

THE BOTTLE IMP

英美文学精品译注丛书



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中国对外翻译出版公司

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《瓶魔》

罗伯特·斯蒂文森：苏格兰小说家、散文家和诗人。1850年生于爱丁堡，1894年逝于萨摩亚。起初写散文、游记和短篇小说：《内河航程》(1878)、《驴背旅程》(1879)、《韦尔吉内伯斯·普里斯克》(1881)、《新天方夜谭》(1882)。

他写长篇小说《金银岛》(1882)一举成名。《金银岛》是部技巧娴熟、感染力强、形象生动、情节曲折的冒险故事。

1886年，他又出版了一部著名长篇小说《化身博士》，以分裂人格为主题，充满了神秘和悬念。同年历史小说《绑架》问世。

1887年8月，斯蒂文森前往美洲，1888年偕同夫人航行去南太平洋，在那里度过了自己的余生。

他后期作品都以波利尼西亚为背景，如《岛上夜谭》(1893)，短篇小说《瓶魔》、《在南太平洋》(1896)。

他死后有两部未完成的长篇小说问世：《赫米斯顿村的魏尔》(1896)和《圣艾夫斯》(1898)。《赫米斯顿村的魏尔》被看作是斯蒂文森的杰作。

可以说，斯蒂文森开创了浪漫主义的一个新阶段。他的题材是浪漫的，他的手法是现实主义的。因此，他颠倒了追求轰动效应的小说家的创作程序，后者以现实为题材，用浪漫的方法加以表现。

除了散文作品外，斯蒂文森还创作了一些非凡的诗歌，其精华收在《儿童诗园》(1885)和《林下植物》(1887)中。

The Bottle Imp

There was a man of the Island of Hawaii, whom I shall call Keawe; for the truth is, he still lives, and his name must be kept secret; but the place of his birth was not far from Honaunau, where the bones of Keawe the Great lie hidden in a cave. This man was poor, brave, and active; he could read and write like a schoolmaster; he was a first-rate mariner besides, sailed for some time in the island steamers, and steered a whale boat on the Hamakua coast. At length it came in Keawe's mind to have a sight of the great world and foreign cities, and he shipped on a vessel bound to San Francisco.

This is a fine town, with a fine harbour, and rich people uncountable; and, in particular, there is one hill which is covered with palaces. Upon this hill Keawe was one day taking a walk with his pocket full of money, viewing the great houses upon either hand with pleasure. 'What fine houses these are!' he was thinking, 'and how happy must those people be who dwell in them, and take no care for the

Bottle Imp: small devil living in the bottle.

whom: *relative pronoun used as object and with prepositions, it's not very often used in informal English, where who is usually used.*

hidden: put or kept in a secret place.

cave: large cavity in a rock or in a mountain. **brave:** courageous.

first-rate: very good; excellent.

besides: moreover; in addition to that.

steamers: ships driven by steam engines. **steered:** guided.

At length: eventually. **to have a sight:** to see; to visit.

shipped: travelled aboard a ship. **vessel:** ship; boat.

bound to: going towards. *Nowadays bound for is more common.*

harbour: protected port.

uncountable: innumerable; impossible to count.

covered with: *note the usage of the the preposition with .* **Upon:** on. **taking a walk:** walking; strolling. **viewing:** observing.

upon either hand: on both sides. *Note the use of the singular with either and of the plural with both.* **must:** *modal verb here meaning logical deduction.* **dwell:** live.

morrow!' The thought was in his mind when he came abreast of a house that was smaller than some others, but all finished and beautiful like a toy; the steps of that house shone like silver, and the borders of the garden bloomed like garlands, and the windows were bright like diamonds; and Keawe stopped and wondered at the excellence of all he saw. So stopping, he was aware of a man that looked forth upon him through a window so clear that Keawe could see him as you see a fish in a pool upon a reef. The man was elderly, with a bald head and a black beard, and his face was heavy with sorrow, and he bitterly sighed. And the truth of it is, that as Keawe looked in upon the man, and the man looked out upon Keawe, each envied the other.

All of a sudden, the man smiled and nodded, and beckoned Keawe to enter, and met him at the door of the house.

'This is a fine house of mine,' said the man, and bitterly sighed. 'Would you not care to view the chambers?'

So he led Keawe all over it, from the cellar to the roof, and there was nothing there that was not perfect of its kind, and Keawe was astonished.

'Truly,' said Keawe, 'this is a beautiful house; if I lived in the like of it, I should be laughing all day long. How comes it, then, that you should be sighing?'

'There is no reason,' said the man, 'why you should not have a house in all points similar to this, and finer, if you wish. You have some money, I suppose?'

'I have fifty dollars,' said Keawe, 'but a house like this will cost more than fifty dollars.'

