

The Gambler

Fyodor Dostoevsky

Translated by Hugh Aplin



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The Gambler

I

I have finally returned from my two-week absence. Our party has already been in Roulettenburg for three days. I thought they were waiting for me like God knows what, but was, however, mistaken. The General had an extremely independent look about him; he had a condescending chat with me and sent me off to his sister. It was clear they have borrowed some money somewhere. I even thought the General was a little ashamed to look at me. Maria Filippovna was extremely busy and had just a brief chat with me; she accepted the money, however, counted it and listened to the whole of my report. Mezentsov, the little Frenchman and some Englishman too were expected for lunch: there's some money and so, as is customary, there's immediately a banquet, Moscow style. Polina Alexandrovna asked upon seeing me why I had been so long, and then went off somewhere without waiting for a reply. It goes without saying, she did that on purpose. We do, however, need to talk things over. A lot has piled up.

I have been allotted a small room on the third floor of the hotel. There is an awareness here that I belong “to the General’s suite”. All the signs are that they have managed to get themselves known. Everybody here thinks the General an extremely wealthy Russian grandee. Even before lunch he managed, among other commissions, to give me two thousand-franc notes to change. I changed them in the hotel office. Now we shall be looked upon as millionaires, for a whole week at least. I wanted to take Misha and Nadya and go for a walk with them, but I was called in to the General from the staircase; he had thought it a good thing to enquire where I was going to take them. That man simply cannot look me straight in the eye; he would actually like to very much, but I answer him each time with such a fixed, that is, disrespectful, gaze, that

he seems to become embarrassed. In a most pompous speech, setting one phrase upon another and finally becoming totally muddled, he gave me to understand that I should walk with the children somewhere well away from the casino, in the park. Finally he got quite angry and added sternly:

“Otherwise you’ll very likely take them to the roulette at the casino. You’ll excuse me,” he added, “but I know you’re still rather frivolous and are very likely capable of gambling. In any event, although I am not your mentor, and don’t wish to take such a role upon myself either, still I do at least have the right to wish that you should not, so to speak, compromise *me...*”

“But I don’t even have any money, do I?” I replied calmly. “You’ve got to have it to gamble it away.”

“You’ll get it straight away,” the General replied, flushing a little; he rummaged in his bureau and consulted his book, and it transpired that he owed me a sum of about a hundred and twenty roubles.

“How can we settle up?” he began. “It needs to be converted into thalers. Well look, take a hundred thalers as a round figure – the remainder, of course, won’t go missing.”

I took the money in silence.

“Please, don’t you take offence at my words, you’re so touchy... If I’ve made a comment to you then I have, so to speak, fore-warned you, and I do, of course, have a certain right to do that...”

Returning home with the children before lunch, I encountered an entire cavalcade. Our party had been to view some ruins. Two excellent carriages, magnificent horses! Mademoiselle Blanche in one carriage with Maria Filippovna and Polina; the little Frenchman, the Englishman and our General on horseback. Passers-by stopped and looked; an effect was achieved; only no good will come of it for the General. I have calculated that with the four thousand francs that I have brought, and having added to that what they have evidently managed to borrow, they now have seven or eight thousand francs; that is too little for Mademoiselle Blanche.

CHAPTER I

Mademoiselle Blanche is staying in our hotel as well, together with her mother; somewhere here too is our little Frenchman. The footmen call him “*Monsieur le comte*”, Mademoiselle Blanche’s mother is called “*Madame la comtesse*”,* well, perhaps they really are *comte et comtesse*.

I just knew that *Monsieur le comte* would not recognize me when we joined one another at lunch. The General, of course, would not even think of introducing us, or at least of recommending me to him; and *Monsieur le comte* has been in Russia himself and knows what small fry the thing they call an *outchitel** is. He knows me very well, though. But, to be honest, I did appear for lunch uninvited; it seems the General forgot to give instructions, otherwise he would probably have sent me to have lunch at the table d’hôte. I appeared on my own initiative, so the General looked at me with displeasure. Kind Maria Filippovna immediately indicated a place to me, but I was aided by my previous meeting with Mr Astley and unwittingly found that I belonged in their society.

