

THE GARDEN PARTY AND OTHER STORIES

英美文学精品译注丛书



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《园 会》

凯瑟琳·曼斯菲尔德(1888—1923),真名叫凯瑟琳·曼斯菲尔德·伯尚,短篇小说家,生于新西兰,曾在新西兰和伦敦接受教育。1903年前往伦敦。除1906年至1908年逗留在新西兰之外,一生都在欧洲度过。她一方面和顽疾作斗争,一方面写小说,不断追求轻松的艺术风格。

她的作品包括《幸福》(1920)、《园会》(1922)和《鸽巢》(1923)。《小说集》于1945年出版。《日记》(1927)和《书信》(1928)由丈夫约翰·米德尔顿·默里编辑出版。

她深受俄国作家安东·契诃夫(1860—1904)的影响,常拿自己和他比较,她努力避开陈旧的传统叙事手法,集中描绘人物生活中意识清醒的时刻,并以敏锐的洞察力对人物进行探索。她以人类共同的经验来检验人物在重要时刻的表现,然后让人物根据内在规律去生活、行动和说话,把人物的过去和未来都展现在大家面前。

她的所有小说的背景都是维多利亚时代末期或英王爱德华时代。她探讨家庭生活,根据人物的不同性格写出机智的对话,情节往往较单薄,故事发展也慢。

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The Garden-Party

And after all the weather was ideal. They could not have had a more perfect day for a garden-party if they had ordered it. Windless, warm, the sky without a cloud. Only the blue was veiled with a haze of light gold, as it is sometimes in early summer. The gardener had been up since dawn, mowing the lawns and sweeping them, until the grass and the dark flat rosettes where the daisy plants had been seemed to shine.

As for the roses, you could not help feeling they understood that roses are the only flowers that impress people at garden-parties; the only flowers that everybody is certain of knowing. Hundreds, yes, literally hundreds, had come out in a single night; the green bushes bowed down as though they had been visited by archangels.

Breakfast was not yet over before the men came to put up the marquee.

‘Where do you want the marquee put, mother?’

‘My dear child, it’s no use asking me. I’m determined to leave everything to you children this year. Forget I am your mother. Treat me as an honoured guest.’

But Meg could not possibly go and supervise the men. She had washed her hair before breakfast, and she sat drinking her coffee in a green turban, with a dark wet curl stamped on each cheek. Jose, the butterfly, always came down in a

Windless: without wind.

veiled: shaded. **haze:** light fog. **light gold:** pale gold.

had been up: *duration form.*

dawn: sunrise. **mowing:** cutting. **sweeping them:** removing the dead grass from them. **rosettes:** areas. **daisy:** flower with white petals.

As for: as regards. **not help:** not avoid.

certain of: note the preposition *of*.

come out: bloomed. **a single:** only one. **bowed down:** bent over. **as though:** as if.

was not yet over: was not yet finished. **put up:** erect.

marquee: open tent.

put: to be put; to be erected.

an honoured: note the article with *honoured* is *an*.

could not possibly: absolutely couldn't.

in a green turban: wearing a green turban. **curl:** lock; small amount of twisted hair.

silk petticoat and a kimono jacket.

'You'll have to go, Laura; you're the artistic one.'

Away Laura flew, still holding her piece of bread-and-butter. It's so delicious to have an excuse for eating out of doors and, besides, she loved having to arrange things; she always felt she could do it so much better than anybody else.

Four men in their shirt-sleeves stood grouped together on the garden path. They carried staves covered with rolls of canvas and they had big tool-bags slung on their backs. They looked impressive. Laura wished now that she was not holding that piece of bread-and-butter, but there was nowhere to put it and she couldn't possibly throw it away. She blushed and tried to look severe and even a little bit short-sighted as she came up to them.

'Good morning,' she said, copying her mother's voice. But that sounded so fearfully affected that she was ashamed, and stammered like a little girl, 'Oh – er – have you come – is it about the marquee?'

