



The Story of My Life 我生活的故事

[美] 海伦·凯勒 著
林志豪 译

华文出版社

鼓舞人类的精神读本 世界无与伦比的杰作

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CHAPTER 1

LIGHT AND VOICE

光 明 和 声 音

带着一种诚惶诚恐的心情，我开始写我生活的故事。我的童年被一层浓雾般的帷幕笼罩着，如今我要揭开它，但却心有疑虑，犹豫不决。写自传往往是很难的，由于时过境迁，事实和想象经常混淆在一起，难以辨认。描绘以前的经历，难免不知不觉地掺入了自己的想象。一些生动的往事不自觉地从我脑海中跳出，而另一些“监狱般的阴影却停滞在那里”。孩童时代，其他的一些酸甜苦辣也早已失却了往日的辛酸，渐渐消退；当经历了更多的新奇刺激后，我早年受教育时的一些至关重要的事件也已忘了。因此，为避免拖沓冗长，我将只尽力呈现那些对我来说最有趣和最重要的片断。

1880年6月27日，我出生在亚拉巴马州北部的一个小镇——塔斯甘比亚镇。

我的父系祖先来自瑞士卡斯帕·凯勒家族，移民定居在美国的马里兰州。其中一位瑞士祖先在苏黎世竟然是聋哑教育专家，他曾写过一本关于聋哑教育方面的书。谁会料到，他竟然会有一个像我这样又盲又聋又哑的后人。谁又敢说国王的祖先里不会有人曾是别人的奴隶；而奴隶的祖先里也许有人曾做过国王呢！

我的祖父，也就是卡斯帕·凯勒的儿子，自从他来到亚拉



巴马州的这块大土地后，整个家族就在这里定居下来。据说，祖父每年都要骑马从塔斯甘比亚镇到费城，购置家里和农场所需的物品。途中所写的家信生动而详实地记述了他的历次旅行，许多信都被珍藏至今。

我的祖母是拉斐特的一位助手亚历山大·莫尔的女儿，是早期弗吉尼亚殖民地的一位总督亚历山大·斯波茨伍德的孙女。她还是罗勃特·E. 李的二表妹。



海伦·凯勒出生的常春藤小屋

仆人睡觉的小屋。那时候，依照南方人的习惯，他们会在自己的屋子旁边再加盖一间房子，以备不时之需。南北战争之后，父亲也盖了这样一间屋子，在他同我母亲结婚后住进了这间小屋。它被葡萄、爬藤蔷薇和金银花遮盖着，从园子里看去，整个小屋就像是一座用树枝搭成的凉亭。小

我的父亲亚瑟·凯勒曾是南北战争时的南军上尉。我的母亲凯特·亚当斯是他的第二任妻子，比父亲小很多岁。母亲的祖父，本杰明·亚当斯，与苏珊娜·古德休结婚，并且在马萨诸塞州的纽贝里住了很多年。他们的儿子查理·亚当斯出生于马萨诸塞州的纽贝里，后来迁往阿肯色州的赫勒纳。美国内战爆发时，他代表南方作战，曾担任旅长，他与露西·海伦·艾弗里特结婚。海伦·艾弗里特与爱德华·艾弗里特和爱德华·艾弗里特·黑尔博士属于同一个家族。战争结束后，他们搬往田纳西州的孟菲斯。

