

less velvet carpets and rugs, and the walls were tastefully done with delicately shaded brocades set in panels of French gray. Paintings and bronzes bespoke taste as well as money.

But the chief objects of interest in the drawing room were little round mahogany tables. About one of them, three persons, two women and a man, were already seated, sipping tea, champagne, cocktails, whatever to them seemed to add piquancy to the adventure.

"Shall we play bridge?" asked Mr. Harrington, after "Mrs. Merrill," "Mrs. Roberts," and "Mr. Mitchell" had been introduced.

"Oh, no!" yawned "Mrs. Willis." "Bridge is such a bore. Let's play a little poker."

The party took their places about the table. Mr. Harrington produced a pack of gilt-edged cards and an ivory box filled with red, white and blue chips. While he played, Mrs. Livingston was busy caring for her guests.

FROM an adjoining room came a very different sound—the treacherous lure of the spinning roulette wheel. Through a door Clare could catch glimpses of blasé and flashily dressed women, risking everything—perhaps honor—on a chance turn of the wheel. It was none of the old-time beautiful wheels of ebony and inlaid silver, but smaller and of a kind that could be packed in a suit case. Layouts for faro, keno, chuck-a-luck and other games were there, but not in operation.

A maid with a white-napkin bottle and little hollow-stemmed glasses on a silver salver moved noiselessly in and out. Clare noted that neither Mrs. Livingston nor Mr. Harrington indulged, passing it off with casual remarks that it was "too early" or that they were "too busy looking after you, my dears." Clare and Billy exchanged a knowing look.

"Let's make it a two-dollar limit," exclaimed one of the ladies at length, shuffling the cards with practiced hand.

"The only limit as far as I am concerned is the roof," smiled Harrington, waiting deferentially for the others to agree.

"That's what you call the high cost of living," laughed one little lady nervously, as she puffed a tiny gold-tipped cigarette. "John wonders why the modiste, the milliner and the couturiere charge so much!"

Mrs. Carlyle's losses did not seem to worry her much. "Such wretched luck," she exclaimed at length, throwing down her cards petulantly. "Let me congratulate you, my dear," to Clare as she noted that she was a trifle ahead of the game.

But "beginner's luck" did not last long. The tide slowly and gradually turned, as Clare had expected. And Lawson, though he had some skill at poker, found that it was of no avail.

The pile of chips in the "kitty," for the "house," increased. Also the pile of blue chips before Mr. Harrington.

Seeing how things were going, Clare suddenly remembered that she had an appointment to meet "Mr. Kendall." She and Lawson quit, amid general regrets, after losing about fifty dollars.

"So that is up-to-date gambling in a luxurious New York joint," ruminated Lawson, thinking of the old places of steel, bronze and oak doors, of look-outs, free wine and expensive cigars.

"Yes," returned Clare as they sped away in a taxicab from the granite and marble house of cards, "just a 'private game' to fleece the unwary. Rather interesting, was n't it, this taste of the new phase of sporting life since the gambling investigation?"

"The worst of this new gambling," remarked Lawson, "is that it gets the women as well as the men. Let me see," he added, looking at his watch. "They left me that, anyhow. It took us just half an hour to get introduced and, by careful playing, drop that fifty."

"Expense money, Billy," laughed Clare, catching his rueful look at their experience with the high lights in the city of lights and shadows. Then she added seriously: "Meet me after dinner. I want to go back there tonight in another rôle."

IN THE meantime Clare hunted up the owner of the apartment and obtained from him the key to an empty suite on the third floor below that in which they had been.

Clare opened the door into the dark apartment and they groped their way to the windows opening on the court. In the kitchen they found a couple of rough wooden chairs that had been left by a previous tenant, and on the gas range Clare placed an oak box about a foot long and four or five inches deep.

Lawson watched curiously in the half light as she opened it. In it, on either side, lay two regular storage batteries and, in a compartment between them, a glittering array of brightly nicked paraphernalia with green silken wires and shiny black discs attached.

Clare opened the window carefully and peered out into the court.

"There it is," she exclaimed with some satisfaction. "Billy, do you think you can reach that wire over there?"

