

AMERICAN SHORT STORIES

英美文学精品译注丛书



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N.Hawthorne A.Bierce O.Henry



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《美国短篇小说精华》

纳撒尼尔·霍桑(1804—1864)生于马萨诸塞州塞勒姆镇。青年时期,他和朗费罗及未来的美国第十四届总统富兰克林·皮尔斯结下了永久的友谊。他因最初写作不成功,在波士顿和塞勒姆海关找了一份工作,数年之后,因为政治原因,又丢掉了工作。1837年,他出版了短篇小说集《重讲一遍的故事》,一举成名。他向各种报纸和杂志投稿,后来创作了著名的小说《红字》(1850)。这是一部美国最优秀的清教徒小说,霍桑可以自豪地说,他创作一部关于清教徒主题的杰作,结束了持续二百多年的一种传统。他后来的小说,如《七个尖角阁的房子》(1851)、《福谷传奇》(1852)和《坦格尔伍德的故事》(1853),又巩固了他的声誉。霍桑实际上被看作是美国文学之父,是一个在精神和理智上对所有后来作家都有影响的人物。完成《玉石雕像》(1860)后,他的健康开始恶化,创作力开始下降。4年之后他在普利茅斯一觉睡去,再也没有醒过来。

安布罗斯·比尔斯(1842—1914)生于俄亥俄州。他生性爱冒险,曾参加美国南北战争,在加利福尼亚当过记者,在伦敦从事写作,死于墨西哥革命期间。19世纪90年代,他创作了一些描述内战的优秀短篇小说。他的作品集《军人与平民的故事》(1891),后易名为《人生》,和《这种事情可能吗?》(1893),赋予他一种近乎传奇的文体大师的地位。他的最佳小说,如《泉河桥事件》和《军官一种》,完全可以列入迄今最有才气的作品。他的鬼怪小说和恐怖小说至今仍然广泛流传,《魔鬼词典》(1906)收集了词语的讽刺性定义,至今仍被引用。比尔斯采用了爱伦·坡的叙事技巧,但改变了爱伦·坡的叙事模式,把神秘的恐怖事件放进内战的历史背景中,使之获得了象征人类状况的感染力。

欧·亨利(1862—1901)真名威廉·西德尼·波特,生于格林斯伯勒。

他是美国最多产的短篇小说家之一,曾在得克萨斯州奥斯丁第一国民银行工作,1899年因挪用资金入狱,在狱中开始写小说。他的作品以结局“出乎意料”著称。

在短篇小说成为美国最流行的叙事形式时期,欧·亨利笔下生花,佳作接踵问世,其中最优秀的作品则把荒谬和怪诞,同生动、真实、紧张的叙述结合起来。《白菜和国王》(1904)与《四百万》(1906)是他最优秀的短篇小说集。

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Nathaniel Hawthorne

Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) was born in Salem, Massachusetts. In his youth he struck a lasting friendship with Longfellow and Franklin Pierce, who was to become 14th President of the USA. As he was unsuccessful at first, he took a job at the Boston and Salem Custom House which he lost years later for political reasons. In 1837 he published "*Twice-Told Tales*", a collection of short stories for which he became famous. He contributed widely to newspapers and periodicals before writing his remarkable novel "*The Scarlet Letter*" (1850). This is the American Puritan novel at its best and Hawthorne can claim the distinction of writing a masterpiece on Puritan themes and ending a tradition that had lasted over two hundred years. His later novels such as "*The House of the Seven Gables*" (1851), "*The Blithedale Romance*" (1852) and "*Tanglewood Tales*" (1853) consolidated his reputation. Hawthorne is seen very much as a father figure in American literature, a spiritual and intellectual influence on all those who came after him. After "*The Marble Faun*" (1860), his health and creative power began to decline and four years later he died in his sleep at Plymouth.