The man made a computation. 'I am sorry you have no more,' said he, 'for it may raise you trouble in the future,

the morrow: the next day.

came abreast of: (*nautical*) reached.

all finished: completed with fine works.

shone: reflected light. **borders:** flower beds. **bloomed:** flourished.

garlands: circular bands of flowers and foliage. **bright:** luminous.

wondered at: was amazed at; was surprised by.

he was aware of: he noticed

looked forth upon him: looked in his direction.

you: *used as an indefinite personal pronoun, anybody.* **reef:** rock close to the surface. **elderly:** quite old. **a bald head:** no hair.

heavy with: sad; serious. *Note the use of the preposition with.*

sorrow: grief; sadness. **sighed:** let out a deep breath expressing grief. **envied:** desired to have for himself what the other had.

nodded: moved his head to say "yes". **beckoned:** called with a movement of his hand.

bitterly: sadly.

chambers: (*archaic*) rooms of a private house.

led: guided. **all over:** in all the rooms of the house. **cellar:** part of the house underground. **of its kind:** in its character, nature.

astonished: very surprised.

Truly: indeed; really.

the like of it: a house similar to this. **How comes it...?:** Why? How is it possible?

in all points: exactly. **finer:** more beautiful.

wish: want; desire.

computation: calculation.

raise: cause; create. **trouble:** problems.

but it shall be yours at fifty dollars.'

'The house?' asked Keawe.

'No, not the house,' replied the man, 'but the bottle. For, I must tell you, although I appear to you so rich and fortunate, all my fortune, and this house itself and its garden, came out of a bottle not much bigger than a pint. This is it.'

And he opened a lockfast place, and took out a round-bellied bottle with a long neck; the glass of it was white like milk, with changing rainbow colours in the grain. Within-sides something obscurely moved, like a shadow and a fire.

'This is the bottle,' said the man; and, when Keawe laughed, 'You do not believe me?' he added. 'Try, then, for yourself. See if you can break it.'

So Keawe took the bottle up and dashed it on the floor till he was weary; but it jumped on the floor like a child's ball, and was not injured.

'This is a strange thing,' said Keawe. 'For by the touch of it, as well as by the look, the bottle should be glass.'

'Of glass it is,' replied the man, sighing more heavily than ever, 'but the glass of it was tempered in the flames of hell. An imp lives in it, and that is the shadow we behold there moving; or so I suppose. If any man buy this bottle the imp is at his command; all that he desires - love, fame, money, houses like this house, ay, or a city like this city all are his at the word uttered. Napoleon had this bottle, and by it he grew to be the king of the world; but he sold it at the last, and fell. Captain Cook had this bottle, and by it he found his way to so many islands; but he, too, sold it, and was slain upon Hawaii. For once it is sold, the power goes and

replied: answered.

although: even though; despite the fact that.

fortunate: lucky. **fortune**: material prosperity.

pint: a U.S. pint is 0,473 litre. A British pint is 0,568 litre.

it: the bottle.

lockfast: closed with a lock; closed very well. **roundbellied**: with a round body.

rainbow: a semicircular display in the sky of the colours of the spectrum. **grain**: texture. **Withinsides**: inside it. **obscurely**: indistinctly.

for yourself: personally.

dashed it: let it fall violently.

weary: tired; exhausted. **jumped on the floor**: hit the floor and sprang back. **not injured**: undamaged.

by the touch: touching.

by the look: looking. **should be glass**: looks like glass.

replied: answered. **sighing**: breathing deeply and audibly.

tempered: (*archaic*) combined; prepared.

imp: little devil. **behold**: observe; see.

suppose: believe. **buy**: *in the XIX century still existed a form of subjunctive without the -s in the third person singular*. **fame**: celebrity. **ay**: (*archaic and dialect*) yes.

at the word uttered: as soon as he speaks. **by it**: by means of it. **grew to be**: became. **at the last**: in the end; finally.

fell: collapsed.

slain: violently killed. **for**: for the reason that; because.

the protection; and unless a man remain content with what he has, ill will befall him.'

'And yet you talk of selling it yourself?' Keawe said.

'I have all I wish, and I am growing elderly,' replied the man. 'There is one thing the imp cannot do – he cannot prolong life; and, it would not be fair to conceal from you, there is a drawback to the bottle; for if a man die before he sells it, he must burn in hell for ever.'

'To be sure, that is a drawback and no mistake,' cried Keawe. 'I would not meddle with the thing. I can do without a house, thank God; but there is one thing I could not be doing with one particle, and that is to be damned.'

'Dear me, you must not run away with things,' returned the man. 'All you have to do is to use the power of the imp in moderation, and then sell it to someone else, as I do to you, and finish your life in comfort.'

'Well, I observe two things,' said Keawe. 'All the time you keep sighing like a maid in love, that is one; and, for the other, you sell this bottle very cheap.'

'I have told you already why I sigh,' said the man. 'It is because I fear my health is breaking up; and, as you said yourself, to die and go to the devil is a pity for anyone. As for why I sell so cheap, I must explain to you there is a peculiarity about the bottle. Long ago, when the devil brought it first on earth, it was extremely expensive, and was sold first of all to Prester John for many millions of dollars; but it cannot be sold at all, unless sold at a loss. If you sell it for as much as you paid for it, back it comes to you again like a homing pigeon. It follows that the price has kept falling in these centuries, and the bottle is now remarkably cheap. I bought it myself from one of my great

remain: *archaic form of subjunctive still existing in the XIX century.* **ill:** evil; harm. **befall:** (*archaic*) happen to.

yourself: personally.

growing elderly: getting, becoming quite old. **replied:** answered.

imp: little devil.

fair: honest. **to conceal from you:** not to tell you

drawback: disadvantage. **die:** *archaic form of subjunctive.*

for ever: for eternity.

