Andrew Tresholm Adentures of a Reluctant Gambler

by

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ANDREW TRESHOLM

GAMBLER'S CHOICE

THE ADVENT OF TRESHOLM, PROFESSIONAL GAMESTER, MAKES MONTE CARLO BUZZ

AT a corner table in the restaurant of the Hotel de Paris, at Monte Carlo, four very distinguished local notabilities were enjoying a midday banquet.

Monsieur Robert, the director of the hotel, was host, white-haired, but vigorous, with keen dark eyes.

On his right sat Monsieur le General de St. Hilaire, from the barracks at Nice, a soldierly-looking person, with fierce gray mustaches, who wore his imposing row of ribbons with the air of one who has earned them.

On the left of his host was Monsieur Desrolles, the Chef de Sûreté of Monaco, a man of mysteries, if ever there was one, tall, dark and hatchet-faced, severe of deportment, as befitted the custodian of many secrets. The fourth man at the table was Gustave Sordel, the leading spirit in the Societé des Bains de Mer, that vast organization responsible primarily for the gambling-rooms, and, in a minor degree, for such less important institutions as the Baths, the Tir aux Pigeons, the Café de Paris, and the golf-course.

The conversation was of food and its glorious corollary, wine. Monsieur

Robert was engaged in the pleasing task of making the mouths of his guests water.

Suddenly he broke off with a frown. At his elbow stood Henri of the reception bureau, with a paper in his hand.

"What is this, Henri?" he demanded. "Monsieur Grammont is in his office. You see that I lunch with friends? An occasion, this! Why am I disturbed?"

Henri overweighted with apologies.

"It is Monsieur Grammont who thought that you should see this, without delay," he confided. "It is a thing incomprehensible. One does not know whether to allot the room."

Monsieur Robert produced a horn-rimmed eye-glass, and adjusted it. The allotment of the rooms is no concern of mine," he grumbled.

"You will permit a word of explanation, Monsieur," the young man begged eagerly. "From the Blue Train there arrived, a quarter of an hour ago, this gentleman, Monsieur Andrew Tresholm, an Englishman. He had engaged by correspondence a room looking over the gardens, with bath and small salon. Monsieur Grammont suggested Suite 39. I took him to it upon his arrival.

"He was satisfied with the apartments and the price. All goes well, you perceive. I hand him the papers from the Bureau of Police, and invite him to sign them. He fills in his name—you see it there, His age, thirty-six. His place of birth, a county in England. He arrives at 'profession.a He leaves that blank. Monsieur Desrolles," the young man added, "will remember his recent injunction."

"Certainly," the Chef de Sûreté assented. "We wish in all cases to have this profession stated. There has been a certain slackness in this respect."

Henri bowed his grateful acknowledgments across the table.

"I desire to carry out the official request," he continued, "and I press Monsieur Tresholm to fill in the space. He protests mildly. I insist. He takes up the pen, hesitates. Then he smiles. He is of that type—he smiles to himself. Then he writes. Behold, Monsieur Robert, what he writes."

The great man took the paper into his band and stared at though bewildered.

"'Occupation'," he read out, "'professional gambler'."

"'Professional gambler'," Monsieur Robert repeated, reading from the paper.

They all exchanged bewildered glances.

"A joke perhaps?" the General suggested.

The young man shook his bead.

"This Monsieur Tresholm seemed perfectly serious," he declared. "I asked him

if he were in earnest, and he replied, 'Certainly. . . It is, the only profession I have,' he assured me, 'and it keeps me fully occupied.' Those were his words. 'Am I to send this in to the police?' I asked him. 'Certainly,' he assented. 'If they must know my profession, there it is'."

"Here, perhaps, is the end of the world for us," said Monsieur Robert. "A professional gambler, mark you. He may know something. A defeating system may have arrived. Soon you may have to close your doors, Gustave, and I my hotel."

Henri waited patiently. "What am I to do about the gentleman's room, Monsieur Robert?" he inquired.

"Give it to him, by all means," was the prompt reply, "See that Madame Grand adorns it with flowers, that the servants, too, show this eccentric every attention Stop, though! His luggage!"

"He has a greet deal of very superior quality," Henri confided. "There is also a motor-car of expensive make."

"Ma foi! He makes it pay!" Monsieur Robert grunted. "But that is very good. Excellent!"

Henri took his leave, and they all began to talk at once.

"An imbecile without a doubt."

"Perhaps a humorist."

"Stop, stop, my friends!" Gustave Sordel begged. "There have been others who have arrived here with equal confidence. We have heard before—we of the Casino—of the invincible system. Our visitor may be very much in earnest. All I can say is, he is welcome."

The young man from the reception bureau once more approached their table.

"I thought it would interest you, sir," he announced, addressing his chief, "to see this gentleman. He has asked for a corner table for luncheon. He arrives now, in the doorway."

They looked at him with very genuine curiosity. A well-built young; man, of a little over medium height, dressed in gray tweeds. His complexion was sunburnt his eyes blue, his features good, and there was a quizzical curve at the corners of his lips and faint lines by his eyes which might have denoted a humorous outlook.

Gustave Sordel looked at his victim with the eyes of the shearer who has opened his gates to the sheep. "He is of the type," he derided. "They believe in themselves, these young Englishmen with systems. We shall see."

Monsieur Robert grunted once more.

"All very well, Gustave," he declared; "that man is no fool. Discoveries are being made now which have startled the world—things that were declared impossible. Why should it not have arrived at last—the perfect system?"

"The gambler with inspiration," Sordel observed, "sometimes gives temporary inconvenience, but it is upon the world with systems that we thrive. I will drink to the health of this brave man."

Andrew Tresholm, an hour or so later, stood upon the steps of the hotel, looking out upon the gay little scene. A small boy, posted there for that purpose, rushed to the telephone to announce to the chefs de partie and officials of the Casino the impending arrival of this menace to their prosperity. There was a little stir in the hall, and everyone neglected his coffee to lean forward and stare. The Senegalese porter approached with a low bow and a smile.

"The Casino, sir," he announced, pointing to the stucco building across the way.

"I see it" was the somewhat surprised reply. "Darned ugly place, too!"

The man, who spoke only French, let it go at that. Tresholm pointed to a quaint little building perched on the side of the mountain overhead.

"What place is that?" he asked in French.

"The Vistaero Restaurant, sir," the man replied. "The Salles Priveés have been open since two o'clock. The Sporting Club will be open at four."

Tresholm showed no particular sign of interest in either announcement A moment later he descended the steps, and the four very prosperous-looking Frenchmen seated in the lounge rose to watch him.

"The battle commences," Gustave Sordel exclaimed, with a chuckle. But apparently the battle was not going to commence, for Tresholm stepped into a very handsome two-seated car which a chauffeur had just brought round, took his place at the wheel, and, skirting the gardens, mounted the hill.

"Ha, ha!" Monsieur Robert joked. "Your victim escapes, Gustave."

"On the contrary." was the complacent reply, "he mounts to the bank."

In less than half an hour, instead of dealing out his packets of mille notes to the ghouls of the Casino according to plan, Andrew Tresholm was leaning over the crazy balcony of the most picturesquely situated restaurant in Europe looking down at what seemed to be a collection of toy buildings out of a child's play-box. A waiter at his elbow coughed suggestively, and Tresholm ordered coffee. He stretched himself out in a wicker chair and seemed singularly content. The afternoon was warm, and Tresholm, who had ill endured the lack of ventilation in his so-called train de luxe the night before,

dosed peacefully in his chair. He awoke to the sound of familiar voices—a woman's musical and pleading, a man's dogged and irritable.

"Can't you understand the common sense of the thing, Norah?" the latter was arguing. "The luck must turn. It's got to turn. Take my case. I've lost for four nights. Tonight, therefore. I am all the more likely to win. What's the good of going home with the paltry sum we have left? Much better try to get the whole lot back."

"Five thousand pounds isn't a paltry sum by any means," the girl protested. "It would make things much more comfortable for us even though you still had to go on at your job."

"Darn the job," was the vicious rejoinder.

Tresholm, who was now quite awake, rose deliberately to his feet and moved across to them.

"Do I, by any chance, come across my young friends of Angoulême once more in some alight trouble? Can I be of any assistance?"

The youth glanced across at him and scowled. The girl swung round.

"Mr. Tresholm!" she exclaimed. "Fancy your being here! Aren't we terrible people, squabbling at the top of our voices in such a beautiful place?"

Tresholm sank into the chair which the young man, with an ungracious greeting, had pushed towards him.

"I seem fated to come up against you two in moments of tribulation," he remarked. "At Angoulême, I think I really was of some assistance. You would never have reached the place but for my chauffeur, who fortunately knows more about cars than I do. A little pathetic you looked, Miss Norah—forgive me, but I never heard your other name—leaning against the wall by the side of that exquisite mountain road, wondering whether any good-natured person would stop and ask if you were in trouble."

She smiled at the recollection. "And you did stop," she reminded him gratefully. "You helped us wonderfully."

"It was my good fortune," he said lightly, but with a faint note of sincerity in his tone. "And this time? What about it? May I be told the trouble again? A discussion about gambling apparently. Well, I know more, about gambling than I do about motor-cars. Let me be your adviser."

"Much obliged. It's no one else's trouble except our own," the young man intervened.

"Or business, I suppose you would like to add," Tresholm observed equably. "Perhaps your sister will be more communicative.

"I told you that night at the hotel at Angoulême of my reputation. I am a

meddler in other people's affairs. You young people have been disputing about something. Let me settle the matter for you."

"Why not?" the girl agreed with enthusiasm. "Let me tell him, Jack."

"You can do as you jolly well please," was the surly rejoinder.

The girl leaned across the little round table towards Tresholm. "We told you a little about ourselves at Angoulême during the evening of the day when you had been so kind to us," she reminded him. "We are orphans and we have been living together at Norwich, just on Jack's salary. Our name, by the by, is Bartlett We hadn't a penny in the world, except what Jack earned.

"Then two months ago, quite unexpectedly, a distant relative, whom we had scarcely ever heard of, died and left us five thousand pounds each. We decided to pool the money, have a holiday —Jack's vacation was almost due—and, for once in our lives, have a thoroughly good time."

"A very sound idea," Tresholm murmured.

"The place we both wanted to come to," she went on, "was Monte Carlo. We bought a little motor-car—you know something about that—and we reached here a few days ago. It was lots of fun, but, alas, ever since we arrived Jack and I have disagreed. His point of view——"

"I'll tell him that myself." her brother interrupted. "Ten thousand pounds our legacy was—nine thousand we reckoned, when our holiday's paid for, and the car. Well, supposing I invested it, what would it mean? Four hundred and fifty a year. Neither one thing nor the other. It's just about what I'm earning. It wouldn't have helped me to escape, I should have had to go on just the same, and I hate the work like poison."

"Four hundred and fifty a year would have made life very much easier for us, even though you had to go on working," she remarked wistfully.

"Thinking of yourself as usual," he growled. "Well, anyhow, you agreed at first."

"Agreed to what?" Tresholm inquired.

"To taking our chance of making a bit while we were here," he explained. "We decided to risk a couple of thousand pounds and see if we could make enough to live quietly somewhere in the country, where there was golf and a bit of shooting."

"It wasn't my idea," she ventured.

"Of course, it wasn't," he scoffed. "You're like all women. You're too frightened of losing to make a good sportsman."

"Well, we have lost" she rejoined drily—"not two thousand but four."

"That seems unfortunate," was Tresholm's grave comment "What is the present subject of your dispute?"

"Simply this," the young man confided. "We have spent or shall have spent, by the time we get home, a thousand pounds of the legacy. We have lost at the tables four thousand, and sold the little car we bought for half what we gave for it We have five thousand left Norah wants me to promise not to go into the Casino again, and to leave for home at once with five thousand pounds in the bank. I want to go, neck or nothing—win back at least our five thousand—perhaps a good bit more. The luck must turn."

"Quite so," Tresholm agreed. "There's a certain amount of reason in what your brother says, Miss Norah."

She looked at him almost in horror.

"You don't mean to say that you're going to advise him to risk the rest of our legacy!" she exclaimed.

Tresholm made no direct reply. He passed around his case and lighted a cigarette himself.

"Well," he pronounced, "I have a certain amount of sympathy for your brother's point of view. If I were in his position and had lost as much as you say, I think I should want a shot at getting some of it back, but," he added, checking the young man's exclamation of delight and the girls little cry of disappointment with the same gesture, "I should want to know that the odds were level"

"Roulette's a fair enough game," the young man protested. "One chance in thirty five against you—and zero, of course."

"You may call that fair," Tresholm said calmly; "I don't. I am assuming that with your small capital you're backing the numbers. Very well. The bank has the pull on you the whole of the time to the extent of five or six percent If you play chemin de fer, the cagnotte amounts to about the same thing.

"I am with you in spirit, my young friend, but gambling at Monte Carlo isn't what I call gambling at all. You're fighting a man of equal ability a stone heavier than yourself. It can't be done. It's automatic. You must lose."

"That's what I say," the girl declared triumphantly. "We're simply foolish to dream of throwing away the last of our money."

"But people do win," her brother insisted There's that Hungarian who won half a million francs the night before last."

"The Casino takes pretty good care to advertise it when anything of that sort happens," Tresholm pointed out. "He'll probably be in again tonight and lose the lot, and more besides. Now listen to me, Bartlett" he went on. "I'm not

against you in spirit I'm against you in this particular proposal because you want to take on an impossibility.

"The people who win here are just the people who play to amuse themselves, and who go away when they've had their fun. People in your position, with a few thousand pounds left over from a legacy and nothing else to fall back upon in the world, are the people who inevitably lose."

The young man thrust his hands into his trousers pockets.

"It's no good trying to be scientific in gambling," he said. "If you want to have a plunge, you always must have a bit up against you, of course. What's it matter so long as you win? I never mind backing a horse at odds on, so long as it's a certainty."

"There is such a thing as fair gambling," Tresholm pointed out. "I'll toss you for your five thousand pounds, if you like. That's a level affair—no cagnotte, no zero. You can choose the coin."

The girl gave a little cry. Her brother gasped.

"You're not serious?" he exclaimed.

"Mr. Tresholm!" she remonstrated.

"I'm perfectly serious," he assured them both. "You seem to think that I know nothing about gambling. On the contrary, I am described in the police records of this principality as a professional gambler. I must live up to my reputation. I will toss you for five thousand pounds. Shall I send for a coin?"

"No!" the girl almost shrieked.

Tresholm shrugged his shoulders.

"Very well," he acquiesced. "You would like to prolong the agony. Dine with me, both of you, tonight at the Hotel de Paris at half past eight We will either toss, or play any game you like where the odds are level, for whatever sum you like up to five thousand pounds."

The girl looked at him reproachfully through a mist of tears. Her brother was exuberant.

"You're a sportsman," he declared. "I wanted to dine at the Paris once more before we left. We'll be there at half past eight."

Gustave Sordel paid a special visit to the hotel just before dinner-time that evening. He encountered Monsieur Robert in the hall.

"But what has arrived!" he exclaimed. "All the afternoon my chefs have been on the qui vive. I have reinforced every table to the extent of a hundred thousand francs. I arranged for a high table at chemin de fer, and, if Monsieur Tresholm had wished to take a bank at baccarat tonight, it could have been

managed. Yet behold the strange thing which has arrived. He has not as yet taken out his ticket—"

"In the Sporting Hub, perhaps?" Monsieur Robert suggested. "Three times I have sent there. No one of his name has applied for a card."

"This affair gives one to think," Monsieur Robert admitted, "At present he dines with a young Englishman and his sister—a couple bien distingué, but poor. They left here last week for a cheaper hotel. Of what interest can they be to him?"

Sordel shrugged his shoulders. "After all." he pointed out "even a professional gambler must have his moments. He waits far the night without a doubt."

Meanwhile, in the restaurant, Tresholm, to all appearance, was very much enjoying his dinner. Bartlett was excited and talkative. Norah, on the other hand, was very quiet. She ate and drank little, and her manner, especially towards her host, was reserved, not to say cold.

"Your sister, Bartlett" the latter confided, "is displeased with me. I wonder whether I might ask why."

"Because you have taken his side against me," she said, looking at him with a smoldering anger in her eyes. "You are encouraging him to gamble with that last five thousand pounds. I hoped so much that you would have been on my side, that you would have told him to keep that money, for both our sakes, and not to enter the Casino again."

