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一向以为,每一种语言都承载着一个民族的智慧与文化,它的不断更新变化也反映着使用者思维方式的变异和他们所处社会的演进。倘若脱离了社会现实,单单把语言当做工具来学习,不但没有什么趣味,效果恐怕也要大打折扣。本书所收的短文中使用的都是最新、最地道、最生动的英语,其内容则是在我们这个日新月异的世界上最近发生的一些有意思的事情。这些记录真实事件的短文涉及政治、经济、科技、宗教、艺术、体育、娱乐等各个方面,正如折射国外社会风貌的一颗颗小水珠。读者们可以借鉴其中鲜活的词汇、生动的句法和颇富风趣的行文,由此改善阅读和写作的技巧;也可以从中管窥我们这个星球上各个角落人们十分多样化的生活和思想。

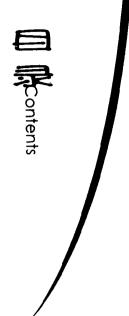
古代许多文人雅士都喜欢搜集当时的异人异事乃至神仙鬼怪之说汇编成书、用以美善刺恶、讽时劝世,如刘义庆的《世说新语》、袁枚的《子不语》、纪昀的《阅微草堂笔记》等皆如此类。编者愚陋,不敢追攀前贤,但选文之时亦力求每篇皆有其令人回味或发人深省之处。俾读者阅读之时,或可会心一笑,或可掩卷沉思;并在每篇短文之后附上自己的一点心得,冀诸君或有共鸣。总之,编者希望本书不仅是学习英语的好材料,也是一本值得在闲暇时一读的有趣的书。

为方便读者阅读,本书为全文英汉对照。编者在翻译时虽广泛查证有关资料,力求准确无误,但由于文章题材多样、所涉背景知识芜杂,加之编者才力有限,倘有疏失与未尽之处,恳请各位不吝指正。

李家真 二零零一年八月三十日



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Extinction Surge

未来时尚, 绝种

ecently a red monkey from the forests of West Africa was officially declared extinct — wiped off the planet as the first documented primate extinction since the 1700s. That may seem troubling, but even more worrisome, scientists say, is the swelling tidal wave of extinction that lies in the future. In fact, research indicates that at least one-fifth of the 608 species of primates that have evolved over millions of years could soon disappear. Although the situation is dire for a large portion of primates, scientists say they have learned that many species can be surprisingly resilient. Although small gene-pools can leave animals vulnerable to disease because of inbreeding, endangered species are not always doomed. As an expert in this field said: "As long as there is survival of a few individuals somewhere, and as long as humans leave them alone, they'll often come back, often quite rapidly. A little protection can go a long way."

最近、生活在西非丛林中的一种红猴正式宣告绝种,这是自 18 世纪以来有记载的第一种绝灭的灵长类动物。这已经不是什么好事,更让科学家们担忧的是将来愈发高涨的绝种浪潮。实际上, 研究指出在经历了数百万年进化历程的 608 种灵长类动物当中, 至少有 1/5 可能会很快绝灭。虽然大部分灵长类动物面临着可怕的处境, 科学家们也认识到许多物种会有出人意料的坚韧生命力。的确, 较小的基因库会引起近亲繁殖, 大大削弱动物的抗病能力, 但濒危物种也并不总会走到末日。正如一位专家所言: "只要还有一些个体存在, 只要人类能给它们空间, 它们经常可以迅速地发展起来。一点小小的保护就能有相当大的作用。"

Remarks:

类似的报道近年来越来越多,但我们好像已经无法勒住 在自然的原野上肆意踩踏的"现代化"野马。希望猩猩们能 学会如何在工业化社会生存。



One of the 25 most endangered primates, a golden lion tamarin perches on a tree in Brazil.

—只金獅小鳴繁栖愈在巴西的丛林中。 这种动物是 25 种处境最危险的灵长类 动物之一。

未来时尚: 绝种

A Night of High Drama

一夜疯狂名刑场



William Daley announced, "Our campaign chairman William Daley announced, "Our campaign continues," the TV networks had already declared Texas Gov. George W. Bush the 43rd president of the United States, Gore had telephoned his congratulations to Bush.

