

Sir Julian Garve

By Ella D'Arcy

A YOUNG man, an American, the latest addition to the hotel colony on the cliff, spent his first evening as all newcomers invariably do ; having dined, he strolled down the broad, villa-bordered road, to the Casino on the shore, and went into the gambling rooms to look at the play. He stopped by the baccarat table.

The sitters were ringed round by a double row of men, who stood and staked over their shoulders. But the stranger, on account of his height, could follow the game easily, and had a good view of the individual who held the bank. This was a man of forty-eight or fifty years of age, handsome, and even distinguished looking. Noting his well-cut clothes, and his imperturbable, his almost stolid demeanour, the stranger guessed at once that he was British. And in spite of the heavy jaw, of the general stolidity, he was struck by something fascinating in the man, by something which suggested to him manifold experiences.

He made these reflections as he idly watched the game. The dealer manipulated the cards with the rapidity and precision of the habitual player. Turning up his own hand he displayed the nine of spades and the ace of diamonds. He helped himself to a
third

third card, and in conformity with an assenting grunt from either side, flung cards to right and left. A murmur arose, half disgust and wholly admiration, for the continued run of luck, which gave the bank, for its third card, the eight of diamonds. The croupier raked together the coloured ivory counters and pushed them over to the Englishman, who swept them into a careless heap and prepared to deal again.

The American, watching, found that his thoughts had travelled to a certain "Professor" Deedes, a professor of conjuring, whose acquaintance he had made at Saratoga during the preceding summer; an ingenuous, an amusing, a voluble little fellow, who had shown him some surprising tricks with plates and tumblers, with coins and cards. With cards, in particular, the little man had been colossal. In his hands, these remained no mere oblong pieces of pasteboard, but became a troupe of tiny *familiars*, each endowed with a magical knowledge of the Professor's wishes, with an unfailing alacrity in obeying them. One of his tricks had been to take an ordinary pack of fifty-two cards, previously examined and shuffled by the looker-on, and to deal from it nothing but kings and aces; apparently fifty-two kings and aces. Then fanning out this same pack face downwards, he would invite you to draw a card, and no matter which card you drew, and though you drew many times in succession, invariably this card proved to be—say, the seven of diamonds. He would turn his back while you ran the pack over, making a visual selection; and the card selected not only divined your choice, but once in the hands of the Professor, found a means of communicating that choice to its master. The young man had been amazed. "But suppose you were to play a game of chance, eh?" The Professor had replied that he never permitted himself to play games of chance. "Without meaning it, from mere force of habit,

habit, I should arrange the cards, I should give myself the game." To demonstrate how safely he could do so, he had dealt as for baccarat, giving himself a total of nine pips every time, and although the young man had been prepared for an exhibition of sleight of hand, although he had been on the look out for it, not to save his life could he have said how it was done.

Now, as he stood watching the play in the Casino, his interest in the game faded before his interest in the problem, as to why at this particular moment, the Saratogan Professor should rise so vividly before his eyes? It had been a mere twenty-four hour acquaintanceship, the distraction of a couple of unoccupied afternoons, a thousand succeeding impressions and incidents had superimposed themselves over it since, he had played baccarat a hundred times since, without giving a thought to Deedes. Why then did a picture of the man, of his good humour, his volubility, his unparalleled dexterity, usurp such prominence among his memories at this particular time?

Preparatory to dealing again, the banker glanced round the table, first at the sitters, then at the circle of men who surrounded them. Here his eye caught the eye of the stranger, and during the brief instant that their glances remained interlocked, the Englishman came to the conclusion that the new-comer had already been observing him for some little time. Then he proceeded with the deal.

When he looked up next he found the stranger occupying the fourth chair to the right, in the place of Morris, the Jew diamond-broker, who had gone. Instead of that gentleman's pronounced Hebrew physiognomy, he saw a young face, betraying a dozen races and a million contradictions, with dark hair parted down the
middle,

middle, hair which had gone prematurely white on top. So that, to the Englishman, with a bit of Herrick running in his mind, the stranger had the appearance of having thrust his head into Mab's palace, and brought away on it all the cobweb tapestries which adorn her walls.

The young man had a broad and full forehead; wore a *pince-nez* which did not conceal the vivacious quality of his eyes, and a black beard, short cut and pointed, which did its best to supplement his lack of chin. "Intellectual, witty and humane, compliant as a woman," commented the Englishman, summing up the stranger's characteristics, and he was struck with the young man's hands as he moved them to and fro over the cloth—long-fingered and finely modelled hands. He was struck with their flexibility, with their grace. He found himself looking at them with speculation.

