

譯典通 隱注系列丛书

A Collect
Of World Famous
Short Stories

世界名家超短小说精品(一)



世界图书出版公司

譯典通 隐注系列丛书

A COLLECT OF WORLD FAMOUS
SHORT STORIES

《世界名家超短篇小说精品》

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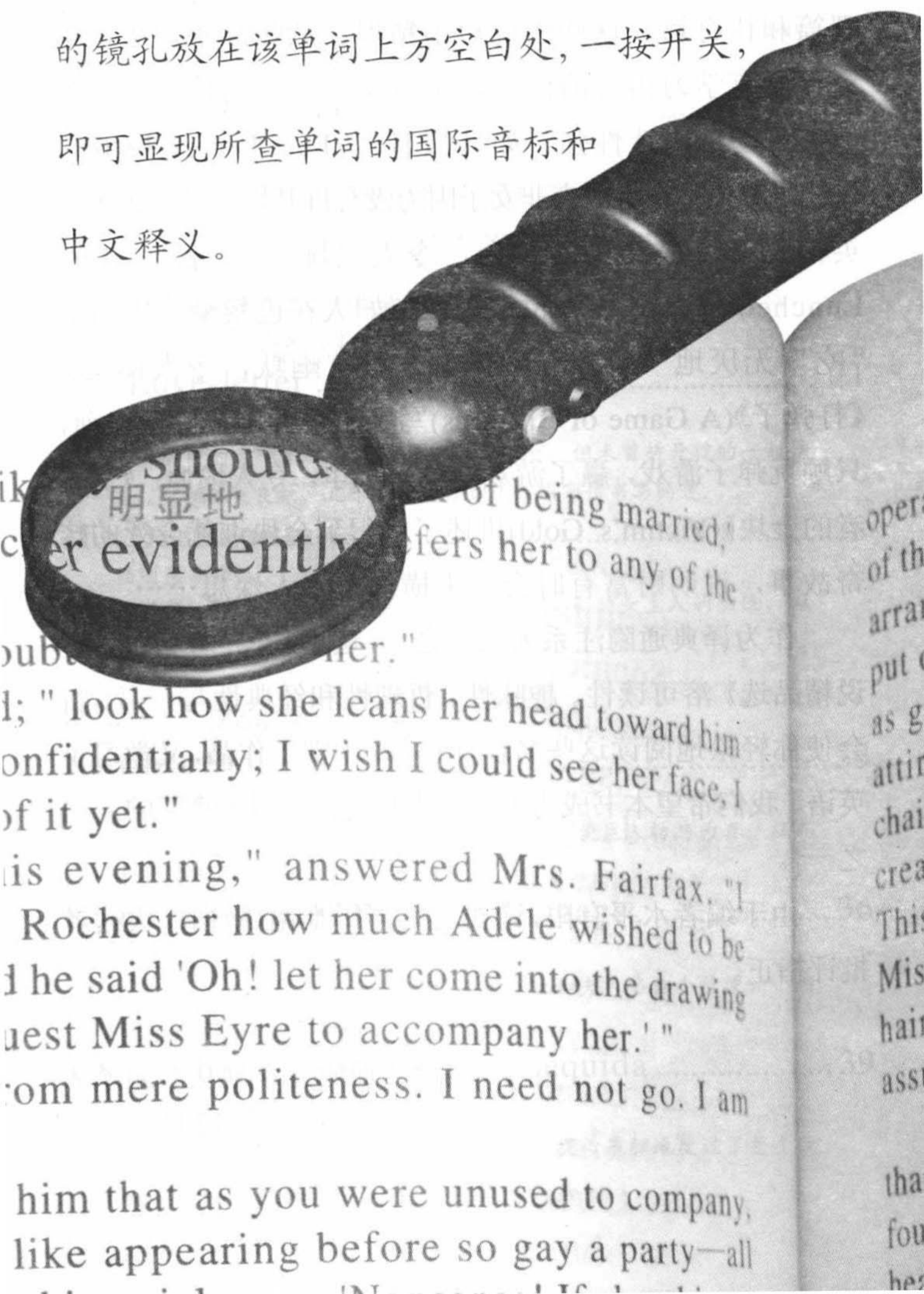
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中文释义。



