

yourself that Lydia is very romantic and fanciful. It would be a very different matter if she were like Madeleine Hollister. She wouldn't need any managing."

Mrs. Mortimer smiled at the idea. "Yes, I'd like to see somebody try to manage Paul's sister," she commented.

"They wouldn't *have* to," her mother pointed out, "she's so level-headed and sane. But Lydia's different. It's part of her loveliness, of course, only you do have to manage her. And she'll be in a very unsettled state for the first week or two after she gets home after such a long absence. The impressions she gets then — well, I wish he were here!"

Mrs. Mortimer waved her hand toward the roses.

"Of course, of course," assented her mother, subsiding peaceably down the scale from anxiety to confidence with the phrase. She looked at the monstrous flowers with the gaze of acquired admiration so usual in her eyes. "They don't look much like roses, do they?" she remarked irrelevantly.

Mrs. Mortimer turned in the doorway, her face expressing an extreme surprise. "Good gracious, no," she cried. "Why, of course not. They cost a dollar and a half apiece."

She did not stop to hear her mother's vaguely assenting reply. Mrs. Emery heard her firm, rapid tread go down the hall to the front door and then suddenly stop. Something indefinable about the pause that followed made the mother's heart beat thickly. "What is it, Marietta?" she called, but her voice was lost in Mrs. Mortimer's exclamation of surprise, "Why it can't be — why, *Lydia!*"

As from a great distance, the mother heard a confused rush in the hall, and then, piercing through the dreamlike unreality of the moment, came the sweet, high note of a girl's voice, laughing, but with the liquid uncertainty of tears quivering through the mirth. "Oh, Marietta! Where's Mother? Aren't you all slow-pokes — not a soul to meet us at the train — where's Mother? Where's Mother? Where's —" The room swam around Mrs.