"*Faites vos jeux, Messieurs,*" cried the voice of the croupier, and the players pushed their counters over the dividing line. "*Messieurs, vos jeux sont faits? Rien ne va plus.*"

The bank lost, won, lost again; seemed in for a run of ill-luck. Re-heartened, the players increased their stakes, and Fortune immediately shifted her wheel, and the croupier's impassive rake pushed everything on the table over to the banker. The young man with the *pince-nez* lost five hundred marks, a thousand, two thousand, in succession. With a steady hand and *insouciant* air, he doubled his stake every time, but the bank continued to win, and the players and bystanders began to look at him with curiosity. He put down five thousand marks and lost it; he put down ten thousand and saw them raked away.

"Well, that's about cleaned me out," he observed in a casual tone, and got up, to perceive that had he held on for but one more deal he would have recouped all his previous losses. For no sooner had

had he risen than the bank lost to the side he had just left. His demeanour on receiving this insult at the hands of the jade who had just injured him, if not imperturbable like the Englishman's—and on the contrary, it was all animation—was quite as undecipherable. Not the shrewdest scrutiny could detect whether or no the heart was heavy within, whether the brain which worked behind those astute blue eyes was a prey to anxiety, or in reality as untroubled as those eyes chose to proclaim.

Yet the loss of a thousand pounds would break half the world, and seriously cripple nine-tenths of the remaining half.

The Englishman followed him with thoughtful eyes, as he lighted a cigarette, and with his hands thrust into his trouser pockets, sauntered away into the vestibule.

The young man wandered up and down the marble floor of the vestibule, coaxing his feet to keep straight along a certain line of green marble lozenges which were set at the corners of larger slabs. He amused himself by imagining there was a tremendous precipice on either side of the line, down which the smallest false step would precipitate him. Meanwhile, the man he liked best in the world walked by his side, and endeavoured to draw his attention to more weighty matters.

“There was something crooked about his play, I'll bet you,” insinuated this Other. “Why else did you think of the little Professor?”

“Hang it all!” said the young man, carefully keeping his equilibrium, “why shouldn't I think of him? And you see if I could have held on for another turn, I should have won everything back.”

“Don't tell me footle like that,” came the answer. “Don't tell

tell me that if your money had been lying on the table the cards would have fallen as they did. But the bank could well afford to lose just then, since the players, intimidated by your losses, had staked so modestly."

The young man arrived safely at the last lozenge, turned, and began the perilous journey back. The Other Fellow turned with him, insisting at his ear: "The man's a card-sharper, a swindler, some poor devil of a half-pay captain, some *chevalier d'industrie* who can't pay his hotel bill."

"You're quite out of it!" returned the young man warmly. "His whole personality refutes you."

"Let's make it a question of character," said the Other Fellow, "and I bet you—well, I bet you twopence that his character won't stand the laxest investigation."

A moment later they both came across Morris. The diamond broker had rendered Underhill a small service earlier in the day. His condescension in accepting that service gave him the right now of putting a question.

"Who was the chap holding the bank at the baccarat table?" he asked.

"That was Sir Julian Garve, Bart.," said Morris, rolling the words about, as though they were a sweet morsel under the tongue.

"Genuine baronet?"

"As good as they make 'em. Looked him up in Burke. Seats at Knowle and Buckhurst. Arms quarterly or and gules, a bend over all, vert. Though what the devil that means, I'm sure I don't know. Supporters, two leopards, spotted."

"Progenitors of the common garden carriage dog, probably," murmured the young man to his beard. Then, "Hard up?" he queried.

"Looks like it!" answered Morris ironically. "Best rooms

at the best hotel in the town, his own cart and blood mares over from England ; everything in tip-top style."

"It's very interesting," remarked the young man smiling, and when he smiled his eyelids came together leaving a mere horizontal gleam of blue.

"Oh, he's very interesting," repeated Morris ; "has done a lot, and seen no end."

"I think I should like to know him," observed the young man nonchalantly, and resumed his peregrinations.

The baccarat party broke up, and Garve, entering the vestibule, arrested Morris in his turn.

"Do you know who it was took your seat at the table this evening ?" he inquired.

"Oh, yes ; know him well. His name's Underhill. He's an American. Only landed at Hamburg this morning. I happened to be up at the Kronprinz when he arrived, and knowing the ropes there, was able to get him a better room than even the almighty dollar would have procured him."

Garve pondered. "It's to be hoped he's got the almighty dollar in good earnest," said he. "Do you know he's dropped a thousand pounds ?"

Morris whistled.

"By-the-bye, has he any one with him ?" asked the baronet.