I had first met this strange Englishman in Prussia, in a railway carriage, where we sat opposite one another when I was trying to catch up with our party; then I had bumped into him entering France, and finally in Switzerland – twice in the course of those two weeks – and now here I was suddenly meeting him in Roulettenburg. Never in my life had I met a man more shy; he is shy to the point of stupidity and, of course, knows of this himself, because he is not at all stupid. Anyway, he is very nice and quiet. I had got him talking at our first meeting in Prussia. He had declared to me that he had visited Cap Nord this summer, and that he had very much wanted to visit the Nizhny Novgorod fair. I do not know how he became acquainted with the General; it seems to me that he is boundlessly in love with Polina. When she came in, he flushed red as a beetroot. He was very glad that I sat down next to him at the table, and already seems to consider me his bosom friend.

At the table the little Frenchman was extraordinarily affected; he is offhand and pompous with everyone. Yet in Moscow, I remember, he was full of hot air. He spoke an awful lot about finance and about Russian politics. The General was sometimes bold enough to contradict him, but modestly, just enough so as not to lose his self-importance completely.

I was in a strange state of mind; needless to say, even less than halfway through lunch I had managed to ask myself my usual and constant question: why am I fooling about with this General and why did I not leave them long ago? Occasionally I would glance at Polina Alexandrovna; she did not notice me at all. It ended with my becoming livid and making up my mind to be rude.

It began when suddenly, without warning, loudly and without permission, I meddled in somebody else's conversation. The main thing for me was that I wanted to have a row with the little Frenchman. I turned to the General and suddenly, perfectly loudly and distinctly and, I think, interrupting him, remarked that this summer it was almost completely impossible for Russians to eat at tables d'hôtes in hotels. The General directed a surprised gaze at me.

"If you're a self-respecting man," I carried on, "you're sure to lay yourself open to abuse and to have to endure extreme insults. At the tables d'hôtes in Paris and on the Rhine, even in Switzerland, there are so many wretched Poles and little Frenchmen who sympathize with them, that there's no chance of getting a word in if you happen to be a Russian."

I said this in French. The General looked at me in bewilderment, not knowing whether he should get angry or just be surprised I had forgotten myself so.

"Somebody somewhere has given you a good lesson, then," said the little Frenchman offhandedly and scornfully.

"In Paris I had a row first with a Pole," I replied, "then with a French officer who was supporting the Pole. Then after that a number of the Frenchmen came over to my side when I told them how I'd wanted to spit in the Monsignor's coffee."

“Spit?” asked the General in pompous bewilderment, and even looking round. The little Frenchman examined me mistrustfully.

“Exactly so, sir,” I replied. “Since for two whole days I was convinced I might possibly have to set off for Rome for a little while on our business, I went to the Chancellery of the Most Holy Father’s embassy in Paris to visa my passport. There I was met by a little abbé of about fifty, dry and with frost in his face, and, after hearing me out politely but extremely coolly, he asked me to wait. Even though I was in a hurry, I did, of course, sit down to wait, took out *Opinion Nationale** and began reading the most dreadful abuse directed against Russia. Meanwhile I heard someone go through the next room to the Monsignor; I saw my abbé bowing to him. I addressed him with my earlier request; even more coolly he asked me again to wait. A little later some other stranger came in, and on business – some Austrian – he was listened to and immediately taken upstairs. At that point I got very annoyed; I rose, went up to the abbé and told him firmly that since the Monsignor was receiving people, he could finish with me too. Suddenly the abbé staggered back away from me in singular surprise. He simply couldn’t understand how it was that a worthless Russian dared consider himself the equal of the Monsignor’s guests. In the most insolent tone, as if rejoicing that he could insult me, he measured me from head to toe and exclaimed: ‘So then, do you really think that the Monsignor will abandon his coffee for you?’ At that point I too shouted, but even more forcefully than he: ‘So then, know this: I spit on your Monsignor’s coffee! If you don’t finish with my passport this very minute, I shall go and see the man himself.’

“‘What? At the same time as he has a cardinal with him!’ the little abbé cried, moving away from me in horror, rushing to the doors and spreading his arms out like a cross, indicating that he would sooner die than let me through.

“Then I answered him that I was a heretic and a barbarian, ‘*que je suis hérétique et barbare*’, and that all these archbishops, cardinals, monsignors and so on were all the same to me. In short, I indicated I wouldn’t give in. The abbé looked at me with infinite malice, then tore my passport away and carried it off upstairs. A minute later it already had a visa. Here, sir, would you care to take a look?” I took out my passport and showed the Roman visa.

