



"Well, I'm nineteen—going on twenty," retorted the Sharp-Voiced One, unexpectedly. "How old are you?"

"Twenty-five," said Marjorie at once.

For some reason Jane asked no more questions that day. The other girls had heard her cross-questioning of pretty Miss Hunt with less surprise than amusement; they knew the Sharp-Voiced One. But Jane's keen eyes never left Marjorie's during the lesson. It took all the young teacher's courage to meet their unwinking challenge.

Later, when Sunday School was over, Marjorie had had a second surprise. Jane, lingering, had said, "I'd like to walk home with you—please."

And so their friendship had begun.

When Marjorie had told Mr. Crawford of her tilt with the Sharp-Voiced One, he had smiled back reassuringly at her.

"She was only testing you," he said. "Poor little drop of bitterness, she thinks every one is ready to snub her. Perhaps they have," he added, consciously ungrammatical, "when she tested *them*."

Marjorie felt very happy over the implication in the emphatic "them." She had not, by the way, told Mr. Crawford her age.

On Thanksgiving morning, Jane lingered at the door of the little church until the rector came out. He, too, looked disappointed as he glanced up the street.

"She has gone," said the Sharp-Voiced One, enigmatically. "She had to hurry, she said."

The rector was a tall man, perhaps forty, perhaps less. The good color in his cheeks deepened a little under Jane's keen gaze, but the fine gray eyes were wonderfully kind as he looked down at her.

"Who is *she*?" he asked, with a merry look.

