

English for  
Home Reading

**Книга для чтения на английском языке**

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## CONTENTS

W. Sommerset Maugham. The Force of Circumstance	5
Oscar Wilde. The Canterville Ghost . . . . .	27
Th. Dreiser. Will You Walk into my Parlor . . . . .	48
Jack London. The End of the Story . . . . .	70
Jack London. The Story of Jees Uck . . . . .	85
Walter Kaufmann. The Curse of Maralinga . . . . .	100
Vocabulary . . . . .	115

# ENGLISH FOR HOME READING

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VNESHTORGIZDAT

*Moscow 1963*

# КНИГА ДЛЯ ЧТЕНИЯ НА АНГЛИЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ

СОСТАВЛЕНА

*Каменецкой Н. В., Комаровым Г. П.*

ВНЕШТОРГИЗДАТ

*Москва 1963*

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## ОТ СОСТАВИТЕЛЕЙ

Настоящий сборник рассказов может быть использован для внеаудиторного чтения на последнем этапе изучения английского языка при переходе к чтению литературы в оригинале.

Сборник предназначен для изучающих английский язык, усвоивших основной курс грамматики и владеющих минимумом общеупотребительной лексики в пределах 2—3 лет обучения.

В сборник вошли рассказы английских и американских писателей, разнообразные и интересные по содержанию.

При обработке материала составители шли главным образом по линии сокращения текстов и лишь незначительной их адаптации. Рассказы расположены в сборнике по степени нарастания трудностей. Наиболее трудные места и идиоматические выражения объясняются в виде постраничных примечаний. В конце книги дается англо-русский алфавитный словарь.

В сборнике сохраняется орфография и пунктуация подлинника, поэтому наряду с английской орфографией встречаются американские варианты написания слова.

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## СОКРАЩЕНИЯ

### Английские

- a* — adjective имя прилагательное  
*adv* — adverb наречие  
*Am* — American  
*n* — noun имя существительное  
*pl* — plural множественное число  
*p.p.* — past participle причастие прошедшего времени  
*v* — verb глагол

### Русские

- ам.* — американский (употребительно в США)  
*букв.* — буквально  
*зд.* — здесь  
*ирон.* — ироническое замечание  
*мед.* — медицина  
*разг.* — разговорное слово, выражение  
*см.* — смотри  
*сокр.* — сокращение  
*фам.* — фамильярно  
*шутл.* — шутиливо
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## THE FORCE OF CIRCUMSTANCE <sup>1</sup>

*By W. S. Maugham*

She was sitting on the verandah waiting for her husband to come in for luncheon. The Malay boy had drawn the blinds when the morning lost its freshness, but she had partly raised one of them so that she could look at the river. Under the breathless sun of midday it had the white pallor of death. A native was paddling along in a small boat above the surface of the water. The colours of the day were ashy and pale. They were but the various tones of the heat. The cicadas sang their song with a wild energy; it was as continual and monotonous as the rustling of a brook over the stones; <sup>2</sup> but on a sudden it drowned by the loud and rich singing of a bird.

Then she heard her husband's step on the gravel path behind the bungalow, the path that led to the office in which he had been working, and she rose from her chair to greet him. He ran up the short flight of steps <sup>3</sup> into the room which served them as a dining-room and parlour, and his eyes lit up with pleasure as he saw her.

"Hulloa, Doris. Hungry?"

"Terribly."

"It'll only take me a minute to have a bath and then I'm ready."

"Be quick," she smiled.

He disappeared into his dressing-room and she heard him whistling cheerfully while, with carelessness he tore off his clothes and flung them on the floor. He was twenty-nine but he was still a school-boy; he would never grow up. That was why she had fallen in love with him, perhaps, for no amount of affection could <sup>4</sup> persuade her that he was good-looking. He was a little round man, with a red face like the full moon, and blue eyes. He was rather

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<sup>1</sup> the force of circumstance — в силу обстоятельств

<sup>2</sup> the rustling of a brook over the stones — журчание ручейка, бегущего по камням

<sup>3</sup> the short flight of steps — несколько ступеней

<sup>4</sup> no amount of affection could — как бы ни велика была ее любовь, она не могла...

pimply. She had examined him carefully and had been forced to confess to him that he had not a single feature which she could praise. She had told him often that he wasn't her type at all.

"I never said I was a beauty," he laughed.

"I can't think what it is I see in you."

