



TOWER OF DEATH

by Maxwell Grant

This page copyright © 2002 Blackmask Online.

<http://www.blackmask.com>

- ? [CHAPTER I. A TRAITOR'S PRICE](#)
- ? [CHAPTER II. FROM THE UNDERWORLD](#)
- ? [CHAPTER III. LUSKIN SPEAKS](#)
- ? [CHAPTER IV. THE SHADOW'S TRAIL](#)
- ? [CHAPTER V. THE LEGACY](#)
- ? [CHAPTER VI. THE NEW GUEST](#)
- ? [CHAPTER VII. SHADOWS AT NIGHT](#)
- ? [CHAPTER VIII. IN MONTGARD](#)
- ? [CHAPTER IX. ONE MAN MISSING](#)
- ? [CHAPTER X. JARVIS RALEIGH SPEAKS](#)
- ? [CHAPTER XI. THE FIRST VISITOR](#)
- ? [CHAPTER XII. NEW MYSTERY](#)
- ? [CHAPTER XIII. DEMANDS ARE MET](#)
- ? [CHAPTER XIV. THE SHADOW SEEKS](#)
- ? [CHAPTER XV. CROOKS STRIKE](#)
- ? [CHAPTER XVI. THE AFTERMATH](#)
- ? [CHAPTER XVII. THE INTERLUDE](#)
- ? [CHAPTER XVIII. WORD FROM WITHOUT](#)
- ? [CHAPTER XIX. ONE MORE GONE](#)
- ? [CHAPTER XX. THE SHOWDOWN](#)
- ? [CHAPTER XXI. THE FINAL FIGHT](#)
- ? [CHAPTER XXII. SOLVED SECRETS](#)
- ? [CHAPTER XXIII. THE SHADOW WRITES](#)

CHAPTER I. A TRAITOR'S PRICE

TWO men were seated in a garishly furnished apartment. Beyond the open window came the muffled roar from the street far below. Changing lights of Manhattan formed a flickering glow from the clouded sky.

The appearance of these men was in keeping with the gaudiness of the place. One, attired in a flashy, braided tuxedo, possessed a hard, thick-lipped countenance. The other, though less uncouth, had beady, ratlike eyes that stared from a crafty, evil visage.

Racketeers deluxe, these men were known to the police. The one in the tuxedo was Mallet Haverly, ex-gangster, who had taken up more lucrative pursuits than ordinary thuggery. The other, dressed in loud, checkered attire, was his lieutenant, "Speedy" Tyron.

The two were in conference. Despite the security which they seemed to enjoy in this apartment, it was obvious that both were glum. The reason became apparent when Mallet Haverly broke loose with a deep-throated growl.

"It's a good bet, Speedy," declared Mallet, "if this guy Luskin has really got the dope. But the layout sounds kind of goofy."

"That's why it looks real," returned Speedy. "Say—if that dough's where he says it is—"

"He's not sure. That's the only trouble. Just the same, we're going to chance it. Things are getting too hot here. A little vacation with some heavy work for a wind-up sounds like a good idea."

Speedy Tyron nodded knowingly.

"Tim Lucas went away for a stretch," mused Mallet. "So did Terry Yarkis. Those birds were kind of close to us, Speedy. Now the bulls are looking for Rags Wilkey. New York's no place for him. When they get on the trail of Rags Wilkey—"

"It means we're next," completed Speedy.

"Right" agreed Mallet. "Rags is smart enough to fox the bulls. The only dick who could spot him is Joe Cardona. But it's not healthy for Rags—and that means it's not going to be healthy for us."

Speedy nodded gloomily. He struck a match to light a cigarette while Mallet arose and paced across the room. The chief racketeer was scowling as he walked.

"The bulls aren't all," he admitted. "They didn't knock off Conklin's crew the time he went after the Club Calcutta. You know who it was that gummed the works that time."

"The Shadow," declared Speedy, soberly.

"Right," decided Mallet. "he's got the rackets like that"—Mallet extended a brawny hand and slowly closed his outspread fingers—"and he's closing tight—closing tighter—"

SPEEDY TYRON'S face was troubled as Mallet Haverly paused. The mere mention of The Shadow was a deterring influence to men of crime. Throughout Manhattan, The Shadow was known as the master fighter who dealt with crime. His hand was everywhere; and minions of these racketeers had felt its power of late.

Speedy Tyron started nervously as the telephone bell rang. Mallet Haverly picked up the receiver. His tones were low; his words were brief. He finished the call, with this admonition:

"Yeah... We're washing up... Leaving tonight... Right... Take care of yourself..."

"Rags?" questioned Speedy, as Mallet turned from the telephone.

Mallet nodded.

"Rags Wilkey is getting out of town," he informed, "and so are we. What's more, Speedy, we're dropping the crew that's in New York. I'm using them tonight, for the last time. After we're clear, we'll get hold of some of the old gorillas from the sticks. This new job of ours is going to be a new deal."

Seating himself, Mallet Haverly drew a post card from his pocket. He stared at it for a few moments; then passed it over to Speedy Tyron. The lieutenant gazed with interest at the colored picture on the back of the card.

The scene showed an old house of fantastic structure. The building centered from a tall tower that was topped by a cone-shaped roof. Odd balconies appeared in front of wide, small-paned windows. Smaller turrets topped the wings.

“That's the place,” informed Mallet.

“Looks like a spook joint,” commented Speedy.

“Maybe it is,” affirmed Mallet. “According to Luskin, there were guys who never came out of the place after they went in.”

“And he knows why—”

“So he says. But that's only part of it. The dough is what we're after. Luskin says we can get it—and we're going to try if we have to shoot the works.”

Mallet took back the card from Speedy. He stared at the picture, then read two lettered words in the lower corner—the name of the old mansion and its location.

“Montgard—Glenwood—”

Mallet tore the card to fragments. He lighted the pieces with a match, held them as they burned and finally dropped them in a large ash tray.

“An old bloke named Windrop Raleigh built the place,” mused Mallet. “he made it like a fort, so Luskin says—and Luskin was a servant there for years. Luskin knew more than the old man thought—but he kept mum and hung on hoping he'd get rewarded when the old geezer crooked.”

“Faithful servant stuff.”

“That was it. But Luskin had a wrong steer. He got the grand bounce along with a couple of other servants when Windrop Raleigh went the voyage. Jarvis Raleigh, the old man's son, took over the old house.”

“That was a few months ago?”

“Yeah. Luskin watched the place like a hawk. He wanted to get at the dough. He lived in an old house in the woods, half a mile from Montgard. But he couldn't figure a way to get in.”

“Plenty of windows in the house.”

“Yeah? Did you see those little panes? I'll tell you what Luskin said about them. Those aren't window slats between the little panes. They're steel rods—like bars.

“The only way to get in is through the front door—in the big tower. They keep it bolted—and there's a second door within. Luskin knew all that; he knew he didn't have a chance to crack the place. That's why he gave up the idea of working it alone. He came to New York, looking for a bimbo with a rep. He found me.”

“Say,” laughed Speedy, “Luskin has spilled the whole story, hasn't he? How come he doesn't figure that you might try the game alone?”

“He probably figured it,” returned Mallet, with an odd laugh. “But he knows he has me. Suppose I did let him down. You know what he'd do, don't you?”

“Squeal to the bulls.”

“Sure. That's why he's not worrying. He wants me to take you and a gang out there and use the cottage as a hide-out. When the time's right, we raid the old mansion. That's Luskin's idea.”

MALLET HAVERLY pronounced the last sentence with a harsh chuckle that made Speedy Tyron stare. The lieutenant popped a quick question.

“Luskin's idea, eh?” he asked, “I take it that you're not going to work it the way Luskin has suggested.”

“You've guessed it, Speedy. I'm using a system of my own—working on what Luskin has told me. He's given me the whole story as he knows it—the names of the people in the old house—the terms of the will and all that. So when Luskin shows up tonight, I'm going to make him a proposition. I'm going to get him to step out.”

“You mean—”

“That I'll offer him cash for what he's told me; that I'll promise him plenty if he'll scam.”

“How much?”

“Forty thousand dollars—maybe fifty or—”

“Fifty grand! Have you gone cuckoo, Mallet? That dough for a chance to grab a lot of swag that may not be where you expect it?”

“Wait a minute, Speedy. Think over what I've said—”

The telephone interrupted. Mallet answered it. He leered as he listened at the receiver. He growled orders and hung up.

“Luskin,” said Mallet to Speedy. “I told them to send him up. Just sit still—and listen.”

A few minutes later, a knock sounded at the door. Mallet Haverly opened the barrier to admit a sly, furtive fellow, who glanced suspiciously about the garish room. The visitor stared steadily toward Speedy Tyron.

“Sit down, Luskin,” invited Mallet, in a smooth tone. “Help yourself to one of those cigars. I want to talk to you—a proposition you'll like.”

Luskin nodded as he took a chair. The man's hand was nervous as it struck a match. Mallet approached and chuckled, as he clapped the former servant on the shoulder.

“You've got the jitters. Luskin,” said the racketeer. “I don't blame you. This kind of stuff is new to you. That's why I've been thinking things over.”

“You don't mean,” queried Luskin anxiously. “that you're going to let me down? I'll tell you—it's a sure thing if you'll help. You ought to know I'm on the level, from all I told you a few days ago.”

“You're a square shooter, Luskin,” purred Mallet. “That's why I'm giving you a break. This has got to be a waiting game, played by a cagey crew. It wouldn't be good policy, Luskin, for you to be seen around the town of Glenwood.”

LUSKIN's fingers clawed at the arm chair. The man showed a furious anxiety. He moved his lips to begin a protest, when Mallet intervened.

“Don't get me wrong,” smiled the racketeer. “You'll be in on the money—in advance. Suppose, Luskin, that I offered you solid cash. Real dough—tonight—for the information that you've given me.

“That will let you keep away from Glenwood. You can beat it from New York. When the raid comes,

nobody will know where you are—”

Mallet paused. Luskin's eyes were gleaming. The traitor to his former master was drinking in the scheme with eagerness. Mallet waited for the reply. It came.

“How much?” questioned Luskin, hoarsely.

“Fifty thousand dollars,” replied Mallet, quietly.

Luskin sat back in his chair. His hands relaxed. His eyes half closed at this vision of wealth without crime. His head nodded as a smile showed upon his lips.

“A deal then,” agreed Mallet. “The cash is yours, Luskin. You're getting plenty and I'm taking all the chances. You've told me everything you know?”

“Everything,” nodded Luskin, opening his eyes to stare squarely at the questioner. “Everything I know. All you'll need to know. There's a million—maybe more—and it's worth what you're paying. But you're right about my being nervous. I want to get out of it. Give me the fifty thousand dollars—”

“Positively,” assured Mallet. He picked up the telephone and continued as he dialed a number. “I don't keep big sums here in my apartment, Luskin. I'm calling up the man who has it—”

Mallet broke short as a voice came over the wire. Luskin and Speedy watched the racketeer as he spoke greetings to the man at the other end.

“Bring it,” ordered Mallet, tersely. “Half an hour.”

A smile flickered on Speedy Tyron's lips as the lieutenant watched the steady face of Mallet Haverly. Luskin did not observe Speedy's smile. Hence he gained no suspicion of what was in the lieutenant's mind.

Speedy Tyron had heard Mallet Haverly make such calls in the past. He realized now that his chief had not gone loco. Speedy Tyron knew that Luskin would never see the money offered him as the price of treachery!

CHAPTER II. FROM THE UNDERWORLD

WHILE Mallet Haverly was making terms in his garish uptown apartment, lesser men of crime were holding confab in a less pretentious establishment. Gangsters of ill repute were gathered in an underworld dive known as the Black Ship.

This was a hangout for gorillas. Here one could find the toughest thugs in all Manhattan. Desperadoes who would kill for paltry prices convened at the Black Ship to while away the intervals between the murders which they perpetrated.

The Black Ship was a bad place for stool pigeons. Squealers who worked for the police avoided the dive. The regular customers were a keen lot, always on the lookout for spies of the law. Only mobsters of recognized repute were admitted to the place.

Moreover, those gangsters who were wanted by the law made it a practice to keep away from this hangout. The Black Ship was patronized only by those who enjoyed a clean bill of health.

Toughened gorillas wandered in and out of the dive. Apparently, the Black Ship was their resort. Yet often, those who strolled forth were bound on crime. Whispered orders from messengers sent here by gang leaders were frequently the cause for prompt departures.

Though the police suspected this condition, they were practically helpless. If detectives or stool pigeons loitered in the Black Ship or its vicinity, they would be promptly spotted. The tip would pass about. Gorillas would be wary. They would choose some other rendezvous.

Tonight, the Black Ship was buzzing with muffled conversation. Mobsters, gathered in small groups, were talking affairs among themselves. Sometimes raucous laughter broke the mumbles. All was well at the Black Ship.

AMONG the habitués of the dive was a firm-faced young man who sat at a table near one side of the room. He was talking with an unshaven individual who sat opposite. Both of these men were well-known at the Black Ship.

The one with the chiseled face was Cliff Marsland, recognized as a freelance mobster with an enviable reputation. The unshaven fellow was "Lugger" Gates, a dock-walloper who sometimes acted as recruiting agent when new gorillas were needed for the crew that he represented.

Of all the patrons of the Black Ship, this pair stood highest by reputation. No one would have suspected either one of being here under false colors.

So far as Lugger Gates was concerned, the man was exactly what he appeared to be—a dock-walloper. But Cliff Marsland was one who relied upon pretense.

Cliff had served time in Sing Sing. He had bargained with big shots; he had handled crews of gangsters. Yet he was not a man of crime. Actually, his reputation was the cover for his real activities.

Cliff Marsland was the underworld aid of The Shadow. Stationed in the badlands, welcomed in every dive, this firm-faced young man served the mysterious fighter whom all gangdom feared.

Time and again, Cliff Marsland had notified The Shadow of impending crime. Always, Cliff had managed to preserve his false reputation among crooks. The Shadow, when he matched his giant mind with schemers of the underworld, moved Cliff like a knight upon the squares of a chessboard.

Of late, The Shadow had been smashing the plans of crooks and racketeers. Mallet Haverly had admitted that fact to Speedy Tyron. Marauding bands, bound on errands of crime, had encountered The Shadow instead of the helpless quarry whom they sought. The underworld was throbbing with nervous awe.

The Shadow's campaign had not ended. That was why Cliff Marsland was in the Black Ship tonight. Stationed in the heart of the enemy's terrain, unsuspected by the craftiest of skulking crooks, Cliff was watching for new indications. He was picking potential foemen against whom The Shadow could pit his might.

CLIFF was using Lugger as a blind. While he chatted with the dock-walloper, The Shadow's agent was keenly alert upon events about him. Lugger, imbibing freely from a bottle, was guffawing at his own uncouth jests. Cliff, taking advantage of his companion's unobservance, kept tabs upon conversation that was going on close by.

A trio of mobsters was at the nearest table. These men were talking in low tones. Snatches of their statements were audible to Cliff. Gorillas who had served with different gangs, these were the type of mobsmen whom Cliff had been set to watch.

"Looks like there'll be nothin' doin' tonight—"

"How do you know? Remember that night we stuck around until two o'clock?"

“Wait’ll Burnetti blows in. Maybe he’ll have somethin’ to tell us—”

These were the words that Cliff Marsland caught. The Shadow's agent knew their meaning. These mobsters were working with a roving gang leader named Burnetti, whose allegiance belonged to big shots who were willing to pay for his services.

Burnetti had been conspicuously absent from the Black Ship of late. Cliff sensed that his appearance here would mean the assembling of his crew for murderous work. Tonight, perhaps might be a blank. That would mean a new vigil for tomorrow night, provided this same trio of thugs should be at the Black Ship.

While Cliff was musing thus, the street door opened and a squatty, evil-faced ruffian slouched into the Black Ship. Cliff’s momentary gaze was keen. The newcomer was Burnetti. Cliff noticed a tenseness among the trio of gorillas.

Lugger Gates was talking. His bleary eyes were looking toward Cliff. The Shadow's agent grinned and nodded in reply to the dock-walloper's incoherent statements. All the while, Cliff watched Burnetti as the newcomer strolled among the tables, grunting greetings to friends.

As if by chance, Burnetti arrived at the spot where his three gorillas were parked. He dropped into a vacant chair, signaled to a waiter for a bottle, and poured himself a drink. His voice came in a cautious growl.

“Forty-sixth... Opposite the Majestic... You’ll see the cab pull up... Watch for Dirk... Two cars... Yeah... He’ll be gettin’ out...”

An utterance from Lugger drowned further words. The dock walloper was gripping Cliff’s arm. Cliff nodded as he centered upon Lugger. He had heard enough; the game now was to avoid suspicion.

Burnetti had finished a second drink. He had strolled over to another table. The three gorillas were rising. Cliff saw them slouch from the Black Ship. He caught a glimpse of Burnetti, finishing another drink and rising to follow, alone.

“Where are you going, Lugger?” questioned Cliff.

“Dunno,” gulped the dock walloper. “Uptown, maybe. Got a car outside. Wanna come along?”

“Sure thing.”

CLIFF arose. Lugger tried to follow suit. He staggered. Cliff caught him. Bracing the dock walloper's shoulders, he piloted the big fellow toward the street door while watching mobsters grinned.

Lugger Gates was on another bender and Cliff Marsland was giving him a lift. That was all.

Lugger staggered sidewise as they reached the street. Cliff guided him toward an alley which the dock walloper indicated. A coupe was parked beside the curb. Cliff yanked open the door on the driver's side and shoved Lugger in beside the wheel. Lugger's big paw went to his forehead.

“Wait a while, Cliff,” suggested Lugger. “I ain’t drivin’ yet. Shay —that booze was lousy—”

“Take it easy, Lugger.” Cliff shoved the dock walloper sidewise across the seat. “Take it easy. We’re in no hurry.”

“Uh-huh.”

Lugger closed his eyes. He sprawled comfortably across the seat. Cliff watched for a moment, then

closed the door quietly and strolled away. Reaching the corner, The Shadow's agent quickened his pace. He reached a small cigar store. He entered and found an obscure telephone. He dialed a number.

"Burbank speaking."

Cliff responded as he heard the quiet tones across the wire. Burbank was The Shadow's contact man. He relayed messages to the hidden chief.

"Burnetti and a mob", informed Cliff. "Two cars by the Majestic Theater, on Forty-sixth Street. Watching for Dirk Halgan to bring a victim into a taxicab. On their way now."

"Report received," returned Burbank. "Await instructions."

Cliff hung up. Minutes ticked by while The Shadow's agent strolled over and purchased some cigarettes from a mild, wizened old storekeeper. As Cliff was lighting a cigarette, the telephone rang. Cliff stepped over to answer it, apparently assuming that the call was for him.

"Corner west of the Majestic," came Burbank's statement. "Join Vincent in his coupe. Follow the two cars."

"Instructions received."

Cliff Marsland sauntered from the store. He walked along a side street, quickened his pace as he passed beneath an elevated structure and reached an avenue that fringed the badlands. He hailed a passing cab and ordered the driver to take him to an address on Forty-sixth Street.

Cliff Marsland was on his way. With Harry Vincent, another agent of The Shadow, Cliff was to follow the gorillas who plotted crime tonight. Two men set to counter crime. The task would have seemed formidable to any but Cliff Marsland.

There was something, however, in Burbank's order that gave Cliff Marsland confidence. He knew that he and Harry Vincent would not be alone tonight. They would serve as aids, not as principals, in the counter-stroke.

Cliff knew that The Shadow, himself, would be on hand. Using the information which he had gained through his agent, the master fighter would bear his share in the work that lay ahead. Cliff Marsland congratulated himself upon the completeness of the data that he had obtained for The Shadow.

There was one point, however, that had escaped Cliff Marsland. It was a fact that Burnetti had not mentioned to his gorillas—the reason why the Majestic Theater had been chosen as the place where men of crime should watch. The old theater, a darkened spot on the uptown side street, was directly opposite the apartment house where Mallet Haverly and Speedy Tyron were still engaged with Luskin!

CHAPTER III. LUSKIN SPEAKS

"HELLO."

Mallet Haverly's thick lips were expressionless as the racketeer growled in response to a telephone ring. A few short words followed. Mallet hung up.

"Your man's downstairs," Mallet informed Luskin. "Waiting outside the apartment house."

"With the money?" questioned Luskin, eagerly.

Mallet's lips formed a grin.

“Of course not,” stated the racketeer. “Do you think I'd have him bring it around here? He'll meet you outside the door. Go with him. He'll give you the cash in a suitcase.”

“And after that?” Luskin's tone was nervous.

“You'll have a chance to count the dough,” explained Mallet. “My man will take you wherever you want to go—and you can check up on the cash while you're in the cab with him.”

Luskin gulped his agreement, he walked to the door with Mallet beside him.

“You'll know the fellow right away,” added Mallet. “He always wears a big stick-pin in his necktie—with a sparkler in it—a diamond.”

Luskin nodded as he left. Mallet thrust out his hand and the dupe shook it in parting.

As Mallet Haverly turned back after closing the door, his pudgy lips framed an evil smile. Speedy Tyron indulged in a similar expression.

“Come along,” ordered Mallet. “My bags are packed. We're hopping out of town—to stay out.”

“Leaving the job to Dirk Halgan and Burnetti,” added Speedy. “Two guys who know their stuff.”

“And the last job they'll be doing for me,” declared Mallet. “If this job pans out, we're through with New York.”

DOWN on the street, Luskin was looking about nervously. He spied a man standing near the curb; as the fellow turned, Luskin spied the glimmer of a diamond stick-pin. He approached the man.

“Hello,” greeted the stranger. “Are you from Haverly?”

Luskin nodded.

“O.K.” The man—“Dirk” Halgan—turned briskly and waved to a cab that was standing across the street. The vehicle approached. Dirk motioned to Luskin to enter. Dirk followed.

Luskin showed no signs of trepidation. His nervousness was allayed as soon as he had entered the cab. Dirk—Luskin did not know the fellow's name—appeared to be the very type of henchman that Mallet Haverly would assign to the duty of delivering funds. Dirk had spoken cautiously; he gave a direction to the cab driver in a low tone that Luskin did not overhear.

Luskin's eyes were approving as they studied Dirk. Engaged in studying his companion, Luskin did not glance behind as the cab pulled from the curb. Hence he did not note the activity which occurred further down the block.

An old sedan pulled away from darkness by the old Majestic Theater. A few seconds later, a rakish touring car started from another spot. These two automobiles took up the trail of the cab which carried Luskin and Dirk Halgan.

Back near the corner, a young man was seated behind the wheel of a coupe. His hand was on the gear shift lever; his eyes were watching toward the curb. This was Harry Vincent, agent of The Shadow, delegated to this duty. He was awaiting the arrival of Cliff Marsland. Harry had received a call from Burbank. Already uptown, Harry had gained this spot ahead of Cliff.

Harry shoved the car in gear, realizing that he could wait no longer. A man, swinging from the passers on the sidewalk, caught the handle of the door. It was Cliff Marsland. The underworld agent had arrived just

in time to join Harry. He boarded the coupe and Harry started after the cars ahead.

The coupe reached the avenue ahead. It shot across just as the light was turning. A larger coupe, coming up the avenue, made a sudden swerve and followed Harry's car. A strange, whispered laugh sounded in the dark interior.

The driver who had uttered that short burst of mirth was hidden in the gloom. His eerie tones, however, were sufficient pronouncement of his identity. The driver was The Shadow.

SWIFT master of action, The Shadow had dispatched his agents to the scene immediately upon receiving word from Burbank. His own location must have been more distant. Instead of coming up the avenue near where the pursuit had begun, he had taken the one ahead, knowing that he might intercept the chase should it have already begun.

Harry Vincent's coupe had passed the next avenue. It was half a block behind the cars which it was trailing; The Shadow was a similar interval behind Harry. Watching from the wheel of his coupe, Harry saw the taxi making a turn to the right. Reaching to the dashboard, Harry clicked the light switch twice.

Cliff Marsland made no comment. He assumed that this was a signal ordered through Burbank; that Harry had been instructed to mark the turns which the cars ahead might make. Cliff's assumption was correct.

The Shadow, almost at the avenue behind, saw the double flicker of the tail light on Harry's coupe. With a quick swerve, he swung his heavy car to the right, going down the nearer avenue just as the traffic lights were changing.

The motor roared as The Shadow's coupe took the straightaway. The heavy car showed a remarkable burst of speed. Green ahead—as he passed the first cross street, The Shadow laughed. Glancing to the left, he had seen the cab passing the same street on the further avenue, a block away.

The pointer on the speedometer shot up to sixty. Across two streets; then, as a traffic opening showed on the left, The Shadow applied the brakes. The big coupe half-skidded and sped across the path of an oncoming truck; a hidden foot pressed the accelerator and the sturdy car roared down the side street.

A red light showed ahead. The Shadow took a right turn. His eyes gleamed as they peered toward the mirror. The soft laugh again sounded from his lips. By rapid maneuver and swift pace, The Shadow had passed all the cars that formed the caravan. He was ahead of the taxicab which mobsters had chosen for their quarry.

With slackened speed, The Shadow kept ahead. His eyes were on the mirror. They were watching the cab, now nearly a block to the rear. The avenue lights changed from green to red. The taxi took a left turn. The Shadow glimpsed the sedan that swung behind it. He, too, turned left, one street ahead. His was a two-way thoroughfare.

AGAIN, the coupe showed its speed. The Shadow knew that the one-way street which the taxi had taken might mark the end of the quest. He picked an avenue which ran beneath the superstructure of the elevated. A red light gleamed; The Shadow swung left at high speed.

Brakes screamed as cars swerved to avoid the coupe which shot across their path. The Shadow's firm hand whisked the coupe past an elevated pillar and swung it clear of a parked car.

The Shadow reached the next street ahead of oncoming traffic. Another breakneck turn to the left. The coupe made a complete U turn and came to a stop facing down the avenue.

