

Little Warren

【美】路易莎·梅·奥尔科特/Louisa May Alcott◎著

箫婕◎译

蒙木◎导读

美国人为青少年专门编写

大陆专家审订并导读



小妇人

Women

尔科特 / Louisa May Alcott◎著

箫婕◎译

蒙木◎导读



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顾 问: 任容容 李文俊 张佩芬 张 玲 柳鸣九 郑克鲁 高中雨 傅惟慈

编 委 会: 乔治・亨德森/ George Henderson

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总 策 划: 对伟见 编辑统筹: 高立志

约翰·史密斯,美国田纳西州人,学者,曾任亚利桑纳州立大学青少年文学研究中心资深顾问,2004年应邀到中国台湾从事英又教学工作。他认为:"中国学生若想提高英文水平,必须从阅读英文经典开始。"因此,他和几位美国专家一起遴选了在英美校园最受欢迎的青少读物30余种,并根据现代流行英语加以改写,成为这套"美国编译的青少经典"。该丛书首先在台湾出版,大受欢迎。中国致公出版社特地引进,并根据大陆读者习惯重新审订,并邀请相关专家撰写导读。

所有时代、所有女孩的天路历程

"我希望,每年多一些麦子,少一些稗子。"

这是《小妇人》最后的话。作者路易莎·梅·奥尔科特(Louisa May Alcott, 1832~1888),美国作家。 其父亲布郎逊·奥尔科特是马萨诸塞州康科德一位自 学成才的哲学家,思想家爱默生的追随者。他一生沉 迷于对理想的追求,以至无力担负家庭生活。维持生 计的担子先是落到他的妻子身上,而后又落到二女儿 路易莎·奥尔科特身上。

路易莎教过书,做过佣人、裁缝、护士,21岁开始发表诗歌及小品。1868年,接受一位出版商的建议撰写一部关于"女孩子的书",她便根据孩提的记忆,写成这本以美国南北战争为背景,以19世纪美国新英格兰地区的一个普通家庭四个姐妹之间的生活琐事为蓝本的带有自传色彩的家庭小说——《小妇人》。书中,路易莎把自己描写成乔·马奇,她的姐妹安娜、亚碧、伊丽莎白便分别成为梅格、艾美、贝思。该著一经出版即打动了无数读者,尤其是女性读者,被美国国会图书馆评为世界最畅销的优秀作品之一、美国最优秀的家庭小说之一。这部历久不衰的作品被后来的评论家许为"卓越的女性主义之作",一部"女性自我内战、

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传统与自由之争"的经典作品,成了有史以来最受欢迎的青少读物之一,又被改编成卡通、电影及电视剧而广为传播。

路易莎成名后,继续撰写小说和故事,并投身于妇 女选举运动和禁酒运动。美国内战期间她在华盛顿做过 军队救护人员,后来,她还担任过一家儿童刊物的编辑。

在这本小说中,马奇家的四姐妹——乔、梅格、艾美、 贝思个性不同, 然而个个都是生活的艺术家, 努力想做 个好女孩。当然,"每个人生活中都会有不幸的雨点落下, 一些日子会变得黑暗、哀伤、凄凉"。欢笑和眼泪交替 出现在她们快乐的生活中。小说受到爱默生的影响。强 调了个人尊严与自立自律的观念。爱默生谈人的价值时 说:"每个真正的人都是一个事业、一个国家和一个时 代:他们需要无限的空间、无数的人和无限的时间去完 成自己的使命。"他还特别强调人的自信和自助:"相信 你自己的思想,相信你内心深处认为是正确的,对所有 的人也是正确的——那就是天才。……一个人应该学会 发现和观察自己内心深处闪烁的微弱的光亮。"奥尔科 特自己说:"我要用自己的头脑做武器,在这艰难的世 间开创出一条路来。"马奇家的四姐妹、虽然理想和命 运都不尽相同, 但是她们都自强自立, 有着对爱的忠诚 以及对亲情的渴望。

