

英美古典文学注释丛书



〔美〕马克·吐温著  
*Mark Twain*

# A MILLION-POUND NOTE

百 万 英 镑

(附电影剧本)

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商 务 印 书 馆

ENGLISH AND AMERICAN CLASSICS

Vol. 104

# THE MILLION-POUND NOTE

(Film Script Attached)

by

Mark Twain

With Notes in Chinese

by

Zhao Lian

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The Commercial Press

Beijing, 1981

## 内 容 提 要

《百万英镑》是美国十九世纪优秀的现实主义作家马克·吐温的短篇小说之一。作者采取喜剧的形式，生动地描述了一个名叫亨利的美国青年漂泊到伦敦的一段奇异的流浪生活。

这篇小说是虚构的，作者运用了艺术夸张的手法，淋漓尽致地揭示了资本主义制度下金钱万能的社会现象。

本书附有电影剧本。这可与小说结合起来进行比较与学习。

本书可供大学英语专业二、三年级学生及相当程度的英语学习者阅读。

本书在注释过程中，曾得到北京大学朱光潜教授和殷宝书教授的指正，特此志谢。

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(附电影剧本)

[美] 马克·吐温 著

赵 燕 注释

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商务印书馆出版

(北京王府井大街36号)

新华书店北京发行所发行

北京第二新华印刷厂印刷

统一书号：9017·1055

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1981年8月初版

开本 787×960 毫米 1/32

1981年8月北京第1次印刷 字数 81 千

印数 1—12,400 册

印张 4

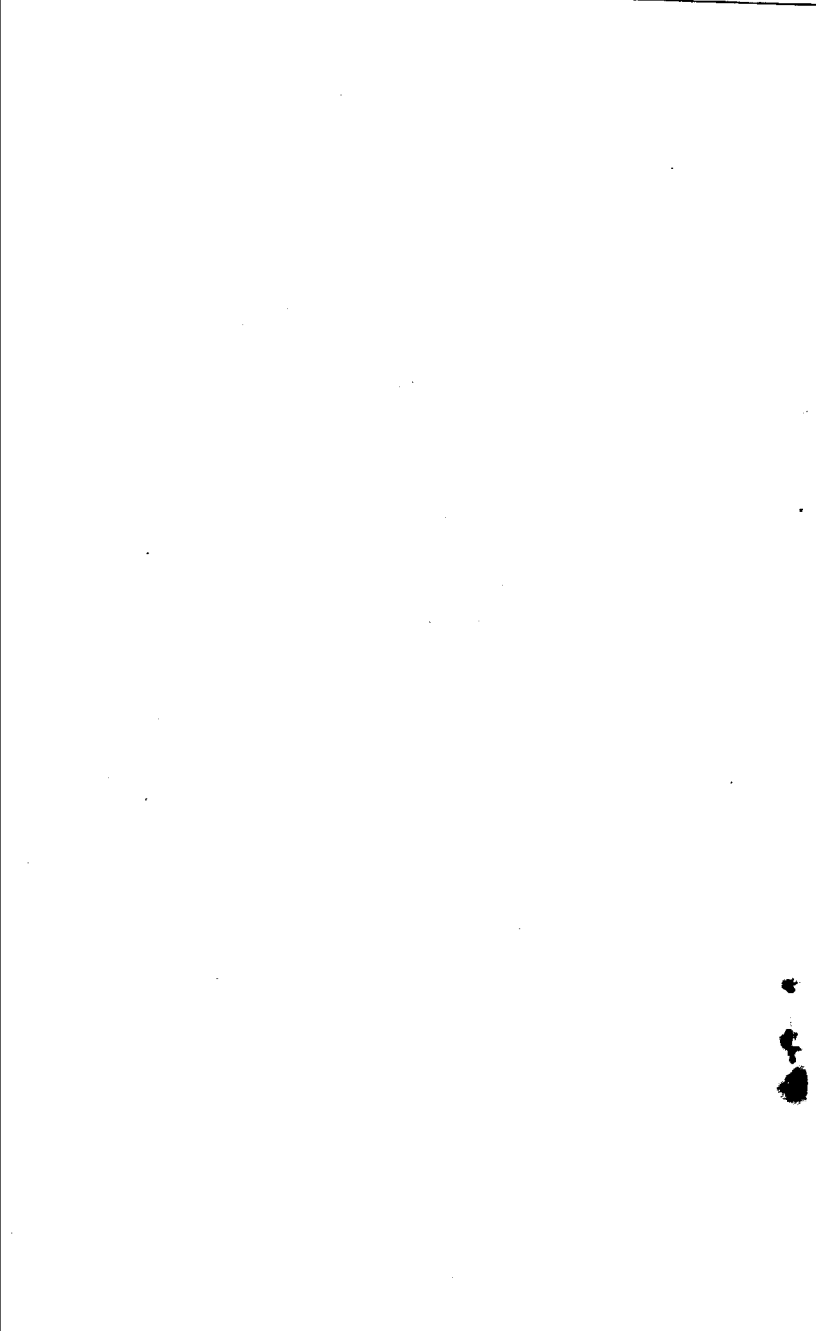
定价：0.45 元

## 作者简介

马克·吐温 (Mark Twain, 1835—1910) 原名塞缪尔·兰霍恩·克莱门斯 (Samuel Lanhorne Clemens), 生于美国密苏里州一个穷困的地方法官家庭, 十二岁丧父后就开始独立生活, 先后当过报童、印刷所学徒、密西西比河上的水手和领港等。“Mark Twain”本来是领港报告河水深度时的呼号, 他开始为报纸写短篇故事的时候, 就把它作为笔名。马克·吐温正好经历了美国从资本主义自由竞争到垄断的发展时期。1873年他写了第一部长篇小说《镀金时代》, 揭露了美国废除奴隶制度后出现的所谓资本主义“黄金时代”的腐败真象。马克·吐温还长于揭露金钱在资本主义世界的作用, 《百万英镑》就是一个代表作。以上是马克·吐温早期创作的特点。

十九世纪八十年代以后, 美国自由资本主义逐渐向垄断阶段过渡, 资产阶级民主自由的地盘一天天缩小, 社会道德和社会风气日趋败坏。马克·吐温目睹这些现象, 进一步加深了认识, 使他的揭露和讽刺也更加有力。他的许多重要作品如《哈克贝利·费恩历险记》、《败坏了赫德莱堡的人》等都是十九世纪八十年代以后的作品。他晚年的作品多为政论, 对欧美帝国主义的海外侵略政策进行了揭露和谴责。





# THE MILLION-POUND NOTE

(The £ 1,000,000 Bank-Note)

When I was twenty seven years old, I was a mining-broker's clerk in San Francisco, and an expert in all the details of stock traffic. I was alone in the world, and had nothing to depend upon but my wits and a clean reputation; but these were setting my feet in the road to eventual fortune, and I was content with the prospect.

My time was my own after the afternoon board, Saturdays, and I was accustomed to put it in on a little sail-boat on the bay. One day I ventured too far, and was carried out to sea. Just at nightfall, when hope was about gone, I was picked up by a small brig which was bound for London. It was a long and stormy voyage, and they made me work my passage without pay, as a common sailor. When I stepped ashore in London my clothes were ragged and shabby, and I had only a dollar in my pocket. This money fed and sheltered me twenty-four hours. During the next twenty-four I went without food and shelter.

About ten o'clock on the following morning, seedy and hungry, I was dragging myself along Portland Place, when a child that was passing, towed by a nurse-maid, tossed a luscious big pear—minus one bite—into the gutter. I stopped, of course, and fastened my desiring eye on that muddy treasure. My mouth watered for it, my