"And if I had told him that" Tresholm asked calmly, "would it have made any difference?"

She reflected for a moment. "Perhaps it would not," she admitted. "He is very self-willed. He would probably have had his own way, and yet, somehow or other, I am sorry that it should have been you who encouraged this."

"I don't think that you are quite just to blame me," he complained. "You must realize that nothing I could have said would have made the slightest difference. You know that you yourself have used all your persuasions. Your brother would have lost every penny in the Casino, if I had not offered him a saner chance of gambling with me."

"I can't explain," she sighed. "I am just disappointed."

They left the table, crossed the lounge and entered the elevator. In the corridor Bartlett stopped to speak to an acquaintance.

The girl suddenly turned to her companion.

"Mr. Tresholm," she begged, "don't do this. Let him lose his money in the Casino, if he must I don't like the idea of you two sitting down to play against one another. I don't like it There's something horrible about it"

"Don't you think," he asked, "that, if your brother must throw his money away, I might as well have it as anybody else?"

"Do you mean—do you really mean that you are what you said?"

"I am afraid there is a certain amount of truth in what I told you," he acknowledged. "If you go to the Chef de Sûreté here in Monaco, he will show you my papers."

"Then I think it is all very terrible," she pronounced sadly. "I am very sorry that we ever came to Monte Carlo."

"Now for the terms," Tresholm said, as he and Bartlett seated themselves at a small table. "First of all, here are two tickets for the Blue Train tomorrow. It is understood that, whether you win my money or I win yours, you make use of them."

"Right-o!" the young man agreed, pocketing the yellow slips.

"I require more than a casual acceptance of that proposal," Tresholm persisted. "I require your word of honor."

"That's all right" the other acquiesced. "I promise upon my honor."

"And I am your witness," Norah intervened gravely.

"Furthermore, whether you win or lose," Tresholm continued, "you must promise not to return within twelve months."

"Agreed. Come along. Let's start"

"The game I leave entirely to you," Tresholm announced. "There are, as you see, four new packs of cards. I will cut you highest or lowest to win, whichever you like, or I will play you two-handed poker, or piquet, or any other game you prefer."

There was a sudden gleam in the young man's eyes. "Piquet?" he repeated. "You play piquet?"

"Rather well," Tresholm warned him. "I should advise you to choose something else."

Bartlett laughed confidently. "Piquet's good enough for me," he declared. "I used to play it with my old governor every night Let's get on with it," he added, moistening his dry lips. "A hundred pounds a time, eh?"

"Whatever you like," was the reply.

It was midnight before the matter was concluded. Bartlett, white and distraught, with a dangerous, almost lunatic, gleam in his eyes, was pacing the room excitedly. Norah, unexpectedly calm, was still seated in the chair from which she had watched the gambling with changeless expression. Tresholm remained at the table. Before him lay a check for five thousand pounds which

the young man had just signed.

"Ready, Jack?" she asked at last.

"I suppose so," he growled. "Come along."

Tresholm rose. "You've had a fair deal with level odds for your money, haven't you?" he asked his late opponent.

"I'm not complaining," was, the broken reply. "I suppose it's no use asking you to lend me a hundred just to have one shot at the Sporting Club?"

"Not the least use in the world," Tresholm refused. "The hundred pounds would go just where the rest of your money has gone. There are some of us who are made to win at games of chance; others to lose. You are one of the predestined losers. If you take my advice, you will never again, so long as you live, indulge in any game of chance for money." He opened the door. The girl passed out slim and dignified, without a glance in his direction.

"Good night Miss Bartlett" he ventured.

"Good night, Mr. Tresholm," she replied. "I congratulate you upon your profitable evening."

With that they both disappeared.

Tresholm returned to his place at the table, playing idly with the cards.

The Blue Train, disturbingly early upon its return journey, just as it is usually outrageously late upon its arrival, came groaning round the bend from Mentone, snorting and puffing into the Monte Carlo station. Norah settled down sadly in her compartment while her brother made his way to the restaurant car to secure seats for dinner.

Then, glancing idly out of the window, she suddenly gave a little gasp. Very deliberately along the platform came Tresholm, calm and undisturbed. Behind him was a small boy carrying an enormous bouquet of roses.

She shrank beck in her place. Anything rather than see him! Before she could decide upon any means of escape, however, the roses were on the seat by her side, and Tresholm was standing bare-headed before her.

"A little farewell offering for you. Miss Bartlett which you must accept, and a farewell note here for you to read as soon as the train has started," he added, handing her a letter. "Will you shake hands?"

In her moment of indecision she forgot and she looked up at him. Directly her eyes met his, clear, gray and somehow compelling, she gave in. Her fingers rested for a moment in his. Then he raised them and brushed them with his lips.

"I am glad," he said gratefully, "that you did not carry your resentment too far.

You will accept the roses, I hope, as an inadequate peace-offering, and think of me as kindly as you can."

Then he was gone, and it was not until after the train had passed through the first of the two tunnels that she remembered the note. She tore open the envelop and read:

Dear Lady of Angoulême,

I very much fear that your perceptions were keener than your brother's last night and that you realised the fact that I was playing with marked cards—part of the equipment of the professional gambler. The unexpected luxury of a qualm of conscience has, however, seized me, and I return your brother's check for his imaginary loss.

I still hold him, however, to the conditions of our bargain, and, if you will accept the advice of such an unprincipled person, keep him away from gambling in any shape or form, even though the odds should seem level. There are some men who are born winners. I am one of them. There are others who are born losers. Your brother is one of those.

Fate, alas, deals out other favors to the latter class, which she denies to the former.

Which is why I must sign myself,

Unhappily yours,

Andrew Tresholm."

Fragments of a torn check fluttered across the compartment. Even in her dazed state, even under the spell of that great throbbing joy with which she waited for her brother's return, there crept into her mind a faint, wonderful doubt— a doubt which sometimes, when she looked backwards, seemed to color those hours of agony with a little halo of romance. Was it altogether by chance, she wondered, in those moments of reflection, that the only possible means by which her brother could have been induced to return to England with that five thousand pounds were precisely those which Tresholm had employed?

In his sitting-room, Tresholm found the four packs of cards neatly stacked upon the mantelpiece. He rang the bell for the waiter.

"You might return those," he begged, "to whomever you borrowed them from."

The waiter collected them with a smile, also the fifty-franc note which Tresholm passed him.

"I borrowed them from one of the clerks in the office, Monsieur," he confided. "I trust that Monsieur had fortune,"

Tresholm nodded slightly, but without his usual smile.

"Yes, I am generally lucky," he confessed.

A FOOL AND HIS MONEY

TRESHOLM TOOK A GAMBLER'S CHANCE, BUT THE STAKES WERE TEMPTINGLY HIGH AND HE COULDN'T RESIST

TRESHOLM brought his car to a standstill under a close-leafed magnolia tree, jammed on the brakes, and lighted a cigarette. For six miles, ascending gradually from the sea-level, he had climbed the mountainous road until he had reached the fruitful plateau which embosoms the the slopes of the Lesser Alps. Blue and cold, the landscape lay below him, gray here and there, with the shimmer of turning olive leaves, the vineyards and meadows like little squares of patchwork, the flower fields daubs of brilliant color, the river winding its way amongst them, a glittering thread of silver. In front, barely a mile distant, was one of the old hill towns, the houses of which might well have been carved out of the living rock. The air around him was pleasantly brisk. In the majestic distance, the snow still lay upon the mountains.

His resting-place was peaceful and well-chosen. On his right was a humble French domain, a trim white house, with red roof and green shutters, separated from the road by a carefully tended vineyard, an orchard of orange trees wandering up to a plantation of pines behind. A very pleasant, sunny spot it seemed, cut off from the world by the ravine, on the farther summit of which was the old town and the precipitous way by which one climbed from the great thoroughfares below. Scarcely a human being in sight, scarcely a toiler in the fields.

An imaginary solitude. Tresholm started as he realised the fixed stare of a gaunt figure in blue jeans, standing only a few feet away from him in the vineyard, partially concealed by a scrubby hawthorn hedge. It was more than the ordinary scrutiny of the curious peasant; in fact, it became clear to Tresholm during those first few seconds that the man was not a peasant at all He was tall and thin, and there was something fine-cut about his features. The brown fingers which grasped the pruning-knife were well-formed and shapely, and as he returned that intense gaze, a queer wave of remembrance swept into Tresholm's brain. Like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, those scraps of memory mocked him: the bleak wind-swept plain; the wilderness, dotted all over with a maze of tin huts and framework buildings; the road of a great city with its myriads of blinding lights; a room high up in a huge official building; the

thunder of tram, below; the ceaseless movement of multitudes crawling like ants along the pavements.

Perhaps the two men reached the end of that unwinding coil of memory at the same moment, for the watcher in the vineyard turned abruptly away and strode off towards the house. With a muttered exclamation, Tresholm pressed the starting-button of his car, turned in at the rude gateway, drove up the rock-strewn approach to the house, and pulled up in its shadow. He descended, and waited for the man, who was still climbing from below.

"You're Dows, aren't you?" he greeted him— Jasper Dows, Naval Intelligence Department at Washington? Let me see, how many years ago?... Who cares?"

"I am Jasper Dows, all right," he admitted, "but Washington Naval Intelligence Department—I don't know what you're talking about. All gone! I'm a small landed proprietor of Les Tourettes. Eighty acres—you can see the lot, I remember you, though. You're Tresholm. Blast you!"

"Why blast me?" his visitor remonstrated.

Jasper Dows laughed bitterly and stood for a moment in silence. When he spoke again, there was a change in his manner.

Some of the resentment had gone.

"Not your fault, of course, Tresholm," he acknowledged. "Come in and drink a bottle of wine. It's long enough since I talked my own language."

They passed into a small sitting-room, in which were some quaint pieces of old Provençal furniture, a mass of flowers in a rude china basin, but with carpetless floor and empty walls, poverty lurking even in its cleanliness. A woman rose hastily from a chair in a corner with its back to the window—a woman far too attractive for her surroundings, evidently English or American, a little startled at the sight of an unexpected visitor.

"A gentleman whom I used to know, Sara," the master of the house announced. "My wife, Tresholm. We want a bottle of last year's vintage, dear, and a couple of glasses."

She greeted Tresholm pleasantly, left them for a few minutes, and returned with a bottle of wine and two glasses upon a tray.

"The most brutal thing I ever did, to bring her over here," Jasper Dows acknowledged, as, with a word of excuse, she hurried away again. "She would come, though. She's that sort of woman."

"But what was the trouble?" Tresholm asked gravely. "When I left Washington —"

"You knew nothing about it, of course, the other interrupted. "The trouble was disgrace and ruin." "That's rather hard to believe."

"There were a few men in my department who thought so at the time. They changed their minds, though, and out I went. I got the sack, Tresholm. Cashiered—chucked out of the service. Do you know who brought it about? Of course you don't. I'll tell you. Here's one of them." He picked up a copy of the Nice Éclaireur, which had been lying upon the table, and read a paragraph from the English and American news: class="newspaper" "Considerable excitement has been caused in the Sporting Club during this week by the very spirited gambling of an American millionaire, Mr. Josh Chandler, of New York. We understand that he was successful in breaking the bank twice in one evening." "That's one of them," Jasper Dows continued, throwing the paper down. "Josh Chandler was one, and you were the other."

"Are you serious?" Tresholm expostulated, wondering for the moment whether the man had lost his wits.

"Sit down, drink your wine, and listen. You are the one man in the world to whom I can tell the story."

Tresholm listened, and it was late in the afternoon, with the sun sinking over the Esterels, when he glided down again from the farm among the mountains to take his place in the stream of vehicles panting along the lighted way.

Gustave Sordel, being at a loose end the following morning, crossed the road from the Casino about a quarter of an hour before luncheon, and took an aperitif with his friend Monsieur Robert, the director of the hotel. They found seats in a retired corner of the lounge.

"The doors of the Casino are still open?" the latter demanded, in gentle badinage.

"And likely to remain open, so far as regards this eccentric of yours," was the good-humored reply. "Figure to yourself, my dear friend, this Monsieur Tresholm. He rests here within a stone's throw of the Casino, he inscribes himself a professional gambler, and he has not yet taken out his card of admission. What does he do with himself?"

"I will tell you what he did yesterday," Monsieur Robert volunteered, "He left his chauffeur, and he drove out into the country. When he returned, he dined alone—the dinner of an epicure, mind you, and drank with it half a bottle of of my finest Burgundy." "And afterwards?" "He went to bed."

"Imbecile—for what does he wait?"

"For money, perhaps. One cannot storm your stronghold, my dear Gustave, without the sinews of war."

The director of the Casino moved a little nearer to his friend.

"As to that," he confided, lowering his voice," I can tell you something. Have no fear for your hotel bill. Yesterday morning—it must have been before our

friend started for his motor trip—I was at the bank, and I—I myself, mind you, was compelled to wait. An important client was with the manager.

"When he came out from the office it was this Monsieur Tresholm. They were around him as though he were a Rothschild. The manager even escorted him to the door whilst I waited."

Monsieur Robert was interested. "You ventured upon an enquiry, perhaps?"

"Up there they are discreet," was the cautious reply. Monsieur Blunt, as you know, has little to say. In his position, he is wise. He brushed aside all my interrogations. 'Monsieur Tresholm,' he whispered in my ear, 'comes to us with excellent recommendations from the highest quarters.' What more than that can be said of any stranger? Yet that is the man who announces himself as a professional gambler, and in four days he has not crossed the threshold of the Casino or of the Sporting Club."

They spoke of other things, and as they talked Tresholm himself entered. He was in tennis togs, carrying a racket under his arm, and instead of passing directly across the lounge, he made a detour towards the restaurant which led him past the divan where the two men were seated. The hotel director greeted him cordially.

"Monsieur was successful in finding a game this morning?" he inquired.

"I found just the game I hoped for," Tresholm confided.

"Excellent! And your apartments, they are comfortable?there is nothing one can do?"

"Nothing whatever," was the courteous assurance. "Everything is as one expects to find it at the Hotel de Paris? perfect."

He would have moved on, but his interlocutor detained him.

"Let me present my friend, Monsieur Sordel," he begged. "It is Monsieur Tresholm, you understand," he added, turning to his companion, "who has perpetrated this jest upon the Chef de Sûreté. I present, you understand, one professional to another. It is a matter of attack and defense. Monsieur Sordel directs the ?Casino."

Tresholm smiled as he shook hands. "Your friend," he remarked, "is a man of many affairs."

"As yet," Sordel rejoined. "I have not had to number yon amongst my responsibilities."

"That will come, without a doubt," Tresholm predicted. "When I first arrived, I had some young friends to entertain. Yesterday the weather was so perfect that I had a fancy for the country. Today, who knows?"

He passed on with a nod of farewell, and the two men exchanged significant

glances.

"It may be today, then," Gustave Sordel observed.

Tresholm paused to interview a maître d'hôtel and order luncheon for two in half an hour, after which he ascended to his room, took a shower-bath and changed his clothes. He descended in time to welcome his guest—an American, Chandler by name, his recent opponent at tennis, and a man apparently of about his own age. There was a marked difference between the two, however as they strolled together into the restaurant—Tresholm lean, bright-eyed and sunburnt, to all appearances as hard as nails, and in perfect condition; his companion, built on stockier lines, more than a little fleshy, carefully dressed and groomed, but with the air of one to whom the night pleasures of the principality had made their successful appeal.

"Lucky to have come across you this morning," he remarked, as they took their places. "Don't know that I should have got a game at all. Fellows here seem sort of cliquish. Don't fancy taking a stranger in if they can help it."

"I dare say they make up their sets beforehand," Tresholm suggested tactfully.

"Maybe. Guess I'd better let a few of them know who I am. My old dad left twenty million of the best. You bet I don't have to wait long for a game at any club over on the other aide."

"Twenty million dollars is a great deal of money." "Piled it up during the war, the old man did," his son confided.

"You were over on this side?"

"Didn't get the chance. I was in the navy, but they wanted me in Washington. Seaplane stuff, most of the time. Gosh, they kept me at it, too!"

His first high-ball was beginning to loosen the young man's tongue.

He was filled with placid satisfaction with himself and his surroundings.