“Well really, you...” the General tried to begin...

“You were saved by your declaring yourself a barbarian and a heretic,” remarked the little Frenchman with a grin. “*Cela n’était pas si bête.*”*

“Is that really the way to look at our Russians? They sit here, they don’t dare make a sound, and are very likely prepared to deny the fact that they are Russians. At least in my hotel in Paris they began dealing with me much more attentively when I told everyone about my fight with the abbé. A fat Polish gentleman, the most hostile towards me at the table d’hôte, faded into the background. The Frenchmen even put up with it when I told how a couple of years ago I saw a man a French chasseur had shot at in 1812, solely in order to unload his gun. That man was then still a ten-year-old child, and his family hadn’t been quick enough to leave Moscow.”

“That’s not possible,” the little Frenchman boiled over, “a French soldier wouldn’t think of firing at a child!”

“And yet it happened,” I replied. “I was told of it by a venerable retired captain, and I myself saw the scar from the bullet on his cheek.”

The Frenchman started saying a lot and quickly. The General was about to start supporting him, but I recommended he at least read, for example, extracts from the *Notes of General Perovsky*,* who was held captive by the French in 1812. Finally Maria Filippovna started talking about something to interrupt the conversation. The General was very displeased with me, because the Frenchman and I had already almost begun

shouting. But Mr Astley seemed to like my argument with the Frenchman very much; getting up from the table, he asked me to drink a glass of wine with him. In the evening I managed to talk with Polina Alexandrovna for about a quarter of an hour, just as was required. Our conversation took place on a walk. Everyone had gone to the park, in the direction of the casino. Polina sat down on a bench opposite the fountain and let Nadyenka go and play with some children nearby. I let Misha go over to the fountain too, and we finally remained alone.

First, of course, we began with business. Polina simply got angry when I handed her only seven hundred guilders. She had been certain that with her diamonds as security I would bring her from Paris at least two thousand guilders or even more.

"I need money, at all costs," she said, "and it must be got; otherwise I'm simply done for."

I started asking questions about what had happened in my absence.

"Nothing more than two pieces of news being received from St Petersburg: first of all, that Grandmama was very unwell, and two days later that she was apparently already dead. This news came from Timofei Petrovich," Polina added, "and he's a meticulous man. We're waiting for a last, conclusive announcement."

"And so everyone here is in expectation?" I asked.

"Of course: everyone and everything; for a whole six months they've done nothing but hope for this one thing."

"And are you hoping?" I asked.

"I'm not related to her at all, of course; I'm only the General's stepdaughter. But I know for sure that she'll remember me in her will."

"I think you'll get a very great deal," I said affirmatively.

"Yes, she did like me; but why do *you* think so?"

"Tell me," I answered with a question, "our Marquis seems to be privy to all the family secrets too, doesn't he?"

"And why are you concerned about that yourself?" asked Polina, giving me a stern and dry look.

"There's every reason; if I'm not mistaken, the General has already managed to borrow some money from him."

"Your guess is a very accurate one."

"Well, and so would he have given any money if he hadn't known about Granny? Did you notice at the dining table: about three times, when saying something about Grandmama, he called her Granny: '*la baboulinka*'. What intimate and what friendly relations!"

"Yes, you're right. As soon as he learns I've inherited something too, he'll go and ask to marry me straight away. That's what you wanted to find out, was it?"

"Ask to marry you only now? I thought he'd been asking to marry you for a long time."

"You know perfectly well it's not so!" said Polina crossly. "Where did you meet that Englishman?" she added after a moment's silence.

"I just knew you'd ask about him now." I told her about my earlier meetings with Mr Astley while travelling. "He's shy and quick to fall in love, and is, of course, in love with you?"

"Yes, he's in love with me," replied Polina.

"And, of course, he's ten times richer than the Frenchman. What, does the Frenchman actually have anything? Isn't that cast into doubt?"

"No, it isn't. He has some sort of *château*. The General was telling me about it conclusively just yesterday. Well then, isn't that enough from you?"

"If I were you, I'd be sure to marry the Englishman."

"Why?" asked Polina.

