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澳大利亞短篇小說選集

*A Selection of
Australian
Short Stories*



A Selection of
Australian Short Stories
澳大利亚短篇小说选集

Chosen and Annotated

by

Hu Wenzhong

胡文仲选注

The Commercial Press

内 容 提 要

本书选自澳大利亚十九世纪末至目前的短篇小说，作者和选篇都具有一定的代表性，使读者读后对澳大利亚短篇小说的概貌有所了解。每篇语言难点、典故及澳俚语均有注释，并附有作者简介和文章提示。

本书的主要对象为大学英语专业二、三年级学生、中学英语教师及同等程度的自学英语者。

澳大利亚短篇小说选集

胡 文 仲 选注

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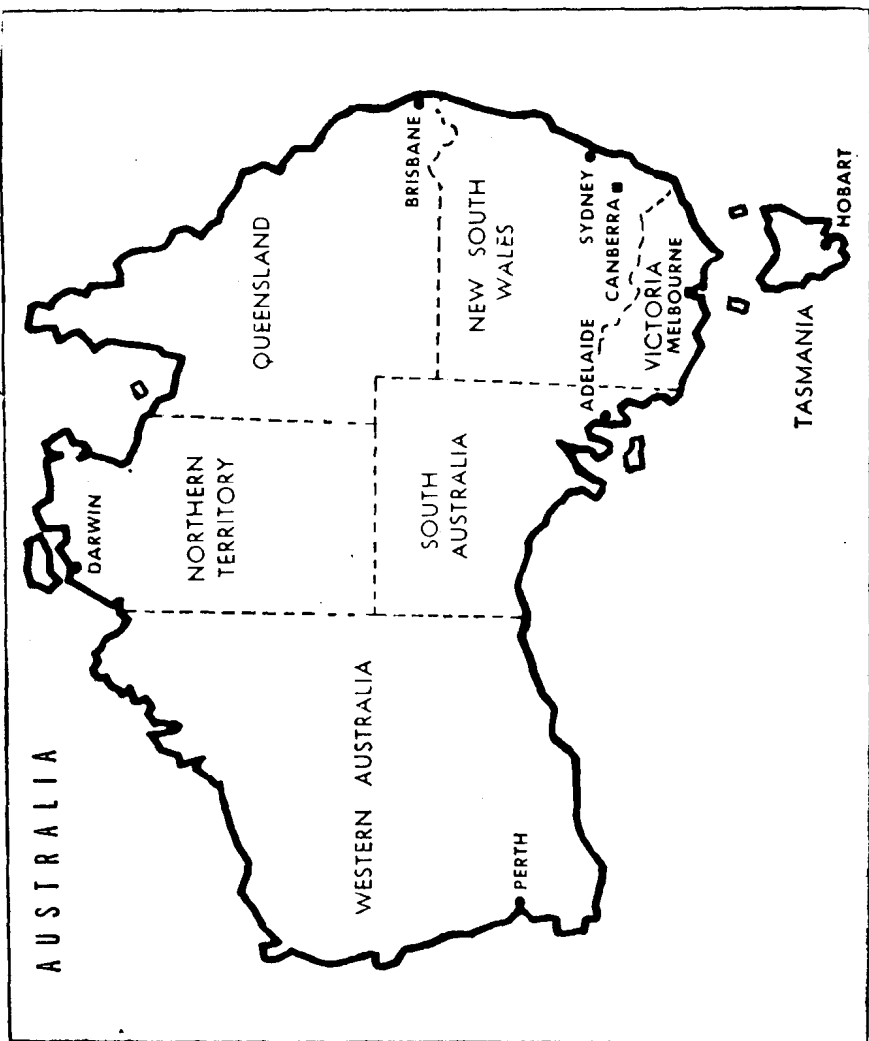
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前 言

澳大利亚短篇小说对我国读者并不完全陌生。亨利·劳森的作品较早地被介绍到我国来，裘达·华登的短篇小说集《没有祖国的儿子》在五十年代就有了译本。近年来，帕特里克·怀特的短篇小说陆续翻译并在杂志上发表。但是，总的来说，澳大利亚文学对于我们还是一个有待探索的新领域。

