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探索女性成长的永恒读物



LITTLE WOMEN

(UNABRIDGED)

小妇人

■ Louisa May Alcott

中国出版集团
中国对外翻译出版公司

中译经典文库·世界文学名著（英文原著版）

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出版前言

一部文学史是人类从童真走向成熟的发展史，是一个个文学大师用如椽巨笔记载的人类的心灵史，也是承载人类良知与情感反思的思想史。阅读这些传世的文学名著就是在阅读最鲜活生动的历史，就是在与大师们做跨越时空的思想交流与情感交流，它会使一代代的读者获得心灵的滋养与巨大的审美满足。

中国对外翻译出版公司以中外语言学习和中外文化交流为自己的出版方向，向广大读者提供既能提升语言能力，又能滋养心灵的精神大餐是我们的一贯宗旨。尽管随着网络技术和数字出版的发展，读者获得这些作品的途径更加便捷，但是，一本本装帧精美、墨香四溢的图书仍是读书人的最爱。

“熟读唐诗三百首，不会做诗也会吟”，汉语学习如此，外语学习尤其如此。要想彻底学好一种语言，必须有大量的阅读。这不仅可以熟能生巧地掌握其语言技能，也可了解一种语言所承载的独特文化。“中译经典文库·世界文学名著（英语原著版）”便是这样一套必将使读者受益终生的读物。

PREFACE

A history of literature is a phylogeny of human beings growing from childhood to adulthood, a spiritual history of masters in literature portraying human spirit with great touch, as well as a thinking history reflecting human conscience and emotional introspection. Reading these immortal classics is like browsing through our history, while communicating across time and space with great writers into thinking and feelings. It bestows spiritual nutrition as well as aesthetic relish upon readers from generation to generation.

China Translation and Publishing Corporation (CTPC), with a publishing mission oriented toward readings of Chinese and foreign languages leaning as well as cultural exchange, has been dedicated to providing spiritual feasts which not only optimize language aptitude but also nourish heart and soul. Along with the development of Internet and digital publication, readers have easier access to reading classic works. Nevertheless, well-designed printed books remain favorite readings for most readers.

“After perusing three hundred Tang poems, a learner can at least utter some verses, if cannot proficiently write a poem.” That is true for learning Chinese, more so for learning a foreign language. To master a language, we must read comprehensively, not only for taking in lingual competence, but also for catching the unique cultural essence implied in the language. “World Literary Classics (English originals)” can surely serve as a series of readings with everlasting edifying significance.

作家与作品

奥尔科特(1832—1888)是美国女作家,以写儿童读物闻名,《小妇人》是她最成功的作品。

奥尔科特出生在宾夕法尼亚州的日耳曼敦,但她的一生却是在靠近马萨诸塞州的康科特城度过的,在那里,爱默生和梭罗是她最早的朋友。奥尔科特自小受当作家和教师的父亲的影响。在父亲的熏陶下,她很早就对写作产生了兴趣。不过,她也很早就意识到父亲不切实际,不能维持妻子和四个女儿的生活,因此,她开始为家境而操劳,短期教过书,当过佣人,最后从事写作。内战开始后,她自愿当了护士,在卫生条件很差的医院里染上伤寒,被送回家。此后一直没有康复。她的书信集《医院速写》(1863)的出版使她初露头角。短篇小说开始在《大西洋月刊》上发表。由于家庭经济困难,他写自传体小说《小妇人》(1868—1869)一书,获得成功。1869年,她在日记中写道:“感谢上帝,债务全部付清。”随后,一批以她早年经历为题材的作品相继问世,其中包括《墨守陈规的姑娘》(1870)、《乔大妈的废物袋》(6卷,1872—1882)、《小男儿》(1871)、《八个表兄妹》(1875)、《乔的男孩们》(1886)。

《小妇人》讲述美国南北战争期间马奇一家的故事。马奇先生远赴战场做了随军牧师,四个女儿和母亲在家里过着清苦的生活。她们坚强乐观,虽贫穷却乐意帮助比她们更需要帮助的邻居;

她们充满幻想，希望能过上公主般的生活，而在现实中却依靠自己的努力来面对生活的各种艰难困苦。大女儿梅格生性爱美，对恋爱充满憧憬；二女儿乔独立自主，立志通过自己奋斗成为作家；三女儿贝思是传统的乖乖女，柔弱而惹人怜爱；小女儿艾钟爱绘画。这部小说以家庭生活为描写对象，以家庭成员的感情纠葛为线索，描写了马奇一家的天伦之爱，描写了她们对家庭的眷恋，对爱的忠诚以及对亲情的渴望。虽然四姐妹的理想和命运各不相同，但是她们都具有自强不息的共同特点。在这本书中可以读到初恋的甜蜜和烦恼，感情与理智的差异，理想和现实的距离，贫穷与富有的矛盾。书中描写的种种情感体验和生活经历，是每一个少女走向成熟所要经历的过程；书中提倡的善良、忠诚、无私、慷慨、尊严、宽容、坚韧、勇敢，是人类永远尊崇和追求的美德和信仰。

