



EYES OF THE SHADOW

Maxwell Grant

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CHAPTER I. A VISITOR AT NIGHT

THE room seemed strangely silent when Bruce Duncan awoke. It was uncanny in this front room of the old house; he had noticed that before during the month he had lived there since his uncle's death. But the silence had never seemed so ominous as now.

One comfort to his disturbed mind was the beam of light that came through the transom of the door to the right of the bed. It fell upon the hearth of the old stone fireplace at the right wall of the room. Duncan turned his eyes momentarily in that direction; an instant later, he was staring at the window again.

For he had heard a strangely sibilant whistle - close and ominous - as though it came from among the bushes on the ground a full story below the window.

There was a rustle outside as if a slight breath of wind had stirred the thick ivy vines that covered the stone masonry of the house. Then a head and shoulders were silhouetted in the dimness of the open window. A grotesque form slipped over the sill.

The figure stole softly toward the bed. Duncan did not move. Somehow he seemed powerless to move. He turned his eyes to follow the actions of the strange visitor from the night, and his gaze was transfixed as the being came into the light from the transom.

The figure was that of an apelike man - a weird, stoop-shouldered creature whose arms were long and whose fingers were bony claws. The face was wizened, and the eyes gleamed wickedly in the light.

The creature's head turned toward the bed. Instinctively, Bruce Duncan closed his eyes and lay as if asleep. He had no will to move a muscle; he could only wait and wonder in the midst of this real nightmare.

The side of the bed sagged slightly as though a form was pressing against it. The creature was stooping over him now. Duncan could feel a warm breath against his forehead. His heart thumped furiously in this moment of weird suspense, and he lay motionless as a waxwork figure, waiting for the clawlike fingers to close about his neck.

But the thing from the night made no closer approach. It was like a game of strategy. Duncan felt that if he made the slightest motion, death would follow. Only by feigning sleep could he escape.

WHAT was to be the next move? Duncan could only wait. Wait and watch.

The creature had moved onto the hearth of the fireplace. A bony hand appeared in the light. The claws crawled up the right side of the fireplace until they reached the top. The hand pressed upward on the metal border.

There was a sharp click. The creature turned quickly toward the bed, but Duncan's eyes closed instantly. Again he lay motionless for fully fifteen seconds. Then he reopened his eyes and stared in fascination.

The gruesome creature was stooping now - stooping beside an opening in the hearth against the side of the fireplace. Its bony hands dipped into the cavity in the floor. They emerged carrying a small package and two envelopes.

The apish visitor again pressed the side of the fireplace, and Duncan saw the stone in the hearth close, completely concealing the hole. As his eyes remained on the spot, he suddenly realized that the creature was gone.

He glanced toward the window. A blotch appeared and immediately vanished downward. From outside came that same hissing whistle. The ivy vines rustled. Then all was silent; the quiet of the night returned.

Only half awake, Duncan climbed out of bed, and switched on the light.

A dream, likely, thought Duncan. Well, there was only one way to test it.

He walked to the fireplace.

He placed his hand against the metal rim and tried to move it. It seemed solid enough. He yanked at it and attempted to push it up and down. Suddenly it yielded as his hand was going upward. There was a sharp click from the floor - a click that he recalled.

He looked at the hearth. One of the stones had swung upward on a hinge, impelled by a concealed spring. There in the masonry was a neatly formed opening, beneath it a small cavity that gaped with emptiness.

CHAPTER II. WORD FROM THE DEAD

THERE was a knock at the door the next morning. Duncan opened the door and admitted Abdul, his Hindu servant. The man was carrying a breakfast tray.

"It was time for you to awake, sahib. I have brought breakfast."

"Abdul," asked Duncan, as he began his meal, "did you hear any one outside last night?"

"No, sahib. At what time of the night?"

"I don't know. Didn't you hear a whistle?"

"No, sahib. What did sahib eat last night?"

"Nothing that would have kept me awake," answered Duncan. "I had an early dinner in the city, and I read for a while in the evening, after I came home. I did eat one of those peppermints in the dish over there on the table not long before I went to bed."

The Hindu went to the table. He took a peppermint from the dish and tasted it.

"At what time did sahib go to bed?" he asked. "You will recall, sahib, that I was not here."

"That's right," replied Duncan. "You went out for the evening, after I came in, didn't you? I guess it was about midnight when I retired."

"Sahib had dreams last night?"

Duncan hesitated a moment before replying.

"Unusual dreams," he said. "They were very vivid, as though they were real. They seemed like something was going to happen - as if I were waiting."

"And time went very slowly?" questioned Abdul.

"Yes," admitted Duncan. "Why do you ask that, Abdul?"

"The peppermint," said the Hindu, "tastes to me different. It is like something that we have in India - something from a bush that grows in the wild."

"What is it?" questioned Duncan.

"It makes men sleep. It makes them dream. To them the minutes seem like the hours. To them the hours seem like the days. The things they see are strange."

A SUDDEN thought came to Duncan. "You mean hashish," he said.

"That is it, sahib," replied the Hindu.

"You think the peppermints contain hashish?"

"It seems to me like that, sahib."

"Then I was drugged last night. Who did it? Why? Where did you get these peppermints, Abdul? Who brought them?"

"I shall answer you, sahib," replied the Hindu. "I shall tell you all. I was in the house all day. I came in this room often, as you have told me to do. At the door of the house I found the package that you had told the man to send. In it was the peppermints. So I brought them here."

"Yes," said Duncan, "I've been having them send mints up every day or two. I've been chewing them at nights - makes the cigarettes taste better with a few mints in between. But how did these mints come to be in the package?"

Abdul shrugged his shoulders.

Duncan was thoughtful when the Hindu left the room. He trusted his Hindu servant - Abdul had been with him for five years - yet it was strange that the man should have so promptly diagnosed the cause of Duncan's peculiar sleep the night before. But why had Abdul mentioned the fact if he had had anything to do with it?

The Hindu returned with the morning mail. It contained a letter from Duncan's lawyer. The young man read the message:

Please call at my office at your earliest convenience. This is very important, and I will expect to see you shortly.

ROBERT CHALMERS TREMAINE.

Two hours later, Duncan was seated in the lawyer's office, facing Tremaine across a large mahogany desk.

"Good morning, Mr. Duncan," said the lawyer in a voice that suited his pompous appearance. "I have interesting news for you."

"I'm glad to hear that."

"Your uncle, Mr. Duncan, was an interesting man. You, as his heir, received rather unusual instructions, which I understand you have followed, in order to comply with the terms of his legacy."

"Correct, Mr. Tremaine," said Duncan. "I have lived in Uncle Harvey's house since the day he died. I have slept in the front room which he occupied, as his will instructed. During the day, my servant has been there continually - except when I have been at home."

The lawyer smiled.

"Those instructions," he said, "were left with a purpose. What the purpose was, I do not know. I was

your uncle's attorney, but he did not take me into his confidence on that matter. Some time before his death, however, your uncle told me that he intended to impart some information to you before he died. He was unable to do this as he passed away the day you reached the city. He was calling for you when he died."

"So I have been told," said Duncan soberly.

"Your uncle anticipated that something might prevent him giving you his message - which proved to be the case - so he left a sealed envelope with me. It was to be delivered to you on this date."

Bruce Duncan studied the long, heavy envelope that Tremaine handed him.

The lawyer thereupon ushered him into a smaller room, to a table in the midst of book-lined walls.

"You will not be disturbed here."

Alone, the young man tore open the envelope which was of cloth texture inside. He withdrew several folded sheets of paper. The inner page carried a message in clearly legible longhand. Bruce recognized it as his uncle's writing.

As he scanned the firmly written lines, astonishment came over him. He began to understand not only why his uncle had left such unusual instructions regarding the occupancy of the house, but, also, he gained an inkling of the significance of last night's experience.

CHAPTER III. A STRANGE HERITAGE

THE terse, blunt statements of the letter told a strange story so plainly that they seemed like spoken words. Bruce Duncan, as he read them, could imagine the very tones of his uncle's voice:

I am speaking to you, Bruce. I am writing in the front room of my house. The shades are drawn. It is late at night. You and I are alone. These are the exact words that I hope to say to you before I die, in the place that I have named. This message is written to be read if that hope is not realized.

I am a comparatively old man, Bruce. You are young and you are my only living relative. You are my dead brother's son and, like him, you have the firm traits of our family.

I am a man with a mission, Bruce, as I write these words. When you read this message, my mission will be yours; for I shall be dead.

For years I have lived in the front room of my home. I have been there always at nights, as you will be. For that room contains a secret which must be guarded.

I have been many places in my life. I have had many adventures. I was in Russia during the Revolution. In Moscow I saved the life of a great man - a member of the nobility - a general in the army of the czar.

I brought him to safety. I risked my life for him. I left him in Paris, and then I saw him some time later. He was going back to Russia. He intended to join the forces of Admiral Kolchak in their fight against the Red rule.

He had another purpose, also. He intended to reclaim a vast wealth. Money, in golden rubles; and precious gems. An amazing fortune. He had left it hidden in Russia, and he was confident that no one could have discovered the hiding place.

He told me that in his trials he had gained the help and friendship of seven men. To each of them he owed

an obligation. He regarded me as the most important of the seven.

He stated that he intended to divide his wealth into three parts - each a fortune. One was for the surviving members of his family. Another was for the cause of the czarists. The third was to be divided into eight portions - one each for six of the men who had befriended him; two for myself.

To me he intrusted the division of this fortune. He gave me a sealed box containing the insignia of a high royal order, which he or his messenger would recognize. He gave me a sealed envelope containing the names of the other six men with their descriptions.

Some day, he declared, I would receive a message simply stating a time and place for a meeting. There I would find him or his messenger. The other six would be present, each notified independently. At that time, I should open the box and reveal the insignia. The fortune would then be given to me without question.

My next duty would be to open the envelope, learn the names of the other six friends, and identify them. To each I should give his share. Should any be absent, it would depend upon me to find them and to give their shares to them or to their heirs, if they had died.

I regarded this as a sacred trust. Upon my return to America, I constructed a hiding place and kept the package and the envelope there. My health had failed, and I lived indoors, always remaining in that room. For as years passed, the matter became to me the most important subject of my life.

My Russian friend was killed in the rout of the Kolchak forces. Still I maintained the trust, confident that he had placed his affairs in the hands of some relative or trusted friend.

I have earned my reward. One week ago, I received a letter that stated the time and place of the meeting. I added the letter to the package and the envelope which contained the names of the other six men.

When you read this, I will be dead. Dead, before the meeting time. I rely upon you to fulfill the mission and to receive the wealth that would have been my reward.

The secret hiding place is in my room. You must live there and guard the spot until the appointed time. Do not regard this as an old man's whim. It is important. No one knows my secret, yet sometimes the most secret things are discovered.

Use the utmost secrecy, Bruce. Be sure that you are alone, in my room. Go to the fireplace. Press upon the metal border at the top of the right side. The hiding place will open. It is concealed by a stone in the hearth.

Read the letter. Learn the time and place of the meeting. Carry the package and the sealed envelope and go there - alone. You know your duty from then on. Destroy this letter after you have read it.

The signature of Harvey Duncan was at the bottom of the page.

THE young man stared at the words before him. He read the letter again. Each fact seemed to burn itself into his brain. He tore the papers into fragments. He wondered what to do with them, then realized it did not matter.

For the secret was no longer his alone. His uncle's fears had been realized. Some one had discovered the hiding place. Bruce was positive now that he had been drugged the night before. Perhaps the hashish - if that had been the drug - had made the strange visitor seem grotesque. But he was certain that some living being had entered his room and had taken the documents and the package.

His only hope was that the thief had not fully understood the significance of the objects he had taken. This seemed a faint hope. Where, then, had the information been gained? Bruce was sure that no one could have read the letter which he had just perused. Tremaine, the lawyer, was unquestionably reliable. Abdul could not have known of the secret. Perhaps the knowledge had been gained from Russia. No; that would not have carried a clue to the hiding place in the hearth.

Bruce Duncan went into Tremaine's office. He was tempted to tell the lawyer what he had learned, for he felt that he needed advice. The secret had been discovered; this fact might alter the instructions in the letter, which demanded absolute secrecy. On second thought Duncan decided to say nothing.

"You have read your uncle's message?" asked Tremaine.

"I have."

The lawyer smiled.

"It was to be read by me," he said, "in case that you failed to abide by the terms of your uncle's will. I am glad that you have seen fit to conform to his desires. Your uncle was my friend."

He walked to the door with Bruce.

"Did any one talk with my uncle before he died?" asked the young man.

"No," said the lawyer. "He talked very little the last few days while you were on your way from Japan. I should have notified you sooner. He was delirious several times."

"Who came to see him?"

"I don't just recall any one person. Hopkins could tell you. He was your uncle's attendant. He had lived there for several years, you know. A faithful servant and a willing worker."

Duncan recalled the old gray-haired retainer who had lived with his uncle. He had a card in his pocket now, with the man's address on it. Hopkins had gone to live with his sister after the death of Harvey Duncan.

A telephone booth was Bruce Duncan's first stopping place after leaving Tremaine's office. He found the card with Hopkins's number and decided to call the old man.

A woman's voice answered.

"Mr. Hopkins?" questioned Duncan.

"Who is calling?" was the reply.

"Bruce Duncan. Nephew of Mr. Harvey Duncan."

"Oh, Mr. Duncan," came the voice. "He asked for you. Mr. Hopkins died two weeks ago. I thought you had been notified. It was so sudden - a heart attack in the night -"

Duncan speculated on this strange coincidence as he drove homeward. A theory had formed in his mind. Some one had visited his uncle, and had been left alone with him by Hopkins. In delirium, Harvey Duncan had given the secret which he had intended to retain for his nephew.

Poor Hopkins! Bruce had almost suspected him when he had made the phone call.

Suddenly, a horrible suspicion filled the young man's mind. Perhaps his uncle had been murdered. Perhaps the death of Hopkins had been planned!

Some fiend was at work; that was certain. Why then had his own life been spared by the creature of the night? The answer came to him. The malefactor behind all this had not known of the envelope in Tremaine's office. The criminal believed that no one knew Harvey Duncan's secret. He, Bruce Duncan, had been drugged so that the paper could be stolen at night. Had he moved while the enemy was in the room, his life would have been taken.

He began to detect the mystery of the peppermints. Each night, Bruce had sat by the window reading, with the peppermints close at hand, as he smoked his cigarettes. He had rarely drawn the shades. Some one had observed him; a clever person had opened the package from the drug store as it lay on the steps. The doped peppermints had been substituted.

Some criminal mind was at work. It possessed the knowledge that belonged to Bruce Duncan as the heir of his uncle.

Duncan realized the difficulty of his position. He had no clue except the gaping space beneath the hearth. He did not even know the time or place of the meeting. He did not know the names of the six men who could help him. He was sworn to secrecy by his uncle's message, and no provision had been made for this dilemma.

CHAPTER IV. VINCENT REMEMBERS A FACE

THREE weeks had passed since Bruce Duncan's visit to his uncle's lawyer. Adventures had apparently ended, so far as Duncan was concerned. Unless new factors developed, episodes of the past would pass into oblivion.

New factors, however, were already entering the game. Oddly, strange incidents were beginning many miles from New York - incidents that chance, alone, was guiding. Budding events had begun aboard a train on the Pennsylvania Railroad, during its day trip east from Pittsburgh.

The Eastern Limited was swinging along the curving roadbed as it followed its course on the mountainside above the river. The scene from the window of the sleeping car was one of rugged grandeur, but it held no interest for a passenger named Harry Vincent.

He was the only person seated in the car; the other passengers - of whom there were very few - had gone either to the diner or to the observation car.

For three hours during that afternoon, Harry had been watching a closed door. It was the door of the drawing room at the end of the car, and his interest in what might be behind that door had kept him in his seat.

At three o'clock, Harry had first discovered that there was a passenger in the drawing-room. The conductor had gone to the door of the compartment and had knocked upon it. The door had been opened slightly; the conductor had not entered. He had merely checked a ticket through the partly opened door and had gone on his way.

Harry had observed a dim face in the drawing-room. Then the door had closed. From then on, he had been puzzling over the matter.

The train was not so fast as some of the other limiteds that ran from Chicago to New York. Why should a single passenger - and Harry held a hunch that there was but one person in the drawing-room - have

chosen a compartment all alone, on a car nearly empty?

With nothing to do but while away the time during the long day trip, Harry had pondered on this matter. To him it spelled mystery. There was only one solution. The person in the drawing-room must have chosen this train and taken the available compartment because it would mean seclusion from observation.

Twice, between three and six o'clock, the door had opened slightly as though some one within were studying the car to see who was there. There had been several persons in the car both times.

THE train stopped at Altoona, and Harry still sat alone in the car. He realized that they had passed the famous Horseshoe Curve without the sight even attracting his attention.

Now they were on their way again, and it was growing dark. The closed door still intrigued Harry Vincent, and he watched it more intently than before. He detected a motion. He buried his head suddenly behind his newspaper.

Peering upward over the top of the paper, he saw the door open wide. A man stepped out, turning quickly so that his back was toward Harry, and the door closed. Then the fellow disappeared along the passage that led to the door of the car. Harry dropped his paper and followed. He reached the next car, but no one was in sight when he came to the aisle. He walked through rapidly and entered the second car. By this time he should have gained on the other man. But there was no one in the aisle.

He was puzzled for the moment. Then he retraced his footsteps. It was obvious that the other man had not gone through the train.

When he reached his own car, Harry pushed back the curtain of the smoking compartment and entered. A man was seated by the window, staring into the outside darkness.

The stranger had assumed a position that confirmed Harry's suspicions. The man had his forehead pressed against the window, with both elbows on the sill, and his hands against his face.

As Harry sat down beside the man and lighted a cigar, the stranger relaxed himself. He did not turn in Harry's direction. But as Harry sat drowsily looking at the floor, he was sure that the other man was studying him in the mirror across the smoking compartment.

Harry spoke without looking at the other man.

"It's a long trip."

"Yeah," confirmed the other.

This was encouraging to Harry. Evidently the secretive passenger had satisfied himself that Harry was simply an ordinary traveler.

"Do you make it often?" questioned Harry in a casual way.

"Once in a while," came the reply.

HARRY turned his head slightly toward his companion. Now he saw the man's face. It was a sallow, smooth-shaven face. The man's eyes were dark and shifty. He did not seem intent upon hiding his features now, but Harry did not watch him long.

Instead, he looked straight ahead and made occasional remarks that might enable him to involve the other

man in conversation. He received responses that were brief and few.

The porter entered the smoking compartment, and the stranger took that opportunity to leave. When Harry went back into the car, he saw that the drawing-room door was closed and he felt sure that the mysterious passenger had returned to his seclusion.

The porter came through the car, and Vincent called to him.

"What's the next stop, porter?"

"Harrisburg, sah."

"Many people getting off there?"

"No, sah. None off this car. All going through to New York, sah."

Harry went to the diner and enjoyed the meal which he had so long delayed. The train was pulling into Harrisburg when he came back to his car.

In the passageway he encountered a man who had a small valise. He recognized him instantly as the passenger of the drawing-room.

The stranger moved aside and turned his head away as he allowed him to pass. The train was slowing as Harry reached his seat. Without hesitation the young man picked up his suitcase and hurried through to the car ahead - directly opposite the exit by which the stranger was leaving.

CHAPTER V. MEN IN THE DARK

THE man who had occupied the drawing-room on the Eastern Limited entered a telephone booth in the Harrisburg station. There was an empty booth behind him. Harry Vincent went into it, and pretended to be calling a number.

The partitions in telephone booths are by no means sound-proof. Harry knew this and smiled when he heard the number which the stranger called. There was something about the man's voice that seemed familiar now.

The number had been obtained. Vincent heard words that gave him the final clue to the stranger's identity.

"Hello, Wally," said the man. "This is Steve."

Steve! That filled the gap in Vincent's memory. He knew now that the fellow was Steve Cronin, the New York gangster who was in hiding. Steve Cronin was known to Harry Vincent, but Cronin did not know Vincent.

Some time ago, Cronin had murdered a man in a New York hotel, and had escaped for parts unknown. Harry had seen Cronin then, but at that time the man had had a black mustache. Now he was clean-shaven.

The New York police wanted Steve Cronin. That was not Harry's concern, however. His instructions came from one source only - from a mysterious person called The Shadow. At present, Harry was under no orders.

Yet The Shadow had been somewhat concerned with Cronin at the time of the murder in the Metrolite

Hotel. Whatever information Harry could obtain about the man's present actions might prove useful. So he listened carefully.

Cronin's conversation was brisk and unilluminating. He seemed to be cutting short the remarks that were coming over the phone.

"Tell me later," Harry heard him say. "Meet me an hour from now. I'll be at the Gorham Hotel. I'll be registered as Stephen Bell. Come up to my room. I'll leave the door open."

The receiver banged on the hook, and Steve Cronin walked from the booth.

HARRY VINCENT was at the Gorham Hotel twenty minutes later. The place was an old one that had known better days. There were a few men hanging around the lobby. Harry looked at the register and saw the entry of "Stephen Bell, Room No. 322."

The clerk was busy, and Harry walked away from the desk. He sat in a leather chair and read a newspaper. At the same time he kept a careful watch and was suddenly elated when he saw Steve Cronin come down the stairs and go out the door.

Evidently the man intended to go on some errand before his friend, Wally, arrived. Cronin had said that the door would be open. Perhaps it was open now. Harry decided to act. He went up the stairs and found Room No. 322. The door was unlocked.

The room was dark, and Harry did not turn on the light. There was to be a meeting here; it would be excellent if he could listen in. Where would be the best place to hide? Under the bed would place him in a precarious position if found, for he was unarmed. The closet might do; there at least he could defend himself if discovered.

He turned toward the door which he had closed behind him. Then he became suddenly motionless as the door opened slowly. Hidden in the darkness, he was momentarily safe as a man entered and closed the door.

"Steve," came a whispered voice.

Harry responded to a daring plan which came to him on the instant.

"That you, Wally?" he whispered in return. "Don't turn on the light. Sit down on the bed."

The man who had entered the room obeyed. Harry found a chair and sat by the window.

"It wasn't my fault, Steve," came the man's voice in the darkness of the room. "I spotted the guy the minute he stepped off the train last night. I followed him to his hotel. I figured he'd stay there a while. Instead of that, he hopped out and took a cab. Cabs ain't plentiful around here. I spotted the number of his cab and got one myself. Figured the only place he could have gone was to the station. I was right enough. His cab was there when I got there. But I couldn't find him at all."

VINCENT did not reply. The speaker continued:

"I hope you ain't sore, Steve. I done my best. He must be coming back here. I've watched his hotel. He left his bag there. What took you so long getting in?"

"Slow train," growled Harry, trying to imitate the voice of Steve Cronin.

"What's the racket, Steve?" came the question. "I've been working blind since I got your tip. Let me in on

it, won't you?"

"I'll tell you later."

"You act like you are sore," said the man in the dark. "You don't talk this way often, Steve. It don't sound like you. What's the matter?"

"Tell you what, Wally," returned Harry. "You run along a while. Come back in half an hour. Let me think it over a bit."

"All right," said the man reluctantly. "Don't see why you want me to go away, Steve; but this is your game. I didn't think you'd be this way about it. Why don't you turn the lights on and be sociable?"

"The bulls are after me."

"I know that, Steve. But they ain't anywhere around here. They don't know you're in Harrisburg. But you're the boss, Steve. I'll be back in an hour or so."

He rose from the bed and stood listening beside the door.

"Did you hear anything, Steve?" came his whisper.

"No," said Harry softly.

"Sounds like some one outside the door."

"I don't hear it."

Wally stood motionless. Harry could not see him in the darkness, but he knew the man was intent. Harry's nerves were tingling now. He sensed immediate danger and wondered how he should act. He reached out and placed his hand on the window sill, then peered out. Three stories down. No escape there.

A few seconds passed, and they seemed a long time. Then suddenly two actions occurred with amazing quickness. The door swung open, and a hand pressed the light switch. The room was instantly illuminated.

One of Harry's hands clutched the window sill; the other gripped the arm of the chair as he stared at the scene before him.

By the bed stood Wally, a startled figure. He was a rough-looking individual, with an ugly, unshaved ace. His mouth was agape with astonishment.

At the door stood Steven Cronin, commanding the room. One hand was still on the light switch. The other clutched a revolver which was close against the holder's body. Cronin's lips were parted in a grim smile that revealed a gold tooth at one side of kits mouth. His keen, quick eyes were taking in the situation.

Harry Vincent felt a sinking sensation. He was caught. What would be next?

CHAPTER VI. CRONIN TALKS TERMS

STEVE CRONIN closed the door of the room. He looked at the man called Wally. Then he lowered his gun.

"Oh, it's you, Wally," he said. "Who's your friend over there?"

Wally had raised his hands at the threat of the revolver. He still held them half upward in astonishment as he stared from Steve Cronin to Harry Vincent. Then he looked back to the man at the door.

"It's you, Steve?" he asked.

"Of course."

Wally became active. His senses suddenly returned.

"Cover the guy by the window," he commanded. "Cover him quick, Steve."

Cronin raised the automatic, and Harry put his hands in the air.

"Get up," ordered Wally.

Harry obeyed. The man ran his hands over Harry's clothes.

"He ain't got a gun," said Wally.

Steve Cronin was now the astounded one.

"Sit down," he said to Harry. "You too, Wally. If the guy ain't got a gun, we can talk sense. What's this all about?"

Wally looked at Harry, and seeing that he intended no action, decided to explain matters:

"I come up here," he said, "and walk in the room. This guy was here, and I thought he was you. He said to leave the light off. So I talked to him."

"What did you tell him?" asked Cronin.

"Not much; but I told him some things he'd better not know."

"Who is he?"

"How do I know? I thought he was you. That's why I was surprised when you stepped in the door. I didn't get who you were at first. You look different since you -"

"Never mind that, Wally," interrupted Cronin. He addressed Harry in a voice that boded no good.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

Harry hesitated a moment, then he decided to take matters calmly and to bluff his way out of this unexpected dilemma.

"My name is Vincent," he said quietly. "Harry Vincent."

"You're the guy that was on the train," said Cronin in sudden recognition. "What's your idea of following me? Are you a bull?"

"Listen, Cronin," said Harry, with sudden boldness. "I'm a friend of yours, but you don't know it. I made a big mistake butting in on this business. I'll admit that. But I'm willing to get out."

"I guess you're anxious enough to get out," sneered Cronin. "But you'll wait a while until I find out what

you mean by this 'friend' stuff. I never saw you before to-day."

"I've seen you before, Cronin," responded Harry. "I watched you follow a man in New York. I was near by when you killed him. I might have made trouble for you, but I didn't. That proves, at least, I'm not your enemy."

"Why are you trailing me now, then? How did you find me? How did you happen to be on the same train?"

"That was just a coincidence, Cronin. I didn't recognize you on the train. I was getting off at Harrisburg and I happened to call up a friend from the booth next to yours. I heard you say where you were going to be. I realized who you were when I heard your name. I wanted to talk business with you. So I came here to the hotel."

"He was here in the room," explained Wally.

"That's right," admitted Harry. "I walked in, after I knocked. Then this other fellow came in and called me 'Steve.' He thought I was you, Cronin. I didn't tell him different. Thought I'd have a little fun with him."

STEVE CRONIN sat on the edge of the bed and whistled softly. He studied Harry for fully a minute.

"Look here, Vincent," he said at last. "This story of yours is fishy. That's all right. I expected it to be. I'd have told a fishy story myself if I were you."

"I've told you the facts, Cronin."

"You've told me some facts," resumed Cronin with an easy smile. "But I want more. You know who I am and you know some things about me. If you're a dick, you're dumber than most of them. If you're a crook, you're a smooth one; and that's what I think you are. What's your game?"

Harry became deliberate. Cronin had given him a cue, and he was puzzling how he could use it. He smiled rather knowingly and took the opportunity calmly to light a cigar. Then he confronted Cronin and commenced his bluff:

"Yes, I'm a crook," he announced. "Maybe I'm a good one; maybe I'm not. I play a lone game when I can. I don't go locking for trouble. I let other fellows get into it. Then I use what I find out."

"When I saw you in New York, Cronin, I figured you were after some big game. I didn't have a chance to follow it up. When I saw you on the train to-day, I half figured you were up to something. When I heard you talking on the phone, I knew who you were and I heard enough to know that some game was under way. I came over here to see what I could find out. Now that you know all about it, I'll play with you if you let me in on it. If you want me to get out, say so; and I'll move along."

Cronin whistled softly again as he considered the explanation.

"You're talking sense now, Vincent," he said. "You're speaking my language. You're no fool and neither am I. You know what I'd do ordinarily, don't you? I'd feed you some of the lead out of this gat in my pocket. But I'd be a fool to do it now. I'm in a jam in New York and I'm still laying low. I can't let anything interfere with the game I'm playing now. I can use your help besides. I need some one with more brains than this fellow, Wally, here."

"Besides that, the game is big enough for the three of us. You'll get a cut if you play square from now on. I think you will. So I'm letting you in."

Harry listened eagerly. Cronin spoke as though he were telling the truth. Harry felt that he had gained the man's confidence and that he was to hear some revelation.

"I've been out in Cleveland," said Cronin frankly. "I've been watching a big bloke who has all kinds of money and doesn't care how he spends it. There's something phony about the guy, though. Maybe you've heard his name. I'm going to tell it to you -"

"Don't do that, Steve," interrupted Wally.

CRONIN glared angrily at his fellow crook. "Shut up, Wally," he said. "You're not the boss. I'm headman of this outfit. Vincent is going to work with us. He looks like he has sense enough to spot a guy that gets off a train without letting him get away. That's more than you have, Wally."

He followed this rebuke by again addressing Harry. "The big boy out in Cleveland," he said, "is named Elbridge Meyers. Every now and then he hops out of town. Goes East for two or three days. Finding things out is my business. I found out why Meyers left town so often. There's a woman mixed up in it. So I figured that if I could get the goods on the old bloke, he'd cough up with the dough."

"Blackmail," said Harry.

"That's the story," resumed Cronin. "Well, I watched this fellow carefully enough, but he got away from me. First thing I knew he'd left town. I got in his office after it was supposed to be closed and found a slip of paper crumpled in the wastebasket. It was a memo this Meyers had made telling the time he was leaving and where he was going - here to Harrisburg. I called up Wally, who was in Philadelphia. He had time to get up here and meet the train. But he muffed things. It's up to us to pick up the trail."

There was silence after Steve Cronin had finished speaking. Harry looked at the man and nodded.

"Sounds good to me," he said. "Count me in on it. How are we going to work it?"

Cronin shrugged his shoulders as he rose from the bed.

"We'll have to locate Meyers, first thing of all," he said. "Now is the time to find him."

He turned to Wally, who was standing at the foot of the bed, looking disgruntled.

"Go over in the corner, dim-wit," said Cronin. "I want to talk business with a man that has brains. If you ear the dope, you'll probably spoil it. You're just the deuce spot in this deck of cards, from now on."

He beckoned to Harry, who rose from the chair and joined Cronin in the corner opposite the indignant Wally.

"Listen," said Cronin, placing one hand upon Harry's shoulder and speaking low in his ear. "I've got a plan, but it takes nerve to work it. You're just the fellow I've been looking for. You see, it's this way -"

SOMETHING caught Vincent in the back of the neck. His teeth clicked as his head went backward. A hand was planted against his chin, and the side of his head was driven against the wall. Just before he felt the blow, he heard the sneering laugh of Steve Cronin. Then consciousness left him, and his body slumped to the floor.

"Jujutsu stuff, Wally," chuckled Cronin. "He's out, and he'll stay out."

"What's the idea, Steve?" asked the amazed Wally. "Ain't you going to let him work with us?"

"This guy? You must be crazy."

"What did you tell him all your business for then?"

"To make him believe me."

"You could have given him a phony story, Steve."

"Not with you around, Wally. He was looking at you. You might have given the game away. The easiest system was to tell him the truth."

"Well, he fell for it. But he'll know too much when he wakes up."

Steve Cronin laughed.

"He knew too much anyway," he said. "He knew who I was. But he won't know anything about it when he wakes up. Because he isn't going to wake up."

"You're going to bump him off?"

"Of course."

"Why didn't you do it right here?"

"Wally, there's no use trying to talk with you. Kill him here? Make a big noise about it? All sorts of trouble then. Nothing doing. We aren't going to figure in this thing at all - so far as anybody can find out. You wait here and watch him. If he starts to wake up, tap him neatly with this. I'll be back in a few minutes."

Steve Cronin drew a blackjack from his pocket and handed it to his companion in crime. He left the room. Ten minutes later, he returned.

He glanced at the form of Harry Vincent as it lay limp in the corner. Then he looked at Wally and grinned - and his ugly smile spoke more clearly than words.

"Come on, Wally," he said. "Help me pick him up. We'll take him out like he was drunk. You've got your car near here?"

"Just down the street."

"We'll put him in it. Then I'll tell you what to do. You're going to learn something to-night, Wally. I've used the rod to put some fellows away, but I know better ways of doing it. Safer ways."

Steve Cronin laughed again as they braced the unconscious Harry Vincent between their shoulders. He was satisfied that this man who knew too much would soon be where he could never reveal his knowledge.

CHAPTER VII. DOOMED TO DIE

AN old touring car was standing at the side of a dirt road. Its lights were extinguished, and the vehicle was totally obscured in the darkness. There were two men in the car. The one at the wheel was listening intently. The other, who was beside him, was motionless as though asleep.

A motor throbbed in the distance, and as the sound came closer, the man at the wheel of the touring car opened the door and stepped to the ground. He looked back along the road toward the red light of a railroad crossing. A pair of headlights appeared beyond, and a moving automobile came rapidly in view.

The second car came alongside the first and stopped in the center of the road. The motor was turned off. The man beside the touring car was in the glare of the headlights. He stepped to the car which had just arrived and opened the door. It was a closed job.

A laugh came from within the automobile. A voice followed.

"How do you like my new sedan, Wally?"

"Pretty nice," said the man on the ground, in an admiring tone. "Where did you get it?"

"Pinched it," was the reply. "How long have you been here?"

"About ten minutes, Steve. Boy, you sure made good time."

"I work fast, Wally."

"What are you going to do now, Steve?"

The man at the wheel of the sedan consulted his watch by the dashlight.

"I'm going to wait about five minutes," he said. "In that short time I'm going to go over this little lesson that you've been learning. I want you to know all the details of the Steve Cronin system for disposing of smart guys - like that fellow you have in the car. Did he wake up at all?"

"Started to, Steve. I tapped him easy, like you said."

"That's good. If he's half awake, it's all the better for us."

"What's the game, Steve?"

"Don't be impatient, Wally. Let's go over details. Do you know what I did when I went downstairs in the hotel?"

"You picked up a road map for one thing. I know that because you showed me how to get out here. You told me to take my time. I'm glad you let me come easy, because this road is a rough one, all right. I nearly busted a spring. I'll bet there's not a car a week comes along here."

"That's all the better. Well, I'll tell you something else I did while I was downstairs. I picked up a few timetables, and it took me just about three minutes to find out what I wanted to know."

"What was that?"

"The times of passenger trains on some of the branch lines in and out of Harrisburg. This branch back here for instance."

"Did you get the dope you wanted?"

"I did, Wally," he said. "I'll come to that later. After you started away, I walked down the street by the hotel. We did a neat job getting this fellow Vincent into your car. He looked just like a regular drunk."

"When I'd been out on the street before I came up to find you in the room, I saw this sedan, and it looked like an easy one to pinch. These babies were all I needed" - he clinked a bunch of keys in his pocket - "so I gave you time to get started and then I followed along in this nice new automobile. I picked up a few articles I needed while I was on my way here and now I'm ready for business."

Cronin stepped from the sedan and walked over to the touring car. He pulled a small flashlight from his pocket and studied the face of Harry Vincent.

"He'll be out for pretty near an hour anyway," Cronin observed. "So we don't have to worry about that. But we'll plant a few things to make it look good."

He pulled three bottles from his pocket. Two were empty; the odd one was about one-third filled.

