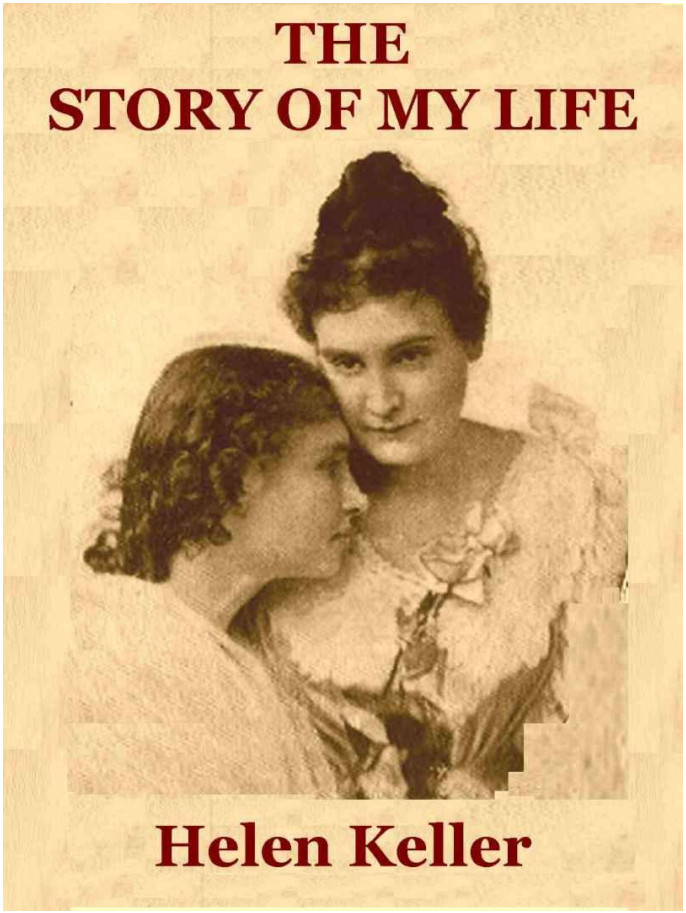
A Review on



By

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About Helen Keller



- Helen Keller, at the age of 19 months, suddenly lost her hearing and vision and with a great deal of persistence, grew into a highly intelligent and sensitive woman

- She was an American author, political activist and lecturer. She was the first deaf blind person to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree

- She campaigned for women's suffrage, workers' rights, and socialism, as well as many other progressive causes

- The name of Helen Adams Keller is known around the world as a symbol of courage in the face of overwhelming odds

Autobiography



- *The Story of My Life* first appeared as a serial of several installments in the *Ladies Home Journal* in 1902
- *The book* is still read today for its ability to motivate and reassure readers.
- In the book Keller recounts the first twenty-two years of her life, from the events of the illness in her early childhood that left her blind and deaf through her second year at Radcliffe College.
- This book won Pultizer prize and Newberry award

Reasons for writing an Autobiography



- Keller's main message in her autobiography is that you can persevere through anything in life .
- She also wrote to express her survival of her disabilities and how she overcame them. Keller's purpose was to inspire people to endure.
- To tell people not to tease or hurt people who had disabilities because they were not any different from them.
- Helen Keller wrote her life story as a tool for other people to learn from. She was plagued by disabilities that she had to overcome. To tell blind, deaf, and mute people that they are just ordinary people.

Organization of the Book



- *The Story of My Life* contains three parts
  - *Part I:* Helen Keller's autobiographical account of her life from childhood to the beginning of her studies at Radcliffe.
  - *Part II:* Helen's letters to family and friends, arranged in chronological sequence, and documents her growth in thought and expression through her writing.
  - *Part III:* a supplementary section, contains an account of Helen Keller's life and education written by John Macy, based for the most part on the records and observations of Anne Sullivan.

The story of her life….



