

THE LIFTED VEIL

CHAPTER I

AT the time it began Bainbridge was still a stranger in New York. He was so much a stranger as to be often lonely, sometimes bewildered, and homesick by fits and starts. When he was homesick it was not so much for any particular domestic group as it was for the well-ordered, stratified life he had known in Boston. New York perplexed him. If it had what he called an organized society its composition transcended his range. He could find neither beginning nor end to it, and no cohesion in its parts. Among the people whom he met he could see little more than a confusion of separate entities, each "on his own." They seemed to him to come from nowhere and to be on the way to nowhere. They gave no account of themselves and asked nothing of the kind from others. He appraised them as the sort of people among whom strange things happened and for whom there were no rules. They might be daring or eccentric or inconsequent or worse—very much worse—and no one would be surprised.

He himself was, therefore, not surprised when, in the early twilight of a November afternoon, a heavily veiled woman came to his house, asking to see him, but declining