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The Eye of Truth

By ARLTON EADIE

'A fascinating story of a Greek who found strange powers in the ruins of a temple in Boeotia

“**M**ESSIEURS, mesdames, faites vos jeux!”

With a sharp twist of his right hand the croupier set the roulette wheel in motion, and a moment later he threw the little ivory ball upon the spinning disk. A tense, breathless hush fell upon the circle of well-dressed men and women seated round the green-covered table; the only sound to be heard was the merry clicking of the tiny ivory ball as it leaped and spun in its dance of fortune.

Gradually the wheel slowed down until the alternating red and black sections could be faintly distinguished—slower still, until one could see the blur of the numbers on the outer rim of white—slower and slower, until the eye could follow the tiny white ball as it circled round in one of the black sections of the wheel, and read the number marked upon the rim.

“*Dix, noir, pair et manque!*” announced the droning voice of the croupier.

For a few seconds he plied his rake deftly, whisked away the stakes of those who had lost, pushing their winnings across to those on whom fortune had smiled.

“The Count wins again!” whispered one woman to her neighbor. “*Ma foi!* but he has the luck of *le grand diable* himself!”

The other woman sighed enviously as she watched her few notes go to swell the great pile opposite the man referred to.

“Ah, but he is one who has the courage to flout Dame Fortune by turning his

back on her while she smiles upon him. See—he is about to leave the table.”

“*Vraiment!* he can well afford to be content,” exclaimed the first speaker. “Tonight he has won a fortune!”

“Last night he did the same—and the night before, too. Many times have I watched him, tempted to follow his play, yet fearing that such luck can not hold. But it does hold. *Tenez!* it is beyond belief! Who is he?”

The other woman raised her pencilled eyebrows and shrugged.

“Ah, many people have asked that question without finding an answer to it. The man is a mystery. Nobody knows his name, so the *habitués* of the tables have invented one for him. They call him ‘Count Roulette.’”

Meanwhile the object of their conversation had risen leisurely to his feet, swept together his winnings and thrust them carelessly into his pocket. He was a tall and extremely handsome man, although well past the prime of life, if one might judge by the snowy whiteness of his hair and the long pointed beard which covered the lower portion of his face. Yet his skin, though pale as old ivory, showed scarcely a trace of a wrinkle, while his dark eyes shone beneath their heavy brows with a keen vivacity that seemed almost youthful.

The moment he rose there was a rush of bystanders to occupy the “lucky chair;” but he did not even glance toward them as he crossed to the door leading to the atrium, where all hats and coats must be



"Before the echoes of the explosion had died away I had drawn my own gun and shot him dead."

deposited. Before he could reach it his arm was seized violently from behind.

"Pardon, *monsieur*," the speaker, a total stranger to him, was quivering with eagerness and excitement. "You play on a system—yes? I will pay your own price for the secret of it!"

The man who had won a fortune paused and regarded the other for a moment through the old-fashioned glass which he usually wore suspended from his neck by a fine gold chain.

"I have no system, *monsieur*," he said coldly. His French was perfect, but he spoke it with a slight intonation which

seemed to indicate it was not his native tongue.

The man's grip tightened on his arm.

"No system?" he whispered in a voice of hoarse incredulity. "Yet you win, and win, and win——"

"True, *monsieur*." For the first time that evening a faint smile lightened the habitual sadness of the bearded man's face. "I win because—unfortunately—I can not lose. I have the honor of wishing you good-night—and better fortune."

He released his arm with a quick movement and, before the other could recover from his astonishment, passed through

the swinging doors into the vestibule. Tendering his numbered *vestaire* check, he received his hat and overcoat, and as the attendant was helping him to don the latter, one of the frock-coated officials approached and whispered in his ear.

"Would it not be well if a gendarme accompanies *monsieur* to his hotel? The hour is late, and you have a large sum of money in your possession, and there have been instances where players have been robbed of their winnings——"

"Pray have no fear," interrupted the Count. "I have a . . . a friend not far away."

"As *monsieur* pleases."

THE official returned to his post in the gaming-room and the other stepped out into the palm-shaded path that led through the gardens of the Casino. As he disappeared, two men, who had quitted the tables a few seconds before him, emerged from the shadows and followed noiselessly in his wake.

Stepping out briskly and inhaling with evident relief the cool sea breeze which swept in from the Mediterranean—doubly refreshing after the vitiated, scented atmosphere of the crowded gaming-rooms—the stranger soon reached the curving terrace overlooking the Pointe Focianana. Here he came to a halt and, lighting a cigar, leant his arms on the stone balustrade and contemplated the scene before him.

Immediately below was the little square harbor, with its twin lighthouses guarding the entrance, their lights, red on one side and green on the other, mirrored with scarcely a break in the smooth, unruffled waters. Beyond the harbor towered the fortress-crowned Rock of Monaco, ancient, grim, rugged and gray; its siege-scarred walls and bastions looking down as though in savage contempt at the

ultra-modern Casino which, glittering with a thousand lights and looking as dainty as the white ornament on a bridal cake, faced it across the bay.

A faint crunching sound on the gravel path behind him caused him to swing round. Confronting him, their faces concealed by masks, were two men, the foremost holding a revolver aimed straight at his breast.

"Your money, *monsieur*, or you die!"

The man with the white beard leaned back against the balustrade and laughed softly.

"Pardon my mirth, *messieurs*, but one would imagine that you had studied your—er—profession at some *opéra bouffe*——"

The right hand of the threatened man made a quick movement toward his breast, but it was merely to grasp the curious eyeglass which dangled on its gold chain. Raising it to his eye, he surveyed each man in turn as coolly and dispassionately as though he were inspecting two rare specimens in a museum. So unexpected was that calm scrutiny that the man with the pistol shrank back and stood irresolute. But the other came forward with a muttered curse.

"*Nom de Dieu*, why do you waste time? Put a bullet into the old *cochon* if he won't hand over——"

Again the man with the white beard laughed.

"Your threats are empty, *messieurs*, as empty as the weapon you threaten me with. Your revolver is not loaded!"

The two men stared at the speaker for an instant in speechless amazement.

"You are surprized that I know that," the old man continued, "but there are many more things about you that I know equally well. You"—he pointed to the man who held the revolver—"are Raoul Lecontier, otherwise known as 'Le Lapin,'

an apache badly wanted by the Sûreté Générale of Paris for the murder of the baker in the Rue du Petit Camas. Your companion is Anton Grezan, otherwise known as——"

"*Mille tonnerres!* You know too much, old man, to be allowed to live! Money or no money, he mustn't get away from here!"

Pocketing his empty pistol, the ruffian slid a knife from his belt, and slowly and cautiously the two began to approach their victim. But the old man had no intention of allowing himself to be cornered. Throwing his hat in the face of the foremost man, he dashed off to the right and tore along a path which stretched dim beneath the arching palms and sub-tropical undergrowth, his assailants in hot pursuit.

"Help!" he cried, raising his voice and speaking in English. "Help me! I am beset by thieves!"

With a promptitude that could scarcely have been excelled had the summons been awaited, a figure rose from one of the stone seats and placed itself in fighting attitude between pursued and pursuers. For an instant the two apaches paused; then, with bared knives held ready for the deadly upward lunge, they circled round to attack the newcomer from both sides simultaneously.

But the man was evidently fully alive to the importance of getting his attack in first. Instead of making a retreat before such odds, he sidestepped quickly and with the force and dexterity of a trained boxer, sent a lightning right and left to the jaw of the nearest man.

"You're down for the count, anyway, my beauty!" he muttered as the Frenchman sagged forward and pitched headlong on to the gravel, his knife falling from his hand. Giving the weapon a kick which sent it slithering well out of

reach, the victor turned his attention to the remaining man, but this time he waited for his opponent's move.

It was not long in coming.

"*Mort de Dieu!*" screamed Le Lapin, springing forward with upraised knife. "Dog of an Englishman—you die!"

"Not on your life, *monsieur!*" came back with a mocking laugh.

What happened subsequently was entirely beyond the apache's experiences of such encounters. The vague impression he retained in his mind was that his intended victim was in two places at once, but before he had time to give this extraordinary phenomenon due attention a fist shot out of nowhere in particular and landed with the force of a battering-ram behind his left ear in what was—although the recipient knew it not—a very scientific and perfect "cross counter."

"Two!" said the victor, as the gallant Lapin went to join his prostrate accomplice. "And now I should be glad to know what all the fuss is about."

The white-bearded man, who had been an interested spectator of the fight, now stepped forward.

"These two gentlemen very kindly offered to relieve me of a few thousand francs that I had won at the tables," he said with a slight smile. "When I declined to allow them to act as my bankers, they tried to kill me."

"Shall I hand them over to the police?" asked the young man.

The other surveyed the limp forms of his late antagonists, then shook his head.

"I think they have learnt their lesson not to molest inoffensive strangers. I will drop a hint in the right quarter to insure that Monte Carlo becomes too hot to hold them another twenty-four hours. Really," he paused and regarded his rescuer through his strange eyeglass, "I am rather grateful to the rogues, since they have

been the means of my becoming acquainted with a young artist whom I have long wished to know."

"Meaning myself?" The surprize in the young man's voice was too deep to be disguised.

"Exactly. As a matter of fact, I ran down this rather dark and forbidding path well knowing that I should find you seated at the farther end, and I may add, well knowing, too, that you would not fail me in my hour of need."

The other gave a laugh of frank incredulity.

"Your good opinion of me is very flattering, sir, but I fear you must be mistaken. How could you have foreseen that I should be in the Casino gardens at this hour of the night? Why, I'm positive that I have spoken to no one of my intention to come here; in fact I did not make up my mind to do so until——"

"Exactly a quarter past five this afternoon, when you were packing up your paints and easel after completing your picture of the distant Citadel of Monaco."

THEY had fallen into step together and had been walking along the avenue which runs parallel to the Quai de Plaisance, but as the older man made this extraordinary remark the young artist stopped dead and stared at him in amazement.

"How could you possibly have known what was in my thoughts?" he cried.

The other shrugged slightly, and a wistful smile rose to his bearded lips.

