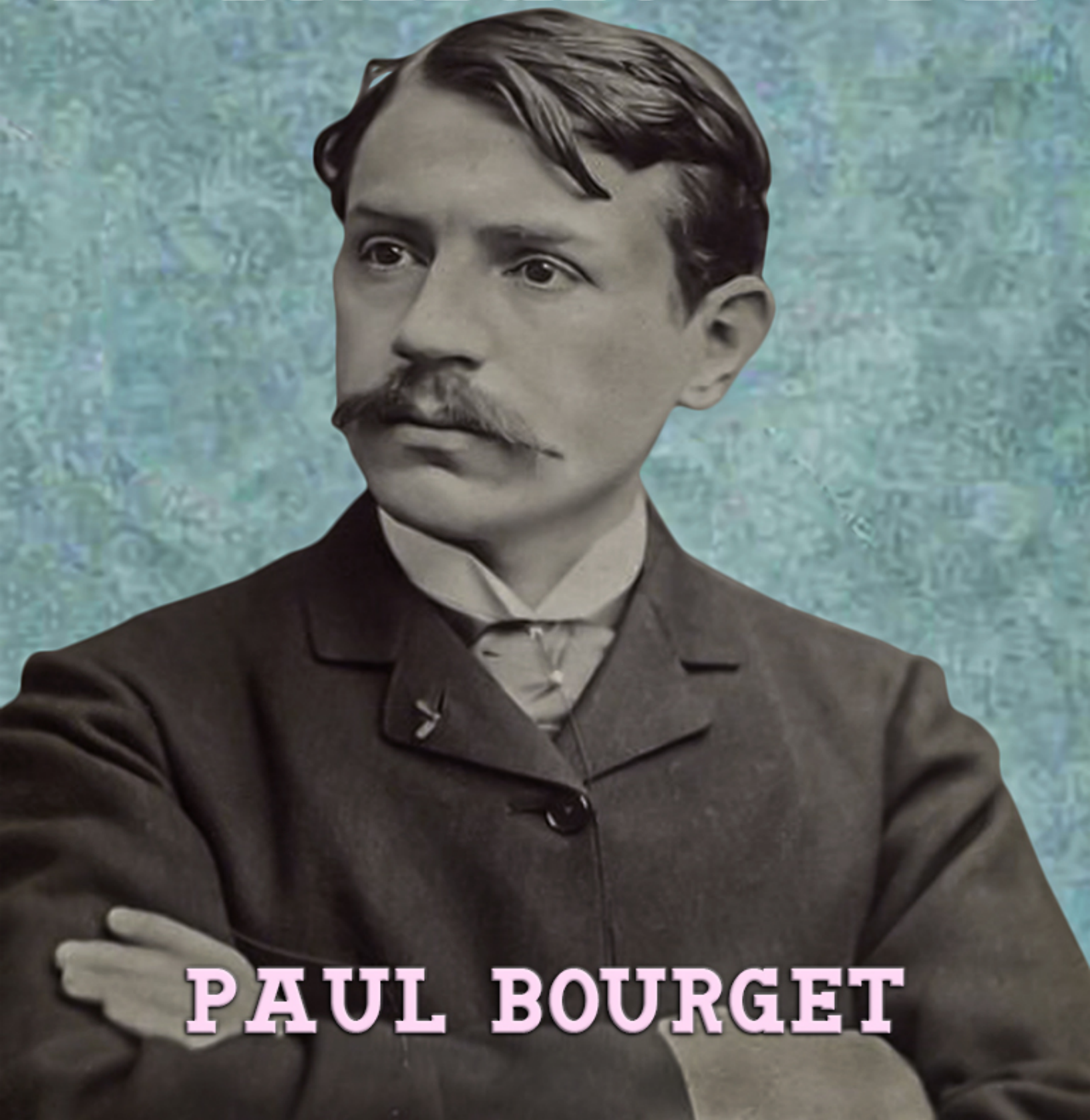
CLASSICS TO GO

A TRAGIC IDYL



PAUL BOURGET

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CHAPTER I
LE "TOUT EUROPE"

That night (toward the end of February, 188—) a vast crowd was thronging the halls of the Casino at Monte Carlo. It was one of the momentary occasions, well known to all who have passed the winter season on the Corniche, when a sudden and prodigious afflux of composite humanity transfigures that place, ordinarily so vulgar with the brutal luxury of the people whom it satisfies. The gay madness that breaks out at Nice during the Carnival attracts to this little point of the Riviera the moving army of pleasure hunters and adventurers, while the beauty of the climate allures thousands of invalids and people weary of living, the victims of disease and of ill fortune; and on certain nights, like that on which this narrative begins, when the countless representatives of the various classes, scattered ordinarily along the coast, suddenly rush together into the gaming-house, their fantastic variety of character appears in all its startling incongruities, with the aspect of a cosmopolitan pandemonium, dazzling and sinister, deafening and tragical, ridiculous and painful, strewn with all the wrecks of luxury and vice of every country and of every class, the victims of every misfortune and disaster. In this stifling atmosphere, amid the glitter of insolent and ignoble wealth, the ancient monarchies were represented by three princes of the house of Bourbon, and the modern by two grand-nephews of Bonaparte, all five recognizable by their profiles, which were reproduced on hundreds of the gold and silver coins rolling before them on the green tables.

