



DEATH CLEW

Maxwell Grant

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CHAPTER I. UNDER COVER.

A GRAY-HAIRED man was seated at a desk in detective headquarters. His face, stern of expression, showed the stolidity that the man had gained through years of service with the New York police.

This man was Inspector Timothy Klein. Grizzled veteran of many battles against crime, Klein, to-night, displayed a determination that showed more than ordinary keenness.

Another man entered the inspector's office. The arrival was younger than Klein; his face, however, carried the same firmness. Stocky of build, swarthy of expression, this newcomer looked like a man of action. He was such. Detective Joe Cardona was recognized as the ace of the Manhattan force.

"Hello, Joe," greeted Klein, solemnly.

"Hello, inspector," returned the detective. "Been talking with the commissioner?"

"Yes," Klein leaned across the desk and plated his heavy fist upon the woodwork. "He wants us to get Strangler Hunn to-night."

"A tough order," remarked Cardona, with a grim smile. "If we were using the dragnet--"

"The commissioner won't see it," interposed Klein. "He claims that it would tip off Hunn. He'd know we were after him."

"Maybe," agreed Cardona. "Every crook that's wanted ducks for cover when the net begins to close. Just the same, it's the only way we could bag Strangler Hunn in a hurry."

"Yes," granted Klein. "We'd also take a big chance on losing him. The commissioner is right, Joe, so far as the best method of getting Strangler is concerned. If he stays in New York, we'll spot him sure. The only trouble is how soon we can get him."

"And he's wanted to-night." Cardona laughed gruffly. "Well, inspector, I'm here to help you. But we're playing a long, long shot."

KLEIN nodded as he leaned back in his chair. Reflectively, the inspector began to sum up the facts concerning Strangler Hunn.

"He was a bad egg, Hunn was" remarked Klein. "He could have choked a bull with those big mitts of his. When he lost his right arm in that dock fight, it crimped his style a bit."

"Yeah?" Again, Cardona laughed. "Well, inspector, if he can't strangle a bull any more, Strangler can still knock one cold with that left fist of his. What's more, he can use a .45 with that one hand better than the average gangster can handle a pair of .38s."

"A murderer," mused Klein. "One we've got to get. Easily recognized by that fake arm that always hangs at his right side. The glove he wears on his phony hand is a good enough give-away."

"Spotted last night. We've been looking for him since. Twenty-five plainclothes men out on the street, looking for Strangler Hunn. In this case, Joe, the undercover system is better than the dragnet."

"It will be," admitted Cardona, "if anybody is lucky enough to spot the guy. But the longer it takes, the more chance there is for a leak. If the news hounds get wise--"

"No reporter knows about Strangler being in town?" Klein's question was a worried one. "If any of them know, we'll have to act quick--"

"It's safe for the present," interrupted Cardona. "Only one reporter's wise. Burke of the Classic. He knows enough, though, not to spoil a good story by blabbing in advance."

"Burke was in here just before I came back," remarked Klein. "He talked with Markham. Coming in later. I guess you're right about him, Joe--he shoots straight. We can count on him keeping quiet."

"I'll talk to him when he shows up," rejoined the detective. "He's probably somewhere near here right now."

IN this surmise, Joe Cardona was correct. Two blocks away from headquarters, a young man of wiry build was entering a small corner store. Spying a telephone booth, he entered and put in a call.

"Burbank speaking," came a voice over the wire.

"Burke," rejoined the man in the booth. "On my way to headquarters."

"Remain there," came a quiet order. "Make immediate report on any new information."

"Instructions received."

Clyde Burke strolled from the store. He had the gait and manner of a newspaper reporter; the completed telephone call, however, indicated that he served in some other capacity. Such was the case.

Clyde Burke was a secret agent of the mysterious being known as The Shadow. Through Burbank, a contact man, Burke and other agents reported to their hidden chief.

The Shadow! Being of mystery, a weird personage shrouded in darkness. He, like the police of New York City, waged ceaseless war against crime. When he appeared in the light, The Shadow invariably used some perfected form of disguise--as Lamont Cranston, as Henry Arnaud, as Fritz the janitor, or as any one he chose to be. A master of impersonation, he was a masquerader who might show any of a hundred faces--but never his own.

When he appeared in his own chosen guise, The Shadow arrived in garb of black. With cloak of inky hue, its collar upward toward the slouch hat above, The Shadow kept his own visage entirely from view.

When The Shadow swept from the cover of darkness, his blazing eyes were the only tokens of his hidden countenance. Those were the eyes that guided the gloved hands of The Shadow--hands that wielded massive automatics against men of crime.

Clyde Burke had reported to The Shadow. Clyde Burke was on his way to detective headquarters. Clyde Burke knew of the undercover search that was being conducted for "Strangler" Hunn. These facts were productive of a single answer. The Shadow, like the police, was anxious to encounter the one-armed murderer who had returned to New York.

Inspector Timothy Klein had more than a score of detectives on the job. Directing from headquarters, Klein held Cardona in readiness. Similarly, The Shadow, in his hidden sanctum, was directing a search for Strangler Hunn. But The Shadow needed no man in readiness. He, The Shadow, was ready to fare forth when action might be required.

TEN minutes after his report to The Shadow, Clyde Burke sauntered into detective headquarters. He appeared in the doorway of Klein's office. The inspector recognized the reporter and nodded. Then Klein made a sign to Cardona.

"Hello, Burke," said the detective. "You're keeping mum on this Strangler Hunn business, aren't you?"

"Sure thing," returned Clyde. "Not a line goes in the sheet until you give the word. Got anything new on him, Joe?"

"Nothing yet," replied the detective. "He was spotted last night. There's twenty-five men on the street looking for him."

"You'll give me a break as soon as some one locates him?"

"Positively. If I go out after him you can come along, Burke. You play the game and--"

Cardona stopped. The telephone bell was ringing. Inspector Klein picked up the instrument from the desk. His face became tense.

"Just now?... Good." Klein was eager. "Sure he didn't see you?... Good... Yes... Stay where you are... Outside the Melbrook Arms... Cardona will be there... Yes, a cordon..."

The telephone banged on the desk. Inspector Klein, forgetting his usual calmness, registered intense excitement.

"Farlan has spotted Strangler Hunn," he exclaimed. "Saw him going into an apartment house--the Melbrook Arms. Here's the address"--Klein paused to scribble on a sheet of paper--"and Hunn is still in the place. Get Markham, Joe. Get started. I'll have the cordon form."

Cardona swung promptly and left the office. Clyde Burke followed on the detective's heels. Cardona was heading down the corridor to find Markham.

"I'll hit the subway, Joe," called Clyde. "I'll be up there as soon as you are. O.K.?"

"O.K.," returned the detective.

Clyde Burke grinned as he hurried from headquarters. He might have worked a ride with Cardona and Markham in the police car. Cardona, however, would think just as well of him for having passed up that privilege. There was another reason, however, for Clyde's action. The reporter wanted to get back to that same telephone that he had used before.

A BLUISH light was shining upon the surface of a polished table. Its rays, focused downward by a heavy shade, showed only a pair of white hands on the table. One hand wore a sparkling gem of ever-changing hue. It was a girasol, a priceless fire-opal.

That gem told the identity of the hands. These were the hands of The Shadow. The light from above was the sole illumination in The Shadow's sanctum, the hidden, black-walled room located somewhere in Manhattan.

A tiny bulb glimmered from the wall. The white hands stretched forward and produced a pair of earphones. A strange, eerie voice whispered from the darkness. It was the voice of The Shadow.

"Burbank speaking," came a quiet tone over the wire.

"Report."

"Report from Marsland," announced Burbank. "Now at the Black Ship. No trace of Strangler Hunn in underworld."

"Report received."

"Report from Vincent. Has finished rounds of listed hotels. No trace of Strangler Hunn."

"Report received."

A pause; then came another statement from Burbank. The quiet voice showed not the slightest tinge of excitement.

"Stand by," declared the contact agent. "New call arriving. It may be Burke."

A longer pause while The Shadow waited. Burbank, in a hidden room of his own, had contact with the outer world. Only he could reach The Shadow by the private line that ran from his station to the sanctum.

The pause ended. The Shadow, shrouded in darkness, listened, while Burbank announced that the call had come from Burke. Then came short, terse statements. After that The Shadow's whisper:

"Report received."

The earphones clattered. White hands slid into darkness. The light clicked out. A soft laugh sounded amid the complete blackness of the sanctum. Weird tones of mirth rose to a shuddering crescendo. They broke with a startling cry that ended with taunting echoes.

The walls hurled back The Shadow's mockery. Hidden tongues seemed to join in the fading gibes. The last reverberation died. Silence joined with blackness. The sanctum was empty.

The Shadow, black-garbed battler who dealt doom to men of evil, had learned the fact he wanted. Through Clyde Burke, The Shadow had gained the information which belonged to the police.

Strangler Hunn, somewhere in the uptown apartment house known as the Melbrook Arms, would have more than detectives and a police cordon to deal with him to-night.

The Shadow, avenger whom all murderers feared, was on his way to strike!

CHAPTER II. AT THE MELBROOK ARMS.

THE Melbrook Arms was an old-fashioned apartment house in the upper eighties. Six stories in height, it formed a square-shaped building that stood across the street from an empty lot.

Automobiles parked in the open space; high rows of signboards against a blank-walled garage beyond--these formed the prospect as viewed from the front windows of the decadent apartment house.

Strangler Hunn had been seen entering the Melbrook Arms. The detective who had spied him was waiting in the parking space across the street. Acting under instructions from Inspector Klein, Detective Farlan was to be in readiness only in case of emergency.

The plain-clothes man had done nothing to excite Strangler Hunn's suspicion. Farlan knew that the wanted man was in the apartment house. That was sufficient. Until the police cordon had formed; until Joe Cardona was here to act, all must remain quiet.

While Farlan watched, a lean, stoop-shouldered man came briskly along the sidewalk. This arrival entered the Melbrook Arms. Farlan decided that he must be a tenant of the apartment house. In this surmise, the detective was correct.

Passing through the deserted lobby, the stoop-shouldered man entered the automatic elevator and rode up to the third floor. There he unlocked the door of a front apartment and entered an unpretentious living room. There was a desk in the corner away from the front window. The man seated himself there and pulled the cord of a desk lamp.

The illumination showed the man to be about fifty years of age. His face, though colorless, was sharp-featured; and the furrowed forehead was that of a keen thinker. Reaching into an inside pocket, the man who had arrived in the apartment drew out a small stack of folded papers.

HE spread one of these upon the desk before him. He began to read it in careful fashion, starting his forefinger along the top lines, which stated, in typewritten letters:

To Mr. Roscoe Wimbledon.

Confidential Report:

From MacAvoy Crane, Private Investigator.

The perusal of this document required only two minutes. Reaching to the side of the desk, the stoop-shouldered man brought up an old-fashioned portable typewriter. He inserted the paper, clicked off a short additional paragraph, formed a space and beneath it typed the line:

Special Investigator.

Removing the paper from the machine he produced a fountain pen and inscribed his own signature:

MacAvoy Crane.

Pushing the paper to one side, the man at the desk picked up a telephone. He dialed a number and sat with ear glued to the receiver. He was paying no attention to the paper which he had just signed. It lay at the left of the desk, upon the other documents. The unblotted ink was still damp.

"Hello..." MacAvoy Crane was speaking in a sharp tone. "Hello... Is Mr. Wimbledon there?... Yes, this is Mr. Crane... What's that?... Yes, I can call him in half an hour. Where is he now?... At a conference in the Hotel Goliath? I see... National Aviation Board... Yes... It's important.... If I can't get him there, I'll call you again in half an hour..."

Pausing, MacAvoy Crane still held the telephone. Hanging up, he set the instrument down impatiently. He reached for the paper which he had signed; pushed it aside and picked up the documents below it. He sorted these; his forehead furrowed in deep perplexity.

Then, with decisive thought, Crane dropped the papers and picked up a telephone book from the floor. He looked up the number of the Hotel Goliath. His finger ran down the page. There was impatience in his action. Evidently he was anxious to get his call through to Roscoe Wimbledon.

The number found, Crane reached for the telephone. He paused. He seemed to be making up his mind whether he should interrupt Wimbledon at the conference or wait until the man had returned home. Then, with a sudden change of plan, MacAvoy Crane again picked up the telephone book. An odd smile showed upon his lips as he began to turn the pages.

SOMETHING crinkled at the side of the desk. Crane swung in his swivel chair. His eyes, upon the desk top, bulged as they saw a huge, hairy hand cover the papers that he had laid there. Looking upward, the investigator found himself staring squarely into one of the ugliest faces that he had ever seen.

A vicious, thick-lipped countenance; glowering eyes beneath bristly brows-- these were the features that Crane spied. Gripping the arms of his chair, the investigator began to rise. As he did so, he lowered his gaze. He saw that the intruder was a man with one arm.

The single hand was rising from the sheet of paper on the table. Its clutching fingers were symbols of prodigious strength. A sudden gasp came from Crane's lips. He knew the identity of this unwelcome visitor.

"You--you are Strangler Hunn?" he blurted.

The leering face had thrust close to the investigator. The thick smile on the brutal lips was answer enough to Crane's question. The hand from the table was creeping upward; its fingers seemed like preying claws.

One hand alone! The mate to that fierce talon was missing. One-handed, Strangler Hunn was ready to attempt murder. Crane knew it. With a quick jolt backward toward the wall, the special investigator thrust his right hand to his pocket to snatch forth a revolver.

That was the instant which Strangler Hunn chose for his lunge. The murderer's left arm came up with a vicious sweep. With wide spreading fingers, Hunn made a quick grip for Crane's throat. His hand reached its mark.

Crane writhed as the talon clutched his neck. His left hand rose; he dug his fingernails into Strangler's massive wrist. Out came Crane's right, with a stub-nose revolver. The action was too late.

Clutching the investigator's throat as one might snatch a helpless puppy, Strangler used his single arm to yank the investigator toward him. Then, with a piston-like jerk, he slammed Crane back against the wall.

The powerful blow found full force against the back of the investigator's head. Crane's arms dropped as Strangler yanked him forward and propelled him on a second journey.

This time, the investigator's head bashed the wall with even greater force. Stunned, Crane began to slump. Strangler Hunn still held him upright. All the while, those vicious claws did not once relax their pressure.

A long minute passed, while inarticulate gurgles came from the stunned man's throat. The noise ceased. Only then did Strangler relax his grasp. Crane's body crumpled behind the desk. The light, showed livid welts upon his throat.

Strangler Hunn, his face a study in ferocity, stood in admiration of his handiwork. MacAvoy Crane was dead, another victim of the murderer's terrible strength.

With a snarling laugh, Strangler picked up the papers that Crane had brought to the apartment. The killer looked at each one, then tossed the packet into a metal wastebasket that lay beside the desk. Only one paper remained upon the desk; that was the one which Crane had signed--the report.

THE killer pulled a match from his pocket. He struck it on the mahogany desk top. He set fire to the papers in the wastebasket.

Augmented by a crumpled newspaper that lay beneath, the flames rose rapidly. Strangler shoved the basket away from the desk. He looked at the report sheet.

Running his forefinger along the typewritten lines, the killer stopped at a certain point. His bloated lips formed a triumphant smile. Tearing a sheet of paper from a small pad on the desk, Strangler took Crane's fountain pen and began to make an inscription.

It was evident that the killer could not write well with his left hand. Instead of script, he printed letters in crude and clumsy fashion. The small sheet of paper slipped occasionally as he formed the words; Strangler managed to hold it by pressure of his hand.

This job complete, Strangler dropped the fountain pen and uttered a contemptuous laugh. He tossed Crane's report sheet into the wastebasket, where the paper was still burning briskly.

Then, with vicious action, Strangler kicked Crane's dead body to one side. The murderer began to yank open desk drawers. In one he found a stack of papers that he tossed into the wastebasket without examination. In another, he found several dollars in bills. Strangler pocketed the money.

The room formed a strange tableau. The flames from the wastebasket threw a lurid glow upon the huge, ill-faced murderer who stood before the desk. Reflected light from the wall showed the pale face of MacAvoy Crane, murdered investigator.

