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VICTORIAN SHORT STORIES



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VICTORIAN SHORT STORIES

ENGLISH

CLASSICAL LITERATURE

Подготовка текста, комментарии и словарь

Е. Г. Тигонен

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В книге представлены новеллы английских писателей второй половины XIX века — Ч. Диккенса, Р. Киплинга, Т. Харди, Г. Дж. Уэллса, А. Конан Дойла и др. Читатель сможет в полной мере оценить не только слог и стиль авторов, но и саму жизнь Викторианской эпохи.

Приводится полный неадаптированный текст на языке оригинала. Для студентов языковых вузов и всех любителей англоязычной литературы.

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Эпоха, отраженная в новелле



Новеллы, вошедшие в сборник, были написаны во времена правления королевы Виктории, царствовавшей в Англии с 1837 по 1901 год. Бурный рост промышленности, расширение колониальных владений сделали Британскую империю самым могущественным государством в мире. Именно Англию Викторианской эпохи принято называть «старой доброй Англией»: люди были серьезными, браки — постоянными. Вступил в свои права средний класс, и в обществе стали преобладать исповедуемые им ценности. Трезвость, пунктуальность, трудолюбие, экономность и хозяйственность ценились и до правления Виктории, но именно в ее эпоху эти качества стали доминирующей нормой. Пример подала сама королева: ее жизнь до конца была подчинена долгу и семье. Большая часть общества последовала ее примеру.

Ценности и энергия среднего класса легли в основу всех достижений Викторианской эпохи. Правда, его представители обладали и малопривлекательными чертами: мещанской уверенностью в том, что процветание — это вознаграждение за добродетель (а стало быть, неудачники просто не достойны лучшего); доведенным до крайности пуританством в семейной жизни, порождавшим чувство вины и лицемерие.

Викторианская эпоха не очень легко поддается описанию, хотя бы потому, что правление королевы Виктории

оказалось невероятно длинным. Сменялись стили и направления в литературе и искусстве, но оставалось основополагающее мировосприятие. Типичными писателями Викторианской эпохи являются Чарльз Диккенс, Уильям Мейкпис Теккерей, Энтони Троллоп, сестры Бронте, поэтами — Альфред Теннисон, Роберт Браунинг и Мэтью Арнольд, художниками — прерафаэлиты.

Рассказы, собранные под этой обложкой, затрагивают социальные, гуманитарные, политические проблемы, иллюстрируют различные аспекты жизни английского общества середины — второй половины XIX века, даже если действие происходит за пределами Англии (например, как в рассказе Р. Киплинга «Without Benefit of Clergy», в котором события разворачиваются в Индии). Снова и снова авторы напоминают нам, что деньги определяют социальный статус человека: те, у кого они есть, высокомерно и недоверчиво относятся к тем, у кого их нет. Снобизм, выросший на этой почве, проявляется жестко и жестоко (как в рассказе Т. Харди «The Son's Veto»), портит того, кто стоит выше на социальной лестнице, ломает жизнь тому, кто не хочет и не может карабкаться по этой лестнице вверх. А. Конан Дойл, писавший не только о Шерлоке Холмсе и докторе Ватсоне, представлен в книге новеллой «Бразильский кот», где, помимо интриги, читатель находит портрет человека, который стремится подняться вверх, не имея ни талантов, ни денег, ни желания зарабатывать даже на пропитание.

Викторианская эпоха полна противоречий. Это время крайнего оптимизма и крайнего же пессимизма, время строгих моральных правил и время, когда в Лондоне процветала проституция, время триумфа империи и время Джека Потрошителя. Все это самым непосредственным образом отразилось в литературе и искусстве.

William Schwenk Gilbert

My Maiden Brief



Late on a certain May morning, as I was sitting at a modest breakfast in my “residence chambers,” Pump Court, Temple, my attention was claimed by a single knock at an outer door, common to the chambers of Felix Polter, and of myself, Horace Penditton, both barristers-at-law of the Inner Temple.

