

Angela's Business

She had gone to the Flowers' soon after luncheon — unexpectedly, it appeared — and, at half-past four, was not yet back. That seemed more or less surprising. Mrs. Wing, who had answered his ring, looked somewhat concerned, he thought. However, as it was agreed that Mary could not remain with Angela indefinitely, the caller decided, after brief hesitation, — for the Studio allured in these days as never before, — to wait for her.

So he came again into the sitting-room, and Mrs. Wing sat to keep him company. Naturally, there was but one subject for their conversation.

Charles liked Mrs. Wing. She always began every conversation with him by asking: "And how did you find your dear mother on your last visit?" Mary's mother had never seen his mother, and possibly never would, but (being a frightful sentimentalist) she assumed that all mothers are dear. It was next her habit to inquire whether Charles had written any stories lately, and why they never saw anything of his in the magazines. Such things tended to create a bond. And recently the tie had been strengthened by an unusually intimate talk on the subject of Mary, whose surrender of her great prize had, indeed, upset and distressed her mother even more than Charles had predicted.

To-day, again, Mrs. Wing appeared somewhat unlike her usual calm self. She omitted her inquiry about Charles's writing altogether (thus denying him his chance to mention the recent rather gratifying acceptance of Dionysius, no less), and the flattering things she kept saying of Angela had, to his ear, a faintly tentative ring, requiring his confirmation. But his first vague wonder, whether anything could have happened, was soon lost in other reactions. Thus, he had to wince a little in agreeing, once more, that Donald's future wife was a