"Say, I ought not to have let you whip me like that this morning," he observed. "Six?two, six?one. Not often I get it in the neck like that."

"A little lazy round the back line, weren't you? A late night?"

"Say, if anyone can tell me how to get to bed early in this little burg, he's a winner with me," Chandler declared gloomily.

"I was playing chemie until five this morning."

"I rather thought roulette was your game," Tresholm remarked. "Didn't I see that you had a big win yesterday or the day before?"

"A hundred and thirty-eight thousand of the best, I skun em," the young man boasted. "I had them all scared. They don't understand having anyone up against them who can afford to lose just as much as he wants to. It don't matter

a snap of the fingers to me whether I win or not. That's where I've got them cold.

"A hundred and thirty-eight thousand," Tresholm repeated softly, thinking for a moment of that poverty-stricken farm up in the mountains. "That's a great deal of money, Mr. Chandler."

"I guess it seems so over here," was the complacent reply. "See that bulge in my pocket? There it is, and they can have the lot back this evening, if they can get it."

Conversation languished for a time and then continued upon somewhat formal lines. Towards the close of their meal, the American, who had been scrutinizing his host closely, asked him a abrupt question.

"Say, haven't we met somewhere before, Mr. Tresholm? Something about you seems kind of familiar to me ever since you came up and asked me for a game."

"I shouldn't be surprised," was the somewhat vague acknowledgment. It's a small world, you know."

"Ever been in the States?"

"Not lately. I dare say we come across each other in Paris or somewhere," Tresholm observed. "I wander about a good deal"

"Same here. I don't have to do any work, and over this side's good enough You Europeans know how to live the life. Say, that's a bully two-seater of yours, Mr. Tresholm."

"Glad you like it. How about a little run into the country this afternoon?"

"It will keep me awake at any rate," the young man agreed.

At Nice, Chandler, who had dropped off to sleep before they had reached Beaulieu, woke up and demanded a highball. They stopped at the Negresco bar where he relapsed into an easy chair with a sigh of content.

"Some car of yours," he admitted; "but I guess we've come about far enough, eh? This seems a pretty good spot to me."

"Only a little farther on," Tresholm begged. "I want to call on a man I used to know, if you don't mind. We can look in here again coming back, if you want to."

Chandler's acquiescence was a little ungracious, but he suffered himself presently to be escorted out to the car, where he sank back among the cushions and promptly went to sleep. Tresholm drove smoothly on until they were just short of Cagnes, when he turned off the main road and crept upwards towards the ridge which encircled the lesser mountains.

Outside the little farmhouse, he pulled up and shook his companion.

"Come along in and see my pal," he invited.

Chandler sat up, blinking, and looked around him. "Where are we?" he demanded.

"Somewhere between Cagnes and Vence. We have a visit to pay."

Chandler descended grumpily, and Tresholm, opening the unfastened front door, ushered him into the bare sitting-room. The unwilling guest looked about him distastefully.

"Don't seem to me as though we'd get a drink here," he decided. "I guess I'll leave you to your friend and wait outside."

Then Tresholm did an unexpected thing. He locked the door, placed the key in his pocket and pointed to a hard wooden chair.

"You'll sit there, and wait until we've finished a little matter of business," he directed.

Josh Chandler was dumfounded. He stared first at the man who had suddenly abandoned his role of courteous if somewhat silent host and addressed these threatening words to him, and then at the no-less-alarming figure in blue overalls who had pushed aside the curtains and appeared upon the threshold of an inner room. As he stared, his memory also reasserted itself. His sleepy, drink-sodden brain cleared beneath the shock.

"Good Heavens!" he exclaimed. "It's Jasper Dows—and"?his eyes traveled fearfully towards Tresholm—"and the Englishman!"

There was a brief silence. His gaze wandered from the worn face of his former associate back to Tresholm, cold, supercilious, tight-lipped, hard yet flexible as a piece of steel.

"What's this— a hold-up?" he demanded. "I'm getting out of here."

"You'll stay just where you are," Tresholm enjoined calmly.

"Who's going to stop me?"

"I am. You can have a rough-house if you want it, Chandler. Oh, yes, I know you're a strong fellow, but I am a boxer. You wouldn't live with me for thirty seconds. No good patting your hip pocket either. I felt you over in the car. You'd better listen quietly,"

"What the—"

"Oh, do be quiet," Tresholm begged a little wearily. "It isn't any use. You're up against it. You've recognised me. I know the truth as between you and Jasper Dows. You'd better look upon me as your protector. I think if I left you two alone, he'd kill you."

"Do you think I'm afraid?"

"You ought to be if you're not," was the quiet rejoinder. "If you think a thrashing will help you to listen more patiently, come outside and have it. If not, get back to your chair."

"I'm right enough here. Get on with it"

"We won't specify the actual date," Tresholm began, "but some ten or eleven years ago, not being in the financial position to which your father's millions have since boosted you, you sold copies of various plans of proposed new American seaplanes to the secret service agent of another country who happened to be in Washington."

Chandler looked around the room as though to be sure that there were no other auditors but that stern, haggard figure standing between the parted curtains.

"I sold them to you," he said hoarsely. "I've been wondering—I was wondering all luncheon-time where I'd seen you before."

"Quite right," Tresholm acknowledged.

"You sold them to me, and I paid you a very handsome sum of money for them. Unfortunately, the fact that the plans had been copied leaked out, and the affair was traced either to Jasper Dows, or to you. As is usually the case, the innocent man got it in the neck, and you, the guilty one, escaped.

"Jasper Dows was considered lucky to be cashiered. His father cut off his allowance and died without leaving him a penny. His friends gave him the cold shoulder, and here he is, working himself to death, earning just enough to live on. By rights, you ought to be in his place, Chandler. I know the person from whom I bought the plans, don't I?"

The accused man leaned forward. His eyes were full of a very malicious light.

"You know all right, you confounded spy," he agreed, "but you can't tell. Supposing I did sell them to you, what about it? You can't open your mouth, and I'm not going to. There isn't another soul in the world knows the truth—and you can't tell."

Tresholm eyed him for a moment meditatively. "What a foul swine you are," he remarked, in bitter disgust.

"However, either you forget one trifling circumstance, or things may be different in your country. We have a statute of limitations—ten years it is fixed at in my department The ten years are up. Added to this, my papers went in some time ago. I am a free man. Chandler. How do you like that?"

Apparently, Chandler didn't like it at all.

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed. "Is this blackmail?"

Tresholm inclined his head very slightly. I alway said that you were not quite a fool, Chandler," he confided. "It is blackmail, and you are the victim."

The young man was dazed. Tresholm pointed authoritatively to his chair. He sat down.

"Let us consider the matter now from a business point of view," he continued "Jasper Daws, you had better join us."

"I'll stay where I am," was the low, passionate reply. "If I'm in the same room I might kill him."

Tresholm nodded sympathetically.

"Quite so," he assented. "Well, I'll proceed on your behalf. Our friend Jasper Dows, Chandler, would have inherited at least half a million from his father, if it hadn't been for your machinations. Very well, we'll start with that. I think you told me on the tennis-courts this morning, and at luncheon today? several times, if I remember rightly,? that the old man, as you called him, had left you twenty millions. We'll take half a million away from you. Half a million dollars, Chandler? not a great sum for the ruin of a man's life."

"What else?" was the gruff demand.

"Several little things. First of all, you won, as all Monte Carlo knows, a hundred and thirty-eight thousand francs last night I can see the mille notes bulging in your pockets. You have even confided to me the fact of their presence there. You will hand them over to Jasper Dows for immediate expenses."

"What else?"

"Ah, now we come to the point. Your confession of having sold the plans, and of Jasper Dows' innocence, is drawn up here. Your signature will be witnessed by the American consul, who is now walking with Mrs. Dows in the garden—but? listen to me calmly—this is where my friend Jasper Dows is inclined to be generous. He has, as it happens, no desire to return permanently to America. Your confession, therefore, will only be used to insure the clearing of his name.

"That is to say, it will simply be placed before the authorities in Washington. His rank in the service will be restored, and that is all he desires. You have nothing to lose in this direction, for yon held no commission. You were simply a shirker, placed in the department by influence to escape active service."

"Ill have nothing to do with this business!" Chandler shouted.

"Wait!" Tresholm begged, holding out his band. "Consider for a moment what will happen if you agree. You will have made such atonement as is possible to Jasper Dows, even though it may have been under compulsion. For the rest of

his life he will enjoy the comfort of which you have deprived him for the last ten years, and his honor will be re-established. Consider what a relief this will be to that sensitive conscience of yours, Chandler."

"Blast you!" the other snarled.

"On the other band," Tresholm went on, unmoved, "if you refuse, being a free-lance in life and having a fancy for my friend Jasper Dows here, and his wife, I shall take the trouble to pay a visit to Washington myself, where I still have many friends. I shall place the facts before the authorities, and I shall place them equally before every one of those enterprising and brilliant young journalists who are apt to gather around when any social scandal or the rumor of it arises. In other words, Chandler, I'll emblazon your name on the roll of disgrace from New York to San Francisco, and never again, so long as you live, will you be able to put your foot upon the deck of a westward-bound steamer."

Chandler unbuttoned his cost threw the great pile of mille notes upon the table, produced his check-book and drew his chair up to the table.

"I'm beat" he decided.

"I always said that you were not quite a fool," Tresholm acknowledged pleasantly. "Dows, you might call in Mr. Wisely."

At Nice, on their homeward journey, Tresholm stopped outside a garage.

"I have brought you so far, much against my inclination," he said to his companion. "You can hire a car here. Get out and look after yourself."

Chandler slouched surlily off, and Tresholm drove on to Monte Carlo.

They sat together in the sunshine outside the Café de Paris the next morning—Jasper Dows and Tresholm. The former had just descended the hill from the bank.

"So it was all right, eh?" his companion asked.

Jasper Dows had the air of a man who had been living in the darkness for years. Even his tone, when he spoke, was the tone of one half dazed.

"They didn't even hesitate," he announced wonderingly. "The money was there already to my credit—five hundred thousand dollars in French francs. I could have drawn the lot if I'd liked."

"Good! Where's the wife?"

Dows' face suddenly softened. An almost beatific smile parted his lips. One might have fancied that his eyes were a little dim.

"She's shopping," he confided. "I just pushed a handful of mille notes into her bag, and she's gone off with them like a child into toy-land. After tea years'

poverty, Tresholm!. Never a hundred francs to spend. Making and remaking old clothes . . . . And now she's shopping!"

Tresholm Summoned a waiter and busied himself with the lighting of a cigarette. Jasper Dows was feeling his way back to life again.

"There was one thing yesterday, Tresholm." he said, "that puzzled me. Our Secret Service isn't quits the same as yours, of course, but—that statute of limitations now. I don't quite get that."

Tresholm leaned back in his chair and looked up at the blue sky.

"Chandler's just the sort of idiot who would swallow such a story," he murmured. "You and I know well enough, Dows, that never so long as I lived could I have opened my lips."

"It was just a bluff then?"

Tresholm nodded. "It seemed the only way of dealing with him—just a gamble as to whether he swallowed it or not. I like a gamble sometimes. Rather in my line, as it happens," he added, pausing to wave his hand to Gustave Sordel, who was passing.

THE MASTER CHEAT OF MONTE CARLO

FIRST A HOLD-UP AND A CROOKED GAME OF CARDS— A STRANGE EVENING, BUT WHAT FOLLOWED WAS STRANGER

TRESHOLM stood upon the top-most step of the Hotel de Paris at Monte Carlo, looking doubtfully out at a not very exhilarating prospect A low-lying bank of clouds obscured the panoramic hills, the pavements were rain-splashed, there were little puddles in the road.

The chairs and tables at the Café de Paris opposite were piled up together, The commissionaire outside the Casino awaited arrivals with a huge umbrella already unfurled. The Senegalese head porter, standing by Tresholm's side, showed all his white teeth in a smile of expectancy.

"A day for the Casino, Monsieur," he hazarded.

Tresholm gazed meditatively across the Place at the great stucco-fronted building, and the very fact of his hesitation seemed to create a little wave of excitement in his immediate neighborhood. The man who worked the lift to the underground passage held open the gates hopefully. A boy in buttons prepared for a dash across the Place to announce the coming event.

By intuition, or some invisible means the rumor of this long-expected descent

upon the stronghold of gambling began to spread. The chief maître d'hôtel of the restaurant followed by two of his subordinates, strolled up as though casually to pay respects to an excellent client.

"A day to remain indoors, I fear, Monsieur," he ventured. "One might amuse oneself at the tables for a time."

Tresholm nodded absently. As yet he made no move. Several people in the lounge prepared to follow him if he should cross the square.

A self-declared professional gambler who had been in Monte Carlo for at least a week, and had not once entered the gambling rooms! The thing was amazing. This morning, however, what else could happen? There was the Casino, with its doors hospitably open, through which was passing all the time a little stream of the world in mackintoshes. The thing seemed predestined.

And then a thin shaft of silver appeared from some partially hidden place and crept down from skywards. The gray puddles flashed like molten silver. The waiters from the Café de Paris came tentatively out and, after a look around, began to rearrange the chairs and tables.

The shaft of sunlight grew broader with the moments. Up in the sky a patch of blue was unexpectedly visible. The of rain for one moment became diamonds and then ceased. The clouds were parting like the drawing of a curtain in a theater.

And then, unmistakably, sunshine— sunshine smiling down upon the Place as though to explain that those leaden hours had been just a joke. The sun shone clearly, its tender warmth chasing all the damp out of the moist atmosphere. Monte Carlo was itself again. Tresholm threw away his cigarette.

"Good!" he exclaimed to his Senegalese friend in the blue uniform. "I shall go out to Cagnes and play golf."

The man tried to conceal his disappointment as he summoned the car. The lift attendant turned away in disgust. The maître d'hôtel followed his example. The expectant little crowd in the lounge resumed their places, and Tresholm stepped into his coupé and disappeared.

Later in the day, it was to mean something to him that the sunshine should have appeared at that particular moment.

Tresholm put on his brakes, stopping the car at once, while his headlights disclosed the man standing in the middle of the road with uplifted arms. After a round of golf, he was in an excellent humor and prepared to play the good Samaritan to anyone. A broken-down car, perhaps? Someone desiring a lift? He leaned forward to scrutinize the man who had hailed him.

"Monsieur will descend," a hoarse voice insisted.

Tresholm was utterly taken by surprise and uncertain, for the moment, how to act. With his hand upon the door of the car stood a person of most ruffianly appearance, wearing a narrow black mask and holding an ugly-looking automatic. Not only that but a second man had appeared out of the shadows and was hanging on the other door.

It is probable that, if Tresholm had not been dreaming and required several seconds to realize the position, his impulse to make a dash for it would have been successful. As it was, however, the opportunity had passed. His first assailant had him at his mercy, and the man who had clambered up behind was in a position to deal him a nasty blow on the top of his head.

Tresholm reflected. He had little money with him, and he was unarmed Discretion was certainly indicated. He held up his hands

"1 will descend," he agreed, "if you will wail while I draw to the aide of the road."

"Vite!" was the harsh command.

Tresholm had every intention of keeping his word, but there was a most unexpected change in the situation. A flashlight illuminated the road. There was the report of a gun from behind, followed by another. The man who had accosted him dashed for the wood from which he had issued, followed by his companion, and the third, who had clambered into the coupé, leaped out and went down the ravine on the other side like a scared rabbit.

Tresholm descended to find them all disappeared, and the deus ex machina a small two-seated car with dazzling headlights, which had evidently just turned the corner. In the middle of the road stood the slim figure of a woman, with a pistol in her hand.

She nodded and beckoned him to her. He obeyed the summons, hat in hand. The twilight was merging into night, but the moon had scarcely yet risen. He saw her only indistinctly, but he gathered she was young, and, to all appearance, French.

"Mademoiselle," he said, "I am grateful for your arrival."

"One is foolish to travel along this road at night without being prepared for trouble," she remarked. Monsieur is probably a tourist, or he would have known that."

"It is true," he admitted.

"You are hurt?"

"Not a scratch."

"Or robbed?"

"Neither, thanks to you, Mademoiselle."

She glanced at him for a moment intently, almost, he thought, inquisitively.

He saw now that her eyes were dark and her features regular. She was sufficiently good-looking, but her appearance was spoiled by a lowering, almost sulky expression. She seemed to resent his presence, to resent having been under the necessity of offering aid. Her voice only was pleasant.