Like a phantom shape, The Shadow glided from the car. His form seemed a fleeting patch of darkness as it gained the walls of buildings that fronted on this avenue. Two seconds later, he had reached the corner. His tall shape merged with the blackness of the side street.

Clad in cloak and hat of sable hue, The Shadow had demonstrated his mysterious ability to travel under cover of the night. His uncanny intuition was also in evidence. Less than a block away, the taxicab which he sought was pulling up to the curb. The Shadow had picked the secluded block which had been chosen by men of crime.

IN the cab, Dirk Halgan was speaking in deliberate fashion. The easy speed of the cab, coupled with Dirk's friendly tone, had completely eliminated all suspicion from Luskin's mind.

"Here's where we get out," remarked Dirk. "Step to the curb—I'll be with you."

Luskin rose to obey. He opened the door beside him. His foot descended to the sidewalk. The taxi driver was looking over his shoulder. A fake cabby; he had been deputed to this job; he was awaiting Dirk Halgan's order.

"All right, Jake," came Dirk's whisper. "Get ready—"

The driver's hand was on the gear shift lever. Then, like a living avalanche, a blackened figure seemed to spring from the sidewalk. A pair of arms caught Luskin and hurled his form back into the cab. Before Jake, the gangster driver, could start the taxi, the fighter from the dark was upon him.

"The Shadow!"

Jake blurted the name as a swift fist swung toward his jaw. The gloved hand of The Shadow clipped the fake cab driver on the chin. Flinging himself backward to escape the blow, Jake was lifted clear from the wheel. Senseless, he went sprawling backward to the street.

Dirk Halgan, jounced back by Luskin's quick return to the cab, was yanking a revolver from his pocket when he heard Jake's gasp. The gangster's hand came upward. His finger pressed the trigger as he fired toward the blackness of the front seat.

The shot was wild. As it crashed the windshield, Dirk could see the head and shoulders of The Shadow by the flame from the revolver. The gangster had fired a foot to the left of his mark. He swung to deliver a second bullet. It never left his gun.

An automatic thundered within the cab. The Shadow's prompt reply performed its work. Dirk Halgan slumped sidewise, against the left door of the cab.

A hand from the dark seized Luskin's shoulder and pressed the saved man to the floor of the cab. A fierce, whispered voice hissed its order:

"Stay where you are! You will be safe!"

In quick seconds of action, The Shadow had nullified the scheme for Luskin's death. Instead of the doomed man being left upon the sidewalk, an open target for approaching killers, he was lying within the cab, protected by The Shadow!

The touring car shot up beside the cab. The would-be murderers knew that something had happened. Two mobsmen bounded to the street as the driver shot the glare of a bull's-eye lantern toward the taxi.

The brilliance showed The Shadow. Leaning from beside the wheel, the master fighter was ready with his

automatics. As the light gleamed, he fired. The driver groaned as the lantern was shattered in his hand.

Mobsters aimed for that spot behind the wheel. The Shadow had dropped away. Bullets riddled the car body beside the driver's seat. One mobster, circling the rear of the cab, was coming to attack the other side.

He was the next to meet The Shadow's might. The black-garbed warrior had reached the curb. His automatic blazed its welcome. The gangster sprawled upon the sidewalk as The Shadow sprang toward the front of the taxi.

NEW shots from the dark. They were delivered from the front of the cab, from a spot close by the radiator. Two mobsters went sprawling from the running board beside the driver's seat of the cab.

The touring car shot forward as a new driver handed it. A revolver barked an instant too soon. Its bullet nicked the chromium of the radiator. The Shadow's automatic spoke in return. The touring car swerved, took the curb on the far side of the street and rammed against a building.

The sedan, which had waited behind, came forward, its headlights blazing down the street. Shots burst from The Shadow's automatics. Simultaneously, new gunfire echoed from behind the sedan. Harry Vincent and Cliff Marsland were opening fire from their coupe.

The coupe stopped. Caught between The Shadow and his henchmen, murderers leaped from the closed car to seek the cover of the houses, firing as they sprang for safety.

While guns barked, the shrill burst of a police whistle came from the avenue where The Shadow had left his car.

This was the signal that produced the unexpected. Luskin heard it as he cowered in the taxicab. Realizing that he, himself, was a man who had aided in plans of crime, Luskin uttered a hoarse scream and leaped to the door. A moment later, he had reached the sidewalk.

A man was close by the rear of the cab. It was Burnetti. The gang leader had managed to gain this temporary refuge. As he saw Luskin, Burnetti leaned forward and fired a quick shot that felled his quarry. Swinging, Burnetti aimed toward the front of taxicab.

He was too late. The Shadow, rising, loosed a shot that drilled the murderer. As Burnetti's body collapsed upon the sidewalk, The Shadow reached the spot where Luskin lay. The man was dying.

“Speak!”

The Shadow's command was a sinister whisper. Luskin responded. His lips moved feebly as they tried to frame gasping words.

The traitor had been double-crossed. He had been duped by an offer of easy wealth. Dying, he was seeking vengeance upon Mallet Haverly, the crook who had sent him to his death!

Mobsters were groaning in the street as Harry Vincent's coupe shot by, heading away from this zone which police were approaching. The battle had been won. The time had come for prompt departure. Yet, while his agents were hastening away, The Shadow lingered.

From Luskin's last words, this super-sleuth was seeking the answer to the crime that had been launched by Mallet Haverly.

CHAPTER IV. THE SHADOW'S TRAIL

POLICE whistles shrilled close by. A siren whined as a patrol car whirled down the side street, its searchlight playing a wide gleam. The taxicab beside the curb; the touring car rammed against a house wall; the sedan deserted in the middle of the block—these were tokens of the fight that had been waged.

Harry Vincent and Cliff Marshland had gained the avenue. No sign of The Shadow's agents remained. Officers, alighting from their car, found mobsters sprawled upon the paving. But they did not see the two figures on the sidewalk near the taxicab.

Luskin, doomed, was stretched upon his back, his eyes were closed. His lips were moving feebly. Above him, a specter of blackness, crouched The Shadow. Burning eyes were upon the moving lips. The Shadow was seeking to read the utterances that were inaudible.

“Fifty thousand—dollars”—Luskin framed the words. “He—can get—a million—”

“Who?”

The Shadow's question was a whisper.

“Haverly,” gasped Luskin, “A million—if he can get it. A million dollars—”

The lips twitched. They did not respond to the dying man's delirious thoughts. Luskin's head sank back. The man was dead.

The Shadow did not rise. Still crouching, he let Luskin's body slide gently to the sidewalk. The Shadow could hear the shouts of policemen on the other side of the cab. New sirens—other cars were coming.

A cordon was forming in this street. Already, officers were starting to come around the cab. Listening, The Shadow knew that they would soon be at this spot where he still lurked unseen. Then came an opportunity.

A shout arose from the other side of the cab. A policeman, heading for the sidewalk, dashed back toward the street. A revolver barked; a man cursed. A police car came to a sudden stop as it whirled up beside the cab. There were sounds of a brief scuffle.

Jake, the fake cab driver, had tried to escape. He alone had escaped The Shadow's bullets. Reviving from the knock-out blow which the gloved fist had dealt to his chin, Jake had made a bolt, only to be stopped by a policeman's shot.

THE SHADOW rose swiftly. During the momentary interval, he made a quick whirl toward the building wall beyond the sidewalk. His figure merged with darkness just as another policeman approached the sidewalk by the cab.

A glimmering flashlight swept the pavement. Its rays passed by The Shadow's feet. They did not disclose the lurking form. Then the flashlight revealed the body of Luskin. A shout brought another officer. He stumbled over the form of Burnett.

Heavy footsteps sounded on the pavement. A stocky, swarthy-faced man appeared within the flashlight's glare. He was in plain clothes. It was Detective Joe Cardona, ace of the Manhattan force.

Cardona's verdict was a quick one, formed as soon as the sleuth had spied the face of Luskin.

“This was the fellow they were after,” declared the detective. “He's no gorilla. They got him all right—but they had a tough time doing it.”

Cardona swung to survey the face of Burnetti, which was now spotted in the circle of a policeman's flashlight. The detective grunted.

"There's a tough mug," decided Cardona. "I know the guy. Burnetti. I've been waiting to pin something on this bird. I know who he works for, but this is the first time I've found him with the goods."

The detective turned to a policeman who had come up beside him. He gave an order.

"We're going over to the Solkirk Apartments," stated Cardona. "It's by the old Majestic Theater. We're dropping in on Mallet Haverly, the racketeer. He'll talk tonight. Burnetti was his man—"

A policeman had opened the door of the cab. Cardona turned as he heard an exclamation. Like a spotlight, an electric torch in the officer's hand revealed the slumped form of Dirk Halgan. Cardona uttered another grunt of recognition.

"This clinches it," announced the sleuth. "Dirk Halgan—another pal of Mallet Haverly's. Say—it's too bad Rags Wilkey wasn't in on this, too. He was Mallet's best bet, before we got on his trail."

Cardona turned. He produced his own flashlight. He took a measure which the policemen had neglected. He sent the glimmer of his torch along the house wall near the taxi. He was looking for lurkers. His light blazed upon the brick surface where The Shadow had been standing.

The glimmer revealed no sign of a human figure. The Shadow had anticipated this action. Silently, with amazing stealth, he had edged away from his position while the police and the detective were centered upon their discoveries of the dead bodies.

Joe Cardona snapped another order. He and the policeman with him went to their car and headed down the block. Joe was losing no more time in his plan to reach Mallet Haverly before the racketeer might receive word of the Waterloo which his minions had encountered.

WHILE Cardona and his companion were starting on their course, a trim coupe was pulling up in the darkness near the old Majestic Theater. A figure alighted and chose a streak of blackness that loomed across the street beneath the front of the deserted theater. It was The Shadow.

His very progress unnoticed, this weird prowler gained the side of the Solkirk Apartments. He entered through a side door that showed a flight of steps to the basement. The Shadow descended. He stood in a deserted corridor. His form, revealed by a single incandescent, looked like a specter from another world.

The Shadow, like Joe Cardona, had picked the place for new investigation. Ahead of the detective, he had reached the apartment house where Mallet Haverly lived. An empty service elevator was in view at the end of the corridor. The Shadow entered it and closed the door.

A few minutes later, the door of Mallet Haverly's apartment opened softly. The figure of The Shadow appeared in the garishly furnished living room. Floor lamps were alight. The place looked as though its occupants had just stepped out.

The Shadow crossed the living room. He entered an adjoining chamber. A tiny flashlight played from his gloved hand.

The apartment was deserted. The furniture—evidently rented with the apartment—was undisturbed. But there was no sign of personal belongings.

Mallet Haverly had departed. The Shadow stopped short. His light went out. He had detected the opening of the outer door. His eyes peered through the crack of a door that led to the living room. The

Shadow saw Joe Cardona. The detective had entered, with a pair of blue-coats at his heels.

Swiftly, The Shadow crossed the room. He reached a window and raised the sash. His figure stepped to a small balcony. Long arms reached upward. The Shadow raised himself to a balcony above.

Hanging batlike beneath the hedgelike projection, The Shadow waited. He had not closed the window. He could hear the tramp of feet and the sound of voices. The light came on in the room which The Shadow had left. Cardona and the officers were searching the place.

Long minutes passed. Cardona appeared beside the open window. The detective stared at the balcony, as though picking it as a last possible spot. He shrugged his shoulders and uttered a disappointed growl.

“Maybe Mallet got a tip-off,” he decided. “Anyway, he's scammed —and it's a bet that Speedy Tyron beat it with him. Well—it got too hot for them. We'll put fliers out. Mallet Haverly is through, even if we don't know where he's gone.”

Cardona pronounced this decision with glum satisfaction. Accompanied by the policemen, the detective left the apartment, after extinguishing the lights. Silence followed; then came the soft swish of a cloak as The Shadow dropped from the upper balcony and reentered the window.

THE disklike ray of The Shadow's flashlight moved through the darkness. All along, The Shadow could see evidences of Cardona's search. The detective had made positive that Mallet Haverly had gone to stay. Yet Cardona and his helpers had found no clew to Mallet's destination.

In the living room, The Shadow's flashlight revealed the ash stand. The rays showed a curled cluster of ashes. These were not the residue of tobacco. A gloved hand plucked the tray from the stand and held it above a table. A slight swaying motion; the ashes fluttered intact and dropped upon the table.

While one hand carefully adjusted the burned fragments, the other held the light. There, like the portions of a jigsaw puzzle, showed blackened lines that formed the shape of the destroyed picture.

Although the outline was not clear, The Shadow saw that this had been a post card bearing the picture of a building. The flashlight steadied upon a curled corner and its rays showed blackened letters which The Shadow's keen eyes traced:

Montgard—Glenwood.

The name of the building and the town near which it was located. These facts were all The Shadow needed. His free hand gathered up the ashes; gloved fingers let them flutter, breaking into tiny bits. The destroyed pieces dropped into the ash tray. The Shadow replaced it in the stand.

Out went the flashlight. A soft laugh sounded in the darkness. The Shadow had found the only clew. His keen brain was piecing the words that Luskin had uttered. A million—where Mallet Haverly could get it!

Where?

In the ashes, The Shadow had found the answer. A building called Montgard—near the town of Glenwood. That was the logical destination which Mallet Haverly had chosen.

Silently, The Shadow left the apartment and descended by the service elevator. His tall form reached the darkness outside of the apartment building. From then on, The Shadow's course was untraceable.

LATER, a light clicked in a silent room. Long, white hands appeared beneath the flickering rays of a shaded, bluish lamp. Fingers used pen to inscribe a coded note in writing of vivid blue ink. The hands

folded the message and sealed it in an envelope.

From his sanctum, the hidden abode wherein The Shadow formed his campaigns, the master sleuth was sending new instructions. He was dispatching his trusted agents—Harry Vincent and Cliff Marsland—to the town of Glenwood.

As soft laugh sounded as an unseen hand clicked off the light. The mirth rose to a strident tone. Its sardonic mockery broke into shuddering, ghoulisn echoes. When the throbbing sounds had died, silence held deep sway.

The Shadow had gained his clew. The Shadow had begun his new quest. The Shadow had departed from his sanctum. The first steps against impending crime were under way.

The Shadow had divined some hidden purpose in the murder of Luskin and Mallet Haverly's prompt departure from New York. His agents would set forth to check upon his findings.

Should The Shadow's operatives report strange doings near the town of Glenwood, The Shadow, himself, would visit that locality to deliver new counterstrokes against men of crime!

CHAPTER V. THE LEGACY

AN elderly, gray-haired man was seated in a luxurious office. The window, opened to receive the mild morning breeze, allowed a view of the Manhattan skyline. Huge shelves of buckram-bound books proclaimed this room as a law office.

Letters lay upon the mahogany desk behind which the elderly man was seated. They were addressed to Reeves Lockwood. The lawyer's attention, however, was not centered upon his mail. Reeves Lockwood was reading the morning newspaper.

"Roberts!"

A young man entered in response to Lockwood's call. The lawyer continued his reading; then suddenly noticed that the employee had arrived.

"Bring me the files on the Raleigh estate," ordered Lockwood. "I want to go over them with you."

"Yes, sir."

When Roberts reappeared with the files, he found the old attorney still engaged with the newspaper. This time, however, Lockwood noted Roberts when the man entered.

"Sit down," ordered the lawyer. "Look through the files and see if you find the name of Luskin."

"Yes, sir."

Silent minutes followed. At last Roberts announced that he had discovered the name in question.

"James Luskin," he announced. "Butler for twelve years in the employ of Windrop Raleigh. Dismissed after Windrop Raleigh's death. Received no legacy under the terms of the will."

"An odd sort, Luskin," mused Lockwood. "Windrop Raleigh left small bounties to certain of the servants. Luskin was one of those whom he failed to remember. Well—perhaps old Windrop Raleigh had foresight."

"How, sir?"

“A man named Luskin was slain last night in a gang duel. Apparently, the former butler had chosen bad company after his dismissal from the Raleigh service.”

“Shall I mark him as dead, sir?”

“Yes—but make a note that it is only a conjecture. The name is a uncommon one. I presume that this was the Luskin in question.”

WHILE Roberts was busy with the files, Reeves Lockwood began to speak in meditative fashion. His thin lips formed a dry smile upon his tight-skinned countenance.

“A miserly fellow, Windrop Raleigh,” he mused. “In death as in life. Always ready to give aid to his numerous relations. Aid so stingy that it bore the marks of reluctant charity. I think that most of his kin must have known him by reputation. Otherwise most of them would have been in to see me regarding their supposed legacies.”

“We have dealt with ten relatives, sir,” reminded Roberts.

“Yes,” agreed Lockwood, “and all but two have rejected the terms of Windrop Raleigh's offer. The trust fund will go begging, eventually. How many more have the right to share in it, Roberts?”

“Fourteen, sir.”

“In addition to the ten?”

“Yes, I should say in addition to the eleven. A distant cousin called two days ago. When I recited the terms, he left in disgust. He did not even ask to talk to you. Here is his name—Charles Parkins. I have crossed it from the list.”

As Reeves Lockwood smiled and nodded, a rap sounded on the door. A stenographer entered in response to the lawyer's order to enter.

“A gentleman named Stokes Corvin is here,” the girl informed. “He is a legatee under the Windrop Raleigh will. Shall I have him wait to see Mr. Roberts?”

“Another trust fund pauper,” smiled Lockwood, grimly. “Is his name on the list, Roberts?”

“Yes, sir,” replied the young man. “He is listed as living in London. A second cousin of Windrop Raleigh's third wife.”

“I hope,” decided Lockwood, “that he has not made the trip across the Atlantic expressly to learn the terms of the legacy to which he is entitled. I believe I shall see him personally. Ask him to step into this office, Miss Manning. You remain here, Roberts.”

The stenographer left and returned with the visitor. Reeves Lockwood raised his eyebrows as he surveyed the man who entered. The visitor was a firm-faced chap who appeared to be about thirty-five years of age. His clean-cut countenance made an immediate impression.

“You are Stokes Corvin?” questioned the lawyer.

“Yes.” The visitor's quiet voice bore an English accent. “I am Stokes Corvin. You, sir, I suppose, are Reeves Lockwood?”

“I am,” returned the lawyer. “Kindly be seated, Mr. Corvin.”

The visitor took a chair.

“You are here,” remarked Lockwood, “to learn about the legacy to which you are entitled by the terms of Windrop Raleigh's will?”

“Precisely,” replied Corvin. “You were the barrister who represented my kinsman, were you not?”

“I was,” affirmed Lockwood, dryly, “and I now have charge of his estate. You were named as a legatee.”

“And what,” questioned Corvin, “did Windrop Raleigh bequeath me?”

“Very little,” stated Lockwood, reaching for a paper which Roberts held out to him. “So little, Mr. Corvin, and under such provisos that I doubt that it will interest you.”

ADJUSTING a pair of glasses to his nose, the old attorney studied the paper before him. His expression showed that he was merely making a resume of terms that he already knew.

“Windrop Raleigh,” stated Lockwood, “left the major portion of his estate to his only son, Jarvis Raleigh. This one son was the child of Windrop Raleigh's second marriage. All of Windrop Raleigh's three wives are dead. The second one—mother of Jarvis Raleigh—was divorced and had custody of her child. Hence Windrop Raleigh left his wealth to a son whom he had seldom seen.

“All other relations—including those of all three wives—are entitled to legacies under the terms of a trust fund which Windrop Raleigh provided for that purpose. You, Mr. Corvin, are included in that group.”

“And the terms?” questioned Stokes Corvin.

“They are quite simple,” assured Lockwood. “To all such relations who have no active means of livelihood, Windrop Raleigh has offered refuge in his home near the town of Glenwood. Jarvis Raleigh is master of the estate called Montgard. The relations who are dependent upon the trust fund must live there under Jarvis Raleigh's rule.

“They're entitled to food and lodging; also to receive the sum of five dollars a month during their term of residence at Montgard. While they live there, they must not engage in any form of gainful occupation; nor may they leave the house wherein they live. To violate either rule would mean an immediate loss of further protection. Moreover, they must recognize Jarvis Raleigh as sole judge in questions of behavior. Those, Mr. Corvin, are the terms.”

“So Windrop Raleigh made those terms!” exclaimed Stokes Corvin, lighting a cigarette from his case. “The old curmudgeon! Did he regard his kinsmen as an army of paupers? One pound a month! What a miserable pittance!”

“I agree with your opinion, Mr. Corvin,” declared Reeves Lockwood, quietly, as he handed the paper back to Roberts. “Nevertheless, as the administrator of the trust fund, I must abide by its terms.”

“I hope,” declared Stokes Corvin, speaking gravely as he arose, “that none of the kinfolk have been so destitute as to accept these miserly terms.”

“Unfortunately,” responded Lockwood, “two of the legatees have been forced through circumstances to take residence at Montgard.”

“Old folk, I suppose?”

“No. One is Sidney Richland, an eccentric cousin of Jarvis Raleigh. The other is also a cousin—a very attractive young lady named Barbara Wyldram.”

“A blood relation of mine?” inquired Corvin.

“No,” returned Lockwood. “She is a relative of Windrop Raleigh's first wife. You are a relative of the third wife. Miss Wyldram has no parents. She was engaged to a young man who died in an automobile accident.

“After all, Mr. Corvin, Montgard is an interesting old place. One can dwell there quite apart from affairs of the world. I fancy that may be the reason why two persons have chosen to accept the terms of Windrop Raleigh's will.”

Reeves Lockwood reached over and drew a large photograph from the file which Roberts held. He passed it to Stokes Corvin. The picture was a large edition of the post card which Mallet Haverly had received from Luskin.

STOKES CORVIN stared at the photograph with interest. The cone-shaped turrets were a fascinating picture with the surrounding trees of the large estate.

“Right jolly!” commented Corvin. “It reminds me of an old place that I used to visit in Surrey. Where is this town of Glenwood where Montgard is situated?”

“Less than one hundred miles from New York,” returned Lockwood.

“I should like to visit the place while I am here in the states,” decided Corvin. “I came here purely on a pleasure trip. The matter of legacy was merely a minor matter that I intended to look up.”

“You would not be welcomed at Montgard,” warned Lockwood. “Jarvis Raleigh is quite as eccentric a person as was his father. He resents all intrusion. In fact, he seems to dislike it when I pay necessary visits to his estate.”

“And yet,” echoed Stokes Corvin, “he would be forced to admit me if I chose to demand the terms of my paltry legacy.”

“Yes,” agreed Lockwood. “So long as you live, Mr. Corvin, you are entitled to residence in Montgard. Jarvis Raleigh cannot deny you that privilege—I say privilege if you choose to call it such.”

A broad grin appeared upon Stokes Corvin's face. The man from England stamped out his fresh-lit cigarette and brought his fist down upon the desk with a resounding thump.

“By Jove!” he exclaimed. “This smacks of adventure, Mr. Lockwood. As I understand it, any kinsman of Old Windrop Raleigh's can occupy Montgard as a guest, with a pound a month as stipend.”

“Yes,” declared Lockwood, “provided that he engages in no gainful occupation—”

“I have no post at present,” interposed Corvin. “Therefore I am entitled to residence at Montgard.”

“So long as you choose to abide by the rules that the will imposes.”

“Jolly!” ejaculated Corvin. “I shall go there and reside for a time in spite of Jarvis Raleigh. I've heard much talk of American nerve—the kind that we term cheek in England. I'll introduce a bit of it myself.”

So saying, Corvin drew a wallet from his pocket and removed cards and folded papers. He handed these to Lockwood.

“Papers of identification,” chuckled Corvin. “Place me on your schedule, Mr. Lockwood. I shall join the colony at Montgard.”

Reeves Lockwood smiled as he arose. He extended his hand to Stokes Corvin.

“It seems to be a sporting proposition with you,” remarked the lawyer. “On that basis, your visit to Montgard may prove enjoyable. Roberts will arrange matters for you, together with a letter of introduction to Jarvis Raleigh, which I shall sign.”

So speaking, the attorney ushered his visitor from the office. Roberts followed and closed the door behind him.

Smiling as he stared from the window, Reeves Lockwood seemed to relish this turn of affairs that was sending another resident to Montgard.

Turning to his desk, the lawyer again noted the newspaper. He crumpled it and tossed it in the wastebasket. He spoke, half aloud.

“I wonder how much Luskin knew,” mused Lockwood. “Not much, I suppose, outside of the terms of the legacy through which he received no benefit. Ah, well, the past is buried. The future can show no clues.”

By which Reeves Lockwood indicated that although adventure lay at Montgard, it would never be uncovered by the man who sought it: Stokes Corvin.

Reeves Lockwood was wrong. Adventure was impending at the old estate. Events that were brewing there would involve Lockwood as well as Corvin; for men of crime were at work.

Moreover, hidden completely in the affairs that were already under way, was a power that would manifest itself before the climax.

That was the power of The Shadow.

CHAPTER VI. THE NEW GUEST

It was evening. Harry Vincent was pacing the platform of the little station in the town of Glenwood. To all appearances, he was merely one of the townsmen who made their occasional appearance when the through limited was due.

A distant whistle announced the incoming train. Harry, staring down the tracks, saw a headlight flash into view from beyond a bend. The roar of a big locomotive increased, then became a heavy clatter as the light loomed large.

The limited came to a stop. Platforms clicked. A man alighted, followed by a porter with luggage. A local taxi-man approached and grabbed the bags. Harry, a few paces away, heard the porter ask the man if taxi service were required.

“A cab? Certainly.” The man who had alighted from the limited was speaking with an English accent. “I say—do you know of an estate hereabouts that is called Montgard? You do? That's excellent. Montgard is where I wish to go.”

As the arrival—it was Stokes Corvin—walked toward the old sedan that served as Glenwood's only taxicab, he tossed a half-consumed cigarette to the ground. Harry Vincent, going in the opposite direction, nearly jostled against a heavy man who was lounging along the platform. Stepping aside, Harry

caught a glimpse of a thick-lipped face.