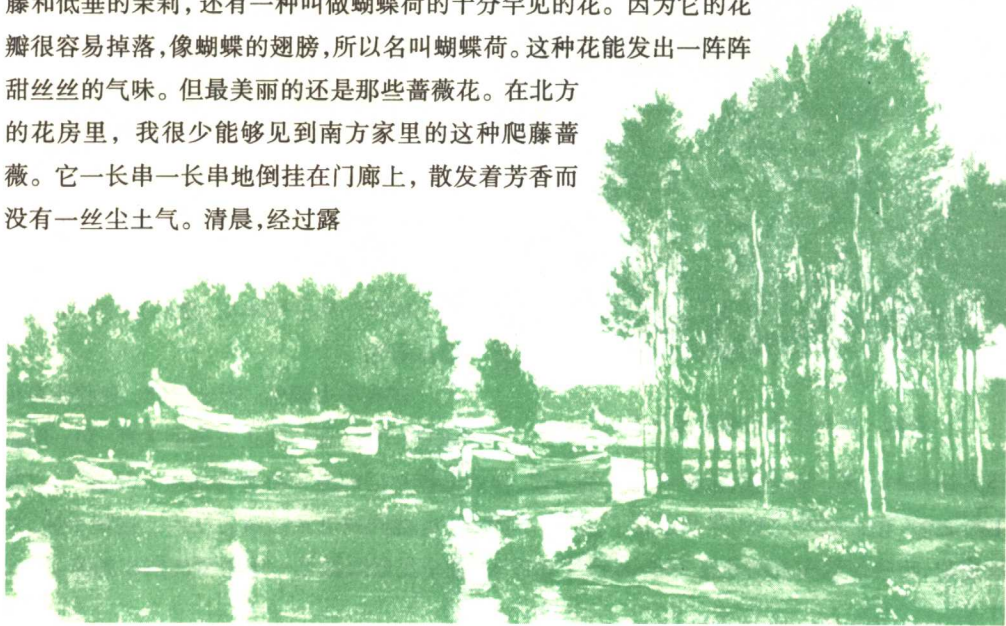
在我失去视觉、听觉以前，我们住在很小的房子里，有一间正方形的大屋，和一间供



门廊也藏在黄蔷薇和南方茯苓花的花丛里，成了蜂鸟和蜜蜂的世界。

凯勒家的老宅，离我们这个蔷薇凉亭不过几步，以前整个家族都住在那里。由于我们家和周围茂密的树木、篱笆都被美丽的绿藤所覆盖，所以邻人们都称我们家为“绿色家园”。这个旧式的花园简直是我童年时代的天堂。

在家庭老师到来之前，我经常沿着坚硬的方型黄杨木树篱慢慢地摸索，凭着自己的嗅觉，寻找初开的紫罗兰和百合花。有时，在发了一通脾气后，我也会独自到这里来寻求慰藉。我总是把炙热的脸庞藏在凉气沁人的树叶和草丛之中，去平静我烦躁不安的心。置身于这绿色花园里，真是令人心旷神怡。我会兴致勃勃地漫游，有时我触到那美丽的藤蔓，摸到了绿叶，闻到了花香，就认出那是一直蔓延到花园尽头，覆盖了那倒塌的亭子的藤蔓。这里有爬在地上的卷须藤和低垂的茉莉，还有一种叫做蝴蝶荷的十分罕见的花。因为它的花瓣很容易掉落，像蝴蝶的翅膀，所以名叫蝴蝶荷。这种花能发出一阵阵甜丝丝的气味。但最美丽的还是那些蔷薇花。在北方的花房里，我很少能够见到南方家里的这种爬藤蔷薇。它一长串一长串地倒挂在门廊上，散发着芳香而没有一丝尘土气。清晨，经过露



水的沐浴,它们是如此柔软,如此高洁,我不禁常想,上帝御花园里的曝光兰,也不过如此吧!

如同别的小生命一样,我的出生也是简单而普通的。我呱呱坠地,睁开了双眼。就像每个家庭迎接第一个孩子时一样,大家都充满喜悦。因为是家里降生的第一个孩子,名字不可随意乱起。每个人都把这事儿挂在心上,难免要费一番唇舌。父亲希望以他最尊敬的祖先的名字“米尔德丽德·坎贝尔”做我的名字,而后不再发表意见,最后还是母亲一锤定音,以她母亲的闺名命名,叫我“海伦·艾弗里特”。但当兴奋的父亲抱着我去教堂受洗的途中,竟把它忘了——这合情合理,因为他本来就不是很乐意用这个名字。当牧师问起我叫什么时,父亲只记得决定沿用外婆的名字,一时之间便说出了“海伦·亚当斯”。