But of course she knew perfectly well. He was a gay, jolly little man, who took nothing very seriously, and he was constantly laughing. He made her laugh too. He found life an amusing rather than a serious business, and he had a charming smile. When she was with him she felt happy. And the deep affection which she saw in those merry blue eyes of his touched her. It was very satisfactory to be loved like that. Once, sitting on his knees, during their honeymoon she had taken his face in her hands and said to him:

"You're an ugly, little fat man, Guy, but you've got charm."<sup>5</sup> I can't help loving you."

A wave of emotion swept over her and her eyes filled with tears. She saw his face twisted for a moment with the extremity of his feeling and his voice was a little shaky when he answered.

"It's a terrible thing for me to have married a woman who's mentally deficient,"<sup>6</sup> he said.

She chuckled. It was the characteristic answer which she would have liked him to make.

It was hard to realize that nine months ago she had never even heard of him. She had met him at a small place by the sea-side where she was spending a month's holiday with her mother. Doris was secretary to a member of Parliament. Guy was home on leave. They were staying at the same hotel, and he quickly told her all about himself. He was born in Sembulu, where his father had served for thirty years under the second Sultan, and on leaving school he had entered the same service. He was devoted to the country.

"After all, England's a foreign land to me," he told her. "My home's Sembulu."

And now it was her home too. He asked her to marry him at the end of the month's holiday. She had known he was going to, and had decided to refuse him. She was her widowed mother's only child and she could not go so far away from her, but when the moment came she did not quite know what happened to her; she accepted him. They had been settled now for four months in the little station of which he was in charge. She was very happy.

She told him once that she had quite made up her mind to refuse him.

"Are you sorry you didn't?" he asked, with a merry smile in his twinkling blue eyes.

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<sup>5</sup> you've got charm — в тебе есть обаяние

<sup>6</sup> mentally deficient — умственно недоразвитая

"I should have been a perfect fool if I had. What a bit of luck that fate or chance or whatever it was stepped in and took the matter entirely out of my hands!"

Now she heard Guy clatter down the steps to the bath-house. He was a noisy fellow and even with bare feet he could not be quiet. But he uttered an exclamation. He said two or three words in the local dialect and she could not understand. Then she heard someone speaking to him, in a whisper. Really it was too bad of people to stop him when he was going to have his bath. He spoke again and though his voice was low she could hear that he was angry. The other voice was raised now; it was a woman's. Doris supposed it was someone who had a complaint to make. It was like a Malay woman to come in that stealthy way. But she was evidently getting very little from Guy, for she heard him say: Get out. That at all events she understood, and then she heard him lock the door. There was a sound of the water he was throwing over himself and in a couple of minutes he was back again in the dining-room. His hair was still wet. They sat down to luncheon.

"It's lucky I'm not a suspicious or a jealous person," she laughed. "I don't know that I should altogether approve of your having an animated conversations with ladies while you're having your bath."<sup>7</sup>

His face, usually so cheerful, had borne a dark, gloomy look when he came in, but now it brightened.

"I wasn't exactly pleased to see her."

"So I judged by the tone of your voice. In fact, I thought you were rather short<sup>8</sup> with the young person."

"Damned cheek, stopping me like that!"

"What did she want?"

"Oh, I don't know. It's a woman from the village. She's had a row<sup>9</sup> with her husband or something."

"I wonder if it's the same one who was hanging about this morning."

He frowned a little.

"Was there someone hanging about?"<sup>10</sup>

"Yes, I went into your dressing-room to see what everything was nice and tidy, and then I went down to the bath-house I saw someone get out of the door as I went down the steps and when I looked out I saw a woman standing there."

"Did you speak to her?"

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<sup>7</sup> I don't know that I should altogether approve of your having an animated conversations with ladies while you're having your bath. — Я не знаю, понравилось ли мне то, что ты ведешь оживленные беседы с дамами, пока принимаешь ванну.

<sup>8</sup> you were rather short — ты был довольно груб

<sup>9</sup> she's had a row — она поругалась

<sup>10</sup> hanging about — бродить вокруг

"I asked her what she wanted and she said something, but I could not understand."

"I'm not going to have all sorts of strange people hanging about here," he said. "They've got no right to come."

He smiled, but Doris, with the quick understanding of a woman in love, noticed that he smiled only with his lips, not as usual with his eyes also, and wondered what it was that troubled him.

"What have you been doing this morning?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing much. I went for a little walk."

"Through the village?"

"Yes, I saw a man sent a chained monkey up a tree to pick cocoanuts, which rather thrilled me."

"It's rather a lark,<sup>11</sup> isn't it?"

"Oh, Guy, there were two little boys watching him who were much whiter than the others. I wondered if they were half-castes. I spoke to them, but they didn't know a word of English."

