

MRS. WEBB

MRS. WEBB. Emily, come and help me string these beans for the winter.

(EMILY sits and helps.)

George Gibbs let himself have a real conversation, didn't he? Why, he's growing up. How old would George be?

EMILY. (coming out of trance, protesting too much) I don't know.

MRS. WEBB. Let's see. He must be almost sixteen.

EMILY. (changing the subject) Mama, I made a speech in class today and I was very good.

MRS. WEBB. You must recite it to your father at supper. What was it about?

EMILY. The Louisiana Purchase. It was like silk off a spool. I'm going to make speeches all my life. (holding up a bean in both hands) – Mama, are these big enough?

MRS. WEBB. Try and get them a little bigger if you can.

EMILY. Mama, will you answer me a question, serious?

MRS. WEBB. Seriously, dear – not serious.

EMILY. Seriously, – will you?

MRS. WEBB. Of course, I will.

EMILY. (after a brief pause, expectantly) Mama, am I good looking?

MRS. WEBB. (steals a quick look at her) Yes, of course you are. All my children have got good features; I'd be ashamed if they hadn't.

EMILY. Oh, Mama, that's not what I mean. What I mean is: am I pretty?

MRS. WEBB. I've already told you, yes. Now that's enough of that. You have a nice young pretty face. I never heard of such foolishness.

EMILY. Oh, Mama, you never tell us the truth about anything.

MRS. WEBB. I am telling you the truth.

EMILY. (wheeling a bit) Mama, were you pretty?

MRS. WEBB. Yes, I was, if I do say it. I was the prettiest girl in town next to Mamie Cartwright.

EMILY. But, Mama, you've got to say something about me. Am I pretty enough...to get anybody...to get people interested in me?

MRS. WEBB. (turning on her, firmly) Emily, you make me tired. Now stop it. You're pretty enough for all normal purposes. (rises, taking bowl with her) – Come along now and bring that bowl with you.

(She exits through trellis.)

EMILY. (picking up bowl from floor and following) Oh, Mama, you're no help at all.