"Have a drink, Wally," said Cronin, passing the last bottle to his companion. "Leave some, though. I brought that along with me from Cleveland."

Wally gulped at the bottle, and Cronin followed suit. Then he poured tiny quantities of the liquor into the empty bottles and shook them around. He put the cork back into the bottle that still contained a little liquid. This he thrust in Harry's pocket. He tossed the empty bottles in the back of the touring car.

"You went through this fellow's pockets, didn't you?" he asked.

"Sure thing," replied Wally.

"What did you take?"

"Only his watch and his money - about forty dollars. Nothing else there that I wanted."

"Give me back about seven dollars."

Steve Cronin put the money in Vincent's wallet. There was a slight jingle from the man's vest.

"What's that?" asked Cronin.

"Just change," answered Wally. "I forgot to take that."

"Leave it there. That makes it still better."

Steve Cronin climbed into the touring car and threw the automobile into reverse.

"Stand on the running board," he said to Wally.

He backed the car along the rough road and up the incline to the center of the railroad crossing. He stopped it there. He turned off the ignition and put the car into high gear. Then he turned the ignition key on again.

Alighting from the automobile, Cronin walked to the opposite side. He opened the door and pushed Harry's body toward the left. Together he and Wally completed the arrangements. Harry Vincent lay slumped over the wheel.

Cronin surveyed his work.

"Just one thing I forgot," he remarked.

He took the bottle from Harry's pocket. He tilted back the head of the unconscious man and poured about half of the remaining contents down his throat. Some of the liquor spilled on Harry's coat. Steve Cronin chuckled.

"Details, Wally," he said. "Details always count. This makes it perfect. Drunk at the wheel. Stalled on the crossing. Empty bottles that smell of liquor."

He walked down the road, followed by Wally, in the glare of the headlights of the stranded car. Cronin had flashed the lights on when he had backed the car. He turned and looked along the road as he consulted his watch.

"In about seven minutes," he said, "this will be finished. That crossing was just made to suit me. Notice how it curves? The engineer won't know a thing about it until he is right on top of the car."

The whole idea now dawned on Wally.

"So that's why you looked up the time-tables!" he exclaimed. "Is it a fast train, Steve?"

"Fast enough to suit me. There's a station about a mile down the line, as near as I can figure it from the map. But it isn't even a flag stop for this train. It will come through here mighty fast."

As if in answer to Cronin's prediction, the men heard the distant whistle of a locomotive - a long, plaintive whistle that indicated a train moving at rapid speed.

"Climb aboard, Wally," exclaimed Steve Cronin as he jumped to the wheel of the sedan. "We're going straight ahead in a hurry. The rest will take care of itself."

The tail light of the sedan disappeared around a bend. All was silent at the crossing. There was another whistle of the locomotive through the night, but the unconscious man at the wheel of the touring car could not hear it.

Steve Cronin had planned well. The fulfillment of his scheme had become a matter of minutes only. A mighty juggernaut of iron was hurtling along the steel rails, and in its certain path stood the waiting automobile.

CHAPTER VIII. DUNCAN'S VISITOR

The very time when Harry Vincent lay helpless behind the wheel of the abandoned touring car, Bruce Duncan was comfortably seated in the upstairs room of his dead uncle's home. Once more he was pondering over the odd adventure that he had experienced within these walls.

Patience was not one of Bruce Duncan's virtues. He realized this as he sat in the armchair, staring at the fireplace.

Three weeks had elapsed since the mysterious visitor of the night had entered his home. During that time he had failed utterly in his attempts to discover who the visitor might be.

Nothing had disturbed him since; but he did not expect that. The thief had obtained what he had sought. Why should he be molested further?

Three weeks - to be exact, three weeks and one night. Twenty-two days without action. It was Wednesday now; the hiding place in the hearth had been opened on a Tuesday night.

Duncan was sure of but two facts - first, that the actual thief had been an ape-faced creature that had seemed inhuman; second, that some one had been outside the window, directing the actions of the strange being.

The door opened, and Abdul, his Hindu servant, entered.

"Eleven o'clock, sahib," said the servant. "Do you need me longer?"

"Better wait up until midnight, Abdul," suggested Duncan. "By the way, what day was it that you mailed that last letter I gave you?"

"Sunday, sahib."

Duncan went to the desk and brought out some papers. He studied them thoughtfully while the Hindu moved quietly about the room.

The letters had been Duncan's only hope for a clue to the mystery which perplexed him. Among his uncle's documents he had found a list of four names which Tremaine had identified as persons with whom Harvey Duncan had conducted considerable correspondence.

Artful questioning had satisfied Bruce Duncan that the lawyer knew nothing about his uncle's connection with a prominent Russian. But it was possible that one of these four men might be able to supply some information.

So he had written them and had received three replies to his carefully worded notes. The letters that had come in indicated that the men knew nothing - unless they had deliberately sought to conceal facts. Bruce intended to investigate that later.

In the meantime he had sent a second letter to the man who had not replied. It was an urgent letter, asking for an immediate response and suggesting a visit. This was the letter that Abdul had mailed on Sunday night.

Bruce put the memoranda back in the desk and returned to his chair. At that moment the doorbell rang. Abdul went to answer it.

The Hindu returned a few minutes later.

"Man to see you, sahib."

"What's his name, Abdul?"

"Mr. Isaac Coffran."

Duncan fairly leaped from his chair.

"Bring him in, Abdul," he exclaimed.

The visitor was the man to whom the last letter had been addressed!

The Hindu ushered an elderly gentleman into the room. The newcomer was of slight build and stoop-shouldered. He used a cane as he walked, and he turned his head upward to stare at Duncan with sharp, blue eyes that were both friendly and inquisitive.

He accepted Bruce Duncan's handshake and sat in the armchair facing the fireplace, while the young man took a position close beside him.

A strange old fellow, thought Duncan. Older than his uncle, yet alert despite his age. It was impossible to determine the exact age of Isaac Coffran. The man's face was clean-shaven, and his cheeks were smooth and tight.

"I received your letter," announced the old man in a wheezy yet amiable voice. "It seemed important, so I came to see you. It is not often that I leave my house."

He laughed; then he added: "This is the first time I have been outside for several months."

"I'm sorry," observed Duncan apologetically. "I could have come to see you."

"No, no," replied the old man. "It was only a few hours from New York. The night is mild, and the trip has done me good. A friend brought me. He is outside in his automobile."

"Would you like to stay all night?" offered Duncan.

"No, no. I am used to late hours. A habit that I have had ever since I was young like you. I can stay only a little while. Why was it that you wished to see me?"

Duncan stared speculatively across the room. He felt that he must be tactful; at the same time, old Isaac Coffran was so affable that it seemed good policy to confide in him. Duncan was anxious to learn all that he could, and although he did not intend to divulge his uncle's secret, he felt that he might be safe in giving an inkling of it.

"You knew my uncle well?" he questioned.

"Very well," affirmed the old man. "He and I knew each other for years. We had business dealings long ago - before I retired. He used to come to see me occasionally, and he wrote me frequently."

"Did you see him before he died?"

The old man shook his head.

"No," he said, "I did not. I sent my regards to him when I learned that he was ill, but I had no idea that his condition was serious. I was greatly saddened by his death. He was considerably younger than myself."

"Did my uncle have any enemies?" questioned Duncan.

Isaac Coffran smiled.

"We are all likely to have enemies"" he said. "Your uncle was an active man. He was in many parts of the world. He made many friends, and I suppose he made enemies, also. Why do you ask?"

"Because" - Duncan hesitated a moment - "because I am sure that my uncle had apprehensions of some sort."

"Did he ever mention them to you?"

"No, because I did not arrive here until after he had died."

"That's right. My memory is not so good as it used to be. I recall that you were not here. I received a letter after your Uncle Harvey died that stated you came too late. I believe the letter was from your uncle's old servant. What was the man's name?"

"Hopkins."

"That's right. I received a letter from Hopkins, Ah! That's the man you should see. Hopkins. He was with your uncle for a long while."

"Hopkins is dead."

"You don't mean it!" There was a tone of real sorrow in Isaac Coffran's voice. "Poor Hopkins! Faithful

servant he was. Died so soon, too!"

"That adds to my belief that my uncle had enemies."

THE old man leaned over and tapped Bruce Duncan on the shoulder.

"Your imagination is at work, my boy," he said. "I don't think that your suspicions are correct. So far as I know, your uncle had nothing to conceal from any one. There is no cause for alarm."

The friendly tone was comforting.

"I wish I could agree with you, Mr. Coffran," said Duncan. "Unfortunately, I cannot. I am sure that my uncle possessed an important secret which he told to no one."

"Imagination, my boy."

"It's not imagination. It is reality. Because my uncle took care that I should learn that secret, even though I did not arrive in time to hear it from his own lips. I have read a message, written by my uncle. It told me everything -"

The old man held up a hand in warning.

"I believe you, my boy. But you must not say another word. Your uncle was a friend of mine; if he had wished that I should know his secret, he would have told it to me. Keep his secret carefully, whatever it may be."

Bruce Duncan smiled.

"I intend to do so," he said. "But there are certain facts which I can state to you. First of all, I did not read his message until one month after his death. It concerned certain documents that were hidden here in the house.

"The night before I read the message, a thief entered this room and stole the very articles that were mentioned in my uncle's message. I saw the thief at work; being ignorant of the facts at the time, I did not act."

Duncan went to the fireplace and pushed the secret spring. The stone on the hearth sprang open before the astonished gaze of Isaac Coffran. Duncan studied the old man as the latter leaned forward in his chair, his mouth gaping.

"Incredible!" exclaimed Isaac Coffran. "Incredible!"

"It is my duty," explained Duncan, "to recover the stolen articles. Inasmuch as the hiding place is known to some person besides ourselves and as it is now empty, I betray no confidence in showing it to you."

"You saw the thief, you say?"

"Yes."

"Could you recognize him?"

"I could. That is why I want to know if my uncle had enemies. The man who robbed that hiding place was scarcely a human being. He was an ape-faced monstrosity; a hideous creature who entered my window while I was half asleep. I thought that I was dreaming, until after the creature had gone."

"You have no clue whatever as to the identity of this - of this person?"

The old man's tone was almost plaintive. Duncan could recognize his concern. He felt that if he encouraged Isaac Coffran, he might stir the old man's memory.

"I have clues, now," Duncan said wisely. "I believe that I am on the trail of the thief. I have assembled facts that should enable me to find him. Remember that I have my uncle's secret. If I can gain some knowledge of his past activities, I can surely find the links that are now missing in the chain of circumstances. That is why I have appealed to you."

THE old man seemed thoughtful. "Perhaps I can help you," he said slowly. "My memory is poor - very, very poor. But if this concerns your uncle's past, as it appears to do, you might be able to trace some clue if you had access to letters which your uncle had written. Am I right?"

"Exactly right."

"I have many letters from your uncle. I have forgotten the contents of most of them - probably of all of them. But I have kept them in a box at my house. Would you like to see them?"

"I should indeed."

"It will be difficult for me to bring them here. Perhaps -"

"I can come to your house in New York."

"As soon as you wish."

"To-morrow night?"

"That will be excellent."

The old man arose. Duncan summoned Abdul. The Hindu brought Isaac Coffran's coat.

"You will find my house rather strange," said Isaac Coffran as they stood at the front door. "It is an old house, in a very poor neighborhood. The locality was a good one years ago. But times have changed. I am so used to the old place that I cannot bear to leave it."

They stepped on the porch, and the old man went down the steps to a waiting automobile.

"I will be at your house to-morrow night at eight," called Duncan in parting.

"I shall expect you," came Isaac Coffran's reply.

The headlights of the car were turned on and lighted up the driveway. Strange shadows appeared in the glare - long shadows of trees, short shadows of bushes, grotesque, shapeless shadows. The car rolled away.

Duncan and Abdul went in the front door. The small porch light was still on, and another shadow appeared beneath its illumination. This shadow moved across the porch and became motionless. It was a long, thin shadow which terminated in a huge, distorted profile. The light was turned off by the Hindu servant; the shadow was blotted into nothingness, and two spots, bright as burning coals, faded into the night.

Neither of the men in the house had seen the shadow. Bruce Duncan was already on his way upstairs when it appeared upon the porch. Abdul, when he turned off the light, was too occupied to think of

looking through the small window beside the front door.

For the Hindu servant was concerned with something that he held in his hand - a scrap of paper which had fallen from the pocket of Isaac Coffran's coat.

Beneath the hall light, Abdul studied the piece of paper and slowly perused the scrawled words that appeared upon it, repeating them to himself as a man who found it difficult to read:

"Find out what Duncan knows. Investigate personally. Prevent all interference. Plans are working perfectly."

Abdul read the message several times. Then a look of understanding appeared upon his dark face. He nodded, as though to himself. He folded the paper carefully and slipped it in a pocket of his jacket.

CHAPTER IX. THREE MEN MISSING

HARRY VINCENT raised his head and opened his eyes. He found himself staring through the windshield of an automobile. The car was standing still. Its gleaming lights revealed a rough dirt road that curved away among the trees.

He placed his hand to the side of his head. There was a throbbing pain there. The back of his head ached, too. Somehow it was difficult to think. He could not remember entering the automobile; yet here he was, slouched over the wheel.

Harry closed his eyes and slumped over the wheel again. The throbbing continued, more painfully now. He gave up trying to remember what had happened.

The whistle of a locomotive sounded through the silent night. Four short blasts, some distance away. The whistle of a standing locomotive.

Two minutes passed. The throbbing bothered Harry, and he shifted his position. He sat up again. He opened his eyes; this time his consciousness was more alert.

A bell had commenced to ring - a loud bell - not ten feet away. Its continued dingle increased the throbbing of his head. What did the bell mean? He rubbed his forehead and looked around.

The glint of metal on the ground attracted his attention, but his confused mind did not identify it as the rails of a single track until he detected a singing sound. Then the connection came. The automobile was stalled upon a railroad crossing; the bell meant that a train was approaching!

As the horror of the situation dawned upon Harry, a bright glare burst the darkness. Out of the night came the headlight of an onrushing locomotive!

Instinct came to Harry's rescue. He thrust his foot forward. By sheer luck it pressed squarely against the pedal of the self-starter. The car had been left in gear; the ignition switch was on; and the response was instantaneous. The automobile jolted forward; its front wheels rolled down the incline from the crossing. The motor started because of the added impetus.

For the fraction of a second the fate of Harry Vincent stood undecided. The car had come to life; the slope had enabled it to start in high gear; yet the mighty monster of the rails was bearing down upon the moving automobile at whirlwind speed.

The glare of the headlight was dazzling; the heavy locomotive was almost upon the fragile car that barred its path. But the very instant that the huge engine clattered on the crossing, the rear wheels of the touring

car slipped over the incline. The plunging piston rods almost grazed the back of the automobile.

A new danger threatened momentarily. As the train shot by, Harry urged by the terror of his close escape, pressed the accelerator. The touring car whirled along the bumpy road. Harry's hands lost their clutch on the wheel. The automobile lunged into the ditch at the side of the road, then the driver regained control. He swung back to safety and brought the car to a stand-still.

Harry leaned forward against the wheel as he listened to the roar of the train off through the distance. The sound became less, then it ceased. His brain began to work; the incidents of the evening flashed in rapid memory.

Steve Cronin - the man on the train. The room in the hotel, where he had been discovered. The offer that Cronin had made with his account of Elbridge Meyers, the man that Cronin sought. These facts were clear now.

Harry's head still throbbed. He knew that he must get somewhere. So he drove the car cautiously along the road and turned off at the first crossing, finding a better highway that paralleled the railroad. After several miles the road turned beneath a trestle and curved up a hill. At the top Harry stopped and alighted beside a railroad station.

The ticket agent was behind his window. His clock registered the time as ten minutes of twelve. Harry felt for his watch. It was gone.

"When's the next train?" he asked.

"Where to? Harrisburg?" questioned the man at the window.

"Yes."

"To-morrow morning. The last one left here fifteen minutes ago."

"How far is it to Harrisburg?"

"Only about ten miles. You've got a car out there, haven't you?"

"Yes."

"Drive into town, then. You can't get another train to-night."

The station agent laughed.

"You're way after train time, anyway," he remarked. "The train that just left was forty minutes late. They were having trouble with repair work on the trestle. Had to flag the train at a little station about six miles up the line. Held it there more than half an hour."

The whole of Steve Cronin's fiendish scheme unfolded itself to Harry as he drove, half dazed, along the road to Harrisburg. Helpless, in the touring car on the railroad crossing, he had been left for what promised to be certain destruction. The fact that the train was to be held for thirty minutes at the station before the crossing was something that Steve Cronin had not known.

Harry had regained consciousness in the nick of time. Yet he was still groggy, and the lights of the city streets danced before his eyes as he drove into Harrisburg. He managed to locate the station. He left the touring car in a parking space.

There was a sleeping car in the station, waiting to be attached to a through train bound for New York.

The seven dollars in Harry's wallet was about sufficient for the railroad fare; in with his change were some silver dollars that he always carried. So he engaged a berth and was soon asleep, for the throbbing in his head ceased when he lay down.

MORNING found Harry Vincent in the Pennsylvania Station in New York. He registered at the Metrolite Hotel, had breakfast, then set out for the office of Claude Fellows, the insurance broker in the Grandville Building.

Fellows greeted Harry with a cordial smile.

"I am glad you arrived to-day," he said. "I have something to discuss with you."

Harry watched the chubby-faced insurance broker as the man went to a filing cabinet. His connection with Fellows was a simple one. The insurance broker was The Shadow's detail man. Giving instructions and receiving reports seemed to be his entire work.

Fellows returned to the desk with two clippings. One was from a newspaper in Trenton, New Jersey, the other from a journal in Richmond, Virginia.

Harry read them. The first was an account of the strange disappearance of a commercial artist named Arthur Hooper; the other told of the mysterious vanishing of J. Howard Longstreth, a druggist.

"Note the similarity of those two items," remarked Fellows. "Both men left suddenly. They stated that they would be back within two or three days, yet neither has returned. Hooper left Trenton, slightly over two weeks ago; Longstreth left Richmond just about one week ago.

"You could transpose the names of the men, yet the facts would serve for both cases. A strange coincidence, isn't it?"

"Very strange," replied Harry, "yet it can be nothing more than coincidence."

"Do you think so?" said Fellows. "Well, Vincent, I spend a great deal of time looking through out-of-town papers for coincidences such as this. In the majority of cases they have meant the beginning of important events."

"Involving The Shadow?"

"Of course. Those clippings indicate something unusual. I have sent copies of them to the empty office on Twenty-third Street, where The Shadow receives his messages. I have received instructions to watch for any further news of similar disappearances."

"Do you expect such news?"

"Perhaps. Note that these men disappeared a week apart. Hooper left Trenton on a Tuesday afternoon; Longstreth was last seen in Richmond on a Monday. The papers did not give the news until the end of the week, in either case."

A sudden thought occurred to Harry Vincent.

"I have a report to make," he said, "and it may fit in with this. It concerns a man named Elbridge Meyers who left Cleveland, Tuesday morning - two days ago."

Fellows seemed interested. Vincent began his story from the time that he had first observed the man on the train, who had proved to be Steve Cronin. When he completed his narrative, he was surprised to see

Fellows become unusually alert.

"Write that down immediately," said the insurance broker, handing him pen and ink. "I have something to do in the meantime."

While Harry prepared his report, Fellows was busy with the telephone.

"Universal Insurance Company?" he called. "This is Fellows, in the Grandville Building. Notify your Cleveland agent to kind out if Mr. Elbridge Meyers is in his office in that city. If he is not in his office, try his home. Have them call me when they are ready with their report."

While Fellows was reading and approving Vincent's report, the telephone bell rang.

"Hello," said the insurance broker. "What's that? Cleveland calling?... Oh, yes. This is Mr. Fellows... What's that? Elbridge Meyers is out of town? Wait a moment."

He pencil made notes as he repeated them.

"Left Tuesday morning... Expected back the next day... Had important appointment. Neglected it, but should have been back this morning... Never away more than forty-eight hours... His partner is worried.

"No, I haven't heard from him... I was anxious to communicate with him, as a friend gave me his name as a good insurance prospect. Let me know if you hear that he has returned.

"Thank you. Good-by."

Fellows seized the pen and wrote a message of his own. He sealed it in an envelope with Vincent's report, went to the outer office, and gave the packet to the stenographer. The girl left.

"Steve Cronin evidently told you the truth," observed Fellows in a methodical voice. "He expected to do away with you. Hence his entire story may be correct. If so, he does not know why Elbridge Meyers went to Harrisburg. That makes the Meyers disappearance as mysterious as the others.

"Your report has enabled me to turn in information a few days before the story will appear in the Cleveland papers. Furthermore, it locates Harrisburg as a center. Make yourself at home here. We should receive a reply within an hour."

The stenographer had left at five minutes after ten. She returned about twenty minutes later. At exactly eleven o'clock a messenger arrived with an envelope for Fellows.

The insurance broker stood by the window as he read the letter carefully. He stared for a while as though committing facts to memory. When he laid the paper on the desk it was a blank sheet of paper. This was no surprise to Vincent. He, too, had received letters from The Shadow; letters written in simple code, with disappearing ink that vanished after a few minutes.

"Vincent," said Fellows, "when unusual crimes occur, unusual men are often responsible for them. There is a man in this city who has been indirectly concerned with other disappearances. He lives in a section of the East Side; his name is Isaac Coffran.

"I learned that this man has been watched for the past few days - either by The Shadow or by one of his men, for there are others besides us. Last night Isaac Coffran left his home - something which he has not done for months. To-night he expects a visitor named Bruce Duncan.

"Coffran's house must be watched, and you are the man appointed. There is an empty store across the

street. The door is unlocked. You can stay in there. Here is an envelope that contains a telephone number. There is a telephone in the store. Report when any one enters Coffran's house, and whenever any one leaves. If a man goes in and stays there more than two hours, report by telephone.

"Your report concerning Harrisburg will doubtless be investigated to-night. Naturally you are not the man to go back there at present. Hence you will perform this new duty."

The chubby-faced insurance broker became very solemn as he added the final words of his instructions.

"Remember, Vincent," he said, "that Isaac Coffran is a very dangerous man. He is not of the criminal type; he has never been suspected of a crime. Yet I have been assured that he has not only known the facts of the disappearances of various people, but also that certain persons have entered his house and have never been seen afterward.

"The police know nothing whatever of this man's activities. Coffran is old and wise. His memory is remarkable, and his resources are many.

"So be alert. Be careful. Remember all you see, and report everything. We are on the verge of important discoveries. Three men are missing. The Shadow intends to find out where they are."

Harry Vincent left the office with the address of Isaac Coffran tucked away in his vest pocket. He was sober as he went down in the elevator. Fellow's words had been impressive; never before had the insurance broker talked so thoroughly. A tremendous crisis must have arisen, for The Shadow's detail man had exhibited unprecedented activity.

Master minds were engaged in some uncommon crime. The Shadow was exerting all his power to defeat them. The Shadow would need many eyes to-night.

CHAPTER X. INTO THE SNARE

THE house of Isaac Coffran was an old brick building in an obscure street on the East Side. It seemed strangely deserted to Bruce Duncan as he rang the bell alongside the massive door.

If his uncle's friend had not assured him that he should come at eight o'clock Thursday evening, Bruce would have decided that the house was unoccupied. For all the windows at the front were closed with iron shutters.

Even now he hesitated. He had rung the bell three times, yet there had been no response from within. Still, it was exactly eight o'clock. It would be best to wait.

The door opened suddenly. Bruce started backward as he faced a huge, dull-faced man whose features were marred by a livid scar across one cheek. The fellow was considerably over six feet in height, and his frame was powerful.

"What you want?" demanded the man in a thick, guttural voice.

"Does Mr. Isaac Coffran live here?"

"Yes. What name?"

"Duncan. Mr. Bruce Duncan."

The huge man removed his bulk from the doorway and motioned for Bruce to enter. He stepped into a dimly lighted hallway, and the man closed the door and bolted it.

"Wait here," he said, indicating a chair.

The big attendant went up the stairs at the end of the hall. Duncan waited several minutes. Then he heard Isaac Coffran calling him from the head of the steps.

"Come up, my boy," were the old man's words.

Isaac Coffran seemed greatly pleased as he shook hands with Bruce Duncan in the upper hallway. He ushered his visitor into a comfortable sitting room at the back of the house.

"Well, boy," said the old man, smiling and rubbing his hands with satisfaction, "I have your uncle's letters all waiting for you."

"Have you looked through them?" questioned Duncan eagerly. "Did you find anything important?"

"I have not had time to read them. I am leaving that work to you. It is your privilege; especially as the letters would not give me any clue. I am quite ignorant of what you wish to discover."

"That's true. Where are the letters?"

"In my study. I shall take you there in a few minutes. You may be a long while reading. So I have arranged everything for you to stay all night."

"That's kind of you, Mr. Coffran."

The old man looked at Bruce quizzically.

"Were you surprised at the appearance of this house?" he asked.

"Yes, I was," admitted Bruce. "I would have thought that it was unoccupied if you had not assured me that you would be at home."

ISAAC COFFRAN smiled. "I am not at home except to a very few friends," he said. "I prefer to keep the house closed in this manner. I have retired from the world. This is a bad neighborhood, and it is necessary to keep the house well-barred. I can't think of leaving this old home. But it is safe here. No one can enter, and Pedro, my servant, is faithful and reliant."

"He appears to be," Bruce remarked sincerely.

"Yes, and he is ignorant. It is well that he should be. It is best never to trust important affairs to servants. By the way, your own servant - that Hindu - are you sure that he is faithful?"

"Absolutely."

"He might be connected with the theft that took place in your uncle's room."

"I thought of that, Mr. Coffran. I'm sure that Abdul knew nothing about it."

"Where is he now?"

"I left him home."

"You told him that he could reach you here, of course?"

"I told him nothing. There is no reason why he should need to communicate with me. I trust Abdul, as I said; but I felt that my visit here should be kept secret. The Hindu cannot tell any one where I have gone

if he does not know where I am."

"That was a wise course, my boy."

"In fact," added Duncan, "I told Abdul that I might not be home for days - or even for weeks. If I find a clue in my uncle's letters, I may start to follow it right away. So the Hindu has instructions to look after the house and wait until I return. You know how those Orientals are. He will stay on the job perpetually until he receives further instructions."

"Very good," observed Isaac Coffran. "Being at the house, he will be available if you need him."

"I was careful coming here, too," explained Duncan. "I left my car in a garage on the West Side and came this way in a taxicab. You and your servants are the only persons who know that I am here."

A crafty smile appeared upon the withered face of Isaac Coffran. Duncan was startled as he saw the sudden change in the old man's features. But the next words of his uncle's friend were reassuring.

"You are wise, my boy. From what you have told me, your uncle must have some enemy. I thought about it as I came home last night. We must be wise when we are dealing with unknown dangers. We must meet guile with guile. Your uncle was a brave and fearless man; better than that, he was keen and perceptive. He knew how to meet those who plotted against him. You remind me of your uncle."

Bruce Duncan smiled. The old man's statement was pleasing.

"Yes," continued Isaac Coffran, "you have come to the right place. I feel that I shall be able to give you good advice - after you have read your uncle's letters. Study them well, my boy; and remember everything that seems important. Then tell me what you have found in them. I am an old man; my memory is poor. Yet I have not lost my youthful ability to think clearly and cleverly. I believe that you will agree with me before long."

"It is fortunate that I met you," agreed Duncan. "Even if nothing tangible is learned by this visit, I feel that I am getting somewhere. I want action; these three weeks of idleness have tried my nerves. I am ready for danger; in fact, I would like to encounter it."

"Spoken like your uncle!" exclaimed Isaac Coffran. "He liked adventure, and he found it. Perhaps you will find it, too. But remember one thing. Caution is as important as daring. Guard your actions well."

Bruce Duncan laughed.

"Those words sound almost as if you were foretelling the future," he said.

The old man smiled. He rose from his chair, took his cane, and motioned to Duncan.

"Come," he said. "Time may be precious. You have work to do."

LEADING the way down a dark hall toward the front of the house, the old man stopped at a door. He opened the portal and revealed a small room, lighted by lobed wall lamps. The apartment was lined with shelves of books.

"Step in," he invited. "This is my study. A quiet, cozy place in which you will not be disturbed."

Duncan entered the room. He noted that it contained no windows. It was a square room, with a desk in one corner where the bookcases ended. There was another special corner; it was almost an addition to the room - a small nook that projected into the wall.

Evidently it was intended as a place for a reading corner; there was a chair there and a light in the ceiling above, which was lower than the rest of the room. But the light was not turned on.

Isaac Coffran indicated the desk. A pile of letters lay upon it, under the beam of a small desk lamp.

"Your uncle's letters," said the old man. "I have not even looked through them. I know that some of them date back as far as twenty years. They are all dated, I believe, and I have kept them in regular order from beginning to end.

"My suggestion is that you read them one by one. Do not skip any of them. There may be references that will be explained in later letters. My only recollection of your uncle's writing is that he reviewed my replies in each succeeding letter. Hence they should all be self-explanatory.

"Forget time, my boy. I shall be in the front room awake half the night. Read as long as you desire, and concentrate upon your reading. It is the only way to stimulate deep thought.

"I shall close the door of the room so that you will not be disturbed. Should you wish to speak with me push this button beside the desk. It will summon Pedro, who stays up as late as I do."

Bruce Duncan sat at the desk and opened the first letter. He recognized the firm writing of his uncle.

Isaac Coffran placed a friendly hand upon Bruce's shoulder.

"Read on, my boy. Let us hope that before you have finished you will know more than you do now."

Duncan heard the door close behind the old man. There was a slight click of the latch. In comfortable silence, the young man began to read.

Outside the study, Isaac Coffran stood quiet and alert, listening at the closed door. He raised his finger to his lips as Pedro came down the hall. The servant with the scar stood as motionless as his master.

Minutes ticked by. Finally the old man smiled. It was a wicked smile, a cunning smile. It was a smile that would have startled Bruce Duncan had he seen it. It was a smile that brought an ugly, sneering grin to the face of Pedro.

Then Isaac Coffran raised a long, thin hand and pressed a button high in the wall above the door. A panel slid noiselessly into place. It concealed the door completely. When it had closed, there was no break in the wall along the hallway. One would never have supposed that a room existed behind that spot.

The old man stepped back and scanned the place where the door had been. The smile was still on his face as he raised his hands to his forehead and bowed. The action brought another grin to the face of the silent Pedro.

It was like a little ceremony on the part of Isaac Coffran, as though he had bidden farewell to some one whom he did not expect to see again.

CHAPTER XI. CRONIN SEES A SHADOW

STEVE CRONIN looked over his shoulder as he walked through the lobby of the old hotel in Harrisburg. There was no one in view except the clerk behind the desk, yet the gangster felt uneasy.

"Must be getting the willies," he observed to himself as he walked up the steps, ignoring the antiquated elevator. "Funny I never felt this way before."

He paused at the door of his room. He looked back along the corridor. It was very dim back there - dim and shadowy. He stared for half a minute as though he expected some movement in the darkness. Then he opened his door, slipped his hand cautiously through the narrow space, and turned the switch.

He entered the room quickly, looked about him, and closed the door. The brightness was somewhat reassuring, yet Cronin was not content until he had peered beneath the bed and in the closet. Then he lowered the window shade.

The gangster sat in the chair which Harry Vincent had occupied on the previous night.

"Funny," he murmured. "First time I ever felt nervous like this. Always laughed at guys that acted like they were scared. But to-night - whew!"

He looked toward the closed door.

"Even the stairs," he muttered. "They creaked like blazes. This must be an old place, all right. Sounded funny, though. Wouldn't have thought that I could have made all that noise coming up. Sounded like somebody was with me! Could have been, too, in all that darkness."

He went to his grip and brought out a bottle. He took a long drink. Then he went back to the chair.

Three taps on the door. Cronin started. He gripped the arms of the chair for a moment. Then he laughed.

"Wally," he said. "Only Wally."

He unlocked the door and opened it, stepping back quickly. His henchman, Wally, looked at him, and Cronin was momentarily startled by the long shadow that was silhouetted upon the floor. Then he laughed again. He turned and walked back toward the window. Wally followed him.

Steve Cronin turned suddenly. He saw the door still open. He stepped rapidly across the room to close and lock it.

"What's the idea, Wally?" he demanded. "You ought to have enough sense to close a door in back of you."

Wally stared in surprise.

"What's the matter, Steve?" he asked. "You look kind o' queer to-night. Sort o' pale, ain't you? What's up?"

"Nothing," growled Cronin as he sat in the chair by the window. He lighted a cigarette.

"Yeah," reaffirmed Wally, "you look worried."

"Maybe I am," admitted Cronin. "I'm going to forget it, though. Guess I've been jumping around too much lately. I don't know when this hit me, Wally. About a half an hour ago, I guess, in the restaurant."

"What was the matter?"

"Nothing. That's the trouble. While I was sitting there, it seemed as though somebody was looking at me. There were some people there, but none of them was paying any attention to me. When I looked around it was all right, but as soon as I began to eat again, I felt just like I had before."

"Huh," grunted Wally.

"All right," said Steve Cronin. "That wasn't all of it. As I was looking at the table, a big shadow fell right in front of me. A shadow like a man's head, with eyes like fire that burned into you. Then it was gone. I looked up quick. Nobody near me."

WALLY made no reply.

"All the way back to the hotel," continued Cronin, "it seemed like some one was following me. Through the lobby - up the stairs."

"All over a shadow. Shadows can't bother anybody."

"They can't, eh? I didn't think so, either. But there was a guy I knew once - a fellow they called Croaker. He went nuts over a shadow. Thought it was alive and following him. He wasn't any good at all after that. The boys bumped him off for double-crossing them, and I heard that when he went out he was still crying about The Shadow."

"All bunk, Steve."

"Bunk, nothing. I saw the guy the same night he died. He was telling me about The Shadow. He thought it was real. It made me laugh. But he wouldn't take much to convince me now that there is a real person - a real person called The Shadow."

There was silence for a moment. Steve Cronin took another drink and put the bottle back in the suitcase.

"Well," he said in a forced tone of briskness, "it looks like we're out of luck, Wally."

"There ain't no sign of this guy Meyers," replied the henchman. "I've been watching for him. He's gone, all right."

"Then he's back in Cleveland. He never stays away more than two days. I'll have to go back and begin operating again."

"Guess that's the best thing. Say, Steve. What about the guy we - the guy last night?"

"Him?" Cronin laughed. "He's out. You saw what I did. He didn't have a shoemaker's chance."

"Nothin' in the papers about it."

"Say, Wally, do you think that means anything? Maybe they haven't got the news yet. Even if they have, what of it? Thousands go out that way every year - clipped on railroad crossings. They don't call that news any more."

"Ought to've been in the papers, I think."

"Listen. I stopped at the station last night. Took a squint at the bulletin board. That train was forty-five minutes late. It was on time when we heard it whistling. Had about eighteen more miles to go. What do you think made it late? Maybe the engineer got out to pick some buttercups."

"I get it, Steve," laughed Wally. "The loco must have knocked that touring car galley-west."

"And left no traces of the mug who was in it," added Steve. "They probably thought the car had been abandoned. Forget that guy, Wally. Nobody will ever hear of Harry Vincent again."

Steve went to the desk and turned on the little lamp. He consulted a time-table.

"Eight fifteen now," he said. "There's a train for Cleveland about nine o'clock. Plenty of time for me to make it. That's where I'm going. You hang around here a while if you want. Take another look up at the hotel, then clear out for Philly."

"We'll give up this Meyers proposition, then?"

"Yeah. Wally, I think I've got the wrong dope this time. The guy never came to Harrisburg before. He couldn't have done it very well and got back to Cleveland as quick as he used to. This must be a new proposition he's on. But he would have got back as quick as possible. So I figure he's there now, like I said. I'll pick up his trail again. I'd like to know why he came here - but there's no way to find out."

"Well, all I know is he got in at nine thirty and was back at the station by ten o'clock."

"Maybe he went right out to Cleveland again. There's a train around ten thirty, I think."

"Guess that's what he did."

