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# The Barber's Uncle



Abridged and  
Simplified by

**S.E.PACES**

英语课外自学文库·第二辑·IV

张道真 主编

# *The Barber's Uncle*

《开心理发店》

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威廉·萨罗扬 等著

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*S. E. PACES*

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# 序

这次应社会科学文献出版社之邀，主编了这套《英语课外自学文库》，旨在为英语学习者创造一个良好的英语阅读环境。

长期以来，我深感国内缺乏适当的英语读物，在书店能够看到的英文原版图书不是价格昂贵，就是鸿篇巨制，对在校的学生及英语学习者来讲，这样既会造成畏难情绪又不实用，对培养他们学习英语的兴趣、提高他们的英语水平极为不利。社会科学文献出版社针对这种情形，同时配合他们的“自学英语行动计划”，精心策划出版《英语课外自学文库》，并诚邀我担纲主编，他们用心良苦，我也欣然应允。

《英语课外自学文库》首批编辑出版的各辑图书都是依据在世界各地流传广泛而深受欢迎的英语文学作品缩写而成（以后还要出版各类英文版知识性读物），是长期在非英语国家从事英语教育的英国专家 S. E. Paces 特意为中国学生精心打造的。

这样的简写读本实际上也非常适合中国的初学英语的成年人。有些内容只要掌握上千词汇甚至几百词汇就能阅读，同时，语法结构也简单化。更为可取的是，每册图书都配有一张动画光盘，既可以像唱卡拉 OK 那样随字幕跟读，又可以在光盘上做相应的练习，而且光盘还具有修改练习错误的功能。总之，是一套听说读写兼顾，很实用又很有趣味的英语读物。

读原文著作，听原声讲话，通过英语学习英语，是吸收英语知识，掌握英语规律最有效的途径。大量阅读英语著作的作用很多，首先是培养阅读的兴趣和能力。认真读完这几十本简写著作，在为

精彩的故事所吸引的同时，英文阅读自然也打下了初步基础；其次是巩固课内所学知识，提高整体英文水平。课堂上所学的知识，零零很难巩固，如果在阅读中反复印证，就会既丰富了语法知识，又扩大了词汇量，不知不觉中语言修养就得到了稳步提高；再有就是通过阅读，能开拓视野，体会异域风情和文化背景，扩大知识面，反过来又为进一步学好英语打下基础。另外，在这里我要建议读者要充分利用原声朗读光盘来学习语音，提高口语能力。在读完一本书或一段文字之后，结合跟读录音，像讲故事一样的进行复述。试试看，你的英文水平会有神速的进步。

我念书的时候条件艰难，英文原著不容易找，我是千方百计地寻觅。现在，国家逐步富裕起来，有条件出版更多更好的英语读物给莘莘学子，让他们很容易从学校图书馆里借来阅读，让他们很容易从书店里买来做藏书随时翻阅。希望这套颇具规模的《英语课外自学文库》成为可以让学生们尽情遨游的英语学习海洋，成为广大读者乐而忘返的英语学习乐园。那么，作为主编，更作为一名英语教育工作者，我将倍感欣慰。

张道真

2003年7月于深圳

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## MY BANK ACCOUNT

*STEPHEN LEACOCK (1869 – 1944) is a Canadian author who was also a university lecturer. He wrote on historical and literary subjects but he is best known for his humorous short stories. The most popular of these are in the book “LITERARY LAPSES”, from which “MY BANK ACCOUNT” is taken.*







## My Bank Account



Whenever I go into a bank, I feel frightened. Everybody and everything that I see there frightens me. As for the manager, the sight of him simply terrifies me and makes me want to run away as fast as I can.

As soon as I open the door of a bank, I lose my head, and when I try to do any business there, I behave like an idiot. I cannot explain the reason for this, but that is how it always has been, and that is how it is now.

When my salary was raised to fifty dollars a month. I knew that I had to do something about it. I had to start putting my money in a bank, no matter how unwilling I felt to set foot in the place. And so I collected all my courage and set out for the bank.