"Monsieur speaks French so well," she said coldly, "that I am in doubt as to his nationality."

"I am English. My name is Tresholm, and I am staying at the Hotel de Paris."

"You are the eccentric," she asked, "who registered here as a professional gambler?"

"My little joke," he apologized.

"Nevertheless," she went on, "you must have had some reason for what you did. You gamble at times, yes?"

"Now and then," he admitted.

"Piquet, perhaps?"

For a moment, Tresholm was oppressed with a sense of unreality. An attack by footpads in the center of civilisation, a deliverer so unexpected, and a question so apparently pointless!

What on earth could it matter to her or to anyone whether or not he played a somewhat neglected game? His companion appeared to realize his bewilderment; she stamped her foot and frowned at him impatiently.

"Please do not think that I am a crazy woman," she begged. "I have a reason for asking you such a question. Now will you please listen to me. You are Mr. Tresholm. Very well. You will admit that I have been of some service to you."

"A service for which I am greatly obliged," he assured her. "I should certainly have lost my temper and my money, if nothing else, but for your opportune arrival."

"Well, you shall do something for me in return," she said, still without the vestige of a smile, or any note of graciousness in her tone. "You will do me the favor of accompanying me to the villa where I live, which is near here, and taking either a whisky and soda or a cocktail before you proceed."

"I shall be delighted," he acquiesced.

She stepped back into her car and took her place at the wheel. "Will you follow me, please?" she asked, "I would ask you to drive with me, but I see that you have no chauffeur."

The two-seated car moved slowly on, with Tresholm behind. Just before reaching the outskirts of Monaco, the girl extended her hand, and they turned

down one of the narrow roads which connect the Lower and Upper Corniche. After a few hundred yards' descent her hand went out again, and she turned between two broken-down gates, along an unkempt cypress-bordered drive, until they reached a deserted-looking villa. The façade was weather-stained and shabby. Its rows of windows were like great glaring eyes, uncurtained; the gardens were desolate; the whole place had an unkempt and forsaken appearance.

The girl descended from her car, and in obedience to her gesture, Tresholm followed her into an ill-furnished room upon the ground floor.

"A quarter to seven," the murmured, as though to herself. "Monsieur Tresholm, it is very hind of you to pay me this little visit"

"If I can be of any service," he ventured, more than ever puzzled.

"You may be," she answered. "I cannot tell. It depends upon what manner of man you are. You seem to have courage, although you let yourself be rescued from footpads by a girl."

He shrugged his shoulders. "I submitted to the inevitable, Mademoiselle," he replied.

She placed a bottle of whisky, a siphon and a glass upon the table.

"Have you ever heard of this villa before, Mr. Tresholm? Do you know who I am?"

He shook his head. "I must confess my ignorance."

"Well, they talk about us sometimes," she remarked,—"not very favorably. This is supposed to be a place to avoid. I live here with my father. He is supposed to be a man with whom you should have nothing to do. You are sure that you have not heard of us?"

"Quite sure, Mademoiselle."

"My name is Brignolles—Lucie Brignolles."

He shook his head. "I am sorry," he confessed, "but the name is unfamiliar to me."

"You never heard of either of us?"

"The other one being—?"

"My father—Monsieur Brignolles."

"Unfortunately, no. You must remember that you yourself correctly described me as a tourist"

"So much the better," she declared. "I will tell you about my father before we begin. You call yourself a professional gambler. An effort at humor, I should imagine, for you seem prosperous. My father is also a professional gambler.

Unfortunately, the occasion is rare nowadays when he can find anyone to play with him. His reputation is none too good. He is barred from the Casino. We have no friends. Are you listening?"

"I have beard every word," ho assured her.

She looked across at him gloomily. He thought that he never had seen a more sullen expression in his life. Even the beauty of her eyes was marred.

"My father has ill health," she went on. "He cannot live very long. He has only one passion, and that is to play cards and to rob anyone who plays with him. I have to tell you this, but I am his daughter, and my sympathies are entirely with him as against any tool whose money he can take. I have been to Nice to try to find someone to come and play Piquet. He is quite invincible at Piquet He can win just as much money as his opponent chooses to play for. Will you play with him?"

"Certainly I will," Tresholm accepted, with a queer little smile. "I must warn you that I am rather good at the game myself."

"You could not succeed against my father, because he cheats," she rejoined curtly. "Nevertheless, it will probably make his last few days happier, if he can win some money from you. Can you afford to lose?"

"I certainly can," Tresholm assured her.

"You are wealthy?" she insisted.

"Sufficiently."

"Remember," she told him, "you are fully warned. You will not complain afterwards ?"

"I give you my promise," he replied, "that I will submit to whatever may happen to me."

She produced another siphon of soda-water and set out a card-table. "You need not he afraid of the whisky and soda," she said dryly. "This is a gambler's den, but that is the end of it. You are here to be cheated, but the drinks are all right. Sit there, please, and wait while I fetch my father. Your solitude will give you an excuse to escape if you are afraid."

He opened the door for her and she passed him as though utterly unconscious of his presence. Tresholm resumed his seat with a little grin. He loved adventure. Although he had a sort of instinctive confidence in the ungracious young woman who had just left him, he fully realized that he might very well find himself involved is a singularly unpleasant adventure. He waited for her return, however, without any feeling of apprehension. Very soon, he heard footsteps. She opened the door and entered.

Leaning upon her arm was a tall, emaciated-looking man whose suit of ancient

gray tweeds hung loosely upon his shrunken figure. It needed only a glance into big face to convince Tresholm that the girl had been right about his health.

"This is my father," the girl announced shortly. "Mr. Tresholm. A gentleman staying down at Monte Carlo. He will play Piquet with you for an hour."

"Very good of him, I am sure—very good," the old man declared, as he extended a skinny hand. "Pleased to welcome you, Mr.—what did you say his name was, girl?" he asked harshly.

She spelled it out with care.

"Tresholm," he murmured. "Quite a good name. Very kind of you to give me a game, sir. Will you sit there? I have brought the cards."

He laid two packs of cards and some markers upon the table, and lowered himself, assisted by his daughter, into the chair. He commenced shuffling, and Tresholm watched his long fingers, fascinated. One part of the man, at least, retained its old nimbleness.

"What points do you care to play, sir?" the old man asked.

"I am in your hands," Tresholm replied.

"Would twenty-franc points seem too much?"

"I could manage that," Tresholm agreed. "I should warn you, sir, that although I have not played lately, I am supposed to be rather good."

The old man looked across at him without expression in his face.

"There is no one in the world," he said, "who can beat me at Piquet"

They cut for deal. Monsieur Brignolles won.

"It is permitted to smoke?" Tresholm asked.

"By all means," the girl acquiesced, "so long as you have your own cigarettes. We have nothing. We have just that bottle of whisky and some soda-water, in case we can find anyone foolish enough to come and play."

"And your father?"

She shook her head. "He neither drinks nor smokes," she confided. "His state of health does not permit it."

Whatever Monsieur Brignolle's state of health may have been, his mentality Tresholm decided, after the first few games, remained unimpaired. He discarded with brilliant intuition, and he played his cards unerringly. Tresholm for the first time found himself outclassed. He lost with better hands; he lost heavily with bands of equal value. Each time his opponent drew as though inspired. The last card was scarcely played before he was preparing for the next hand. It was as though he played for a great stake, and against the clock.

The girl did the scoring, and every time she passed the sheet to Tresholm for his inspection, she did so with a half-malicious, half-triumphant smile.

"You must say when you would like to leave off, Mr. Tresholm," she remarked once.

"Mr. Tresholm must have his revenge," her father squeaked hastily. "It is not for you to interfere."

"I can tell you one thing, Mademoiselle Brignolles," Tresholm confided. "Your father is not only the finest piquet player whom I have ever encountered, but I can assure you that he is also the finest player in the world. I have never seen such intuition. One could imagine that he might be one of those rare people in the world who can see through the back of the cards."

The girl shot one malign glance at him and did not speak again until the next game was finished. Tresholm glanced at his watch.

"You are afraid of being late for your dinner?" she asked, with a note of sarcasm.

"Not in the least." he assured her. "I only looked at the watch to be certain that I should not be. If I leave here in another half-hour, that will suit me admirably."

"If you are sure you can afford it," she mocked, "Prosperity has come to the house. I see that you already owe nineteen milles."

"I must economize in other directions," Tresholm replied. "At any rate, I am having a wonderful lesson at the game."

They played on in silence. The old man shivered every now and then, as though affected by an ague, but the cards left his hand with uncanny precision.

In the intervals between the deals Tresholm ventured to glance around, and it seemed to him that he never before had sat in such a terrible room. The color-wash was peeling off the walls. There was dust upon the frames of the few hideous pictures. There was not a whole article of furniture in the room. To make matters more uncomfortable, there was a fire of huge logs burning upon the hearth, and not a single window open, but although Tresholm felt his cheeks burn and his forehead become damp, his host's face never changed in its waxen pallor. A sudden vigorous distaste of his surroundings, the ugliness it all, the terrible old man, the sullen girl got on Tresholm's nerves. He began to make mistakes in playing his cards and suffered for them severely. The girl smiled maliciously.

"Only ten minutes longer," she consoled him. How glad you will be to go. Never mind, worse might have happened, if I had left you to the robbers on the hill."

"The game is very interesting," Tresholm assured her, speaking with an attempt at lightness. "I am outclassed, but so would anyone else be."

She shivered palpably. Her father's long, nervous fingers were toying with the cards which remained in the little pack. He drew them out one by one, glanced back at his own hand and hesitated. Finally he discarded, throwing three cards only, instead of five, to which he was entitled. Tresholm, when the last card fell upon the table, had lost more than in any previous game.

The girl began to add up the scores. Her father looked over her shoulder, checking the totals. When she had finished, she looked at them in dismay.

"Do you know how much you have lost, Mr. Tresholm?" she asked.

Quite a good deal, I am afraid," he replied.

"You have lost thirty-one thousand francs," she announced.

"As much as that?" he rejoined coolly.

"Have you the money in your pocket?" the old man asked, with a note of nervous harshness quavering in his voice. "If not, my daughter had better return to the hotel with you."

"I never carry more than a few milles," Tresholm replied. "I have my check-book."

"Where do you bank?" Brignolles asked.

"Here in Monte Carlo"

The old man's face cleared. "If you have not the money, I must take a check then. Lucie, fetch pen and ink."

She placed writing materials upon the table, and Tresholm wrote out a check

While he was filling in the counterfoil he was conscious of someone looking over his shoulder. He turned around and met the old man's greedy eyes.

"But what a balance!" the latter declared breathlessly. "You are a rich man, Mr. Tresholm?"

"I have enough for my needs," was the quiet reply.

The girl threw open the door. "What does it matter to us whether Mr. Tresholm is rich or not?" she demanded. "He has enough to pay his debt." His debt?" Tresholm murmured. She looked at him with challenge in her eyes. The old man shuffled across to the cupboard and took out a glass and a bottle. The girl swung around. "Come this way," she enjoined. "I will see you out." They passed down the wretched little hall, and she opened the front door.

Well," Tresholm said, "many thanks for saving me from the bandits."

"Nothing to thank me for," she rejoined curtly. "You paid, all right."

She closed the door, and Tresholm drove away from the place with an infinite sense of relief. The girl returned wearily to the shabby little room. Before she reached the door, she heard her father calling her. He was standing at the table with a pack of cards in his hand.

"Lucie," he cried, "where is the other pack?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "I do not know," she answered.

"It is gone!" the old man shrieked. "Do you suppose—?"

She searched the table, turned the box upside down, looked everywhere feverishly. Then they faced one another—father and daughter.

"He has taken it away!" the former groaned. "Stop him, Lucie!"

She listened to the sound of Tresholm's horn as she turned from the avenue into the road.

"Too late!" she muttered. "You may as well tear up the check, Father."

At eleven o'clock on the following morning, the girl stood in the road below the bank and watched the great doors roll slowly back. She looked in her bag. The check was safely there. She closed it, turned her back upon the Boulevard des Moulins and slowly entered the gardens. She chose a secluded seat and sat there in what seemed to be a sort of apathetic stupor. After some time she rose, left the gardens by the lower exit, and looked up at the Casino clock. It was exactly eleven.

She crossed the road, sat down at one of the tables outside the Café de Paris, and ordered a cup of coffee. At half past eleven she paid for her coffee and mounted the hill. At five-and-twenty minutes to twelve she crossed the portals of the bank. She made her way to the nearest cashier's window, unfastened her bag, and produced the check. As she handed it across, she felt her heart give a great throb. For a single moment the man's face before her was blurred; everything in the bank was hazy. Then she came to. She was herself again. Even the sullen expression had returned. She was like any ordinary customer waiting for her money.

"Would like any small change, Madame?" the cashier asked.

"A little please," she answered, not too steadily.

He glanced at the check once more. Then he counted rapidly through three packets of ten-mule notes pinned together, pushed them across the counter, and added a mille in hundreds and fifties. The girl stuffed them into her bag. She walked a little uncertainly towards the door. Then she came face to face with Tresholm, who was talking to the bank manager. She gave one little gasp, but recovered swiftly. She was passing on when he stopped her.

"How do you do, Mademoiselle," he said. "I hope you found that I had enough

money to meet your fathers check."

The bank manager laughed. An excellent joke. The girl looked at Tresholm, and for a moment he was startled. There was a curious new quality in her eyes.

"Could I speak to you for a moment?" she asked.

"Certainly." he acquiesced.

Ho opened the door for her and nodded his farewell to the manager. She led the way across the road to the gardens.

"How is your father this morning?" Tresholm asked politely.

"He is well as he is likely to be," was the toneless answer. "Do you mind sitting down here; I wish to ask you a question."

He seated himself by her side, immaculate in his white flannels, his pongee coat and the carnation is his buttonhole. In the rather pitiless sunlight, the shabbiness of her own clothes, well-cut thought they were, was a little pathetic.

"I want to know why you did not stop payment of that check," she demanded.

"Stop payment of the check?" he repeated. "But why should I? I lost the money." "Yes, you lost the money," she agreed, But—" She paused significantly.

"If you thought I was going to stop payment of it," he asked, "why weren't you here on the steps at ten o'clock this morning?"

"I was," she confessed. "That was what I was supposed to do—to cash it as soon as the doors were opened. I thought I would give you a chance though. I waited."

"Very sporting of you!" he murmured. "Anyhow, I never meant to stop it."

"Why not?" she persisted. "You know that you were cheated; you know that my father was playing with marked cards. You even brought them away with you as evidence!"

"My dear young lady!" he expostulated. "You haven't your facts correctly, and you seem to have an entirely wrong view of the situation. It is true that I brought away a pack of your father's cards last night, but that was simply because I thought he was better without them. Besides, didn't I own up to being a professional gambler? I am always interested in the appurtenances of my profession."

"I do not believe that you are a professional gambler at all," she declared, with a sudden flame of anger in her face and tone.

"But I can assure you that I am," he pleaded earnestly. "Everyone who comes to Monte Carlo and signs his papers at a hotel has to have a profession. That is

mine. Now, I don't went to seem unsociable," he went on, "but don't you think you ought to be getting home? Your father will be uneasy."

She opened her bag and dashed the little pile of notes upon the ground between them.

"You knew you were being cheated!" she cried passionately. "You knew that you had no chance. You lost that on on purpose. It was charity."

"Young lady, it was nothing of the sort," he insisted. "I thoroughly enjoyed the experience. Your father's skill at the game, to begin with, is phenomenal; his technique in those other matters was also amazing."

"Be quiet, will you!" she sobbed. "One has to suffer enough without such gibes."

"Now please be reasonable," he begged. "I assure you—"

Then, for a moment he broke off and affected to be busy lighting a cigarette. When he was prepared to resume the conversation, the young woman's breathing was a little more normal, and she had disposed of her handkerchief.

Within a few feet of them, the uniformed garden attendant was standing. His eyes were glued on the packet of notes.

"Quelque chose est tombée, monsieur," he pointed out. Tresholm peered at the notes through his eye-glass.

"Ça n'est pas à moi," he declared, with a little gesture of abnegation.

The man turned to the girl. "À mademoiselle, peut-être?" he suggested, pointing to the money.

