

THE FACE IN THE TAXI

Pall Mall. As I reached the pavement on the other side, I took out my cigarette case; I wanted to be normal and reasonable; I would smoke.

"Take a light from mine, Julius," said a smooth and dainty voice.

It may seem absurd—an affectation of language—to call a voice "dainty," but the epithet is really appropriate to Arsenio Valdez's way of talking, whether in Spanish, Italian, or English. As was natural, he spoke them all with equal ease and mastery, but he used none of them familiarly; each was treated as an art, not in the choice of words—that would be tedious in every-day life—but in articulation. We others used often to chaff him about it, but he always asserted that it was the "note of a Castilian."

There he stood, at the bottom corner of St. James's Street, neat, cool, and trim as usual—like myself, he was wearing a wedding garment—and looking his least romantic and his most monkeyish: he could do wonders in either direction.

"Hullo! what tree have you dropped from, Monkey?" I asked. But then I went on, without waiting for an answer. "I say, that taxi must have passed you too, didn't it?"

"A lot of taxis have been passing. Which one?"

"The one with the girl in it—the girl like Lucinda. Didn't you see her?"

"I never saw a girl like Lucinda—except Lucinda herself. Have you lunched? No, I mean the