小说故事情节简单,内容平实细腻,却感人至深。 所有时代的少女成长过程中所要面对与经历的,都可以 在这本书中找到:初恋的甜蜜和烦恼,感情与理智的差 异,理想和现实的距离,贫穷与富有的矛盾,这些经历和情感体验都曾经、正在并将要发生在每一个少女走向成熟的过程之中。

就艺术成就而言,《小妇人》也许无法媲美《安娜·卡列尼娜》《包法利夫人》或者她同时代的狄金森 (Emily Elizabeth Dickinson 1830~1886)的诗歌,但它所提倡的诚实、善良、尊严、宽容、勇敢等都是人类永远尊崇和追求的美德和信仰。这赋予这本书超越时代和国度的生命力。作者强调善行和幸福的渴望是引导我们排除万难、改正错误、走向心灵宁静的向导。心灵宁静才是真正的天国之城。

显然,本书强调要理智地控制自己感情,带有强烈的基督教新教伦理色彩,新教伦理也是美国的立国之本。就作者思想而言,爱情对于女人非常紧要,它是本书的主题之一,但爱情也并非生命中唯一值得追求的东西,而是每个人成长的一个部分,是生活中很严肃而又现实的事情。

最后我想引用一下作者所推崇的爱默生关于读书的 三条实用准则与读者共勉,这也是笔者推荐《小妇人》 这部名著的原因:"第一,决不阅读任何写出来不到一 年的书;第二,不是名著不读;第三,只读你喜欢的书。"

蒙木,图书策划人、书评人,主要编写作品包括《美利坚开国风云》《五四风云》《民国换晚清》等。

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1. Playing Pilgrims

During a winter afternoon the four March girls were sitting by the fireside talking. It was a comfortable room. Though the furniture was plain and the carpet almost worn out, a few good pictures hung upon the walls, and there were several shelves filled with books. Flowers stood in pots near the windows, and there was a pleasant feeling of peace over all.

The firelight shone on the girls as they talked. Margaret, called Meg by the family, was sixteen years old and very pretty. Fifteen-year-old Josephine, or Jo, was tall and thin, with long thick hair—her only beauty,

一个冬天的午后,马奇家的四个女孩子围坐在火炉边聊天。那是一间很舒服的屋子,虽然家具简陋,地毯破旧,可是墙上挂着几幅精致的画,书架上也摆满了各种书籍。花儿插在靠近窗口的花瓶里,到处都洋溢着愉快、安详的气氛。

女孩子们在聊天,炉火映照在她们的身上。玛格丽特,家人昵称为梅格,十六岁,长得很漂亮。十五岁的约瑟芬,或叫她乔,身材高挑而纤瘦,留了一头长长的浓密的头发,她常说这是她唯一漂亮的地方。

she used to say. She wanted to write stories, and cared little for the things that girls of her age usually care for. Next came Elizabeth, or Beth, a quiet bright—eyed girl of thirteen, who loved music and was loved by everybody. What she most desired was to play the piano well. Amy, the youngest, was twelve, and, in her own opinion, a very important person. She had golden hair and blue eyes, and wanted to be an artist.

The girls were talking about Christmas; what they were going to do, and what presents they would be given. Meg was speaking, "You know, girls, that Mother proposed us not having presents this Christmas, because it is going to be a hard winter for everybody, and she thinks we ought not to spend money for plea-

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她想写小说,所以很少关心像她这样年龄的女孩子们 所常关心的事情。接下来的就是伊丽莎白了,或者叫 她贝思,她是一个安静并有一对闪亮的眼睛的十三岁 少女,她喜爱音乐,大家都很喜欢她。她最大的愿望 是把钢琴弹好。艾美是年纪最小的一个,只有十二岁, 依她自己的说法,她是一个很重要的角色,她有着金 黄色的头发和蓝色的眼睛,想成为一个艺术家。

女孩们正在讨论着在圣诞节她们要准备什么节目,以及她们将会得到什么礼物。梅格说:"妹妹们,你们要知道,母亲提议我们这个圣诞节不要送礼物,因为对每一个人来说,这将是一个很艰辛的冬天。她

sure when our men are suffering in the army."

