



"I'm the agent of Mr. Winterhouse," volunteered Clare.
"May I look around?"

level. Jacot himself was a slim Frenchman, well-preserved, faultlessly dressed.

"I am the agent of Mr. Winterhouse, a western mine owner and connoisseur," volunteered Clare on entering the shop.

"May I look around?"
"Avec plaisir, m'amselle," returned the suave Frenchman with both hands interlocking. "In what is Mr. Winterhouse most interested? In furniture? In pictures? In —"

"Nearly everything," she confided, looking the dealer frankly in the eye. "And he is not particular about the price, if he wants a thing. As for me — I am particular about one thing. A rebate on the bill, a commission, you understand? The price is immaterial, but not my — er — commission. *Comprenez-vous?*"

"Parfaitement," smiled the little Frenchman. "I can arrange all that. Trust me."

An hour perhaps Clare spent wandering up and down the long aisles of the store, admiring, pricing, absorbing facts that might serve to captivate the fictitious Mr. Winterhouse.

Suddenly she glanced at her little wrist watch, giving a suppressed exclamation. "Oh — is it after four? At four I was to meet Mr. Winterhouse uptown. He is waiting now. What shall I do?"

"Can mademoiselle not telephone?" suggested Jacot, in genuine solicitude to please a prospective customer.

"Oh — may I?"

"Assuredly, *Voilà* — the booth in the office."

"BILLY," she almost whispered in the transmitter, "you'd better call a taxi. Have a messenger carry that grip. I've told some whoppers here. You're at least a billionaire. Only you must say 'No' to every suggestion I make. Then agree to reconsider tomorrow when you have time. Get me?"

"I'm on."

"A few minutes later Lawson arrived and with marked respect was greeted by Jacot and conducted to the office where Clare waited.

"I was so fascinated in looking over this wonder-

ful collection," she apologized, "that I forgot the time, and then I thought perhaps you might be interested in some exquisite Seventeenth Century silverware. You may leave the grip here, boy," she concluded to the messenger.

Lawson dropped into a chair with feigned exhaustion.

"Tired to death," he sighed. "Still, I'll look at it."

With a hasty glance about, Clare noted that the office was in a corner and that no one could see it except Jacot.

"Could you not bring the silver service in here for inspection?" she asked.

"Delighted," bowed Jacot. "If mademoiselle and monsieur will make themselves at home here I am sure it will not take long."

Jacot retired backward. Instantly Clare was on her knees opening the grip.

"Move that cabinet beside the telephone booth out just a bit, Billy," she whispered, quickly removing the covering from a mahogany box and placing it on a table. It was a peculiar box with a sort of dial in the front face, and as Clare opened and shut it for an instant she closed what looked like two discs or spools of wire.

QUIETLY Lawson edged the cabinet out. Clare closed the box and a moment later she placed it carefully on the floor, leaving two wires exposed.

Footsteps down the aisle warned them that Jacot and an assistant were returning with the silver service.

"Push the cabinet back, Billy," whispered Clare shoving the wires out of sight. "I'll finish when you have turned down the silver service."

Lawson had moved the cabinet and restored the status quo by lounging into the easy chair with a half yawn. Clare consumed several minutes urging the merits of the silver service as compared with one they had seen in London. Lawson parried.

"Perhaps you would be interested in the new importation of Chinese cloisonné which Mr. Jacot showed me?"

"Bring it out, so long as we are here."

Again Jacot disappeared. Clare found the loose

wires and deftly cut in and attached them to the wires of the telephone in the shadow of the cabinet where they would not be observed.

The cloisonné satisfied Lawson even less than the silver service. Still, taking the cue from Clare that her plan, whatever it was, had worked well so far, he assumed an air of cordiality toward Jacot and asked to call the next day.

As they arose to go, Lawson observed that Clare had left her parasol in a corner. Before he could hand it to her he caught a fleeting frown and a shake of her head. She evidently intended to forget it.

"What do you make of the little Frenchman?" he asked when they had reached the waiting taxicab. "Is he playing a 'fence' or is he on the square with Osgood?"

"I'm not guessing," she answered, "at least not until I have had a chance to return for my parasol before he closes. I think I'll go alone. Meanwhile, I'll let you know if anything develops."

That night Clare and Lawson sat comfortably chatting in an obscure corner of the parlor at the Ritz.

"How did you get the clew?" asked Lawson with surprise and admiration.

"Never mind, Billy — there's Jacot, now. See — he is evidently looking for some one."

Just then Jacot caught sight of a tastefully gowned woman, obviously a foreigner, who had been seated alone in an alcove at the other end of the room.

As he advanced toward her, she hesitantly recognized him, arose, and then received him with cordiality, extending a jeweled hand.

AS Clare studied the face of the woman, it flashed on her that something beneath the olive beauty of her complexion resembled that enigmatical look in the photograph of La Ginevra. Jacot himself was evidently much taken with her. They chatted with animation, and when he made his adieux, he bent so low over her hand that his lips almost touched the rings on her fingers.

"Follow Jacot, Billy," whispered Clare. "I don't think it will lead to much, but there's no use taking chances."

A moment later she wished she had not sent him away. A stranger, in evening clothes of pronounced continental tone, sauntered through the lobby as if seeking some one, caught sight of the woman, alone, turned to the desk to recall a card he had just given the clerk, and made his way quickly to her side.

The greeting between the two left no doubt but that the man was infatuated; and she, as they talked, seemed utterly oblivious of the gay throng of diners passing through the lobby.

Clare sauntered to the desk. "What, please, is that lady's name?" she asked casually.

"Signora Giulia Ascoli," replied the clerk.



She flung her arms about his neck. For one long moment they held each other in a passionate embrace