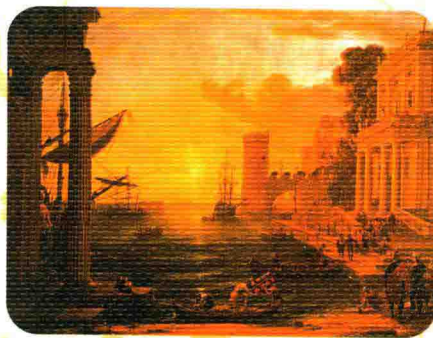


插图·中文导读英文版



The Curious Case of
Benjamin Button

返老还童

[美] 菲茨杰拉德 著

杨楠 等 编译



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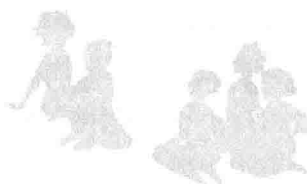
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内 容 简 介

《返老还童》是世界公认的文学经典名著。这是一部充满魔幻色彩的小说，讲述主人公本杰明·巴顿逆行时光的人生故事。本杰明一出生就像一位耄耋的老者，母亲因他难产而死，他一出生便遭父亲的遗弃。在养老院工作的一对黑人夫妇收养了他，并给予他无限的爱和智慧。从第一次世界大战末到二十一世纪，随着时间的流逝，本杰明越变越年轻，经历了求学、结婚、参军……最后，他以婴儿的状态躺在妻子的怀抱里安静地去世。

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弗·司各特·菲茨杰拉德 (Francis Scott Fitzgerald, 1896—1940), 20 世纪美国最伟大的作家之一。

菲茨杰拉德是 20 世纪与海明威、福克纳齐名的美国著名作家。20 世纪的 20 年代和 30 年代是美国小说的黄金时代, 这 20 年间可谓是群星璀璨。除菲茨杰拉德外, 美国文坛还涌现出了像辛克莱·刘易斯、赛珍珠、福克纳、海明威、斯坦贝克、莫里斯等享誉世界的作家。这个年代也被称为“爵士时代”, 因为这是美国历史上最会享乐、最绚丽的时代, 也是空前繁荣的时代, 是创造“美国梦”的时代。菲茨杰拉德的作品生动地反映了 20 世纪 20 年代“美国梦”的破灭, 展示了大萧条时期美国上层社会“荒原时代”的精神面貌。菲茨杰拉德纵情参与了“爵士时代”的酒食征逐, 也完全融化在自己的作品之中。正因为如此, 他才能栩栩如生地重现那个时代的社会风貌、生活气息和感情节奏。但更重要的是, 在沉湎其中的同时, 他又能冷眼旁观, 体味“灯火阑珊, 酒醒人散”的怅惘, 用严峻的道德标准衡量一切, 用凄婉的笔调抒写了战后“迷茫的一代”对于“美国梦”幻灭的悲哀。因此菲茨杰拉德被誉为是“迷惘的一代的代言人”、“爵士时代的桂冠诗人”。

1896 年 9 月 24 日, 菲茨杰拉德出生在美国明尼苏达州圣保罗



市一个小商人家庭。1913年，进入普林斯顿大学学习，中途辍学。1917年入伍，次年升为中尉军官。1919年退伍，之后在一家商业公司当抄写员，业余致力于文学创作。1920年，他出版了第一部长篇小说《人间天堂》，该书一经出版便成为当时最畅销的小说之一，在社会上引起了很大的反响。继《人间天堂》之后，他又陆续出版了《美国的悲剧》（1925年）、《了不起的盖茨比》（1925年）和《夜色温柔》（1934年）等。

除长篇小说外，菲茨杰拉德还出版了160多部短篇小说，这些短篇小说收录在《爵士时代的故事》（1922）、《所有悲伤的年轻人的故事》（1926）等短篇小说集中，他的短篇小说取得了很高的艺术成就。同时，短篇小说还给他带来了可观的收入，并赢得了普通读者的认同和喜爱。菲茨杰拉德的短篇小说一般都有很强的娱乐性，它们布局精巧曲折，文字细腻华丽，风格机智诙谐，经常有出人意料的结尾，读起来是一种愉快的享受。本书选录的《返老还童》（也译作《本杰明·巴顿奇事》）和《像里兹饭店那样大的钻石》是菲茨杰拉德短篇小说中的典型代表，也是世界短篇小说的经典之作，它们同时收录在《爵士时代故事集》中的“幻想故事”类下。由《返老还童》改编而拍成的电影还获得了第81届奥斯卡的多项大奖。时至今日，菲茨杰拉德的很多作品已成为美国大学和中学英文课的必读文学经典。