stomach craved it, my whole being begged for it. But every time I made a move to get it some passing eye detected my purpose, and of course I straightened up then, and looked  
5 indifferent, and pretended that I hadn't been thinking about the pear at all. This same thing kept happening and happening, and I couldn't get the pear. I was just getting desperate enough to brave all the shame, and to seize it, when a  
10 window behind me was raised, and a gentleman spoke out of it, saying:

"Step in here, please."

I was admitted by a gorgeous flunkey, and shown into a sumptuous room where a couple  
15 of elderly gentlemen were sitting. They sent away the servant, and made me sit down. They had just finished their breakfast, and the sight of the remains of it almost overpowered me. I could hardly keep my wits together in the pre-  
20 sence of that food, but as I was not asked to sample it, I had to bear my trouble as best I could.

Now, something had been happening there a little before, which I did not know anything  
25 about until a good many days afterward, but I will tell you about it now. Those two old brothers had been having a pretty hot argument a couple of days before, and had ended by agreeing to decide it by a bet, which is the Eng-  
30 lish way of settling everything.

You will remember that the Bank of England once issued two notes of a million pounds each,



to be used for a special purpose connected with  
some public transaction with a foreign country.  
For some reason or other only one of these  
had been used and canceled; the other still lay  
in the vaults of the Bank. Well, the brothers, 5  
chatting along, happened to get to wondering  
what might be the fate of a perfectly honest  
and intelligent stranger who should be turned  
adrift in London without a friend, and  
with no money but that million-pound bank- 10  
note, and no way to account for his being in  
possession of it. Brother A said he would starve  
to death; Brother B said he wouldn't. Bro-  
ther A said he couldn't offer it at a bank or  
anywhere else, because he would be arrested on 15  
the spot. So they went on disputing till Broth-  
er B said he would bet twenty thousand pounds  
that the man would live thirty days, *anyway*,  
on that million, and keep out of jail, too. Bro-  
ther A took him up. Brother B went down to 20  
the Bank and bought that note. Just like an  
Englishman, you see; pluck to the backbone.  
Then he dictated a letter, which one of his  
clerks wrote out in a beautiful round hand, and  
then the two brothers sat at the window a 25  
whole day watching for the right man to give  
it to.