"I am a man who knows many things that are hidden in the hearts of others," he said slowly, "though it is doubtful whether I am to be envied my knowledge. For instance, although you are living in an obscure lodging in the unfashionable quarter of the town, I know that you are

Frank Hartley, the only son of Matthew Hartley, the millionaire oil-king."

"Quite correct," the young man admitted. "But such information might have been gained by a few discreet inquiries. I must have more convincing proof than that if I am to believe in your boasted omniscience. Tell me, for instance, the most important thing that I intend to do tomorrow."

The old man raised his eyeglass to his eye and favored Frank Hartley with a long stare.

"The most important thing that you intend to do tomorrow, Mr. Hartley—although you have not yet quite made up your mind to take the plunge—is to ask Lady Vanda Delafer to become your wife."

The statement seemed to strike the young man speechless. For a moment he stood rigid and motionless with sheer amazement, and the other went on:

"If an old man may offer a little advice to one younger than himself, I would counsel you to beware of putting too much trust in new-found friends—no matter how beautiful and fascinating. Remember that, although your father has disinherited you because you chose to follow art instead of leading the idle, useless life of a fashionable man about town—remember, I repeat, that he may relent before he dies, and Frank Hartley, heir to the Hartley millions, may succeed in love where Frank Hartley, as the penniless artist, would be rejected with scorn."

Hartley started forward and seized the old man's shoulder.

"Who are you?" he demanded fiercely.

"Men call me 'Count Roulette,' and that name will serve as well as any other," the unknown answered with a shrug. "My home is that large steam yacht, the *Veritas*, which you can see moored at the quay yonder. As for my occupation—

well, I can only describe myself as a seeker."

"A seeker?" Frank repeated wonderingly. "What do you seek, then? Is it love?—fame?—riches?"

With a slow, inscrutable smile, Count Roulette shook his head.

"I seek none of those things, my friend, but rather a thing that one might imagine to be much easier to find. Yet I find my quest strangely difficult—so difficult, indeed, that until this night I have almost despaired of accomplishing it. But now I have hopes——" He paused and with a slow, impressive movement raised to his eye the curious eyeglass which dangled on its gold chain, intently scrutinizing the young man's features as he muttered to himself, "Yes, most decidedly I have hopes—now."

Then, dropping the glass, he raised his hat with a courtly, old-fashioned bow and hurried away, walking with rapid strides down the inclined road which led to the harbor.

Frank Hartley watched him until he turned the corner, a puzzled frown on his rather handsome features.

"He must be crazed—obsessed by a fantastic quest," he muttered as he turned away. "Yet the poor old fellow looked so kindly—so intelligent——" He started suddenly as his thoughts flew back to the old man's strange words. "But all the same it's mighty queer how he came by his knowledge of my private affairs, and was able to guess my intentions regarding Lady Vanda. Yes, it's very queer . . . I wonder. . . ."

He pondered deeply over the problem as he made his way through the silent streets to his lodging in the older and less fashionable district known as La Condamine. But when he fell asleep that night he had advanced no farther toward the solution of the mystery which surrounded

the strange, white-bearded man whose amazing luck had gained for him the title of "Count Roulette."

IN THE daintily decorated breakfast room of a *suite de luxe* in the most exclusive and expensive hotel in Monte Carlo, two people were seated the following morning. Neither of them seemed to have much appetite for the breakfast which the waiter had just set out on the table in the window overlooking the sea. The girl, a strikingly handsome blond attired in a wrapper of coral-pink silk, was puffing at a perfumed cigarette while she manipulated a cocktail-shaker with the facility of an expert.

There was a strong facial likeness between her and the man who was lounging on the settee, glancing through a Continental edition of an English newspaper—a likeness which was rendered even more striking by his effeminate air, drawling utterance, and languid movements.

The Honorable Bobby Delafer was two years older than his sister Vanda, but hers was the dominating will, and in the not infrequent discussions as to the best ways and means of what in less exalted society is termed "raising the wind," hers was the casting vote which decided their tactics. For, although the ancestral heads of the house of Delafer had bequeathed to their descendants an ancient and—outwardly, at least—unsullied title, there had been no fat rent-roll accompanying it.

The present Lord Delafer, the tenth of his line, had early in his career evinced a partiality for high stakes at cards, and this taste, combined with a certain novel and dexterous method of manipulating them, had caused him to resign his commission in a crack cavalry regiment at the urgent and very caustic request of his commanding officer. At the present time he was drawing a very modest and precarious in-

come by allowing his name to figure on the lists of directors of sundry newly fledged mining companies. To his two offspring he had given his fatherly advice and blessing before launching them on the sea of life, to trim their sails by such favoring winds as fate might send, in the hope of berthing in the snug and secure haven of a rich marriage.

To the Honorable Bobby this much-desired consummation seemed as far off as ever; the enterprising Vanda, however, had at one time seemed (to maintain the nautical simile) almost on the point of hooking her anchor firmly in the golden shoals accumulated by old Matthew Hartley. With infinite patience she had cultivated the acquaintance of his only son, Frank, even going to the length of taking lessons in art—a thing she heartily detested. To the generous and unsuspecting young student she appeared like a kindred soul. Friendship ripened quickly into that *camaraderie* which prevails in the studios, and that in turn ripened—on Frank's part at least—to a deep and abiding love. Then, with the prize almost within her grasp, came the bombshell which shattered her hopes. Quite casually, as though it were a thing of but little importance, Frank happened to mention that his father had quarrelled with him because he had chosen to become an artist, and that his hopes of inheriting the bulk of the old man's millions were very slender.

Frank had been considerably puzzled by her sudden and unaccountable coolness toward him, but little did he realize the real reason for it. Indifferent to wealth himself, he credited the adorable Vanda with a like disinterestedness. He might have seen fit to revise his opinion of that lady had he seen her that morning as she filled two tall glasses with the fog-colored

liquor from the shaker, and raised one of them in a sardonic toast.

"Here's to our next venture, Bobby—and may it prove a more profitable stunt than angling for a paint-slinging fool of a pauper!"

The Honorable Bobby shook his head slightly as he sipped his cocktail.

"Not quite a pauper, Vanda," he corrected. "He has a bit of an income——"

"Yes—enough to pay my hair-dressing and beauty-parlor bills." There was a sneer of her carmined lips that revealed little cruel lines at the corners of her mouth. "No, I'm afraid the dear innocent Frank Hartley is a back number as far as I am concerned. I might have been able to tolerate him as a husband with a million or two to burn, but he'd drive me crazy as a love-in-a-cottage partner. I'll write to him this morning and tell him that I'm through—that I'm 'wedded to my art'—like he is, the poor fish!"

Bobby, who had been listlessly glancing down the columns of the paper, now looked up with a sudden exclamation.

"Hold on, my dear. You're travelling a bit too rapid. I'd leave that note unwritten for a day or two, if I were you."

"Why?" she demanded harshly. "If you imagine for a moment that I'm going to waste my chances on——"

"Waste nothing!" he jerked out sharply. "Just read that."

He laid the paper before her and pointed to a paragraph half-way down the middle page.

Vanda snatched up the paper and hastily scanned the headline, her breast rising and falling rapidly, her hands trembling with an excitement which she did not attempt to control.

MILLIONAIRE DIES INTESTATE
 DRAMATIC COLLAPSE OF
 MR. MATTHEW HARTLEY IN OFFICE
 SEARCH FOR MISSING HEIR

The actual report was brief, merely intimating that the well-known oil magnate had died of a heart attack while attending to his private correspondence in his London office. Then followed the usual outline of the dead man's career, with a list of the various companies and combines in which he had held a controlling interest. It was the final paragraph which caused a wave of wild elation to mount to Vanda Delafer's brain:

The solicitors of the late Mr. Hartley have made known the extraordinary news that the dead millionaire has left no will, in which case it is to be presumed that the whole of his immense fortune will devolve on his only son. Although his actual whereabouts is at present unknown, Mr. Frank Hartley is believed to be travelling on the Continent. Inquiries are being set on foot, and he is requested to communicate without delay with Messrs. Harrow and Brett, solicitors, of Gray's Inn Square, London.

SHE tossed the paper aside and sprang to her feet, her eyes shining, her sharp white teeth showing in a smile of triumph.

"So Frank will be rich after all!" she cried. "And I was about to give him up!"

Her brother shrugged his narrow shoulders as he gave a smile of conscious superiority.

"Your impulsiveness will be your ruin one of these days, my dear sister," he drawled. "Lucky for you that you have me to give you a little brotherly guidance now and then. If it had not been for me you would have let that poor fish wriggle off the hook after having played him so patiently."

"No fear of that happening—now!" The grating laugh which accompanied her words seemed strangely at variance with her delicate beauty. "I'm willing to bet that I'll be murmuring a coy 'Yes' to his proposal some time today."

The Honorable Bobby favored his sister with an approving grin.

"Leave it until the shades of evening are softly falling—he will feel more ro-

matic then," he advised with the certitude of an adept in such matters. "But for heaven's sake don't let him know you've seen that report of his father's death."

Vanda received his advice as though it were a personal affront.

"Think I was born yesterday?" she asked in a tone of acid reproof. "Leave it to me, boy. I reckon there's no flies on your little sister when it comes to vamping a simp like that!"

A discreet tap on the door interrupted their conversation at this stage, and a moment later one of the hotel valets made his appearance.

"A young lady wishes to speak with *madame*," he said.

"Oh yes, show her up." Vanda turned to her brother with a little laugh when the man had gone. "I've got a surprize for you, Bobby. You never suspected that I was a perfect unknown genius of an artist, did you? Well, I am—or perhaps I should say, I'm going to be one."

"Good lord!" Bobby gasped in surprize. "Why, the only thing I've ever seen you paint is your face!"

"Don't be horrid, or I shan't tell you how clever I've been. You know how Frank absolutely raves over anything connected with art? Well, I'm going to paint some lovely pictures for him to gloat over."

Bobby shook his head with a puzzled air. "I can't imagine you painting anything that Frank Hartley is likely to gloat over."