澳洲作为一个洲占据着地球上最古老的大陆，但澳大利亚却是一个年轻的国家。美国独立战争结束之后五年——即1788年——第一艘载着囚徒的英国船才开进杰克逊湾。殖民时期虽有一些创作，但总的看来并没有引人注目的成就。在民族民主浪潮激荡的十九世纪九十年代，文学园地也繁荣起来。短篇小说在这一时期发展极为迅速。当时颇有影响的文学杂志《公报》在1880—1890年间只刊登了不足一百篇短篇小说，但自1890年至二十世纪初这十年多的时间内却发表了一千四百多篇。作品虽菁芜夹杂，甚至大部分已为人们所忘却，但其中优秀的篇目却具有一些共同的特点：短小精悍，侧重描述偏僻的农村生活，在整个气氛和对话中有着强烈的澳大利亚特点。

劳森是九十年代涌现的一位十分有才华的作家。1888年在《公报》杂志上发表了他的第一篇短篇小说《他父亲的伙伴》。此后他陆续发表过三百多篇短篇小说和大量的诗作。劳森当过牧工、油漆工、木匠、伐木工人，因此对下层人民生活十分熟悉。他在短篇小说中成功地塑造了牧工、自耕农、剪羊毛工、流浪汉、农村妇女、乡村医生等各阶层人民的形象。他的文字简洁生动，朴素无华，富于幽默，吸收和反映了澳劳动人民口语的某些特点，被誉为“普通人的声音”。他的短篇小说往往不以情节取胜，而以真实的

感情打动读者。这里所选的《牧人之妻》和《捐点钱吧》就情节而言都没有惊人之处,然而感情真挚动人,读后不免要对这位坚韧的农村妇女和热心忘我的剪羊毛工肃然起敬。劳森把这些有名无姓或者无名无姓的普通人写得栩栩如生,不仅描述了他们的言谈笑貌,而且刻画了他们的内心世界。劳森最优秀的作品总共不过二十余篇,但是却有着经世不衰的力量,在澳大利亚文学史上仍然占据着重要的地位。许多短篇小说家都或多或少地受到劳森的影响。

两次大战之间出现了许多优秀的作家,如凯瑟琳·苏姗娜·普里恰德、克里丝蒂娜·斯泰德、万斯·帕尔默等。前两位的主要成就在于长篇小说,帕尔默则是一个“多面手”,既写长篇又写短篇,同时是剧作家和文艺评论家,在澳文坛起过重要的作用。约翰·莫里逊、盖汶·卡塞、哈尔·波特是这个时期涌现出来的优秀短篇小说家。莫里逊和卡塞都善于刻画工人形象,而波特则洞察入微、擅长讽刺;在语言上,刻意求新,自成一体。

在四十年代,除了《公报》杂志继续刊登短篇小说外,文艺刊物《南风》和《密安津》先后于1939年、1940年问世,开辟了短篇小说的新园地。此外,自1941年起,安格斯-罗伯森出版公司每年聘请作家或评论家选出前一年最优秀的短篇小说,汇成一集出版。这一切为短篇小说的蓬勃发展创造了十分有利的条件。仅1944年这一年就有包括彼得·考恩在内的六位作家的短篇小说集出版。

怀特是澳大利亚迄今唯一的诺贝尔文学奖获得者,主要成就在于长篇小说,但是在六十——七十年代也陆续发表过短篇小说和中篇小说,后汇编为两个集子。怀特深受欧洲现代派的影响,在题材和写作风格上与大部分澳作家迥然不同。他对于澳文学的写实持批评态度,他认为艺术真实不同于生活真实,他批评澳大利亚许多文学作品是“新闻体现实主义平淡无奇的产物”。他的人物中有许多都与现代社会格格不入,有着孤僻奇特的性格,曲折地反映了西方社会人们矛盾的心理。怀特着力于人物内心世界的挖掘,而不追求情节的生动。在写法上则力求含蓄,为读者的想象留出充

分的余地，在遣词造句上也是精心琢磨的。有时为了追求某一特殊效果，他大胆地摆脱开句法规则的羁绊。“意识流”写法的影响清楚可见。

大卫·坎贝尔和朱迪丝·赖特都是在澳大利亚颇负盛名的诗人。在短篇小说中，他们表现了诗人特有的洞察力，感情细腻，语言清新。尤其是朱迪丝·赖特的《低垂的无花果树》更把情与景揉合在一起，使读者有所回味。