Steve Cronin tossed a few articles in the bag.

"I'll run along, Steve," said Wally. "If I see him up at the hotel, I'll drop over to the station before you leave."

He unlocked the door and went out. Cronin continued packing. Wally had closed the door, but Steve did not bother to lock it, although he kept his eyes upon it.

"Feel creepy again," he mumbled. "Guess I'll hop for the station."

He walked to the door. He turned out the light, then noticed that he had left the desk lamp burning. The room was gloomy and shadowy under the dim illumination.

He placed one hand on the doorknob. Then he glanced into the nearest corner - a space alongside the bed. It was quite dark there, and the blackness seemed to be actually solid.

"Whew," said Steve Cronin aloud. "Look at that shadow! Looks real."

He laughed, but without enjoyment.

"Maybe it is real," he declared. "Hello, shadow! Let's see you wake up!"

His nerve was returning as he uttered the words. But hardly had he finished speaking before his blood was chilled. His hand became limp upon the doorknob.

For the blackness at which he gazed began to move. It did not move toward him. It moved straight upward. It rose like a huge sable specter - a thing that was living, yet which seemed uncanny in the dimness.

Steve Cronin's fear-glazed eyes distinguished the outline of a black cloak with a broad-brimmed black hat that seemed to merge with the form beneath. From between the hat and the cloak glared two eyes that shone like beads of fire!

Then came the voice - a low, ghostly voice; a voice deeper than a whisper. It was a voice that made Steve Cronin tremble, and its tones were weird and chilling.

"Steve Cronin," it said, "I am The Shadow. You summoned me, and I am here."

Silence. The crook could not move. The figure remained motionless, yet real.

"Steve Cronin," said the voice of The Shadow, "I have watched you. Once before I watched you."

Again a pause, and then the voice:

"One time more will be the last. That is my warning. Three times will mean your doom."

Steve's eyes were half shut.

"Your doom," repeated the voice.

Still Steve Cronin was powerless. He did not move, even when a long arm came slowly upward and stretched forward until a black-gloved finger showed directly in front of the gangster's eyes.

"You have heard my warning," said the voice. Its tones were sinister. "I seldom give a warning. This is the only one - for you."

There was a sibilant hiss to the voice. Then came a single, emphatic word:

"Go!"

The figure seemed to dwindle as it merged into the darkness. Two burning spots glowed dull and disappeared. Steve Cronin's limbs gained a sudden strength of frenzied fear. A low, gasping scream escaped his lips as he yanked the door open and half flung himself into the hall. A sound followed him from the room - it was a mirthless, mocking laugh!

He had seen The Shadow! It was real! It had spoken! It had looked at him with its eyes of fire!

At the stairway Cronin paused in his flight. He steadied himself against the rail. He set his suitcase on the floor and drew a revolver from his pocket.

With shaking steps he stole softly back along the hall. He waited outside the open door for an instant, then thrust his hand against the switch, which he could see in the light from the desk lamp. He was in the room, facing that same corner, with his gun before him.

The room was empty!

Steve Cronin made a hurried search. Under the bed - in the closet. No one there. He stopped at the window. The shade was fully two inches higher than it had been before. He peered out into the darkness. He could see nothing.

The gangster laughed in a relieved way. He reached to turn off the desk lamp. His hand trembled. A card lay before him. On it, in printed characters, were the words:

REMEMBER. ONCE MORE WILL MEAN YOUR DOOM.

The revolver nearly fell from Cronin's weakened fingers. With feigned boldness he managed to thrust it in his pocket. He still stared at the card with its ominous words. Then suddenly the writing faded. The card was blank!

Steve Cronin rushed from the room. He staggered down the stairs, his suitcase knocking against the rail. He hailed a cab that was outside the hotel. His voice quivered as he directed the driver to take him to the station.

Cronin's train pulled out at nine o'clock. Alone in a compartment, the westward-bound crook sat huddled and unnerved. Steve feared pursuit, even though he was doing his utmost to escape The Shadow's wrath. Steve wondered where The Shadow had headed from Harrisburg. He might have guessed the answer had he left the city by air, instead of by train.

At that same hour - nine o'clock - an airplane took off from the Harrisburg airport. Its lone occupant was a black-cloaked pilot, whose figure was almost invisible at the controls of the fleet monoplane.

The ship's course was eastward, heading directly toward New York. As it roared low over the Pennsylvania countryside, its broad wings glinted in the moonlight, and cast a wide, spreading, moving shadow on the ground below.

CHAPTER XII. VINCENT TAKES ACTION

IT was eleven o'clock. For three hours Harry Vincent had been watching from the vacant store across the street from Isaac Coffran's house.

At eight o'clock a man had entered. In accordance with instructions, Vincent had called on the telephone. A quiet voice had answered him and had received the information.

Harry had made a second report at nine o'clock, and a third at ten. It was time for a fourth call, yet he had nothing new to say - simply that the man who had entered the house had not come out.

Speculation had gripped Harry's mind. He could see Isaac Coffran's house fairly well, for the street was lighted. The place appeared to be impregnable. The iron-shuttered windows formed a veritable fortress. He imagined that the sides and the rear of the house were similarly protected. He would have supposed that the house was empty had he not seen the man enter.

He was sure that the visitor was Bruce Duncan. He had not had an opportunity to observe the man closely, but he could tell that he was not over thirty years of age, and of more than average height and weight.

He picked up the telephone and called the number. While waiting for the connection, Harry wondered who the person with the quiet voice could be. Some agent of The Shadow. He doubted that it could be The Shadow himself. The Shadow might be out of town - perhaps in Harrisburg!

The thought was not encouraging. To-night's adventure might show sudden developments. It was more than four hours from Harrisburg by the fastest train. The Shadow, superman that he was, could not be in the capital of Pennsylvania and in Manhattan at the same time. That might account for the delay in action. Vincent knew from experience that when danger threatened The Shadow's presence was invaluable.

Harry also wondered where the person whom he was calling was located. Probably at some temporary place, which was being used for to-night only.

"Hello." It was the quiet voice coming across the phone.

"Hello," said Harry. "Everything the same."

"Keep watching."

"Wait!"

Harry had seen a man come stealthily up the street. The fellow was outside the store window now, looking at the house across the street.

"What's up?" asked the methodical voice.

"There's a man outside the window," answered Harry in guarded tones.

"Outside your window?" asked the voice. "Or outside the window of the house?"

"Outside my window. Right here."

"What does he look like?"

"His back is toward me. Wait. He's turning now. I can see his face. It's a dark face. He looks like a Hindu."

"What's he doing now?"

"Sneaking across the street. He's trying the front door of the house."

"Keep watching him."

"I am watching him. He's back in the street. He's looking up at the house. Evidently he sees he can't get in. Now he's going around to the right side."

"What's he doing there?"

"I can't see. The house is a trifle down the street."

"Tell me immediately if he comes back."

There was a lapse of fully two minutes. Then Vincent saw the Hindu reappear in front of the house.

"He's back," he said in the phone.

"Keep watching," ordered the voice.

"Right. He's looking at the front of the house, just above the sidewalk. He must have found cellar windows on the side. There are none here in front. Now he's going to the left side of the house."

"Can you see him there?"

"Just barely. He's in an alley - a narrow alley - and it's dark. I can just make out his outline. He's stooping now. Trying the windows. He won't have any luck; this house is certainly heavily barred. Ah!"

"What is it?"

"He must have found a loose fastening. He's working on a window. About halfway back. I can just see him."

"Don't lose sight of him."

"I won't. He seems to be working harder. Now he's stopped. He's trying to push himself into something. He's flat on the ground. There he goes! Feet-first! He's in - completely in!"

"Wait one minute. Tell me if he reappears."

HARRY remained silent, his eyes glued on the spot where the Hindu had disappeared into the side of the building. He could detect no motion.

"Has he returned?" questioned the voice.

"No," answered Harry. "I'm sure he has gained an entrance."

"It is time for you to act," said the quiet tones. "Until to-night it has seemed impossible to effect an entrance into that building. Now it has been done by some one else."

"Shall I enter the way the Hindu went?"

"Yes. But be cautious. Listen to my instructions."

Harry was intent.

"In the table drawer," said the person at the other end of the wire, "you will find three articles. A piece of chalk. A small flashlight. An automatic pistol, fully loaded.

"When you leave the store, make a chalk mark on the door. Put a tiny arrow on the sidewalk pointing across the street. Mark your path to the spot where you enter.

"Once in the house, your chief duty will be to find Bruce Duncan, the young man who entered at eight o'clock. Mark your path as you go through the house.

"Use the flashlight as little as possible. Use the automatic only in case of necessity. I can give you no more advice. The rest is up to you."

Harry waited, but the monotonous voice did not continue. He was about to speak when he heard the click of the receiver at the other end of the line. He opened the table drawer. Groping in the dark, he found the articles mentioned. He made his way cautiously to the street; there he placed the first chalk mark on the door.

The fresh air added new vigor to Harry Vincent. The time for action had arrived! He was on the verge of a mysterious adventure. His mind dwelt on the thoughts of what lay ahead as he went stealthily toward the house, making his chalk marks as he moved along.

The Hindu had pried open a hinged iron shutter. Harry discovered this after a quick examination which did not require the flashlight. Inside the shutter was an iron grating. This must also have been loose, for it was swung inward.

The flashlight made a circle on the floor of the cellar as Harry pressed the button of the tiny instrument. It was a dark, gloomy cellar, that seemed to fade away in endless depths. The Hindu had entered in the darkness. Harry did likewise.

His feet clicked as they struck the stone floor. Blindly, Harry Vincent moved forward; as he did, he sensed that something was taking place beyond him. He fancied that he heard a sound some distance away.

CHAPTER XIII. THE ENEMY REVEALED

THE stack of letters had dwindled by half during Bruce Duncan's reading. Bruce stopped for a moment's rest, and rubbed his eyes. Then he moved the last letter that he had perused, noting the sizes of the two heaps. Those that he had read were on the right; the unread letters were at the left edge of the desk.

Bruce had not neglected to read a single word. It had been an interesting task, this exploration into the adventurous life of his uncle. The letters had been mailed from many parts of the world, and they went

into great detail over many matters.

Never before had Bruce Duncan realized the amazing features of his uncle's career. Remarkable facts and strange experiences were recounted in a simple, matter-of-fact manner. It seemed surprising that Isaac Coffran had been unable to recollect the contents of these letters.

Duncan resumed his reading. He had not yet reached the portion of his uncle's life that dealt with Russia. Still, he had felt it wise to follow Isaac Coffran's advice and read all of the letters. There might be some slight clue in the early ones that would help later on.

Furthermore, he was gaining a valuable insight into his uncle's methods and purposes. This, he felt, was preparing him for discoveries that might come later on. The mere mention of a prominent Russian name might be the very thread of circumstance he sought!

He completed another letter. He felt a bit tired. How long had he been reading? It seemed scarcely more than an hour - more probably it was two or three. He was about to glance at his watch when he thought of Isaac Coffran's suggestion to forget time.

Rising from his chair, Duncan felt a sudden return of exhilaration. It surprised him. He realized that the air had become a bit stuffy, yet it seemed like a complete change now. He walked around the room. He stopped by the door, but did not try to open it. He looked at the button beside the desk. Well, he could summon Pedro if he wished. That might be a good idea, but he would read a few more letters first.

He sat at the desk. He seemed suddenly weary and out of breath. As he reached to the pile of letters at the left, he accidentally knocked them to the floor - all but one letter, the last of the group. Duncan picked it up and reached for the others.

As he stooped to the floor, a sudden feeling of nausea came over him. He seized the letters and as he held them, he began to choke. His throat seemed to form a solid lump.

It required a moment for him to recover after he regained his sitting position. He had picked up the loose letters hurriedly. In so doing he had added the final letter to the top of the pile. He was not aware of the fact, for he was fighting against an attack of temporary dizziness.

DUNCAN closed his eyes, and his senses returned. Mechanically he opened the letter that lay on top of the heap at the left. He began to read it, wearily, without actually noting the words. Then a sudden difference in the appearance of the note attracted his attention.

All of the previous letters had borne the introduction, "My dear Isaac." This one began with the simple statement, "Sir." Concentrating, Duncan followed each word. The task seemed laborious, his senses had become dulled. But even in his lethargic mental state, the full meaning of his uncle's writing burned itself into his mind with startling revelation. The letter read:

This is the end. For many years I have been a trusting fool. I believed in your friendship. I told you much. Now I know you for what you are - a fiend - a fiend that has assumed a human form!

You have used the information that I have given you to prey upon helpless people. You have sought to injure me, but without avail. I know now why I was attacked in Singapore. I have found out the source of the plot upon my life in Russia. I thought the Reds were back of it. But you were the man who caused it!

You have covered your tracks well. Only the man who tried to murder me in France could testify against you. He died beside me during an attack on the German trenches. He told me all, with his last breath. So you are safe.

But your schemes can no longer reach me. I am on my guard. The secret that you seek will never be yours. I shall reveal it on my deathbed, and the one who hears it will be warned against you. No inkling of you and your evilness will ever appear in anything I write. I am too wise to trust such statements to paper. But my own words will tell -

The letter fell from Bruce Duncan's hand. He had reached the end of the first page. He had learned all he needed.

Isaac Coffran was his uncle's enemy! The old man who had appeared so friendly had gained the secret after all. It was his messenger who had stolen the package and the envelopes!

Rising, Duncan felt that former feeling of exhilaration. His mind, suddenly responsive, grasped the details of what had happened.

Some one had visited his uncle. In his delirium, the dying man had fancied that Bruce had come at last. He had revealed the message which he had intended for his nephew.

It could not have been Coffran. Even at the point of death, Uncle Harvey would have recognized his enemy. It could not have been the ape-faced man. It must have been a third person - an agent of Coffran's. It did not matter who it had been. The vital fact was that the secret had been learned.

While he, Bruce Duncan, had been ignorant of his uncle's enmity toward Isaac Coffran, there had been no need for murder. But now, since Bruce had admitted that he intended to detect the thief, he had become a menace.

He seized the letter and turned to the second page. He followed the denunciation that his uncle had written from the point where he had left off.

- the man who will continue to keep my trust.

When your name is mentioned, he will be warned against another - your companion in crime, Bernardo Chefano - whose twisted lips will reveal his identity, no matter what disguise or alias he may employ.

Chefano is clever, but you are cunning. Yet I defy you both and I -

Dizziness was seizing Duncan. He had taken the chair again. He rose to his feet and gasped. The letter fluttered to the floor. Bending slowly forward, Duncan lowered his head inch by inch. Gradually he felt the sensation of weakness returning.

He rushed to the door. It was locked. Then he stood motionless, his mind alternating between fear and anger.

The room was a death trap! Locked in this small compartment, he was to be the victim of Isaac Coffran's fiendish methods. That was cruelly plain.

From somewhere - from hidden spots about the room, a slow, deadly poison gas was entering the compartment. It must be akin to carbon monoxide - a vapor that could not be sensed by smell. Heavier than air, it was creeping upward from the floor, gradually overcoming him.

The last letter that revealed the true Isaac Coffran would never have been reached by Bruce Duncan.

It was intended that he should die before he knew the truth. Now he had learned it. But to what avail? He could cry for help; he could batter against the solid door. These efforts would all be futile; they would add to the misery of death.

He went to the desk and pressed the button. He waited. There was no response. Of course not. Isaac Coffran had probably received the signal and was gloating.

The air was stifling. Life, Bruce realized, was a matter of short duration, now. He might prolong it by standing upon a chair, with his head against the low ceiling. That would mean twenty minutes more, perhaps half an hour.

The little alcove attracted his attention. There was a button beside it - perhaps another signal. He staggered across the room and pressed the button. There was no result.

Should he lie on the floor and die? It might be best, he thought, but the ordeal was hard to face. No, he would defy Isaac Coffran to the last moment. He stood upon the chair and braced himself against the wall.

The relief was not great. Duncan fancied he could hear the insidious gas hissing into the death chamber. Perhaps it was coming more rapidly now; possibly his imagination was ruling him.

He looked at his watch. Quarter past eleven. The room was beginning to whirl, so it seemed. He was losing his balance. In another minute, he would topple from his place of temporary security, and all would be over.

A sharp click came from across the room. He looked toward the oddly shaped nook in the corner. His eyes stared in sudden fascination. Was it fancy? No, it was reality! The corner section of the room, with its narrow opening, was slowly descending. Following it, from the ceiling, was emerging a sheet of solid wall.

For the fraction of a second, Bruce Duncan hesitated. In that infinitesimal space of time, a rush of conflicting thoughts filled his brain. Another trap! No trap could be worse than this. A terrible death! All death was terrible. A chance for life! It was a hope at least.

He plunged from the chair, holding his breath as he fell to the floor. As in a nightmare, in which muscles fail in their task, he fought his way across the room. The descending compartment was more than halfway down, yet he crawled through the breach, then slumped in a heap, completely inside the downward-moving alcove.

His smarting eyes caught one last glimpse of the gas-filled room. Then the opening was closed. He was in total darkness - a terrible darkness that seemed to smother him for an instant.

He opened his mouth and gasped; he breathed deeply. Through his nostrils came the reviving tonic of sweet air that brought relief to his bursting lungs.

CHAPTER XIV. A NEW MENACE

IT was a long trip down. The slow, regular movement of the floor beneath him became a relief to Bruce Duncan. He realized that he was in a small elevator between walls of solid masonry. Perhaps he was going to a new ordeal. But future fear could not overcome the present hope that he had gained in escaping from the poisoned atmosphere above.

The darkness continued for a while. Then a crack of light appeared by the floor. It seemed to rise slowly upward as though it were a curtain of illumination. Bruce realized that he had reached the bottom of the elevator shaft.

The light came from a large flashlight that was pointed in his direction. As the brilliance moved up and

down under the control of the man who held it, Duncan fancied that he could make out the form of the person behind it.

Some inquisitor, he supposed. Isaac Coffran or his henchman, Pedro, waiting to seize him. He felt helpless; the gas that he had inhaled had left him weak.

The little elevator stopped. Looking upward, Duncan realized that he had reached a low-vaulted room in the cellar of the building. Then a hand gripped him. He was dragged forth to the floor.

The man was bending over him; the flashlight moved upward. From its new position, it revealed the other person. A gasp of relief escaped Bruce Duncan's lips as he recognized the dark anxious face above him.

"Abdul!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sahib," affirmed the Hindu, in his quiet voice.

"How did you come here?" questioned Bruce, as he sat upon the floor. "How did you find me?"

"I shall tell you later, burra sahib," replied Abdul. "Let us first leave this place of danger."

Duncan tried to rise to his feet. He sank back, momentarily exhausted. His eyes followed the glare of the Hindu's flashlight as it swept about them.

They were in a narrow, low-roofed passage, which terminated in the elevator at one end, and in an arched opening at the other. The Hindu's light was focused on the exit.

"Through there I came," said Abdul. "There we shall go. It is safe there, sahib."

He extended one arm. Bruce Duncan steadied himself and rose with the Hindu's aid. Together they started slowly toward the opening that led to safety.

Just as they reached the low arch, Duncan faltered. As he paused, Abdul stood still beside him. The wait was only a brief second, but before Duncan had advanced another step, some huge device dropped into the glare of the light. There was a swish of cold air, followed by a sharp clang. Two feet in front of the men appeared a solid wall.

Duncan reached out and pressed his hand against hard metal.

"A curtain of steel!" he exclaimed. "A solid sheet of metal! It would have struck us, Abdul, if we had not stopped."

"It has closed our way to safety," replied the Hindu, in his even voice. "We are trapped, burra sahib."

Duncan's rescuer turned the flashlight in all directions. Only the elevator remained as a means of exit. The walls of the room were solid and close together; the steel curtain filled the archway completely. Not even a crack was visible.

There was a click. The elevator began to move slowly upward, a solid wall following from below. It was an ingenious device - part of the room on the second floor of this chamber in the cellar. Going, it left no trace of its existence.

Abdul held the light toward the rising lift.

"Shall we go there, sahib?" he asked.

"No!" exclaimed Duncan. "It leads to death, Abdul. I escaped from a room filled with gas."

"There is no safety here," said the Hindu simply.

"I know that," admitted Duncan. "But it is better than that den I left."

The elevator was gone. A blank, solid wall had taken its place.

Duncan sat on the floor.

"We can do nothing, Abdul," he said. "We must wait. That is all."

With the patience characteristic of his race, the Hindu squatted on the floor beside his master. He turned out the light, and they listened in darkness.

Finally, Bruce Duncan spoke softly.

"Abdul," he said, "why did you come here? How did you manage to rescue me?"

"Burra sahib," said the Hindu, "I suspected evil from the old man last night."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"It is not right that I should interfere with what burra sahib may choose to do. But after you have gone away tonight, some voice seems to tell me that Duncan sahib will be in danger. I have the name and address of this old man, sahib. I come here. I see the house dark. I enter. I find this place."

"But the elevator, Abdul. How did you operate that?"

In answer the Hindu turned on the light. He pointed it to the blank wall, then above. On the ceiling, Duncan saw a small button. He doubted that he would have seen it had it not been indicated for him.

"I could reach to there," explained Abdul. "I know that button means something. My eyes are good, sahib. When I see that, I know it has some use. So I press. Down comes the little room - with you, burra sahib."

The Hindu turned off the light.

"Well, Abdul," said Duncan, in the darkness, "you have saved my life. Above here is a room - a room in which I sat, not suspecting that Isaac Coffran was my enemy. The room gradually filled with a poisonous vapor. I pressed a button up there, but it served no purpose, for the elevator was up.

"I can understand the use for the elevator. The old man would have placed my body in it. From here, in the basement, he would have brought down the elevator. An easy, simple way to remove a murdered person."

He rose and groped toward the wall ahead.

"Turn on the light, Abdul," he said.

The Hindu complied. At that instant a cry came from Bruce Duncan. The floor caved beneath him. He dropped downward, but his course was halted by the alert Hindu. The man had dropped the light, and his hands had caught Duncan underneath the arms, just as he was disappearing into the depths below.

AS soon as Abdul had drawn his master to safety the opening in the floor swung upward. It was a hinged

device by the wall below the elevator. Its springs made it close so tightly that even under the inspection of the flashlight the cracks seemed hardly noticeable.

"Another danger!" exclaimed Duncan. "My uncle was right. I read his letters, Abdul, in the room upstairs. He said that Isaac Coffran was a fiend!

"I understand it all, now. He murders a man by gas, in the upstairs room. The body is brought down the lift. It is drawn to the floor, the trap is released and down goes the victim!

"He has discovered my escape, Abdul. He knows that some one has helped me. From some room upstairs he operates his hidden mechanisms. He dropped the curtain of steel. He brought the elevator up again. He released the catches that hold the trap, hoping that one or both of us might fall into some pit below. He has us here, at his mercy. What will he do next?"

"We must wait to see, burra sahib," said the Hindu quietly.

Duncan moved cautiously to the steel curtain. He tapped against it with a key. The click seemed loud in the darkness.

There was an answering sound - a faint echo of the click. Yet it brought a sudden hope to Bruce Duncan. He stepped closer and tapped three times. Three clicks replied.

Using the International code, Duncan slowly spelled out a single word: "Help."

The reply came: "Who are you?"

"It may be a friend, Abdul," exclaimed Duncan in a low tone. "He wants to know who is here."

"Name Duncan," he replied in code.

"Will help," was the answer.

"Tell him, 'Quick,'" came the voice of Abdul, close by Duncan's ear.

"Quick," tapped Bruce.

The first faint clicks of a reply came from the steel curtain. Then they ceased.

"He's gone," murmured Duncan.

"Perhaps to help us quickly," answered Abdul. "Listen, burra sahib. I have heard a new noise."

Duncan heard it. He had not noticed it while listening to the clicking sound from the steel barrier. But it attracted his attention now. It was a deep, dull thumping - an ominous, thudding sound that seemed to come from the side walls of their prison.

"Look!" exclaimed Abdul.

Duncan's eyes followed the glare of the flashlight to one side wall of the room. Slowly, inch by inch, the wall was moving toward him. Its speed was sluggish, but constant.

"It brings death, burra sahib," said the Hindu.

"We must escape," replied Duncan. "But how?"

"We must wait, sahib. Wait until that one beyond the closed way helps."

"Push the button for the elevator. Maybe the room upstairs is free from gas."

"I cannot reach it, sahib. It is above the trap, which is now made so I shall fall."

"That's one way out," observed Duncan grimly. "Drop through the hole. Better than being crushed to death. But we'll wait to the last second, Abdul."

He tapped vainly against the steel curtain. There was no reply. Had the mysterious friend been trapped, also? Perhaps he had gone for more help. Perhaps it had been Isaac Coffran, tantalizing his victims with vain hope of possible escape.

The Hindu still held the flashlight toward the side wall of the room. The crushing barrier was coming closer - slowly but certainly. There might be twenty minutes now left them. Perhaps only fifteen. Duncan's mind was unable to calculate.

Abdul was leaning against the other side wall of the compartment. Bruce Duncan joined him. Together they watched that ever-approaching instrument of destruction.

Thump - thump - thump -

"A few minutes more," murmured Duncan. "A few minutes more, and we can only wait. Wait and hope."

This was more terrible than the gas-filled room above. There death had crept upon him almost unknown; here it was announcing its approach.

The young man and his Hindu servant stood silently side by side. Neither spoke. Both stared rigidly before them, calm yet fascinated by that huge moving surface.

Thump - thump - thump - thump -

The wall was coming closer - closer - closer.

CHAPTER XV. BEYOND THE BARRIER

IT was Harry Vincent who had answered Bruce Duncan's plea for help. As he had heard the last clicks of the code, he had realized that the situation must be desperate.

He had found this steel curtain in the darkness. His flashlight had shown that it was a barrier he could not pass. Then had come the taps to which he had replied.

He seemed to hear a dull thumping on the other side of the metal curtain. What did it signify? Perhaps the man behind the barrier would tell. Yet Harry realized that time must be short. He had found Bruce Duncan. It was his duty to aid the man. How could he help by standing there?

It would be best, he thought, to listen for a few minutes. Perhaps the coded clicks would give him some suggestion that might enable him to rescue the man whom he had come to save. But as he swept the flashlight along the side of the cellar, he understood the situation. It was not a wall that lay between him and Bruce Duncan - it was a curtain of steel that could evidently be raised from above.

As he turned to start a search for stairs to the house above, he heard a sound to one side. He wheeled quickly; as he did, a light filled the room. Plunging upon him was a huge man. Vincent caught the glint of a knife - a machete. He saw a leering face, with a scarred cheek. He turned to escape the enemy, and swung his automatic toward him.

His wrist was seized before he could press the trigger. The pistol fell upon the floor. But though Harry lost his weapon, he managed to escape the thrust of the machete. Quick as a flash he caught the man's right wrist and prevented him from bringing the knife into play.

They struggled silently. The huge man with the ugly face was powerful, yet The Shadow's agent had the strength to resist him. As their arms locked and they stood straining yet almost motionless, Harry realized that he had been discovered in the dark, and that the man had pressed a light switch which illuminated this part of the cellar.

Harry's fierce opponent was a leering, scar-faced brute. Harry, faced by the man's dark visage, took the fellow for a Mexican; a logical guess since the man had first attacked with a machete. Harry battled madly; but he knew from the start that he was waging conflict with an enemy whose strength was far greater than his own.

THE odds were in favor of the attacker. He had nearly caught Harry unaware; he intended to weaken his antagonist. Every second that went by postponed all effort to rescue the imprisoned Bruce Duncan.

Harry realized this. He made a sudden twist. Taking advantage of a slip on the part of his opponent, he eluded the man's grasp and was free. He dashed madly across the cellar toward the opening through which he had come. There he stopped in consternation.

The Mexican, in coming through the cellar, had evidently seen the dim light of the opened window. This part of the cellar was quite dark, away from the illumination farther back. Still, Harry could see that the grating had been closed and fastened.

There was only an instant to take in these facts. The lead that Harry had gained might have been sufficient for him to scramble through had the grating been open. Outside, he might have summoned help. Now, at bay, he turned to meet the onrush of the big man whose machete was raised above his head.

Harry grabbed the fellow's arm and locked in furious struggle. His only hope was to overpower the man now. He was fierce in his attack and he swung the huge Mexican around toward the wall near the grating.

He had gripped the wrist of the hand that held the knife, but in his eagerness Harry lost his clutch on the other wrist. The fellow's left hand pressed against Harry's face and pushed him backward. Harry's arms were pinned in a powerful grasp. The Shadow's agent was suddenly rendered helpless.

In the dimness he saw the outline of the snarling, jeering face. The hand with the machete was free. It poised above him, the weapon pointed toward his chest.

"Hah-hah-hah!" the Mexican's voice panted as he sneered at Vincent. "You think you can fight Pedro? Hah-hah-hah! You see this?"

The machete wriggled in Pedro's hand. It quivered for the death thrust. The big man's back was against the wall, near the grating. Harry could see the closed bars behind him.

The knife trembled as it began its downward swing.

Then, with startling suddenness, an arm shot through the grating behind the Mexican. A black-gloved hand caught Pedro's descending wrist. The huge man's powerful swing was plucked in mid-air. Harry saw a look of distorted amazement come over Pedro. The man released him suddenly. Harry fell to the floor, and his head thumped against the stone.

Though slightly dazed, he could still see what was happening. That single hand which gripped Pedro's

wrist possessed superhuman power, for it was twisting the huge Mexican back and forth as though he had been made of straw.

Another thin-gloved hand came through the hers. There was a quick movement, and Pedro was hurled headlong. The machete shot from his hand and clanged on the cellar floor. The big Mexican lay still.

A click and the grating opened. Those hands had pried open the fastening in a twinkling. The bars swung inward. A black figure slipped into the cellar and stood over Harry Vincent, looming like a mammoth bat-winged creature.

It bent forward, and Harry believed that he saw two bright eyes in the depths of the black shape. An exclamation came to his parched lips.

"The Shadow!"

A strange, almost mystic whisper came from the figure that hovered above him.

"Where is Duncan?"

"At the other end of the cellar. Behind a steel barrier."

"In danger?"

"Yes."

"Rest yourself for a minute. Wait until I have gone. Then go there to help him."

The Shadow moved away. Harry could see the back of the strange figure in the cloak as it seemed to blot out the motionless form of Pedro. A flashlight was turned on; it was set on the floor. As Harry leaned against the wall, he could see the face of the unconscious Mexican, in the center of the ring of light.

The Shadow was bending over Pedro. Some quick action was indicated by the trembling of the long black cloak. Harry could not see The Shadow's face, but it appeared as though the man was studying the features of the brute on the floor.

Pedro's body moved as The Shadow seemed to tug at it. Something was happening - rapidly. A full minute elapsed, then came a surprising result that made Harry rub his eyes and gasp with astonishment.

The light was lifted from the floor. It shone on a mirror that was held by a hand. With a single motion, the black cloak and hat were lifted upward, then they fell to the floor. A face was revealed in the circle of light. It was the face of Pedro the Mexican!

As the standing figure turned, Vincent could see the features plainly. They were the perfect replica of Pedro's countenance. Even the scar on the cheek appeared in livid vividness.

The lips moved. They showed a sneer. It was an exact representation of the triumphant expression which the Mexican had revealed when he had poised the machete above Vincent's breast.

The real Pedro lay on the floor, but above him stood his exact duplicate! It seemed incredible - impossible - yet it was actuality!

For one brief instant the face of the false Pedro changed its expression. Then the sneer reappeared. The light was out; the standing figure was gone.

As Harry Vincent rose to his feet and steadied himself against the wall, a weird, unforgettable sound

echoed through the vaulted basement.

It was the sound of a laugh - a whispered laugh a mocking laugh that brought a sudden throbbing to Harry Vincent's temples.

It was the laugh of The Shadow!

CHAPTER XVI. THE OLD MAN'S STRATEGY

ISAAC COFFRAN was standing in the center of the front room on the second story. He was facing the curtained doorway, but his eyes were on the floor. A cunning smile was on his lips. He was gloating and triumphant. His hands were behind his back; his pose was one of enjoyable anticipation.

A shadow moved across the floor and extended toward the old man. Isaac Coffran raised his head quickly. He grinned as he saw the leering face of Pedro. The Mexican had parted the curtains and was standing in the doorway. His left hand held the machete; his right arm supported a black bundle.

"Well?" questioned Isaac Coffran.

Pedro's lips parted in an ugly snarl of mirth. The big man tossed the machete on a chair and placed the bundle on top of it.

"Did you find the man in the cellar?" asked Isaac Coffran.

"Si, senior," replied Pedro. "Yes."

"Ah!" exclaimed the old man. "I am glad I sent you down. I thought perhaps the rescuer had slipped out before the curtain closed. Where was Duncan - the young man? In the closing room?"

"I think so."

"He couldn't have escaped. He was too exhausted by the gas. Well, he has five minutes more to wait. What did you do to the other man?"

Pedro pointed to the chair.

"There is his hat, senior," he said. "There is his coat. Pedro can use the machete well. Very well."

The old man chuckled.

"You are useful, Pedro," he said. "But these are useful, too. He pointed to a row of buttons and lights above a table by the door. One by one he indicated them.

"Here," he chortled, "is the gas button. That was first. The second was this light - when Duncan rang from the study. Then this light showed that some one within the cellar had brought down the elevator. How did the man get in? Through a loosely fastened window?"

"Yes."

"Careless of you, Pedro. We must attend to that. But look. I pressed this button. Up came the elevator. This button - down came the steel curtain. Here I released the trap - perhaps the young man has fallen in it. We shall see later. Then" - the old man's face gleamed with fiendish malice - "the last button. The wall is closing. Slowly closing. Soon it will be ended. Listen!"

A faint, distant thumping could be heard from the depths of the house.

"The machete is useful, Pedro," observed the old man. "Quick work - no noise. We will drop that body through the trap, too."

He looked at the Mexican quizzically.

Pedro grinned.

"You look different than usual," said Isaac Coffran. "You must have had some trouble, Pedro. Your scar is a trifle redder than I have ever seen it before. You must have given way to excitement! I never knew you to do that before."

The old man wheeled and faced a clock that hung on the wall opposite the door. Staring toward the dial, he became oblivious to Pedro's presence. Venomously, Isaac Coffran announced the moments that remained.

"Three minutes more," he sneered. "No! Two minutes. The crushing is about to commence. This period is always enjoyable to me. That last minute, when the wall closes over the few remaining feet. The victim is at his last moment of helplessness. This is a rare pleasure, Pedro. I hope you enjoy it as much as I."

He paused, listening, while he stared at the clock.

"Can I be wrong?" he asked. "Impossible! Yet the mechanism has stopped! I can't hear its thumping beats. Can you, Pedro? No. I can't be wrong. There is more than a minute to go! I test it every week, Pedro. It is timed exactly!"

THERE was no response from the door. Isaac Coffran did not turn. He still watched the clock.

"I wonder if it stopped," he muttered. "I must investigate. Perhaps the body was stretched toward the wall. That must be it. Young Duncan was half unconscious. He may have lain where the other dragged him. A lengthwise body would crush slowly. It might stop the wall - yet the mechanism should still go on, at that!"

The old man swung toward the table. He saw the buttons above it and a startled cry came from him.

There had been little yellow lights over the two buttons which he had last indicated - the button that released the steel curtain and the button that operated the moving wall. Both of these lights were out. Some one had pressed the buttons!

"Pedro!" exclaimed the old man.

He looked up at the curtained doorway. The Mexican was gone. In his place stood a strange, silent figure - a man wearing a black cloak and hat, the same garments that Pedro had brought upstairs. The cloak seemed to envelop a shapeless form; the hat had a broad brim that obscured the face of the bent head. Isaac Coffran thought that he could glimpse two eyes between the hat and cloak.

The fiendish old man stood staring, at the form in the doorway. He still held his hands behind his back. No sign of fear appeared upon his features. His smooth, parchmentlike face was calm and undisturbed.

"Well," said Isaac Coffran. "Who may you be?"

A sinister, whispering voice emerged from the shape in the doorway. It was a voice that would have chilled the blood of a brave, virile man. But old Isaac Coffran's withered veins did not quiver.