"You foolish boy, I'm not going to paint them *myself*—I'm going to pose as a genius by proxy. I saw a girl making sketches on the Corniche Road yesterday—just the style of thing that Frank raves about—so I arranged to buy a few of her pictures, so as to pass them off as my own work—"

"But it's rather risky. Supposing——"
 "Hush! here she is."

The girl who entered was slim and dark, and of such remarkable beauty that even the blasé Bobby stared. Here was a face almost Madonna-like in its serene purity, with a clear complexion that had been toned and ripened to rich damask coloring by long hours in the open air, and with steady blue-gray eyes which looked so transparently sincere. Although she might have passed for a girl still in her teens, Mary Deane was twenty-one, and her short experience of the world had not been free either from struggle or hardship. Adversity might have robbed her of the illusions of youth, but in their place it had given her poise, and a dogged confidence in her own ability to win through.

"Ah, good morning, Miss Deane." Vanda's tone was slightly more gracious than that which she used when addressing her maid. "You have brought the sketches, I see."

"Yes, and I have also brought the one I was working on when you spoke to me yesterday."

Mary Deane opened the leather portfolio and took out four pictures and laid them on the table. Bobby uttered a sound which was intended to express admiration.

"By Jove, I've never seen anything I like better." His gaze was not on the pictures as he spoke. "I could sit here and feast my eyes for hours on such beauty."

The girl made a slight inclination of her head.

"It is indeed a pleasure to meet such an ardent admirer—of coast scenery," she said in a voice which betrayed a slight tinge of irony. "There are so many other attractions in Monte Carlo, that to many visitors the natural beauties pass almost unnoticed."

Catching her brother's eye, Vanda gave him a warning frown as he was about to launch into another enthusiastic panegyric.

"I'm rather glad that you do not sign your work," was her own highly practical remark. "Personally, I think it's much nicer to have unsigned pictures hanging on the walls—unless, of course, they are by well-known artists—and, after all, it is the painting itself, not the signature, that matters."

The ghost of a smile touched the lips of Mary Deane as she listened. Hard and practical experience had taught her different, and often in the past she had seen a mediocre work bearing the signature of a well-known R. A. eagerly snapped up while a better work by an unknown artist had failed to find a buyer.

"Undoubtedly a famous name has its value," she contented herself with remarking. "But I fear that your ladyship is mistaken in assuming that my pictures are quite unsigned. If you look very closely in the corner of each picture you will see a tiny monogram, M. D., my own initials."

"By Jove, sounds quite doctorish—what?" broke in Bobby.

Vanda Delafer's brows met in a frown of annoyance as she bent over the pictures, carefully examining the spot indicated by the young artist. At last she shook her head.

"I can not see the monogram," she said.

"It is very difficult to make out," Mary explained. "For instance, in this picture it is composed of the stems of the clump of grass in the foreground; in this, it is markings on the fragment of rock. It is a queer little notion of my own to mark my pictures in this way," Mary Deane went on with a smile, "a sort of a compromise between a signed picture and an unsigned one. I suppose I must have just

sufficient of the artistic temperament to prevent me writing my name in full, and just too little to allow me to leave it out altogether."

Vanda took another long look and a sigh of relief escaped her lips.

"But it is quite unnoticeable unless one looked for the monogram," she said.

"Oh, quite."

"Then it really docs not matter whether it is there or not." She placed the pictures together and crossed to the bureau in the corner of the room. "I will buy the four pictures, Miss Deane. I think you said you valued them at ten guineas each? Very well, I will write you out a check now."

She seated herself at the bureau, took up a pen, and then started to search frantically, pulling out the drawers and rummaging among the littered papers.

"Dear me, wherever could I have put my check-book? One of those careless maids must have mislaid it." She turned to the girl with a charming smile of apology. "I'll have to send the check on to you, after all. Will you just scribble the address where you are staying, so that I can send the money on to you when my check-book turns up? It's frightfully annoying, but I hope you won't mind the slight delay?"

"Not in the least, Lady Delafer."

Mary Deane wrote down the address and Vanda dismissed her with a gracious smile and the assurance that she would receive the check by the first available post.

"Dear little trustful soul!" said Bobby, after the door had closed on the unsuspecting girl. "Where does she hang out?"

He craned forward to read the address, but his sister quickly snatched it away.

"You'll please keep out of this little business, Bobby," she said sharply. "If Mary Deane is trustful now, she wouldn't

be trustful long after you had started amusing yourself with her."

The Honorable Bobby scowled sulkily as he lit a cigarette.

"All right. But it certainly amuses me to hear *you* moralizing, my dear Vanda," he answered with a sneer. "How long do you think she would have trusted you if you'd written out that check? I know the amount is only £42, but your present bank balance is something of a minus quantity."

There was a derisive smile on Lady Vanda's painted lips, and a light of sly triumph glinted between her heavy eyelids.

"Have no fear of that, my dear Bobby," she said calmly. "There will be plenty of money in the bank to meet that check when it is presented. From now onward nothing can mar my plans. I am determined that I shall be Frank Hartley's wife within a month, and I defy the devil himself to prevent me——"

Bobby's warning cry caused her to swing round. Her confident boast ended in a low gasp of dismay.

Framed in the open doorway, still and silent as a granite sphinx as he stood regarding her through a quaint, old-fashioned eyeglass, was the mysterious man known as Count Roulette.

FOR nearly a minute there was silence in the dainty room, silence that was broken only by the ticking of the gilt clock on the mantelpiece and the quick breathing of the startled girl. Then, with an ugly oath, Bobby sprang to his feet and advanced toward the intruder.

"What do you mean by sneaking in here like that?" he demanded furiously. "This is a private suite—not the smoke-room!"

Count Roulette dropped his eyeglass

and bent his head in a little deferential bow.

"I must beg of you to forgive a foolish old man for his unintentional intrusion," he said in perfect English. "As some slight excuse for my offense, I may mention the fact that I knocked twice before entering, but unfortunately I mistook Lady Vanda's somewhat loudly voiced remarks for an invitation to enter."

"What do you want, anyway?" queried Bobby, eyeing him with a suspicious scowl.

"I came here in the hope of meeting Mr. Frank Hartley."

"Are you a friend of his?" Vanda asked quickly.

The Count made a gesture of polite deprecation as he shook his head.

"I can scarcely claim to be that, Lady Vanda. I spoke to him for the first time last night."

Vanda heaved a long sigh of relief. The man was a mere casual acquaintance, and it was hardly likely that Frank would have told him about his private affairs. She hastened to switch the conversation into a different channel.

"I have heard about your sensational winnings at the tables, Count—indeed, who has not done so?" she said with a dazzling smile. "Were you equally lucky last night?"

The old man's fingers strayed toward the dangling eyeglass as he nodded gravely.

"Yes, *mademoiselle*, I was indeed fortunate."

"Did you break the bank?" Bobby asked eagerly.

The Count spread his hands, at the same time giving a humorous lift of his eyebrows.

"*Hélas!* in these days one can do nothing so sensational as 'break the bank,' for when the croupier of one table finds his

funds are running low, he quietly sends to one of the other tables for more money. Still, I have no reason to complain of my fortune last night."

"I'd give a good deal to know the system that you play on, Count," said Vanda, shooting a keen glance at his impassive face. "They say you have a marvelous *flair* for the exact moment to begin your play."

Again that slow smile broke the sphinx-like calm of the old man's features.

"More important than that, my dear Lady Vanda, I know the right moment when the game gets too difficult to play with safety—a knowledge which is of value in even more risky pastimes than roulette."

Lightly as the words were spoken, Lady Vanda sensed a subtle note of warning underlying them. For an instant she felt a strange and unreasoning fear of this soft-spoken man with the bright yet inscrutable eyes, but she dismissed the passing presentiment with a careless laugh.

"Really, my dear Count, you are so sure of your knowledge of the future that I'm tempted to think you must have dealings in the Black Art," she said with a faint sneer. "You speak with all the confidence of an ancient oracle!"

"Your ladyship may regard me as one, if the idea affords any amusement." Again that baffling smile touched his lips as he added, "An oracle of Ancient Greece."

With a sudden start the suspicion flashed over her that the old man was merely talking to gain time until Frank Hartley should arrive. Her smile was sweeter than ever as she rose to her feet to end the interview.

"Just at present I'm too frightfully busy to consult oracles of any description," she said, extending her hand. "Must you really be going now?"

The hint was too pointed to be ignored,

Count Roulette took the proffered hand and for an instant his dark eyes looked straight into hers.

"*Au revoir*, Lady Vanda Delafer," he said slowly. "My stay in Monte Carlo is likely to be a short one, but something—call it my prophetic instinct, if you like—tells me that we shall meet again."

With a little bow and a parting glance through his eyeglass, he took his departure. For nearly a minute Lady Vanda stood motionless, staring at the closed door with eyes which had of a sudden become filled with dread; then, with a low sob, she sank into her chair.

"Who is that man?—what is he?" she asked in a hoarse whisper. "I loathe him, yet I fear him even more. And when he looked at me through that eyeglass I felt as if all the secrets of my innermost soul were lying bare before him. I believe he is the devil himself!"

"In that case you should find him highly congenial company," Bobby answered with a grin. "But as a matter of fact I suppose the fellow is nothing more than one of the usual crowd of dubious foreign 'counts' that one meets in a place like this. He has gained a sort of cheap notoriety by a few fortunate runs at the tables; but wait till his luck changes—as it must do sooner or later—and you'll see him vanish—like that!"

And the Honorable Bobby blew a cloud of cigarette smoke into the air.

WHEN, some two hours later, Frank called at the hotel he found Vanda attired in an artist's overall and apparently in the act of cleaning her palette.

"What, at work so early?" he cried in surprise. "You positively put me to shame—I haven't touched a brush for nearly a week. Let's have a look at the picture."

Vanda lifted her shoulders in a shrug of affected indifference.

"Oh, it's nothing much—just a sketch I dashed off a few days ago. I really did not intend you to see it, for I just dread having my poor amateur efforts criticized. Please let me hide it away in merciful oblivion." And she made a movement as if she were about to cover it up.

Greatly to her disappointment, he made no effort to prevent her. "As you please, Vanda," was all he said. "I have no wish to pry into matters that you would rather I did not."