All the while, the piece of paper on which Strangler had penned his printed words lay in plain view near

the side of the desk. The murderer had not forgotten it. His evil eyes fell upon it; his big hand reached to pluck it from the desk.

Word had reached headquarters too late to save the life of MacAvoy Crane. Strangler Hunn had performed his deed of murder. But while the fiend still gloated, avengers were on their way to find him at this spot.

Before he left this apartment where he had delivered death; before he could make use of the information which he had copied upon a sheet of paper, Strangler Hunn would have other persons to encounter.

Joe Cardona--stalwart detectives--a cordon of police. These were the foemen who would arrive to trap the slayer. But more formidable than all was the hidden warrior who had also set forth to deal with Strangler Hunn.

The Shadow, he who feared no living man, would play his part in the strife that was to come!

CHAPTER III. DEATH TO THE KILLER.

"LOOK there, Joe!"

The speaker was Farlan, the detective who stood by the parking space across the street from the Melbrook Arms. Farlan was pointing upward to the third floor of the apartment house.

Cardona nodded. The police car had driven into the parking space; Joe had alighted; he had found Farlan promptly. Now he was staring at the window which Farlan had indicated. The flickering light of flames was reflected from the inner wall.

"Maybe that's where he is--"

"You stay here." Cardona interrupted Farlan. "I'm going in with Markham. The cordon is forming; send in a crew of men as soon as they close in. I'm going up to get Strangler."

With this, Cardona headed across the street, Markham at his heels. Farlan, stepping forward, wigwagged to a pair of bluecoats at the corner. As the officers approached, a young man swung up and headed toward the door of the Melbrook Arms.

"Hold it," growled Farlan. "Where are you going?"

"I'm Burke of the Classic," replied the arrival. "Cardona told me I could tag along. I'm going in."

"Stick here." Farlan drew Burke back toward the parking lot. "See that window? That's where Cardona's gone. We think Strangler Hunn is in the apartment. You might get plugged if you went up there."

Clyde Burke shrugged his shoulders. There was nothing to do but wait. Like Farlan, he stared up toward the flickering light that showed in the third story window. The policemen were at the entrance to the apartment house. Two detectives had arrived; Farlan now was pointing them into the building.

A trim coupe purred into the parking lot. Keen eyes spied Clyde Burke. They also noted the spot toward which the reporter was gazing. A soft whisper--almost inaudible--sounded from within the car.

The Shadow had encountered a longer journey than had Joe Cardona. He had arrived in time to avoid any trouble with the police cordon; but too late to precede Cardona into the apartment house. His quick brain summed the whole situation in a moment.

Policemen were closing into the parking lot. They did not see the figure that was emerging from the coupe. They did not glimpse the black-cloaked form that moved among the darkened cars toward the wall at the inner side of the lot. Nor did they see The Shadow as he merged with the darkness behind the tall tiers of signboards.

The Shadow was moving upward. He knew that police would be at the rear of the apartment house. He knew that Cardona must now be at the third floor. His one opportunity to gain even a partial glimpse into that spotted room lay in taking a vantage post from across the parking lot.

UP in the apartment, Strangler Hunn had completed his brief process of rifling MacAvoy Crane's desk. The killer paid no attention to the burning papers in the wastebasket. He thought that the flame was too far away from the window to be visible from outside. This assumption was partially correct. Farlan would not have noticed the reflection of the flames had he not been watching the apartment house.

Strangler, himself, was in the alcove where Crane's desk was located. The killer was completely out of range of the window. He was picking up the paper that he had worded. He was folding it clumsily with his single hand; making ready to thrust it in his pocket, when a thump at the door brought him to a standstill.

"Open the door!" came a growled voice. "Open the door!"

Strangler made no move.

"Open in the name of the law!"

Strangler knew the voice. He recognized it as the tone of Joe Cardona. His face took on a ferocious glare. Then came a terrific smash. The door seemed to bulge inward. Another crash; a panel began to splinter.

Raising his hand toward his face, Strangler Hunn gripped one end of his paper between his teeth; he held the other end with his fingers. Clumsiness gone, he tore the paper in half; He placed the pieces together. Another tear. Once more; as Strangler stared at the ripped fragments, the upper hinge of the door broke loose and the barrier swung inward a full foot.

Springing forward, Strangler emitted a vicious laugh as he let the torn pieces of paper drop from his hand. Downward they fluttered. Strangler saw them waver into the upward licking flames. That was sufficient. The message gone, Strangler yanked a big .45 from his left hip.

The fluttering papers seemed to dance into the licking flames. Strangler had taken it for granted that they would be destroyed. He was heeding them no longer. The flames seemed to catch the pieces individually. Two ragged slips bobbed upward from the rising heat; the flames sucked in one as it wavered on the edge of the basket.

But the last piece, a single portion of the torn sheet, fluttered free. Striking the edge of the metal basket it toppled outward and drifted, unburned, to the floor. Strangler Hunn never noticed it. His eyes were busy elsewhere.

Crash!

THE lower portion of the door shot free. As the barrier caved, the body of Detective Sergeant Markham came sprawling into the room. Had Strangler taken a shot at that door-breaking form, it would have been his last.

For there was another man behind Markham--a swarthy-faced fellow whose revolver muzzle came into

view with promptness. Joe Cardona was covering his pal. This was what Strangler Hunn had expected. The killer's arm came upward.

A bark from the big revolver. A bullet flattened itself in the doorway, an inch from Cardona's ear. The detective fired in return. His hasty shot was wide.

New shots sounded in this duel. Cardona, half protected by the door, was safe. Yet his own shot again was wide.

More shots. The fight was an odd one. Both Strangler and Cardona were shooting left handed. The murderer had no right hand; Cardona could not use his because that side of the door was the only one which gave him cover.

Strangler was a dangerous shooter. It was the protection in the doorway that gave Cardona a break. On the other hand, Cardona's handicapped shots were delivered with a prayer and Strangler knew it.

It was Markham who had caused the prompt duel. Cardona was engaging Strangler chiefly to save Markham. The detective sergeant had the opportunity to change the balance. He sought to use it.

Rising suddenly from the floor, Markham yanked his revolver and blazed at Strangler. Had the shot been well aimed, the battle would have been ended. But Markham was too hasty. His bullet zipped the tip of Strangler's left ear. The killer, swinging suddenly, delivered his reply. Markham fell groaning, a bullet in his shoulder.

Strangler aimed a quick shot at the door to ward off Cardona. Then he swung his gun toward Markham's prostrate body. This time the hammer clicked. Strangler's last shot had been used. Luck had saved Detective Sergeant Markham.

Springing forward, Joe Cardona fired his last bullet to stop Strangler Hunn. Just as Joe pressed the trigger, Strangler leaped forward. The bullet missed by inches. Cardona dived to the floor to beat Strangler's leap. He and the killer were after the same object--Markham's gun. The detective sergeant had let the weapon clatter on the floor.

Cardona dropped his own revolver as he clutched for Markham's. But Strangler retained his own big gun; and it served him handily. As Cardona grabbed Markham's weapon, Strangler delivered a sidewipe. Having no right arm to stay him, the killer lost his balance, but he gained his purpose. His swinging revolver dealt a glancing blow to Joe Cardona's head. The detective sprawled upon the floor.

CROUCHING on his knees, Strangler seized Markham's gun. He aimed it promptly toward the door, where a new detective had appeared. Two shots resounded simultaneously. The detective dropped, wounded; a second man yanked him to the cover of the hallway.

Strangler, edging toward the wall beside the window, gained his feet. The stump of his right arm was against the wall. His left hand was close against his body, holding the precious gun that it had gained.

A hoarse laugh came from Strangler Hunn. The killer saw the way to freedom. Detective Sergeant Markham was wounded and helpless; so was a detective in the hall. One man outside was still in action; Strangler was ready to mow down any ordinary dick.

But for the moment he had a score to settle. Joe Cardona, unarmed, was rising to his feet. The ace detective who had opened the battle was a helpless victim for Strangler's wrath.

With an evil smile upon his twisted lips, Strangler Hunn thrust his huge fist slowly forward. The revolver and the hand that held it moved just past the edge of the window. The hand steadied as the finger rested

on the trigger to deliver the murderous shot.

Joe Cardona, almost to his feet, was staring squarely into the revolver muzzle. Certain death was before him. Aid from the door could not suffice; Strangler had covered that spot also.

ACROSS the street, a blackened, huddled shape lay atop the highest advertising sign. Keen eyes could see Joe Cardona by the door of the apartment living room; those same eyes were upon the hand and gun that had come past the inner edge of the window, fifty yards away!

An automatic barked as The Shadow's finger pressed the trigger. A tongue of flame spat from the top of the signboard. As if by magic, that distant hand dropped from view!

JOE CARDONA, facing death, saw Strangler's arm drop as The Shadow's bullet clipped the killer's wrist. The report of the automatic seemed to follow, muffled. Yet to Cardona, the event was miraculous. It was as though a hand from nowhere had delivered the lifesaving stroke.

Cardona was leaping forward to grapple with the slayer. With his single arm swinging like a club, Strangler pounced forward to combat the detective. His hard swing swept the detective aside. Then came two shots from the door.

The detective in the hallway had come to aid. With Strangler bounding squarely toward him, the man had fired point-blank, not knowing that the killer had been rendered helpless.

The Shadow, peering huddled from beyond the parking space, saw the collapse of Strangler Hunn. He knew that deserved death had been received. The Shadow, once he had crippled Strangler, had refrained from its delivery. The actual death had been scored by an excited detective.

Excitement was reigning in the street. All members of the closing cordon had headed toward the apartment house. Along with the shrill of police whistles and the approaching sirens, The Shadow's lone shot had been mistaken for one from the beleaguered apartment.

Yet The Shadow, with that single, long-range delivery, had turned the tide of battle. He had saved the life of Joe Cardona. He had spelled the end of Strangler Hunn's murderous career.

A soft, whispered laugh sounded from atop the signboard. Then the blackened form descended into the hidden space against the wall. The echoes of The Shadow's mockery became a hollow shudder that died unheard!

CHAPTER IV. CARDONA'S CLEW.

CLYDE BURKE, standing by the parking space opposite the Melbrook Arms, had first been figuring out a way to join Joe Cardona within the apartment house. Clyde knew that his reporter's card would not aid him in passing the closed cordon; but he also knew that if he managed to get through the entrance, Cardona would square his action later on.

Clyde had been watching for lack of vigilance on the part of the policemen at the apartment-house door. Then the firing had begun. Clyde, spotting the third story room as the place of action, had clambered to the running board of a coupe to gain a better view.

Like policemen in the street, he had heard The Shadow's shot. Although the report of the automatic had differed from those of the revolvers, Clyde had taken it for granted that the gun had been fired within the apartment.

Firing had ceased. Policemen were piling into the apartment house. Clyde decided that now was the time

for his entry. He stepped from the running board of the coupe. He stopped stock still as he heard a hiss not three feet distant from his elbow.

A sinister whisper--a sibilant tone that Clyde recognized. The Shadow was here--within reach of his secret agent. Clyde did not turn. He knew the source of the sound. It came from within the coupe. The Shadow's agent stood attentive.

"Strangler Hunn is dead." The pronouncement came in a weird monotone. "You can enter. Stay with Cardona. Learn all that has happened."

"Instructions received," spoke Clyde, in a quiet tone. Then, without another word, The Shadow's agent paced across the street to the door of the apartment house.

SHOUTS were coming from above. Word was reaching the men below, informing them that the raid had succeeded. A burly policeman, holding his arm as a barrier to keep Clyde out, suddenly dropped his hand.

"All right," agreed the officer. "They've got the guy. That ticket will let you in now. I couldn't have let you by while the fight was on."

Clyde tucked his reporter's card in the outer band of his hat. Scorning the elevator, he took the steps two at a time until he reached the third floor. A detective came forward to stop him; Clyde pointed to his hat. The man let him by.

Then came another halt. Markham and the wounded detective were being carried to the elevator. Clyde watched them pass. He continued to the open door of the apartment.

Joe Cardona was in charge. Strangler Hunn's body lay sprawled upon the floor. Cardona had drawn back the desk. Clyde turned to gaze at the dead form of MacAvoy Crane.

"Did Strangler get him?" questioned the reporter.

"Yeah," returned Cardona, grimly. "Before we got here."

"Do you know who he is?"

Cardona nodded.

"A private detective," informed Cardona. "Called himself a special investigator. MacAvoy Crane. I knew him."

"Why do you think Strangler bumped him?"

"Revenge, maybe. Crane may have had something on Strangler."

Clyde stared at the wastebasket. The flames had died out. Nothing but charred remainders told of MacAvoy Crane's documents. Cardona poked among the ashes. He shrugged his shoulders while Clyde watched.

Neither the detective nor the reporter saw the tiny bit of paper that had escaped the basket. Cardona raised the metal container as he stooped to study the ashes. When he replaced it on the floor, it went directly over that tell-tale fragment.

Cardona began a search of the dead men's clothes. He found several dollars in Strangler's pockets; nothing else of consequence. A search of Crane revealed identification cards; no papers of other

importance.

CLYDE BURKE, watching the detective, saw every item that was discovered. By the time Cardona had finished this work, Inspector Timothy Klein appeared with a police surgeon.

Clyde listened while Cardona made a brief report. Standing by the window, the reporter heard the first account of the actual fight which Joe had waged with Strangler.

"He was standing right there"--Cardona paused to point toward the side of the window--"ready to plug me, when his arm dropped. I went for him; he broke loose. Parker got him at the door--"

"You mean," broke in Klein, "that he had you covered, but deliberately lowered his gun?"

"Something must have got him," explained Cardona. "Maybe one of my early shots wounded him so he gave out at the critical moment."

"His wrist is shattered," announced the police surgeon, bending over Strangler's body. "A bullet did it."

A sudden recollection came to Clyde Burke. He could hear The Shadow's words, whispered from the coupe.

"Strangler is dead--"

How had The Shadow known it? Why had Strangler dropped his arm, just, at the moment when he had been about to slay his hated enemy, Joe Cardona?

"A funny thing," the detective was saying. "I thought I heard a shot from outside just as Strangler's arm dropped. Yet nobody could have fired in from the street. They couldn't have seen Strangler, on account of the angle."

Clyde's gaze turned across the street. The Shadow's agent saw the tiers of signboards. Clyde knew the answer. Posted above the signs, The Shadow, master marksman, had intervened to rescue Joe Cardona.

More than that, The Shadow had saved the lives of others. Strangler Hunn, breaking free, might well have blazed a way of destruction in his mad effort to escape below.

Cardona and Klein were summing up the case. The inspector had been talking with Farlan; the detective now appeared to take a look at Crane's body. He nodded to the inspector.

"Farlan saw this fellow come in," stated Klein. "It is obvious that Strangler Hunn came here to lie in wait for him--probably in that inner room. You say that Crane was a special investigator. He probably did know too much about Strangler. That accounts for the destruction of the documents."

"We've gotten the man we were after. That will suit the commissioner. Your job, now, Joe, is to find out more about Crane. If you can link him up with Strangler, that will clinch this circumstantial evidence."

"Do you hear that, Burke?" Cardona turned to the reporter. "You've got a real story. Play it big. That's how we'll learn about Crane's past--through the newspapers. We don't know who he was working for, but we'll find out quick enough after your story goes in print."

"Count on me, Joe," assured Clyde. "I'm heading for the office right now. This is going to be a story you'll like. What's more"--Clyde was speaking to Klein--"you're going to read about how Commissioner Weston's order was put through pronto."

A broad smile showed on the inspector's bluff face as Clyde left the apartment. Klein was pleased. He knew that he would receive his share of the credit. Both he and Joe Cardona thought of Clyde Burke purely as a representative of the Classic. Little did they suspect that their findings would go verbatim to The Shadow before Clyde reached the newspaper office!

FIFTEEN minutes later, Joe Cardona was standing alone in the living room. The bodies had been removed. The police cordon had departed. The detective was preparing to leave.

