

 房龙经典·英文原版

THE STORY OF  
MANKIND  
THE STORY OF  
INVENTION  
人类的故事·发明的故事

❀ 英文原版 ❀

[美] 房 龙 ⊙ 著



中国城市出版社  
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## 出版前言

亨德里克·威廉·房龙 (Hendrik Willem van Loon, 1882 - 1944)，著名荷兰裔美国作家、历史学家、科普作家和文学家。

房龙于 1882 年 1 月出生于荷兰鹿特丹。幼年时期的房龙由于家庭内部暴力而感受不到温暖，8 岁就进入寄宿学校，10 岁起沉溺于史学。20 岁以后，房龙到美国康奈尔大学、德国慕尼黑大学求学，获得博士学位，但他并没有成为书斋里的学究。他当过编辑、记者和老师，屡经漂泊，同时苦练写作。房龙还是个多才多艺的人，从小就对历史、地理、船舶、绘画和音乐感兴趣，而且终生未曾放弃。他能用 10 种文字写作并与人交流，还拉得一手小提琴，善绘画，他著作中几乎所有的插图都是自己绘制。

1921 年，房龙出版《人类的故事》，使他一举成名，从此迎来了创作的丰收期。之后，《发明的故事》、《圣经的故事》、《美国的故事》、《房龙地理》（又名《人类的家园》）、《人类的艺术》、《宽容》（又名《人类的解放》）、《与世界伟人谈心》、《伦勃朗传》、《荷兰共和国兴衰史》、《太平洋的故事》等几十部著作陆续出版，几乎本本畅销，饮誉世界，许多国家都翻译出版了他的作品。可以说，房龙一生出版的 30 余种著作，将人类各方面的历史几乎全都复述了一遍。

房龙在学问和文学上坚持文人主义的立场，并逐渐形成了一套自己的理解和表达方式。他认为：“凡学问一到穿上专家的拖鞋，躲进了它的‘精舍’，而把它鞋子上的泥土作肥料去的时候，它就宣布自己预备死了。与人隔绝的知识生活是引到毁灭去的。”因此，深入浅出地将艰深枯燥的学问化作轻松风趣的精神食粮，成了房龙作品的显著特征。

房龙的作品基本围绕人类生存与发展的最本质问题，贯穿其中的精神是科学、宽容和进步，其目标是向人类的无知与偏见挑战，从而将知识和真理普及为人所共知的常识。

当然，由于房龙坚持人文主义立场，在有些问题上不免有失偏颇甚至谬误；同时，由于他的生活时代所限，使他在有些问题上的见解不可避免地受到局限，如他在《房龙地理》中错误地将西藏放到“中亚高地”，而不是放到“中国”这一章来讲述；又比如，他以地理环境决定论来解释日本近代的侵略行为。所有这些，读者在阅读时当然能够甄别。

房龙的主要作品在 20 世纪 20 年代就开始被介绍给我国读者。历史学家和著名报人曹聚仁回忆说，他早年曾在一次候车时偶然买到《人类的故事》中译本，“那天下午，我发痴似的，车来了，在车上读，到了家中，把晚饭吞下去，就靠在床上读，一直读到天明，走马观花地总算看完了。这 50 年中，我总是看了又看，除了《儒林外史》、《红楼梦》，没有其他的书这么吸引我了”。我国著名文学家郁达夫也曾评价房龙的作品说：“房龙的笔，有一种魔力……是将文学家的手法，拿来用以讲述科学……无论大人小孩，读他书的人都觉得娓娓忘倦了。”

房龙作品在我国至今仍然畅销不衰。显然，对于我国学习英语的广大读者来说，亲切而不失幽默，同时又饱含人文气息的房龙作品原著是难得的阅读文本。因此，我们推出了房龙作品的英文原著，希望对读者有所裨益。

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## 献给杰米

“一本没有插图的书，有什么用呢？”

