

## Angela's Business

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she went there for — to talk the whole situation over with Angela."

But Charles, who had always thought of Angela as "soft" and Mary as "hard," seemed somehow quite certain that that talk had accomplished nothing. With brief speech, he moved toward the door. Doubtless struck with the fixed gravity of his look, Mary's mother, who had been an old-fashioned girl herself once, said with an effort, and yet firmly too: —

"It is life itself that is hard. Marriage means — readjustment. That is the only comment to make."

It was precisely the point on which the silent young man did not agree with her. To him, as to her, all the sharp force of this tidings was, indeed, in Mary's new overthrow. And yet for the moment there seemed to be room in him for nothing else but comments on the vast void in Mary's so different cousin.

Angela was wanting in the responsible qualities of a full-grown human being. Her fatal lack was in human worth. It was the sum of all he had thought about her since the day he had called upon her poor father. It was the cap and climax of all he meant to say about her in his New Novel.

So Charles took his leave with an abstracted face.

In the drawer of the Studio table, there was growing now, night by night, a fresh stack of manuscript, steady and firm upon a new Line. Mary Wing had straightened out this Line for Charles: Mary who had taught him once and for all that a woman could be finely independent, and still uphold the interdependence which held the world together. Yet Mary, the admirable, was after all but his "contrast" and his foil: it was for the peculiarities of her opposite that he had finally whetted his pencil. And, in the intense and retrospective thinking which went along with the best writing he had ever yet done,