Glancing at the wastebasket, Cardona scowled as he thought of the documents that had been so effectively destroyed. With an angry snort, the detective delivered a kick to the metal basket. The container rolled over on the floor, spilling ashes on the rug.

Cardona's eyes opened. On the spot where the basket had been resting was a small piece of white paper. Cardona stooped to pick up the fragment. He carried it to the lamp light in the corner. He stared at the crude, poorly spaced letters and figures that appeared upon the bit of paper:

M E N

1 3

With thoughtful expression, Cardona drew an envelope from his pocket. He inserted the scrap of paper. On the desk, he saw a partly used pad. He noted that a sheet had been torn from it, evidently in haste. He folded the envelope and placed it in his vest pocket. He dropped the pad in a pocket of his coat.

Then to the wastebasket. Scattering ashes with his foot, Cardona peered in search of other undestroyed fragments. He found none. With a shrug of his shoulders, the detective turned out the desk light and left the apartment.

TEN minutes afterward, a strange, grotesque figure came suddenly into view outside of the deserted apartment. Looming from the stairway, this shape looked like a phantom materialized from night.

A tall personage, clad in cloak of black, his head topped by a slouch hat with turned down brim, The Shadow had arrived upon the spot where murder had been followed with justly delivered death.

The Shadow merged with darkness as he passed the broken door. The tiny circle of a small flashlight glimmered on the floor. Methodically, The Shadow was beginning a search of his own.

The Shadow had received a full report from Clyde Burke. Presumably, his agent had gained full knowledge of all that Joe Cardona had discovered. Clyde had assured Burbank of that fact. Cardona had departed; The Shadow's turn had come.

The flashlight went through with its searching spots of light. The spots where the bodies had been; the rifled drawers of the desk; these came under full inspection. Next the ashes from the wastebasket.

Here The Shadow saw that nothing could be learned. An old newspaper had furnished the blaze in which Crane's documents had met destruction. Cardona's cursory inspection of the ashes had ended all possibility of noting any burned fragments. The overturned basket stood for what The Shadow thought it to be; an outburst of impatience on the part of Joe Cardona.

The flashlight went out. The Shadow's cloak swished as the mysterious being made his departure. This inspection furnished no additional material to the statements relayed by Clyde Burke. The Shadow could find no new clew.

Fate had played an odd trick to-night. Clyde Burke had left too soon; The Shadow had arrived too late.

In the interim, Joe Cardona had made an accidental discovery.

The detective, alone, possessed the single clew that remained to tell of Strangler Hunn's purpose in slaying MacAvoy Crane. Joe Cardona did not know the meaning of that shred of evidence.

Had The Shadow found that torn paper, his keen brain might have divined the meaning of its fragmentary statement: MEN 13. But luck had been in Joe Cardona's favor.

Upon that single clew rested the fate of living men. In Joe Cardona's possession, its existence unknown to The Shadow, the bit of paper might allow the perpetration of further murder.

Two freaks of chance. The paper floating from destruction; its discovery by Joe Cardona--these were to be the forerunners of contemplated crime!

The Shadow, though he suspected further purpose behind Strangler Hunn's murder of MacAvoy Crane, had not yet learned the facts that he required.

Only time and The Shadow's keen ability to ferret crime would enable the master sleuth to undo the harm that had occurred to-night.

A task was rising before The Shadow--a task that would require the intuition of a superman--all because of the clew upon which Joe Cardona had so unhappily blundered!

CHAPTER V. THE SHADOW FOLLOWS.

IT was late the next afternoon. Joe Cardona was seated at his desk in head-quarters. The detective looked up from a stack of papers to see Clyde Burke at the doorway.

"Hello, Burke," greeted the sleuth. "Great stuff, that story of yours. Thanks."

"Same to you," returned Clyde. "I scooped the town because you let me in on it. That's why I'm here now. Looking for another beat."

"You mean on MacAvoy Crane?"

"Yes."

"No luck, Burke." Cardona's tone seemed dull. "I thought your story would bring us a lot of facts on Crane. It didn't. So far as we've learned, Crane hadn't had an investigating job for three months."

"What of it? Maybe it was before that when he ran into Strangler Hunn."

"Crane's last job,"--Cardona paused to refer to the papers in front of him--"was a six-month assignment for the S.P.C.A. He trekked all over New York City looking into livery stable conditions and checking up incoming shipments of live stock."

"Before that?"

"A job with a credit bureau, finding out about phony collection agencies that never turned in the dough on bad accounts. He was in that work for nearly a year."

Clyde became thoughtful. Joe Cardona studied the reporter; then added a new statement.

"Let me tell you something about Strangler Hunn, Burke," vouchsafed the detective. "He was a tough guy that worked along with a tough mob. They took a beating in the dock fight about seven months ago."

That's where Strangler lost his right arm.

"The whole crew scrambled out of town, and it was good riddance. They were tough gorillas and some of the others were as bad as Strangler. But he was the only one that we had with the goods. He was wanted for murder. That's why we got him."

"The others?" inquired Clyde.

"We haven't seen any of them back in town," returned Cardona. "Strangler was working alone--that's a sure bet. There's a chance that some of his old cronies may be hereabouts. We haven't seen them, though. But the main point is that we can't hook Strangler with MacAvoy Crane."

"Listen, Joe." Burke became serious. "I'm not so sure that there was a past tie-up between Strangler and Crane. I'm thinking about the present. Maybe Strangler was put on the job to get Crane--to stop him from going through with some investigation--"

"I've covered that, Burke," interrupted Cardona. "Haven't I just told you that Crane wasn't working for the past three months? There's no use worrying about it. We've got nothing yet. More than likely Strangler went in to rob the apartment. Maybe he had some imaginary grudge. The point is that he killed MacAvoy Crane and we got him for it."

With that, Cardona went back to a consideration of the papers on his desk. It was evident that the detective was concerned with other matters; that he had tabled Strangler's case for the time.

"So long, Joe," remarked Clyde Burke.

The Shadow's agent strolled from the office. As he reached the street he became thoughtful. There was something in Cardona's manner that had given Clyde a hunch. The glib explanation of Crane's past activities had aroused Clyde's suspicions.

Entering a store, Clyde went to a telephone booth. He put in a call to Burbank, to inform the contact man of his interview with Joe Cardona. When Clyde reappeared on the street, he headed for the Classic office, beneath a dark, early evening sky.

BACK at headquarters, Joe Cardona continued to busy himself with his papers. Half an hour passed. Footsteps sounded in the corridor. Cardona looked up. He saw Inspector Timothy Klein. The official made a sign with his hand and nodded. Cardona arose to follow Klein into the latter's office.

"Burke was here," began Cardona. "I stalled him."

"Good," decided Klein.

"I hated to let him down," growled Cardona, "but it had to be done. Maybe I'll have a chance to treat him better later on. He's a real guy, Burke. That story of his was good for both of us."

"That's true," nodded Klein, "and I can see why Burke showed up here. It's natural for him to think that we've learned something about what MacAvoy Crane was doing. If the information had come directly to me, Joe, Burke might have had it. But it came in to the commissioner and he wants it kept quiet. I've just been talking with him. He wants you to go along to-night."

"Fine. Did he tell you any more about the call that came to him?"

"A little. Here is the story, Joe. You remember that Universal Aircraft mess a few months ago--the big swindle that the government uncovered--"

"Sure thing. Jackson Gleek committed suicide. He was general manager of Universal Aircraft. I was up at the morgue when they brought his body in. Then there was another fellow implicated--Lester Drayson, the president. He took it on the lam. Supposed to have made off with plenty of cash."

"That's the case. Well, Joe, the commissioner has just informed me that MacAvoy Crane was investigating the affairs of the defunct Universal Aircraft Corporation."

"I thought that would be a government job!"

"It was. But the federal authorities let down after the receivers for Universal Aircraft sold out to the World Wide Aviation Company. It was the president of World Wide--Roscoe Wimbledon--who put Crane on the job."

"To find out if others were implicated?"

"Exactly. If he can uncover other crooked workers, he can turn the job over to the government. Stolen funds may be recovered. Maybe Lester Drayson planted a lot of dough with other people--"

Klein paused suddenly. A shadow had fallen across the door sill. Joe Cardona turned to follow the direction of the inspector's gaze. Both men smiled as a tall, stoop-shouldered janitor shambled into view, carrying a mop and bucket.

"Hello, Fritz," greeted Cardona. "On the old job again, eh?"

"Yah," returned the janitor, staring with a dull expression upon his stupid face.

"Keep going," laughed Cardona. "Don't mind us, Fritz. We'll be out of here soon."

The janitor began to work with mop and bucket. Inspector Klein arose from his desk.

"That's about all I know, Joe," he told Cardona. "I wanted you to keep mum on the whole business until I'd seen the commissioner. I can't go along to-night. He's taking you to see Wimbledon."

"Where?"

"At Wimbledon's home. Incidentally, a call came in to Wimbledon's last night. It was MacAvoy Crane who called. He said that he had a report to make. Wimbledon, was out at the time. Crane didn't call again."

"Then those papers--"

"Were probably documents that Wimbledon wanted. They may have contained important information regarding the tangled affairs of Universal Aircraft Corporation."

Inspector Klein glanced at his watch. He turned again to Joe Cardona.

"Better get started, Joe," he ordered. "You've just about got time to get up to the commissioner's before he is ready to leave."

Klein and Cardona strolled from the office. As Joe passed Fritz, the janitor was busy mopping in the corner. Cardona gave a friendly jab against the man's ribs. Fritz jumped away and almost upset the bucket.

"So long, Fritz," laughed Cardona.

"Yah," returned the janitor, stooping to pick up the mop that he had dropped.

FOOTSTEPS faded along the corridor. A few minutes passed. Fritz suddenly ceased his work. Picking up the mop and the bucket, the stoop-shouldered worker slouched from the office. He followed the corridor, made a turn and stopped in an obscure space where lockers were in evidence.

Fritz opened a locker. Then began a strange transformation. Out came a folded mass of black cloth. It slipped over the stooped shoulders. Next a slouch hat settled upon a head. Black gloves covered long hands. Fritz, the janitor, had ceased to exist.

In his place stood, a tall, erect being garbed in black. Impersonating the headquarters' janitor, The Shadow had listened in on the conversation between Inspector Timothy Klein and Detective Joe Cardona!

Informed through Burbank that Clyde Burke suspected concealed facts held by Joe Cardona, The Shadow had come here to investigate. He had arrived before the hour when the real Fritz usually put in his appearance. He was leaving in time to avoid the genuine janitor.

The blackened form glided from the locker. It picked an obscure exit to the street. The Shadow merged with darkness, as a soft, whispered laugh came from his hidden lips.

THE SHADOW next appeared within his sanctum, some time later. White hands beneath a bluish light were the only tokens of his presence. Those hands were fingering clippings and typewritten statements which concerned the scandal that had swept the affairs of the insolvent Universal Aircraft Corporation.

The light clicked out. A soft swish sounded in the Stygian blackness of The Shadow's secret abode. Again, a whispered laugh. The sound died, with fading echoes. The sanctum was empty.

HALF an hour later, a tall, dignified individual alighted from a taxicab in front of the exclusive Cobalt Club. The doorman bowed as he passed. This personage, a gentleman clad in faultless evening attire, was evidently some one of high consequence.

In the light of the club lobby, the arrival's face showed as a keen, chiseled visage, characterized by thin, firm lips beneath a hawklike nose. Strolling across the lobby, the arrival approached a telephone booth and entered. A long, blackened silhouette stretched from the booth across the tiled floor, as the newcomer dialed a number.

"Hello..." The occupant of the booth spoke in an even-toned voice. "Yes... I should like to speak with Mr. Wimbledon... He is busy? Inform him that Mr. Lamont Cranston has called... From the Cobalt Club... I shall call on him this evening..."

The receiver clicked. The speaker stepped from the booth. A thin smile showed upon his firm lips. Parting, the lips seemed to voice a soundless laugh.

This personage who called himself Lamont Cranston was The Shadow. Club man of wealth, he had entry to the homes of the elite.

As Fritz the janitor, The Shadow had learned that Joe Cardona and the police commissioner were going to visit Roscoe Wimbledon. As Lamont Cranston, The Shadow had arranged a trip to the same destination.

Like the police, The Shadow was anxious to learn why Strangler Hunn had murdered MacAvoy Crane. Chance had enabled the law to move first. Joe Cardona had dashed forth last night to fight with Strangler Hunn. Police Commissioner Ralph Weston had to-day received a call concerning MacAvoy Crane.

To-night, Weston and Cardona were interviewing Roscoe Wimbledon, the man who had hired Crane as an investigator.

The Shadow had chosen to follow. He was taking the trail that the law had opened. Such was his only policy for the present. The time would come soon when he would outstrip the action of the law.

A soft, whispered laugh pronounced that fact with prophetic mockery as Lamont Cranston strolled forth from the Cobalt Club.

CHAPTER VI. AT WIMBLEDON'S.

THREE men were seated in the library of Roscoe Wimbledon's palatial New York home. One was Roscoe Wimbledon himself; the others were Police Commissioner Ralph Weston and Detective Joe Cardona.

As he viewed his companions, Cardona was impressed with their appearance. Commissioner Weston, a man of powerful build and dynamic personality, had always held Cardona's regard. Weston's keen face, with firm-set jaw and pointed mustache, marked the commissioner as a man of action.

Yet as he noted Roscoe Wimbledon, Cardona found himself admitting that the aviation magnate was Weston's equal. Wimbledon, a man in his early forties, possessed a powerful virility. Tall, broad of shoulders, with square countenance that marked him a man of achievement, Wimbledon showed the ability to dominate those who came in contact with him.

Roscoe Wimbledon was talking. Weston and Cardona were listening. In short, terse phrases, the aviation man was stating the case in question.

"The Universal Aircraft Corporation," declared Wimbledon, "had orders that aggregated millions of dollars. The concern was a going one. The opportunity for quick but unlawful profit proved too great a temptation to resist.

"The company was pillaged by its officers. The government stepped in to end the swindle. Jackson Gleek, the general manager, committed suicide. Lester Drayson, the president, fled the country. The receivers who were appointed found the affairs of the company in a deplorable condition."

Weston and Cardona nodded. They were familiar with this phase of the situation. They wanted to learn the part that followed. From behind his flat-topped desk, Wimbledon began to speak upon this matter.

"Universal Aircraft," he stated, "had lists of unfilled orders. It was because of that fact that I, as president of the World Wide Aviation Company, advised our directors to take over the defunct corporation.

"Our profit will be slight. Nevertheless, for the good of the industry, it was the proper stand for us to take. When I came to study the books of the Universal Aircraft Corporation, I saw an opportunity that I had not foreseen.

"UNIVERSAL AIRCRAFT, gentlemen, had been robbed of approximately five million dollars. The stealing of that sum could be laid directly upon the work of Jackson Gleek, the general manager. It was obvious, however, that Gleek was merely a cat's paw. What became of the five million dollars?"

"Lester Drayson must have taken it," answered Weston. "He was the president. His hasty flight after the discovery of the swindle stands as proof against him."

"True," agreed Wimbledon. "Drayson must have gained a share of the spoils. But he was absent from New York during a considerable period while the thefts were being made. He was in Chicago when the

exposure broke. He fled from that city. Therefore, I came to the conclusion that there must be others in the game."

"Officers of the corporation?"

"No. Drayson and Gleek were the only two who possessed a real control. I mean lesser men--tools, like Gleek, but smaller. It is my belief, commissioner, that certain men in New York are holding lumps of money for later division with Lester Drayson."

"I see," Weston nodded. "They would get their share, of course. At the same time, they would have to come clean with Drayson, or he could expose them."

"Precisely," announced Wimbledon. "That is why I hired MacAvoy Crane as a special investigator. I set him to work with the purpose of locating former associates of Lester Drayson. Could they be discovered and made to disgorge funds that they may possess, the recovered money can be given to the receivers who handled Universal Aircraft Corporation. They, in turn, might see fit to refund a portion of the purchase price that World Wide gave for the defunct corporation."

There was a rap at the door as Wimbledon finished his statement. The aircraft magnate called; the door opened and a quiet-faced servant appeared.