Timidly I stepped inside and, with a great effort, I lifted my head to look around me. The sight of the clerks filled me with fear but I bravely walked up to a window marked ACCOUNT. The accountant stood there like a figure of stone, waiting for me to speak. My tongue refused to move but I swallowed hard and at last I was able to ask in a voice that sounded strange to my ears, "Can I see the manager, please?" To this request I added, but I don't know why, "alone". I asked for the manager because I thought that everyone had to speak to the manager before opening an account at a bank.

"Certainly," said the accountant, "unless he is engaged. I will go to see."

He went away, leaving me standing there alone. Everybody seemed to be staring at me and I felt most uncomfortable. Fortunately the manager was free at that time and the accountant took me to him.

I looked at the manager. His face was calm and serious. It

frightened me. I held my fifty-six dollars tightly in my hand which I kept all the time in my trouser pocket.

“Are you the manager?” I asked him. It was a foolish question because I knew full well that he was.

“Yes,” he answered.

“Can I see you?” I asked, and I added once more “alone”. The question seemed silly without this last word.

A look of anxiety came over the manager’s face. I was sure that he was thinking that I had some important and unpleasant information to give him. Perhaps I had found some mistake or even dishonesty in the work of the bank.

“This way,” he said and led me to his private room. He turned the key in the lock. “Here, it is quite private,” he said. “No one will disturb us. Please take a seat.”

We sat down and looked at each other. I was tongue-tied and could not say a word. He broke the uncomfortable silence by saying, “You are one of Pinkerton’s detectives, I suppose.”

My strange behaviour had made him think that I was a detective. I read his thoughts and they made me feel even more nervous.

“No, not from Pinkerton’s,” I said. Such an answer made him think that I was a detective from some other detective agency. So I hastened to say, “To tell you the honest truth, I am not a detective at all.” That, of course, sounded as if someone had accused me of lying. I was shaken but I managed to go on. “I have come to open an account. You see, from now on, I would like to keep all my money in this bank.”

The manager looked less anxious. Now he was beginning to think that my nervous manner meant that I had an unusually large sum to deposit. Perhaps I was the feeble-minded son of a millionaire . . . . .

“A large account, I suppose,” he said.

“Fairly large,” I said in a voice that was little more than a whisper. “I intend to deposit fifty-six dollars now and fifty dollars a month regularly.”

Without saying another word, the manager rose from his seat and walked briskly to the door. He threw it open and called to the accountant:

"*Mr. Montgomery*, this gentleman wishes to open an account. He will put fifty-six dollars in it." He turned to me and said coldly, "Good morning."

His voice was loud enough for everyone to hear and I am sure that everyone heard. How I wished that I might sink through the floor and disappear! Well, I stood up and walked unsteadily to a large iron door that was open at one side of the room.

"Good morning," I said, and I walked straight into the safe.

"Not that way," said the manager. "This is the way," and he pointed to the door through which we had entered.

I went up to the accountant's desk and pushed my money to him with a quick, sudden movement, as if the money were too hot for me to hold. My face was white and my voice shook as I said, "Put this into my account."

Without saying anything, the accountant took the money and handed it to another clerk. He made me write my name on a piece of paper and sign my name in a book. By this time I hardly knew what I was doing. My head was going round and round and I could not see anything properly.

"Is it in the account?" I managed to ask in a shaking voice.

"Yes," said the accountant.

"Then I want to draw a cheque," I said.

I was thinking of drawing out six dollars for my immediate use. Someone handed me a cheque-book and someone else began telling me how to write out a cheque. Other customers in the bank were staring at me. They were thinking that I was a man who owned millions of dollars, but clearly I was not feeling very well. Somehow I wrote something on a cheque and pushed it towards the clerk. He looked at it.

"What! Are you drawing it all out again?" he asked in surprise.

I took the cheque from him and saw that I had written fifty-six

dollars instead of six. At that point I lost my head completely. It was quite impossible for me to explain my mistake. All the other clerks had stopped working and were staring at me.