- **“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.”**
- **“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.”**
- **Thus starts Helen Keller the story of her life.**

Helen Keller-the story of her life



Childhood:

- Born in June 1880- a healthy child- Named Helen after her grandmother.
- 19 months- just learning to speak- an unknown sickness diagnosed as brain fever rendered her deaf and blind.
- Slowly got used to the new world and lost her ability to speak as a consequence of being unable to hear.

Childhood….



- Felt the things around her with the help of smell and touch.
- Tried to make people understand what she wanted through signs but soon found this was not enough and grew frustrated when she couldn't get people to do as she intended.
- "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!."

The initial lessons….



- She was a naughty seven year old child when upon learning the use of the key, locked her mother inside a room.
- Journey to Baltimore and thenceforth to Washington in search of a teacher to teach her at home.
- "I did not dream that that interview would be the door through which I should pass from darkness into light, from isolation to friendship, companionship, knowledge, love."
- March 1887- arrival of Ms. Anne Mansfield Sullivan.



Anne Sullivan and Helen….



- "The most important day I remember in all my life is the one on which my teacher, Anne Mansfield Sullivan, came to me. I am filled with wonder when I consider the immeasurable contrasts between the two lives which it connects."
- "She had come to reveal all things to me, and, more than all things else, to love me."
- She linked my earliest thoughts with nature, and made me feel that "birds and flowers and I were happy peers."
- "It was my teacher's genius, her quick sympathy, her loving tact which made the first years of my education so beautiful."

Anne Sullivan and Helen…

- "My teacher is so near to me that I scarcely think of myself apart from her. How much of my delight in all beautiful things is innate, and how much is due to her influence, I can never tell. I feel that her being is inseparable from my own, and that the footsteps of my life are in hers. All the best of me belongs to her--there is not a talent, or an aspiration or a joy in me that has not been awakened by her loving touch."



The initial lessons…



- First word she learnt to spell- ‘d-o-l-l’ and then many more followed.
- She understood things only when she touched them-love being the word she didn’t understand then.
- Think- new concept of knowing things-love.
- Reading using slips of cardboard on which were printed words in raised letters.
- No regular lessons for a long time and then science and mathematics followed.
- Lessons mostly in open, the scents of nature’s elements playing a great role in her learning.

School….



- Boston, 1889- Perkin's Institution for the Blind- first encounter with people like herself.

"When the train at last pulled into the station at Boston it was as if a beautiful fairy tale had come true. The "once upon a time" was now; the "far-away country" was here."

- Visits to many places and people helped her in her learning about various subjects like history.
- 1890- learnt to speak- lip reading and vibrations of the throat.
- Made a speech on her own the next time she reached home.

School….



- Read a lot of books during this time and put in efforts to improve speech.
- Learnt Latin, German and French among other subjects like arithmetic, geometry etc.
- Pitfalls- speaking, arithmetic.
- October, 1896, entered the Cambridge School for Young Ladies, to be prepared for Radcliffe.
- Ms. Sullivan to attend classes and translate.

Preparation for College…



- Examinations at Cambridge-first year.
- Dropped out of Cambridge in the middle of second year and prepared for Radcliffe at home.
- 1899- examination for Radcliffe college.
- 1900- entry into Radcliffe.

Literary Style…



- We can observe Helen's unusually fine English while reading her autobiography.
- She has inborn gift of style.
- Miss Sullivan read lots of good books to her young student.

Literary Style…



- Besides the selection of good books, there is another cause for Helen's excellence in writing, for which Miss Sullivan deserves unlimited credit.

- That is her tireless and unrelenting discipline. She never allowed her student to send letters which contained offenses against taste, but made her write them over until they were not only correct, but charming and well phrased.

- This trained the power of expression in the child Helen.

Literary Style…



- De Quincey says that the best English is found in the letters of the Helen, because she has read only a few good books and has not been corrupted by the style of newspapers and the jargon of street, market-place and assembly hall.

- In the book, she quotes famous authors as she had a very retentive memory and used some of the poems by famous poets whenever she found their application.

