

Angela's Business

the female form could be counted on to perform such a feat of pure character. And Romance, which gallantly or indifferently made these exact assumptions, defending and cherishing the queer but comfortable orientalizing with the cloak of false "womanliness," scarcely pretended to believe its own agreeable fictions.

Here was Angela again, his little case in point. Angela was reasonably good-looking, adopted a flattering attitude toward eligible young men, knew her place, and kept no opinions on matters of interest to her betters; hence she was called a "womanly" woman. Being womanly implied the possession of certain home-making virtues, present and to come; hence it was assumed, and she inevitably and naïvely assumed, that she possessed these virtues. Odd as these deductions sounded, he himself, he could not deny, had swallowed them once, — that night at the Redmantle Club, — romantically accepting the appearance for the reality, willfully investing the humdrum commonplace with the full beauties of the ideal. But for him, at least, all obstinate optimisms concerning *La Femme* had exploded with a bang in a party-call. You did not gather figs of thistles. And now it was no longer conceivable to him that she who in quarter of a century had developed no human interests, tastes, resources at all, who seemed to lack even an average interest in Paulie and Neddy Warder, should all at once blossom marvelously into the responsible and "justified" matron. No, for him, Angela at forty, having "let herself go" now that nothing more was expected of her, sat forever in a room that she had not swept, plaintively reminding a fatigued Donald of the priceless gift of her Self.

And Donald, though his interest in exploring the creature once so elaborately mystified was long since utterly exhausted, would probably take that argument amiss no more than