In my misery, I made a desperate decision.

“Yes,” I said, “all of it.”

“You wish to draw all your money out?”

“Every cent.”

“You really want to close your account?”

“Yes,” I said, trying hard to make my voice sound angry.

An idea had come to me. Perhaps they might think that I was offended by something they had done or said, and for that reason I had changed my mind. I tried my hardest to look like a man who had a very quick temper but I did not succeed very well.

The clerk was ready to pay out the money.

“How will you have it?” he asked.

“What?”

“How will you have it?”

It was some moments before I was able to understand what he meant. Then I answered, “In fifty-dollar notes.”

He gave me one fifty-dollar note.

“And the six?” he asked coldly.

“In six-dollar notes,” I said.

He gave me six one-dollar notes.

I rushed out of the bank as if I were escaping from a house on fire.

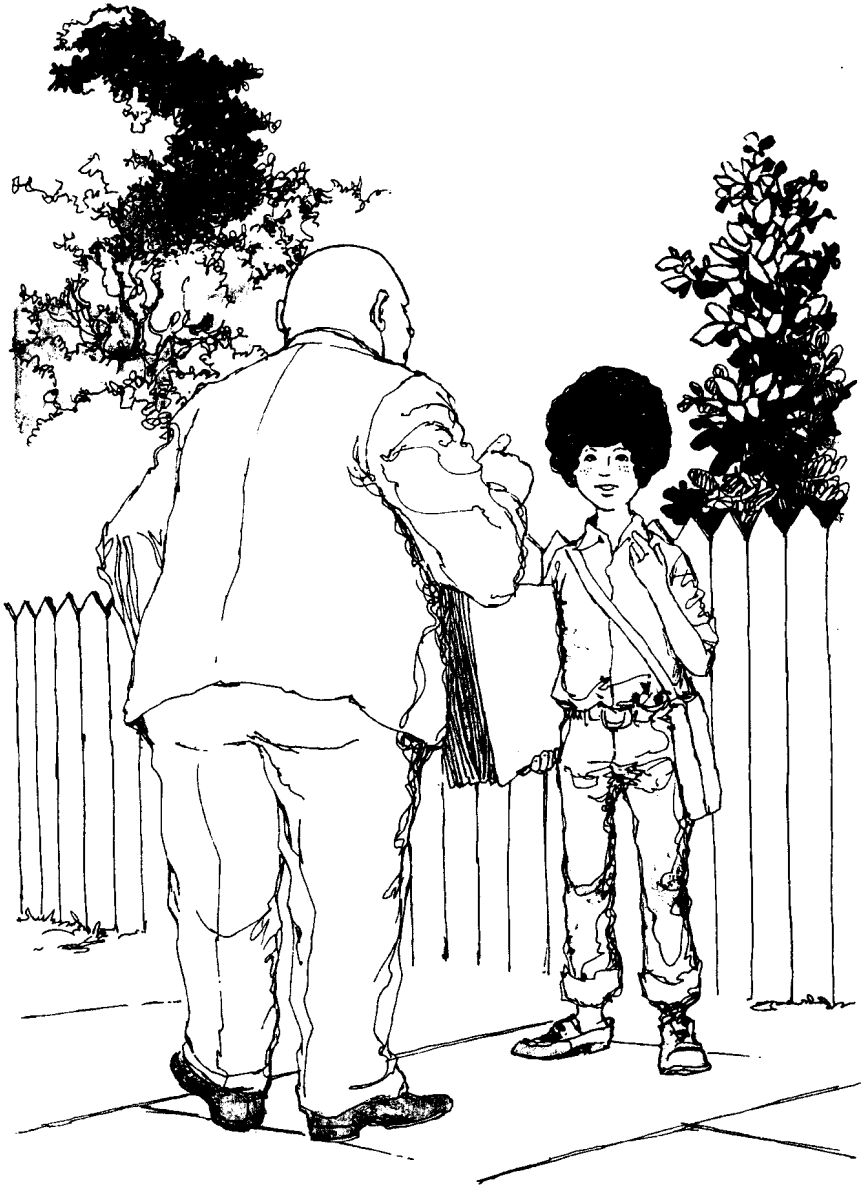
As the big door of the bank closed behind me, I heard a burst of laughter that seemed to shake the whole building.

