

**Бестселлер на все времена**

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Джером К. Джером, Ч. Диккенс, | Jerome K. Jerome, Ch. Dickens  
Льюис Кэрролл и другие | Lewis Carroll and others

**Что такое  
английский юмор?  
Сборник рассказов  
Best Humorous  
Stories**



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Чтение оригинальных произведений — простой и действенный способ погрузиться в языковую среду и совершенствоваться в иностранном языке. Серия «Бестселлер на все времена» — это возможность улучшить свой английский, читая лучшие произведения англоязычных авторов, любимые миллионами читателей. Для лучшего понимания текста в книгу включены краткий словарь и комментарии, поясняющие языковые и лингвострановедческие вопросы, исторические и культурные реалии описываемой эпохи.

Что такое английский юмор? Это тонкая игра слов, великолепная ирония, занятные наблюдения, удачные пародии, невероятные сюжеты и удивительно смешные рассказы о повседневных событиях и явлениях. Великолепный язык и блистательные каламбуры не только поднимут настроение, но и помогут улучшить английский.

Книга предназначена для тех, кто изучает английский язык на продолжающем или продвинутом уровне и стремится к его совершенствованию.

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# BEST HUMOROUS STORIES

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*Arthur Conan Doyle*  
Behind the Times

My first interview with Dr. James Winter was under dramatic circumstances. It occurred at two in the morning in the bedroom of an old country house. I kicked him twice on the white waistcoat and knocked off his gold spectacles, while he with the aid of a female accomplice stifled my angry cries in a flannel petticoat and thrust me into a warm bath. I am told that one of my parents, who happened to be present, remarked in a whisper that there was nothing the matter with my lungs. I cannot recall how Dr. Winter looked at the time, for I had other things to think of, but his description of my own appearance is far from flattering. a fluffy head, a body like a trussed goose, very bandy legs, and feet with the soles turned inwards — those are the main items which he can remember.

From this time onwards the epochs of my life were the periodical assaults which Dr. Winter made upon me. He vaccinated me; he cut me for an abscess; he blistered me for mumps. It was a world of peace and he the one dark cloud that threatened. But at last there came a time of real illness — a time when I lay for months

together inside my wickerwork-basket bed, and then it was that I learned that that hard face could relax, that those country-made creaking boots could steal very gently to a bedside, and that that rough voice could thin into a whisper when it spoke to a sick child.

And now the child is himself a medical man, and yet Dr. Winter is the same as ever. I can see no change since first I can remember him, save that perhaps the brindled hair is a trifle whiter, and the huge shoulders a little more bowed. He is a very tall man, though he loses a couple of inches from his stoop. That big back of his has curved itself over sick beds until it has set in that shape. His face is of a walnut brown, and tells of long winter drives over bleak country roads, with the wind and the rain in his teeth. It looks smooth at a little distance, but as you approach him you see that it is shot with innumerable fine wrinkles like a last year's apple. They are hardly to be seen when he is in repose; but when he laughs his face breaks like a starred glass, and you realise then that though he looks old, he must be older than he looks.

How old that is I could never discover. I have often tried to find out, and have struck his stream as high up as George IV and even the Regency<sup>1</sup>, but without ever getting quite to the source. His mind must have been open to impressions very early, but it must also have closed early, for the politics of the day have little interest for him, while he is fiercely excited about questions which are entirely prehistoric. He shakes

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<sup>1</sup> Георг IV (1762–1830), король Соединенного королевства Великобритании и Ирландии, занял трон в 1820 г. после смерти своего отца Георга III. Он выступал регентом в период душевной болезни короля, время регентства длилось с 1811 по 1820.

his head when he speaks of the first Reform Bill<sup>1</sup> and expresses grave doubts as to its wisdom, and I have heard him, when he was warmed by a glass of wine, say bitter things about Robert Peel and his abandoning of the Corn Laws<sup>2</sup>. The death of that statesman brought the history of England to a definite close, and Dr. Winter refers to everything which had happened since then as to an insignificant anticlimax.

But it was only when I had myself become a medical man that I was able to appreciate how entirely he is a survival of a past generation. He had learned his medicine under that obsolete and forgotten system by which a youth was apprenticed to a surgeon, in the days when the study of anatomy was often approached through a violated grave. His views upon his own profession are even more reactionary than in politics. Fifty years have brought him little and deprived him of less. Vaccination was well within the teaching of his youth, though I think he has a secret preference for inoculation. Bleeding he would practise freely but for public opinion. Chloroform he regards as a dangerous innovation, and he always clicks with his tongue when it is mentioned. He has even been known to say vain things about Laennec<sup>3</sup>, and to refer to the stethoscope as 'a new-fangled French toy.' He carries one in his hat

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<sup>1</sup> Акт о народном представительстве 1832 г. был актом Парламента, который вносил большие изменения в избирательную систему Англии и Уэльса.

