

The Story of Helen Keller



It was a warm summer evening in the sleepy little town of Tuscumbia, Alabama. A light breeze rustled through the ivy leaves and brought the fragrance of roses into the living room of the vine-covered Keller house.

Captain Arthur Keller laid down his newspaper and peered thoughtfully over his glasses at his six-year-old daughter Helen, curled up in a chair with a big, shapeless rag doll.

"Her mind—whatever mind she has—is locked up in a prison cell," he said sadly. "It can't get out, and nobody can open the door to reach it. For the key is lost and nobody can find it."

Helen's mother looked up from her sewing. Tears filled her eyes.

But the child's aunt spoke up spiritedly in her defense.

"I tell you, Arthur," she said, "Helen's got more sense than all the rest of the Kellers put together."



夏季的一天晚上,暖意融融。亚拉巴马州塔斯坎毕亚小镇一片寂静。微风阵 阵吹来,常春藤叶子发出沙沙的响声,玫瑰的芬芳飘进掩映在葡萄藤下凯勒住宅 的客厅。

亚瑟·凯勒上尉放下手里的报纸,关切地从眼镜上方注视着他六岁的女儿海 伦,她正拿着个破旧得不像样子的大娃娃,蜷缩在一把椅子里。

"她的智力——不管是什么样的智力——已经禁锢起来了,"他忧伤地说, "再也出不来了,而且没有人能打开门拯救它。因为开门的钥匙已经丢失,谁也 找不到。"

海伦的妈妈停下针线活,慢慢地抬起头来,眼里饱含着泪水。

但是孩子的姑妈却极力地为孩子辩护。

"亚瑟,我跟你说,"她说道,"海伦比我们凯勒全家其他人加在一起还要 聪明。"

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Captain Keller shook his head and picked up his newspaper.

"She may have the brain of a genius," he sighed. "But what good is it, to her or anybody else?"

Although they were talking about her, Helen showed no interest. For she had not heard them. An illness, when she was not quite two years old, had left her deaf, dumb, and blind. This meant that she must spend the rest of her life in silence and darkness. It was like being shut up in a black closet. No sound, no light could get in.

Helen slid off the chair and groped her way along the edge of a table to a cradle at her mother's feet. This had been Helen's cradle when she was a baby, and she loved to rock her doll in it.

But recently there had been a change in the Keller household that she could not understand. It disturbed her greatly. A baby girl, not much bigger than Helen's doll—but different, because it had arms and legs that moved—had come to live with the Kellers.

Since she could not hear anything, Helen did not know the word "baby," nor any other words. She thought of her baby sister as "It." And she did not like "It," because often, when she tried to climb into her mother's lap, "It" would be there, and her mother's soft, slender hands would push her gently away.

Now, as she reached the cradle and ran her hand inside, she found "It" there, snugly tucked in. Growling like an angry puppy, Helen ripped back the covers and tipped the cradle over, dumping the baby out. Fortunately, her mother caught the baby before she hit the floor. Quickly Captain Keller grabbed Helen by the shoulders and jerked her away, shaking her soundly.

"That settles it," he said sharply. "We're going to have to send her away to an institution!"

凯勒上尉摇了摇头,拿起他的报纸。

"她或许有一个天才的脑袋,但是,这对她自己或对别人又有什么用呢?" 他叹息道。

尽管他们在谈论着她,可海伦没有表示出丝毫的兴趣,因为她听不见他们在说话。在还不到两岁的时候,一场疾病使她变成了聋哑盲人。这就意味着,她必须在黑暗和寂静中度过她的余生,就像囚禁在漆黑的、不透声和光的密室里一样。

这时,海伦从椅子上滑了下来,沿桌边摸索着走向她妈妈脚旁的摇篮。在她 还是一个婴孩时这摇篮是属于她的。她喜欢把她的娃娃放在里面摇着。

最近,凯勒家里发生了一种海伦无法理解的变化,这变化大大地扰乱着她的 心。一个比海伦的娃娃大不了多少,可手臂和腿脚能动的小女孩进入了他们家的 生活圈子。

由于海伦听不见任何东西,她既不知道"婴儿"这个词,也不知道别的什么词,她在心里管她的小妹妹叫"它"。她不喜欢"它",因为当她想爬到妈妈腿上去时,"它"常常在那儿,妈妈总是用她那柔软而修长的手把她轻轻推开。

现在,当海伦靠近摇篮把手伸进去的时候,她摸到了"它"正舒舒服服地缩在里面。忽然,海伦像一条发狂的小狗一样咆哮起来。她掀去摇篮的盖罩,翻倒了摇篮,将婴孩倾了出来,幸亏妈妈及时抱住了婴儿才没有撞到地上。凯勒上尉迅速抓住了海伦的肩膀,猛地把她拉开,使劲地摇晃着。

"我们非得把她送到聋哑学校去不可,"他厉声地说,"就这样决定吧。"

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Helen's mother, still trembling with fright, began to cry.