家里的人告诉我说,我在婴儿时期就表现出了很强的个性,对任何事物都充满了好奇心。看到别人做的一些事情都坚持要模仿。所以,六个月时,我就会尖声地说“你好”。一天,我竟然清晰地发出了“茶、茶、茶”的音,吸引了每个人的注意力。甚至于“水”这个字,也是我在那时学会的。我生病后,虽然忘掉了以前所学的其它字,却仍记得“水”。我不时会断续发出“水”字的音来,直到后来学习拼写这个字,我才停止这种咿咿呀呀。

家人告诉我,在我刚满周岁时就能走路了。我母亲把我从浴盆中抱出来,放在膝头。突然间,我注意到了光滑的地板上,透过阳光摇曳多姿的树影,于是就从母亲的膝上溜下来,几乎是跑着去追那影子。冲动过后,我摔倒了,哭着要母亲把我抱起来。

然而好景不常。短促的春光里百鸟啁啾,歌声盈耳;夏日里果子惹眼,蔷薇飘香;秋天金光闪烁,漫山通红。三个美好的季节匆匆而过,在一个活蹦乱跳、咿呀学语的孩子心中留下了美好



儿时的海伦·凯勒



的记忆。在次年可怕的2月里,我突然生病,这场病使我失去了视觉和听觉,我又像婴儿一般蒙昧。医生们诊断的结果,是急性脑充血,说我无药可救了。一个清晨,我的高烧却突然地退了,就和它无端的到来一样。全家人的惊喜溢于言表。但是,他们,甚至医生哪会想到,我会永久失去听觉和视觉,再也听不到看不见了。

至今,我仍依稀记得那场病,尤其记得母亲在我高烧不退、昏沉沉、痛苦难耐的时候,温柔地抚慰我,让我勇敢地度过了恐惧。我还记得在高烧退后,眼睛因为干枯炽热、疼痛怕光,必须避开自己以前所喜爱的阳光而面向着墙壁。后来,我的视力一天不如一天,对阳光的感觉也渐渐地模糊不清了。除了这些短暂的记忆——如果可以称得上记忆的话——剩下的一切似乎都是不真实的,仿佛一场噩梦。一直到她——我的家庭教师到来之后,我才逐渐地习惯了充满了黑暗和冷清的世界,忘记了我曾经拥有的那个不一样的天地。是她把我从思想束缚中解放了出来。虽然我只拥有过19个月的光明和声音,但我却仍清晰地记得宽广的绿色家园、蔚蓝的天空、青翠的草木、争奇斗艳的鲜花,所有这些一点一滴都已铭刻在我的心中。



海伦·凯勒的母亲

LIGHT AND VOICE



IT is with a kind of fear that I begin to write the history of my life. I have, as it were, a superstitious hesitation in lifting the veil that clings about my childhood like a golden mist. The task of writing an autobiography is a difficult one. When I try to classify my earliest impressions, I find that fact and fancy look alike across the years that link the past with the present. The woman paints the child's experiences in her own fantasy. A few impressions stand out vividly from the first years of my life; but "the shadows of the prison-house are on the rest." Besides, many of the joys and sorrows of childhood have lost their poignancy, and many incidents of vital importance in my early education have been forgotten in the excitement of great discoveries. In order, therefore, not to be tedious I shall try to present in a series of sketches only the episodes that seem to me to be the most interesting and important.

I was born on June 27, 1880, in Tuscumbia, a little town of northern Alabama.

The family on my father's side is descended from Caspar Keller, a native of Switzerland, who settled in Maryland. One of my Swiss ancestors was the first teacher of the deaf in Zurich and wrote a book on the subject of their education—rather a singular coincidence; though it is true that there is no



king who has not had a slave among his ancestors, and no slave who has not had a king among his.