"I?" asked the voice. "I am The Shadow!"

Isaac Coffran's eyes dropped to the floor. The shadow that appeared there seemed to be an extension of the form in the doorway. It was a huge, black shadow. It merged with the figure as the old man turned his head slowly upward.

"The Shadow!" said Isaac Coffran, in a sneering tone. "I have heard of you. Perhaps you have heard of me?"

"I have," replied the cold, relentless voice.

"Perhaps you know a bit about me. Perhaps you would like to know more. You have come to the right place to find out. What people learn here, they remember as long as they live. Unfortunately they never live long after that. Strange, isn't it?"

The Shadow was silent. The form seemed to project from the half-drawn curtain against which it stood.

"Those buttons on the wall," observed Isaac Coffran. "Perhaps you pressed them?"

"I pressed them."

"That interests me. On that account, you shall die. I understand now why Pedro looked different. You were Pedro. You have learned much here. You shall forget it all - within an hour. Perhaps within a minute. You shall die, because I do not wish you to live. You are dangerous, alive. You will be helpless, incapable of annoying me, when you are dead."

The old man scanned the figure as if to discover the effect of his words.

"Isaac Coffran." The whispered voice, though low, had penetrating volume. Its words seemed to take shape as they were uttered, as though they were living things. "Isaac Coffran, I shall not die. You would die, if I commanded it. But dead, you would be useless to me. Alive, you may prove useful. So live. But remember" - the voice was solemn and slow - "you live only because I choose to be indulgent."

THE old man moved a step nearer as The Shadow finished speaking. Suddenly he swung his right hand from behind his back. The motion was marvelously quick.

The hand held a small revolver. The finger was on the trigger. The gun covered the silent form by the curtain. Isaac Coffran's keen, beady eyes were searching as they watched the figure of The Shadow.

"One motion on your part," threatened the old man, "will mean instant death. My hand is firm, but the slightest quiver of the finger will discharge the contents of this weapon. Stand where you are."

The black form trembled slightly, but the old man did not press the trigger. Instead he smiled and chuckled. He had expected that. This fearless Shadow could yield to fear after all. Isaac Coffran moved a step nearer.

"The Shadow!" he exclaimed sarcastically. "The man whose face has never been seen. The strange creature of the night, that comes and goes invisibly - that is here and there at once!"

He fancied that the figure shook again. It slumped slightly, its black hat tilting forward, the edges of the cloak sagging as though the being within had lost his proud posture.

The old man was close now. His revolver was pressed against The Shadow's cloak; his face was grinning triumphantly.

"Die!" he cried. "Die, Shadow! And before you perish, I shall see your mysterious face!"

Isaac Coffran's left hand shot forward and seized the broad brim of the black hat. The right forefinger pressed the trigger of the gun, and the automatic spat its bullets through the cloak. As the old man swept the hat away, the lower garment fell to the floor and collapsed into a small mass of cloth.

Isaac Coffran almost staggered. The revolver slipped from his nerveless fingers. He had shot into nothingness. There was no one in the cloak; the removal of the hat had revealed no head and face!

The figure had been standing between the half-opened curtains. Two gleaming pins revealed the ruse. The slump in the figure had not been caused by fear. It had been the exit of the real Shadow - the man within. Only the vacant shell - a cloak and hat - had remained to receive the bullets from Isaac Coffran's weapon. When the hat had been swept away, the cloak had fallen.

The Shadow had gone, and Isaac Coffran stood in the hall, fuming with rage and anger. His lips spat oaths of disappointment.

Then came a sound from the floor below; it was a long, tantalizing sound. A quivering laugh came up the stairs - a taunting, sardonic laugh. It was jeering, maddening to the ears of the old man above. The laugh came again - farther away; then a third time, fading in the distance.

Trembling with rage, the old man still stood in the upstairs hallway, shaking his fist in wrath. The air seemed to quiver with the echoes of The Shadow's laugh.

Back in his room the old man seized the black garments and flung them against the wall. He stamped upon them in sudden rage. Then he became suddenly calm. He had held The Shadow and had lost him. Well, they would meet again.

Grimness was expressed upon Isaac Coffran's evil countenance as he drew another revolver from the table drawer and started downstairs to find the missing Pedro.

CHAPTER XVII. MEN MARKED TO DIE

WHILE Isaac Coffran had been watching the clock upstairs, the two men in the chamber of death had been witnessing the final approach of the wall that was designed to crush them.

Bruce Duncan's eyes had become glassy. He was standing nearer to the archway than Abdul, the Hindu. His back was against the wall behind him; his arms were outstretched. He had felt certain that it must be too late for rescue.

Only a few inches had intervened between his body and that moving surface. The air was stifling. Then, at the moment when death seemed imminent, a feeling of faintness had come over Duncan. Mercifully, consciousness had faded from him.

The dark-faced Hindu had glanced stolidly at Duncan. Abdul was accepting death. Yet he had thrown his arm between his master and the moving wall. The solid surface pressed against his wrist and forced it toward Duncan's body. The Hindu realized that he could not withdraw his arm.

The thumping of the machinery had drummed into Abdul's thoughts. Then suddenly it had ceased. The pressure against his wrist remained the same. The Hindu stared in front of him. The wall was no longer moving!

Then came a grating sound, followed by a rush of cool fresh air. The steel curtain raised. The two men in the death chamber were revealed in the spot of a flashlight.

"Bruce Duncan?" came a voice. "Are you alive?"

"He is alive," replied Abdul.

The Hindu pressed his arm firmly against his master's body and managed to draw it free. There was not sufficient space for him to turn sideways, but he managed to force Duncan's form toward the archway where the steel curtain had been.

A pair of strong arms assisted him from the outside. A few seconds later Bruce Duncan was lying on the floor of the cellar. Abdul edged out of the narrow crevice and approached the man who held the flashlight.

"I am a friend," the man whispered. "My name is Harry Vincent. I saw you enter the cellar. I came to help. We must get Duncan out immediately."

He lifted the feet of the prostrate man. Abdul bore Duncan's head and shoulders. With Vincent's flashlight blazing the trail ahead, they carried their burden toward the open grating, passing the prone form of Pedro on the way.

"Who is that?" asked Abdul.

"Pedro," replied Harry. "An enemy. We can leave him where he is."

It required two or three minutes to force Duncan's body through the opening in the side of the house. When Harry and Abdul had brought him to safety, the young man came to a state of semiconsciousness. This enabled them to help Duncan walk, one supporting him on each side.

Harry left Abdul with Duncan at the side alley and hurried to the corner where he found an empty taxicab.

He returned for the others. Duncan seemed fairly well roused. But he slumped in a corner of the cab. Harry glanced from the window as they went by Isaac Coffran's house and he blinked for a moment as he noticed the front door. It seemed to be closing. On the steps was a shadowy form that seemed to flit toward the sidewalk as they rolled along.

Harry told the driver to take them to the Metrolite Hotel. Abdul offered no objection.

BRUCE DUNCAN was conscious but bewildered when they reached their destination. Harry and Abdul took him upstairs and put him to bed, in Harry's room. Then Harry called the desk and arranged for an adjoining room. He slept there, leaving Abdul with his master. The Hindu sat in a chair and dozed comfortably.

When morning arrived, Harry went to interview the man whom he had rescued. He was admitted to the room by Abdul. Bruce Duncan was sitting up in bed. His face looked weary; but Bruce managed a smile as he extended his hand to Harry Vincent.

"Abdul has told me what you did to help us," he said. "I don't know how you came into the picture. But you were certainly a friend in need. How did you managed it?"

Harry Vincent smiled.

"I only managed a very little of it," he replied. "I may be able to tell you more later. I'm anxious to get your story. But let's have breakfast first."

While Harry was calling downstairs, Abdul spoke to his master.

"I shall leave you, burra sahib," he said in a knowing tone. "This other man - Vincent sahib - may have much to tell you. It is better I should go."

He gave a slip of paper to Bruce Duncan.

"This will be my address," Abdul explained. "I have a Hindu friend here in New York. You can reach me there."

He drew a second paper from his pocket.

"This, burra sahib," he added, "is why I came to you last night. It fell out of the pocket of the old man when he came to see you at your house."

Duncan read the paper and whistled. He turned to question Abdul, but the Hindu had departed.

Harry Vincent came over and sat on the edge of the bed.

"Duncan," he said, "I'm going to tell you a few facts. In return, I want you to be frank with me. Last night I made a phone call after we arrived. I called from my room, to a number from which I had received instructions to assist you. I am permitted to tell you certain things concerning my own operations. But in return I am to find out all you know. I suspect that you had some secret reason for your visit to that house last night. I think we can help each other. Does that seem fair?"

Bruce Duncan thought a moment. Then he decided. After all, it was Vincent's intervention that had saved his life. Without that, his secret would have perished with him.

"I agree," he said.

The waiter arrived with their breakfast. While they were eating Harry told his story briefly.

"I am the agent of a being called The Shadow," he said. "I can't tell you who he is or what he is, because I don't know. He saved me from suicide, and I've worked for him ever since. He saved your life last night. He expects your cooperation in return, and you are to keep secret what I tell you."

"Agreed," said Duncan. "Go on."

"I was watching Isaac Coffran's house," said The Shadow's agent. "We believe that the old man is mixed up in some shady business, involving the mysterious disappearance of three persons. I was told that you were coming.

"I tried to rescue you last night, but I would have been killed by Coffran's big Mexican except for the intervention of a man who I believe was The Shadow himself. Somehow, he freed you from the death chamber. I helped your Hindu servant bring you here.

"If you can shed any light on the affairs of Isaac Coffran, you may give us the clue that we need to explain the disappearances of three men - one from Trenton, one from Richmond, one from Cleveland. Each vanished on a Tuesday. One week apart. It is Friday now; the last one, Meyers of Cleveland, has been gone three days."

"A Tuesday night," murmured Bruce Duncan. He counted on his fingers. "Why, the first one must have gone just one week after-"

He paused.

"One week after what?" quizzed Harry Vincent.

"Vincent," blurted Duncan, "there's no use in trying to keep my secret any longer. I'm going to rely on you."

DUNCAN felt relieved as he poured forth his story. He began with the mysterious visitor who had robbed the hiding place in the hearth. He told of his uncle's letter. He described the visit of Isaac Coffran, and his journey to the home of the man he believed to be his uncle's friend. He described the accidental reading of the last letter, and the terror he had known in the gas-filled study. The escape by the elevator was news to Harry Vincent; from then on, the account was plain. "What do you think about it?" asked Duncan when he had concluded.

"Just one thing I want to know," said Harry. "You mentioned the letter that you were reading in Coffran's study. What did it say, besides the accusation?"

Duncan's mind was groping. His thoughts seemed far away as he repeated:

"An attack in Singapore - a plot in Russia - an attempted murder in France - a man who told and died. There was something else. I have it! Bernardo Chefano - the twisted lips - they will identify him no matter what disguise or alias he may use."

"Ah!" exclaimed Harry. "There's something! We can connect some one else with Isaac Coffran. Did the ape-man have twisted lips?"

"No," said Duncan, "he was hardly a man at all, as I remember. Of course the hashish had me pretty well doped that night. I might have seen anything. Bernardo Chefano. He can't be Pedro, either. Wait! Some one had charge of that strange creature that came into my room. Some one whistled outside. That might have been Pedro, of course. It couldn't have been old Coffran. So it may not have been this fellow Chefano after all."

He happened to see the paper that lay on the foot of the bed. He had forgotten it.

"Look," he said. "Abdul gave me this. It fell out of Coffran's pocket the night he was at my house. Some one sent it to him. That indicates the extra man!"

"Find out what Duncan knows," read Harry. "He found out what you know, all right, but not all." Harry read again:

"Investigate personally.' He did that. Came to the house; most unusual for him.

"Prevent all interference.'

"That was Coffran's scheme all right. With you out of the way, there could be no interference - on your part at least, and the message deals with you.

"Plans are working perfectly.'

"What can that mean?"

Harry Vincent looked toward Bruce Duncan.

"It's got me stumped," admitted Duncan. "If the man from Russia had arrived, Chefano - assuming he wrote the note - would have the jewels by this time. The plans would not be working. They would have worked completely."

"Yes," agreed Harry, "it means that something has been going on; that something will continue to go on.

We must think in terms of these three men who have disappeared. Can there be a connection between them and you?"

"I never heard of any of them. What did you say their names were?"

"Arthur Hooper, J. Howard Longstreth, Elbridge Meyers. Three men from different cities. One disappeared each Tuesday, beginning exactly a week after you had your experience."

"I never heard their names before." Bruce looked out the window, as if he sought relief there.

Harry Vincent paced across the room. Suddenly he stopped. A look of horror appeared upon his face.

"Duncan!" he exclaimed. "I have it! It is horrible - it is fiendish! Only Isaac Coffran could have planned it!"

"What?"

"The crime that is still going on. Let me explain. Get my reasons. First, suppose that the messenger from Russia is not due to arrive immediately.

"In those stolen papers was a list of the names and addresses of the six men who were to receive their shares of the wealth. There was also a letter to your uncle, naming the time and place of meeting - probably similar to those received by the others.

"The thief can appear to claim the wealth, posing as your uncle or his representative. But the others would be there, too. He would have to divide the money he received."

"You don't mean -"

"You see it now, too. Fake notes to each of the six. Copies - forgeries - patterned after the note to your uncle. Notes that look authentic - setting the date ahead! One six weeks early, one five weeks early -"

"Vincent!" Bruce Duncan's exclamation expressed horror. "I see it! Hooper - Longstreth - Meyers. Each of them is one of the six men! One by one they have been lured to the meeting place and there they -"

"They have died," was Vincent's solemn announcement. "But Duncan, there are three men more!"

"Three men more!" echoed Duncan. "Men who we do not know. Men whom we cannot help. Men marked to die!"

CHAPTER XVIII. FELLOWS LEARNS SOMETHING

CLAUDE FELLOWS reclined comfortably in the cushions of the limousine and puffed a cigar in contentment. It was Friday evening; he was on his way to a party in New Jersey.

The chubby insurance broker had many wealthy friends. Most important of them all was Lamont Cranston, a millionaire who owned a fine estate in New Jersey, twenty miles outside of New York. Cranston was holding the party to-night. He had sent one of his cars - chauffeur included - to bring Fellows.

Cranston was a good friend to have. Fellows had known him back in the days when the insurance business had been less prosperous. The millionaire had always given him encouragement. The only trouble was that Cranston was so often away. Like other persons of wealth, he apparently went South in the winter and North in the summer. It was said that he often traveled to Europe.

At any rate, it was an event when the big house in New Jersey was open and guests were invited. Fellows had always felt that Cranston might have helped him out of his financial trouble a few years ago. But that had occurred when the millionaire was away. Fellows had pulled out of his predicament, thanks to The Shadow. That had been his first experience with his mysterious employer.

Fellows had performed his services faithfully and well. He no longer had worries. Checks came in regularly, even when his insurance business was slow. He had never been able to identify The Shadow; now he was no longer curious about the matter.

To-day he had sent in a most important report. Harry Vincent had come to his office and had told of an interview with Bruce Duncan. Not only had Fellows learned of Isaac Coffran's fiendish schemes and the secret of Bruce Duncan's uncle; he had listened to a well-thought-out theory that Vincent had evolved.

All these matters had gone in the morning report. The stenographer had taken the envelope to the dingy office on Twenty-third Street. A reply had been received. It was a simple one - instructions to Harry Vincent to wait with Bruce Duncan at the Metrolite Hotel until further notice.

Vincent had seemed a bit impatient. But Fellows had taken the whole affair very calmly, and his soothing advice had quieted the eager young man. It was evident that The Shadow intended to think matters over carefully. The situation was unquestionably a difficult one.

The limousine had passed through the Holland Tunnel. It had traveled several miles into New Jersey and was now running along an unimportant highway. The chauffeur pulled up at a small service station.

"Always get my gasoline here, sir," he explained to Fellows, opening the rear door of the car to do so.

"I have no objections." The insurance broker smiled.

The chauffeur closed the door. Fellows shut his eyes and yawned. As he did, he thought he heard the door open and close again. Probably the chauffeur had not shut it tightly the first time.

The limousine was moving again. The insurance broker was completely alone in back; in fact, he was entirely by himself, for the glass partition was closed behind the chauffeur.

"This is really comfortable," he said aloud.

"I agree with you," replied a voice.

FELLOWS was startled. The voice had come from the corner of the car. It was black there, for there were no lights along the road. But Fellows was not surprised simply because he heard the voice; it was the tone of the voice that startled him. He had heard it before - long ago - that weird whisper. It had always seemed friendly to him, but he could well imagine it as a voice that could create dread apprehension.

"The Shadow!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," came the sibilant whisper. "To-day's report was excellent."

"Thank you," replied Fellows.

"Realizing that you would be alone," said the voice of The Shadow, "I took this opportunity to join you on your journey. I have been thinking matters over. Listen carefully while I tell you what our new plans will be. You can give Vincent his instructions tomorrow."

Fellows leaned back in the seat and shut his eyes. He felt more accustomed to that strange, whispered voice. It was low but clear. Every word seemed to impress itself upon his mind.

"The fourth man, picked for death, will reach the meeting place on next Tuesday. At ten o'clock a train leaves Harrisburg - southwest, through the Cumberland Valley. I believe the meeting place is in that direction - perhaps among the surrounding mountains.

"Before next Tuesday the place must be discovered. You may intrust that work to two men - Harry Vincent and Bruce Duncan.

"You will receive a memorandum to-morrow morning by nine o'clock."

The big car turned off the road and stopped between stone gateposts. A keeper appeared in the glare of the lights and opened the iron gates.

The limousine swung up the driveway. It stopped at the entrance to Cranston's mansion. The chauffeur opened the door on the side where The Shadow sat. The porch lights shone fully into the interior of the automobile. The insurance broker could see the entire seat as he stepped out.

The car was empty!

At some instant - probably when they had stopped at the gates - The Shadow had disappeared, silently and invisibly.

Fellows could not believe his senses. He almost doubted that he had had a companion in the limousine. He would have considered it all a dream, but for those clear thoughts and statements that still lingered in his mind.

He went leisurely into the house. He gave his hat and coat to a waiting servant. He was ushered into the large living room.

Lamont Cranston greeted him with a smile. The millionaire was a comparatively young man, but his face seemed a trifle old. In fact it was almost masklike, as though his features possessed an artificial mold - a surface over a face beneath.

Cranston's eyes were twinkling in a kindly manner.

"Glad to see you, Claude," he said.

"Thanks for sending the car," replied Fellows.

"That's all right." The millionaire laughed. "But I've been worrying about you, old man. Rather a dull trip it must have been - coming out here all alone."

"I didn't mind it."

"That's good." The millionaire's face took on an almost solemn expression. "Yet it must have been rather lonely for you. So I'll send a few of the other guests back with you to-night. It will be more interesting than to sit all alone - alone with darkness - and shadows."

CHAPTER XIX. A CHANCE ENCOUNTER

IT was Monday morning.

Two men were eating a late breakfast in the only restaurant of a small town in Pennsylvania. They were

alone in a corner. Across the street they could see the railroad station.

The man nearest the window began to speak.

"Well, Harry," he said, "this looks like our last bet. The thriving town of Culbertville, Pennsylvania. Unless we find something here, the whole plan is wrong."

"Maybe we slipped up in one of the other towns, Bruce."

"Well, we made enough inquiries. Of course, time has been short. We can finish here to-day, then try the other places again to-morrow. But there are other places that we haven't visited at all."

"Those were eliminated in the final instructions we received from Fellows."

"You mean in that telegram that was waiting for us in Harrisburg?"

"Yes."

"Why did Fellows cut them off the list? What does he know about it? We're here on the ground. He's back in New York."

"The instructions came from The Shadow, Bruce. Fellows merely passed them on to us."

"Maybe The Shadow is wrong, Harry."

"You don't know The Shadow, Bruce."

The man by the window shrugged his shoulders.

"He knows his stuff all right, Harry. I can see that. But there's just a certain amount that a human mind can do. I understand his plan all right. He thinks that one of the towns along this branch line is the spot we're after. So he studies them all from some standpoint that we don't know, and cuts some of them off the list. I admit that that's good theory. But does it work in practice?"

"That's what we're trying to find out."

"I know. So far it's been a blank. Keep on with it; I'm game. But I'm beginning to question the entire basis of the thing. There's two great chances of error. First - Elbridge Meyers. Are we sure he's one of the men? Second - assuming that he is one of them, did he come this way?"

"It's all based on deduction, Bruce. The Shadow is a master of that art."

"Granted. But we're playing two long shots just the same. I'm right with you, Harry. But I don't want to be disappointed if it doesn't work out."

His companion reached in his pocket and drew out a letter.

"I just stepped in the post office," he explained. "Meant to open this when I came in. It's from Fellows - sent general delivery to reach us here this morning. It can't be very important, but it may have some notes of interest."

He opened the letter and scanned the written page. Bruce Duncan could see that the words were in code.

"Well," said Harry Vincent, smiling. "Here's an answer to your first question. Investigation has revealed

that all three men - Hooper, Longstreth, and Meyers - were in Russia some years ago. Looks like the original idea is correct."

"Let's see the letter," suggested Bruce curiously.

Harry gave it to him.

"I said the letter," repeated Bruce.

"I gave it to you."

"No, you didn't. This is a blank sheet of paper."

Harry smiled.

"I forgot you didn't know about it," he said. "The ink doesn't last on any letters that deal with The Shadow's business. It fades out and never comes back."

HARRY rose from the table.

"Let's get started," he suggested.

They left the restaurant and drove about the town in Vincent's coupe. The car bore Pennsylvania license plates. Harry had been careful about that registration. It would not attract the attention of a car that was plainly identified as from New York.

After a short cruise they returned and separated. Each spent an hour about town, gossiping in stores and with idlers. This was an easy task in the rural community.

"Only one good idea," said Harry when they met. "We might try the old Mountain Pike that goes north from here. There's a bus runs over it, through a gap between the hills. The bus waits for the last train from Harrisburg. Meyers might have taken it if he got off here."

"Good idea," agreed Bruce. "I haven't anything better to offer."

They rode slowly along the pike toward the nearest mountains, which were several miles away. As they neared the rising slopes, the road entered thick woods, which opened occasionally when they approached farms.

They stopped when they had reached the highest point in the road, midway between two small mountains.

"Let's go back," said Bruce. "We passed several side roads. The spot we hope to find is probably some distance off the pike."

Returning, they reached a road that went to their left. It was a dirt road and in poor condition. Harry drove the car carefully and slowed down as they neared a bend.

"Listen!" exclaimed Bruce.

From a distance up the road came a cry for help. It was a man's voice, screaming loudly.

Harry pressed the accelerator. The car shot forward. They rounded the curve and turned sharply in the other direction. Directly in their path were two men struggling in the center of the road. One was trying to free himself from the other's grasp. He was shouting, but his cries were weakening. Evidently he was

being choked.

Harry jerked the wheel as he applied the brakes. He missed the combatants by a narrow margin, almost ditching the car at the side of the road.

The men were at the left of the car. The one who had been screaming had fallen in the dust, his opponent upon him.

THE attacker was not a large man, but he appeared vigorous. Harry seized him by the shoulders and dragged him away. With a terrible snarl the fellow turned upon him. The attack was terrific. In one second Harry was lying helpless, with the man beating his head against the road.

Bruce came to the rescue. He had seen Vincent fall, and he realized the strength of the antagonist. He had not anticipated such a battle or he would have seized a wrench from the car. His help was needed instantly now; he hurled himself upon the frenzied man and rolled him in the dust.

With this advantage, Bruce expected quick results. Yet he was suddenly overpowered; the tables were turned. He found himself on his back, his arms beneath him. Clawlike hands were at his throat. As he stared upward he saw a hideous, wizened face, with wicked, glaring eyes.

Bruce Duncan was at the mercy of that apelike creature that had entered his room a month ago. It was the same brutal face that he had seen before!

The monster possessed prodigious strength. It was choking him to death. Why didn't Vincent come to his rescue? Vincent, or the other man, whom they had aided? Duncan's head was beating within, like the sound of a drum. His eyes seemed bulging from his head. He could even feel the claws that were buried in his neck.

Suddenly the pressure relaxed. Duncan was still powerless; the creature's hands were still at his throat. But its head had turned sideways. It was waiting, unwilling to loose its victim, yet hesitating for some unknown reason. It seemed to be listening for something.

As Duncan breathed, the drumming ceased, and his head cleared. Then to his ears came a sound that he had heard on that same eventful night. It was a low, hissing whistle from far away; a penetrating whistle that seemed to echo through his brain.

The creature rose quickly. With long, jumping strides it dashed to the side of the road. As he propped himself on one elbow, Bruce Duncan saw the strange monster disappear into the surrounding woods.

CHAPTER XX. TWISTED LIPS

SOME one helped Bruce Duncan to his feet. It was the man who had been struggling with the creature when the coupe had arrived.

Harry Vincent, a dazed look on his face, was sitting in the road, rubbing the back of his head.

The man, who was assisting Duncan, appeared to be a farmer. His face was white from his recent experience.

"Sorry I couldn't come quicker, friend," he said. "You gentlemen helped me. I was pretty near done. I was just comin' to help you when the critter ran away. I was agoin' to hit him with this."

He exhibited a large stone in his right hand.

"Let's get him!" exclaimed Bruce.

He leaped to his feet and rushed to the car. He came back with two wrenches and a jack handle. He passed a wrench to the farmer. Harry, now well recovered, accepted the other. Flourishing the jack handle, Bruce started through the underbrush, with the others closely following.

The creature had plowed a track through the bushes. It was easy for them to follow the course, which led to a path. Running along, away from the road, the three men continued their pursuit.

In a few hundred yards they came to a clearing. A small house stood there - a one-story building, not much better than a cabin. A man was watching from the rude porch. He held a shotgun over one arm, and he gazed narrowly at the approaching group.

Bruce Duncan stopped in front of him. The man was dressed in outing clothes, but he did not appear to be a woodsman. Instead, he looked like some one from the city. His face was rather hardened, and he did not appear friendly.

"Well?" questioned the man, as though demanding an explanation.

"Did you see anything of a wild man?" asked Vincent, joining Bruce Duncan. "That's about the best way to describe the fellow we're after."

"You look rather wild yourselves," observed the man in a gruff voice. "You're on private property, too. What's the idea of coming in here this way?"

"It's the wild man," explained Duncan angrily. "He came this way. You must have seen him."

The man on the porch thrust his chin forward.

"You're telling me what I've seen?" he asked in a significant voice. "Listen, young fellow. You're a trespasser. Get that? Move along before I plug you."

He raised the shotgun in a threatening manner.

The farmer intervened.

"Just forget that shotgun, stranger," he said. "This ain't your property. I live around here. I know."

"I'm renting it," declared the man on the porch.

"From whom? I'll bet you're squatting here. This is Seth Wilkinson's property. Seth's a friend of mine. Lives in Harrisburg. If you don't want trespassers, where's your notice?"

"Over on that tree."

"That's Seth Wilkinson's sign. Not yours. What's more, that shotgun business ain't used around these parts no more. If you want a quick jury trial with twelve men all agin' you, just plug one of us. You got just two barrels there. You ain't agoin' to hit all three."

He swung the wrench in short circles.

"Look!" exclaimed Harry. "See? In the window!"

They turned toward the cabin window, but saw nothing.

"It's gone," asserted Harry. "It's the man that was in the road. He's there in the house. He half killed me. I'm going to get him."

"Wait a minute." The man on the porch was speaking. "I guess I've made a mistake with you fellows. I've got the wild man here, boys. He isn't a wild man, though. He's just eccentric. Did he give you trouble?"

"Blamed right he did," ejaculated the farmer. "He jumped out of the bushes and landed on me in the road. These gentlemen came along in their car just in time to save me."

"That makes it different." The man on the porch laid the shotgun aside. "Let me explain matters. This man I have here is half-witted. He's strong, but he's mild ordinarily. I've got charge of him. I know how to handle him, and he's just like a child ordinarily. I brought him here because we figured that if he was kept off by himself for a while, he would improve.

"I am very sorry for what has happened," the man went on smoothly. "I really mean that. I can promise you that it will not happen again. I was ignorant of what actually occurred. This is a valuable lesson for me."

Bruce Duncan's mind was working rapidly. The man's story was a good one and plausible. It was evident that his ape-faced charge had escaped by accident. There were even more reasons than the one he had explained that would make him desirous of keeping the brute under cover.

For Duncan knew that the ape-man had been used for a criminal purpose on at least one occasion. He and Vincent had found the clue they sought - the fact that linked the present with that first event of a month ago.

The man on the porch could not have recognized Duncan. For it was the ape-man who had entered his room, and Bruce doubted that the creature had sufficient intelligence to tell his master who Bruce Duncan was.

Bruce glanced at Harry. He realized that his friend had not yet caught the significance of their discovery. The best plan was to leave and go back toward the town. On the way he could tell everything to Vincent.

They were nearing the evidence they sought. But who was the man on the porch? Was he merely a person of minor importance who kept the apelike creature under control? Or was he the one behind the sequence of crime?

It was this perplexity that caused Bruce Duncan to remain staring at the fellow after his two companions had turned toward the path. The stranger had bidden them a cordial farewell, thanking them for informing him of the attack made by his ward.

The man was laughing in a friendly manner as he waved good-by. As Harry and the farmer turned away, his lips closed together.

Upon his face appeared a strange, peculiar smile.

On one side his lips seemed to curl upward, on the other they turned downward. It gave his mouth a distorted expression - one that the viewer would not soon forget.

Bruce Duncan turned and hurried after his companions. He could scarcely restrain his exultation.

For the smile had betrayed the identity of the man who lived in the cabin. There was only one way to describe that smile. The mouth that had formed it had twisted lips.

CHAPTER XXI. PLANS ARE ARRANGED

WHEN Vincent, Duncan and the farmer had reached the road, Harry turned the car back toward the Mountain Pike. They rode along the dirt road, taking the farmer with them. He said good-by at the pike, and the two young men were alone as Harry swung the coupe onto the highway that led back to Culbertville.

It was then that Bruce Duncan made his startling revelations to his astonished companion.

"The ape-man!" exclaimed Harry when he had heard the story. "The same beast that entered your room! And the fellow on the porch was Chefano! Bruce, we've found what we wanted."

"Right, Harry. But what shall we do next?"

Harry considered.

"It won't do to go back there right away," he said. "I think our best plan is to head for the town. When we're there I think we can make plans."

"Are you going to report to New York?"

"Not until to-night. That will be soon enough. We may discover more in the meantime."

"Still, we ought to be on the ground. Our plan now is to watch Chefano. We must do it carefully."

"No question about that, Bruce. The ape-faced wild man is dangerous. It's not wise to take chances."

"That's not the most important reason. We must not let Chefano suspect that we are present. If he has any idea that we are interested in his plans, he will probably make changes."

"You are right, Bruce. The best thing we can do to start is to make inquiries in the village. We will find out how the land lies."

"Be careful. Chefano may have some one working with him, on the lookout for strangers."

"I don't think so, Bruce. But you leave it to me. I have a plan already forming. Let me do the questioning; you agree with anything I say. I won't excite the least suspicion."

They were approaching the town. When they arrived near the station, Vincent parked the car. With Duncan following, he strolled up to a group of idlers.

"Howdy," said one of the men.

"Good morning," replied Harry. "Nice country around here."

"Plenty say that."

"How's the fishing?"

"Good - if you know the right places."

The other men in the group laughed good-naturedly.

"My friend and I are looking for a place to spend a few weeks. Thought maybe we could rent a little shack in the woods. Do you know of any up along the Mountain Pike?"

"There's quite a few up that way," replied one of the other idlers. "All depends upon how far away from town you want to be."

"Seth Wilkinson has a couple of old cabins in the woods," remarked another man. "They're pretty old ones, I reckon. Wouldn't be much good in wet weather."

"Try old Josh Stevens," suggested the first man. "He's got a regular house - small but good - about a half mile off the pike. There ain't been any one living there for a long time."

"Where does his place lie?" questioned Harry. "Is it very far from town?"

"About four miles out," said the former speaker. "When you begin to get up in the hills, you run into Wilkinson's land. It comes down to the pike. Then there's a small road leading in to the right. That's the road to the house. But you don't need to go out there to find out more about it. Stevens has a store across the street there. You can see him now if you want."

"How does it sound to you?" Vincent asked Duncan.

"All right," answered his companion.

THEY found Josh Stevens in his store. He was anxious to rent the house. Once started, he began a long description of it. With the aid of a few questions, Harry Vincent gained an excellent fund of information. It was a good house, better than the two old cabins owned by Seth Wilkinson. They were nothing more than shacks. They could be seen by walking through the woods below the Stevens house. Neither of the cabins was occupied; Wilkinson was away, and had neglected them. Josh Stevens invited the two visitors to make the comparison for themselves.

The outcome of the discussion was the payment of sixteen dollars - a month's rent in advance - by Harry.

The mountain bus was at the station when the young men came out of Josh Stevens's store. Harry went over and talked with the driver.

"Where do you stop along the Mountain Pike?" he inquired. "We're going to stay up that direction. We may have to use the bus occasionally."

"I stop anywhere a passenger wants to get off. You can't ask much better service than that."

"When is the last bus?"

"Leaves here at eleven thirty, after the last train comes in from Harrisburg. We wait if the train's late. It's usually on time."

"Do you get many passengers that late?" asked Bruce casually.

"Quite a few that go through to the end of the route. Not many that get off before that."

"Mostly regular passengers, I suppose," said Harry.

"Generally. I know most of them on that last trip. Guess I haven't had a stranger for a week - not since the time I left the fellow off at the Ridge Road. Funny thing; I hadn't made that stop in months. Now it seems like some new rider gets off there every week, regular."

Duncan glanced significantly at Vincent. The Ridge Road was the one on which they had encountered the ape-man.

"Looks like we have everything," Bruce told Harry as they walked across the street. "The old cabin must be the meeting place. The letters that were received must have given the directions to go there."

"The time of the meeting is evidently midnight," replied Harry. "With the bus leaving at eleven thirty, any one could arrive at the cabin before twelve."

"How about your report?"

Harry smiled at the question.

"To-night is soon enough," he replied. "It's time for lunch now."

They reached the Stevens house late in the afternoon. The place was well-secluded in the thick woods; an ideal spot to remain undiscovered. The house contained old furniture; they arranged the beds with sheets and blankets that they had bought at Stevens's store.

"What next?" asked Bruce.

"Come with me," replied Harry.

He went to the back of the coupe and opened it. Within was a large box which Harry unlocked. Lifting the lid and taking out an inner covering, he revealed a complete radio apparatus - the most compact mechanism that Duncan had ever seen.

"Know anything about wireless telegraphy?" questioned Harry.

"Not much," admitted his companion. "I studied the International code and can send messages slowly, but I never went in for radio very strongly."

"I know a good bit about it?" said Harry. "This is one of the simplest sending sets ever devised. It has remarkable mechanical improvements. You can help me put up the aerial. I'll do the rest."

The two men completed the work at dusk. The night was cool at this altitude. They sat before a fire in the main room on the first floor, with the sending equipment and the receiving set close by.

"We'll cook some dinner," said Harry. "Then we can make our last investigation. After that we send out information. Fellows said that the Monday night report would be most important."

Duncan was enthused while they ate. He had wondered why Vincent had been so indifferent about making his report. He had imagined that out here they would be far away from means of communication, and that it would be necessary to go into the village to find a telephone. Instead, they were in direct contact with headquarters.

Harry had pulled down the shades at dark. After they had finished eating, he extinguished the oil lamps. He went out on the porch. Bruce followed. They found a path in the darkness. It led toward Seth Wilkinson's property.

They felt their way for a considerable distance. Then Harry clutched his companion's arm.

"Look," he whispered. "A light through the woods."

The gleam was from the cabin they had visited during the morning. As they arrived closer, they saw that the light came from a crack at the bottom of a rear window where the shade had not been fully drawn.

"No use going any farther," whispered Harry. "We know who is inside; that's enough. We mustn't let

Chefano have any suspicion whatever."

