

*Little Women (Revised)*

By Louisa M. Alcott

“Christmas won’t be Christmas without any presents,” grumbled Jo, lying on the rug.

“It’s so dreadful to be poor!” sighed Meg, looking down at her old dress.

“I don’t think it’s fair for some girls to have lots of pretty things, and other girls nothing at all,” added little Amy with an injured sniff.

“We’ve got Father and Mother, and each other, anyhow,” said Beth contentedly, from her corner. Then Meg said in an altered tone:

“You know the reason Mother proposed not having any presents this Christmas was because it’s going to be a hard winter for everyone,” and Meg shook her head, as she thought regretfully of all the pretty things she wanted.

Margaret or Meg, the eldest of the four, was sixteen, and very pretty, with large eyes, a sweet mouth, and beautiful white hands. Fifteen-year-old Jo was very tall, thin and brown, and reminded one of a colt; for she never seemed to know what to do with her long legs. Elizabeth – or Beth, as everyone called her – was a rosy, bright-eyed girl of thirteen. Her father called her “Little Tranquility,” and the name suited her excellently. Amy, though the youngest, was a most important person, in her own opinion at least. She was a regular snow maiden with blue eyes, and always carrying herself like a young lady.

The clock struck six; and Beth put a pair of slippers down to warm. Somehow the sight of the old slippers had a good effect upon the girls, for they knew Mother was coming, and everyone brightened to welcome her.

“Glad to find you so merry, my girls,” said a cheery voice at the door, and all the girls turned to welcome a stout, motherly lady.

“Well, dearies, how have you got on today? Has anyone called, Beth? How is your cold, Meg? Jo, you look tired. Come and kiss me.”

While making these comments, Mrs. March sat down in the easy-chair, preparing to enjoy the happiest hour of her day.

As they gathered about the table, Mrs. March said, with a particularly happy face: “I’ve got a treat for you after supper.”

A quick, bright smile went round like a ray of sunshine. Beth clapped her hands and Jo tossed up her napkin, crying: “A letter! a letter! Three cheers for Father!”

“Yes, a nice long letter. He is well, and he sends all sorts of loving wishes for Christmas, and a special message to you girls,” said Mrs. March, patting her pocket as if she had a treasure there.

Very few letters were written in those hard times that were not touching. Though he knew he could not be home for Christmas, it was a cheerful, hopeful letter, and only at the end did his heart overflow with fatherly love and longing for the little girls at home.

“Give them all my dear love and a kiss. Tell them I think of them by day, pray for them by night, and find my best comfort in their affection at all times. A year seems very long to wait before I see them, but remind them that while we wait we may all

work, so that these hard days need not be wasted. I know they will remember all I have said to them, that they will be loving children to you, will do their duty so faithfully that when I come back to them I may be prouder than ever of my little women.”

Everybody sniffed when they came to that part, and all the girls thought that Father’s letter was a thousand times better than any other Christmas presents.

605 words

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