"There are two or three half-caste children in the village," he answered.

"Who do they belong to?"

"Their mother is one of the village girls."

"Who is their father?"

"Oh, my dear, that's the sort of question we think it a little dangerous to ask out here." He paused. "A lot of fellows have native wives, and then when they go home or marry they pension them off and send them back to their villages."

Doris was silent. The indifference with which he spoke seemed a little heartless to her. There was almost a frown on her frank, open face when she replied.

"And what about the children?"

"I have no doubt they're properly provided for.<sup>12</sup> Within his means, a man generally sees that there's enough money to have them decently educated. They get jobs as clerks in a government office, you know; they're all right."

She gave him a slightly rueful smile.

"You can't expect me to think it's a very good system."

"You mustn't be too hard," he smiled back.

"I'm not hard. But I'm thankful you never had a Malay wife. I should have hated it. Just think if those two little boys were yours."

The servant changed their plates. There was never much variety in their menu. They started luncheon with river fish, dull and tasteless, so that a good deal of tomato ketchup was needed to make it pleasant, and then went on to some kind of stew. Guy poured Worcester Sauce over it.

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<sup>11</sup> It's rather a lark — Это довольно забавно

<sup>12</sup> they're properly provided for — они должным образом обеспечены

"The old Sultan didn't think it was a white woman's country," he said presently. "He rather encouraged people to keep house with native girls. Of course things have changed now. The country's perfectly quiet and I suppose we know better how to cope with the climate."

"But, Guy, the eldest of those boys wasn't more than seven or eight and the other was about five."

"It's awfully lonely on an outstation. Why, often one doesn't see another white man for six months on end.<sup>13</sup> A fellow comes out here when he's only a boy." He gave her that charming smile of his which transfigured his round, plain face. "There are excuses, you know."

She always found that smile irresistible. It was his best argument. Her eyes grew once more soft and tender.

"I'm sure there are." She stretched her hand across the little table and put it on his. "I'm very lucky to have caught you so young. Honestly, it would upset me dreadfully, if I were told that you had lived like that."

He took her hand and pressed it.

"Are you happy here, darling?"

"Desperately."

She looked very cool and fresh in her linen dress. The heat did not distress her. She had no more than the prettiness of youth, though her brown eyes were fine; but she had a pleasing frankness of expression, and her dark, short hair was neat and glossy. She gave you the impression of a girl of spirit and you felt sure that the member of parliament for whom she worked had in her a very competent secretary.

"I loved the country at once," she said. "Although I'm alone so much I don't think I've ever once felt lonely."

Of course she had read novels about the Malay Archipelago and she had formed an impression of a sombre land with great ominous rivers and a silent, impenetrable jungle. When the little steamer set them down at the mouth of the river, where a large boat was waiting to take them to the station, her breath was taken away by the beauty of the scene. On each bank of the river were mangroves and palms, and behind them the dense green of the forest. In the distance stretched blue mountains as far as the eye could see. The green glittered in the sunshine and the sky was cheerful.

They rowed on. Two monkeys, with their hanging tails, sat side by side on a branch. On the horizon, over there on the other side of the river, beyond the jungle, was a row of little white clouds, the only clouds in the sky, and they looked like a row of ballet-girls, dressed in white. Her heart was filled with joy; and

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<sup>13</sup> on end — подряд (не виделись целых шесть месяцев)

now, remembering it all, her eyes rested on her husband with a grateful, assured affection.

And what fun it had been to arrange their living-room! It was very big. On the floor, when she arrived, was a torn and dirty matting; on the walls of unpainted wood hung photogravures of Academy pictures. The tables were covered with Dyak cloth in sombre colours, and on them stood empty cigarette tins and bits of Malay silver much in need of cleaning. There was a rough wooden shelf with cheap editions of novels and a number of old travel books; and another shelf was crowded with empty bottles. It was a bachelor's room, untidy and cold. It was a dull, comfortable life that Guy had led there, and she threw her arms round his neck and kissed him.

"You poor darling," she laughed.

She had deft hands and she soon made the room habitable. She arranged this and that, and what she could not do with she turned out.<sup>14</sup> Her wedding-presents helped. Now the room was friendly and comfortable. In glass vases were lovely orchids and in great bowls huge masses of flowering shrubs. She felt an unusual pride because it was her house (she had never in her life lived in anything but a little flat) and she made it charming for him.

"Are you pleased with me?" she asked when she had finished.

"Quite," he smiled.

