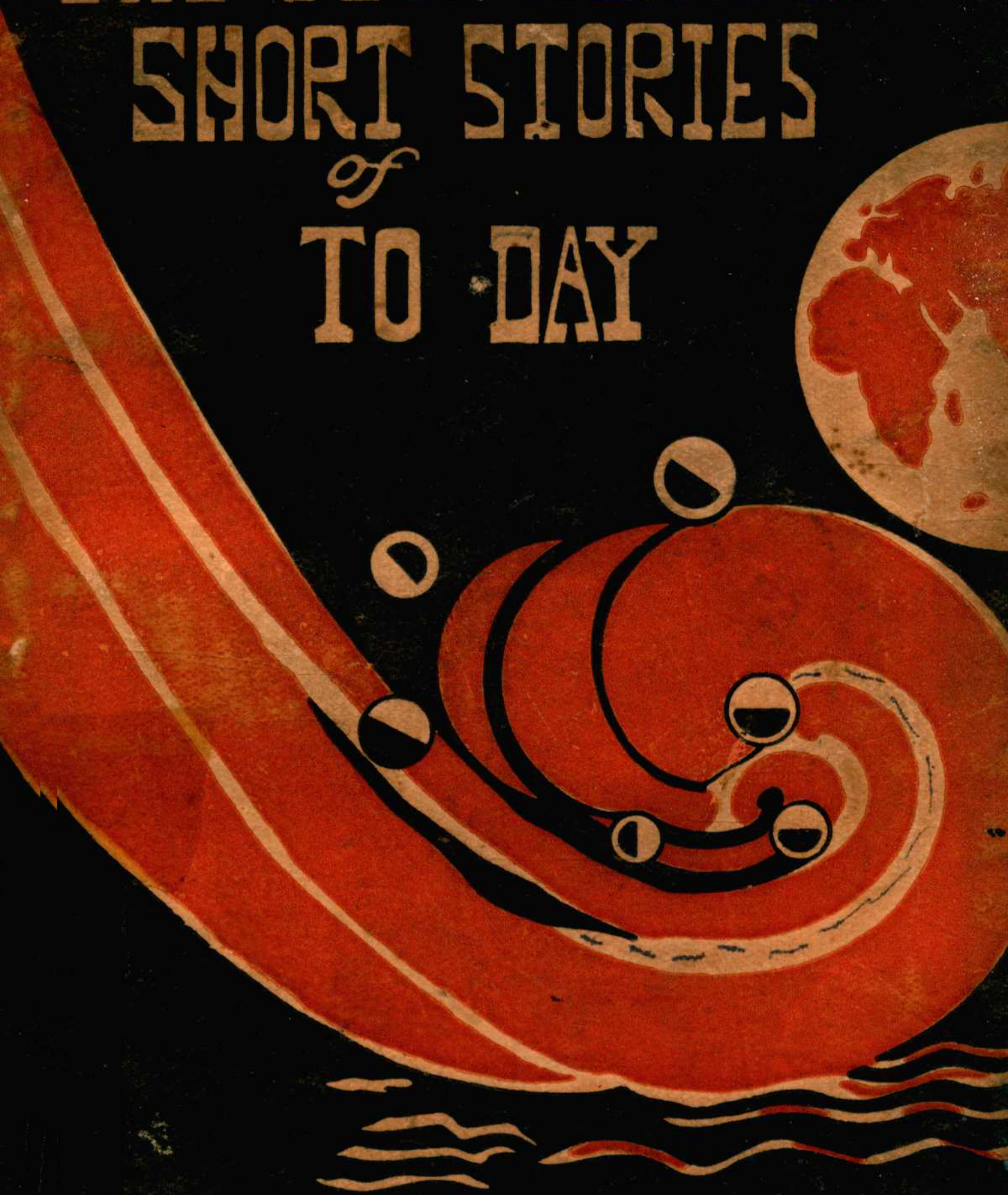


THE BEST EUROPEAN  
SHORT STORIES  
*of*  
TO DAY



最近歐洲二十七國短篇小說選

華文譯註

THE WORLD'S MODERN LITERATURE  
SERIES (10)

THE BEST CONTINENTAL  
SHORT STORIES OF THE DAY

VOL. II

WITH CHINESE NOTES

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華文詳註

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最近歐州二十七國小說選

中冊

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# 序

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有人說“文學並無新舊可分，只有中外可辨。”其意以為各國有各國的文學，與歷史的時代並無關係；簡而言之，文學只有空間的關係，沒有時間的分別。我們看了這本最近歐洲二十七國小說選却得了一個極端相反的結論：“文學只有時代可分，並無中外可辨。”你看這本書收集了從露西亞到意卑里亞半島，從斯堪的那維亞半島到巴爾幹半島，同時代的三十七位文學作家，代表了二十七個國家。所說的同時代，便是現在的資本主義的末期時代。在經濟的鐵蹄下底民衆的喊冤聲，呻吟聲，憤激聲，是二十七國混成一片的。分開來說，二十七國；綜合起來，只是一個民衆；只有一個靈魂，一肚悶氣，一流眼淚，一股熱血。各國的