They listened a while in the hope that some sound might come from the shack. But all remained silent. The companions carefully retraced their footsteps and found their own abode.

Seated by the fire, Harry clicked his first message, tapping the key slowly while he referred to a code that lay before him. He waited a few minutes, then repeated the message he had sent.

A half hour passed while Harry waited with the ear phones on his head. Then his hand became busy with a pencil and paper. He was receiving a reply.

He read the message to Bruce Duncan:

"Watch the house to-morrow night. When the fourth man arrives, be ready to act. Protect him at any cost. Meanwhile, give no sign of your presence."

Harry sent a brief response stating that the message had been received. He opened a suitcase that he had brought from the car. He took two automatics and gave one to Bruce Duncan. He repeated the operation with two flashlights that were in the bag. Then he bolted the door of the house.

"We'll take no chances to-night," he said. "But I am sure that we are safe here. Our real task is tomorrow - at midnight. I gave full details of our location in my first message, and also described the cabin where Chefano awaits the next victim. We will be ready when the time arrives."

CHAPTER XXII. A SCHEME FOR VENGEANCE

ISAAC COFFRAN sat in his upstairs room and tapped methodically on the arm of his chair. Before him stood Pedro. The big Mexican wore a bandage on his head.

"Pedro," said the old man in a sharp voice, "I am thinking of something that will please you."

The Mexican did not reply. Isaac Coffran continued as though he had not expected a response.

"I like to talk to you, Pedro. You seldom say anything in return. That is because you do not think for yourself. You do just what you are told to do. You are the type of man that is useful."

The Mexican grinned.

"That's better," said the old man. "You are becoming interested. A few nights ago, Pedro, you made a great mistake. You left a window loose in the cellar. I do not like you to make mistakes. You have suffered for it. That is why you are wearing the bandage on your head. I am going to give you a chance to make amends for your mistake."

The grin on the Mexican's face broadened until it became an ugly leer.

"This house has been watched," resumed Isaac Coffran. "When young Duncan came in he was seen. He was rescued. He was the only man who has ever escaped me. He will be caught later. But it is more important that we capture the man who caused the trouble. Do you agree with me, Pedro?"

The big Mexican nodded.

"The man we want is called The Shadow," said Isaac Coffran. "He is clever. Like all clever men, he is not always wise. By watching this house he has learned nothing of my plans. For he is still watching."

The old man went to the window and raised a tiny section of the iron shutter. Through it he peered into

the street below.

"I cannot see him, Pedro," he said, "yet I know that he is watching. There are shadows in the street, and among them is The Shadow. Let him watch. He will not enter again. We have gone over every place carefully. While he is here watching, he cannot be elsewhere. That is to my advantage. He will learn nothing here. I am content while he stays.

"But he may go away. Perhaps he will not come here to-morrow night. That would be unfortunate, Pedro. For while he is outside, across the street, we can control him. We can trap him. You would like that, wouldn't you, Pedro?"

"I would like it," said the Mexican. "I would like it - very much."

"I thought so," said Isaac Coffran with a cunning smile. "So I am going to trap him, Pedro, and you are to help me."

THE Mexican's smile disappeared. His face became malicious. He drew the large machete from his belt. The fingers of his other hand twitched as though eager for vengeance.

"Not that way, Pedro," said the old man. "I said that you do not think, and I speak the truth. The Shadow is too wise to enter here without a reason. You would have me leave the front door open, I suppose, thinking that he would enter. That action, Pedro, would make him stay away.

"Why is he waiting and watching? Not because he expects some one to arrive, but because he hopes some one will leave. He knows who is in the house. He knows that I am here. He knows that you are here. If we leave, we will be followed. So you will leave Pedro. You will go out hurriedly, but you will make no sign to indicate that you know some one is there - across the street. Do you understand?"

"Si, senior," replied the Mexican. "I understand. What do you wish that I should do?"

"Three years ago, Pedro," said Isaac Coffran reflectively, "we disposed of a troublesome person. He was annoying - like this Shadow. He had cause to follow you. So I let him follow you. You went to a little store a few streets away. You remember the place. From there you went to a place called the Black Ship - downstairs - underground - where men drink."

"I remember," replied the Mexican. His evil grin reappeared. "I remember what happened there. I went through the big room -"

"That is enough," interrupted Isaac Coffran. "Pedro, you know well that I have many ways and many plans which I use to remove those persons who are troublesome. I seldom use the same method often. That is why my methods are sure. Three years ago! That was the only time I worked the plan that I intend to use to-night. It is arranged by a man whom I can trust, because he is paid in advance and does not know who I am!

"He is always ready, waiting, on a Monday night. I have paid him regularly for three years, because I knew that some day I would need him. To-night he will earn his pay.

"The Shadow!" The old man chuckled in derision. "The Shadow! A man who is clever. He proved that the other night. He has studied me, Pedro. He knows that I plot to bring people here. How he has found it out is a mystery, for no one else has ever suspected it. But there is one thing The Shadow does not know; I am sure of that. He does not know that I can lure clever persons away from my house and trap them somewhere else! Very well. He will learn that to-night."

The old man looked at the clock upon the wall.

"Five minutes after eleven," he said. "It is time for you to start. I can depend upon you, Pedro. When you have done something once, you can always do it well the second time. Go. Remain there. Remember what you see. Tell me all. You will have the pleasure to-night, when you see The Shadow die!"

THE gleam upon Pedro's dark face revealed his eagerness. The big Mexican's eyes were widening. His breath hissed as he sucked through his teeth. He thrust the machete beneath his coat. He opened and closed his huge fists. He laughed silently. Then he became calm.

"I thank you, senior," he said. "I thank you. I go. Now."

Isaac Coffran rubbed his hands together gleefully as he heard the Mexican's departing footsteps. He listened as the front door opened. He peered through the opening in the shutter. He saw Pedro walking along the street. He fancied that a shadow on the pavement was moving in pursuit.

Pedro was not thinking of the shadows that surrounded him. The big Mexican had no imagination. His mind dealt with tangible matters as he walked toward the corner.

He was recalling what had occurred a few nights before - how living hands had come through the cellar grating to subdue him as easily as if he had been a child. Pedro did not smile as he reached the corner, yet his teeth were gleaming in the brightness of the street lamp. His expression was one of expected vengeance.

The Mexican turned several corners, finally stopping on a side street before a cigar store. He entered the shop. He purchased two packs of cigarettes, each of a different brand.

He loitered about for several minutes, then, lighting a cigarette, he started for the door. There he hesitated a moment and felt carefully in his pocket as though to make sure that he had something about which he might be anxious. With a satisfied smile he stepped into the street and walked away.

While the big Mexican had been standing in the store, a man sitting in a chair at the rear had risen and entered a telephone booth. Shortly after Pedro's departure, this man, a stoop-shouldered, crafty-looking fellow, sidled from the door of the tobacco shop.

The man behind the counter saw him go, but did not regard the matter as significant. He knew the fellow as a customer who idled about the shop on various occasions. Had the storekeeper been conversant with the underworld, he would have recognized the man as "Spotter" - one of the strangest characters in the realm of gangland.

Spotter's claim to fame rested upon his ability to recognize faces and the ease with which he could trail any one whom he might follow. Immediately upon leaving the cigar store he became the least conspicuous person in the street.

He moved stealthily, going from one corner of a building to another, sliding behind lamp-posts, obscuring himself beside empty ash cans. People walked by him without detecting his presence.

Yet with it all, Spotter moved with amazing rapidity. Within a few minutes he was in sight of Pedro the Mexican, and his quick eyes were following the big man's course.

Yet it was not Pedro himself that Spotter seemed to be watching. His gaze was fixed some distance behind the Mexican, and as Spotter maintained a space of fifty yards between himself and the man ahead, a perplexed look appeared upon his face.

"This ain't right," whispered Spotter to himself. "Where's de guy I'm supposed to watch? Maybe he dropped out somewhere."

He crossed the street and quickened his pace until he was closer to Pedro. Then Spotter's body merged suddenly alongside a barrel that was on the sidewalk. He watched carefully as the Mexican passed beneath a bright light. He could see Pedro distinctly. He even noted the shadow of the huge man.

When Pedro had passed along, Spotter's eyes still remained upon that lighted area. No other man appeared there, but a long, thin shadow became visible on the sidewalk. It slid beneath the glare. It was blotted by the blackness beyond.

The barrel moved as Spotter trembled against it. The strange personage of the underworld did not move from his position. Instead he whispered to himself.

"It looks like - like - De Shadow!"

Regaining his nerve, Spotter slid along the sidewalk, slowly, now, as though he desired to have as much distance as possible between himself and Pedro.

"If it ain't De Shadow," he muttered, "I'm all right. If it is De Shadow - well, I got to do it. He ain't watchin' me, anyway. He's after dat big guy up ahead. He don't have to know I'm here - but he finds out anyt'ing! Everyt'ing!"

Spotter squatted close to a fire plug and thought for a moment. Then he laughed harshly.

"Well," he said softly, "it may be his funeral tonight. His funeral. So here goes. I don't owe De Shadow no good feelin's. I lost out t'rough him once. I ain't goin' to quit, now that I got started."

He moved more quickly, but with the greatest care. Even his footsteps were soundless. And as he followed, far behind Pedro, he became more bold. For Spotter was entering the heart of the underworld; he was among the haunts with which he was most familiar.

The Mexican turned down an alley. Spotter reached the corner very quickly. He saw Pedro stop before a door. He waited while the Mexican entered. A dim light revealed the scene, yet Spotter could see no one else - not even a conspicuous shadow.

Slowly, stealthily, he crept down the dim alley, virtually invisible in the darkness. He stopped suddenly, thirty feet before he reached the doorway. He saw it now, across the alley - a huge, black blot on the sidewalk - a blot that seemed to sway.

Spotter remained motionless. His eyes sought the wall above the strange quivering shadow. Everything was dark along the wall; he would have sworn that there was no one in that spot.

No one moved along the alley. The place seemed absolutely deserted. Spotter, crouched behind a pile of boxes, did not betray his presence. He waited expectantly, afraid to move despite the fact that his sharp eyes had seen nothing.

Suddenly a human form seemed to emerge from the dark wall. The appearance was instantaneous, as though a curtain had been swept aside to reveal a living being. A man walked openly beneath the light - a man attired in rough clothing, who appeared to be a typical denizen of the underworld.

Spotter could see the man's face; it was a sullen, grimy face. He knew every one in gangland; yet he could not identify this person. The man who had appeared with such amazing suddenness entered the doorway where the Mexican had gone.

Spotter waited, again undecided. Then he rose slowly, and stood still. For a moment he began to turn, as though to leave the alley. Then, with an effort, he approached the doorway. It was the entrance to the

basement den known as the Black Ship - a place with which Spotter was quite familiar.

"De bunch will know me," mumbled Spotter as he hesitated before the door. "Dey will all know me. An' if dat's De Shadow - well, he will know me, too."

He thrust his hands in his pockets. Some coins jingled. They were the change left from money he had spent - money which had been paid him in advance for the work he was expected to do to-night.

"I tipped de bunch off already," observed Spotter, as though reasoning with himself. "If I don't show up, maybe dey'll blow de works demselves. I ain't got nothin' to do but go ahead wid it. It means more dough comin' to me if it works."

He shrugged his shoulders.

Then, defying his apprehensions, he drew his hands from his pockets, opened the door, and stepped into the Black Ship.

CHAPTER XXIII. IN THE BLACK SHIP

THERE were about two dozen men in the large underground den when Pedro entered. The Mexican, with his ugly, scar-marked face, was a fit companion for the group that was assembled there. His eyes shone, and his teeth gleamed as he looked about him with satisfaction.

The crowd in the Black Ship represented the most ruthless thugs of the underworld. Every face that Pedro saw was a hardened, criminal type. Pockmarked features, ratlike eyes, coarse, brutal lips - these predominated in the Black Ship.

The Mexican seated himself at a table near the small bar that was in one corner of the room. The man behind the bar, a huge, brutal fellow, brought out a bottle and a glass and placed them in front of Pedro. The Mexican gave him a dollar bill.

He knew who the bartender was. The man was "Red Mike" himself, the proprietor of the Black Ship. He conducted his notorious dive without interference from the police. For the Black Ship was the meeting place of the worst criminals that the underworld could boast, and the fact that it operated almost openly was of value to the authorities who sought to combat the evil hordes of gangland.

Police detectives did not enter the Black Ship, but their stool pigeons did. Time and again notorious criminals were traced from this den of the underworld. Yet it was only the most daring and most secretive of stool pigeons who dared enter the Black Ship; for had their identity been known, their lives would have been taken in an instant.

Red Mike knew that his place was tolerated by the police. For that reason he insisted that order be preserved. The gangsters respected Red Mike. They were his friends, and any unruly customer would be ejected instantly at his command.

"No gun play" was the proprietor's strict rule. He did not permit fights and quarrels among crooks to enter his domain. There was only one entrance to the Black Ship. It was an unwritten law in the underworld that those whose victims entered the dive beneath the street should wait outside until their men left Red Mike's place.

Any one could enter. Any one could be served. But only the toughest characters came in. Red Mike spotted strangers instantly. As long as they sat quietly and drank what they received they were welcome. But no one was allowed to take a bottle from his place.

LIKE every hardened man of that district, Red Mike was willing to take a chance for the proper price. Hence, on rare occasions, he allowed a fight to start in the Black Ship - but always under the most careful conditions.

He was expecting trouble to-night. A phone call had come from the proper person. In response, Red Mike had served free drinks to all his patrons. This was a remarkable action - one which was seldom performed in the Black Ship.

Some of the men had received the unexpected benefit with looks of surprise. Others - these were the ones whom Red Mike noticed particularly - had grinned in anticipation. Their toughened faces had shown sudden interest.

One by one they had risen from their tables and had gone through a door into a small inner room - a stone-walled apartment with an iron-plated door. It was seldom that Red Mike allowed any of his patrons to enter that room. It was usually kept for storage purposes.

Pedro the Mexican had entered before the last man had gone through the heavy door. He finished his drink leisurely. While he still sat at his table, the outer door of the Black Ship swung open and a man walked through the entrance.

The newcomer was tall and wiry. He wore khaki pants that were too large for him. An old sweater covered his body. A ragged cap was pulled down over his eyes. Beneath the visor was a face that revealed the typical gangster - a cruel, toughened face.

The pulled-down cap obscured the man's eyes and forehead. Red Mike did not recognize the new customer, yet he placed him instantly as a gangster. The proprietor of the Black Ship prided himself on his ability to spot any detective. This fellow was not of that ilk. He was unquestionably a denizen of the underworld.

The man accepted the bottle and glass that Red Mike laid before him and proffered a five-dollar bill. The proprietor made change and laid the money on the table. The man's head was turned downward; the cap prevented Red Mike from catching the slightest glimpse of his countenance.

The proprietor of the Black Ship waited behind the bar. He watched the stranger draw out a cigarette and light it before sampling the contents of the bottle. Another man came through the entrance. Red Mike recognized the fellow instantly. It was Spotter, the crafty-faced sneak who knew the underworld so well.

Spotter moved quickly and quietly across the room, taking a position in a corner, where he could observe the stranger who had entered before him. Yet Spotter was so situated that the other man could not see him without turning. No sign on Spotter's face betrayed any interest whatever. He became instantly occupied with the bottle that Red Mike put before him.

Pedro the Mexican sat where he could see Spotter. The big man with the scar on his face rose from the table. He stood as though undecided. Then he walked across and opened the heavy door. The sound of voices came from within as the Mexican entered the other room.

A FEW minutes passed, then two or three more ruffians came into the Black Ship. The den was becoming well-filled. This was Red Mike's cue.

"Them that wants can go in the other room," he announced. "Big crowd here to-night, boys."

The newcomers had already seated themselves, so they remained where they were. But shortly after Red Mike's invitation the stranger with the pulled-down cap rose and casually entered the other room. Spotter

finished his drink slowly. Then he left his place and followed the stranger.

The inner room was virtually a vault, with a low stone ceiling and walls of solid masonry. It was lit by a large electric bulb which hung from the ceiling. It was a fair-sized room, and contained several tables around the walls.

There were exactly eleven men there when Spotter entered and slipped into a chair beside the nearest table. Pedro was seated in a far corner, apparently talking to a man opposite him. The gangster with the pulled-down cap was close by, sullenly slouched over his table, apparently unaware what was going on. The others were drinking and talking in rather low voices.

Red Mike entered and distributed bottles and glasses. When the proprietor had gone, the room apparently remained the same, except for one fact - all its occupants, with the exception of the slouching man with the cap, seemed to be turning furtive glances in the direction of Spotter.

The crafty-faced fellow poured himself one drink and gulped down the contents of his glass. He drank again, rather rapidly; finally he emptied the bottle. As he was about to set it on the table, he tilted the top of the bottle, and pointed it toward the man with the cap.

All eyes shifted toward the stranger. The man was leaning over the table, ignoring his drink. His hands rested beneath the table. The other men in the room began to move. Hardened grins appeared upon their faces. They were all known to Spotter; he recognized the fact that his companions were the boldest thugs of the underworld. He grinned also, for he was sure that guns would not be needed to-night.

Only one man displayed too much eagerness for what was to come. That was Pedro, the Mexican. He acted one second too soon. Spotter's motion had been the signal for a sudden attack that would come with cleverly calculated stealth. But Pedro, a look of grim vengeance appearing on his face, could not wait. He swung from his chair and sprang upon the huddled man who wore the cap. The Mexican's hand shot upward from his coat. The machete gleamed and came downward with a sure, well-aimed stroke.

The blade never reached its mark. As Pedro hurled himself across the table with amazing speed, the man with the cap slid quickly away from the wall where he sat. The machete whizzed by, cutting the shoulder of the sweater. Pedro, with all his weight behind the blow, fell forward upon the table.

Like a flash, the stranger was in the center of the room. He was standing, head up now, with both hands buried in the fold at the bottom of his sweater. His eyes were flashing as he glanced quickly around the room.

Only Spotter did not move. He grinned as he watched with his crafty eyes. By quick action the unknown man had reached the floor while the others were still rising. He stood there now, his shadow round and black upon the floor before him.

This was only for an instant. The nine thugs were in motion. Those nearest the stranger leaped with one accord. Two of them were drawing knives. The others were hurling themselves to the spot where the stranger stood.

With a quick, short motion the hands came from the fold of the sweater. The quick shots of two looming automatics burst the silence of the low-ceilinged room. Spotter could see the spreading motion of the stranger's hands as the bullets found their marks.

SOME of the cutthroats sprawled upon the floor. The others, springing forward, fell in a mass upon their prey. The wiry man went down beneath the heap. Spotter grunted in satisfaction as he saw knives gleaming, raised to strike.

Then from the heap of men came a single pistol shot. Simultaneously the light in the ceiling was extinguished. Glass clattered to the floor. The overpowered victim had freed a hand, and his quick, instant aim had been true. The room was plunged in darkness.

Spotter slipped toward the door. There were shouts coming from the floor. Ten men, the giant Mexican included, were fighting one. But in that blackness they could not identify the enemy they sought. A chair crashed against the door. An oath came from Spotter.

The battler was free! He was fighting like a demon! Every blow he struck was finding a mark. Bottles crashed. Tables hurtled against the walls. The lone stranger was moving everywhere, using anything as a weapon. His foemen were battling blindly. They were powerless.

Spotter could hear groans and sharp oaths. He realized that the conflict would soon cease, with the one man victorious. Then he would be alone with the enemy whom he had betrayed. Alone with The Shadow!

There was a thumping at the door. Spotter had cleverly bolted it when he had entered, to cut off the only avenue of escape. Now he rose cautiously from the floor, drew back the bolt, and let the door swing inward.

The light of the outer room revealed the faces of excited gangsters. They leaped away from the door as it opened - only Red Mike remaining. He was the one who had knocked. Spotter darted through the opening.

The proprietor of the Black Ship held a flashlight and a revolver. But before he had an opportunity to enter to the rescue, the cutthroats swept him aside as they came staggering out. A flying chair struck Pedro as the big Mexican emerged, and he was stretched prone upon the floor.

Rowdies were crawling from the door - groaning, whining. Beaten men they were. The last one collapsed in the entrance. Then a tall figure appeared from the darkness. It raised the fallen ruffian and held him in mid-air. Red Mike pointed his revolver, seeking an angle from which he could shoot without striking the helpless man who was being used as a shield.

Then the body of the crippled thug was hurled forward. It landed against Red Mike with terrific force, sending the proprietor to the floor.

The door of the inner room closed with a bang. The bolt clicked as it was shot in place. The thick, iron-plated door blocked all entrance.

Then, to the ears of the men of the underworld, came a strange, ominous sound. It could be heard above their excited voices - heard even though it was muffled by the heavy barrier.

It was a hollow, mocking laugh - a chilling laugh - a laugh that made those hardened crooks stare at one another in sudden alarm.

Spotter shuddered as he recognized the laugh of The Shadow!

CHAPTER XXIV. A HORDE ATTACKS

RED MIKE restored order. There were fully three dozen angry men in his outer room - would-be killers who uttered mad threats as they saw their comrades stagger from the inner room. These fighters of the underworld had become suddenly silent when they had heard The Shadow's mocking laugh. Then their shouts had recommenced - to stop when the proprietor of the Black Ship held up a commanding hand.

"Quiet!" he howled.

The babel ceased. At Red Mike's summons, several men came to the aid of the wounded crooks who had been in the fight. Not one of the ten had escaped uninjured. Three of them were badly hurt; they were carried to the street.

The bullets from the automatics had been well aimed; most of them had struck the arms and shoulders of the attackers. The Shadow had been swift to cripple his foemen.

Only two of the tribe were capable of further battle. One of them was Pedro. The big Mexican had not been hurt until the chair had struck him during his rush to safety. He was again ready for action, recovered from the blow that had sprawled him.

He still gripped his huge machete. He flourished the weapon and leered venomously as he shouted to Red Mike.

"He is hurt!" cried Pedro. "He is hurt, I tell you! He is in there; where we can get him!"

"Wait a minute," commanded Red Mike.

He turned toward the door that led to the street. Two men were standing there.

"Look outside, boys," ordered Red Mike. "We don't want more gun play until we know that things are quiet."

The men left the Black Ship. The proprietor listened at the door to the inner room.

"We've got him, all right," he said quietly. "He was lucky, that's all. He can't get out of there. We can take our time. Who is he?"

The question was put to Spotter.

"A stool," said the crafty-faced man. "I seen de guy once before. He's a bad egg."

A chorus of snarls followed these words.

"Spotter knows 'em all," affirmed a thug. "He can pick 'em out when he sees 'em. Let's get busy."

Spotter smiled. He had made the right statement. He was glad that he had not mentioned the name of The Shadow. It was known to comparatively few in the underworld; those who had heard the name held it in awe.

"Easy now, boys," commanded Red Mike. "Wait till we know that everything is quiet."

One of the two men who had left now reappeared at the entrance.

"All right outside," he reported. "Geek is watchin'. Youse can go ahead."

Red Mike produced a hammer and chisel. He began to pry one of the iron plates from the door.

"Watch out, Mike," warned Spotter. "He may pot you t'rough de door."

"Not with them little toy guns."

The iron sheet had been nailed fast to the top portion of the door. It yielded as the proprietor worked upon it. With great effort, Red Mike forced it free at the bottom and bent it upward. The crooks watched

in silence.

At last there was a space more than a foot in extent, just above the middle of the door. Red Mike turned from his work and marshaled his forces of the underworld. He placed three men on each side of the door. They stood with big revolvers. He moved the others to the corners and stationed two by the only door that led to the street. Pedro insisted on being close by. He held the machete as though he hoped to strike the first blow.

"Here you, Turkey," ordered Red Mike. "There's two bull's-eye lanterns over behind the bar. Take one and give the other to another guy. Stand by the door."

While the men were following instructions, Red Mike produced a fire ax and a long piece of strong wire. He used a pair of pliers to fashion a loop in the end of the wire.

"Come here, Spotter," he said. "You stand on the right side of the door. I'm going to smash a hole. You know where the bolt lies. Shove the wire in and hook the bolt after I make the hole."

"I ain't sure I can do it," said Spotter cautiously.

Pedro took the wire from his hand.

"I will do it," he said with a grin. He took his position beside the door and made a few practice thrusts with the wire. "Go ahead. I am ready."

Red Mike lifted the ax.

"Work smooth, boys," he said. "First I crash the door. The Mex here pulls the bolt. The guy won't be by the door; he'll be off in a corner. When you hear the bolt click, come in low, so you'll be in back of that bottom sheet of iron.

"Then we rush the room. Guns and lights. Don't give him a chance. If he does duck through - I don't see how he can, though - I'll get him with the ax."

Pedro grinned.

"Let him come," he said, brandishing the machete.

The men were alert. Thirty hardened fighters of the underworld were in readiness. Even those in the corners were prepared, although they believed the man in the inner room would never reach the doorway.

Red Mike swung the ax against the door. Once, then again, and again. As the heavy strokes resounded, Spotter sidled across the room and reached the door to the street.

"I'm goin' out," he told the men there. "I ain't got no rod; I ain't no use here."

He peered through the crack of the outer door, watching the wood splinter under the powerful strokes of Red Mike's ax. A small hole appeared in the door of the inner room.

The proprietor of the Black Ship stepped well back from the door. The den was tense and silent as he surveyed the work that he had done. He swung the ax; then waited. Another blow; then another pause.

Spotter perceived the plan. The intermittent strokes of the ax would keep the prisoner away from the door. Spotter grinned.

One more stroke of the ax. The hole was larger now. As Red Mike stepped away, he pointed toward the hole. Pedro leered as he thrust the wire through the gap and hooked the bolt.

THEN the unexpected happened. A hand came through the hole in the door and flung a tubelike object into the outer room. Before the astounded crooks realized what had happened, they were choking and coughing, gasping and covering their eyes.

A tear bomb had been projected from the inner room. It had taken Red Mike and his companions unaware. They were helpless - blinded - gasping as they tried to scream.

The two outer guards staggered into the street, pushing Spotter aside. Then the battered door swung open and a figure stepped into the outer room of the Black Ship. His rough clothes were gone; he no longer wore the khaki trousers and the coarse sweater. Instead, he was attired in a dark suit. Over his face he wore a gogglelike mask that completely obscured his features.

He walked unsteadily through the gas-filled room, pushing aside the choking men who staggered against him, stepping over those who lay helplessly weeping upon the floor.

He stumbled as he reached the door to the street, but he caught himself and came up the steps from the underground den. He gained the door ahead of those who were blindly seeking to find it.

Spotter slipped away and crouched by the wall of the building. The Shadow came out, pulled the mask from his face, and hurried down the alley.

"Stop him," screamed Spotter. "He's getting away!"

The two outer guards who had escaped after suffering from the first effects of the gas had now recovered. Their guns spoke as they fired after the speeding figure. It seemed to stagger. They ran after their quarry as he reached the street at the end of the alley.

Some one stepped in the path of the escaping figure. It was "Geek," the gangster who had gone out to see that all was clear. "Stop him!" screamed Spotter as he joined in the chase.

Geek fell sprawling as a hard blow reached his chin. The dark-clad figure disappeared from view. Spotter and his pals reached the street. They stared in both directions. The street was not well-lighted; it was filled with black shadows.

The crooks separated, one running in each direction. Spotter remained at the entrance to the alley, beside the stunned form of Geek. He smiled wickedly as he saw Geek's revolver lying on the ground. He picked up the .38 and looked closely at the sidewalk.

There his sharp eyes detected a small, dark splotch. Blood!

"He's hurt!" muttered Spotter. "I thought de Mex stabbed him in de fight. One of de boys must 'a' plugged him, too. Well, here's where Spotter finishes him."

He saw another splotch a few feet farther on. Edging his way in the shadow of the houses, he moved along the street until he came to a pair of steps. He stopped and listened. Something - some one - was breathing heavily in the shadowy darkness.

By the steps Spotter felt a human form. He set his automatic against the huddled body and placed his finger on the trigger.

A firm hand caught his wrist. The gun dropped from Spotter's grasp. Fingers clutched his throat, and he

gasped as consciousness was wrested from him.

A black form emerged from the steps and moved unsteadily down the street, pausing every now and then as it leaned against the wall of a house. It reached the corner and turned into another street, moving always the same - barely visible, then half hidden. Its actions seemed weak and uncertain, as though its power had been spent.

It appeared for one brief second and leaned against a lamp-post. Then it tottered and disappeared into the blackness beyond.

But the spot where it had stood was marked - marked with a large splotch of blood that showed deep crimson on the sidewalk.

CHAPTER XXV. TUESDAY - MIDNIGHT

HARRY VINCENT'S face was solemn as he removed the ear phones.

"Nothing doing, Bruce," he said.

"It's after eleven o'clock now," replied Bruce Duncan. "We should have had a message by now. You've been sending all evening."

"Well, our work is cut out for us. That last train will reach Culbertville pretty soon. But what do you think has happened? Maybe your set has gone wrong."

"I've tested it," said Vincent. "I'm sure it's all right. I think I know what's happened, Bruce."

"What is it?"

"I think The Shadow himself sent us that message last night. Up to now I believed that another person operated his end of the radio and communicated with him. But last night's instructions came so quickly in reply to my message that it seems pretty certain he was on the other key himself."

"Why hasn't he talked to us to-day or to-night? We've been in the house constantly. You said we must lay low."

"I know all that, Bruce. The way I figure it is this. The Shadow knows exactly where we are. He's on his way here himself. There's no need for communication with headquarters. Last night's instructions were final. I radioed that we had found the meeting place. I explained its location. There's no reason why we should have been molested."

"Maybe we should have hung around the cabin this evening," suggested Bruce.

"No," replied Harry, "that might have been a tipoff. There's just one thing to do now. The time has come."

Harry picked up his revolver from the table; the flashlight was already in his pocket. Bruce went upstairs, where he had left his gun.

They walked through the woods until they saw the gleam of light from the cabin. Bruce had made one trip that far earlier in the evening, and had reported the light. Now they took a path that led to the right of the house.

"Perhaps we ought to go down and watch the bus arrive," said Bruce. "Then we'll be sure our man is

here."

"It's too far to the pike," objected Harry. "More than a half mile away from the path between Ridge Road and the cabin."

"We can follow the man up here."

"Yes, but we can't watch the cabin at the same time. Our instructions are to watch the meeting place."

"I can do that while you go down to the bus stop."

"Then we would be too far apart. I have a better plan, Bruce. Wait here a minute."

They were below the cabin now, and their path had joined with the one that went from the hut in the woods to the Ridge Road.

"I'll stay here," said Harry. "You go down to the road and wait there. When our man comes along you will see him. He may have a light to find his way. He will probably stop to look for the path. It shows plainly from the road, but I suppose our man has never been here before."

"That's a good compromise," agreed Bruce. "I'd rather watch the pike to make sure the bus stops. But we know the driver has let people out at this road, and it's the only way to the cabin. I'll stay in the bushes and keep watching. I'll only be a hundred yards away from you."

"That's right, Bruce. I'm going to move up a bit so I can actually see the cabin. If you hear me call, or hear a pistol shot, come in a hurry. If you need me for an emergency, use the same signal."

"What will I do when the man comes?"

"Follow him. I'll know when he walks along the path. If he has a light, I'll know that he is coming."

"Suppose he has no light?"

"I'll hear him in the darkness. But I get your point, Bruce. You're figuring that there might be more than one man."

"Right. We don't know what's going to happen. If the stranger is being followed, you might mistake the second man for me."

"Well, when you reach this spot, whistle very low. Be sure you are far enough behind your man so your presence will not be known."

Bruce moved silently toward Ridge Road. Harry stole along the path toward the cabin. He could see the gleam from here; one of the front windows of the house was also poorly screened from within.

Harry reached a spot not far from the cabin and took shelter among some bushes. The night was calm and still. It was cloudy, and the light of the waning moon was well-obscured.

Harry was wearing a wrist watch with a luminous dial; he consulted this from time to time. At half past eleven he figured that the bus was leaving the station. It should reach its stopping point within fifteen minutes.

Quarter of twelve, and still no sound from the cabin or from the road below. It would require nearly ten minutes for the arriving man to reach this spot.

Harry began to wonder about The Shadow. Was he here, too - that mysterious stranger who seemed to live in darkness? Harry believed that The Shadow must be close at hand - he usually was when trouble was brewing. The thought was comforting. He and Bruce might need help before this adventure was ended.

The watch showed one minute of twelve. The stranger should be here now. He should have been here before this. He should have passed by Duncan, at least.

WHAT was that? Some one coming along the path from the road? Harry could hear stealthy footsteps close at hand. He waited breathlessly. Then came a low, almost soundless, whistle.

It was Bruce Duncan.

Harry responded with a similar whistle. His friend followed the sound and crouched beside him in the shadow of the bush.

"Where is our man?" Harry whispered.

"I don't know," was the soft reply. "I stayed by the road until a few minutes ago. Then I was afraid he might have slipped by me."

"It's the meeting time now."

"Maybe the man didn't come."

"That's possible."

"My uncle's instructions specified that some of the men might not arrive."

Fifteen minutes went by. Harry Vincent became uneasy. Bruce Duncan detected the fact.

"I know what you're thinking, Harry," he whispered. "You're wondering if everything is all right up ahead. You want to do something about it. Well, I agree with you. The man hasn't come along. The cabin is our only bet."

"Let's go," responded Harry.

The young men moved silently toward the cabin. They reached the porch and crawled to the window on their hands and knees.

The tiny crack afforded very little vision; through it Harry could see only part of an empty room. He looked around for Bruce. He saw his companion turning the knob of the door.

"Come on," urged Bruce as the door yielded.

They found themselves in a large room - the only room in the entire cabin. There was nothing there except a box on which stood a lighted lantern.

The effect of this discovery was stunning. The truth dawned upon Vincent and Duncan simultaneously.

The cabin was deserted. The lantern had been left there, with the shades partly raised, to mislead those who might see it from a distance.

The wily Bernardo Chefano had departed with his ape-faced man. He had planned well, planned to trick every one who might have suspected the crimes he had committed.

The cabin was not the meeting place.

The fourth man had gone to his doom!

CHAPTER XXVI. FELLOWS IS SUMMONED

AT four o'clock Thursday afternoon, Claude Fellows began to pace up and down his private office. The insurance broker seldom became perturbed, but on this occasion his chubby face expressed considerable worry.

He had received no message from The Shadow since Tuesday morning.

This was something that had never happened before during a period of activity. Furthermore, there had been no answer to urgent messages which Fellows had sent to the office on Twenty-third Street.

The word which had come to Fellows on Tuesday morning had been contained in a letter which bore the postmark of Monday night. It had simply stated that Harry Vincent had made a direct report by wireless, that he had discovered the place which he had been seeking, and that Fellows would receive further word by Wednesday.

But on Wednesday, instead of receiving terse instructions from The Shadow, Fellows had been called by Harry Vincent - called by long distance from a town in Pennsylvania. Vincent's report had been disconcerting. He had not located the meeting place, after all. Things had gone wrong Tuesday night. He had lost the communication which he had established.

Vincent had spoken rather vaguely over the telephone, and Fellows had promised to reply by letter. For the present he could only advise Vincent to wait and to exert the utmost caution in all his actions. His final instructions were to report to him if there were any new developments.

Fellows had delivered a letter himself, making the trip to the vacant office in the building on Twenty-third Street. No reply had arrived on Wednesday. He had repeated the operation the next day, to no avail.

Now it was Friday afternoon. He had sent a third letter in the morning. Still no reply. Fellows had good cause to be worried. What had become of The Shadow?

A clipping lay upon the insurance broker's desk. He had clipped it from a paper that morning. It stated that Harrison Glover, a real-estate man of Scranton, Pennsylvania, had mysteriously disappeared.

The missing man had left home Monday afternoon, stating that he would be home Wednesday night. He had not come back. There were important reasons why he should have been back in Scranton at the time he had stated. His case had been reported to the police, but they had no clue regarding him.

"The fourth man," murmured Fellows. "Missing. Vincent was mistaken when he reported he had discovered the meeting place. The Shadow has failed to appear."