Neither these princes nor their neighbors noticed the presence at one of the tables of a man who had borne the title of King in one of the states improvised on the Balkan Peninsula. Men had fought for this man, men had died for

him, but his royal interests seemed now to be restricted to the pasteboard monarchs on the table of *trente-et-quarante*. And king and princes, grand-nephews and cousins of emperors, in the promiscuity of this international resort, elbowed noblemen whose ancestors had served or betrayed their own; and these lords elbowed the sons of tradesmen, dressed like them, nourished like them, amused like them; and these *bourgeois* brushed against celebrated artists—here the most famous of our portrait painters, there a well-known singer, there an illustrious writer—while fashionable women mingled with this crowd in toilets which rivalled in splendor those of the *demi-monde*. And other men poured in continually, and other women, and especially others of the *demi-monde*. Through the door they streamed in endlessly, of all categories, from the creature with hungry eyes and the face of a criminal, in search of some fortunate gambler whose substance she might absorb as a spider does that of a fly, to the insolent and triumphant devourer of fortunes, who stakes twenty-five louis on every turn of the roulette and wears in her ears diamonds worth 30,000f. These contrasts formed here and there a picture even more striking and significant; for example, between two of these venders of love, their complexion painted with ceruse and with rouge, their eyes depraved by luxury and greed, a young woman, almost a child, recently married and passing through Monte Carlo on her wedding journey, stretched forth her fresh, pretty face with a smile of innocence and roguish curiosity.

Further on, the amateurs of political philosophy might have seen one of the great Israelitish bankers of Paris placing his stake beside that of the bitterest of socialist pamphleteers. Not far from them a young consumptive, whose white face spotted with purple, hollow cheeks, burning eyes, and fleshless hands announced the fast approach of death, was seated beside a "sporting" man,

whose ruddy complexion, broad shoulders, and herculean muscles seemed to promise eighty years of life. The white glare of the electric globes along the ceiling and the walls, and the yellow light that radiated from the lamps suspended above the tables, falling upon the faces of this swarming crowd revealed differences no less extraordinary of race and origin. Russian faces, broad and heavy, powerfully, almost savagely Asiatic, were mingled with Italian physiognomies, of a Latin fineness and of a modelling that recalled the elegance of ancient portraits. German heads, thick, and, as it were, rough-hewn, with an expression of mingled cunning and good nature, alternated with Parisian heads, intelligent and dissipated, which suggested the boulevard and the *couloirs* of the *Variétés*. Red and energetic profiles of Englishmen and Americans sketched their vigorous outlines, evincing the habit of exercise, long exposure to the tanning air and also the daily intoxication of alcohol; while exotic faces, by the animation of their eyes and mouths, by the warm tones of their complexions, evoked visions of other climes, of far-off countries, of fortunes made in the antipodes, in those mysterious regions which our fathers called simply *the isles*. And money, money, endless money flowed from this crowd on to the green tables, whose number had been increased since the previous day. Although the hands of the great clock over the entrance marked a quarter to ten, the visitors became at every moment more numerous. It was not the sound of conversation that was audible in these rooms, but the noise of footsteps moving about the tables, which stood firm amid this surging crowd like flat rocks on the mounting sea, motionless under the lash of the waves. The noise of footsteps was accompanied by another no less continuous—the clinking of gold and silver coins, which one could hear falling, piling, separating, living, in fact, with the sonorous and rapid life which they have under the rake of the *croupier*. The rattle of the balls in the roulette rooms formed

a mechanical accompaniment to the formulae, mechanically repeated, in which the words "*rouge*" and "*noir*," "*pair*" and "*impair*," "*passe*" and "*manque*" recurred with oracular impassibility. And, still more monotonous, from the tables of *trente-et-quarante* which lacked the rattle of the wheel, other formulæ arose incessantly—"*Quatre, deux. Rouge gagne et la couleur—Cinq, neuf. Rouge perd, la couleur gagne—Deux, deux. Après*—" At the sight of the columns of napoleons and hundred-franc pieces rising and falling on the ten or twelve tables, the bank-notes of one hundred, five hundred, and a thousand francs, unfolded and heaped up; the full dress of the men, the jewels of the women, the evident prodigality of all these people, one felt the gaming-house vibrating with a frenzy other than that of loss and gain. One breathed in the fever of luxury, the excess and abuse of pleasure. On nights like this gold seems to have no longer any value, so fast is it won and lost on these tables, so wildly is it spent in the hotels, restaurants, and villas which crowd around the Casino like the houses of a watering-place around the spring. The beauty of women is here too tempting and accessible, pleasure is too abundant, the climate too soft, comfort is too easy. The paradise of brutal refinement installed here on this flower-clad rock is hostile to calm enjoyment and to cool reflection. The giddiness which it imparts to the passing guest has its crisis of intensity, and this night was one of them. It had something of the Kermess about it, and of Babylonian furore. Nor did it lack even the *Mene*, *Tekel*, *Upharsin* of the Biblical feast, for the despatches posted on one of the columns in the vestibule recounted the bloody episode of a strike that had broken out since the previous day in the mining district of the North. The telegram told of the firing of the troops, of workmen killed, and of an engineer murdered for revenge. But who pictured in concrete images the details of this tragic despatch? Who in this crowd, more and more athirst for pleasure, realized its revolutionary

menace? The gold and silver coins continued to roll, the bank-notes to unfold and quiver, the *croupiers* to cry "*Faites vos jeux*" and "*Rien ne va plus*," the balls to spin around the wheels, the cards to fall on the green cloth, the rakes to grasp the money of the poor unfortunates, and each one to follow his mania for gambling or for luxury, his fancy for snobbery and vanity, or the caprice of his *ennui*. For how many different fancies this strange palace, with its doors like those of the Alhambra, served as the theatre. On this night of feverish excitement it was lending one of its divans to the preparatives for a most fantastic adventure, the mere announcement of which recalls the advertisements of the *Opéra Comique*, the music of our great-grandmothers, and the forgotten name of Cimarosa—a secret marriage.