Dangling from the room above was the wire that Clare had hastily dropped out of the window.

WITH an old broom, Lawson managed to reach it and draw it in. Already Clare was unpacking the mysterious oak box. Quickly she shoved two plugs on the end of the wire into their proper sockets. Then she took from the case an apparatus very much like that used by wireless telegraph operators and placed it over her head.

"Take the other one, Billy," she said indicating a

dropped today comes back to you—here it is. Oh, yes, and then there are those two fourflushers you brought in today who left only fifty dollars!"

Clare made a wry face in a general upward direction.

Lawson looked at her, puzzled. "Wh-what does it mean?" he gasped, as the significance of the conversation began to dawn on him.

"Mean? Why, it means that the rich Mrs. Carlyle, in order to keep her losses from her husband, has turned capper or steerer for a gambling flat, that's all. Sh-h! Listen!"

Mrs. Livingston and Mrs. Carlyle were talking in low tones in the boudoir, yet the detectaphone plainly repeated all they said.

"Yes, I'll ask him. You've done pretty well, Gus-sie," cooed Mrs. Livingston. "At this rate you'll quickly work off that other five hundred. Then you can play again, perhaps get it back. Luck will turn, my dear, luck will turn. You've been in pretty bad, you know. It can't always go against you. There's always the chance to get it back, and more, too."



Mrs. Livingston, with blazing eyes, was demanding an explanation

second connection similar to it, "and do the same."

Lawson complied, adjusting the two receivers over his ears.

"Ready?" asked Clare.

He nodded.

She reached over to a little rheostat built into the box and turned the switch to a point marked "loud."

With a click in his ears as the switch was turned, Lawson suddenly became aware that he was listening to voices.

There were two of them, women's voices, so clear and distinct that he almost fancied he could recognize them.

"What is it?" he asked, leaning over to Clare and whispering. "Can they hear us?"

Clare laughed. "The Byrnes detectaphone," she replied. "More sensitive than any of the other electric ears that the scientific eavesdroppers have used. No, they can't hear us, of course. Do you recognize them?"

"It's Mrs. Carlyle and Mrs. Livingston, is n't it?"

"Yes—listen."

The "hostess" was talking.

"I'll find out," Mrs. Livingston was saying.

"No one can hear us?" inquired Mrs. Carlyle nervously.

"No—no' here."

The detectaphone conscientiously repeated it downstairs.

"Let me see. You're going now? Well, you owed a thousand after that last settlement the other day. Your commission on that Mrs. Roberts is two hundred and fifty so far. The other woman was worth about a hundred. Then Mr. Mitchell lost about five hundred—a hundred and twenty-five more off for you. That makes you owe only about five hundred of that thousand still; of course, the sixty you

Mrs. Carlyle laughed nervously, a little harshly.

Lawson was amazed at the picture Clare had opened up to him of this well born woman, who had squandered her own and perhaps some of her husband's money, and was sinking even farther in the moral quagmire in hope of earning enough to pay her losses and keep her husband and family from the knowledge of her gambling. He had already seen how admirably she fitted into the scheme of the gamblers as a capper. He remembered her eyes as she had looked at him in the *Mechante*. Such women were the finest bait for men who would go to the *Recherche* and lose hundreds and thousands without a squeal.

All the evening Clare and Billy "listened in," sometimes in shifts, sometimes together, gathering choice fragments of confidences and scandals from the "cloak room" of the apartment above, as the habitués in evening dress came and went.

It was far past midnight, and they were still at the detectaphone. This time it was a man's voice, as well, that they heard—a strange voice to Lawson.

"HOW much tonight?" he asked as they heard a door close.

"Seven hundred and seventy apiece," returned Mrs. Livingston.

"Pretty soft—eh, Belle?"

"Yes. Harrington says one got away with thirty-five dollars."

"Never mind. She'll lose it next time, and more, too. They all do. Did Mrs. C. play?"

"Only for the house. Those were your orders. But she asked me to speak to you. She wants to play again, for herself—the wheel—she has a system."

"H-m! Let's see. How (Continued on Page 13)