To be sure: really. **no mistake:** without any doubt

meddle: get involved; interfere.

with one particle: in any way.

run away with: accelerate; go too fast. **returned:** answered.

imp: little devil.

in moderation: within reasonable limits.

in comfort: comfortably.

I observe: I can see. **All the time:** always.

keep sighing: go on; continue sighing. **a maid:** a young girl.

very cheap: at a very low price.

sigh: breathe deeply and audibly.

I fear: I am afraid. **breaking up:** becoming damaged; getting worse. **yourself:** personally.

As for: as regards. **cheap:** at a low price.

peculiarity: something very particular.

first: for the first time.

Prester John: a legendary Christian priest and king that in the Middle Ages was believed to rule in the Far East. **at a loss:** for less than you paid.

a homing pigeon: a bird that always flies back home. (It was used to deliver messages.) **falling:** going down.

remarkably: very; considerably.

neighbours on this hill, and the price I paid was only ninety dollars. I could sell it for as high as eighty nine dollars and ninety cents, but not a penny dearer. or back the thing must come to me. Now, about this there are two bothers. First, when you offer a bottle so singular for eighty odd dollars people suppose you to be jesting. And second – but there is no hurry about that – and I need not go into it. Only remember it must be coined money that you sell it for.’

‘How am I to know that this is all true?’ asked Keawe.

‘Some of it you can try at once,’ replied the man. ‘Give me your fifty dollars, take the bottle, and wish your fifty dollars back into your pocket. If that does not happen, I pledge you my honour I will cry off the bargain and restore your money.’

‘You are not deceiving me?’ said Keawe.

The man bound himself with a great oath.

‘Well, I risk that much,’ said Keawe, ‘for that can do no harm.’ And he paid over his money to the man, and the man handed him the bottle.

‘Imp of the bottle,’ said Keawe, ‘I want my fifty dollars back.’ And sure enough he had scarce said the word before his pocket was as heavy as ever.

‘To be sure this is a wonderful bottle,’ said Keawe.

‘And now good morning to you, my fine fellow, and the devil go with you for me!’ said the man.

‘Hold on,’ said Keawe, ‘I don’t want any more of this fun. Here, take your bottle back.’

‘You have bought it for less than I paid for it,’ replied the man, rubbing his hands. ‘It is yours now; and, for my part, I am only concerned to see the back of you.’

And with that he rang for his Chinese servant, and had

as high as: as a maximum.

dearer: more expensive.

bothers: problems.

eighty odd dollars: about eighty dollars; more or less eighty dollars. **jesting:** joking; making fun.

hurry: urgency; haste.

coined money: metal pieces of money.

am I to: can I. **true:** not false.

at once: right now.

wish: want; desire.

pledge you my honour: promise on my honour. **cry off:** *(informal)* cancel. **bargain:** agreement; affair. **restore:** give back. **deceiving:** fooling; lying with.

bound himself with: made. **oath:** solemn promise

harm: evil. **paid over:** gave.

handed: gave.

Imp: little devil.

scarce: *(archaic; modern English is scarcely)* just.

wonderful: marvellous; strange.

fellow: man; friend.

Hold on: wait a minute. **fun:** enjoyment; amusement.

replied: answered.

rubbing his hands: moving his hands one against the other. **for my part:** as far as I am concerned. **concerned:** interested in. **the back of you:** you going away. **rang for:** rang the bell to call.

Keawe shown out of the house.

Now, when Keawe was in the street with the bottle under his arm, he began to think. — 'If all is true about this bottle, I may have made a losing bargain,' thinks he.

'But perhaps the man was only fooling me.' The first thing he did was to count his money; the sum was exact — forty nine dollars American money, and one Chili piece. 'That looks like the truth,' said Keawe. 'Now I will try another part.'

The streets in that part of the city were as clean as a ship's decks, and though it was noon, there were no passengers. Keawe set the bottle in the gutter and walked away.

Twice he looked back, and there was the milky, round-bellied bottle where he left it. A third time he looked back, and turned a corner; but he had scarce done so, when something knocked upon his elbow, and behold! it was the long neck sticking up; and as for the round belly, it was jammed into the pocket of his pilot coat.

'And that looks like the truth,' said Keawe.

The next thing he did was to buy a corkscrew in a shop, and go apart into a secret place in the fields. And there he tried to draw the cork, but as often as he put the screw in, out it came again, and the cork as whole as ever.

'This is some new kind of cork,' said Keawe, and all at once he began to shake and sweat, for he was afraid of the bottle.

On his way back to the portside, he saw a shop where a man sold shells and clubs from the wild islands, old heathen deities, old coined money, pictures from China and Japan, and all manner of things that sailors bring in their seachests. And here he had an idea. So he went in and