编者的话

本书选编了世界各国著名作家的短篇小说精品 19 篇。根据题材我们把它们编入四个类别：爱情篇、幽默篇、哲理篇和传奇篇。这些小说短小精悍、意味隽永，英语地道，既有学习语言的价值，又有文学参考的价值。小说情节生动，可读性强。如《情书》(The Lover-letter)讲述了一位不识字的南非女子因为没有拆开情书而失去了到英国与心上人结婚的机会，令人叹惋；《午餐》(The Luncheon)叙述了一位法国中年妇人在巴黎豪华饭店贪“吃”无厌地“宰”一位作家，语言幽默，令人捧腹；《打弹子》(A Game of Billiards)写了一位元帅在大敌当前，只顾玩弹子游戏，赢了游戏而输了战争，令人愤慨；《受害者的金块》(Victim's Gold)讲述了谁得到金块谁就会死的传奇故事，说明财富有时会带来横祸，令人深思……

作为译典通隐注系列丛书之一，这本《世界著名短篇小说精品选》溶可读性、趣味性、哲理性和经典性与一书。将会使你轻松地阅读这些名篇佳作，既欣赏了作品，又学习了英语。我们希望本书成为大中学生和英语学习者喜爱的读物之一。

由于编者水平有限，错误之处在所难免，敬请广大读者批评指正。

译典通隐注系列丛书编译部

2000年12月于深圳

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Witches' Loaves

O. Henry

MISS Martha Meacham kept the little bakery on the corner (the one where you go up three steps, and the bell tinkles when you open the door).

Miss Martha was forty, her bank-book showed a credit of two thousand dollars, and she possessed two false teeth and a sympathetic heart... Many people have married whose chances to do so were much inferior to Miss Martha's.

Two or three times a week a customer came in in whom she began to take an interest. He was a middle-aged man, wearing spectacles and a brown beard trimmed to a careful point.

He spoke English with a strong German accent. His clothes were worn and darned in places, and wrinkled and baggy in others. But he looked neat, and had very good manners.

He always bought two loaves of stale bread. Fresh bread was five cents a loaf. Stale ones were two for five. Never did he call for anything but stale bread.

Once Miss Martha saw a red and brown stain on his fingers. She was sure then that he was an artist and very poor. No doubt he lived in a garret, where he painted pictures and ate stale bread and thought of the good things to eat in Miss MARTHA's bakery.

Often when Miss Martha sat down to her chops and light rolls and jam and tea she would sigh, and wish that the gentle-mannered artist might share

her tasty meal instead of eating his dry crust in that draughty attic. Miss MARTHA's heart, as you have been told, was a sympathetic one.

In order to test her theory as to his occupation, she brought from her room one day a painting that she had bought at a sale, and set it against the shelves behind the bread counter.

It was a Venetian scene. A splendid marble palazzo (so it said on the picture) stood in the foreground—or rather forewater. For the rest there were gondolas (with the lady trailing her hand in the water), clouds, sky, and chiaroscuro in plenty. No artist could fail to notice it.

Two days afterward the customer came in.

"Two loafsof stale bread, if you please."

"You haf here a fine bicture, madame," he said while she was wrapping up the bread.

"Yes?" says Miss Martha, revelling in her own cunning. "I do so admire art and" (no, it would not do to say "artists" thus early) "and paintings," she substituted. "You think it is a good picture?"

"Der balace," said the customer, "is not in good drawing. Der bairspectiveof it is not true. Goot morning, madame."

He took his bread, bowed, and hurried out.

Yes, he must be an artist. Miss Martha took the picture back to her room.

How gentle and kindly his eyes shone behind his spectacles! What a broad brow he had! To be able to judge perspective at a glance—and to live on stale bread! But genius often has to struggle before it is recognized.

What a thing it would be for art and perspective if genius were backed by two thousand dollars in bank, a bakery, and a sympathetic heart to — But these were daydreams, Miss Martha.

Often now when he came he would chat for a while across the showcase. He seemed to crave Miss MARTHA's cheerful words.