藝術家代表各國的民衆，用各種不同的樂器，  
合奏同一的悲調。

文學只有時代可分，並無中外可辨。帝國主義的軍閥底殘暴，貧苦階級的士兵底悲哀，在保加利亞 Ivan Vazoff 的“Is He Coming?”裏，愛沙尼亞 Friedebert Tuglas 的“Shadows of Men”裏是如此；在勒鐵 Akuraters 的“Death”裏，羅馬尼亞的女皇 Marie 的“In the Winter of War”裏也是如此。捷克 Bozena Kuneticka 的“Geese”裏貧孩底病死，日耳曼 Joseph Winkler 的“The Holiday Child”裏寄食的孤兒，同樣悲嘆無產階級的兒童是不當生活的。意大利 Bruno Corre 的“Hassan's Career”描寫六歲的孩童便須拿起鞋刷鞋油在大街中去尋麪包，露西亞 Lydia Seifoulina 的“The Golden Childhood”活寫出兒童時代却是鉛鐵時代！作家底國籍不同，時代精神底反映則一。

老姑娘的孤獨，醜郎君的失望，狄奧多的沉痛，斐阿叔的鬱悶，都是極甘甜的哀歌。第一次的懺悔，灰色的驢底作者滑稽的筆桿，變

做了喚醒迷於宗教的愚民底棒喝。是，形式是散文，其實是歌舞劇，久旱的天空沛然下降甘霖，Minev 的筆端也流不完詩的美。足印及忘了的魂帶着神祕底色彩；磨坊女及沙妃的鞋子蒸散着新浪漫底芬芳。

還生存的三十七位作家，可說是歐洲作者的整體。有些出自無名小國，有些是新作家，要一一敘其傳略真是不可能，且亦非必要。我們雖不能細究誰是何人，却從他們的作品中可窺見誰是何如人了。

林漢達。

一九二九，三，十。

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# THE BEST CONTINENTAL SHORT STORIES OF THE DAY

## THE DEATH OF THE OLD DEEMSTER

BY LAURI POHJANPAA (FINLAND)

THAT day of July was warmer than any during the whole rainless, hot summer. Vanhakylä—a hamlet on the banks of a small lake—lay exposed to the burning and parching heat of the sun. It seemed as if the grey houses and cottages, surrounded by hurdle fences, had thronged together just in order to get shadow from each other against the merciless, burning rays. But vainly, for the long rainless period had, as it were, baked heat into the walls of the buildings, and now the heat was thrown back into the air. The sun was burning from a cloudless sky, the highroad was burning under the feet of the children, the walls and the stones were burning. The meadows had acquired a light brown colour, *singed* by the sun; the cattle still remaining in the village stood in the warm water of the lake along the reeds, exhausted by the heat.

a cloudless<sup>1</sup> sky

## THE BEST SHORT STORIES

Even the church standing on the hill outside the village suffered; on its walls the air quivered, giving an impression of small burning *wicks*, and the old logs in the walls *sweated resin*.

The only place that did not seem to feel anything of the heat that tortured the whole village was the estate of the old *deemster* on the opposite side of the lake. But (no wonder,) for the estate was quite isolated and lay aristocratically alone surrounded by its garden. It was quite sheltered in the shade of the tall *aspens* and the aged maple trees. The leaves of the aspens moved slightly even in the dead calm, as fans lazily waving round some oriental prince. Only the "sauna," the Finnish steam-bath, peeped out from the shadow, its wall in the sun; it stood, as it were, on *tiptoe*, at the water's edge and it looked as if it were ready to retire into the shadow of the trees. The greyish main building with a curb-roof did not show itself at all, but rowing out to the midst of the lake you could perceive its green windows as evil eyes staring at the disturbers of the peace.

In the house of the old *deemster* it was always dull, dark and silent. The only voice heard in the house was that of the old *deemster* himself; you got the impression that all others in



cs

## THE DEATH OF THE OLD DEEMSTER

this abode merely whispered. But the old deemster spoke the louder. When he stood, still a stately and tall man, ~~in the midst of~~ the sunny mansion court, he spoke as a *field-marshal* would have addressed a whole army; when ~~the~~ air was calm his voice carried to every farm in Vanhakylä and everywhere the children ran away seeking a hiding place.

