

Angela's Business

her seat under his eye, and, rising, went away to the office's one window. There she stood, her back toward him. And presently she began to clear her throat, with nervous quick coughings.

Through this, Charles had not spoken, or thought of doing so. To pat Mary's shoulder, this time, had not entered his head. His instinct seemed to feel the banality of any intrusion upon her freedom: she should weep or not weep, just as seemed best to her. Now, as his grave eyes followed her, it occurred to him that his presence here had been, and was, a considerable intrusion. And about the time he had reached this conclusion, Mary spoke, naturally enough, except that a sharp catch of breath broke her sentence in the middle.

"I'm giving you . . . a pleasant visit to-day."

The young man stirred on his perch. He answered, oddly, with a sort of growl: —

"That's right! I'm a fair-weather friend. Keep things pleasant for *me* all the time — or good-bye."

His heroine was sniffing repeatedly, in the humanest way. She kept clearing her throat. Her movements made it clear that she was searching busily for her handkerchief. However, there lay her handkerchief on the table, under his eye. And if she, perhaps, hardly wished to turn and come for it just now, no more did he see his way clear to going and taking it to her.

"No — but what's the sense of it? I'm — doing just what I told Angela not to do. Feeling sorry for myself, that's all."

"Well, I don't feel sorry for you. Don't worry about that."

Charles came down the ladder, and stood a moment kicking at the "New Schools" strewn about the floor.

"Look here, suppose I save time by arranging about this box now? You want it to go to your house, I suppose?"