

## LUCINDA

daughter were much too busy to take any notice. I am afraid that I was rather glad of it; apprehensive visions of a *partie carrée*—the lovers mutually absorbed, and myself left to engross Mrs. Knyvett—faded harmlessly into the might-have-beens.

I walked along the Mall, making for my club in St. James's Street. At the corner by Marlborough House I had to wait before crossing the road; a succession of motors and taxis held me up. I was still thinking of Lucinda; at least I told myself a moment later that I must have been still thinking of Lucinda, because only in that way could I account, on rational lines, for what happened to me. It was one o'clock—the Palace clock had just struck. The wedding was at half-past two, and the bride was, beyond reasonable doubt, now being decked out for it, or, perchance, taking necessary sustenance. But not driving straight away from the scene of operations, not looking out of the window of that last taxi which had just whisked by me! Yet the face at the taxi window—I could have sworn it was Lucinda's. It wore her smile—and not many faces did that. Stranger still, it dazzled with that vivid flush which she herself—the real Lucinda—exhibited only on the rarest occasions, the moments of high feeling. It had come on the evening when Waldo and Arsenio Valdez quarreled at Cragfoot.

The vision came and went, but left me strangely taken aback, in a way ashamed of myself, feeling a fool. I shrugged my shoulders angrily as I crossed