"Ça ne m'appartient pas," she echoed.

The man drew a little nearer to the notes. There was a gleam of cupidity in his eyes. Tresholm's foot fell gently upon them.

"Monsieur," he said, "believe me, the young lady is mistaken. The notes are hers. I saw them fall from her bag. Owing to a slight difference of opinion between us, she refuses to pick them up. I, too, am obstinate."

He passed across a hundred-franc note, and the keeper at once decided that a hundred francs in the hand were worth more than a bundle of mille notes upon he ground.

"Monsieur est très gentil," he murmured and departed.

"You see, Mademoiselle," Tresholm continued, "to leave those notes on the ground there may eventually result in trouble. If our friend had been a gendarme, for instance, we might have been marched off to the commissaire to account or the singular fact that we are sitting with a bundle of mille notes between us which neither of us will touch.

"Now, I will set you a good example," he added, coolly possessing himself of her bag, picking up the notes, unfastening the clasp and dropping them in. "That I trust, will be the first step," he concluded, "towards our complete reconciliation. You will not deny that the sac is yours."

The bag lay upon the girl's knees. She said nothing. She was suddenly very white. Is her eyes was vacancy, and yet, when he ventured to look towards her, was it his fancy, or were there unfathomable depths of wistfulness lurking, there?

"Mademoiselle," he said gently, "why make the world a gloomier place than it is? It should be a place, you know, where human beings take pleasure in helping one another and in receiving help. The fates have made me, through no merit of my own, a very rich man. I have few pleasures. One you can give me by picking up that bag and shaking hands with me and mentioning no more that ugly word 'charity,' because, after all, remember that is a phrase ill-used by all of us. You permit?"

Almost before she knew what was happening, he had risen to his feet. He raised her fingers to his lips—very well-shaped and carefully tended, he saw they were—and, with a little smile of farewell, he passed on. The girl remained in her place, her eyes following his departing figure, the bag clasped tightly in her hands.

ONE NIGHT IN NICE

AN AIR OF SUSPENSE HUNG OVER THE GAY TOWN WHEN RUMORS WERE SPREAD OF

MYSTERIOUS HAPPENINGS ON BOARD THE BATTLE-SHIP THAT LAY IN THE HARBOR.

EARLIER in the day, Tresholm had brought his car to a standstill and had joined a crowd of people gazing down into the harbor of Villefranche, where a battle-ship lay anchored. The reason for their mild excitement was easily apparent. Instead of being surrounded by the usual stream of boats coming and going, the sea around the ship was deserted, the gangway was drawn up, and a flag was flying, which perhaps Tresholm alone among that little company rightly understood—the navy flag, warning off all visitors or tradespeople of any description. The only craft visible was the battle-ship's own pinnace, which had just left the landing-stage.

Tresholm adjusted his field-glasses and studied the scene below. The two passengers who were being escorted on board were Monsieur Desrolles, the

Chef de Sûreté at Monaco, and a companion whom Tresholm chanced to recognize as the Chef de Sûreté at Nice.

Something had happened to disturb the serenity of life upon the battle-ship. His understanding of the flag, and his recognition of the two men in the pinnace helped him to realize the probable nature of the event. He watched the pinnace cutting through the water, leaving behind its trail of foam, watched the gangway let grudgingly down and the two visitors received on board, watched afterwards the immediate drawing up of the gangway and the sheering off of the pinnace. Then he drove on to Nice.

It was a gay night at Maxim's, Nice's moat fashionable bohemian restaurant. The exhibition dancers never had been received with more favor. Tresholm, inclined to wonder why he had lingered on after a late dinner to the small hours of the morning, still felt no impulse to depart There were two people and one circumstance in the room which interested him—the girl with the misty eyes at the table opposite and the small man who was his left-band neighbor, a man with rather high color, a wizened face, hair as stiffly upright as porcupine quills. He was correctly dressed for the evening and he ate his supper with an Éclaireur du Soir propped up in front of him. These were the two people whom Tresholm, always observant of the world around him, had singled out as being of interest.

The circumstance was another matter—a long table laid for fourteen, at the end of the room, which had been unoccupied all the evening and which was now being slowly and unwillingly dismantled. Tresholm leaned forward as the maître d'hôtel passed.

"You are disappointed of some guests tonight, Louis?" he remarked.

"A party of officers from the battle-ship in Villefranche Harbor, sir," the man confided. "Some of them visit here most nights, but this was to be a very special affair. The wine and the supper were ordered a week ago. It was the fête-day of the one who has been our best patron here."

"The celebration has been postponed then?" Tresholm asked.

The maître d'hôtel approached a step nearer. "Monsieur has not heard then of what has arrived?"

"I have heard nothing at all," Tresholm replied.

The man leaned forward. "One knows nothing, though one bears sometimes wild stories," he said. "Leave from the battle-ship has been stopped. It is a pity, for the supper has been cooked. They will come another day."

The man bowed himself away, and Tresholm, aware of the cause of his sudden reticence, continued his meal without remark. Presently he looked across at the opposite table. The girl with the misty eyes smiled at him slightly. With

nothing in mind save the gratification of his almost impersonal interest, he rose to his feet and crossed the floor.

"Mademoiselle will dance?" he invited.

Mademoiselle hesitated, and, it seemed to Tresholm, looked at his neighbor.

Then she rose slowly.

"If Monsieur wishes," she assented.

The dance was a success, and as Tresholm led her back to her seat he was somewhat confident that his curiosity concerning her was justified.

"Mademoiselle would care to share my table for a time?" he suggested. "We both seem to be alone."

She demurred. "Sit with me for a few minutes," she begged, "I like this side of the room better.

"Why do you prefer your table to mine?" he asked.

"It is your neighbor," the confided. "I do not like him. He looks at me all the time. I know very well that if we talked together he would listen."

"Why shouldn't he, if it amuses him?" Tresholm rejoined, smiling. "We are not going to discuss secrets of state, are we?"

The girl took out her vanity-case and dabbed at her lips.

"I suppose you have something to say to me," she ventured. "I do not know what it is, but I can guess. I would prefer that Monsieur did not hear; so, I should think, would you."

Tresholm showed no signs of surprise at her unexpected speech. There had certainly been no thought of adventure in his mind when he had decided to stay her for dinner. Yet old habits were strong. At the first breath of it, he felt himself back in the old life. He was playing a part, even before he knew it.

"What do you expect to hear from me?" he asked.

She finished with her vanity-case and put at deliberately away. "You will probably ask me first where Arthur is," she said, with a faint smile. "After that, you will talk business."

"Then where is Arthur?" Tresholm demanded.

"In the Casino." She paused, expectant, for his next question. Then she caught the air of bewilderment in his face, and her own expression changed. "Eh bien?"

"It seems to me," Tresholm confessed, that this is where I break down. Shall we dance again?"

The girl shrugged. She was evidently ill at ease.

"Tonight I am tired," she pleaded. "I prefer not to dance any more. Perhaps Monsieur had better return to his table. I am expecting—a—a friend."

He rose. "I trust that I have not offended in any way."

She looked at him keenly. "Only by seeming to be what you are not."

She suddenly rose, and Tresholm became aware of one of the professional dancers standing at the table. She accepted his invitation to dance, and Tresholm returned to his place. His neighbor glanced up from the newspaper as he sat down, and addressed him in English, which showed only the slightest trace of a foreign accent,

"Scarcely a success, eh?"

"I am afraid," Tresholm admitted, concealing his surprise, "that I was not exactly popular with the young lady:"

The little man dropped his eye-glasses, folded up his newspaper and leaned towards his companion.

"Am I right in believing that your name is Tresholm," he asked, "and that when you registered at your hotel in Monte Carlo, you described yourself as a professional gambler?"

"Quite right," Tresholm admitted. "An effort at humor which has led to several misunderstandings. The hotel clerk was persistent that I should fill in the space, and I could think of nothing else for the moment?"

"Not being anxious to disclose your real profession," the other suggested.

"Having retired from it, whatever it may have been," was the swift rejoinder.

"Retired?"

"Formally and actually."

"Then what are you doing her tonight?"

"I am here entirely by accident."

"Yes. I know all that," was the somewhat impatient interruption. "With me it is unnecessary."

"May I ask who you are?"

"I will tall you," the other replied, "although I expect you know already. My name is Vigaud—Charles Vigaud—not unknown to the headquarters of the police here. Now, Mr. Tresholm we know one another. Presently I may have a suggestion to make to you. But wait. Things are about to happen."

There was a disturbance at the door, a hurrying forward of the vestiaire, a vision of bowing waiters, a maître d'hôtel hastening towards the place where the long table had been dismantled. Ten or twelve new arrivals were divesting

themselves of hats and coats.

Vigaud turned to Tresholm with a queer smile.

"Our friends, the naval officers," he remarked. "The commander must be in a gracious mood."

"Do they belong to the ship that was flying the warning-off flag?" Tresholm inquired.

Vigaud nodded. "This has been their usual meeting-place for many nights," he confided. "This morning all leave was stopped and they were not expected."

"Why?"

The other shrugged. "A robbery on board, one hears."

They came presently down the room—ten very presentable young men. They were popular, evidently, for shouts of welcome greeted them. The girl with the misty eyes alone looked down at her plate and never once glanced up as the long file trooped past her.

Tresholm, happening by chance to notice the fact, watched the young men curiously. The first half-dozen, either by design or accident, ignored her completely. Towards the end of the procession, however, one of the youngest-looking of the officers glanced anxiously across at her table.

Tresholm's gaze followed the lad curiously. He fancied there was a certain tenseness in his expression, shared by none of his companions. They took their places noisily. Vigaud chuckled.

"An idea," he commented—"without a doubt an idea!"

"What's it all about?" Tresholm inquired good-humoredly.

His companion appeared to have become less communicative.

"One asks oneself," he murmured.

The young men from the battle-ship settled down to enjoy themselves, and no one was more swiftly uproarious than the youth whose entrance had attracted Tresholm's attention. Ladies with inclinations towards dancing seemed to arrive as though by magic from all directions. Every one of the party danced, including the boy. His partner, however, was a little, fair-haired Frenchwoman, from whose eyes he scarcely once looked away. Tresholm, who was intrigued by a situation which he utterly failed to understand, ordered another bottle of wine and postponed his intention of leaving. The girl with the misty eyes suddenly smiled across at him, with a little gesture of invitation. Tresholm hastened to her side, and she slipped eagerly into his arms.

"But your hands are cold!" he exclaimed, as they swung down the room.

"As cold as my heart, Monsieur—cold with fear," she answered.

He looked at her, puzzled. There was little doubt but that she was speaking the truth. Such natural color as she may have possessed had left her cheeks so completely that the rouge remained like an ugly daub upon her livid skin. Her body was quivering.

"Come to the bar," she begged. "I am not fit to dance. I thought at first that you brought me a message from George. We had a little code arranged—that is of no consequence—you must help me. Indeed, you must help me."

They sat on stools, and, with a whispered word of mingled excuse and injunction, she left him for a few moments, The barman leaned across the counter.

"Monsieur knows the young lady well?" he asked.

"I never saw her before this evening," Tresholm replied.

"If Monsieur is ignorant of certain things," the man advised, "if he is concerned, he would do well to be careful. It is a night, this, when disaster might come.

"I wish I knew what you are talking about!" Tresholm exclaimed.

The man leaned a little farther over the counter. He looked furtively to the right and to the left. Then suddenly he stiffened. Mademoiselle stood once more by Tresholm's side. She had washed the rouge from her face, and although she was terribly pale, she looked once more herself.

"I have engaged a salon privé," she whispered. "Monsieur will come. I have something to say to him. He followed her down the passage, and the young barman looked after them anxiously. With a little sigh, the latter drew his account block from his pocket, scribbled a few lines upon one of the pages torn from it, and handed it to a gray-haired maître d'hôtel.

The man nodded and made his way up the crowded room to where Tresholm's neighbor was still seated. He handed the note to him without a word, and slipped away. Vigaud adjusted his eye-glass and read the few lines carefully. Then he glanced across at the empty place opposite and shrugged. His bill was already paid, as though in expectation of some such emergency. He made is way through the throng and strolled out into the night.

Tresholm was a man rarely ill at case, but a certain fineness of sensibility inspired in him a swift revulsion to his tawdry and meretricious environment.

"Mademoiselle," he said, "you must forgive me, but I find these surroundings distasteful. Unless you can offer me an immediate explanation of the service which you require from me, I must leave you."

"I shall explain," she assured him quickly. "Have patience for a few moment, I beg."

"At least, let me unlock the door," he begged.

"Not yet," she insisted. "There must always be that delay. Now I explain."

He stood icily upon the other side of the table. She poured out two glasses of champagne, drank one and threw the other upon the floor.

"You know my nationality," she began. "For the last few years there has been unrest in this part of the world. I speak both languages. I have many acquaintances. In the war I was in a government bureau."

She paused to listen for a moment.

"Go on," he invited, a little less coldly.

"My instructions came to me a month ago, but first I had to wait for three weeks. Since then I have been working. There is a? battle-ship in the harbor. My task was to make friends with one of the officers. The ship is fitted with some secret device for resisting torpedoes. Half-way across the Atlantic she was submitted to tests—you understand, Monsieur?"

"Quite well," Tresholm assented. "Go on."

"The results of these tests," she continued, "were entered in the Admiral's private diary. My task was to obtain the page upon which the results were written, while he was in Toulon. I succeeded."

"Are you sure you haven't been hoaxed?" he asked her.

She shook her head. "A great deal was done for me," she confided. "On the first visitors' day someone whom I have never seen in my life took a wax impression of the key of the small cupboard where the diary is kept. The key was given to me four days ago. I gave it to my friend. Yesterday, he brought me the page, cut out."

"Have you parted with it yet?"

"They won't let me," she cried, almost hysterically. "I have been driven crazy. The French police are suspicious. They have not ventured to search my rooms, but there is an agent of the police outside my door who pretends to be a fireman, and they follow me in the street, so that I dare not post a letter or approach any of my intimates here. My telephone, I know, is guarded. I have been nearly crazy with anxiety. The man into whose hands I was to pass the page of the diary has been in the restaurant tonight, but I had to signal him to go away. Opposite me sits Vigaud, an agent of the French police. I am terrified."

"Where is this page of the diary at the present moment?" Tresholm asked.

"I have it with me," she confided. "I throw myself upon your generosity, Monsieur. My heart has ached ever since I did this thing. I repent. I sob at night with terror. That poor boy! I saw his face this evening"

"You mean the tall youth at the end of the procession?"

"Yes. They tell me if it is discovered he will be shot. I want the page restored to him."

"What would he the good of that?" Tresholm pointed out. "You can't cut a page out of a diary and replace it."

"This is different," the told him eagerly. "The book is of a different fabrication. Each day of the week is on a separate page, with holes at the top through which two clips pass. The poor boy still has the key. He could at least take his chance of replacing it."

"How are you going to communicate with him?"

"I can't," she cried, "but you could."

"Even if I did," Tresholm deliberated, "it seems to me long odds about his being able to replace it. Has anyone discovered it is missing?"

"I will tell you, Monsieur, what has happened," she declared eagerly. "The Admiral's secretary, with whom he left his keys, had occasion to go to the safe. He found things disturbed. The alarm was given. The ship was isolated. Afterwards a search was made."

"This one page from the diary?"

"It was not noticed. The secretary—he decided that he had been mistaken in the disturbance of the papers. People were allowed once more to come and go from the ship as they willed, but tomorrow, Monsieur—tomorrow the Admiral returns. He will be told of the scare, and he will search for himself. It must be returned before midday tomorrow."

She listened for a moment with the old terror in her eyes.

"I had a letter from that poor boy this morning—a pathetic letter. If only he knew how I longed to give him back the page! No harm has been done. Not a soul has seen it. Nevertheless, when the Admiral returns, a report of the scare will be made to him and the theft will be discovered. George will be suspected first of all, because he is the Admiral's nephew and is allowed access to the cabin. Poor boy, he is not of the nature of those who conspire. He will break down. He will confess. He will be shot."

Tresholm stood considering the problem.

"You are my hope!" she cried. "Directly you came in, my heart, gave a leap. You were pointed out to me at Monte Carlo. They told me that you were a great gambler. Take the risk, Monsieur. You will save this boy's life. You are English. So little can happen to you. Ah!"