"No—no—no!" she pleaded. "We can't do that to her! I've heard of those places they're for feeble-minded children. They won't even try to teach her anything!"

Captain Keller, still holding on to Helen as she kicked and fought like a little wild animal, spoke more gently now.

"We've tried to teach her," he said, "but it's no use. And we can't keep her here. She's getting too big and strong. She's dangerous. She might have killed the baby!"

And Helen, in her rage and despair, kept crying to herself, over and over again, "Why are They doing this to me? Why? Why?"

To Helen, since she knew no words, the people about her were all lumped together as "They"—her father, her mother, and the little colored girl, Martha Washington, who was her playmate.

And mostly "They" meant hands. Hands that pulled her back when she was about to run into something. Hands that caught her when she stumbled over something and kept her from falling. Hands that gave her things—and took them away from her. Hands that sometimes stroked her tumbled curls and comforted her. Hands that sometimes held her in a powerful grip, as her father's hands held her now, and would not let her get away.

She had to depend on her own small hands, too, to be both eyes and ears. Already she had learned many things through her sensitive little fingertips. They could find the first violets in the springtime, shyly nestling in the grass. They knew the round, smooth surfaces of eggs in a nest, and they had taught her not to drop the eggs or squeeze them too hard, for they would break. They knew the soft fur of a kitten and the silky coat of her setter dog, Belle.

海伦的妈妈还在因惊骇而战栗着,然后开始哭泣起来。

"不,不,不!"她恳求道。"我们不能这样对待她,我听说过那些地方,它们都是为智障儿童开办的,不会教她任何东西"。

凯勒上尉仍然把海伦抓在手里,因为她活像头小野兽一样踢踢打打。不过现 在他说话的口气温和多了。

"我们已经试着教过她,"他说,"但是没有用。我们不能把她留在这儿, 她长得太大太壮,这很危险,搞不好就会伤害她的小妹妹。"

海伦处在盛怒和绝望之中,一直不停地哭着。她问自己: "他们为什么这样 对待我?为什么?为什么?"

对海伦来说,由于她不知道单词,周围的人们——爸爸、妈妈,以及她的玩伴黑人小姑娘玛莎·华盛顿——都并在一起统称为"他们"。

而且通常"他们"即意味着是手。当她快要撞上什么东西的时候,是手把她 拉回来的;当她被什么东西绊住的时候,是手把她抓住以免摔跤;是手把东西拿 给她,又把东西带走;有时候手给她掠平蓬乱的卷发,并且抚摸温暖着她;有时 候手有力地抓住她,不让她动弹,就像现在爸爸抓住她一样。

她也不得不依靠自己的小手,既作为眼睛又作为耳朵用,凭着她敏锐灵活的小手指尖,她学会了许多东西。春天,它们能找到半隐半现在草丛里的第一批紫罗兰花;它们能辨别鸟窝里圆润光滑的蛋,并且它们教会了她,蛋不能掉到地上也不能用力挤压,不然就会破碎;它们还知道小猫有着柔滑的软毛,她的塞特猎狗贝利长着如丝绸般的皮毛。

Her restless, questioning little hands had explored her mother's face and had told her that sometimes those soft, smooth cheeks would be wet with tears. Helen did not know the word for tears—only that when she was in trouble and unhappy her own cheeks would be wet like that, too.

"Have They been doing bad things to you, too?" she would wonder.

Standing between her parents with her hands on their faces, she had felt their lips move. To her, it seemed that They were playing some queer sort of game They never played with her. She would move her lips, too. But They paid no attention.

"What are They doing?" she would ask herself. "Why don't They do it with me, too?"

She wanted so desperately to make them understand! But since she couldn't, she had learned to grab a thing when she wanted it, to push it roughly away when she didn't. And to fight like a little wildcat when big, strong hands tried to control her. Sometimes, because she was shut off from things and lonely, she would fly into rages which, as she grew bigger and stronger, really made her dangerous.

"Let me out of here!" she would cry inside herself. "I've got to get out of here! I've GOT to!"