It was the first time in Fellows's experience that such well-laid plans had gone wrong. Where was The Shadow? In New York? On another enterprise, relying solely upon Vincent?

Fellows shook his head. It seemed more likely that The Shadow had met with foul play. The chubby man mopped his forehead with his handkerchief.

The telephone bell rang. Fellows lifted the receiver of the instrument.

"Mr. Fellows?" came a voice.

"This is Mr. Fellows."

"I am Doctor Wells, of Merwyn, New Jersey. Are you a friend of Lamont Cranston, who lives near here?"

"I am."

"Mr. Cranston is in a very serious condition. He has mentioned your name twice. I would appreciate it if you would come to his home as soon as possible."

"I shall come immediately. What is the trouble?"

"An accident. I shall explain later. There is a train from the Pennsylvania Station at four thirty-five. Mr. Cranston's car will meet you at Rahway."

Fellows's mind was working actively as he hurried to the depot. An accident to Lamont Cranston, coincident with the disappearance of The Shadow! He had not thought of it before. The incidents of his previous visit to the millionaire's home now loomed large in his memory.

THE physician met Fellows in the hallway of Lamont Cranston's home. He took the insurance broker to one side, and ushered him into a small room where they were joined by Richards, the millionaire's valet.

"Mr. Cranston is sleeping now," explained Doctor Huston Wells. "We must not disturb him for a while. But matters have been serious. Only servants in the house - although Richards here is very capable. But the circumstances are most unusual, and when I heard that Mr. Cranston had spoken your name, I questioned Richards. I learned that you have long been a friend of Mr. Cranston, so I summoned you."

"I am glad you did," replied Fellows. "Tell me what has happened."

"You must keep the matter strictly confidential," said the doctor.

"Mr. Fellows will do that, sir," put in Richards. "He has had business dealings with Mr. Cranston for several years. They are very good friends. When Mr. Cranston spoke this morning, I was sure that he wanted Mr. Fellows here."

"I shall preserve absolute secrecy," promised Fellows.

"Good," said the doctor. "Tell what you know, Richards."

"It was on Monday night," said the man. "Mr. Cranston went upstairs to his room in the tower. He has a wireless set there, you know. It is a hobby with him. He was sending and receiving messages until about nine o'clock. Then he hurriedly left the house. He had ordered Stanley, the chauffeur, to be waiting with the car. I was at the door, and I heard him tell Stanley to lose no time getting in to New York."

"I have questioned Stanley," interposed Doctor Wells. "His story coincides with what Richards is telling you."

"Mr. Cranston told Stanley to come in town on Tuesday night and wait for him at the usual parking space on Forty-eighth Street," continued Richards. "Stanley did so; he waited until long after midnight, wondering why Mr. Cranston did not arrive. At two o'clock, a cab drove up. Mr. Cranston alighted and entered the limousine. Stanley was holding the door open; he says that Mr. Cranston stumbled as he entered the big car."

"Mr. Cranston told Stanley to hurry home, which he did. I was awake; the other servants had gone to

bed. I heard the car coming up the drive and I opened the front door. I saw Stanley get out and open the door of the car. But Mr. Cranston did not appear. I walked down the front steps and joined Stanley.

"We both looked in the back of the car. For a moment, I thought that there was no one there. It was all dark, and no one moved. Then I turned on the light. Mr. Cranston was lying in a corner. His coat and vest were open; there was blood all over the side of his shirt.

"I thought for a minute that he was dead. He was limp when Stanley and I brought him in the house. I called for Doctor Wells, who came here immediately. Mr. Cranston seemed very badly hurt, sir."

"He had four knife wounds, and a bullet in his left side," announced the physician. "One cut, on his left shoulder, was a nasty one. The bullet caused a lot of trouble. The case was a bad one because he had evidently received the wounds several hours before I arrived. He had suffered greatly from loss of blood.

"When he regained consciousness, Cranston became delirious. He said nothing coherent. I was afraid that he would not survive, but his vitality is wonderful. His condition was critical Tuesday and Wednesday. It improved a bit Thursday, but it was not until this morning that he spoke so we could understand him. Then he mentioned your name twice."

"And spoke as though he wanted to see you, sir," added Richards.

"What is his condition now?" inquired Fellows, with anxiety in his voice.

"It is improving rapidly," said Doctor Wells.

"How soon will he be better?"

"I cannot tell. It may be a matter of weeks."

Fellows suppressed a groan.

"It depends a great deal upon how he is when he awakens," explained the physician. "The wounds are doing nicely. The fever has been the greatest complication. I hope that it will lessen, now that he is sleeping quietly. If it passes away rapidly, he will be sitting up within two days. Possibly to-morrow. If it continues, we may have a long siege."

"I shall wait until he wakes," declared Fellows.

"Very good," responded the doctor. "But I have wanted to talk with some friend of Mr. Cranston's regarding this affair. What should be done about it? I have hesitated to report it to the police."

"Don't do that," said Fellows promptly. "He was wounded in New York. This is New Jersey. It would be best to keep the matter quiet."

"Yet steps should be taken to discover the men who are responsible for Mr. Cranston's injuries." The doctor was solicitous, but Fellows was thinking rapidly.

"Let him decide that matter," he said. "He knows what happened and where it occurred. Has he said anything that might be a clue?"

"Not a word," the doctor replied. "Am I correct, Richards?"

"You are correct, doctor," replied the valet.

"Since it happened Monday night," said Fellows, "it would be wise to let the matter rest for the present. I say that emphatically. You have called upon me as a friend of Mr. Cranston. I know him well enough to believe that he would agree with me."

"Very well," said the doctor.

FELLOWS dined with Doctor Wells, and later in the evening, Richards informed them that Mr. Cranston had awakened. They went upstairs, and the wounded millionaire greeted them with a feeble smile on his pale face.

"Fellows," he said weakly.

The insurance broker sat down.

"Don't let him talk much," whispered the physician. "Don't say anything that will worry him."

"How are things going?" asked the man in the bed.

"Very well," replied Fellows.

The head turned, and two eyes peered searchingly at Fellows. Under that glance the insurance broker felt uneasy. Cranston was pale and weak, but his eyes seemed twin fires that pierced through the wanness.

"Fellows," said the millionaire, in a slow voice, "in my vest pocket you will find a slip of paper. It bears a telephone number. Call it. Tell the man who answers you that I am - that I am not well. Ask him to come here. He is a wireless operator. I want him to take charge of my set - upstairs."

Lamont Cranston closed his eyes wearily.

"The man I want," he said, "is an old friend of mine - a friend whom you have never met. I shall ask him to write you - regarding insurance policies - and other matters. Be sure that he comes here. Be sure to reply immediately to any letters that he sends you."

The millionaire ceased speaking. He seemed to be half asleep.

"Come," whispered Doctor Wells.

The insurance broker found the paper in the vest pocket. He opened it at the telephone table downstairs. He called the number. A quiet voice replied. Fellows explained the situation.

"I shall come to-night," said the man at the other end of the wire. "You may count on my arriving within two hours."

Fellows was thoughtful as he rode back to Rahway in Lamont Cranston's car. He was wondering about the phone call he had made. The voice that had answered was one that he had never heard previously. He felt that he would like to meet the man to whom he had spoken.

The phone call had relieved Fellows's worries; not because of the voice, but because of the call itself. Fellows had a remarkable memory when telephone numbers were concerned.

The number which he had called was the same number that he had given to Harry Vincent, the night that young man had kept watch at the home of Isaac Coffran.

CHAPTER XXVII. NEW DISCOVERIES

HARRY VINCENT stared gloomily at Bruce Duncan while they were eating their breakfast.

"Next Tuesday is coming soon," remarked Harry.

"Why remind me of it?" replied his friend. "If we don't do any more than we have during the last three days, next Tuesday can come and go without meaning anything to us."

"What can we do? We've lost contact by radio, and we've been instructed to use caution. We can't go prowling through the woods without exciting suspicion, can we?"

"Did you send a wireless message last night?"

"Yes, and I listened for a reply. Up to ten o'clock. No result. So I gave it up."

"You received a letter when we were in town yesterday morning. Whom was it from?"

"Fellows. He simply said to keep on lying low. I think something has gone wrong, Bruce. It's Saturday now, and we've been kept virtually idle since Tuesday night. It seems to me The Shadow has slipped out of the picture."

"Maybe he ran into trouble, Harry. He's looked for it often enough. He ran some big chances that night he pulled me out of Isaac Coffran's house."

"The Shadow usually manages to win out, Bruce. But this time it looks different. I'm going to run down to the village to see if there's another letter there. Unless Fellows gives us some definite instructions, we'll have to act for ourselves."

Bruce Duncan was thoughtful.

"Harry," he said, "we can't be far wrong in our location. The bus driver told us that he stopped at Ridge Road to let a man off on Tuesday night. The only reason that we haven't found the place is because we haven't looked."

"I agree, Bruce. But if we run into Chefano again, he'll be wise to the whole thing. You know that."

"If we had a plane, we could fly over this locality and make observations. You can see a lot from above."

Vincent grunted contemptuously.

"Sure you can, and what would Chefano think if he heard a plane buzzing in circles overhead? But wait! You've given me an idea. You know that mountain in back of us?"

"The one they call Rocky Summit?"

"That's the one. When I was in town yesterday, I saw one of the natives pointing it out to a stranger. He said that there's a path up the mountain. There's a clearing near the top, and you can see the whole valley from there. That's better than an airplane."

"We'd be pretty far away to observe anything."

"Not if we had powerful field glasses. We'll go downtown and see if we can buy any."

THEY were fortunate when they arrived at the village. Josh Stevens had an excellent pair of field glasses for sale.

"I had an order for them two years ago," he said. "When they came in, the customer had left town. I kept them anyway."

The morning mail had brought no letter from Fellows. So Vincent and Duncan set out for Rocky Summit. Reaching the highest point on Mountain Pike, they turned up a side road and reached the path that led up the mountain. Very few persons made the ascent; the climb was not difficult, but the mountain was infested with rattlesnakes. The young men wore leather puttees and carried long sticks.

They found that the top of the mountain formed an excellent lookout. In a short while, they located the top of their cottage. The cabin on Seth Wilkinson's property could not be seen because of the trees.

"That's the trouble," observed Bruce. "We're looking down at an angle. I can't even see the Ridge Road."

"There's a portion of it, where it leaves the pike."

"Yes. That's plain enough. Look there, Harry. What's that below the road - that old gray building?"

Harry adjusted the glasses.

"It looks like a mass of ruins," he said. "There's a little white building alongside of it."

Duncan took the field glasses and made observations.

"It looks like an old stone house," he said. "Stone base, probably, with the top floors wood. There's been a fire there. Not much left of it except the ground floor. I can't figure what the white building is."

Harry Vincent drew a paper from his pocket.

"This may tell us," he said. "It's a back number of Culbertville's weekly newspaper. I was in their office a few days ago, making careful inquiries. I mentioned that I was interested in this part of the country, and they told me they'd obtain an old copy of their paper that contained information about this locality. I picked the paper up this morning, after I left the post office. Put it in my pocket and forgot it."

He found the desired article and read halfway through it. His face showed sudden interest as he exclaimed:

"Here it is, Bruce!"

"Read it," replied his companion, still looking through the glasses. Harry read:

"Not far from Culbertville is the Marsden house, now a blackened heap of stone. It was built on the site of an old Mennonite church that had been abandoned many years before. About fifty years ago, Harper Marsden, an eccentric resident of Culbertville, purchased a tract of land adjoining the old church property and chose that spot to build his home.

"The first floor was of stone, raised above an extensive basement, but the upper stories were made of wood. The building was erected close beside the old cemetery, which was all that remained after the church had been torn down.

"Harper Marsden lived there for several years; he was a wealthy bachelor and seemed to like his melancholy abode. He said that it would be his resting place, and in anticipation of his death he erected a mausoleum near his home. His prophecy that he would be buried there came true, but not as he expected it. The house was destroyed by fire, and Harper Marsden died amid the flames. His body was never

recovered; it was probably lost beneath the stone wall at the rear, which crumbled into a mass.

"Since that event, no attempt has been made to restore the property. The front of the basement was not completely destroyed; it is still covered by the first floor. When the ruins were searched in hopes of discovering the body of the owner, two men were injured by falling stones. Since then the place has been avoided as dangerous.

"The property stands back from Mountain Pike, below Ridge Road. It was reached by a lane extending from Ridge Road, but the byway has fallen into disuse and has long since become little more than a path. The iron fence erected by Harper Marsden still surrounds the property, including the ancient graveyard."

Bruce Duncan was still studying the scene below when Harry Vincent concluded his reading. He acted as though he had not heard a single word.

"Want me to read it again?"

"No," replied Bruce. "I heard it. That's why I'm so interested. I'm looking at the old cemetery."

"Can you see it from here?"

"Yes, to the left of the mausoleum. The tombstones look like little gray bricks. There's some one sitting on one of them."

"What!"

"Some one sitting on one of them," repeated Bruce. "A man, sitting on a tombstone. He looks very small, even with these field glasses. He's moving now."

"Harry, he's walking over by the mausoleum. He's running, now, toward the old ruins. Harry, it's the ape-faced man! He's gone!"

Harry seized the glasses. The object of his search had disappeared.

"Are you sure about it, Bruce?"

"Positive," Bruce declared. "Do you remember when the creature ran off through the woods, last Monday? It seemed to hop along the ground. I recognized that stride just now."

"I see something," remarked Harry. "A man outside the building. A man with a gray shirt. Chefano wore a gray flannel shirt when we saw him. It may be Chefano. He's gone now."

They took turns watching through the glasses, but neither saw any further motion near the ruins of the old mansion. They decided to descend.

"It's the meeting place, all right," declared Bruce as they walked down the path. "The old lane must be close to Mountain Pike. We went past it without noticing it. That's why we missed the man the other night. If we'd waited for the bus, we would have seen him."

The more they considered the matter, the more positive they were that they had located the place they sought. To make sure, they drove up Ridge Road and found the abandoned lane. Leaving the car, they walked cautiously along until they discovered the iron fence, which was constructed of iron bars, pointed at the top.

"Stop!" whispered Harry. "Look along the fence, Bruce."

On the other side of the pickets stood the ape-faced man. The creature's clawlike hands gripped the bars. Its head turned, and it saw the two men in the lane.

With an ugly snarl the brute ran along behind the fence until it neared the intruders.

"Come along," exclaimed Harry. "Back to the car. Chefano may be down here any minute."

Bruce glanced over his shoulder as he ran. The ape-faced creature was evidently human. It was clad in old, ill-fitting garments.

Back in the cottage, Bruce talked of their discoveries while Harry tapped a call on the wireless. It was late in the afternoon - time to go through the routine of sending a message, even though there was no hope of a reply.

"The creature is safe inside those bars," said Bruce. "That's why Chefano is keeping it there at present. I figure that he lived in the cabin so as to keep away from the meeting place except on Tuesday nights. But after that trouble in the road, he moved into the old ruins. I don't think he really suspected us of knowing anything. Our trouble with the ape-man was too obviously accidental. He played safe by moving; that's all.

"Did you see those gates in the fence? They were closed and locked with a chain. That must be the entrance to the place. On Tuesday night, the gates will be unlocked."

He ended his comments when Harry Vincent adjusted the ear phones. Both men lighted cigars. Suddenly, Harry became alert. He listened intently for a minute. Then he sprang to the key.

"At last!" he exclaimed. "A reply!"

With his eyes on the code before him, The Shadow's agent worked with keen rapidity as he sent his report of the new discoveries.

CHAPTER XXVIII. THE FIFTH MAN

AT one o'clock Tuesday afternoon, Harry Vincent and Bruce Duncan were eating lunch in the Culbertville restaurant. They were seated at their customary table in the corner, by the window. Their voices were low, for there were other diners in the restaurant.

"To-night," said Harry, "we have another opportunity. Let's hope we can do better than we did last week."

"Our orders are just the same," replied his companion. "Watch the meeting place and intercept the fifth man."

"Yes, but we are now sure of the meeting place."

"We thought we were sure of it last Tuesday night."

"You don't think we're wrong about it now, do you?"

"Don't forget one thing, Harry. This fellow Chefano is as clever as the devil himself. For all we know, he may be laughing at us this very minute."

Harry shook his head.

"Don't be foolish, Bruce," he said. "Everything is all right now. Our one worry is how we are going to

handle the situation. But I believe that will work out well. To-night we will receive our final instructions."

"We didn't get any last Tuesday night - when we needed them most."

"Something was wrong then. The Shadow expected to be here; at least that's my opinion. But he didn't arrive."

"Maybe he won't be here to-night."

Harry Vincent did not reply.

"Suppose," added Bruce Duncan quizzically, "that we do not receive further instructions. What are we to do when the fifth man arrives? Follow him or warn him?"

"Follow him, of course."

"It would be better to warn him."

"Impossible," said Harry. "We couldn't do that in the dark. Remember, each of these men has come secretly to the meeting place. Another is due to-night. He will be suspicious of everything until he reaches his final destination. If we should step out of the darkness and speak to him, he would look upon us as enemies."

"We might wait for him here at the station."

"That would be better, but even then he would be suspicious. Most important of all, our orders are specific; we are to begin our watch before midnight. We can't be out by the old ruins and be here, too."

Bruce Duncan shrugged his shoulders. Somehow he doubted Vincent's faith in the wisdom of The Shadow. It was true that Bruce owed his life to the timely aid The Shadow had given that night at Isaac Coffran's. But the failure of a week ago had somewhat curbed Bruce's enthusiasm.

A TRAIN pulled into the station across the street. It was the afternoon local from Harrisburg. Bruce Duncan studied the few passengers who alighted. One was a heavy-set man with a ruddy complexion who stood on the station platform and surveyed the scene curiously.

Bruce watched the stranger. The man walked over to the bus and talked for a minute with the driver. Then he crossed the street and disappeared from Bruce's view.

Harry Vincent was reading a newspaper. Bruce Duncan slipped quietly from his chair and left the restaurant. He moved across the street and approached the bus driver.

"Hello," said the driver. "Going to ride out with me?"

"No; we have our car here in town. I just came over to say 'Hello.'"

"Reckon I'll have another passenger for Ridge Road to-night. It seems like I let somebody off there once a week."

"You mean on your last trip?"

"Yep. Some fellow was just talking to me a couple of minutes ago. Wanted to know what time the last bus went. Said he was going out to Ridge Road. I told him I stopped there."

"Did you know the man?"

"Never saw him before. He talked like an Englishman. Stranger around here, I reckon. He just went down the street, looking over the town. Well, he won't find much to do around this place. Might as well go out on this trip and wander around the woods. This town is as slow as they make them."

The driver waved good-bye as he climbed into his seat and started the bus.

Harry Vincent, lowering his paper, noticed that Bruce had gone. He glanced out the window just as Bruce waved good-bye to the bus driver and walked out to him.

"What's up, Bruce?" he asked. "I didn't see you leave the restaurant. Why the conversation with the bus driver?"

Duncan explained everything that had happened. Harry whistled.

"I'll bet that's our man!" he exclaimed. "He must have arrived early. Where did he go, Bruce?"

"I don't know," replied Duncan, "but he can't be far away. Let's visit some of the stores. Maybe we'll find him."

They discovered the Englishman in the corner drug store. He was talking to the clerk. Harry Vincent purchased some cigars; he and Bruce lighted them and stood by to listen to the conversation.

"I don't know where you can hire any autos round here, sir," said the clerk, addressing the Englishman.

"I merely desired to make a short journey," replied the stranger. "I supposed that a motor car would be available. I understand that the scenery is beautiful in this district, and I intended to ride up toward the mountains."

"We are going that way," said Harry, joining in the discussion. "We would be glad to have you accompany us."

The Englishman studied the two young men.

"I should be delighted to accept your invitation," he said. "But I should not care to inconvenience you. I wish to return to the village; otherwise I should have been a passenger on the motor bus. But I learned that it does not return until late in the evening."

"We are coming back to town shortly," said Harry. "We are living in a cottage several miles from here. We intended to run out there and then return some time before dinner. It would be a pleasure to have you with us."

This argument persuaded the Englishman. He left the store with Vincent and Duncan, but insisted upon riding in the rumble seat so that he could have a better view of the surrounding country. Harry drove slowly along Mountain Pike.

As they neared the foothills, Harry watched the Englishman in the mirror at the front of the car. He could see that the man was interested in something; so he drove very slowly as they neared Ridge Road. As they passed that highway, the man in the rumble seat turned and looked back over his shoulder until they had rounded the next bend.

HARRY kept on until they reached the highest point of Mountain Pike, then he turned the car and drove back to the road that led to the cottage. He invited the Englishman into their house. The guest looked curiously at the radio equipment.

"A sending station?" he said. "Quite interesting."

"Yes," said Vincent. "We are interested in wireless. This is a good spot to experiment with it."

"Not many persons living hereabouts, I suppose."

"Very few. There are some unoccupied cabins in the woods below. Beyond that, across Ridge Road, is the deserted ruin of an old house."

"Indeed. That's curious. Ruins have always interested me. I have seen many in England, and the Continent."

"In Russia?" questioned Bruce Duncan suddenly.

The Englishman started. He looked sharply at his questioner. Then his natural indifference returned.

"Yes, I have been to Russia," he drawled.

"And that is why you are here now," added Harry.

A curious expression appeared upon the Englishman's face. For a moment, he appeared to be alarmed.

"I don't quite understand," he said.

Bruce Duncan no longer doubted that the Englishman was the fifth man.

"Why did you come so early?" he questioned. "You are not expected until midnight."

The Englishman did not reply.

"We are glad that you arrived early," continued Bruce. "We have been waiting for you - to warn you. Didn't you suspect that something was wrong when you received word to come before the time that was originally stated?"

The Englishman's face expressed concern.

"My name," continued the young man, "is Bruce Duncan. I am the nephew of Harvey Duncan, who was one of the seven men who were summoned to meet in the old ruined house. My uncle died. He had the names of the other six men. The list was stolen after his death. Since then, four men have been lured to their doom. You were to be the fifth."

The Englishman slumped into a chair. He could tell that Bruce Duncan was speaking the truth. He seemed in a daze.

"An impostor," said Bruce, "is taking my uncle's place. He has the stolen badge that will identify him as the proper man to receive the wealth from Russia. But he knew that six others would arrive on the appointed night. By removing them, he could keep the secret to himself, and appropriate the shares that belonged to them. Hence he evolved the fiendish scheme of notifying each man to appear beforehand. He set the meeting times a week apart. We are attempting to frustrate his plans."

The Englishman rose from the chair and became suddenly alert. He extended his hand to Bruce Duncan.

"My name is Hubert Weston," he said. "I was a major in the British army during the war. I was in Russia, prior to the revolution. I saved the life of Prince Samanov, one of the czar's generals. I promised him that I would obey any summons that came from him or any one whom he might designate. The proof of its

authenticity was to be the mark of his signet."

THE Englishman drew a folded paper from his pocket. It was a message, stating the time of the meeting place, and naming the spot as the old ruined house below Ridge Road. The note contained complete directions for reaching the place before midnight.

"The time was set for a week from Wednesday," observed Bruce as he noted the date on the message.

"Correct," responded Major Weston. "But I had no idea that others were expected. Hence I would actually have been surprised at the presence of other passengers on the bus, and would have had no suspicion that anything was wrong, should I have come alone."

Bruce Duncan was studying the seal at the bottom of the message. The Englishman laid another sheet of paper beside it.

"This message followed," he said. "You will observe that the impression of the seal in the wax appears to be identical. Yet from what you say, it must be a clever imitation. It would not be difficult to duplicate the seal after one had seen the original impression."

The second message was inscribed in handwriting that closely resembled the penmanship of the first. It stated that the meeting time had been changed.

"The new date is to-night," remarked Bruce.

The Englishman was staring at Harry Vincent, who was busy with the wireless key. Bruce Duncan explained the situation, telling of his own adventures and the important part The Shadow had played in these affairs.

"Marvelous!" exclaimed Major Weston, enthusiastically. "I owe you much, Mr. Duncan, for coming to my assistance. I am quite willing to rely upon your judgment. I am glad that I have been warned beforehand. I shall agree to abide by any instructions that you receive over the wireless."

Harry Vincent completed his message. He was wearing the ear phones while he jotted down the reply which he was receiving.

"I have full instructions," he announced. "The arrival of Major Weston had made it unnecessary for us to watch the old ruined house. We are to wait here and be cautious for another week. It is probable that the sixth man will arrive next Tuesday. We must intercept him, also, if possible. The Russian, we now know, is due a week from Wednesday. That is the night that we shall attack."

"But to-night," objected Bruce. "What about tonight? Won't Chefano be suspicious when Major Weston does not arrive?"

"That matter was covered in the message," replied Harry. "The nonappearance of one man will mean nothing. Chefano has no proof that Major Weston received the messages that were sent him. Nor has he any proof that Major Weston intended to keep the appointment. One man less means one less crime. He will surely wait until the Russian appears. This plan which The Shadow has arranged will protect Major Weston."

There was a note of finality in Harry Vincent's voice. The plan did not satisfy Bruce Duncan. He looked inquiringly at Major Weston. To his surprise, the Englishman agreed with Vincent.

"I am satisfied," he said. "I shall be pleased to remain with you until a week from Wednesday night - the time originally appointed. I shall accompany you to the meeting place on that night."

CHAPTER XXIX. LAMONT CRANSTON DISAPPEARS

DOCTOR WELLS seemed highly pleased with the condition of his injured patient, Lamont Cranston.

"You have been improving rapidly," he said, as he stood at the foot of the bed. "I have rarely witnessed such a rapid recovery."

"Excellent," observed the millionaire, who was leaning against propped-up pillows. "How soon will I be on my feet?"

"You are almost on your feet now," replied the physician. "You have walked about the room to-day. But you must not try to be active for a while. Let me see. This is Tuesday afternoon. It was a week ago last night that you were injured. Suppose we wait until next Tuesday, before you leave the house."

"All right," yawned the millionaire.

"Has Mr. Fellows been here again?" questioned the doctor.

"Not since the time you summoned him last week," answered Cranston. "He brought Burbank here, you know. Burbank has communicated with him."

"Oh, yes; Burbank, the wireless operator. I haven't seen him yet."

"He spends most of his time upstairs. Wireless is my hobby, you know. I experiment frequently. I feel satisfied to know that my work is going on, even though I am incapable of attending to it."

"You may be able to take a hand at it yourself, by the end of the week," said the doctor.

"That's encouraging. The way I feel to-day, I could be up and around - outdoors - anywhere."

"Forget that idea," ordered Doctor Wells.

The door opened, and Richards entered. The servant gave a sheet of paper to Lamont Cranston.

"Mr. Burbank sent this down, sir," stated Richards. "He said it came in at three o'clock."

Cranston's keen eyes scanned the paper before him. Then the millionaire tossed the message on the bed. He closed his eyes and tilted his head back as though engaged in deep thought. Doctor Wells could see the paper. It was inscribed with a series of dots and dashes - a wireless code.

Suddenly the millionaire seized a pencil. He wrote rapidly on the reverse side of the paper. Doctor Wells was amazed at his remarkable activity. Cranston paused occasionally as though inspired by sudden thought, then he continued to inscribe his series of dots and dashes. He passed the paper to Richards.

"Tell Burbank to send this."

Doctor Wells noticed that the injured man seemed weary as he laid his head against the pillows.

"Don't try to be mentally active," he said. "It will prove quite as bad as physical strain. I advise you to forget your wireless for a few days."

Lamont Cranston seemed to be giving the matter consideration. Doctor Wells turned to Richards, who had just returned from the wireless room.

"Richards," he said, "can I rely upon you to see that Mr. Cranston does not overdo himself? Has he been

using much mental effort - particularly in reference to the wireless upstairs?"

The valet hesitated. He looked at his master.

"Tell him the truth, Richards," said Cranston, with a smile.

"Well, sir," admitted the valet, "he has seen Mr. Burbank quite often. I would say, sir, that it has spruced him up a bit. But he seems to become very tired at times, sir."

"Very bad," said the physician. "You must forget this hobby of yours until the end of the week, Mr. Cranston. I am not sure that it is advisable for Burbank to be here."

The man in the bed motioned wearily to Richards.

"Bring me a sheet of paper and my green fountain pen. An envelope, also. Remember, the green fountain pen."

He received the articles.

"Now, Richards," he said, as he began to write, slowly and laboriously, "go and bring Burbank here."

Lamont Cranston was sealing the letter in the envelope when the wireless operator arrived.

"Any reply to that last message?" asked the millionaire.

"Yes," said Burbank. "Here it is."

He showed a paper that bore a short series of dots and dashes. Cranston smiled.

"That's an O.K.," he said. He wrote a short reply. "Send this - it will be your last message. You have your car here, haven't you, Burbank?"

"Yes."

"After you've sent the message, come downstairs and bring your car from the garage. You can take Doctor Wells to his home; it will save Stanley another trip. I won't need you any more, Burbank. We'll close the station until the end of the week. Take this letter into town with you; I've already addressed it to Mr. Fellows."

Richards helped the injured man as he tried to push the banked-up pillows from beneath his head. Lamont Cranston turned on his side and closed his eyes. His recent efforts seemed to have taken all his strength.

"You have done wisely," said the physician quietly. "You need a great deal of rest. Your strength has merely begun to return. I shall count on Richards to see that you do not overexert yourself during the next few days."

The doctor pulled down the shades at the windows. He motioned Richards and Burbank from the room. At the door he glanced toward the man in the bed. His patient was quiet - possibly asleep, thought the doctor.

One minute after the door had closed, Lamont Cranston sat upright. His body shook with silent laughter. He slipped silently from his bed and made his way to a closet in the corner. He took clothes from their hooks and dressed with amazing rapidity.

Unlocking a table drawer, he removed various articles a small rolled bag of tools; an automatic revolver, a flashlight, and a bulging wallet. He moved silently toward a window. The sash moved upward without noise.

ABOUT ten minutes after Doctor Wells had left his patient apparently asleep, Burbank came down from the wireless room. He went to the garage for his car. The physician joined him at the door of the house. The quiet wireless operator drove Doctor Wells to his home, which stood on a curving lane in the town of Merwyn.

The physician congratulated himself as he walked up the steps of his residence. He had handled a rather difficult patient in a most satisfactory way.

"He must have rest," murmured the practitioner. "I am glad he finally accepted my verdict. He went to sleep like a child. He thinks he has recovered his strength, yet the least effort tires him. I actually don't believe he is capable of walking downstairs alone, at this very minute."

It never occurred to Doctor Wells that he might have watched Burbank's coupe as it rolled up the lane toward the wide boulevard a block away. Had he done so, he would have been amazed.

For when the car halted at the stop street and waited for the flow of traffic to cease, a surprising occurrence took place. The cover of the rumble seat opened slightly as though some one was peering from within, to make sure that no one was near by.

Then the back of the car opened wider still, and just as Burbank was shifting into low gear, a figure emerged. A man dressed in a dark suit dropped into the street just as the car started forward. Then with quick steps the figure reached the sidewalk and moved toward the boulevard.

If Doctor Wells had observed this incident, he would hardly have recognized the agile man as Lamont Cranston, for he would not have believed it possible that the millionaire could have acted with so much nimbleness.

In fact, the physician could scarcely believe that his ears did not deceive him when he answered the telephone at eight o'clock that evening, and heard the voice of Richards.

"Mr. Cranston has gone!" was the valet's amazing statement. "His door has not been opened, and his windows are still shut. No one has seen him go! No one has heard him go! But he was not there when we brought his dinner this evening. I can't imagine what has happened, sir. Yet I am sure that Mr. Cranston has disappeared!"

CHAPTER XXX. SINISTER SHADOWS

RAIN was dripping from the branches of the trees above the abandoned lane that led from Ridge Road. A downpour had begun at dusk; now, early in the evening, it had settled into a steady drizzle.

The old roadway was pitch black as a man slogged through the puddles, his heavy boots splattering water in all directions. He appeared to be familiar with the road and indifferent to its condition. His splashing footsteps seemed to echo behind him.

He felt his way along the iron fence until he reached the gates which were open. Still in darkness, he slogged along the mud of a long-forgotten driveway until he reached the ruin which had once been the home of Harper Marsden.

Even in the darkness, the old gray walls were slightly visible. They seemed silent and forlorn as they

loomed toward the falling rain. The nearest corner of the old building was higher than the rest; it had evidently been a tower extending the full height of the building - a tower of stone that had alone survived the devastating flames.

The man passed by the front of the building and reached a flight of stone steps near the further side. The steps had been an entrance to the cellar. Slowly and cautiously the man walked down these steps.

He turned quickly when he reached the bottom as though surprised by a noise behind him. He listened intently, then noticed that the patter of the raindrops made a perceptible sound upon the flat steps.

He knocked on the door three times. Faint taps seemed to be repeated from within. He knocked once. A single tap echoed. The man knocked twice. The door was opened inward, revealing a dim light.

The man moved along the stone floor of the basement. There were cracks above, through which rain dripped, but he continued on to a spot where other steps went down. At the bottom he reached a dry cement floor.

Turning to the right, he entered an underground apartment. A man was seated at a crude table on which rested a lighted lantern.

Other footsteps came along the passageway. The newcomer turned. Into the lighted room came a stooped, longstriding creature whose face was more apish than human.

"Did you close the door, Jupe?" asked the man at the table.

"Ehhh!" answered the ape-faced being.

The man who had just arrived laughed as he removed his black rubber hat and coat.

"When did you teach Jupe to answer the door?" he asked.

"He learned it the last time you came," was the reply from the man at the table. "He's been following me every time; to-night when I walked to the door to wait for you, he grunted and pushed me aside. So I let him try it."

The man at the table was seated on a box. The newcomer picked up a similar stool and joined him. The stooped figure with the ugly face did the same.

"Jupe has to get in on the conference," said the man who had come through the rain.

The ape-faced man leaned sideways with a snarl. His eyes turned toward the passageway.

"He hears something," said the newcomer.

"Only the rain," replied the other man. "He's always listening for something. The other night a loose stone fell from that high corner of the building, and he was bothered about it for half an hour."

THE speaker rose and raised the lantern, hooking it to a wire that was suspended from the low ceiling. The range of the light increased. Under its glow the shadows of the three men became grotesque. They were long, ugly shadows. The profile of the ape-faced man was plainly visible upon the floor. Beyond those dark, moving silhouettes, a black blot projected from the corner of the room. It, too, seemed like a human shadow, except that it was motionless.

The visitor's eyes fell on the shadow; they moved toward the corner, where two long white-pine boxes seemed to account for the extending blackness.

"Only two of the coffins left," he said. "One ought to do, though, Chefano."

"I didn't know that at first, Frenchy," said the other man. "Still we may need the other after all. We may have trouble on the last night."

"You have the credentials."

"Yes, but we can never tell what may happen."

The newcomer laughed. His face was not unpleasant. His teeth were perfect, and his eyes, though crafty, were well set. His nose alone marred his features. It was rather flat, with a noticeable bulge at the bridge.

His laugh was contagious. It brought a sinister smile from Chefano. The dark-faced man's lips began to twist.

"If anything happens," "Frenchy" said, "it will be to our advantage. The game has gone well so far, Chefano. The only trouble is that it has been too long."

"Not for you," was the reply. "Your part is easy. One night a week is all you work, while I've been here on the job all along."

"I don't see why you stay."

"That's because you don't know how much trouble Jupe can make. It was bad enough getting him here. If I could leave him alone, I could get along without your help. I could go back and forth myself. You haven't done anything but bring that one letter from Coffran and take back my reply."

"I've helped bury the dead," said Frenchy with a laugh.

"I could have done that alone," said Chefano. "Nevertheless, you've been useful. If anything had gone wrong outside, you would have found it out. You've been watching the papers this week?"

"I have. They haven't traced any of the missing men as far as Harrisburg."

"Good. I figured they were all sworn to secrecy. Each one made a clever get-away out of town, expecting he'd be back soon."

"I haven't any dope on the Englishman."

"I didn't expect that. He had a long way to come. Maybe he won't show up. If so, it will be an extra coffin. You earned your pay, Frenchy, when you found out about Cooper."