She turned her eyes on him with a look of laughing dismay.

"Really, my dear Frank, that remark sounded frightfully mysterious—any one would imagine that I had all sorts of grisly skeletons in my cupboards! I suppose I must show it to you now, if only to convince you that there's nothing sinister about my poor daub. If you promise you won't be too scathing in your comments, I'll let you have one little peep. There!" She placed the sketch that Mary Deane had sold her on the easel so that the light fell upon it to the best effect. "As Shakespeare says somewhere or other, 'A poor thing, but mine own!'"

With a tolerant smile Frank turned to look, but as his eyes fell upon the picture his expression changed to a look of delighted wonder.

"By Jove, Vanda, this is simply wonderful!" he cried in a tone of genuine admiration. "I had no idea that you could turn out such clever and distinctive work."

Vanda raised her brows with an expression of artless surprise.

"Then you don't think it so very bad, Frank?"

"Bad?" he cried, catching her hands in his strong grasp and drawing her to him. "I only wish that I could paint half as well! Have you any more sketches that

you have 'dashed off,' as you so modestly call it?"

"Oh, I've kept a few," she answered carelessly, and without a tremor or a blush she took out the other three sketches of Mary Deane's and laid them before him. "It's a wonder that I did not destroy these, as I have the rest of my work. I had no idea that they were really good."

"Why, you dear little unassuming genius, every one of them is a masterpiece!" Frank exclaimed with a boyish laugh. "After we are married I must get you to give me some lessons——"

"Married? Oh, Frank, do you really mean that?" Without waiting for an answer, she flung her arms round his neck and kissed him passionately. "You have made me the happiest girl in all the world!"

For a moment he stared at her stupidly. The words had been spoken unconsciously, his thoughts more on the glorious colorings of the pictured scenes than on Vanda herself. He would have recalled them had it been possible, but as it was there was only one thing that he could do.

"Of course I meant it, Vanda," he said gently, yet in a voice that he knew was strangely lacking in warmth. "I have always liked you, but now that there is another bond between us, your wonderful art——"

With a little playful laugh she put her hand on his mouth.

"For today let's forget all about those old pictures," she begged. "I shall get quite jealous of them if you persist in singing their praises, and if I once get the idea that you think more of them than you do of me, I declare I shall never paint another one again! Tell me that you love me for myself."

Smiling down at the blue eyes which looked into his so appealingly, Frank gave her the assurance she asked for. Yet,

even as he spoke the words, his eyes wandered from the throbbing form he held in his arms to the glowing colors of the picture on the easel, and in his secret heart he knew that he lied. And Lady Vanda, flushed with triumph though she was, felt a pang of bitter resentment as she realized that the real inspirer of Frank's love was the genius of Mary Deane, the girl whose pictures she had claimed as her own.

IT MUST be admitted that Frank and Lady Vanda looked a handsome and well-matched couple as they passed through the hotel foyer and into the sunny street, and their smiling, and apparently happy faces drew many an envious glance from the wrinkled dowagers and flabby, bilious-looking old gentlemen who seemed to make up the greater part of the residents.

The moment they reached the sidewalk Frank was aware of a familiar figure hurrying across the square toward them.

"I want to introduce you to a new friend, Vanda," he said. "He is a strange man, and I met him under strange circumstances, and I can not help thinking that, in some way or other, he is going to have a great influence in my life."

Vanda's eyes grew hard as she recognized the object of his words.

"You mean Count Roulette? If so, then your introduction comes somewhat late. The Count and I have met before."

Before Frank could voice his surprize at this unexpected piece of information, the Count was by their side.

"Well met, *mes amis!*" he cried, raising his broad-brimmed hat with a gesture which might have seemed exaggerated had it been less graceful. "I seemed to have a premonition that I should encounter you as you came out either to enjoy a walk in the morning air, or to woo the fickle goddess of chance."

Lady Vanda's fair eyebrows were lifted in genuine surprize as she turned to the Count. "Surely you must be aware that the Casino is not open so early in the day?"

"Truly, *mademoiselle*. But there are other ways of gambling at Monte, besides roulette or trente-et-quarante."

He pointed to the farther side of the square, where an old man was walking up and down displaying a large printed placard and at the same time calling out, "*Loterie! Loterie!*" Every now and then one of the passers-by would approach him, tender a coin, and receive in exchange a pink ticket torn from the book he held in his hand.

"The State Lottery is the only form of gambling in which the native Monégasques are allowed to indulge, for the authorities very wisely exclude their own citizens from the gaming-rooms," Count Roulette explained, his eyeglass focused on the old ticket-seller; then he added with a smile: "Now is your opportunity to make a little speculation. Although he does not know it, that shabby old man is at the present moment holding in his hand the ticket which will win 200,000 francs when the result of the draw is made public today. The winning check is number L7F. 49368, and it is the fourth ticket in the book he is holding in his hand."

A smile of amused contempt came over Vanda's features as she listened.

"Surely you do not expect me to believe that you can tell the winning number beforehand?" she cried.

"Oh, no, *mademoiselle*. I do not in the least expect you to believe such an apparent absurdity." The Count's tone was gently apologetic. "Yet it is a fact nevertheless. If you would like to be the richer by 200,000 francs before tonight, I would advise you to buy the check numbered L7F. 49368 before it is sold to some one

else. It is now the third ticket from the top, for he has sold one since I last spoke."

"You must be joking, Count," she cried. "Such a thing is unheard of."

Count Roulette shrugged slightly.

"Alas, *mademoiselle*, it is only the unheard-of things which excite our interest in the present age of scientific marvels." He turned his head and threw a lightning glance at Lady Vanda's chauffeur, who was listening eagerly to the conversation. "But you will have to hurry if you wish to secure the winning ticket. It is now the second in the old man's book."

"I've a good mind to take your tip," Frank cried. "It's a chance, anyway."

"Alas, my dear friend, it is a chance which you have lost!" said the Count, shaking his head and pointing to the chauffeur who was hurrying across the road in the direction of the ticket-seller. "See, the enterprising Jules has forestalled you. He has already bought the ticket that will win what to him will mean a fortune."

"Lucky Jules!" Vanda laughed mockingly.

There was a strange expression on the Count's face as he raised his eyeglass and through it watched the chauffeur as he climbed into the driving-seat of Lady Vanda's high-powered car.

"Lucky?" he repeated softly. "Lucky . . . we shall see!"

For a while they chatted on different subjects, until Vanda glanced at the tiny watch she wore on her wrist and uttered an exclamation of surprize.

"I hope you won't think me a flatterer when I say that time passes very quickly in your company, Count," she cried gayly. "We must really be going now, as we have arranged to have a run to Nice by way of the Corniche Road. I have never

been by car before, and they say the scenery is wonderful."

"Nice?" There was a far-away expression in the old man's dark eyes as he repeated the word. "I am rather interested in that town, not because of its fashionable hotels and expensive shops, but because it was one of the places where my ancestors, the ancient Greeks, overcame the aboriginal inhabitants and built their Acropolis on the great rock which overhangs the little cove of *les Ponchettes*, and in it set up a great statue of Nike, the winged Goddess of Victory. It is from that almost forgotten goddess, Nike, that the modern name of the town, Nice, is derived."

"Indeed?" she murmured politely, suppressing a yawn with difficulty. "You must be frightfully clever to know all about such dead-and-done-with events."

Count Roulette shook his head and almost unconsciously his fingers strayed to the eyeglass which dangled from its gold chain.

"'Dead-and-done-with' is a very apt description, my dear Lady Vanda," he replied quietly. "Yet who shall say how little or how much we moderns owe to the sages and philosophers of the ancient civilizations which have preceded us into the Eternal Night?" He broke off abruptly with a little laugh of apology. "But I fear I shall get the name of a bad companion if I indulge in such speculations on such a delightful morning as this—one should keep gloomy thoughts for gloomy weather, and tell ghost tales only when the snow is on the ground and the wind moans in the chimney, as is your English custom. I do not think I could do better than follow your example and take a run in my car along the Corniche Road as far as Nice."

Disregarding Vanda's warning frown,

Frank turned as he was about to enter the car.

"Why not accompany us, Count? There's plenty of room and I should welcome your company."

For a second it seemed as if Count Roulette was on the point of accepting; but, after raising his glass to his eye and glancing at the chauffeur he shook his head.

"I would prefer to use my own car for the journey there and back. However, I trust you will do me the honor of lunching with me at the Negresco at Nice. You will? Good! Then *au revoir* till we meet there. I will phone the *maitre d'hôtel* to reserve a private room, for I may possibly have something to tell you of a rather confidential nature."

With a sweep of his broad-brimmed hat, Count Roulette turned away and hurried off in the direction of the quay. Frank's eyes followed the tall figure until it was lost to sight amid the fashionably dressed crowd. Then, vaguely uneasy, he turned to the waiting Jules and motioned to him to start the car on its journey along the Corniche Road.

ALTHOUGH visitors to the Riviera are accustomed to speak of "the Corniche Road," there are, strictly speaking, no less than three highways that come under that general designation. There is the Grande Corniche, the great road hewn out of the rugged face of the mountains as part of the first Napoleon's ambitious plan for the conquest of Italy; there is the Moyenne or Middle Corniche, a newly constructed road which follows the general trend of the former, though at a lower altitude; and lastly there is the Petite Corniche, sometimes called the Corniche du Littoral, which, as its name implies, follows the coastline more or less

closely and is the nearest route between Monte Carlo and Nice.

Jules, having a good car beneath him and a clear road in front, set off at a speed which would have covered the whole distance in some twenty minutes or so. But Frank soon pulled him up.

"I don't mind a bit of fast travelling occasionally," he said to Vanda by way of explanation, "but it seems like sacrilege to rush through such beautiful scenery with the speed of an express train. Just look at the wonderful shades of blue in that sea—sapphire, turquoise, with here and there a shimmer of that fleeting sheen that one sees on the breast of a peacock. Well has this coast been named the Côte d'Azur!"

Vanda turned languidly in her seat and allowed her eyes to travel over the expanse of sun-kissed waters.

