

Angela's Business

cataclysm, he saw that her delicate face wore that look described as "rain-washed," which commonly means peace, but peace at a price. The redness of her eyelids was quite perceptible. What struck the young man particularly, however, was the look of the blue eyes themselves. More or less irrelevant eyes he had always thought them, for all the heavy arched brows which so emphasized their faculty for steady, sometimes disconcerting, interrogation. That characteristic grave intentness was in Mary's gaze now: but it was not this that gave her look its power to hold Charles Garrott in his tracks.

The peculiar commotion within him gave forth in a short laugh, testy and embarrassed: "Honestly, if you say the word 'eye' to me again —"

"I was n't going to speak of your eye," said Mary Wing, with quite remarkable meekness. . . . "I was thinking of that remark you made — about being a fair-weather friend."

And then she went on hurriedly, with a rare, impulsive-ness: "I've just been thinking — I don't suppose since the world began there was ever such another rainy-day friend as you. It's got so now that I never get into trouble without thinking right away — as I was thinking this afternoon when I left the Flowers' — that you'll be right there to help me with it. Yes, I was. And it's so — perfect. Nothing to spoil it ever — not one thing for you to gain — all just your rather extravagant idea of what being a friend means. You don't know — how much it means. . . ."

The strange speech — strange blossom of her disruptive emotion — ended a little short; but that it ended was the principal thing. Doubtless there had been a time when words such as these from Mary Wing, this fine frank expression of abiding friendship, would have been sweet and acceptable to Charles Garrott, crowning him with a full reward.