She sprang away. Down the passage came footsteps, which in their very tread seemed grim and official. To Tresholm she behaved like a madwoman. She,

flung herself upon the couch, pulled off her stockings and concealed them beneath the cushions. Then she burst into a senseless fit of gay but hysterical laughter.

Then there came the knocking at the door—a brief, imperative knocking. She answered,, Her voice was stifled—angry, but not terrified.

"Qui est là?"

"Open the door, in the name of the police," was the stern reply.

She unlocked the door and stepped back with a little cry. A very official-looking inspector of police had entered, followed by two gendarmes. They closed the door behind them.

The inspector addressed himself to Tresholm:

"Monsieur," he said, politely, "I demand pardon for this unusual intrusion, but a grave theft has been committed in the neighborhood, and this lady is under suspicion."

"You arrest me?" she shrieked.

"Pas forcement!" the inspector replied. "If this gentleman and you will submit yourselves to a search, and the missing property is not found on either of you, our disagreeable duty will be completed."

"But how impossible!" she exclaimed. Search me—a woman? It is incredible!"

"We have a female attendant outside," was the civil response, "and an empty room."

She scowled at him, and then turned to Tresholm.

"I ask a thousand pardons, cheri," she said. "Shall we humor this man and then perhaps we shall be left alone?"

"I am at your disposal," he conceded.

The gendarme unlocked the door, and Mademoiselle passed out into the care of a woman who was waiting in the passage. Tresholm divested himself of his outer garment, handed over his belongings and saw every pocket of his clothes being turned inside out. After an even closer search of his person, the official saluted. "A thousand pardons. Monsieur." he apologized courteously. Permit me to play the part of valet. I trust we are more fortunate with the lady."

"What is this missing property?" Tresholm inquired.

"A packet of a hundred mille," the man answered glibly.

Tresholm smiled. "A great deal of money," he remarked, helping himself to some of the wine and passing the bottle towards the inspector.

In due course the door opened, and the woman searcher returned with her charge. A glance between the former and the inspector was sufficient.

"Perhaps," Mademoiselle demanded angrily, "we may now be allowed to finish our wine."

"There is nothing to prevent it. Mademoiselle," was the inspector's regretful reply, as he saluted and took his leave.

The door was closed and locked. Mademoiselle listened to the retreating footsteps, her hand still upon the key. Her face was drawn, and dark rims were forming under her eyes.

"But this is terrible," she murmured.

"Hadn't you better put your stockings on?" Tresholm suggested.

She continued to listen for a moment. Then she stole back to the couch and drew out the stockings from beneath the pillows and pulled them on.

"The safest of all hiding-places," she murmured.

She held up her foot. He leaned forward and felt the sole. There was something stiff there.

"They are beautifully made by a friend at Lyons," she confided. "No one would ever believe that there is a double sole. And you—you consent now to help me?"

"I'll do my best," Tresholm promised.

The two cars full of noisy sailor boys were bought to an unexpected halt at the commencement of the dark descent to the Villefranche Harbor. A long-bonneted two-seater was slewed across the road, completely barring progress.

Tresholm advanced out of the shadows. With his hat pulled over his forehead and his coat-collar turned up, he was quite unrecognizable.

"Sorry," he apologized, "I didn't see the bend, put on my brakes too soon, skidded round and stalled my engine. If you fellows wouldn't mind pushing me off the road, I'll get her going somehow or other."

They all tumbled out good-naturedly enough. In the darkness Tresholm managed to slip a pocketbook into the young man's hand.

"No more of this confounded foolery, mind," he whispered.

The boy looked around. They were well behind the others.

"I swear there won't be, sir," he groaned.

"Think you'll get it back all right?"

"Certain," was the confident reply. "Tell you what, sir—you really want to know?"

"Well, you've given me a lot of trouble tonight," Tresholm acknowledged. "I's like to feel that it wasn't for nothing."

"Stop on the hill, sir, just before the bend. My pal's on signalling duty tonight. I'll send you three white flashes as soon as the job's done. He'll think it's for a little girl we know at Cap Ferrat."

With a final push, the car was on the right road once more, its bonnet turned. Tresholm jammed on the brakes.

They trooped back to their cars, and Tresholm, starting his engined, curiously enough, without trouble mounted the hill. At the top she swung into the side of the road and gazed downward.

The shapes of the greet battle-ship and the three attendant gunboats were defined with curious accuracy by their brilliant line of lights. Everywhere was deep silence.

Suddenly, the signal came, somehow eloquently dramatic, significant of a catastrophe averted. Three times the brilliant white rays pierced the darkness. Tresholm slipped in the clutch and started off to complete his journey. Behind Mount Agel, the dawn, colorless as yet, was lightening the sky.

THE BIG WINNER

GAMBLER'S LUCK

INSTALLED in an easy chair in a corner of that somberly lighted bar—a quaint contrast to the brilliantly illuminated, somewhat garish restaurant adjoining—Tresholm became suddenly tense, assailed by a wave of memories. He bent forward, his lean face strained, his eyes fixed upon the approaching figure.

A strange flood of memories this—the pungent perfume of the Campagna herbs, the April sunlight flooding the plain, even to the outskirts the city, the dark and splendid outline of St. Peter's itself, the music of those hasty words, the longing of her dark eyes, then the thundering hoofs, the crack of the huntsman whip—off again into the mild distraction of the hunt! But oh, that perfume, how it clung!

It was Lena who recognized him—a child when he had left Rome. She caught at the arm of her companion.

"Margherita, see, It is Signor Tresholm!"

He came forward then. The world of sweet fancies and memories had slipped back where it belonged. He smiled and raised her fingers to his lips.

"Princess," he murmured.

"You, Andrew!" she replied.

The seconds possessed their full measure of bitter sweetness. Lena claimed her few words, and the princess turned towards their companion—a somewhat weary-looking elderly man.

"Duke," she said, let me present Mr. Andrew Tresholm—the Duca di Michani. Signor Tresholm was at his embassy in Rome when my husband interested himself in politics—five, six, alas, seven years ago."

The two men shook hands.

"I knew your chief very well, of course, Signore," the duke acknowledged.

The princess turned to Tresholm.

"You are not by any chance alone?" she asked.... "Yes? Then join us. Indeed, if you will, you will relieve me of some anxiety. Here, it is difficult to explain. This little enterprise of ours is undertaken much against my will. You would be of great assistance if you would join us."

"I will do so with pleasure," Tresholm accepted. "I must warn you though, that I seldom dance."

"Yet I seem to remember," the woman murmured, "when the music was to your fancy, there were few who danced like you."

"It may be for that reason." he rejoined, "that today I dance but seldom."

Arrived at their table, to which they were escorted by the manager and the head waiter, Lena floated away almost at once with her escort. The princess smiled.

"Lena is the sister of my heart" she acknowledged. "Always she understands. Now, before I bring myself to realize how happy it has made me—even this brief meeting—let me tell you of this embarrassment in which we find ourselves. I came here tonight because of it, in fear and trembling. With you, however, I feel safe."

"Tell me, by all means," he begged and glanced at her.

"Dear friend," she confided, "last month we announced Lena's engagement to Bartoldi."

"I read of it," Tresholm murmured. "In spite of our vow not to write. I nearly sent you a line."

"The affair seemed well enough. Bartoldi is poor, but Lena is rich. I knew little of the young man. Like most others, he was supposed to be gay. What would you have? He is only twenty-four. It was thought that marriage would be good for him. I begin to doubt it. Indeed, I am frightened."

"Tell me exactly why," Tresholm suggested.

"We discovered one thing—he is a gambler."

"Just how do things stand at present?" Tresholm asked.

"Gastone, as I told you, is not rich," the princess explained. "He comes here as our guest. He brought with him a hundred thousand lire for gambling. He has lost that. He has drawn another hundred thousand lire from home, he has borrowed some from me, and tonight he has borrowed from Lena.

"It is not only his money losses, but he himself is changing. Lena and I refuse to play at all, hoping that may have some effect. We came here last night with Michani and two other friends. Gastone arrived just as we were leaving. He behaved disgracefully. He quarreled with the man with whom Lena was dancing, and declared that until she was married she must dance with no one but him. He made a scene. I was much ashamed, and a little frightened.

"Today he has obtained money somehow, and he is playing. As soon as he has lost it all, I fear that he will follow us here. He will, perhaps. make himself disagreeable. Last night he behaved like a madman. Ha wanted to fight a perfectly harmless youth with whom she was dancing."

She broke off while Tresholm ordered supper and wine. Almost immediately Lena and her escort returned to the table. Conversation became gay. The duke, approving alike of the caviar and the champagne, unbent. He danced again with Lena. The princess looked at her companion, and a little smile parted her lips.

"The dances are not the same, but the music—it remains. Andrew, you will dance with me?"

They danced, and he was back again in the flood of memories. There were a few whispered words, but the silence had its tumultuous charm.

When at last they sat down, it seemed to Tresholm that she was avoiding his eyes. Then suddenly she touched his sleeve.

"Bartoldi!" she exclaimed. "Look! In the doorway."

Tresholm turned and met the gaze of the young man who had just entered. Bartoldi was very decorative, but he was not altogether sober. He stood there, gloomy, almost ferocious-looking. The princess waved. He approached with deliberate footsteps.

"I looked for you in the club, he said. "It was arranged, I thought, that we should come here."

The princess toyed with her fan.

"At twelve o'clock, dear Gastone," she reminded him. "At one o'clock you were still playing. We persuaded the duke to be our escort, and I was fortunate

enough to find here one of my dearest friends.... Mr. Andrew Tresholm—Prince Bartoldi."

The greeting between the two man was of the slightest. There was a a smile, however, upon Tresholm's lips.

"The prince occupies himself a great deal with the game," he remarked.

"As yet, I have not played."

"But surely you have been here for some time?" the princess asked.

"Three weeks," Tresholm confessed.

The young man was staring at him solemnly. "You have been here three weeks," he repeated, "and you have not yet entered the Casino or the Sporting Club?"

"Not yet."

The music was once more alluring. Lena smiled at Bartoldi.

"We dance, Gastone, yes?"

The young man muttered something in Italian. Tresholm rose. "Perhaps you will honor me," he begged.

She rose without hesitation. Bartoldi set down his glass.

"Lena!"

She affected not to hear him and would have hurried her partner off, but Tresholm lingered for a moment.

"Signor Tresholm," Bartoldi said, "I do not know who you are. The Signorina is my fiancée, and in Italy it is not the custom—"

"Pity we're in Monaco," Tresholm interrupted pleasantly, as he moved away.

The princess leaned forward. "Gastone," she said, "it seems to me that we, who may be your new relatives, will have a little more to put up with than we expected. There is one thing, however, which I should never forgive, and that is your making yourself ridiculous before any dear friend of mine. You may make yourself at ease concerning Signor Tresholm. He is an Englishman of distinguished family who was in the Diplomatic Service of his country when I knew him. Continue your supper, please. You have lost again, I fear."

"I have lost" the young acknowledged sullenly. "I have lost all the money I could scrape together, and all the money they would lend me at the bar. Never was anyone plagued with such accursed luck."

"It is a little message from fate," the princess told him. "You are not meant to win. The man who plays against fate, playa hopelessly."

"Women know nothing about gambling," Bartoldi declared savagely.

"That may be why we win," was the suave rejoinder.

Tresholm and his partner returned, and the supper-party drifted on without disaster. Towards its close, Tresholm found himself once more alone with his hostess. Lena and Michani were dancing, and Bartoldi had gone to the bar in search of an acquaintance.

"What am I to do?" the princess asked Tresholm suddenly. "I believe that Gastone is not so bad. It is just this gambling. And Lena, alas, adores him. Already he has borrowed all our spare money, and my hands are now tied. I have promised my husband I will lend him no more. What can one do with him? Advise me, dear friend."

Tresholm smoked thoughtfully for a moment. "I will do what I can to help him. You have your car here? Very well. When you leave, the duke can escort you and your sister. I will propose to Prince Bartoldi that he and I walk to the hotel. If I fail with the young man, I can at least let you know at the end of four days what I think of him."

"You are just as sweet to me as ever, dear Andrew," she whispered. "If only I had had the courage in those days!"

He shook his head. "Your place dear Margherita," he sighed, "was always In the great world."

They left soon afterwards. On the pavement outside, Tresholm offered his cigarette-case to the young man.

"Shall we walk?" he suggested. "It is only a few yards to the Paris, and Michani is sufficient escort for our hostess and the Signorina."

The young man assented without graciousness.

"Had bad luck at the tables, haven't you?" Tresholm asked.

"Infernal," was the disgusted assent. "It is all a matter of capital. I could have got it back, but I can't raise any more money. The old prince is a miser, my lawyer is in England, and not one of my friends is out here."

"Upon certain conditions," Tresholm said, "I will be your banker to the extent of, say, a million francs."

"I will pay any interest" the young men declared eagerly.

"I am not concerned about interest," Tresholm assured him. "If I lend you this money, you will give me an I.O.U. and pay me back the exact sum, but—you won't like my terms."

"The terms then, if you please."

"It is now," Tresholm reflected, "Tuesday morning. The sum I mentioned will be at your disposal on Friday at midnight The terms are these: that between

now and then you do not attempt to gamble; you do whatever I choose."

"You are not going to ask that I do anything impossible during the four days?" the young man ventured.

"Nothing whatever. Most of the time I shall spend with you."

They turned into the Hotel de Paris.

"I thank you, sir," Bartoldi said. "It is so arranged then. Tomorrow morning, I am at your service."

"Turn up at half past ten in tennis kit," Tresholm enjoined.

Bartoldi was a slow starter at tennis on the following morning, but improved considerably towards the close of the seance. Tresholm, who had won the first three sets, was obliged to fight hard for the fourth, and lost the fifth. They wandered off to the Royalty for cocktails with the princess and Lena, who had been interested spectators. The princess took Tresholm's arm.

"Dear friend," she remonstrated. "I hear that you have offered to lend Gastone money, without any restrictions as to gambling."

Tresholm nodded. "He doesn't get it till midnight on Friday though," he reminded her, "and until then he's on his honor not to play at all."

They drank their cocktails in the sunshine, and on a sudden inspiration motored out to Beaulieu for luncheon. Afterwards, the princess suggested a visit to Cannes, but Tresholm shook his head.

"If you don't mind," he begged, "Bartoldi and I want to go to the Sporting Club."

The young man's eyes glittered. The Princess and Lena were astonished.

"To the Sporting Club!" the latter exclaimed. "I thought Gastone was not to play till Friday."

"We aren't going to play; we're going to look on," Tresholm confided.

At a few minutes past four, the event for which Monte Carlo had been waiting took place. Tresholm mounted the steps of the Sporting Club, accompanied by Bartoldi, and turned into the Bureau.

"Got to get my ticket," he explained.

The young Italian stared at him incredulously.

"Do you mean to say that you haven't even taken a ticket out?" he demanded.

"Haven't been in the place since I arrived," Tresholm confessed. "Come and sign for me."

Tresholm's appearance caused a sensation. His ticket was made out by the senior clerk, while the junior one rushed to the telephone. The news spread in

all directions. When they entered the rooms, the croupiers stood up and craned their necks with curiosity. The chef of the plaque roulette table covertly counted over his capital. The chef at the trente-et-quarante board sent at once for a supply of five-mille plaques. The man whose appearance had created such a sensation, however, entered the gambling-rooms modestly. He made no attempt to change any money.

His companion stood with his hands in his pockets, his eyes on the board.

"Quatorze," he groaned as the spin was concluded. "Signor Tresholm, let me have a mille. I must back seven and twenty-nine after fourteen."

"What on earth for?" Tresholm demanded. "Under our conditions you are not playing."

"And you? You will not play either?" Bertoldi asked.

"No, not at present."

The next number was thirty-four, the next thirty-five, the following one six.

"You'd have lost your money, wouldn't you?" Tresholm remarked casually.

"Look at that Dutchman," Bartoldi whispered. "He must have eighty mille there."

Tresholm nodded. "Clever fellow!" he murmured. "Let's watch some of the other tables."

They wandered down to the far end of the room. When they came back the Dutchman at the plaque table was changing a bundle of mille notes.

"Soon lost his eighty mille," Tresholm observed. "Jolly interesting, isn't it. Let's look at the chemie."

The chemie game was dragging wearily along. At each table, the croupier glanced round almost wistfully at their approach. Tresholm remained blandly indifferent.

