

## 2018 常州“龙城杯”翻译大奖赛：英译汉原文

Anyone, of any age, reading this volume will see quickly that I do not accept the category of "Children's Literature," which had some use and distinction a century ago, but now all too often is a mask for the dumbing-down that is destroying our literary culture. Most of what is now commercially offered as children's literature would be inadequate fare for any reader of any age at any time. I myself first read nearly everything I have gathered together in this book between the ages of five and fifteen, and I have gone on reading these stories and poems from fifteen to seventy. My title is meant to be precise : What is between these covers is for extremely intelligent children of all ages. Rudyard Kipling, Lewis Carroll, and Edward Lear are blended with Nathaniel Hawthorne, Nicolai Gogol, and Ivan Turgenev, because all of them—in the poems and stories I have chosen—make themselves open to authentic readers of any age. There is nothing here that is difficult or obscure, nothing that will not both illuminate and entertain. If anyone finds a work here that does not yield immediately to their understanding, I would urge them to persevere. It is by extending oneself, by exercising some capacity previously unused that you come to a better knowledge of your own potential. I forbear suggesting any particular story or poem for one age or another because I would like to think of this book as an open field in which the reader will wander and find, for himself or herself, what seems appropriate. These selections offer and will confer delight, and many of

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them will bring even the most solitary reader a sense of companionship.

There are many convenient explanations as to why many children (of all ages) no longer read, or find it difficult to be challenged by what they read. The Age of Information emphasizes the screen—motion picture, television, and personal computer—and the e-book begins to be an alternative to the printed book. My own students at Yale, where I have taught for almost half a century, are as gifted as their forerunners, and yet they have read less. The obstacles to reading are, to some extent, merely a matter of fashion, or of inadequate examples set by parents for children. What is read remains the pragmatic question, the difference that will make a difference.

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I am old-fashioned and romantic enough to believe that many children, given the right circumstances, are natural readers until this instinct is destroyed by the media. The tyranny of the screen threatens any order in which literary value or human wisdom can be preferred to the steady flow of information. It may be an illusion to believe that the magical connection of solitary children to the best books can endure, but such a relationship does go so long a way back that it will not easily expire. The romance of reading, like all experiential romance, depends upon enchantment, and enchantment relies upon the potential of power rather than upon complete knowledge. You are unlikely to fall in love with

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someone, however charming such a person may be, if you have known one another all your lives. What you can know fully will not induce you to fall in love, so that falling in love with a book is not wholly unlike falling in love with a person.

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In Ovid's Pygmalion myth, adapted by George Bernard Shaw for his play and motion picture (which later became the musical *My Fair Lady*), the sculptor Pygmalion is unable to bring his beautiful statue, Galatea, to life. The goddess Venus does that, for him. I take this (as Shaw did not) as a parable for reading: The poem or story will not come alive for you if you do not fall in love with it. If asked my favorite story or poem in this book, I would become bewildered in attempting a reply. In some moods I might vote for Hawthorne's "Feathertop" among the stories, and for "The Two Spirits." "Feathertop" is so light it seems almost delicate, like the fragile scarecrow who gives the tale its title. And yet its reverberations take us all the way from the creation of Adam to the kind of despair that leads Feathertop to immolate himself. Shelley's "The Two Spirits" haunts one with the memories of first love, and the endless wonder as to how that could have turned out. But moods vary, and today I prefer Pushkin's "The Queen of Spades" and Edward Lear's "The Dong with a Luminous Nose." In "The Queen of Spades" horror suddenly erupts in the most decorous of contexts while "The Dong with a Luminous Nose" both satirizes and yet

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more piercingly laments the dreadful sadness of what it means to suffer  
an unrequited love.