The deliberate understatement was much to her mind.<sup>15</sup> How jolly it was that they should understand each other so well! They were both of them shy of showing emotion, and it was only at rare moments that they used with one another anything but ironic joking.

They finished luncheon and he threw himself into a long chair to have a sleep. She went towards her room. She was a little surprised that he drew her to him as she passed and, making her bend down, kissed her lips. They were not in the habit of exchanging embraces at odd hours<sup>16</sup> of the day.

"A full stomach is making you sentimental, my poor lamb," she teased him.

"Get out and don't let me see you again for at least two hours."

"Don't snore."

She left him. They had risen at dawn and in five minutes were fast asleep.

Doris was awakened by the sound of her husband's splashing in the bath-house. The walls of the bungalow were rather thin and

<sup>14</sup> what she could not do with she turned out. — то, что ей не понравилось, она выбросила.

<sup>15</sup> The deliberate understatement was much to her mind. — это сдержанное высказывание ей очень нравилось.

<sup>16</sup> odd hours — часы досуга

got a thing that one of them did escaped the other. She felt too lazy to move, but she heard the boy bring the tea things in, so she jumped up and ran down into her own bath-house. The water, not cold but cool, was deliciously refreshing. When she came into the sitting-room Guy was taking the rackets out of the press, for they played tennis in the short cool of the evening. The night fell at six.

The tennis-court was two or three hundred yards from the bungalow and after tea, anxious not to lose time, they strolled down to it.

"Oh, look," said Doris, "there's that girl that I saw this morning."

Guy turned quickly. His eyes rested for a moment on a native woman, but he did not speak.

"What a pretty sarong<sup>17</sup> she's got," said Doris. "I wonder where it comes from."

They passed her. She was slight and small, with the large dark, starry eyes of her race and a mass of black hair. She did not stir as they went by, but stared at them strangely. Doris saw then that she was not quite so young as she had at first thought. Her features were a trifle heavy and her skin was dark, but she was very pretty. She held a small child in her arms. Doris smiled a little as she saw it, but no answering smile moved the woman's lips. Her face remained impassive. She did not look at Guy, she looked only at Doris, and he walked on as though he did not see her. Doris turned to him.

"Isn't that baby a duck?"

"I didn't notice."

She was puzzled by the look of his face. It was deathly white, and the pimples which not a little distressed her were more than commonly red.

"Did you notice her hands and feet? She might be a duchess."

"All natives have good hands and feet," he answered, but not jovially as usual; it was as though he forced himself to speak.

But Doris was not intrigued.

"Who is she, d'you know?"

"She's one of the girls in the village."

They had reached the court now. When Guy went up to the net to see that it was taut he looked back. The girl was still standing where they had passed her. Their eyes met.

"Shall I serve?" said Doris.

"Yes, you've got the balls on your side."

He played very badly. Generally he gave her fifteen and beat her, but to-day she won easily. And he played silently. Generally he was a noisy player, shouting all the time, cursing his foolish-

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<sup>17</sup> sarong — a local dress

ness when he missed a ball and teasing her when he placed me out of her reach.

"You're off your game, young man," she cried.

"Not a bit," he said.

He began to beat the balls, trying to win, and sent one after the other into the net. She had never seen him with that set face. Was it possible that he was a little out of temper because he was not playing well? The light fell, and they ceased to play. The woman whom they had passed stood in exactly the same position as when they came and once more, with expressionless face she watched them go.

The blinds on the verandah were raised now and on the table between their two long chairs were bottles and soda-water. This was the hour at which they had the first drink of the day and Guy prepared two glasses of wine. The river stretched widely before them and on the further bank the jungle was wrapped in the mystery of the approaching night. A native was silently rowing upstream.

"I played like a fool," said Guy, breaking a silence. "I'm feeling a bit under the weather."<sup>18</sup>

"I'm sorry. You're not going to have fever, are you?"

"Oh, no. I shall be all right to-morrow."

Darkness closed in upon them. The frogs croaked loudly and now and then they heard a few short notes from some singing bird of the night. Fireflies flitted across the verandah and they made the trees that surrounded it look like Christmas trees lit with tiny candles. Doris thought she heard a little sigh. It disturbed her. Guy was always so full of gaiety.

"What is it, old man?" she said gently. "Tell mother."

"Nothing. Time for another drink," he answered cheerfully.