On the day after the election, it remains up to Florida to decide the final outcome. Most of America went to bed not knowing who would be running the country for the next four years and woke up ... not knowing who would be running the country for the next four years. But the hours in between were one wild and crazy ride: The networks gave Gore the key state of Florida at 7:49 p.m. ET, retracted it at 10:16 p.m., gave it to Bush at 2:17 a.m., awarding him the presidency, and retracted it again at 4 a.m.. Fortunately, they are quiet now.

美国总统大选: 正当戈尔的竞选委员会主席威廉·戴利宣称斗争仍在继续之时,美国的电视网络却迫不及待地把得克萨斯州长小布什推上了第43届美国总统的宝座,不知就里的戈尔也打电话向小布什致贺。

然而,虽然大选已经过去了一天,佛罗里达州的选举结果却还在统计之中,最终结果自然也还未见分晓。大多数美国老百姓酣然睡去一并不知道今后四年中谁将会统治他们——然后醒来——依然不知道。但在这一枕黄粱之间却有一出惊心动魄的好戏:美国东部时间晚上7点49分,电视网络宣布戈尔在决定生死的佛罗里达州取得胜利;10点16分,他们把这一说法咽了回去;凌晨2点17分,他们将该州判给布什并给他加冕,4点钟——又一次——他们自食其言。幸好现在终于踏实了。

一夜**友**狂 名利场

Remarks:

可以想象,在这样一个晚上,有多少颗心在起起落落, 有多少人会认为在这几个小时中他们已经历了一生的悲和喜。 还好,我们只是看客,我们一直很踏实。

Cheap Labor

廉价劳工

Tawee, a Thai farmer who owns orchards of tamarind, mango and coconut, is teaching the monkeys how to pick fruit. His venture near the resort town of Chiang Mai is not unique. Monkeys have been used to harvest coconuts in southern Thailand for generations. But Tawee is the first farmer in the north to try to use them to pick softer fruit like tamarinds and mangos. Tawee concedes monkeys will never replace humans completely. Some types of fruit can't be harvested by monkeys—strawberries and loganberries, for example, which are too delicate for a monkey's grab-and-pull technique. Watermelons also are problematic, being too heavy for the little animals. But monkeys are loyal and have no fright of height, and "on top of it, they will not complain or ask a raise."



眼看着雇帮工的价码日益上涨、拥有罗望子、芒果和椰子果园的泰国农民 Tawee 只好训练猴子来采摘果实。他在观光胜地清迈附近所作的这一尝试并不是破天荒,因为用猴子来采椰子在泰国南部是有传统的。不过在泰国北部,Tawee 是第一个训练它们来采像罗望子和芒果这样较为柔软的果实的人。Tawee承认猴子永远也不能完全替代人:像草莓和罗甘莓这样精致柔弱的果实无法承受它们又抓又扯的手法,西瓜对这些小东西来说义太重了。但是猴子有猴子的好处,它们忠诚,不恐高,而且"最重要的是,它们不会抱怨,也不会要求加薪。"

Remarks:

好玩的故事,严酷的背景,金融危机使泰国失业率大幅 度上升,政府为增加就业而驱逐外籍劳工,雇佣农业工人的 成本因此也节节攀升——猴子的机会来了。

廉价劳工

Past Decade 'Warmest for 1,000 Years'

最温暖的十年



A researcher is drilling the ice core.

一个研究人员正在钻取冰芯。

The past decade has been the warmest for 1,000 years, according to an analysis of ice cores drilled from a glacier in the Himalayas. The findings, which were published in *Science*, offer new evidence of global warming.

The ice cores, which were taken from the glacier four miles above sea level on the Tibetan plateau, showed a record of at least eight major droughts. They were caused by a failure of the South Asian monsoon, the worst of which was a seven-year dry spell which killed more than 600,000 people.

Researchers said that the results offered particularly significant evidence of climate change, as early signs of global warming are always seen at high altitudes. And the evidence supported the idea that the warmer climate in recent decades was caused by human pollution.

根据对从喜马拉雅山脉钻取的冰芯所作的分析,过去的 10 年是 千年来最温暖的十年。在《科学》杂志上发表的这一发现为全球气 候变暖提供了新的证据。

这些在青藏高原海拔4英里处取得的冰芯记录了至少8次由于南亚季风中断引起的大旱灾,其中为害最烈的是一段长达7年的干旱时期,它夺去了超过60万人的生命。

研究者们认为这一成果为气候变化提供了意义重大的证据,因为全球气候变暖的早期征兆总是出现在高海拔地区。这一成果也进一步证实了近几十年的气候变暖系由人类污染造成的说法。

Remarks:

个人的物欲引起头脑发热:人类的物欲引起全球发热。 发展真的必须以环境为代价?