《小妇人》强调个人尊严和自立自律的重要，富有强烈的感染力，一个多世纪以来影响了一代又一代读者。这部小说自1868年初版以来，多次被搬上银幕，并被译成各种文字，成为世界文学宝库中的经典名作。

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PART I

CHAPTER I

Playing Pilgrims

“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 plenty 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,” said Beth, contentedly, from her corner.

The four young faces on which the firelight shone brightened at the cheerful words, but darkened again as Jo said sadly:

“We haven’t got Father, and shall not have him for a long time.” She didn’t say “perhaps never,” but each silently added it, thinking of Father far away, where the fighting was.

Nobody spoke for a minute; then Meg said in an altered tone:

“You know the reason Mother proposed not having any presents this Christmas was because it is going to be a hard winter for everyone; and she thinks we ought not to spend money for pleasure when our men are suffering so in the army. We can’t do much, but we can make our little sacrifices, and ought to do it gladly. But I am afraid I don’t;” and Meg shook her head, as she thought regretfully of all the pretty things she wanted.

“But I don’t think the little we should spend would do any good. We’ve each got a dollar, and the army wouldn’t be much helped by our giving that. I agree not to expect anything from Mother or you, but I do want to buy *UNDINE AND SINTRAM* for myself; I’ve wanted it so long,” said Jo, who was a bookworm.

“I planned to spend mine on new music,” said Beth, with a little sigh,

which no one heard but the hearth brush and kettle holder.

"I shall get a nice box of Faber's drawing pencils; I really need them," said Amy, decidedly.

"Mother didn't say anything about our money, and she won't wish us to give up everything. Let's each buy what we want, and have a little fun; I'm sure we work hard enough to earn it," cried Jo, examining the heels of her shoes in a gentlemanly manner.

"I know I do—teaching those tiresome children nearly all day when I'm longing to enjoy myself at home," began Meg, in the complaining tone again.

"You don't have half such a hard time as I do," said Jo.

"How would you like to be shut up for hours with a nervous, fussy old lady, who keeps you trotting, is never satisfied, and worries you till you're ready to fly out of the window or cry?"

"It's naughty to fret; but I do think washing dishes and keeping things tidy is the worst work in the world. It makes me cross; and my hands get so stiff, I can't practice well at all;" And Beth looked at her rough hands with a sigh that anyone could hear that time.

"I don't believe any of you suffer as I do," cried Amy; "for you don't have to go to school with impertinent girls, who plague you if you don't know your lessons, and laugh at your dresses, and label your father if he isn't rich, and insult you when your nose isn't nice."

"If you mean *libel*, I'd say so, and not talk about *labels*, as if Papa was a pickle bottle," advised Jo, laughing.

"I know what I mean, and you needn't be *statirical* about it. It's proper to use good words, and improve your *vocabulary*," returned Amy, with dignity.

"Don't peck at one another, children. Don't you wish we had the money Papa lost when we were little, Jo? Dear me! How happy and good we'd be, if we had no worries!" said Meg, who could remember better times.

"You said, the other day, you thought we were a deal happier than the King children, for they were fighting and fretting all the time, in spite of their money."

"So I did, Beth. Well, I think we are; For, though we do have to work, we make fun of ourselves, and are a pretty jolly set, as Jo would say."

"Jo does use such slang words!" observed Amy, with a reproving look

at the long figure stretched on the rug. Jo immediately sat up, put her hands in her pockets, and began to whistle.

"Don't, Jo. It's so boyish!"

"That's why I do it."

"I detest rude, unladylike girls!"

"I hate affected, niminy-piminy chits!"

"Birds in their little nests agree," sang Beth, the peacemaker, with such a funny face that both sharp voices softened to a laugh, and the "pecking" ended for that time.

"Really, girls, you are both to be blamed," said Meg, beginning to lecture in her elder-sisterly fashion. "You are old enough to leave off boyish tricks, and to behave better, Josephine. It didn't matter so much when you were a little girl, but now you are so tall, and turn up your hair, you should remember that you are a young lady."

"I'm not! And if turning up my hair makes me one, I'll wear it in two tails till I'm twenty," cried Jo, pulling off her net, and shaking down her chestnut mane. "I hate to think I've got to grow up, and be Miss March, and wear long gowns, and look as prim as a China aster! It's bad enough to be a girl, anyway, when I like boys' games and work and manners! I can't get over my disappointment in not being a boy; and it's worse than ever now, for I'm dying to go and fight with Papa, and I can only stay at home and knit, like a poky old woman!" And Jo shook the blue army sock till the needles rattled like castanets, and her ball bounded across the room.