"A telephone call, sir," the man announced. "It was from Mr. Lamont Cranston."

"Ah!" exclaimed Wimbledon. "Is he on the wire?"

"No, sir," replied the servant. "He said that he would come to visit you this evening. Then he hung up."

"All right, Harkin," laughed Wimbledon. "When Mr. Cranston arrives, inform me at once. I shall see him."

"You are acquainted with Lamont Cranston?" inquired Weston, as Harkin left. "I know him quite well myself; it seems that he is widely acquainted in New York."

"He purchased a special plane through World Wide Aircraft," stated Wimbledon. "That was about a year ago. I have met him several times since then. It is quite droll, the way he told Harkin he would be here. Cranston is very informal at times. A matter of an appointment would never deter him."

Wimbledon smiled as he tapped the desk with his fingers. Then, abruptly, he forgot the interruption and came back to the important point.

"MACAVOY CRANE telephoned me last night," announced Wimbledon. "Harkin took the message. From what Crane told him, the job was done. I believe that Crane had gained the data that I sought."

"Crane did not call again. This morning, I read in the newspapers that he had been murdered by Strangler Hunn; that burned papers had been found in his wastebasket."

"Gentlemen, I am convinced that those papers were the documents which I required. There can be but one reason for the slaying of MacAvoy Crane. Strangler Hunn was hired to kill him--hired as the agent of the swindlers whom I am seeking."

Weston nodded. The theory seemed plausible.

"Either by the men themselves," continued Wimbledon, "or by the king pin of them all--Lester Drayson. It may be he who chose Strangler to act as the assassin."

"But Drayson has fled the country," stated Cardona.

"Are we sure that he has not returned?" questioned Wimbleton, swinging promptly toward the detective. "He may be hiding. He may have been watching Crane. More than that, he may be trying to negotiate with the very men whom I have assumed were connected with him."

"But you don't know who they could be?"

"No. That was the job I left to Crane. The fact that the papers were destroyed seems proof--to me at least--that Crane had gained the names of certain men. But Crane's evidence has turned to ashes."

"Yes." It was Weston who inserted the grim utterance. "Last night I ordered the capture of Strangler Hunn. The job was done; but the victory was a failure. Had a single paper been recovered from those burned ashes, it might have served us as a starting point!"

"One moment, commissioner." Cardona reached into his coat pocket and produced a pad of paper. While Weston and Wimbleton stared curiously, the detective brought out a folded envelope from his vest.

"This pad," stated the detective, "was on Crane's desk. You can see that a sheet has been hurriedly torn from it. Here"--he opened the envelope and produced the fragment--"is a piece from a torn sheet. It must have missed the basket when Strangler threw it there.

"Look at those scrawled letters. See how the paper is torn crooked. Do you know what this is? It's something that Strangler Hunn wrote down--something he wanted to get rid of!"

WESTON was examining the torn bit of paper. He passed it over to Wimbleton, who eyed it curiously, and turned it about between his hands.

"I think you're right, Cardona," affirmed the commissioner. "Strangler must have done that crude writing. But what does it mean?"

"Men 13," read Wimbleton. "This is indeed perplexing. Do you think it could refer to something that the murderer discovered in Crane's papers?"

"Yes," asserted Cardona. "From what you've been saying, Mr. Wimbleton, I take it that Strangler may have counted a list of names. If there were thirteen, he might have written that fact for reference."

"Let me see the paper." Weston took it from Wimbleton. "I doubt your theory, Cardona. This scrawl could have been Strangler's work; the man had only one arm and that was the left one. But I think he would have put the number 13 above the word 'men'--not below."

"A good point," observed Wimbleton. "At the same time, commissioner, the murderer was in a hurry. He may have marked the word and the number in reverse fashion."

"Possibly," declared Weston. "Furthermore, we have no assurance that this is all the murderer wrote. The wide spaces between those letters and figures; the irregularity of the inscription itself--both indicate that this is but a fragment of whatever message Strangler Hunn was inscribing.

"The value of this clew is slight. It signifies no more than we have already supposed. We know that Strangler may have purposely destroyed the documents which Crane had prepared for you. The fact that he made a memorandum afterward; then destroyed his own notation--well, it supports our theory. That is all."

Weston handed the slip to Cardona. The detective replaced the fragment in the envelope. He folded the envelope and dropped it with the pad, into his coat pocket.

"Keep that piece of paper, Cardona," ordered Weston. "Later developments may make it of value. Tell no one that you have it. We do not want the news to get out that MacAvoy Crane was engaged in an important work of investigation."

A knock at the door. It was Harkin. The servant spoke to Wimbleton.

"Mr. Cranston has arrived, sir," announced Harkin. "Also Mr. Harlton."

"Tell them to come in," ordered Wimbleton. Then, to Weston: "Lamont Cranston is a friend of yours, commissioner; Ross Harlton is aircraft technician with the World Wide Aviation Company. We can take them into our confidence should we discuss this matter further."

"With reservations," agreed Commissioner Weston. "It will be quite all right to admit them."

Roscoe Wimbleton arose. Striding toward the door, he awaited the appearance of these visitors who had arrived just too late to hear the discussion concerning Joe Cardona's clew.

CHAPTER VII. SEARCHES BEGIN.

FIVE men were in the room where three had been before. Lamont Cranston and Ross Harlton had joined the trio in Roscoe Wimbleton's library. To Joe Cardona, the arrivals formed an interesting study.

Joe had met Cranston before. As he watched the millionaire's firm-chiseled face, the detective was impressed by its immobility. Lamont Cranston was smoking a cigarette; the occasional action of placing it to his lips was the only motion that he made.

Ross Harlton, a man in his late thirties, was a keen-faced chap who also made a good listener. Dark-haired, with steady, deep-set eyes beneath heavy brows, Harlton looked the part of an aircraft technician.

"We were talking about the Universal Aircraft mess," Roscoe Wimbleton was stating. "I have told Commissioner Weston that the corporation was pillaged in outrageous fashion. You have been going over the technical end of it, Harlton. What is your opinion?"

"The same as yours, Mr. Wimbleton," replied the technician. "I have paid regular visits to the closed testing grounds on Long Island. The workmanship used in the Universal planes speaks very badly for the reputation which the concern once enjoyed."

"This interests me," declared Weston. "The government handled the investigation; I heard comparatively little concerning the findings."

"Explain the details, Harlton," suggested Wimbleton.

"Universal had been handling some big orders," stated the technician. "Up at the World Wide plant, we wondered how they had managed to underbid us on the jobs. We found out after the swindle was uncovered.

"Universal had built a lot of commercial planes; they followed by taking a series of orders for military planes to be shipped to foreign governments. The hitch came when they completed building a batch of ships for the Paraguayan government. They wanted them down there to use on the Bolivian frontier.

"There was some talk of an embargo. Officials from Washington demanded an exact report on the number of planes that were being sent to Paraguay. This was a government investigation that proved to be a thorough one--too thorough for the Universal Corporation.

Washington ordered a group of navy aviators to test the Paraguayan planes--just to learn how good they were. They found out. One of the navy men went into a bank; the wing came off the plane and he was killed. That started the trouble.

"Government investigators got a look at the specifications. They compared the planes. They found that the ships were faulty. They communicated promptly with other purchasers of Universal ships. They discovered that cheap and faulty materials had been used constantly. They learned that an outrageous graft had been perpetrated. They ordered the factory closed. That was all."

"All from the technical standpoint," added Wimbledon. "But the real scandal followed. The government went after Jackson Gleek. He was found dead--a suicide. Some one must have tipped off Lester Drayson. He managed to get out of the country."

"And the status now?" inquired Weston.

"World Wide has taken over Universal," replied Wimbledon. "I mentioned that fact to you a while ago. The faulty planes have been condemned. We are keeping them until the government gives the order to scrap them. The Universal factory will be idle until we receive the word to reopen it."

"I am making a full account of stock on hand," explained Harlton. "I have completed all the statistics. It merely remains to compile the details. That, however, will not be a simple task. It involves many minor points."

"You will do the work here," declared Wimbledon. "Beginning with tomorrow morning, Harlton. I have cancelled all appointments for the next few days. This accounting is important. We shall work on it together."

THERE was a pause. It was Lamont Cranston who took up the conversation. In leisurely fashion, the millionaire removed his cigarette from his lips and spoke in a quiet, even tone.

"This is quite interesting," he remarked. "I came here tonight merely to talk with Mr. Wimbledon regarding a new speed plane that I might like to purchase. I find, however, that he will be busy for the next few days. So I shall postpone the matter.

"I must confess that I am quite surprised to find the police commissioner in conference with Mr. Wimbledon. I knew that Mr. Wimbledon has been negotiating with the federal government; I am somewhat perplexed to find that the local law has also commanded his attention."

It was Weston who responded. The police commissioner chuckled as he turned to face Lamont Cranston. Nodding in approval of the millionaire's keenness, he produced the answer.

"Very few facts escape your notice, Cranston," remarked the commissioner. "Since you are a friend of mine and also are acquainted with Mr. Wimbledon, I see no reason why you should not be taken into our confidence.

"Last night, a private investigator named MacAvoy Crane was slain by a notorious murderer called Strangler Hunn. The killer was shot dead by a detective. Before the fight, he managed to destroy all the papers which he had found in Crane's apartment.

"MacAvoy Crane was in the employ of Roscoe Wimbledon. He was seeking facts regarding the business

contacts of Lester Drayson, the missing president of Universal Aircraft Corporation.

"Mr. Wimbledon called me personally to tell me that Crane was in his employ. We hold to the theory that Strangler Hunn was acting under orders to kill MacAvoy Crane and to destroy the documents."

"Quite logical," stated Cranston.

"It is obvious," asserted Weston, "that the man behind the game is Lester Drayson. Therefore, I am ordering a general search for the missing president of Universal Aircraft. If he happens to be in New York, we shall uncover him."

There was emphasis in Weston's tone. Every one nodded in approval, with the exception of Cranston. The millionaire drew upon his cigarette; blew forth a puff then asked:

"And if Drayson is not in New York?"

There was no answer.

FOUR men sat silent, expecting Cranston to follow, up the quizzical remark. The millionaire did not disappoint them.

"The theory is a good beginning," stated Cranston. "Let us assume that Strangler Hunn was working under orders. But does that prove that Lester Drayson would place himself in position to be captured?"

"Quite the reverse. I should imagine that he would stay away from New York. But I can see another possibility. If murder has been used as a means to suppress facts, it might be used again.

"Strangler Hunn--a hired killer. Why not a second paid assassin to carry on the work now that Hunn is dead? Have you any proof that Crane is the only man to be eliminated?"

"No," admitted Weston. "Drayson might want to get rid of others who knew too much about him. You're right, Cranston. The very fact that Crane dug up some information proves that there would be good reason to go after other men."

"Associates of Lester Drayson," stated Cranston. "Have you any idea who they might be?"

"That was the information Crane was after," broke in Wimbledon. "Lester Drayson may have had certain men in his confidence"

"He might have had a private secretary," suggested Cranston. "Do you know of any such man?"

"Yes," affirmed Wimbledon, in a slow, meditative tone. "I believe that Drayson did have a confidential secretary. But I have not been able to learn the fellow's name."

"The province of the police"--Cranston was looking directly at Weston as he spoke--"is to prevent crime as well as to solve it. This death of MacAvoy Crane is of high interest chiefly if it presages further murder.

"From Crane's death, we find three factors. First, a man behind the murder. Second, a hired killer. Third, a possible victim. Let us assume that new murder is being plotted. There are three ways to forestall it.

"First: to find the plotter. Second: to discover the new assassin. Third: to look for the coming victim. You have chosen the first method, commissioner. You intend to look for Lester Drayson.

"I should prefer the second method. Hired killers--like Strangler Hunn-- are few and far between. The

third method, namely to search for the potential victim, would involve too much time."

Commissioner Weston was smiling. He had risen from his chair; stepping forward he clapped Lamont Cranston on the shoulder.

"You are an excellent theorist," commended Weston, with a friendly laugh. "More than that, Cranston, you have summed this case in creditable fashion. Nevertheless, I still hold to my plan.

"I intend to use the law to uncover the plotter. I shall choose the first method that you suggested. We are going to look for Lester Drayson. He apparently has much at stake. The chances are that he is in New York."

Lamont Cranston had also risen. Like Commissioner Weston, he was ready to depart. His lips showed a quiet smile as he made a final statement.

"If I had the power which you possess, commissioner," he said, "I should prefer the method which I have mentioned. Look for a potential murderer. Find the man who could fill the shoes of Strangler Hunn."

"No." Weston shook his head emphatically. "Your method would not work, Cranston. The search is on for Lester Drayson."

When Commissioner Ralph Weston and Lamont Cranston had left Roscoe Wimbledon's, they parted on the sidewalk in front of the big mansion. Weston stepped into his car, accompanied by Joe Cardona. Lamont Cranston entered a waiting limousine.

HALF an hour later, a light was shining in The Shadow's sanctum. Papers lay upon the table, beneath the glare. These memoranda concerned the checkered career of Strangler Hunn.

The Shadow, following his belief, was looking for a second choice. He was studying the records of the band with which Strangler had been associated. He was out to find a new killer.

Searches had begun. Commissioner Ralph Weston was invoking the law to hunt for Lester Drayson. The Shadow was looking for the pals of Strangler Hunn. In one sense, both the police and The Shadow were aiming for a single goal.

It seemed possible that more lives were at stake. Men like MacAvoy Crane, men who knew too much, might already be spotted for sudden doom. Perhaps innocent persons were slated to die along with the quarry that a hidden plotter sought!

Until now, The Shadow had followed. This was the time that he had chosen to work ahead. His path had diverged from the one chosen by the law. The grim race against crime had started.

Yet all the while, the law held an advantage that The Shadow did not possess. Once more, fate had tricked the master sleuth. Murder was in the making; that fact seemed evident. Yet the only clew had been sidetracked as a matter of small moment.

The paper that rested in Joe Cardona's pocket. What a valuable bit of evidence it would be, had The Shadow known of its existence. Those letters and figures, that formed the disjointed statement--MEN 13--would have given The Shadow the groundwork for a perfect chance to forestall coming crime.

The Shadow had divined the future. One bit of evidence had alone escaped him. Such was the grim irony that blocked The Shadow's course. For that fragment of an unburned paper was the key to all that lay ahead!

CHAPTER VIII. AGENTS AT WORK.

FIVE days had passed. They were days that brought nights of strange activities. Man hunts were in progress. The police and The Shadow were at work upon their respective tasks.

Often had The Shadow sought in higher places while police had scoured the underworld in vain search after crime suspects. This time the situation was reversed. Commissioner Ralph Weston had belittled the suggestion made by Lamont Cranston.

Detectives were roaming through Manhattan, looking here and there for traces of Lester Drayson. They were supplied with photographs of the fugitive. Those pictures showed Drayson's portrait--that of an elderly, gray-haired man with a placid face that showed no trace of criminal characteristics.

Meanwhile, stool pigeons were idle. The badlands were ignored by the law. It was The Shadow who was working there. The master sleuth was trying to place his finger upon some skulking messenger of coming crime.

Stalking the underworld The Shadow was at times a roving phantom. On other occasions, he appeared in notorious dives, disguised as a sweated mobster. Frequently The Shadow had played the part of a denizen of scum-land. Yet he was not alone in his efforts.

Trusted agents were at work. Cliff Marsland, accepted by mobland as one of their ilk, was spending his time in the hangouts where crooks lingered. Harry Vincent, another capable agent, was a visitor at the flossy night clubs and old hotels which cash-possessing gangsters were wont to frequent.

Clyde Burke, roving reporter of the New York Classic, was patrolling both types of places; and at intervals, he dropped into police headquarters to chat with Detective Joe Cardona.

IT was evident to Clyde that a search was being made by the Manhattan police. Clyde knew, through The Shadow, that the dicks were after Lester Drayson. But Joe Cardona, wary and taciturn, was stingy with his information. The ace detective never once gave Clyde a tip.

