

The Canterville Ghost

英美文学精品详注丛书

第一辑 第四册

坎特维尔的鬼

〔英〕王尔德 著



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《坎特维尔的鬼》

奥斯卡·王尔德(1854-1900) 生于都柏林,父亲是著名的外科医生。曾就读于都柏林的三一学院,后进入牛津大学的麦格达伦学院学习,在那里开始了“唯美主义”崇拜,即化生活为艺术。

1881年,出版了第一本著作《诗集》,然后前往美国讲学。1884年,与康斯坦斯·劳埃德结婚,创作了几部童话故事。随后创作了《道林·格雷的肖像》(1891),在其序言中极其明白地表述了唯美运动的基本原则。《温德梅尔夫人的扇子》(1892)、《无足轻重的女人》(1893)、《理想丈夫》(1895)、《认真的重要》(1895)等一系列喜剧的问世,方给他带来真正的成功。其中《认真的重要》至今依然是他最负盛名的戏剧作品。1854年,用法语为法国女演员萨拉·伯恩哈特创作了独幕剧《莎乐美》,由艾尔弗雷德·道格拉斯勋爵译成英文。在其创作的颠峰时期,谣言四起,说他与道格拉斯有同性恋关系,因而招来道格拉斯父亲昆斯伯里侯爵的干预。王尔德提出诉讼,控告侯爵诽谤,结果酿成丑闻:他被判入狱,服苦役两年。他利用这段经历创作了《里丁监狱之歌》和1962年方全文出版的散文集《从深处》。1897年获得释放,而后前往巴黎,住在那里,直到1900年去世。

Oscar Wilde

The Canterville Ghost

Oscar Wilde (Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde 1854 - 1900) was born in Dublin, the son of an eminent surgeon. He went to Trinity College, Dublin, and then to Magdalen College, Oxford, where he started the cult of "Aestheticism", or making an art of life.

After the publication of his first book, *Poems*, in 1881, he went to lecture in America. In 1884 he married Constance Lloyd and published several books of stories for children before writing *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), whose preface is perhaps the most clear expression of the principles which constitute the basis of the Aesthetic Movement. Real success came with a series of comedies: *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892), *A Woman of no Importance* (1893), *An Ideal Husband* (1895) and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) which remains his most well-known play. *Salomè* was written in French for Sarah Bernhardt in 1894 and translated into English by Lord Alfred Douglas. At the peak of Wilde's career rumours of his homosexual relationship with Douglas caused the intervention of the latter's father, the Marquis of Queensbury. When Wilde brought a libel action against the Marquis, a scandal ensued: he was sentenced to two years imprisonment with hard labour. As a result of this experience he wrote *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* and *De Profundis* which was published in full only in 1962. He was released from prison in 1897 and went to Paris where he lived until his death in 1900.

THE CANTERVILLE GHOST

I

When Mr. Hiram B. Otis, the American minister, bought Canterville Chase, every one told him he was doing a very foolish thing, as there was no doubt at all that the place was haunted. Indeed, Lord Canterville himself, who was a man of the most punctilious honour, had felt it his duty to mention the fact to Mr. Otis, when they came to discuss terms.

“We have not cared to live in the place ourselves,” said Lord Canterville, “since my grand-aunt, the Dowager Duchess of Bolton, was frightened into a fit, from which she never really recovered, by two skeleton hands being placed on her shoulders as she was dressing for dinner, and I feel bound to tell you, Mr. Otis, that the ghost has been seen by several living members of my family, as well as by the rector of the parish, the Rev. Augustus Dampier, who is a fellow of King’s College, Cambridge. After the unfortunate accident to the Duchess, none of our younger servants would stay with us, and Lady Canterville often got very little sleep at night, in consequence of the mysterious noises that came from the corridor and the library.”

minister: diplomat.