六十年代末至七十年代初，反对侵略越南战争的政治风云给文学创作也带来了一些变化。在短篇小说创作方面，弗兰克·穆尔豪斯、迈克尔·王尔丁、穆瑞·贝尔等年轻作家在题材上侧重于写知识分子和城市市民。在创作方法上，穆尔豪斯使用所谓的“间断叙述法”（表面上互不关联的短篇小说环绕同一主题或说明同一社会现象），贝尔则试验各种写法。他们在表现手法上都受到一些美国作家的影响。选集的最后一篇《牧人之妻》是贝尔根据劳森的《牧人之妻》加以改写而成。选用这篇的目的在于从侧面说明在澳文坛上环绕“劳森传统”展开的一场争论。贝尔袭用劳森最著名的一篇短篇小说的题目，通过改写不时地对劳森开开玩笑，通过海赛尔和戈登的不和影射劳森传统与现实生活是多么不合拍。这篇是选集的最后一篇，也许恰好说明了澳短篇小说所经历的这一段路程。

纵观澳短篇小说这一段历史，我们可以看到现实主义传统始终占据着主导地位，尽管画面从乡村逐渐转到城市，浓郁的生活气息，真实的思想感情总是跃然纸上。读澳大利亚的短篇故事犹如翻开澳大利亚的历史画册。在这里我们看到早期的拓荒者为征服自然付出了艰苦的劳动——甚至血的代价，在无花果树下曾经埋葬过两代人；在这里我们看到牧人的妻子忍受着长年的孤独，操持家务，抚养孩子，战胜水灾、火灾、蛇害；在这里我们看到乍来澳洲大陆的移民在定居中需要克服何等巨大的文化和心理上的障碍；在这里我们看到码头工人宁愿面对房东的驱逐也不干违心的事；在

这里我们还看到在资本主义社会中小职员和妻子如何追求虚荣受到折磨,某些知识分子精神空虚,一味赶时髦,以及年轻人吸毒,两代人之间的隔阂等等。全书二十二篇中只有一篇不是澳大利亚的题材,这就是怀特的《一杯茶》。怀特是一位国际作家,长期受到欧洲文化的陶冶,以欧洲为背景,写希腊的人物,也从一个方面说明了澳短篇小说的成熟。

在选择作家和作品时,尽量选取知名作家的名篇。个别篇子的收入则是出于题材的考虑,使读者不仅了解澳短篇小说的概貌,也通过作品接触到澳社会的各个不同侧面。劳森的《牧人之妻》几乎见于每个澳短篇小说选本;玛加丽·巴纳德的《柿树》虽只千把字,却也被普遍认为是澳短篇小说中别具一格的佳作。这类作品自然都选入了这个集子。在风格上照顾到多样化,不以个人好恶为准绳。一般地都是一位作家选一篇,例外则是劳森、帕尔默、怀特和波特。虽然这四人各选了两篇,也还难免挂一漏万。不少作家和作品由于篇幅的限制不得不割爱,恐怕这也是每个编选集的人的苦衷。

每篇之后附有一段说明性的文字,是编者读后的一点感想,仅供参考。为了帮助读者阅读,对某些词句做了注释。注释侧重于理解上容易出错的地方以及牵涉背景或不易查到的短语、习用语以及澳大利亚土语或俚语等。在词典上能查到的生词一般不注。

