

MODERN ENGLISH PROSE

近代英国散文选

范存忠 柳无忌编注

江苏教育出版社



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重印《近代英国散文选》序

一九四〇年间，我们两人同在原中央大学外国语文系英语专业任教。为了适应当时一、二、三年级同学阅读与写作练习的需要，编印了这本书。若干其他院校也采用了，三年之内印了数次。一九四四年，又扩充篇目，并在注释部分特别用力，印了增订版，仍很畅销。我们觉得，这个增订版对目前英语专业的教学以及在英语方面已有基础的自学青年，仍有作用，特予重印。

有几点需要说明：首先，几百年来，英国散文面广量大，多种多样，这个选本则以十八、十九世纪的小品散文(familiar essay)为主，在这类散文中又以其全盛时期广泛流传的名家名篇为主。其次，这个选本对作者生平、疑难字句、作品特色等，都有详细注释，务使教者容易讲解，学者容易领悟，从而取得良好效果。

十七世纪英国唯物主义者培根也是散文名家。他对读书一事(包括读什么书以及怎样读)说过不少话，直到今日仍有启发作用。在《论学习》一文中，他说：“有些书只读某些部分就够了；有些书也应当读，但不必过于仔细；有少数书不但应当全部读，还应当用功读，聚精会神地读。”这本书里的文章，主要属于第三类，要求读懂、读熟、读透。同时，也可以用作写作练习的范本。我们当时就是这样进行教学的。

江苏教育出版社同意重印这本书，并为这本书的排印和校订费了不少精力，我们在这里谨表衷心感谢。

范海忠 柳燕总

1985年6月5日

PREFACE

This volume of *Modern English Prose* grows out of materials we have used for class-room readings in the last few years. It was first published two years ago to meet an urgent demand for textbooks in our colleges and universities. Since then we have received much encouragement by its warm reception and a number of valuable suggestions for its improvement from various quarters. Now that there is a call for a second edition, we have taken the chance to enlarge it and make whatever modifications and corrections that are necessary.

In undertaking the selection of these essays, we have kept constantly in view two aims: First, they are to serve as model essays for class-room perusal and imitation. Within the page limits we have endeavoured to present the best, and nothing but the best, of the prose masters of the two great centuries. Secondly, it is hoped that a study of these specimens will stimulate a deeper interest on the part of the readers in a field which is by far the most fertile of English prose.

In a sense this volume is unique. Instead of making it representative of all types of English prose writings, we have included in it only one type of prose, the Informal Essay, which attained the perfectness of form in the hands of Steele and Addison, reached the culmination of its splendour in Lamb and Hazlitt, and retained much of its exuberance in the inimitable writings of Stevenson and Ruskin who closed the past century.

On this account we are forced to make many omissions and exclusions. It is regrettable that some great names, especially of the nineteenth century, ~~have to be~~ left out from this collection.

In preparing this revised edition, we have introduced some new essays and authors and verified the texts, making them reasonably accurate. We have also added many new entries in the Notes, which have now grown to a considerable size. But there is hardly any scholarly pretense. We have drawn freely on the learning of our predecessors who by their arduous and noble labour have added copiously to an understanding and appreciation of these essays. What little contributions we have been able to make are therefore quite insignificant in view of the great mass of borrowings, which are too many to be enumerated.

Our thanks are due to our colleagues and others who have helped us in the making of these selections. We are also grateful to Mr. John Blofeld, Cultural Attache of the British Embassy in Chungking, who has kindly made the arrangement for a generous grant from the British Council in London, without which the publication of this new edition would be practically impossible.

Tsen-Chung Fan

Wu-Chi Liu

National Central University,
Chungking.

June 6, 1944.

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SIR RICHARD STEELE (1672-1729) AND

JOSEPH ADDISON (1672-1719)

Recollections of Childhood

*Dies, ni fallor, adest, quem semper acerbum,
Semper honoratum (sic di voluistis), habebo.*

There are those among mankind who can enjoy no relish of their being except the world is made acquainted with all that relates to them, and think everything lost that passes unobserved; but others find a solid delight in stealing by the crowd and modelling their life after such a manner as is as much above the approbation as the practice of the vulgar. Life being too short to give instances great enough of true friendship or goodwill, some sages have thought it pious to preserve a certain reverence for the manes of their deceased friends, and have withdrawn themselves from the rest of the world at certain seasons to commemorate in their own thoughts such of their acquaintance who have gone before them out of this life; and indeed, when we are advanced in years, there is not a more pleasing entertainment than to recollect in a gloomy moment the many we have parted with, that have been dear and agreeable to us, and to cast a melancholy thought or two after those with whom, perhaps, we have indulged ourselves in whole nights of mirth and jollity. With such inclinations in my heart, I went

