

“小屋”丛书

农家子

(英语注释读物)



FARMER BOY

上海教育出版社

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【美】劳拉·英格尔·维尔德 著

刘葆宏 万培德 主编 翁鹤年 注释



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前 言

“小屋”丛书是美国著名的儿童文学作品，是描述十九世纪中叶美国拓荒者一家的生活的长篇家世小说。全套共八册，每册都有独立完整的内容。这八册书是：

1. LITTLE HOUSE IN THE BIG WOODS 大森林里的小屋，

2. LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE 大草原上的小屋，

3. FARMER BOY 农家子，

4. ON THE BANKS OF PLUM CREEK 在李子河的岸上，

5. BY THE SHORES OF SILVER LAKE 在银湖畔，

6. THE LONG WINTER 漫长的冬天，

7. LITTLE TOWN ON THE PRAIRIE 大草原上的小镇，

8. THESE HAPPY GOLDEN YEARS 欢快的黄金年代。

“小屋”丛书初版以来，已经再版几十次，拥有许多读者，并且根据此丛书已制成了优秀的电视系列片广泛放映。此外，还引起许多人对它的内容和主人公进行专门研究。

本书作者就是书中的主人公劳拉·英格尔·威尔德夫人。她是美国著名的儿童文学作家，1867年劳拉生于威斯康星州

一个拓荒者的家庭里。她从小跟随父母亲坐着大篷马车先后在美国中西部明尼苏达、堪萨斯、达科他等州的未开发地区进行拓荒。她在致读者的信中自述她是“经历了书中发生的每一件事。”自从1894年她的一家定居在密苏里后，她陆续回忆写出了“小屋”丛书及其他回忆过去年代的生活的书籍，深受美国读者的欢迎。

劳拉在密苏里的旧居，现今已成为“劳拉·英格尔·维尔德故居和博物馆”，对外开放。馆内至今保持着同她生前完全一样的布置，并陈列着书中提及的许多物品。劳拉的家庭当时在达科他州德斯梅的土地、界石、供观察测量用的棚屋、劳拉读书的学校等也都辟作游览地点，供人参观，深受人们的欢迎。

维尔德夫人的这套小说是现实主义自传体小说，基本如实地描写了美国历史上一个特定阶段的某个侧面。维尔德夫人卒于1957年，享年九十。但本丛书所写仅限于她的前半生，即十九世纪后半期的拓荒情景。

英国人在北美移民定居起于十七世纪初，早期移民受英皇统治，北美还是英国的殖民地。但是，他们于1776年宣布独立，成立了美利坚合众国。到了十九世纪初，美国北方出现了资本主义的工业革命，但是南方还是蓄奴制的农业社会。南北矛盾不断加剧，最终导致了1861—1865年的南北战争。这场内战以北方胜利告终。从此，资本主义生产方式不但在北方占优势，而且向南方和中西部迅速扩展。在这以前，经济、政治、文化都集中在东部沿海，但是，此后中西部在全国所起的作用却越来越大了。小说描写的就是在南北战争以后向中西部移民拓荒的生活。读者可以从中看到早期拓荒者以一家一户为单位开荒种地、伐木建屋的情景，也能看到后来的城镇在大草原上兴起以及农业开始实现机械化的景象。

这套丛书还带有强烈的理想主义色彩。它以深厚的感情歌颂了普通美国人的勤劳、勇敢、诚实和乐观主义的品质，歌颂了亲人之间的爱和邻居、朋友、甚至陌生人之间的互助精神。理想与现实有时难免有距离，但它却有鼓舞人们前进和启示人们探索、追求美好生活的积极作用。因此，这套丛书长期以来受到人们的特别爱好。

本书内容生动活泼，文字朴实流畅。作者在描述生活方式、劳动过程时，十分具体精确；在抒情写景时，却又细腻深刻。读者可以从中学到广泛涉及生活各方面的用语和地道的表达方式，以提高自己的英语水平。同时，又可以从这套书中学到一些美国的历史和地理知识，了解到美国人民在早期开荒移民时期与自然界的暴风雨、蝗虫、野兽等作斗争的情形；了解到他们砍伐森林、开垦土地、种植作物、畜养牛羊、建造自己家园的艰苦劳动；以及拓荒者日常家庭生活、文娱活动、节日团聚的欢乐情景。书中确如作者所说：“既有阳光，又有阴影”。读者还能从中体会到美国劳动人民不畏艰难、勇敢创业的精神，他们诚实、耐劳、勤奋、俭朴而又充满欢快的乐观精神。