"No, he's quite alone. Come to Europe to study art or literature or some tommy-rot of that sort."

"Then the money was probably his year's screw. I feel very sorry about it."

Morris thought there was no need to fret ; evidently he was a millionaire. How else could he afford to waste his time studying art ?

But

But Garve stuck to his own opinion.

"Unless my intuitions are very much at fault," said he, in an impressive undertone, "to-night has struck him a heavy blow. I've known men put an end to themselves for less. You remember poor O'Hagan two seasons back?"

"Oh, yes; but O'Hagan was an emotional Irishman. This chap's not a Yankee for nothing. He's got his head screwed on the right way if ever a man had. Don't think I ever saw a cuter specimen."

Garve looked at the diamond merchant with a tolerant smile. "Of course, being an American, he's necessarily cute, while Irishmen are necessarily emotional, and Englishmen like myself necessarily slow-witted but honest. You allow for no shades in your character-painting. However, I'll try to believe, in this matter, you're right. Look here, he's coming this way now," he added in a moment; "can't you introduce him to me?"

Morris was proud to be in a position to gratify a baronet's wish.

"Allow me to make you and my friend Sir Julian Garve acquainted," said he, as the young man with the *pince-nez* was about to pass them by. "Mr. Francis Underhill, of New York. You'll be surprised at my having got your name and description so pat, but I took the liberty of reading it in the hotel book when I was up there to-day."

The young man removed his glasses, polished them lightly on his silk handkerchief, and readjusted them with care for the purpose of looking the speaker up and down. ("Damn his cheek!" the Other Fellow had suggested at his ear.)

"No liberty taken by a member of your talented race would ever surprise me, Mr. Moses," he replied.

"My name's Morris," corrected the diamond broker, stiffly.

"Ah,

"Ah, yes, I remember you told me so before; but you see I omitted to impress it on my mind by a reference to the Visitors' Book."

Garve, listening with an air of weary amusement, again caught Underhill's eye, and their glances again interlocked as before at the table. But Garve only said: "I was sorry you had such bad luck to-night." And Underhill thought that the quality of his voice was delightful; it was rich, soft, harmonious. But then, all English voices delighted his ear.

"Yes," he admitted, "luck was decidedly against me."

Morris alone was unconscious of the dot-long pause which distinguished the word luck.

"To-morrow night you will come and take your revenge," Garve predicted; but there was a note of inquiry in his voice.

"I shall certainly come and play to-morrow," affirmed the young man.

"That's right!" said Garve, cordially. "We shall be glad to see you. We admired your coolness. You're an old hand at the game, evidently."

The attendants were making their presence felt; they were waiting to close the Casino. The three men went out upon the terrace in front, and Garve prepared to take leave.

"You are staying at the Kronprinz, I think?" he said to Underhill. "Then our ways don't lie together, for I always put up in the town. I went there first, long before the cliff hotels were thought of. You came down the upper road, of course? Then, take my advice, and go back by the sands. They're as smooth and firm as a billiard-table, and with this moonlight, you'll have a magnificent walk. Presently you'll come to a zig-zag staircase cut in the cliff, which will bring you up right opposite your hotel."

Underhill

Underhill and Morris remained some little time longer leaning against the stone balustrade. Above them was a moon-suffused sky, before them a moon-silvered sea. The shrubberies of the Casino gardens sloped down on every side. Over the tops of the foliage on the left glittered the glass dome of the Badeaustaldt, with vacant surrounding sands, which gleamed wetly where the Dürren, dividing into a hundred slender rivulets, flows across them in shallow channels to the sea. Beyond, again, the wooded, widely curved horn of the bay closed in the western prospect.

Only the extreme tip of the right horn was visible, for immediately to the right of the Casino the land rises abruptly and out-thrusts seawards a bold series of cliffs, crowned from time immemorial by the famous pine forests of Schoenewalder, and, within recent years, by a dozen monster sanatoria and hotels.

Underhill leaned upon the balustrade and looked seawards. He had forgotten his insolence to Morris (he had forgotten Morris's existence), and the Jew had entirely forgiven it. He forgave a good deal in the course of the day to the possessors of rank or wealth. But he was not destitute of good feeling. He was genuinely sorry for the young man, whose silence he attributed to a natural depression on account of his loss. He had a great deal to say next day on the subject of Underhill's low spirits.

When he turned to go, Morris escorted him through the garden. He wished he could have gone all the way with him, and said so. Terror of Mrs. Morris, whom he knew to be sitting up for him at the Villa Rose, alone prevented him. But this he did not say.

Underhill responded with polite abstraction, and they parted on the crest of the Jew's fervid hope, that they should meet again next day.

The young man sprang lightly down the path which wound to the shore. His first graceless sensation was one of relief that that little boulder had left him. Then, catching sight of the black shadow walking with him over the sands, he made it a courtly salutation.

"For I must confess I'm never in such pleasant company as when I'm alone with you, my dear," he addressed it. The shadow flourished its hat in acknowledgment, and the companions walked on amicably.

"Yet I fancy that fellow Garve could be pleasant company too!" he threw out tentatively.

"Only it's a pity he cheats at cards, eh?"

"Bah, bah! Who says that he cheated? Isn't it less improbable to believe it was luck than to believe that a man of his position, his wealth, and his appearance—for you'll admit, I suppose, that his appearance is in his favour—is a mere card-sharper, a swindler?"

"Why, then, did you think of the little professor?"

"Toujours cette rengaine!" cried Underhill, with indignation.

"What makes me think of the man in the moon at the present moment?"

"Why, the moonlight, of course, you blooming duffer!" chuckled his opponent. "Which establishes my case. Thoughts don't spring up spontaneous in the mind, any more than babies spring up spontaneous under bushes. The kid and the thought are both connected with something which has gone before, although I'll admit that the parentage of both may sometimes be a little difficult to trace. But that gives zest to the pursuit. Now, up on the terrace with Moses, you were thinking that when your year in Europe's over, you'll go home, and ask your delicious little cousin, Annie Laurie, to be your wife."

Underhill

Underhill broke off to murmur,

“It was many and many a year ago,
In a kingdom by the sea,
That a maiden there lived, whom you may know
By the name of Annabel Lee.”

“Oh, stick to business!” urged the other. “What made you think of Annie?”

“Well, if you really must know,” confessed the young man, “I was thinking of my indulgent father and my adoring mother. As Annie Laurie lives with them the connection is obvious.”

“And what made you think of your parents?”

“I was back in God’s country.”

“How did you get there?”

“Let me see. . . . Ah, yes! I stood on the terrace, looking out over the sea, and observed in the distance the smoke of a steamer. But I don’t surely need to follow the thread further, for a person of your intelligence.”

“No, but you perceive that you can’t possess a thought that hasn’t its ancestry lying behind it, any more than you can get from the moonlight here to the shadow there by the cliffs without leaving footprints to show the way you went. Now, when you stood at the baccarat table this evening, what made you think of the little Professor?”

“My dear chap,” said Underhill, “you make me tired. There is such a thing as pressing a point too far. And, since you were good enough to call my attention to the fact that the cliff throws a shadow, I’m going to extinguish your Socratic questionings by walking in it. *Buona sera!*”

He rounded a spur of cliff, keeping close to its base.

“This

“This maiden she had no other thought
Than to love and be loved by me;
I was a child and she was a child
In this kingdom by the sea.
But we loved with a love that was more than love,
I and my Annabel Lee.”

“Now what’s the parentage of that quotation? The similarity of the initials of course. Oh, my dear, far be it from me to deny your cleverness!” he concluded gaily, and entered the next cove.

Across it moved a figure, a real figure, not a shadow, going from him. The hands, holding a light bamboo, were clasped behind the back.

“By Jove, it’s Garve!” thought Underhill and hurried after him. Garve turned round in surprise.

“I didn’t think there was much likelihood of my overtaking *you*,” said he, “but it never occurred to me you could overtake *me*. You remained up at the Casino?”

“And you didn’t go home after all, but put your advice to me into practice instead? Well, it was good advice too. The walk is superb. It’s the sort of night when the thought of bed is a sacrilege.”

“Even when at home I never go to bed until daybreak,” remarked Garve. “In civilised countries, I go on playing until then. But here, a grandmotherly government shuts the Casino at twelve.”

“A grandmotherly government knows that otherwise you wouldn’t leave a red cent in the place,” said the young man with a quizzical flash of blue through his glasses.

Garve stopped to scrutinise him.

“My

"My luck isn't altogether luck perhaps," said he, walking on again.

"No?" (With exaggerated surprise.)

"No," pursued Garve, "it's keeping a cool head, and carefully regulating my life with a view to my play in the evening. I live on cards. I dine at four in the afternoon off roast mutton and rice pudding——"

"Good Lord, how tragic!"

"I go to bed at six and sleep till ten. Then I get up, take a cup of coffee and a biscuit, and come into the rooms with all my wits about me. Naturally, I stand a better chance than the men who've finished off a day of peg-drinking by a heavy indigestible dinner and half a dozen different wines."

