

## THE LIFTED VEIL

"And yet the difference between a good woman and what is called a good woman is considerable. We must get away from what things are called and reach realities."

Again she took a long minute for reflection, asking at last, "Do you mean that I wasn't a good woman?"

He leaned on the desk, toying with a paper-knife. "That's hardly for me to say; but if you want to know my opinion—"

"Yes, I do."

"Then," he said, gently, "I shouldn't think it probable."

"Oh, but I *was*."

He knew he had shocked her from the uneasiness with which she stirred in her seat.

She went on, breathlessly: "I was a widow—quite young. I was very careful."

He rested his forehead on one hand, while the other continued to finger the paper-knife. "You say that you fell in love with a man you had no right to fall in love with, and that you couldn't help it. But a good woman would have helped it. The difference is there."

She threw up her head in indignation. "She would have helped it? How?"

"By her mental attitude. She would have been where the sort of thing that happened to you couldn't have reached her."

"Ah, that's easy to say!"

"It's easy to say because it's true. A good woman is shielded against this form of attack as she is against the unhappiness that springs from it."

Though she kept her voice low, there was a tragic emphasis in the declaration: "*That's* not true. I've known good women who were unhappy just in the way I've been."