在菲茨杰拉德的众多作品中，《返老还童》是其短篇小说中的典型代表。在中国，这部小说同样受到广大读者的喜爱。为此，我们决定编译《返老还童》，并采用中文导读英文版的形式出版。在中文导读中，我们尽力使其贴近原作的精髓。我们希望能够编出为当代中国读者所喜爱的经典读本。读者在阅读每章之前，可以先阅读中文导读内容，这样有利于了解每章的背景，从而加快阅读速度。



同时，为了读者更好地理解故事内容，书中加入了大量的插图。我们相信，该经典小说的引进对加强当代中国读者，特别是大学生读者的文学修养是非常有帮助的。

本书是中文导读英文名著系列丛书的一种，编写本系列丛书的另一个主要目的就是为准备参加英语国家留学考试的学生提供学习素材。对于留学考试，无论是 SSAT、SAT，还是 TOEFL、GRE，要取得好的成绩，就必须了解西方的社会、历史、文化、生活等方面的背景知识，而阅读西方原版名著是了解这些知识最重要的手段之一。

作为专门从事英语考试培训、留学规划和留学申请指导的教育机构，啄木鸟教育支持编写的这套中文导读英文原版名著系列图书，可以使读者在欣赏世界原版名著的同时，了解西方的历史、文化、传统、价值观等，并提高英语阅读速度、阅读水平和写作能力，从而在 TOEFL、雅思、SSAT、SAT、GRE、GMAT 等考试中取得好的成绩，进而帮助读者成功申请到更好的国外学校。

本书中文导读内容由杨楠编写。参加本书故事素材搜集整理及编译工作的还有纪飞、赵雪、刘乃亚、蔡红昌、熊红华、熊建国、徐平国、龚桂平、付泽新、熊志勇、胡贝贝、李军、宋亭、张灵羚、张玉瑶、付建平等。限于我们的科学、人文素养和英语水平，书中难免会有不当之处，衷心希望读者朋友批评指正。



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如今，小孩在医院里发出第一声啼哭已是司空见惯的事，而在 1860 年代，小孩在家里出生却天经地义。本书的主人公本杰明生活于 1860 年代，却在医院出生，超前了整整 50 年。这个“年代超前”，不知是否与接下来的故事有关。

年轻的罗杰·巴顿夫妇是巴迪莫地区的首富。九月的一个早上，罗杰匆匆向私人医院走去，想知道妻子是否刚刚生了个男孩。他在医院门口碰见了自家的家庭医生基尼，便迫不及待地询问起来，不料基尼却气急败坏，不耐烦地回答完罗杰后，便甩手而去。罗杰目瞪口呆，他走进医院，报上了自己的姓名和目的，原本亲切的护士顿时变了脸色，称孩子的出生给医院的名誉带来了巨大损失。被



罗杰跟着护士见到了自己的孩子



恐惧感笼罩的罗杰跟着护士，见到了自己的孩子：那个弓腰弯背、满脸皱纹的白发老头，看上去足有七十岁。罗杰目瞪口呆，那个坐在婴儿床上的“孩子”突然开口叫了一声“爸爸”，抱怨说他要吃东西、穿衣服，但是医院只给他喝牛奶、裹婴儿服。罗杰如梦初醒。一旁的护士要求罗杰买套衣服，尽快带他儿子回家。

As long ago as 1860 it was the proper thing to be born at home. At present, so I am told, the high gods of medicine have decreed that the first cries of the young shall be uttered upon the anesthetic air of a hospital, preferably a fashionable one. So young Mr. and Mrs. Roger Button were fifty years ahead of style when they decided, one day in the summer of 1860, that their first baby should be born in a hospital. Whether this anachronism had any bearing upon the astonishing history I am about to set down will never be known.



弓腰弯背、满脸皱纹的“老头儿”坐在婴儿床上

I shall tell you what occurred, and let you judge for yourself.