最温暖的十年

Europe's Worst Linguists

欧洲最不合说话的人

The British are the European Union's worst linguists while the citizens of Luxembourg are the best, according to an EU poll published recently. Almost two-thirds of Britons know no language apart from their mother tongue, the highest figure recorded in the 15 EU countries. That compares to just 2.2 percent in Luxembourg, 12.3 percent of Danes and an EU average of 47.3 percent of people who speak no other language but their own, the poll of 16,000 EU citizens said. But British travelers to Europe need not worry. English is the most common second language in the EU, spoken by 41 percent of the bloc's citizens. In Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands, at least 78 percent of people speak English as a second language. Although 47 percent of EU citizens know only their mother tongue, there is wide agreement that speaking a foreign language is a good thing. 72 percent of those polled believe foreign language skills are useful, 71 percent said everyone should know one foreign language and 69 percent said everyone should speak English.



新近公布的一项欧盟民意测验结果显示:英国人和卢森堡人分别是最差和最好的外语学习者。这次民意测验有1万6千名欧盟成员国公民参加。调查发现将近2/3的英国人只懂母语、这一比例在15个欧盟成员国中是最高的。在卢森堡和丹麦、不懂外语的人所占比例分别只有2.2%和12.3%,而欧盟各国的平均百分比为47.3%。不过在欧洲旅行的英国人无须担心他们会遇到什么障碍、因为英语是欧盟各国使用最普遍的第二语言。41%的欧盟成员国公民会讲英语、在丹麦、瑞典和荷兰更有至少78%的人使用英语作为第二语言。尽管欧盟公民中有47%只懂母语、懂一门外语是好事仍是大家的共识。参加此次调查的人中有72%认为外语是一项有用的技能、71%认为所有人都应该懂一门外语,认为所有人都应该讲英语的人则占69%。

Remarks:

正是英语的流行优势使英国人不思进取、所谓:"莫愁前路 无知己,天下谁人不识 English?" 欧洲最 不会说话的人

Eating Away Disease

把疾病吃掉!



Charles Arntzen believes
genetically modified foods can
be used to immunize Third World
children against certain infectious
diseases.

查尔斯·阿尔岑相信基因改性食品可 为第三世界國家儿童提供免疫保护。

lthough major progress has been made in inoculating children in much of the world, in the poorest of the poor nations, little has been achieved. That leaves about 20 percent of the world's infants vulnerable to horrible diseases, according to the World Health Organization. Inoculating these impoverished children is almost impossible with the current technology as almost all vaccines that are now available have to be injected, and injections are too expensive and too problematical in much of the world. Concerned by this, Arntzen, a plant biologist at Texas A&M University, figured some plants could be genetically modified to produce the proteins that would jump-start the human immune system so it could destroy disease-causing pathogens before they could do their damage. He devotes himself to this research and hopes that specially modified fruits and vegetables vaccinate the world. If he succeeds, more of the world will see more of their infants live past childhood.

虽然在世界上许多地方儿童疫苗接种已经取得了显著的成就,但在那些最穷的国家中却没有什么进展。根据世界卫生组织的估计,这使得世界上大约20%的婴幼儿极易受到可怕疾病的侵袭。在现有技术条件下,给那些贫困地区的孩子们接种几乎是不可能的事。这是因为现有的疫苗几乎都只能通过注射接种,而注射对许多地方来说是太昂贵也太难操作了。有鉴于此,德州农工大学的植物学家阿尔岑提出可以对一些植物进行基因改性,使它们制造出特殊的蛋白。这种蛋白能激发人体免疫系统,使它能在病原体致病之前将其消灭。他致力于此项研究,希望生产出可用作疫苗的改性蔬果并把它推广到全世界。如果他能够成功,在世界的更多地方将有更多的孩子得以健康长大。

把疾病吃掉!

Remarks:

这将是非常受人欢迎的发明——即使在有条件进行注射的地方,通过吃一只香蕉来接种疫苗也比打一针舒服得多。