Wakefield

In some old magazine or newspaper I recollect a story, told as truth, of a man – let us call him Wakefield – who absented himself for a long time from his wife. The fact, thus abstractly stated, is not very uncommon, nor – without a proper distinction of circumstances – to be condemned either as naughty or nonsensical. Howbeit, this, though far from the most aggravated, is perhaps the strangest, instance on record, of marital delinquency; and, moreover, as remarkable a freak as may be found in the whole list of human oddities. The wedded couple lived in London. The man, under pretence of going a journey, took lodgings in the next street to his own house, and there, unheard of by his wife or friends, and without the shadow of a reason for such self-banishment, dwelt upwards of twenty years.

recollect: remember.

as truth: as if it were true.

absented himself: went away.

thus: in this way. **uncommon**: unusual; rare.

proper: correct.

naughty: bad. **nonsensical**: without sense. **Howbeit**: in any ~~ease.~~

instance: example. **moreover**: in addition.

freak: unusual event. **whole**: complete; entire.

oddities: strange characteristics. **wedded**: married.

pretence: simulation. **took lodgings**: rented accommodation.

unheard of: unknown.

the shadow of: the smallest.

self-banishment: exile imposed by oneself. **dwelt**: lived.

upwards of: more than.

During that period, he beheld his home every day, and frequently the forlorn Mrs. Wakefield. And after so great a gap in his matrimonial felicity – when his death was reckoned certain, his estate settled, his name dismissed from memory, and his wife, long, long ago, resigned to her autumnal widowhood – he entered the door one evening, quietly, as from a day's absence, and became a loving spouse till death.

This outline is all that I remember. But the incident, though of the purest originality, unexampled, and probably never to be repeated, is one, I think, which appeals to the generous sympathies of mankind. We know, each for himself, that none of us would perpetrate such a folly, yet feel as if some other might.

To my own contemplations, at least, it has often recurred, always exciting wonder, but with a sense that the story must be true, and a conception of its hero's character. Whenever any subject so forcibly affects the mind, time is well spent in thinking of it. If the reader choose, let him do his own meditation; or if he prefers to ramble with me through the twenty years of Wakefield's vagary, I bid him welcome; trusting that there will be a pervading spirit and a moral, even should we fail to find them, done up neatly, and condensed into the final sentence. Thought has always its efficacy, and every striking incident its moral.

What sort of a man was Wakefield! We are free to shape out our own idea, and call it by his name. He was now in the meridian of life; his matrimonial affections, never violent, were sobered into a calm, habitual sentiment; of all husbands, he was likely to be the most constant, because a certain sluggishness would keep his heart at rest, wherever it might be placed. He was intellectual, but not actively so; his mind occupied itself in long and lazy musings, that ended to no purpose, or had not vigor to attain it; his thoughts were seldom so energetic as to seize hold of words. Imagination, in the proper meaning of the

beheld: observed.

forlorn: sad; desperate.

gap: empty space. **felicity**: happiness.

reckoned: considered; calculated. **estate**: ~~money and possessions~~. **settled**: divided up after death. **dismissed from memory**: forgotten. **widowhood**: state of a woman who has lost her husband.

spouse: husband.

outline: framework; summary.

unexampled: unique; unprecedented.

appeals to: attracts.

mankind: humanity.

perpetrate: ~~carry out, execute~~. **folly**: crazy action. **yet**: but.

might: would be able to.

contemplations: thoughts; meditations. **recurred**: returned.

exciting: causing. **wonder**: surprise.

Whenever: every time. **forcibly**: strongly.

If the reader choose: (*archaic form, subjunctive*) if he reader wants to. **ramble**: travel.

vagary: journey without direction. **bid**: give.

pervading: general.

even should we: *note the inversion*. **neatly**: tidily.

efficacy: quality of producing the desired result. **striking**: impressive. **incident**: event. **sort**: kind; type.

shape out: form.

meridian: middle.

sobered: calmed.

likely: probably.

sluggishness: inactivity. **would keep**: *habit in the past*.

wherever: in any place where.

musings: thoughts. **purpose**: goal, aim.

attain: get a result; achieve. **seldom**: rarely.

seize hold of: take possession of.

term, made no part of Wakefield's gifts. With a cold but not depraved nor wandering heart, and a mind never feverish with riotous thoughts, nor perplexed with originality, who could have anticipated that our friend would entitle himself to a foremost place among the doers of eccentric deeds? Had his acquaintances been asked, who was the man in London the surest to perform nothing today which should be remembered on the morrow, they would have thought of Wakefield. Only the wife of his bosom might have hesitated. She, without having analyzed his character, was partly aware of a quiet selfishness, that had rusted into his inactive mind; of a peculiar sort of vanity, the most uneasy attribute about him; of a disposition to craft, which had seldom produced more positive effects than the keeping of petty secrets, hardly worth revealing; and, lastly, of what she called a little strangeness, sometimes, in the good man. This latter quality is indefinable, and perhaps non-existent.