"It won't be like Christmas without presents," said Jo.

"It is so awful to be poor," said Meg, looking at the old dress she was wearing.

"We have each got a dollar," said Jo, "but I think that would not do much good to the army even if we gave it. So I will agree not to expect a present from Mother or from you others, but I would like to buy a story book for myself which I have wanted for so long."

"I planned to spend my dollar on new music," said Beth.

"I shall get a box of good drawing pencils. I really need them," said Amy.

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认为,前方的士兵正在军队中饱受苦难,我们不应该 为了欢乐而浪费金钱。"

"没有礼物就不像是圣诞节了。" 乔说道。

"贫穷是如此可怕。"梅格看着她穿着的旧衣服说。

"我们每个人都有一块钱," 乔说,"我想就算我们都捐献出来,对军队也没有多大帮助,因此我并不期望从母亲或你们那里得到礼物,倒是想为我自己买一本渴望已久的小说。"

"我打算把我的钱花在新的乐谱上。"贝思说道。

"我要去买一盒好的图画笔,我真的需要它。"艾 美说道。 "Well," said Jo, "Mother did not say anything about how we should spend our money, and she won't want us to give up everything. Let us each buy what we want and have some fun. I am sure we work hard enough to earn it."

"Yes," replied Meg, who went out daily to teach the children of some rich friends.

"You don't have nearly such a hard time as I do," said Jo. She worked as companion and help the old Miss March. "How would you like to stay for hours with an old lady who is never satisfied, who is always complaining, and who worries you until you feel like crying or jumping out of the window?"

"哎," 乔说,"妈妈从不过问我们要怎样花我们的钱,而且她也不希望我们放弃任何一样东西。让我们各人买各人需要的东西,并从中获得一些乐趣。我确信我们都已经努力地赚到这点钱了。"

"是的。"梅格回答说。她每天都要去给一些有钱 人的孩子们上课。

"你们并不像我这样过着痛苦的时光。"乔说道。她的工作是陪伴老马奇小姐,并且服侍她。"你怎能想象连续几小时陪伴着一位永远不会满足,而且始终在抱怨的老妇人,这会让你心烦得快要哭出来,甚至想从窗口跳出去。"

"Well, I suppose it's wrong to complain, but I do think that washing dishes and keeping house too is the worst work in the world. It makes my hands so rough and stiff, I can't play the piano well at all." Beth looked at her rough hands as she spoke.

"I don't believe any of you suffer as I do," cried Amy, "for you don't have to go to school and be with girls you don't like, who laugh at your dresses, and say unkind things to you about your father."

The sisters continued talking in this way, until the clock struck six, the time for their mother to return from her visiting, and they all became more cheerful to welcome her. Meg lit the lamp, Beth put her mother's soft shoes to warm by the fire, Amy got out of the

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"好了好了!我知道发牢骚是不对的,可是我想洗盘子和整理房间也是世界上最糟的工作。这使得我的双手变得如此的粗糙和僵硬,让我根本无法把钢琴弹好。"贝思一边看着她那双粗糙的手一边说道。

"我不相信你们之中有谁像我那样受苦,"艾美叫道,"因为你们不需要到学校去,和那些你不喜欢、嘲笑你的衣服,又说你父亲坏话的女孩们待在一起。"

姊妹们继续说着这些事,直到时钟敲了六下,这 时她们的母亲拜访朋友就要回来了,她们快乐地准备 迎接她。梅格点上了灯;贝思把她母亲的软鞋放在炉 边烘暖;没有人要求艾美做什么,她就离开了那张舒 comfortable chair without being asked, and Jo forgot how tired she was as she held the shoes nearer the fire.

"They are quite worn out. Mother must have a new pair."

"I thought I would get her some with my dollar," said Beth.

"No. I shall," cried Amy.

"I'm the eldest," began Meg, but Jo went on.

"I take the place of the man of the family now Father is away, and I shall provide the shoes. He told me to take special care of mother while he was away."

