

Angela's Business

"No — I'm going to send it to the grammar-school."

"Oh — all right. I'll attend to it," he said, briefly. "I'll tell the porter to keep it to-night, and get a wagon to-morrow."

On which, without more ado, he stepped from the assistant principal's office, and shut the door behind him.

Charles's conference with the negro porter in the corridor below lasted a minute, perhaps. His diplomatic retirement lasted ten minutes, at least. His surplus time the young man spent in staring out of a tall window into a white-paved courtyard. But that it was a white-paved courtyard, or that it was a courtyard, he never knew. The instant he found that he was staring at it, he jumped a little, and went upstairs. . . .

If he had meant this interval as a punctuation and the turning of a page, Mary, it seemed, had so accepted it. Reopening Mr. Geddie's door, Charles saw that his absence had been employed for a general setting to rights. The table had been moved back against the wall; the books and globe restored to it, the chair Mary had occupied returned to its place, the window opened to blow out the dust. Mary herself stood in the middle of the room, coated, buttoning her gloves. Without looking at her exactly, he was aware that the white veil which had been caught up around her hat was now let down.

Bygones were bygones, clearly: the least said, the soonest mended. Charles remarked, exactly as if house-cleaning were the sole interest he knew of here: "Well, you've made a good job of it."

And Mary replied, with equal naturalness: "I did what I could. John will have to attend to these things on the floor."

"Yes — I told him to see to that at once."

"He ought to give the closet a good cleaning, too. I'd better tell him — this is just the time."