The group of three persons who had been compelled to choose a corner of this mundane caravansary for that romantic conspiracy was composed of a young man and two women. The young man appeared to be thirty-two years old. That was also the age of one of the women, who was, as they say in America, the chaperon of the other, a girl ten years younger. To complete the paradoxical character of this matrimonial conference in the long room that separates the roulette halls from those of the *trente-et-quarante*, it is only necessary to add that the young girl, an American, was in reality chaperoning the official chaperon, and that the project of this secret marriage did not concern her in the least. She was seated at the end of the divan, unmistakably a sentinel, while her friend and the young man talked together. Her beautiful brown eyes fearlessly scrutinized the passing crowd with the energy and confidence natural to a girl of the United States, accustomed from her childhood to realize her individuality, and who, if she dispenses with certain conventionalities, at least knows why, and is not ashamed of it. She was beautiful, with that beauty already so ripe which, accentuated by a toilet almost too

fashionable, gives to so many American women the air of a creature on exhibition. Her features were delicate, even too small for the powerful moulding of her face and the strength of her chin. On her thick, chestnut-colored hair she wore a round hat of black velvet, with a rim too wide and with plumes too high, which rose in the back over a *cachepeigne* of artificial orchids. It was the hat of a young girl and a hat for the afternoon, but, in its excess, it was quite in keeping with her dress of glossy cloth and her corsage, or rather cuirass, trimmed with silver, which the most celebrated couturier in Paris had designed for her. Thus adorned, and with the superabundance of jewellery that accompanied this toilet, Miss Florence Marsh—that was her name—might have passed for anything in the world except what she really was—the most straightforward and honest of young girls, helping to prepare for the conjugal happiness of a woman equally honest and irreproachable. This woman was the Marquise Andryana Bonnacorsi, a Venetian by birth, belonging to the ancient and illustrious dogal family of the Navagero. Her dress, though it, too, came from Paris, bore the marks of that taste for tinsel peculiar to Italian finery, which gives it that *fufu* air, to employ an untranslatable term, with which our provincial *bourgeoisie* ridicules these unsubstantial ornaments. A flock of butterflies in black jet rested upon her black satin dress. The same butterflies appeared on the satin of her small shoes and among the pink roses of her hat, above her beautiful light hair of that red gold so dear to the painters of her country. The voluptuous splendor of her complexion, the nobility of her somewhat heavy features, the precocious development of her bust accorded well with her origin, and even more the soft blue of her eyes, in which there floated all the passion and languor of the lagoons. The light of her blue eyes enveloped the young man who was now speaking to her, and with whom she was visibly in love, madly in love. He, in the full maturity of his strength, justified that adoration

more sensual than sentimental. He was a remarkable type of the manly beauty peculiar to our Provence, which attests that for centuries it was the land where the Roman race left its deepest imprint. His short, black hair, over the straight, white forehead; his pointed, slightly curling beard, the firm line if his nose, and the deep curve of his brows, gave him a profile like that of a medal, which would have been severe, if all the energy of a born lover had not burned in his soft eyes, and all the gayety of the South sparkled in his smile. His robust and supple physique could be divined even under his coat and white waistcoat, and these signs of animal health were so evident, his somewhat excessive gestures seemed to evince such exuberance, such perfect joy in living, that one failed to notice how impenetrable were those ardent eyes, how shrewd the smiling mouth, and how all the signs of cunning calculation were imprinted on that face, so reflective under its mobility.

Two kinds of men thus excel in utilizing their defects to the profit of their interest—the German, who shelters his diplomacy behind his apparent dulness, and the Provençal, who conceals his beneath his instinctive petulance, and who appears, as he really is on the surface, an enthusiast, while he is executing some plan as solidly and coldly realistic as though he were a Scotchman of the Border. Who would have guessed that on this lounge of the Casino, while he talked so gayly with his habitual abandon, the Viscount de Corancez—he belonged to a family near Tarascon, of the least authentic title to nobility—was just bringing to a successful conclusion the most audacious, the most improbable, and the most carefully studied of intrigues? But who in all the world suspected the real character of this "careless Marius," as he was called by his father, the old vine-grower of Tarascon, whom his compatriots had seen die in despair at the eternal debts of his son? Certainly not these men of Tarascon and the Rhone valley, who had seen

the beautiful vines, so well cared for and regenerated by the father, disappear, vineyard by vineyard, to satisfy the follies of the heir at Paris. Nor was his real character known to the companions of his folly, the Casal, the Vardes, the Machault, all be noted men of pleasure of the time, who had clearly recognized the sensuality and vanity of the Southerner, but not his cunning, and who had classed him once ad for all among the provincials destined to disappear after shining like a meteor in the firmament of Paris. No one had perceived in this joyous companion, this gourmand ready for every pleasure, for a supper, for cards, for a love-affair, the practical philosopher who should when the hour arrived nimbly change his weapon. And the hour had struck several months ago; of the 600,000f. left him by his father scarcely 40,000 remained, and this winter the supple Southerner had begun to execute the programme of is thirty-second year—a successful marriage. The originality of this project lay in the peculiar conditions he affixed to it. In the first place, he had perceived that, even if enriched by the most fortunate marriage, his situation at Paris would never be what he wished. His defeat at an aristocratic club, to which he had attempted to gain admittance, trusting of certain influence imprudently offered and accepted, had shown him the difference between mere comradeship and a solid standing in society. Two or three visits to Nice had revealed the cosmopolitan world to him, and, with his superior cleverness, he had divined its resources. He had resolved to marry some stranger who had a good standing in the society of Europe. He dreamed of passing the winter on the coast, the summer in the Alps, the hunting season in Scotland, the autumn on his wife's estate, and a few festive weeks in Paris in the spring. This plan of existence presupposed that his wife should not be a mere young girl. Corancez wished her to be a widow, older than himself if need be, and yet still beautiful in her autumn. As he based his hopes of success mainly upon his youthful and

handsome appearance, it was desirable that the matrimonial labors should not be too severe. An Italian Marquise, belonging by birth to the highest Venetian aristocracy, the widow of a nobleman, left with an income of 200,000f., irreproachable in character, and devotedly religious, which would save her from any love-affairs unsanctioned by marriage, and nevertheless led by the influence of her Anglomaniac brother into cosmopolitan life, was the ideal of all his hopes, embodied as though by enchantment. But all the apples of Hesperides have their dragon, and the mythical monster was in this case represented by the brother, the Count Alvise Navagero, a doubtful personage under his snobbish exterior, who well understood how to keep for his own use the millions of his deceased brother-in-law, Francesco Bonnacorsi. How had the Provençal trickery eluded the Venetian watchfulness? Even to this day, when those events are things of the past, the five o'clock *habitués* of the yacht club at Cannes confess themselves unable to explain it, such astuteness had the ingenious Corancez employed in preparing the mine without arousing a suspicion of his subterranean labor. And four short months had sufficed. Through an inner conflict of emotions and of scruples, of timidity and passion, the Marquise Andryana had been brought to accept the idea of a secret marriage, finding no other way to satisfy the ardor with which she now burned, the exigencies of her religion, and her fear of her brother, which grew with her love for Corancez. She trembled now at the thought of it, although she knew this redoubtable guardian to be engaged in risking at a near table the thousand-franc notes she had given to be rid of him. Alvise was staking his money with the thoughtfulness and care of an old gambler who had already been once ruined by cards, unaware that within a few yards of him another game that concerned him was being played, and a fortune was at stake which he, like a perfect parasite, considered as his own. It was not simply at stake, it was

lost; for the romantic plan invented by Corancez to fasten an inseparable bond between the Marquise and himself was about to be consummated; the two lovers had just settled upon the place and time and details.

"And now," concluded Marius, "*rien ne va plus*, as they say in roulette. We have only to wait patiently for two weeks.—I believe we have not forgotten anything."

"But I am so afraid of some mischance," said the Marquise Andryana, softly shaking her blond head, the black butterflies trembling on her hat. "If Marsh changes the date of his yachting party?"

"You will telegraph me," said Corancez, "and I will meet you at Genoa another day.—Anyhow, Marsh will not change the date. It was the Baroness Ely who chose the 14th, and the wife of an archduke, though morganatic, is not to be disappointed, even were Marsh such a democrat as the western ranchman, who said once, with a strong handshake to an Infanta of Spain, 'Very glad to meet you, Infanta.' It was Marsh himself who told me this, and you remember his disgust, don't you, Miss Florence?"

"My uncle is as punctual in his pleasures as in his business," replied the American girl; "and since the Baroness Ely is in the party—"

"But if Alvise changes his mind and sails with us?" said the Venetian.

"Ah, Marquise, Marquise," Corancez cried, "what dismal forebodings. You forget that the Count Alvise is invited to the *Dalilah*, the yacht of Lord Herbert Bohun, to meet H.K.H. *Alberto Edoardo*, Prince of Wales, and Navagero miss that appointment? Never."

In light mockery at his future brother-in-law's Anglomania, he imitated the British accent which the Count affected,

with a mimicry so gay that the Marquise could not help exclaiming:—

"*Che carino!*"

And with her fan she stroked the hand of her *fiancé*. Notwithstanding his pleasantry at the expense of the domestic tyrant, at which the Marquise was ready to smile, much as she trembled in his presence, Corancez seemed to think the conversation dangerous, for he attempted to bring it to an end:—

"I do not wish my happiness to cost you a moment of worry, and it will not. I can predict hour by hour everything that will take place on the 14th, and you will see if your friend is not a prophet. You know what a lucky line I have here," he added, showing the palm of his hand, "and you know what I have read in your own pretty hand."

It was one of his tricks, and at the same time one of his own superstitions, to play the rôle of a parlor wizard and chiromancer, and he continued with that tone of certitude that imparts firmness to the irresolute:—

"You will have a magnificent passage to Genoa. You will find me you know where with Dom Fortunato Lagumina, for the old *abbé* is eager to act as chaplain in this *matrimonio segreto*. You will return to Cannes without any one in the world suspecting that *Mme. la Marquise Bonnacorsi* has become *Mme. la Vicomtesse de Corancez*, excepting the Vicomte, who will find some way of making our little *combinazione* acceptable to the good Alvise. Until then you will write to me at Genoa, *poste restante*, and I to you, in care of our dear Miss Florence."

"Whose name is also Miss Prudence," said the young girl, "and she thinks you are talking too long for conspirators. Beware of pickpockets," she added in English.

This was the signal agreed upon to warn them of the approach of some acquaintance.

"Bah, that pickpocket is not dangerous," said Corancez, following the direction of Miss Marsh's fan, and recognizing the person who had attracted her attention. "It is Pierre Hautefeuille, my old friend. He doesn't even notice us. Marquise, do you wish to see a lover desperate at not finding his loved one? And to think that I should be like him," he added, in a lower tone, "if you were not here to intoxicate me with your beauty." Then, raising his voice, "Watch him sit down on that lounge in the corner, unconscious of the three pairs of eyes that are observing him. A ruined gambler might blow out his brains beside him and he would not turn his head. He would not even hear."

The young man had at this moment an air of absorption so profound, so complete, that he justified the laughing raillery of Corancez. If the plot of a secret marriage, mapped out in these surroundings and amid this crowd, appear strangely paradoxical, the reveries of this man whom Corancez had called his "old friend"—they had been at school together in Paris for two years—were still stranger and more paradoxical. The contrast was too strong between the crowd swarming around Pierre Hautefeuille and the hypnotism that appeared to be upon him. Evidently the two thousand people scattered through these rooms ceased to exist for him as soon as he had discovered the absence of a certain person. And who could this be if not a woman? The disappointed lover had fallen, rather than seated himself, upon the lounge in front of Corancez and his fellow-conspirators. With his elbow on the arm of the divan, he pressed his hand over his forehead, disconsolately. His slender fingers, pushing back his hair, disclosed the noble outline of his brow, revealed his profile, the slightly arched nose, the severe lips, whose proud expression would have been almost fierce were it not for the tender softness of his

eyes. This look of strangely intense meditation in a face so exhausted and pale, with its small, dark mustache, gave him a resemblance to the classic portrait of Louis XIII. in his youth. His narrow shoulders, his slightly angular limbs, the evident delicacy of his whole body indicated one of those fragile organizations whose force lies wholly in the nerves, a physique with no vital power of resistance, ravaged eternally by emotions, down to the obscure and quivering centre of consciousness, and as easily exhausted by sentiment as muscular natures are by action and sensation. Although Pierre Hautefeuille was, in his dress and manner, indistinguishable from Corancez and the countless men of pleasure in the rooms, yet either his physiognomy was very deceptive or he did not belong to the same race morally as these cavaliers of the white waistcoat and the varnished pumps, who encircled the ladies dressed like *demi-mondaines*, and the *demi-mondaines* dressed like ladies, or crowded around the tables, amid the throng of gentlemen and swindlers. The melancholy in the curve of his lips and in his tired eyelids revealed a sadness, not momentary, but habitual, an abiding gloom, and if it were true that he had come to this place in search of a woman whom he loved, this sadness was too naturally explained. He must suffer from the life that this woman was leading, from her surroundings, her pleasures, her habits, her inconsistencies —suffer even to the extent of illness, and, perhaps, without knowing why, for he had not the eyes that judge of one they love. In any case, if he was, as Corancez said, a lover, he was certainly not a successful one. His face showed neither the pride nor the bitterness of a man to whom the loved woman has given herself, and who believes in her or suspects her. Even the simplicity with which he indulged his reveries in the midst of this crowd and on the lounge of a gaming-house was enough to prove a youthfulness of heart and imagination rare at his age. Corancez's companions were struck at the same time with this naïve contrast, and

each made to herself a little exclamation in her native tongue:—

"*Com'è simpatico*," murmured the Italian.

"*Oh, you dear boy*," said Miss Florence.

"And with whom is he in love?" they asked together.

"I could give you a hundred to guess," said Corancez, "but you could not. Never mind. It is not a secret that was confided to me; I discovered it myself, so I am not bound to keep it. Well, the *sympathetic*, dear boy has chosen to fall in love with our friend Madame de Carlsberg, the Baroness Ely, herself. She has been here for six days with Madame Brion, and this poor boy has not been able to remain away from her. He wished to see her without her knowing. He must have been wandering around the Villa Brion, waiting for her to come out. See the dust on his shoes and trousers. Then, having doubtless heard that the Baroness spends her evenings here, he has come to watch her. He has not found her in this crowd. That is how we love," he added, with a look at the Marquise, "when we do love."

"And the Baroness?"

"You wish to know whether or not the Baroness loves him? Luckily you and Miss Florence believe in hands, for it is only through my talent for fortunetelling that I can answer you. You are interested? Well," he continued, with his peculiar air of seriousness and mystification, "she has in her hand a red heart-line, which indicates a violent passion, and there is a mark that places this passion near her thirtieth year, which is just her present age. By the way, did I never tell you that she has also on the Mount of Jupiter, there, a perfect star—one of whose rays forms a cross of union?"

"And that means?" inquired the American girl, with the interest that the people of the most materialistic country

have for all questions of a supernatural order, for everything that pertains to what they call "spiritualism."

"Marriage with a prince," replied the Southerner.

There was a minute of silence, during which Corancez continued to watch Pierre Hautefeuille with great attention. Suddenly his eyes sparkled with an idea that had just occurred to him:—

"Marquise. The witness we need for the ceremony at Genoa. Why not have him? I think he would bring us good luck."

"That is so," said Madame Bonnacorsi; "it is delightful to meet with a face like that at certain moments of one's life. But would it be wise?"

"If I propose him to you," Corancez replied, "you may be sure that I answer for his discretion. We have known each other since our boyhood, Hautefeuille and I; he is solid gold. And how much safer than a hired witness, who could at any time betray us."

"Will he accept?"

"I shall know to-morrow before leaving Cannes, if you have no objection to my choosing him. Only," the young man added, "in that case it might be better to have him on the yacht."

"I'll attend to that," said Miss Marsh. "But how and when introduce him to my uncle?"

"This evening," Corancez replied, "while we are all in the train for Cannes. I will secure our lover at once, and not leave him till we are in the train—especially," he added, rising, "as we have been talking here too long, and though the walls have no ears, they have eyes. My dear," he murmured, passionately pressing the little hand of Madame Bonnacorsi, who also had risen, "I shall not talk with you

again before the great day; give me a word to carry with me and live with until then."

"God guard you, *anima mia*," she answered, in her grave voice, revealing all the passion that this skilful personage had inspired in her.

"It is written here," he said gayly, opening his hand, "and here," he added, placing his hand upon his heart.

Then, turning to the young girl:—

"Miss Flossie, when you need some one to go through fire for you, a word, and he will be ready *right away*."

While Miss Marsh laughed at this joke upon one of the little idioms of the Yankee language, the Marquise followed him with the look of a passionate woman whose heart goes out to every motion of the man she loves. The Provençal moved toward his old friend with such grace and suppleness of carriage that the American girl could not refrain from remarking it. The young girls of that energetic race, so fond of exercise and so accustomed to the easy familiarities of the tennis court, are frankly and innocently sensible to the physical beauty of men.

"How handsome he is, your Corancez," she exclaimed to the Marquise. "To me he is the Frenchman, the type that I used to picture to myself in Marionville when I read the novels of Dumas. How happy you will be with him."

"So happy," the Italian murmured, but added, with a melancholy foreboding, "yet God will not permit it."

"God permits everything that one wishes, if one wishes it hard enough, and it is just," Miss Florence interrupted.

"No. I have had to tell Alvise too many lies. I shall be punished."

"If you feel that way," said the American, "why don't you tell your brother? Do you wish me to do it? Five minutes of conversation, and you will not have a single lie on your conscience. You have the right to marry. The money is yours. What do you fear?"

"You don't know Alvise," she said, and her face had a look of actual terror. "What if he should provoke him to a duel and kill him? No; let us do as we have planned, and may the Madonna protect us."