——艾丽丝



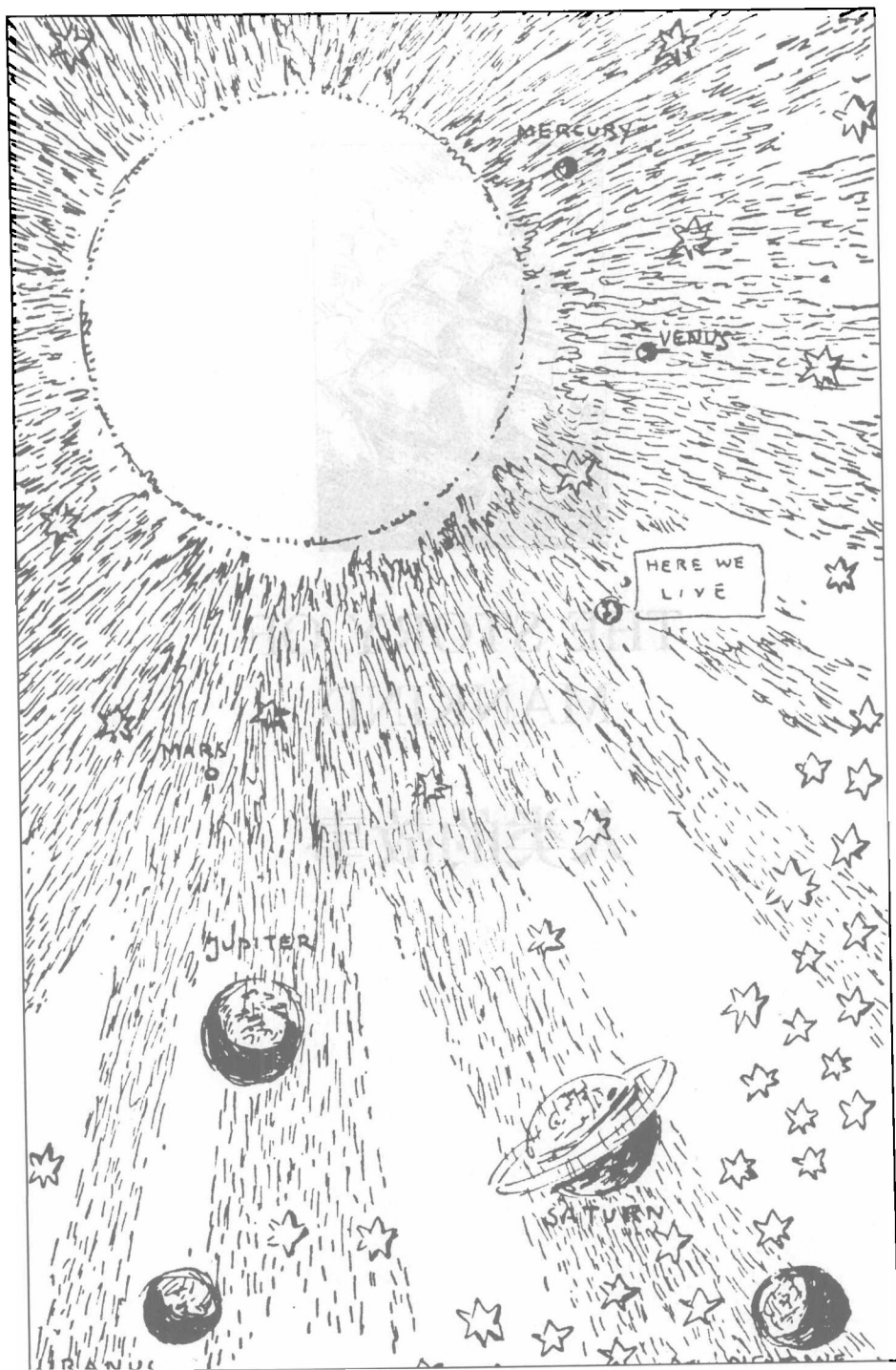


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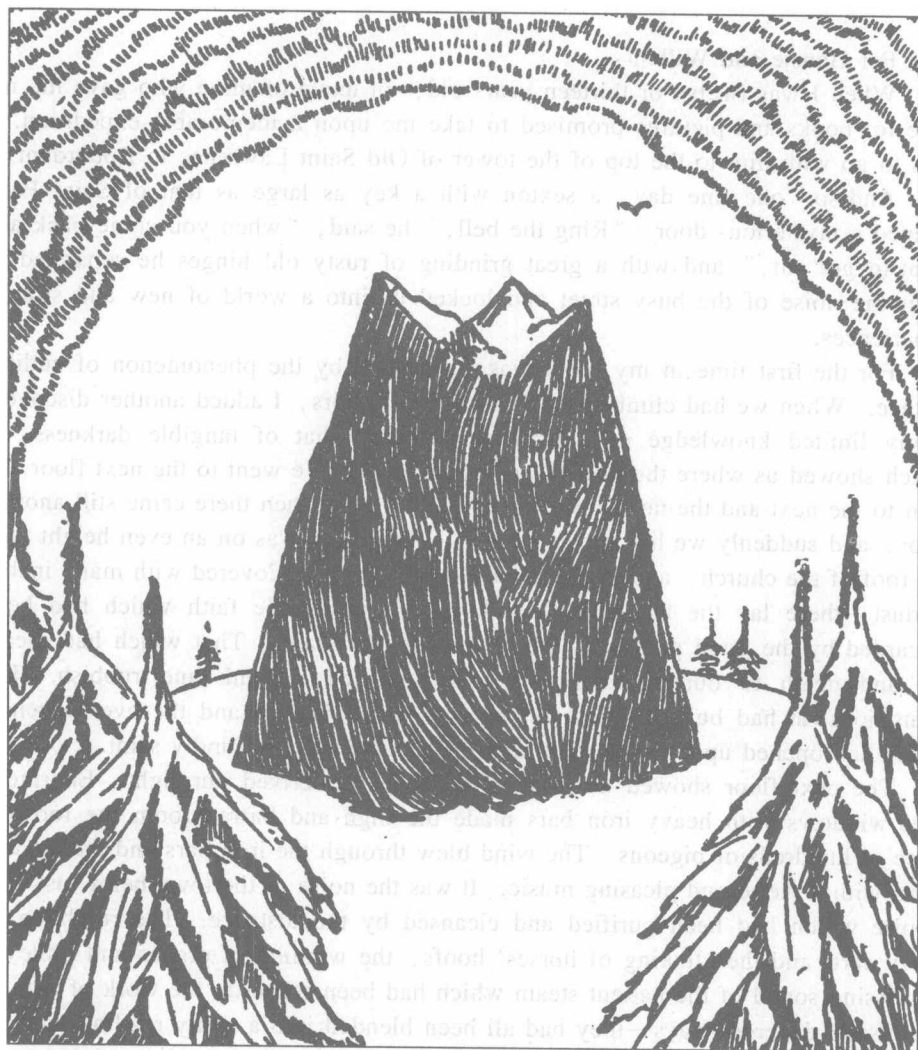
# THE STORY OF MANKIND

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人类的故事



我们的历史发生在浩瀚宇宙中一个小小的星球上



在北方一个叫斯维斯约德的土地上，耸立着一块巨石。它高100英里、宽100英里。每隔1000年，就有一只小鸟飞到这块石头上磨自己的喙。

巨石就这样被磨光之后，永恒中才过了一天。

## FOREWORD

For Hansje and Willem:

When I was twelve or thirteen years old, an uncle of mine who gave me my love for books and pictures promised to take me upon a memorable expedition. I was to go with him to the top of the tower of Old Saint Lawrence in Rotterdam.

And so, one fine day, a sexton with a key as large as that of Saint Peter opened a mysterious door. "Ring the bell," he said, "when you come back and want to get out," and with a great grinding of rusty old hinges he separated us from the noise of the busy street and locked us into a world of new and strange experiences.

