

Angela's Business

"It's not decided yet, at all. However, I have a plan — another suggestion — which it seems to me might meet some of the difficulties."

"Are n't there friends or relatives here that she might stay with for a time?"

"That's it. I think I can persuade her to live with us — till we have a chance to see how all this —"

"With *you*?"

"It's just a hope, as I say. I did n't think of it till just now. Mother is very fond of her. And Wallie can't give up college, of course. That would be — quite the worst thing."

The school-teacher spoke with characteristic matter-of-factness. If she was adding final touches to the portraits of two women, she did it, certainly, with supreme unconsciousness. In the brief stillness of the office, she efficiently neared the end of her task. The top of her table was almost bare, the litter on the floor was deep. And now she spoke again, dryly and quite conclusively.

"At any rate, nothing fatal has happened. Nobody knows that better than I do — really. No doubt it's personal vanity with me, as much as anything. And now —"

"Do you know," Charles Garrott spoke up suddenly, as if he did not hear her at all — "I think you're the best I ever knew? The best — the *best* — absolutely the most of a person —"

She, the strong, seemed to start and shrink; she broke in sharply, with instant signs of a shaken poise: "No — *please*! You don't understand me at all. I do — not need sympathy! It's just what I've been trying to say —"

"Well, you are n't getting it from me, no fear. Sympathy! If ever there was honest looking up, if ever —"

"No! — don't! I did n't tell you about it for that! — only to explain why I seemed so . . . It was due you. As I say,