"Time for our first cocktail," he suggested to his companion.

"Thank heaven!" the other replied.

They sat down and smoked in a corner of the bar.

"Queer thing at that table that's just broken up," Tresholm remarked. "Eight people went to cash their chips, and there wasn't a winner among them. Cagnotte had the lot. Jolly interesting to watch all the same! Drink up quickly, and we'll get back to the roulette."

When the time came the young man rose unwillingly. Things at the table had changed. The Dutchman was nervously fingering the last of his mille notes. A newcomer had collected a pile of plaques. They watched for a time and then walked down to the other tables. When they came back the Dutchman had

increased his stock by a few plaques. The newcomer was cashing mille notes.

"Must play badly, these fellows, I think," Tresholm observed. "They never seem to keep it. Let's go over to theCercle Privé for an hour.

They strolled away.

"Always gives me the hump, this place," Tresholm remarked. "To think that some of these broken-down, miserable-looking men and women were once decent folk. Came here, lots of them, with plenty of money, good homes and all the rest of it, and then set themselves to play against a certainty. Imbeciles, of course, but one can't help feeling sorry for them!"

They wandered down to the Salles Privées.

"There are a couple of plaque tables in the Schmit Room," Tresholm said. "Quite high play, I believe."

Bartoldi followed his companion without enthusiasm. At first sight, one of his numbers appearing produced in him a fit of restlessness. After about an hour, however, he scarcely made an observation. Every now and then he glanced at the clock.

They stayed for a quarter of an hour. It was Bartoldi who led the way out of the rooms. As they mounted the steps of the Hotel de Paris, Monsieur Robert the manager, came hurrying forward.

"At last, Monsieur Tresholm, they tell me that you have entered the lists," he exclaimed. "What fortune? The Casino is perhaps mortgaged to you?"

Tresholm smiled. I have just been looking on," he confided. "I haven't played."

"You could watch and not play?" the other gasped.

"Why not. I find it amusing enough."

"All these people seem very interested in you," Bartoldi remarked curiously as they mounted in the lift.

Tresholm smiled. "I have a reputation," he explained, "which as yet I have not attempted to justify."

Dinner was distinctly a cheerful meal. Bartoldi was a little tired nervous, but he improved in humor and appearance as the evening went on. The princess was puzzled.

"I do not understand." she told Tresholm frankly. "Gastone tells me that instead of keeping him away from the gaming-rooms, you have pressed him to accompany you there, and on Friday you are lending him all that money.

Tresholm nodded. "I am gambling," he confessed.

She made a little grimace. "You have the right to, without a doubt, but Gastone —he will only lose your money."

"The luck may change."

It was eleven o'clock before they left the dining-room, and everyone was in excellent humor. Lena turned towards Tresholm.

"Why shouldn't we all go straight to that little Russian place an dance?" she suggested. "Gastone doesn't mind."

"Just one hour at the Sporting Club first, please," Tresholm begged.

"And I thought you didn't play," the princess intervened reproachfully,

"It's a wonderful game to watch." Tresholm rejoined. They made their way through the passage silently. The princess drifted Into the chemie room. Tresholm, with his hand resting lightly upon Bartoldi's shoulder, took up his old position at the roulette table. There were more people playing and the gambling was heavier.

"Twenty-nine!" the young man exclaimed irritably. "Oh, if only I could back the seven and the fourteen."

Tresholm remained deaf. Twenty-five turned up, then nineteen, followed by twenty-seven. An English nobleman collected a great pile of ten-mille plaques.

"Over two hundred thousand francs he's won while we've been standing here," Bartoldi murmured feverishly.

"Let's watch the other table for a time," he suggested.

They strolled around. In half an hour they returned. The Englishman was cashing a check. He looked up and nodded as Tresholm passed.

"What's become of all those plaques," the latter asked.

"All gone," was the frowning response. "They spin too quickly."

"Yes, I suppose that's it Tresholm agreed, half to himself. "They spin too quickly. They don't give you a chance to keep your winnings."

Lena leaned forward and passed her arm through his. "Margherita wants to go," she pleaded. "Everyone feels like dancing tonight."

"What about Bartoldi?" Tresholm asked.

"I'd like to go if you're ready," the young man assented, almost eagerly.

"Just half an hour more," Tresholm stipulated.

Even Bartoldi sighed with relief when they left the Sporting Club a short time later. There were still signs of strain about him, but he danced with spirit, and of his own accord inquired about the morrow's plans

"Tennis at ten-thirty," Tresholm told him. "Two decent fellows want to make a foursome. And Thursday morning—what about a foursome at Mont Agel?"

"I should love it," Lena declared. "Alas, it is so long since I played," the

princess sighed.

"Nevertheless, we will give them a game," Tresholm promised....

"I wish I knew just what your idea is, Andrew," she said to him a little later, when they were alone at the table. "Of course, I know that you have promised to lend Gastone some money, and that is what makes him agree to everything you suggest, but why don't you keep him away from the tables altogether? Surely that would be best. This afternoon the poor boy was standing there in agony."

Tresholm nodded with satisfaction. "You noticed that too, did you?" he observed. "Good!. The young man is to have this money I promised him at midnight on Friday. After that I shall try to explain." "Dear Andrew," she begged, "Lena is so worried. She is afraid you don't realize what this gambling may mean to him."

"You know that they call me here?" he asked abruptly.

"I know," she admitted—"'the professional gambler.' It was a blague of yours."

"Nevertheless," he went on, "there is perhaps a little truth in it. As a professional gambler I must know something of the psychology of this—shall we call it habit or vice? I am the physician. Bartoldi is my patient You are the amateur who intervenes. Dear lady, shall we dance?"

She came willingly enough into the clasp of his arms, and again he thought of those great bunches of Roman violets, their purple glint and their April fragrance.

Tresholm glanced at his watch and passed his hand through the young man's arm. "Come into the bar, Bertoldi. It is midnight on Friday, and your period of probation is up."

The young man, who had been looking down at the roulette table, turned around with alacrity. Tresholm led he way into the inner portion of the bar and drew out a packet from his pocket.

"Her you are," he announced. "There's a hundred mille in each of these—ten of them. Get as much fun as you can out of it. It ought to last you a few nights, at any rate."

The young man smiled.

"You don't seem to believe in anyone's winning," Mr. Tresholm.

"Oh, I dare say they do sometimes," was the casual reply. —"if they have to leave in a hurry just after a run of luck. We've been watching for four afternoons and four evenings, haven't we?"

"Watching till I'm blamed sick at the sight of the ball," the young man declared vigorously.

"Well, we haven't seen anyone who kept his winning, have we?" Tresholm observed.

Bartoldi stopped a young man who was passing.

"Here's the sixty mille I owe you, Françous," he said.

"That is excellent," the other exclaimed as he pocketed the money. "You have been winning, yes?"

"I haven't played for the last few days,"

Bartoldi excused himself and made his way to the bar, summoning Joseph to a conference. Joseph approached, glum, and with regrets already framing themselves upon his lips.

"I will take my I.O.U.'s, Joseph," his patron said. "Sixty mille, I think."

The sun broke through the clouds. Joseph's famous smile illumined his face.

"The I.O.U.'s are here, Monsieur le Prince," he said, producing them.

Bartoldi tore them up. Tresholm was talking to the princess and Lena, who were just leaving the room with the Duca di Michani.

"Margherita," Bartoldi announced, "I owe you fifty thousand. Voilà. And you, Lena, thirty thousand. You have room in your bag, I hope. Now I have only one creditor."

"My dear Gastone!" the princess exclaimed. "Now I shall be able to play again."

"You are sure that you wouldn't like to keep this a little longer?" Lena asked wistfully.

"Not for a second." he assured her. "I was suggesting to the princess an hour or two at the Carlton," Michani proposed.

"Well, we've gone there for several nights." Tresholm observed. "Tonight I think we ought to stay for a little time to see Prince Bartoldi play."

Michani indulged in a significant grimace. There was distress in the princess's face. Nevertheless they trooped out to the roulette table. As though instinctively, Tresholm and his young companion stood where they had watched the game hour after hour for the last four days.

Tresholm's eyes followed the whirling of the ball.

"Nineteen," he announced, "I should never have thought of nineteen. What are you for, Bartoldi? Maximums on seven, fourteen, twenty-nine, I suppose?"

Lena's hand stole through the young man's arm.

"I may stand by you?" she whispered. "I do not disturb?"

Tresholm was watching his companion closely. Bartoldi's attitude was that of a

genuine spectator—if anything a trifle bored. He held a packet of notes in his hand, but he was whispering to Lena, and they both laughed. The he leaned forward and watched the croupiers.

"What a silly game!" he exclaimed suddenly. "I say," he added, turning to Tresholm. "do you mind if we go on up to the Carlton? You and I have to play against those fellows at tennis tomorrow at half past ten, so we ought not to be too late."

The little procession passed down the stairs, Lena's arm through her fiancé's, the princess's head close to Tresholm's.

"But you are a magician, dear friend," she murmured.

Later in the evening they found themselves alone for a few minutes.

"Every since I knew you, dear Andrew," she said, "you've been helping people out of trouble. There was that second secretary who had an affair with Signor Catoni's wife. And then—"

"Don't make me out too much of a busybody," he begged. "Dear Margherita, you permit?"

"Margherita and nothing else, for always," she whispered.

"Then, Margherita," he went on, "believe me, this little episode has given me given me real pleasure. It is a hobby of mine to speculate upon human nature and its byways, of which gambling is one. I figured to myself that, after the first agony of watching a game of chance when one was hopelessly without the means of joining in, the flatness of it would begin to depress. That was my theory. Afternoon after afternoon, night after night, we watched that stupid mechanical toy, and every time the young man has become bored. At he suffered, but only for a short time. By comparison, the tennis we arranged for him, the golf, the companionship of your delightful Lena gained every hour in value. Tonight I am certain he was honest. The game did not attract him. I am proud of my patient."

"And you, the physician!" she murmured. "Is there no one who can pay your fee?"

Then the lights went down; shadows crept through the place. Without a word, they rose.

"The last thing the true physician thinks of is his fee," Tresholm confided.

Her lips almost brushed his in that subdued light. "So the patient has to offer," she whispered.

THE GAMBLER'S ROAD

A FINAL RECKONING

PIERRE GOURDAIN, son of the Niçois millionaire jeweler, and one of the young elegants of the Sporting Club at Monte Carlo, presented himself at the main Bureau de Change with only a weak effort at that immobility of expression which, in the life of the Casino, is counted part of the equipment of the chic gambler.

Both his hands were filled with red plaques, and he had no sooner deposited them upon the desk than from his bulging pockets, he produced two more handfuls. The cashier spread them before him in rows of ten. Then he produced an incredible pile of mille notes, done up in series of tens. He turned them over with agile forefinger, pausing to examine more closely a small portion of them.

"There is some sealing-wax on the backs of these," he pointed out. "Monsieur objects?"

"Not in the least," the young man assured him.

The forty-six packets were transferred to to the pocket of the fortunate young man. The cashier leaned forward.

"Monsieur returns to Nice tonight?"

The young man nodded.

"Monsieur will play tomorrow night?"

"Without a doubt. While the Sporting Club is open, I play nowhere else."

The Gourdains were a well-known local family, and the cashier was a born Monegasque. He leaned forward once more.

"Why not leave a portion of the money, Monsieur Gourdain?" he suggested. "You can collect it when you arrive tomorrow."

The young man shook his head.

"Why should I do that?" he protested "My banker thinks that I gamble heavily. Tomorrow I shall show him: I shall deposit half, and bring the remainder away with me. He will believe then that it is possible to win."

"Four hundred and sixty thousand francs is a great deal of money take to Nice at three o'clock in th morning," the cashier warned him.

"Why, my friend," the young man expostulated, "this is one of the safest roads of Europe. Besides, in car at a hundred kilometers an hour what can be done? I stop for no one That I can promise."

There was a rush of business, and the fortunate gambler passed on. He lingered at the bar for a word with Joseph and a final whisky-and-soda. The

popular barman leaned across the counter.

"Monsieur has had good fortune tonight?"

Pierre Gourdain smiled. "Good enough to ask you to take one of those boxes of cigars home with you, Joseph."

"That is very kind of Monsieur," was the grateful acknowledgment "But Monsieur Gourdain. why not leave some of your winnings with me? It goes into the safe, or I can get you a Casino check."

"What on earth for? I am going straight back to Nice and, as you see, I am, as always, sober."

"Naturally," was the reply; "but the road between here and Nice—"

"Why, it is the safest in the world!" the young man interrupted. "I have never heard anything more than a rumor of any attempt at robbery."

"Écoutez, Monsieur Gourdain," Joseph begged eagerly. "Up till last week, yes; since last week, even the night before last, there has been trouble on the road."

"What do you mean? Robbery?"

Joseph nodded. "There is an American who was robbed of fifty thousand francs—as yet he is not able to ex- plain how."

"I have heard nothing of this," Pierre Gourdain declared.

"No?" Joseph remarked meaningly. "Do we hear much of what happens in Monte Carlo, save of the galas, and the brilliant crowd at the Sporting Club, and the great winnings? Nevertheless, this is the truth. Besides the American, there was a man found dead two mornings ago, in the road near Cap d'Ail. and not a sign or a word as to how he got there—a man in evening clothes, with empty pockets. What does one think? I ask you, Monsieur Gourdain."

"Who is to know, Joseph," Gourdain asked him, "that I leave here tonight with money?"

"Monsieur Gourdain," Joseph confided. "It has been said that there are spies about here; that when a large win comes to anyone out of Monte Carlo, like yon, the news is passed on by telephone. I speak more than I should, perhaps, but I have my Ideas."

One of the perambulating deities of the place crossed the threshold of the bar and looked around the room. Joseph faded away like a ghost.

Monsieur Gourdain made his thoughtful departure. As he struggled into his heavy overcoat, a person whom he had passed on the stairs entered the telephone-booth. ?

Four o'clock glowed upon his illuminated timepiece as Tresholm, homeward-bound from Toulon, swung round one of the last of the terrible curves of the

Lower Corniche close to Cap d'Ail.

Against the high bank on his left, all the elements of tragedy were disclosed to him by his cautiously operated head-light. He turned it off and descended. His chauffeur was already in the road.

"An accident I'm afraid," Tresholm muttered.

"It's that car from Nice, sir," the man volunteered.

They both hurried forward. An overturned car was leaning against the bank, with an ambulance wagon drawn up just short of it; upon the ground a prostrate form, over which were bending a woman in a nurse's costume and a man who had the appearance of a doctor. A gendarme in the Monegasque uniform turned towards the two new arrivals.

"What has arrived," Tresholm asked.

A motor accident" the man replied. "Monsieur would do well to proceed. There is by chance here a doctor and a nurse. Further aid is not necessary."

"You are of the gendarmerie of Beaulieu or Nice?" Tresholm inquired, looking at the man's uniform.

"It is of no consequence, that. Monsieur will please proceed. My orders are to allow no one to loiter."

"Your orders? From whom?"

"Monsieur le Docteur Earnshaw," was the prompt response. "It is a question whether the injured man will live, A crowd around him would be fatal. Pass on, If you please."

"I have some knowledge of medicine," Tresholm persisted. "I may be of assistance."

He thrust aside the man's outstretched arm and approached the prostrate form. The doctor, a clean-shaven, gray-haired man, swung round at the sound of his footsteps. The nurse looked at him with startled eyes.

"There has been an accident, I fear. Can I be of any assistance? Tresholm asked.

"You and your chauffeur can help us to carry this unfortunate fellow to our ambulance, if you will be so kind," the doctor suggested.

"What happened?" Tresholm ventured.

"We scarcely saw," the doctor replied. "He us, traveling at a tremendous speed at the beginning of the turn here. Perhaps he did not allow himself quite enough room. Perhaps he had drunk too much. He gave a gave a tremendous skid, hit the side of the bank, and the car turned over. We found him lying by the roadside here."

"Is he seriously hurt?"

"I can find no signs of life."

Just then another car drew up. A man and a woman leaped from it and ran towards the scene of the accident.

"What has happened?" the woman cried.

Tresholm sprang between her and the injured man. "You must not look," he said.

The four men picked up the injured man and carried him to the ambulance. The nurse arranged the pillows for his head. Still he gave no sign of life.