"Oh yes, it's very pretty," she said, anxious to show her appreciation. "The colors are exquisite—that stretch of sea between that rock and the beach reminds me of a perfect dream of a dress I bought as I came through Paris—it was exactly that shade."

"Doesn't it remind you of anything else?"

Struck by his tone, she turned and saw that he was regarding her with a puzzled frown. Rousing herself, she looked at the scene before her with a new interest, and her heart gave a quick nervous throb as she realized how narrowly she had escaped a bad blunder.

"Why of course, it's the place I chose for the sketch I showed you this morning," she cried. "Really, it was stupid of me not to recognize it before. But my eyes were dazzled by the sun, and I have a splitting headache. Do please tell Jules to stop at the first place which looks as if it could provide a decent cup of tea."

A few minutes later they halted in the

villa-lined boulevard of Cap-d'Ail, before an establishment which proudly announced its ability to supply every want of the English or American visitor, and while Vanda was drinking her tea Frank strolled out and gazed over the low stone wall to where the distant promontory of Cap Ferret hung like a faint blue cloud midway between sea and sky.

For several minutes he remained in silent contemplation of the scene before him; then, with something that sounded like a sigh, he turned to make his way back to the car. As he swung round he noticed for the first time a girl who was seated before a small sketching-easel on a stretch of grass overlooking the scene he had just been admiring.

Mary Deane had felt a very natural elation when she had quitted Lady Vanda Delafer at the Hotel de Paris that morning. Her art meant something more to her than just a pleasant mode of passing the time in the open air; it was her livelihood, and to have sold four pictures in one morning was an event as rare as it was welcome. She had received no money, it is true; but it never occurred to Mary to doubt her somewhat haughty patron when she had promised to let her have a check the following morning. Had she known the real character of that lady, and the deception in which her own pictures were to play a prominent part, Mary's steps might have been less buoyant and her mind less at ease than was actually the case when she had sallied forth—after an early and somewhat more sumptuous lunch in honor of the occasion—to begin another picture. It was while she was engaged in "roughing in" the outline that Frank Hartley caught sight of her.

At first his interest was awakened by the girl's occupation rather than by the girl herself. All unconscious of his pres-

ence, she was seated with her face half turned away from him, her eyes fixed alternately on the canvas before her and the distant view. All he could see was the outline of her face against the shadowy green of the foliage behind, yet the dimly seen profile was one which represented in living flesh and blood his own mental conception of ideal beauty.

But he was conscious of something more than mere prettiness in her face; character and determination showed in the line of her dark eyebrows and in her firm, red-lipped mouth and resolute chin; while the steady eyes of blue-gray were singularly intelligent as well as beautiful. Dark though her hair was, something told him that the girl was neither French nor Italian. Was she English? or American—

"Frank! Frank! Where have you disappeared to?"

The voice of Vanda, harsh with impatience, broke in upon his thoughts. With one lingering glance at the unknown girl at the easel, Frank stepped out into the road and waved his hand.

"Oh, there you are! I was beginning to think you intended remaining in this place all day. I finished my tea ages ago, and I've been looking for you everywhere——"

Frank looked at Vanda curiously as her voice came to an abrupt stop. Her eyes, wide open and filled with an expression which looked more like fear than surprise, were looking past him at the girl seated at the easel, who now had risen to her feet and was regarding Vanda with what looked like a smile of recognition.

"Why—do you know her?" Frank cried in eager surprise.

"No—yes—that is, slightly." Vanda, with the merest suspicion of a nod to Mary Deane, grasped Frank's arm and

almost dragged him to the car. "Let us be moving on."

She sprang into the car and held the door open. Frank hesitated, his foot on the step.

"But who is that girl? She seemed to know you."

Lady Vanda's quick wits had already concocted an explanation.

"Oh, *her?*" she drawled carelessly. "She's some poor creature who called at the hotel the other day hawking some wretched daubs which she said she'd painted. I really couldn't help feeling sorry for her, for she told a pitiful story of having been lured to Monte Carlo by an adventurer who had deceived her by promising marriage. Of course, one meets all kinds of such people in a place like this, and I am not narrow-minded, thank heaven! I gave the girl a few guineas out of pure charity, and I suppose the poor creature is grateful. Please don't humiliate her by questioning her further. The best thing we can do is to get along to Nice."

Jules let in the clutch and the great car began to glide smoothly along the road which stretched like a twisted ribbon of white between the blue of the sea and the warm gray of the mountains. Turning, Frank caught a glimpse of the girl still standing by her easel. When a turn of the road hid her from sight, he settled himself in his seat and lit a cigarette with a thoughtful and slightly puzzled air.

Somehow the girl with the blue-gray eyes and Lady Vanda's description of her did not seem to fit.

"**W**HAT'S all the excitement about, Jules?"

Their car had crossed the Pont Garibaldi at Nice, and had entered the Place Massena, when the sight of a large and

excited crowd gathered before the Hôtel de Ville brought forth Frank's inquiry.

"They are waiting to hear the result of the Public Lottery, *m'sieu*—the same that I bought a ticket for before we left Monte Carlo."

Frank smiled slightly as he remembered how the nimble-witted Frenchman had forestalled him in the purchase of the lottery ticket recommended by Count Roulette.

"Well, you deserve to be fortunate—-if only for your pluck!" he said half jestingly. "Say, what would you do if your ticket carried off the first prize?"

"I would make good use of the money, *m'sieu*," the man replied with an earnestness that was almost pathetic. "I have my eye on a little garage business that is going cheap—cheap, *m'sieu* will understand, for a man with 200,000 francs in his pocket. There I would make much money, and there is a girl . . . at Narbonne . . . we have waited so long, *m'sieu*, for we are both poor; and when *Monsieur le Comte* spoke of the winning ticket I seemed to see a way——"

"I understand." Frank's tone was free from jesting now. "You run us round to the Negresco, garage the car, and then skim off to see if you've been lucky. And I hope you have—for the sake of the girl at Narbonne."

"I thank *m'sieu* for his good wishes."

The car turned into the Promenade des Anglais and a few minutes later came to a halt opposite the great hotel where Count Roulette had promised to meet them. Jules immediately disappeared with the car in the direction of the hotel garage, and Frank and Lady Vanda made their way through the vestibule and inquired for the room which had been reserved for them.

It was quickly evident that Count Roulette's was a name to conjure with in the

Hotel Negresco. It was the height of the winter season, when the hotel is at its busiest, yet the room which was placed at their disposal was one of the much-coveted apartments with a southerly aspect, with large windows overlooking the limpid blue waters of the Baie des Anges. It was with an ever-increasing wonder that Lady Vanda saw the deference which the mere mention of his name inspired.

"Who *is* this mysterious Count?" she asked Frank as they sat on the shaded balcony awaiting his arrival. "Is he a prophet—a seer? Or is he merely a little wrong in his head?"

Frank could only shrug helplessly.

"I really know no more about him than you do, Vanda."

The girl frowned at what she imagined was an evasive answer.

"Is he a madman?" she demanded bluntly.

"There is method in his madness, then," Frank laughed, "and I know I'd sooner trust his judgment than that of the sanest man living. He may be a little strange and eccentric, Vanda, but you can take my word for it that he's far from mad."

For a few minutes there was silence, the girl gazing out to sea with eyes that were half veiled in thought.

"Have you noticed that queer eyeglass that he carries on a gold chain?" she asked suddenly. "Have you noticed his trick of looking at people through it, almost as if he were examining their secret souls? I thought he was short-sighted at first, but I watched him and found that he could see things near to him and far off without using it. I suppose that is part of the poor man's eccentricity?"

"Maybe." Frank's tone was curt, for Vanda's question was but a thinly veiled sneer. "Perhaps he can see more than we

suspect with that antique-looking glass of his."

Lady Vanda Delafer threw back her head and gave a peal of mocking laughter.

"Perhaps he saw the winning number of the lottery in which poor Jules, with a faith that would be touching if it were not laughable, invested his money this morning?"

"He may have seen even that!" Frank Hartley crossed to the bell and a moment later one of the waiters entered the room. "Do you know the number of the winning ticket in the National Lottery?" he asked the man.

"*Mais oui, monsieur.* I myself have speculated, but without success, *bélas!* The winning number was L7F. 49368."

Vanda sat back in her chair with a gasp.

"It is the very number that the Count told you to buy!" she cried, her eyes wide open with something more than surprize. "Jules has won a fortune!"

"Well, he deserves his luck, for he had more faith in the Count than we had," cried Frank. "And I must say I'm glad, both for his sake and the sake of the girl at Narbonne——"

"**A**ND I, *monsieur*, am deeply sorry!" said a voice which caused them both to look round with a start.

Count Roulette had entered the room at the heels of the waiter and was regarding them with an expression of sadness on his pale handsome face. He came slowly forward, dismissed the waiter with a nod, then raised his eyeglass and looked fixedly at the newly engaged pair.

"Doubtless it seems strange to you that I should express sorrow at the news of your chauffeur's good fortune," said the Count. "But I have a presentiment that sorrow and tragedy will follow. Will

you think it presumptuous of me if I beg of you not to return to Monte Carlo in your car?"

"But—but why not?" Frank stammered in bewilderment. "We were looking forward to the run back by moonlight."

The Count shrugged.

"There is an excellent train service, or my own car is at your disposal. But on no account travel by the one driven by Jules."

At the cool audacity of what she considered his attempt to dictate to her, a wave of anger came over Lady Vanda.

"You speak in riddles, Count," she cried. "You have made one or two pretty shrewd guesses, but that does not give you the right to rule us like a pair of babies! Why shouldn't we go back by my car? Jules is a careful driver, and I shall feel quite safe in his charge."

Count Roulette made a little gesture of smiling dissent, but his voice was grave as he replied.

"Tonight, *mademoiselle*, he will be neither steady nor safe. He has already celebrated his good fortune in more than one café, and he is a man who carries his liquor well—up to a certain point. But the Corniche is a dangerous road to take chances on. There will be a bad accident at the sharp bend above Cap Roux, and the car will swerve over the cliff onto the rocks below. Jules will be killed instantly. I wish to save you and Monsieur Hartley from a similar fate."

For one moment the steady eyes and slow, measured utterance had their effect; then the bantering voice of Vanda broke the tension.

