

THE LIFTED VEIL

"Please don't let me put you to any trouble."

"You put me to a great *deal* of trouble; but it's nothing to what I'm willing to take for you. Now I come to think of it, I do know a woman who might care to look you over."

"Oh, but I might balk at that."

"Since you're bound to be some woman's prey a good one might as well have the refusal of you—even if she turns you down."

"But you won't let her take me by surprise?"

"She won't take you by surprise, because you won't know anything about her. She'll come and go without your seeing that she's been there. If I don't get out of this rat-trap," she exclaimed, holding out her hand to him, "I shall smother. Good-by. Think over what I've been saying, and don't forget the twenty-ninth."

He looked blank. "The twenty-ninth?"

"Don't tell me you've forgotten that you're going to dine with us that night. If you have, then all is over between you and me. But I give you the benefit of the doubt and leave you. Go and tell Mary that I shall never forgive her for bringing me to this ridiculous zoo."

Through the seething of the human whirlpool he made his way toward Mary Galloway. "Is this the way you look after me?" he asked. "Don't you remember what you promised to do if I came?"

When his words brought a new shade of color to her cheek he thought he had never seen anything so exquisite. Nevertheless, she tossed her head with that air of disdain which might have been no more than a covering for shyness as she said, "I saw you were very well protected."

"Did you? But there are times when a man doesn't need protection so much as sympathy."