My grandfather, Caspar Keller's son, "entered" large tracts of land in Alabama and finally settled there. I have been told that once a year he went from Tuscumbia to Philadelphia on horseback to purchase supplies for the plantation, and my aunt has in her possession many of the letters to his family, which give charming and vivid accounts of these trips.

My Grandmother Keller was a daughter of one of Lafayette's aides, Alexander Moore, and granddaughter of Alexander Spotswood, an early Colonial Governor of Virginia. She was also second cousin to Robert E. Lee.

My father, Arthur H. Keller, was a captain in the Confederate Army, and my mother, Kate Adams, was his second wife and many years younger. Her grandfather, Benjamin Adams, married Susanna E. Goodhue, and lived in Newbury, Massachusetts, for many years. Their son, Charles Adams, was born in Newburyport, Massachusetts, and moved to Helena, Arkansas. When the Civil War broke out, he fought on the side of the South and became a brigadier-general. He married Lucy Helen Everett, who belonged to the same family of Everetts as Edward Everett and Dr. Edward Everett Hale. After the war was over the family moved to Memphis, Tennessee.

I lived, up to the time of the illness that deprived me of my sight and hearing, in a tiny house consisting of a large square room and a small one, in which the servant slept. It is a custom in the South to build a small house near the homestead as an annex to be used on occasion. Such a house my father built after the Civil War, and when he married my mother they went to live in it. It was completely covered with vines, climbing roses and honeysuckles. From the garden it looked like an arbour. The little porch was hidden from view by a screen of yellow roses and Southern smilax. It was the favourite haunt of humming-birds and bees.

The Keller homestead, where the family lived, was a few steps from our little rose-bower. It was

called "Ivy Green" because the house and the surrounding trees and fences were covered with beautiful English ivy. Its old-fashioned garden was the paradise of my childhood.

Even in the days before my teacher came, I used to feel along the square stiff boxwood hedges, and, guided by the sense of smell, would find the first violets and lilies. There, too, after a fit of temper, I went to find comfort and to hide my hot face in the cool leaves and grass. What joy it was to lose myself in that garden of flowers, to wander happily from spot to spot, until, coming suddenly upon a beautiful vine, I recognized it by its leaves and blossoms, and knew it was the vine which covered the tumble-down summer-house at the farther end of the garden! Here, also, were trailing clematis, drooping jessamine, and some rare sweet flowers called butterfly lilies, because their fragile petals resemble butterflies' wings. But the roses - they were loveliest of all. Never have I found in the greenhouses of the North such heart-satisfying roses as the climbing roses of my southern home. They used to hang in long festoons from our porch, filling the whole air with their fragrance, untainted by any earthy smell; and in the early morning, washed in the dew, they felt so soft, so pure, I could not help wondering if they did not resemble the asphodels of God's garden.

The beginning of my life was simple and much like every other little life. I came, I saw, I conquered, as the first baby in the

