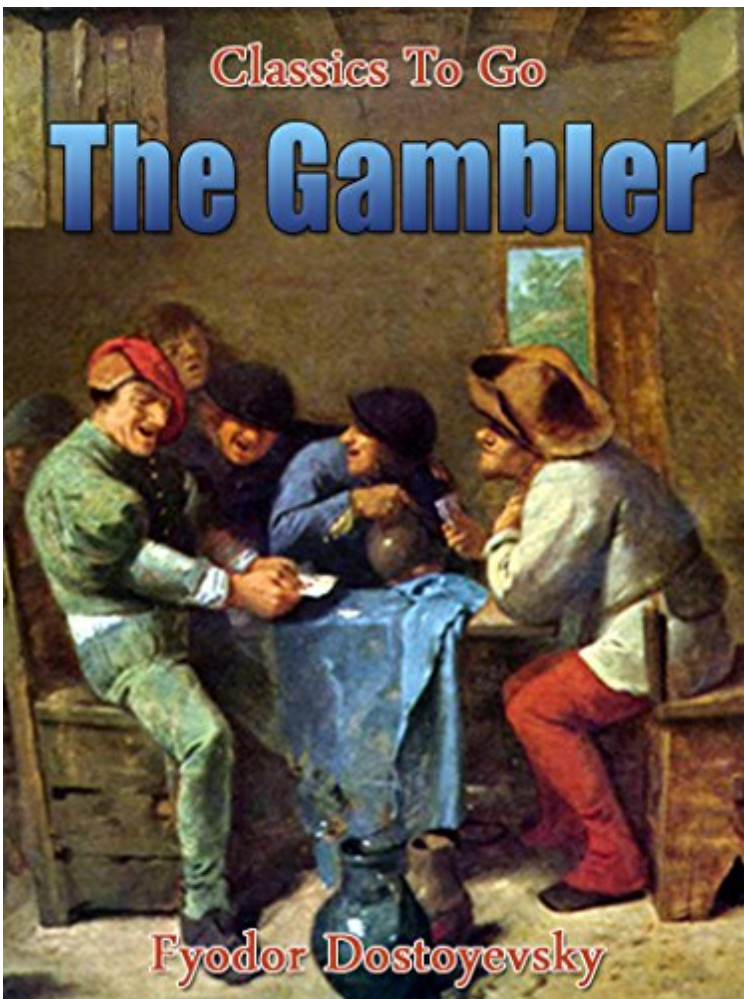


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The Gambler



Par Fyodor Dostoyevsky
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Description : Description du produit
In this dark and compelling short novel, Fyodor Dostoevsky tells the story of Alexey Ivanovitch, a young tutor working in the household of an imperious Russian general. Alexey tries to break through the wall of the established order in Russia, but instead becomes mired in the endless downward spiral of betting and loss. His intense and inescapable addiction is accentuated by his affair with the General's cruel yet seductive niece, Polina. In *The Gambler*, Dostoevsky reaches the heights of drama with this stunning psychological portrait.

Prsentation de l'diteur
'The Gambler' is a short novel by Fyodor Dostoyevsky about a young tutor in the employment of a formerly wealthy Russian general. The novella reflects Dostoyevsky's own addiction to roulette, which was in more ways than one the inspiration for the book: Dostoyevsky completed the novella under a strict deadline to pay off gambling debts..com
The Gambler brilliantly captures the strangely powerful compulsion to bet that Dostoyevsky, himself a compulsive gambler, knew so well. The hero rides an emotional roller coaster between exhilaration and despair, and secondary characters such as the Grandmother, who throws much of her fortune away at the gaming tables, are unforgettable. The book's

publishing history is equally so: Under the pressure of a deadline from an unscrupulous publisher, and with rights to his entire oeuvre at stake, Dostoyevsky dictated the book in less than a month to the star pupil of Russia's first shorthand school. Then he married her. *Extraiti*. At last I have come back from my fortnights absence. Our friends have already been two days in Roulettenburg. I imagined that they were expecting me with the greatest eagerness; I was mistaken, however. The General had an extremely independent air, he talked to me condescendingly and sent me away to his sister. I even fancied that the General was a little ashamed to look at me. Marya Filippovna was tremendously busy and scarcely spoke to me; she took the money, however, counted it, and listened to my whole report. They were expecting Mezentsov, the little Frenchman, and some Englishman; as usual, as soon as there was money there was a dinner-party; in the Moscow style. Polina Alexandrovna, seeing me, asked why I had been away so long, and without waiting for an answer went off somewhere. Of course, she did that on purpose. We must have an explanation, though. Things have accumulated. They had assigned me a little room on the fourth storey of the hotel. They know here that I belong to the Generals suite. It all looks as though they had managed to impress the people.

The General is looked upon by every one here as a very rich Russian grandee. Even before dinner he commissioned me, among other things, to change two notes for a thousand francs each. I changed them at the office of the hotel. Now we shall be looked upon as millionaires for a whole week, at least. I wanted to take Misha and Nadya out for a walk, but on the stairs I was summoned back to the General; he had graciously bethought him to inquire where I was taking them. The man is absolutely unable to look me straight in the face; he would like to very much, but every time I meet his eyes with an intent, that is, disrespectful air, he seems overcome with embarrassment. In very bombastic language, piling one sentence on another, and at last losing his thread altogether, he gave me to understand that I was to take the children for a walk in the park, as far as possible from the Casino. At last he lost his temper completely, and added sharply: Or else maybe you'll be taking them into the gambling saloon. You must excuse me, he added, but I know you are still rather thoughtless and capable, perhaps, of gambling. In any case, though, I am not your mentor and have no desire to be, yet I have the right, at any rate, to desire that you will not compromise me, so to speak. . . . But I have no money, I said calmly; one must have it before one can lose it. You shall have it at once, answered the General, flushing a little; he rummaged in his bureau, looked up in an account book, and it turned out that he had a hundred and twenty roubles owing me. How are we to settle up? he said. We must change it into thalers. Come, take a hundred thaler the rest, of course, won't be lost. I took the money without a word. Please don't be offended by my words, you are so ready to take offence. . . . If I did make an observation, it was only, so to speak, by way of warning, and, of course, I have some right to do so. . . . On my way home before dinner, with the children, I met a perfect cavalcade. One party had driven out to look at some ruin. Two magnificent carriages, superb horses! In one carriage was Mlle. Blanche with Marya Filippovna and Polina; the Frenchman, the Englishman and our General were on horseback. The passers-by stopped and stared; a sensation was created; but the General will have a bad time, all the same. I calculated that with the four thousand francs I had brought, added to what they had evidently managed to get hold of, they had now seven or eight thousand francs; but that is not enough for Mlle. Blanche. Mlle. Blanche, too, is staying at the hotel with her mother; our Frenchman is somewhere in the house, too. The footman calls him Monsieur le Comte. Mlle. Blanche's mother is called Madame la Comtesse; well, who knows, they may be Comte and Comtesse. I felt sure that M. le Comte would not recognize me when we assembled at dinner. The General, of course, would not have thought of introducing us or even saying a word to him on my behalf; and M. le Comte has been in Russia himself, and knows what is called an outchitel is very small fry. He knows me very well, however. But I must confess I made my appearance at dinner unbidden; I fancy the General forgot to give orders, or else he would certainly have sent me to dine at the table d'hôte. I came of my own accord, so that the General looked at me with astonishment. Kind-hearted Marya Filippovna immediately made a place for me; but my meeting with Mr. Astley saved the situation, and I could not help seeming to belong to the party. I met this strange Englishman for the first time in the train in Prussia, where we sat opposite to one another, when I was travelling to join the family; then I came across him as I was going into France, and then again in Switzerland: in the course of that fortnight twice and now I suddenly met him in Roulettenburg. I never met a man so shy in my life. He is stupidly shy and, of course, is aware of it himself, for he is by no means stupid. He is very sweet and gentle, however. I drew him into talk at our first meeting in Prussia. He told me that he had been that summer at North Cape, and that he was very anxious to visit the fair at Nizhni Novgorod. I don't know how he made acquaintance with the General; I believe that he is hopelessly in love with Polina. When she came in he glowed like a sunset. He was very