Let us now imagine Wakefield bidding adieu to his wife. It is the dusk of an October evening. His equipment is a drab great-coat, a hat covered with an oilcloth, top-boots, an umbrella in one hand and a small portmanteau in the other. He has informed Mrs. Wakefield that he is to take the night coach into the country. She would fain inquire the length of his journey, its object, and the probable time of his return; but, indulgent to his harmless love of mystery, interrogates him only by a look. He tells her not to expect him positively by the return coach, nor to be alarmed should he tarry three or four days; but, at all events, to look for him at supper on Friday evening. Wakefield himself, be it considered, has no suspicion of what is before him. He holds out his hand, she gives her own, and meets his parting kiss in the matter-of-course way of a ten year's matrimony; and forth goes the middle-aged Mr. Wakefield, almost resolved to perplex his good lady by a whole week's absence. After the door has closed behind him, she

gifts: natural characteristics.

depraved: evil; immoral. **wandering:** inconstant; unfaithful.

feverish: excited. **riotous:** confused; out of control. **perplexed:** puzzled; not knowing what to do.

entitle himself: get the right. **foremost:** important; principal.

deeds: actions. **acquaintances:** people he knew.

surest: most certain. **perform:** do.

the morrow: the next day.

bosom: chest; heart.

might have hesitated: could have hesitated.

aware: conscious. **selfishness:** egotism.

rusted: become part of. **vanity:** pride; love of oneself.

uneasy: worrying. **attribute:** characteristic.

craft: secret activity. **seldom:** rarely.

petty: little; unimportant. **hardly worth revealing:** insufficiently important or valuable to reveal.

latter: last (*here* strangeness).

bidding adieu: saying goodbye.

dusk: sunset.

drab: dull; uninteresting. **great-coat:** overcoat. **oilcloth:** water-proof covering. **top-boots:** high boots. **portmanteau:** bag; case.

is to take: *future intention*.

coach: horse carriage. **fain:** like to.

indulgent: accepting. **harmless:** innocuous.

alarmed: worried.

should he tarry: if he stayed. **at all events:** in any case.

look for: expect.

be it: if it is. **before:** in front of.

her own: her hand.

matter-of-course: ordinary.

forth: out.

perplex: worry; puzzle. **whole:** complete.

perceives it thrust partly open, and a vision of her husband's face, through the aperture, smiling on her, and gone in a moment. For the time, this little incident is dismissed without a thought. But, long afterwards, when she has been more years a widow than a wife, that smile recurs, and flickers across all her reminiscences of Wakefield's visage. In her many musings, she surrounds the original smile with a multitude of fantasies, which make it strange and awful: as, for instance, if she imagines him in a coffin, that parting look is frozen on his pale features; or, if she dreams of him in heaven, still his blessed spirit wears a quiet and crafty smile. Yet, for its sake, when all others have given him up for dead, she sometimes doubts whether she is a widow.

But our business is with the husband. We must hurry after him along the street, ere he lose his individuality, and melt into the great mass of London life. It would be vain searching for him there. Let us follow close at his heels, therefore, until, after several superfluous turns and doublings, we find him comfortably established by the fireside of a small apartment, previously bespoke. He is in the next street to his own, and at his journey's end. He can scarcely trust his good fortune, in having got thither unperceived – recollecting that, at one time, he was delayed by the throng, in the very focus of a lighted lantern; and, again, there were footsteps that seemed to tread behind his own, distinct from the multitudinous tramp around him; and, anon, he heard a voice shouting afar, and fancied that it called his name. Doubtless, a dozen busy-bodies had been watching him, and told his wife the whole affair. Poor Wakefield! Little knowest thou thine own insignificance in this great world! No mortal eye but mine has traced thee. Go quietly to thy bed, foolish man; and, on the morrow, if thou wilt be wise, get thee home to good Mrs. Wakefield, and tell her the truth. Remove not thyself, even for a little week, from thy place in her chaste bosom.

perceives: sees. **thrust:** pushed.
aperture: opening.
dismissed: forgotten.
long afterwards: a long time later.
recurs: returns.
flickers: flutters; vibrate. **reminiscences:** memories.
visage: face. **musings:** thoughts. **surrounds:** combines.
multitude: a large number.
awful: terrible. **coffin:** box for the dead.
frozen: still. **features:** face.
blessed: beatified; holy.
crafty: cunning; dishonest. **for its sake:** because of it.
given him up for dead: lost all hope he was alive. **whether:** if.

