

THE LIFTED VEIL

been asked by a general to come and command an army could have a keener sense of the irony of the invitation accorded him. He urged his age, his inexperience, his incompetence.

"Don't expect you to do everything all at once," the old man replied. "What I'm looking for is some one who'll grow up to the work, so that by the time he's equal to it he'll know its ins and outs. You can't bring a mature man from Chicago or San Francisco to New York and expect him to find the methods used in the one place adapted to the needs of the other. Civilization in our country is not national so much as it's civic. We're a congeries of little municipal republics, each with its tricks and passwords. New York has them, just like Boston or St. Louis or St. Paul. Come and learn them, so that when you're ripe for it you can do us good."

He went on further to explain the peculiar composition of St. Mary Magdalen's. It was made up of strata running in parallel lines, each superimposed on the other. First there was the original bedrock of old New York families, mostly of great wealth, who owned the pews and used them but spasmodically. Above them were to be found people of the same antecedents but of more moderate means, like the Endsleighs, the Jarrotts, the Colfaxes, and the Pallisers, who habitually lived in New York and carried the workings of the parish on their shoulders. Above them, but independent of them, was the transient contribution made by the great hotels and apartment-houses which during ten years had sprung up between Forty-second Street and the southern edge of the Park. Above them, again, numerous enough to be noticeable, was the variety of worshiper that only America could furnish, who attended St. Mary Magdalen's because it was in