'That's right, miss,' said the tallest of the men, a lanky, freckled fellow, and he shifted his tool-bag, knocked back his straw hat and smiled down at her. 'That's about it.'

His smile was so easy, so friendly, that Laura recovered. What nice eyes he had, small, but such a dark blue! And now she looked at the others, they were smiling, too.

'Cheer up, we won't bite,' their smile seemed to say. How very nice workmen were! And what a beautiful morning! She mustn't mention the morning; she must be business-like. The marquee.

'Well, what about the lily-lawn? Would that do?'

And she pointed to the lily-lawn with the hand that didn't hold the bread-and-butter. They turned, they stared in the

in a silk petticoat: wearing a silk undergarment.

holding: having in her hands.

out of doors: outside the house. **besides:** in addition to that.
arrange: organize.

in their shirt-sleeves: without wearing their jackets.

path: walkway. **staves:** long poles.

rolls of canvas: long rolls of tough cloth. **tool-bags:** bags with their equipment. **slung:** carried. **impressive:** imposing.

holding: having in her hands.

couldn't possibly: absolutely couldn't.

blushed: got red in her face.

short-sighted: unable to see far distances. **came up:** came near. **copying:** imitating.

fearfully: terribly; very much. **affected:** false.

stammered: stumbled in her speech.

marquee: open tent.

lanky: tall and thin.

freckled: with small brown spots on his face. **shifted:** moved.

knocked: pushed.

easy: relaxed. **recovered:** felt better; regained her control.

Cheer up: relax.

mention: talk about.

business-like: serious. **marquee:** open tent.

lily-lawn: grass near the lilies. **Would that do?:** Would that be O.K.?

hold: had in her hands. **stared:** looked.

direction. A little fat chap thrust out his underlip and the tall fellow frowned.

‘I don’t fancy it,’ said he. ‘Not conspicuous enough. You see, with a thing like a marquee’ – and he turned to Laura in his easy way – ‘you want to put it somewhere where it’ll give you a bang slap in the eye, if you follow me.’

Laura’s upbringing made her wonder for a moment whether it was quite respectful of a workman to talk to her of bangs slap in the eye. But she did quite follow him.

‘A corner of the tennis-court,’ she suggested. ‘But the band’s going to be in one corner.’

‘H’m, going to have a band, are you?’ said another of the workmen. He was pale. He had a haggard look as his dark eyes scanned the tennis-court. What was he thinking?

‘Only a very small band,’ said Laura gently. Perhaps he wouldn’t mind so much if the band was quite small. But the tall fellow interrupted.

‘Look here, miss, that’s the place. Against those trees. Over there. That’ll do fine.’

Against the karakas. Then the karaka trees would be hidden. And they were so lovely, with their broad, gleaming leaves, and their clusters of yellow fruit. They were like trees you imagined growing on a desert island, proud, solitary, lifting their leaves and fruits to the sun in a kind of silent splendour. Must they be hidden by a marquee?

They must. Already the men had shouldered their staves and were making for the place. Only the tall fellow was left. He bent down, pinched a sprig of lavender, put his thumb and forefinger to his nose and snuffed up the smell. When Laura saw that gesture she forgot all about the karakas in her wonder at him caring for things like that – caring for the smell of lavender. How many men that she

chap: fellow; man. **thrust out his underlip:** pushed his underlip forward. **fellow:** man. **frowned:** contracted his face to express unhappiness. **fancy:** like. **conspicuous:** noticeable; relevant. **see:** understand. **marquee:** open tent.

easy: friendly. **it'll:** it will.

give you a bang slap in the eye: attract your attention.

upbringing: education. **wonder:** question; ask to herself. **whether:** if.

she did quite follow him: she understood him. *To do* is emphatic.

the band's going to be: the band is supposed to be.

are you?: *question-tag.*

haggard look: tired appearance. **as:** while.

scanned: examined.

