

A MERRY CHRISTMAS

A One-Act Play
From the story Little Women

by
Pauline Phelps



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This is the first scene from “Little Women”, a three-act dramatization by Miss Phelps from Louisa May Alcott’s book by the same title. Published by the WETMORE DECLAMATION BUREAU, Sioux City, Iowa.

CHARACTERS:

Hannah, the maid.

The four “Little Women”:

Meg

Jo

Beth

Amy

Mrs. March, the mother.

TIME: December 25, 1863.

PLACE: Concord, Massachusetts.

SCENE: The action of the play is laid in the sitting room of the March home.

DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS:

HANNAH: A maid who has been in the family so long that she is considered one of the family. She is around fifty, rather “dried-up” in appearance, quick, capable, and extremely neat. Her hair is parted in the middle, and combed smoothly down over her ears. She fastens her white collar with a large heirloom cameo pin, and her gingham apron is immaculate and stiffly starched. Hannah’s favorite expression, which has become a habit with her, is “Such goin’s on I never see in my life before.”

MEG: Sixteen and very pretty, with large eyes, a sweet mouth, and white hands of which she is rather proud. Meg’s hair is becomingly combed, and her clothes as dainty as she can manage in their straitened circumstances.

JO: A year younger than Meg, tall, thin and brown. Her hair is beautiful, but as a rule she braids it tightly and crowds it into a net, as she “doesn’t care how she looks”. She is at the awkward age as to legs and arms, and this is accentuated by her habit of stretching out at full length on the sofa, or sprawling in an ungainly attitude on the hearth rug.

BETH: Almost fourteen, rosy-cheeked, plump and sweet. Beth is very shy, and her manner so self-effacing that she is frequently taken to be younger than Amy, instead of older.

AMY: Just entering her teens, and a very important person--at least in her own estimation. In appearance she is a regular snow maiden, tall, with large blue eyes, an exquisite complexion, and golden curls. Her great ambition is to be considered really gown-up, and her demeanor is always one of extreme propriety.

MRS. MARCH: A tall, noble-looking woman, with a “can I help you?” look about her, which is truly delightful. She dresses very plainly, but wears her clothes like a queen.

PROPERTIES:

A half-knitted blue sock, with a ball of yarn attached (on large upholstered chair, R.)

Four packages (under the breakfast plates) containing testaments (Blue, red, gray, green).

Small basket containing Marmee’s gifts (slippers, gloves, handkerchiefs).

Package containing bottle of cologne for Amy.

Two plates of batter cakes for Hannah.

STAGE: The scene is the sitting room of the March home. Door up R., Mr. March's study, with back stairs beyond it. Door down R., dining room and kitchen. Door down L., garden and street. Up L. is a window with a shelf in front of it, holding a number of potted plants, among them a rose with two blooms. Against the wall at back is a long sofa with a number of pillows upon it. Above this hangs a large mirror. At C. stands an old-fashioned table, set for breakfast for five people, with white tablecloth, dainty china and silver. A high-backed chair is at the head of it, and a small straight chair at either side. Another small chair stands up stage near window. Down R. is a large chair with ottoman footstool. On the large chair is a half-knitted blue sock, with a ball of yarn attached.

When the curtain rises, Hannah is taking the small chair from up stage and placing it at table R.

HANNAH: (Grumbling but happy) Such goin's on, I never see in my life before! Eating where we don't belong, just because it's Christmas morning. (Sets down chair) And still one short. (Takes ottoman and places it at table L.) There! Now, I guess everything's ready. (Goes to door up R. and calls) Meg? Jo? How soon before you girls are coming down?

MEG: (Answering offstage) We're on our way. (Enters from up R.) Merry Christmas, Hannah.

JO, AMY, BETH: (Entering immediately behind Meg, and speaking in chorus) Merry Christmas.

HANNAH: (With unusual formality) The same to you, young ladies, and many of them..

JO: (Looking about appreciatively) You've set the table in the sitting room, just as you promised, so now we'll be warm and cozy for breakfast. But where's Mother?

HANNAH: Goodness only knows. Some poor creature come a-beggin', and your Ma went straight off to see what was needed. There never was such a woman for givin' away victuals and drink, clothes and firin'.

MEG: She'll be back soon, I think, so start your cakes and have everything ready. But, of course, we won't think of sitting down to the table until she comes. (Hannah exits, down R.)

BETH: (Answering Meg) Christmas wouldn't seem like Christmas unless we all ate our breakfast together. (Takes up partly finished stocking from large chair, R., seats herself and begins to knit)

JO: (Walking to window, L.) It won't seem like Christmas whatever we do, with Father away at war, and no tree, stockings or presents.

AMY: (Complainingly) I don't think it's fair for some girls to have all the good things, and other girls nothing at all. (Looks at herself in mirror, at back)

MEG: Don't you wish we had all the money Father lost when we were small, Jo? It's so dreadful to be poor. (Sinks on the sofa with a sigh) I suppose I mind it more than the rest of you because I can remember past glories, and now I have to wear made-over dresses, and go out to work every day teaching three tiresome children.

JO: (Crossly, sitting down on floor L., and hugging her knees with her long arms) You don't have half the bad time I do. How would you like to be shut up for hours with a nervous, fussy old lady like Aunt March, who's never satisfied, and worries you 'til you're ready to fly out of the window?

(Amy, having finished inspecting herself in glass, sits primly on sofa, her feet placed correctly in front of her)

BETH: (Succumbing to the general depression) It's naughty to fret, but I do think that washing dishes and helping Hannah to keep 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.