The task which The Shadow had set for himself and his agents was no sinecure. The Shadow knew that any former pal of Strangler Hunn would certainly be laying low. The Shadow, as Lamont Cranston, had given Ralph Weston an idea which the police commissioner had not accepted. That duty performed, The Shadow was working on his own, and his course was preferable.

Weston, had he chosen to look for companions of Strangler Hunn, would have invoked the dragnet. The slowness of The Shadow's present search proved fully that any pal of Strangler's would have dodged that method of capture. The Shadow's work, unhampered by police activities, offered better possibilities.

On this night, the fifth after the conference at Roscoe Wimbledon's, The Shadow chanced to give a fleeting trace of his mysterious presence. Like an apparition, he appeared beneath the lamp light near an obscure corner on the East Side.

No peering eyes were there to see The Shadow's passage. Like a being of a supernatural sort, The Shadow glided toward a darkened space beside a wall. From then on, his course was indiscernible.

The next manifestation of The Shadow's weird presence came within the blackened walls of the sanctum. A bluish light clicked on. The hand that wore the girasol appeared beneath the vivid rays. The other hand joined it. Long fingers handled typewritten report sheets.

These papers listed names and descriptions of the persons. They were memoranda that concerned half a

dozen members of the scattered band to which Strangler Hunn had once belonged. They listed toughened mobsters; potential killers who had fled Manhattan.

Had one of these returned? That was the question which The Shadow sought to answer. To date, there had been no indication of the fact. Yet The Shadow was sure that when new murder was required, one of these crooks would arrive.

DOWN in an underworld dive, scattered groups of mobsters were chatting among themselves. Things were quiet in the badlands. This place, the Black Ship, showed very little trace of impending activities in the realm of crime.

Among the patrons was a keen-faced man who sat quietly in a corner. There was something in this fellow's appearance that marked him as a member of gangdom's elite. His features were clearly chiseled. His square jaw showed him to be a fighter. This was Cliff Marsland, agent of The Shadow.

Cliff had once served time in Sing Sing. This had given him a high status in the badlands. Only The Shadow knew that Cliff had taken the rap to save the brother of the girl he loved. All crooks who knew Cliff thought that he had gone to the big house for a crime of his own commission.

Cliff had accomplished much through his reputation. He had become one of the most valued agents in The Shadow's small but capable corps. To-night, as on previous evenings, Cliff was alert in The Shadow's service.

A scrawny mobster strolled into the Black Ship. His ratlike eyes spied Cliff Marsland. The arrival caught a gesture from Cliff. He approached and sat down at the table where Cliff was holding out alone.

"Hello, Bowser," greeted Cliff. "How're things going?"

"Lousy," returned the scrawny mobsman. "There ain't nothin' doin'. I'm on my uppers."

"Not like the old days, eh? Back when you were with the dock wallopers?"

"Nah. I shook that crew before the big fight. Lucky I did. I might have took a bump."

"Or lost an arm?"

Bowser shifted uneasily. This was a reference to Strangler Hunn. Bowser had been but a hanger-on with the old mob. Cliff knew that Bowser could not be a potential killer. Yet the reference worried the scrawny crook.

"Don't remind me of that stuff, Cliff," pleaded Bowser. "I never did like Strangler. He was the bad egg of the outfit. There was more than one guy found with his throat gagged after Strangler had worked on him."

"Yeah. Strangler was a killer." Cliff's tone was a casual one. "Even after he lost his right mitt, he could still do dirty work. Best gat handler in the outfit, wasn't he?"

"Nah." Bowser was emphatic in his protest. "There was other guys that could sling a rod better than Strangler."

"But none of them had nerve enough to come back to town."

"Yeah? That's where you're foolin' yourself." Bowser leaned over the table. "There's one guy that ain't worried about the bulls. He's around here right now."

Cliff leaned back and indulged in a quiet but contemptuous laugh. The action riled Bowser.

"You think that's hooey?" questioned the scrawny mobster. "Well, it ain't. I seen this guy a couple of hours ago, down by Red Mike's place."

"Maybe you were seeing things," suggested Cliff. "That bum hooch down at Red Mike's is enough to make a fellow see a dead man walk."

"I wasn't crocked," snarled Bowser. "What's more, I didn't make no mistake. I'll tell you who the guy was-- Shakes Niefan."

BOWSER spoke as though the statement settled everything. He poured himself a drink from a bottle that a waiter had brought him. He held the glass in his hand and began to wiggle his wrist. Drops of liquor plopped over the glass rim.

"See that?" demanded Bowser. "That's the way Shakes Niefan is. Wobbly--all the time. But that don't mean nothin' when he handles a rod. When he gets tough, he steadies. I've seen him."

Bowser paused to gulp his drink. Then, as he set the glass upon the table, he added:

"There ain't no mistakin' Shakes Niefan when you see him. He's here in New York; an he ain't yellow. He didn't want to talk much; an it's a sure bet he's hidin' out somewhere. But that ain't nothin' against him. The best of 'em hide out when they've got some job on."

"You win, Bowser," laughed Cliff, as he arose from the table. "If Shakes Niefan is back, I give him credit."

"Don't say nothin' though," warned Bowser, clutching at Cliff's arm. "I told Shakes I'd keep mum."

"What do you think I am?" growled Cliff. "A stool?" Then, with a laugh, he added: "Say--maybe you think I'm working for The Shadow! Go on, Bowser. Finish your bottle"--Cliff took a friendly jab at the scrawny gangster's ribs--"and forget it. What do I care about Shakes Niefan?"

Bowser was satisfied. He poured himself another drink when Cliff had left.

But had Bowser followed the man who had left, his qualms would have returned. Cliff Marsland, directly after his departure from the Black Ship, headed for an obscure store a few blocks from the dive.

There Cliff found a corner telephone. Unnoticed, he dialed a number. In a low tone; The Shadow's agent informed Burbank of what he had learned. After that, Cliff hung up and waited. A return call came through in a few minutes. Cliff acknowledged new instructions.

Word had been relayed to The Shadow. In his sanctum, the master who battled crime had learned the news. He had sent back orders. Now his hands were at work. They had put aside all papers except one. That was the sheet which carried data concerning "Shakes" Niefan.

The light clicked out. A hollow laugh sounded in the blackness. It died; echoes faded. Then complete silence. The Shadow had departed. His plan had brought results.

Somewhere in New York was the potential murderer who could fill Strangler Hunn's place. The Shadow had fared forth to begin his own hunt for Shakes Niefan's hide-out.

CHAPTER IX. MURDER TO ORDER.

AT the time when The Shadow was departing from his sanctum, an elevated train was coming to a stop at a station in the nineties. A huddled man arose from a corner seat and strolled out of the car. He crossed the station platform and descended to the street below.

In the light that came from a drugstore window, this individual presented an odd appearance. His face, though not ugly, showed a hardness that was unpleasant. His lips exhibited a peculiar twitch; his eyes seemed constantly on the shift.

The man was well dressed. He wore a dark hat, a dark overcoat and brown kid gloves. As he raised one hand to unbutton his overcoat, his fingers seemed to falter nervously. Twitching lips--shifting eyes--trembling hand-- these marked the man's identity. He was Shakes Niefan, notorious mobster.

Shakes appeared contemptuous of recognition in this obscure neighborhood. He was far from the badlands and there was no need for over caution. Boldly, Shakes went into the drug store and entered a phone booth. He dialed a number.

"Hello..." Shakes spoke in a growl. "Yeah. I'm up here...Ready... Sure... I came straight from the hide-out... Yeah. I'll call you later..."

Leaving the booth, Shakes went to the street. He walked for two blocks; turned left and came to a silent house in the middle of an old-fashioned row. Here Shakes paused to light a cigarette. His roving eyes studied upstairs windows. The place was a private home that had been converted into an apartment.

Shakes sauntered up the stone steps to the high front entrance. The door opened to his touch. The gangster entered a darkened vestibule. He flicked his cigarette out into the street and closed the big door behind him.

By light that came through a glass-paneled inner door, Shakes could read the names upon the wall beside an apartment phone. His lips formed a grotesque smile. His shaking hand reached for the knob of the inner door.

This barrier was locked. Shakes noted that it gave a fraction of an inch. He pulled a jimmy from his pocket and pried at the woodwork. After he had splintered the edge of the door Shakes managed to pry the latch. He entered; smoothed some of the wood with his gloved hand; then closed the door behind him.

SHAKES headed up a flight of stairs. He reached the third floor. He noted a door at the back. It bore the number 3 D. Quietly, Shakes tried the door. His twisting lips formed a grin as his hand found it unlocked.

Shakes Niefan stepped into a lighted room. It was a small chamber that served as living room and study. In the corner was a lighted lamp upon a table. Shakes noted papers lying there. He approached.

With his left hand, he pulled the glove from his right; then thrust the bare hand in the pocket of his overcoat. His left knuckles rested upon the dusty surface of the table. The glove formed a mark in the dust.

Shakes threw brief, shifty glances toward the papers. All the while, he was concerned with a door that led to another room. Light showed beneath the door.

Reaching out with his left hand, Shakes began to paw over the papers. He shrugged his shoulders; then bundled up the whole batch and thrust the pile into his coat pocket. Standing erect again, Shakes faced the closed door to the other room. His left knuckles, resting lightly on the desk, were twitching in their

usual fashion.

Shakes had heard the sound of a moving chair. Now, before he could make a step, the door opened. A tall man in shirt sleeves stopped to stare at the intruder. Shakes gave a sour smile.

"Who are you?" demanded the man who stood in the lighted doorway.

"Just a visitor," returned Shakes. "You're Jerome Neville, aren't you?"

"Yes." The speaker still eyed Shakes. "I'm Jerome Neville. Usually, visitors call this apartment. What's the idea of walking in this way?"

"You'll find out quick enough," retorted Shakes. "I'm going to take a look around this dump, see? There may be something here that I want. If there isn't--"

Neville was staring. He saw that the papers had been removed from his table. He noticed the package sticking from the intruder's pocket.

"A crook, eh?" questioned Neville. "Well, there's nothing here for you. Get going, before I call the police."

"I'm warning you," growled Shakes. "I'm going through this joint--"

Shakes still had his left hand on the table. It was quivering. Neville noticed it. He thought the intruder was trembling from fear, now that he had been discovered. Neville closed a pair of hard fists. He snorted as he saw the nervous twitch of Niefan's lips and the shifty action of the man's eyes.

"Get out!" With that challenge, Neville strode forward. Then, as he saw Shakes still stand his ground, Neville made a furious spring, raising his left hand as a guard as he drew his right back for a powerful swing.

Shakes Niefan tightened. His feet never budged. His left hand steadied hard against the table. His right snapped from his pocket with a quick wrist action that was a motion of only a few inches.

A stub-nosed revolver gleamed in the bare hand. As Jerome Neville's left hand came swinging toward him, Shakes pressed the trigger of his gun. Neville's stroke became an awkward swerve as the short revolver barked.

The tall man collapsed to the floor. Shakes Niefan, steadied, leered at the sprawled body. His shot had been aimed for the victim's heart. It had found its mark. Jerome Neville was dead.

SUDDENLY Shakes awoke to furious action. He leaped to the table and ripped open its single drawer. He grabbed the few papers that he saw there and thrust them in his pocket with the ones that he had taken before.

Springing across the dead body of Jerome Neville, Shakes reached the inner room. There he found a bureau. He yanked open the drawers in search of other papers. He found none. The quick search completed, Shakes hurried through the living room.

Opening the outer door, Shakes listened. He could hear subdued voices from below; then came one in a louder tone--the voice of a man.

"I'm going up," the speaker was saying. "It sounded like a gun shot--like it was from Neville's apartment."

Striding to the head of the stairs, Shakes Niefan raised his right hand and fired his revolver toward the floor below. Shrieks sounded as the zimming bullet dug its way into the wall beyond the bottom step. Women were screaming; a man's heavy footsteps took to flight.

Shakes started downward. He saw a man diving for cover through a door at the front of the hall. He fired a bullet that marked the doorway above the fellow's head. Hurrying to the flight that led to the first floor, Shakes fired another shot.

Then came the dash for the street. The murderer reached it unopposed. On the sidewalk, Shakes whirled as he heard the sound of a police whistle. A patrolman was hastening up from the nearest corner.

The officer saw Shakes. A revolver shot sounded; the bullet whistled by the murderer's head. With quick return, Shakes aimed his own gun and fired. The cop sprawled upon the sidewalk.

There was a car parked across the street. A man was in it, hastily trying to start the motor. Just as the engine rumbled, Shakes pounced up to the side of the car.

"Scram!" he snarled as he swung his revolver.

The man in the car ducked. He went sprawling through the open door toward the curb. Yanking open the nearer door, Shakes leaped to the wheel. He jammed the car into gear and sped down the street.

More whistles sounded. The shot from the sidewalk was bringing a new patrolman. The officer, however, was too late. Shakes Niefan was a block away when he arrived.

From the opened window of the old sedan came flurries of paper fragments. Shakes Niefan, driving from this neighborhood, was making sure that no evidence would remain.

These paper bits, scattering in the wake of the speeding sedan, were the destroyed portions of the documents which Shakes Niefan had carried from the apartment of Jerome Neville.

The murder of MacAvoy Crane had been followed by a similar outrage. Shakes Niefan had proven himself to be the new killer. He was the one whom The Shadow had divined might take the place of Strangler Hunn!

CHAPTER X. THE SHADOW'S CLEW.

"WHAT do you make of it, Joe?"

It was Inspector Timothy Klein who put the question. He and Detective Joe Cardona were standing in Jerome Neville's living room. The dead man's body had been removed. Klein and Cardona were summarizing their findings.

"I don't get it, inspector," confessed Cardona. "Here's a murder that looks a lot like the killing of MacAvoy Crane. But there was a motive for Strangler Hunn to kill Crane--at least, Crane was an investigator who may have found out something.

"But this fellow Neville was a refrigerator salesman. So far as we can figure, the only letters and papers that he would have here were ones that had something to do with his business. Yet the murderer grabbed everything."

"It looks odd," admitted Klein.

"I'd like to have a description of the killer," grumbled Cardona. "Those people downstairs ducked for

cover. The patrolman was wounded before he had a good look at the guy. The man in the sedan was too scared to even take a glance."

Detective Sergeant Markham appeared in the doorway as Cardona finished speaking.

"We've found the car," declared Markham. "The killer left it down on Seventy-first Street. No papers in it, Joe. The fellow made a get-away."

"That's what I expected," growled Cardona.

"Burke is downstairs," added Markham. "He wants to see you. Shall I tell him to come up?"

"All right."

Joe Cardona rested his chin in his right hand. The detective was recalling the conference at Roscoe Wimbledon's. He remembered the statements which had been made by Lamont Cranston.

Had MacAvoy Crane's death been but the first in a series of plotted murders? Was it connected with this killing of Jerome Neville? These were questions that perplexed the sleuth.

"Men thirteen," mumbled Cardona, half aloud. "Thirteen men. Maybe Crane was one; Neville is two--"

"What's that, Joe?" inquired Klein.

"Just an idea, inspector," returned Cardona. "I was thinking." He paused; then stared toward the door. "Hello, there, Burke. Later than usual to-night, eh?"

"I wouldn't be," retorted the reporter, "if that dumb cop hadn't stopped me downstairs. He wouldn't even send a message up to you. What's the story, Joe?"

"An unknown killer," stated the detective, "entered here and shot Jerome Neville. The victim was a refrigerator salesman."

"Any motive?"

"None apparent. The killer made away with some papers belonging to Neville. He ransacked the place before he left."

CARDONA looked narrowly at Burke. The detective wanted to see what the reporter's response would be. Cardona nodded grimly as Burke made comment.

"Something like the Crane murder, eh?" quizzed the reporter. "Any link between the two deaths?"

"None," decided Cardona. "That is, none except the circumstances. Go easy on it, Burke."

"All right, Joe. Say"--Clyde's eyes turned toward a telephone on the table--"were there any calls out of the place?"

"None," returned Cardona. "We received a report from the telephone company. We've still got to get a final statement. But it looks like there were no calls."