<sup>2</sup> Введение тарифов на импорт зерна позволило удержать цены. Смысл заключался в поддержке британских производителей, однако цены на зерно оставались высокими. Недостаток продовольствия привел к голоду в Ирландии в 1845–1852 гг., и премьер-министр сэр Роберт Пил добился отмены законов о зерне (1846).

<sup>3</sup> Лаеннек — Рене Лаэннек (1781–1826), французский врач, изобретатель стетоскопа.

out of deference to the expectations of his patients, but he is very hard of hearing, so that it makes little difference whether he uses it or not.

He reads, as a duty, his weekly medical paper, so that he has a general idea as to the advance of modern science. He always persists in looking upon it as a huge and rather ludicrous experiment. The germ theory of disease set him chuckling for a long time, and his favourite joke in the sick room was to say, 'Shut the door or the germs will be getting in.' As to the Darwinian theory, it struck him as being the crowning joke of the century. 'The children in the nursery and the ancestors in the stable,' he would cry, and laugh the tears out of his eyes.

He is so very much behind the day that occasionally, as things move round in their usual circle, he finds himself, to his bewilderment, in the front of the fashion. Dietetic treatment, for example, had been much in vogue in his youth, and he has more practical knowledge of it than any one whom I have met. Massage, too, was familiar to him when it was new to our generation. He had been trained also at a time when instruments were in a rudimentary state, and when men learned to trust more to their own fingers. He has a model surgical hand, muscular in the palm, tapering in the fingers, 'with an eye at the end of each.' I shall not easily forget how Dr. Patterson and I cut Sir John Sirwell, the County Member, and were unable to find the stone. It was a horrible moment. Both our careers were at stake. And then it was that Dr. Winter, whom we had asked out of courtesy to be present, introduced into the wound a finger which seemed to our excited senses to be about nine inches long, and hooked out the stone at the end of it. 'It's always well to bring one

in your waistcoat-pocket,' said he with a chuckle, 'but I suppose you youngsters are above all that.'

We made him president of our branch of the British Medical Association, but he resigned after the first meeting. 'The young men are too much for me,' he said. 'I don't understand what they are talking about.' Yet his patients do very well. He has the healing touch — that magnetic thing which defies explanation or analysis, but which is a very evident fact none the less. His mere presence leaves the patient with more hopefulness and vitality. The sight of disease affects him as dust does a careful housewife. It makes him angry and impatient. 'Tut, tut, this will never do!' he cries, as he takes over a new case. He would shoo Death out of the room as though he were an intrusive hen. But when the intruder refuses to be dislodged, when the blood moves more slowly and the eyes grow dimmer, then it is that Dr. Winter is of more avail than all the drugs in his surgery. Dying folk cling to his hand as if the presence of his bulk and vigour gives them more courage to face the change; and that kindly, windbeaten face has been the last earthly impression which many a sufferer has carried into the unknown.

When Dr. Patterson and I — both of us young, energetic, and up-to-date — settled in the district, we were most cordially received by the old doctor, who would have been only too happy to be relieved of some of his patients. The patients themselves, however, followed their own inclinations — which is a reprehensible way that patients have — so that we remained neglected, with our modern instruments and our latest alkaloids, while he was serving out senna and calomel<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> calomel, senna — слабительные.



to all the countryside. We both of us loved the old fellow, but at the same time, in the privacy of our own intimate conversations, we could not help commenting upon this deplorable lack of judgment. 'It's all very well for the poorer people,' said Patterson. 'But after all the educated classes have a right to expect that their medical man will know the difference between a mitral murmur and a bronchitic rale. It's the judicial frame of mind, not the sympathetic, which is the essential one.'

I thoroughly agreed with Patterson in what he said. It happened, however, that very shortly afterwards the epidemic of influenza broke out, and we were all worked to death. One morning I met Patterson on my round, and found him looking rather pale and fagged out. He made the same remark about me. I was, in fact, feeling far from well, and I lay upon the sofa all the afternoon with a splitting headache and pains in every joint. As evening closed in, I could no longer disguise the fact that the scourge was upon me, and I felt that I should have medical advice without delay. It was of Patterson, naturally, that I thought, but somehow the idea of him had suddenly become repugnant to me. I thought of his cold, critical attitude, of his endless questions, of his tests and his tappings. I wanted something more soothing — something more genial.

'Mrs. Hudson,' said I to my housekeeper, 'would you kindly run along to old Dr. Winter and tell him that I should be obliged to him if he would step round?'

She was back with an answer presently. 'Dr. Winter will come round in an hour or so, sir; but he has just been called in to attend Dr. Patterson.'