Deemster Ludvig Lindencrona was about eighty-five years old and *stone blind*, but he still *lorded over* the estate with ~~unbroken~~ strength of mind. He had been left alone, ~~like~~ an old pine in a young plantation, his sons and grandsons having died. Except himself, only the widow of his grandson, Agnes, and her daughter, Margaret, a girl of seven, lived on the estate. Although Agnes Lindencrona was almost thirty years old, the deemster treated her as a child to whom one could entrust nothing.

That day of July the old deemster was sitting in his easy chair as was his habit, straight and *stiff*. The easy chair was drawn up to the chest and in the chest were all the keys of the house. Although he had been ailing for a few days, the deemster wore a black frock coat, a white necktie and boots of patent leather. He had, with Napoleonic gesture, put his right hand inside the

*air*  
THE BEST SHORT STORIES

coat; at his outstretched left hand sat the shy and pale Margaret, the eye and servant of the deemster, on a small *hassock*. The white wig and the whiskers, the angles over the empty eyes and the strong, clean-shaven chin gave the face of the deemster an aristocratic expression. In old age he had preserved his majestic *air*. The heavy *mahogany* furniture reflected the master's solemnity, even the worn-out pieces of the furniture had something severe about them, and the tears in the sofa cover gaped hostilely. The room, *as* indeed the whole house, was dark and musty; the air was sultry because nobody was allowed to open the window.

On one of the chairs in the doorway, *was sitting* the late Clerk of Assize, Nyholm. As a rule he was to be found sitting there; when not, the deemster would send a word round for him to come. This man had *lately* become indispensable to the deemster, who required someone to speak to, or rather to listen to his *monologues*. Nyholm was a trembling old *fogey*, in whose mouth only one tooth had been left *as* a memory of happier times, but his red-blue nose, striking witness to his besom sin, was still a good interpreter of his unquenchable love of life, although his strength was gone. Nyholm was hardly smaller than his

*in front of*  
THE DEATH OF THE OLD DEEMSTER

master, so the old suits of the deemster suited him well—although they turned as *threadbare* as he was himself. In the village the tails of the old frockcoat still fluttered neatly, so well suited were they to the clerk's tripping way of walking, but as soon as the late Clerk of Assize stood in front of the deemster, he became a miserable sinner—in front of the deemster all grew smaller.

Nyholm was sitting in his usual place *prattling* with his toothless mouth, piously twinkling with his eyes—answering the questions of the deemster.

“How do you find our fields, Nyholm?”

“Very good, your honour, very good, indeed, ye-es.”

“You are lying, you old crow, as if I shouldn't know. Tell the truth straight out. Shamefully bad are they. The ditches are full of *osiery*, the fields of bad weeds.”

“Oh, but no, your honour, no, no.”

“Be silent and don't interrupt me. I know better than you. Here is *everything going to the dogs* because I am blind. All are stealing, the man-servant steals, the maids steal, perhaps you do, too. Is the *rye* flowering?”

“I dare say it is flowering, oh, yes.”

“Again you are lying. Why do you come

*Tell the truth straight out.*

already  
The people

## THE BEST SHORT STORIES

here with your tales? It has not flowered yet. But what should you know, when you are drinking all the time?"

"No, no, your honour. No, baron, *the times are bad*, I haven't got as much as that . . ."

"Who is there? Is it Agnes?" asked the deemster, feeling that somebody had slipped into the room.

"Please will you give me the key to the shed?"

"What are you going to do?"

"We want to bake."

"Are you mad, to bake by this weather? You want to set the house on fire as you can't destroy it any other way—eh? And what would you bake? Is it already my funeral feast you are all preparing for? I am not going to die yet."

"The people have no bread."

"*Give them hay.* We are not going to bake until it has rained, do you understand?"

The shadow has vanished. Nyholm laughs and giggles in silence in the doorway, pressing his hands between his knees.

"Oh, it is blazing hot; my mouth feels parched," says he, cautiously feeling the ground.

"Blazing hot, is it? I know—you want

blazing hot

*I must be going now*  
THE DEATH OF THE OLD DEEMSTER

brandy, that's it, you old drunkard. But you shan't get a drop today, not a drop."

Nyholm kept his countenance; it was not the first time he was "*driving for the parson.*" He twinkles cunningly with his eyes: he knows the trick of it.

"Well, I must be going now, I just came to, inquire about your honour's precious health. You seem to be very well today, baron, ye-es, I see it to my satisfaction."

"Oh, you find that," said the deemster, reviving. "I see, I see. But where are you going, old friend? Margaret, tell mother to have some corn-brandy brought for Nyholm, and yes, why not? || To me a glass of wine. And please, have a look on the highroad lest anybody should come."

Nyholm laughs again, bent forward, an old man's laugh, chuckling to himself; rubbing his hands against his chin. The deemster's *aromatic* corn-brandy is the best of its kind.