to my closet yesterday in the evening, and resolved to be sorrowful; upon which occasion, I could not but look with disdain upon myself, that, though all the reasons which I had to lament the loss of many of my friends are now as forcible as at the moment of their departure, yet did not my heart swell with the same sorrow which I felt at that time; but I could, without tears, reflect upon many pleasing adventures I have had with some who have long been blended with common earth. Though it is by the benefit of nature that length of time thus blots out the violence of afflictions, yet with tempers too much given to pleasure it is almost necessary to revive the old places of grief in our memory, and ponder step by step on past life, to lead the mind into that sobriety of thought which poises the heart and makes it beat with due time, without being quickened with desire, or retarded with despair, from its proper and equal motion. When we wind up a clock that is out of order to make it go well for the future, we do not immediately set the hand to the present instant, but we make it strike the round of all its hours before it can recover the regularity of its time. "Such," thought I, "shall be my method this evening; and since it is that day of the year which I dedicate to the memory of such in another life as I much delighted in when living, an hour or two shall be sacred to sorrow and their memory, while I run over all the melancholy circumstances of this kind which have occurred to me in my whole life."

The first sense of sorrow I ever knew was upon the death of my father, at which time I was not quite five years of age, but was rather amazed at what all the house meant than possessed

with a real understanding why nobody was willing to play with me. I remember I went into the room where his body lay, and my mother sat weeping alone by it. I had my battledore in my hand, and fell a-beating the coffin, and calling "Papa"; for I know not how I had some slight idea that he was locked up there. My mother caught me in her arms, and, transported beyond all patience of the silent grief she was before in, she almost smothered me in her embrace, and told me, in a flood of tears, papa could not hear me, and would play with me no more, for they were going to put him under ground, whence he could never come to us again. She was a very beautiful woman, of a noble spirit, and there was a dignity in her grief amidst all the wildness of her transport, which, methought, struck me with an instinct of sorrow which, before I was sensible of what it was to grieve, seized my very soul, and has made pity the weakness of my heart ever since. The mind in infancy is, methinks, like the body in embryo, and receives impressions so forcible that they are as hard to be removed by reason, as any mark with which a child is born is to be taken away by any future application. Hence is it that good nature in me is no merit; but, having been so frequently overwhelmed with her tears before I knew the cause of any affliction, or could draw defences from my own judgment, I imbibed commiseration, remorse, and an unmanly gentleness of mind which has since ensnared me into ten thousand calamities, and from whence I can reap no advantage, except it be that in such a humour as I am now in, I can the better indulge myself in the softnesses of humanity, and enjoy

that sweet anxiety which arises from the memory of past afflictions.

We, that are very old, are better able to remember things which befell us in our distant youth than the passages of later days. For this reason it is that the companions of my strong and vigorous years present themselves more immediately to me in this office of sorrow. Untimely or unhappy deaths are what we are most apt to lament, so little are we able to make it indifferent when a thing happens, though we know it must happen. Thus we groan under life, and bewail those who are relieved from it. Every object that returns to our imagination raises different passions according to the circumstance of their departure. Who can have lived in an army, and in a serious hour reflect upon the many gay and agreeable men that might long have flourished in the arts of peace, and not join with the imprecations of the fatherless and widow on the tyrant to whose ambition they fell sacrifices? But gallant men who are cut off by the sword move rather our veneration than our pity; and we gather relief enough from their own contempt of death, to make it no evil, which was approached with so much cheerfulness and attended with so much honour. But when we turn our thoughts from the great parts of life on such occasions, and instead of lamenting those who stood ready to give death to those from whom they had the fortune to receive it,—I say, when we let our thoughts wander from such noble objects, and consider the havoc which is made among the tender and the innocent, pity enters with an unmixed softness, and possesses all our souls at once.

Here (were there words to express such sentiments with

proper tenderness) I should record the beauty, innocence, and untimely death of the first object my eyes ever beheld with love. The beautiful virgin! How ignorantly did she charm, how carelessly excel! O Death! thou hast right to the bold, to the ambitious, to the high, and to the haughty; but why this cruelty to the humble, to the meek, to the undiscerning, to the thoughtless? Nor age, nor business, nor distress can erase the dear image from my imagination. In the same week, I saw her dressed for a ball and in a shroud. How ill did the habit of Death become the pretty trifle! I still behold the smiling earth—

A large train of disasters were coming on to my memory, when my servant knocked at my closet door and interrupted me with a letter, attended with a hamper of wine, of the same sort with that which is to be put to sale on Thursday next at Garraway's Coffeehouse. Upon the receipt of it, I sent for three of my friends. We are so intimate that we can be company in whatever state of mind we meet, and can entertain each other without expecting always to rejoice. The wine we found to be generous and warming, but with such a heat as moved us rather to be cheerful than frolicsome. It revived the spirits without firing the blood. We commended it till two of the clock this morning; and, having to-day met a little before dinner, we found that, though we drank two bottles a man, we had much more reason to recollect than forget what had passed the night before.—Steele.

The Spectator Introduces Himself

Non fumum ex fulgore, sed ex fumo dare lucem

220052

Cogitat, ut speciosa dehinc miracula promat.

