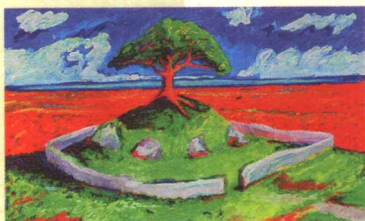


FAMOUS LAST WORDS



终 极 名 言

汉 英 对 照



[美] 雷·鲁宾逊 编 元嘉 译



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前 言

父亲逝于1957年,他生前是纽约市的一名律师,从业超过45年,名声很好,但是物质上并不宽裕。在他位于市中心办公室的黑色大箱子里,我仅仅找到了一个空的可口可乐瓶、一件旧的长袖内衣、一小叠细长的白色信纸。纸上是我父亲手抄的诗句,这些诗句是银行家非兹-格林·赫拉克1820年写给亡友、美国诗人约瑟夫·拉丹·德诺克的,内容如下:

身边的小草绿意盎然,
我和朋友度过了一段快乐时光!
无人知晓你,却爱上你,
无人知晓你,却赞扬你。

多年以来,我一直把赫拉克写给朋友的诗放在钱包里带在身边(后来才发现它出自《巴特里特常用妙语字典》)。我从来不曾发现,父亲竟然是个感情如此丰富的人。我知道他酷爱莎士比亚作品,终身热爱哥伦比亚大学橄榄球队,并且喜欢有关蛇的书,但是他珍爱这四句诗的事儿我却一点也不知道。

这一零碎纸片上的发现,促使我开始收集各行各业人士的临终遗言。虽然有人认为这是个病态的嗜好,但我乐此不疲。我沉浸在或新或旧的人物传记中,特别注意看最后的章节——一般来

说,传记末章都会介绍主人公临终前一些值得回味的事情。我浏览报纸的“悲痛专栏”——这是夏洛克·休姆形容《伦敦时报》上刊登的死亡讣告的用语。此外,我还好奇而仔细地倾听朋友和熟人讲述奇闻轶事。在此期间,克伦·多伦律师幸灾乐祸的这句话无意间鼓励了我:“我没有杀过任何人,但是饶有兴趣地看过很多死亡讣告。”

在研究过程中,我越来越发现,我们中的大部分人不仅关心死亡,而且关心人们怎样度过人生最后的时光——当然,前提是我们能够充分预估自己什么时候死亡。虽然这个话题很沉重,但是我很快发现,不是每个垂死的人面对死亡时都显得如此沉重。事实上,本书收纳了大量极好的一句话遗言。遗言各式各样,除了有趣的遗言外,有的遗言令人厌恶,有的让人惊恐,有的使人忧伤,有的低劣卑鄙,有的使人悲痛,有的引人愤怒,偶尔还有的令人费解。其中一些优美的临终遗言为我们打开一扇窗户,通过这个窗户,我们可以对逝者的整个人生窥豹一斑,虽然只是短暂的一瞥。

关于遗言的真实性问题,校验起来比较麻烦。因为见证人可能思绪混乱,不一定记得十分精确。为了照顾当事人的后代,他们有时也会对遗言作适当的修改。1920年,垂死的圣母队中卫乔治·吉普似乎向教练耐特·罗奇低语:“让他们出去打,为吉普尔赢得一球。”但是,我们并不确定当时耐特是否在现场。而且,吉普的伙伴或者其他人并不叫他吉普尔。

事实上,有关临终遗言的报道也是大相径庭。有报道称,富

..... ❖

有冒险精神的威尔逊·米茨纳在临死前曾对牧师说：“我为什么要和你讲啊？我刚刚和你老板谈过。”而其他报章的报道则是另外一个版本：“哦，医生，我猜这就是主要的事情。”很明显，完整记录原话并不容易，但是我倾向于认为，本书中大部分人的临终遗言是真实可靠的。

这本书汇集了诗人、圣哲、运动员、流氓、政治家、绑匪、影星、律师、士兵、飞行员、大亨、罪犯的临终之言，同时还包括一些墓志铭和颂词——虽然这些并不是严格意义上的遗言，但是内容非常有意思，所以不忍割舍。

——雷·鲁宾逊

“I’ve never felt better.”

DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS

After suffering a heart attack in 1939 at the age of 57, “The King of Silent Hollywood” (*Robin Hood*, *The Thief of Baghdad*, *The Mark of Zorro*) reassured an attendant while resting at home, then went back to sleep and died that night. Fairbanks was an athletic movie star known for his charm, good looks, and—apparently—an inability to gauge his physical condition.

