

Angela's Business

"I'll relieve you with pleasure," said Charles, coldly.

So Mr. Geddie lumbered down from the ladder, wiped his hands on his pocket-handkerchief and re-attached his cuffs. He implored Miss Wing to make herself absolutely at home in his office, assured her, not once but three times, that John the porter, on the floor below, would be positively gratified to do any service for her, however small. In the moment of parting, he volunteered a new civility.

"Why, here, Mr. Garrott!" he hastily exclaimed, "your coat's all dusty in the back! That won't do! Just a minute while I get my whisk —"

But Miss Wing's young man interrupted him rudely.

"No, I'm not dusty at all! Thanks — don't trouble."

Another person who did n't know the value of a smile, clearly. And the man *was* dusty, of course. Well, no affair of his, of course. Mr. Geddie kept a-smiling.

"Well, good people!" said he. "Olive oil!"

When he had got a polite distance down the hall, Miss Wing's young man shut the office door upon him. So at last came privacy. For the first time, since the unforgotten afternoon last month, Charles Garrott stood alone with his admirable heroine.

He moved toward her, deliberating.

Downstairs there, he had been having five of the most engrossing, the most completely satisfying, minutes of his life. Being able to come upstairs at all, he had come in the spiritual state of his stimulating experience. Over all that was unsettled and unhappy, there persisted in him a fierce young elation. By the oddest luck, he was not here empty-handed, after all: he came with something rather better than a hope to give. And doubtless — since he was incurably a sentence-maker — there had already come into his head discreet phrases