Strolling to his coupe, Harry joined Cliff Marsland, who was seated at the wheel. The moment that Harry entered, Cliff shoved the car in gear. It pulled away from the station just as the locomotive of the limited was clanging its bell for the departure.

“Wait a minute, Cliff,” protested Harry. “What’s the hurry? Did you see that fellow with the bags? He’s going to Montgard.”

“Who is he?” questioned Cliff.

“I don’t know,” responded Harry. “I suppose he’s a new guest. One of the family, maybe. He talks like an Englishman.”

“All right,” laughed Cliff. “That settles him. You saw him and you don’t know who he is. But I saw a fellow that I know. That’s why we’re moving.”

“Who did you see?”

“Mallet Haverly. You nearly bumped into him on the platform.”

“You’re sure it was Mallet?”

“Positive.”

The rickety taxi came speeding past the coupe. Cliff had headed in the direction of Montgard. He guided the coupe behind the old sedan.

“We’ll make sure that this fellow is going to Montgard,” decided Cliff, “and then we’ll keep on to do a little exploration of our own. We’ve got to do more than just watch the big mansion, Harry, now that we’ve spotted Mallet.”

“You mean the cottage that we saw in the woods?”

“That’s it. It would be an A-1 hideout for Mallet and his crew if they mean trouble. I’ll park off in the woods and we can edge around a bit.”

The coupe had reached a spot nearly a mile from the town of Glenwood. Up ahead, the tail light of the sedan made a sudden turn as the improvised taxi swung from the straight road.

“That chap’s going to Montgard all right,” asserted Cliff. “The old taxi just entered the gates to the house.”

The Shadow’s agents glanced down a long, straight driveway as they passed the gates. They caught another flash of the tail light. Cliff kept on, to circuit the big estate. He and Harry, with the town of Glenwood as their base of operations, had familiarized themselves with the territory about Montgard.

MEANWHILE, the taxi that was carrying Stokes Corvin as its passenger had taken the bend of a graveled circle in front of the looming mansion. A quarter mile within the gates, it came to a stop. Corvin, staring from the window, made out the dark shape of the huge central turret.

Dull lights showed through small-paned windows. The front door of the gloomy mansion was barely discernible as Corvin sought to penetrate the darkness. Although Corvin had made no effort to open the door, the driver gave an important warning from the front seat.

“There's bad dogs hereabouts,” said the man. “Stay where you are until the caretaker comes up.”

As if in response to the admonition, growls sounded in the blackness. A Great Dane came pouncing up to the car. It set its forepaws on the step and emitted another growl. A second canine guardian joined the first. One dog uttered a vicious bark.

The sound was answered by barks from kenneled hounds. Then came the sweep of a flashlight, with crunching footsteps on the gravel. The headlights of the local taxi showed an ugly-faced fellow approaching the car.

“What you want?” came the challenge as the advancing man stepped into darkness and flickered his light into the car.

“It's all right, Jerome,” returned the cab driver, in a wheedling tone. “This gentleman came in on the limited. He wants to see Mr. Raleigh.”

“Yeah?” Jerome's reply was unfriendly. “Well, Mr. Raleigh don't want to see nobody.”

“One moment, my man,” spoke Stokes Corvin, in a firm voice. “I have important business with Mr. Raleigh. I must see him. Do you understand?”

“I ain't stopping you,” growled Jerome, with an odd laugh. “Step right in, mister. But if Mr. Raleigh don't want to see you, I'm here to see you get out.”

With that, Jerome flickered the light on the Great Danes. The dogs dropped back from the car step. Their growls were muffled, as Stokes Corvin alighted from the car and boldly advanced to the house. Finding a knocker on the front door, Corvin lifted it and delivered a succession of loud raps.

There was a long pause. The old sedan remained in the driveway, its motor idling in jerky fashion. Jerome was holding back the dogs. At last, the sound of moving bolts came from within the house. The door swung inward.

STOKES CORVIN stared at the man who had come to answer the door. A tall, cadaverous fellow in the dress of a servant, the man looked like a living corpse. His face was white above the dark collar of his coat. His eyes stared like those of a waxwork figure.

“Whom do you wish to see?” questioned the servitor.

“I am Stokes Corvin,” announced the visitor. “I want to meet Mr. Jarvis Raleigh.”

“Step in,” ordered the servant.

Stokes Corvin obeyed. The cadaverous man beckoned to the cab driver. In gingerly fashion, the fellow alighted from his sedan and brought Corvin's bags to the doorway. Turning, he hastened back into his car. He was driving away when the servant closed the door.

While Stokes Corvin watched, the cadaverous man pressed home three huge bolts. Walking directly past the visitor, the servant opened an inner door and stood there. He spoke in a hollow tone:

“I shall return. Wait here until I have announced your arrival to Mr. Raleigh.”

Stepping through the inner door, the servant bolted it from the other side. Again, Stokes Corvin had evidence of triple bolting. With a shrug of his shoulders, he stared about the odd room in which he stood.

The turret served as a huge entry to the house. It was lighted by two bulbs set in brackets, one on each

side of the inner door. As he stared at the wall, Stokes Corvin observed that they were of stone. Windowless, they went upward like the smooth bore of a rounded tunnel. Gazing upward, Corvin saw the thin crossbeams that supported the turret itself.

Fully forty feet in height, and some fifteen feet in diameter, the turret formed a room of ample proportions. Yet its forbidding atmosphere made it a place of gloom. The walls were plain and severe. The only decorations appeared upon the floor. Stokes Corvin studied them with interest.

The floor was of stone, fitted with tiles of various colors. A double-circled border followed the circumference of the floor. Within this appeared a succession of odd, tiled characters which Corvin recognized as Egyptian hieroglyphics.

Four lines came from the outer circle, joining in the center of the floor so that they formed a huge X. These were cut by concentric circles, to form new borders. The one within the Egyptian inscription bore the twelve signs of the zodiac, three to each quadrant.

These were exquisitely formed by unglazed tiles.

The innermost decoration represented a compass. It showed the four main points upon the cross lines that formed the X.

While Stokes Corvin was engaged in interested study, he heard the drawing of bolts. He looked up as the inner door opened. He saw the cadaverous servant, motioning for him to enter.

The visitor obeyed.

STOKES CORVIN found himself in a curious corridor. It was the junction point of three passages. Two came in from the front, like the arms of an inverted Y. Straight ahead was the main hallway itself.

A step led up to each of the three passages. On the one in front of Corvin stood a queer, stoop-shouldered individual, who held his hands together against his hunched-in chest. The step gave him a stature which he did not actually possess. His eyes, sharp as those of a snake, were staring directly toward Stokes Corvin.

“Another guest.” The man on the step cackled the greeting in disdainful fashion. “A new pauper to share my humble abode. Welcome, Stokes Corvin, to Montgard.”

“You are Jarvis Raleigh?” questioned Corvin. He eyed the man as he spoke and estimated his age as nearly fifty.

“Yes.” The reply was almost a sneer. “I am Jarvis Raleigh. I am the reluctant host to guests who are unwelcome. This”—he jabbed a scrawny finger toward the servant—“is Quarley, my one retainer. I received word from Lockwood that you were coming. Quarley will show you to your room.”

The cadaverous servant stooped to pick up two bags that Corvin had carried in. There was a third that Quarley left for Corvin himself. The newcomer picked it up. Jarvis Raleigh, his hands still clasped, stepped aside to let them pass.

“I am sorry,” he announced ironically, “that my other guests are not here to meet you. They have retired early. I shall introduce you to them tomorrow.”

Quarley had shot the bolts of the inner front door during the conversation between Jarvis Raleigh and Stokes Corvin. The master of Montgard glanced to make sure that the house was locked. Then, with slow stride, he followed after the two who were walking along the central passage.

There was a flight of stairs at the end of the long hall. Quarley led the way with Corvin following. They reached the second hall, where Stokes Corvin glimpsed darkened passages. They continued up a gloomy flight of steps to the third floor. One passage here was illuminated by a single electric light. Quarley entered a room and Stokes Corvin followed.

The place was furnished in antiquated style. It possessed no electric lights; the wiring, apparently, had been confined to the lower floors. Candles, mounted in wall brackets, served as the mode of illumination.

Stokes Corvin looked about him. He turned to see Quarley slinking from the room. The servant closed the big oak door behind him. Corvin's forehead furrowed as he heard the servant slide a bolt upon the other side.

There was a key in the door. Corvin stepped over and turned it. He smiled as he did so. If he were to be locked in his room, he might as well lock others out. Removing coat and vest, the newcomer to Montgard shrugged his shoulders and approached the window.

SMALL panes with dividing bars between. Examining them, Stokes Corvin noted that they were rods of steel. He tried a pane. It revolved in its metal frame. At least ventilation was obtainable.

Stokes Corvin extracted a cigarette from his pocket. He lighted it from a candle; then blew out the various flames to plunge the room in darkness. Puffing at the cigarette, he approached the window and stood there, smoking, while he surveyed the dim sky above the trees which surrounded the curious old house.

The howl of a dog came from some spot on the ground below. Silence; then an answering howl from another portion of the grounds. A dry laugh came from Stokes Corvin. This was adventure, of a sort.

The cigarette sped downward like a meteor as Corvin snapped it through the opened window pane. Corvin saw it reach the dark ground and lie there like a glowing ember. The speck of light died. Stokes Corvin walked across the room.

His shoes thudded on the floor. The springs creaked as Corvin flung himself, still clothed, upon the bed. Minutes passed, while occasional canine howls came like ghostly wails. Then there were snores from the direction of the bed.

Stokes Corvin, the latest of Windrop Raleigh's legatees, had chosen sleep in preference to the weird atmosphere that surrounded Montgard. A prisoner for the night, he had postponed adventure until the morrow.

CHAPTER VII. SHADOWS AT NIGHT

IT was the next evening. Fading twilight showed Montgard, a looming edifice amid the dying glow. Darkened turrets, surmounting forbidding walls, made the place appear as a haunt of ghosts.

The sun had set beyond the old house. The last rays of daylight produced an elongated shadow from the old mansion; a stretch of darkness that seemed to warn all strangers not to enter.

A peculiar, hunched-up man was pacing a balcony that projected from the second story. It was Jarvis Raleigh. At times, the master of Montgard paused in his walk to gaze intently toward the drive that led in from the road. He was staring at the scene before him, apparently watching for intruders.

Yet even the beady eyes of Jarvis Raleigh could not perceive the strange figure that was approaching Montgard. Like a creature torn from darkness, a tall form was stalking beside the trees that fringed the driveway. Unseen, this ghostly visitant reached the blackened shade of the house. There it merged with

darkness.

The Shadow had arrived at Montgard. Prowling within close range of the massive stone walls, he was studying the character of the fortlike building. Informed through his agents that men of crime were close by, The Shadow was looking over the objective which they must gain.

Reaching the front wall, The Shadow followed the house itself. His figure was like the blackened stones. Approaching night hid his shape. At times, The Shadow paused, while his sharp eyes scaled the heights above. The rugged stones, though they would afford hold to a climber, could offer no advantage in entering Montgard. Windows above were all of the curious, small-paned type.

The Shadow's form moved upward. The starting point was directly below the balcony where The Shadow had spied Jarvis Raleigh. Gloved hands gripped stones. Like a human fly, The Shadow made the ascent. His peering eyes came above the parapet about the small balcony.

Jarvis Raleigh had left the upper porch. A heavy door, tightly closed, showed the path which he had taken. That door presented a formidable barrier. Bolted from the inside, it would prevent all entry.

The Shadow moved downward. Increasing darkness hid his form as he circled to the rear of the house. Barely discernible in the afterglow, The Shadow's figure was no more than a fleeting shade. No human eye would have noticed it.

The Shadow paused. His ears had detected an approaching sound. The tall figure moved upward, taking the rear wall with marked alacrity. One dozen feet above the ground, the moving shape paused and clung in batlike fashion within a blackened spot formed by the clustered branches of a near-by tree.

A GROWL from below. One of the Great Danes was sniffing near the wall. The dog's eyes moved, upward. Its throat formed a rumble. Still growling, the dog rested on its haunches.

A figure came blundering through the gloom. The voice of Jerome formed a snarl as the caretaker gripped the big dog by its collar.

Looking upward, Jerome could not discern the shape which the Great Dane observed. He dragged the dog away and delivered a vicious slap, which started it ahead of him on his tour around the house.

The Shadow moved slowly upward. His precarious course took him higher and higher. He paused beside the window of a third-story room. His gloved hands examined the iron shafts that separated the panes. A soft laugh sounded from his hidden lips.

The Shadow reached the roof. Here, again, he could find no mode of entry. Moving cautiously along the sloping surface, The Shadow arrived at a sheer wall near one of the end turrets. His eyes peered downward.

There was a first-story veranda on this side of the building. The ground sloped to give the broad porch height. The Shadow's form seemed to twist upon the sloping roof. His body dangled from the ledge. Firm feet found a hold upon projecting stones; a hand descended and gained a grip. The Shadow continued his descent.

He passed the second story and reached the veranda. Here, crouched under the cover of the high parapet, The Shadow passed another heavy door and peered in through a small-paned window. The lighted room, situated in a front corner of the house, was a library. It was finely furnished and huge bookcases showed along its paneled walls. The library was deserted.

Dropping from the high veranda, The Shadow crossed the lawn. He passed the stonework of an old

well. He continued on until he reached a fringe of trees. His course was indiscernible. Ten minutes later, he emerged, as though conjured from space, near a clearing just beyond the iron fence that marked the boundary of the Montgard estate.

A light showed from a low-lying building. The Shadow approached like a ghost. He noted that the shades were drawn in the cottage. His gloved hands stretched upward. A thin instrument of blackened metal seemed to wedge itself between the portions of a window shaft.

The lock turned silently. The sash moved upward. The sound of low voices was audible. The window shade trembled, almost imperceptibly. The eyes of The Shadow peered between sill and lower edge of sash.

THREE men were seated by a rough table on which a gasoline lamp was resting. One was the man whose presence in this vicinity had been reported by The Shadow's agents: Mallet Haverly. The second was the racketeer's lieutenant, Speedy Tyron. The third was a rough-faced underling.

Mallet and Speedy were engaged in discussion, while their henchman sat silent. The Shadow, listening intently, could hear their words.

"We've got the lay, right enough," declared Mallet. "So far as we know, Luskin gave us the right dope."

"But we're not sure, yet," returned Speedy, "about the—"

Speedy paused as Mallet raised a warning hand. The lieutenant nodded. He knew that Mallet did not want the third man to hear too much.

"About the way things are fixed inside," corrected Speedy. "Just because Luskin was right on what we've seen doesn't prove he was right on what we haven't seen."

"I know that," admitted Mallet. "If the guy was bluffing us, he would have told us the straight stuff about the outside lay and used his stall when he talked about the inside."

"But I'm counting on Luskin's story being right. That's why we're waiting here. We've got to take time with this job, Speedy."

"I can't see that you're getting anywhere yet," objected Speedy. "Last night, you went downtown a while; then you came back and took a sneak up toward the house. But you didn't get very far."

"I couldn't," growled Mallet. "That one hound started to howl. That's why I've sent Bagger up to the place tonight. He'll fix the dog."

"What's one dog?" queried Speedy. "They've got a dozen of them around the place. Those big pooches are the worst."

"The Great Danes? They don't cut a figure if you're careful. The squarehead who lives out in the stable takes them in with him after he makes his rounds."

"Yeah; and I'll bet he's got them ready to send out as soon as the hounds start to howl in their kennels."

"Don't I know it?" Mallet laughed. "You can't get near the house between those kennels—at least I couldn't. One hound started a howl last night; another took it up. That's why I scrambled."

"So you've sent Bagger—"

"To nab one of the hounds. If he does it neat, that will make an opening. I can go by the empty kennel. I

want to look the house over at close range.”

Mallet paused to light a cigarette. He looked toward the henchman who was listening in on the conversation. He uttered a growled order.

“Go on outside, Corky,” he instructed. “Take a look around the clearing. Make sure there's nobody prowling here.”

“Corky” departed.

SPEEDY TYRON was smiling. He knew that Mallet's order had a double purpose. The racketeer wanted to get rid of the henchman for the time. The order to search the clearing was a pretense.

“Listen, Speedy.” Mallet's tone was persuasive. “I know the game I'm playing. I'm the fellow who talked to Luskin. What I learned from him is my business.”

“Sure thing,” agreed Speedy.

“I've told you enough,” continued Mallet. “You know that I'm after some real swag. That's all you have to know. I'm taking it slow, because I want to be mighty sure that the boodle is where I think it is.

“I want to get up around the house and look it over. I've got to learn more about the joint—inside as well as out. When the time is ripe, we'll be ready to hit.”

“But if you can't get inside,” insisted Speedy, “how are you going to learn what you want to know?”

“I'll find it out,” declared Mallet. “There's windows there, aren't there? I can look through them, even if I can't get in. Leave that to me, Speedy. I'm going to get the lay of the joint.”

“I see. That's why you're having Bagger work tonight. You think that one hound out of the way will be enough?”

“Yeah. For the time. Just so I can keep tabs on a few things up at that house. I'm telling you, Speedy—”

The rest of the sentence was lost to The Shadow. The black-garbed listener was swinging away from the window. His tall form flattened itself against the side of the cottage and edged into a corner by a stone chimney.

Corky was coming by. The gorilla's flashlight swept the wall. Its angle missed the niche that The Shadow had chosen. Corky went past and turned the corner of the house. His voice came in challenge at the front of the cottage. It was answered.

The Shadow moved back to the window, just in time to see Corky entering with three men who had arrived from the clearing. One, a coarse-faced ruffian with a scar on one cheek, was evidently “Bagger.”

“You got the hound?” The question came from Mallet Haverly.

“You bet,” laughed Bagger, huskily. “That's one pooch gone where he won't do no harm. I picked the kennel that you told me about. It was a cinch.”

“Good work.” Mallet arose. “You stay here, Speedy. I'm taking Bagger and Corky with me to stay back by the fence while I do a sneak around the big place.”

Speedy nodded as Mallet started forth. With Bagger and Corky flicking their flashlights to point the way, the chief of the crooks headed toward the woods beyond the clearing.

TEN minutes later, Mallet was on the grounds of Montgard. Moving carefully across the lawn, the racketeer was going toward the kennel which now had no canine occupant. Mallet reached the house and stood there, staring upward toward unlighted windows. Crouching, he waited a while; then, after crawling closer to the wall, he suddenly arose and began to move along the side of the house.

Mallet's survey was a brief one. The crook studied the wall that fringed the first story veranda and decided that a climb might prove too noisy. Groping through the dark, he retraced his footsteps toward the vacant kennel.

There he paused and craned on tiptoe to study the windows of the library. Shades were drawn. The room was evidently occupied. Mallet continued his retreat. His first visit to Montgard had been a short one.

Something moved by the wall near where Mallet had been. A gliding figure went stealthily to the front of the building and crossed the gravel without a crunching step. The same form became invisible.

Later, a creepy laugh sounded in darkness by the front gates of the estate, a quarter mile from the house itself. A soft sound swished in the darkness.

The Shadow had paid a second visit to Montgard, to watch Mallet Haverly. He had needed no break in the circle of kennels. Drowsy hounds could not scent The Shadow's presence.

Tonight, The Shadow had studied the fort-like home of Jarvis Raleigh. He had also visited the temporary quarters where men of crime were waiting opportunity to rise to an attack.

The Shadow knew that any onslaught on Montgard would, of necessity, be delayed. Mallet Haverly was playing a waiting game. The stakes were too big to be risked by a futile raid.

Again the laugh. Hollow in the open spaces, its tones were unheard by any but the one who uttered them. The Shadow's laugh was prophetic.

The time would come for Mallet Haverly's attack. The foray would be a planned one. Its indications would be plain before it took place. When Mallet and his men broke forth, The Shadow would be ready.

The Shadow, like Mallet Haverly, was playing a waiting game.

CHAPTER VIII. IN MONTGARD

WHILE prowling figures stalked the grounds about the stone-walled castle of Montgard, a trio of persons were engaged in conversation within the house itself. Stokes Corvin, new resident at Montgard, was making friends with the two other persons who classed themselves as guests at the manor.

Corvin was in the library, seated in a comfortable easy chair. Opposite him was a pinch-faced, middle-aged man who stared solemnly through a pair of gold rimmed glasses that were fastened by a ribbon from his waistcoat pocket. This man was Sidney Richland.

To the right was a quiet, pale-faced girl of twenty five. Barbara Wyldram was attractive of features, but her countenance bore the marks of melancholy. Her eyes, as they stared toward Sidney Richland, seemed dull; when they turned in the direction of Stokes Corvin, they showed a momentary sparkle.

It was evident that life at Montgard had been tedious to Barbara Wyldram. In Stokes Corvin, the girl saw the first person whose manner had been in contrast to the depressing atmosphere of the old house.

“So you believe you will enjoy it here at Montgard.” Sidney Richland was speaking testily to Stokes

Corvin. “Well, young man, that is more than I can say for the place. To me, it is a port in a storm. More precisely”—the speaker was nodding sagely—“it is a haven away from storms.”

“Montgard,” rejoined Stokes Corvin, “is quite an interesting old place. I find it to my liking and I believe”—his gaze shifted toward Barbara Wyldram—“that I shall find the company enjoyable.”

“I appreciate the sentiment,” nodded Richland.

Barbara Wyldram smiled. She saw what Richland had not discerned; namely, that Stokes Corvin's remark was intended for her alone.

“Already,” resumed Corvin, leaning back in his chair, “I have experienced a day of placid adventure. I awoke at nine, to find the door of my room unbolted. That was an unexpected pleasure to begin the day.”

“An old custom of the Raleigh's,” interposed Richland, dryly. He glanced suspiciously toward the library door as though expecting listeners. “A queer lot, if you ask me. All guests are bolted in for the night, when they first come here. That practice will end in a few days.”

“I shall be paroled?” laughed Corvin. “Excellent. But to resume my story, I breakfasted alone. I returned to my room and fell asleep. I lunched alone.”

“That was purely unintentional on our part,” pleaded Barbara Wyldram. “You were late for breakfast and for lunch as well. Neither Sidney nor I knew that you had arrived until—”

“Until,” interrupted Corvin, with a smile, “you found me here in the library just before dinner. That was when I looked forward to an enjoyable meal. I had not reckoned with the gloomy presence of our host.”

“Jarvis Raleigh is always dour,” explained Sidney Richland. “He likes silence at dinner—the only meal at which he joins us. Since he is master here, we respect his wishes.”

“So I observed,” declared Corvin. “With Cousin Jarvis silent at the head of the table; with Quarley playing butler and moving about in stealthy fashion, the dining room seemed like a mausoleum. It was not until the three of us came in here to chat that I began to acclimate myself—”

Corvin's voice broke off suddenly. The new guest was staring beyond Sidney Richland, toward the door of the library. Sidney Richland turned; Barbara Wyldram did the same. Both saw the object of Stokes Corvin's puzzled observation.

A WOMAN was standing in the doorway. A haglike figure, with lower lip projecting from a parchment face, this creature was staring with wide, wild eyes.

Her gray hair formed a tousled mop upon her head. Her lips began to move as she mumbled to herself. Then, after a blank stare at a spot by the window, the woman gave a cackling laugh. She turned and shuffled down the corridor. Her cackle was repeated.

“Who is that?” queried Stokes Corvin.

“Maria,” replied Richland, in his testy tone. “The cook here for many, many years. Quite eccentric. She serves as housekeeper also.”

“Her staring eyes—”

“She sees ghosts. So she says. Family ghosts—of those who once lived at Montgard.”

“Tell me about them.”

Sidney Richland arose and stole softly to the door. He looked along the angled passage that led toward the meeting place of the corridors. He returned and seated himself close to Stokes Corvin. Barbara Wyldram appeared nervous.

“Montgard,” explained Richland, in a cautious tone, “is a strange, unexplainable place. Windrop Raleigh built this old mansion. He was married three times; and none of his wives could put up with the surroundings.

“Windrop Raleigh was an eccentric inventor. He had a perpetual motion machine which he believed would work. That proved his folly; at the same time he also created various mechanical devices that proved practical. All the earnings from the good inventions went into the bad.

“All the while, Windrop lived the life of a miser. He held an interest in a glassware factory owned by himself, two half-brothers and a cousin. Windrop, with all his eccentricity, was the shrewdest of the lot. They looked to him as the brains behind the business.”

“Interesting,” mused Corvin. “I heard of these relatives. What became of them?”

Sidney Richland shrugged his shoulders, then spread his hands in a sweeping gesture.

“No one knows!” he whispered. “One by one they disappeared—always after paying visits to Windrop Raleigh. It is said”—Richland’s whisper became lower—“that they entered Montgard—one by one, never to reappear!”

BARBARA WYLD RAM shuddered. Sidney Richland chuckled hoarsely as he settled back into his chair.

“The secret of Montgard!” he declared, still in his cautious tone. “The terror of this place! Lost men whose wealth became part of Windrop Raleigh’s miserly gain!”

“The secret of Montgard,” repeated Stokes Corvin, soberly. “Is there such a thing, Richland?”

“Who knows?” questioned the pinch-faced man. “Windrop Raleigh is dead.”

“But his wealth?”

“Ah!” Richland wagged a forefinger. “Where is it?”

“I understood,” remarked Corvin, “that Jarvis Raleigh inherited practically all of his father’s estate.”

“He did,” affirmed Richland, “however, it was not large except for this property. The will was a peculiar one, Stokes. It deeded to Jarvis Raleigh the house of Montgard with all that it contained—”

“Which means—”

“That millions may be hidden here! Hoarded gold—family pate—wealth of other sorts—”

“As yet uncovered by Jarvis Raleigh?”

“Yes.”

Again, Barbara Wyldram appeared perturbed. Stokes Corvin smiled as he lighted another cigarette.

“Quite incredible,” he stated. “If Montgard holds a hidden store of wealth, it is obvious that Jarvis Raleigh would institute a search for it.”