FRENCHY shrugged his shoulders. "It's all been easy," he said. "Too easy, Chefano. Maybe we will have trouble before we are through with it."

"Forget it, Frenchy. This thing has been planned by a real mind. I'll show you how safe we are. First thing, old Coffran doped it out. He sent for me. I came from Europe and brought you with me. We've been operating over there for years, and they haven't begun to track us. We both talk English better than most American crooks. When a foreigner learns the language, he doesn't talk in gangland slang.

"You had the first job - posing as Harvey Duncan's nephew. The old man was so delirious we could have sent Jupe to do the work, only he couldn't have made his way past the front door. The old servant - Hopkins, wasn't it? - thought you were a friend of old Duncan."

"He was a little bit wise afterward."

"Yes. That's why we had to get rid of him. I did that. Posed as a book agent. Saw the old fellow's pills on the table. Dropped a few potent pellets in with them. Of course the big job was when I used your information about the hiding place. Jupe stole the whole works. I was afraid he would strangle young Duncan. I had to whistle for him."

"Yes. A murder would have been bad. Still, it might have been well to put Duncan out of the way. Coffran was worried about him."

"Well, if he found out that Duncan was dangerous, he probably attended to him. I don't think the boy knew enough to make trouble. It was Coffran's job to attend to him, so I let it go at that. The old man doped out the scheme; he sent the letters, that's all. It wasn't too much to ask him to attend to one man in New York, even if it meant a murder."

As Frenchy was about to speak, Jupe leaped from the table and glared wickedly at the corner beyond the pine-board boxes. He began to snarl, then he started forward. Chefano whistled sharply. The ape-faced man came back to the table.

"What's the matter?" asked Frenchy.

"He does that right along," replied Chefano. "Thinks he sees something."

Frenchy looked toward the corner.

"That's it, I guess," he said. "See that funny shadow? It must be the position of the boxes. It looks almost like a person's shadow."

"Jupe is a lot of trouble," asserted Chefano. "I had to keep him up here all week."

"What! You left the cabin? Do you think it wise to hang out in this place?"

"Can't help it. A week ago - Monday it was - I left the door unlocked. He ran down to the road and attacked a farmer who was passing. Two men came along in a car and tried to help. Jupe might have killed all three, only he heard me whistling and ran back."

"Whew! That was bad. Did they follow him?"

"Yes. I explained that he was a half-wit, and that seemed to satisfy them. Tried to bluff it at first, but they saw Jupe in the window. I fixed things up, but I brought him over here after that. Left a light burning in the cabin for a couple of nights as a precaution."

"It would be bad if he was seen here."

"Nobody ever comes around this place. I let Jupe out occasionally. He runs around the graveyard. Once or twice he went down to the fence, but couldn't get out. I brought him back in a hurry."

"You certainly know how to handle him."

"Well, I had him in Italy, that year I traveled with a circus so the police would know I was behaving myself. Then I sent him over here with another fellow who understood him. I got him back when I came over here, and he's proved useful in this job."

The men remained silent for a few minutes. Then Chefano rose and took a yellow slicker from a corner opposite the pine-board boxes.

"Let's go for a walk, Frenchy," he said. "I'm tired of being inside."

"It's still drizzling," replied Frenchy. "I walked from the old barn, half a mile down the pike, where I always put my car."

"Well, you've got a rubber coat. It won't hurt you. Jupe doesn't mind the wet. I'll show you where I've dug the pit. Did it last night."

The men walked toward the passage, followed by Jupe. Their shadows, distorted beneath the lamplight, moved gnomishly upon the floor. At the same time the long shadow from the boxes seemed to expand and move after them.

Outside the building the trio walked beyond the old ruin and passed the mausoleum which shone through the darkness. Chefano produced a tiny flashlight and pointed it toward the side of the massive tomb. The light revealed a deep grave, with a pile of earth beside it.

"You dug far enough down," observed Frenchy.

"Why not?" asked Chefano. "I had plenty of time. The deeper the better. This isn't much deeper than the other ones."

"Perhaps not. It looks deeper though. It must go down below the foundations of the mausoleum."

"It does. I thought of digging it inside the mausoleum; but that would have been bad. Out here it might be anybody's grave. I'll get Jupe to carry over one of those old tombstones and plant it here."

"You couldn't have dug it in the mausoleum."

"Why not?"

"It must have a stone floor."

"No, indeed. It was never finished, I suppose. Here, take a look."

The door grated on rusty hinges as Chefano pulled it open. The flashlight revealed soft dirt, on which lay a few old rusty spades.

The man with twisted lips turned out the light. Frenchy walked away as Chefano tried to swing the door shut. It required several attempts as the hinges had sprung.

Just as Chefano closed the door, Jupe strode over and snarled angrily. He clawed at the edge of the door as if to open it. Chefano hissed. The ape-faced man quieted.

"Stay out of there," he ordered. "Run along. Back in the house."

"He's a lot of trouble, isn't he?" observed Frenchy.

"Plenty. He's tried to get in that place a couple of times during the day. I've shown him that it's empty. But he's never satisfied. To-night's no time to humor him."

"Keep him impatient." Frenchy grinned as they descended the steps.

Inside the cellar room the two men sat at the table and conversed, while Jupe, after a short prowling, took his place on one of the pine-board boxes. Neither of the men paid any attention to him. At times the ape-faced man raised his head as if to listen. But fear of Chefano's wrath prevented him from making any motion.

Yet Jupe was not satisfied.

His keen ears seemed to detect a strange noise that did not cease - a noise that neither Chefano nor Frenchy would have heard if they had listened for it.

CHAPTER XXXI. DUNCAN GOES ALONE

TWO of the three men in Josh Stevens's cottage were growing sleepy. The rain that dripped outside was quieting.

"Half past eleven," said Harry Vincent. "I'm tired. I'm glad you came along this afternoon, major. It's nice to know that we don't have to go out in the rain."

The Englishman gave a sleepy laugh.

"A good night to sleep," he said. "But I don't feel like dying. I'm rather pleased that I did come in time to look around a bit."

"No more wireless messages?" inquired Bruce Duncan, impatiently.

"The last one this afternoon was final," declared Harry. He seemed somewhat annoyed by Duncan's question.

"Well," said Bruce, "I don't like it. Sitting around here when we know that Chefano and his ape-man are waiting. I wish we were going up there to-night."

"Not to-night," said the Englishman. "It will be good sport to wait. I never cared for rainy nights. They were dreadful in the trenches."

"I'm going to turn in," declared Harry.

"Ditto," said Major Weston. "good night, old top."

The two men went to their rooms. Bruce Duncan sat beside the embers of the open fire. He realized that he had been outvoted. At the same time he felt that his own opinion deserved some consideration. It was his information that had put the wheels in motion. He had a greater interest in the affairs of the ruined house than any one else - Major Weston included. As the nephew of Harvey Duncan, the closest friend of Prince Samanov, Bruce felt that his own word should be final.

Looking at the table, he saw Vincent's automatic. His own gun was in his room upstairs. A plan began to dominate Bruce's thoughts. His watch showed ten minutes of twelve.

He tiptoed up the stairs. The doors of the rooms occupied by the other men were closed. All was silent. Probably they were already asleep.

In the darkness, Bruce found his automatic and his flashlight. He crept downstairs and, with both guns pocketed, slipped from the house.

He moved noiselessly along the path. In the woods he used the flashlight. This was his own expedition. A man was expected at the old ruin by midnight - a man who was supposed to suspect nothing. He would appear as that man. He would surprise the two fiends who waited. If necessary, he would shoot them without mercy. That would bring matters to a definite conclusion.

With the criminals out of the way, he could probably find the stolen insignia. If not, he and Major Weston

could keep the appointment the next week and explain matters.

THE merits of his plan pleased Bruce when he reached the abandoned lane. His scheme seemed far superior to the one which The Shadow had evolved. To-morrow, Chefano and his powerful brute might both be gone. Get them to-night! It was his privilege, for they had done him an evil turn.

Bruce turned out his flashlight when he saw the open gate. The trap was set, and he would turn it against his enemies. He made as little noise as possible along the path.

He came beneath the towering corner of the ruin, a portion of the old house which had been obscured by trees when he had viewed the building from Rocky Summit.

Bruce took the path to the far side of the building. He stopped at the foot of stone steps. Below him was an open door, with a dimly lighted passageway. This was the lure for the fifth man! It was the trap that had ensnared four unsuspecting victims!

Bruce drew both guns from his pocket. He stepped cautiously into the passageway. The light was brighter at the end. The close-set walls were of solid stone. No danger here. He moved quietly to the end of the passage. Before coming into the light, he turned and looked back toward the entrance.

The steps seemed shadowy and black, as though some one was concealed there. Duncan went back cautiously. He thought he detected motion in the gloom. But he found the steps vacant.

Annoyed by his imagination, Duncan silently resumed his course and reached the end of the passage again. He looked back and saw the same shadowy depths. He decided that the blackness was due to the dimness of the light.

There was a doorway at the end of the passage - a doorway to the right. The door was open; it extended into the passage, against the wall in front of Bruce Duncan.

The young man watched the door suspiciously, then moved to the end of the passage and turned to the right. He stopped short, his hands behind his hips, concealing the automatics.

A man was seated at the table. He turned as he heard Duncan's approach. It was Bernardo Chefano.

"Good evening," said Chefano in a suave voice. His lips twisted in a slight smile. "You are Major Weston?"

"Yes," replied Bruce.

"Come in," said Chefano cordially.

Duncan waited. He had the advantage here. From his position he could command both the room and the passage to the outside. He was standing in semidarkness. Chefano could not see the position of his hands. Bruce looked about the room. He wondered where the terrible ape-faced creature was.

"What is the matter?" questioned Chefano smoothly. "I have been expecting you, major. I suppose you expected to find my uncle, Prince Samanov." The criminal's face took on a saddened expression. "I am sorry to inform you, major. My uncle is dead."

"Dead?" echoed Bruce. He knew that Chefano had not recognized him as the man who had been attacked by the ape-faced creature. He had not expected to be recognized.

"Dead," repeated Chefano. "Killed in battle, a martyr to our cause. Step inside, major. I have waited long

to meet you."

THE invitation was the needed clue. Bruce knew the method now; he knew where the ape-man was! Chefano desired Bruce to step across the threshold, because the monster was in the room - in one of the near corners - waiting to spring!

In which corner? Ah, Chefano had betrayed himself! For one instant, his eyes had moved to Duncan's right. His lips had twisted momentarily into a distorted shape. He was restraining the creature until the proper moment.

With one action, Bruce Duncan stepped suddenly into the room. With his left hand he raised an automatic to cover Chefano, who seemed obviously without a weapon. At the same instant, he looked to the right and pointed his other gun toward the corner. There was the monster - six feet away - ready for a spring.

Bruce Duncan's finger was on the trigger, but he did not press it. The ape-faced creature had more intelligence than Bruce had supposed. The sight of the revolver had curbed it. Back into the corner it sank, and its prompt action saved its life.

Bruce was master of the situation. He could wait. He laughed. Should he reveal his identity or play the part of Weston? Bruce decided on the latter course.

"I suspected this," he declared. "The second message with the seal of Prince Samanov - I detected the imitation. Come eight days early, eh? What reason for the change? Had it been later, I might have suspected nothing."

From his position Bruce could easily observe both Chefano and the ape-man. The former, his lips twisted venomously, sat with upraised hands. The monster still cowered in the corner.

"A creature here, to kill me," continued Bruce. "A monster - not even human. It shall die. You" - he glanced momentarily toward Chefano - "shall live - for a while. I will learn the truth of this deception - from your ugly lips!"

The drama had gone far enough. Bruce knew that he must make good his boast. It was right that he should kill the ape-man, the horrible monster that was responsible for at least four deaths. His own safety depended upon immediate action. The effect of the ape-man's death would awe Chefano; from then on, Bruce could deal with a single, helpless foe.

HE threw one last glance at Chefano. The man's distorted lips had formed a brutal smile. There was a sudden noise from behind. Two iron hands gripped Bruce Duncan's wrists, and his arms were twisted toward the floor. The revolver slipped from his left hand; the automatic in his right roared as he pulled the trigger. The bullets ricocheted from the stone floor. The ape-faced monster was unharmed.

The creature was upon Bruce, but at Chefano's hissing whistle it withdrew. The twisted lips spat a command, and the monster slunk back to its corner.

Its assistance was not needed. The man who had fallen upon Bruce Duncan from behind had caught him unawares. He lay helpless, upon his back, his eyes staring toward the doorway which he had entered. The door was partway open now, and Bruce realized his mistake. Its hinges were at the opposite side. It was the entrance to a room at the end of the passage.

The half-opened door seemed to cast a heavy shadow in the passage. The door was swaying slightly, and the shadow seemed to move with it, then recede along the passageway. Chefano had taken the

lantern from the wire and was bringing it closer.

"Put it back," ordered the man who was holding Duncan. "We don't need it."

"I wanted to see his face, close to," said Chefano. "You caught him right, Frenchy."

"I'm good at that," admitted Frenchy. "The trouble was the door. I had to be slow when I opened it. I was afraid the hinges would squeak."

Duncan became limp as he ceased his last attempt to struggle. Frenchy was sitting on his body, pinning him so cleverly that he could scarcely move.

"What are you going to do with him?" asked Frenchy. "Let Jupe finish him?"

The ape-faced creature snarled at the mention of its name.

"No," said Chefano. His lips had become hideous in their expression. "No."

"Why not?"

"Because it's too good for him. The others came quietly. They died quickly. He created trouble. Let him think about it. He shall die of his own accord."

"Where? How?"

"In his grave," said Chefano.

Bruce Duncan groaned as he realized the significance of those words.

CHAPTER XXXII. BURIED ALIVE

BRUCE DUNCAN lay on the stone floor, watching the preparations for his interment. He was bound now, his wrists and ankles held with stout rope. He had been gagged with a handkerchief. Frenchy sat upon his body to prevent him from moving about. Duncan's captor appeared to view the proceedings as a huge entertainment.

Chefano ordered Jupe to the corner where the boxes lay. The ape-man carried one of the improvised coffins with ease and laid it on the floor beside Duncan.

"Take it outside, Jupe," ordered Chefano. "Out by the big hole I dug."

The monster obeyed. While he was gone, Chefano produced three shovels, a bag of nails and two hammers, which he muffled with cloth.

"I'm sorry old Coffran isn't here to-night," said Chefano. "He would enjoy this."

Jupe returned. At Chefano's command, he picked up Duncan's body and flung it across his shoulder. Chefano uttered his hissing whistle.

"Don't hurt him, Jupe," he said.

Frenchy took the lead, holding Duncan's loaded automatic at the ready in his overcoat pocket. Then came Chefano with a shovel, nails, and a hammer.

Jupe followed, toting the prisoner. Bound helplessly, Bruce Duncan shivered as the party entered the graveyard. He was resigned to his fate, yet he regretted that he had not shot Chefano and the ape-man

the instant he had walked into their underground den. He was going to a horrible death - one to which none but fiends would assign a living creature.

Chefano, with Frenchy standing guard, made a cursory examination of the coffin. Then he whistled for Jupe to fetch his human burden.

For a moment, the ape-man hesitated. It seemed as though the eerie place were occupied by more than just the four of them. Not that Jupe saw any other. It was more a dread, oppressive feeling that called to some primitive sense. As though intense, boring eyes were fastening themselves upon him with tentacles of doom. And there among the night's haunting shadows, there seemed to be a greater, all-enveloping shadow.

Chefano whistled again. It was not for Jupe, the ape-man, to think. With his burden, he shambled forward.

Jupe, with Chefano standing by, carefully placed Bruce in the pine-board box. Looking upward, the bound man could see the white mausoleum, looming like death itself.

"Are you comfortable?" hissed Chefano in a jeering whisper. "I hope you like your bed; you will sleep in it for a long, long time."

"A long, long while," echoed Frenchy.

"Get the cover," hissed Chefano. His voice seemed part of the whistling wind.

Frenchy prepared to place the top portion of the crude coffin in position.

"Not yet," said Chefano. "We're going to give him a fighting chance." The man's voice seemed to laugh in sinister fashion. "We'll let him call for help. Let him force his way out. Through the cover, up through six feet of earth!"

He drew a knife from his pocket. He turned the flash on Duncan's prostrate form. He cut the rope about the prisoner's ankles, then the rope at the wrists, which were beneath Duncan's body. This did not effect a release; Bruce struggled but found the ropes did not yield immediately.

Chefano carefully severed the handkerchief with which Bruce was gagged. The man in the coffin turned his head and tried to loosen the choking cloth.

"Quick," hissed Chefano. "The cover."

THE flat top of the coffin came in place above. It seemed to shut Bruce off from the rest of the world. Even the sighing wind had ceased. Bruce Duncan felt terribly imprisoned, and his thoughts brought horror.

Dull sounds came from above. They were driving nails with the muffled hammers!

Bruce tried to roll about. His struggle was desperate. If he could fight clear of the bonds, he might force the cover before they had it nailed! The ropes were yielding under his frenzied efforts. The gag had loosened and was slipping beneath his chin.

"Help!"

His cry seemed hopeless. Muffled within the coffin, overwhelmed by the wind! A faint cry far from human aid. Perhaps Vincent and the Englishman had discovered his absence. They might be coming to

save him! Bruce was delirious enough to believe almost anything, yet even that one hope seemed futile.

He had one hand loose and was pressing against the top of the coffin. The board was heavy, yet it seemed to bend. But now they were lifting the coffin, carrying it to the grave!

It was going down, down, down - slowly down, with ropes beneath it. The thought stunned Bruce momentarily. His mind seemed apart from his body. He was thinking of other things while he shouted and beat against the top of the box.

He writhed and turned on his side. Both hands were free; his ankles were almost loosened. He tried to get on his knees to brace his back against the cover.

Thud! It was dirt upon the coffin. The noise was repeated - again and again. Bruce was no longer shouting for aid, no longer fighting wildly. Somehow the terrible situation had calmed his feverish mind. He was making one concentrated, superhuman effort to gain his freedom.

Bracing on hands and knees, he pushed against the top of the pine box, almost confident that he could force it. But now the weight was terrific. The thudding had ceased; there was no noise from above. He realized that Chefano and Frenchy, aided by the imitative Jupe, had been piling on the soft earth with terrific speed.

He sank to the floor of the box, exhausted. He could no longer struggle. It seemed that he was being crushed, pressed beneath tremendous weight. Even the air seemed thick - almost solid. Such blackness! He could feel it!

One last vague desire gripped Bruce Duncan's mind. Death was near. If he could only hear a final sound from the world above! His gasps seemed to echo through the box in which he lay. He made a great effort to hold his breath while he listened.

His hope was rewarded. He heard a sound. Not from above, but at the side. Loose dirt, forced down by the earth above; dirt, rattling beside the box in which he lay. He gasped.

The sound came again - at the side and near the end. It was a scratching sound. It became more definite than that! Something was striking against the end of the box!

Bruce heard a muffled, clicking noise. Then came a squeak, that sounded as though a nail was being pulled from wood. He extended one hand and pressed it against the end of the box. He felt a vibration. The end of the coffin was moving outward! What did it mean? What was causing it?

He pressed again, and the end seemed to yield. Again he heard the muffled clicking. Then came a soft, sibilant whisper - a strange, creepy whisper - a voice in the grave!

Bruce shuddered. It was death, he thought. At first he could not distinguish the words, but as he listened, they came plainly.

"Lie still," said the voice. "You are safe. Be calm."

HE obeyed the command. Some strange being had spoken from the depths below ground. The voice was weird, yet encouraging. Bruce did not move. He breathed deeply. The air seemed clearer.

"Press it" came the hissing whisper. "Press outward!"

Bruce obeyed. The end of the box moved a full inch. It was on a slant, and as it yielded, he heard the rasping sound of slipping nails.

"Press slowly," came the whisper. It seemed vague and quiet now.

Bruce used his hands carefully, half wondering whether the whole event was real. The rough wood scraped his fingers; he was sure that he was neither dreaming nor dying.

"Stop!"

There was a slight jolt at the end of the coffin. Reaching out cautiously, Bruce found that the end of the box was open. The air seemed clear but damp.

"Crawl forward - carefully."

His hands were in dirt beyond the coffin. On hands and knees, Bruce emerged into solid earth. He was in a damp, moldy tunnel - a small passage that was barely large enough for his body. It twisted to the right. He made the turn with difficulty.

The hole became larger as he moved upward. The angle became greater as he continued. His hands slipped as he clutched at the sides of the cramped tunnel.

Then his wrists were seized, and he was drawn bodily upward. He was clear of the hole; his knees had reached the surface. The hands released his wrists. He fell forward on solid ground!

Bruce uttered a long sigh. His limbs were aching; his ankles and wrists were sore from the ropes that had bound them. But his mind was freed of torment. He managed to roll on his back. He looked above him, and through the Stygian gloom he fancied he saw a white ceiling above.

He was in the mausoleum!

Some one was working close beside him, working so silently that Bruce could hardly hear the labor. Some one was shoveling dirt back into the hole from which he had emerged.

All trace of time passed from Bruce Duncan's mind. His brain responded only to the soft sound of dirt, dropping downward. Then came a patting noise - the smoothing of the surface where the hole had been.

From that moment on, all seemed a dream. Bruce knew that he was outside the mausoleum; that he was moving forward through the rain and wind, sometimes being carried, sometimes walking. Some one was beside him, directing the way. But Bruce Duncan's eyelids were heavy; he could not open them. At last all seemed blank. A great faintness came over him.

Then came a sensation of warmth and dryness. He opened his eyes and stared with surprise at his surroundings. He was seated in a chair, in the downstairs room of the cottage. He was wrapped in a blanket. His outer garments were hanging over the wire screen before a blazing fire.

Bruce felt weak and tired. He rose wearily and went to the window. Raising the shade, he saw that the first touches of dawn were appearing in the sky.

Bruce picked up his shirt from the screen. It was nearly dry now - dry, but covered with caked dirt. Gathering his garments, he went upstairs. He was in his stocking feet, and he made no noise as he passed the closed doors and reached the bed in his own room.

As sleep came upon him, Bruce Duncan's mind was filled with confused thoughts of his adventure. But one dominating impression filled his mind. The identity of his rescuer came with startling suddenness.

He had been drawn from his tomb by The Shadow!

CHAPTER XXXIII. LAMONT CRANSTON RETURNS

AT nine o'clock, Wednesday morning, Richards was awakened by the ringing of a bell in the kitchen. The valet had spent a sleepless night, wondering what had become of his master. He was dozing when the bell rang, and he leaped from his chair when he heard it.

"Mr. Cranston is ringing!" he exclaimed. Then, realizing that the millionaire was missing, he added: "Some one must be in his room."

He hurried upstairs and stood in amazement at the door of Cranston's room. The millionaire was lying in bed, with his head propped wearily against the pillows.

"Mr. Cranston, sir!" exclaimed the astonished valet.

"Yes," was the reproving reply. "What kind of care have you been giving me, Richards?"

"What - what, sir?" stammered the valet. "Where have you been, sir?"

"A short while ago I found myself in the wireless room upstairs. I was dressed, and I felt very tired. So I came down and went to bed."

"So you were up there!" exclaimed Richards. "We wondered where you had gone, sir. Did you go up there yesterday afternoon?"

"Yesterday afternoon, Richards? I don't recall it. I imagined that I had been there only a short while."

"You were missing from your room, sir, and we could not find you."

"Did you look upstairs?" The millionaire asked the question wearily.

"We tried the door, sir, but it was locked. Your key was downstairs, so we didn't suppose you could be there, sir."

"Burbank must have left his key in the lock. I recall going in the room - I'm not exactly sure of the time I entered - and it seems to me the key was in the door."

The valet hurried to the phone and called Doctor Wells. Richards reported the return of Lamont Cranston, and the doctor hurried over immediately. He listened to Richards's story and decided that Cranston must have become delirious during the previous afternoon.

"That wireless room was preying on your mind," the physician said to the millionaire. "You must have gone upstairs and fallen asleep. I can't understand how you managed to get that far. Oddly, your condition seems to be improved despite the exertion."

"Perhaps I am capable of greater exertion than climbing stairs," said Cranston with a slight smile.

"Possibly," replied the physician. "I believe now that your condition was somewhat better than I supposed."

"Mr. Fellows has arrived," announced Richards.

"Hello, Fellows," said Lamont Cranston as the chubby-faced insurance man appeared. "What brings you here?"

"Richards called me at the office. I was there before eight o'clock to-day. He said you were missing."

"I appear to have been in the wireless room upstairs."

"I thought Burbank was attending to that."

"He went away yesterday."

"Mr. Cranston's interest in Burbank's work appeared to be taxing his strength," explained Doctor Wells. "When I mentioned that fact, we agreed that Burbank should go."

"I can't keep my mind off the sending station," said Cranston. "Perhaps you had better let me go up there today."

"No, no," exclaimed the physician.

"Then we'll have to send for Burbank."

"Very well. I suppose that would be best under the existing circumstances."

FELLOWS undertook to call the wireless operator by telephone. When he had completed his mission, he had received Burbank's promise to come immediately.

"I am glad you are here, Fellows," said Cranston. "There is something I wish you would do for me. I am anxious to learn what has become of a friend of mine - an Englishman whom I met last year at Palm Beach. His name is Hubert Weston. He was an officer in the British army during the war - a major, I believe. I have intended to write Weston, but have lost his address. You have many unusual connections in New York. Perhaps you could find out something about him."

"I might be able to do that," said Fellows thoughtfully. "Do you merely want his address?"

"It would be better if I could obtain additional information - other facts - a picture of him would be excellent. I want to be quite sure that I am writing to the right man - not to some one of the same name."

"I'll do what I can," promised the insurance broker. "Perhaps I can learn something about Weston through the British consulate. You will hear from me as soon as possible."

The matter had been discussed in an indifferent manner; there seemed no further topic of conversation. Fellows went back to New York. Doctor Wells also left after deciding that his patient could sit up in a chair by the window.

"Wonderful improvement," he had said. "Your visit to your wireless room seems to have done you good. Don't overdo yourself. I may have you completely well within a week."

When Burbank arrived, he was sent to Cranston's room. The millionaire gave the wireless operator a code message which he had written.

"Send this quickly," he said. "I answered a call this morning. Told them to wait for two hours. This will explain a lot of questions that will be asked. Bring me the reply."

Burbank made occasional visits to Cranston's room during the course of the afternoon. At five o'clock a messenger arrived with a large envelope from Fellows. The packet was brought to the millionaire's room. The Shadow smiled with satisfaction as he drew out several pages of data along with the photograph of a man in the uniform of a British officer.

"Very quick work," he said musingly. "Now to get Weston to look into the box. That will be easy."

He took pencil and paper and wrote a careful message in longhand:

The box which was installed last night is an improved device to aid transmission. We are ready to test it. Open the front of the box, press the button on the side, and look in. You will see intermittent lights. Make sure that they change regularly.

When you use the key, have some one else look in the box while you are operating, to make sure that the lights are regular. Since Duncan is asleep, you may intrust that simple duty to Major Weston. Your previous messages have been difficult to receive because of static. The new device, if it functions correctly, will over come that difficulty. Explain the matter to Major Weston.

The Shadow rapidly translated the writing into code. He rang the bell for Richards and dispatched the valet to the wireless room with the message.

Five minutes later the door of Lamont Cranston's room opened softly. Richards was standing in the hall, but he heard nothing. He did not even see the form that slipped silently up the stairs to the sending station in the tower - a form attired in a dark dressing gown.

Burbank was seated at a table on which stood a small screen. The room was dark. The wireless operator looked up as some one touched his shoulder. It was Lamont Cranston.

"In a minute," said Burbank quietly.

A slight buzzing began. The small white screen was illuminated. The face of Harry Vincent appeared there, flickering like a motion picture.

The face disappeared; another took its place. It was the face of a square-jawed man - a man with a short mustache and close-cropped hair.

Lamont Cranston focused a small light on a picture which he held in his hand. He compared it with the image on the screen while Burbank looked on with interest.

"Identical," whispered the millionaire.

"Excellent television," replied Burbank.

The Shadow's fingers sought the sending key. They tapped a slow message.

"I am sending an O.K. to Vincent. Do not make any more complaints about static, Burbank. Let them think that it has been eliminated by the new device. I am greatly pleased by the clearness of the images. The television apparatus has proven quite satisfactory. We may have occasion to utilize it further, Burbank."

The image of Major Hubert Weston had disappeared. Burbank turned off the light, and the little screen was dark.

When Richards entered his master's room a short time later he found Lamont Cranston sound asleep in his chair by the window.

CHAPTER XXXIV. TWO MEN TALK

MAJOR WESTON sat in front of the open fireplace, watching the sparks fly upward as he puffed at a massive meerschaum pipe. He turned suddenly as the door opened. Harry Vincent entered.

"Ah!" said the major. "I was just wondering when you would return. How is Bruce Duncan?"

"He seemed better after I got him home. The Hindu servant was waiting there and took charge of him. I think he will improve quickly. It was impossible to keep him here."

"I agree with you. This place is too near the scene of his terrible adventure. We have enough trouble ahead of us without the added responsibility of a sick man."

"I was wise to take him home to-day. To-morrow will be Sunday - heavy traffic on the road. I don't like those once-a-week drivers," said Harry.

"You were away fourteen hours. You left at seven in the morning; it's only a few minutes past nine now."

Harry Vincent picked up the ear phones and listened a while. Then he tapped a brief message.

"Reporting my return," Harry explained to Weston. Then:

"Well," he said, "we have our instructions. Nothing to do until Tuesday. Then intercept the sixth man - if possible. I hope we have the same luck that Duncan and I ran into when we discovered you."

"By the way," said the Englishman, "you said that you expected to pick up special instructions in New York. Did you receive them?"

"That's right!" exclaimed Harry. "An envelope was waiting for me at Duncan's house. Abdul gave it to me. Here it is."

Harry read the letter carefully, then tossed the paper into the fire. The Englishman noted that it turned over as it fell, but he did not observe writing on either side. The fact struck him as curious, yet he made no comment.

"Important instructions," said Harry. "First, no more wireless messages are necessary until Tuesday. We must be careful in our actions. We are to use our own judgment in finding the sixth man."

"Good," remarked the Englishman approvingly.

"If we find the man," resumed Harry, "I shall report immediately. But we must not, under any circumstances, tell him of Bruce Duncan's miraculous escape."

"Why not?"

"It sounds too incredible. Our story is simply this: Duncan and I met you by chance and explained matters. We decided not to visit the meeting place at the time appointed. Duncan, acting independently, disappeared. We do not know where he is. We cannot understand it.

"We are afraid that he visited the ruins at midnight, yet we can scarcely believe that he could have been so foolhardy as to have gone alone. We are acting cautiously; hence we have not investigated. We know that danger lurks, and we are waiting for the crucial time before we take a single step. That time will be Wednesday - the day originally set for the authentic meeting."

"Very well," agreed the Englishman. "I must confess that I would not have believed Duncan's story under ordinary circumstances. The idea seems to me to be the correct one. Let us set our minds to it; in all our conversation, we must speak of Duncan as one who has disappeared."

BOTH men considered the matter mentally, and their thoughts concurred. After all, Bruce Duncan had actually disappeared. Their story was one of fact. The theory that Duncan might have gone, prepared for

danger, to the meeting place was a correct deduction. To say that he had not returned would certainly be a curbing influence upon the sixth man. It would make him quite willing to abide by the wishes of Vincent and Weston, to follow any instructions that they might receive.

"I wonder why Bruce Duncan does not return," remarked the Englishman casually as he lighted his pipe.

Vincent smiled. The major was accustoming himself to the story already. Vincent opened the front door a trifle. The room was smoky from the fire.

"What have you been doing all day?" he asked the Englishman.

"I tramped down to the village," said Weston. "A long hike it was. I was there most of the day."

"That was a mistake," observed Harry. "You might have been seen."

"By whom? I told my name to no one. You and Duncan went to the village frequently, didn't you?"

"Yes; but our case was different. We established a reason for being here. We even had Pennsylvania licenses on our car. You are here alone, with no reason for your presence. You are obviously a Britisher. The natives are apt to talk about you."

"Right-o," said the Englishman. "I never considered it in that light. What shall I do? Stay around here?"

"I guess that's the only thing to do. You might climb Rocky Summit to-morrow. That's the mountain from which Duncan and I observed the old ruined house."

"Topping idea," declared Weston. "By the way, what do you suppose has become of our friend Duncan?"

"I don't know," said Vincent, repressing a smile at the major's persistency in sticking to the trumped-up story.

"What plan do you have concerning the sixth man?" questioned Major Weston. "Shall we watch the station or the bus?"

"We'll go downtown in the afternoon," declared Harry. "He may come in on the early train, as you did. If we have no luck, you ride on the bus from the station. I'll take you downtown in time for the last trip. You will probably not be noticed that late at night. Try to open conversation with any passenger who seems likely to be the man. If he is on the bus, he will get off at Ridge Road. You can get off, too; I will be waiting there."

"An excellent plan. Perhaps I can discover the chap and begin negotiations on the bus."

"That's the very idea I was suggesting."

HARRY rose and walked toward the door. Major Weston followed him. The two men stood on the porch, breathing the cool mountain air.

"How do you like this district, Major Weston?" inquired Harry.

"The place is delightful," replied the Englishman. "This has been an enjoyable week - but for our worries over Bruce Duncan - and I am glad to be here. Tomorrow I shall climb Rocky Summit. Will you accompany me?"

"I had better stay here," replied Harry. "There's another reason why I am sorry you went to the village.

One of us should be here all along, on account of the wireless."

"I believe you are right. I should not have gone to the village. In fact, it was after dark when I started back. A man gave me a lift."

"Who was he - a native?"

"I don't believe so. I couldn't see his face in the dark. He talked as though he came from the city. He brought me along Mountain Pike as far as our road."

"You didn't tell him where you were staying?" Vincent's voice seemed anxious.

"No, indeed. I merely mentioned that I was stopping at a house near by."

Harry Vincent became suddenly alert. He drew a flashlight from his pocket and turned a glare of light on the ground in front of the porch.

"What is it?" asked Weston.

"Thought I heard something out there," replied Harry. "I must have been mistaken. It sounded like a crackling twig."

"Probably some small animal."

"I suppose so. The woods are full of them."

Harry pocketed the flashlight. Accompanied by Major Weston, he reentered the cottage. Harry closed the door behind him.

CHAPTER XXXV. THE SIXTH MAN

A STRANGER alighted from the afternoon train at Culbertville. He was a dapper man of rather good appearance, his pointed mustache forming a thin black line beneath his aquiline nose. He glanced leisurely about him and looked with interest at the bus which was loading passengers for its trip across the mountains.

He approached as though to speak to the bus driver. Then, apparently changing his mind, he sat on a bench of the station platform. Even when the bus got under way, he made no move.

The stranger finished a cigarette, then strolled across the street and stopped to light another cigarette beside a parked coupe. Two men were seated in the automobile. The stranger noticed them as he raised his head.

"Pardon me," he said with a pleasant smile. "Which direction do I go to find the road called Mountain Pike?"

"Straight ahead," said the young man at the wheel of the car. "But if you are going up Mountain Pike you should have taken the bus."

"I realize that," replied the stranger. "But I can take the bus on its next trip."

"That isn't until late at night - half past eleven, to be exact."

"I'm in no hurry," said the stranger with a shrug of his shoulders.

"We are driving in that direction," said the man at the wheel. "You are quite welcome to go with us."

The stranger hesitated.

"You would be overcrowded," he said.

"Certainly not," came the reply. "There's room for three of us. Come along if you wish."

The stranger accepted the invitation. The man at the side of the driver shifted to the left to allow room.

"My name is Vincent," said the man at the wheel, "and this gentleman is Major Weston."

"Glad to meet you," said the stranger. "My name is Garrison Cooper."

"How far along the pike are you going?"

"I'm not quite sure. I expect to stop off at a road somewhere on the way. Let me think a moment - the name slips my mind."

"Ridge Road?"

"That's it. How did you happen to name it so quickly?"

Vincent laughed.

