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SELECTIONS FROM
MODERN BRITISH AND
AMERICAN AUTHORS
WITH FULL NOTES

近代

英美

文选

(详 注)

葛传槩 桂绍盱
上海 社

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PREFACE TO THE NEW EDITION

It is with a heavy heart that I am writing this short preface to the new edition of the book after revising the notes—single-handed. Comrade Gui Shaoxu (桂绍盱), my great friend for more than fifty years and my co-worker on several books, died on 17 August 1983, leaving a void in my life that can never be filled. If only he had lived to do a share of the revision or to read and criticize the changes and additions I had made !

Ge Chuangui

June, 1984

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

These English selections are exclusively from writers working, and in many cases born, in the present century. Every one of the pieces is definitely known to have been written after 1900, and a considerable part of them are from works published during or after World War II. Neither is any author represented whose mother tongue is not English, nor is any translation by any English-speaking person included.

The notes are of course intended to contribute to an intelligent understanding of the text. In writing them we have tried to anticipate every difficulty likely to confront the average Chinese freshman, and to explain and interpret in such a way as to make it practically impossible for him to misunderstand, or to understand but vaguely, any of the points we have endeavoured to elucidate. It is owing to the first aim that many of the notes may appear to advanced students to be superfluous. The second aim accounts for the rather cumbersome, though accurate, English in which some of them are written.

We have collaborated throughout this work. While it does not seem to be likely that we have annotated every

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piece together, the notes prepared by one of us have always been critically read by the other; two heads, after all, are better than one.

Ge Chuangui
Gui Shaoxu

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1. PRIVATE SCHOOL

Picture of a System

By Ethel Mannin

Soon after I was six years old I was sent to a private school in a small private house. It was run by an elderly widow and her two undoubtedly maiden daughters. The memory of it comes back to me with the warm smell of privet flowers on sultry summer afternoons, for there was a high privet hedge in the garden, and its hot scent would come into the schoolroom with the school odour of children's bodies and india rubber and exercise-books and ink.

The school called itself a preparatory school, but for what it could possibly prepare anyone it would be impossible to say. The children were divided into two groups, "The Big Class", and "The Little Class"; it was all very indiscriminate. We learnt history by committing to memory prose passages from history books. In this way I acquired the valuable piece of knowledge that William the Conqueror flew to Normandy, and I always pictured him flying up in the air in a magic trunk, like an illustration in my Hans Andersen fairy-tale book. I was given lists of words to learn to spell, and I learnt them backwards, so that I would

sit repeating to myself such things as "t-u-n spells nut", and "t-o-n spells not", and so on. I was given sums to add up. We used slates, which we used to clean with saliva, wiped off with sponges; we used each other's slates, and it did not occur to anyone that our cleaning process was highly unhygienic. I learnt multiplication tables parrotwise, without ever understanding them. I tried to learn to read, but without any marked success. I learnt that the world is round like an orange, and that there are five continents and a North and South Pole, which I, of course, thought of as poles sticking up at the top and bottom of the world.

I was dreadfully unhappy and tormented here. I would feel dazed with all that I was told and required to commit to memory. Various small boys would create a diversion in the midst of this welter of tediousness by exposing their little genital organs under the desks for the amusement of the little girls. The habit spread, until the older boys used to follow suit. The little girls would giggle, but I would be frightened, because I had been brought up to be full of shame about bodies in general and genital organs in particular. I never used to tell my mother. I have often wondered since if the other little girls confided in their mothers. I don't think so, or they would have been removed from the school. We of that generation were all brought up on the same appalling hush-hush principle of shame and silence. Very few children of that

generation, I think, made confidantes of their parents.

I was so agonizingly shy and timid that I was fair game for the older children's teasing. A group of the older girls would amuse themselves by tormenting me until I would say a funny little obscene word. But I would think of God listening, and of Jesus who had died for sinners, and keep silent, and then they would twist my wrists and goad me "Go on, say it! Say it!" until at last, unable to bear the torment any longer, I would sob out the required word, trusting that God would understand how it had been forced out of me, and hoping He would not see it as a sin ... And then I would remember that Jesus had had nails driven through His Hands, and I could not stand a little pinching and wrist-twisting, and would be terribly ashamed.

It was an incredible school. A child would be refused permission to "leave the room" until the little over-strained bladder began to relieve itself and the poor child suffer agonies of shame by being sent home for the offence. This occurred not once but several times, — I don't know whether those disappointed spinsters derived any sexual sadistic satisfaction out of it. I can think of no other way of accounting for this monstrous cruelty to children.

Sometimes we were taken out into the garden at the back of the house and rather ineffectively drilled or made to play round games. In the afternoons we were all assembled in what was referred to as "the morning-room",

and spent the afternoon at a long ink-stained table with the widow herself at the head of it, in a curious reading lesson, or we would be read to — and through a window at the far end of the room I would see my mother waiting outside with my young brother in the perambulator, and my heart would yearn for her, and the dear freedom of the outer world ... but the voices would drone on, and the close room be drenched with the pungency of the privet flowers, suffocatingly. One would seem to smother in the smell of the place and the consuming ennui.

I made no friends at that dreadful little school, but I fell in love with a boy about two years older than myself who had wetted himself standing on the "dunce's stool", and burst into tears when he was finally released to go and do what he had already done. I felt his suffering terribly and loved him from that day on. I wanted to tell him not to cry, that it wasn't his fault, that I understood, that he needn't be ashamed. Actually I never spoke to him all the time I was there, but I would lie in bed at night and think of him, and a warm new sensation, exciting and a little frightening, yet pleasurable, would sweep me. He got so much into my imagination that for weeks I would look forward to going to bed so that I could snuggle down into the warmth and dark and secrecy of the bed and indulge the voluptuous pleasure which invariably came with the thought of him. I was six years old and affected by a personality for the first time. I remember that the boys

name was Maurice, that I thought him beautiful with his riot of waving brown hair, and loved him with an aching compassionate love.