"The Frenchman's more handsome, but he's more devious; while the Englishman, on top of the fact that he's honest, is ten times richer too," I snapped.

"Yes; but then again the Frenchman's a marquis and cleverer," she replied in the calmest possible manner.

"But is that true?" I continued as before.

"Absolutely so."

Polina found my questions dreadfully unpleasant, and I could see she wanted to infuriate me with her tone and the grotesqueness of her reply; I told her of this straight away.

“Well, the way you rage does indeed entertain me. Just for the fact that I allow you to question and conjecture like this you ought to pay.”

“I actually think I have the right to ask you all sorts of questions,” I replied calmly, “precisely because I’m prepared to pay for them any way you like, and I don’t now attach any value to my life.”

Polina roared with laughter.

“The last time, on Schlangenberg, you told me you were prepared at one word from me to throw yourself off head first, and it was as much as a thousand feet there, I think. I’ll utter that word someday, solely in order to see how you’ll pay, and you can be quite sure that I’ll stand firm. You’re hateful to me for the very reason that I’ve allowed you so much, and even more hateful for the reason that I need you so. But while I do need you – I must look after you.”

She began getting up. She spoke with irritation. Recently she had always ended a conversation with me with malice and irritation, genuine malice.

“Allow me to ask you, what is this Mademoiselle Blanche?” I asked, not wishing to let her go without an explanation.

“You know for yourself what this Mademoiselle Blanche is. Nothing more has been added since back then. Mademoiselle Blanche will probably be the General’s wife – if, of course, the rumour of Grandma’s death is confirmed, because Mademoiselle Blanche, and her mother, and her second *cousin*, the Marquis, all know very well that we’re ruined.”

“And is the General utterly in love?”

“That’s not the point now. Listen and remember: take these seven hundred florins and go and play, win me as much as you can at roulette; I need money now at all costs.”

Having said this, she called Nadyenka and set off towards the casino where she joined all the rest of our party. But I turned onto the first path I came across to the left, thinking things over and feeling surprised. It was as if I had had a rush of blood to the head after the command to go and play roulette. It was strange: there were things for me to think about, and yet I was completely absorbed in analysing the sensations of my feelings for Polina. Truly, I had found things easier in those two weeks of absence than now, on the day of my return, even though, while travelling, I had yearned like a madman, rushed about like one possessed, and had even seen her before me at every moment in my sleep. Once (it was in Switzerland), having fallen asleep in a railway carriage, I apparently began talking with Polina out loud, thus amusing all the travellers sitting with me. And now once again I asked myself the question: do I love her? And once again I was unable to reply to it, that is, to put it better; I again, for the hundredth time, replied to myself that I hated her. Yes, she was hateful to me. There were moments (specifically, at the end of every one of our conversations) when I would have given up half my life to strangle her! I swear, had it been possible to plunge a sharp knife slowly into her breast, I think I would have seized it with pleasure. And yet I swear by everything that is sacred, if on Schlangenberg, on that fashionable *pointe*, she really had said to me "Throw yourself off", I would have done so straight away, and even with pleasure. I knew that. One way or another, this had to be resolved. She understands all this astonishingly well, and the thought that I am quite rightly and clearly conscious of all her inaccessibility for me, of all the impossibility of my fantasies being fulfilled, that thought, I am certain, gives her extreme pleasure; could she, cautious and clever, be so intimate and candid with me otherwise? It seems to me that until now she has looked upon me like that ancient empress who began undressing in front of her slave, not considering him a person. Yes, there have been many times she has not considered me a person...

However, I had her commission – to win at roulette at all costs. I had no time to wonder for what purpose and how soon I needed to win, and what new considerations had been born in that eternally calculating head. In addition, a mass of new facts had evidently been added in these two weeks, about which I as yet had no idea. All this needed to be worked out, penetrated, and as soon as possible. But there was no time for the moment: I needed to set off for the roulette.

