

The Miracle Worker

By William Gibson

Play no. 172

Opening show 3/12/1960

Creative team

Hebrew : Yona Arieli

Directed by: Avrha Ninio

Designed by: Arnon Adar

Costumes by: Ofra Bourla-Adar

Cast

Doctor: B. David

Kate Keller: S. Duar

Captain Keller: S. Rodensky

Martha: L. Rivlen

Percy: G. Naaman

Viney: H. Hendler

Helen Keller: D. Cohen, R. Natan

The story of Helen Keller is the story of a child suddenly shut off from the world at age of nineteen months, and of her slow and hard but victorious fight to re-enter it. Through the years, the little deaf-and-blind mute has become the woman of the gifted pen, writing and speaking and incessantly working toward the betterment of others. Her story is, in brief, that of half-wild creature become a highly intelligent and sensitive citizen with a definite place in the history of our time.

She was born, a normal child, in Tuscumbia, Alabama, on June 27, 1880, in white frame cottage called "Ivy Green". On her father's side she is connected with the Lees and other Southern families. On her mother's side, she is related to the Hales, the Everetts and the Adams family of New England. Helen Keller was suddenly bereft of sight and hearing by an illness in babyhood. The disease had been diagnosed as brain fever; according to popular theory of the time this disease was believed to leave the victim an idiot. Stronger and healthy physically, she grew into childhood, wild and unruly, with little real understanding of what went on around.

It was when Helen was nearly seven years old that her teacher, Anne Sullivan, a girl of twenty, was brought to her from Perkins Institution, Boston, Massachusetts. Anne Sullivan had been educated at this school for the blind, but had regained useful sight through a series of operations. Her assignment was arranged through the sympathetic interest of Alexander Graham Bell, whose advice had been sought by the parents. After that time, the two – teacher and pupil – were inseparable, until the death of the former in 1936.

Anne Sullivan had undertaken a task that called for inexhaustible patience and courage. The little blind children at Perkins Institution had made a doll for her to take Helen. She began her training with that, trying to connect objects with letters by spelling "d-o-l-l" in the manual alphabet into the child's hand. Helen quickly learned to make the letters correctly, but did not know that she was spelling a word, or that word existed. In the days that followed she learned to spell in this uncomprehending way a great many more words.

One day she and her teacher were standing beside the outdoor pump while someone was drawing water. Miss Sullivan put Helen's hand under the spout. As the cool water gushed over one hand, she spelled into the other the word "w-a-t-e-r", first slowly, then rapidly. Suddenly, the signals crossed Helen's consciousness with a meaning. She knew that "water" meant the wonderful cool something flowing over her hand. Quickly, she stopped and touched the earth and demanded its letter-name, and by nightfall of that day she had learned thirty words. That was the beginning of Helen Keller's education. In quick succession she mastered the alphabet, both manual and in raised print for the blind, and gained facility in reading and writing. In 1880, she surprised "Teacher" with the request that she learn to speak. Somehow she had found that a deaf and blind girl in far-off Norway had acquired this ability. Miss Sarah Fuller of the Horace Mann School was her first speech teacher.

Even as a little girl, Helen Keller used to say, "Some day I shall go to college" – and she did. In 1886 she entered the Cambridge School for Young Ladies to be prepared for Radcliffe College which she entered in the fall of 1900. In 1904 she graduated with the degree of B.A. cum laude. Throughout her school days Miss Sullivan was her constant companion, patiently interpreting, though the manual alphabet, the many lectures which must be attended, encouraging her, and stimulating her by showing that she had confidence in her ability. Besides the B.A. degree from Radcliffe, Helen Keller holds honorary degrees from Temple University Philadelphia, the Universities of Glasgow, Scotland and Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.

In 1904 Miss Sullivan married Mr. John A. Macy, the eminent literary critic. The marriage made change in the teacher-pupil relationship. Helen went to live with the Macys, and both husband and wife gave unstintingly of their time to help her with her studies and her other activities.

Even before graduation Helen Keller had broken into print with her autobiography "The Story of My Life". Published in 1902 as serial in the "Ladies Home Journal". From that time on, her pen has never been idle. In her literary work she uses the Braille typewriter in preparing her manuscripts, and then copies them on the typewriter.

In addition to "The Story of My Life", she has written many books: "Optimism", an essay, "The World I Live In", "The Song of the Stone Wall", "Out of the Dark", "My Religion", "Midstream – my Later Life", "Peace at Eventide", "Helen Keller's Journal" and "Let Us Have Faith". Her books have been translated and read in a great many languages. "The Story of My Life" in particular, has been published in about fifty languages including Marathi, Pushtu, Tagalog and Urdu.

A few years before his death, Mark Twain said; "The two most interesting characters of the nineteenth century are Napoleon and Helen Keller". William James wrote: "The sum of it is that you are blessing". These sentiments expressed by two friends from her early youth, have been shared fully through the years by famous and prominent men and women all over the world whose friendship she has enjoyed – and continues to enjoy.