The Roger Buttons held an enviable position, both social and financial, in ante-bellum Baltimore. They were related to the This Family and the That Family, which, as every Southerner knew, entitled them to membership in that enormous peerage which largely populated the Confederacy. This was their first experience with the charming old custom of having babies—Mr. Button was naturally nervous. He hoped it would be a boy so that he could be sent to Yale College in Connecticut, at which institution Mr. Button himself had been known for four years by the somewhat obvious nickname of “Cuff.”

On the September morning consecrated to the enormous event he arose nervously at six o'clock, dressed himself, adjusted an impeccable stock, and hurried forth through the streets of Baltimore to the



hospital, to determine whether the darkness of the night had borne in new life upon its bosom.

When he was approximately a hundred yards from the Maryland Private Hospital for Ladies and Gentlemen he saw Doctor Keene, the family physician, descending the front steps, rubbing his hands together with a washing movement—as all doctors are required to do by the unwritten ethics of their profession.

Mr. Roger Button, the president of Roger Button & Co., Wholesale Hardware, began to run toward Doctor Keene with much less dignity than was expected from a Southern gentleman of that picturesque period. “Doctor Keene!” he called. “Oh, Doctor Keene !”

The doctor heard him, faced around, and stood waiting, a curious expression settling on his harsh, medicinal face as Mr. Button drew near.

“What happened?” demanded Mr. Button, as he came up in a gasping rush. “What was it? How is she?”

A boy? Who is it? What—”

“Talk sense!” said Doctor Keene sharply. He appeared somewhat irritated.

“Is the child born?” begged Mr. Button.

Doctor Keene frowned. “Why, yes, I suppose so—after a fashion.” Again he threw a curious glance at Mr. Button.

“Is my wife all right?”

“Yes.”

“Is it a boy or a girl?”

“Here now!” cried Doctor Keene in a perfect passion of irritation, “I’ll ask you to go and see for yourself. Outrageous!” He snapped the last word out in almost one syllable, then he turned away muttering: “Do you imagine a case like this will help my professional reputation? One more would ruin me—ruin anybody.”

“What’s the matter?” demanded Mr. Button,



appalled. “Triplets?”

“No, not triplets!” answered the doctor cuttingly. “What’s more, you can go and see for yourself. And get another doctor. I brought you into the world, young man, and I’ve been physician to your family for forty years, but I’m through with you! I don’t want to see you or any of your relatives ever again ! Good-bye!”

Then he turned sharply, and without another word climbed into his phaeton, which was waiting at the curbstone, and drove severely away.

Mr. Button stood there upon the sidewalk, stupefied and trembling from head to foot. What horrible mishap had occurred ? He had suddenly lost all desire to go into the Maryland Private Hospital for Ladies and Gentlemen—it was with the greatest difficulty that, a moment later, he forced himself to mount the steps and enter the front door.

A nurse was sitting behind a desk in the opaque



gloom of the hall. Swallowing his shame, Mr. Button approached her.

“Good-morning,” she remarked, looking up at him pleasantly.

“Good-morning. I—I am Mr. Button.”

At this a look of utter terror spread itself over the girl’s face. She rose to her feet and seemed about to fly from the hall, restraining herself only with the most apparent difficulty.

“I want to see my child,” said Mr. Button.

The nurse gave a little scream. “Oh—of course!” she cried hysterically. “Upstairs. Right upstairs. Go—up!”

She pointed the direction, and Mr. Button, bathed in a cool perspiration, turned falteringly, and began to mount to the second floor. In the upper hall he addressed another nurse who approached him, basin in hand. “I’m Mr. Button,” he managed to articulate. “I



want to see my—”

Clank! The basin clattered to the floor and rolled in the direction of the stairs. Clank! Clank! It began a methodical descent as if sharing in the general terror which this gentleman provoked.

“I want to see my child!” Mr. Button almost shrieked. He was on the verge of collapse.

Clank! The basin had reached the first floor. The nurse regained control of herself, and threw Mr. Button a look of hearty contempt.

“All right, Mr. Button,” she agreed in a hushed voice. “Very well! But if you knew what state it’s put us all in this morning! It’s perfectly outrageous! The hospital will never have the ghost of a reputation after —”

“Hurry !” he cried hoarsely. “I can’t stand this !”

“Come this way, then, Mr. Button. ”

He dragged himself after her. At the end of a long