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Louisa May Alcott – Part II

Lead: It took two and a half months, but with poverty knocking on the family door, Louisa May Alcott finally delivered to her anxious publisher a “story for girls.”

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: At first, Alcott balked at her publisher’s assignment, saying she had “never liked girls or knew many except my sister...” The novel, which was loosely autobiographical, was set during the Civil War and describes the domestic experiences of the Marchs, a New England family of

modest means. It examines the lives of four sisters, Meg, , Beth, Amy and Jo, as they wrestle with their own character flaws and each other's. The literary world was entranced. The novel was hailed for its simplicity and realistic depiction of the struggles of adolescence.

Within months of its publication in 1868, Louisa became a world famous author. She paid off every back debt the family owed, something she had been trying to do since she was a kid. The royalties from *Little Women* gave Louisa May Alcott financial security for the rest of her life. The following year she release the second volume entitled *Good Wives*. Since 1920 the two volumes have been published

together under the title *Little Women*. Alcott wrote three more sequels to *Little Women*, but in her lifetime, the works for children overshadowed those for adults. Only in latter part of the 20th century did Louisa's Gothic short stories and novels for adults generate interest among fans and scholars.

Louisa May Alcott never married and remained devoted to her family. She became a political activist fighting for temperance, suffrage, and women's rights through the remainder of her life. She died in 1888 at the age of fifty-five, finally succumbing to the long effects of mercury poisoning. She was buried on Author's Ridge in Sleepy Hollow

Cemetery in Concord, Massachusetts, close by the graves of the giants of American literature, her mentors and family friends, Emerson, Thoreau and Hawthorne.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

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