“Not so,” returned Richland, wagging his head as he spoke. “Jarvis Raleigh is quite as eccentric as his father. He, too, is an inventor. He has his laboratory and his workshop on the second floor of this house.

“I think”—Richland was glancing toward the door as he spoke—“that Jarvis Raleigh really believes his father murdered those men, whom I have mentioned. Jarvis has spoken more than once of his father’s tainted wealth.

“If a vast sum lies buried somewhere in Montgard, it belongs, by right, to Jarvis Raleigh. Yet he does not want it; moreover, he has forbidden anyone to search this old house. His adherence to that policy was a cause for ill-feeling between himself and Reeves Lockwood, his attorney—”

Sidney Richland stopped as a wailing cry came from somewhere outside the house. Barbara Wyl dram shuddered.

Stokes Corvin stared tensely. Richland laughed in his chuckling fashion.

“It’s only Jerome,” he declared. “he is late tonight. He is a little bit lacking up here”—Richland paused to tap his forehead significantly —“and he always announces himself in that peculiar fashion. He has brought the mail from town. There goes Quarley to answer the door.”

THE old servant walked past the library as Richland spoke. The trio became silent. They could hear the clicking of bolts as Quarley drew them open. Then came muffled words; the closing of bolts; finally footsteps. Quarley appeared and ushered Jerome into the library.

“I shall tell Mr. Raleigh that you want to speak to him,” informed Quarley, in his diligent tone. “Wait here, Jerome.”

The groundskeeper was nodding to the persons present. Viewing Jerome in the light, Stokes Corvin could see that the man, though hardened in appearance, was of low intelligence. Jerome’s face had a stolid, fixed expression.

Minutes went by. Jarvis Raleigh suddenly appeared at the library door, with Quarley close behind him. Raleigh gave no greeting to his guests. He spoke directly to Jerome.

“What is it?” he demanded, in a querulous tone.

“Here is the mail, sir,” replied Jerome. “What I wanted to tell you about is the dog.”

“Which dog?”

“Rox. One of the hounds. I came by his kennel on my way in from the stable. He’s broke loose, sir.”

Jarvis Raleigh stared fixedly. For a moment his face flickered with anger, then with apprehension. At last he spoke harshly:

“Rox may turn up tomorrow. Look for him in the morning. That will be all, Jerome.”

The groundskeeper left, accompanied by Quarley. Jarvis Raleigh began to look through the mail which Jerome had handed him. He passed a letter to Sidney Richland. He pocketed all the other envelopes except one. He scowled as he tore it open.

“From that old blatherskite!” he exclaimed aloud. “You all know whom I mean. Reeves Lockwood!

What does he have to say this time?"

Spreading out the letter, Jarvis Raleigh studied its typewritten lines. His lips formed a sneer. He looked out at the three people who were seated. He glanced toward the door where Quarley had returned.

"My dear Jarvis." The master of Montgard read the letter aloud in sarcastic tones. "It is urgent that I see you in person regarding a matter of utmost importance. This concerns your own welfare and the protection of your property.

"On this account, I shall call at your home on Wednesday night. It is essential that I discuss the matters that concern us both. Sincerely, Reeves Lockwood."

Angrily, Jarvis Raleigh ripped the letter to pieces and threw the fragments on the floor. His usual coldness to his guests was absent. In his antagonism toward Lockwood, he accepted the others almost as confidants.

"The doddering fool!" snarled Raleigh. "I suppose he will again try to tell me how I should conduct my own affairs. I cannot keep him away from Montgard; it is his privilege to come here.

"But I doubt that he will come again. I doubt it. I don't want to talk with him. His services were forced upon me. I don't like the old wind-bag!"

With that, Jarvis Raleigh turned on his heel and stamped through the doorway. Quarley, unperturbed, watched his master go. The servant's face remained immobile.

Sidney Richland adjusted his pince-nez as he stared toward the door which Jarvis Raleigh had left. Barbara Wyldram seemed nervous. Stokes Corvin sat reflective as he considered the aftermath of Jarvis Raleigh's outburst.

STOKES CORVIN was still thoughtful as he stood in his own room an hour later. Quarley had conducted him here; Stokes had heard the old servant close the bolt in the hall. The new guest did not trouble himself to lock the door from the inside.

Instead, he lighted a cigarette from a candle; blew out the wicks and stood smoking by panes which he had opened in the window. The silent lawn of Montgard lay below. Tonight, however, there was no howl of a hound from the nearest kennel.

The cigarette decreased while Stokes Corvin pondered. The newcomer was thinking of events at Montgard. Sidney Richland and Barbara Wyldram—the other guests—were likable. Quarley, Maria and Jerome—all the servants—were strange.

Most consequential of all, however, was the behavior of Jarvis Raleigh, which had occurred so shortly after the information supplied by Sidney Richland. The rage into which Raleigh had flown seemed to justify the remarks which Richland had made.

Even now, Stokes Corvin could picture Jarvis Raleigh storming from the library. He could also recall the unchanging expression upon the face of Quarley. What was the servant's opinion of the master? Stokes Corvin did not know.

The cigarette butt shot from the window and formed a dying ember on the ground below. Again, Stokes Corvin was retiring, a prisoner in his room. His thoughts were on the morrow, when evening would bring Reeves Lockwood.

Would the lawyer's visit produce some startling outcome? Stokes Corvin, lay motionless upon his bed,

was thinking of that possibility.

CHAPTER IX. ONE MAN MISSING

DINNER was ended. A new evening had come to Montgard. Stokes Corvin and Sidney Richland were standing on the side veranda, puffing their cigarettes.

From the distant driveway, the two men looked like a pair of toy figures. Yet there was one who formed an odder sight. Jarvis Raleigh, concealed from those on the veranda, yet discernible from the gateway, was pacing the balcony on the second floor front like a captain on the bridge of his ship.

Unseen, a figure was approaching Montgard. Through the dimming light of day, The Shadow was making his way along the drive, hidden by the umbra of the shade trees. His stealthy shape glided to the blackened front of the big building. The Shadow edged his way to a spot beneath the veranda where Corvin and Richland were strolling.

The men had ceased pacing. They were leaning on the parapet. The tips of their cigarettes formed tiny glows above. The Shadow could hear their voices.

“Quite odd,” Corvin was saying. “The antagonism which Jarvis Raleigh showed at the mere mention of Reeves Lockwood.”

“Yes.” The statement was Richland's. “I fancy the old boy will be in for an unpleasant visit when he arrives tonight.”

“A likable chap, that barrister,” commented Corvin. “I cannot understand Raleigh's animosity.”

A pause; then Richland spoke.

“I should like to talk with Lockwood,” he said. “I really think that he should know how much Jarvis dislikes him.”

“Why not speak to him when he arrives tonight?”

“Impossible. We are prisoners here, Stokes. To disobey any normal order of Jarvis Raleigh is to forfeit the privilege of remaining.”

“A doubtful privilege.”

“To you, perhaps; but to me, a sole mode of livelihood. Jarvis Raleigh has made it an order that none of us who live here by the terms of his father's will shall communicate with outsiders.”

“Do you call that a normal order?”

“I have always considered it such.”

“Possibly you are right, old chap,” Corvin pondered. “Yet I think that you can make an exception in the case of Lockwood.”

“Why so?” questioned Richland.

“Because,” asserted Corvin, “he is the administrator of the trust fund that keeps you here. Surely, he cannot be regarded as an outsider.”

“A fine thought, Stokes! You are right. Quite right. I shall make it a point to speak to Lockwood when

he arrives tonight. But I shall do so in a subtle manner. When the door bell rings, I shall stroll from the library. Quarley will summon Jarvis Raleigh. When Jarvis arrives to meet Lockwood, I shall appear as if by chance.”

Corvin laughed. He could not help but see the humorous side of Richland's careful plan to meet a man whom he had every right to see.

“How long will Lockwood be here?” queried Corvin.

“That is hard to tell,” replied Richland. “Sometimes he stays over night. He may choose to do so on this visit. He never stays longer than a single night. Would you like to talk to him also?”

“It is not necessary. I shall remain in the library. I am enjoying some volumes of Dumas that I neglected during my boyhood.”

“Perhaps Lockwood will come into the library with me.”

“If so, I shall have a chance to chat with him.”

A flickering light appeared at a window high above. Stokes Corvin stared upward.

“Barbara's room,” informed Richland. “She seemed very tired tonight.”

“Yes,” recalled Corvin. “I remember that she complained of a headache during dinner.”

A FLOOD of light came from the library as the oak door was opened. The blinds had been drawn, hence this opening bathed the veranda with a shaft of illumination. Quarley appeared within the door.

“It is dark now, gentlemen,” informed the servant. “It is time to come in from the veranda.”

“One of Jarvis Raleigh's orders,” said Richland to Corvin. “We are on a curfew basis in this establishment.”

Stokes Corvin laughed as he flicked his cigarette out to the lawn. He turned and followed Sidney Richland into the house. The oak door closed. Clicking of bolts followed.

The Shadow moved stealthily to the front of the house. The upstairs balcony was deserted. Lights in the window beyond it showed that Jarvis Raleigh had also gone indoors.

Half an hour passed. All lay still about Montgard. Then came the distant throb of a wheezy motor. Lights appeared at the end of the driveway as the local taxi headed in through the gates. The headlights of the old sedan lighted a path among the trees. They did not, however, reveal a tall shape that stood as inconspicuous as a tree trunk.

As the car swung to the circle in front of the house, one of the Great Danes came bounding up. The dog, half growling, half barking, leaped to the step of the car. Reeves Lockwood's voice sounded. The dog seemed to recognize its tones.

A flashlight glimmered. Jerome arrived and the old lawyer called a greeting. Jerome banished the dog and stood aside while Lockwood alighted. The lawyer spoke to the cab driver.

“You can go back to town,” he declared. “I shall not need you. Jerome can run me to the station in his car.”

“You are staying here tonight, sir?” questioned Jerome.

“Perhaps,” replied Lockwood dryly. “It is also possible that I may make the next train to New York. I shall inform you, Jerome.”

Lockwood approached the door. As he lifted the knocker, the cab pulled away, while Jerome waited only until the lawyer was admitted by Quarley. As soon as the front door was closed and bolted, Jerome shuffled away with the big dog.

Up on Jarvis Raleigh's balcony, the door was closing. The master of Montgard had heard the arrival of the local car. He had peered from his lookout to learn the identity of this visitor.

In the library, Sidney Richland and Stokes Corvin had heard the knocking on the door. Rising, Richland crept toward the door and spoke in an anxious whisper.

“Quarley will leave Lockwood in the turret entry,” he said. “He will then go to summon Jarvis Raleigh. It will be a few minutes before the two of them arrive, so I must not proceed too rapidly.”

It was, in fact, five minutes later when Sidney Richland, standing in the corridor that led past the library, heard the footsteps of Jarvis Raleigh and the servant Quarley. He wondered why the arrival had been so long delayed. Had Quarley loitered or had Jarvis Raleigh decided to keep Reeves Lockwood waiting?

Jarvis Raleigh stopped on the step of the center passage while Quarley pulled back the bolts that opened the door to the turret. Reeves Lockwood, like all other visitors, had been locked in the circular entry pending Jarvis Raleigh's appearance.

As Quarley opened the door to the turret, Sidney Richland came stumbling forward as though he had merely chanced to pass this way. He stopped abruptly behind Quarley and stood there glancing into the turret.

Quarley was as motionless as a statue. The eyes of his expressionless face were fixed. A gasp came from Sidney Richland as he gazed over Quarley's shoulder. A sharp exclamation was Jarvis Raleigh's contribution as the master of Montgard stepped forward to join the other two.

Stokes Corvin had strolled to the library door. Looking down the corridor, he saw the tableau which the three men formed. With a puzzled expression, he hastened forward and came up behind the three. He saw the reason for their amazement.

The front door that led outside was still triple-bolted. It had not been touched. No one could have departed by that direction. Yet the turret, silent as a tomb, was empty, without sign of a living man.

Reeves Lockwood, unwelcome visitor to Montgard, bearer of important information, was no longer in the circular entry. He had vanished as completely as if a hand from the void had plucked him into another world!

Jarvis Raleigh was the first man to move. He stepped into the empty turret and stood there, gazing all about him in singular fashion. A queer, insane leer appeared upon his lips.

“He is gone!” Raleigh's words came with a snarl. “He is gone—the meddler—like others who went before him. Away from here—all of you!”

Jarvis Raleigh's footsteps clicked upon the tiling. Stokes Corvin withdrew toward the library. Sidney Richland started down the central corridor toward the stairs. Quarley stepped aside as his master closed the inner door and bolted it.

Without another word, Jarvis Raleigh turned and took the corridor that would lead him to his own

quarters on the second floor. Quarley stood immobile. The old servant seemed to accept this strange event as an ordinary occurrence.

OUTSIDE the huge house, the figure of The Shadow still lurked among the trees. Minutes passed in long procession. The Shadow's cloak swished. The black-clad watcher was making his departure.

The Shadow had seen nothing wrong in Montgard. He had assumed that Reeves Lockwood had decided to remain over night. For once, The Shadow, trailing crime, had been unable to catch a solitary inkling of a most amazing mystery.

Less than one hundred feet from the spot where The Shadow had been lurking, a strange disappearance of a living man had been effected. The closed outer door of the central turret had blocked The Shadow's view, as the inner door had hidden the occurrence from the eyes of those within.

Reeves Lockwood had gone into nothingness and The Shadow, as yet, had gained no inkling of that astounding fact!

CHAPTER X. JARVIS RALEIGH SPEAKS

TWO days had passed since the strange disappearance of Reeves Lockwood. Another evening was approaching. All seemed quiet about Montgard. Stokes Corvin, as he stood beside the parapet of the veranda, felt a placid lull as he gazed across the lawn.

The sun had set and long streaks of blackness showed upon the grass. Puffing a cigarette, Corvin stared toward the empty kennel that showed some fifty yards away. The hound, Rox, had not been found. Jerome had reported that fact to Jarvis Raleigh.

A footstep sounded on the veranda. Stokes Corvin turned to face Barbara Wyldram. He had not seen the girl since two nights ago. Barbara had been ill and Maria had carried her meals to her room.

In the dusk, Barbara seemed very beautiful. The pallor of her face, increased by her brief illness, was not apparent. Stokes Corvin bowed as he greeted the girl. When Barbara joined him on the parapet, he flicked his cigarette out to the grass.

It was apparent that the girl was troubled. She glanced back toward the open door, then spoke in a low and cautious tone.

"I must talk to you, Stokes," she said. "Is it true—what Sidney has just told me—about Reeves Lockwood?"

"His disappearance?" Corvin's tone was also guarded. "Yes. It was a very strange incident, Barbara. One which has puzzled me ever since it occurred."

"He vanished from the entry in the turret?"

"Yes."

"What has been done about it?"

"Nothing, Barbara." The man's voice denoted puzzlement. "That is, nothing tangible. Sidney and I have searched the entry, unbeknown to either Jarvis Raleigh or Quarley. That is all."

"You found no trace?"

"None. We chose a time while Jarvis was upstairs and Quarley was busy. We unlocked the inner door

and went into the entry. We studied the tiling inch by inch and even tapped the walls. Cautiously, of course.”

“You did not go beyond the outer door?”

“No. It was at night. In the evening, Jerome might have been outside with the dogs. Sidney also feared that Jarvis might be on his upstairs balcony.”

Barbara Wyldram nodded. It was plain that the girl was apprehensive. She seemed to be drinking in the free air of the veranda, dreading the moment when she would have to return to the stifling atmosphere of the house. Stokes Corvin spoke in reassuring tones.

“Sidney has alarmed you, Barbara,” he said. “He chatters about the strange secret which exists here. He talks of legend almost as if it were fact.

“Jarvis Raleigh is eccentric; Quarley is an odd sort also. Their behavior is to be expected. But Sidney should have more common sense than he has shown.”

“I UNDERSTAND Sidney's oddity,” agreed Barbara. “Nevertheless, he has real cause to be terribly disturbed. He wants to know what has happened to Reeves Lockwood!”

“I admit,” declared Corvin, “that the case is perplexing. Nevertheless, we have not obtained sufficient evidence to warrant the panic-stricken attitude that Sidney has taken. Personally, I am on the alert. Nevertheless, I have not yet classed Lockwood's supposed disappearance as an unexplainable mystery.”

“You have a theory?”

“Yes. A slim one, I must admit; yet a theory quite as good as Sidney's secret or Maria's ghosts. I have a very definite notion that Reeves Lockwood never entered that turret.”

“But Quarley admitted him—”

“Quarley announced him. Since then, Quarley has preserved strict silence. Neither Sidney nor I have had the opportunity to question Jerome. How do we know, for a certainty, that Reeves Lockwood came here two nights ago?”

“But there must be something behind all this.”

“Certainly. That is precisely what I have set out to determine. Here, Barbara, is the theory which I have formed. I have not yet expounded it to Sidney. I intend to do so, however.

“Sidney has been chafing at the rules which Jarvis Raleigh has imposed. He had practically threatened to complain to Reeves Lockwood, the man whom Jarvis Raleigh detests. Sidney is also impressed by the tales of strange disappearances at Montgard.

“Suppose that letter from Lockwood was a hoax. Suppose that Quarley, by order from Jarvis Raleigh, pretended that Lockwood had arrived. That would explain all would it not?”

“It would,” admitted Barbara.

“And it would surely cow Sidney,” added Corvin. “More than that, it would be calculated to have an effect upon you and myself.”

“You reassure me,” sighed Barbara. “This is helpful, Stokes. I would prefer to feel that we were the victims of a hoax than to believe that Reeves Lockwood was the victim of murder.”

Stokes Corvin laid a light hand on the girl's arm. Barbara stood close, feeling new confidence from the grasp.

"Be brave," whispered Corvin. "I shall help you, Barbara. You may rely upon me; if my theory is correct, there is nothing to fear. On the contrary."

"You mean that Reeves Lockwood may actually have disappeared?"

"Yes. Yet, in that case, there is no need to fear. I am on constant watch. Last night, Quarley did not bolt the door of my room. I am trusted now—much as Sidney and yourself."

"You are right, Stokes," nodded Barbara. "We should have nothing to fear. I have lived here for some time; no harm has befallen me."

"Nor will it," assured Corvin. "We can do more, Barbara, by quietly watching than by worrying the way Sidney is. If there is trouble here, I shall learn the truth concerning it."

There was possessiveness in Stokes Corvin's tones. Barbara Wyldram smiled with new reassurance.

"Jarvis Raleigh," concluded Corvin, thoughtfully, "is an eccentric man. So, for that matter, is Quarley. It is possible that one or the other is playing a game of his own. There may be very little contact between master and servant."

"That is possible," agreed Barbara. "Quarley was one of old Windrop Raleigh's servants. He was part of the legacy, so to speak. I can readily see why—"

The girl stopped speaking as Corvin gripped her arm in warning. The man had heard a footstep in the library. He turned to see Quarley standing there.

"Dinner is served," declared the cadaverous servant. "Mr. Raleigh expects you at once."

Stokes Corvin and Barbara Wyldram entered the library. Quarley bolted the big door to the veranda while man and girl followed the passage to the central point. They took the other angled passage and entered the dining room—an apartment much like the library in size and shape. There they found Jarvis Raleigh and Sidney Richland seated at the table.

DINNER was a gloomy meal. No comment passed between host and guests. Ice, clinking in glasses; the clatter of knives and tableware—these were the only sounds that disturbed the deathly stillness.

While dessert was being eaten, Jerome's weird call sounded outside the house. Quarley left the dining room and returned several minutes later to pass a packet of mail to Jarvis Raleigh.

"Has Jerome found the hound?" demanded Raleigh.

"No, sir," replied Quarley. "No trace of the dog has been discovered."

"Humph."

With this ejaculation, Jarvis Raleigh went through the envelopes, he passed one to Sidney Richland; another to Stokes Corvin. Both guests opened their letters; their actions showed that the mail was not important. As they pocketed envelopes and letters, Jarvis Raleigh uttered another grunt.

"Two letters tonight," he declared. "Two visitors are coming here tonight. One is a man whom I want to see; another is a man who would do better to stay away."

“Lamont Cranston, a New York millionaire, has written that he has learned about my chemical experiments. He is anxious to see the new extractor which I have devised for removing gold from sea water. He is coming here tonight. He will be welcome.

“Merton Helmsford, a private detective, has also written me from New York. He states that Reeves Lockwood has been missing since he left New York to visit me on business. He will not be welcome, although I shall receive him.”

Rising, the master of Montgard tore one letter to pieces and threw the bits of paper on the table. His voice rose to a maddened pitch.

“Lockwood!” He screamed. “Lockwood! Am I always to be annoyed because of that man? I have no idea what has become of him! Let the detectives investigate elsewhere; not at Montgard!”

While Sidney Richland and Barbara Wyldram were staring, awed, at Jarvis Raleigh, Stokes Corvin looked across the dining room to study Quarley. He fancied that he saw a changed expression upon the old servant's face.

Sidney Richland caught the direction of Corvin's gaze. Barbara Wyldram did the same. This word concerning Reeves Lockwood had aroused the girl's former fears. It damaged the assuring theory that Stokes Corvin had propounded.

WHO knew the truth of Reeves Lockwood's disappearance? Barbara saw a lack of concord between Jarvis Raleigh and his servant Quarley. She felt that suspicion could well be directed to one, yet not to the other.

Which one?

That was the perplexing question. The others were again looking at Jarvis Raleigh as he stamped toward the door of the dining room. Barbara did the same. She saw Raleigh wheel as he reached the door.

“Remember my orders!” thundered Jarvis Raleigh. “My visitors are not to meet my guests. I want no talk between any of you and these two men who are coming here tonight.

“Do you hear that, Quarley? See that my orders are obeyed. Announce each visitor when he arrives and keep him waiting in the turret entry.”

With that, Jarvis Raleigh turned upon his heel. His footsteps echoed heavily along the passage while his three guests sat in silence.

New visitors to Montgard! All who sat there felt the tenseness of events that were to come.

CHAPTER XI. THE FIRST VISITOR

“A DETECTIVE!” whispered Sidney Richland, in an awed tone. “Coming here tonight! You see, Stokes, I was right! Something terrible has happened to Reeves Lockwood!”

Stokes Corvin placed his finger to his lips. He was seated in the library, his eyes fixed upon the door. Sidney Richland, leaning forward in his chair, glanced in the same direction. He saw Quarley passing along the corridor.

“Go easy, old man,” suggested Corvin, after Quarley had passed from view. “If matters are bad hereabouts, you don't want to kick up a fuss about it.”

“That's right,” agreed Richland, settling back wearily. “We must be calm.”

“Think a bit of Barbara,” added Corvin. The girl was seated across the library, reading. “She seems frightfully unnerved. We must do nothing that would cause her new alarm.”

“Very well,” nodded Richland. “Nevertheless, Stokes, I am worried about these men who are coming here tonight. Suppose that one of them should disappear like Lockwood. Suppose that both of them—”

Richland paused. Stokes Corvin was listening to a distant sound. Richland could hear it also; the throbbing of an approaching motor.

“A car coming in the drive,” stated Richland.

“Yes,” decided Corvin, “and it is not that decrepit conveyance that I hired at the station. This visitor is coming in his own vehicle.”

Sidney Richland was rising in faltering fashion. Stokes Corvin gripped him firmly by the arm.

“Where are you going?” he questioned.

“To the front door,” returned Richland. “To learn who has arrived—”

“Stay here,” ordered Corvin. “It is my turn tonight. You are unnerved, Sidney.”

With calm, deliberate step, Corvin strolled toward the door of the library. The clang of the front door bell sounded as he reached the passage.

Corvin was in no hurry as he kept onward. He could see Quarley unbolting the inner door. He paused to light a cigarette, while the servant entered the turret.

AS Quarley came back from the entry and began to shove the triple bolts in place, Stokes Corvin suddenly appeared from the passage to the Library.

“Ah, there, Quarley,” Corvin spoke in an easy tone. “One of our visitors has arrived, has he not?”

Quarley turned to stare at the questioner. He made no reply. Stokes Corvin drew his cigarette from his lips and smiled pleasantly.

“Come, my man,” he said to Quarley. “Don't stand there like a waxwork figure. Jove! You look like an exhibit in Madame Toussaud's chamber of horrors. You remind me of the days when I was a little tyke in London.”

Quarley stood as silent as before. His hand was on the last of the bolts. He seemed unable to cope with Corvin's jocular attitude.

“Which one of our guests has arrived?” questioned Corvin. “The millionaire or the detective? King Midas or King Sleuth? Tell me, fellow, which?”

“I am announcing Mr. Lamont Cranston,” responded Quarley, in a slow, challenging tone. “I intend to wait, sir, until you have returned to the library.”

“The millionaire, eh?” Corvin laughed indulgently. “I rather fancied so, by the thrum of his motor. It sounded like a European car. Well, Quarley, go about your duty. I shall not annoy our distinguished guest.”

With that, Corvin turned and strolled back toward the library, puffing his cigarette as he went. Quarley watched him steadily. As he saw Corvin reach the library door, the servant turned to the central passage

and moved toward the stairs with lengthy, catlike stride.

A TALL man was standing in the circular entry of the turret. His keen eyes were studying the stone walls and the door through which Quarley had gone. Lamont Cranston was a striking individual, perfect in poise and manner.

His features, even in the dim light of the entry, showed unusual characteristics. His face, though distinguished, was almost masklike. His hawklike nose gave him a keen appearance. His eyes, sharp of vision, were like blazing orbs.

Those optics, peering from each side of the aquiline nose, were distinguishing marks. They were the same eyes that had studied the exterior of Montgard. They identified this visitor as the being who had peered so intently from the dark.

The character of Lamont Cranston was a pretense. In the guise of a millionaire, the master of darkness had penetrated within the walls of Montgard. This personage who called himself Lamont Cranston was The Shadow!

Two nights ago, The Shadow had heard statements to the effect that Reeves Lockwood would not remain at Montgard more than a single night. Yet Reeves Lockwood had not come from the old mansion. Hence The Shadow, by subterfuge, had arranged a visit of his own.