- The autobiography also has many quotations from the Bible.

Literary Style…



- She uses vivid sensory language when describing events and objects. When she went to visit the ocean she says, "I felt the pebbles rattling as the waves threw their ponderous weight against the shore."

- Her descriptions envelop the experiences, almost bringing it to life.

- The idea of feeling rather than hearing a sound, or of admiring a flower's motion rather than its color, evokes a strong visceral sensation in the reader, giving The Story of My Life a subtle power and beauty.

Literary Style…



- She uses personification many times to add more elements to her writing. At the ocean she says, "the whole beach seemed racked by their terrific onset, and the air throbbed with their pulsations".

- She used similes to give more detail in her descriptions. At Christmas time, she expresses her joy as "(her) cup of happiness overflowed."

Literary Style…



- Helen Keller uses a subjective, first person, and simple tone to tell the story of her life.
- She uses educated vocabulary with many descriptive adjectives in her writing. Her intelligence is shown through her scholarly language.
- Her knowledge of a vast vocabulary makes it easy for her to communicate her ideas uniquely and precisely.

Literary Style…



- Her subject is focused on her accomplishments and her approach is chronologically ordered in the path of her accomplishments.

- Her goal was to inspire people and she appeals to the audience by making her autobiography to the point and clear.

Personality…



- In spite of her triple handicap, she proved that "*The virtue in life is real courage that knows how to face facts and live beyond them.*"

Personality…



- Physically strong and seems to be more nervous than she really is, as she expresses more with her hands than most people do.
- When Miss Keller speaks, her face is animated and expresses all the modes of her thought.
- When she is talking with an intimate friend, her hand goes quickly to her friend's face to observe their expressions.



Helen Keller met President Dwight D Eisenhower in 1953.

She can understand the twists of the mouth and changes in the muscles of the cheeks.

Personality…



- Her memory of people is remarkable. She remembers the grasp of fingers she has held before, all the characteristic tightening of the muscles that makes one person's handshake different from that of another.

Personality…



- Her perseverance

  It was her perseverance that made her to learn to speak and to go to college.

- She is brave and has sportsmanlike determination.

- Miss Keller likes to be part of the company.