II

I confess it was unpleasant for me; maybe I had decided I was going to gamble, but I had certainly not intended to begin on behalf of others. This was even somewhat disconcerting for me, and I entered the gaming rooms with a feeling of great annoyance. At first sight I did not like anything there. I cannot bear that servility in feuilletons the whole world over, and principally in our Russian newspapers, where almost every spring our feuilleton-writers talk about two things: firstly, about the extraordinary magnificence and luxury of the gaming rooms in the roulette towns on the Rhine, and secondly, about the heaps of gold that allegedly lie on the tables. They do not get paid for it, after all; it is just talked about that way out of disinterested obsequiousness. There is no magnificence whatsoever in those lousy rooms, and not only are there no heaps of gold on the tables, there is scarcely ever even just a little. Of course, once in a while in the course of a season some eccentric will suddenly appear, either an Englishman or some Asiatic, a Turk, like this summer, and will suddenly lose or win a very great deal; but the rest all play for small change in guilders, and on average there is always very little money lying on the table. After I had entered the gaming room (for the first time in my life) it still took me some time to make up my mind to play. The crowd, in addition, was dense. But even if I had been alone, even

then, I think, I would sooner have left and not begun playing. I confess, my heart was pounding and I was not composed; I probably knew and had already long ago decided that I would not leave Roulettenburg just like that; something radical and definitive was bound to occur in my fate. That was how it had to be, and that was how it would be. However ridiculous it might be that I expect so much for myself from roulette, still funnier to me seems the routine opinion, acknowledged by all, that it is stupid and absurd to expect anything from gambling. And why is gambling worse than any other means of making money, than trade, for example? It is true that only one in a hundred wins. But what does that matter to me?

In any event, I determined first of all to have a good look and not to start anything serious that evening. That evening, if anything did happen, it would happen by accident and just a little – and that was how I decided it. In addition, the game itself needed to be studied too, because, despite the thousands of descriptions of roulette that I had always read so avidly, I understood absolutely nothing of its workings until I had seen it for myself.

Firstly, everything seemed to me so sordid – somehow morally odious and sordid. I am by no means talking about those greedy and restless faces that surround the gaming tables in their dozens, even in their hundreds. I certainly cannot see anything sordid in the desire to win a lot and quickly; a certain well-fed and well-to-do moralist's idea always seemed very silly to me when, to someone's excuse that "they only gamble in a small way, you know", he replied: all the worse, because that means petty greed. Quite: petty greed and large-scale greed are not just the same. It is a matter of proportion. What for Rothschild* is petty is for me very lavish, and as regards profit and winning, well, not just in roulette, but everywhere, people do nothing but profit or take things away from one another. Whether profit and financial gain are disgusting in general – that is another question. But I am not deciding it here. Since I was myself

gripped in the highest degree by the desire for a win, all this acquisitiveness and all this acquisitive sordidness, if you will, was, as I entered the room, somehow closer, more congenial. It is the nicest thing when people do not stand on ceremony with one another, but act candidly and open-hearted. And what is the point of deceiving oneself? The most futile and wasteful pastime! Particularly unattractive at first sight in all this roulette riff-raff was that respect for the pastime, that seriousness and even deference with which everyone surrounded the tables. That is why there is a sharp differentiation made here between the gambling that is known as *mauvais genre** and that which is permissible for a respectable man. There are two types of gambling – one is for gentlemen, while the other is plebeian, mercenary, the gambling of all sorts of riff-raff. There is a strict differentiation here – and how vile, in essence, is that differentiation! A gentleman, for example, can stake five or ten louis d'or, rarely more, though he can stake even a thousand francs if he is very rich, but strictly for the game alone, just for the amusement alone, strictly in order to take a look at the process of winning or losing; but by no means should he be interested in his winnings. Upon winning, he can, for example, laugh out loud, make a remark to one of those around him, he can even stake again and double again, but solely out of curiosity, for the observation of odds, to make calculations, but not out of a plebeian desire to win. In short, he must look at all these gaming tables, roulette and *trente et quarante*,^{*} as nothing other than an amusement arranged solely for his pleasure. The greed and deception on which the bank is based and organized he must not even suspect. It would even be a very, very good thing if it seemed to him, for example, that all these other gamblers too, all this trash, trembling over a guilder, were absolutely just such rich gentlemen as he is himself, and were playing solely for the entertainment and amusement alone. This complete ignorance of reality and innocent view of people would, of course, be extremely aristocratic. I saw many mamas pushing forward