Chase: country villa with land.

foolish: stupid. **no doubt at all**: absolutely no doubt.

haunted: infested with ghosts. **Indeed**: in fact.

punctilious: scrupulous. **duty**: moral obligation.

mention: tell.

terms: conditions.

cared: wanted.

since: from the time. **Dowager**: title given to a woman.

frightened: scared. **fit**: convulsion.

from which... recovered: which... got over. **skeleton**: bone framework. **as**: while. **dinner**: formal evening meal.

bound: forced.

several: some. **as well as**: besides.

rector: priest. **parish**: division of a county with its own church and priest. **Rev.**: Reverend. **fellow**: teaching member.

none: not one.

would stay: wanted to remain. **got**: had.

in consequence of: because of.

noises: loud sounds. **library**: room where books are kept.

“My Lord,” answered the Minister, “I will take the furniture and the ghost at a valuation. I come from a modern country, where we have everything that money can buy; and with all our spry young fellows painting the Old World red, and carrying off your best actresses and prima-donnas, I reckon that if there were such a thing as a ghost in Europe, we’d have it at home in a very short time in one of our public museums, or on the road as a show.”

“I fear that the ghost exists, said Lord Canterville, smiling, “though it may have resisted the overtures of your enterprising impresarios. It has been well known for three centuries, since 1584, in fact, and always makes its appearance before the death of any member of our family.”

“Well, so does the family doctor for that matter, Lord Canterville. But there is no such thing, sir, as a ghost, and I guess the laws of nature are not going to be suspended for the British aristocracy.”

“You are certainly very natural in America,” answered Lord Canterville, who did not quite understand Mr. Otis’s last observation, “and if you don’t mind a ghost in the house, it is all right. Only you must remember I warned you.”

A few weeks after this, the purchase was completed and at the close of the season the Minister and his family went down to Canterville Chase. Mrs. Otis, who, as Miss Lucretia R. Tappan, of West 53rd Street had been a celebrated New York belle, was now a very handsome middle-aged woman, with fine eyes, and a superb profile. Many American ladies on leaving their native land adopt an appearance of chronic ill-health, under the impression that it is a form of European refinement, but Mrs. Otis had never fallen into this error. She had a magnificent constitution, and a really wonderful

furniture: beds, tables, chairs, etc. (*sing. noun*).

valuation: price.

spry: agile . **painting the Old World red:** (*idiom*) enjoying themselves in Europe. **carrying off:** taking to America. **reckon:** think. **If there were:** *note the use of were (subjunctive)*. **such a thing:** *note construction with such*. **we'd:** we would. **at home:** in America. **on the road:** taken around the country to be shown in various places. **I fear:** I'm afraid. **resisted:** avoided the temptation. **overtures:** advances, proposals. **enterprising:** imaginative; forceful. **has been well known:** *duration form*. **since:** *note that for is used with the length of time while since is used with the point of departure*. **any:** no matter which. **so does...:** *note the inversion*. **for that matter:** in reality.

guess: (*USA*) think. **laws:** rules.

certainly: surely.

not quite: not entirely.

mind: object to.

warned you: informed you in advance that something may happen.

purchase: sale.

close: end.

as: with the name.

had been: (*past perfect*) was no longer. **celebrated:** well known.

belle: beautiful woman. **handsome:** good looking. **middle-aged:** in her late forties, early fifties. **fine:** lovely.

on leaving: when they leave.

ill-health: not being well. **form:** kind; type.

fallen into this error: made this mistake.

constitution: physical structure.

amount of animal spirits. Indeed, in many respects, she was quite English, and was an excellent example of the fact that we have really everything in common with America nowadays, except, of course, language. Her eldest son, christened Washington by his parents in a moment of patriotism, which he never ceased to regret was a fair-haired, rather good-looking young man, who had qualified himself for American diplomacy by leading the German at the Newport Casino for three successive seasons, and even in London was well known as an excellent dancer. Gardenias and the peerage were his only weaknesses. Otherwise he was extremely sensible. Miss Virginia E. Otis was a little girl of fifteen, lithe and lovely as a fawn, and with a fine freedom in her large blue eyes. She was a wonderful amazon, and had once raced old Lord Bilton on her pony twice round the park, winning by a length and a half, just in front of Achilles statue, to the huge delight of the young Duke of Cheshire, who proposed for her on the spot, and was sent back to Eton that very night by his guardians, in floods of tears.