Now, when Helen's mother and father had finally succeeded in quieting her, they put her to bed. Returning to the living room, they sat down to talk about her, thoughtfully, sadly.

"It's no use," her father said. "We can't teach her anything."

"I know," her mother sighed. "We're letting her have her own way too much."

她那动个不停、不断探寻的小手摸索过妈妈的脸,它们告诉她,妈妈柔软润滑的两颊有时被泪水沾湿了。海伦不知道眼泪这个词,只是当她在烦恼或者不高兴的时候,她自己的双颊也像这样湿。

每当这种时候,海伦会纳闷不解:"难道'他们'对你也不好吗?"

站在爸爸、妈妈中间,用手抚摸他们的脸时,她感觉到他们的嘴唇在动。在 她看来,"他们"就像是在玩一种从未和她玩过的古怪游戏似的。她的嘴唇也能 动。但是,"他们"却不理睬她。

"'他们'在干什么?"她问自己。"为什么'他们'不和我也这样玩呢?"

她多么想让"他们"理解她啊!可是她不能。因此,她学会了当她想要某件东西时,就赶快把它抓住;不想要时,就顺手把它推开。当有力的大手要把她控制住时,她就会像一只小野猫一样搏斗着。当她被关起来与人隔绝时,她会大发雷霆。在她越长越大的情况下,这的确十分危险。

"让我出去!"她会在心里喊着,"我要出去,我要出去!"

现在,海伦的妈妈和爸爸终于让她安静下来。他们把她送到床上。回到客厅里,他们坐下来,认真但是忧伤地继续谈论着海伦。

爸爸说道:"没有用,我们教不了她任何东西。"

"我知道,"妈妈叹了口气说,"可我们太听其自便了。"



"But how can you punish a child," her father asked, "when you can't get through to her and make her understand why you're doing it?"

Her mother shook her head. Then she asked: "Why don't we write to that man in Boston that Dr. Bell told us about?"

Some months earlier Helen's parents had taken her to a famous eye doctor in Baltimore. He had not been able to help her, but he had suggested that they take her to Dr. Alexander Graham Bell in Washington.

"Perhaps Dr. Bell can do something about Helen's deafness," the eye doctor had said. "It was while trying to find some way to help deaf children that he invented the telephone, you know."

So the Kellers had taken their daughter to see Dr. Bell. He had held Helen on his lap and let her play with his watch while he sadly told her parents he could do nothing for her.



"但是,当我们不能做好她的工作,并且让她理解我们为什么做某件事时, 我们怎么能处罚一个孩子呢?"爸爸这样问道。

妈妈摇摇头,然后问:"我们为什么不写信给贝尔博士介绍过的那个在波士顿的人呢?"

几个月前,海伦的爸爸、妈妈曾带她去巴尔的摩找一个有名的眼科医生。 那位医生帮不了她什么忙,但他建议他们到华盛顿去找亚历山大·格雷姆·贝尔博士。

"也许贝尔博士能医治她的耳聋。"那位眼科医生对他们说, "你们知道吧,正是在寻求解救耳聋儿童的办法中,他发明了电话。"

于是,凯勒夫妇带着他们的女儿去见贝尔博士。贝尔博士把海伦抱在腿上, 让她玩自己的表。最后,他黯然地告诉她的父母亲他也无能为力。 "But there's a man up in Boston, named Mr. Michael Anagnos, who runs a school for blind children," Dr. Bell had said. "It's called the Perkins Institution for the Blind. There's a woman living at the school, named Laura Bridgman, who is blind, deaf, and dumb, like your little girl. I understand the people at the school have found a way of talking to her by spelling out words with their fingers in her hand."

"Maybe Mr. Anagnos could do something for Helen. Here's his address. I'll write it down for you."

Remembering all this, Captain Keller now looked at his wife doubtfully. He could not bear to think how heartbroken she would be if this, too, failed. But he could not resist the pleading expression in her eyes.

"All right," he said slowly. "We'll try. I'll write to Mr. Anagnos tomorrow."

"但是在波士顿有一位叫迈克尔·阿纳格诺斯的先生,他为盲童开办了一所学校。"贝尔博士说,"他那所学校叫珀金斯盲校。该校有一个名叫劳拉·布里奇曼的妇女,她像你们的小姑娘一样是个聋哑盲人。我听说学校里的人找到了一种用手指在她的手上拼单词来同她交流的办法。"

"或许阿纳格诺斯先生会对海伦有所帮助。这是他的地址, 我给你们写下来。"

回忆起这些,凯勒上尉以疑虑的目光注视着他的妻子。他不敢去想,如果这也失败了,她将会怎样地伤心。但他无法拒绝她眼睛里那种恳求的目光。

"行,"他慢慢地说,"我们试试看吧,明天我就给阿纳格诺斯先生写信。"



Helen had no way of knowing that this day, March 3, 1887, would be the most important day in her whole life.