"Poor Jo! It's too bad, but it can't be helped; So you must try to be contented with making your name boyish, and playing brother to us girls," said Beth, stroking the rough head at her knee with a hand that all the dish washing and dusting in the world could not make ungente in its touch.

"As for you, Amy," continued Meg, "you are altogether too particular and prim. Your airs are funny now; but you'll grow up an affected little goose, if you don't take care. I like your nice manners and refined ways of speaking when you don't try to be elegant; but your absurd words are as bad as Jo's slang."

"If Jo is a tomboy and Amy a goose, what am I, please?" asked Beth, ready to share the lecture.

"You're a dear, and nothing else," answered Meg, warmly; and no one contradicted her, for the "Mouse" was the pet of the family.

As young readers like to know "how people look", we will take this

moment to give them a little sketch of the four sisters, who sat knitting away in the twilight, while the December snow fell quietly without, and the fire crackled cheerfully within. It was a comfortable old room, though the carpet was faded and the furniture very plain; for a good picture or two hung on the walls, books filled the recesses, chrysanthemums and Christmas roses bloomed in the windows, and a pleasant atmosphere of home peace pervaded it.

Margaret, the eldest of the four, was sixteen, and very pretty, being plump and fair, with large eyes, plenty of soft, brown hair, a sweet mouth, and white hands, of which she was rather vain. 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 limbs, which were very much in her way. She had a decided mouth, a comical nose, and sharp, gray eyes, which appeared to see everything, and were by turns fierce, funny, or thoughtful. Her long, thick hair was her one beauty; but it was usually bundled in a net, to be out of her way. Round shoulders had Jo, big hands and feet, a flyaway look to her clothes, and the uncomfortable appearance of a girl who was rapidly shooting up into a woman and didn't like it. Elizabeth, or Beth—as everyone called her—was a rosy, smooth-haired, bright-eyed girl of thirteen, with a shy manner, a timid voice, and a peaceful expression, which was seldom disturbed. Her father called her "Little Miss Tranquility"; and the name suited her excellently, for she seemed to live in a happy world of her own, only venturing out to meet the few whom she trusted and loved. Amy, though the youngest, was a most important person—in her own opinion at least. A regular snow maiden, with blue eyes, and yellow hair, curling on her shoulders, pale and slender, and always carrying herself like a young lady mindful of her manners. What the characters of the four sisters were we will leave to be found out.

The clock struck six; and, having swept up the hearth, Beth put a pair of slippers down to warm. Somehow the sight of the old shoes had a good effect upon the girls; for Mother was coming, and everyone brightened to welcome her. Meg stopped lecturing, and lighted the lamp, Amy got out of the easy chair without being asked, and Jo forgot how tired she was as she sat up to hold the slippers nearer to the blaze.

"They are quite worn out; Marmee must have a new pair."

"I thought I'd get her some with my dollar," said Beth.

"No, I shall!" cried Amy.

"I'm the oldest," began Meg, but Jo cut in with a decided:

"I'm the man of the family now Papa is away, and I shall provide the slippers, for he told me to take special care of Mother while he was gone."

"I'll tell you what we'll do," said Beth, "let's each get her something for Christmas, and not get anything for ourselves."

"That's like you, dear! What will we get?" exclaimed Jo.

Everyone thought soberly for a minute; then Meg announced as if the idea was suggested by the sight of her own pretty hands, "I shall give her a nice pair of gloves."

"Army shoes, best to be had," cried Jo.

"Some handkerchiefs, all hemmed," said Beth.

"I'll get a little bottle of cologne; she likes it, and it won't cost much, so I'll have some left to buy my pencils," added Amy.

"How will we give the things?" asked Meg.

"Put them on the table, and bring her in and see her open the bundles. Don't you remember how we used to do on our birthdays?" answered Jo.

"I used to be *so* frightened when it was my turn to sit in the chair with the crown on, and see you all come marching round to give the presents, with a kiss. I liked the things and the kisses, but it was dreadful to have you sit looking at me while I opened the bundles," said Beth, who was toasting her face and the bread for tea, at the same time.

"Let Marmee think we are getting things for ourselves, and then surprise her. We must go shopping tomorrow afternoon, Meg; there is so much to do about the play for Christmas night," said Jo, marching up and down, with her hands behind her back and her nose in the air.

"I don't mean to act any more after this time; I'm getting too old for such things," observed Meg, who was as much a child as ever about "dressing-up" frolics.