After Virginia came the twins, who were usually called "The Stars and Stripes" as they were always getting swished. They were delightful boys, and with the exception of the worthy Minister the only true republicans of the family. As Canterville Chase is seven miles from Ascot, the nearest railway station, Mr. Otis had telegraphed for a waggonette to meet them, and they started on their drive in high spirits. It was a lovely July evening, and the air was delicate with the scent of the pinewoods. Now and then they heard a wood pigeon brooding over its own sweet voice, or saw, deep in the rustling fern, the burnished breast of the pheasant. Little squirrels peered at them from the

amount: quantity.

quite: rather.

we: the English. **in common with:** the same as. **nowadays:** at the present time. **eldest:** *superlative form of old, only used for members of the family.* **christened:** baptized.

ceased: stopped. **regret:** feel sorry about. **fair-haired:** with fair hair (*note construction*).

successive: coming one after the other. **even:** also.

Gardenias: flowers.

peerage: aristocracy. **weaknesses:** things one is unable to resist. **Otherwise:** apart from that. **sensible:** full of common sense. **lithe:** agile. **fawn:** young deer.

amazon: strong and wonderful woman. **raced:** competed on horseback. **twice:** two times. **length:** how long a horse is. **just:** exactly. **huge:** enormous. **delight:** pleasure.

proposed for her: asked for her hand in marriage. **on the spot:** immediately. **Eton:** famous English boarding school. **that very night:** the same night. **guardians:** people legally responsible for him. **floods:** large liquid quantities.

swished: (*slang*) physically punished.

delightful: pleasant.

worthy: honourable. **true:** real.

As: since. **seven miles:** about 11.2 km (*1 mile = 1.609 kms*).

telegraphed: sent a telegraph asking.

waggonette: horse-cart. **in high spirits:** cheerfully.

scent: perfume. **Now and then:** occasionally. **wood pigeon:** bird living in forest. **brooding:** thinking in a melancholy way. **rustling:** making a noise when the wind blows. **fern:** forest plant. **burnished:** golden. **breast:** chest. **pheasant:** long tailed bird. **squirrels:** small rodents living in trees. **peered:** looked.

beech-trees as they went by, and the rabbits scudded away through the brushwood and over the mossy knolls, with their white tails in the air. As they entered the avenue of Canterville Chase, however, the sky became suddenly overcast with clouds, a curious stillness seemed to hold the atmosphere, a great flight of rooks passed silently over their heads, and, before they reached the house, some big drops of rain had fallen.

Standing on the steps to receive them was an old woman, neatly dressed in black silk, with a white cap and apron. This was Mrs. Umney, the housekeeper, whom Mrs. Otis, at Lady Canterville's earnest request, had consented to keep on in her former position. She made them each a low curtsy as they alighted, and said in a quaint, old-fashioned manner, "I bid you welcome to Canterville Chase." Following her, they passed through the fine Tudor hall into the library, a long, low room, panelled in black oak, at the end of which was a large stained-glass window. Here they found tea laid out for them, and, after taking off their wraps, they sat down and began to look round, while Mrs. Umney waited on them.

Suddenly Mrs. Otis caught sight of a dull red stain on the floor just by the fireplace and, quite unconscious of what it really signified, said to Mrs. Umney, "I am afraid something has been spilt there."

"Yes, madam," replied the old housekeeper in a low voice, "blood has been spilt on that spot."

"How horrid," cried Mrs. Otis; "I don't at all care for blood-stains in a sitting-room. It must be removed at once."

The old woman smiled, and answered in the same low, mysterious voice, "It is the blood of Lady Eleanore de Canterville, who was murdered on that very spot by her

scudded: ran.

brushwood: low vegetation. **mossy:** green. **knolls:** little elevations. **avenue:** line of trees marking a road.

overcast: covered. **stillness:** tranquillity. **to hold:** restrain.

rooks: black birds.

reached: arrived at.

receive: meet; welcome.

neatly: smartly; tidily. **apron:** garment worn over clothes to keep them clean.

earnest: insistent; forceful. **consented:** agreed.

curtsey: respectful gesture. **alighted:** got out of the carriage.

quaint: strange; picturesque. **bid:** give.

through: into and out of.

panelled: the walls covered in panels of wood. **oak:** tree.

stained-glass: coloured glass.