Since that time, I have never used a bank. I keep my cash in my pocket and my savings in silver dollars in a sock.



## THE BARBER'S UNCLE

*WILLIAM SAROYAN (born 1908) is an American dramatist and short-story writer whose family (Armenian) had emigrated from south-western Russia to California. His best stories are about Armenian people now living in America but who still remember their old way of living. He writes in a simple style but his meaning is often philosophic. "THE BARBER'S UNCLE" is typical of his work. Other short stories are to be found in the very popular book "THE DARING YOUNG MAN ON THE FLYING TRAPEZE". His play "THE TIME OF YOUR LIFE" won an important American literary prize.*





## The Barber's Uncle



*Miss Gamma* said I needed a haircut, my mother said I needed a haircut, my brother *Krikor* said I needed a haircut – everybody said I needed a haircut. They all said, “Your head’s too big.” “Too much long black hair.” And they kept on asking me, “When are you going to get a haircut?”

There was a rich business-man in our town named *Huntingdon*. He used to buy a newspaper from me every evening and I got to know him quite well. He weighed two hundred and forty pounds and owned two Cadillacs, six hundred acres of land and over a million dollars in the bank. In addition to all this, he owned a very small head, without a single hair on it, placed right at the top of him for all the world to see. Well, this Mr. *Huntingdon* used to bring people from miles away to look at my head. “Look at his hair,” he used to shout out in the street. “There’s a head for you. There’s California – good weather and health. There’s hair on a head,” he used to roar.

*Miss Gamma* was quite angry over my long, thick, black hair.

“I shall not mention any names,” she said in class one day, “but if a certain young man, here among us, does not visit the barber and get a haircut very soon, he will come to a very bad end.”

She did not mention any names but she was looking hard at me all the time she was talking.

“What’s the big idea?” asked my brother *Krikor*. He was angry over my hair and so was everybody else. I did not mind that at all. In fact, I rather enjoyed it. But one day something happened which made me run to the barber’s. A small bird began to build its nest in my hair.

It happened like this. I was lying on the grass under the tree in our yard, day-dreaming as usual. It was a warm winter day and the whole world seemed to be sleeping. Around me, everything



was still and silent. No noise of traffic. No noise of people hurrying here and there, shouting, talking, laughing, crying. Nothing but a silence that was sad and happy – that's how it seemed to me as I lay there, half-asleep.

I was feeling that it was good to be alive in this world. It was good to have a small house: rooms and tables and chairs and beds. Pictures on the walls. Ah, it was wonderful to be able to move through time and space, morning, noon and night; to breathe and eat and laugh and talk and sleep and grow. To see and hear and smell and taste and touch. To walk through the places of the world under the sun or the moon. Ah, how wonderful just to be alive in the world!

Then there came into my mind pictures of the places that I was so eager to see: New York, London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Constantinople, Rome, Cairo. The streets, the houses, the people. The doors and windows everywhere. And at night, the trains roaring their way through the darkness and the great ships sailing over the sea. The dark, sad sea. It was at that point that I felt so happy that I became sad – sad because I realised how all these lovely things would pass away. Ah, if there were no change, decay or death . . . . .

I fell fast asleep.

It was then that a small bird flew down from the tree on to my head and began building a nest in my hair. After a while it began singing, and that woke me up. The world had been so silent before and then suddenly there came the song of this bird.

Never before in my life had I heard the song of a bird so clearly. The sound seemed so strange and new and yet, at the same time, so natural and so old. I lay there listening happily until I realized that there was a bird in my hair. I felt a sense of shock: it was not right for anyone to have a bird in his hair. I jumped up and hurried to town while the bird flew away in fright.

“Yes,” I was thinking as I ran to the barber's, “Miss Gamma was right, my mother was right, my brother Krikor was right.