

Angela's Business

permanently lost the fullness of her double birthright: all in nice, unconscious and inevitable response to an environment which continually assured her that being a woman was enough.

If life had been real and bright and turbulent around her, and she sat within and polished her pink nails, it was because she was a woman. If she was given no education beyond the demands of provincial parlor-talk, no training for her hands, no occupation for her head, if no one ever thought of her as a full-statured being who must pay her way in substantial coin; this, again, was because she was a woman, and a woman (if any one bothered with argument at all) some day might — or might not — be the mother of children. Surely it had not been Angela's fault if she was early apprised, though through a sweet mist, that she had but one faculty of any value in the world's market; not her fault if, amid general approval, she innocently spent her youth and idleness in tricking out her value, and bringing it steadily to the attention of the only beings who could have a use for it. Least of all was it her fault if her peculiar business, and her odd specialized training, were bounded, not by marriage, but only by a wedding-day. For the final unnaturalness, the crowning wrong in her situation was exactly this: that, being told that she must be a wife or nothing, she was coincidentally told that being a wife was a matter which a nice girl did well to know nothing about. . . .

The author, sharpening his phrases, walked in angry abstraction. He passed old acquaintances as if he had never seen them before. . . .

Oh, it was true (he conceded), a thousand times true, that many women of this crude bringing-up did develop, when their time came, a splendid competence over all their special field. But it was a little too much to assume that every creature in