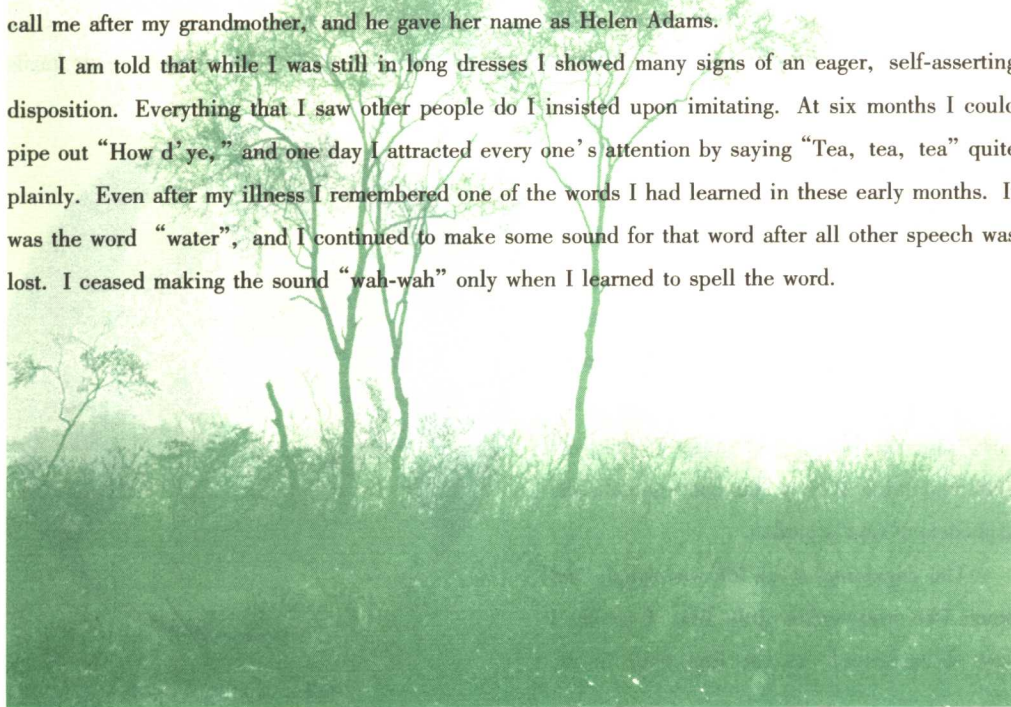


Helen Keller as a child



family always does. There was the usual amount of discussion as to a name for me. The first baby in the family was not to be lightly named, every one was emphatic about that. My father suggested the name of Mildred Campbell, an ancestor whom he highly esteemed, and he declined to take any further part in the discussion. My mother solved the problem by giving it as her wish that I should be called after her mother, whose maiden name was Helen Everett. But in the excitement of carrying me to church my father lost the name on the way, very naturally, since it was one in which he had declined to have a part. When the minister asked him for it, he just remembered that it had been decided to call me after my grandmother, and he gave her name as Helen Adams.

I am told that while I was still in long dresses I showed many signs of an eager, self-asserting disposition. Everything that I saw other people do I insisted upon imitating. At six months I could pipe out "How d'ye," and one day I attracted every one's attention by saying "Tea, tea, tea" quite plainly. Even after my illness I remembered one of the words I had learned in these early months. It was the word "water", and I continued to make some sound for that word after all other speech was lost. I ceased making the sound "wah-wah" only when I learned to spell the word.



They told me I walked the day I was a year old. My mother had just taken me out of the bath-tub and was holding me in her lap, when I was suddenly attracted by the flickering shadows of leaves that danced in the sunlight on the smooth floor. I slipped from my mother's lap and almost ran toward them. The impulse having gone, I fell down and cried for her to take me up in her arms.

These happy days did not last long. One brief spring, musical with the song of robin and mocking-bird, one summer rich in fruit and roses, one autumn of gold and crimson sped by and left their gifts at the feet of an eager, delighted child. Then, in the dreary month of February, came the illness which closed my eyes and ears and plunged me into the unconsciousness of a new-born baby. They called it acute congestion of the stomach and brain. The doctor thought I could not live. Early one morning, however, the



Helen Keller as a young woman

fever left me as suddenly and mysteriously as it had come. There was great rejoicing in the family that morning, but no one, not even the doctor, knew that I should never see or hear again.

I fancy I still have confused recollections of that illness. I especially remember the tenderness with which my mother tried to

soothe me in my waking hours of fret and pain, and the agony and bewilderment with which I awoke after a tossing half sleep, and turned my eyes, so dry and hot, to the wall, away from the once-loved



light, which came to me dim and yet dimmer each day. But, except for these fleeting memories, if, indeed, they be memories, it all seems very unreal, like a nightmare. Gradually I got used to the silence and darkness that surrounded me and forgot that it had ever been different, until she came – my teacher – who was to set my spirit free. But during the first nineteen months of my life I had caught glimpses of broad, green fields, a luminous sky, trees and flowers which the darkness that followed could not wholly blot out. If we have once seen, “the day is ours, and what the day has shown.”