The outer door was not the only article common to Polter and myself. We also shared what Polter (who wrote farces) was pleased to term a “property” clerk, who did nothing at all, and a “practicable” laundress, who did everything. There existed also a communion of interest in teacups, razors, gridirons, candlesticks, etc.; for although neither of us was particularly well supplied with the necessaries of life¹, each happened to possess the very articles in which the other was deficient. So we got on uncommonly well together, each regarding his friend in the light of an indispensable other self. We had both embraced the “higher walk” of the legal pro-

¹ **with the necessaries of life** — (разг.) предметами первой необходимости

fession, and were patiently waiting for the legal profession to embrace us.

The single knock raised some well-founded apprehensions in both our minds.

“Walker!” said I to the property clerk.

“Sir!”

“If that knock is for me, I’m out, you know.”

“Of course, sir!”

“And Walker!” cried Polter.

“Sir!”

“If it’s for me, I’m not a home!”

Polter always rejoiced if he could manage to make the conversation partake of a Maddisonian Mortonic character.

Mr. Walker opened the door. “Mr. Penditton’s a-breakfasting with the Master of the Rolls, if it’s him you want; and if it isn’t, Mr. Polter’s with the Attorney-General.”

“You don’t say so!”¹ remarked the visitor; “then p’raps you’ll give this to Mr. Penditton, as soon as the Master can make up his mind to part with him.”

And, so saying, the visitor handed Walker a lovely parcel of brief-paper, tied up neatly with a piece of red tape, and minuted:

“Central Criminal Court, May Sessions, 1860. — The Queen on the prosecution of Ann Back *v.*² Elizabeth Briggs. Brief for the prisoner. Mr. Penditton, one guinea. — Poddle and Shaddery, Hans Place.”

¹ **You don’t say so!** — (разг.) Да что вы говорите!

² *v.* — сокр. от лат. *versus*, ПРОТИВ

So it had come at last! Only an Old Bailey¹ brief, it is true; but still a brief. We scarcely knew what to make of it. Polter looked at me, and I looked at Polter, and then we both looked at the brief.

It turned out to be a charge against Elizabeth Briggs, widow, of picking pockets² in an omnibus. It appeared from my “instructions,” that my client was an elderly lady, and religious. On the 2nd of April then last, she entered an Islington omnibus, with the view of attending a tea and prayer meeting in Bell Court, Islington. A woman in the omnibus missed her purse, and accused Mrs. Briggs, who sat on her right, of having stolen it. The poor soul, speechless with horror at the charge, was dragged out of the omnibus, and as the purse was found in a pocket in the left-hand side of her dress, she was given into custody³. As it was stated by the police that she had been “in trouble” before, the infatuate magistrate who examined her committed her for trial.

“There, my boy, your fortune’s made!” said Polter.

“But I don’t see the use of my taking it,” said I; “there’s nothing to be said for her.”

“Not take it? Won’t you, though? I’ll see about that. You shall take it, and you shall get her off, too! Highly respectable old lady — attentive member of well-known

¹ **Old Bailey** — разговорное название самого известного в Британии суда, рассматривающего серьезные преступления против личности

² **widow, of picking pockets** — (разг.) вдовы, которая обчищала карманы

³ **was given into custody** — (разг.) была взята под стражу (арестована)

congregation — parson to speak to her character, no doubt. As honest as you are!”

“But the purse was found on her!”

“Well, sir, and what of that? Poor woman left-handed, and pocket in left of dress. Robbed woman right-handed, and pocket in right of dress. Poor woman sat on right of robbed woman. Robbed woman, replacing her purse, slipped it accidentally into poor woman’s pocket. Ample folds of dress, you know — crinolines overlapping, and all that. Splendid defence for you!”

“Well, but she’s an old hand¹, it seems. The police know her.”

“Police always do. ‘Always know everybody’ — police maxim. Swear anything, they will.”

Polter really seemed so sanguine about it that I began to look at the case hopefully, and to think that something might be done with it. He talked to me with such effect that he not only convinced me that there was a good deal to be said in Mrs. Briggs’s favour, but I actually began to look upon her as an innocent victim of circumstantial evidence, and determined that no effort should be wanting on my part to procure her release from a degrading but unmerited confinement.

