

MEG. Oh, Laurie—

LAURIE. With the maker's compliments and congratulations. Any time, when John is away and you get frightened, Mrs. Meg—*(Takes rattle which MEG has undone)*—just swing this out of the front window, and it will rouse the neighborhood in a jiffy. *(It is a mammoth rattle, and, as LAURIE finishes, he takes it from MEG and gives a sample of its power, that makes them cover their ears—then he hands the rattle back to MEG, who laughs so that she cannot thank him. He falls into an attitude of mack devotion before AMY.)* Amy, you are getting altogether too handsome for a single lady. I shall warn grandpa.

*(Goes to AMY at back of table c.)*

AMY. *(Nettled)* Don't be absurd, Laurie. Will you ever grow up?

LAURIE. I'm doing my best, ma'am—but six feet is about all a man can do in these degenerate days. *(Looks over at BROOKE and MEG, who are again absorbed)* Oh, gaze upon the happy lovers!

AMY. Aren't they radiant? I want to paint Meg in her wedding gown, the first bride in the March family.

*(Jo, evidently disgusted at the talk about lovers, grabs up her writing desk and goes to desk L., slamming small writing case down on desk L. sits.)*

LAURIE. Old Brooke has asked me to the wedding, and I accepted on the spot. Told him I'd come if I were at the end of the earth, for the sight of Jo's face on that occasion would be worth a long journey.

AMY. *(Has risen as he spoke—puts drawing board on small table at back, starts to go upstairs)*

Yes, wouldn't it? I must dress or I shall be late. *(Exits)*

LAURIE. *(At newel post L., evidently in teasing mood—looks at MEG and JOHN, then goes over to Jo)* You don't look festive, ma'am, what's the matter?

Jo. I don't approve of the match. You can't know how hard it is for me to give up Meg.

LAURIE. *(Going to her consolingly)* You don't give her up. You only go halves.

Jo. I've lost my dearest friend.

LAURIE. You've got me, anyhow, and I'll stand by you, Jo, all the days of my life. *(Holds out hand)*

Jo. *(Shaking hands with him)* I know you will. You're always such a comfort to me, Teddy.

LAURIE. Well, now, don't be dismal, there's a good fellow. It'll be very jolly to see Mrs. Meg in her own little home; but, oh, I say, Jo, that little Parker is getting desperate about Amy.

Jo. *(Aghast)* About Amy?

LAURIE. Yes. He writes poetry about her and all that sort of thing. We'd better nip his little passion in the bud, hadn't we?

Jo. *(Startled)* Of course we had. The idea! We don't want any more marrying in this family for years to come. Mercy on us, what are the children thinking about?

LAURIE. *(Chuckling)* It's a fast age, and I don't know what we are coming to, ma'am. You're a mere infant, but you'll go next, Jo.

Jo. Don't be alarmed. There should always be one old maid in the family—and I'm it! *(LAURIE laughs—Jo's tone changes)* I think it's dreadful to break up families so—*(Bell rings and Jo starts for L. door, consciously)* Let's change the subject.

LAURIE. *(Meaningly)* You'll go next. — END