Then Beth said,

适的椅子; 乔也忘记了自己如何疲倦, 而把鞋子移到 更靠近炉边的地方。

"这双鞋马上就要破了,妈妈需要一双新鞋子。"

"我决定用我的钱帮她买一双。" 贝思说道。

"不!我来买。"艾美叫着说。

"我是年纪最大的。"梅格刚一开口,就被乔打断 了。

"父亲不在家,我代替了家中男主人的地位,应 由我来买鞋。他吩咐我在他不在家的时候,更加要照 顾母亲。"

然后贝思说:

"Let us each get Mother something for Christmas, and nothing for ourselves."

"That's good of you, dear," said Jo, "now what shall we get?"

They all thought for a minute. Then Meg, looking at her own pretty hands, said, "I shall give her a pair of gloves."

"Army shoes, best to be had," cried Jo.

"Some pretty handkerchiefs," said Beth.

"I shall buy her a little bottle of scent, Mother likes it, and it won't cost much, and I shall have some money left to buy my pencils," said Amy.

\triangle \triangle

"我们每人都给妈妈买个圣诞节的礼物吧,我们自己就不买了。"

"好极了,亲爱的,"乔说,"我们现在要买些什么呢?"

她们想了一会儿,然后梅格看着自己美丽的双手 说:"我要买一副手套给她。"

"我要买最好的军鞋。" 乔叫道。

"我买几条漂亮的手绢。" 贝思说道。

"我要买一小瓶香水给她,妈妈喜欢它,而且也不需要花太多的钱,我还可以用剩余的钱来买我的画 笔。"艾美说道。 Having decided what presents they would give, Jo said that they must now think about practicing their parts in a play to be acted on Christmas night.

"I don't mean to act any more after this time," said Meg, "I'm getting too old for such things." But Meg really loved acting.

"You are the best actress of us all and must not give up acting, and I know you never will, Meg, while you can walk about in a silk dress and wear false jewels," said Jo. "Now, Amy, come here and practise the fainting scene. You are much too stiff in that."

"I can't do it, Jo, because I've never seen anybody faint, and I don't like falling on the floor. If I can go

* * *

决定了各自要送的礼物之后, 乔说她们现在必须 要排练她们在圣诞夜演出的戏中所扮演的角色了。

"这是我最后一次演出了,"梅格说,"我太大了, 不能再做这样的事了。"不过梅格真的很喜欢演戏。

"你是我们当中最优秀的演员,一定不能放弃演戏,我知道,在你还能穿着丝质衣服,戴着人造珠宝,四处走动的时候,梅格,你永远不会放弃的。"乔说:"艾美,现在到这边来排练晕倒的那一幕,这个动作你总是太僵硬了一点。"

"乔,我没办法演,因为我从来没有看过任何人 晕倒,而且我也不喜欢倒在地上。要是我能轻易地倒 "Do it this way, Amy: hold your hands together and stagger across the room, crying out, 'Save me, save me." and away went Jo with a very real cry of fear. Amy tried to copy her sister, but she could not act well.

"Oh dear!" said Jo, "that's no use. You must do the best you can, and, if the audience laughs, don't blame me." "Oh, Jo, I don't know how you can write and act such splendid things," said Beth, who believed that her sister was wonderfully clever in everything.

"Its the best play we've had yet," said Meg, and the girls went on talking and laughing, until the door opened and a voice said, "I'm glad to find you so

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下去,我会倒下去的。否则,我情愿倒在一张椅子上。"

"艾美,这样做:把双手握在一起,蹒跚地走过房间,大叫'救命呀!救命呀!'"于是,乔发出一声非常逼真的惊叫走过去。艾美想模仿她的姐姐,但她就是演不好。

"哎,天啊!"乔说,"那是没用的,你必须尽力去做,如果观众嘲笑起来,你可不要怪我。""哎,乔,我没想到你会写出并演出这样绝妙的故事来。"贝思说,她相信她的姊妹们样样事情都是绝顶聪明的。

"这是我们演过的最好的剧本呢!"梅格说。于 是女孩们继续谈笑着,一直到门开了传来一个声音说: