

attendant. You watch to see whether he pays anything, and how much. He pays nothing but receives a metal disc, which he slips into his waistcoat pocket. You have meanwhile zealously imitated him, with similar results, and when he walks across the corridor you walk after him. He takes his place in a line of persons standing in single file near a bureau of some sort. Here, then, is the receipt of custom. So you watch again to see what there is to pay. It is a most amazing place this Monte Carlo. Up to the present stage of the proceedings nobody has lightened his pockets of a single "brown." The people in front of you are getting tickets, and apparently getting them for nothing; you had to pay nothing at the outer door, nothing at the cloak room, and now, behold, you are to receive a ticket gratis to the halls of dazzling light.

As the line moves on you notice that the people in front of you hand their visiting cards to a busy little clerk, who scratches first in a big book and then on a numbered ticket, putting questions between the scratches to each applicant. Your mastery of French enables you to perceive, after a few preliminary tremors, that you are expected to present your card, and say what country you come from and what hotel you are stopping at. Warned by the linguistic slips of the parties in front of you write it all down on your card. Beyond doubt, you are expected to vouch for your own respectability. But alas! do they want indorsers? Is the busy, scribbling clerk demanding certificates of birth, baptism and vaccination? There are hitches in the line. Some of the applicants go away empty handed; they attempt argument; the busy little clerk ceases his scribbling and looks as stern as any dog in office.

Upon him argument prevails not; he raises his hand in the most approved tragic manner. Then he says "next" in French, and your grave and reverend seignor lays down his pasteboard of identification, and the busy clerk looks up, and raises his hand with a "go away" gesture, and the grave and reverend seignor mutters astonishment, or simulates astonishment in voluble Gallic.

The busy scribbler looks at you and says, "Monsieur?" and gives an interrogative wist to his eyebrows. You hand him your card; he makes the record of your name in his book, he scrawls your name on a dated and numbered ticket, putting your sir name first and your Christain name last, in his curious French way. Then he gives you your ticket and returns you your card, and you make way for the next man, feeling, that after all, you have a new sensation.

In the big central corridor of the casino people are smoking, walking and talking, but you do not pause for these attractions. The obvious thing is to follow the other holders of the buff tickets of respectability. Your number is 796, and although the hour is but 5 in the afternoon, the numerals give proof of fair attendance since luncheon time. At the end of the big corridor there are two sets of swinging doors; people are coming out of one and going in at the other. Eminently grave persons in uniform keep watch and ward at these doors. You show your ticket, you are greeted with a bow and a ceremonious wave of the hand, and a door is swung ajar for your entrance. Another step and you are in the famous gambling hell of Monte Carlo.

The spectacle is familiar. You have often seen it reproduced in the illustrated papers. There is a range of huge, lofty rooms not unprepossessing in general effect, but rather too heavy in style. It would be the finest place in the world for a great ball or state reception. Each room in the suite has a couple of long tables, and around each table there are, sitting and standing, a hundred persons of both sexes, most of them with a stake in the game, the minority being passive on-lookers like yourself. The few words that are spoken are uttered in an undertone, except on the part of the master of ceremonies at each table, and he cries occasionally a number or a color and cries in a French, which you readily recognize, "Gentlemen, make your play."

Then the ladies and gentlemen throw down their 5 franc pieces and their Napoleons. There are only two or three tables for cards; all the rest are for the wheel. Their are six or eight men at each table superintending the game, keeping their eyes on shady customers and shady practices, and holding themselves in readiness to settle disputes off-hand. As soon as the wheel has stopped and the number is cried there is a prodigious clink of silver and gold as the pieces are wheeled in by the banker or unceremoniously tossed to the winners. The wonder of it is how the officials of the game keep tally of the winners and the winnings. The business is done in a

twinkling. As coins fly about the table, players have to keep a wary watch so that they come into their own with usury. For, in the press around the tables, there are respectable-looking persons who will take what does not belong to them if they see a chance. They say at Monte Carlo that the women who play much are the most unscrupulous in these trifles.

You roam from table to table. The groups are everywhere the same. What most impresses you is the perfect management of the place. A woman loses her temper over a run of ill-luck and begins to expostulate with the banker on some pretext or other. She has no sooner raised her voice than one of the superintendents of the game is at her side courteously explaining matters, and by his manner of calm precise authority effectually quieting her. Or perhaps it is a man who quarrels with his neighbor over some division of spoils. Before he can splutter half a dozen words his indignant eloquence is checked by the appearance of authority in a frock coat. If the contumacious player persists in his unpleasantness he is asked for his card and his ticket of admission, and he is shown the door, and his name is put on the black list.

At the tables where the wheel spins the game is usually for small stakes and the players are commonplace to the last degree. At the card table the game goes up many notches in recklessness, and the gamblers several pegs in appearance. It is at the card tables that you look for your wicked dukes and pallid heroes and your adventuresses of melodrama and romance. You will probably look in vain. You will also look for the clever fellow who is "breaking the bank." He is a rare bird, seldom shot on the wing. He is for the most part one of the pleasing fictions of Monte Carlo. You go away after half an hour intolerably bored.

But you return after dinner. You wish to see the Casino lighted. Of course, the smart folk will come forth then in their finery, and the general note will be festive. Mankind feels at ease, having dined. So you make assay once more and turn again into the hall of dazzling light. To be sure, the crowd is greater than it was in the afternoon, but is the same crowd in different gear. You sit near the doors of the first saloon and watch the incomers, I will be bound that they strike your sense of the ridiculous and keep you in a vuiver of mirth. They comprise the oddest assortment of "radishes with heads fantastically carved," as Carlyle said, that you will encounter on a footstool. Wickedness! They do not even suggest it! For the most part it is a commonplace, thick-brained humanity which congregates here; that part of noodledum which seems to take it for granted that the bank of the Casino exists to be broken. As for their tailoring and dressmaking the heavens never looked down upon such a weird array.

Plentiful sprinkling of German dudes with their hair cut pompadour, their shoulders of amazing thickness, their trousers of phenomenal tightness; French dudes, with heads like shoebrushes and beards like the hirsute adornment of Mme. Tussaud's wax figures; English swells of all ages, with monocles and spats and, American eccentrics, dark-skinned Italians, and dark-skinned Turks, and many faded, sadly faded, beauties of all the European countries.

Such a prodigious array of plain and ungainly women can be seen nowhere outside the Casino at Monte Carlo; such legions of podgy, uninteresting men; such frumps and frizzled things, such seedy gentility and shabby vulgarity, such colors and cuts of dress can be equaled nowhere.

The place is lighted at night by plain lamps swung from the ceiling to within three or four feet of the green covered tables. The air gets hot and heavy.

There are no seats from which you can watch the games. The few chairs at the tables do not accommodate one-tenth of the players.

Monte Carlo's lovely garden, perfect roads, miraculous cleanliness, good order and good light, may inspire even the virtuous. After all, the Casino has other uses than that of gambling. It has a concert hall where you can hear good music, and it has pleasant reading rooms. You can spend a delightful week at Monte Carlo and not bother your head about the gambling. Yet somehow, the trial of the game is over it all. You cannot altogether avoid the sordid, shabby and flashy ones who come here for their notions of pleasure. Monte Carlo is paradise with the serpent in possession. Well, the serpent is an interesting creature anyway, but he is not a tempter.