

THE LIFTED VEIL

"And the other man came back? Was that it?"

She shook her head. "No; he's in—in another country. I've never seen him since. He was striking—and perhaps if he'd— But he never came back. I read about him sometimes—in the papers. You'd probably know his name. He's been married since then—and is now a widower. But he has nothing to do with what I'm going to tell you—except that at one time if he'd only—only insisted a little more. . . . But all that's nothing. What really happened was with some one else."

To relieve her agitation he asked, in a commonplace voice, "Shall I turn on the light?"

She replied, quickly: "No; please! There's light enough, and I can tell you better as we are." A few seconds passed before she could resume her tale. "When my husband died I brought him back from Europe, where we had been living, to be buried in his own country. I forgot to say that my mother had died two years before. I realized then that it was the reason why she wanted me to marry my husband. She knew she couldn't be with me much longer, and so she wanted me to be taken care of. But that left me without friends—I mean any one very near to me."

"And you were only twenty-four," he said, sympathetically.

"There was just one person," she continued, "a woman, a distant cousin, two or three years older than myself. She'd been married about the same time as I had been. I'd known her all my life, without ever knowing her very well. She asked me to stay with her when I came back for the funeral—and then I met—I met her—her husband."

"I see."