Of the firm of Poddle and Shaddery I knew nothing whatever, and how they came to entrust Mrs. Briggs’s case to me I can form no conception. As we (for Polter took so deep a personal interest in the success of Mrs. Briggs’s case that he completely identified himself,

¹ **she’s an old hand** — (разг.) она давно этим занимается (промышляет)

in my mind, with her fallen fortunes) resolved to go to work in a thoroughly businesslike manner, we determined to commence operations by searching for the firm of Poddle and Shaddery in the *Law List*. To our dismay the *Law List* of that year had no record of Poddle, neither did Shaddery find a place in its pages. This was serious, and Polter did not improve matters by suddenly recollecting that he once heard an old Q.C.¹ say that, as a rule, the further west of Temple Bar, the shadier the attorney; so that assuming Polter's friend to have been correct on this point, a firm from Brompton Square whose name did not appear in Mr. Dalbiac's *Law List* was a legitimate object of suspicion.

But Polter, who took a hopeful view of anything which he thought might lead to good farce "situations," and who probably imagined that my first appearance on any stage as counsel for the defence was likely to be rich in suggestions, remarked that they might possibly have been certificated since the publishing of the last *Law List*; and as for the *dictum* about Temple Bar, why, the case of Poddle and Shaddery might be one of those very exceptions whose existence is necessary to the proof of every general rule. So Polter and I determined to treat the firm in a spirit of charity, and accept their brief.

As the May sessions did not commence until the 8th, I had four clear days in which to study my brief and prepare my defence. Besides, there was a murder case,

¹ Q.C. — сокр. от **Queen's Council**, в британской правовой системе адвокат высокого ранга, член Королевского совета

and a desperate burglary or two, which would probably be taken first, so that it was unlikely that the case of the poor soul whose cause I had espoused would be tried before the 12th. So I had plenty of time to master what Polter and I agreed was one of the most painful cases of circumstantial evidence ever submitted to a British jury; and I really believe that by the first day of the May sessions I was intimately acquainted with the details of every case of pocket-picking reported in *Cox's Criminal Cases* and *Buckler's Shorthand Reports*.

On the night of the 11th I asked Bodger of Brazenose, Norton of Gray's Inn, Cadbury of the Lancers, and three or four other men, college chums principally, to drop in¹ at Pump Court, and hear a rehearsal of my speech for the defence, in the forthcoming *cause célèbre*² of the Queen on the prosecution of Ann Back *v.* Elizabeth Briggs. At nine o'clock they began to appear, and by ten all were assembled. Pipes and strong waters³ were produced, and Norton of Gray's was forthwith raised to the Bench by the style and dignity of Sir Joseph Norton, one of the barons of her Majesty's Court of Exchequer; Cadbury, Bodger, and another represented the jury; Wilkinson of Lincoln's Inn was counsel for the prosecution, Polter was clerk of arraigns, and Walker, my clerk, was the prosecutrix.

Everything went satisfactorily: Wilkinson broke down in his speech for the prosecution; his witness

¹ **to drop in** — (разг.) заглянуть; заскочить

² **cause célèbre** — (фр.) громкое дело

³ **strong waters** — (разг.) спиртные напитки

prevaricated and contradicted himself in a preposterous manner; and my speech for the defence was voted to be one of the most masterly specimens of forensic ingenuity that had ever come before the notice of the court; and the consequence was, that the prisoner (inadequately represented by a statuette of the Greek Slave) was discharged, and Norton (who would have looked more like a Baron of the Exchequer if he had looked less like a tipsy churchwarden) remarked that she left the court without a stain upon her character.

The court then adjourned for refreshment, and the conversation took a general turn, after canvassing the respective merits of “May it please your ludship,” and “May it please you, my lud,” as an introduction to a counsel’s speech — a discussion which terminated in favour of the latter form, as being a trifle more independent in its character. I remember proposing that the health of Elizabeth Briggs should be drunk in a solemn and respectful bumper; and as the evening wore on, I am afraid I became exceedingly indignant with Cadbury because he had taken the liberty of holding up to public ridicule an imaginary (and highly undignified) *carte de visite*¹ of my unfortunate client.

