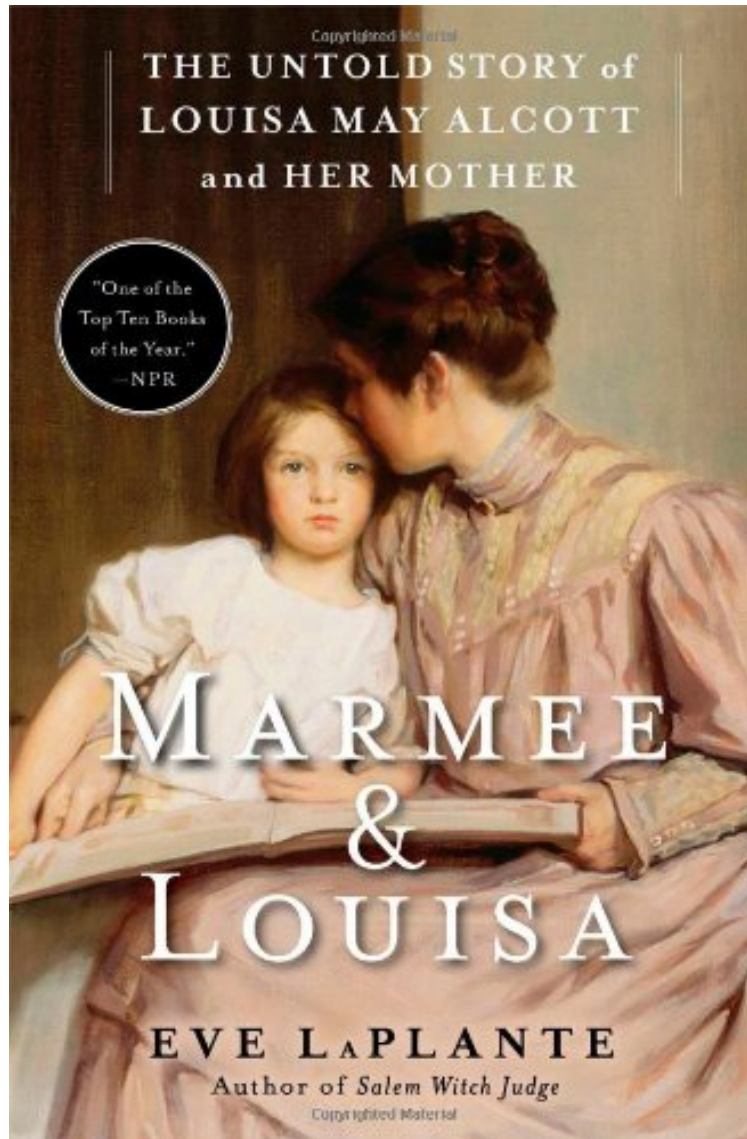


(Ebook free) Marmee Louisa: The Untold Story of Louisa May Alcott and Her Mother

## Marmee Louisa: The Untold Story of Louisa May Alcott and Her Mother

*Eve LaPlante*

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**Eve LaPlante : Marmee Louisa: The Untold Story of Louisa May Alcott and Her Mother** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Marmee Louisa: The Untold Story of Louisa May Alcott and Her Mother:

46 of 47 people found the following review helpful. A Victorian woman speaks By YA Librarian Louisa May Alcott's life is well known, and many historians have stated that it was her father, Bronson, that helped mold his daughter into