这套丛书适合高中或大学低年级学生作为课外泛读材料，对于英语爱好者当然同样适用。为了便于读者独立阅读，我们对原文进行了比较详细的注释，书后并附有词汇表。本丛书图文并茂，插图如实地反映了当时的真实情景。参加注释工作的有：陈黛云同志及上海外国语学院附属上海外国语学校叶永、翁鹤年、张慧芬、杨性义、荣新民、姚颖白、忻韦廉等老师。我们还请华东师大外语系俞苏美副教授对全书进行了仔细的审校。

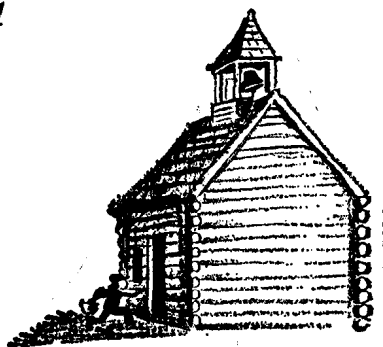
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Chapter 1



SCHOOL DAYS

IT WAS January in northern New York State¹, sixty-seven years ago. Snow lay deep every-where. It loaded the bare limbs of oak and maples and beeches, it bent the green boughs of cedars and spruces down into the drifts². Billows of snow covered the fields and the stone fences.

Down a long road through the woods a little boy trudged to school, with his big brother Royal³ and his two sisters, Eliza Jane⁴ and Alice⁵. Royal was thirteen years old, Eliza Jane was twelve, and Alice was ten. Almanzo⁶ was the youngest of all, and this was his first going-to-school, because he was not quite nine years old.

He had to walk fast to keep up with the others, and he had to carry the dinner-pail.

"Royal ought to carry it," he said. "He's bigger

than I be⁷."

Royal strode ahead, big and manly in boots, and Eliza Jane said:

"No, Manzo⁸. It's your turn to carry it now, because you're the littlest⁹."

Eliza Jane was bossy. She always knew what was best to do, and she made Almanzo and Alice do it.

Almanzo hurried behind Royal, and Alice hurried behind Eliza Jane, in the deep paths made by bobsled runners¹⁰. On each side the soft snow was piled high. The road went down a long slope, then it crossed a little bridge and went on for a mile through the frozen woods to the school-house.

The cold nipped Almanzo's eyelids and numbed his nose¹¹, but inside his good woolen clothes he was warm. They were all made from the wool of his father's sheep. His underwear was creamy white, but mother had dyed the wool for his outside clothes.

Butternut hulls had dyed the thread for his coat and his long trousers. Then mother had woven it, and she had soaked and shrunk the cloth into heavy, thick fullcloth. Not wind nor cold nor even a drenching rain could go through the good fullcloth that mother made¹².

For Almanzo's waist she had dyed fine wool as red as a cherry¹³, and she had woven a soft, thin cloth. It was light and warm and beautifully red.

Almanzo's long brown pants buttoned to his red

waist with a row of bright brass buttons, all around his middle¹⁴. The waist's collar buttoned snugly up to his chin¹⁵, and so did his long coat of brown fullcloth¹⁶. Mother had made his cap of the same brown fullcloth, with cozy ear-flaps that tied under his chin. And his red mittens were on a string that went up the sleeves of his coat and across the back of his neck. That was so he couldn't lose them.

He wore one pair of socks pulled snug over the legs of his underdrawers¹⁷, and another pair outside the legs of his long brown pants, and he wore moccasins. They were exactly like the moccasins that Indians¹⁸ wore.

Girls tied heavy veils over their faces when they went out in winter. But Almanzo was a boy, and his face was out in the frosty air. His cheeks were red as apples and his nose was redder than a cherry, and after he had walked a mile and a half he was glad to see the schoolhouse.