The 12th May, big with the fate of Penditton and of Briggs, dawned in the usual manner. At ten o’clock Polter and I drove up in wigs and gowns² to the Old Bailey; as well because we kept those imposing garments

¹ *carte de visite* — (фр.) визитная карточка

² **in wigs and gowns** — (разг.) в париках и балахонах (судейских мантиях)

at our chambers, not having any use for them elsewhere, as to impress passers-by, and the loungers below the court, with a conviction that we were not merely Old Bailey counsel, but had come down from our usual sphere of action at Westminster, to conduct a mere case of more than ordinary complication. Impressed with a sense of propriety of presenting an accurate professional appearance, I had taken remarkable pains with my toilette. I had the previous morning shaved off a flourishing moustache, and sent Walker out for half-a-dozen serious collars, as substitutes for the unprofessional "lay-downs" I usually wore. I was dressed in a correct evening suit, and wore a pair of thin gold spectacles, and Polter remarked, that I looked the sucking bencher to the life. Polter, whose interest in the accuracy of my "get up" was almost fatherly, had totally neglected his own; and he made his appearance in the raggedest of beards and moustaches under his wig, and the sloppiest of cheap drab lounging-coats under his gown.

I modestly took my place in the back row of the seats allotted to the bar; Polter took his in the very front, in order to have the opportunity, at the close of the case, of telling the leading counsel, in the hearing of the attorneys, the name and address of the young and rising barrister who had just electrified the court. In various parts of the building I detected Cadbury, Wilkinson, and others, who had represented judge, jury, and counsel, on the previous evening. They had been instructed by Polter (who had had some experience in "packing" a house) to distribute themselves about the court, and, at the termination of the speech for the

defence, to give vent to their feelings¹ in that applause which is always so quickly suppressed by the officers of a court of justice. I was rather annoyed at this, as I did not consider it altogether legitimate; and my annoyance was immensely increased when I found that my three elderly maiden aunts, to whom I had been foolish enough to confide the fact of my having to appear on the 12th, were seated in state in that portion of the court allotted to friends of the bench and bar, and busied themselves by informing everybody within whisper-shot, that I was to defend Elizabeth Briggs, and that this was my first brief. It was some little consolation, however, to find that the unceremonious manner in which the facts of the cases that preceded mine were explained and commented upon by judge, jury, and counsel, caused those ladies great uneasiness, and indeed compelled them, on one or two occasions, to beat an unceremonious retreat.

At length the clerk of arraigns called the case of Briggs, and with my heart in mouth² I began to try to recollect the opening words of my speech for the defence, but I was interrupted in that hopeless task by the appearance of Elizabeth in the dock.

She was a pale, elderly widow, rather buxom, and remarkably neatly dressed, in slightly rusty mourning. Her hair was arranged in two sausage curls, one on each side of her head, and looped in two festoons over the

¹ **to give vent to their feelings** — (разг.) не скрывать своих чувств; бурно реагировать

² **with my heart in mouth** — (разг.) до смерти напуганный

forehead. She appeared to feel her position acutely, and although she did not weep, her red eyes showed evident traces of recent tears. She grasped the edge of the dock and rocked backwards and forwards, accompanying the motion with a low moaning sound, that was extremely touching. Polter looked back at me with an expression which plainly said, "If ever an innocent woman appeared in that dock, that woman is Elizabeth Briggs!"

The clerk of arraigns now proceeded to charge the jury¹. "Gentlemen of the jury, the prisoner at the bar, Elizabeth Briggs, is indicted for that she did, on 2nd April last, steal from the person of Ann Back a purse containing ten shillings and fourpence, the moneys of the said Ann Back. There is another count to the indictment, charging her with having received the same, knowing it to have been stolen. To both of these counts the prisoner has pleaded 'Not guilty,' and it is your charge to try whether she is guilty or not guilty." Then to the bar, "Who appears in this case?"

Nobody replying in behalf of the crown, I rose and remarked that I appeared for the defence.

A counsel here said that he believed the brief for the prosecution was entrusted to Mr. Porter, but that that gentleman was engaged at the Middlesex Sessions, in a case which was likely to occupy several hours, and that he (Mr. Porter) did not expect that Briggs's case would come on that day.

¹ **to charge the jury** — (юр.) напутствовать присяжных (кратко вводить в курс дела)

A consultation then took place between the judge and the clerk of arraigns. At its termination, the latter functionary said, "Who is the junior counsel present?"

To my horror, up jumped Polter, and said, "I think it's very likely that I am the junior counsel in court. My name is Polter, and I was called last term!"

A titter ran through the crowd, but Polter, whose least fault was bashfulness, only smiled benignly at those around him.

Another whispering between judge and clerk. At its conclusion, the clerk handed a bundle of papers to Polter, saying, at the same time:

"Mr. Polter, his lordship wishes you to conduct the prosecution."

"Certainly," said Polter; and he opened the papers, glanced at them, and rose to address the court.

He began by requesting that the jury would take into consideration the fact that he had only that moment been placed in possession of the brief for the prosecution of the prisoner at the bar, who appeared, from what he could gather from a glance at his instructions, to have been guilty of as heartless a robbery as ever disgraced humanity. He would endeavour to do his duty, but he feared that, at so short a notice¹, he should scarcely be able to do justice to the brief with which he had been most unexpectedly entrusted. He then went on to state the case in a masterly manner, appearing to gather the facts, with which, of course, he was perfectly intimate,

¹ **at so short a notice** — (зд.) поскольку он только что получил дело

from the papers in his hand. He commented on the growing frequency of omnibus robberies, and then went on to say:

“Gentlemen, I am at no loss¹ to anticipate the defence on which my learned friend will base his hope of inducing you to acquit that wretched woman. I don’t know whether it has ever been your misfortune to try criminal cases before, but if it has, you will be able to anticipate his defence as certainly as I can. He will probably tell you, because the purse was found in the left-hand pocket of that miserable woman’s dress, that she is left-handed, and on that account wears her pocket on the left side, and he will then, if I am not very much mistaken, ask the prosecutrix if she is not right-handed, and, lastly, he will ask you to believe that the prosecutrix, sitting on the prisoner’s left, slipped the purse accidentally into the prisoner’s pocket. But, gentlemen, I need not remind you that the facts of these omnibus robberies are always identical. The prisoner is always left-handed, the prosecutrix always is right-handed, and the prosecutrix always does slip the purse accidentally into the prisoner’s pocket, instead of her own. My lord will tell you that this is so, and you will know how much faith to place upon such a defence, should my friend think proper to set it up.” He ended by entreating the jury to give the case their attentive consideration, and stated that he relied confidently on an immediate verdict of “Guilty!” He then sat down, saying to the usher, “Call Ann Back.”

¹ **I am at no loss** — (разг.) у меня нет сомнений

Ann Back, who was in court, shuffled up into the witness-box and was duly sworn¹. Polter then drew out her evidence bit by bit, helping her with leading questions of the most flagrant description. I knew that I ought not to allow this, but I was too horrified at the turn matters had taken² to interfere. At the conclusion of the examination in chief Polter sat down triumphantly, and I rose to cross-examine.

“You are right-handed, Mrs. Back?” (*Laughter.*)

“Oh, yes, sir!”

“Very good. I’ve nothing else to ask you.”

So Mrs. Back stood down, and the omnibus conductor took her place. His evidence was not material, and I declined to cross-examine. The policeman who had charge of the case followed the conductor, and his evidence was to the effect³ that the purse was found in her pocket.

I felt that this witness ought to be cross-examined, but not having anything ready, I allowed him to stand down. A question, I am sorry to say, then occurred to me, and I requested his lordship to allow the witness to be recalled.

“You say you found the purse in her pocket, my man?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Did you find anything else?”

¹ **was duly sworn** — (*разг.*) была приведена к присяге

² **was too horrified at the turn matters had taken** — (*разг.*) был в шоке от того, как повернулось дело

³ **was to the effect** — (*зд.*) подтвердило

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