“我的身体从来没有这么好过。”

——道格拉斯·费尔班克斯

1939年,57岁的“好莱坞默片之王”费尔班克斯(《罗宾汉》、《巴格达大盗》、《佐罗的面具》的主演)心脏病发作后在家休息。说了如上的话消除仆人的担忧后,他上床安睡,这一睡就再也没有醒来。费尔班克斯是一位动作片明星,以出色的演技和英俊的外表著称。显而易见的是,他也无法准确评估自己的身体状况。

“I wish I had drunk more champagne.”

JOHN MAYNARD KEYNES

The British Keynes was not your average economist. Keynes, whose eponymous theories influenced Roosevelt's New Deal and the rise of the European welfare state, was also a member of the famously liberated Bloomsbury group. He was politically liberal and sexually liberated, sleeping with many of the bohemian men in his circle and, of course, drinking champagne. Of that, and government spending, Keynes thought there could never be enough.

“要是我再多喝些香槟酒就好了。”

——约翰·梅纳德·凯恩斯

英国经济学家凯恩斯不是普通意义上的经济学家。他的经济学理论影响了罗斯福新政和欧洲福利国家的兴起，他还是著名的布鲁姆伯利解放联盟的成员之一。凯恩斯持自由主义政治观，崇尚性解放，当然他也喝香槟酒，酒钱由政府来付。凯恩斯觉得香槟酒永远喝不够。

“It's very beautiful over there.”

THOMAS EDISON

The Wizard of Menlo Park, arguably America's foremost inventor, received only three months of schooling in his entire childhood. Plagued by lifelong and worsening hearing loss, Edison's gifts to the world were more sound (the phonograph and talking movies), more light (the light bulb), and better communication (the telegraph). Near death in 1931, his second wife, Mina, asked him if he was suffering. “No,” Edison replied. “Just waiting.” Then he looked out his bedroom window and uttered his last words.

“风景那边独好。”

——托马斯·爱迪生

被称为“门洛公园魔术师”的托马斯·爱迪生,按说是美国最顶尖发明家,但他在整个童年时代只上过三个月学。尽管毕生被不断恶化的耳聋折磨,爱迪生却为世界贡献了更多的声音——留声机和有声电影、更多的光亮——电灯泡,和更便捷的通讯方式——电报。1931年,在他临死前,第二任妻子米娜问他是否很难受,爱迪生回答:“不,只是在等待。”然后,他向卧室的窗外望去,说出这最后的遗言。

“You will show my head to the people
—it is worth seeing.”

GEORGES JACQUES DANTON

Shortly after giving these instructions to his executioner in 1794, the head in question was removed from Danton's body by guillotine. During the French Revolution, Danton was a Parisian lawyer who decried the Reign of Terror, which charged him with conspiracy to overthrow the government and then sentenced him to death.

“请将我的头颅示众，它值得一看。”

——乔治斯·雅克·丹东

1794年，在丢给刽子手这样一句话后，巴黎律师丹东的脑袋即被搬了家。在法国大革命中，丹东公开谴责恐怖政策，被控阴谋推翻政府，最终被送上了断头台。

“This is a sharp medicine,
but a sure remedy for all evils.”

SIR WALTER RALEIGH

Poet, explorer, and sometime-pirate Sir Walter Raleigh was a loose cannon in the English court. After his attack on a Spanish camp in South America almost started a war, England's peace-loving king, James I, sent for the headsman. Yet even people who didn't like Raleigh had to admire the clever exit line he tossed off from the scaffold.

“这种药的药力太猛，不过倒是包治百病。”

——沃尔特·雷利爵士

沃尔特·雷利爵士是诗人、探险家，有时候还是海盗。他就像英国宫廷里一尊不受限制的“加农炮”，其对西班牙驻南美阵营的攻击几乎引发了一场战争。之后，爱好和平的英国国王詹姆士一世把他送上了断头台。但是，就连不喜欢雷利的人也会欣赏他在绞刑架下的睿智遗言。

“I would rather be a servant in the house of the Lord than sit in the seat of the mighty.”

ALBEN W. BARKLEY

Barkley got his wish when, while quoting the Bible before a mock convention in 1956, he died of a heart attack. Admired for his story-telling and oratory, the 77-year-old Kentuckian served the Democratic party for 44 years as a congressman, Senate majority leader, and as vice president under Harry Truman.