在编选过程中,曾经得到澳大利亚文学评论家克拉默教授、基尔南先生、作家怀特先生、王尔丁先生、贝尔先生以及希腊朋友拉斯卡里先生的协助,在此一并志谢。

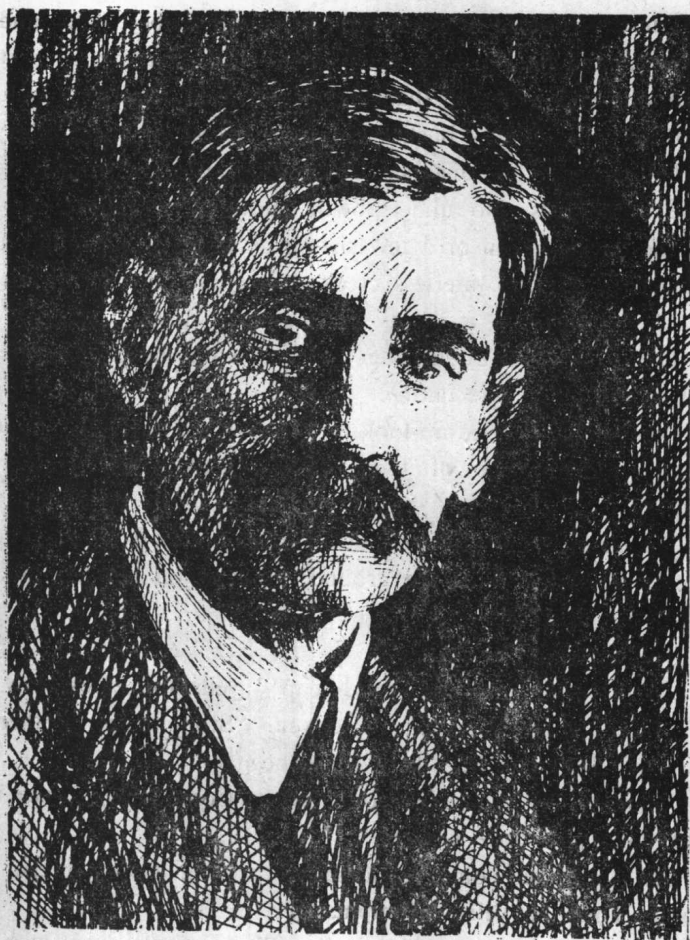
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亨利·劳森



宽涛 绘

The Drover's Wife

by Henry Lawson

THE two-roomed house is built of round timber, slabs, and stringybark,¹ and floored with split slabs. A big bark kitchen standing at one end is larger than the house itself, verandah included.

Bush² all round — bush with no horizon, for the country is flat. No ranges in the distance. The bush consists of stunted, rotten native apple-trees. No undergrowth. Nothing to relieve the eye save the darker green of a few she-oaks³ which are sighing above the narrow, almost waterless creek. Nineteen miles to the nearest sign of civilization — a shanty on the main road.

The drover,⁴ an ex-squatter,⁵ is away with sheep. His wife and children are left here alone.

Four ragged, dried-up-looking children are playing about the house. Suddenly one of them yells: "Snake! Mother, here's a snake!"

The gaunt, sun-browned bushwoman dashes from the kitchen, snatches her baby from the ground, holds it on her left hip, and reaches for a stick.

"Where is it?"

"Here! gone into the wood-heap!" yells the eldest boy — a sharp-faced, excited urchin of eleven. "Stop there, mother! I'll have him. Stand back! I'll have the beggar!"

"Tommy, come here, or you'll be bit.⁶ Come here at once when I tell you, you little wretch!"

The youngster comes reluctantly, carrying a stick bigger than himself. Then he yells, triumphantly:

"There it goes — under the house!" and darts away with club uplifted. At the same time the big, black, yellow-eyed dog-of-all-breeds,⁷ who has shown the wildest interest in the proceedings, breaks his chain and rushes after that snake. He is a moment late,

however, and his nose reaches the crack in the slabs just as the end of its tail disappears. Almost at the same moment the boy's club comes down and skins the aforesaid nose. Alligator⁸ takes small notice of this and proceeds to undermine the building; but he is subdued after a struggle and chained up. They cannot afford to lose him.

The drover's wife makes the children stand together near the dog-house while she watches for the snake. She gets two small dishes of milk and sets them down near the wall to tempt it to come out; but an hour goes by and it does not show itself.

It is near sunset, and a thunderstorm is coming. The children must be brought inside. She will not take them into the house, for she knows the snake is there, and may at any moment come up through the cracks in the rough slab floor; so she carries several armfuls of firewood into the kitchen and then takes the children there. The kitchen has no floor — or, rather, an earthen one, called a "ground floor" in this part of the bush. There is a large, roughly made table in the centre of the place. She brings the children in and makes them get on this table. They are two boys and two girls — mere babies. She gives them some supper, and then, before it gets dark, she goes into the house and snatches up some pillows and bedclothes — expecting to see or lay her hand on the snake any minute. She makes a bed on the kitchen table for the children and sits down beside it to watch all night.

She has an eye on the corner, and a green sapling club laid in readiness on the dresser by her side, together with her sewing basket and a copy of the *Young Ladies' Journal*. She has brought the dog into the room.

Tommy turns in, under protest, but says he'll lie awake all night and smash that blinded⁹ snake.