The keen eyes turned to the floor of the circular room. They studied the compass points; then the signs of the zodiac. Finally, they rested upon the outer border with its Egyptian inscription. The Shadow's eyes moved along the circle of hieroglyphs, noting the characters with interest.

A thin smile rested upon the firm lips of Lamont Cranston's countenance as it turned upward. The Shadow studied the circular wall of the room, as it rose in tubular fashion to the turret high above. The thin smile remained. Then came an interruption.

Quarley was unbolting the inner door. With the manner of Lamont Cranston, the visitor strolled forward and reached the barrier just as the servant opened it. Looking straight ahead, The Shadow saw the stooped form of Jarvis Raleigh. The owner of Montgard wore a smile as he bowed to greet this welcome visitor.

"I am pleased to meet you, Mr. Cranston." Raleigh stepped forward with outstretched hand. "This is a privilege to have you in my home. You are intending to remain over night?"

"I can do so," remarked Cranston. "My chauffeur is outside. He has my bags in the car."

"Get them, Quarley!" ordered Raleigh. "Get them at once."

The old servant unbolted the outer door. Jerome was there with the Great Danes. Quarley approached a limousine that was standing in the drive. Lamont Cranston followed to the outer door.

"All right, Stanley," he called to the chauffeur. "Keep the car at Glenwood for the night. Call here in the morning."

"Very well, sir," came the chauffeur's response.

TURNING, Cranston found himself close to Jarvis Raleigh. The master of Montgard had stepped into the turret. While they were waiting for the bags, Cranston made a gesture toward the tiled floor.

"A remarkable bit of workmanship," he commented. "Those characters around the outer border.

Egyptian, I presume?"

"Yes," responded Raleigh. "My father had this work done; he obtained the titles from some plant where work had been done for a museum. The inscription, I understand, was supplied by an Egyptologist."

"What is its significance?"

"It is a rather somber message." Jarvis Raleigh was cackling nervously as he pointed a scrawny finger toward the floor. "I do not know the individual characters; but the entire inscription"—his finger was describing a circle—"is to this effect:

"Ye living men who love life and hate death; ye who will pass by this spot shall sacrifice to me."

"Was there a hidden purpose in that message?" questioned Cranston, mildly. Jarvis Raleigh was moving toward the inner door. He paused there, his clasped hands doubled on his bosom. His tones were harsh as he stated this conclusion:

"My father, Mr. Cranston, was a man of sharp practice. He and I had nothing in accord. I never approved of his grasping methods. That explains why I have sought outside capital to finance my inventions."

Quarley had arrived with the bags. Lamont Cranston's tall figure appeared in the corridor, following Jarvis Raleigh. Behind the pair came Quarley. Stokes Corvin, standing at the door of the library, saw the tall visitor between the other two. He caught the flash of a pair of searching eyes as Cranston chanced to glance along the hallway toward the library.

Then Jarvis Raleigh and the visitor were gone along the central passage toward the stairs. Quarley remained to bolt the inner door. The servant picked up the bags and followed the path toward the stairs.

STOKES CORVIN strolled back into the library. He noted anxious looks upon the faces of Barbara Wyldram and Sidney Richland. He spoke in reassuring tones.

"Our first visitor has arrived," declared Corvin. "It is Lamont Cranston, the millionaire. He has gone upstairs with Jarvis Raleigh."

Barbara seemed pleased as she resumed her reading. Richland sat down with an air of relief. His nervousness was dispelled.

"Perhaps I was wrong about Lockwood," he decided. "It may have been a hoax. Your theory, Stokes—"

"My theory," interposed Corvin, quietly, "may be entirely wrong. The letter from the detective makes it seem that Lockwood actually disappeared from this house."

"Another hoax, perhaps."

"I hardly think so. The matter looks serious to me. One of us, Sidney, must make sure that this detective actually arrives."

"It will be my turn, Stokes."

"You are still nervous—"

"Not at all. Quarley might become antagonistic if you appeared again. This time I shall watch from the passage."

Sidney Richland spoke in a decisive tone. Stokes Corvin nodded slightly in agreement. He lighted a cigarette and sat down beside Barbara. He began pleasant conversation. A dozen minutes passed. Suddenly, Stokes Corvin raised his hand.

“Is that a car?” he questioned.

The sounds of a throbbing motor were barely audible. Sidney Richland nodded as he heard them. Both men listened tensely. Corvin glanced at his watch.

“The limited arrived ten minutes ago,” he remarked, “provided, of course, that it was on schedule.”

“It usually is,” stated Richland, rising. “Stokes, this means that the second visitor is here.”

Adjusting his pince-nez, Richland arose and threw back his shoulders in a manner that would have been ludicrous on an ordinary occasion. With an attempt at bravado, he moved toward the door and entered the passage.

“Stokes!” Barbara's tone was cautious. “I feel dreadfully ill at ease. If this should be the detective—”

The girl stared startled as the door bell clanged. Stokes Corvin leaned forward and patted her shoulder in brotherly fashion. He stood silent for a few moments; then, as Barbara sighed in slight relief, Stokes strolled to the door. He stood there peering into the passage. He returned some seconds later.

“Quarley has just come back from the entry,” he remarked. “He has left to announce the visitor. Sidney is watching the bolted inner door.”

“These coming minutes will be frightful—”

“Not if you take them calmly. Resume your reading, Barbara.” Corvin raised the book that was in the girl's hands, “Rely on Sidney's observation. To set you an example”—Corvin smiled as he stepped away—“I shall resort to my favorite author, Alexander Dumas.”

Barbara smiled wistfully as Stokes Corvin went to the corner bookcase and drew out two volumes of Dumas. She began to read her book. The concentration steadied her; she felt more confident when Stokes Corvin returned across the room and took a chair beside her.

Despite their tenseness, both Stokes Corvin and Barbara Wyldram were maintaining calm while they awaited the return of Sidney Richland. A second visitor had come to Montgard. Would he, like Lamont Cranston, enter safely?

Or did new mystery brew? Fateful seconds were ticking slowly while these two guests at Montgard awaited the impending outcome.

CHAPTER XII. NEW MYSTERY

WHILE people downstairs were concerning themselves with the arrival of a second visitor at Montgard, Jarvis Raleigh was deeply engaged with a demonstration in his experimental laboratory.

This room was on the second floor. It was situated between Jarvis Raleigh's bedroom and his workshop. Closed doors indicated those other rooms. Lamont Cranston was looking on with interest, while the owner of Montgard stood beside a square-shaped tank.

The large container was filled with briny water. Above it rested a cylindrical device that was purring with the sound of an electric motor. A tube ran from the cylinder to a hinged cubical container.

The noise of the motor was sufficient to drown out all foreign sounds. In this closed room, it was impossible for the keenest ears to detect the noise which had been heard in the living room: the arrival of an automobile in the front driveway.

"This is the gold extractor." Jarvis Raleigh was speaking in a loud tone as he pointed to the closed cylinder. "This is where the actual process takes place. Fundamentally, Mr. Cranston, my system of extraction is like those which have already been developed."

"I understand," nodded the visitor. "But how, Mr. Raleigh, can you manage to make the process a commercial possibility?"

"Through this vaporizer." Raleigh smiled cunningly as he tapped the cylinder where the motor buzzed. "It reduces the liquid content of the brine."

He placed his hand in front of an exhaust pipe at the side of the buzzing cylinder. He nodded as he drew his hand away. Cranston's hand moved to the spot indicated. The visitor could feel a moist vapor coming from the pipe.

There was a loud rap at the door. Jarvis Raleigh did not appear to notice it. Lamont Cranston listened intently, then attracted Raleigh's attention. Jarvis Raleigh appeared annoyed; then, nodding in recollection, he smiled sourly.

Pressing the switch that brought the motor to a dying whir, he went to the door of the laboratory and opened it. Quarley was standing there, his face totally unexpressive.

"Mr. Helmsford is here, sir," he announced.

"Very well," declared Jarvis Raleigh, sullenly. "I shall come down to see him. Wait here, Quarley."

The owner of Montgard turned and entered the door to the bedroom. While Quarley stood somberly at the door in the hallway, Cranston studied the tank and its machine with keen, steady gaze.

TWO minutes later, Jarvis Raleigh reappeared. He had changed coats, leaving his white laboratory jacket in the bedroom. His eyes were suspicious as they fell on Cranston. Evidently, Raleigh did not like the close inspection that the visitor was making.

Cranston's gaze turned. In a trice, the keen eyes detected Jarvis Raleigh's expression. The Shadow knew what was passing in Raleigh's mind. The owner of Montgard was in a dilemma. He did not know whether to leave Cranston here in the laboratory or to invite him downstairs. A thin, almost imperceptible smile appeared as Cranston's lips voiced words that decided the issue.

"I chanced to hear your servant's announcement," came the remark. "He said that Mr. Helmsford was here. Did he refer to Merton Helmsford?"

"Yes." Jarvis Raleigh's eyes were narrowing. "I believe that is the visitor's full name."

"A private detective," added Cranston. "I know him quite well. I have met him, in fact, while he has been doing operative work."

"I shall not talk with him long," announced Raleigh. "He has come to inquire about a matter of which I know nothing. I detest such annoyances."

"Perhaps," suggested Cranston, artfully, "it would be wise for me to meet him with you. If he should prove to be persistent, I can manage him."

Jarvis Raleigh stared. His gaze was troubled. His hands clenched as he drew them toward his chest. Lamont Cranston, turning toward the door, faced Quarley. The servant stared impassively.

“Let us adjourn below,” was Cranston's statement.

Quarley hesitated. Although the servant's manner was one of stolidity, he seemed to be expecting an order from his master. Lamont Cranston caught his stare; then wheeled at Jarvis Raleigh.

“Come, my friend,” he said, calmly. “That turret entry is not a conformable reception room.”

Jarvis Raleigh advanced. He seemed to be choosing the lesser of two evils as he obeyed Cranston's dictate. There was something about the visitor's manner that made Jarvis Raleigh feel that it would be unwise to leave him here alone.

Quarley turned and led the way to the stairs. The servant's footsteps were slinky. Lamont Cranston followed close behind him; Jarvis Raleigh brought up the rear, keeping a steady watch upon his visitor.

THEY reached the downstairs hall. Quarley went directly to the big door when they arrived at the curl of the passage. Lamont Cranston descended the final step. Glancing along the passage to the library, he saw the standing figure of Sidney Richland. The man fumbled with the ribbon of his spectacles as he caught Cranston's gaze.

Jarvis Raleigh was still upon the step of the central passage. Lamont Cranston turned toward him and smiled. There was a significance in the motion of his lips that made Raleigh twitch.

“Your home is like a fortress,” observed Cranston, quietly. “I can see why unwanted visitors would find it unpleasant to come here.”

The last bolt clattered. Quarley opened the huge door. Lamont Cranston stepped aside. Jarvis Raleigh leaned forward. Sidney Richland came cautiously along the passage. He reached the end and stared with the others.

Not a sound occurred until a frightened gasp came from Richland's lips. That outcry was the echo of the startlement that had gripped Richland's brain. It was the voicing of a discovery that the other three had also made.

The outer door was barred on the inside, exactly as Quarley should have left it. Any occupant of the turret entry could not possibly have left the place. Yet the circular room was empty!

Merton Helmsford, private detective who had arrived here to investigate the disappearance of Reeves Lockwood, had vanished as mysteriously as the man whom he had come to seek!

CHAPTER XIII. DEMANDS ARE MET

LAMONT CRANSTON was the first of the observers to make a move. The millionaire's tall figure cast a spectral silhouette upon the tiling as it moved forward into the turret entry.

Cranston's keen eyes surveyed the stone walls. They turned upward toward the turret itself, then swept searchingly about the floor. They studied the bolted outer door, then turned toward the three men who stood within the house.

“Your visitor,” Cranston's head inclined toward Jarvis Raleigh, “seems to have made a rather unaccountable departure.”

“So it appears,” snarled Jarvis Raleigh. “he must have decided not to wait.”

“The front door is bolted,” came Cranston's next remark. “As I recall it, the same door was bolted while I waited in this entry.”

The searching eyes were upon Quarley. The old servant lost his somber calm, then regained it. He turned to Jarvis Raleigh.

“Perhaps I made a mistake, sir,” he declared. “I asked Mr. Helmsford to enter. Possibly he failed to do, so. I may have bolted the outer door thinking that he was in the entry.”

Sidney Richland, glancing over his shoulder, saw Stokes Corvin and Barbara Wyldram peering down the passage from the library. They had heard the sound of voices. Inspired by the knowledge that they would be with him, Richland sprang forward and delivered a verbal outburst.

“This is too much!” he exclaimed. “No excuse will do! First Reeves Lockwood—now a detective—both are gone! Where are they? Where are they?”

The man's voice was rising to a nervous scream. Jarvis Raleigh clenched his fists. He snarled as he stormed at Richland.

“You forget yourself, Sidney!” was Raleigh's fierce rebuke. “The affairs of any visitors do not concern you. One more word and I shall eject you from this refuge!”

Richland subsided. Raleigh glared. But the challenge did not end. Stokes Corvin had arrived, with Barbara Wyldram close beside him. Corvin's voice was firm as he took up Richland's cause.

“Perhaps,” said Corvin, coldly addressing Jarvis Raleigh, “you can cower Sidney Richland. He is dependent upon the meager shelter that he gains here. I, however, have no qualms. I am determined to learn the truth. What has become of Reeves Lockwood and Merton Helmsford?”

“I do not know,” snarled Jarvis Raleigh.

“Perhaps you can explain.” Corvin turned to Quarley. “You admitted both visitors. Where did they go?”

“I may have been mistaken.” Quarley had regained his impassiveness. “Perhaps neither of these persons entered the—”

“Twaddle!” interjected Corvin. “We have observed you, Quarley. This is no sell. I considered it a hoax when Lockwood disappeared. Matters are more serious now.”

“The secret of Montgard!” declared Sidney Richland, regaining his tongue. “This is not the first time that people have disappeared within these walls!”

JARVIS RALEIGH raised his hands in protest. All turned to hear what he might say. In a strange tone, the owner of Montgard spoke slowly and precisely.

“Let me assure you,” declared Raleigh, “that I have no idea what has become of either Reeves Lockwood or Merton Helmsford. Both were visitors whom I did not invite to Montgard. What you have said, Sidney, is a matter of pure speculation.

“Montgard, they have said, possesses a secret. There is a legend that certain persons vanished from this house while my father was master here. I hold no briefs for the past.

“Since I have become master of Montgard, I have conducted my affairs in honorable fashion. The secrets of this place—should they exist—are buried so far as I am concerned. Reeves Lockwood insisted that

wealth lay somewhere within this house. I refused to search for it.

“I have chosen Montgard as my abode because the place is mine. I am master here and I am concerned only with my experiments and inventions. Let me remind you”—Raleigh's tone was taking on a sarcastic sneer —“that my term of occupancy commenced after my father's death. I have no acquaintance with conditions as they existed prior to his demise.”

Standing upon the raised step, Raleigh hunched his form defiantly. His statement had been made; he was ready for objections.

Sidney Richland was about to blurt new words when Stokes Corvin stopped him. Quietly, Corvin turned to Quarley and addressed the servant.

“You, I understand, were in the employ of Windrop Raleigh,” remarked Corvin. “Am I correct in that assumption, Quarley?”

“Yes,” admitted the old servant, sullenly.

“Perhaps,” resumed Corvin, “you were acquainted with certain unusual conditions that existed here in Montgard?”

“No, sir.” Quarley's tone was steady. “I served my old master as I now serve my new one. I was retained, sir”—Quarley showed a proud smile on his colorless lips—“because I was honest and faithful.”

“There were other servants here?”

“Yes, sir.”

“They were dismissed?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Why?”

“I do not know, sir. I can vouch for none save myself.”

There were footsteps in the passage from the dining room. All stared to see Maria approaching. The woman's eyes were fixed in wild gaze. Staring toward the turret, Maria mumbled incoherent words. Turning, she walked back along the passage toward the dining room.

“Apparently,” came the quiet tones of Lamont Cranston, “the mystery that exists here can be centered in this turret. Would you object, Mr. Raleigh, to an inspection of this entry?”

Jarvis Raleigh's eyes were challenging. Yet there was something in Cranston's demeanor that quieted him. The owner of Montgard slowly shook his head.

“I have no objection,” he declared, “provided that such inspection takes place in my presence.”

SIDNEY RICHLAND looked toward Stokes Corvin. The other man nodded. Together, the two joined Lamont Cranston in the turret. Richland seemed eager to perform a task openly that he had previously done with secret caution. He started to pound against the stone wall. Stokes Corvin noticed him and turned to Quarley.

“A hammer,” ordered Corvin, “and a piece of board.”

Quarley looked to Jarvis Raleigh. The master of Montgard nodded. The servant departed and returned a few minutes later with the required articles.

Ordering Richland to hold the board upright so as to avoid the circular shape of the wall, Corvin began a systematic pounding. His object was to sound the wall without chipping the stone. Solid resistance greeted every stroke of the hammer.

Lamont Cranston watched the process. His eyes saw plainly that nothing was being left undone. The mortared crevices of the irregular stones were proof in themselves that the wall could hide no opening. Yet Corvin and Richland continued their work from a height of six feet down to the floor.

Staring upward, Cranston could see that the higher portions of the wall were also of solid construction. Like a mammoth tube, its perspective causing a tapering effect to the turret itself, this circular chamber formed a solid affair.

Corvin and Richland ended the first part of the task. They came to the floor. Richland held the board upon the tiling. Corvin hammered steadily. As before, solid sounds greeted the work.

As the two men neared the center of the entry, Lamont Cranston stepped toward the outer border. Strolling along, he studied the Egyptian inscription which he had noticed before.

“Quite odd,” came his comment. “the study of Egyptian must be a fascinating subject. What was the meaning of this inscription, Mr. Raleigh? I have forgotten it.”

Standing on his step, Jarvis Raleigh slowly repeated the words which he had evidently committed to memory:

“Ye living men who love life and hate death; ye who will pass by this spot shall sacrifice to me.”

Sidney Richland looked up. His eyes were staring. He faced Jarvis Raleigh and his voice rose to a frenzy.

“So that is the meaning!” he screamed. “True—very true! We have passed by this spot—we who live here as paupers. We have sacrificed—yes, we have sacrificed our independence—to you!”

“That is enough, Sidney!” returned Jarvis Raleigh. “The inscription bears no significance so far as I am concerned. I did not order the laying of those tiles.”

“Your father then!” blurted Richland. “We have sacrificed to the terms of his preposterous will. There were others in the past who sacrificed to him. His brothers; his cousin. They lived, while they sacrificed. When they failed to sacrifice, they died!”

Barbara Wyldram shuddered. Jarvis Raleigh stood glaring. Stokes Corvin broke the tension by plucking Richland's sleeve.

“Come old man,” suggested Corvin. “Let us finish this work.”

LAMONT CRANSTON was still puzzling over the hieroglyphs. Tapping of the hammer alone broke the silence. The work completed, Stokes Corvin arose and passed the hammer to Sidney Richland.

“The floor is as solid as stone,” Corvin declared, in a puzzled tone. “The walls are actually stone. It is about forty feet to the turret”—he was looking upward—“as I should judge it. I fancy that we have engaged ourselves with a hopeless project. I can offer no solution to the disappearance of those two men.”

“Leave this turret then,” ordered Jarvis Raleigh. “Your actions have not met with my approval, Stokes. As for you, Sidney”—he paused to turn warningly to Richland—“I shall tolerate no further insubordination of the sort that you have shown. If you expect to remain at Montgard, you will meddle no longer in affairs which do not concern you.”

“This matter,” observed Lamont Cranston, in a smooth tone, “seems to be closed. My conjecture is that Quarley must be correct. Those men must have left somehow of their own accord.

“To me, Mr. Raleigh, your invention upstairs is alone of consequence. I shall forget this unpleasant commotion and I trust that those who live here at Montgard may decide to do the same.”

With a bow toward the others, Lamont Cranston moved toward the step where Jarvis Raleigh was standing. The owner of Montgard smiled in approval of his visitor's statement. Turning, he led the way toward the stairway to the second floor.

Stokes Corvin and Sidney Richland had rejoined Barbara Wyldram. They formed a silent trio as they watched Quarley close the big door to the entry and press the bolts in place.

Corvin shrugged his shoulders as he motioned to the others to follow him along the passage to the library. Reaching that room, he gently conducted Barbara to her chair and placed her book in her hands.

Picking up his own volume of Dumas, Stokes lighted a cigarette and resumed his reading. He said no more about the mystery which had proved so disturbing. Barbara Wyldram decided to follow his own example.

Only Sidney Richland still appeared perturbed. Standing by the doorway to the passage. Richland toyed with the ribbon of his spectacles as he stared toward the barred front door. His twitching lips were voicing soundless words. Sidney Richland was loath to forget the secret which hung over the lonely mansion of Montgard.

CHAPTER XIV. THE SHADOW SEEKS

WHEN Stokes Corvin decided to retire for the night, Barbara Wyldram had already finished reading and had gone upstairs. Sidney Richland was still sulking like a melancholy owl as he watched Corvin replace the volume of Dumas on the shelf.

“Good, night, old top,” said Corvin, cheerily, as he strolled past Richland. “I prescribe a bit of rest. Let's forget this worrisome matter until the morn.”

“I can't forget it,” pleaded Richland. “Think of it, Stokes! Two men missing—”

“We can't explain it, Sidney,” interposed Corvin, gravely. “I can assure you that I am as disturbed as you. Nevertheless, brooding will bring no solution. Cheerio, old fellow. Brace up before you begin to see Maria's ghosts.”

Sidney Richland shuddered. Corvin smiled in reassuring fashion and walked from the room. As he passed along the angled passage, Corvin's forehead furrowed. Despite his light manner, this new resident of Montgard was taking matters very soberly.

As he reached the second floor, Corvin saw a light under the door of Jarvis Raleigh's laboratory. He knew that Raleigh must still be engaged in discussion of his invention. Arriving at the third floor, Corvin noticed an opened doorway. Lighted candles shone in wall brackets. This was evidently the apartment designed for Lamont Cranston.

Entering his own room, Stokes Corvin performed his nightly ceremony of lighting a cigarette from a candle wick. He blew out the lights and strolled through darkness to the window. He opened one of the turning panes.

Silence reigned below. Corvin recalled that nothing more had been said of Rox, the missing hound. He assumed that the dog had not yet been found and that the matter had been dropped. All was quiet outside the huge house; then came a sound within—footsteps on the stairs.

Holding his cigarette behind him, Stokes stole to the door of his room and opened the barrier a trifle. Peering through the crack, he saw Quarley conducting Lamont Cranston to the guest room. Cranston entered. Quarley closed the door. Stokes saw the old servant shoot the outer bolt. He heard the bar click in place. Lamont Cranston, like every new guest at Montgard, was securely imprisoned for the night.

Corvin softly closed his own door. He turned the key in the lock. He strolled to the window and continued smoking until his cigarette had dwindled. He flicked the glowing stump far out upon the lawn; then made his way through the darkness of the room until he reached the bed.

IN the guest room, Lamont Cranston was standing near the door. He had heard the click of the outer bolt. His lips wore their thin smile. Walking about the room, he extinguished the candles, then made his way toward a spot near the window where Quarley had placed his bags.

Slight sounds occurred. A mass of cloth came from a grip. Its enveloping folds slipped over Cranston's crouching form. A tiny flashlight glimmered. Its guarded rays reached the door as the unseen figure moved in that direction.

A gloved hand came into the tiny circle of illumination. Fingers plucked the key from the hole beneath the knob. A long piece of thin, curved metal came into view before the flashlight's rays. The end of the pliable hook had a loop.

The flashlight went out as the gloved hand of The Shadow pushed the metal loop through the keyhole. With deft fingers, The Shadow guided the probing loop upward. It scraped gently against the outside of the door, then found its objective.

Twisting the curved metal in adept fashion, The Shadow used it to draw back the outer bolt. Rising, he unloosed the delicate instrument and withdrew it from the keyhole. Softly, he opened the door and stepped into the hall. He closed the door behind him and pressed the bolt without a sound.

A tall figure garbed in black—a dim shape in the dull light of the hall. Such was The Shadow as he moved toward the stairway and descended. The door of the room was bolted behind him. To all appearances, Lamont Cranston was safely imprisoned for the night.

Yet The Shadow was at large. A stalking, ghostlike figure, he was faring forth to investigate affairs within the walls of Montgard. Alone, unhampered, The Shadow was seeking the answer to the strange disappearances that had occurred here.

Until tonight, The Shadow had gained no proof of strange crime in Montgard. He had come here—as Lamont Cranston—to learn the reasons why Reeves Lockwood was apparently staying at Jarvis Raleigh's home. Arriving before Merton Helmsford, The Shadow had gained no knowledge of the detective's expected visit until after Helmsford had arrived.

Then The Shadow had learned truth regarding both lawyer and detective; but in that truth there had been no tangible clew to the strange fate that had overtaken these unwelcome visitors.

THERE was a hall light on the second floor; The Shadow, however, noted no glimmerings from under doors. He continued downward and reached the center passage. He advanced until he gained the door to the circular entry.

In the dim light furnished by a single incandescent at the meeting of the passage, The Shadow drew back the three bolts. He opened the heavy barrier and advanced softly into the turret chamber.

Here the flashlight flickered. It passed along the floor, circling about the Egyptian hieroglyphics that formed the outer border. It turned straight upward; its spreading glow revealed the cross beams of the turret. The light went out.

Moving back into the house, The Shadow closed the door and threw the bolts. His tall form making a weird blotch, The Shadow stood intently. He was gauging the actions of Quarley, when the servant had come upstairs to inform his master of a second visitor. He was recalling the deeds of Jarvis Raleigh.

The passage to the library was black; near the end, however, The Shadow could see the glow of a library light through the open door. This was the direction from which Sidney Richland had come, leaving Stokes Corvin and Barbara Wyldram behind.