Clyde Burke put further questions. All pertained to the simple facts of the case. Joe Cardona gave the required data. While this was going on, the telephone bell rang. Inspector Klein answered.

"Chief operator?" he questioned. "Yes... This is Quadrangle two--four--one--three--eight... Inspector

Klein is speaking. Yes, from headquarters... Final check-up, eh? Thank you."

The inspector hung up. He turned to Joe Cardona with the announcement:

"No calls reported on this wire since last night."

Cardona made the notation for his report. He put down the number: Quadrangle 2-4138. Then he turned to Clyde Burke.

"We don't know who the killer was, Burke," stated the detective. "But it's a cinch he wasn't an amateur. One shot was all he needed to drill Neville through the heart. He wounded the patrolman at long range. He knows his business--this killer."

"As well as Strangler Hunn?" questioned Clyde.

"I wouldn't say that," growled Cardona. "Forget that Crane death, Burke. This is another story. Well--we've got all there is to get. How about it, inspector?"

"I guess you're right, Joe," agreed Klein, in a rueful tone. "We might as well be going."

The three men left. Clyde Burke separated from Klein and Cardona after they had reached the street. The newspaper man went to look for a telephone--presumably to call the Classic office.

SOME time afterward, a figure appeared upon the street opposite the old house in which Jerome Neville had died. A policeman was standing by the front steps. The officer did not see the form that had arrived on the other sidewalk.

For the watching shape was one of blackness--that of a creature who possessed a pair of burning eyes; beyond that, no features which were discernible. When the officer turned to pace a few rods toward the corner, the watching being glided in phantom fashion. Crossing the street, the weird prowler gained the darkness of a space beneath the high stone steps.

The policeman paced by. Silently, the hidden personage began to work upon a basement door. A lock yielded with a slight click. When the policeman paused upon the steps, the low door opened without a squeak. It closed. The dark form was no longer in front of it.

Minutes passed. Into the gloom of Jerome Neville's living room crept a weird, amazing visitor. The table lamp was still burning; its partly shaded rays made the arrival appear as a shrouded creature from the tomb.

The Shadow had come to inspect these premises. He was repeating his previous procedure; the one that he had used at MacAvoy Crane's. First: a report from Clyde Burke, telling what Joe Cardona had discovered. Second: a search by The Shadow himself.

Burning eyes turned toward the table. They spied marks in the dust. Joe Cardona had seen those traces. The detective, however, had passed them up because they showed no hand or finger impressions.

To The Shadow, however, those marks were important. A flashlight gleamed to increase the illumination. It showed blurred marks that faded toward the edges. The Shadow's left fist closed; its black-gloved outline poised above the traces in the dust.

The Shadow's hand began to quiver. It was simulating the action that would have necessarily caused the marks upon the table. A gloved hand--a shaky hand--such was the hand that had rested here.

A soft laugh crept through the room. The Shadow had found the clew he needed. The Shadow knew that Shakes Niefan was back in New York; The Shadow was looking for the slayer who had been a pal of Strangler Hunn.

Here was Shakes Niefan's imprint. The murderer who steadied when crime demanded was the slayer whom The Shadow wanted. Shakes Niefan--no one else--was the murderer of Jerome Neville.

The motive? A hidden plotter? A coming victim? These were questions that could be answered by a swift and direct plan. Shakes Niefan must be found. That was The Shadow's mission.

THE flashlight went out. The phantom shape moved from the living room. The tiny bulb blinked as The Shadow searched the remainder of the apartment. At last, the blinking ceased.

Stealthily The Shadow descended the stairs and passed through the silent house. He chose a rear window as an exit. He merged into thick darkness. His purpose here was finished.

To-night, The Shadow had found a clew that Joe Cardona had missed. The Shadow no longer followed. He was leading in the race to frustrate crime. Yet still, The Shadow was handicapped. Of the two clews--one at Crane's, the other at Neville's--Joe Cardona had found the most important one.

The cryptic message on the torn bit of paper. Its lettered inscription--MEN 13--still remained unsolved. That was the clew which The Shadow needed. Until he learned of its existence, the master sleuth would be working under disadvantage.

His one course now was to uncover Shakes Niefan. The odds were against a speedy gaining of that goal. In the meantime, new deaths threatened--stark murder which Joe Cardona alone could prevent, yet which the detective could not discern.

Only the keen brain of The Shadow could have spotted the meaning of that cryptic fragment which Joe Cardona was holding unused!

CHAPTER XI. AGAIN THE KILLER.

THICK, misty night had descended upon Manhattan. Swirls of fog clung to the pillars of the elevated structure where it cut its way through a shoddy district of the East Side.

Dull blares of steamship whistles came in eerie basso through the drizzly blackness. Close to the river, this district seemed to seep in the waters of the bridge-spanned channel between Manhattan and Long Island.

A skulking man came from the opening of a narrow street. His coat collar was turned up about his neck. His dampened felt hat clung closely to his head. His hands were encased in sticky kid gloves. Quick, shifty eyes looked back and forth. Hands fumbled as they pressed the coat collar closer to the chin.

Shakes Niefan was again at large. The slayer of Jerome Neville had spent the night in his hide-out. On this evening, twenty-four hours after his murderous stroke, Shakes Niefan was faring forth on new work of crime.

The killer's footsteps pounded up the stairway of the elevated. Then came the rumble of an arriving train. The elapsing time was just sufficient. Shakes Niefan had caught the uptown local.

Gobs of water dripped from the elevated structure as the departing train made the ironwork tremble. Deep-throated fog horns spelled a melancholy message that carved weirdly through the mist. Then, amid moments of fleeting silence, a strange figure moved from darkness into light.

It was The Shadow. Grotesquely shaped in the glimmer of the street lamps, the mysterious master was crossing the avenue to reach the street from which Shakes Niefan had emerged. Stalking the underworld in person, The Shadow was on the trail of the killer who had returned to Manhattan.

Once again, luck had betrayed The Shadow. By a scant minute he had missed the path of Shakes Niefan. Since his investigation of last night, The Shadow had been visiting the most secluded portions of the underworld. He had been using all his cunning to learn the location of Shakes Niefan's hideout.

Dew-like drops glistened upon blackened cloth as The Shadow's phantom form appeared momentarily beneath a lamp near the entrance of an obscure alley. The figure disappeared from view. Moving through darkness, The Shadow tried the door of a dilapidated house. The barrier resisted. Clicks in the dark were tribute to the skill of The Shadow's pick. The door opened inward.

Gaslight showed a short hall; beyond it an opened doorway to a dully lighted room. A tumbledown staircase was at the left. The front door of the house closed as The Shadow pressed it shut. The gaslight wavered as The Shadow moved up the stairs.

TWO men were seated in the rear room that The Shadow had noticed. Crouched at a table, a bottle between them, they were talking in low, growled tones. Stalwart ruffians, with leering, heavy-jawed faces, these rogues formed the toughest pair of dock wallopers that had ever graced a Brooklyn wharf.

"What's the matter with this hideout, Pete?" one man was asking. "The bulls ain't never bothered us down here."

"Don't ask me," returned the other. "It ain't our business, Slugger, if Shakes don't like the dump. All I know is that he's scrambled and won't be back."

"He plugged a guy last night," declared Pete. "I guess that's why he ain't comin' back. Changin' hide-outs. Well, we got a grand between us--"

"Sh-h!" The tone of "Slugger" was cautious as he gripped Pete's arm. "Look at that!"

Slugger was pointing upward to the single gaslight in the room. Pete followed the direction of the other's gaze.

"It wiggled like that when Shakes went out," whispered Slugger, hoarsely. "That means that somebody's come in again--"

"Maybe Shakes is back."

"Not him. He gave me his key."

"Come along."

Pete rose to his feet and gestured to Slugger. A pair of apelike fighters, the dock wallopers formed a formidable pair as they pulled out big revolvers and crept toward the lighted hallway.

Slugger looked about. He saw no one. He nudged his thumb toward the stairway. Pete nodded. Slugger led the way, with Pete at his heels. Despite their bulk, these huge men moved with noiseless tread as they started for the second floor.

A FLASHLIGHT was glimmering beyond a closed door on the second story. Standing in a dingy room, The Shadow was using the sharp but tiny beam in an inspection of the hide-out. Two broken chairs; a tumbledown cot with blankets strewn upon it; these were the tokens of recent occupancy.

There was one discovery, however, which told The Shadow more. The flashlight glimmered on crumpled newspapers. There were three of these; all had been turned to inner pages. The Shadow's laugh came in a bare whisper as the flashlight gave the clew.

The man who had been reading these newspapers had evidently started with front page stories. He had turned to pages on which the news accounts were continued. In each newspaper, the upturned page carried a run-over concerning the murder of Jerome Neville.

The Shadow knew that Shakes Niefan was the killer. He had found this hide-out, thinking that Shakes might be here. He had arrived too late. Shakes had gone; but the evidence of his occupancy remained.

Would the killer return? That was the question for which The Shadow sought an answer. The flashlight, as it scoured the room, showed no sign of bags or clothing. The Shadow knew that it would be well to watch this hideout; he also knew that Shakes Niefan's absence was an ominous sign. It could mean that Shakes had fared forth to deal with some new victim.

The flashlight snapped out. The Shadow made no move. His keen ears had caught a sound outside the door. Stealthy footsteps. These might mean the return of Shakes Niefan! The knob of the door was rattling softly. The black cloak swished in darkness. Then came silence as the door swung open.

A flashlight clicked. Its large-circled beam cut a swath through the center of the room as Slugger entered. The big dock walloper swung his light to form a spreading arc. The cot--the window--then the chairs--these were the objects that the torch revealed.

Slugger's gun moved along with the light. The dock walloper had finger upon trigger. He swerved the light to the final point--the corner of the room nearest to the open door.

Like an avalanche, a mass of blackness came surging into the path of the flashlight's ray. The swiftness of The Shadow's attack blotted out the glare. The Shadow had made his lunge in time with the swerving light. He was upon Slugger before the startled dock walloper knew what had happened.

A gloved fist was the weapon that The Shadow used. That clenched hand had the power of a piston rod as it clipped upward to Slugger's jaw. The big dock walloper was lifted from his crouch. Hurlled backward, his arms shot out. Flashlight and revolver went flying in opposite directions.

Pete, standing in the dim hall, saw the effect of The Shadow's rush. To his startled eyes, it appeared that some invisible force had hoisted Slugger upward and stretched him sprawled upon the floor. Pete acted on a moment's notice.

Springing into the darkened room, the second dock walloper fired blindly. His first shot was in the direction of the window; his next deliveries were made from a hand sweeping to the right. But Pete never dispatched the bullet that might have reached The Shadow.

A hurtling form came in from Pete's right. An arm like an iron bar swung up and struck Pete's wrist. The revolver skied to the ceiling. Pete, staggering back, barely managed to ward off The Shadow's punch. The upswing of his own right arm had given the dock walloper an involuntary guard.

Another punch came forward. Head down, Pete escaped its greatest force. Fiercely, the disarmed dock walloper grappled with the black-clad warrior who had sprung so suddenly from the darkness.

THE SHADOW had sought to avoid gunfire. In this portion of the underworld, a single shot would turn loose hordes of ruffians. The Shadow did not fear such enemies. His purpose was simply to avoid delay in his pursuit of Shakes Niefan.

Hence, The Shadow, as he battled with Pete, was dragging the big dock walloper toward the hallway. Like a mongoose attacking a writhing cobra, The Shadow had gained a hold that enabled him to sling the big man back and forth. Pete, possessed of hardened strength, was fighting back.

The heel of a gloved hand was pressed against Pete's chin. Staring upward with bulging eyes, the dock walloper could not see his opponent. The Shadow had pinioned the big man's right arm. Pete's left was swinging wildly in the air.

With an angry, snarl, Pete threw all of his brute strength into the fray. As The Shadow pressed his head against the wall, the dock walloper wrested his right arm free. Twisting, he threw a pair of paws blindly toward his foeman's throat.

Long nails ripped the collar of The Shadow's cloak. The Shadow's hand dropped from Pete's jaw. Snarling his triumph, the dock walloper lowered his chin and fought to clutch the neck that was slipping from his big hands. Then came the turn.

The Shadow had dropped to gain a jujutsu hold. Pete's hands lost their grip as his huge form was hoisted upward in spite of all its bulk. Braced on the floor, The Shadow snapped himself upward and backward. His odd lunge stopped.

Pete kept on. Like a rock slung from a catapult, the big dock walloper shot straight forward over The Shadow's head. His clawing hands clutched wildly as his arms spread in a vain effort to stop his fall. The stairway lay dead ahead. Pete's plunge carried him halfway to the bottom before his long dive brought him head first to a projecting step.

The crash was terrific. Striking on head and hands, Pete's big bulk described a bounding somersault that ended at the bottom of the stairway. There the dock walloper rolled in a sideways fashion and smashed into the wall.

The Shadow was gliding down the stairway. His quick pace carried him across Pete's body. His swift hand yanked open the door. Din came to The Shadow's ears. Running forms were arriving beneath the light at the entrance of the alley.

In this quarter all were foemen unless they announced themselves as friends. The dull light from the opened door was sufficient for mobsmen eager for a fight. A revolver barked from the entrance of the alley. A bullet splintered the door frame.

The Shadow's hands swept from his cloak. Two automatics thundered from the doorway. The gangster who had fired his revolver went sprawling in the alley. Others dived for cover. The Shadow leaped outward, yanking the door behind him. An instant later, his automatics opened a new cannonade.

Mobsters scattered while The Shadow backed swiftly through the alley to the further street. Shouts had risen. Wild shots began. Distant whistles sounded as The Shadow reached the next street.

Scurrying gangsters were coming from another block. The Shadow did not wait for them. Swiftly and unseen, he crossed the street and gained a new passage between two buildings opposite.

Weaving his way into the underworld, The Shadow was taking a roundabout course that would lead him from the badlands. He had shown his skill tonight; but he had not sought the adventure which had been his lot.

For this delay--caused by the chance flicker of a gaslight--had ended all chance to trail Shakes Niefan. The killer had gone his way. New death was in the making!

CHAPTER XII. MURDER AT NIGHT.

SHAKES NIEFAN had unwittingly eluded The Shadow. While the gun-fray was going on about the killer's discarded hide-out, Shakes had reached a new objective. After alighting from an uptown station, he had walked two blocks to make a phone call from a booth in a cigar store.

With receiver wobbling in his unsteady hand, Shakes was talking in the fashion of the night before. Once more the slayer was reporting for grim duty.

"Hello..." Shakes was using his affected growl. "Yeah... I'm all ready... Sure... Last night was O.K. wasn't it? All right... To-night will be the same... No, I'm not going back to the old place... I'm going to keep away from those joints... Yeah... Some guys think they're too wise..."

Leaving the store, Shakes walked westward to an avenue. He went one block north; then turned into a side street. He reduced his pace as he neared a lighted archway that occupied a broad space between two old-fashioned buildings. Shakes noted the inscription on the arch:

BALLANTYNE

PLACE

Shakes walked beneath the archway. The space within widened out into a large courtyard. Two-story buildings-- old English houses in miniature--flanked the sides of Ballantyne Place.

A secluded spot in the heart of Manhattan, this exclusive section consisted of houses built, on the cooperative plan. There were perhaps a dozen residences in Ballantyne Place; each bore a conspicuous number upon its door. Shakes Niefan strolled along until he reached Number 8.

Pausing to light his cigarette, Shakes feigned the part of a chance visitor while he glanced about to make sure that no one was in the quiet court. He noted lights in the upstairs windows of the house at which he stood. He tried the door and found it locked.

The style of the lock was its weakness. A large keyhole offered an easy task. Shakes pulled a ring of skeleton keys from his pocket. On the third trial, the lock opened.

Shakes pressed the door inward. It yielded only a few inches. Pulling the glove from his right hand, Shakes inserted his fingers. He found a chain instead of a bolt. This, again, was a factor in the crook's favor.

The chain would not loosen, but when Shakes brought his jimmy into action, the work was simple. A dull, splintering sound occurred as the wall fastening broke loose. Shakes threw a nervous glance toward the courtyard; then entered.