His mother asks him how many times she has told him not to swear.

He has his club with him under the bedclothes, and Jacky protests:

"Mummy! Tommy's skinnin' me alive wif¹⁰ his club. Make

him take it out."

Tommy: "Shet up, you little — ¹¹! D'yer want to be bit with the snake?"

Jacky shuts up.

"If yer bit," says Tommy, after a pause, "you'll swell up, an' smell, an' turn red an' green an' blue all over till yer bust. Won't he, mother?"

"Now then, don't frighten the child. Go to sleep," she says.

The two younger children go to sleep, and now and then Jacky complains of being "skeezed". More room is made for him. Presently Tommy says: "Mother! listen to them (adjective¹²) little 'possums. I'd like to screw their blanky¹³ necks."

And Jacky protests drowsily:

"But they don't hurt us, the little blanks!"

Mother: "There, I told you you'd teach Jacky to swear." But the remark makes her smile. Jacky goes to sleep.

Presently Tommy asks:

"Mother! Do you think they'll ever extricate the (adjective) kangaroo?"

"Lord! How am I to know, child? Go to sleep."

"Will you wake me if the snake comes out?"

"Yes. Go to sleep."

Near midnight. The children are all asleep and she sits there still, sewing and reading by turns. From time to time she glances round the floor and wall-plate, and whenever she hears a noise she reaches for the stick. The thunderstorm comes on, and the wind, rushing through the cracks in the slab wall, threatens to blow out her candle. She places it on a sheltered part of the dresser and fixes up a newspaper to protect it. At every flash of lightning, the cracks between the slabs gleam like polished silver. The thunder rolls, and the rain comes down in torrents.

Alligator lies at full length on the floor, with his eyes turned towards the partition. She knows by this that the snake is there. There are large cracks in that wall opening under the floor of the dwelling-house.

She is not a coward, but recent events have shaken her nerves. A little son of her brother-in-law was lately bitten by a snake, and died. Besides, she has not heard from her husband for six months, and is anxious about him.

He was a drover, and started squatting here when they were married. The drought of 18 — ruined him. He had to sacrifice the remnant of his flock and go droving again. He intends to move his family into the nearest town when he comes back, and, in the meantime, his brother, who keeps a shanty¹⁴ on the main road, comes over about once a month with provisions. The wife has still a couple of cows, one horse, and a few sheep. The brother-in-law kills one of the sheep occasionally, gives her what she needs of it, and takes the rest in return for other provisions.

She is used to being left alone. She once lived like this for eighteen months. As a girl she built the usual castles in the air; but all her girlish hopes and aspirations have long been dead. She finds all the excitement and recreation she needs in the *Young Ladies' Journal*, and, Heaven help her! takes a pleasure in the fashion-plates.

Her husband is an Australian, and so is she. He is careless, but a good enough husband. If he had the means¹⁵ he would take her to the city and keep her there like a princess. They are used to being apart, or at least she is. "No use fretting," she says. He may forget sometimes that he is married; but if he has a good cheque when he comes back he will give most of it to her. When he had money he took her to the city several times — hired a railway sleeping compartment, and put up at the best hotels. He also bought her a buggy,¹⁶ but they had to sacrifice that along with the rest.

The last two children were born in the bush — one while her husband was bringing a drunken doctor, by force, to attend to her. She was alone on this occasion, and very weak. She had been ill with a fever. She prayed to God to send her assistance. God sent Black Mary — the "whitest" gin¹⁷ in all the land. Or, at least, God sent "King Jimmy" first, and he sent Black Mary. He put his

black face round the door-post, took in the situation at a glance,¹⁸ and said cheerfully: "All right, Missis¹⁹ — I bring my old woman, she down alonga creek."

One of her children died while she was here alone. She rode nineteen miles for assistance, carrying the dead child.

It must be near one or two o'clock. The fire is burning low. Alligator lies with his head resting on his paws, and watches the wall. He is not a very beautiful dog to look at, and the light shows numerous old wounds where the hair will not grow. He is afraid of nothing on the face of the earth or under it. He will tackle a bullock as readily as he will tackle a flea. He hates all other dogs — except kangaroo-dogs²⁰ — and has a marked dislike to friends or relations of the family. They seldom call, however. He sometimes makes friends with strangers. He hates snakes and has killed many, but he will be bitten some day and die; most snake-dogs end that way.

