BIBLIOPHILES MEETING #35

Mark Twain’s 1872 ground-breaking adventure book titled **ROUGING IT** was the subject of our last great read and discussion. Twain traveled extensively throughout the untamed American West with his brother, working his way from town to town in a variety of jobs, including gold and silver prospector, reporter, editor and lecturer. **Roughing It** is Twain’s personal recollection of his wanderlust years. As described by one of its editors, it is a “wildly humorous adventurous yarn that combines hard facts with a healthy dose of the author’s unique perspective, one that helped define the course of American Literature.”

One could also say that it is a swashbuckling and picaresque account of unique landscapes and personalities, both high and low, who were innovators, manipulators and survivors on the Western frontier. It is chock-full of excitement, surprises, shifty dealings and close calls. Some of our group were put off by the lack of distinction between fact and fiction (tall stories), but others responded enthusiastically to Twain’s vivid and tactile descriptions of the Nevada Territory:

> The sun beats down with dead, blistering, relentless malignity, the perspiration is welling from every pore in man and beast, but scarcely a sign of it finds its way to the surface – it is absorbed before it gets there, there is not the faintest breath of air stirring, three is not a living creature visible in any direction whither one searches the blank level that stretches its monotonous miles on every hand, there is not a sound – not a sigh – not a whisper – not a buzz, or a whir of wings, or distant pipe of bird – not even a sob from the lost souls that doubtless people that dead air.

Long continuous sentences and multiple page paragraphs sometimes provided challenges for reader attention and visual scanning.

We had another informal book selection process choosing from among seven titles that had been recommended at our last meeting. Terry Haney’s “strong recommendation” for Justin Reed Early’s **STREET CHILD: A Memoir**, won the day. It is the “shocking and inspiring memoir of a young boy who escapes his increasingly dysfunctional and violent home...” You may Google [http://justinearly.com/](http://justinearly.com/) to learn more. There is a notable local, non-profit agency that supports homeless children ([http://www.yesomaha.org](http://www.yesomaha.org)). It is supported by the Omaha Community Foundation with opportunities to give on May 25, 2016.
Today, I picked up one of the three copies that I was able to order for our club at the Bookworm. When I placed the order right after our last meeting, I learned that it was from an independent publisher. In bookseller parlance, that means a title that is sold at very low (or no) profit margin, and for which unsold copies cannot be returned to the publisher. This is an understandable marketing dilemma and an unfortunate constraint on access from local bookstores. I suggest that you hustle down to the Bookworm and purchase one of the two remaining copies, or possibly call them (402-392-2877) to hold or confirm current availability, possibly through a personal order.

I look forward to seeing you again at Spezia (11:30) on September 14 to resume our book discussion adventures. Have a happy summer and keep reading (It’s so much better than TV).

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