It stood lonely in the frozen woods, at the foot of Hardscrabble Hill¹⁹. Smoke was rising from the chimney, and the teacher had shoveled a path through the snow drifts to the door²⁰. Five big boys were scuffling in the deep snow by the path.

Almanzo was frightened when he saw them. Royal pretended not to be afraid, but he was²¹. They were the big boys from Hardscrabble Settlement²², and everybody was afraid of them.

They smashed little boys' sleds, for fun²³. They'd²⁴ catch a little boy and swing him by his legs, then let him go headfirst²⁵ into the deep snow. Sometimes they made two little boys fight each other, though the little boys didn't want to fight and begged to be let off²⁶.

These big boys were sixteen or seventeen years old and they came to school only in the middle of the winter term. They came to thrash the teacher and break up the school. They boasted that no teacher could finish the winter term in that school, and no teacher ever had²⁷.

This year the teacher was a slim, pale young man. His name was Mr. Corse²⁸. He was gentle and patient, and never whipped little boys because they forgot how to spell a word. Almanzo felt sick inside²⁹ when he thought how the big boys would beat Mr. Corse. Mr. Corse wasn't big enough to fight them.

There was a hush in the schoolhouse and you could hear the noise the big boys were making outside. The other pupils stood whispering together by the big stove in the middle of the room. Mr. Corse sat at his desk. One thin cheek rested on his slim hand³⁰ and he was reading a book. He looked up and said pleasantly,

"Good morning."

Royal and Eliza Jane and Alice answered him politely, but Almanzo did not say anything. He stood by the desk, looking at Mr. Corse. Mr. Corse smiled at him and said,

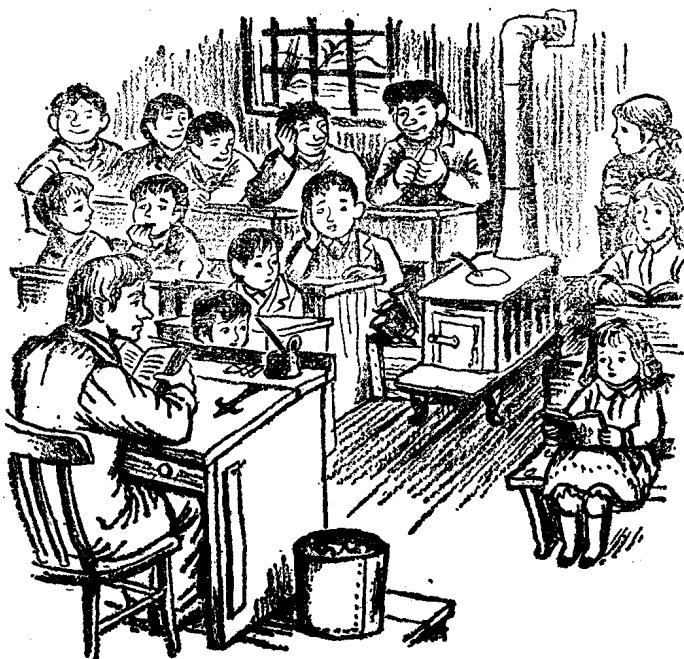
"Do you know I'm going home with you tonight?" Almanzo was too troubled to answer³¹. "Yes," Mr. Corse said. "It's your father's turn³²."

Every family in the district boarded the teacher for two weeks³³. He went from farm to farm till he had stayed two weeks at each one. Then he closed school for that term.

When he said this, Mr. Corse rapped on his desk with his ruler; it was time for school to begin. All the boys and girls went to their seats. The girls sat on the left side of the room and the boys sat on the right side, with the big stove and wood-box in the middle between them. The big ones sat in the back seats, the middle-sized ones in the middle seats, and the little ones in the front seats. All the seats were the same size. The big boys could hardly get their knees under their desks, and the little boys couldn't rest their feet on the floor³⁴.

Almnazo and Miles Lewis³⁵ were the primer class³⁶, so they sat on the very front seat and they had no desk. They had to hold up their primers in their hands.

Then Mr. Corse went to the window and tapped on it. The big boys clattered into the entry³⁷, jeering and loudly laughing. They burst the door open with a big noise and swaggered in. Big Bill Ritchie³⁸ was their leader. He was almost as big as Almanzo's father; his fists were as big as Almanzo's father's fists. He stamped the snow from his feet and noisily tramped to a back seat. The



four other boys made all the noise they could, too.