Perhaps: *maybe.*

wouldn't mind so much: wouldn't be so much concerned.

fellow: man.

That'll do fine: that will be O.K.

karakas: New Zealand trees.

hidden: out of sight. **broad:** wide.

gleaming: shining. **clusters:** bunches.

proud: selfconfident.

lifting: raising.

a kind of: a sort of. **hidden:** concealed from view. **marquee:** open tent. **shouldered:** taken on their shoulders. **staves:** long pales. **making for:** moving towards. **fellow:** man.

was left: remained there. **pinched:** held up. **sprig:** small part. **forefinger:** index finger.

karakas: New Zealand trees. **wonder at:** amazement at; surprise at. **caring for:** having an interest in.

knew would have done such a thing? Oh, how extraordinarily nice workmen were, she thought. Why couldn't she have workmen for friends rather than the silly boys she danced with and who came to Sunday night supper? She would get on much better with men like these.

It's all the fault, she decided, as the tall fellow drew something on the back of an envelope, something that was to be looped up or left to hang, of these absurd class distinctions. Well, for her part, she didn't feel them. Not a bit, not an atom. ... And now there came the chock-chock of wooden hammers. Someone whistled, someone sang out, 'Are you right there matey?' 'Matey!' The friendliness of it, the – the – Just to prove how happy she was, just to show the tall fellow how at home she felt, and how she despised stupid conventions, Laura took a big bite of her bread-and-butter as she stared at the little drawing. She felt just like a work-girl.

'Laura, Laura, where are you? Telephone, Laura!' a voice cried from the house.

'Coming!' Away she skimmed, over the lawn, up the path, up the steps, across the veranda and into the porch. In the hall her father and Laurie were brushing their hats ready to go to the office.

'I say, Laura,' said Laurie very fast, 'you might just give a squiz at my coat before this afternoon. See if it wants pressing.'

'I will,' said she. Suddenly she couldn't stop herself. She ran at Laurie and gave him a small, quick squeeze. 'Oh, I do love parties, don't you?' gasped Laura.

'Ra-ther,' said Laurie's warm boyish voice, and he squeezed his sister too and gave her a gentle push.

'Dash off to the telephone, old girl.'

rather than: instead of. **silly:** stupid.

get on: interact.

as: while. **fellow:** man. **drew:** sketched; wrote.

to be looped up: to be fastened.

for her part: to her; in her mind.

not a bit: not even slightly. **chock-chock:** sound,

whistled: produced a sound by passing breath through his lips.

matey: (slang) friend.

Just: only.

fellow: man. **at home:** at ease; comfortable.

despised: hated; didn't like. **bite:** piece.

as: while. **stared:** looked. **drawing:** picture.

just: exactly.

cried: shouted.

Coming: I am coming. **skimmed:** ran quickly and lightly. **lawn:** grass. **path:** walkway. **porch:** entrance.

hall: corridor; entranceway. **brushing:** cleaning with a brush.

fast: quickly.

squiz: (Austr.) look. **wants:** needs.

pressing: ironing.

stop herself: refrain herself.

squeeze: embrace.

I do love: *to do* is emphatic. **don't you?:** *question-tag*. **gasped:** said breathlessly. **Ra-ther:** affirmative exclamation.

squeezed: embraced. **push:** friendly stroke.

Dash off: run.

The telephone. 'Yes, yes; oh yes. Kitty? Good morning, dear. Come to lunch? Do, dear. Delighted, of course. It will only be a very scratch meal – just the sandwich crusts and broken meringue-shells and what's left over. Yes, isn't it a perfect morning? Your white? Oh, I certainly should. One moment – hold the line. Mother's calling.' And Laura sat back. 'What, mother? Can't hear.'

Mrs. Sheridan's voice floated down the stairs. 'Tell her to wear that sweet hat she had on last Sunday.'