Personality…
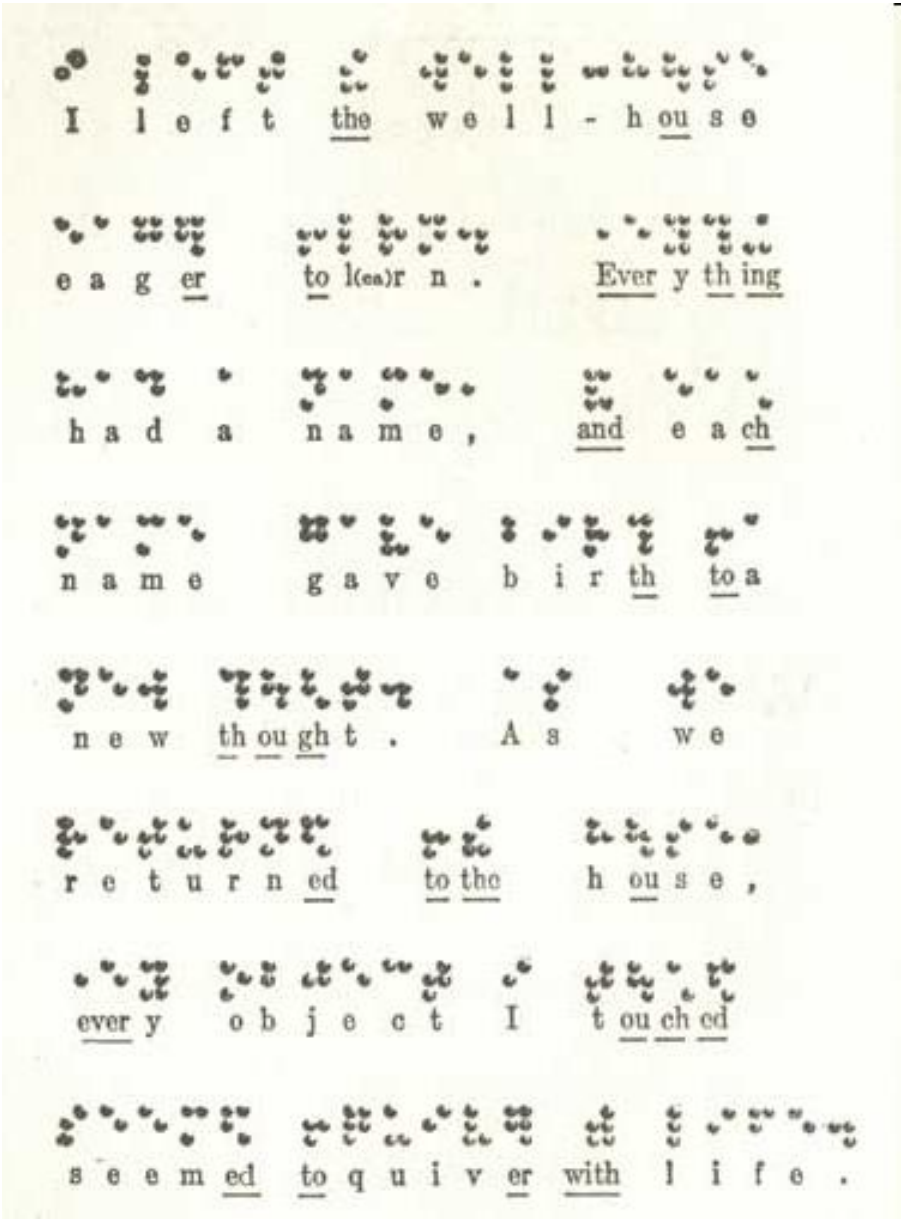


- Her appreciation of sculptures.

  When she was at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston she stood on a step-ladder and let both hands play over the statues. When she felt a bas-relief of dancing girls she asked, "Where are the singers?" When she found them she said, "One is silent." The lips of the singer were closed.

Personality…



- Miss Keller's effort to reach out and meet other people on their own intellectual ground has kept her informed of daily affairs.
- While at college she developed a strong interest in women's rights and became a militant campaigner in favour of universal suffrage. She also became friends with several notable public figures including John Greenleaf Whittier, Oliver Wendell Holmes and William Dean Howells.
- Miss Keller reads by means of embossed print or the various kinds of Braille and remembers that in fingers.



Facsimile of the Braille manuscript of the passage in Part I, Chapter IV, with equivalents--slightly reduced.



Helen Keller reading a book in Braille, circa 1903

Personality…



- Good sense, good humour, and imagination keep her scheme of things sane and beautiful.

- Charles Dudley Warner, wrote about her in *Harper's Magazine* :

  "I believe she is the purest-minded human ever in existence.... The world to her is what her own mind is. She has not even learned that exhibition on which so many pride themselves, of 'righteous indignation.'

Personality…



- She is logical and tolerant, most trustful of a world that has treated her kindly.
- Once when some one asked her to define "love," she replied, "Why, bless you, that is easy; it is what everybody feels for everybody else.“
- "Toleration," she said once, when she was visiting her friend Mrs. Laurence Hutton, "is the greatest gift of the mind; it requires the same effort of the brain that it takes to balance oneself on a bicycle."

Personality…



- An optimist and an idealist.

- In the diary that she kept at the Wright-Humason school in New York she wrote on October 18, 1894, "I find that I have four things to learn in my school life here, and indeed, in life--to think clearly without hurry or confusion, to love everybody sincerely, to act in everything with the highest motives, and to trust in dear God unhesitatingly."



Helen Keller… The story of her Miraculous Journey

" *KELLER remains till today a symbol of strength, determination and will power to fight against all odds.*"

Bibiliography…

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