glad that I was sitting beside him at the table and seemed already to look upon me as his bosom friend. At dinner the Frenchman gave himself airs in an extraordinary way; he was nonchalant and majestic with every one. In Moscow, I remember, he used to blow soap bubbles. He talked a great deal about finance and Russian politics. The General sometimes ventured to contradict, but discreetly, and only so far as he could without too great loss of dignity. I was in a strange mood; of course, before we were half through dinner I had asked myself my usual invariable question: Why I went on dancing attendance on this General, and had not left them long ago? From time to time I glanced at Polina Alexandrovna. She took no notice of me whatever. It ended by my flying into a rage and making up my mind to be rude. I began by suddenly, apropos of nothing, breaking in on the conversation in a loud voice. What I longed to do above all things was to be abusive to the Frenchman. I turned round to the General and very loudly and distinctly, I believe, interrupted him. I observed that this summer it was utterly impossible for a Russian to dine at table d'hte. The General turned upon me an astonished stare. If you are a self-respecting man, I went on, you will certainly be inviting abuse and must put up with affronts to your dignity. In Paris, on the Rhine, even in Switzerland, there are so many little Poles, and French people who sympathize with them, that there's no chance for a Russian to utter a word. I spoke in French. The General looked at me in amazement. I don't know whether he was angry or simply astonished at my so forgetting myself. It seems some one gave you a lesson, said the Frenchman, carelessly and contemptuously. I had a row for the first time with a Pole in Paris, I answered; then with a French officer who took the Poles part. And then some of the French came over to my side, when I told them how I tried to spit in Monseigneur's coffee. Spit? asked the General, with dignified perplexity, and he even looked about him aghast. The Frenchman scanned me mistrustfully. Just so, I answered. After feeling convinced for two whole days that I might have to pay a brief visit to Rome about our business, I went to the office of the Papal Embassy to get my passport vised. There I was met by a little abb, a dried-up little man of about fifty, with a frost-bitten expression. After listening to me politely, but extremely drily, he asked me to wait a little. Though I was in a hurry, of course I sat down to wait, and took up *L'Opinion Nationale* and began reading a horribly abusive attack on Russia. Meanwhile, I heard some one in the next room ask to see Monseigneur; I saw my abb bow to him. I addressed the same request to him again; he asked me to wait more drily than ever. A little later some one else entered, a stranger, but on business, some Austrian; he was listened to and at once conducted upstairs. Then I felt very much vexed; I got up, went to the abb and said resolutely, that as Monseigneur was receiving, he might settle my business, too. At once the abb drew back in great surprise. It was beyond his comprehension that an insignificant Russian should dare to put himself on a level with Monseigneur's guests. As though delighted to have an opportunity of insulting me, he looked me up and down, and shouted in the most insolent tone: Can you really suppose that Monseigneur is going to leave his coffee on your account? Then I shouted, too, but more loudly than he: Let me tell you I'm ready to spit in your Monseigneur's coffee! If you don't finish with my passport this minute, I'll go to him in person. What! When the Cardinal is sitting with him! cried the abb, recoiling from me with horror, and, flinging wide his arms, he stood like a cross, with an air of being ready to die rather than let me pass. Then I answered him that I was a heretic and a barbarian, *que je suis hrtique et barbare*, and that I cared nothing for all these Archbishops, Cardinals, Monseignurs and all of them. In short, I showed I was not going to give way. The abb looked at me with uneasy ill-humour, then snatched my passport and carried it upstairs. A minute later it had been vised. Here, wouldn't you like to see it? I took out the passport and showed the Roman vis. Well, I must say . . . the General began. What saved you was saying that you were a heretic and barbarian, the Frenchman observed, with a smile. *Cela n'tait pas si bte*. Why, am I to model myself upon our Russians here? They sit, not daring to open their lips, and almost ready to deny they are Russians. In Paris, anyway in my hotel, they began to treat me much more attentively when I told every one about my passage-at-arms with the abb. The fat Polish pan, the person most antagonistic to me at table d'hte, sank into the background. The Frenchmen did not even resent it when I told them that I had, two years previously, seen a man at whom, in 1812, a French chasseur had shot simply in order to discharge his gun. The man was at that time a child of ten, and his family had not succeeded in leaving Moscow.