

XXII

IT was March now, the mild March of an early spring. There came new days, zephyrous and sweet. All the world seemed to love a lover. But other matters were afoot in the world, too, necessarily: afoot even in the old coterie itself.

Charles Garrott, descending Miss Grace's steps on an afternoon that looked like April and felt like May, thought not of young Romance. What with the groom's absorption, and Mary Wing's unprecedented illness, the old principal friend had, indeed, heard little or nothing of the happy pair through these days. He had accepted the event, long since, once and for all, with fatalistic philosophy; and though the nuptials were now but six days distant, they were far from his mind in this moment, as, his hated tutor's stint done, he turned his long stride hurriedly toward Olive Street.

Charles, as we know, was not a caller. It was true that he had hardly seen Mary Wing since the day when she, the heroine of his write-ups, had so suddenly indicated herself as his larger heroine as well; true also that, in the engrossed and very fruitful solitude of the Studio succeeding, he had thought of her much, bookishly and otherwise. But these facts had not changed the essential nature of Charles. Still he was not a caller; still when he rang people's door-bells, it was morally certain that he had definite matters to urge upon their notice.

And so it was to-day. Charles, in a word, had conceived a new plan for helping Mary.

That she, the admirable, by way of reward for her smashing