

MEG sits sewing R. of table. She is listening to MARCH'S voice as he reads aloud in the study R.I.

MARCH. (Off) "The fat boy pointed to the destination of the pies. 'Wery good,' said Sam, 'stick a bit o' Christmas in 'em. There now, we look compact and comfortable, as the father said when he cut his little boy's head off to cure him o' squintin'."

(Amid a burst of laughter which follows, HANNAH enters from dining room and goes to MEG.)

HANNAH. Miss Meg, come quick! Miss Amy's hoppin' around the woodshed with her foot in some white stuff—and she can't git it out.

AMY. (Comes hopping on from dining room with the pan on her right foot, crying) I can't get it out—(Ad lib. Comes to R.C. Jo looks up and roars, then goes on with her writing)

MEG. (Rises and puts down her work impatiently) Oh, dear, Amy, I do wish you would leave plaster modeling alone.

HANNAH. Well, she's crazy about them chiny figgers she calls stattys. (HANNAH, MEG and AMY exit into dining room her bare leg and the pan stuck out behind—as she hops off R. 3, ad lib outside) I can't pull her foot out of the pan!

MEG. Well, try now, Hannah!

(AMY screams. Jo, who has evidently reached the end of her inspiration, rises and stretches herself, casting aside apron and cap on desk L., stretches arms over her head; as she yawns and shakes herself, enter MARCH and BETH from study; MARCH with book under his arm; BETH with a little basket in her hand.)

Jo. What—no more Pickwick?

MARCH. (Laying book on mantel at fireplace, with his back to fire, takes off spectacles and begins cleaning them with handkerchief) Not for the present. I'm read out.

BETH. (Goes to Jo, up L. near desk) Jo, don't you want to help me cut the sunflowers? We need the seeds to feed Aunt Cocketop and her family of chicks.

(MRS. MARCH comes down the stairs. She is wearing a little knitted shawl over her shoulders, which she takes off and puts on BETH.)

Jo. I'll be glad of the exercise and—(Laughing) the chance to cool my fevered brain. (Takes off net and shakes down her hair, which falls loosely about her shoulders) Besides, I've got to wait and fill up my idea box again.

MRS. MARCH. (The two girls exit, laughing, hall door. MRS. MARCH takes her work basket from c. table and goes over to MARCH, sitting on settee at fireplace) Father, I am worried about Amy and Laurie and Jo.

MARCH. Worried? You don't think that Amy—?

MRS. MARCH. Mother's eyes are keen, dear, and there is no question in my mind that Amy cares for Laurie in quite another way than he does for her. He loves her, of course, but it's entirely the big brother attitude.

MARCH. And Jo?

MRS. MARCH. I've sometimes feared Jo's heart would never be touched with a real romance.

MARCH. (Thoughtfully) With her, brain is developing before heart.

MRS. MARCH. (Smiling) Yes; she prefers imaginary heroes to real ones, says that when she gets

tired of them she can lock them up in the old tin kitchen where she keeps her manuscripts. And yet—

MARCH. And yet— (*Sits on settee R. of MRS. MARCH, putting arm around her*) What else have those keen, motherly eyes discovered?

MRS. MARCH. Do you remember how interested Jo was in that elderly Professor?

MARCH. (*Looks surprised*) Professor Bhaer?

MRS. MARCH. Well, since she's been teaching Mrs. Kirk's children, she has seen him again. He rooms at the Kirks; he's teaching her German, and she sews on his buttons and darns his socks.

MARCH. (*Smiling and shaking his head in a deprecating way, as he taps his wife's cheek gently*) You dear, foolish mother. I shouldn't call darning socks a love symptom. (*Rises*)

MEG. (*Enters downstairs, dressed for walking*) I'm going down to the office to walk up with John, Mother.

MRS. MARCH. Very well, dear; bring John back to tea.

MEG. (*Goes to hall door L.I.*) Thanks, Marmee.

(*Curtseys and exits L.I.*)

Jo. (*Coming in from dining room, her hair tidy again, carrying letter, absorbed and pleased, comes to R.C., suddenly becomes aware of presence of father and mother and gives an embarrassed look*) Ha—ha—Marmee, you said I might ask my professor to call and he's coming this afternoon.

(*MR. and MRS. MARCH exchange a meaning look, which Jo does not see—being upstage and back of table to chair L. Bus. of tucking letter into dress, taking apron and cap from chair and throwing them in closet on floor. MARCH shakes*

END

his head, and, chuckling to himself, disappears into the study R.I. Jo fixes the bow at her neck, comes down to chair L. of table C. and takes up her pen.)

MRS. MARCH. (*Takes up her sewing*) You seem very much interested in the professor, Jo.

Jo. Well, he advised me to study simple, true characters, so I proceeded to study him. I find him a great puzzle. He's not fascinating or brilliant, and yet people gather about him as naturally as about a genial fire. He's poor, yet he always appears to be giving something away. He's a stranger, yet everyone's his friend. He's plain and peculiar and I've been trying to discover his charm and I've finally decided that it's a benevolence that has worked the miracle. (*With a funny little laugh*) Why, Mother, his very boots are benevolent.

AMY. (*Enters, wearing MEG's dress of Act One made over*) Marmee, may I wear your little pearl pin to the dance to-night? (*Bus. of scratching left ankle with right foot*)

MRS. MARCH. Surely, dear, it is simple enough to be quite appropriate for my little girl.

Jo. Where are you going, Amy?

AMY. Aunt Curtis has asked me to dine there to-night, and she will take Flo and me to Mamie Gardner's dance.

MRS. MARCH. What are you going to wear, dear?

AMY. I've covered Flo's old white silk with tarlatan, and I shall loop it with rosebuds.

Jo. (*Disapprovingly*) Don't see why you want to go to parties, Amy, and truckle to a parcel of girls who don't care a sixpence for you, just because they wear French heels and ride in coupes.

AMY. (*Indignantly*) I don't truckle, and I hate being patronized as much as you do, but I like peo-