

THE LIFTED VEIL

makes for enthusiasm in fulfilling it. He was never thoroughly content when away from it. This man's sins or that woman's cares were generally on his mind. The great city having thus become not merely a home to him, but the source of those actions and reactions, tragic, comic, social, moral, and emotional, which express the dynamic energies of life, he drew daily stimulation from its vigor.

And that a man so happy, so successful, so good-looking, and so well-to-do should still be unmarried became a stone of stumbling to every second woman who attended St. Mary Magdalen's. Bainbridge knew this in a general way, and smiled within himself. He had no definite intention of being married, not even to Mary Galloway, the rector's daughter, on whom the consensus of parochial opinion bestowed him, though she was one of the sweetest girls he knew.

He made this last admission on a morning in the autumn when Mary Galloway stopped him on the rectory steps, as he was coming away from a conference with her father. Her smile was an apology for interrupting his course toward Fifth Avenue.

"Oh, Mr. Bainbridge," she said, in the tinkling crystalline voice which held a hint of jest in reserve "I just want to remind you that poor Miss Higgins's reception comes this afternoon. I know what you're going to say—that you won't have time. But do look in on her, if it's only for five minutes. It will give her so much pleasure—and the poor thing doesn't have a great deal. I'm drumming up all the people I know."

He answered more or less at random, because he was saying to himself that if it was in him to fall in love again this was probably his opportunity. He noticed, too, that