They saw many honest faces go by that were  
not intelligent enough; many that were intelli-  
gent, but not honest enough; many that were 30  
both, but the possessors were not poor enough,  
or, if poor enough, were not strangers. There

was always a defect, until I came along; but they agreed that I filled the bill all around; so they elected me unanimously, and there I was now waiting to know why I was called in. They  
5 began to ask me questions about myself, and pretty soon they had my story. Finally they told me I would answer their purpose. I said I was sincerely glad, and asked what it was. Then one of them handed me an envelope, and  
10 said I would find the explanation inside. I was going to open it, but he said no; take it to my lodgings, and look it over carefully, and not be hasty or rash. I was puzzled, and wanted to discuss the matter a little further; but they  
15 didn't; so I took my leave, feeling hurt and insulted to be made the butt of what was apparently some kind of a practical joke, and yet obliged to put up with it, not being in circumstances to resent affronts from rich and strong  
20 folk.

I would have picked up the pear now and eaten it before all the world, but it was gone; so I had lost that by this unlucky business, and the thought of it did not soften my feeling toward those men. As soon as I was out of sight  
25 of that house I opened my envelope, and saw that it contained money! My opinion of those people changed, I can tell you! I lost not a moment, but shoved note and money into my  
30 vest pocket, and broke for the nearest cheap eating-house. Well, how I did eat! When at last I couldn't hold any more, I took out my

money and unfolded it, took one glimpse and nearly fainted. Five millions of dollars! Why, it made my head swim.

I must have sat there stunned and blinking at the note as much as a minute before I came rightly to myself again. The first thing I noticed, then, was the landlord. His eye was on the note, and he was petrified. He was worshipping, with all his body and soul, but he looked as if he couldn't stir hand or foot. I took my cue in a moment, and did the only rational thing there was to do. I reached the note toward him, and said, carelessly:

"Give me the change, please."

Then he was restored to his normal condition, and made a thousand apologies for not being able to break the bill, and I couldn't get him to touch it. He wanted to look at it, and keep on looking at it; he couldn't seem to get enough of it to quench the thirst of his eye, but he shrank from touching it as if it had been something too sacred for poor common clay to handle. I said:

"I am sorry if it is an inconvenience, but I must insist. Please change it; I haven't anything else."

But he said that wasn't any matter; he was quite willing to let the trifle stand over till another time. I said I might not be in his neighborhood again for a good while; but he said it was of no consequence, he could wait, and, moreover, I could have anything I wanted, any

time I chose, and let the account run as long as I pleased. He said he hoped he wasn't afraid to trust as rich a gentleman as I was, merely because I was of a merry disposition, and  
5 chose to play larks on the public in the matter of dress. By this time another customer was entering, and the landlord hinted to me to put the monster out of sight; then he bowed me all the way to the door, and I started straight  
10 for that house and those brothers, to correct the mistake which had been made before the police should hunt me up, and help me do it. I was pretty nervous; in fact, pretty badly frightened, though, of course, I was no way in  
15 fault; but I knew men well enough to know that when they find they've given a tramp a million-pound bill when they thought it was a one-pounder, they are in a frantic rage against *him* instead of quarreling with their own  
20 near-sightedness, as they ought. As I approached the house my excitement began to abate, for all was quiet there, which made me feel pretty sure the blunder was not discovered yet. I rang. The same servant appeared. I asked for  
25 those gentlemen.

"They are gone." This in the lofty, cold way of that fellow's tribe.

"Gone? Gone where?"

"On a journey."

30 "But whereabouts?"

"To the Continent, I think."

"The Continent?"

"Yes, sir."

"Which way—by what route?"

"I can't say, sir."

"When will they be back?"

"In a month, they said."

5

"A month! Oh, this is awful! Give me *some* sort of idea of how to get a word to them. It's of the last importance."

"I can't, indeed. I've no idea where they've gone, sir."

10

"Then I must see some member of the family."

"Family's away, too; been abroad months—in Egypt and India, I think."

"Man, there's been an immense mistake made. They'll be back before night. Will you tell them I've been here, and that I will keep coming till it's all made right, and they needn't be afraid?"

15

"I'll tell them, if they come back, but I am not expecting them. They said you would be here in an hour to make inquiries, but I must tell you it's all right, they'll be here on time and expect you."