"A thousand thanks for your warning, my dear Count, but I am not nervous," she drawled. "If you feel jumpy about a little moonlight spin you are at perfect liberty to return by rail. As for me, the arrangements stand."

Count Roulette turned to Frank.

"And you?" he queried.

"Frank will be guided by me," Vanda interposed swiftly. "Please say no more on the subject. The matter is settled."

With a silent shrug Count Roulette rang the bell and ordered dinner to be served. He proved to be an excellent host and during the progress of the meal did not revert to the topic of the homeward journey. It was only when he was bidding the pair good-bye in front of the hotel that he spoke what was in his mind.

"You are determined to disregard my warning, then?" His voice was almost wistful as he put the question.

Lady Vanda laughed openly as she took her seat in the car.

"As you are so solicitous about our safety, my dear Count, why not come with us to look after us?" she scoffed. "The car will easily hold another passenger."

Count Roulette raised his eyeglass and surveyed the vehicle as though to verify her words. Then he came closer and sank his voice to an impressive whisper which she alone could hear.

"There *is* another passenger—although you see him not—a personage whom the mediæval artists usually represented riding on a pale horse, with an hour-glass slung round his bony hips, and a whetted scythe grasped in his skeleton hands. The Shadow of Death is your fellow-traveller, Lady Vanda!"

"Won't you introduce him?" laughed the girl. "I should imagine that his company would be a trifle more cheerful than yours."

She nodded to Jules and the car began to move. Count Roulette raised his hat with a slow, sweeping gesture.

"He will need no introduction from me, *mademoiselle*," he said gravely, "*—when you get to Cap Roux!*"

THE big car in which Lady Vanda and Frank Hartley were being driven back to Monte Carlo was the last word in luxury and speed. Within a few minutes of leaving the hotel it had purred its smooth way along the palm-shaded Promenade des Anglais, skirted the ornamental gardens which face the Casino Municipal, and begun to thread the narrower streets which lead to the eastern outlet to the town, mounting the steadily rising gradient to the Corniche Road with the effortless ease of a swallow on the wing.

Mindful of the Count's grim prediction, Frank watched the chauffeur's manner of taking the corners and avoiding the oncoming traffic; but Jules seemed, if anything, more careful than usual. It was not until they were abreast of the tree-crowned hill of Montboron that he leant back in his seat, convinced that the wine which Jules had taken to celebrate his accession to wealth had not affected his eyesight or his judgment. It was true that Count Roulette had made some lucky guesses in the past, but he had evidently made a big blunder in stating that there would be a crash that night. It was curious, though, how he had contrived to foretell the number of the winning lottery ticket. Could it be by some manner of thought-reading that he made such confident statements? Or was it mere chance that he had happened to be right? But tonight he had made his first mistake. There would be no fatal accident; he would reach Monte Carlo safely and in the morning would call on the Count and chaff him unmercifully on the danger of being too explicit in his predictions.

With a smile at his foolishness in taking the man's pretensions so seriously, Frank dismissed the subject from his mind and gave himself up to enjoying the beauty of the night.

The three Corniche Roads which lead eastward from Nice have been well named; each is actually a mere "corniche" or ledge hewn for the greater part of its length from the sheer face of the cliff, a ribbon coiled and draped between the mighty ramparts of the mountain hinterland and the tideless sea. The road they were now traversing had appeared beautiful enough when seen basking in the dazzling sunshine, with sky, sea, and the flower-decked gardens combining in a riot of color. Now, as Frank lay back in his cushioned seat, watching the procession of dark pines and palms silhouetted against the starry sky, breathing the warm air scented with wisteria and golden mimosa, he felt as though he were being borne by some fabled genii through an enchanted land. Every unexpected twist of the mazy track brought its fresh angle of vision. At one moment the bonnet of the car would be pointing straight inland to where the purple-blue heights rose, star-crowned and mysterious; a sudden bend, and they would be looking over the smooth moonlit waters, with nothing but a light railing or a crumbling, moss-grown wall between them and the sheer verge of the cliffs.

"You seem very silent tonight, Frank. Has our cheerful friend, the Count, rubbed the fear of death into you with his crazy prophecies?"

There was a note of sarcasm in the slowly drawled query that brought him to earth with a sudden jar.

"My thoughts were far away from Count Roulette and his prophecies," he answered.

"Then what *were* you thinking of? Come, dear," she moved closer to him and slipped her arm coaxingly through his. "There should be no secrets between engaged couples, you know. Will a penny

buy your thoughts, or shall I have to bid higher?"

Her smiling lips were temptingly close to his as she leaned forward; but he was almost unconscious of them as he turned his head and again looked out into the night.

"Just at that moment I fear my thoughts were not worth even a penny," he answered carelessly. "I was merely admiring the scenery and thinking what wonderful pictures might be painted of some of the spots we have passed. I'm rather surprized that the same thought did not occur to you, Vanda—with such scenes to inspire you, you might even excel that wonderful sketch you showed me this morning."

"Yes, yes—of course," she hastened to say, turning her head aside to hide the frown that had gathered on her forehead. His words had recalled the memory of her debt to the pretty young artist, and her own non-existent bank balance. How she wished that she had taken the advice of the eccentric Count Roulette and risked a few francs on the lottery ticket he had so confidently asserted would win the prize. Mad or sane, his luck was amazing; his guesses of the trend of future events had been verified in a manner that was almost uncanny. But no man could always be right, and it seemed self-evident that he had overreached himself when he had predicted disaster that night.

"What place is that?" she asked as they came through a cluster of white villas on a bold promontory overlooking the sea.

"Beaulieu." He glanced at her with a slight smile as he added: "The point you can see about a mile farther on is Cap Roux. Unless Count Roulette is a lying prophet, it is there we shall meet our fate! So, if you wish to circumvent the decrees of destiny you had better get out and walk."

"How absurd!" her laugh rang out in amused contempt. "I wonder that you have the patience to listen to such nonsense. Nobody but a madman would claim to see the future as he does."

"Quite so, my dear, but all the same——" He reached up and took the speaking-tube from its clip. "Jules!" he called through to the chauffeur, "Please be careful as you take that sharp turn above Cap Roux—just before you come to the railway bridge, you know."

"Trust me for that, *m'sieu*," came back the confident reply. "One does not want to break one's neck just after having won a fortune!"

The car was now skirting the wide sweep of the Bay of Beaulieu, past the fantastic masses of tumbled rocks and jagged cliffs which have received the fanciful name of "Petite-Afrique." Here the broken nature of the ground has compelled the road to run through a series of short tunnels beneath the towering bluffs which intersect its path. Jules slowed down to a mere crawl as they entered the last tunnel, which pierces the Cap itself, and it was only when they emerged into the moonlight on the farther side that he stepped on the accelerator and the car leapt forward like a hound unleashed.

A derisive laugh came from Lady Vanda's lips.

"We're through without mishap!" she cried. "Your wonderful prophet is a charlatan—a trickster—a cheap liar! . . . Ah, God help us! . . ."

Her mocking voice ended in a scream of mortal terror as a pair of glaring headlights sprang into view round the bend a few yards ahead. It was a high-powered English car, traveling at speed, on the left—the wrong according to Continental usage—side of the road.

Jules had a bare two seconds in which to act, yet he might have avoided a col-

lision had his brain been unclouded by the fumes of wine. A slight turn of the steering-wheel, and he could have passed on the other side with twice the width of the car to spare. As it was, he jammed on the brakes, and the car skidded to the right, crashed its way through the light iron railing and remained poised precariously on the very verge of the abyss below.

But only for an instant. There was a rending crash as the oncoming car struck the rear of the chassis, sending it nearer the edge. Frank felt the floor beneath his feet take a steeper angle as the bonnet began to dip; streams of loosened clods and fragments of stone began to clatter down the cliff.

"Jump!" he shouted to Vanda. "Jump for your life!"

But the girl was crouching back in her seat, her hands pressed over her eyes, too terrified to move. Quick as thought, Frank stepped to her side. His left arm seemed strangely limp and useless, but with his right he strove to lift her from the seat. With the unreasoning panic of semi-consciousness she clung to the side of the car, resisting his efforts to save her.

"Let go!" he cried, striving to break her hold with his one serviceable hand. "It's death to stop here!"

Even as he spoke, the car gave another lurch forward. There came a sound of tearing and rending of metal as the last remnant of the shattered railings gave way beneath the weight thrown upon them. Just in time Frank leapt upward, his right hand stretched to grasp the branch of a tree which showed black against the sky a few feet above his head. And as he sprang the doomed car slid from beneath him, plunging, accompanied by an avalanche of stones, over the edge and falling with a dull splash into the sea far below.

It seemed ages that he hung there before willing arms grasped him by the legs

and lowered him to the ground. Faint and reeling, sick with horror and the pain of an arm which he now realized was broken, he staggered to the road as a large covered car appeared from the direction of Nice and came to a standstill. A moment later he was looking into the face of Count Roulette.

"So, the accident has happened?" the voice of the mysterious Greek was as unconcerned as if he were making a remark on the weather. "It seems as if my wild prophecy was not very wide of the truth."

Frank Hartley took an unsteady pace forward and looked the old man full in the eyes.

"Who are you?" he demanded hoarsely. "Are you angel of light or fiend from hell that you are able to see the fates of men and read their hearts like the pages of a book? Seer—magician—angel—devil? Which are you? Speak!"

A faint smile broke the sphinx-like immobility of Count Roulette's features as he shrugged slightly.

"None of these things am I, my young friend," he said, his somber eyes fixed on the other's face. "I am merely a man like yourself—but I am a man who sees the truth!"

For an instant Frank stared stupidly, trying to grasp his meaning. Then came the inevitable reaction of the shock and numbing pain. He opened his lips to speak, but before the words came he swayed unsteadily and fell in a dead faint at the feet of the man with the strange-looking eyeglass.