She closed her eyes a moment, sighing. Florence Marsh watched her with amazement. The independent Anglo-Saxon could never understand the hypnotic terror that Navagero threw over his sister. The thoughts of the Marquise had wandered back to Cannes. She saw the little chapel of Notre Dame des Pins, where every day for months a mass had been said in order to find pardon for her falsehoods, and she saw the altar where she and Corancez had knelt and made a vow that they would go together to Loretto as soon as their marriage was announced. The Provençal believed in the Madonna, just as he believed in the lines of the hand, with that demi-scepticism and demi-faith possible only to those southern natures, so childish and so cunning, so complex with their instinctive simplicity, so sincere in their boastfulness, and forever superstitious in even their coldest calculations. He saw in the scruples of Madame Bonnacorsi the surest guarantee of his success; for, once in love, a woman of such religious ardor and such passionate intensity would end necessarily in marriage. And, besides, the tapers burning in the little church at Cannes assured him in regard to the brother, whose suspicions he had evaded, but whom he knew to be capable of anything in order not to lose the fortune of his sister. So, unlike Miss Marsh, he was not astonished at the fears of his *fiancée*. But what could the fury of Alvise avail against a union consummated in due form before a genuine priest, lacking

only the civil consecration, which mattered nothing to the pious Marquise? However, faithful to the old adage that two precautions are better than one, Corancez, in view of the eventual explanation, was not displeased at the prospect of having at his wedding a man of his own set. Why had he not thought before of his old friend of Louis-le-Grand, whom he had found again at Cannes, just as candid and simple-hearted as in the days when they sat side by side on the benches of the school? Corancez had recognized the candor and simplicity of his old acquaintance at the first touch of his hand. He had recognized them also in the innocent impulsiveness with which Hautefeuille had become enamoured of the Baroness Ely de Carlsberg. He had revealed this passion to his two interlocutors; but he had not told them that he believed Madame de Carlsberg to be as much in love with the young man as he was with her. However, he might justly have boasted of his perspicacity. It had been keen in this case, as in so many others. But, perspicacious as he was, the Southerner did not realize that in making use of his discovery he was about to turn the *opéra bouffe* of his marriage with Madame Bonnacorsi into a dramatic episode. In speaking to himself of his famous line of luck, he always said, "Only gay things come to me." It seems, in fact, that there are two distinct types of men, and their eternal coexistence proves the legitimacy of the two standpoints taken since the world began by the painters of human nature—comedy and tragedy. Every man partakes of one or the other, and rare is the destiny in which both are mingled. For a whole group of persons—of whom Corancez was one—the most romantic affairs end in a vaudeville; while for the other class, to which, alas, Pierre Hautefeuille belonged, the simplest adventures result in tragedy. If the first love sincerely, never does the loved woman do them wrong. A smile is always ready to mingle with their tears. The others are given to poignant emotions, to cruel complications; all their idyls are tragic idyls. And truly, to

see these two young men side by side, as Corancez laid his hand on Hautefeuille's shoulder, to arouse him from his reverie, these two eternal types—the hero of comedy and the hero of tragedy—appeared in all their contrast—the one robust and laughing, with bright eyes and sensual lips, sure of himself, and throwing around him, as it were, an atmosphere of good humor; the other frail and delicate, his eyes heavy with thought, ready to suffer at the least contact with life, scarcely able to conceal a quiver of irritation at the sudden interrupting of his dreams.

His irritation quickly vanished; when he had risen and Corancez had taken him familiarly by the arm, the thought occurred to him that perhaps he might hear from his old friend some news of the Baroness Ely de Carlsberg, whom in fact he had been vainly seeking at Monte Carlo. And the cunning Southerner began:—

"How sly of you to come here without letting me know. And how foolish. You might have dined comfortably with me. I had this evening the prettiest table in Monte Carlo: Madame de Carlsberg, Madame de Chésy, Miss Marsh, Madame Bonnacorsi. You know all four of them, I believe. You would not have been bored."

"I didn't know until five o'clock that I should take the train at six," said Hautefeuille.

"I understand," said Corancez; "you are sitting comfortably in your room at Cannes. You hear voices, like Jeanne d'Arc, only not quite the same; '*Rien ne va plus*. *Messieurs, faites vos jeux*;' and the bank-notes begin to pant in your purse, the napoleons to dance in your pocket, and before you know it you find yourself in front of the green cloth. Have you won?"

"I never play," Pierre answered.

"You will before long. But, tell me, do you often come here?"

"This is the first time."

"And you have been all winter at Cannes. I can still hear Du Prat calling you Mademoiselle Pierrette. You are too good and too young. Look out for the reaction. And, speaking of Du Prat, have you heard from him?"

"He is still on the Nile with his wife," Hautefeuille replied, "and he insists upon my joining them."

"And you wouldn't go and finish the wedding journey with them. That was even wiser than refusing to play. That is the result of not spending one's honeymoon here on the coast, like everybody else. They get bored with each other even before the housewarming."

"But I assure you that Olivier is very happy," Hautefeuille said, with an emphasis that showed his affection for the man of whom Corancez had spoken so lightly; then, to avoid any further comments upon his absent friend: "But, frankly, do you find this society so amusing?" And he motioned toward the crowd of players around the tables who were growing more and more excited. "It is the paradise of the *rastaquouères*."

"That's the prejudice of the Parisian," said the Provençal, who still felt bitter against the great city on account of his defeat at the most desirable of clubs. He continued to vent his bitterness; "*Rastaquouères*. When you have uttered that anathema, you think that you have settled the question; and by dint of repeating it, you blind yourself to the fact that you Parisians are becoming the provincials of Europe. Yes, you no longer produce the really great aristocrats; they are now the English, the Russians, the Americans, the Italians, who have as much elegance and wit as you Parisians, but with real temperament beneath their elegance which you

have never had, and with the gayety which you have no more. And the women of these foreign lands. Contrast them with that heartless, senseless doll, that vanity in *papier mâché*, the Parisian woman."