The young man was amazed, interested, delighted with the absurdity of such an existence.

"As an amusement cards are good enough," said he; "or even at a pinch they might provide the means of livelihood. But why in the world a man of your position should make such sacrifices at their shrine——"

"My position," Garve broke in bitterly, "simply necessitates my spending more money than other men, without furnishing me the wherewithal to do it. I suppose it seems incredible to you Americans, that a man of old family, a man with a handle to his name, shouldn't possess a brass farthing to bless himself with?"

"Yet I understood from our friend Moses that you had town houses and country houses, manservants and maidservants, oxen and asses, not to mention spotted leopards and bloodstock over from England."

The impertinence of this speech was deprived of its sting by the friendly whimsicality of Underhill's manner. Garve accepted it in perfect good part.

"It's

"It's just as well Morris and the rest of that crew should think so, but the truth is, I succeeded to an encumbered estate, the rent-roll of which barely suffices to pay the mortgage interest. Knowles is let furnished, Buckhurst is so dilapidated no one will hire it. I can't sell, because of the entail. I can't work, for I was never given a profession. I can only play cards; and by playing systematically and regulating, as I tell you, my whole life to that end, I manage to pay my way."

"Twenty thousand dollars in a night," murmured the Other Fellow at Underhill's ear, "would not only pay your way but pave it too. Not?"

"Oh, dry up!" advised the young man. "You're such a damned literal chap! Can't you see he's speaking metaphorically?"

"So now, you understand the tragedy of the cold mutton," Garve concluded smiling. They walked on a bit in silence, until Garve resumed in exactly the same even, melodious voice in which he had last spoken, "You thought I cheated to-night, didn't you?"

Underhill was inexpressibly shocked and pained by this sudden, naked confrontation with his thought. Besides, he thought it no longer. Garve's explanations had convinced him of Garve's probity; he was subjugated by Garve's charm.

"No, no, no! Don't say such things!" he protested. "A thousand times no!"

"All the same, you thought I cheated," repeated Garve, standing still and looking at him oddly. "And—I did cheat! . . . I lost only when it suited my purpose to lose. Every time I had forced the cards."

He remained imperturbable, cold, as he said this. It was, perhaps, only the moonlight that made his handsome face look haggard and pale.

On the other hand, it was the young American who coloured up to the roots of his hair, who was overcome with horror, who was conscious of all the shame, of all the confusion which the confessed swindler might be supposed to feel. And when Garve sat down on a boulder, and covered his face with his hand, Underhill longed to sink through the earth, that he might not witness his humiliation.

He tried to say something comforting. The words would not form themselves, or stumbled out disjointedly, irrelevantly.

Garve did not listen.

"I've lost the last thing I had in the world to lose," said he ; "my honour. I carry a besmirched name. I am a ruined, a broken man. You found me out to-night. Even if you spare me, another will find me out another night. And how to live with the knowledge that you know my shame ! How to live ! How to live !"

He got up. His stick lay on the sand. He took a few uncertain steps with bowed head, and his hand thrust into his breast. He came back to where the young man stood.

"There's but one thing left for me to do," said he, looking at him with sombre eyes, "and that's to shoot myself. Don't you see yourself it's all that remains for me to do ?"

Underhill's quick brain envisaged the man's whole life, the infamy of it, the pathos of it. He recognised the impossibility of living down such a past, he foresaw the degrading years to come. He knew that Garve had found the only solution possible. He knew it was what he himself would do in the same hideous circumstances. Yet how could he counsel this other to do it ? This other for whom his heart was wrung, for whom he felt warm sympathy, compassion, brotherliness. Oh, there must be some other way !

While

While he hesitated, while he searched for it, Garve repeated his proposition. "There's only one thing for me to do, shoot myself, eh? Or," he paused . . . "shoot the man who's found me out? I might, for instance, shoot you."

Underhill was conscious of a smart blow on the ear. He started back looking at Garve with surprise. For the fraction of a second he thought Garve had really shot him . . . but that was absurd . . . a little blow like that! Yet what then did he mean by it? Garve stood staring across at him, staring, staring, and between the fingers of his right hand, which was falling back to his side, was a glint of steel. Motionless in air between them hung a tiny swirl of smoke.

"Is it possible? is it possible?" Underhill asked himself. And all at once Garve seemed to be removed an immense way off; he saw him blurred, wavering, indistinct. Then it was no longer Garve, it was his father, over whose shoulder appeared his mother's face, and Annie Laurie's. . . He tried to spring to them, but his legs refused to obey him. He dropped to his knees instead, and all thought and all sensation suddenly ceased . . . the body sank over into the sand.