ere: before. **he lose... and melt:** *note the subjunctive.* **melt:** disappear. **vain:** useless.
searching for: looking for. **close at his heels:** closely.

doublings: returning the same way. **established:** settled.
bespoken: reserved; booked.

scarcely trust: hardly believe. **thither:** there.
unperceived: unnoticed. **recollecting:** remembering.
delayed: made late. **throng:** crowd.
tread: walk.
multitudinous: various. **tramp:** sound of walking.
anon: another time. **afar:** at a distance.
fancied: imagined.
busybodies: inquisitive people. **whole:** entire; complete.
knowest thou: (*archaic*) do you know. **thine:** (*archaic*) your.
but: except.
traced: followed. **thee:** (*archaic*) you. **foolish:** silly; stupid.
morrow: next day. **if thou wilt:** (*archaic*) if you will. **wise:** sensible.
get thee home: (*archaic*) go home. **thyself:** (*archaic*) yourself.
chaste: pure. **bosom:** heart.

Were she, for a single moment, to deem thee dead, or lost, or lastingly divided from her, thou wouldst be woefully conscious of a change in thy true wife forever after. It is perilous to make a chasm in human affections; not that they gape so long and wide – but so quickly close again! Almost repenting of his frolic, or whatever it may be termed, Wakefield lies down betimes, and starting from his first nap, spreads forth his arms into the wide and solitary waste of the unaccustomed bed. “No,” thinks he, gathering the bedclothes about him, “I will not sleep alone another night.”

In the morning he rises earlier than usual, and sets himself to consider what he really means to do. Such are his loose and rambling modes of thought that he has taken this very singular step with the consciousness of a purpose, indeed, but without being able to define it sufficiently for his own contemplation. The vagueness of the project, and the convulsive efforts with which he plunges into the execution of it, are equally characteristic of a feeble-minded man. Wakefield sifts his ideas, however, as minutely as he may, and finds himself curious to know the progress of matters at home – how his exemplary wife will endure her widowhood of a week; and, briefly, how the little sphere of creatures and circumstances, in which he was a central object, will be affected by his removal. A morbid vanity, therefore, lies nearest the bottom of the affair. But, how is he to attain his ends? Not certainly, by keeping close in this comfortable lodging, where, though he slept and awoke in the next street to his home, he is as effectually abroad as if the stagecoach had been whirling him away all night. Yet, should he reappear, the whole project is knocked in the head. His poor brains being hopelessly puzzled with this dilemma, he at length ventures out, partly resolving to cross the head of the street, and send one hasty glance towards his forsaken domicile. Habit – for he is a man of habits – takes him by the hand, and guides him, wholly

were she... to deem thee dead: if she thought you were dead
(note the inversion). **lastingly:** for a long time. **wouldst:**
(archaic) would. **woefully:** sadly. **thy:** (archaic) your.
perilous: dangerous. **chasm:** abyss.

gape: open.

frolic: crazy action.

betimes: for a short time. **starting:** waking.

nap: little sleep. **forth:** out.

waste: empty space. **unaccustomed:** unknown; unusual.

gathering: taking. **bedclothes:** sheets, blankets etc.

rises: gets up. **sets himself:** decides.

means: intends. **loose:** vague.

rambling: not having direction.

purpose: aim; goal; reason.

contemplation: thought. **project:** plan.

convulsive: violent. **plunges:** jumps.

feeble-minded: mentally weak.

sifts: sorts; examines. **minutely:** carefully.

matters: affairs.

endure: tolerate; stand.

widowhood: being without a husband. **briefly:** in short.

removal: disappearance. **morbid:** unhealthy; sick. **vanity:**
pride; love of oneself.

how is he to attain: how can he reach. **keeping close:** staying;
hiding himself. **lodging:** accommodation. **awoke:** woke up.

effectually abroad: as distant.

stagecoach: horse carriage. **whirling:** carrying quickly.

should he: if he should.

knocked in the head: finished; destroyed. **hopelessly:** very.

puzzled: perplexed; confused. **dilemma:** difficult decision.

ventures: goes. **hasty:** quick. **glance:** look.

forsaken: abandoned. **domicile:** home. **for:** because.

wholly: completely.