Closing the door Shakes began a flashlight inspection downstairs. He found a small living room where the embers of a dying fire glowed from a grate. Desk and table drawers revealed an assortment of papers. Shakes bundled these without further inspection; he tossed them in the fireplace and watched them burn to ashes. With a short laugh Shakes approached the stairs and sneaked upward to the darkened hall above.

THERE was a light beneath the door of a front room. A low, hoarse voice issued forth in frightened tones. Pressing close to the door, Shakes distinguished words:

"This is Hiram Engliss speaking... Number Eight, Ballantyne Place... I believe that my house has been entered... Yes... I could hear some one breaking in downstairs..."

While his lips formed a fierce, distorted grimace, Shakes Niefan pressed his jimmy into place against the edge of the frail door. He was sure that this barrier was locked. The man within was calling the police. There was no time to lose.

Pausing, Shakes heard the clatter of the telephone receiver. He used the jimmy with full force. A startled cry came from within. Hiram Engliss knew now that danger had arrived.

Woodwork splintered from the door. Another wrench of the jimmy. As Shakes leaned to his work, he heard a window come open; he caught the shout that Hiram Engliss uttered:

"Help!" The man was frantic. "Help! Burglars--"

The door snapped open. Shakes Niefan dropped his jimmy as he plunged forward. His right hand shot to his coat pocket. He was face to face with a pale-faced, elderly man who was turning from the window. Hiram Engliss was holding, an old-fashioned pepper-box--a four-barreled pistol that looked like a honeycomb.

The gun was wobbling in the old man's hand. Hiram Engliss, clad in dressing gown, was ready with a frantic effort to stop this intruder. Wildly, he fired. Even at this close range, the bullet went wide.

Shakes was bringing out his revolver with a hand that shook as much as the old man's. But the murderer lacked the nervousness that had gripped Hiram Engliss. The pepper-box spoke with a puny bark. Again, the aim was faulty.

Shakes pressed the trigger of his stub-nosed revolver. His hand had steadied for the action. His aim had its customary perfection. The old-fashioned gun fell to the floor as Hiram Engliss collapsed.

Shakes Niefan lost no time. He yanked open the bureau drawers. They contained no papers. Turning, Shakes dashed down the stairs. He passed the living room, hurried through the front door and crossed the court.

Shouts came from other windows. Shakes turned and delivered a shot that shattered a pane. Heads bobbed from view. Shakes reached the street. He saw a taxicab stopping at the opposite curb.

"Scram!" shouted the murderer.

Cab driver and passenger jumped to the sidewalk. Shakes grabbed the wheel and shot the car full speed ahead. A patrolman appeared as the cab reached the corner. Shakes opened fire. The officer ducked for the cover of a doorway. He responded with futile shots as the cab swung around the corner.

Once again, Shakes Niefan had delivered death. The murderer was still ahead of The Shadow's pursuit. The police had shown their inability to cope with his swift ways of killing.

The taxi swung into an obscure block. It came to a leisurely stop as a patrol car sped past. The police were on the way to the scene of death; but the murderer had gone.

Shakes Niefan again wore his evil smile as he alighted from the cab and strolled along the street. Safely away, a new hide-out chosen for to-night, he was ready to make his telephoned report concerning the death of Hiram Engliss.

CHAPTER XIII. THE COMMISSIONER SPEAKS.

IT was midnight. Inspector Timothy Klein and Detective Joe Cardona were at the scene of crime. Standing in the room where Hiram Engliss had died, they were discussing the facts that they had learned.

The telephone bell began to ring. Inspector Klein picked up the instrument from the table beside the bed. The call was from police headquarters. Cardona judged that from Klein's conversation.

"We've fixed one point," declared the inspector, grimly, as he laid the telephone aside. "They've compared the bullets. The same gun was used to kill both Jerome Neville and Hiram Engliss."

"Which means the same murderer," asserted Cardona. "I saw that right away, inspector. Those ashes in the living room grate--"

Cardona paused as a man entered the upstairs room. It was Clyde Burke. The detective stared at the reporter.

"No alibi for being late to-night," announced Clyde. "It doesn't matter, though. Looks like I've walked in on something interesting."

"You have," admitted Cardona. "Here's the link you want. You can tell the public that we're after one murderer. The same man killed both Neville and Engliss."

Clyde nodded as he scrawled the item on a sheet of folded copy paper. He was about to put a question when the telephone bell jingled. Again, Klein answered.

"Hello," greeted the inspector. "Yes. This is Midtown nine-one-three-six-two... Final report, eh? Only one call out of here to-night? Yes... We know about that one... It was a call to the police..."

"Engliss heard the murderer break in," explained Cardona, to Clyde. "He put in a call for help. The killer must have got him right after that."

"Fingerprints?" inquired Clyde, briskly.

"None," responded Cardona.

"No link-up with the Crane case?" asked Clyde.

"None at all." Cardona was almost savage in his retort. "That's out, Burke. Do you understand? We've got enough trouble without you--"

"All right, Joe." Clyde's easy tone mollified the detective. "Don't worry. I'm not mentioning it. This is enough. How did the murderer get away tonight?"

"In a taxicab," stated Cardona. "Chased the driver and the passenger to the sidewalk. We picked up the empty cab a dozen blocks away. It's the same story. Nobody got a good look at the killer. Of all the dumb clucks--"

KLEIN and Burke turned toward the door as they saw Cardona pause. Like the detective, they recognized the stalwart form of the new arrival. It was Police Commissioner Ralph Weston.

"Have you completed your report, Cardona?" questioned Commissioner Weston, brusquely.

"Yes, sir," replied the detective. "Inspector Klein just received word from headquarters. They say that the bullets--"

"I've heard about the bullets," interrupted Weston. "You take charge here, Inspector Klein. I want Detective Cardona to come along with me. Are you ready, Cardona?"

The detective nodded. Weston turned and started down stairs. Cardona followed. Inspector Klein spoke

warningly to Clyde Burke.

"Go easy in your story," said Klein. "Don't play it up about the commissioner being here. I think he's on the war path. He doesn't like it when we give out too much."

"All right, inspector," agreed Clyde. "Give me a few more facts and I'll call it a night. I'm due at the office anyway."

Staring from the front window, Clyde saw Weston and Cardona passing through the archway to the street. The Shadow's agent wondered what urgency had brought the police commissioner here. Clyde watched the pair enter the commissioner's car. The vehicle pulled away.

CLYDE BURKE would have given much to have heard the conversation that began between Weston and Cardona. The police commissioner was prompt with the reasons that had made him seek the sleuth.

"Inspector Klein informed me of this Engliss murder," announced Weston. "I linked it right away with the death of Neville. Two killings in two nights. This is more than mere coincidence.

"You will recall, Cardona, that when we discussed the death of MacAvoy Crane, we foresaw a possibility of further killings. That is why we began our search for Lester Drayson.

"Are these deaths--Engliss and Neville's--an aftermath of Crane's? That is the question which now besets us. We have linked Engliss and Neville to the same killer. Can we go further back?"

"I don't know, commissioner;" admitted Cardona, frankly. "We studied Jerome Neville's case. The man was a refrigerator salesman. He had no enemies. Now comes Hiram Engliss. I've been busy calling his friends; the old man was a retired architect with an innocent past.

"On the face of it, you can't link these killings with the Crane case. Strangler Hunn bumped MacAvoy Crane. Strangler is dead; Crane was a man investigating crime. But here's a new killer--and two victims who don't seem logical persons to be murdered. At the same time--"

"Well?" inquired Weston, as Cardona paused.

"I've got a hunch, that's all," returned Cardona. "I'm still thinking about that slip of paper. Thirteen men--"

"Men thirteen," objected Weston.

"It's the same thing," commented Cardona. "Crane was the first; then Neville; now Engliss--"

Further confab ended. The car had swung a corner past an uptown hotel--the Morrisette. The driver was pulling to the opposite curb. Cardona, for the first time, realized the destination. Commissioner Weston was taking him to the home of Roscoe Wimbledon.

THE servant who admitted the commissioner and the detective was prompt to usher them into Wimbledon's library. There they found the aviation magnate awaiting them. Ross Harlton was with Roscoe Wimbledon. It was evident that the police commissioner had made a telephone call here.

Weston came to business promptly. Taking a chair, the dynamic police commissioner opened his conversation.

"I am here, Mr. Wimbledon," asserted Weston, "to confer with you regarding consequences which may have been the outgrowth of the murder which we previously discussed. When you told me that MacAvoy Crane had served as your private investigator, I advanced the theory that other murders might be

forthcoming."

"That is right," nodded Wimbledon. "As I recall it, commissioner, you accepted my belief that Lester Drayson may have had friends in New York."

"Exactly," agreed Weston. "That is why I instituted a search for Drayson. The hunt is still on; to date it has brought no results. At the same time, however, we considered the possibility that Strangler Hunn had been a hired killer and that another assassin might be employed to continue his work."

"That theory," recalled Wimbledon, "was pressed by a gentleman who had called on me. I refer to Mr. Lamont Cranston. I believe that he suggested looking for the potential killer rather than beginning a hunt for Lester Drayson."

"Yes," agreed Weston. "I remember Cranston's statements. They had merit. Present developments have proven so. I told you, over the telephone to-night, that the police are confronted with two new killings. I am anxious to learn whether or not they are the follow-up of Crane's death."

"Assuming that Lester Drayson ordered the killing of Crane because the man was an investigator into his affairs, it is logical to suppose that Drayson would continue by ordering the murder of others who might have facts about him."

"Quite logical," nodded Wimbledon. He reached for a newspaper beside his desk. "I read of the death of Jerome Neville. Here is the story--in to-day's Classic. What puzzles me, commissioner, is why a refrigerator salesman should have been slain."

"His place was rifled," interposed Joe Cardona. "Papers taken to be destroyed. Just like the situation at Crane's."

"That is true," said Wimbledon. "What about the case to-night? You told me, commissioner, that a man named Hiram Engliss had been murdered. What was his occupation?"

"Retired architect," stated Cardona. "His living room was rifled. Papers were burned in the fire place."

"Ah!" Wimbledon became alert. "That is interesting. This does make it look like more than mere coincidence."

"What I want to know," declared Weston, "is whether or not these men could have been friends of Lester Drayson. Have you any record of them, Mr. Wimbledon? Do you know the names of Drayson's former associates?"

"No," returned Wimbledon. "That is why I hired Crane. We had positively nothing to go on, except the knowledge that Drayson probably had confidants. In fact, I thought that Crane might have been looking for a lone man. Now, however, I am ready to believe that there must be more than one."

"What gets me," announced Cardona, suddenly, "is this matter of the papers. We have a good idea why Strangler Hunn burned the documents after he killed MacAvoy Crane. The investigator's reports could have made trouble for Lester Drayson."

"But what papers would the others have? None. If they were secretly hooked up with Drayson, about the only thing they would have had would be money. Drayson could have planted cash with them--"

CARDONA stopped suddenly as Wimbledon raised his hand. The aviation magnate had struck an idea through the detective's words. The same thought hit Cardona as he paused. It was Wimbledon, however, who voiced the theory.

"Papers were destroyed!" exclaimed Wimbledon, as he tapped his desk significantly. "Papers which the new murderer found when he killed Neville and Engliss. But were papers the object of his raids?"

"Is it not possible that he found money also? That he may have seized negotiable securities held by these men? Suppose that Jerome Neville and Hiram Engliss were friends of Lester Drayson. Their very obscurity would have made them the right persons to serve as guardians of his stolen funds."

"I get it," declared Cardona, turning to Weston. "There's a game that holds water, commissioner. Suppose Drayson had planted dough with Neville and Engliss. What would he do? Come back--get his profits--and pay them off."

"But Drayson was a fugitive. These fellows knew too much. He could find a simpler way to get that dough. Bump them off--through some killer--and end all chances of them squealing. You can hire a thug cheaper than you can pay off men who know too much."

There was a pause. Roscoe Wimbledon ended it by turning to speak to Ross Harlton.

"Suppose, Ross," he suggested, "that you go upstairs and resume work on those technical reports. I shall join you after I have ended this conference."

"Very well, sir." Harlton arose, bowed good-night, and left the library. Wimbledon waited until the door had closed behind him. Then the aviation magnate leaned across the desk.

"That paper which you found at Crane's," he said, cautiously to Cardona. "Has any one seen it except myself and Commissioner Weston?"

"No," returned Cardona. "I have it here."

The detective reached in his pocket and produced the slip. He placed it on the desk. Weston drew close to examine it with Wimbledon.

"I've got a hunch about that paper, asserted Cardona. "I read it thirteen men and I figure that three of the lot have gone the voyage. Crane--Neville--Engliss--"

"Not Crane." Wimbledon shook his head. "He was the investigator. His job was to learn the names of all who had been associated with Lester Drayson. It seems incredible that there could have been thirteen. Nevertheless--"

Wimbledon paused thoughtfully as he picked up the torn paper and returned it to Cardona. Then he added:

"The more men, the less each one would have to hold in keeping. Yet thirteen--the number seems too great. There is one way, however, that the theory might be tested."

"How is that?" questioned Weston.

"By making it public," declared Wimbledon. "Lester Drayson is known to be a rogue. It seems likely that he dealt with his associates individually; that one could not know another."

"Bring out the facts. Spread them through the newspapers. Let it be known that murder is still in the making. All who have facts regarding Drayson will come scurrying to you for protection."

COMMISSIONER WESTON tugged at the points of his mustache. Joe Cardona knew why the official was pondering. Weston's cardinal principle was to avoid publicity while the police were concerned with

unsolved crime.

"We must wait," came Weston's decision. "Sometimes newspaper reports do more harm than good. We can always use the journals as a final resort; but once we have taken such a step, we cannot withdraw.

"A double hunt is on, Cardona!" Weston pounded the edge of Wimbledon's desk as he turned to the detective. "We shall search for two men: Lester Drayson and the unknown killer. I shall find the latter even if Drayson cannot be had.

"The order is going out. Scour the underworld. Bring in this skulking murderer who has taken the place of Strangler Hunn. Examine the records; give out descriptions of all who knew Hunn in the past."

"The dragnet?" questioned Cardona.

"If necessary," agreed Weston. "There are three ways to work." Unwittingly, the commissioner began to paraphrase the statements of Lamont Cranston. "First: find the plotter. Second: the potential murderer. Third: the victims that are to be.

"We shall use the first and second methods. The third is impossible. Our double system will bring the results that we require."

With this assertion, Commissioner Weston arose. His mind was decided. From now on, the law would not concern itself with the single search for Lester Drayson. Weston was throwing all his power to the uncovering of the unknown murderer whose identity The Shadow already knew.

Though the process might be delayed, eventually the dragnet would close in an effort to ensnare the missing slayer: Shakes Niefan.

Without realizing it, Commissioner Ralph Weston was following the lead of The Shadow!

CHAPTER XIV. FIGURES IN THE NIGHT.

INSPECTOR TIMOTHY KLEIN and Clyde Burke had not lingered long at the home of Hiram Engliss. Inspector and reporter had left five minutes after the departure of Commissioner Ralph Weston and Detective Joe Cardona.

Klein had gone directly to headquarters. Burke had headed to find a telephone, ostensibly for the purpose of calling the Classic office. Instead of performing that duty, however, Burke had reported to Burbank.

Hence, while Weston and Cardona were still at Wimbledon's a strange figure made its appearance in the secluded courtyard of Ballantyne Place. A blackened shape that moved with gliding tread, The Shadow had come to view the scene of crime.

Unseen, The Shadow entered the house where Engliss had died. His probing flashlight showed the broken fastenings of the front-door chain. It glimmered in the fire place where ashes rested as the crumbled remainders of papers which had belonged to Hiram Engliss.

The same light reappeared upstairs. It revealed the door that Shakes Niefan had jimmied. It swung along beside the bed; across the spot where Engliss had collapsed; then to the telephone on the little table.

The searching circle rested there. A silver disk, the flashlight's beam stayed poised. Then came a click. The light went out. A whispered laugh shuddered through the room. A swish announced the departure of The Shadow.