"In the first place, I am not at all a Parisian," interrupted Pierre Hautefeuille; "I am rather a provincial of provincials. And then, I grant the second part of your paradox; some of these women are remarkable in their fineness and culture, in their brightness and charm. And yet is their charm ever equal, not to that of the Parisienne, I agree, but to that of the real Frenchwoman, with her good sense and her grace, her tact, her intelligence—the poetry of perfect measure and taste?"

He had been thinking aloud, unconscious of the slight smile that passed, almost invisibly, over the ironical lips of his interlocutor. The "Sire" de Corancez was not the man to engage himself in a discussion for which he cared no more than he did for the Pharaohs whose tombs served as the background of their friend's honeymoon. Knowing Hautefeuille's attachment to this man, he had brought up his name in order to give to their conversation an accent of ease and confidence. Hautefeuille's remarks about foreign women, confirming the diagnosis of his love for Madame de Carlsberg, recalled Corancez to the real purpose of this interview. He and his companion were at this moment near the table of *trente-et-quarante*, at which was seated one of the persons most involved in the execution of his project, the uncle of Miss Marsh, one of the most celebrated of American railroad magnates, Richard Carlyle Marsh, familiarly known as Dickie Marsh, he who was destined, on a fixed day, to lend his yacht unwittingly to the wedding voyage of Madame Bonnacorsi. It was in his company that Corancez was to return with his friend to Cannes, and he wished to interest Hautefeuille in the Yankee potentate in order to facilitate his introduction.

"No," he continued, "I assure you that this foreign colony contains men who are as interesting as their wives. We are apt to overlook this fact, because they are not so pretty to look at.—I see one at this table whom I shall introduce. We met his niece the other day at the Baroness's. He is Marsh, the American. I wish you to see him playing— Good, some one is rising. Don't lose me, we may profit by this and get to the front of the crowd."

And the adroit Southerner managed to push himself and Hautefeuille through the sudden opening of the spectators so that in a moment they were stationed right behind the chair of the croupier, who was in the act of turning the cards. They could command the whole table and every movement of the players.

"Now, look," Corancez whispered. "There is Marsh."

"That little gray-faced man with the pile of bank-notes in front of him?"

"That's the man. He is not fifty years old, and he is worth ten million dollars. At eighteen he was a conductor of a tramway at Cleveland, Ohio. Such as you see him now, he has founded a city of fifty thousand inhabitants, named after his wife, Marionville, and he has made his fortune literally with his own hands, since they say that he himself, with a few workmen, built on the prairie the first miles of his company's railroad, which is now more than two thousand miles long. Observe those hands of his. You can see them so well against the green cloth; they are strong and not common. You see the knotty knuckles, which means reflection, judgment, calculation. The ends of the fingers are a little too spatulated; that means an excessive activity, the need of continual movement and a tendency toward mournful thoughts. I will tell you some day about the death of his daughter. You see the thumb; the two joints are large and of equal length; that means will and logic combined. It

curves backward; that is prodigality. Marsh has given a hundred thousand dollars to the University of Marionville. And notice his movements, what decision, what calm, what freedom from nervousness. Isn't that a man?"

"He is certainly a man with an abundance of money," said Hautefeuille, amused by his friend's enthusiasm, "and a man who is not afraid of losing it."

"And that other, two places from Marsh, has he no money, then? That personage with a rosette and a red, sinister face. It is Brion, the financier, the director of the Banque Générale. Have you not met him at the house of Madame de Carlsberg? His wife is the intimate friend of Baroness Ely. Millionaire that he is, look at his hands, how nervous and greedy. You observe that his thumb is ball-shaped; that is the mark of crime. If that rascal is not a robber! And his manner of clutching the bank-notes, doesn't it show his brutality? And beside him you may see the play of a fool, Chésy, with his smooth and pointed fingers, the two middle ones of equal length, that of Saturn and that of the Sun. That is the infallible sign of a player who will ruin himself, especially if he is no more logical than this one. And he thinks himself shrewd! He enters into business relations with Brion, who pays court to Madame de Chésy. You may see the inevitable end."

"The pretty Madame de Chésy?" exclaimed Hautefeuille, "and that abominable Brion? Impossible."

"I do not say that it has happened; I say that, given this imbecile of a husband, with his taste for gambling here and at the Bourse, there is a great danger that it will happen some day. You see," he added, "that this place is not so commonplace when you open your eyes; and you will acknowledge that of the two Parisians and the *rastaquouère* whom we have seen, the interesting man is the *rastaquouère*."

While Corancez was speaking, the two young men had left their post of observation. He now led his companion toward the roulette rooms, adding these words, which made Hautefeuille quiver from head to foot:—

"If you have no objection we might look for Madame de Carlsberg, whom I left at one of these tables, and of whom I wish to take my leave. Fancy, she hates to have her friends near her while she is playing. But she must have lost all her money by this time."

"Does she play very much?" asked Hautefeuille, who now had no more desire to leave his friend than at first he had to follow him.

"As she does everything," Corancez answered, "capriciously and to beguile her *ennui*. And her marriage justifies her only too well. You know the prince? No? But you know his habits. Is it worth while to belong to the house of Hapsburg-Lorraine, to be called the Archduke Henry Francis, and to have a wife like that, if one is to profess the opinions of an anarchist, and spend sixteen hours out of the twenty-four in a laboratory, burning one's hands and beard and eyes over furnaces, and receive the friends of the Baroness in the way he does?"

"Then," said Hantefeuille, his arm trembling a little, as he asked his naïve question, "you think she is not happy?"

"You have only to look at her," replied Corancez, who, rising on his toes, had just recognized Madame de Carlsberg.

