

CHAPTER XIX

ALMOST at the same hour that Clodagh sat down to play cards with Laurence Asshlin at Orri-town, Nance was seated with Daisy Estcoit in the lounge of the Carlton. After her sister's departure, Mrs. Estcoit had borne her off to be her guest at the hotel; and now, the little party of four having dined in the restaurant, she had gone to her room to discuss a business letter with her son, leaving the two girls ensconced under one of the big palm-trees.

It was very pleasant and interesting to sit there, and watch the groups seated on the low couches beside the little coffee-tables, or to study the throng of people that moved constantly through the large glass doors of the vestibule, and up the flight of shallow steps to the restaurant itself, with its shaded lights and pretty artificial garden. The crowd was unusually large for the time of year: the band was playing a waltz: the whole atmosphere seemed gay and happy to one who only that morning had performed a great act of love.

"How lovely life is, Daisy!" Nance said suddenly, unconsciously echoing Clodagh's words on the day of Gore's return to London.

Daisy Estcoit laughed.

"Of course it is—with a trousseau like yours! But look over there—by the big palm!"

Nance had bent to rearrange some roses in her belt.

"Where? What?" she said, glancing up.

"Don't you see?"

"No. What?"

"Sir Walter Gore. He just rushed through and into the restaurant. He seems in tremendous haste."

"Walter! Where?" Nance looked round eagerly.

"I've just told you. In the restaurant. But here he