DREAMS, vivid and swift-moving, yet vague and confused as a fogged cinema film, preceded Frank Hartley's return to consciousness. Once more he fought the two apaches in the gardens of the Casino; once more he saw the graceful figure of the unknown girl seated at her

easel against a background of sea and sky; then came the repetition of the Count's solemn warning; the night ride through the scented air; the impact of the colliding cars and the vision of Lady Vanda's terror-frozen features as she fell. When at length his delirium passed and he looked sanely on his surroundings it was only with difficulty that he persuaded himself that what he saw was not another phase of his visions.

He was lying in bed in a prettily decorated room overlooking the sea. The furniture and decorations, though plain and inexpensive, evidenced a perfection of taste with which he could find no fault. The tempered sunshine, entering through drawn window curtains of gay-colored chintz, showed trifles and knickknacks subtly indicative of a woman's presence; an easel bearing an unfinished sketch in oils hinted that the owner of this haven of harmony and repose possessed at least one taste in common with him.

Turning his eyes again toward the window, he noticed that a girl was bending over a small table set there, arranging some flowers in a china bowl. Something familiar about that slender, shadowy outline caused him to catch his breath in a low gasp of surprise. He blinked his eyes and looked again, dreading that she would fade away like the other phantoms of his dreams. But she was still there—and she was, in very truth, the girl whom he had seen painting on the cliffs on that afternoon that now seemed so long past.

"Ah, you are evidently beginning to take an interest in your surroundings," said a cheery, well-remembered voice from the other side of the bed.

Frank essayed to turn, and for the first time discovered that his left arm was encased in splints and surgical bandages, and strapped immovably across his chest.

"No, no, don't move," Count Roulette

went on hastily, moving round the bed so that he came within Frank's range of vision. "You have been through a bad time, what with the shock and the fracture. But you are on the mend now, and in a few days you may be about again."

"But the others — Jules and Lady Vanda? Were they killed?"

There was a grave expression on the old man's face as he inclined his head in assent.

"No human efforts could have saved them. It is a sheer drop of eighty feet into deep water . . . the bodies were not recovered until two days later."

"Two days!" Frank gasped. "Then how long have I been lying here?"

"A week," came the answer, and as he spoke the Count beckoned to the girl at the window. "And you have to thank this young lady for her clever nursing during your crisis. Allow me to introduce you to Miss Mary Deane."

Frank felt a strange thrill as her cool hand touched his own for an instant.

"How can I thank you for your kindness?" he said in a voice full of genuine emotion. "I was a stranger to you, yet you gave me shelter—nursed me——"

She held her hand up in protest.

"What else could I have done?" she said. "My bungalow was the nearest to the scene of the accident—or almost the nearest—and you were much too ill to be carried farther. How could I turn you from my door when Count Roulette solemnly declared that the delay in getting you to the hospital would mean the difference between life and death? Besides, you were not quite a stranger, since the Count vouched for you—and he seems to be an excellent judge of character."

A smile spread over Frank's pale face.

"He does indeed," he agreed heartily, "seeing that he has chosen you for my guardian angel."

The whole-hearted fervor with which the words were spoken caused a deeper tint to creep into the girl's cheeks.

"I can see that you are getting light-headed, Mr. Hartley," she said in a tone of severe reproof as she poured out a dose of medicine and held it to his lips. "Come, drink this. Then go to sleep until you can talk rationally."

There was a gleam of amusement in Count Roulette's eyes as he raised his eye-glass and looked at each in turn.

"I venture to predict a speedy recovery for our patient," he said with a smile as he quitted the room. "Mr. Frank Hartley may consider himself very fortunate to be here—in more ways than one," he added under his breath as the door closed behind him.

"**Y**OU are a strange man, Count, and you possess a positively uncanny power of guessing the trend of future events." It was three days later, when Frank and Count Roulette were seated on the balcony of the bungalow, that the younger man made the remark. "And I must confess that I envy you your strange gift."

"Are you sure you mean that?" The old man's eyes were fixed on Frank with a keen penetrating gaze as he asked the question. "Is it enviable, think you, to walk the crowded streets of a great city, conscious of the greed, hatred, jealousy and dishonesty which eat like loathsome cankers in the hearts of those around me? To see, beneath the smug, respectable faces of the business men, or the beautiful faces of the women, hidden thoughts which make one turn to the dumb animals for relief? To have every ideal—every pleasing illusion shattered for ever? No, no, envy me not my strange power, but rather go down on your knees in thankfulness that you have been spared the pos-

session of such a dangerous, saddening gift."

Frank Hartley was bewildered at the intense emotion which vibrated in the old man's voice.

"You almost speak as if this power had been forced on you against your will," he observed with a slight smile.

"In one sense it *has* been forced on me. Nothing was farther from my thoughts when I discovered the Eye of Veritas."

"Veritas?" Frank repeated the word slowly, a puzzled frown creasing his forehead. "That has something to do with truth, has it not?"

Count Roulette gave an affirmative nod.

"It is the name of one of the deities of Ancient Greece—the Goddess of Truth. She was not very famous or well known, I must admit, and you will find but few references to her in the classical writers; for the Greeks of old apparently had as slight a veneration for the virtue she symbolized as have the people of the present day. But she had her temples and her mysteries, and one lonely mountain shrine in Bœotia was considered especially sacred, and thither flocked crowds of pilgrims, all eager to know the truth and—for the time being—to revere so rare a virtue. It was in the ruins of that Temple of Veritas that I became the most favored, the most cursed, the most disillusioned of mortals—a man who saw the Truth!"

A low, long-drawn sigh escaped the lips of Count Roulette, and for a while he sat silent, his dark eyes fixed on the distant horizon with an expression of wistful yearning, as though he were regretting something lost to him for ever. Presently he roused himself and continued:

"At the time it happened, some forty years ago, I was a young man fresh from college; but, young as I was, I had made a special study of the classical lore of my country, which resulted in my obtaining

a permanent post in the Excavations Department of the Hellenic Archeological Society. For some time our headquarters at Athens had been receiving vague rumors of hoards of statues, coins, and relics being unearthed by the peasants on the site of the ancient city of Tanagra, which is quite close to the modern village of Skimatari. I was deputed to go to the district to see if I could find out if there was any truth in the rumors; in order to allay suspicion I went alone, in the character of a man who travels for pleasure.

"I soon found that my task was not likely to be either easy or pleasant. In ancient times Bœotia had a most unenviable reputation, and the cultured Athenians were never tired of contemptuously referring to the inhabitants as stupid, awkward, uncivilized and ignorant. They pointed out, with truth, that the country had contributed nothing to Greek literature, nor had it produced a great sculptor or painter of note—indeed, the very word Bœotian was at that period almost synonymous with imbecility. And I can affirm, from personal experience, that their present-day descendants have many of the traits of their departed ancestors. I have traveled much since that time, but never have I encountered a more degraded, dishonest, brutal and treacherous horde of scoundrels than the inhabitants of that wretched village near the site of the ancient Temple of Truth.

"There were only two men in Skimatari whom I felt I could trust; one was the village priest, a venerable old man with flowing silvery hair and a patriarchal beard, and the other was the landlord of the inn where I put up. This latter was the very personification of the traditional innkeeper of stage and story; fat, red-cheeked; with merry, twinkling eyes and a bluff, hearty manner that made me take to him at first sight. His name was Gior-

gios Dimitri, but he was usually called by his nickname of 'Barba-Jorghi', which means 'Old George'. As for the rest of the villagers, they seemed to suspect the reason of my presence and remained sullenly aloof. Needless to say, the moment I arrived the secret excavations that they had been making were filled in, and I could discover nothing.

"Well, I had hung about the village to no good results for a week or more, and I was seriously thinking of giving up my quest as a bad job and making my way back to Athens, when, late one night, after the last toper had staggered out of the inn, Barba-Jorghi sidled up to me with a proposition that sent my hopes soaring to the skies.

"Of course he did not come to the point directly. He began a long rambling diatribe about the scarcity of travelers, the poverty of his village customers, the high price of wine and the smallness of his profits. From that he went on to draw comparisons between the present wretchedness of the district and its former wealth, pointing his words, to my great amazement, by producing a well-thumbed copy of Müller's translation of Dicærchus, a classical author who wrote in the second century B. C. Thinking to draw him out by a little flattery, I complimented him on his archeological knowledge, and he snapped at the bait like a famished pike.

"You are right!" he cried. "Although you see me here, the keeper of a poor inn, struggling to make a paltry *drachma* or two, I am not like the ignorant swine around me. No, no!—Old Jorghi can read; he can study; he can think; he can look up and see far afield while the other fools toil with their faces to the ground. Old Jorghi is wise, even as you are, my young friend. We are two wise men in a community of fools, and like wise men we should turn our wisdom to account."

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"Naturally, I asked him how, and he went on:

"This writer speaks of a famous oracle situated near here, which people came from all parts to consult. He says that this oracle, which was kept in a small temple in the mountains, predicted future events, laid bare the secret thoughts, illuminating the hidden souls of men like the noonday sun shining through a crystal goblet of wine. Not that you or I believe such fairy-tales,' he added with a knowing wink, 'but the all-important thing which concerns us is that the ancient pilgrims believed them, and showered their offering of gold, silver and precious stones into the coffers of the wily priests. There must be wealth untold lying in the ruins of that Temple of Veritas—enough to make us both millionaires!"

"His words and manner set my pulses racing with excitement, for it was clear that he was about to broach the very matter which had brought me from Athens. I managed to infuse a note of amused incredulity into my voice as I replied: 'But there's small chance of us ever finding it, worse luck!"

"The innkeeper leaned nearer to me across the table, his eyes glittering in the dim lamplight.

"I have already found it—I, Barba-Jorghi, the keeper of a village inn—I have found the site of the ancient Oracle of Truth!"

"For the first time a vague suspicion entered my mind.

"Then why do you confide in me?" I asked. 'Why don't you take the treasure and be rich?"

"I would if I could,' he answered with engaging frankness. 'But it will need the strength of two men to move the blocks of stone which seal the door of the treasure chamber. I dare not ask the aid of my neighbors—they would murder me

without the slightest hesitation for a hundredth part of the wealth which is inside. But you are a gentleman and honest. I can trust you to share with me fairly.'

"His childlike trust in me, no less than the magnificence of the offer itself, almost took my breath away.

