

MONTE CARLO

I

January.—It knew I would come back, my exquisite, make-believe world, the place of unreality and nerves, the sun, and of the altar of Chance.

I am quite care-free; no one expects me to be anything but myself. I stand aside, I watch life, I am deliciously alone. I can hardly repress myself from spreading out my hands in visible ecstasy when I first go out in the extreme morning air and meet the golden waves of the sun, the spring coolness of the earth's smell, the pressure of the flowers' perfume, the dazzling horizon of the diamond-faceted sea. At night when I leave the Casino the convex sky, hung in constellations of jewels,

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dips through the lines of the palm fronds, and the darkness is Nature living, sheltered in the shadowed petals of unseen roses.

Everything is shut away by the click of the little sibilant balls as they whirl to the touch of Fate, and life rises and falls to the drip of the cards as they fall endlessly, making the scale of Fate sway up and down.

The Riviera Palace Hotel.—This seemed still further away, still more removed. I have a terror of masses of people, of being near my kind. This mountain ledge paved with flowers, where I step from my white bedroom to the Terrace set austere with its hyacinths and cactus, is held far above the burning blue of the sea, the little gilt-crowned world that lies on the shore.

As I take tea in the corridor in the late

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afternoon the huge windows become transmuted mirrors and shadow the marble columns till they stretch out on the sunset-flushed sea and sky in endless colonnades of mystic castles.

I am so glad to be alone. I stretch out my arms to myself and gather back all the wounded, distracted selves that have borne the past two years.

I have been tormented by the sudden wish to gamble again. I look at the wish with a sort of sullen surprise. I have no intention of risking the money I have; it was earned too brutally to let me be willing to risk having to earn any more that way.

Out of the world up here, surrounded and calmed by the quiet garden walks of transplanted flowers, I have no need to go down into the spiked sensations that come with the oscillation of Fate. I like to see

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my Fate still, undisturbed, for a while, like the curved petals of the lilies that lie sheltered in the artificial pools.

When I went into the Rooms to-night I came face to face with my lover of Little Hungary.

The world rocked, and the blinding well of electricity was whirled up at my feet. I caught my senses in my hand to steady them. I was drowning in the same torrent of stars and fire and intoxication. He was there, I would see him again, he was in the world, it had not been a dream. He was real, not the half vision of a stray god that I changed the memory to; the blood hummed in my ears. You cannot seem dazed in the gambling rooms; ecstasy seems there to mean a practical madness. I turned to a near-by table and put down some napoleons, anywhere, anything, so

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that I could have an excuse for my changed, heart-swept face.

And then, when I raised my eyes, he was before me. I met his eyes—he and I—with consciousness face to face. And then, the invisible flood roaring to my lips, I fled from the Rooms. I would have fainted if I had stayed. But he is here, I shall see him again; but I must wait, wait, I am not able yet, I am blinded yet.

I feel as though I had been drinking electric light; all my life between to-night and Little Hungary has shrivelled like paper in fire. He is here—the pulse of the world to me, the man who made life life to me. I am staggering as though I had been caught, and flung into a sea of fire, that had turned me into itself, and made me leap with its flames. The thought that he is here is enough, it is drowning me in delight.

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Sunday Afternoon.—There is a corner of the grounds where the cliff juts out like a wall and makes on the other side a mountain grotto. They have trained heliotrope over it, and the top of the wall is planted with pink geraniums. I took my book to the chair there this afternoon. Pater, the most artificial and exquisite thing I know, Greek statuary in prose. But I could see the sea, tremulous against the horizon, and I rested idle without reading, my whole body and senses bathed in the ineffable wholeness of life, my being alive, and in the sight of his eyes.

A whole day of uncounted rapture, the mere fact of existence is enough; his life near seems to consume mine and radiate like the flame of a dominating planet.

Monday Morning.—The maid brought my coffee as usual this morning, and drew the cord that kept the blue silk curtains

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together. The sun rushed in and sparkled on the silver and the pink paper of the *Morning Telegram*. I opened it with the feeling that it might have some mention of his name.

And then a paragraph blistered before my eyes: "W. V. Kemp leaves for Paris to-day after a short stay at the Hôtel de Paris." I crowded down in the bed, my eyes blind.

I am so tired of life—the eternal struggle, the never-reached peace. Yet the peace was there. I knew the world held for me utter, complete satisfaction—his abominable money, his miserable wealth. If he were only poor—I could speak, write, go—what do I care for his money? All it does is to close him in by a wall and shut him from me.

But his beggarly wealth at least keeps him in the papers, will always let me know where he is; and when I can pay the price,

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when once I have the money that will let me go with the people I know, I can meet him. Birth, brains, youth—all I want is the money, the miserable, miserable money—and I am so tired, so tired! I had struggled so, and now the old struggle must commence all over again. Stone walls, palls of fire, upright swords.

I have been struck too hard by life. I drag my brokenness away like a wounded dog to get knit again and ready to fight. Life lies at the edge of things ready to tear me with its claws. But for a little while I am going to rest, to set myself, like a watch, and see if my nerves and body are under control. I've got to use them again, I must do something; but now I have crept out of life just to warm myself, to fill myself with the wine and glamour of the sun—to draw it into my veins and heart, the blood of the world. I have been sapped dry of vitality.