For the first time in my life I was confronted by the phenomenon of audible silence. When we had climbed the first flight of stairs, I added another discovery to my limited knowledge of natural phenomena—that of tangible darkness. A match showed us where the upward road continued. We went to the next floor and then to the next and the next until I had lost count and then there came still another floor, and suddenly we had plenty of light. This floor was on an even height with the roof of the church, and it was used as a storeroom. Covered with many inches of dust, there lay the abandoned symbols of a venerable faith which had been discarded by the good people of the city many years ago. That which had meant life and death to our ancestors was here reduced to junk and rubbish. The industrious rat had built his nest among the carved images and the ever watchful spider had opened up shop between the outspread arms of a kindly saint.

The next floor showed us from where we had derived our light. Enormous open windows with heavy iron bars made the high and barren room the roosting place of hundreds of pigeons. The wind blew through the iron bars and the air was filled with a weird and pleasing music. It was the noise of the town below us, but a noise which had been purified and cleansed by the distance. The rumbling of heavy carts and the clinking of horses' hoofs, the winding of cranes and pulleys, the hissing sound of the patient steam which had been set to do the work of man in a thousand different ways—they had all been blended into a softly rustling whisper which provided a beautiful background for the trembling cooing of the pigeons.

Here the stairs came to an end and the ladders began. And after the first ladder (a slippery old thing which made one feel his way with a cautious foot) there was a new and even greater wonder, the town-clock. I saw the heart of time. I could hear the heavy pulsebeats of the rapid seconds—one—two—three—up to sixty. Then a sudden quivering noise when all the wheels seemed to stop and another minute had been chopped off eternity. Without pause it began again—one—two—three—until at last after a warning rumble and the scraping of many



wheels a thunderous voice, high above us, told the world that it was the hour of noon.

On the next floor were the bells. The nice little bells and their terrible sisters. In the centre the big bell, which made me turn stiff with fright when I heard it in the middle of the night telling a story of fire or flood. In solitary grandeur it seemed to reflect upon those six hundred years during which it had shared the joys and the sorrows of the good people of Rotterdam. Around it, neatly arranged like the blue jars in an old-fashioned apothecary shop, hung the little fellows, who twice each week played a merry tune for the benefit of the countryfolk who had come to market to buy and sell and hear what the big world had been doing. But in a corner—all alone and shunned by the others—a big black bell, silent and stern, the bell of death.

Then darkness once more and other ladders, steeper and even more dangerous than those we had climbed before, and suddenly the fresh air of the wide heavens. We had reached the highest gallery. Above us the sky. Below us the city—a little toy-town, where busy ants were hastily crawling hither and thither, each one intent upon his or her particular business, and beyond the jumble of stones, the wide greenness of the open country.

It was my first glimpse of the big world.

Since then, whenever I have had the opportunity, I have gone to the top of the tower and enjoyed myself. It was hard work, but it repaid in full the mere physical exertion of climbing a few stairs.

Besides, I knew what my reward would be. I would see the land and the sky, and I would listen to the stories of my kind friend the watchman, who lived in a small shack, built in a sheltered corner of the gallery. He looked after the clock and was a father to the bells, and he warned of fires, but he enjoyed many free hours and then he smoked a pipe and thought his own peaceful thoughts. He had gone to school almost fifty years before and he had rarely read a book, but he had lived on the top of his tower for so many years that he had absorbed the wisdom of that wide world which surrounded him on all sides.

History he knew well, for it was a living thing with him. "There," he would say, pointing to a bend of the river, "there, my boy, do you see those trees? That is where the Prince of Orange cut the dikes to drown the land and save Leyden." Or he would tell me the tale of the old Meuse, until the broad river ceased to be a convenient harbour and became a wonderful highroad, carrying the ships of De Ruyter and Tromp upon that famous last voyage, when they gave their lives that the sea might be free to all.

Then there were the little villages, clustering around the protecting church which once, many years ago, had been the home of their Patron Saints. In the distance we could see the leaning tower of Delft. Within sight of its high arches, William the Silent had been murdered and there Grotius had learned to construe his first Latin sentences. And still further away, the long low body of the church of Gouda, the early home of the man whose wit had proved mightier than the armies