

THE LIFTED VEIL

thing of the sort before. I'd never been in love with any one—not really. It didn't matter to me then that the man was some one I had no right to love—that he was another woman's husband. Nothing would have mattered to me, not if it was to be death the next moment. He kissed me; we kissed each other. It was—it was like a marriage—a marriage far more real than my real marriage. . . . It was two years ago."

"And since then—?"

"That's what I want to talk to you about. You see, it was this way. For the first year we lived in a kind of heaven. The secrecy and the deceit didn't matter to either of us. We often talked about that side of it, and said how strange it was that there should be people in the world who'd condemn us. It didn't seem wrong to us; it seemed right—and natural."

"That kind of lie is often told by sin, but it can't keep it up."

She drew a sharp, audible breath, but controlled herself sufficiently to say: "It didn't keep it up with us—whatever it was. I think it was he who felt it first."

"The man often does."

"I remember that it was toward the end of the first year that I began to see—or rather to feel—that he hadn't his own inner support, as at first. When he came to see me he was often grave and depressed. He began to be worried, too, for fear his wife should find out."

"Didn't he want her to find out—and set him free?"

"No; neither of us wanted that. I don't know why, exactly, but we preferred the situation as it was. If I couldn't hold him in that way I would rather have let him go."

"And couldn't you hold him?"