20

So I had to give it up and go away. What a riddle it all was! I was like to lose my mind. They would, be here "on time." What could that mean? Oh the letter would explain, maybe. I had forgotten the letter; I got it out and read it. This is what it said:

30

*You are an intelligent and honest man, as one may see by your face. We conceive you to be poor*

*and a stranger. Enclosed you will find a sum of money. It is lent to you for thirty days, without interest. Report at this house at the end of that time. I have a bet on you. If I win it you shall*  
5 *have any situation that is in my gift—any, that is, that you shall be able to prove yourself familiar with and competent to fill.*

No signature, no address, no date.

Well, here was a coil to be in! You are  
10 posted on what had preceded all this, but I was not. It was just a deep, dark puzzle to me. I hadn't the least idea what the game was, nor whether harm was meant me or a kindness. I went into a park, and sat down to try to  
15 think it out, and to consider what I had best do.

At the end of an hour my reasonings had crystallized into this verdict.

Maybe those men mean me well, maybe they  
20 mean me ill; no way to decide that—let it go. They've got a game, or a scheme, or an experiment, of some kind on hand; no way to determine what it is—let it go. There's a bet on me; no way to find out what it is—let it go.  
25 That disposes of the indeterminable quantities; the remainder of the matter is tangible, solid, and may be classed and labeled with certainty. If I ask the Bank of England to place this bill to the credit of the man it belongs to, they'll  
30 do it, for they know him, although I don't; but they will ask me how I came in possession of it, and if I tell the truth they'll put me in the

asylum, naturally, and a lie will land me in jail. The same result would follow if I tried to bank the bill anywhere or to borrow money on it. I have got to carry this immense burden around until those men come back, whether I want to or not. It is useless to me, as useless as a handful of ashes, and yet I must take care of it, and watch over it, while I beg my living. I couldn't *give* it away, if I should try, for neither honest citizen nor highwayman would accept it or meddle with it for anything. Those brothers are safe. Even if I lose their bill, or burn it, they are still safe, because they can stop payment, and the bank will make them whole; but meantime I've got to do a month's suffering without wages or profit—unless I help win that bet, whatever it may be, and get that situation that I am promised. I *should* like to get that; men of their sort have situations in their gift that are worth having.

I got to thinking a good deal about that situation. My hopes began to rise high. Without doubt the salary would be large. It would begin in a month; after that I should be all right. Pretty soon I was feeling first rate. By this time I was tramping the streets again. The sight of a tailorshop gave me a sharp longing to shed my rags, and to clothe myself decently once more. Could I afford it? No; I had nothing in the world but a million pounds. So I forced myself to go on by. But soon I was drifting back again. The temptation persecuted

me cruelly. I must have passed that shop back and forth six times during that manful struggle. At last I gave in; I had to. I asked if they had a misfit suit that had been thrown on their hands. The fellow I spoke to nodded his head toward another fellow, and gave me no answer. I went to the indicated fellow, and he indicated another fellow with *his* head, and no words. I went to him, and he said:

10 "Tend to you presently."

I waited till he was done with what he was at, then he took me into a back room, and overhauled a pile of rejected suits, and selected the rattiest one for me. I put it on. It didn't fit, and wasn't in any way attractive, but it was new, and I was anxious to have it; so I didn't find any fault, but said, with some diffidence:

20 "It would be an accommodation to me if you could wait some days for the money. I haven't any small change about me."

The fellow worked up a most sarcastic expression of countenance, and said:

25 "Oh, you haven't? Well, of course, I didn't expect it. I'd only expect gentlemen like you to carry large change."

I was nettled, and said:

30 "My friend, you shouldn't judge a stranger always by the clothes he wears. I am quite able to pay for this suit; I simply didn't wish to put you to the trouble of changing a large note."



He modified his style a little at that, and said, though still with something of an air:

"I didn't mean any particular harm, but as long as rebukes are going, I might say it wasn't quite your affair to jump to the conclusion that we couldn't change any note that you might happen to be carrying around. On the contrary, we *can*." 5

I handed the note to him, and said:

"Oh, very well; I apologize." 10

He received it with a smile, one of those large smiles which go all around over, and have folds in them, and wrinkles, and spirals, and look like the place where you have thrown a brick in a pond; and then in the act of his taking a glimpse of the bill this smile froze solid, and turned yellow, and looked like those wavy, wormy spreads of lava which you find hardened on little levels on the side of Vesuvius. I never before saw a smile caught like that, and perpetuated. The man stood there holding the bill, and looking like that, and the proprietor hustled up to see what was the matter, and said, briskly: 15

"Well, what's up? what's the trouble? what's wanting?" 20

I said: "There isn't any trouble. I'm waiting for my change."

"Come, come; get him his change, Tod; get him his change." 30

Tod retorted: "Get him his change! It's easy to say, sir; but look at the bill yourself."