness before the Revolutionary Tribunal, he no longer reads his past as he once painfully did in the Bastille. He has made a new context for himself. His new suffering depends on the fact that others, notably the Defarges, read his letter in a context which suits their very different understanding of a history which is both public and private.

It is by means of yet another letter, sent out in hope to a man who has attempted to avoid the consequences of his name, that Charles Darnay returns to Revolutionary France in the summer of 1792. In the last chapter of Book II, Gabelle's 'very pressing' appeal to 'Monsieur heretofore the Marquis St Evrémonde, of France', alerts readers to the secret of Darnay's suppressed ancestry and name. That he was the nephew of a French marquis was evident earlier in the story, but the family name (which will echo and re-echo through the closing phases of the novel) has not been heard before. There is another irony here. The letter reaches the man who both is and is not the Marquis St Evrémonde. In England he is Charles Darnay, though he can legitimately claim the title of Marquis; in France, because titles of nobility had been abolished, he is an Evrémonde, but no longer a Marquis. Darnay reads the letter and understands its import; the name of Evrémonde is the 'Loadstone Rock' which draws him inevitably to a historic destiny and to the 'obligations' which he acknowledges when he writes parting letters to his wife and father-in-law. Gabelle's letter finds its addressee; Darnay recognizes its, and his own, context.

Evidence and nomenclature have always to be read carefully. At Darnay's English trial at the Old Bailey, the evidence presented against him is as ambiguous as his real name; he is acquitted only because his close resemblance to Carton casts positive doubt on proper identification. A parallel device releases him from the Conciergerie, though in this instance Carton takes on the destiny of the Evrémonde name while Charles is free to resume the name and destiny of Darnay. A similar confusion of names and

identities marks the appearance and disappearances of Solomon Pross, and reflects the play on doubleness which figures throughout the novel. How things or persons are called matters a great deal in a narrative which is balanced between two cities and between two languages. Dickens offers us bilingual characters (Manette, Darnay, Carton), but he also experiments with the device of literally translating the French idioms of his monoglot francophones (the Defarges and the Jacques) into English. The device may seem awkward, and it has been censured frequently by critics of the novel, but it adds subtly to the complexity of a narrative in which the way words are understood vitally matters. In some instances events and actions serve to reinterpret words and concepts, much as the Revolution itself had sought to redefine eras, months, and days. Dickens twice quotes the Revolutionary motto—'Liberty, Fraternity, Equality—or Death'—so that the words seem to echo both hollowly and ironically in the experience of characters. The title 'Citizen', enforced on all by decree, has little meaning to those denied the rights and privileges of citizenship. At times words fail altogether, notably so in the final confrontation of Mme Defarge and Miss Pross, both locked in their own languages as much as they are locked in a physical struggle which is the elemental one of good and evil. At the very end of the novel it is the voice of the narrator which takes on the role of the articulator of Carton's prophetic thought, projecting it into a human future which of necessity excludes the silent prophet.

In the last paragraphs of *A Tale of Two Cities* Carton also looks forward to descendants of the Darnays who will purge his name of the 'blots' he had thrown upon it. The first of these future Sydneys will be the 'foremost of just judges and honoured men', and will thus serve as a bringer of the kind of justice which will counterbalance the injustice which has destroyed Carton and threatened all of the Evrémonde-Darnays. It may well be that the 'blots' to which Carton refers are stains which he has indirectly thrown upon the reputation of the English Republican hero after whom he

was named, Algernon Sidney. This Sidney was also the victim of injustice, having been tried and executed in the seventeenth century under the notorious Judge Jeffreys (to whom Carton is compared in his drunkenness). Dickens's choice of a Christian name introduces a further ramification into the fiction, giving an extra dimension to the discussion of historical causes and effects, and to the idea of justice which runs through the story. The fictional Carton offers a kind of expiation, not only for his 'wasted' past life, but also for the injustice of Revolutionary justice. Algernon Sidney had come to be regarded as a martyr in the cause of liberty by English Whigs, dying, as Macaulay put it, 'with the fortitude of a Stoic'; Carton dies Christianly, with a Resurrection text on his lips and with a face which strikes onlookers as 'sublime and prophetic'. Carton's self-sacrifice reverses the Defarges' perception of justice as revenge much as Dr Manette had, in his turn, learnt the healing of the quality of mercy. The concept of martyrdom contains within it a good deal that is paradoxical. Carton's death, which brings together and contrasts ideas of justice and mercy, bids readers examine a particularly charged paradox within the framework of a tightly argued historical plot.

When he is condemned by the Tribunal, Darnay attempts to soothe his distraught family with the words 'It could not be otherwise . . . All things have worked together as they have fallen out.' Dickens's story traces both this 'working together' and the way in which Carton's interference allows for an unpredicted conclusion to the sequence of events. Following Carlyle, Dickens sees the Revolution as the inevitable consequence of history. In beginning his plot in the 1750s he provides the graphic evidence of the crimes by which the *ancien régime* stands condemned by its victims, but he also provides for an individual intervention in the historical process which averts the visitation of the sins of fathers on their children. The impression we are given of the France of Louis XV and Louis XVI is highly unfavourable; it is a society based on privilege and on the abuse of privilege. Above all, as both the general opening chapter of

the novel and the discussions of the Jacques confirm, the eighteenth century's idea of criminal justice is based on painful and bloody retribution (we are referred to the historical cases of de la Barre and Damiens, and to the fictional instance of the murderer of the Marquis). Dickens does not, however, allow any Revolutionary leader to articulate a case for his reaction against a defunct social and political system. We have instead the narrow prejudices of the Defarges, seekers after personal vengeance, in whose eyes the Revolution is simply a consequence of their past sufferings and an answer to the oppressions endured by their ancestors. The novel provides us with a historical context, but with only a limited view of how a particular Revolutionary process evolved. This has seemed to many commentators to be a straightforward eschewal of analysis, a series of vivid impressions rather than serious investigation. This is to underrate Dickens's intelligence as an artist. As he was at pains to suggest in his Preface, he did not seek 'to add anything to the philosophy of Mr Carlyle's wonderful book'. *A Tale of Two Cities* stands beside *The French Revolution*, not as a fictional alternative to it. Carlyle had fused many perspectives into a narrative; Dickens composed a Dickensian novel about fictional individuals set in the Revolutionary period. Carton's sacrifice no more answers the problem of the Reign of Terror than the marriage of Esther and Allan Woodcourt solves the dilemma of the divided England of *Bleak House*. Both gestures, however, can be interpreted as signs. Dickens is not implying that the novel's plot traces a Revolutionary process, or that Revolutions ought to evolve according to the moral dialectic of the story; but that individuals, given moral choices, *can* choose mercy over justice, sacrifice over selfishness, and that such choices may prove the more perfect human way. The novel merely provides readers with a certain kind of evidence, but it leaves the evidence open to interpretation. One of the first critics to dispute the accuracy and validity of Dickens's understanding of the Revolutionary period was his friend Edward Bulwer-Lytton. Having defended his understanding

of the sources he had used, the novelist went on to insist on the propriety of introducing into his plot the accident by means of which he disposes of Mme Defarge:

Where the accident is inseparable from the passion and emotion of the character, when it is strictly consistent with the whole design, and arises out of some culminating proceeding on the part of the character which the whole story has led up to, it seems to me to become, as it were, an act of divine justice. (5 June 1860)

'Accident', seen according to a certain light, appears as a providential act. The story, of which Dickens was so proud, is a 'design' which has to be read and understood as a pattern. That pattern can represent a human ordering which offers some meaning amid a sequence of historical events which seemed to Carlyle to teeter on the edge of Chaos.

Dickens's stress on the intervention of the individual, rather than on a demonstration or picturing of the larger events and ideas of the Revolution, may well be related to factors in his personal life and experience. His feeling for France and the French, and his close and affectionate knowledge of Paris certainly contributed much. Throughout *A Tale of Two Cities* Paris is seen as somehow caught up in a fearful enchantment; its streets are violent, bloody, unswept, and poor; its people sullen, threatening, and defensive. This was not the Paris that Dickens seems to have known in the mid-nineteenth century, and the disparity between the imagined and the experienced city certainly disturbed him. When he first saw Paris in 1844 he found it 'the most extraordinary place in the world'; its streets showed him 'novelty, novelty, novelty'. When he describes the city thereafter in his letters, in his minor fiction, or in his periodical essays, it is a place of light, colour, neatness, pleasure, and delighted fantasy. He was, of course, well aware of the role the capital had played in the Revolutions of 1830 and 1848 but, somehow, these liberal changes of regime struck the progressive Dickens as fitting to his age, not as recalls of the 'terrible time' of the early 1790s. His

unease at the contrast between the city of light and the city of destruction expresses itself in an extraordinary image. As Carton is driven through the streets on his way to the guillotine, the narrator suggests that the Revolutionary city is in the grip of a 'powerful enchanter' or a 'great magician' who is 'working out the appointed order of the Creator'. Once again we have a paradox. How is this place of uncreative disorder to function in a Creator's order? To some extent the plot offers a speculative answer, but at this point in the narrative the response is an echo of the *Arabian Nights*. In one of these favourite stories of Dickens's childhood a man, transformed into an ape, is restored to order by means of a simple questioning formula which breaks the enchantment. Carton may not be released from his doom, but Paris is to be. There is no formula, and no Princess to put the vital question, except for the prophetic thoughts which finally inspire the dying man, seeing Paris beautiful again and 'a brilliant people rising from the abyss'. Time will make for expiation, fulfilling the purposes of providence, and dream will supplant nightmare.

It would seem likely that during his repeated visits to Paris in the 1840s and 1850s Dickens sought out the relics of the nightmare. His knowledge of Carlyle's *The French Revolution* would already have familiarized him with the associations of the major surviving historical sites (surviving, that is, the changes wrought by the first Napoleon), but he almost certainly would have visited the city's prisons during his fascinated walks through the streets. The Bastille had been systematically demolished in 1789, but the Conciergerie, La Force, and the Abbaye prison were all still standing. Both La Force (demolished in 1851) and the Abbaye (demolished 1854-5) were still in use as houses of detention. As his published writings amply testify, Dickens was instinctively drawn to prisons throughout his life. The shadow of his father's confinement in the Marshalsea in the 1820s falls darkly over his fiction from the accounts of Newgate and the Fleet in *Sketches by 'Boz'* and *Pickwick Papers* to the unrealized scene in a condemned cell which was perhaps to form the

crisis of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. In *Pictures from Italy* there are horrified accounts of the dungeons at Avignon and of the cells adjacent to the Doge's Palace at Venice. Strangely though, it was the modern American prison system which probably provided the initial stimulus to the portrait of Dr Manette. In the seventh chapter of *American Notes* Dickens lengthily describes his visit to the Eastern Penitentiary in Philadelphia, and he is forthright in his condemnation of the system of solitary confinement practised there:

I believe that very few men are capable of estimating the immense amount of torture and agony which this dreadful punishment, prolonged for years, inflicts upon the sufferers; and in guessing at it myself, and in reasoning from what I have seen written upon their faces, and what to my certain knowledge they feel within, I am only the more convinced that there is a depth of terrible endurance in it which none but the sufferers themselves can fathom, and which no man has a right to inflict upon his fellow-creature. I hold this slow and daily tampering with the mysteries of the brain to be immeasurably worse than any torture of the body.

The delineation of the effects of Manette's long incarceration, of his recovery, and of his relapses into silence, is one of the most persuasive descriptions of mental affliction in all of Dickens's work (and Dickens is generally more observant of mental aberration than any other English novelist). In fusing his impressions of the Philadelphia system with the imagined horrors of that monster among prisons, the Bastille, the novelist found the germ of his story. The image of the solitary prisoner appears as a vignette on the title-page of the first edition of the novel, and Dickens prepared, but never gave, a reading based on a condensation of *A Tale of Two Cities* which was simply to be called 'The Bastille Prisoner'. In writing the novel he carefully moved back the time of Darnay's departure for France in 1792 in order that he might be in Paris at the time of the prison massacres in September of that year, and he insists that Darnay be confined in La Force 'en secret' (in solitary confinement), a somewhat extraordinary condition given the overcrowding of the gaols.

The news of Manette's release from the Bastille ('Recalled to Life') opens the novel's plot. As the impact and the meaning of that news sinks in, Dickens begins Chapter 3 with a musing on the 'mysteries of the brain' which is related to his evident disturbance in describing the system of solitary confinement in Philadelphia. Jerry Cruncher arrives in London by night to find the city asleep, and the narrator offers a reflection on his behalf:

... every human creature is constituted to be that profound secret and mystery to every other. A solemn consideration, when I enter a great city by night, that every one of those darkly clustered houses encloses its own secret; that every room in every one of them encloses its own secret; that every beating heart in the hundreds of thousands of breasts there, is, in some of its imaginings, a secret to the heart nearest it! Something of the awfulness, even of Death itself, is referable to this.

The human mind, by means of which the external world is grasped and articulated and given some kind of order, sleeps. More disturbingly, each mind is distinct from that of its neighbour; in sleep it is isolated, uncommunicative, self-possessed. This passage partly suggests why Dickens is often so unwilling to analyse thought and motive in his characters, and so much happier in recording speech and observing external traits; but it is also closely linked with the themes of this particular novel. The 'mysteries of the brain', and the dangers of tampering with those mysteries, are everywhere. Manette's catatonia proves susceptible to coaxing treatment (notably so in the chapter entitled 'An Opinion'), but other consequences of mental trauma have dire social results. In many ways Manette's tortured mind prefigures the more widespread distortions produced by the France of the *ancien régime*. This diseased system ('the leprosy of unreality' as it is styled) is seen in the novel very much through Carlyle's prejudiced eyes, but in his determination to relate causes to effects Dickens locates the stimulus for revolutionary excess in the condition of pre-Revolutionary France. Therese Defarge is as much a product of this system as is Manette; the difference between them lies in the fact

that her continued confinement is in a mentally and morally restrictive straitjacket. It is in this way that we can best grasp the import of the narrator's often-quoted (and criticized) rhetoric which opens the last chapter of the novel:

Crush humanity out of shape once more, under similar hammers, and it will twist itself into the same tortured forms. Sow the same seed of rapacious licence and oppression ever again, and it will surely yield the same fruit according to its kind.

This is an insistent directive both back to the opening chapter of the narrative and into a non-fictional future. The Revolution has had causes, and it developed naturally out of ill-sown seeds which have awaited their proper season for ripening. This is a thoroughly Carlylean image. Dickens's first image is also derived from Carlyle, but it is one which we can recognize from its reiteration elsewhere in his novels. The human spirit, distorted by systems, by falsehoods, and by fraudulent philosophies, produces distorted societies. One oppressive sham is as likely to breed another sham in reaction, as did France in the 1790s. The harvest of French Philosophism may be worse than that of English Benthamism but it is only so by a matter of degree. As always in Dickens's work, it is individuals who free themselves from the rigid imposition of institutions, not the institutions which reform themselves. In this limited freedom of a few individuals lies the only hope for the future. This is why Dickens so distrusts, and therefore leaves out of his novel, the idealism of the French Revolution. Manette's way is not Marat's nor is Carton's that of Saint-Just.

A personal ramification to the nature of the novel needs finally to be mentioned. In his Preface Dickens mentions that he conceived the main idea of the story while he was acting with his children and friends in 'Mr. Wilkie Collins's drama of *The Frozen Deep*'. Collins's play is now justly forgotten but for its connection with *A Tale of Two Cities*, but the casts assembled for the performances of the play in 1857 retain more than a passing interest. Dickens was, by all accounts, a talented and indeed a passionate actor and his

performance as the flawed hero of the play seems to have demanded a great deal of him emotionally. These emotions were complicated during the three public performances of *The Frozen Deep* in Manchester in the July of 1857, for here professional actors were imported into the cast. These actors, all members of the Ternan family, took over the women's parts from Dickens's daughters and from the wife of his assistant, Wills. The youngest Ternan, Ellen, played the part of Lucy Crayford. The play's plot is melodramatic and hinges on the rivalry in love of two men; the rejected suitor, Richard Wardour (played by Dickens), ends the play by dying in the arms of the woman he still loves, having saved the life of his rivals during an Arctic expedition (the 'frozen deep' of the title). The links with the novel at first seem tenuous, for there are no obvious verbal or structural echoes in the later fiction. What does seem to have impressed itself upon Dickens's mind was the elevating notion of sacrifice and its relation to the redeeming and purifying power of love. The presence of Ellen Ternan in the cast, and Dickens's clear sexual attraction to her by the time of the composition of the novel, do seem to have moulded certain aspects of the narrative. Ellen became the physical model for Lucie Manette, as the easy shift from 'Lucy' to 'Lucie' signals, and Richard Wardour seems to have prompted the conception of the character of Sydney Carton. As the manuscript of the novel reveals, Dickens at first gave Carton the name 'Dick' but changed his mind early on. The link between 'Dick' and 'Richard' is obvious, but one can only speculate as to what subconscious motivation might have suggested Dickens's own initials 'C.D.' for Darnay and their reversal, 'D.C.', originally for Carton. The two men closely resemble each other, of course, but the prospect of the leading male figures in the story being called 'Charles' and 'Dick' must have quickly struck the novelist as too blatant a code.

We must not read too much biography or too much of Dickens the actor into *A Tale of Two Cities*, though clearly a strong personal sympathy for both Darnay and Carton went into their creation. The fact that each man mirrors the other