"'But I am an utter stranger to you——' I began to protest.

"'All the better,' he interrupted quickly, with a smile which rather puzzled me at the time. 'Being a stranger, you can leave the district without raising comment. Tomorrow you must let it be known that you are tired of the place and intend returning to Athens. You will set off on horseback in full view of the villagers, and take the highroad which follows the coast, setting your pace so that you arrive at Oropus a little after dusk has fallen. A little beyond the town is a bridle path leading back across the mountains. Follow this, and you will come to a deserted post-house at the crossroads. I will be awaiting you there with the necessary tools and a spare mule to carry the treasure, which you will bear to some obscure retreat until I can settle up my affairs here, sell the inn for what it will fetch, and afterward join you. Do you think my plan is good?'

"I nodded silently, well pleased that he had played so blindly into my hands, and after we had gone over the details once more, we parted and retired for the night.

EVERYTHING went off without a hitch. I reached the deserted post-house shortly after ten o'clock, tethered my horse in one of the roofless stables, and followed Barba-Jorghi along a narrow boulder-strewn track which led at a steep angle up the mountain. It was ticklish work in the darkness, for at places the path overhung the gorge below, and a single false step would have meant death.

But Jorghi had made himself well acquainted with the track, and after about an hour of stiff climbing we emerged safely on to a little wooded plateau which jutted out like a broad spur from the mass of the mountain proper. Without hesitation he plunged into the dense undergrowth, forcing his way through, until he came to a halt facing what seemed to be a huge mound overgrown with tangled bushes. Here he lit the lantern he carried, and by its light he searched for a time along the edge of the mound. Presently he set the lantern down and pulled aside a heap of dead leaves and branches.

"'Look!' he said, pointing downward.

"My heart leapt when I saw a portion of a wall of squared masonry, with the sculptured lintel of a door just showing above the surface of the ground. It did not need a second glance at the angular Greek characters engraved on the weather-worn stone to tell me that I stood on the threshold of the fabled Temple of Truth.

"In silence we set to work to dig down far enough to effect an entrance; but the door proved to be blocked by a wall of rough blocks of stone, which seemed to have been built in haste. As soon as we had cleared sufficient space in which to manipulate a pick and crowbar, we attacked this with a will. It was heavy work, but hope spurred us on, and at last, panting and streaming with perspiration, we squeezed our bodies through and stood within.

"The light of the lantern was dim, and it was only by slow degrees that we were able to examine our surroundings. As I made a slow circuit of the place I caught glimpses of sculptured friezes, fluted columns, Doric capitals, matchless statues still upright on their pedestals. Treasure or no treasure, I knew that we had made the discovery of a lifetime—an ancient Greek

temple as it was in the heyday of its splendor.

"We waste time!" cried Jorghi, impatiently snatching the lantern from me. "The treasure, man, the treasure!"

"Beyond the small ring of lanternlight the darkness seemed to hem us in like a solid wall; the air was pervaded with a deathlike chill; the silence so intense that our restrained breathing sent vague echoes gliding before us like sighing ghosts as we made our way into the innermost sanctuary, where a huge statue of Truth, naked yet chaste, towered dimly above us. With a shout of joy, Barba-Jorghi darted forward and flung himself on a massive coffer of greenish bronze which stood in a recess behind the statue.

"It is here—the treasure!" he shouted. "The treasure at last!"

"Seizing the crowbar, he thrust the point under the hasp which secured the lid, wrenching the corroded metal apart. With a creaking of disused hinges, the lid swung up, revealing a heap of yellowish-gray material. A cry of disappointment burst from my companion.

"Rags—nothing but old rags!" he groaned.

"Be silent!" I whispered fiercely, for my own nerves were on edge. "Who knows what is underneath?"

"I thrust him aside and knelt before the chest, lifting out the garments one by one and laying them on the floor. They had the appearance of ceremonial robes worn by the priests, but they were so tender with age that the material came into shreds even as I lifted them. Right at the bottom of the coffer I came upon this——"

Count Roulette paused in his narrative and held up the eyeglass that was suspended from his neck. Frank Hartley looked surprized.

"But I thought the science of optics

was quite unknown in those ancient days," he said.

The Count nodded in agreement.

"Quite so; but they were acquainted with something even more wonderful."

Struck by his peculiar tone, Frank bent forward and examined the object with closer interest. Apparently it had no magnifying power, for the surfaces were quite flat; it seemed to be nothing more than a thin segment of natural, colorless crystal, slightly oval in shape and set in a narrow band of gold, the handle being formed of the slender figure of a woman, probably intended to represent Veritas herself.

"There does not appear to be anything very wonderful about that glass," Frank declared at length.

"So I thought myself when I first discovered it," the old man continued. "Naturally my first act was to take it up and hold it to my eye to ascertain if it possessed any optical properties, and the most convenient object on which to focus it was the face of Barba-Jorghi as he stood watching me keenly. To my eye, however, the crystal seemed to have no more effect than a piece of common glass; but its effect on my brain, my understanding, was astounding. As though illuminated by a ray of sunlight entering a pitch-dark room, I saw the man as he really was—his hidden thoughts—his schemes—his villainy—lay bare before me. Beneath his bluff, hearty mask was a soul filled with avarice, cunning and treachery. Having paved the way by inducing me to announce my departure openly, thus making sure that no awkward questions would follow my disappearance, he intended to murder me the moment the treasure was unearthed, and with one swift, well-aimed shot rid himself of an inconvenient witness and a sharer in the spoil. The rev-

elation was so sudden and unexpected that for a moment I was stunned.

"What have you found, my friend?' The smooth, oily voice roused me. 'Is it gold?—a jewel?'

"Something more precious than either,' I answered swiftly. 'Why are you aiming a loaded revolver at me from beneath your cloak?'

"The unctuous smirk vanished from his face as his jaw sagged open. I saw a quick movement of his hand beneath his cloak and had barely time to duck before a shot rang out and a bullet smacked against the wall behind me. Before the echoes of the explosion had died away I had drawn my own weapon and shot him dead.

LEAVING his body lying before the altar, I slipped the Glass of Truth into my pocket and quitted the sanctuary, hastily filling in the pit we had dug in order to enter. That night I rode fast and far, and by daylight I found myself in a little seaport on the Gulf of Petali. There I sold my horse and with the proceeds paid my passage to Messina by a small tramp steamer that was on the point of sailing. In Sicily it did not take me long to find a gambling-hell where, thanks to my magic glass, I won in an hour enough to carry me to the more palatial casinos of the Riviera. I could easily have broken the bank at each, but I dreaded attracting attention, so contented myself with modest stakes, reserving the bulk of my winnings for big deals on the stock markets of different European capitals. In less than a year I was a wealthy man.

"But the mere accumulation of money gave me little satisfaction; I wanted to turn my marvelous gift to some purpose that would bring lasting benefit to humanity. Then came the great disillusionment. Travel where I would, search as

I might, everywhere I saw the same deceit, guile, and greed in the hearts of those with whom I came into contact. Few indeed were there from whom I did not shrink with disgust when I examined them through my magic glass; I almost despaired of humanity until I chanced upon a young artist who had given up his hopes of inheriting his father's millions that he might earn his livelihood by his own talents. But he was on the point of ruining his happiness by marrying a worthless woman whose only aim was a life of wealth and luxury. This unscrupulous harpy, in order to effect her purpose, had acquired the pictures of a struggling artist and passed them off as her own work. The masterpieces you so admired as the work of Lady Vanda were in reality painted by Mary Deane, the girl to whose devoted nursing you owe your life."

THE effect of the Count's words was galvanic. During the unfolding of the story, amazement, incredulity and doubt had in turn shown on the young man's mobile features; but as he now struggled to his feet, his shining eyes and flushed face told that belief had prevailed over the sober dictates of common sense.

"What would I not give to possess the Eye of Truth!" he cried. "By its aid I could solve the deepest mysteries—read the hearts of all men—control the stock markets of the world—back the winning horse in every race! I could discover the hidden virtues and beauties of the world——"

"And likewise its hatreds, its sins, its miseries!" Count Roulette shook his head as he laid his hand kindly on Frank's shoulder. "Seek not too deep a knowledge, my young friend. If the Eye of Truth can show you the path to happiness, believe me, it can do no more."

"No more?" the other gasped, his face

blank with surprise. "Could I not discover every gold mine in the world?—unearth secret treasures——?"

"One treasure—one inestimable treasure—may yet be yours."

The old man raised his voice as he called the name of Mary Deane, and as the girl approached, looking curiously from one to the other, he held the Eye of Truth between her and Frank so that each looked at the other through its crystal disk.

For a full minute they stood there gazing into each other's eyes and reading there the secret that their lips had never uttered. Then, without speaking, Frank leant forward and caught her slender body in his arms, bending his head until her trembling lips fluttered up to his.

"And now," said Count Roulette softly, "it is time for us to part."

Frank turned quickly at the sound of the word.

"Part? Surely not so soon?" There was genuine regret in his voice. "You have brought such happiness into my life that I am loth to say good-bye. Besides, I should like to have a few more peeps through that wonderful glass of yours."

There was a whimsical expression on the Count's face as he shook his head.

"No, no, my young friend. You had

better rest content with what you have already seen. The Eye of Truth has shown you how to be happy—it can do no more. Remember, it is a wise lover—and a still wiser husband—that does not see too much!" He held out both hands to them as he went on: "My mission here is ended. At sundown my yacht sails from Monte Carlo, and it is unlikely that our paths in life will cross again. So farewell to you both, my children. . . . Farewell!"

SOME three hours later, as the dying sun was drooping toward the horizon, a white-painted yacht crept into sight round the distant rocky headland of Monaco, and steamed westward along the coast. It was Count Roulette leaving for his unknown destination.

Standing hand in hand on the balcony of the bungalow, Mary Deane and Frank watched it draw abreast of them, and saw the tiny flag at the masthead dip thrice in silent salute. Then the bows of the *Veritas* swung seaward and the dainty craft grew gradually smaller and dimmer until its trailing plume of smoke merged into the shadows of the coming night.

The Eye of Truth had passed, but it had left behind a legacy of love and happiness that would only pass with life itself.

