

## The Japan Mark Twain Society: Its History and Activities

From 1876 until the present day, Mark Twain has continued to capture the Japanese imagination. Looking back at the postwar years, I recall how in those days we simply enjoyed reading this good old local humorist. Yet, recent currents in contemporary literary criticism have encouraged us to revolutionize Twain's image, even giving rise to heated controversy over the reCanonization of this representative man of the Gilded Age. This productive reconstruction of American literary history in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century very naturally led Japanese scholars to conceive The Japan Mark Twain Society in October 1996. Including myself, four of Japan's foremost authorities on Twain — Professors Matsuyama Nobunao, Nasu Yorimasa, Kamei Shunsuke and Nagawara Makoto, the Society's first president, joined forces to establish The Japan Mark Twain Society on March 15, 1997 at Doshisha University in Kyoto. At that time we sponsored a symposium on *The Prince and the Pauper* and featured Professor Matsumura Masaie's lecture on Twain's transatlantic connections. We have since held our annual meetings every autumn: The first one featured Professor Watanabe Toshio's special lecture on Twain in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (October 13, 1997 at Toyo University, Tokyo); the second, Professor Katsuura Yoshio's lecture on his scholarly encounters with Twain (October 16, 1998 at Astair Plaza in Hiroshima); the third annual meeting focused on the years prior to Twain's literary debut, moderated by Professor Ichikawa Hiroaki (October 8, 1999 at Kitakyushu University); the fourth annual meeting highlighted a symposium on Sexuality, Gender, Feminism, moderated by Professor Oi Koji (October 13, 2000 at Doshisha University). For information about subsequent symposia, please see the "Professional Notes" section in this issue.

It is the Society's second president, Professor Kamei Shunsuke, who made possible the publication of our own academic journal through negotiations with Mr. Hara Nobuo of Nan'undo publishers. Since 2002, we have annually published the Japanese numbers of *The Journal of Mark Twain Studies*, dedicated in turn to "Mark Twain and Technology," "Mark Twain and Detective Stories," and "Mark Twain and Fantasy." These three issues paved the way for the first English issue you are perusing right now. We hope that *Mark Twain Studies* will contribute much to international Twain scholarship, continuing to reveal the hidden agendas of this all-American hero not only in the context of his own Gilded Age, but also in today's Globalized one.

NASU Yorimasa

President of The Japan Mark Twain Society