Mr. Corse did not say anything.

No whispering was permitted in school, and no fidgeting⁹⁹. Everyone must be perfectly still and keep his eyes fixed on his lesson. Almanzo and Miles held up their primers and tried not to swing their legs. Their legs grew so tired that they ached, dangling from the edge of the seat. Sometimes one leg would kick suddenly, before Almanzo could stop it. Then he tried to pretend that nothing had happened, but he could feel Mr. Corse looking at him.

In the back seats the big boys whispered and scuffled and slammed their books. Mr. Corse said sternly:

"A little less disturbance, please⁴⁰."

For a minute they were quiet, then they began again. They wanted Mr. Corse to try to punish them. When he did, all five of them would jump on him⁴¹.

At last the primer class was called, and Almanzo could slide off the seat and walk with Miles to the teacher's desk. Mr. Corse took Almanzo's primer and gave them words to spell.

When Royal had been in the primer class, he had often come home at night with his hand stiff and swollen⁴². The teacher had beaten the palm with a ruler because Royal did not know his lesson. Then Father said,

"If the teacher has to thrash you again, Royal, I'll give you a thrashing you'll remember⁴³."

But Mr. Corse never beat a little boy's hand with his ruler. When Almanzo could not spell a word, Mr. Corse said,

"Stay in at recess⁴⁴ and learn it."

At recess the girls were let out first. They put on their hoods and cloaks and quietly went outdoors. After fifteen minutes, Mr. Corse rapped on the window and they came in, hung their wraps in the entry, and took their books again. Then the boys could go out for fifteen minutes.

They rushed out shouting into the cold. The first

out⁴⁵ began snowballing the others. All that had sleds⁴⁶ scrambled up Hardscrabble Hill; they flung themselves, stomach-down, on the sleds and swooped down the long, steep slope⁴⁷. They upset into the snow; they ran and wrestled and threw snowballs and washed one another's faces with snow, and all the time they yelled as loud as they could.

When Almanzo had to stay in his seat at recess, he was ashamed because he was kept in with the girls.

At noontime everyone was allowed to move about the schoolroom and talk quietly. Eliza Jane opened the dinner-pail on her desk. It held bread-and-butter and sausage, doughnuts and apples, and four delicious apple-turnovers, their plump crusts filled with melting slices of apple and spicy brown juice⁴⁸.

After Almanzo had eaten every crumb of his turnover and licked his fingers, he took a drink of water from the pail with a dipper in it, on a bench in the corner. Then he put on his cap and coat and mittens and went out to play.

The sun was shining almost overhead. All the snow was a dazzle of sparkles⁴⁹, and the woodhaulers were coming down Hardserabble Hill. High on the bobsleds piled with logs⁵⁰, the men cracked their whips⁵¹ and shouted to their horses, and the horses shook jingles from their string of bells.

All the boys ran shouting to fasten their sleds to

the bobsleds' runners, and boys who had not brought their sleds climbed up and rode on the loads of wood.

They went merrily past the schoolhouse and down the road. Snowballs were flying thick⁵². Up on the loads the boys wrestled, pushing each other off into the deep drifts. Almanzo and Miles rode shouting on Miles' sled.

It did not seem a minute since they left the schoolhouse⁵³. But it took much longer to go back. First they walked, then they trotted, then they ran, panting. They were afraid they'd be late. Then they knew they were late. Mr. Corse would whip them all.

The schoolhouse stood silent⁵⁴. They did not want to go in, but they had to. They stole in quietly⁵⁵. Mr. Corse sat at his desk and all the girls were in their places, pretending to study. On the boys' side of the room, every seat was empty.

Almanzo crept to his seat in the dreadful silence. He held up his primer and tried not to breathe so loud. Mr. Corse did not say anything.

Bill Ritchie and the other big boys didn't care. They made all the noise they could, going to their seats⁵⁶. Mr. Corse waited until they were quiet. Then he said:

"I will overlook your tardiness this one time⁵⁷. But do not let it happen again."

Everybody knew the big boys would be tardy again. Mr. Corse could not punish them because they could thrash him, and that was what they meant to do⁵⁸.