the amazing woman she became. That theory never set well with me. I often wondered if historians were shutting out an important chapter in Louisa's life. Did Louisa's mother play a larger part in her daughter's life? Were historians not giving Abigail her due because, after all, she was just a Victorian woman subjected to the domestic sphere of life. Abigail has never been known to most people because her journals and letters were supposedly burned by her husband and famous daughter. The public image of Marmee, the tranquil, loving angel of the household had to be kept up no matter what. The family did not want future biographers writing about Abigail's headstrong ways and Bronson didn't like some of the things his wife wrote about him. Her image had to be upheld no matter what. And for the most part that was true. There is one biography about her life entitled *Marmee: The Mother Of Little Women*, but that gives very little insight into her thoughts. Ms. LaPlante stumbled onto Abigail's letters and journals. These papers allow us to peel away the layers of the iconic Marmee and see who she really was. The book is filled with many firsts and that makes it a treasure. It begins with the history of the Mays and explores Abigail's life as a girl and young woman. The reader is introduced to a headstrong woman who has a mind of her own, wants to explore education, embraces many radical ideas of the time (anti slavery and giving women the right to vote). She may become a spinster, and is comfortable with her role. However, she meets Bronson and is overtaken by love. The heart of the book, I believe, is when we see Abigail struggle with her marriage. No other book has portrayed this in such a powerful way. Everyone knows that Abigail had a difficult time being Mrs. Alcott. The book does not portray Bronson in a positive light. If anything he comes off as a bumbling fool, lazy, hopeless, unrealistic and an unlikeable person. And frankly I'm a fan with this interpretation. The man left his family for long periods of time and let them drown in poverty. Victorian women needed a man (in many cases) to survive and Bronson was too busy chasing his own dreams like a clueless child. The snippets of journal entries and letters to family members gives Abigail, a Victorian woman, a voice. Finally, after decades of silence she speaks and what the reader encounters is powerful and sad. We are exposed to her thoughts on a variety of subjects. Mrs. Alcott struggled to feed her children. The poor woman relies on charity from friends, asks family for money and takes in boarders to provide for her four daughters. Abigail endured countless moves, horrible utopian ideas (Fruitlands) and long, painful absences from her husband. Bronson threatens to leave his wife and during one period believes in staying out of the marriage bed. She suffered a miscarriage and a stillborn son. Despite her hardships she was a very progressive woman and Abigail passed on her views to her daughters. Through Louisa's and Abigail's journals we see that there is a strong bond between mother and daughter. The two women are very much alike in temperament, dreams and philosophy. It is Abigail who encourages Louisa to write. And I think Ms. LaPlante makes it clear that it was Mrs. Alcott who encouraged Louisa to pursue her dreams. I also agree with the author that it was Mrs. Alcott's marriage that exposed Louisa to the horrors of a Victorian marriage. The toil wore down her mother and made her weary and ill, would the same hold true for Louisa if she married? Was Louisa willing to take the risk? In the end the answer, as we all know, is no. There is little doubt that Louisa's choice to remain a spinster was made easier by watching her mother's suffering. Louisa's struggles and accomplishments are found later in the book. Ms. LaPlante writes about Louisa's rise to fame, the books she wrote and even some of the short stories. Abigail's journals and letters do not show up as often in later chapters; but that is no doubt due to illness and old age. She was feeble from a life of hard work and her eyes were not very good. Ms. LaPlante has succeeded in giving Mrs. Abigail May Alcott a voice. She, like so many other Victorian women, toiled and worked hard to make her family as happy and comfortable as she could. The discovery of her letters and journals are amazing and sheds new light onto the life of Louisa and her mother. This book is a must read for anyone interested in Louisa May Alcott's life. In order to understand the headstrong, successful author one must know her mother because without Abigail I do not think Louisa would have graced us with her amazing talent.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. I was interested especially since I like nonfiction. I ordered the book immediately (hardcover) By bekki speaks I heard a Jacksonville librarian raving about this book on the radio. I was interested especially since I like nonfiction. I ordered the book immediately (hardcover, full retail price) as a gift for my daughter. Fortunately I read it first. Considering the author had family archives and possibly might have inherited Louisa's writing genes, this book was an ordeal. Abigail was a popular name back then and the reader doesn't get clues as to which Abigail we are discussing. As another reviewer stated, the book is not much more than quotes and very little narrative. The book is an excellent reference book, but not an enjoyable read. I did plod all the way through to the end but never passed it on to my daughter. This was a disappointment. I'm giving it four stars because of the effort the author made, not because it was a good read.

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Juicy as a Sequel By Yours Truly Anyone who read *Little Women* and other children's fiction by Louisa May Alcott and marveled at the family's forbearance in the face of genteel poverty should read this book. The fictional gentle minister father off to see the troops on the Civil War battlefield was really a long-winded narcissist, and Marmee struggled all her adult life with her rage at his willful failure to support his family. The real Jo (Louisa) may not have been as ruthless as Scarlett O'Hara, but she was determined never to be hungry again. Author Eve LaPlante, a descendant of the May family herself, recasts this saga through feminist eyes with Abigail May Alcott (Marmee) and not her husband, Bronson, as Louisa's guiding light. It was Marmee who gave Louisa the materials she needed to write (pencils, a pen, journals) and encouraged her from girlhood. Again and again as Bronson moved from trying and failing to establish progressive schools then wandered off to give public

"conversations," the family struggled with debt, moved from place to place, and often lacked adequate food. Although smart and curious as her Harvard-educated minister brother, Abigail was privately tutored but never studied for a degree and was discouraged by her sex from entering the public sphere. Once married (she proposed to Bronson rather than accede to her father's wishes to marry a first cousin), Abigail lost her property rights and would have stood to lose her children had she divorced. She earned a little money from sewing and boarding students that her husband abandoned. managing a spa and working among the poor, but mostly she relied on funds from her brother, Samuel Joseph May, and the kindness of friends and other relatives. If the story has a hero, it is the principled, generous abolitionist brother whose grandchildren Louisa would eventually send to college. LaPlante's account is full of interactions with various leading lights of the period--Margaret Fuller, Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Theodore Parker, William Lloyd Garrison, Susan B. Anthony--but her focus is on Louisa's relationship with her mother and her sisters. Sadly, Louisa abandons her insights about the need for women's rights and freedom in the public sphere when she pursues the fiction that would make her rich and famous. The truths here are more interesting than the soothing fictions that Alcott wove, but LaPlante can't change the ending.