*Charles Dickens*

## The Ghost of Art

I am a bachelor, residing in rather a dreary set of chambers in the Temple. They are situated in a square court of high houses, which would be a complete well, but for the want of water and the absence of a bucket. I live at the top of the house, among the tiles and sparrows. Like the little man in the nursery-story, I live by myself, and all the bread and cheese I get — which is not much — I put upon a shelf. I need scarcely add, perhaps, that I am in love, and that the father of my charming Julia objects to our union.

I mention these little particulars as I might deliver a letter of introduction. The reader is now acquainted with me, and perhaps will condescend to listen to my narrative.

I am naturally of a dreamy turn of mind; and my abundant leisure — for I am called to the Bar — coupled with much lonely listening to the twittering of sparrows, and the pattering of rain, has encouraged that disposition. In my 'top set' I hear the wind howl on a winter night, when the man on the ground floor believes it is perfectly still weather. The dim lamps with which our Honourable Society (supposed to be as yet unconscious of the new discovery called Gas) make the horrors of the staircase visible, deepen the gloom which generally settles on my soul when I go home at night.

I am in the Law, but not of it. I can't exactly make out what it means. I sit in Westminster Hall sometimes (in character) from ten to four; and when I go

out of Court, I don't know whether I am standing on my wig or my boots.

It appears to me (I mention this in confidence) as if there were too much talk and too much law — as if some grains of truth were started overboard into a tempestuous sea of chaff.

All this may make me mystical. Still, I am confident that what I am going to describe myself as having seen and heard, I actually did see and hear.

It is necessary that I should observe that I have a great delight in pictures. I am no painter myself, but I have studied pictures and written about them. I have seen all the most famous pictures in the world; my education and reading have been sufficiently general to possess me beforehand with a knowledge of most of the subjects to which a Painter is likely to have recourse; and, although I might be in some doubt as to the rightful fashion of the scabbard of King Lear's sword, for instance, I think I should know King Lear tolerably well, if I happened to meet with him.

I go to all the Modern Exhibitions every season, and of course I revere the Royal Academy. I stand by its forty Academical articles almost as firmly as I stand by the thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England. I am convinced that in neither case could there be, by any rightful possibility, one article more or less.

It is now exactly three years — three years ago, this very month — since I went from Westminster to the Temple, one Thursday afternoon, in a cheap steam-boat. The sky was black, when I imprudently walked on board. It began to thunder and lighten immediately afterwards, and the rain poured down in torrents. The deck seeming to smoke with the wet, I went below; but so many passengers were there, smoking too,

that I came up again, and buttoning my pea-coat, and standing in the shadow of the paddle-box, stood as upright as I could, and made the best of it.

It was at this moment that I first beheld the terrible Being, who is the subject of my present recollections.

Standing against the funnel, apparently with the intention of drying himself by the heat as fast as he got wet, was a shabby man in threadbare black, and with his hands in his pockets, who fascinated me from the memorable instant when I caught his eye.

Where had I caught that eye before? Who was he? Why did I connect him, all at once, with the Vicar of Wakefield<sup>1</sup>, Alfred the Great<sup>2</sup>, Gil Blas<sup>3</sup>, Charles the Second<sup>4</sup>, Joseph and his Brethren<sup>5</sup>, the Fairy Queen<sup>6</sup>, Tom Jones<sup>7</sup>, the Decameron of Boccaccio<sup>8</sup>,

<sup>1</sup> Vicar of Wakefield — «Векфильдский священник», роман ирландского писателя Оливера Голдсмита (1730–1774), опубликованный в 1766 г., очень популярный в Викторианскую эпоху.

<sup>2</sup> Alfred the Great — Альфред Великий (849–899), король Уэссекса, единственный английский монарх по прозвищу «Великий». Среди его деяний — социальные и образовательные реформы, военные победы в битвах с датчанами, основание английского флота.

<sup>3</sup> Gil Blas — Жиль Блаз, герой романа «История Жиль Бласа из Сантьяны» (1715–1735) Алена-Рене Лесажа.

<sup>4</sup> Charles the Second — Карл II (1630–1685), король Англии, Шотландии и Ирландии с 1660 по 1685 г.; его коронация в 1660 г. привела к концу правления республиканцев в Англии.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph and his Brethren — из Библии: Иосиф был продан в рабство своими братьями, которые ему завидовали.

<sup>6</sup> The Fairy Queen — рыцарская поэма Эдмунда Спенсера.

<sup>7</sup> Tom Jones — главный герой романа Генри Филдинга (1707–1754) «История Тома Джонса, найденыша» (1749).

<sup>8</sup> the Decameron of Boccaccio — сборник из 100 любовных новелл, созданный итальянским писателем Джованни Боккаччо (1313–1375), и написанный как будто бы со слов разных рассказчиков.