Was some one still in the library? The light indicated that fact.

The Shadow moved along the darkened passage. He reached the door and peered within. He saw Sidney Richland seated by a table. The man with the pince-nez was staring glumly toward the shaded window.

Footsteps sounded from the direction of the central passage. Stepping along the corridor past the library door, The Shadow became motionless as he stood against the wall. Quarley appeared and stopped at the door.

“It is late, sir.” The servant spoke to Richland. “Mr. Raleigh's orders, sir.”

“Curfew again, eh?” grumbled Richland. “All right, Quarley.”

Richland paced from the room. Quarley looked about; then extinguished the lights. The servant left and followed Richland's course to the front of the house. He left the light burning by the front door. That was all. The Shadow could see its faint glimmer at the end of the passage.

The black cloak swished. The Shadow entered the darkened library. His flashlight gave intermittent glimmers as it picked out certain spots. It swept along the rows of bookshelves; paused at the volumes of Dumas that Stokes Corvin had replaced; then moved to the chair wherein Barbara Wyldram had been reading earlier in the evening.

The light fell upon the heavy oak door with its triple bolts. The Shadow studied this barrier; then extinguished the light. For a short while, there was motion in the darkness. Then The Shadow's form glided from the library and back along the passage to the front door. The spectral investigator took the passage to the dining room. He played his flashlight about that apartment.

DARKNESS again. The Shadow reappeared by the front door. A mammoth shape of blackness, he again loosed the bolts and opened the barrier to the entry. Beyond the portal, he studied the tiled flooring. Once again, his eyes turned toward the Egyptian inscription.

From one hieroglyph to another, The Shadow's flashlight formed a moving spotlight. Burning eyes surveyed each of the odd characters. The light went out after the circle had been completed.

For the second time The Shadow reentered the house and closed the heavy portal. A soft laugh sounded from his hidden lips as The Shadow completed the sliding of the bolts and then stole along the passage to the library.

Here, without the aid of his flashlight, The Shadow drew back the bolts of the oak door. A puff of fresh air was the token when he stepped to the veranda and stole forward to the parapet. With noiseless skill, The Shadow climbed the stone rail and dropped to the ground beneath. He made his way to the front of the great house.

The Shadow had studied Montgard thoroughly before; but never with the knowledge that he now possessed. Although the place was dark, the clear starlight enabled The Shadow to locate important portions of the house.

The dining room and library, each reached by an angled passage, had windows at the front of the house. With the turret entry in the center, they formed a chain of three rooms.

The Shadow could trace the windows of the bedroom, and workshop on the second floor. The laboratory lay between them, behind the turret. These were the chambers in which Jarvis Raleigh dwelt. Above were the rooms for guests; the servants evidently occupied rear rooms on the second floor.

The Shadow returned towards the veranda. His form became motionless. Some one was groping through the dark, approaching the house. The prowler seemed to crouch along the ground; then his thudding footsteps turned away and dwindled as they passed the vacant dog kennel.

It was Mallet Haverly or one of his henchmen. The evil crew was still on watch. A blundering sound came to The Shadow's ears. A hound heard it, also; a howl came from one of the kennels. Another dog took up the cry.

Swiftly, The Shadow reached the veranda and ascended the parapet. He reentered the library and bolted the door behind him. He made swift progress down the passage; then turned along the central corridor and gained the stairs. The howling of the dogs continued. Though the prowler had fled, the hounds were keeping on with their cry.

Just as The Shadow reached the second floor, a door swung open. Maria, the old housekeeper, stepped into view, carrying a lighted candle in its stick. The woman stopped short. The candle light, throwing a dull flicker toward the stairway, revealed a mass of living blackness!

FROM that spectral form peered a pair of blazing eyes. Maria stood face to face with The Shadow, not five feet distant from the strange being.

A shrill cry came from the woman's cracked lips. As Maria's odd call echoed through the lonely hall, a hand swept forward. Gloved fingers, snapping in the air, extinguished the flame of the candle wick.

Quarley had put out the hall lights. The place was plunged in darkness by The Shadow's action. Again, Maria's lips formed a ghastly wail. Another door swung open. Quarley sprang into the hall, carrying a flashlight.

"What is the matter?" queried the servant.

"I have seen it." Maria's eyes held their vacant stare. "I have seen the ghost. This old house holds an evil spirit—"

"Be silent!" ordered Quarley, sweeping his flashlight about the hall to make sure that the place was empty. "You will disturb the master. Go back to bed, Maria!"

Sullenly, the woman returned to her room. Quarley, after another inspection of the hall, went to the stairs that led to the third floor. As he reached the top, he found Barbara Wyldram standing in her dressing gown, holding a lighted candle. Her room was closest to the stairway. The girl had heard Maria's wail.

"What is the matter, Quarley!" asked Barbara, in a whisper.

"Nothing, Miss Wyldram," returned the servant, in a courteous tone. "Maria has been seeing ghosts. I wanted to be sure that all was well up here."

"I have seen no one," stated Barbara. "I came to the hallway as soon as I could find my dressing gown."

"Maria is crazy," muttered Quarley. "I hope her cries did not wake the master."

With that, the servant turned and went down to the second floor. Barbara Wyldram shuddered slightly. She looked about her as she held the candle high. Her eyes fell upon the door of Lamont Cranston's room.

The girl stared. Something was moving on that door. The bolt, withdrawn, was sliding into place as though sponsored by a ghostly hand. Barbara blinked. The bolt had stopped, fully closed. The girl advanced and touched the cold metal.

Reality belied the past moments. As Barbara Wyldram stood beside the bolted door, she decided that her imagination must have been at work. Holding the wavering candle flame before her, the girl returned to her own room and closed the door.

Silence reigned about Montgard. The wailing of the hounds had died. Quiet persisted within the walls of the massive dwelling. The only sound that disturbed the stillness was a creepy echo of a whispered laugh.

Uttered within the bolted guest room, the tones of that shuddered mirth were unheard elsewhere. The laugh came from hidden lips. Its author was invisible within the room where he now remained.

The Shadow's search was ended for the night. Guised as Lamont Cranston, The Shadow had come to Montgard. In his garb of black, he had roamed at will within these sinister walls.

The only two persons who had seen evidence of his weird presence had accepted it as something unexplainable. To Maria, The Shadow was a ghost; to Barbara Wyldram, the moving bolt had been a product of imagination.

Tomorrow, The Shadow would depart as Lamont Cranston. Meanwhile his purpose had been attained. He had studied evidences of crime within Montgard as he had examined the evidences that lay without.

Hidden wealth was at stake. Lives were in the balance. The Shadow was prepared to meet the coming thrusts. He was ready to protect those whom men of evil sought to harm.

CHAPTER XV. CROOKS STRIKE

"SO Maria has been seeing ghosts?"

It was Jarvis Raleigh who put the question. Seated at the head of the dinner table, the owner of Montgard was speaking to Quarley.

"Yes, sir." Quarley's reply was solemn. "Maria was prowling about in the second story hall. It was in the dead of night, sir."

"A trivial matter. Nevertheless, you should have mentioned it to me earlier, Quarley."

"I wished to do so, sir. But you were engaged with Mr. Cranston until he left about one hour ago."

"Quite so, Quarley. It was well that you did not speak of the matter in Cranston's presence. He had already been disturbed by that incident of last night."

Within this reference to the disappearance of Merton Helmsford, Jarvis Raleigh glared toward the other diners. Solemn faces showed in the light of the huge candelabrum that adorned the center of the dinner table.

"Well?" Raleigh's question was a sour snarl. "Do any of you have anything to say? Speak if you want to."

"Ghosts do not concern me," responded Stokes Corvin with a smile. "I think that their appearance would be trivial in comparison with the incident that you have mentioned. The disappearance of a living man is more surprising than the appearance of a ghost."

"If ghosts are here," warned Sidney Richland, solemnly, "they are of your bringing, Jarvis! Shades of vanished men should rightfully rise in horror at what has taken place within the walls of Montgard."

Barbara Wyldram reclined forward to grip Richland's arm. She could observe the scowl which had appeared on Jarvis Raleigh's face. She feared a new outburst on the part of the master of Montgard.

"I saw something last night." Barbara's voice trembled slightly as the girl tried to bridge the ominous interruption which she had produced. "I came out into the hallway on the third floor. It was when Maria screamed about a ghost. I heard her from my room."

"Quarley was there with his flashlight. He went downstairs. I chanced to look toward the door of the guest room. I was sure that I saw the bolt closing to lock that very door. It was moving, of its own accord, inch by inch, yet no hand was visible."

"Did you bolt that door last night Quarley?" questioned Jarvis Raleigh.

"Yes sir," responded the servant. "Immediately after I left Mr. Cranston in his room."

Silence followed. Jarvis Raleigh wore an ugly scowl. Quarley's face was firm; one could not have guessed the servant's thoughts. Sidney Richland, his hands gripping the table cloth, was staring through his glasses in frightened fashion. Stokes Corvin was looking toward Barbara, studying the girl's face, while his own brow wrinkled.

JARVIS RALEIGH ended the situation. He arose from his chair and stalked silently from the dining room. He paused as he neared the door.

"The evening is warm," he remarked. "You may leave the veranda open Quarley, for the next hour. I shall depart from my rule of keeping it closed after dark."

"Very well, sir."

The tension was broken. Sidney Richland smiled at the thought of a stroll on the cool veranda. Stokes Corvin also indulged in a smile as he considered the sudden turn in the conversation.

"One thing more, Quarley." Jarvis Raleigh had paused at the door. "Has Jerome found the hound?"

"I do not believe so, sir."

"Let me talk with him tonight when he comes in from the stable. Rox was a valuable dog."

Jarvis Raleigh stalked from the dining room. Stokes Corvin arose, and addressed his companions.

“We have one hour,” he remarked. “Suppose that we adjourn to the veranda.”

Ten minutes later, the glowing of cigarettes marked the presence of Corvin and Richland on the open porch. The two men were leaning against the parapet. Barbara Wyldram was seated in a chair which she had brought from the library.

“Another evening,” remarked Corvin, in a jocular tone. “What new events will this night bring to Montgard?”

“None, I hope,” protested Richland. “Last night was terrible, Stokes. To think of it! Any one who enters here is in terror of his life!”

“Not Lamont Cranston,” observed Corvin. “The millionaire seemed to enjoy a pleasant stay.”

“A remarkable fellow, Cranston,” decided Richland. “He looked toward me while I was standing in the passage. Even at that distance, I noticed the clearness of his eyes. They were keen and searching. Cranston is a man of high intelligence.”

“I noticed his eyes,” observed Barbara. “To me, they seemed firm, yet kindly. In studying character, I believe that eyes—”

“Eyes!” A crackly voice uttered the word from the open doorway. “The eyes of a ghost! I saw them last night! They stared at me!”

All turned to see Maria standing in the doorway. The housekeeper was staring out into the darkness as though visualizing glowing eyes in the blackness above the lawn. As the persons on the veranda watched the woman, Maria emitted a crazed laugh and withdrew through the library.

“She gives me the creeps,” gasped Richland.

“Maria frightens me sometimes,” admitted Barbara. “I do not like to admit it—”

“I wonder,” spoke Corvin, thoughtfully, “if Maria did see something last night. You saw a bolt moving in a lock Barbara.”

“I thought I did,” declared the girl. “Yet it may have been only my imagination—”

Barbara broke off as a sound occurred below the veranda. The girl uttered a startled cry. Richland laughed; Corvin spoke soothingly.

“It is only Jerome,” he declared. “Going his rounds, with the Great Danes.”

The spread of a flashlight swept across the lawn. Jerome was heading toward the stable, off in back of the mansion. The blinks ended. Silence and darkness held sway.

MINUTES passed while random conversation ruled. Then came the sound of a wheezy motor from in back of the house. Sidney Richland made a comment.

“Jerome is going downtown,” he declared. “He will be back with the mail in about an hour. He is late tonight.”

The motor throbbled its way along the drive. Silence continued. The tones of conversation were subdued. At last a figure appeared in the doorway. Quarley was here to summon the three indoors.

Jarvis Raleigh's hour of privilege had ended. Corvin and Richland tossed their cigarettes to the lawn. They and Barbara entered the library.

Shortly after the oaken door had closed, a stealthy figure moved from the lawn beside the veranda. Like a phantom of the darkness, it glided toward the front of the house. It reached the trees beyond the drive. Eyes from the darkness looked toward the windows of Jarvis Raleigh's rooms on the second floor; those windows that formed panels of light on either side of the huge, darkened turret.

Elsewhere near the huge house, figures were in motion. By the fence at the rear of the estate, Mallet Haverly was talking to his men. Speedy Tyron stood beside his chief.

Mallet disappeared. He was heading toward the large house, choosing the course that led past the vacant dog kennel. The others waited. Long minutes passed. A tiny light glimmered from the side of the house, by the veranda. It was Mallet's signal.

"All right," growled Speedy. "Move ahead. Keep together until we reach the house."

The figures moved across the lawn. The entire gang—a dozen ex-gorillas—was on its way to the objective. The zero hour of crime was approaching.

These mobsters, however, were not the only ones who took that path.

After the crew had all departed, a pair of stealthy men crept from among the bushes. A muffled conversation took place. The voices told the identity of these two who had watched the invaders move to action. The watchers were Harry Vincent and Cliff Marsland. As if by signal, The Shadow's agents took up the trail of Mallet's gang.

Dulled headlights were coming up the drive to Montgard; Jerome was returning in his wheezy roadster. The groundskeeper had left the Great Danes in the stable, in conformity with his usual practice.

Alighting from his car, Jerome approached the house and emitted the odd, half-witted cry that served as his signal. The motor of the roadster was still running. Jerome was halfway between the car and the front door.

A short interval. Then came the opening of the door. Quarley was responding to Jerome's call. The dull light from the turret revealed the two figures at the doorway.

INSTANTLY, a pair of figures arose in the darkness at the front of the house. Aiming at an angle past the parked roadster, two of Mallet Haverly's gorillas were about to shoot down the helpless men who stood between them and the entrance to Montgard.

The crooks would have been unseen in the darkness but for another event that occurred with startling unexpectedness. The light from a powerful electric torch appeared suddenly from the trees in front of the house. Its rays, focused with precision, revealed the rising mobsters.

Instinctively, the gorillas swung to meet this unexpected danger. With quick fingers on revolver triggers, they aimed for the blazing light. Their shots never came. From close behind the light, a pair of automatics spurted flame. The Shadow had opened fire on the murderous crooks.

Both gorillas toppled. Their guns dropped to the ground as they went sprawling. Jerome wheeled at the door; he yanked a revolver from one pocket and a flashlight from the other. Quarley produced a revolver.

Logically, the two men should have sprung to safety, closing the door behind them. The Shadow had not

counted on their brave response. Revolver shots broke from other spots about the house as new members of Mallet's crew sought to amend the failure of their felled pals.

Out went The Shadow's light. Automatics barked as the master fighter, weaving his way among the trees aimed for the spots where revolver spurts betrayed the presence of attacking mobsmen.

Cries came from the darkness. The Shadow's marksmanship was finding living flesh. Futile shots were returned in his direction. Other bullets, aimed toward the house, were chipping stone from about the doorway of the turret.

Jerome and Quarley were firing wildly. Suddenly Jerome gave forth a cry and staggered. The groundskeeper was hit. The Shadow's response was a shot toward the mobster who had felled Jerome. A cry came from the dark.

Jerome, his right hand clutching left shoulder, made a frantic dash to the roadster. Leaping into the car, he drove frantically along the driveway, whirling the wheel one-handed. Wild shots followed; they did not manage to stop the get-away.

Quarley, realizing the full danger, leaped back into the turret and slammed the big door. The old servant had received a flesh wound. His action was a timely one.

For a moment, there was silence after echoing shots. Mobsters were blundering away to cover. The howling of hounds arose from the kennels. Then came a new burst of gunfire.

Jarvis Raleigh had extinguished the light in his bedroom. He was on the upstairs balcony, aiming with a rifle at hidden enemies in the dark.

ANSWERING shots came from the side of the house, in front of the veranda. The mobsters had headed in that direction. Like a flash, The Shadow's light came on. It revealed a cluster of mobsmen. An automatic spoke with tongues of flame.

Gangsters scattered. Only a few wild bullets had been dispatched toward Jarvis Raleigh. The master of Montgard had made himself a target. But for The Shadow, he would have been a simple mark. The gorillas, however, were spreading with their leaders, seeking the shelter beyond the house.

Then came another unexpected turn. The door of the veranda opened. Two men appeared from the library: Stokes Corvin and Sidney Richland. A shout was the response. Mallet Haverly was pointing this new opening to his minions.

The Shadow's torch swept the lawn. Again the automatic barked. The Shadow had moved toward the side of the house; again he was here as the protector. Stokes Corvin leaped back to safety. He grabbed Sidney Richland and dragged the other with him.

As they disappeared, Mallet Haverly fired. From behind a tree trunk, the mobleader was making the open door his target. He was here to prevent its closing until his minions could gain the parapet of the veranda.

Speedy Tyron had reached the security of a stone well that projected near a clump of bushes, a hundred feet from the house. He was firing toward the light that The Shadow was sweeping across the lawn. A bullet whizzed past the gloved hand. The Shadow clicked out the light.

Then came the tones of the weird laugh that all mobsmen dreaded. In answer to this challenge, The Shadow had chosen full darkness. The tones of his eerie mirth brought a momentary lull.

No one could spot The Shadow. Somewhere in the blackness of the night, The Shadow was moving as a solitary menace. Mallet Haverly, secure behind the thick tree trunk, broke the spell with a fierce snarl. Once again, the mobleader opened intermittent fire upon the door to the library.

Encouraged, the dwindled crew of mobsters clambered up the rear wall of the veranda. Corvin and Richland had fled from the library. The way was open to enter Montgard. Behind the parapet, these minions knew that they would be safe to gain the open door.

SO they reasoned; but without knowledge of their foe. As the first of the mobsmen leaped over the stone rail; he heard a sinister laugh that came from a spot no more than twenty feet away. A torch blazed. An automatic barked from the hand of the crouching being who held the light.

The Shadow, too, had gained the parapet from the front. On the veranda, he was here to meet the mobsmen the moment they arrived.

The first crook tried to fire. The Shadow's shot preceded him. With a scream, the gorilla toppled backward from the parapet of the veranda. Another shot; the second climber toppled and fell sprawling to the ground below.

Out went the light. The Shadow leaped for the rear rail. His shots sped through the dark, aimed for scattering mobsmen. Defiantly, Mallet and Speedy aimed for the rail behind which The Shadow crouched. Mallet was behind his tree; Speedy had edged to another vantage point behind the well.

Again the laugh. Its eerie tones were commanding. They were answered. From across the lawn came shots from new guns. The Shadow's agents, joining the fray, were aiming for the nests which Mallet and Speedy had chosen.

A bullet zipped against the tree trunk. Another chiseled stonework from the well. Caught by an enfilading fire, Mallet and Speedy left their posts. Trusting to darkness, the chief and his lieutenant dashed for the trees that skirted the far side of the lawn.

Harry and Cliff delivered a final volley toward the stables, where the few remaining mobsters had fled for refuge, seeking to put the rear corner of the house between themselves and The Shadow's fire. Then came the final silence that marked the end of the swift fray.

The Shadow's laugh resounded with a peal of triumph. Stalking to the open door of the deserted library, The Shadow swung the barrier shut. Gliding to the parapet, the master fighter dropped to the darkness of the ground.

Crime had come to Montgard—crime from without. Fighting against a fierce horde, The Shadow had worked to save the lives of five men. His covering shots had been designed to protect Jerome and Quarley; then Jarvis Raleigh; finally, Stokes Corvin and Sidney Richland.

The Shadow had driven off the crooks from two points of entry. Mallet Haverly and Speedy Tyron had escaped almost by luck; nearly all of their gorillas had fallen in the fray.

Yet The Shadow's task was not yet ended. Tonight, he had dealt with crime from without, protecting all who dwelt in Montgard. His newer and more subtle task remained. Later, he must strike at crime that dwelt within those beleaguered walls of stone!

A distant laugh rippled from a spot along the driveway. Hollow and foreboding in its tones, that taunting cry was the aftermath of triumph. It was the token of the coming task which The Shadow had chosen as his work!

CHAPTER XVI. THE AFTERMATH

TEN minutes after The Shadow had delivered his departing laugh, an automobile came whirling down the drive to Montgard. Its horn delivered a resounding honk; the blare was echoed by a second car that followed the first.

Both automobiles came to a stop in front of the stone house. Men with flashlights leaped to the ground. Others followed, armed with revolvers and rifles. Spreading in response to their leader's command, they began to search the lawn.

They gained immediate results. The calls came back that they had discovered two bodies on the ground and that others appeared to be further along. The leader of the armed band called an order.

"Pick them up!" he shouted, gruffly. "If they put up a fight, let them have it. I'll be in the house."

Advancing through the darkness, this man rang the door of the big house. The window of Jarvis Raleigh's bedroom opened. A querulous challenge came from above.

"I'm Burton Haggar," called the man at the door. "Here with a posse. Let me in."

A few minutes later, the bolts of the door slid back and Quarley, his cadaverous face paler than usual, stepped away to admit the arrival. Jarvis Raleigh stood at the opened inner door.

"Come right in, sheriff," invited the master of Montgard. "We have just withstood a powerful invasion. Fortunately, all is well. Here is our only casualty."

He pointed to Quarley. The servant's arm was bandaged. Barbara Wyldram had bound the flesh wound that the servant had received.

"There's one other," corrected Haggar, as he stepped into the hallway. "Your man Jerome. He's a gritty fellow. Drove down to my house to give us the alarm. Then he caved in."

"Was he seriously wounded?" questioned Raleigh, anxiously.

"A bullet in his shoulder," reported the sheriff. "Done up from loss of blood. We sent him to the hospital."

Jarvis Raleigh pointed along the passage to the library, indicating that he wanted the sheriff to take that direction.

"The other members of my household are in the library," asserted Raleigh. "Among us, we can tell you all that occurred."

ARRIVED at the library, Raleigh introduced the sheriff to the three who were waiting there. Stokes Corvin had bolted the big oak door. He was calm as he smoked a cigarette. Sidney Richland was hunched in a chair, nervously wiping his spectacles. Barbara Wyldram was seated in a corner of the room. Quarley appeared while Raleigh was making the introductions.

"Briefly," began Raleigh, "the trouble began when Quarley admitted Jerome at the front door. Ruffians opened fire from the dark. Jerome leaped into the car and fled. Quarley closed the door and bolted it.

"I came to my balcony upstairs. I opened fire with a rifle. When I realized the danger, I retired. Meanwhile, these two gentlemen"—Raleigh was indicating Corvin and Richland—"rushed to the side veranda. They were unarmed; like myself, they did not realize the strength of the invaders. They retired and bolted the door behind them."

One of the posse came stamping up the hall as Raleigh finished speaking. The sheriff turned toward the door. The man delivered his report.

“We've accounted for eight of them,” he announced. “Four dead—the others are badly wounded. We sent the wounded men down to the hospital.”

“Have you questioned any of them?” asked Haggar.

“They won't talk,” said the deputy. “They look like a crowd of big-city mobsters if you ask me.”

“How do you account for this?” quizzed Haggar, turning to Raleigh. “Here eight men picked off in the dark; yet the only two of you who had guns were forced to retire.”

“I can answer that.” It was Stokes Corvin who spoke. “There was a great deal of firing outside. I am sure that the invaders were attacked by others in the dark.”

“That is right, sir,” agreed Quarley. “They were fighting among themselves. I think that is why Jerome managed to escape, sir.”

“Probably true,” decided Jarvis Raleigh, nodding. “Some of the firing must have been diverted while I was at the window.”

“Not unlikely,” asserted the sheriff. “Those big-town crooks are always knocking each other off. One bunch probably came here to raid your home. The others learned of it and saw an opportunity to make trouble for their rivals.”

After this assertion, Haggar pondered. At last, he turned to Raleigh.

“Why do you think they came here?” he demanded. “What were they after?”

“I do not know.” Raleigh was emphatic. “My own property is very limited.”

“I can tell you.” Sidney Richland arose as he placed his pince-nez on his nose. “They were after the money that is hidden here. The wealth of Windrop Raleigh—”

Richland subsided as he caught a glare from Jarvis Raleigh. The owner of Montgard scowled, then spoke suavely to the sheriff.

“It is said,” he stated, “that my father left a considerable sum in some unknown hiding place. I have never looked for the supposed wealth. I need none of it, even should it actually exist.”

“It is possible, as Sidney suggests, that some knaves may have heard this rumor. However, it would be futile for them to seek wealth that is so effectively buried that even I have never uncovered it.”

“That's a motive, anyway,” decided the sheriff. “I'll tell you what I'll do, Mr. Raleigh. I'll leave some of my posse on guard around the place.”

“I do not want, them,” rejoined Raleigh, with an emphatic shake of his head. “I prefer the isolation which I now enjoy. We shall be prepared for future trouble. I shall see to it that Corvin and Richland can obtain revolvers should new invaders appear.”

“Sorry, Mr. Raleigh,” declared the sheriff, grimly. “I'll have to overrule you for tonight, at least. My men will be here until tomorrow.”

“That is allowable,” agreed Raleigh. “But after tomorrow—no.”

“We'll search the grounds by daylight,” asserted the sheriff. “If everything is all right, we won't disturb you further.”

Hagar and his deputy walked from the library. Quarley followed to bolt the front doors. Jarvis Raleigh glowered at Sidney Richland.

“After this, Sidney,” he ordered, “you will speak to visitors only when I request it. If you wish to do anything out of the ordinary, ask my permission.

Raleigh ended this brusque statement by a prompt departure. Sidney Richland sat abashed. Barbara Wyldram was thoughtful; at last the girl steadied herself and picked up a book to read. Stokes Corvin smiled; he strolled to the bookcase and obtained his volume of Dumas.