laid out: prepared on the table. **taking off:** removing.

wraps: outdoor clothes.

waited on: served.

caught sight of: saw. **stain:** mark.

just by: next to. **unconscious:** unaware.

signified: meant.

spilt: dropped.

replied: answered.

spot: place.

horrid: awful; horrible. **care for:** like.

removed: cleaned. **at once:** immediately.

murdered: killed. **on that very spot:** in exactly the same place.

own husband, Sir Simon de Canterville, in 1575. Sir Simon survived her nine years, and disappeared suddenly under very mysterious circumstances. His body has never been discovered, but his guilty spirit still haunts the Chase. The blood-stain has been much admired by tourists and others, and cannot be removed."

"That is all nonsense," cried Washington Otis; "Pinkerton's Champion Stain Remover and Paragon Detergent will clean it up in no time," and before the terrified housekeeper could interfere he had fallen upon his knees, and was rapidly scouring the floor with a small stick of what looked like a black cosmetic. In a few moments no trace of the blood-stain could be seen.

"I knew Pinkerton would do it," he exclaimed triumphantly, as he looked round at his admiring family, but no sooner had he said these words than a terrible flash of lightning lit up the sombre room, a fearful peal of thunder made them all start to their feet, and Mrs. Umney fainted.

"What a monstrous climate!" said the American Minister calmly, as he lit a long cheroot. "I guess the old country is so overpopulated that they have not enough decent weather for everybody. I have always been of opinion that emigration is the only thing for England."

"My dear Hiram," cried Mrs. Otis, "what can we do with a woman who faints?"

"Charge it to her like breakages," answered the Minister: "she won't faint after that"; and in a few moments Mrs. Umney certainly came to. There was no doubt, however, that she was extremely upset, and she sternly warned Mr. Otis to beware of some trouble coming to the house.

"I have seen things with my own eyes, sir," she said, "that would make any Christian's hair stand on end, and many

survived: lived longer than.

under... circumstances: *note the preposition.*

guilty: not innocent. **still**: continually. **haunts**: returns to.

much: very.

nonsense: things without sense. **cried**: said with feeling.

in no time: very quickly. **terrified**: very frightened.

interfere: do something. **upon**: on.

scouring: cleaning.

looked like: resembled. **trace**: sign.

could be seen: *note the passive.*

would do: *future in the past.*

no sooner had he said: *note the inversion.*

lightning: light in the sky produced by natural electricity.

sombre: dark and depressing. **fearful**: frightening. **peal**: noise.

start: jump. **fainted**: lost consciousness.

What a...: *exclamation; note the article.*

cheroot: cigar. **guess**: (USA) suppose.

been of opinion: thought.

faints: loses consciousness.

Charge it to her: make her pay for it. **breakages**: the things that the servant breaks. **won't**: will not.

came to: recovered consciousness.

upset: disturbed. **sternly**: severely.

beware: be careful about. **trouble**: bad business.

own: *emphatic.*

any: all. **stand on end**: giving the impression of fear.

and many a night I have not closed my eyes in sleep for the awful things that are done here." Mr. Otis, however, and his wife warmly assured the honest soul that they were not afraid of ghosts, and, after invoking the blessings of Providence on her new master and mistress, and making arrangements for an increase of salary, the old housekeeper tottered off to her own room.

II

The storm raged fiercely all that night, but nothing of particular note occurred. The next morning, however, when they came down to breakfast, they found the terrible stain of blood once again on the floor.

"I don't think it can be the fault of the Paragon Detergent," said Washington, "for I have tried it with everything. It must be the ghost." He accordingly rubbed out the stain a second time, but the second morning it appeared again. The third morning also it was there, though the library had been locked up at night by Mr. Otis himself, and the key carried upstairs. The whole family were now quite interested; Mr. Otis began to suspect that he had been too dogmatic in his denial of the existence of ghosts, Mrs. Otis expressed her intention of joining the Psychical Society, and Washington prepared a long letter to Messrs. Myers and Podmore on the subject of the Permanence of Sanguineous Stains when connected with crime. That night all doubts about the objective existence of phantasmata were removed for ever. The day had been warm and sunny; and, in the cool of the evening, the whole family went out for a drive. They did