



(Upper half of 1914 Panel)

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"I have told Dr. Grimm that your friends will take twenty-five thousand and he says he will have the money tonight."
"Good! You told him what to do?"
"Yes. He will be there at midnight. For one part of the transaction, Signora, I would willingly change places with him."
A silvery laugh was recorded.
"Ah, monsieur, for what you have done I could wish to have you change places. Over the telephone—I kiss you."
"Without the telephone—*ma chérie*—tomorrow?" hinted Jacot in his most gallantly insinuating tone.
"Perhaps. We shall see. Ah—quick—monsieur. Good bye. I hear Giorgio coming to my room—"

The receiver at the other end had evidently been hung up at the most interesting point of the little flirtation.

Jacot was now trembling like a leaf. "Before God, Mr. Osgood," he cried. "It's all true enough. But I know no more about it now than you know. I did nothing—nothing. I was only the agent of Dr. Grimm who met this woman, the agent of the others. She led me on—like a fool—women, women—"

"Let me see," interrupted Clare. "The number 2330 is not the Ritz, of course. Hello, Information. What is the street address of 2330? The York Arms—Fifty-eighth. Thank you. Mr. Osgood—your car, please."

THEY pulled up with a jolt before the York Arms and the hall boy was subsidized to show them to the Vaccaro apartments.

As Lawson and Osgood half tumbled into a sitting room, they stopped short before Signora Ascoli, tall, imperious, in a diaphanous morning gown.

It needed no word from any of them to tell her that she was cornered. There was Jacot himself cringing in the rear. Facing her was the woman she had seen at the Ritz who had caused her hasty departure and had aroused suspicion that after all Dr. Grimm might have spoken with the hated *polizia*.

Quickly she glided, almost like a serpent, to a stand and seized a bottle of acid. Before she could pour it into a long brass tube, Lawson with his heavy cane had dashed the bottle to the floor where the acid ate into and blackened the wood.

Another moment and Clare had seized the tube itself. From it she

drew a long strip of canvas. As it unwound Osgood cried in delight, "At last! My lost Ginevra Benci—safe!"
"Subito Giorgio l'urgenza" cried the woman, dashing into a bedroom, through another door.

They followed. There stood Vaccaro—his escape cut off. With a hasty sentence or two in low Italian, she flung her arms about his neck. For one long moment they held each other in a passionate embrace.

"He is the thief," cried Jacot who had heard and translated the words. "He planned it from his knowledge of art: he did it under the spell of those eyes—eyes like those in the painting itself—for which a man would risk all—honor, life. I see it. This meant money for both—love—"

Jacot paused, horrified. The faces of the lovers had changed even as he was speaking. Together, locked in an unrelaxing grasp they sank back on the divan.

Staring at the intruders lay Vaccaro unable to move a muscle, hearing but powerless to speak, as if ebbing away. Lawson looked quickly from one to the other of the pair. The already hardening features of Giulia Ascoli told the story.

"Ricinus again," he muttered. "The poison by which they killed others."

Clare had reached down and withdrawn carefully from the jeweled hand of the Ascoli woman a little ring which she held out to Osgood.

"The poison ring of the Borgias," he cried in amazement, "taken from my own collection. See, it has a hollow in the part that encircles the stone, with a point and a little concealed spring. It is a formidable and easy weapon—see—the fatal scratch could be given while shaking hands—while blinded by the passion of the embrace."

"It was that poisoned fang that sent your faithful curator to his death," remarked Clare quietly regarding the awesome ring. "It would have sent others, too, who knew too much about the stolen picture, the money, the murder."

Jacot was in a palsy.

"Another day and I should have followed Grimm," he shivered, turning to Clare with a new respect that even the susceptible little art dealer had never felt for the sex. "Mademoiselle, I owe you my life."

The Golden Chimera

(Continued from Page 5)

also that the marvels of the man were due to the philosopher's stone.

Whether cathode rays and vacuum tubes can effect as much, whether for that matter Saint-Germain could, is at least conjectural. Yet if there be a word of truth in history, there have been people who knew more than the rest of us, people who knew how to make you believe anything you wished.

It is a great art. Saint-Germain possessed it. So, too, did Cagliostro. In addition, there were others. There were so many that they pervaded Europe. But though pervasive they were not propagandists. It was not everybody that could happen, as Flamel did, haphazard, on their secret.

This secret, a society known as the Rosicrucians, banded themselves together, to guard. What the secret really was we may surmise and never know. But its provenance is less problematical. The Rosicrucians had it from the Kabbalists, a sect that stretches back to the seers of Chaldea who got it, or, more exactly, who are said to have said they got it, from Raziel, Angel of Mysteries.

That statement is taken from the Sepher, a scroll otherwise known as the Book of Creation. The Sepher is not perhaps very authoritative. But it must have seemed so to Agrippa, to Paracelsus, Nostradamus, and Albertus Magnus; for, generally in the tolerable abstruse pages of these magi-

clans, the legend is repeated and confirmed. According to them, it was from the Chaldean seers that the Mesopotamian monarchs learned what's what.

THERE is probably no truth in all this, but, at least, there is romance. In a moment there will be more. Meanwhile the Rosicrucians so carefully guarded their secret that save to neophytes, studiously prepared and patiently tested, it was never revealed. Even the tortures of which Kings disposed could not extract it.

What the latter got, when they got anything, was the stone not the secret: not the formula for its composition, but the composition itself. Yet in their tortures there was a menace. Hence the mystery in the movements of the adepts. Hence, too, the order of the attempts to discover what the mystery was. Everything imaginable and unimaginable was tried. The influence of the planets was invoked, the aid of Satan, the assistance of Time. An experiment begun by one man would be continued by his descendants for generations.

These artifices failing, others were devised. Among them was a variation of the Sixth Henry's little trick. For while, obviously, counterfeiting would not quite do, yet confidence games might. Moreover, since the planets would not be beguiled, it was thought that the public could be gulled. Then, presently, instead of



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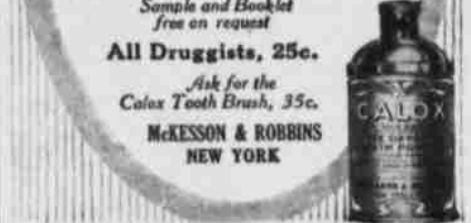
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