Six months had passed since the evening when she had tipped her baby sister out of the cradle. As he had promised, her father had written to Mr. Anagnos. And today Miss Anne Sullivan, only twenty years old and just out of school, was arriving from Boston to live with the Kellers and be Helen's teacher.

Of course Helen knew nothing about Miss Sullivan's expected arrival. But she had sensed for several days that something unusual was going on.

For one thing, she had noticed that one of the rooms upstairs, usually kept closed and smelling musty, had been opened and aired.

Martha Washington's mother had been in there, too, with broom and dustcloth. And this morning the bed had been made up with clean sheets. Fresh towels, smelling sweet, like the linen closet, had been placed on the rack.



海伦没有想到,1887年3月3日这一天可能成为她整个一生中最重要的一天。

自从她把小妹妹从摇篮里掀翻出来的那天晚上到现在,已经过去六个月了。 他父亲像他所答应的那样,第二天就给阿纳格诺斯先生写了信。今天,安妮·莎 利文小姐就要从波士顿到达这里了。莎利文小姐年方二十,刚刚从学校毕业。她 将与凯勒一家一起生活,并且当海伦的老师。

当然,对于莎利文小姐即将到来一事,海伦毫无所知。但是这几天以来,她 已感觉到某种不同寻常的事情正在发生。

原因之一就是,她注意到楼上的一个房间过去常常是关着的,散发着一股霉味,可现在已经打开通风了。

玛莎·华盛顿的母亲带着扫把、抹布去过那个房间。今天早上,床上铺上了 干净的床单,散发着内衣橱里那种香味儿的新毛巾也挂在架子上了。

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In the kitchen Martha Washington's mother was busy with extra cooking. She baked a cake and let Helen lick the pan in which she made the frosting. But even this treat failed to bring much pleasure to an anxious, unhappy little girl.

Round and round inside her head raced the questions she could not put into words.

"Something's going to happen. But what? Why can't I know? Why? Why?"

And because she could get no answers, she was restless and cross and badly behaved.

Now she had followed her mother out onto the porch and was standing beside her, tense and worried.

Mrs. Keller was about to go to the station to meet Miss Sullivan. Helen of course did not know that. But her mother had on her hat and coat. That meant she was going somewhere. And Helen wanted to go along.

Soon Helen's father came out on the porch, holding a letter from Mr. Anagnos, which he had read over and over again.

"Mr. Anagnos writes that Miss Sullivan was blind, too, when she was a child," he said, "but they were able to operate on her eyes."

"I wish they could operate on Helen's eyes," his wife remarked wistfully as she drew on her gloves. But Captain Keller sighed and shook his head.

"This is a different kind of blindness," he said sadly. "An operation would do no good."

Suddenly Helen stiffened. She knew that the horses and carriage were being brought around from the stable. The clump-clump-clumping of horses' hoofs shook the porch ever so slightly. Not enough so that the average person would notice it. But Helen could feel it in her feet. She had learned to be alert for signs like this.

玛莎·华盛顿的母亲正在厨房里忙着准备特别的饭菜。她焙了一个蛋糕,让海伦舔那做了糖霜的锅。但这小姑娘依然闷闷不乐,丝毫没有显出高兴的样子。

"有件事情就要发生,但是是什么事呢?为什么我没法知道?为什么?"

这个问题在她脑子里盘旋着,可她不能用言语表达出来。

因为没法得到答案,她显得心神不宁、烦躁易怒,行为很不规矩。

这时,她跟着妈妈来到走廊上,焦虑不安地站在她身旁。

凯勒夫人准备去车站接莎利文小姐。海伦知道妈妈已经穿好衣服、戴上帽子要出门了,虽然她不知道去哪儿,但很想跟着一道去。

海伦的爸爸不久也到走廊上来了,他手里拿着阿纳格诺斯先生的来信。这封信他已经读了好几遍了。

"阿纳格诺斯先生在信里说,莎利文小姐小时候也看不见。"他说,"不过那时他们能给她的眼睛动手术。"

"我多么希望他们也能给海伦的眼睛动动手术。"他妻子边戴手套边若有所思地说。但凯勒上尉叹了口气,摇摇头。

"海伦的失明不一样,手术根本没有什么用。"他的声音里充满了忧伤。

正在这时,海伦的身子突然颤抖了一下,她知道有人正把马和车子从马厩里 拉过来。传到走廊来的马蹄的嗒嗒声很轻,一般人察觉不到,但海伦通过脚底感 觉到了。她已经学会敏锐地判断类似这样的声音信号。 She grabbed hold of her mother's coat and tried to follow her into the carriage. But her father's big, strong hands pulled her back.

