

THE LIFTED VEIL

office chair at the other end of the hearth-rug. Bainbridge gave the lines a fourth reading, in order to think out as rapidly and as clearly as possible what he should have to say.

"First," he observed, when the length of the silence had made it necessary for him to break it, "I ought to inform you that I don't know the name of the writer of these words, nor do I think I ought to know it."

"So she gave me to understand. From what I gathered that will not affect what you have to tell me."

Bainbridge felt that the way had been pointed for his next move. "What have you gathered?"

"Nothing—certainly."

"Well, then—uncertainly?"

There was the slightest hesitation. "Still—nothing."

"Still—nothing?"

"Still—nothing."

The last word had the ring of decision and finality. After scanning the lines once more, Bainbridge tore the paper into tiny shreds. Leaning forward, he threw the fragments into the fire. "Then I'm afraid I can't add anything to what you already know," he said, quietly, as he watched them burn.

The tall figure seemed to stiffen in surprise. "Does that mean that you don't trust me?"

"Not exactly. I do trust you. Only, you must see that this is a situation in which I'm unable to act."

"I'm afraid I don't see that, sir."

Bainbridge endeavored to explain. "A lady did come to me—about a year and a half ago—a lady I didn't know—closely veiled. But I've no positive assurance that this letter is from her." As the Canadian was about to protest the clergyman went on, quickly, "Even if I had it wouldn't