It is brought to him in a round, small, *thick-bellied* bottle.

"I have the honour most humbly to drink your Lordship's health." Nyholm was proposing his usual toast. In connection with corn-brandy the deemster is always "your Lordship."

*Have a look on the high-road*

still time

## THE BEST SHORT STORIES

“Ah, how good and refreshing for my dry bones,” says the late Clerk of Assize then, and speaking continually—lest the deemster should observe it—he takes another *dram*.

“*The deuce*, how that hand of mine shakes.”

On his cheeks appears a faint blush and the eyes grow more devotional. He will soon be in a state to listen to the *soliloquy* of the deemster; he coughs more intimately. But this time he will not hear the deemster’s speech for at that moment Margaret opens the door and says:

“The *vicar*.”

“Nobody else on the road?”

“Nobody.”

Nyholm has still time to gulp down a couple of drams and to slip out as the vicar enters the room.

Mr. Tuominen, the vicar, a fat, mild-looking country parson, is dressed in clerical garb and holds in his hands a case containing the *Holy Communion*—lest it should be required. Even he is rather uncertain in his movements when speaking to the deemster.

“I am very glad to see you out of bed, my dear deemster.

“Out of bed! Ought I to lie in bed, or perhaps in a coffin? It looks as if some people

as

## THE DEATH OF THE OLD DEEMSTER

are just waiting for that. Why did you come? Did I call for you, Parson?"

The deemster never liked to call Mr. Tuominen vicar. The only vicar for him was Dean Gustaf Adolf Grönberg, who about a year before had been moved to another *parish*.

"I heard that you were ill, deemster . . ."

" . . . and you have probably prepared my funeral sermon already, and got it in your pocket, eh? No, Parson, I am not yet going to die, nothing of the kind, and it is a great pity for your pathetic sermon. I am still waiting for a guest. I won't die before he has called, I have something very important to tell him. Margaret! Where is the girl again? Oh, there you are, Margaret! Are you quite sure you didn't see anybody coming? Oh, I see, yes—sit down, my child, and wait. And you, Mr. Parson, don't for goodness' sake move your feet like that! You are not going yet. Remain seated while you are here. It was nice of you to come, all the same. And now you could speak to me, miserable sinner that I am—words of comfort. But not too many words! Come, begin!"

And the vicar spoke in his mild manner. He was anxious, and hoped to be able by means of soft words to get below the icy crust and find

It was <sup>9</sup>nice of you  
to come

as

## THE BEST SHORT STORIES

the way to the heart of the old man. The deemster listened, head erect, the angles over the eyes drawn high up towards the forehead.

"Listen, Parson," said he after the vicar had finished, "listen, Parson, to what I have to say to you. With all your honeyed words you only make women weep—with all your *syrup*. Of course, it is all right, but you must make it harsher and stronger and not like food for little children. Have you ever heard that God is a consuming fire? Moses saw God in a burning shrub—that's a fine thing—you would never have been able to see that. You never hear God speaking in fire and in the tempest that breaks mountains; you apprehend him only in the *soughing of a faint wind*. Do you know, Parson, who it was who once said: 'I have come to kindle a fire on earth,'—yes, a fire. But nowadays one never hears about fire in sermons. One sees only such soft and womanish milkmouths as, for instance, yourself—yes, and even my sons and grandsons died as flies. Erik didn't even leave a son behind him—oh, no, no, Margaret, you are not to blame, no, please run to the road and see if anybody is coming! Yes—what was I saying? Oh, yes, that God is fire. Fire purifies and makes hard. All that is best within us is akin to fire."



Perform great deeds

## THE DEATH OF THE OLD DEEMSTER

Isn't that very strange? We have fire under our feet and above our heads, the fire of the earth and the fire of the sun. Earth is born of fire and shall perish in fire, just as we ourselves. . . Yes, of fire are we born, and—don't try to interrupt me! Only he who worships the fire will be able to perform great deeds. As for instance, Napoleon. Napoleon was a worshiper of fire. He had a divine thought: first fire, then peace; the *millennium* will be born of the fire. Do you know why Napoleon perished? Because he fell away from the fire. Fire destroys him who is faithless to it. Napoleon almost succeeded, but . . . even he was after all a *milk-sop*. I know it. I am, I was"—here the voice of the old deemster turns to a whisper—"I was, as you certainly have heard, summoned to a great task" (the old deemster had told it many times before), "to be a general and a statesman, I won't specify in what high position. Well, it didn't come off, and it doesn't matter now anyhow. But—I hope I can trust in your discretion—I nevertheless influenced the current of the world politics, secretly, you know, by way of thought and mind. Oh, if you knew, Parson, what I do! Even this emperor, who calls himself Nicolaus II by the grace of God—it is *blasphemy*, I say. In that man there