

MONTE CARLO

II

March.—The Englishman has followed me very persistently and I have hardly noticed. I have always dimly surmised that he was there, and taken it for granted that it would be he who would see that the servants came out quickly if I wanted my chair moved or tea brought. He would divine, it seemed, what I wanted, and that I also wanted to be let alone and not to talk, not to meet anyone.

He is more or less an invalid, I imagine; he never goes to the Rooms, but stays up here all day lying in the sun.

It is the Berlioz celebration, and I never conceived or imagined or dreamed that mere lights on a white chateau, in the

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tropical trees, on the curved Terrace, and a hilly street leading sideways down to the amethyst sea, could be so celestially lovely. Monte Carlo was covered by a network of descended stars. I almost laughed at the marvel of it, at the delight of the transcendent myriad lights that had fastened themselves to everything like a cloud of stellar parasites devouring the marble and palms.

I went down to the Casino Terrace to see it all, and walked up and down ecstatically, contentedly, alone. But always I was conscious of the tall figure in the long ulster, keeping carefully in the background, but so obviously fearful of the consequences of a woman walking alone at night on the Terrace at Monte Carlo. How foolish! This is the capital of madness, of dreams, of the inversion of the usual practicality. He would expect

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babes to buckle on swords, and cats to turn from saucers of cream.

It amused me, but made me a little impatient. I have so long been face to face with deeper dangers, that a snatch at my purse is not very much dreaded; and I am so palpably a woman accustomed to being taken care of, that no one would dream that a husband or a brother was not only by chance away.

I couldn't make up my mind to go to bed last night, and so, a little after eleven, I unlatched my door window again, and went out on the Terrace. Why can't people stay up all night and sleep all the garish morning? It was a disclosed rapture of ethereal perfume and translucent greenness and glittering dew-wet flowers. I went over to the balustrade, cloakless, without even a scarf, and opened my hands out on the cool stone ledge. I heard

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then the impatient opening of another of the doors and a man's hasty walk behind me. The Englishman strode up to me, his ulster half dragged on over his evening dress.

"Aren't you afraid of taking cold?" he asked rather harshly. "Please put this on." "This" was a driving coat, and he seemed perfectly unsurprised, and so was I, when I meekly turned and let him help me on with it.

Friday.—I am not in the least a passionate woman, hardly even sensual—merely inordinately curious, colossally ambitious, and supremely emancipated from the accustomed prejudices concerning the vital actions of life. But there is no doubt about it, I must face it, that I enjoy the Englishman's being with me; the rest of his looking after me, ordering the coachman, the servants, pouring my tea, carry-

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ing my furs, lighting my cigarettes. He has a lascivious little trick of doing this, transferring it from his lips to mine; it is like the lustfulness of a Puck or adolescent faun. You can almost see the twinkle of the pointed furry ears in the action. And I yield, I even smoke the cigarettes. Tom is deliciously attractive to me in the way a young unspoiled satyr would be if it should spring living out of the marble in the moss and fountains of the Borghese Gardens.

That kiss has never been repeated; he understands it would be useless to ask, and there is far more amusement in the denial than there would be in the climax. Climax or denial, I am always indifferent which, but one must be amused. He is essentially unspoiled; you can think of him as being frigidly, unconsciously, inherently the essence of honour, honour that has never felt the sooty fingers of a

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woman's inquisitive hand to test its texture.

He has all the suggestion of domineering pride that men of the conquering white nation get in India. India gives a peculiar hardening of the mouth to Englishmen; and Tom is so young—about thirty perhaps—so nervous, instinctive, supple to feeling, that the race pride sits on him as quaintly as the little laughing furry ears of crass instinct that curve up now and then.

We are always together; we drive, tea, breakfast, and have walks, with a carriage following to take us up when he grows tired; then I take supper with him sometimes at Ciro's or dine at the Hôtel de Paris.

But the favourite thing of all we do is to go to a fairy place we have found in the ramparts of Monaco. A nook away down the cliff set in the stone wall, a deep

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embrasure with an arched opening looking out on the harbour and the half-hoop of the Casino Terrace. The ledge is wide—wide enough to sit on without growing dizzy by looking at the depths below; and here we bring rugs and cushions and candied fruits for me, and cigarettes and books, and lounge and read and talk.

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III

April.—He wants me so much to marry him. I like him so much, the sudden rest from all struggle would be so great, that I am almost tempted to do it. It is always so easy to do the proper thing. It takes such tremendous moral courage to do what is called wrong.

He is impatient, eager, almost querulous, like all invalids; and the strain of being denied what really there is no reason I should not consent to, were it not for an unplanned, obscure goal in my own mind, is keeping him in an unnatural fever.

As he pleads, there is no reason why we should not be married at once. I have no