

ACT II

(The tables and chairs of the two kitchens are still on the stage.)

(During intermission, the ladders and the small bench are withdrawn.)

☼ *(A minute before 'curtain time,' the stage lights fade gradually into an early morning blue.)*

*(The **STAGE MANAGER** has been at his accustomed place watching the audience return to its seats.)*

☼ *(During the opening scene, morning light is gradually established.)*

STAGE MANAGER. Three years have gone by. Yes, the sun's come up over a thousand times. Summers and winters have cracked the mountains a little bit more and the rains have brought down some of the dirt. Some babies that weren't even born before have begun talking regular sentences already; and a number of people who thought they were right young and spry have noticed that they can't bound up a flight of stairs like they used to, without their heart fluttering a little. All that can happen in a thousand days. Nature's been pushing and contriving in other ways, too: a number of young people fell in love and got married. Yes, the mountain got bit away a few fractions of an inch; millions of gallons of water went by the mill; and here and there a new home was set up under a roof. Almost everybody in the world gets married – you know what I mean? In our town there aren't hardly any exceptions. Most everybody in

Emily & George
are 19

the world climbs into their graves married. The First Act was called the Daily Life. This act is called Love and Marriage. There's another act coming after this: I reckon you can guess what that's about. So: It's three years later. It's 1904. It's July 7th, just after High School Commencement. That's the time most of our young people jump up and get married. Soon as they've passed their last examinations in solid geometry and Cicero's Orations, looks like they suddenly feel themselves fit to be married. It's early morning.

*Emily and George are
18 going on 19*



(The sound of distant thunder.)

STAGE MANAGER. *(cont.)* Only this time it's been raining. It's been pouring and thundering. Mrs. Gibbs' garden, and Mrs. Webb's here: drenched. All those bean poles and pea vines: drenched. All yesterday over there on Main Street, the rain looked like curtains being blown along.



(More thunder. He looks up and out.)

Hm...it may begin again any minute.



(Distant train whistle. He looks at pocket watch.)

There! You can hear the 5:45 for Boston.



(MRS. GIBBS and MRS. WEBB enter their kitchens and start the day as in the First Act.)

(MRS. GIBBS again raises the shade and window and makes her wood fire. MRS. WEBB shakes the grate, adds coal to her stove, turns damper, fills coffee pot at sink.)

And there's Mrs. Gibbs and Mrs. Webb come down to make breakfast, just as though it were an ordinary day. I don't have to point out to the women in my audience that those ladies they see before them, both of those ladies cooked three meals a day – one of 'em for twenty years, the other for forty – and no summer vacation.

(MRS. WEBB crosses with pot to cupboard and grinds coffee.)