innocent and elegant fifteen- and sixteen-year-old misses, their daughters, and, giving them a few gold coins, teaching them how to play. The young lady would win or lose, smiled without fail and went away very happy. Our General approached the table sedately and self-importantly; a footman rushed up to offer him a chair, but he did not notice the footman; he spent a very long time taking out his purse, a very long time taking three hundred francs in gold out of the purse; he put them on black and won. He did not pick his winnings up, but left them on the table. Black came up again; he did not pick them up this time either, and when this third time red came up, he lost one thousand two hundred francs all in one go. He walked away with a smile and remained firm. I am convinced there was a gnawing at his heart, and if the stake had been two or three times greater, he would not have remained firm and would have displayed his agitation. Yet I was present when a Frenchman won and then lost up to about thirty thousand francs cheerfully and without any kind of agitation. A true gentleman, if he has lost even his entire fortune, must not get agitated. Money should be to such an extent beneath gentlemanliness that it is scarcely worthwhile worrying about it. Of course, it is very aristocratic to seem completely unaware of all the sordidness of all the riff-raff and the ambience as a whole. However, sometimes no less aristocratic is the opposite way, to be aware of, that is, to look closely at, even to examine, maybe through a lorgnette, for example, all the riff-raff: but only if taking all the crowd and all the sordidness to be an entertainment of sorts, to be a kind of performance, organized for the amusement of gentlemen. You can yourself be jostled in this crowd, yet look around with the utter conviction that you personally are an observer and do not pertain to its composition in any way at all. But then again, one ought not to observe very closely either: again, this will already be ungentlemanly, because the spectacle is in any event not worth great and excessively close observation. And in general there are few spectacles worthy of

excessively close observation for a gentleman. But at the same time it seemed to me personally that all this was actually most worthy of very close observation, especially for someone who has come not for observation alone, and who sincerely and conscientiously numbers himself among all the riff-raff. And as far as my innermost moral convictions are concerned, they, of course, have no place in my present discourse. Let it be so; I am talking for the sake of a clear conscience. But here is what I will remark: that all the time of late I have found it dreadfully repellent somehow to measure my actions and thoughts against any moral standard whatsoever. Something else has been governing me...

The riff-raff really do play very sordidly. I am not even averse to the idea that a great deal of the most ordinary thieving takes place here at the table. The croupiers, who sit along the ends of the table, look after the stakes and settle up, have an awful lot of work. There's more riff-raff for you! They are French for the most part. However, I am observing and noting things here not at all in order to describe roulette; I am assessing things for myself in order to know how to behave for the future. I have noted, for example, that there is nothing more commonplace than somebody's hand suddenly reaching out from alongside the table and taking what you have won for itself. An argument begins, not infrequently some shouting, and – I humbly request you to prove, to find witnesses that the stake is yours!

At first the whole business was double Dutch to me; I only guessed and somehow or other made out that bets can be on numbers, on even and odd, and on colours. I resolved to try out one hundred guilders of Polina Alexandrovna's money that evening. The thought that I was setting about gambling other than for myself was somehow disconcerting for me. The sensation was extremely unpleasant, and I wanted to have done with it quickly. It constantly seemed to me that by beginning for Polina, I was undermining my own luck. Is it really not possible to touch a gaming table without immediately

being infected with superstition? I began by taking out five friedrichs d'or, that is, fifty guilders, and putting them on even. The wheel turned and thirteen came up — I had lost. With a morbid sort of sensation, solely in order somehow to have done and leave, I put another five friedrichs d'or on red. Red came up. I staked all ten friedrichs d'or — red came up again. Again I staked all in one go, again red came up. Receiving forty friedrichs d'or, I put twenty on the twelve middle numbers, not knowing what would come of it. I was paid threefold. Thus from ten friedrichs d'or, I had suddenly had eighty appear. Some extraordinary and strange sort of sensation made things so unbearable for me that I resolved to leave. It seemed to me that I would not have played like that at all if I had been playing for myself. However, I put all eighty friedrichs d'or on even once again. This time four came up; they counted me out another eighty friedrichs d'or and, grabbing the entire pile of one hundred and sixty friedrichs d'or, I set off to look for Polina Alexandrovna.