Now and then the bushwoman lays down her work and watches, and listens, and thinks. She thinks of things in her own life, for there is little else to think about.

The rain will make the grass grow, and this reminds her how she fought a bushfire once while her husband was away. The grass was long, and very dry, and the fire threatened to burn her out. She put on an old pair of her husband's trousers and beat out the flames with a green bough, till great drops of sooty perspiration stood out on her forehead and ran in streaks down her blackened arms. The sight of his mother in trousers²¹ greatly amused Tommy, who worked like a little hero by her side, but the terrified baby howled lustily for his "mummy". The fire would have mastered her but for four excited bushmen who arrived in the nick of time.²² It was a mixed-up affair all round: when she went to take up the baby he screamed and struggled convulsively, thinking it was a "black man"; and Alligator, trusting more to the child's sense than his own instinct, charged furiously, and (being old and slightly deaf) did not in his excitement at first recognize his mistress's

voice, but continued to hang on to the moleskins until choked off by Tommy with a saddle-strap. The dog's sorrow for his blunder, and his anxiety to let it be known that it was all a mistake, was as evident as his ragged tail and a twelve-inch grin could make it. It was a glorious time for the boys; a day to look back to, and talk about, and laugh over for many years.

She thinks how she fought a flood during her husband's absence. She stood for hours in the drenching downpour, and dug an overflow gutter to save the dam across the creek. But she could not save it. There are things that a bushwoman cannot do. Next morning the dam was broken, and her heart was nearly broken too, for she thought how her husband would feel when he came home and saw the result of years of labour swept away. She cried then.

She also fought the pleuro-pneumonia — dosed and bled the few remaining cattle, and wept again when her two best cows died.

Again, she fought a mad bullock that besieged the house for a day. She made bullets and fired at him through cracks in the slabs with an old shot-gun. He was dead in the morning. She skinned him and got seventeen-and-six for the hide.

She also fights the crows and eagles that have designs on her chickens. Her plan of campaign is very original. The children cry "Crows, Mother!" and she rushes out and aims a broomstick at the birds as though it were a gun, and says "Bung!" The crows leave in a hurry; they are cunning, but a woman's cunning is greater.

Occasionally a bushman in the horrors, or a villainous-looking sundowner,²³ comes and nearly scares the life out of her. She generally tells the suspicious-looking stranger that her husband and two sons are at work below the dam, or over at the yard,²⁴ for he always cunningly inquires for the boss.

Only last week a gallows-faced swagman²⁵ — having satisfied himself that there were no men on the place — threw his swag down on the verandah and demanded tucker.²⁶ She gave him something to eat; then he expressed his intention of staying for the night. It

was sundown then. She got a batten from the sofa, loosened the dog, and confronted the stranger, holding the batten in one hand and the dog's collar with the other. "Now you go!" she said. He looked at her and at the dog, said "All right, mum," in a cringing tone, and left. She was a determined-looking woman, and Alligator's yellow eyes glared unpleasantly — besides, the dog's chewing-up apparatus greatly resembled that of the reptile he was named after.

She has few pleasures to think of as she sits here alone by the fire, on guard against a snake. All days are much the same to her; but on Sunday afternoon she dresses herself, tidies the children, smartens up baby, and goes for a lonely walk along the bush-track, pushing an old perambulator in front of her. She does this every Sunday. She takes as much care to make herself and the children look smart as she would if she were going to do the block²⁷ in the city. There is nothing to see, however, and not a soul to meet. You might walk for twenty miles along this track without being able to fix a point in your mind, unless you are a bushman. This is because of the everlasting, maddening sameness of the stunted trees — that monotony which makes a man long to break away and travel as far as trains can go, and sail as far as ships can sail — and further.

But this bushwoman is used to the loneliness of it. As a girl-wife²⁸ she hated it, but now she would feel strange away from it.

She is glad when her husband returns, but she does not gush or make a fuss about it. She gets him something good to eat, and tidies up the children.

She seems contented with her lot. She loves her children, but has no time to show it. She seems harsh to them. Her surroundings are not favourable to the development of the "womanly" or sentimental side of nature.

It must be near morning now; but the clock is in the dwelling-house. Her candle is nearly done; she forgot that she was out of candles. Some more wood must be got to keep the fire up, and