It was the one table that Pierre had not approached, on account of the crowd, which had been thicker around it than elsewhere. He signed to his companion that he was not tall enough to see over the mass of shoulders and heads; and Corancez, preceding his timid friend, began again to glide through the living wall of spectators, whose curiosity was

evidently excited to the highest degree. The young men understood why, when, after several minutes of breathless struggling, they succeeded in gaining once more the place behind the croupier which they had had at the table of *trente-et-quarante*. There was taking place, in fact, one of those extraordinary events which become a legend on the coast and spread their fame through Europe and the two Americas; and Hautefeuille was shocked to discover that the heroine of this occasion was none else than the Baroness Ely, whose adorable name echoed in his heart with the sweetness of music. Yes, it was indeed Madame de Carlsberg who was the focus of all the eyes in this *blasé* multitude, and she employed in the caprices of her extravagant play the same gentle yet imposing grace that had inspired the young man with his passionate idolatry. Ah, she was so proud even at this moment, and so beautiful. Her delicate bust, the only part of her body he could see, was draped in a corsage of violet silk, covered with a black plaited *mousseline de soie*, with sleeves of the same stuff which seemed to tremble at every movement. A set of Danube pearls, enormous and set with brilliants, formed a clasp for this corsage, over which fell a thin watch-chain of gold studded with various stones. She wore a diminutive hat, composed of two similar wings, spangled with silver and with violet sequins. This stylish trinket, resting on her black hair, divided simply into two heavy folds, contrasted, like her dress and like her present occupation, with the character of her physiognomy. Her face was one of those, so rare in our aging civilization, imprinted with *la grande beauté*, the beauty that is unaffected by age, for it lies in the essential lines of the features, the shape of the head, the form of the brow, the curve of the chin, the droop of the eyelids. To those who knew of the Greek blood in her veins, the classic nobility of her face explained itself. Her father, General de Sallach, when aide-de-camp of the Commander-in-Chief at Zara, had married for love a Montenegrin girl at

Bocca da Cattaro, who was the daughter of a woman of Salonica. This blood alone could have moulded a face at the same time so magnificent and so delicate, whose warm pallor added to its vague suggestion of the Orient. But her eyes lacked the happy and passionate lustre of the East. They were of an indefinable color, brown verging upon yellow, with something dim about them, as though perpetually obscured by an inner distress. One read in them an *ennui* so profound, a lassitude so incurable, that after perceiving this expression one began in spite of one's self to pity this woman apparently so fortunate, and to feel an impulse to obey her slightest whim if so her admirable face might lose that look, if but for a second. Yet doubtless it was one of those effects of the physiognomy which signify nothing of the soul, for her eyes retained the same singular expression at this moment while she abandoned herself to the wild fancies of the play. She must have gained an enormous sum since Corancez had left her, for a pile of thousand-franc notes—fifty perhaps—lay before her, and many columns of twenty-franc and hundred-franc pieces. Her gloved hands, armed with a little rake, manipulated this mass of money with dexterous grace. The cause of the feverish curiosity around her was that she risked at every turn the maximum stake: nine napoleons on a single number, that of her age, thirty-one, an equal number of napoleons on the squares, and six thousand francs on the black. The alternations of loss and gain were so great, and she met them with such evident impassibility, that she naturally had become the centre of interest. Oblivious to the comments that were whispered around her, she seemed scarcely to interest herself even in the ball that bounded over the numbered compartments.

"I assure you that she is an archduchess," said one.

"She is a Russian princess," declared another; "there is no one but a Russian for that game there."

"Let her win but three or four times and the bank is broken."

"She can't win, it is only the color that saves her."

"I believe in her luck. I will play her number."

"I'll play against her. Her luck is turning."

"Her hands," Corancez whispered to Hautefeuille. "Look at her hands; even under her gloves, the hands of the genuine aristocrat. See the others beside her, the motion of those greedy and nervous paws. All those fingers are plebeian after you have seen hers. But I am afraid we have brought her bad luck. Red and 7: she has lost—Oh, lost again. That means twenty-five thousand francs. If the word were not too vulgar to apply to such a pretty woman, I would say, 'What stomach!' She is going on."

The young woman continued to distribute her gold and bank-notes upon the same number, the same squares, and upon the black, and it seemed as though neither the numbers, nor the squares, nor the black would ever appear again. A few more turns, and the columns of twenty-franc and hundred-franc pieces had disappeared as into a crucible, and, six by six, the bank-notes had gone under the rake to join the pile heaped up before the croupier. A quarter of an hour had scarcely elapsed since the arrival of Corancez and Hautefeuille, and the Baroness Ely had nothing before her but a little empty purse and a Russian cigarette case of gold inlaid with niello and with sapphires, rubies, and diamonds. The young woman weighed the case in her hand, while another turn of the wheel brought up the red again.

It was the eleventh time that this color had won. Suddenly, with the same air of indifference, she turned to her neighbor, a large man of about fifty years, with a square head and wearing spectacles, who had abandoned his book

of calculations to play simply against her. He had before him now a mass of gold and bank-notes.

"Monsieur," she said, handing him the case, "will you give me a thousand francs for this box?"

She spoke loud enough for Corancez and Hautefeuille, who had approached, to hear this strange and unexpected question.

"But we should be the ones to lend her the money," said Pierre.

"I should not advise you to offer it," the other replied. "She is very much of an archduchess when she chooses, and I fancy she would not receive us well. However, there will be plenty of usurers to buy the case at that price, if the man in the spectacles does not accept.—He is speaking German. He doesn't understand.—Well, what did I tell you?"

As though to support Corancez's pretensions to prophecy, just as Madame de Carlsberg was replying to her neighbor in German, the hook-nose of a jewel merchant penetrated the crowd, a hand held out the thousand-franc note, and the gold case disappeared. The Baroness did not deign even to glance at this personage, who was one of the innumerable moneylenders that practise a vagrant usury around the tables. She took the bank-note, and twisted it a moment without unfolding it. She waited until the red had appeared twice more; seemed to hesitate; then, with the end of her rake, pushed the note toward the *croupier*, saying:—

"On the red."

The ball spun round again, and this time it was the black. Baroness Ely picked up her fan and her empty purse, and rose. In the movement of the crowd, while he was endeavoring to extricate himself in order to reach her, Corancez suddenly noticed that he had lost Hautefeuille.