"We live near Ridge Road," he said. "We have a cottage about half a mile beyond. Would you like to run up and see the place?"

Cooper studied Vincent rather quizzically. The invitation had been given in a friendly, matter-of-fact manner.

"I suppose so," said Cooper. He seemed a trifle uneasy for the moment.

WHEN the car pulled up in front of the cottage, Cooper was the first to alight.

"He's our man," whispered Weston.

"I know," replied Harry. "We must give him the information."

They ushered the newcomer into the cottage. The man's eyes expressed interest as he observed the wireless equipment.

"What's this?" he exclaimed. "A sending station?"

"Yes," responded Vincent.

"What is its range?"

"Only a few hundred miles. But we can receive from a great distance."

"Even from Russia," said Major Weston.

Wheeling about, Cooper stared at the Englishman. His face seemed excited; his hands and arms trembled nervously.

"Why did you say that?" he exclaimed.

"Because I believed it would interest you," said the Englishman. "Mr. Cooper, I am your friend. Like you, I have an interest in Russia." He drew a paper from his pocket and unfolded it before the eyes of the astonished guest.

"This came to me a few months ago," explained Weston. "It bears the seal of Prince Samanov."

Cooper seized the paper and studied it with eager eyes. He examined the seal closely.

"It is the same as the one I received," he said at length. "But why have you kept it? I destroyed mine. I suspected that there might be others, but I was not sure."

"Why did you destroy it?"

"Because I wished no one to see it. I read the message and remembered it. I received a second also. Did you?"

"Yes. I have it here."

Cooper uttered a sharp cry as he read the second message.

"You were told to come eight days ahead! My second letter set the meeting but one day in advance. Tonight, instead of Wednesday. Did you go last Tuesday night?"

The Englishman shook his head.

"I learned that the second letter was a forgery," he said. "It was a snare to lure me to my death."

Cooper's face betrayed signs of fright as he sank into a chair. He listened intently as Hubert Weston told the story in terse, cold words.

"So you did not go!" exclaimed Cooper when the major had finished his account. "But what became of young Duncan? He could not have been foolish enough to have gone in your place."

"We fear that he was," said Weston in a hushed voice. "He has been gone one week. Gone - perhaps to the same death encountered by the other four. You and I may be the sole survivors. We are indeed fortunate."

"What shall I do?" questioned Cooper. "Stay here with you to-night? I cannot go alone."

"Stay here, certainly. That fits in with our plan. We attack to-morrow night. Three of us. We had hoped to have four - Duncan, as well as yourself. Even now we outnumber the two who are at the old ruin. I doubt that they have others with them, although there might be one extra man."

"The ape-man is powerful," interposed Vincent. "Do not forget that. I have encountered him."

"Why not go to-night?" questioned Cooper.

"We must abide by the decision of the man who is directing us. We are following our chief's plans."

Garrison Cooper nodded. Then he addressed Major Weston.

"It is fortunate, after all," he said, "that you kept the messages which bore Prince Samanov's seal. I destroyed mine for a very definite reason. I had received a letter from Prince Samanov some time after the Russian Revolution. It was a very personal letter, and in it were instructions to destroy it and all similar communications. I considered these last messages as similar communications."

"What was your connection with my friend, the prince?" asked the Englishman.

"I met him in France," said Cooper. "I loaned him a considerable amount of money, with no security other than his word. I supposed that at this meeting the debt would be repaid. I could see no danger in coming, but I did realize that there was need for secrecy, as Prince Samanov's agent might have had difficulty leaving Russia."

"Have you come far?"

"From Providence, Rhode Island."

HARRY VINCENT was busy with the wireless. Garrison Cooper was curious as Major Weston peered into the box that stood on the table. He waited until the message had been sent.

"What is that instrument?" he inquired.

"A static eliminator," explained Harry. "It was put in here the -"

"A very ingenious device," broke in Major Weston. "It was here when I came."

"Yes," agreed Harry. "It was put in here by Duncan and myself the night we first came to the cottage. It was part of the equipment."

He threw a thankful glance at Weston. Harry had caught himself just in time. Had he finished his sentence by saying "the night that Duncan disappeared," he would have revealed the fact that The Shadow had paid a mysterious visit to the cottage.

Bruce Duncan had described his adventure to Harry and Weston, during the rational moments that he had had. They realized the part that The Shadow must have played, and the wireless message the next day had explained why the new instrument had been added to the wireless set.

A reply came to Harry's message.

"Same instructions," announced the young man. "Let matters rest to-night. The fact that Cooper does not appear will not change matters in the least. The big event will be to-morrow night. Chefano must remain there to meet the agent of Prince Samanov."

"But when will that man arrive?" asked Cooper.

"We don't know. Possibly in advance of midnight. We are to receive our final orders to-morrow afternoon."

The three men drove to a town on the other side of the mountains for dinner. Harry advised against going to Culbertville. After they had made their trip, he urged his companions to remain in the new town during the evening. As a result, they did not get back to the cottage until after midnight.

"Well, that's over," said Harry as they entered the house. "I'm glad we were away from here at midnight. I was afraid one of you might have become venturesome - as we presume Duncan did."

"Poor Duncan," said Major Weston. "If he did fall into the trap, Chefano probably supposed that it was I. He may have been the fifth man that died."

Garrison Cooper shuddered.

"I was to have been the sixth victim," he murmured. "I am glad it is past midnight!"

Cooper was to sleep in the room which Duncan had occupied. Major Weston went upstairs, leading the way. Harry Vincent remained by the wireless instrument, apparently to make a final call.

He remained there for a full hour. Then he tiptoed noiselessly upstairs. He listened at the two closed doors - first at Cooper's, then at Weston's. Assured that both men were asleep, he retired.

CHAPTER XXXVI. THE SURPRISE

WEDNESDAY was a day of waiting. After one o'clock in the afternoon, Harry sent a few calls, but did not receive a response until nearly six. He repeated the message to his companions:

"Further instructions will follow soon. Unless you are notified differently, follow this plan. Move at eleven o'clock, with Weston and Cooper. Surprise Chefano and the ape-man. Watch out for a third man called Frenchy. He may be in hiding. Wait outside the gates from nine o'clock on, in case the agent of Prince Samanov arrives early. Attack at eleven whether he has come or not. Then wait to meet him. You will not be aided. You three should be sufficient. Circumstances make assistance difficult. Report immediately after operations."

Harry still kept the ear phones on his head in response to a "Stand by" that had followed the message. Code words came again, bringing unexpected instructions. Harry repeated the message aloud:

"Send Major Weston to look at the cabin in the woods. He must go immediately. Tell him to make sure that it is deserted."

The Englishman left the cottage. Presently another message came.

If Weston has gone, call me to that effect. Be sure that the static eliminator is working. Tell Cooper to watch it.

Harry reached for the sending key. He motioned to Garrison Cooper and pointed toward the box on the table.

"Look in there," he said. "Be sure that the lights change regularly. The static must be bad."

Cooper followed instructions while Harry called. Receiving the reply, he gave the information that Weston had left to investigate the old cabin. The answer came quickly:

O.K. Stand by. Important.

Harry waved Cooper from the instrument on the table. He removed his ear phones as he noticed the man's lips were moving.

"I'm worried about Weston," said Cooper nervously. "Suppose I go out on the porch and watch for him?"

"All right," said Harry. "But stay there until I come. There's no danger at the old cabin. This is just a precaution, I suppose."

He clamped the ear phones on his head as Cooper left by the front door. A few minutes elapsed. Then came another message:

Important. The stated time of operations remains the same. But immediately upon the return of Major Weston, tell Cooper that -

The message ceased suddenly. Something seemed to have gone wrong with the receiving apparatus. Harry removed the ear phones and began an investigation. Then he went to the door. Cooper was standing on the steps, looking toward the woods.

"Something has gone wrong with the wireless," said Harry.

"Have you found the trouble?" asked Cooper anxiously.

"No," replied Harry. "Have you seen Weston?"

"Not yet."

"I guess he'll be back any minute now. I'll try to locate the trouble."

"Maybe it's the aerial."

Harry went out to see. Cooper's surmise was correct. One end of the aerial had dropped from the side of the house. The other end was attached to a tree. A moderate wind was blowing, and Harry supposed that the swaying of the tree had caused the damage. He obtained a ladder from the back of the cottage.

Cooper went in the house for a pair of pliers. As he arrived with them, Major Weston appeared from the woods.

"Can I help?" he asked.

"I'll have it fixed in a few minutes," said Harry from the top of the ladder. "Cooper can help if necessary."

THE Englishman went in the house. He was smoking his pipe in the corner when Harry entered with Cooper. There was more difficulty with the wireless. Harry made a thorough inspection before he finally mended the trouble. He had wasted nearly an hour.

He began to call, but received no response. He joined his companions at a cold supper, then returned to his operating, with no result.

"It's nearly nine o'clock," observed Major Weston.

The Englishman was right. The time had arrived for them to start, and Harry had not received The Shadow's final message! He wondered what it could have been. The accident to the aerial and the trouble with the set had been a strange coincidence.

Yet Cooper had been on the porch when the first occurred, and Weston had been indoors on the second occasion. No one could have approached the cabin to tamper with the equipment without having been seen. There might be some reason why either Weston or Cooper could have wished to stop the wireless message, but certainly both men would not have desired it.

Harry Vincent's mind was filled with absurd doubts. Then he realized that The Shadow had planned tonight's operations, and that the mysterious director had included both the Englishman and the newcomer in his instructions.

The set was working now, yet there had been no response, which evidently signified that the interrupted message had been of minor consequence.

It was dark outside. The night was clear, and the moon had not yet risen. Harry calculated that it would not become bright until very late - perhaps after midnight. It was imperative however, that they should start at once.

He produced three automatics. Each of his companions took a pistol. Harry extinguished the lamps in the cottage.

They arrived at the gates in silence. Two hours to wait. They were long hours during which the three men were impatient, although Weston passed the time rather easily by smoking his pipe, keeping his hand around the bowl to prevent the sparks from blowing. The wind sobbed eerily through the trees.

"Eleven o'clock!"

At Harry's announcement, the trio entered the gates and stole up the driveway. The moon was rising; the corner tower of the old ruin was plainly visible in the dim light. Harry led the way, keeping well in the shadow of overhanging trees.

It was pitch-black in the shelter of the old ruin. All was quiet; the wind had ceased its low moaning with the rising of the moon. The three men reached the stone steps that led to the cellar. They could see the light from the passage.

"I'll go first," whispered Harry. "Cooper next. Weston last. We must watch the rear. Keep by the steps here, major. Do not enter too far. Keep in touch with us."

They huddled in a silent group.

"Do not fire unless absolutely necessary," whispered Harry. "Capture them, if possible - Chefano and his ape-man. But we must guard against a third - in case there is another here."

He did not explain the reason to Cooper, but the Englishman grunted affirmatively in the darkness. Major Weston was familiar with the details of Bruce Duncan's experience.

"Remember," cautioned Harry, "that the Russian may be here soon. If he should hear shots, he might be alarmed. Hence we must work silently if possible. We are not expected. We can make a surprise attack."

He entered the passage, moving noiselessly. Cooper followed, and as they neared the end of the passage, Harry made signs for the man to watch the door at the end. Cooper nodded that he understood.

When he reached the turn to the right, Harry crouched cautiously. Then, with sudden action, he leaped into the lighted room. He saw Chefano at the table, the ape-faced man lying on the floor beside him. As the two rose, Harry covered them with his automatic.

Consternation appeared on Chefano's twisted lips. The ape-man snarled at the sight of the gun. The creature had leaped upward; now it sank back as Chefano raised his hands.

"Come on!" called Harry.

Cooper rushed into the room, and Weston appeared at the end of the passage.

"Watch that door, major," ordered Harry. "See if there's any one behind it."

The heavy-set Englishman turned on a flashlight. He opened the door and threw the gleam beyond.

"It's a small room," he said. "Two steps down. Empty."

He made an investigation and returned.

"Solid walls," he declared. "It's a regular vault. No other entrance."

"Good," decided Harry. "We'll put them in there."

He ordered Chefano to stand.

"No foolishness," he declared. "Go down in that room and call your creature with you. Any false move - by either you or the ape-man - and it's bullets for you, Bernardo Chefano."

The twisted lips were ugly as Chefano arose and obeyed. He hissed his commanding whistle. The cowed ape-man followed. Weston stood in the passage, his automatic ready, as the prisoners entered the vault.

Harry was at the head of the steps, covering the scene with his flashlight. The Englishman joined the prisoners and calmly searched their clothes; the ape-man cowered during the operation. Weston took a revolver from Chefano's pocket.

"No trouble from them now," he said calmly.

He closed the door of the vault; it had a heavy hasp which the Englishman attached to the staple on the doorway, wedging the fastening in place with a bolt that was there for the purpose.

COOPER smiled in a relieved way.

"You fellows have nerve," he said. "I'll admit I was scared. You handled them as easily as if they were babies. Well, we have them now. But maybe there's some one else near by."

"We'll watch for that," declared Harry. "Two of us can remain in this room, which is evidently the meeting place. The third must stand guard in the passage."

"I'm willing," said Cooper. "What shall I do?"

"Keep your back against the door to the vault. You can hear anything that happens there. Have your automatic ready. Then keep looking down the passage. The moment that you hear any one, come in here. If it is an enemy, we will be ready for him. If it is the messenger that we expected, we can explain everything to his satisfaction."

"Good," agreed Major Weston.

Harry sat beside the Englishman at the table. He held his automatic in readiness for a sign from Cooper, who had taken his place on guard.

"There must be only two of them to-night," remarked Vincent in a low voice which only Major Weston could hear.

"Duncan said there was a third," replied the Englishman quietly.

"Yes," affirmed Harry. "A man called Frenchy. I don't think he's here. He's not needed. Chefano has the insignia. He should receive the money without question."

"The insignia!" exclaimed the Englishman in a louder tone. "Chefano didn't have it when I searched him! It must be somewhere in the room!"

Harry examined the table. It had no drawer. His eyes roamed about the room. There was a coffinlike box in one corner; opposite it were two smaller boxes.

He laid his automatic on the table and went to inspect. Inside the top box of the two he found some envelopes and a small wooden case.

"Look at these," he exclaimed.

Major Weston glanced to make sure that Cooper was on guard. The man was looking in the room.

"Watch the passageway," cautioned the Englishman. "You can look at these later."

Cooper obeyed. Weston laid his automatic on the box upon which he had been seated and joined Harry.

"Well!" came the voice of Cooper from the doorway.

The others turned. They were staring into the muzzle of Cooper's automatic. A jeering laugh came from the man in the doorway.

"Easy, eh!" he exclaimed. "You thought Chefano, and Jupe were easy! You are the easy ones! You thought there might be another man in the gang, but you never suspected he was with you all the time!"

Harry Vincent and Major Weston were as motionless as statues. The unexpected climax had rendered them powerless. Transfixed with amazement, they watched their former companion stride to the table and pick up their pistols. He still covered them with his own gun.

Cooper's face was malicious as he ordered his prisoners to raise their hands above their heads. His good-natured smile had become an evil grin. The fingers of his left hand tugged at his mustache and pulled the adornment from his lip.

"Garrison Cooper!" he exclaimed. "Garrison Cooper died a month ago. He was the sixth man; he carried his secret to his grave, for he destroyed both letters after he received them. He died from a heart attack. We didn't expect him to come here after we learned of his death. Only the living can come - and they do not leave.

"I don't even look like Garrison Cooper. But you didn't know that. My name is - well, they call me 'Frenchy'; that's enough. I'm Chefano's trump card - his ace in the hole. He left the game in my hands, and I've won!"

Frenchy's white teeth gleamed as he surveyed the men he had betrayed.

CHAPTER XXXVII. THE TORTURE CHAMBER

A LITTLE group of men came into the moonlight, up the stone steps from the passage that extended beneath the old stone ruin. Harry Vincent and Major Weston were in advance, their arms raised. Frenchy followed, threatening with his automatic. Chefano and Jupe, released from their dungeon, were at the rear.

Chefano took the lead after they had reached the ground. Following a curt command from Frenchy the prisoners walked after Chefano. His path led back toward the lane, but he turned left at the end of the building and stopped at a pair of stone steps that descended beneath the old tower to light a lantern.

The prisoners were taken into a low-ceilinged room that seemed dull and tomblike in the gloom. A doorway showed at the farther corner. It had steps that evidently went up into the stone tower.

In the center of the room was a low, flat table. Chains rested on one end; at the other edge was a long

roller of wood that was set in two upright posts. At each end, by a post, was a four-armed winch; these winches were crudely fashioned of wooden spokes. There were chains attached to the roller and chains at the lower end of the table.

"Place them on the table," ordered Chefano.

"Lie down on the table," commanded Frenchy.

Both Harry and the major hesitated.

"Lie down," commanded Frenchy again. "Call Jupe, Chefano. He can take care of them."

Avoiding this threat of the ape-man, the prisoners obeyed. The table was barely wide enough for both of them. At Chefano's directions they placed their feet at the lower end, with their heads a few feet below the roller.

Chefano leered as he fastened their ankles to the bottom of the table and attached the chains of the roller to their wrists. Their arms were extended above them; they were stretched between the ends of the table.

"What's this idea?" questioned Frenchy.

"A rack," said Chefano, hanging the light from the ceiling. "The table was here when I came. So I constructed the posts and the roller. It's exactly like the racks they used in Italy years ago to make prisoners talk. When the roller is tightened, the chains stretch the body between. When the body begins to stretch, the tongue begins to wag.

"I had it ready in case we might need information from some one, but there was no occasion to use it. It was planned for one, but I altered it because of the width of the table."

FRENCHY grinned in admiration.

"You turn the winches, eh?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Chefano. "There is a ratchet on each one. The wheel will not go back. One man can operate both by going from one to the other."

"But we don't need to find out anything from these men, Chefano. I was with them. I know their story."

"It will be good amusement for Jupe," said the heartless Chefano. "I don't want him around when our next visitor arrives. He might excite suspicion. I don't contemplate trouble with the last man. I have the credentials."

"This one is Major Weston," said Frenchy, indicating the Englishman as one would point out an article of furniture.

"Weston!" exclaimed Chefano. "I thought he was the man we buried alive!"

"That was young Duncan. He and this other fellow - whose name is Vincent - met Weston last Tuesday night and warned him. Duncan was hot for excitement, and came up here alone. That was why he made so much trouble. He was prepared for you and Jupe - but not for me.

"I stayed around the town a bit last week. I had a hunch that something might be wrong. I saw Weston in the village. Plainly, he was an Englishman. I followed him to the cottage where he was staying with Vincent. I listened in, and learned part of their game. So I showed up yesterday and let them think I was

Garrison Cooper."

"You've been with them since last night!"

"Of course. They had radio communication with New York, or some place, getting instructions from some fellow they call The Shadow. I put the wireless out of commission this afternoon just to be safe."

The words revealed the truth to Harry Vincent. Frenchy had broken the aerial when he went out on the porch; he had tampered with the set when he had been sent into the house for pliers!

"They're working alone now," concluded Frenchy. "So it's up to you. But I'd advise you to let Jupe strangle them and finish the job right now."

"He will strangle them before it's over," announced Chefano as he rolled his lips. "As soon as they commence to shout he'll leave the winches and choke them. We'll let him use the rack for a while. It will amuse him."

He made signs to the ape-man. Jupe had evidently been instructed previously in the use of the rack. The inhuman creature snarled to show that it understood its work.

"Come on," said Chefano. "The Russian may be here. Leave the light so Jupe can see what he is doing."

"One of us had better come back every now and then to see that everything is all right."

"Yes; we'll do that. But don't worry about Jupe. Come along."

The ape-faced creature walked about the table after the two men had gone. It thrust its ugly face above the eyes of the chained men and snarled. It laid its claws upon Vincent's throat, and for a moment he thought the end was near. But the creature evidently remembered its instructions, for it went to the end of the table and clutched one of the winches.

Click! The winch turned a notch. Jupe moved to the other side of the table. There was a click from the second winch.

The ape-man repeated the operations. Harry Vincent could feel the tightening of his arms.

"What about it?" he asked grimly, turning his head toward the Englishman. "Shall we shout and let the beast choke us?"

"Carry on a bit," replied the major.

THE ape-faced man moved slowly from one side of the table to the other, pausing in between to stare over the end of the rack and view the faces of his victims. The roller had pulled the chains taut now; the next turn of the winch brought a groan of agony from Harry. The Englishman caught his breath as the winch on his side was turned.

"I'm going to shout," groaned Harry, "while I have strength."

He saw the hideous face of the ape-man grinning down upon him. He opened his mouth for the cry that would bring death. Strangulation would be pleasant as a relief from this torture.

But before Harry could shout, he saw the monster raise its head and snarl. It was looking at something at the foot of the rack. It seemed about to spring over the bodies of the prisoners.

There, at the foot of the table, stood a black-robed figure that completed the sinister aspect of this torture

chamber. It was like some dark phantom of the past, a veritable inquisitor of the Middle Ages. Its face was hidden by its robes, but through the black coverings one could feel the piercing dagger of two eyes - eyes that burned.

The ape-man did not leap upon the table. Instead he ran around to the side, snarling as he approached the opposite end. Then, from the black-robed form came a hissing whistle - the signal which the monster had been taught to obey. Jupe stopped and crouched beside the table.

"It's Chefano," gasped Harry. "Chefano, come to see us suffer."

"Stay there, Jupe," came the order.

The black-robed figure moved to the top of the table; it leaned over the faces of the stretched men, and its huge shadow seemed to bury them in blackness. Harry felt those eyes upon him. It spoke again - but no longer in Chefano's voice. Its words were uttered in a strange, sibilant whisper that Vincent recognized from the past.

"Attack Chefano and Frenchy," said the deliberate voice. "You will find weapons beside the stone steps. The two men are within the meeting room. I shall handle the monster."

The winches were released. With amazing quickness the mysterious figure in black released the prisoners. Jupe began to snarl. The hissing whistle silenced him. But as the men on the table raised themselves to a sitting position, the monster sensed that it had been deceived. With a hideous cry of rage, it sprang toward the cloaked being.

Harry saw the tall form merge into the shadows at the end of the room. The ape-man missed his goal.

"Hurry!" came the commanding whisper. "Go!"

Jupe's sharp eyes detected the figure in the gloom. The ape-man, his arms extended wide, approached the shadowy form, to drive it toward the corner. Harry and the major were on the floor, hurrying toward the door as fast as their limbs would respond.

Glancing over his shoulder, Harry saw the black-robed shape elude the ape-man's grasp. With amazing speed it gained the stairway in the corner of the room; it vanished upward in the darkness, with the snarling monster in pursuit.

Down from the stairs, through the low-ceilinged room, echoed a hollow, mocking laugh.

It was a sinister laugh - a laugh more terrifying than the torture of the rack!

CHAPTER XXXVIII. THE FIGHT ON THE TOWER

CHEFANO and his evil accomplice, Frenchy, were completely surprised when their former prisoners appeared in the doorway of the meeting room. The two men were engaged in tense conversation over the table. They looked up when Vincent and the Englishman entered. Weakly, the crooks raised their hands at sight of the two pistols.

Harry ordered them outside the building. Major Weston had discovered a rope in the corner of the room. While Harry covered the captives with his gun, the Englishman bound them and toppled them to the ground. He put their guns in his own pockets.

Their work had been quickly done; now Harry thought of the torture chamber and the stairs to the tower. The Shadow had rescued them; now he was at bay! Superman though he might be, this strange being of

the night was human, and his retreat was cut off by the terrible ape-man, who possessed the strength of a gorilla!

The thought maddened Harry. He pictured a lifeless body on the winding stairs that led to the tower, with Jupe snarling above his fallen prey.

The Shadow's aid ran toward the ruin, and a cry came from his throat. Two forms had appeared upon the top of the old tower. One was tall and lithe in the moonlight; the other was a bulky, crouching figure.

Major Weston had heard Harry's cry. The Englishman raised his automatic. It was a long shot, but his aim was on the ape-man when Harry seized his arm. The two figures had closed together; they were locked in conflict!

The sight was weird and amazing. The Englishman uttered a cry of surprise as he saw the tall figure push the bulky one backward. It was unbelievable that the strange fighter in black could resist the power of the ape-faced monster.

Yet the conflict seemed equal. The ape-man was recovering now, and for a moment The Shadow appeared weakened. Then both forms stood motionless, apparently at ease. But the observers on the ground knew that each of them was using all his strength.

"I'm going up the stairs!" exclaimed Harry.

"Wait!" Major Weston's voice was commanding. "You can do nothing on the tower. You would be hurled aside in that terrible struggle. Your place is here with me. If they separate for an instant we must shoot to kill the monster."

They watched the battle helplessly. At times the figures swayed. Once the ape-man staggered backward, and the major's finger was on the trigger of his automatic. The next instant The Shadow had followed up his advantage. Again the grappling shapes were locked.

Minutes went by - terrible, tense minutes - while the weird fray continued beneath the glare of the risen moon. Then the strength of the ape-faced man became more apparent. It was Jupe who was fighting strongly now.

"There will be a break," promised Weston, his voice betraying his anxiety. "My aim is true, even at this distance. But I must wait until they are apart."

"The monster is forcing the fight," groaned Harry. "We cannot wait long. It will be too late."

As if in answer to the gloomy prophecy, the two forms on the top of the tower moved steadily toward the parapet. For a tragic moment the figure of The Shadow seemed to lean over the edge. Then, imbued with sudden strength, it regained its former position. Yet the ape-man still held the advantage.

Again human strength began to yield as the power of the fiend increased. The Shadow's form seemed to collapse, going down beneath the bulk of the fierce monster. It reappeared, a twisted shape, half-thrust from the edge of the ruined tower.

Two long arms lost their clutch on the ape-man. They spread apart and grasped the low stone parapet. The head and shoulders of The Shadow were projecting above the wall. The cloaked avenger was making his last fight for life!

Then came the sickening finish. The Shadow rose in one final effort. He staggered, arms wide, his black cloak fluttering in the night breeze. Weston's automatic thundered as Jupe stepped back for the spring,

but the shot went wide. The ape-man merged with his faltering victim. The tall form was lifted upward. Then it was head downward; the cloak draping on the parapet. The two figures sank as the monster crouched to throw its victim to the ground beneath.

A portion of the parapet gave way as the fighters flattened against it, and a living form fell with the shower of stones, the black robe winding about it as it crashed to its doom on the stones beneath. A crouching figure was silhouetted on the tower.

The Englishman's eyes had rested for an instant upon the shapeless mass that lay among the ruins of the old building. Instinctively he had followed its fatal fall. Now he saw the sinister form by the broken parapet, but as he fired a well-aimed shot, the figure disappeared.

Harry Vincent was clambering over the ruined building, risking his limbs amid the loose stones. His companion followed him. Their one thought was for the man who had fallen. Perhaps through some miracle The Shadow was still alive!

The black robe covered the body. In the glare of the Englishman's flashlight, Harry pulled the cloak aside and stared at the upturned face. A cry of amazement followed. It came from Harry Vincent.

He was looking at the evil countenance of Jupe, the ape-man. In its final spring the monster had become entangled in the black robe of The Shadow. Its powerful body had broken the crumbling parapet. The fierce creature had plunged headlong to its death while The Shadow had managed to hold on in safety as the cloak ripped from his shoulders.

The crouching figure that had remained on the tower was The Shadow!

A sudden noise startled Harry. He looked back toward the entrance to the cellar. Two men were fleeing through the moonlight toward the woods. They were well away, close together. One of them appeared to be carrying something. Chefano and Frenchy were free!

"We cannot stop them," cried Major Weston. "One of them must have slipped the ropes and aided the other."

Harry watched the men as they vanished among the trees. He clambered back over the loose stones. Reaching the steps, he entered the passage, with the major close behind.

"Where are you going?" asked the Englishman.

"To get the wooden box," replied Vincent. "It was intended as a coffin. It will do for the ape-man's body."

"Hush!" exclaimed the major, as they reached the end of the passage. "I hear something."

A moaning sound came from behind the door of the vault. They opened the barrier. Their flashlights showed a man lying on the floor, bound with ropes. They released him. The Englishman uttered a cry of recognition when he saw the man's face.

"It's Berchik!!" he exclaimed. "I remember him! Samanov's trusted servant. He is the messenger. They captured him! He must have come while we were in the torture chamber!"

"And now they are gone," muttered Vincent. "Chefano and Frenchy - gone - gone with the stolen wealth."

CHAPTER XXXIX. THE HAND OF THE SHADOW

A LOW-BUILT coupe was whirling along a Pennsylvania highway, its yellow hood shining in the moonlight. Two men were laughing as they watched the road flow rapidly beneath the wheels of the car.

"Great work, Frenchy," said the man at the right. He turned and opened a box that lay in the center of the seat.

The box was cubical, measuring approximately one foot in each dimension. It rested free between Chefano and Frenchy; its opened lid revealed a shimmer of sparkling contents that caught the glint of the dash light. Chefano closed the lid and turned a key. Leaning back, he stared forward through the windshield.

"Lucky it was gems instead of gold," asserted Frenchy, his eyes intent on the road ahead. "They must have used the gold for other purposes and sent the sparklers over here because they were easier to carry."

"That's probably the idea," said Chefano. "I wonder how that messenger brought them in. He must have smuggled them."

"Getting by the American customs would be easy," was Frenchy's reply. "Easy, compared to sneaking them out of Russia. Why worry about it, Chefano? We've got them. That's enough."

"Yes, and we're lucky. I wonder who it was that let those fellows loose. Could it have been The Shadow they were talking about? Was that him fighting Jupe on the tower, do you suppose?"

"Probably. And he got what was coming to him."

"I wonder where Jupe went."

"I suppose he's hiding somewhere. Why think about him? You're better off without him, Chefano. He's done his work. He doesn't know enough to talk, even. He can't give you away if they do catch him."

Chefano laughed. Frenchy could see his lips twist as he gazed in the mirror of the car. He thought he saw a dark form, too, and two tiny spots of light, like fires. It was not wise to watch the mirror, going at his high speed.

"It's been a wild night," said Chefano. "First that little surprise you didn't warn me about. That worked out very nicely when we put the two men on the rack. We handled the Russian messenger in the best possible way. When he walked in with the box under his arm, thinking we must be friends, I couldn't resist it. It was so easy to knock him down without any argument."

"Yes," agreed Frenchy, "but if you had had your way and opened the box right then and there it would have been very bad when Vincent and the Englishman came in. I shoved the box under the table while we decided what to do next. One minute later they popped up."

"We did the best thing when we ran for it," said Chefano. "They never thought to watch us while that fight was going on up at the top of the tower. When I got loose and started to free you, my one idea was to get the box and clear out."

"They couldn't have followed us through the woods," said Frenchy. "If they had known where my car was - in that old barn down the pike - it might have been bad. But once we were away - well, we're going to keep right on going."

"We?" said Chefano sharply. "We? You've been paid for your work, Frenchy. It's my lookout from now on. But you've been so useful that I'm going to give you some extra cash."

"You'll split the swag fifty-fifty," asserted Frenchy.

"What do you mean?" demanded Chefano. "How about Isaac Coffran? I've worked with him for years."

"Leave him out this time."

"Nothing doing. I'm too wise for that, Frenchy. I don't double-cross any one so smart as he is."

"All right. Split it three ways, then."

CHEFANO'S lips twitched as he seemed to consider the matter.

"I'll tell you what, Frenchy," he said. "Twenty-five per cent for you, deducting what you've already received. That is, if Coffran will agree."

Frenchy's teeth shone as he smiled. He did not reply at once. The car was following a curving course; his eyes were on the road as he tried to maintain the rapid speed.

At last he spoke.

"That might do," he said. "But when you figure that we have the swag now - all ours - here in this car -"

He stopped as Chefano uttered a sharp exclamation. Frenchy looked down at the jewel box. A hand was upon it - a hand that came through the open window at the back of the coupe! Only the hand was visible in the moonlight. Frenchy could not see the arm.

"You have the swag?" whispered a mocking voice. "You are wrong. It is mine!"

The gloved hand lifted the box by the handle. The motion was slow - deliberate - uncanny. Frenchy's eyes had leaped back to the road as he righted the car along a sloping curve.

"I won't stop, Chefano!" he cried. "He can't get away at this speed. We're going too fast. Grab him! It's The Shadow!"

Chefano thrust his hands toward the box, which was almost to the rear window. A black-clad arm swung the box swiftly to the right. It crashed against Chefano's face.

Frenchy's right arm was quick. With a swift glance he directed his motion and caught hold of the box with his hand. He still watched the road, steering the car rapidly around a bend with his left hand on the wheel.

"Help me!" he exclaimed to Chefano.

There was no response. The other man was groggy from the blow he had received.

Frenchy felt the box slipping from his clutch. He turned his head in desperation. He saw a black form at the back window of the car. He threw another glance at the road, then vainly tried to halt the momentum of the car.

Not twenty-five feet ahead was a red light of warning, mounted upon a white fence that marked a sharp turn in the road. It was too late for action then. The automobile smashed the heavy fence as though it had been built of match sticks. Over the edge plunged the car - a sheer drop into the river below.

The men in the car were trapped as the automobile sank beneath the water's surface. The river was deep beneath the cliff. The coupe turned completely over as it fell, tossing its occupants about inside the body.

But before the car reached the water, a long figure shot clear of it and was precipitated twenty feet beyond.

Out in the river a head appeared among the ripples that had followed the tremendous splash. The head seemed to float for a few moments, then the swimmer struck out for shore. He clambered from the river; in his hand he supported a box.

The hand of The Shadow had regained the stolen wealth. The box had been plucked from the death car the instant that it had made its fatal plunge.

But there had been no escape for Frenchy and Chefano. Trapped within the closed doors of the coupe, the crooks had been enveloped by a surge of water through the opened rear window. Their car had sunk into a hollowed depth beneath the cliff. Thirty feet below the stream's surface, two fiends of crime had found their proper doom.

ON the following evening, Harry Vincent and Major Hubert Weston arrived at the home of Bruce Duncan. They brought with them Berchik, the messenger of the late Prince Samanov. They had come following instructions which Vincent had received by wireless early in the morning.

The loss of the Samanov fortune had come as a stunning blow to Bruce. His duty still remained - to recover the jewels and to divide them among the heirs of the unfortunate men who had been murdered.

"We have only one hope," maintained Harry Vincent. "I expect The Shadow to act immediately against Isaac Coffran. The old man is in the game. Through him we may locate the stolen wealth. He must be forced to give us information that will lead us to the two crooks who escaped."

"Isaac Coffran is gone," replied Bruce Duncan soberly. "We have no clue. Remember, Abdul and I have a score to settle with that man. Last night Abdul visited the old house with my consent. The place was empty. The door was unlocked. Everything of value had been removed. Isaac Coffran is too clever to have left a single trace that would tell where he has gone."

The men looked at one another gloomily. Each was thoughtful, but their silence indicated that none of them could propose a course of action.

The door opened. Abdul entered, for once the calm Hindu seemed excited. He was carrying a cube-shaped box; already his fingers were turning the key that projected from its lock. The lid came open as Bruce Duncan seized the casket.

Vivid sparkles flashed from within the box. Out upon the table, Bruce poured a dazzling array of shimmering gems: rubies, sapphires, emeralds, along with glinting diamonds. A rare topaz slid to the edge of the table. Berchik stopped the skidding gem; then dipped his fingers into the mass of treasure.

"The Samanov jewels!" cried the Russian. "Here - all here! They have been regained!"

"Who brought them here?" queried Bruce Duncan, turning to Abdul.

"There was a knock at the door, sahib," declared the Hindu, solemnly. "When I opened the door, the box was upon the steps. I saw no one - no one but a great dark shadow. I saw two burning spots, like eyes. Then they were gone. Only darkness stayed there, sahib."

While the others stared at Abdul in amazement, a thought flashed through Harry Vincent's brain. Those spots that Abdul had seen were living eyes; the burning optics of a weird avenger who had conquered crime. They were eyes that Harry had seen in the past; eyes that he would see again, when he encountered new adventures in the service of a mysterious master whose command meant law to Harry

Vincent.

The eyes of The Shadow!

THE END