QUIET had come again to Montgard. In the excitement that had followed the sheriff's arrival, all mention of former occurrences had been forgotten. The mystery of the two missing men remained as deep as before.

Hours passed. Montgard became a silent structure of heaped stone and small-paned windows that glimmered in the starlight, while pacing men patrolled the grounds, their rifles ready for a possible return of scattered invaders.

Though the past seemed forgotten at Montgard, it was remembered elsewhere. One hundred miles away, in New York City, a light came on in a mysterious room where only one being penetrated.

The Shadow was in his sanctum. Long white hands appeared beneath the bluish lamp. A brilliant gem, changing in its radiant hues, sparkled from a finger of the left hand. That jewel was The Shadow's girasol, the matchless fire-opal which served as the mysterious master's only token.

Hands were at work beneath the light. They were inscribing carefully worded letters, each to a different person. These messages were not in code. Their statements, phrased in simple language, were brief and definite.

The hands folded each of the letters. The notes were placed in separate envelopes. The Shadow's hand addressed them. One letter was for Jarvis Raleigh; the other for Stokes Corvin.

A typewritten sheet of paper appeared beneath the light. It was a confidential statement from Rutledge Mann, an investigating agent who, in capacity of investment broker, obtained information for The Shadow. Another sheet appeared; it had been prepared by a second agent: Clyde Burke, reporter on the New York Classic.

Between these two workers, The Shadow could rely on accurate data concerning all persons whose affairs he followed. Here, listed in order, were brief accounts that referred to Jarvis Raleigh and Stokes Corvin.

They told of Jarvis Raleigh's former business connections; of the enterprises in which his father, Windrop Raleigh, had been engaged. They also gave facts concerning Stokes Corvin's residence in England, where he had lived all his life.

In addition, the lists bore short statements concerning Sidney Richland and Barbara Wyldram. At the bottom of each list, however, there was a question mark beside the name of Quarley. The old servant had worked for Windrop Raleigh and now served his former master's son. Nothing else was known concerning him.

The Shadow had chosen the names of Jarvis Raleigh and Stokes Corvin. These two would be the

recipients of the communications which he had prepared. The envelopes disappeared as The Shadow drew them from the table. The light clicked out.

A strange laugh reverberated within the blackened walls of the mysterious sanctum. Ghoulish echoes sobbed back the mirthful cry. When the sounds had ended, the room was empty. The Shadow had departed.

The Shadow had planned to solve the mystery of Montgard. The time for the dispatching of the letters had not yet arrived; when the epistles reached their destinations, all would be ready for the final stroke.

The Shadow was relying upon the actions of two men. Through the responses of Jarvis Raleigh and Stokes Corvin, he would trap the villain who was responsible for crime within the walls of Montgard!

CHAPTER XVII. THE INTERLUDE

THREE nights had passed since the raid on Montgard. Twilight, settling over the secluded estate, showed Stokes Corvin pacing the veranda at the side of the house.

All had been quiet since the excitement. The sheriff's posse had patrolled the grounds only for a single night. Crippled mobsters, quartered in the local jail, offered no more explanation than did their dead companions.

The strange evanishments of Reeves Lockwood and Merton Helmsford were apparently closed issues. Yet these disappearances, thought they had remained undiscussed, were not forgotten. Somehow, all within Montgard seemed to be waiting for what was to come.

Jarvis Raleigh had maintained a silent routine, staying in his own quarters except at dinner time. Quarley, taking up Jerome's chief duty, made circuits of the house after dark, accompanied by the Great Danes. He performed this service in addition to his regular duties.

Stokes Corvin had maintained a wise silence; while Barbara Wyldram had copied his discretion. Only Sidney Richland had shown odd behavior. As wild-eyed as the harmless Maria, Richland had paced about the house, mumbling incoherent menaces. The man was brooding; that fact was plain to all.

Finishing a smoke, Stokes Corvin flicked his cigarette from the veranda as he heard a footfall at the door. He supposed that Quarley had arrived to summon him indoors. It was nearly time for the servant to patrol the grounds.

Turning, Corvin observed Sidney Richland instead of Quarley. Richland appeared excited as he beckoned to the man on the veranda. Corvin entered the library and Richland drew him to the front corner.

"I've talked with Jarvis." Richland's tone was low but excited. "I went up to his laboratory after dinner. I caught him in a friendly mood."

"Why did you wish to speak to him?" inquired Stokes.

"Because"—Richland paused as Barbara entered the room and took a chair—"because I had an idea. That's why. Listen, Stokes. I told him that I was worried because Quarley went down town every night to get the mail. I told him it was a mistake to leave the house unprotected."

"What did Jarvis say?"

"He asked what I thought should be done about it. I told him" —Richland's lips formed a cunning

smile—"that I would be pleased to go instead."

"Did he agree?"

"Yes. He considered the matter for a time; then said that I was to tell him when I was ready to leave. He said that he would instruct Quarley to let me leave the house. I can drive the old roadster to—"

"One moment, Sidney." Stokes Corvin was serious in his interruption. "You're telling me only half, old chap. There's some other reason why you wish to go to Glenwood. I wager that I can guess it."

RICHLAND stared and nodded slightly.

"Who might you see downtown?" Corvin put a question that he was prepared to answer for himself. "I shall tell you. That sheriff chap —Burton Haggar—would be the logical fellow. Haggar is interested in affairs up here at the manor. Perhaps he would like to hear about Lockwood and Helmsford."

"That's just it," declared Richland, persisting in his crafty smile. "I don't mind you knowing it, Stokes. I'm going to see Haggar. I'm going to tell him what he ought to know, without Jarvis Raleigh learning of it."

"Listen, old fellow." Corvin was more serious than before. "Take my advice and remain here. I guessed what your real reason is. Do you fancy that Jarvis failed to conjecture it also?"

The smile faded from Richland's lips. The man stared as he tried to recall his interview with Jarvis Raleigh. At last, he shook his head.

"I don't think so," he declared. "I don't believe that Jarvis saw through my game. I didn't talk to him as I have just talked to you, Stokes."

Stokes Corvin shook his head in disapproval. Sidney Richland seemed to resent his attitude. Moving toward the door to the passage, Richland removed his pince-nez and gestured emphatically with the glasses as he spoke.

"The situation is too wearing," he declared. "I can tolerate it no longer. I am going downtown. I expect to see Burton Haggar, to tell him all—"

Richland stopped abruptly as he caught a warning gesture from Stokes Corvin. Quarley had entered the room in his stealthy fashion. The old servant's face was rigid. There was something about the cadaverous contenance to indicate that he had overheard Richland's interrupted statement.

Seeing that the three people were all in the library, Quarley solemnly bolted the door to the veranda. Without a word, he turned and went back to the passage. Sidney Richland approached Stokes Corvin.

"Do you think that Quarley overheard me?" questioned the man with the spectacles.

"I am sure he did," returned Corvin soberly. "Take my advice, Richland. Remain here. All is quiet for the present. It is better to await developments."

"Such as the last one?" queried Richland. "Not a bit of it. I am going downtown, Stokes. Once I am there, I shall regain my courage. I want freedom; I intend to obtain it."

"Do not go." Corvin's voice was firm. "It is not safe, Sidney, to make a single move out of the ordinary. Something is sure to develop that will give us an inkling to the mystery which shrouds this place."

RICHLAND placed his glasses on his nose and threw back his shoulders. The man made an odd, defiant figure.

“My plan is completed,” he declared. “Nothing can make me alter it.”

Barbara Wyldram had been listening. Rising, the girl stepped forward and placed her hand on Richland's arm. She added her plea to the one that Stokes Corvin had made.

“Don't go, Sidney,” begged Barbara. “Stokes is right. We do not know what lies ahead.”

Sidney Richland's lips showed a frenzied expression. Angrily, the man drew away from Barbara's grasp. Stepping to the door, he wagged a finger.

“Enough of this persuasion!” he exclaimed. “I am going to tell Jarvis that I am ready to depart. I shall not be balked in my plan!”

With that, Richland turned and paced rapidly down the passage. Barbara looked pleadingly at Stokes as she heard the footsteps fade.

“What can we do?” questioned the girl, anxiously.

“Nothing, now,” decided Corvin, solemnly. “Sidney has gained permission from Jarvis Raleigh. I might go upstairs and request that it be revoked.”

“No.” Barbara shook her head. “Sidney would object; that would lead to a discovery of the truth. We can only hope that Jarvis does not suspect his true purpose.”

“Yes,” agreed Corvin, “and if I try to intercept Sidney at the front door, it would mean a scene in Quarley's presence.”

“We cannot stop him,” stated Barbara.

“We can only wish him luck,” asserted Corvin.

The girl went toward the door that led to the passage. She hesitated there. Stokes Corvin approached and laid his hand upon her arm.

“Don't worry, Barbara,” he said, soothingly. “After all, Sidney's plan may bring results. He had been acting strangely; the tension was sure to break. Let us sit down and resume our reading, as though nothing were at stake.”

“As soon as Sidney has left,” agreed Barbara. “Until then, I shall watch. I want to be sure that he makes an untroubled departure.”

“Keep watch, then,” suggested Corvin. “Inform me if anything unexpected occurs.”

STOKES Corvin strolled across the library to obtain the book that he had been reading. He was standing near the corner of the room when he caught, a low tone from Barbara.

“Sidney is at the front door,” whispered the girl, as she stared from the doorway. “Talking to Quarley. He must be asking him if the car is ready. Quarley's nodding.”

“What else?” questioned Corvin, mildly.

“Sidney is unbolting the door himself,” informed the girl. “Apparently he intends to let Quarley lock up after him. Sidney has entered the turret. Quarley is closing the inner door and bolting it.”

There was a pause while Barbara watched. Stokes Corvin replaced the book on the shelf and moved

toward the door, speaking in a puzzled tone.

“That’s odd,” he said, “that Quarley should bolt the inner door. He should have gone into the turret to bolt the outer door also.”

Barbara raised her hand as Corvin approached.

“Quarley has remembered,” whispered the girl. “He is coming back. He is unbolting the inner door—”

Stokes Corvin was looking over Barbara Wyldram’s shoulder. Together, they stared along the passage. Quarley had evidently remembered his oversight. He was drawing back the third bolt of the inner door. They saw him open the barrier.

Quarley stood stock-still. He stared into the turret entry. He made no motion; yet there was something in his attitude that gripped the watchers.

“Come!” Corvin uttered the order as he stepped past Barbara. He hurried along the passage, with the girl close behind him.

As they reached the junction of the three corridors, they heard new footsteps. Jarvis Raleigh had come down from the second floor. The master of Montgard uttered an angry exclamation to Quarley.

“Stop him!” ordered Raleigh. “Stop Sidney! I want to talk to him again. I believe the scoundrel has tried to trick me.”

Quarley turned. His cadaverous features were immobile. His hand, as it pointed toward the turret, alone announced what the servant had seen. Stokes Corvin—Barbara Wyldram—Jarvis Raleigh—all three arrived to stare into the turret.

The bolts of the outer door were shut. No one could have departed by that exit. Yet the gloomy turret entry was empty. Sidney Richland, like Reeves Lockwood and Merton Helmsford, had vanished from among the living!

CHAPTER XVIII. WORD FROM WITHOUT

THE next evening found a silent trio gathered at Jarvis Raleigh’s dinner table. Sidney Richland’s place was conspicuously empty. Barbara Wyldram, pale and nervous, kept glancing toward the blank space where the missing man should have been.

Jarvis Raleigh was irritable. He voiced no comment; but his eyes, sharp and suspicious, were quick with their occasional glances toward the two who dined with him. Stokes Corvin, positive that he was the one whom Raleigh watched most intently, maintained an easy calm.

The disappearance of Sidney Richland had created consternation the night before. The discovery of the empty turret had finally brought an outburst from Jarvis Raleigh. The owner of Montgard had ordered Quarley to lock the house. He had told Stokes Corvin and Barbara Wyldram go to their rooms. They had obeyed.

It was apparent, here at dinner, that both Stokes and Barbara were willing to follow Raleigh’s orders. Yet their reasons for obedience differed. Stokes Corvin, confident in his quiet fashion, was biding his time; Barbara, half terrified by the new mystery at Montgard, was too bewildered to protest.

Occasionally, the girl glanced toward Stokes Corvin. Receiving a confident gaze in return, Barbara managed to withstand the ordeal through which she was passing. While Stokes Corvin was at Montgard,

Barbara Wyldram felt that she possessed a protector.

“So Sidney has left us!” The snarled comment was Jarvis Raleigh's first reference to the disappearance of last night. “A meddling fellow, Sidney. He wanted to go downtown last night to get the mail. A pretext to leave this house. Well, he has gone. He should be satisfied, wherever he may be.”

“We should be worried about Sidney,” protested Barbara, feebly. “He was one of us; he depended upon our friendship—”

“Be silent!” stormed Jarvis Raleigh, pounding the table with his fist. “Sidney Richland was not welcome here. I am not concerned with what may have happened to him. He is like those others—Lockwood and that detective! They came here of their own accord. I did not invite them!”

The speaker glared fiercely in Barbara's direction. The girl shrank back in her chair. Raleigh's gaze turned. The master of Montgard glared at Stokes Corvin.

“Well?” Raleigh's voice was testy. “What have you to say? Are you worrying about that cur, Sidney Richland?”

“Not at all,” replied Corvin, quietly. “The mail is my concern. Sidney went out to procure it last night; he has not returned with it.”

“Don't worry about the mail,” Jarvis Raleigh cackled. “We shall receive a double batch of it. I told Quarley to get it back here before we had finished dinner.”

Stokes Corvin nodded approvingly. He had noticed that Quarley had left the dining room some minutes before. While Corvin was still nodding, Maria entered and began to clear the table. The woman was wearing her vacant stare. Her cracked lips were moving in silent speech.

FOOTSTEPS sounded in the passage from the front. Quarley appeared, bringing the mail that Jarvis Raleigh had promised. The servant passed a small packet of letters to his master. Jarvis Raleigh tossed two envelopes to Stokes Corvin; he kept one for himself.

Corvin opened the first envelope. It contained an advertising letter from a New York store. He opened the second and began to peruse the contents of this letter when he heard a chuckle from Jarvis Raleigh.

“Speaking of visitors,” announced Raleigh, “we shall have a welcome one tonight. My friend Lamont Cranston will pay a new visit to Montgard. He thinks well of my gold extractor. He wishes to talk terms.”

Stokes Corvin was meditative. His forehead furrowed as he folded his own letter and thrust it into his pocket. He remained silent as Jarvis Raleigh arose to leave the dining room.

“I shall be in my laboratory, Quarley,” stated Raleigh. “Admit Mr. Cranston in the usual fashion. Announce his arrival to me.”

“Yes, sir,” replied the cadaverous servant.

As soon as Jarvis Raleigh had departed, Stokes Corvin arose. He nodded toward Barbara Wyldram. The girl accompanied him to the library. Alone in the secluded room, they began a tense conversation.

“Something may happen tonight, Barbara,” confided Stokes. “I believe that the climax of strange occurrences is due.”

“Did your letter—”

“Please don't question me, Barbara,” interposed Corvin. “Just do as I suggest. Go to your room; remain there until I call you.”

“And after that—”

“We shall leave Montgard. I have remained here solely on your account, Barbara. Our departure seemed unwise; but after tonight, we can leave.”

“You mean—”

“That we need not fear the future. I am not dependent, Barbara, upon the petty legacy which enables me to live at Montgard. Nor should you be. We can leave—together—for England.”

The girl's eyes opened. Though hesitant, Barbara began to view the prospect with a smile. She placed a hand upon Stokes Corvin's arm.

“I have relied upon you, Stokes” said the girl. “Perhaps it is well that you do not tell me what the immediate future holds. I shall continue to depend upon you. Yet I am afraid—”

“Because of Sidney?”

“Partly. More, though, on account of this man who is coming here tonight. Lamont Cranston seemed a kindly person. I should not like to see harm befall him.”

“Do not worry.” Corvin spoke firmly. “Rely upon me, Barbara. No matter what occurs, remain in your room until you hear me call. I promise you that we shall then be free.”

Barbara nodded. She picked up her book and went from the library. Stokes Corvin lighted a cigarette. He peered along the passage.

Satisfied that Quarley was not about, the young man unbolted the door to the veranda. Leaving it ajar behind him, he strolled to the parapet and stood there gazing out into the night.

THERE was a sound from the ground below. Quarley, serving for Jerome, was making the rounds with the Great Danes. Stokes Corvin drew back to the door and stood against the barrier, holding his cigarette low, so even its glimmer would not show. Quarley passed along toward the stables. Corvin advanced to the parapet.

The young man finished his smoke with short puffs. He flicked the cigarette stump out unto the lawn; then turned and made his way softly to the door. He edged into the library and closed the door behind him. He shot the bolts.

The action was just in time. Corvin had scarcely seated himself with a book before Quarley appeared at the door of the library. Pretending that he had been reading, Corvin looked up in startled fashion.

“Where is Miss Wyldram?” questioned Quarley, in his monotone.

“She has retired,” responded Corvin. The servant turned. His footsteps sounded dully in the passage. Stokes Corvin arose. He carried his book with him and rearranged it on the shelf, along with the other volumes of Dumas. Then he stole quietly toward the door of the library and stood there, listening.

A smooth purr came from the front of the house. Corvin recognized the sound of Lamont Cranston's foreign motor. The car came closer; Corvin heard it stop out in the drive. Softly, the young man stole to the door that led to the veranda. He drew back the bolts.

There was a ring from the front door bell. Moving to the door to the passage, Corvin peered cautiously. He saw Quarley arrive and unbolt the big door to the turret entry. The servant went into the entry. One minute later, he returned and closed the door. He pressed the bolts in place and took the central passage to summon Jarvis Raleigh.

Lamont Cranston had arrived. Stokes Corvin was sure of that fact as he stepped back into the library. Corvin's face wore a firm smile. The climax was at hand. Tonight, the long vigil which Stokes Corvin had kept would be crowned with the achievement for which he had hoped.

CHAPTER XIX. ONE MORE GONE

STOKES CORVIN was right in his assumption that Quarley had admitted Lamont Cranston. The old servant had found the millionaire standing by the front door. He had beckoned Cranston into the turret; in turn, Cranston had picked up a bag with one hand while he waved to his chauffeur with the other.

Within the turret, Quarley, true to orders, had bolted the outer door. He had passed into the house, to bolt the inner door behind him, he had paid no more attention to the visitor's actions.

Hence Quarley had not seen the glint in Lamont Cranston's eyes as those optics had lowered to gaze at the Egyptian inscription upon the floor of the turret room. The aftermath came when Quarley had closed the door. A soft laugh echoed from Cranston's thin lips. His tall form stepped toward the stone wall while his right hand raised the bag that he was carrying.

Out came a mass of folded cloth. It swept down over Cranston's shoulders. A slouch hat settled on the visitor's head. As the bag dropped to the floor, a pair of automatics showed in long-fingered hands. The weapons disappeared beneath the cloak.

Reaching into a fold of his black garment, Lamont Cranston, now The Shadow, began to draw forth a pair of black gloves. All the while, his keen eyes were upon the floor, while his cloaked shoulder pressed against the rough hewn stone that made the circular inner wall of the tower.

A muffled, warning click sounded from beneath the floor. The gloves dropped instantly into the folds of the cloak as The Shadow's bare hands shot upward to grip projecting stones. The keen eyes watched the floor.

The tiled surface began to open downward. Each of its four quarter-circles dropped inward at the center.

Like the pieces of a mammoth pie, a star-trap on a huge scale, the hinged sections fell points downward to reveal a blackened abyss!

The Shadow's suitcase dropped. While the black-garbed form clung safely to the wall, the bag plunged down into the chasm. Long moments followed until a faint splash marked its destination—a watery pit a full hundred feet below!

The Shadow was moving upward. His hands and feet found easy holds upon the projecting stones. A grim, whispered laugh sounded in the turret as The Shadow's eyes, still peering downward, saw the four sections of the trap swing upward and click into place.

Once again, the tiled floor appeared solid. The X lines that divided its circles into quadrants were the closed edges of the perfect-fitting trap.

THE fate of three men was explained. No one, standing near the center of that floor, could have escaped the plunge which The Shadow had so cunningly avoided.

The opening and the closing of the death trap had been a matter of seconds. The Shadow was already a dozen feet up the wall. Still climbing he laughed again as his eyes, peering downward, saw what followed.

The floor, apparent solid, shifted a few inches downward. Smoothly, it slid away beneath the wall on one side of the turret. As it moved, a second floor came into view from the other side.

A duplicate, tiled surface took the place of the first and stopped; then pressed upward into its solid position.

The death trap of Montgard was explained. The reason for the steps up to the inner passage could be answered by the action of this amazing mechanism. The library on one side; the dining room on the other. Both had raised floors.

Beneath the heavy flooring of the other rooms, these tiled surfaces responded to the action of a silent mechanism. The true floor of the turret had been beneath the dining room. Now that it had shifted back into place, the false floor, with its death trap, had slid beneath the library.

The upward and downward leverage enabled the passing floors to pass the stone bottom of the turret. The death trap had been in waiting; its work done, it had been shifted out of sight to be replaced by a solid tiled floor!

No amount of tapping could have revealed the secret. The death pit, covered by the true floor, was beneath a solid structure. This was the ingenious invention of dead Windrop Raleigh. It explained the deaths of his brothers and his cousin. Of late, three other men had been dropped to the grave in which others had perished long ago!

The Shadow's climb was ended. He had reached the top of the circular tower. His form made a blackened mass against the inner structure of the turret. It edged toward the wall. It disappeared from view. Mysteriously, The Shadow had rendered himself totally invisible!

WITHIN Montgard, Jarvis Raleigh was coming along the center passage toward the door that led to the turret.

Quarley was with him. The master of Montgard stood upon his step while he watched Quarley advance and withdraw the bolts. Stokes Corvin came boldly along the passage from the library. He paused to watch.

Quarley's face was expressionless. The servant, to all appearances, was about to admit an ordinary visitor. Quarley seemed unperturbed by events that had occurred in the past.

Jarvis Raleigh's face wore a peculiar smile. Odd in all his actions, the master of Montgard might have considered that facial expression to be a welcome to his guest, Lamont Cranston.

Stokes Corvin was watching anxiously. The young man's mind was dwelling now on what had happened in the past. Three times had that door opened to reveal no one. Corvin was gazing, tensely, as though he dreaded the unexpected.

The door swung back. Quarley stared blankly. He made no comment. With one accord, Jarvis Raleigh and Stokes Corvin stepped up behind him. The three men gazed toward the outer door with its triple bolts; then stared about the turret.

Once more, mystery had pervaded the circular entry to the house of Montgard. From this spot where three men had vanished separately, a fourth had gone from view. Lamont Cranston had disappeared.

Quarley turned to look at Jarvis Raleigh and Stokes Corvin. The two men were gazing at each other with fixed expressions. Crime had struck once too often. This time the climax was due.

The Shadow, he who had rendered himself invisible, was here to witness the results that were to follow. Three men, all sure that Lamont Cranston had met with foul play, were ready with their challenges!

CHAPTER XX. THE SHOWDOWN

“WHAT are you doing here?” rasped Jarvis Raleigh, as he caught Stokes Corvin's stare. “Why are you interfering when I come to meet a guest?”

“What guest?” questioned Corvin, firmly. “I see no one in the turret.”

Clenching his fists against his chest, Jarvis Raleigh stalked into the turret. Stokes Corvin followed him. He watched Raleigh stare about the circular room. Quarley stood in the inner doorway, his cadaverous face unflinching.

“Well?” questioned Corvin. “What are you looking for—a ghost?”

“I am looking for my visitor,” snarled Raleigh. “I am looking for Lamont Cranston. Did you admit him, Quarley?”

“Yes, sir,” declared the old servant.

“Strange,” commented Corvin, in an ironical tone, “that you should seek this one man. You did not appear disturbed, Jarvis, when others vanished from this turret.”

“I did not care about them,” retorted Raleigh. “Two were unwelcome; the third was a meddler. I make no inquiries for those who do not concern me.”

“Perhaps,” stated Corvin, dryly, “they violated the order that is inscribed upon the floor. The Egyptian hieroglyphics bear a sinister message, Jarvis.”

“That wording was my father's work,” snarled the master of Montgard. “I know that he dealt harshly with those who refused to obey his wishes. I leave my enemies to their own fate.”

“Yet you,” asserted Corvin, grimly, “may be held responsible for those who have vanished within this turret.”

Jarvis Raleigh stared sullenly. The full meaning of Stokes Corvin's statement fell upon him. For a moment, he was tense. Then, tilting back his head, he delivered a cackling laugh.

“You are accusing me of murder?” he questioned. “You are as great a fool as Sidney Richland. He thought, I suppose, that I had done away with Reeves Lockwood and Merton Helmsford. He prattled of the secret that lay here in Montgard—a secret of which I know nothing.”

“Nothing?” questioned Corvin, narrowly.

“Nothing,” repeated Raleigh. “You, perhaps, agreed with Sidney Richland. Perhaps”—Raleigh was speaking cunningly—“you believed that I was responsible for Sidney's disappearance. Whatever your theory, it must be shattered now. Lamont Cranston was my friend. He was a man upon whose aid I counted to commercialize my great invention. Why should I have sought to do away with Cranston?”

Jarvis Raleigh's eyes were glaring with their challenge. Stokes Corvin stepped forward. Near the outer door, he stood to face the master of Montgard.

“Answer me!” stormed Jarvis Raleigh. “Why should I have been ill-disposed toward Cranston? This time, Stokes, we are agreed. Where is the man who stood within this turret? Where, I ask you?”

STOKES CORVIN, his jaw firm, was staring past Jarvis Raleigh, toward the inner doorway. His eyes were steady as they gazed at Quarley. Jarvis Raleigh wheeled. He, too, faced the old servant.

“Perhaps,” said Corvin, grimly, “you can tell us something, Quarley. You lived here during Windrop Raleigh's lifetime. What do you know about the secret of Montgard?”