'Mother says you're to wear that sweet hat you had on last Sunday. Good. One o'clock. Bye-bye.'

Laura put back the receiver, flung her arms over her head, took a deep breath, stretched and let them fall. 'Huh,' she sighed, and the moment after the sigh she sat up quickly. She was still, listening. All the doors in the house seemed to be open. The house was alive with soft, quick steps and running voices. The green baize door that led to the kitchen regions swung open and shut with a muffled thud. And now there came a long, chuckling absurd sound. It was the heavy piano being moved on its stiff castors. But the air! If you stopped to notice, was the air always like this? Little faint winds were playing chase in at the tops of the windows, out at the doors. And there were two tiny spots of sun, one on the inkpot, one on a silver photograph frame, playing too. Darling little spots. Especially the one on the inkpot lid. It was quite warm. A warm little silver star. She could have kissed it.

The front door bell pealed and there sounded the rustle of Sadie's print skirt on the stairs. A man's voice murmured; Sadie answered, careless, 'I'm sure I don't know. Wait. I'll ask Mrs. Sheridan.'

'What is it, Sadie?' Laura came into the hall.

Do: affirmative answer. **Delighted:** I am delighted.
scratch meal: unplanned meal. **crusts:** edges.
meringue-shells: shells of cakes to be filled with cream. **left over:** remained. **Your white:** your white dress.
hold the line: don't hang up the phone.
sat back: moved back in her chair. **Can't hear:** I can't hear.
floated: came lightly.
had on: was wearing.
you're to wear: you should wear.

put back the receiver: hung up. **flung:** threw.
stretched: extended herself.
sighed: breathed deeply. **sat up:** sat straight.
still: motionless. **seemed:** appeared.
alive: lively. **steps:** paces.
green baize door: door covered with a green thick cloth. **led to:** connected with. **swung open:** opened up. **shut:** closed. **muffled thud:** quiet sound. **chuckling:** laughing.
stiff castors: wheels hard to move.
stopped to notice: stopped in order to observe.
faint winds: weak winds. **playing chase:** chasing each other.
in: coming in. **out:** going out. **tiny:** very small.
inkpot: vessel containing ink.
Darling: pretty; cute.
lid: cover.

pealed: rang. **rustle:** noise.
print skirt: skirt with designs on it. **murmured:** talked in a low tone. **careless:** carelessly; without much concern.

‘It’s the florist, Miss Laura.’

It was, indeed. There, just inside the door, stood a wide, shallow tray full of pots of pink lilies. No other kind. Nothing but lilies – canna lilies, big pink flowers, wide open, radiant, almost frighteningly alive on bright crimson stems.

‘O-oh, Sadie!’ said Laura, and the sound was like a little moan. She crouched down as if to warm herself at that blaze of lilies; she felt they were in her fingers, on her lips, growing in her breast.

‘It’s some mistake,’ she said faintly. ‘Nobody ever ordered so many. Sadie, go and find mother.’

But at that moment Mrs. Sheridan joined them.

‘It’s quite right,’ she said calmly. ‘Yes, I ordered them. Aren’t they lovely?’ She pressed Laura’s arm. ‘I was passing the shop yesterday, and I saw them in the window. And I suddenly thought for once in my life I shall have enough canna lilies. The garden-party will be a good excuse.’

‘But I thought you said you didn’t mean to interfere,’ said Laura. Sadie had gone. The florist’s man was still outside at his van. She put her arm round her mother’s neck and gently, very gently, she bit her mother’s ear.

‘My darling child, you wouldn’t like a logical mother, would you? Don’t do that. Here’s the man.’ He carried more lilies still, another whole tray. ‘Bank them up, just inside the door, on both sides of the porch, please,’ said Mrs. Sheridan. ‘Don’t you agree, Laura?’

‘Oh, I do, mother.’

In the drawing-room Meg, Jose and good little Hans had at last succeeded in moving the piano.

‘Now, if we put this chesterfield against the wall and move