“与其做一个强权者，
我更乐意当一个家仆。”

——艾尔本·W. 巴克利

巴克利是肯塔基人，77岁时死于心脏病。他的临终愿望来源于1956年在一次模拟总统竞选大会上对《圣经》的引用。巴克利具有出众的演说能力，作为国会议员、参议院多数党领袖和哈里·杜鲁门内阁时的副总统，他为民主党效力了44年。

“How were the circus receipts in Madison Square Garden?”

P. T. BARNUM

Entertainment and flummery were Barnum's business to the very end. During his brilliant career as a showman and shameless bunko artist, P. T. Barnum bamboozled the public into believing that half of a stuffed monkey sewn onto a fish tail was a mermaid, and that an elderly black woman was George Washington's 161-year-old nurse. He later billed his three-ring circus as "The Greatest Show on Earth."

“麦迪逊广场公园的马戏团门票卖得怎么样？”

——P. T. 巴尔南姆

娱乐和假意恭维是巴尔南姆一生的事业。在当马戏团老板和厚脸皮欺诈艺术家的“光辉”职业生涯中，他欺骗公众去相信，半只绑上鱼尾巴、被喂饱的猴子就是美人鱼，一个上了年纪的黑人妇女是乔治·华盛顿 161 岁的护士。后来，他把三环马戏团的表演称作“世界上最精彩的表演”来推销。

“Please know that I am quite aware of the hazards. I want to do it because I want to do it. Women must try to do things as men have tried. When they fail, their failure must be but a challenge to others.”

AMELIA EARHART

Earhart knew as a teenager that she wanted to fly, and fly she did, setting dozens of records for both women and aviators of either sex. While attempting to circle the globe at the equator in 1937, she disappeared in the central Pacific and was never heard from again. Theories about her fate have ranged from her being sent to spy on the Japanese to becoming a South Pacific fisherman. Before taking off for the last time, she wrote this farewell letter to her husband, publisher G. P. Putnam.

“请相信我充分意识到了危险的存在，但我仍然愿意去尝试。男人们能做的事情，女人也应该努力去做。即使失败，也会激励更多的人前来挑战。”

——阿美丽亚·埃尔哈特



少女时代，埃尔哈特就因为想飞翔天空而为人所知。她的确做到了，还创造了多项飞行记录——包括女子和男子飞行记录。1937年，当在赤道附近做环球飞行时，她在中太平洋消失，从此杳无音讯。关于她的下落有很多推测，有人说她被派到了日本当间谍，有人说她在南太平洋上当渔夫。在最后一次启程前，她写了如上的信给她的丈夫——出版商 G. P. 普特蓝。

“Mom, do you hear the rain? Do you hear the rain? Mom, I just want to take off in the plane.”

JESSICA DUBROFF

Jessica's parents believed she was so special that she would set a record as the youngest person to fly east across the United States at the age of seven. In 1996, after only four months of flight training, she got as far as Cheyenne, Wyoming, where she spoke her last words over the phone to her mother shortly before leaving on the next leg of her journey.

“妈妈，你听到雨声了吗？ 听到雨声了吗？
妈妈，我就要起飞了。”

——杰西卡·杜布罗夫

父母相信，杰西卡的特别之处在于，7岁的她将刷新记录，成为飞越美国的人中年龄最小者。1996年，在仅仅进行了四个月的飞行训练后，杰西卡就飞抵怀俄明州的夏安市。在开始下一段行程之前，她打电话给妈妈说了这最后的话。

“Tell my mother I died for my country. I thought I did it for the best. Useless, useless...”

JOHN WILKES BOOTH

The actor hailed a few years earlier as the “youngest tragedian in the world” was responsible for one of America’s great tragedies. After the 27-year-old Booth—rabidly pro-slavery and quite possibly a Confederate spy—assassinated President Lincoln on April 14, 1865, he fled to Virginia, where he refused to surrender and was shot in the neck in a burning barn.

“告诉妈妈，我为国而死。我想这是我最好的选择。没用的，没用的……”

——约翰·威尔克斯·布斯

这位曾经很受欢迎的“世界上最年轻的悲剧演员”，后来却酿成了美国历史上最大的悲剧之一。布斯在 27 岁时发生了思想转变，狂热地支持奴隶制度，很可能还成了一名南方同盟特工。1865 年 4 月 14 日，他刺杀了林肯总统，随后逃到了弗吉尼亚州，并拒绝投降，最终在一个燃烧的谷仓被枪射中了脖子。