“Nothing.” Quarley spat the word as he stepped into the turret. His mild manner was ended. “I came after the time when men had disappeared from this house. You are an intruder in my master's home!”

Stokes Corvin wore a firm smile. He had raised his left hand. He drew back the bolts of the outer door, one by one. He laid his hand upon the knob and turned it.

“Move from that door!” spat Quarley, viciously. “It is not to be opened save at my master's bidding. Move away, I tell you!”

Quarley sprang forward. Corvin leaped to meet him. Eluding the servant's grasp, the younger man delivered a punch to Quarley's body that sent the old servant sprawling on the tiled floor. Stepping back to the outer door, Corvin yanked the barrier inward. Framed in the open doorway, he faced Jarvis Raleigh, who was standing with fists clenched against his bosom.

“There has been enough of treachery,” declared Corvin. “My suspicions have rested upon both you and Quarley. One of you, at least, is responsible for crime. I ask you first. What is your answer?”

Before Jarvis Raleigh could reply, Quarley raised himself upon his hands and knees. Groping in his pocket, the old servant yanked out his revolver. He faltered as he sought to raise it to aim at Stokes Corvin.

Quickly, the man at the door thrust his own right hand into his pocket. A revolver gleamed as he brought it into view. Late on the draw, Corvin was trying to beat Quarley to the shot.

Then came the interruption. From high above, a sinister laugh broke shuddering through the turret. All eyes went upward, their owners startled by that unexpected burst of mockery.

CLINGING to the cross-beams of the turret was the black-garbed form of The Shadow. Like a materialized ghost, this listening master had thrust his hand into the play.

While Stokes Corvin stood with leveled gun; while Quarley's weapon pointed from his steadying hand; while Jarvis Raleigh was standing spectator to the duel, The Shadow, by his sinister, echoing taunt, had brought a sudden interlude before the coming climax.

Blazing eyes shone from above. They were the eyes of the being who knew; they were eyes that had seen the ways of crime. The eyes of The Shadow. No man of evil could face The Shadow without realizing the menace of that black-clad avenger.

A fierce cry came from Stokes Corvin's lips as the man at the door swung his hand upward. With the eyes of The Shadow as his targets, Corvin pressed finger to trigger to deliver a shot that never came.

A roar from the turret. Aiming downward The Shadow balked Corvin's shot with a bullet from his automatic. Stokes Corvin staggered as the shot shattered his wrist. Dropping his revolver, he backed, screaming, toward the outer door.

A fierce cry came from Quarley. Belated in his effort to beat Stokes Corvin's aim, the servant acted now. Furiously, he fired at the backing form. Stokes Corvin staggered, swayed dizzily and sprawled face foremost upon the floor of the turret entry.

A hollow laugh came from high above. The Shadow's weird mockery reverberated with ghoulish echoes. The Shadow's taunt was one that marked the delivery of deserved vengeance.

Glowing eyes surveyed the body of Stokes Corvin sprawled upon the floor. The Shadow, through his timely intervention, had marked the man of crime who dwelt within Montgard. His bullet had laid Stokes Corvin open for Quarley's frenzied shots.

Stokes Corvin, the man who had made a pretense of ferreting for crime, was actually the murderer who had sent three helpless men to their doom.

The Shadow, through his keen intuition, had gained the clews to Corvin's evil game. He had come here to climax inside crime with vengeance.

The dying throbs of The Shadow's laugh were tokens of retaliation. They also carried an ominous note of readiness for events that were to come.

Though Stokes Corvin, murderer, was dead, the finish to his game had not yet arrived. Jarvis Raleigh and Quarley, staring upward, saw to their amazement that The Shadow had disappeared.

Solid wall—solid turret above—where had The Shadow gone? They did not realize that the vanished fighter had chosen a strange, unknown path.

The Shadow was on his way to meet the next thrust of crime. The Shadow had learned another secret of Montgard. He expected danger from without as aftermath to that which he had ended from within.

The Shadow knew!

CHAPTER XXI. THE FINAL FIGHT

A REVOLVER barked from the darkness in front of Montgard. Quarley, standing in the center of the turret, looked beyond the body of Stokes Corvin. As the servant stared, a second shot sounded. A bullet sizzled past Quarley's head and flattened itself against the stone inner wall of the tower.

“Back, Quarley!” gasped Jarvis Raleigh. “Back, into the house!”

The owner of Montgard sprang through the inner door as he cried the warning. Quarley, backing stubbornly, placed shots from his revolver through the open outer doorway. The answers came. Advancing men from the darkness sent new bullets zimming into the opened turret.

Quarley's delayed retreat brought misfortune. Had he obeyed Raleigh's frenzied order, Quarley might have escaped unscathed. As it was, the outburst from the darkness proved too formidable. Quarley staggered as he neared the inner door. Twisting, the servant sprawled to the floor and dropped his revolver as he crawled toward the passage that led to the dining room.

Instinctively, Quarley chose this route because it led away from the front door. The center corridor was no avenue for retreat. It would be open to the invaders who had opened with their volley.

Jarvis Raleigh seized the revolver. Flat against the inner wall, the owner of Montgard held his ground. Suddenly, he stared wildly along the passage to the library, just as a man sprang into view from the library door.

Others had entered from the veranda. Fiercely, Raleigh fired. Two shots sent the invaders back into the library. Then the revolver clicked. The last bullet had been dispatched.

Dropping the emptied weapon, Jarvis Raleigh sprang toward the passage to the dining room. He grabbed Quarley and dragged the old servant toward that spot of security.

Momentary silence prevailed. Then came the growl of Mallet Haverly, from a spot just beyond the outer door. The racketeer had arrived with new cohorts to replace his former minions. Expecting shots from within, he was gathering his men for a rush.

Speedy Tyron was the little crook whom Jarvis Raleigh had seen at the library door. The lieutenant was there with part of the new mob. Like Mallet, he was waiting momentarily.

THE center passage of the old house was a gloomy, dimly lighted corridor. To all appearances it was empty. Yet something was moving in its obscurity. A stealthy figure had descended from the stairway.

The Shadow was creeping forward to gain the danger post—that meeting spot of three corridors from which Jarvis Raleigh and Quarley had fled.

As The Shadow, close to the wall, drew near to his objective, the signal came from Mallet Haverly. In through the front door dashed a trio of mobsters, swinging their revolvers.

Up straightened The Shadow's form. Automatics thundered from the central hall. Hot lead seared the vanguard. These unexpected shots sent two mobsters sprawling; the third, stopping short in the center of the turret, was clipped as he aimed toward the spot from which the shots had come.

The Shadow sprang forward. Across the junction of the passages; into the turret; all the while his automatics were delivering their intermittent barrage toward the opening where the invaders must enter—the outer door.

Mallet Haverly, swinging in to follow his men, went down. A mobster toppled beside him. Other gorillas, seeing their companions fall, took to the darkness, seeking to get the range from a more distant angle.

The Shadow had foreseen this move. He swung back into the house, heading for the passage to the library. He gained his new objective just as shots broke loose from outside. A gorilla's bullet skimmed the shoulder beneath the black cloak.

With gloved hands The Shadow was thrusting his automatics beneath his cloak. His black fists swooped forth, each with a new weapon. The action was accomplished at a timely moment. Speedy Tyron and a mobster had stepped into the passage from the library. Others were behind them.

The Shadow dropped as he fired. Speedy's first shot whistled an inch above the black slouch hat. Bursts from the automatics. Speedy staggered; his companion sprawled. The Shadow sprang forward toward the doorway.

There was a reason for his attack in this direction. The gorillas out front had turned to meet new enemies. Shots had broken loose from a clump of bushes off beyond the house. Harry Vincent and Cliff Marsland were joining in the fray. The Shadow's agents were set to cover the front door as well as the veranda.

A mobster swung from the library door as The Shadow arrived at the spot. A revolver barrel glimmered between The Shadow's eyes. A bulky finger pressed against the trigger just as The Shadow's right arm swung up.

With a cannonlike roar the gangster's gat dispatched its hot lead a half-inch past The Shadow's forehead.

The bullet's swish was felt as the missile sped through the brim of the slouch hat. The Shadow's left hand pressed the trigger of the automatic. The gangster swayed and began to crumple.

The Shadow's left arm caught the falling gorilla. With the mobster's body as a shield, The Shadow aimed his right hand across the fellow's shoulder. Cold, steely eyes glared from beneath the hat brim toward a trio of mobsters who had backed to the veranda door.

ONE gorilla fired while the others sprang pell-mell through the open doorway. The Shadow, timing his shift to the upraised gun, delivered a weird laugh as the revolver bullet singed his right cheek. His automatic barked. The mobster fell, his finger trembling on the trigger of his gun.

The Shadow dropped the dead gorilla whom he had taken as a shield. Extinguishing the library light, he crouched toward the open door and reached the veranda with his stooped gliding motion. Fleeting mobsters had leaped from the parapet. The Shadow gained that vantage point.

Scattered gorillas, leaderless, had given up the attack on Montgard. Spreading through the darkness, they were closing in on the spot where The Shadow agents lay in ambush. Determined to clear this nest of enemies, they were firing as they approached. Cliff and Harry, prone in a ditch between two bushes, were answering with staccato shots.

The Shadow opened fire. With uncanny precision, he picked the flashes of gangster guns. Snarling cries came from the lawn. Futile shots were loosed toward the veranda.

Open warfare in the dark; such was the battle now. The Shadow, from the parapet, was making a grim fight to protect his agents from the sniping fire of vengeful mobsters. The outcome was in the balance. Harry and Cliff were in a spot from which they could not retreat.

Then came the long glare from headlights as an automobile swept into the driveway. The first car was followed by a second. As the first approached, a searchlight swung across the lawn. It stopped to show a gangster ducking for cover. A rifle shot burst from the car.

The driver stopped short in front of the great house. While he operated the searchlight, his companions piled from the automobile. Sheriff Burton Haggard had arrived with a crew of deputies.

THE fight was ended. Fleeing gorillas were scampering to cover. They were human targets for the rifle fire of skilled rural marksmen. Sprawling figures adorned the lawn, whenever the searchlight picked out a new ruffian.

Harry Vincent and Cliff Marsland had lost no time. Coming from their ditch, they made haste off through the bushes, taking a sure path to safety. Unseen by the sheriff and his men, their escape was quick and easy.

A weird laugh came from the veranda. The Shadow, from this spot of security, had watched the defeat of Mallet Haverly's hordes. His glib tones indicated that he had foreseen this outcome; that his fight against surpassing numbers had been a battle against time.

Crouching, The Shadow gained the library. He closed the oak door behind him. The black cloak swished as The Shadow groped his way toward the bookcase in the corner.

A few moments later, the light clicked on. The Shadow was no longer visible. In his place stood Lamont Cranston. A smile upon his thin lips, this visitor to Montgard left the library and strolled along the passage toward the turret.

Once more in the guise of the New York millionaire, The Shadow was acting as the host of Montgard.

While Jarvis Raleigh and Quarley were cowering in the living room, Lamont Cranston was quietly preparing to meet the sheriff and his men.

The Shadow had waged victorious battle; now it was his purpose to play a new part in the odd events to follow.

CHAPTER XXII. SOLVED SECRETS

LAMONT CRANSTON was standing at the inner door of the turret. His tall form cast a strange, elongated shadow across the tiled floor. Sheriff Burton Haggar, entering with two men behind him, stopped short at the sight of this waiting figure.

“Who are you?” challenged Haggar. “Where is Jarvis Raleigh?”

The two men behind the sheriff came in view. One was a tall, light-haired young man whose face showed perplexity. The other was stocky and swarthy-faced. It was he who hastened forward, with outstretched hand.

“Hello, Mr. Cranston!” he exclaimed. “What are you doing out here?”

“Good evening, Detective Cardona,” returned Cranston, with his thin smile. “I happen to be a guest of Jarvis Raleigh. I am the one who should be surprised to see you here.”

“You know this man?” queried Haggar, turning to Cardona.

“Certainly,” returned Cardona, “Mr. Cranston is a prominent man in New York. He's a famous traveler. Has a home over in New Jersey.”

Lamont Cranston had stepped back into the house. He was glancing to the right as Cardona spoke to Haggar. He raised his hand and beckoned.

“Here comes Mr. Raleigh now,” remarked Cranston. “He seems to be quite all right.”

Jarvis Raleigh was pale as he arrived by the door. He stared at Cranston as though viewing a ghost. Then, turning to Sheriff Haggar, he spoke in a worried tone.

“Quarley is wounded,” explained Raleigh. “I helped him into the dining room—”

“Here is the physician,” interposed Haggar, as a stout man entered the turret from outside. “Will you attend to Quarley, Doctor Meadows?”

The physician nodded and went along the passage. Jarvis Raleigh, peaked of face, kept shaking his head as questions came to him. He nodded when Haggar introduced Cardona; then stared as the sheriff pointed to the light-haired chap who had come with him and the detective.

“This gentleman,” declared Haggar, “is a relative of yours. Stokes Corvin, recently arrived from England—”

“Stokes Corvin!” gasped Raleigh. “Stokes Corvin is dead! There is his body, by the outer door—”

JOE CARDONA had produced a flashlight. He spread a luminous circle about the face of the man who had called himself Stokes Corvin. The dead visage was staring upward. Cardona growled in recognition.

“One mug that never was in the rogue's gallery,” asserted the detective. “A smart crook that always kept out of sight—it was just luck that I saw him once so I can identify him. I'll tell you who he is —Rags

Wilkey, the brains behind Mallet Haverly, the racketeer.

“An international confidence man, this fellow. He's been laying low since I heard he was with Mallet. He's just the bird who could have passed himself as you, Mr. Corvin.”

Cardona reached down and drew out an envelope that was projecting from the dead man's pocket. He produced the letter and opened it.

“Get this,” announced Joe, “It's a note from Mallet Haverly to Rags Wilkey. It says that Mallet got cigarette message sixteen from the lawn; that he'll be ready with the crew at the front; to leave the side door open—”

“That letter came tonight,” exclaimed Jarvis Raleigh. “Stokes—I mean this crook who called himself Stokes Corvin—knew that he would receive his mail unopened—”

“Here's more of it,” interrupted Cardona. “It says to look out for The Shadow—maybe he knows what Luskin told us. Luskin”—Cardona paused reflectively—“say, there was a fellow by that name put on the spot not long ago—”

“Luskin was a servant here,” interposed Raleigh. “He was in my father's employ. He must have learned the secret of this tower. The Shadow—could he be the one who was up there?”

Jarvis Raleigh pointed to the turret high above. He added awed words:

“A being in black—who appeared and vanished. He laughed—and it was his hand that felled this villain who was in my house.”

Lamont Cranston stepped forward as Jarvis Raleigh paused. Raleigh seemed bewildered. It was Cranston who took up the story.

“A curious place, this turret entry,” he remarked, in a quiet, even tone, to which all listened. “When I came here tonight, I had a strange sense of danger. I opened the outer door and stepped out to call my car. It had left.

“When I turned back, some one had bolted the door. Jarvis Raleigh is right, there was a mysterious presence in this turret. Then the fighting started. I was forced to take cover by the wall. When the lull came, I hurried into the house.”

Not one person doubted the plausibility of this story. Still playing the part of Lamont Cranston, The Shadow had completely disassociated his own part with that of the supposed millionaire.

“This floor”—Cranston was pointing downward—“might well be a death trap, despite its apparent solidity. Yet the turret itself is even more remarkable. Look upward, gentlemen. Note those walls of solid stone.”

ALL eyes turned upward as Cranston's hand was raised. The quiet voice continued:

“A cylinder of stone—a vertical shaft that seems to taper—as all shafts do. Yet this one, when I studied it closely, several nights ago, seemed to taper to an unusual degree. Its perspective is wrong. It forms an optical illusion.”

“You may be right, Mr. Cranston,” asserted Cardona, suddenly. “I see what you mean. The wall looks straight; but it slopes inward all the way up.”

“Exactly. More than fifteen feet in diameter at the base. Yet at the top, as I estimate it, the width of this upright tube is scarcely more than six. The cupola, itself, is full size.

“The illusion is perfect; yet there is one way to detect it. That is to study the turret from the outside. It seems shorter when viewed from the outside than it does when we look upward from within.

“I might hazard the belief that there is a hiding place at the top—a circular room, between the outer and the inner walls of the turret. It could be reached from the cupola, should one venture that high.”

“Get a ladder,” ordered Joe Cardona. “We're going up—”

Turning, the detective paused. He stared toward the inner hall. Barbara Wyldram had appeared. The girl was highly excited.

“Where is Stokes?” she questioned. “Stokes Corvin? I must tell him—”

“The man you knew as Stokes Corvin is dead,” interposed Lamont Cranston quietly. “This is the real Stokes Corvin.”

Barbara stared bewildered. She saw Jarvis Raleigh. For once, the owner of Montgard appeared sympathetic. The girl clutched Raleigh's arm.

“Your laboratory!” she exclaimed. “The door is open; and inside I saw an opened panel in the wall. There was an iron ladder. Leading upward.”

“Let's go to the laboratory,” ordered Joe Cardona. “That's where we'll find the answer.”

WHEN the group reached the laboratory, they discovered what Barbara had reported. A perfectly fitted panel had been removed from the wall, directly in back of the turret. It showed a narrow space with iron rungs leading up to the secret room which Lamont Cranston had decided must exist.

Joe Cardona ascended. He returned a few minutes later. He walked directly to Jarvis Raleigh and silently extended his hand in congratulation. Then he turned to the others.

“Perhaps,” stated Cardona, “you have all heard of The Shadow. As a detective—as a crime fighter—he hasn't an equal. We owe this discovery to him. He was here tonight.

“As near as I can figure it, he must have scaled the inside of that turret. There's an opening under the cupola, just as Mr. Cranston thought. The circular room is there all right—and from what I could see of money bags and gold ornaments, there's a million or more that belongs to Jarvis Raleigh.”

“My father's wealth,” asserted Raleigh. “I knew that it was hidden here. I would never search for it; nor would Quarley. I do not need it. It will go to other relatives—and to charity.”

“Suit yourself, Mr. Raleigh,” returned Cardona. “Anyway, the stuff is there; and it's what those crooks were after. Luskin must have learned a lot about this place. He was a sap to blab to Mallet Haverly and Rags Wilkey.

“They needed an inside man, to make sure that Luskin was right; a fellow to let them in when they were ready. From your description of the last fight, sheriff, The Shadow must have been here to stop theft before; and he showed up again tonight.”

Cardona paused to point to the opening in the laboratory wall; then, resuming his reconstruction of events, he added:

“The Shadow found this way to the laboratory. He must have come down through and picked up the fight from inside the house. That's why the gorillas were scattering when we arrived.”

“One question,” stated Jarvis Raleigh, turning to the real Stokes Corvin. “How did you happen to learn that an impostor was here in my house?”

“Odd circumstances,” returned Stokes Corvin. “More than a week ago, I received a mysterious cablegram summoning me to New York. I was told to await further information at the Hotel Metrolite.

“Last night, I received a mysterious letter.” He produced it from his pocket. “Unsigned, it told me to call on Detective Cardona and to request him to come with me to Glenwood, there to introduce myself in person to Sheriff Burton Haggar. I found Detective Cardona; he came with me this evening.”

“And when this fellow introduced himself,” declared Haggar, “I brought him here in a hurry, along with a posse. I knew there was a fellow here who called himself Stokes Corvin. When the right man showed me his passports, I figured that you had a phony staying with you, Mr. Raleigh.”

The physician appeared at the door of the laboratory. He spoke to Jarvis Raleigh.

“Quarley is resting comfortably,” he announced. “He will recover. By the way, is there a gentleman here named Cranston?”

“Yes,” returned Raleigh, “This is Mr. Cranston.”

“Your car has arrived,” stated the physician. “It is waiting in front of the house.”

“I told Stanley to return,” remarked Cranston. “I was not sure that I would stay all night. In view of the extraordinary events that have occurred, I think it would be best for me to return to New York. I shall write you, Mr. Raleigh, arranging another appointment.”

With that, Cranston bowed good night and walked toward the door of the laboratory. He paused; turned and added a suggestion:

“I should advise a further study of the turret entry,” he stated. “The floor strikes me as suspicious. Good night, gentlemen.”

JOE CARDONA pondered. A few minutes after Lamont Cranston had departed, he suggested a trip downstairs. He led the way to the turret. Cranston's car had gone; the deputies had departed carrying the dead and wounded attackers who had failed to capture Montgard.

“This floor is solid as rock,” growled Cardona, as he stamped upon the tiling. “Yet I've got a hunch that Mr. Cranston was right about it. There's no use tearing it up, unless—”

Cardona stopped abruptly as the floor moved downward. It stopped after a drop of a few inches. Cardona motioned the others back into the house while he sprang for the front door.

While all watched from safety, the floor began to slide in the direction of the living room. Cardona and the others stared as the duplicate floor took the place of the first.

Hardly had it shifted into position before the warning click occurred. The quadrants dropped downward like yawning jaws. Astounded men stared into the abyss.

“Reeves Lockwood!” gasped Jarvis Raleigh. “Merton Helmsford—Sidney Richland—that is where they met their end—like the others who went before them!”

“The inscription in the border: 'Ye living men who love life and hate death; ye who will pass by this spot shall sacrifice to me!'—I know its importance now!”

The jaws of the trap were closing. They clicked into place, forming what appeared to be a solid floor. Then came the downward shift; the floor that formed the death trap slid beneath the wall while the solid duplicate replaced it.

“The library!” exclaimed Jarvis Raleigh, suddenly. “That's where the false Stokes Corvin used to stay. This way—this way—”

All followed Raleigh along the passage. The library light was on; the door to the veranda was open. Jarvis Raleigh uttered a cry as he pointed toward the corner bookcase. He sprang in that direction.

The volumes of Dumas had been removed. Behind the spot where they belonged was an opened panel. Cunningly set in the wall, this moving portion had been designed to deceive the keenest eyes.

Beyond the opening were two switches. Their purpose was obvious. One to change the floors; the other to drop and close the trap. This was the final secret of the death trap arranged by Windrop Raleigh—a chasm of doom below the cunning hiding place where the old miser had kept his hoarded wealth.

While amazed men stared, a distant cry came to their ears from far across the lawn. A chilling sound of sinister mirth, it was the climax to the final revelation.

Those in the library stood silent with awe as they heard the laugh of The Shadow!

CHAPTER XXIII. THE SHADOW WRITES

THE blue light was shining in The Shadow's sanctum. Long white fingers were lifting newspaper clippings and typewritten reports. These gave the final pieces of information that concerned the mystery of Montgard.

Papers and clippings disappeared. A massive book replaced them. Opening to a blank page, the hands of The Shadow produced a long quill pen. Fingers began to write, in a perfect penmanship.

When Lamont Cranston first arrived at Montgard, he read the inscription on the floor of the turret entry. He noted an error in a single tile; the wrong figurine for the inscription. Despite his pretense to the contrary, Lamont Cranston was familiar with hieroglyphics. To his eyes, the error was plain.

When the floor of the entry was examined after the strange disappearance of Merton Helmsford, the proper figurine was in the inscription. A single tile could not have been removed. Therefore the entire floor must have been changed.

The Shadow paused. His pen disappeared from the light; it returned, its point glowing with new ink. Again, the hand inscribed:

Waiting crooks were close by Montgard. Their purpose indicated

that their leader expected word from within. The man who called himself Stokes Corvin was the latest arrival at Montgard.

Stokes Corvin had been in the library. The room warranted inspection. The volumes of Dumas were the clew that led to the discovery of the secret panel.

Reeves Lockwood and Merton Helmsford perished because they knew too much. Rags Wilkey—posing as Stokes Corvin—killed one and then the other because he feared that the lawyer had learned him to be an impostor and that the detective might press the investigation.

Those deaths were unfortunate. They came before the discovery of the secret panel that placed the guilt on the impostor. Had Sidney Richland used ordinary judgment he would not have become a third victim. His death came through his unfortunate actions.

The impostor, by inference, was Rags Wilkey—a crook whom only Joe Cardona could identify—one formerly associated with Mallet Haverly. His practice of tossing cigarette stumps upon the lawn near the kennel from which the hound had been removed was indication of his communications. Messages, wadded in the cigarette stumps, were his chosen method.

Another pause. The Shadow's thoughts were reverting to the past. The hand of The Shadow made its final inscription.

Windrop Raleigh had dealt in secret crime at Montgard. His tiled floor was secretly duplicated. One error only—that of a single figurine—was never discovered during his time.

Luskin knew the secret of the death trap. He also knew, in part, the existence of the hiding place near the top of the turret. A servant in the household while Windrop Raleigh was installing these secret places, Luskin had managed to learn the truth.

The trap of doom, unused since the death of Windrop Raleigh, was

brought into play by the new murderer who had found his way within the walls of Montgard. Wilkey did not know the error in the tile which had escaped the notice even of Windrop Raleigh. It remained for another to detect that one flaw in the trap—Windrop Raleigh's legacy of death!

The pen disappeared. Ink dried upon the page.

The hands of The Shadow moved into the outer darkness. They returned, bearing perfect copies of the inscriptions which appeared on the tiled floor of the turret at Montgard. A slight notation on the second copy showed the changed figurine which proved to be the solution of this strange mystery.

Now the pages of the massive book were closed. The light clicked out; a weird laugh sounded amid the enshrouding gloom.

The final statements in the mystery of Montgard had been chronicled for all time within the secret archives of The Shadow.

The Shadow had solved the mystery of Montgard, and had cleared another case in his amazing career. He had found the clew which saved the name and reputation of innocent people.

But, difficult though this clew was to uncover, he was to find one even more unusual, even more mystifying. It was the clew of death which no science of language could solve—only The Shadow's amazing power of deduction, and uncanny ability to trace crime.

Men died, one by one, and no one knew which would be next. Some guessed that the killer went by phone numbers; others that he had a certain number of people to kill. Which would you have guessed if you were faced with The Death Clew which The Shadow faces in the next story?

THE END