They were all out walking somewhere in the park, and I managed to see her only at dinner. This time the Frenchman was not there, and the General opened up: among other things, he found it necessary to remark to me again that he would not wish to see me at the gaming table. In his opinion he would be very much compromised if I were somehow to lose too much; "but even if you were to win a very great deal, then too I should also be compromised," he added significantly. "Of course, I have no right to order your actions, but you must agree..." Here, as was his habit, he did not finish. I answered him drily that I had very little money and that, consequently, I could not lose too noticeably, even if I did start gambling. Going upstairs to my room, I managed to hand Polina her winnings and announced to her that I would no longer be gambling for her.

"But why not?" she asked in alarm.

"Because I want to gamble for myself," I replied, examining her in surprise, "and it prevents me."

"So you resolutely continue to be convinced that roulette is your only way out and salvation?" she asked mockingly. I replied, again very seriously, that I did; and as far as my certainty that I was bound to win was concerned, maybe it was ridiculous, I agreed, "but I'm to be left in peace."

Polina Alexandrovna insisted I must share the day's winnings with her half and half, and tried to give me eighty friedrichs d'or, proposing to continue playing henceforth under these conditions too. I definitively and absolutely refused to take half, and declared that I could not gamble for others, not because I did not wish to, but because I would be sure to lose.

"And yet, however stupid it might be, I myself am all but relying on roulette alone too," she said, becoming pensive. "And for that reason you must without fail continue to play, sharing half and half with me, and – naturally – you will." At this point she left me, without listening to my further objections.

III

And yet yesterday she did not say a single word to me about gambling the entire day. Indeed, she avoided speaking to me yesterday generally. Her former manner with me has not changed. There is the same completely offhanded way of talking when we meet, and even something contemptuous and hateful. In general, she does not wish to conceal her feeling of repellence for me; I can see it. Despite this, neither does she conceal from me the fact that she needs me for something and that she is saving me up for something. Relations of a strange sort have been established between us which, if her pride and haughtiness with everyone are taken into consideration, are in many respects incomprehensible to me. She knows, for example, that I love her madly, even permits me to speak of my passion – and, of course, there is no way she could express her contempt to me more than by this permission to speak to her unimpeded

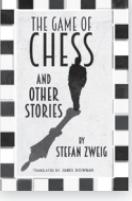
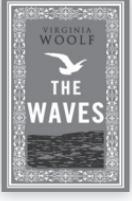
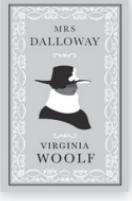
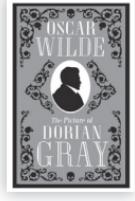
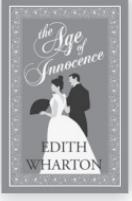
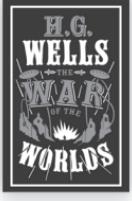
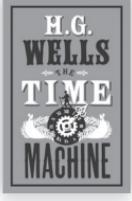
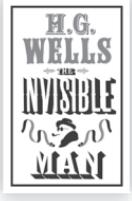
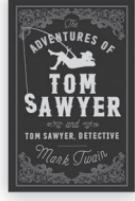
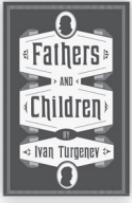
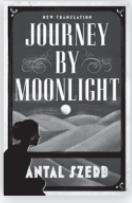
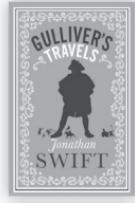
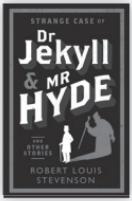
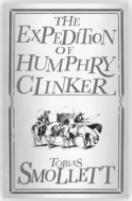
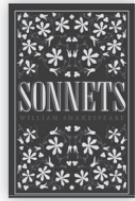
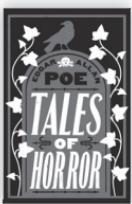
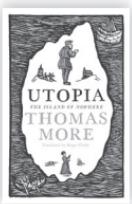
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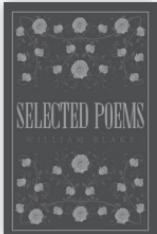
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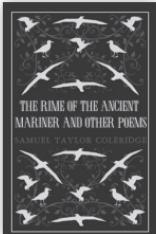
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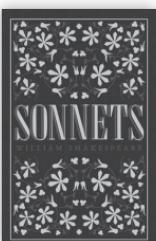
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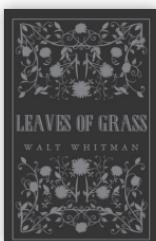
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