Tam O'Shanter<sup>1</sup>, the Marriage of the Doge of Venice with the Adriatic<sup>2</sup>, and the Great Plague of London<sup>3</sup>? Why, when he bent one leg, and placed one hand upon the back of the seat near him, did my mind associate him wildly with the words, 'Number one hundred and forty-two, Portrait of a gentleman'? Could it be that I was going mad?

I looked at him again, and now I could have taken my affidavit that he belonged to the Vicar of Wakefield's family. Whether he was the Vicar, or Moses, or Mr. Burchill, or the Squire, or a conglomeration of all four, I knew not; but I was impelled to seize him by the throat, and charge him with being, in some fell way, connected with the Primrose blood. He looked up at the rain, and then — oh Heaven! — he became Saint John. He folded his arms, resigning himself to the weather, and I was frantically inclined to address him as the Spectator, and firmly demand to know what he had done with Sir Roger de Coverley<sup>4</sup>.

The frightful suspicion that I was becoming deranged returned upon me with redoubled force. Meantime, this awful stranger, inexplicably linked to my

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<sup>1</sup> Tam O'Shanter — Тэм О'Шентер, главный герой поэмы шотландского поэта Роберта Бернса (1759–1796); стихотворные строки включают английский и шотландский языки, а также фольклорные мотивы.

<sup>2</sup> the Marriage of the Doge of Venice with the Adriatic — венчание венецианского дожа с Адриатикой, ежегодная церемония, которая символизировала господство Венеции на море.

<sup>3</sup> the Great Plague of London — самая страшная эпидемия чумы в Англии (1665–1666). Лондон потерял около 20% населения.

<sup>4</sup> Sir Roger de Coverley — сэр Роджер де Коверли — выдуманный персонаж, типичный представитель мелкопоместного дворянства. Джозеф Аддинсон создал этот образ, чтобы приписать ему авторство писем, опубликованных в журнале The Spectator.

distress, stood drying himself at the funnel; and ever, as the steam rose from his clothes, diffusing a mist around him, I saw through the ghostly medium all the people I have mentioned, and a score more, sacred and profane.

I am conscious of a dreadful inclination that stole upon me, as it thundered and lightened, to grapple with this man, or demon, and plunge him over the side. But, I constrained myself — I know not how — to speak to him, and in a pause of the storm, I crossed the deck, and said:

‘What are you?’

He replied, hoarsely, ‘A Model.’

‘A what?’ said I.

‘A Model,’ he replied. ‘I sets to the profession for a bob a- hour.’ (All through this narrative I give his own words, which are indelibly imprinted on my memory.)

The relief which this disclosure gave me, the exquisite delight of the restoration of my confidence in my own sanity, I cannot describe. I should have fallen on his neck, but for the consciousness of being observed by the man at the wheel.

‘You then,’ said I, shaking him so warmly by the hand, that I wrung the rain out of his coat-cuff, ‘are the gentleman whom I have so frequently contemplated, in connection with a high-backed chair with a red cushion, and a table with twisted legs.’

‘I am that Model,’ he rejoined moodily, ‘and I wish I was anything else.’

‘Say not so,’ I returned. ‘I have seen you in the society of many beautiful young women;’ as in truth I had, and always (I now remember) in the act of making the most of his legs.

‘No doubt,’ said he. ‘And you’ve seen me along with wares of flowers, and any number of table-kivers, and antique cabinets, and various gammon.’

‘Sir?’ said I.

‘And various gammon,’ he repeated, in a louder voice. ‘You might have seen me in armour, too, if you had looked sharp. Blessed if I ha’n’t stood in half the suits of armour as ever came out of Pratt’s shop: and sat, for weeks together, a-eating nothing, out of half the gold and silver dishes as has ever been lent for the purpose out of Storrses, and Mortimerses, or Garrardses, and Davenportseses.’

Excited, as it appeared, by a sense of injury, I thought he would never have found an end for the last word. But, at length it rolled sullenly away with the thunder.

‘Pardon me,’ said I, ‘you are a well-favoured, well-made man, and yet — forgive me — I find, on examining my mind, that I associate you with — that my recollection indistinctly makes you, in short — excuse me — a kind of powerful monster.’

‘It would be a wonder if it didn’t,’ he said. ‘Do you know what my points are?’

‘No,’ said I.

‘My throat and my legs,’ said he. ‘When I don’t set for a head, I mostly sets for a throat and a pair of legs. Now, granted you was a painter, and was to work at my throat for a week together, I suppose you’d see a lot of lumps and bumps there, that would never be there at all, if you looked at me, complete, instead of only my throat. Wouldn’t you?’

‘Probably,’ said I, surveying him.

‘Why, it stands to reason,’ said the Model. ‘Work another week at my legs, and it’ll be the same thing.’