

THE LIFTED VEIL

which was either experience or sorrow that he would have made some stupid reply if the subject hadn't been one he had long ago thought out. "By living," he answered, mechanically, as he helped himself to something, while scarcely taking his eyes from hers. "I don't know that there is any other way."

"I don't think you understand me—"

"Oh yes, I do. But people don't start out to do good as they might to take singing-lessons or do parlor tricks. You can't say I'll do good from ten to twelve on Tuesday and from two to four on Friday. Fundamentally, it isn't a question of how we act, but of what we are."

"Yes, that's like what you said before—"

"Before? When?" he asked, quickly.

She recovered herself without much display of confusion. "I've heard you preach—not often—but a few times. You said something like it then."

"Did I? Very likely. I feel rather strongly that it's something we should all understand—and that very few of us do."

The inclination of her head reminded him of nothing so much as that of a lily on its stalk. "And yet it seems to me that if you pushed that theory far enough you'd put an end to all the good work that's being done in the way of social service—"

He laughed. "Social service, as it's called, doesn't often amount to much—at least a large part of it. It's restless and mechanical and not thorough. I'm afraid it's no more than a fad of the day that will go out of fashion like other fads. I've nothing against it, further than that, in the majority of cases, it ranks with the attempt to grow plants by electric light instead of in the sunshine."