"How far do you go?" Tresholm asked.

"To Nice," the doctor answered. "I have a small clinic in the Boulevard Dubouchage. My name is Doctor Earnshaw."

"I seem to know the young man by sight," Tresholm reflected.

"He is quite well known in Nice," the doctor confided gravely. "He is the son of a rich jeweler—a great gambler I fear. Thank you so much for your help sir."

Tresholm returned thoughtfully to his car. He paused to watch the departing ambulance thread its careful way round the curve.

"We'll get along Johnson," he called out to his chauffeur who was examining the wreck.

"Queer things, them skids sir," the man remarked "The road's as dry as a bone at the turn here, and there ain't too much dust. Besides, that the front of the car's all smashed in, as though it had hit something solid. The bank's soft enough. No more than an odd bit of rock or two that wouldn't hurt anything."

Tresholm crossed the road at once and examined the car with his chauffeur. The terrible condition of the bonnet and the smashed front-springs was difficult to understand.

"It does seem queer," Tresholm ruminated.

"I've never seen the front of a car buckled up like that before, sir, just with running up a bank," the man commented. "Looks to me as though there might have been dirty work before the doctor and the ambulance came along. He wouldn't think anything about that, naturally, seeing the car overturned here, and the man dead or unconscious."

Tresholm walked a few pace, along the road. They were some distance from any habitation, except the ghostly Château d'Ail. whose empty windows had looked down upon the road for forty years. Tresholm studied them meditatively. Then he returned to his car.

"The young man's face was familiar to me." he repeated. "I fancy he's been pointed out as a gambler from Nice."

Tresholm. the unwilling victim of a gala dinner a few nights later, unfolded his napkin and glanced sideways at the card of the woman on his left. She caught his eye. smiled, and adjusted the strip of pasteboard so that he could read it more easily.

"Earnshaw," she murmured. "Isobel Earnshaw. That is my name. Yours I know, but I wonder whether you can remember where we met last."

Tresholm was genuinely intrigued. Something about the woman's eyes was vaguely reminiscent. She was a a handsome woman, beautifully dressed. Her pearls were beautiful, her plainly coiffured hair attractive. Sense of familiarity was there, but for one Tresholm was at a loss.

"I have seen you somewhere recently," he admitted. "The amazing thing is that I cannot recall where."

"I will not spoil your dinner by leaving you guessing. Those were tragical moments in which we met Three or four o'clock in the morning it must have been, a mist over the moon, and that terrible accident"

"You were the nurse!" he exclaimed.

She nodded. "And my husband was the doctor. You can see him on the other side of the table. It was a great grief to both of us that we were unable to do anything for that poor young man. He must have been dead several minutes before we arrived."

"It was a horrible tragedy," Tresholm said gravely.

"It was indeed," she assented, and turned to answer a remark from her left-hand neighbor. Tresholm leaned towards his hostess, Lady Westerton.

"We were speaking of that poor young man's motor accident on his way back to Nice." he explained. "One has seen so little of it in the papers."

"I was remarking the same thing to my husband this morning," Lady Westerton agreed. "Have they found any trace of all that money he was supposed to have with him?"

Tresholm turned once more to Mrs. Earnshaw. "Lady Westerton was saying something about the young man's having had a large sum of money."

"An exaggeration, I should imagine," she commented thoughtfully. "He was undressed at the clinic naturally. The night-sister too my place, but I am sure I should have heard of it if he had had any unusual sum."

She leaned across the table, and spoke to her husband. "Lady Westerton has been telling us that that poor young man, Monsieur Gourdain, was supposed to have a considerable sum of money In his possession."

"Seven mille and some odd change," her husband replied. "I know, because I locked it up."

"There are always rumors of that sort," Isobel Earnshaw reminded them. "In this case, however, it must have been a mistake, for there was certainly no time for anyone to have robbed him and to have gotten away before we arrived on the scene."

A guest from the other side of the table intervened. "There is no doubt that the young man won a large sum that night" he said, "but he probably left it somewhere in Monte Carlo."

"He had plenty of, time." the doctor remarked. "They say that he left the Sporting Club at three o'clock in the morning. It couldn't have taken him more than ten minutes to get to Cap d'Ail, and it was nearly four when we came upon him."

The party broke up as usual with a general exodus to the Sporting Club. Tresholm found himself afflicted with a curious fit of uneasiness. He watched the play for a time, and then, acting upon a sudden impulse, descended the stairs and strolled out into the soft night. He walked the length of the terrace, and returning found himself in front of the Casino. He joined the thin stream of entrants and made his leisurely progress through the "Kitchen."

Suddenly he came to a standstill. Mrs. Earnshaw was seated at one of the tables, playing—and playing for high stakes. He watched her closely. She had a book in her hand which she studied before each bet, but she was losing constantly. He changed his place and strolled round behind her. She must have had four mille in stakes on the table, mostly around twenty-one and red. Twenty-two and black turned up. Her reluctant fingers stole into here bag. She drew out a packet of notes and passed five of them to the croupier.

Tresholm for a moment almost betrayed himself. On the backs of the notes were little spatterings of red sealing-wax. He watched the note disappear into the tronc of the table. Then he walked silently away. The sordid, crowded room existed no longer. He looked into the darkness; he saw the flickering beams of moonlight upon the white road, the little groups of figures, the young man sobbing out his last breath—watched those white, cool fingers stealing in and out of his pockets.

Tresholm made friends with the Chef de Sûreté of the principality. It was rather a one-sided affair, for that functionary was reserved though polite, and Tresholm was on the borderline of being inquisitive. He persisted in discussing" the tragedy of the Lower Corniche Road.

"You see, Monsieur," he ventured, "it is not as though it were the first affair of the sort. There have been two others presenting similar characteristics."

"From whom have you that information?" Monsieur Desrolles demanded.

"I gathered it with difficulty," Tresholm replied evasively. "Nevertheless, there was Monsieur Pierre Lavalle, the contractor from Saint Raphael, who was found dead, with a burst tire on his car, not a mile from the scene of the present tragedy. He too, is reported to have been winning at the Casino, yet when he was discovered he had barely a mille note upon him.

"Then there was the wine-grower from Juan-les-Pins—I have forgotten his name—and his was a small affair, but when Be left the Casino he certainly had seventy or eighty thousand francs in his pocket of which there were no traces when his body was found at the roadside.

"It may be. as you say, a dangerous road. Monsieur Desrolles, but it is odd that these three accidents should have happened to men who left Monte Carlo with large sums of money which were never seen again."

"The affairs in question are occupying my department" the Chef de Sûreté declared. "At the same time, let me remind you of this—there is no direct evidence that any one of these three man whom you have mentioned actually had a large sum of money in his possession when the accident occurred.

"Young Monsieur Gourdain is known to have called somewhere in Monte Carlo on his homeward way, and also at a dancing place in Cap d'Ail. Lavalle sat in a café two hours on his return journey and the person from Juan was, according to the medical sodden with drink. All these might well have been robbed elsewhere than upon the scene of the accident."

"That is true," Tresholm admitted, but as against that, no traces of the money have been discovered."

"How do you know?"

"Well, there has been no word of it in the papers."

"In England," the Chef de Sûreté pointed out. "you often make escape from justice an easy thing for the criminal. You show him in what direction the police are working, and against whom their suspicions are directed. That is not our method."

"Admitting all this," Tresholm insisted patiently, "do you believe, Monsieur Desrolles, that these three tragedies were ordinary accidents?"

"My answer to you, Monsieur Tresholm, is that we have no reason to suppose otherwise," was the rejoinder.

"In you case, as you are a friend of Monsieur Robert's, I will treat you with some confidence, and I will venture to remind you of one fact. The amateur detective does not exist in France. We find that official business proceeds more satisfactorily without interference from outsiders."

"Monsieur Desrolles," said Tresholm, "I am not an amateur detective, and I have no wish to force your hand in any way. I will walk away from here with a seal upon my lips. Please listen to what I have to say."

"I will listen to what you have to say, Monsieur Tresholm," the other decided.

"The clerk who handed Gourdain notes for some of his winnings is reported to have apologized for the fact that a number of them had been spattered with red sealing-wax. I have seen notes spattered in the same fashion within the last twenty-four hours."

"You would recognize the person who passed them?"

"Certainly. I could tell you her name, if you would like to hear it."

"I am listening."

"Her name is Isobel Earnshaw. She is the wife of the doctor whom I saw upon the road bandaging the young man's head that night."

Tresholm was confused at the result of his words. Whether from shock or for some other reason, Desrolles was incapable of speech. Tresholm had the queer feeling that the man was personally affected.

"The lady in question, Tresholm went on. "was gambling in the 'Kitchen' for sums which, for a doctor's wife, were enormous. I suggest, sir, that you look up the dossiers of Doctor Earnshaw and his wife."

The functionary was himself again. There was a new and rasping note in his voice, however.

"There is no one in the neighborhood," he announced scornfully, who needs to look at a police dossier of Doctor Earnshaw, or his wife. The doctor has practised in Nice for seventeen years, served In the war, and has amassed, without doubt, a comfortable fortune. He has been married for twelve years and his wife enjoys the respect of the whole community."

"A good record," Tresholm admitted.

"So good," Desrolles continued, "that your suggestion took my breath away. There are many bundles of mille notes, Monsieur Tresholm, which bear traces of sealing-wax."

Tresholm rose unwillingly. "After what you have told me, Monsieur—"

"No, sit down," the other interrupted. "We must consider this matter. Any theory you may have formed concerning Earnshaw and his wife is of course, absurd. But tell me what was in your mind."

"Simply this. I am fond on an adventure—a gambler outside of gaming-rooms, you understand. I had an idea of leaving the Sporting Club a heavy winner one night and testing the affair by going to Nice myself. If you approved of my

plan and were willing to help me. I thought we might perhaps solve this mystery."

Desrolles was scribbling with his pen.

"Your plan is worth considering," he conceded. "See me later, and we will work out the details. In the meanwhile, Monsieur Tresholm, let me impress upon you one thing—the necessity for discretion. Upon that condition alone we work together."

"I agree," Tresholm assented.

On the following night Tresholm justified himself, at least in the eyes of all Monte Carlo. The news went flashing from the Sporting Club back to the hotel and through the Casino. The attack upon its resources was opened. Tresholm had bought a million francs' worth of plaques, and was playing a steady, systematic game of roulette at maximums.

An hour later a further bulletin was issued. Affairs were going ill with he intrepid gambler. He was half a million down, and losing steadily. Gustave Sordel, hurrying through the passage, chuckled to himself. It was a tardy triumph, but worth while.

Tresholm backed the same numbers and every possible combination of them without flinching his losses. His luck began to turn when a vacated place next to the croupier on the opposite side of the table was taken by a woman.

Their eyes met as she sat down. whatever surprise Tresholm may have felt, he succeeded in concealing it. His greeting was friendly. Following her first smile, however, was a look in her beautiful eyes which puzzled him. He had suddenly become of some account to her. So might she have looked at him if, by some incredible chance, she had overheard his conversation with Desrolles. She had betrayed only a trace of it but, she was afraid.

Luck at the tables is a singular thing, or the world's interest in that mechanical toy, the roulette-wheel would long since have evaporated. The woman opposite him was playing on black numbers of low denominations. Tresholm, with every stake, was directly opposed to her. From the moment of her sitting down, his numbers dominated the board. In five spins he won en plein three times. His luck was prodigious. The heap of disks in front of him grew and grew. As be won, his vis-à-vis lost.

"You are Invincible, Mr. Tresholm," she murmured.

"You are playing against the table," he rejoined. "The run of it is for my numbers."

At one o'clock she left off playing, and at a quarter past Tresholm rose. The cashier handed him back his check for a million, which he had cashed at the beginning of the evening, and over a million in mille notes.

For once he broke through his habit of silence.

"It Is perhaps as well for the Casino, Monsieur Tresholm," he said. "that you are only an occasional player. Would you like me to send one of the clerks up with you to your room?"

"Thanks very much," Tresholm replied, "but I am staying at the Negresco at Nice—moved in there yesterday.!

In the bar he called for a whisky-and-soda. Joseph welcomed him.

"Walk quickly through the passages. Monsieur." he advised A million francs burn in the pocket."

"I'm not going through any passages," Tresholm said. "I am going to Nice. I'm staying at the Negresco for a few days."

There was a rush of custom, and Joseph moved reluctantly away. Tresholm finished his drink and turned leave the room. In the entrance he came face to face with Isobel Earnshaw.

"Better luck now I've left?" he asked.

She ignored his question, laid her long nervous fingers on his arm and drew him into the little recess.

"Mr. Tresholm," she said, you will think that my nerves have all gone because I have been losing tonight, but it is not that. I have a superstition—a real one. Don't go to Nice tonight."

"But my dear lady, why not? I am not like young men—a reckless driver—and I shall call nowhere on the way.

"Nevertheless, I implore you—do not go.

Their eyes met for a single moment.

"Madam," he said, "this, I believe, is kindness, which I shall always remember. Good-night!"

He strode out, and down the stairs. As he stood waiting for his hat and overcoat, someone hurried into the telephone booth.

The Sporting Club was still crowded an hour and a half later, when Tresholm made his unexpected reappearance. He strolled into the bar, and Joseph stared and asked breathlessly:

"You changed your mind, sir?"

"Not exactly that," Tresholm admitted. "I found the road just beyond Cap d'Ail practically in the hands of the police, and such a hullabaloo going on that I thought I'd come back."

Gustave Sordel. who had been at the bar, leaned forward. "What, then, has

arrived?" he demanded.

Tresholm paused for a moment, and in that moment he heard soft movements. He had no need to turn his head; he knew who had stolen up onto the vacant stool by his side.

"Well," he replied, "do you happen to know a sort of deserted château on the road near Cap d'Ail?"

"Naturally. All the world knows it," Sordel assented. "Proceed."

There was a little indrawn breath on his other side?almost a sob. Tresholm was merciful. He avoided the temptation of a dramatic recital.

"I found a barrier across the road here." he recounted. "The Nice police had got possession of the place. From the little I could gather. It seems to have been temporarily In the possession of a doctor. Someone had gotten hold of the place before him I suppose, though, and just round the bend there was a most diabolical affair, worked by an engine from a secret opening In the wood, which dragged an iron structure up to the right-hand side of the road. That's the thing young Gourdain ran into, of course, and probably others. As a matter of fact, it was out tonight?for me."

There was a babel of questions.

"Can't you see that Mrs. Earnshaw isn't well?" Tresholm protested. "Give me some brandy, Joseph."

"Was anyone arrested?" someone asked eagerly.

The fingers of the woman gripped his own. She was deathly pale, but her eyes commanded.

"Go on," she Insisted. "Tell your story."

"There Is not so much to tell," he obeyed reluctantly, "among whom—it was ridiculous, of course," he added, "but your husband was nominal owner of the property—so, as a matter of form—"

"What else?" she interrupted.

"Let me take you home," he begged.

"It you don't tell me everything," she? gasped, "I shall die. Can't you see? I must know!"

"There was another tragedy," he confided. "Monsieur Desrolles—no doubt it was a point of honor with him—he thought that the Nice police had been too officious; he drove up, passed me on the way, in fact, found out what had happened, and blew his brains out."

There was a little shiver of emotion. Isobel Earnshaw stretched out her hand for the brandy.

"You yourself have received a slight wound, Monsieur," Sordel remarked.

Tresholm dabbed his cheek with a handkerchief and nodded.

"A blood-thirsty night," he observed. "Someone took a pot-shot at me from a car."

The woman dropped a white pellet into her glass. She drew closer to Tresholm.

"It was? Armand Desrolles who tried to shoot you," she said. "He did it because of me. I'm glad he failed. You're a brave man anyhow, although you deceived Armand and went for the Nice police."

She drained the contents of her glass. Tresholm suddenly saw the cloudiness of the liquid and snatched at it, but he was too late.

"An affair of thirty seconds," she assured him. "You took a gambler's chance, anyhow, and I like you for it."

"Tresholm!" someone called out.

He turned his head. Another voice was raised above the general hubbub.

"Look out! What's happened to Mrs. Earnshaw?"

She slipped from her stool, clinging his shoulder to break her fall. Her arm dragged him down, her pale lips whispered:

"I was a gambler from birth, through life—to death," she faltered. "You, too. Goodbye."