Sobbing and making little sounds like a hurt puppy, Helen broke away and stumbled down the driveway after the carriage. Her father hurried after her and caught her. Reaching into his pocket, he brought out some peppermint drops. Helen ate them, but they did not make her any happier. Slowly she found her way back to the porch.

She was hardly an attractive little girl as she stood there in the spring sunshine, waiting. Her light brown hair had not been combed that day and was full of tangles. Sometimes, when she was in a bad mood as she was today, she would not let anyone comb her hair or wash her face. Her mother, who hated to spank her, because she was so sorry for her, would just give in to her. And now her grimy little face was streaked with tears.

Finally after what seemed to Helen a very long time, she felt the porch shake ever so slightly again under her feet. The horses and carriage were coming up the driveway.

Then Helen felt someone coming toward her. Nearer. Nearer. With a little growl she lunged forward—into a strange pair of arms.

Desperately she jerked herself loose. This stranger was no bigger than her mother. But the arms were stronger, the hands more firm. And the smell. It was not the sweet smell of those little silk bags her mother kept in her bureau drawers. Helen remembered this smell from the time her parents had taken her on the train to Baltimore to see the eye doctor—the smell of cinders and coal smoke.

她紧紧地抓住妈妈的衣服,拼命跟着往车上爬。可爸爸有力的大手把她拉了 下来。

海伦哭泣起来,嘴里发出像受伤的小狗似的声音,她挣脱爸爸的手,跟在马车后面跌跌撞撞地跑下车道。爸爸追上去抓住她,从口袋里拿出一些薄荷糖塞给她。海伦嘴里嚼着糖,可心里并不高兴。慢慢地,她找到了回走廊的路。

在春天的阳光下,海伦站在走廊上等候着。她的浅褐色头发没有梳理,乱成一团,模样很不好看。有时,当她脾气不好,就像今天这样,她不让任何人给她梳头、洗脸。她妈妈因为太替她难过了,不愿打她,总是迁就她、听任她。现在她的脏兮兮的小脸蛋上布满了泪痕。

在海伦看来过了很长一段时间以后,她感觉到走廊在她脚底下又轻轻地震动起来——马车驶到车道上了。

随后,海伦觉得有人向她走过来,越走越近,越走越近。她嘴里发出咕噜咕噜的声音,一头栽进一双陌生的手臂里。

她不顾一切地扭脱开来。这个陌生人不比她妈妈高大,但她的手臂更有力, 手更结实。她身上还有一股气味。这气味不是妈妈放在衣橱抽屉里小丝绸包散发 出的那种气味,是煤烟和炉灰的气味。自从爸爸、妈妈带她坐火车去巴尔的摩看 眼科医生的时候起,她就记得这种气味。 "We are glad, Miss Sullivan, that you have come to be our little girl's teacher," Captain Keller was saying.

But Helen of course could not hear him. If she had known any words, she would have called this newcomer The Stranger. For that was what she was to Helen. And she would continue to be The Stranger for what would seem to both of them a long, long time.

Helen brushed against a traveling bag and grabbed it. Sometimes there was candy in traveling bags! The Stranger gently started to take the bag away. But Helen hurled herself at her with such force that they both would have fallen, had not Captain Keller caught them.

Curious now, in spite of her resentment, Helen followed The Stranger upstairs into the room that had been made ready for her. The Stranger opened the traveling bag, firmly pushing Helen's dirty little hands away.

She brought out a doll and placed it in Helen's arms. Smiling, she watched as Helen delightedly ran her fingers over it and held it lovingly against her cheek.

Then she gently led the child across the room and placed her small right hand, palm up, on a table. Slowly she moved her own fingers inside Helen's palm.

She repeated the motions several times while Helen waited, curious about this new game. Then she guided Helen's small fingers through the same motions, spelling the word over and over: D-O-L-L, D-O-L-L, D-O-L-L. Then Helen tried it without help several times, clumsily at first, then perfectly.

Next, The Stranger started to take the doll away from Helen. She intended to give the doll back again if Helen spelled the word once more with her fingers.