In this meticulously researched look at Louisa May Alcott and her mother, Eve LaPlante shatters myths about the supposed passive Marmee, replacing them with a portrait of a woman who fought for a woman's right to education, professional and maternal satisfaction, and power (People Magazine). Marmee Louisa, hailed by NPR as one of the best books of 2012, paints an exquisitely moving and utterly convincing portrait of Louisa May Alcott and her mother, the real Marmee. Award-winning biographer Eve LaPlante mines the Alcotts' intimate diaries and other private papers, some recently discovered in a family attic and others thought to have been destroyed, to revive this remarkable daughter and mother. Abigail May Alcott long dismissed as a quiet, self-effacing background figure comes to life as a gifted writer and thinker. A politically active feminist firebrand, she fought for universal civil rights, an end to slavery, and women's suffrage. This gorgeously written story of two extraordinary women is guaranteed to transform our view and deepen our understanding of one of America's most beloved authors.

From Booklist \*Starred \* Its not unusual for a biography to include a family tree, but its rare for the biographer to appear on it. LaPlante (Salem Witch Judge, 2007) is great-niece and cousin of the subjects of this involving mother-daughter portrait of Abigail May and Louisa May Alcott. Louisa's unconventional father, Bronson, has received far more attention than his long-suffering, feminist wife, even though Abigail is the model for Marmee, the beloved mother in *Little Women*. This imbalance was due, in part, to Bronson's burning of Abigail's personal papers. But LaPlante discovered that all was not lost while examining the contents of her mother's attic. Her subsequent quest for more overlooked materials resulted in this first full biography of Abigail; a collection of her writings (*My Heart Is Boundless*); and a fresh perspective on Louisa. Spirited Abigail believed women had the right to an education and a voice in running the world, but she fell for a charismatic yet incompetent man and found herself trapped in poverty, caring alone for their four daughters. Her own dreams cruelly thwarted, Abigail brilliantly nurtured Louisa's literary genius. Although bitter ironies mark each woman's story, vividly set within the social upheavals of the Civil War era, their profound love, intellect, and courage shine. --Donna Seaman [An] involving mother-daughter portrait and a fresh perspective on Louisa. Louisa's unconventional father, Bronson, has received far more attention than his long-suffering, feminist wife... Her own dreams cruelly thwarted, Abigail brilliantly nurtured Louisa's literary genius. Although bitter ironies mark each woman's story, vividly set within the social upheavals of the Civil War era, their profound love, intellect, and courage shine. (Booklist, starred review) In this meticulously researched look at Louisa May Alcott and her mother, LaPlante shatters myths about the supposed passive Marmee, replacing them with a portrait of a woman who fought for a woman's right to education, professional and maternal satisfaction, and power. (People Magazine) A November 2012 Indie Next Great Read (American Booksellers Association) Engrossing... LaPlante, a descendant of the Alcotts, pursued this untold story after discovering forgotten journals and letters in an attic trunk. In her skilled hands these documents yield Abigail unabridged: a thinker, writer, activist, wife and mother who held fast to her convictions in the face of terrible suffering... [T]his is a biography of Louisa, too, and LaPlante makes a compelling case that it was Abigail, not Bronson, who encouraged Louisa not only to channel her considerable energy through writing, but also to pursue publication and to weather the censorship that female writers faced... In bringing to life the woman who made Louisa May Alcott's work possible, LaPlante shows us that there's even more to admire in the real Abigail than in the fictional Marmee." (The Washington Post) This revealing biography... will forever change how we view the characters and their relationships in Louisa's novels... Through LaPlante's book we see how Louisa drew heavily from Abigail's life experiences in her own writings... Alcott fans who revel in LaPlante's biography can read to the very last page and then turn to a bonus... companion volume, *MY HEART IS BOUNDLESS*, writings of Abigail May Alcott. (USA Today) A revelatory dual biography... LaPlante makes a convincing case that Abigail's doggedly pragmatic responses to the intertwined and ongoing catastrophes of Bronson's inconsistent emotional involvement and the family finances left an indelible impression on Louisa, who vowed from an early age to take care of her mother... [D]emonstrates that Abigail's daughters were her dreams made manifest. (The Seattle Times) A romance... The eye-