He kept on buying stale bread. Never a cake, never a pie, never one of her delicious Sally Lunn's.

She thought he began to look thinner and discouraged. Her heart ached to add something good to eat to his meagre purchase, but her courage failed at the act. She did not dare affront him. She knew the pride of artists.

Miss Martha took to wearing her blue-dotted silk waist behind the counter. In the back room she cooked a mysterious compound of quince seeds and borax. Ever so many people use it for the complexion.

One day the customer came in as usual, laid his nickel on the showcase, and called for his stale loaves. While Miss Martha was reaching for them there was a great tooting and clanging, and a fire-engine came lumbering past.

The customer hurried to the door to look, as any one will. Suddenly inspired, Miss Martha seized the opportunity.

On the bottom shelf behind the counter was a pound of fresh butter that the dairyman had left ten minutes before. With bread knife Miss Martha made a deep slash in each of the stale loaves, inserted a generous quantity of butter, and pressed the loaves

tight again.

When the customer turned once more she was tying the paper around them.

When he had gone, after an unusually pleasant little chat, Miss Martha smiled to herself, but not without a slight fluttering of the heart.

Had she been too bold? Would he take offense? But surely not. There was no language of edibles. Butter was no emblem of unmaidenly forwardness.

For a long time that day her mind dwelt on the subject. She imagined the scene when he should discover her little deception.

He would lay down his brushes and palette. There would stand his easel with the picture he was painting in which the perspective was beyond criticism.

He would prepare for his luncheon of dry bread and water. He would slice into a loaf— ah!

Miss Martha blushed. Would he think of the hand that placed it there as he ate? Would he —

The front door bell jangled viciously. Somebody was coming in, making a great deal of noise.

Miss Martha hurried to the front. Two men were there. One was a young man smoking a pipe — a man she had never seen before. The other was her artist.

His face was very red, his hat was on the back of his head, his hair was wildly ruffled. He clinched his two fists and shook them furiously at Miss Martha. At Miss Martha.

"Dummkopf!" he shouted with extreme loudness; and then "Tausendonfer!" or something like it in German.

The young man tried to draw him away.

"I vill not go," he said angrily, "else I shall told her."

He made a bass drum of Miss MARTHA's counter.

"You haf shpoilt me," he cried, his blue eyes blazing behind his spectacles. "I vill tell you. You vasvan meddlingsome old cat!"

Miss Martha leaned weakly against the shelves and laid one hand on her blue-dotted silk waist. The young man took the other by the collar.

"Come on," he said, "you've said enough." He dragged the angry one out at the door to the sidewalk, and then come back.

"Guess you ought to be told, ma'am, " he said, "what the row is about. That's Blumberger. He's an architectural draftsman. I work in the same office with him.

"He's been working hard for three months drawing a plan for a new city hall. It was a prize competition. He finished inking the lines yesterday. You know, a draftsman always makes his drawing in pencil first. When it's done he rubs out the pencil lines with handfuls of stale bread crumbs That's better than India rubber.

"Blumberger's been buying the bread here. Well, today — well, you know, ma'am, that butter isn't — well, Blumberger's plan isn't good for anything now except to cut up into railroad sandwiches."

Miss Martha went into the back room. She took off the blue-dotted silk waist and put on the old brown serge she used to wear. Then she poured the quince seed and borax mixture out of the window into the ash can.

The Guardian Angel

Andre Maurois

When Jeanne Bertaut died, at thirty, we all thought that Victor Bertaut's career was ended. A determined worker and one of the finest orators of his generations, Victor by all signs seemed destined for political success. But those of us who, like myself, had been through school and in the service with him knew his weaknesses too well to think that he had within him the makings of a statesman. We certainly knew him capable of getting himself elected deputy and of dazzling the Chamber with his verbal fireworks. But we couldn't possibly visualize him heading a ministry, working harmoniously with his colleagues, or winning the respect of the nation. His defeats were no less spectacular than his triumphs. He had too great a fondness for women and had a bland confidence in his powers of seduction. In debate, always convinced of being right, he was completely incapable of considering the merits of his opponents' arguments. In addition, he was subject to such outbursts of rage that he frequently alienated the very men whom he needed.