Next day he was as cheerful as ever and the mail came. The steamer passed the mouth of the river twice a month, once on its way to the coalfields and once on its way back. On the outward journey it brought mail, which Guy sent a boat down to fetch. Its arrival was the excitement of their uneventful lives. For the first day or two they looked through all that had come rapidly: letters, English papers and papers from Singapore, magazines and books. They snatched the illustrated papers from one another. If Doris had not been so absorbed she might have noticed that there was a change in Guy. She would have found it hard to describe and harder still to explain. There was in his eyes a sort of watchfulness and in his mouth a slight droop of anxiety.

Then, perhaps a week later, one morning when she was sitting in the shaded room studying a Malay grammar (for she was learn-

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<sup>18</sup> I'm feeling a bit under the weather. — Я чувствую себя немного нездоровым.

ing the language hard) she heard a commotion in the garden. She heard the house boy's voice, he was speaking angrily, the voice of another man, perhaps it was the water-carrier's and then a woman's shrill and cursing. There was a confused fight. She went to the window and opened the shutters. The water-carrier had hold of a woman's arm and was dragging her along, while the house boy was pushing her from behind with both hands. Doris recognized her at once as the woman she had seen one morning walking in the garden and later in the day outside the tennis-court. She was holding a baby against her breast. All three were shouting angrily.

"Stop," cried Doris. "What are you doing?"

At the sound of her voice the water-carrier let go suddenly and the woman still pushed from behind, fell to the ground. There was a sudden silence and the house boy looked gloomily into space. The water-carrier hesitated a moment and then ran away. The woman raised herself slowly to her feet, arranged the baby on her arm, and stood impassive, staring at Doris. The boy said something to her which Doris could not have heard even if she had understood; the woman by no change of face showed that his words meant anything to her; but she slowly strolled away. The boy followed her to the gate of the garden. Doris called to him as he walked back, but he pretended not to hear. She was growing angry now and she called more sharply.

"Come here at once," she cried.

Suddenly, avoiding her angry glance, he came towards the bungalow. He came in and stood at the door.

"What were you doing with that woman?" she asked sharply.

"Tuan<sup>19</sup> say she no come here."

"You mustn't treat a woman like that. I won't have it. I shall tell the tuan exactly what I saw."

The boy did not answer. He looked away, but she felt that he was watching her through his long eyelashes. She dismissed him.

In a little while the boy came in to lay the cloth for luncheon. On a sudden he went to the door.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Tuan just coming."

He went out to take Guy's hat from him. His quick ears had caught the footsteps before she could hear them. Guy did not as usual come up the steps immediately; he paused, and Doris at once guessed that the boy had gone down to meet him in order to tell him of the morning's incident. She shrugged her shoulders. The boy evidently wanted to get his story in first. But she was astonished when Guy came in. His face was ashy.

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<sup>19</sup> tuan — господин (местное)

"Guy, what on earth's the matter?"<sup>20</sup>

He flushed a sudden hot red.

"Nothing. Why?"

It took him longer than usual to have his bath and change his clothes and luncheon was served when he came in.

"Guy," she said, as they sat down, "that woman we saw the other day was here again this morning."

"So I've heard," he answered.

"The boys were treating her brutally. I had to stop them. You must really speak to them about it."

Though the Malay understood every word she said, he made no sign that he heard. He handed her the toast.

"She's been told not to come here. I gave instructions that if she showed herself again she was to be turned out."

"Were they obliged to be so rough?"

"She refused to go. I don't think they were any rougher than they could help."

"It was horrible to see a woman treated like that. She had a baby in her arms."

"Hardly a baby. It's three years old."

"How d'you know?"

"I know all about her. She hasn't the least right to come here annoying everybody."

"What does she want?"

"She wants to do exactly what she did. She wants to make a disturbance."

For a little while Doris did not speak. She was surprised at her husband's tone. He spoke as though all this were no concern of hers. She thought him a little unkind. He was nervous and irritable.

"I doubt if we shall be able to play tennis this afternoon," he said. "It looks to me as though we were going to have a storm."

The rain was falling when she awoke and it was impossible to go out. During tea Guy was silent and abstracted. She got her sewing and began to work. Guy sat down to read such of the English papers as he had not yet gone through from cover to cover; but he was restless; he walked up and down the large room and then went out on the verandah. He looked at the rain. What was he thinking of? Doris was vaguely uneasy.

It was not till after dinner that he spoke. During the simple meal he had tried hard to be his usual gay self, but in vain. The rain had ceased and the night was starry. They sat on the verandah. In order not to attract insects they had turned off the lamp in the sitting-room. At their feet, silent, mysterious and fatal, flowed the river.

"Doris, I've got something to say to you," he said suddenly.

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<sup>20</sup> what on earth's the matter? — что, черт возьми, произошло?