"You won't stop, I know, as long as you can trail round in a white gown with your hair down, and wear gold-paper jewelry. You are the best actress we've got, and there'll be an end of everything if you quit the boards," said Jo. "We ought to rehearse tonight. Come here, Amy, and do the fainting scene, for you are as stiff as a poker in that."

"I can't help it; I never saw anyone faint, and I don't choose to make myself all black and blue, tumbling flat as you do. If I can go down easily, I'll drop; If I can't, I shall fall into a chair and be graceful; I don't care if Hugo does come at me with a pistol," returned Amy, who was not gifted

with dramatic power, but was chosen because she was small enough to be borne out shrieking by the villain of the piece.

"Do it this way; Clasp your hands so, and stagger across the room, crying frantically, 'Roderigo! Save me! Save me!'" and away went Jo, with a melodramatic scream which was truly thrilling.

Amy followed, but she poked her hands out stiffly before her, and jerked herself along as if she went by machinery; and her "Ow!" was more suggestive of pins being run into her than of fear and anguish. Jo gave a despairing groan, and Meg laughed outright, while Beth let her bread burn as she watched the fun with interest.

"It's no use! Do the best you can when the time comes, and if the audience laughs, don't blame me. Come on, Meg."

Then things went smoothly, for Don Pedro defied the world in a speech of two pages without a single break. Hagar, the witch, chanted an awful incantation over her kettleful of simmering toads, with weird effect; Roderigo rent his chains asunder manfully, and Hugo died in agonies of remorse and arsenic, with a wild "Ha! Ha!"

"It's the best we've had yet," said Meg, as the dead villain sat up and rubbed his elbows.

"I don't see how you can write and act such splendid things, Jo. You're a regular Shakespeare!" exclaimed Beth, who firmly believed that her sisters were gifted with wonderful genius in all things.

"Not quite," replied Jo modestly. "I do think *THE WITCHES CURSE*, an Operatic Tragedy; is rather a nice thing; but I'd like to try *McBETH*, if we only had a trapdoor for Banquo. I always wanted to do the killing part. 'Is that a dagger I see before me?'" muttered Jo, rolling her eyes and clutching at the air, as she had seen a famous tragedian do.

"No, it's the toasting fork, with Mother's shoe on it instead of the bread. Beth's stage-struck!" cried Meg, and the rehearsal ended in a general burst of laughter.

"Glad to find you so merry, my girls," said a cheery voice at the door, and actors and audience turned to welcome a tall, motherly lady with a "can-I-help-you" look about her which was truly delightful. She was not elegantly dressed, but a noble-looking woman, and the girls thought the gray cloak and unfashionable bonnet covered the most splendid mother in the world.

"Well, dearies, how have you got on today? There was so much to do,

getting the boxes ready to go tomorrow, that I didn't come home to dinner. Has anyone called, Beth? How is your cold, Meg? Jo, you look tired to death. Come and kiss me, baby."

While making these maternal inquiries, Mrs. March got her wet things off, her warm slippers on, and sitting down in the easy chair, drew Amy to her lap, preparing to enjoy the happiest hour of her busy day. The girls flew about, trying to make things comfortable, each in her own way. Meg arranged the tea table; Jo brought wood and set chairs, dropping, overturning, and clattering everything she touched; Beth trotted to and fro between parlor and kitchen, quiet and busy; while Amy gave directions to everyone, as she sat with her hands folded.

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 streak of sunshine. Beth clapped her hands, regardless of the biscuit she held, and Jo tossed up her napkin, crying, "A letter! A letter! Three cheers for Father!"

"Yes, a nice long letter. He is well, and thinks he shall get through the cold season better than we feared. He sends all sorts of loving wishes for Christmas, and an especial message to you girls," said Mrs. March, patting her pocket as if she had got a treasure there.

"Hurry and get done! Don't stop to quirk your little finger, and simper over your plate, Amy," cried Jo, choking in her tea, and dropping her bread, butter side down, on the carpet in her haste to get at the treat.

Beth ate no more, but crept away, to sit in her shadowy corner and brood over the delight to come, till the others were ready.

"I think it was so splendid of Father to go as chaplain when he was too old to be drafted, and not strong enough for a soldier," said Meg, warmly.

"Don't I wish I could go as a drummer, a *vivan*—what's its name? Or a nurse, so I could be near him and help him," exclaimed Jo, with a groan.

"It must be very disagreeable to sleep in a tent, and eat all sorts of bad-tasting things, and drink out of a tin mug," sighed Amy.

"When will he come home, Marmee?" asked Beth, with a little quiver in her voice.

"Not for many months, dear, unless he is sick. He will stay and do his work faithfully as long as he can, and we won't ask for him back a minute sooner than he can be spared. Now come and hear the letter."

They all drew to the fire, Mother in the big chair, with Beth at her