

XXIII

MARY WING was considered a reliable person. When she announced that she would clean out an office closet on a certain day, you could make your plans on the thing's being done. And to-day — if her usual principles might have weakened a little — Mary was further bound by the definite engagement she had made. As Charles had reflected, a demoted grammar-school teacher could not walk in and out of a principal's office like one who had some rights there.

Mary had not remained at the Flowers' interminably, after all. She had entered the High School before Charles Garrott had arrived at Olive Street, and had been upstairs for half an hour, when Charles, following on to help her, strode through the great bronze doors. Nevertheless, she was a full hour behind the time mentioned to Mr. Johnson Geddie over the telephone, and this increased her hope that her only too obliging successor would not be found waiting for her. However, Mr. Geddie was found waiting for her; very much so, in fact. Nothing could have exceeded the exuberance of his courtesy, and nothing could have been less welcome.

The new assistant principal was a plump, white person, in whose face a reddish mustache and gold-rimmed spectacles — his own personal addenda, as it were — were the only salient features. Not brilliant, he was rising by character, evinced in an unconquerable optimism. "Keep a-smiling, brother — it costs you nothing!" — so Mr. Geddie's roguish eyes seemed continually to say. But perhaps they seemed to say it more