opener of Eve LaPlante's marvelous new dual biography...is that Abigail was every inch the social philosopher that Bronson was when it came to issues of abolition and women's rights.... Marmee Louisa charts Abigail's relatively unacknowledged influence as a progressive thinker on her famous daughter Louisa.... When Louisa began to write *Little Women*... she drew material from her mother's approximately 20 volumes of diaries. Until Abigail's death...she was her daughter's closest confidant and biggest booster. (Maureen Corrigan NPR "Fresh Air")Until recently, most scholarship has glossed over Abigail's influence on Louisa's writing, focusing instead on the role of Louisa's father, who was often absent. Drawing on newly discovered letters and diary entries, this fascinating dual biography corrects the record by revealing the enormously close bond that was shared by mother and daughter,...showing that Abigail was Louisa's most important intellectual mentor. (BUST (five stars))Convincingly argue[d]... Of interest to anyone who enjoys mother/daughter stories, American history, or literary studies In the winter season, when many of us will cue our DVD players to the opening scene of *LITTLE WOMEN*, Marmee Louisa is well worth a read.

(Bookpage)[Marmee Louisa] shows just how much iconic children's author Louisa May Alcott (1832-1888) was her mother's daughter previously undiscovered family papers and untapped pages from Abigail's dairies provide new evidence exposing her undeniable influence on her daughter Fresh material gives flesh to the formerly invisible Abigail, revealing how she and her famous daughter mirrored one another Thoroughly researched and moving. (Kirkus)LaPlante sheds light on Abigail May Alcott [who] is shown to have been a remarkable intellect and a progressive who played a primary role in Louisa's life. LaPlante pays meticulous attention to primary sources, delving into the surviving diaries of mother and daughter. This heavily researched double biography serves as a kind of twin to John Matteson's *Edens Outcasts*. Nineteenth-century New England literature buffs and Alcott aficionados will appreciate this well-wrought study. (Library Journal)Let the world know you are alive! Abigail Alcott counseled her daughter, who amply did, having inherited her mother's spirit and frustrations, diaries and work ethic. Along the way Louisa May Alcott immortalized the woman in whose debt she understood herself to be and who ultimately died in her arms; Eve LaPlante beautifully resurrects her here. A most original love story, taut and tender. (Stacy Schiff, Pulitzer Prize winner and New York Times bestselling author of *Cleopatra: A Life*)Eve LaPlante's Marmee Louisa is a heartwarming and thoroughly researched story of family interdependence very much in the style of Louisa's own unforgettable *Little Women*. No other biographer has examined so thoughtfully and with such compassion the mother-daughter relationship that supported both women through decades of adversity and brought a great American novel into being. (Megan Marshall, author of *The Peabody Sisters: Three Women Who Ignited American Romanticism* and *Margaret Fuller: A New American Life*)This is an important book about an important relationship. Writing engagingly and with precision, Eve LaPlante sheds new light on the Alcott story, a story that is in some ways the story of America. (Jon Meacham, Pulitzer Prize winner and New York Times bestselling author of *Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power*)Reason and religion are emancipating woman from that intellectual thralldom that has so long held her captive. That was the dearest hope of Louisa May Alcott's mother Abigail, who was a writer herself and juggled work and family in ways that will be strikingly familiar to many contemporary readers. Marmee Louisa is the engrossing story of a vibrant, talented woman whose life and influence on her famous daughter has, until now, been erased. (Anne-Marie Slaughter, Bert G. Kerstetter '66 University Professor of Politics and International Affairs, Princeton University)It's hard to imagine that anything new could be said about the life of Louisa May Alcott, one of America's most beloved authors. Yet as a great-niece of Abigail May Alcott, Louisa's mother, Eve LaPlante isn't just any biographer. Her new book, *MARMEE LOUISA*, is an intimate portrait of mother and daughter, showing how their lives were profoundly intertwined in ways that some biographers have underplayed or ignored altogether... LaPlante chronicles the intense attachment between Abigail and Louisa. [A] fascinating story of two visionary women (The Boston Globe)Compelling... LaPlante admirably seeks to paint a fuller picture of Abigail and her role in Louisa's life....[and] allows her protagonists to speak for themselves. (Publishers Weekly)About the AuthorEve LaPlante is a great niece and a first cousin of Abigail and Louisa May Alcott. She is the author of *Seized*, *American Jezebel*, and *Salem Witch Judge*, which won the 2008 Massachusetts Book Award for Nonfiction. She is also the editor of *My Heart Is Boundless* the first collection of Abigail May Alcott's private papers. She lives with her family in New England.