I have observed that a reader seldom peruses a book with pleasure till he knows whether the writer of it be a black or a fair man, of a mild or choleric disposition, married or a bachelor, with other particulars of the like nature, that conduce very much to the right understanding of an author. To gratify this curiosity, which is so natural to a reader, I design this paper and my next as prefatory discourses to my following writings, and shall give some account in them of the several persons that are engaged in this work. As the chief trouble of compiling, digesting, and correcting will fall to my share, I must do myself the justice to open the work with my own history.

I was born to a small hereditary estate, which, according to the tradition of the village where it lies, was bounded by the same hedges and ditches in William the Conqueror's time that it is at present, and has been delivered down from father to son whole and entire, without the loss or acquisition of a single field or meadow, during the space of six hundred years. There runs a story in the family that when my mother was gone with child of me about three months, she dreamt that she was brought to bed of a judge. Whether this might proceed from a law-suit which was then depending in the family, or my father's being a justice of the peace, I cannot determine; for I am not so vain as to think it presaged any dignity that I should arrive at in my future life, though that was the interpretation which the neighbourhood put upon it. The gravity of my behaviour at my very first appearance in the world, and all the time that I sucked, seemed to favour my mother's dream. For,

as she often told me, I threw away my rattle before I was two months old, and would not make use of my coral till they had taken away the bells from it.

As for the rest of my infancy, there being nothing in it remarkable, I shall pass it over in silence. I find that, during my nonage, I had the reputation of a very sullen youth, but was always a favourite of my schoolmaster, who used to say that my parts were solid and would wear well. I had not been long at the university before I distinguished myself by a most profound silence; for during the space of eight years, excepting in the public exercises of the college, I scarce uttered the quantity of an hundred words; and indeed do not remember that I ever spoke three sentences together in my whole life. Whilst I was in this learned body, I applied myself with so much diligence to my studies that there are very few celebrated books, either in the learned or the modern tongues, which I am not acquainted with.

Upon the death of my father I was resolved to travel into foreign countries, and therefore left the university, with the character of an odd unaccountable fellow that had a great deal of learning, if I would but show it. An insatiable thirst after knowledge carried me into all the countries of Europe, in which there was anything new or strange to be seen; nay, to such a degree was my curiosity raised that, having read the controversies of some great men concerning the antiquities of Egypt, I made a voyage to Grand Cairo on purpose to take the measure of a pyramid; and as soon as I had set myself right in that particular, returned to my native country with great satisfaction.

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I have passed my latter years in this city, where I am frequently seen in most public places, though there are not above half a dozen of my select friends that know me; of whom my next paper shall give a more particular account. There is no place of general resort wherein I do not often make my appearance; sometimes I am seen thrusting my head into a round of politicians at Will's and listening with great attention to the narratives that are made in those little circular audiences. Sometimes I smoke a pipe at Child's; and whilst I seem attentive to nothing but the *Postman*, overhear the conversation of every table in the room. I appear on Sunday nights at St. James's Coffee-house, and sometimes join the little committee of politics in the inner room, as one who comes there to hear and improve. My face is likewise very well known at the Grecian, the Cocoa Tree, and in the theatres both of Drury-Lane and the Haymarket. I have been taken for a merchant upon the Exchange for above these ten years, and sometimes pass for a Jew in the assembly of stock-jobbers at Jonathan's. In short, wherever I see a cluster of people I always mix with them, though I never open my lips but in my own club.

Thus I live in the world rather as a Spectator of Mankind than as one of the species; by which means I have made myself a speculative statesman, soldier, merchant, and artisan, without ever meddling with any practical part in life. I am very well versed in the theory of an husband, or a father, and can discern the errors in the economy, business, and diversion of others better than those who are engaged in them; as standers-by discover blots, which are apt to escape those who are in the

game. I never espoused any party with violence, and am resolved to observe an exact neutrality between the Whigs and Tories, unless I shall be forced to declare myself by the hostilities of either side. In short, I have acted in all the parts of my life as a looker-on, which is the character I intend to preserve in this paper.

I have given the reader just so much of my history and character as to let him see I am not altogether unqualified for the business I have undertaken. As for other particulars in my *Life and Adventures*, I shall insert them in following papers, as I shall see occasion. In the meantime, when I consider how much I have seen, read and heard, I begin to blame my own taciturnity; and since I have neither time nor inclination to communicate the fulness of my heart in speech, I am resolved to do it in writing, and to print myself out, if possible, before I die. I have been often told by my friends that it is pity so many useful discoveries which I have made should be in the possession of a silent man. For this reason, therefore, I shall publish a sheetful of thoughts every morning for the benefit of my contemporaries; and if I can any way contribute to the diversion or improvement of the country in which I live, I shall leave it, when I am summoned out of it, with the secret satisfaction of thinking that I have not lived in vain.

There are three very material points which I have not spoken to in this paper, and which for several important reasons, I must keep to myself, at least for some time: I mean, an account of my name, my age, and my lodgings. I must confess I would gratify my reader in anything that is reasonable; but as