There was also a girl of about twelve whom I thought both grown-up and beautiful, immeasurably beyond me, but she had nothing but contempt for me. She wore petticoats with wide lace to them, and knickers with coloured ribbons run through. She was fond of doing high kicks—presumably to show off this seductive lingerie. I knew a curious quickening of the senses at the sight of her; she was a dashing and lovely being infinitely removed from me. But I have forgotten her name. I suppose that it is because I unconsciously shrink from the memory of her. She was one of my sadistic persecutors.

NOTES

Ethel ['eθəl] Mannin (1900-), English journalist and novelist, was born in London. She started life as a stenographer in an advertising agency. In 1918 she began her journalistic career as associate editor of *The Pelican*, a theatrical paper. She produced a very considerable amount of writing. In 1923 Mannin made a reputation with her first novel, *Martha*.

Confessions and Impressions (1930), as the title suggests, is autobiographical. It consists of two parts, "My Own Story: Self-Portrait" and "People Who Have Interested

Me: Some Sketches and Portraits". The present selection is the fourth chapter of the first part.

It is interesting to note that the term "private school" has not quite the same meaning in English and American usage. In England it denotes a school that is carried on for its owner's profit; in America it denotes any kind of school that is not maintained by public funds and controlled by a public authority. There are several public schools in England that would be called private schools in America. The term is of course used in the English sense in our selection.

P. 1 run: conducted.

privete ['privit]: Any of several shrubs with small white flowers, much used for hedges.

would: This "would" and many others in the present selection denote habit.

preparatory school: Like "private school", the term "preparatory school" has not quite the same meaning in English and American usage. An English preparatory school prepares young children for a higher school; an American one prepares students for college.

for what it could possibly prepare anyone: What it could possibly prepare anyone for. (A noun clause, object of "to say".)

committing to memory: memorizing. Not "Committing to the memory" or "committing to *our memories*".

valuable: Somewhat ironical here.

William the Conqueror: (1027-1087) William I, King of England 1066-1087. He was Duke of Normandy (a district in northwestern France). He conquered England in 1066; hence the title "the Conqueror". The event is known as "the Conquest".

flew: travelled swiftly. (Needless to say, not "travelled by air".)

pictured: imagined.

Hans [hans] **Andersen** ['ændəsn] **fairy-tale book:** book of fairy-tales written by Hans Christian ['kristʃən] Andersen (1805-1875), Danish author.

P.2 did not occur to: did not come into the mind of; was not thought of by.

multiplication tables: A "multiplication table" is a table of a set of numbers, usually from one to twelve, with the products of multiplication by the same numbers successively, meant to be memorized, in the form "Twice three is six", "Four times five is twenty", etc.

parrotwise: in the manner of parrots, some kinds of which can imitate human speech, without understanding the words, of course; in a mechanical manner. ("Wise", which means *way* or *manner*, is often used with a preceding noun to form an adverb of manner, as in "The insect goes *crabwise*".)

North and South Pole, which I, of course, thought of as poles sticking up at the top and bottom of the world: The word "pole" meaning either of the two extremities

of the earth and the word "pole" meaning a long rounded piece of wood are of different origins.

dreadfully: very. (A colloquial intensive.)

follow suit: do what another does or others do. (This idiom comes from card-games, in which a "suit" is any of the four sets (hearts, diamonds, clubs, and spades) into which the cards are divided, and to "follow suit" is to play a card of the same suit as that first played. Not "followe *the* suit" or "follow *their* suit".)

brought up: educated.

confided in: entrusted secrets to, especially secret causes of distress or perplexity.

We of that generation: I and others about my age at the period referred to.

hush-hush principle of shame and silence: principle of being ashamed of sex and saying nothing about it. ("Hush-hush" usually means *made or carried on with secrecy*; here it means *based on secrecy*.)

made confidantes [konfi'dænts] of their parents: entrusted secrets to their parents. ("Confidante(s)" is feminine; the masculine form is "confidant(s)", which has the same pronunciation. "Parents" here refers to mothers.)

fair game: legitimate or natural object of pursuit; figuratively, person who deserves to be attacked because he is foolish or unreasonable. ("Fair" is rather ironically used here. Notice that there is no "a" before "fair

game", "game" having a collective sense.)

P.3 keep silent: not say anything: that is, not say the "funny little obscene word".

Go on: Don't be silly; Do what is right. (A colloquialism expressing impatience.)

He: The capital letter is used because the word refers to God.

had had nails driven through His Hands: had been put to death on the cross. (Why the capital letters?)

and: Contrast is meant here.

stand: endure.

incredible: extraordinary; absurd. (A colloquial sense.)

the little over strained bladder began to relieve itself:
the child began to pass urine involuntarily.

suffer: That is, "began to suffer".

disappointed spinsters: women who remain unmarried because they have been unable to find suitable husbands.

sexual sadistic [sæ'distik] satisfaction: sexual satisfaction obtained by inflicting cruelty; satisfying sexual desire by inflicting suffering because it cannot be satisfied in the ordinary way.

can think of no other way of accounting for this monstrous cruelty to children: cannot explain this very bad cruelty to children in any other way.

round games: games in which all the players take part in turn, with neither teams nor partners.