For these reasons I felt that his success, despite his brilliance, would be limited. That is until the day when, to my great surprise, he married Jeanne. I never learned how he got to know her. What was surprising was not that he had met her, but that he appreciated her. She was as different from him as possible — calm as he was furious; moderate as he was fanatical; indulgent as he was sharp; reticent

as he was garrulous. And she seemed to have set herself — and succeeded at — the double task of conquering him and changing him. Much less beautiful than his other women, she had an undeniable fresh charm, blooming health, a frank regard, and a gay smile.

I must admit that I could never have anticipated Bertaut's ability to discover, much less to appreciate such hidden virtues. But I was wrong. From the time she married her great man. Jeanne and he were never apart. She worked with him, went to the Chamber daily, accompanied him on the rounds of his constituency, and finally, with great tact, advised him in such a manner that he could not take offense.

Bertaut's position in his party was transformed by the marriage. No longer did the political bigwigs say: "Bertaut? Yes — very brilliant — a good talker — but a crackpot!" Now they nodded in approval: "Bertaut? A bit young perhaps, but very promising." "Sometimes he'd burst out again — but a word from Jeanne, a handshake — and all would be smoothed over. As for the "great lover" — he was faithful to one woman — his own.

This success and good fortune was cut short by Jeanne's death. I remember returning from the cemetery with Bertrand Schmitt, the novelist, and one of the couple's best friends.

"She made him over from head to toe," he said. "She saved him from himself. Without her he'll go to Hell with himself again. Well, we'll have to wait and see. "

For some months, outside of writing to assure

Bertaut that I would assist him if and when he desired, I did not disturb his grief. He reappeared at the Palais-Bourbon in October when the Chamber reconvened. His colleagues greeted him with sympathy, but they soon found him as hard to get along with as before. Even more difficult, for an icy bitterness was added to his former rages. I, however, had nothing to complain about. We dined together a couple of times a month; he treated me with a sulky affection which was not unpleasant. But he never mentioned his wife, and developed, in this regard, a cynicism which I interpreted as defense.

When, in December, the Ministry resigned, the newspapers announced that Briand, charged with forming a new cabinet, had offered Victor, Deputy from Drome, the office of Postmaster General. Shortly after his name appeared in the official list, I went to congratulate Victor. I found him in one of his bad moods.

"Keep your congratulations," he snapped. "I've taken part in only two Council meetings—and I'll probably resign. I've had furious battles with Finance and with Public Works. Anyway, this Ministry is a shambles. Everyone's in charge except me—the Minister."

For a few days after that I expected, daily, to read of Bertaut's resignation. This did not occur. The following week I encountered Bertrand Schmitt, and, of course, we spoke of Victor:

"Have you heard about his amazing experience?" asked Schmitt. "Concerning the letter?"

"What letter?" said I.

"Ah, what a subject for a novel," sighed Schmitt. "I don't know if you know that Bertaut, a fledgling in office, started acting like a bull in a china shop."

"Yes, yes," I said.

"And you know that Briand is patient—but even his patience has its limits. And when Bertaut insulted poor C — before the entire Chamber, the President was about to demand his resignation. Then there was a real coup de theatre. To the surprise of all his colleagues, our intransigent Victor voluntarily apologized to Cheron in such an outspoken, sincere, repentant manner that Cheron himself went to Briand to plead for him. And, of course, everything has been patched up."

"How," I asked, "do you explain this reversal of character?"

"Victor himself explained it to me," schmitt said. "The day after the run in with Cheron, as he was leaving his house, his secretary gave him a letter marked PERSONAL which had just arrived. With surprise, emotion, and even terror he thought he recognized Jeanne's handwriting. He ripped open the envelope—the letter was, beyond a doubt, from his wife. He read me some passages from it; naturally, I didn't memorize them, but as a novelist it's easy for me to reconstruct such things. In effect, Jeanne had written:

"Dearest— at first you'll be upset at receiving a letter from me. Be reassured— this is not a letter from the Tomb , nor from Hades. Before entering the clinic, feeling very weak and not knowing