

## THE LIFTED VEIL

"Good gracious, no! Why should I be her enemy? You might as well be the enemy of a sheep."

He remembered these words and this tone when, not long afterward, he learned that Miss Higgins was a power in New York, and toyed with love and destiny as if she was one of the three Fates.

But Mrs. Palliser had already had enough of a subject which she regarded as tiresome. Without preamble or transition she went on abruptly to say, "Isn't Mary too sweet for anything?" Before Bainbridge could agree with her she added, "Why on earth don't you marry her?"

He laughed good-naturedly. It was not the first time she had attacked him thus, though perhaps never so directly from the front. After all, she was the one woman in New York who could take this liberty, for she and her husband had had him under their wing ever since his early days at St. Mary Magdalen's. Being a few years older than he, they had been able to act as social counselors and guides to the young Bostonian without losing the fellowship of contemporaneous sympathies. He came to be at ease with them, to be able to unbend in their company as he never did elsewhere. As time went on Mrs. Palliser began to throw a motherly eye over his bachelor establishment, seeing that Mrs. Wedlock cleaned it in the proper way on the proper occasions and gave him proper food to eat. For this he was grateful for the motive rather than for the result, while the ties of intimacy were strengthened.

As for the present question, his instinct was to hedge rather than to face it openly. "Isn't marriage a matter to be tackled from the positive rather than the negative point of view? If you go round asking every one why they