ONE block away from Ballantyne Place, a dozing taxi driver was startled to hear a quiet voice from the interior of his cab. The driver had not heard a passenger open the door. This fare seemed to have dropped from nowhere. Nodding drowsily, the perplexed driver heard the destination which the quiet voice gave him:

"Hotel Morrisette."

UP near the destination that The Shadow had ordered, Commissioner Ralph Weston and Detective Joe Cardona were at that moment coming down the steps of Roscoe Wimbledon's home. Weston, stopping by the door of his car, began to talk to Cardona.

"You'll get instructions at headquarters," asserted the commissioner. "You'll work with Klein to find this murderer. It's a harder job, Cardona, than finding Strangler Hunn. Nevertheless, I rely on you to perform it."

"Give me time, commissioner," pleaded Cardona. "I want to get the stools working before we use the dragnet. I may be able to spot the guy before he knows what's up. I'm going after anybody that ever worked with Strangler Hunn."

"In the meantime," remarked Weston, "the search will continue for Lester Drayson. If the man is in New York, we will land him."

"Here's his picture," commented Cardona, drawing a photograph from his pocket. "Gray hair--clean shaven--he couldn't grow a beard without it being gray, too."

Weston nodded. He took the photograph and stepped away from the car so that he could hold the picture in the light of a street lamp. The commissioner nearly jostled against two men who were walking by. Then he began to examine the picture while Cardona looked on.

"So that's Lester Drayson," commented Weston. "I saw this photograph before; but I hadn't analyzed it closely. There's a dignity about the fellow, Cardona. He might change that expression; but otherwise--"

"Gray hair," recited Cardona, "and bushy gray eyebrows. Thirty plainclothes men looking for Lester Drayson. They ought to find him."

A strolling man came between Weston and the light of the street lamp. Weston handed the photograph back to Cardona. The stroller paused a few yards along to apply a match to his cigar. Then he crossed the street and entered the lobby of the Hotel Morrisette.

Commissioner Weston stepped into his car. As Cardona stood by, a taxicab pulled up on the other side of the street. Neither Weston nor Cardona noticed it. The commissioner was repeating his previous remarks with new emphasis. He concluded by giving an order to his chauffeur. The big car pulled away. Cardona watched it depart; then turned and walked away.

ACROSS the street, the taxi driver was waiting for his passenger to alight. He had opened the door of the cab; no one had come out. Impatiently, the driver turned and looked into the back. He pressed the light switch.

The door on the left was ajar, like the door which the cabby had opened on the right. A five-dollar bill was lying on the cushion of the back seat. Otherwise the cab was empty.

The driver reached mechanically as he picked up the ample fare. Shaking his head, he started his cab along the street. His mysterious passenger had vanished as weirdly as he had arrived. The driver did not know that he had taxied The Shadow!

Lurking in the darkness on the street side of the cab, The Shadow had caught the last exchange of words between Weston and Cardona. He had heard the commissioner's repeated demand for action in the underworld. He had detected the utterance of a man's name:

Lester Drayson.

The Shadow had arrived too late to learn more definite facts; but his keen brain had divined the answer. He knew that Commissioner Weston had chosen a double course. The police would follow the plan which The Shadow--as Lamont Cranston--had advocated; namely, to search for a potential killer as redoubtable as Strangler Hunn.

Gliding into darkness, The Shadow passed along the street. Weston's conference with Wimbledon had ended; there could be no purpose in adopting the guise of Lamont Cranston now that the brief visit was over.

THE SHADOW was not the only watcher who had witnessed the departures of Ralph Weston and Joe Cardona. Stationed just within the lobby of the Hotel Morrisette, a man had waited until the commissioner and the detective had both gone on their way.

Turning, this watcher strolled into the lobby and advanced to the desk. He rapped to attract the attention of the drowsy clerk.

"Key to 614," he ordered. Then, as the clerk produced the key: "Any messages for Martin Hyslop?"

"None," replied the clerk.

The man went to the elevator. He reached the sixth floor and entered Room 614. He turned on a table lamp; then walked over and drew the window shades. There was a large bureau in one corner of the hotel room. On either side were light brackets. The man turned on these lights. He stood before the mirror.

In the glare, the face of Martin Hyslop showed as a rounded visage. Black hair glistened in the light. Thin black eyebrows formed straight lines beneath. Hyslop's upper lip had a heavy black mustache. His low jaw possessed a forward thrust.

Only this direct light revealed a certain artificiality to Martin Hyslop's countenance. As the man brought his face closer to the mirror, the black hair showed more glisten. The eyebrows, viewed closely by the man who studied his own reflection, gave bare evidence that they had been clipped.

Martin Hyslop relaxed his jaw. That slight action gave the clew. A challenging countenance changed to one of formal dignity. The man stared fixedly; then resumed the forward thrust of his chin. The alteration pleased him. He laughed in surly fashion.

In those brief moments of inspection, Martin Hyslop had given a trace of his real identity. This man who had registered at the Hotel Morrisette was none other than Lester Drayson, the man for whom the law was searching!

As a stroller in the night, Drayson had heard the words between Weston and Cardona. He had seen the police commissioner examining the photograph of a face that Drayson, himself, was trying to disguise!

Lester Drayson turned out the lights. He raised the window shades and stared out into the night. Below, he could see the darkened house where Roscoe Wimbledon lived. A spiteful snarl came from Drayson's lips.

Craftily, Drayson had chosen a bold course. This hotel, just across the street from the home of the man who had denounced him, was the best place in New York for the returned fugitive to use as temporary residence. It was evident from Drayson's snarl that the ex-president of Universal Aircraft felt himself capable of avoiding discovery.

Moving through the darkness of his room, Drayson found the telephone. He waited until an answer came from the clerk below; then he gave a number:

"Carmody five--nine--two--one--three."

Minutes passed. Then came word from the desk:

"No answer, sir."

Lester Drayson muttered to himself as he returned to the window. Then his tone changed to a short, grunted laugh. Lighting a cigar, the man who called himself Martin Hyslop sat beside the window and stared out into darkness.

ELSEWHERE in Manhattan, a figure had arrived within the walls of a darkened room. A swish amid blackness; then came the click of a light. A bluish incandescent threw its focused rays upon a polished table. The Shadow had reached his sanctum.

White hands appeared beneath the light. They stretched forward and obtained earphones. A voice came over the wire:

"Burbank speaking."

"Report." It was The Shadow's whisper.

"Report from Marsland," announced Burbank. "All quiet at Shakes Niefan's old hide-out. Much discussion about the gun fight that took place. Marsland does not think that Niefan will return."

"Report received."

A whispered laugh came from the darkness as The Shadow thrust the earphones to the wall. The hands produced pen and paper. They began to make notations:

Method One.

Find the plotter.

Police searching for Lester Drayson.

The hand paused. Blue ink dried. The words began to vanish. Such was the way with the ink that The Shadow used. This fluid vanished after drying unless sealed within an envelope. The Shadow used it for communications with his agents. He also employed the special ink for inscribing the thoughts that gripped him when he planned his ways to counter crime.

The hand wrote once more:

Method Two.

Find the killer.

Shakes Niefan has not returned to hide-out.

Police search will eventually point to him.

Another wait. The ink vanished, word by word. There was significance in the soft laugh that The Shadow uttered. It seemed to indicate a change of policy. The Shadow had left the first method to the police while he pursued the second. Now that the law had followed The Shadow's lead, the master sleuth was planning another course.

Again the hand inscribed:

Third Method.

Find the next victim.

This time a new laugh throbbed within the black-walled sanctum. The Shadow had chosen a more startling course. Yet it was one that offered high reward should it succeed.

Two men had been slain since Strangler Hunn had murdered MacAvoy Crane. Had The Shadow possessed a clew to lead him to Jerome Neville or Hiram Engliss, he could have saved the lives of those unfortunate victims.

Did new murder lie ahead? The Shadow could combat it by learning who Shakes Niefan planned to slay. The Shadow's task was a grim one; yet this master had a faculty for turning past and present into a foresight of the future!

Jerome Neville.

Hiram Engliss.

These were the names that The Shadow wrote. The names vanished while hidden eyes studied them. Next came addresses. Finally, telephone numbers.

Here The Shadow paused. When the writing faded, he repeated the inscription.

FROM the facts that Clyde Burke had furnished, The Shadow had found a meager clew. Taking two sheets of paper, he wrote the name and telephone number of Jerome Neville on one.

Upon the other sheet, he placed the same data concerning Hiram Engliss.

The papers read:

Jerome Neville, Quadrangle 2-4138

Hiram. Engliss, Midtown 9-1362

As each sheet dried, The Shadow inserted it in an envelope before the ink had time to vanish. Then, upon a larger sheet of paper, he inscribed a coded message. He folded this, placed it in the envelope and closed the flap. On the face of the envelope, he wrote the name of Clyde Burke.

This envelope went into a larger one. Using another pen, with a blacker ink, The Shadow addressed the outer envelope to Rutledge Mann, Badger Building, New York City. The inscription dried. It did not fade.

A soft laugh sounded in darkness as the light clicked out. The weird mockery rose to a sinister tone; then faded into shuddering reverberations.

Two deaths--both the work of Shakes Niefan--had given The Shadow opportunity for a chance comparison. Between now and the next night, The Shadow was sure that he would gain facts to aid him in pursuance of his clew.

CHAPTER XV. CARDONA TAKES A TIP.

AT nine o'clock the next morning, a chubby-faced man was staring from the window of an office high above Broadway. He seemed to have no interest other than his view of the Manhattan skyline.

This was Rutledge Mann, a prosperous investment broker who had his suite of offices in the towering Badger Building. Leisurely in manner, Mann seemed to have no concern other than the fluctuations of the stock market.

Mann's business, however, was twofold. His brokerage activities, though they brought him comfortable profit, were not his most important job. This office was actually a blind. Rutledge Mann was an agent of The Shadow.

Useful in research, Mann also served as a contact agent between The Shadow and his active operatives. The investment broker delivered important written instructions; he also received elaborate reports which he delivered to The Shadow.

Rutledge Mann turned as he heard a rap at the door. It was the stenographer, coming to announce a visitor.

"Mr. Burke is here," stated the girl.

"Show him in," ordered Mann.

When Clyde Burke had arrived, Mann reached into a desk drawer and produced a sealed envelope. This was the inner packet that had come from The Shadow. Clyde Burke's name had faded from the face of the envelope after Mann had read it.

Clyde received the envelope. He tore it open. Out came a folded sheet of paper; with it, two small slips. Clyde noted the slips first. Then, as their writing faded, he unfolded the paper and perused its coded lines.

Clyde began to nod as he finished reading. His lips formed a slight smile. Rutledge Mann watched the slips go in the wastebasket. The folded paper followed. Its coded message had also disappeared.

"All right," announced Clyde. "I'll be back later in the morning."

LEAVING the Badger Building, Clyde called a taxi. The Shadow's agent ordered the driver to take him to detective headquarters. Arriving at his destination, Clyde went directly to Joe Cardona's office.

"Hello, Burke," growled the detective, as he looked up from a batch of papers. "Nothing new on the Engliss case. I'll let you know when any word comes in.

Clyde smiled as he saw Cardona cover a photograph with a paper. The Shadow's agent knew that a heavy search was due for an unknown killer. It was evident that Cardona did not want the newspapers to know too much at present.

"I'm not looking for a story, Joe," announced Clyde. "That is, I'm not asking you to give me one. I've got an idea--a long shot--and I'll slip it to you if you're willing to go through with it."

"On these murders?"

"Yes."

"Spill it."

"Wait a minute." Clyde was working for effect. "You may think I'm crazy, Joe. But I'm not. I've got a real bet for you; it may mean a lot of trouble; but I've got a real hunch that it may bring a big result."

"I like hunches," nodded Cardona. "Go ahead, Burke. I'll be frank with you--we're ready to take any lead that looks good."

"All right, Joe." Clyde considered. "First of all, there's something funny about these two murders. The same killer got Jerome Neville and Hiram Engliss. That's bad enough; but why should he want to murder either one of them?"

"Do you know why?"

"No. But the murderer worked mighty quick. It's a sure bet, Joe, that he isn't finished. Unless you get started, there'll be another killing to-night--and maybe one on the next night--"

"Cut it, Burke." Cardona was impatient. "You're giving me the jitters. Spring your idea."

"It strikes me," declared Clyde, as he seated himself in front of the detective's desk, "that there must be some connection between Jerome Neville and Hiram Engliss. But all the facts--their work, their ages, their locations--point against it. We just know this--the same guy bumped both of them."

"Is that all you've got to tell me?"

"No. I've figured that the connection must be there. No matter how slight it seems, you ought to follow any point that the two men had in common. I'll go further than that--you ought to follow half a point, if you can get even that much--"

"And what is it?" interrupted Cardona.

"A number," declared Burke, in a solemn tone. "The number thirteen."

INSTANTLY, The Shadow's agent saw that he had scored an unexpected hit. Clyde had come here expecting to sell Cardona an idea that the detective might reject. Instead, he realized that he had struck home. Cardona's hands were gripping the edge of the desk. The ace was staring eagerly.

"What about it?" came Cardona's question. "What about the number thirteen?"

"Jerome Neville," remarked Clyde, "had the telephone number Quadrangle

2-4138. Hiram Engliss had the number Midtown 9-1362. Write them down, Joe. You'll see that each one contains the number thirteen, as big as life."

"That's right." Cardona was scrawling the numbers on a sheet of paper. "Still, I don't get your idea, Burke. This thirteen business is important, because"--he paused abruptly--"well, because I'm superstitious, I guess. But what can I do about it?"

"I'll tell you," stated Clyde. "It's a long shot and it may seem a crazy one; but if you follow it, you might get somewhere. There are about twelve hundred pages in the Manhattan telephone book. Why not put a dozen girls to work, each with a hundred pages. Better still, two dozen girls, with fifty pages each.

"Let them run down the columns. It's quick work spotting every number that has thirteen in it. With a bunch of typists on the job, you can list the names that the girls get. When you're through, you can eliminate a lot of names--businesses and the like--and the list you have will contain the names of whatever men that killer is still out to get."

Cardona was drawing circles on his sheet of paper. He put a ring around each number 13; then began to tap on the desk with his pencil. He eyed Clyde Burke for a moment; then made a definite effort to curb the enthusiasm that he had shown.

"I'll try this out, Burke," he said. "I'll work it through the telephone company. What you say may be true--but there'll be a lot of names in that list when--"

"What of it?" questioned Clyde. "It's not going to interfere with whatever else you're doing. Tell the phone company what you want--but make sure you have the list before to-night. If my hunch is right, Joe, there may be other lives at stake--"

"All right, Burke," interrupted Cardona, with a nod. He was trying to indicate that the reporter had convinced him. "I'll attend to that matter. By the way, where do you come in on this? You're looking for a story--is that the idea?"

"You bet I am," returned Clyde. "Say--if this hunch brings results, I'll be sitting pretty with the Classic office. You're sure you're going through with it, aren't you, Joe?"

"Leave it with me, Burke."

"If you're not sure you'll have that list by to-night," warned Clyde, "I'll take it up with the Classic. They'll make up that list pronto, just to see if the next murder has a thirteen in it. But I figured the idea belonged to you."

"Don't tell the newspaper office!" exclaimed Cardona. "What do you want to do--spoil the story for yourself? I'll take care of this right away, Burke. Positively. Call me up in an hour; I'll tell you when the lists will be here."

CLYDE BURKE smiled as he left headquarters. He had followed instructions from The Shadow. The trump card in The Shadow's game had been Clyde's statement that he would get the Classic to work on the list. That threat had been unneeded. Clyde had delivered it solely for good measure.

Back in his office, Joe Cardona was muttering to himself. In his left hand lay the fragment of paper that he had found at Crane's. The detective was staring at the ragged clew.

"Men thirteen," mumbled Cardona. "Maybe it means men with thirteen in their phone numbers. Maybe--"

The detective lifted the telephone and put in an official call. True to his statement, Cardona intended to arrange the list that Clyde Burke had suggested.

In a corner of the Classic office, Clyde Burke was preparing a report for Rutledge Mann. The reporter was including every detail--particularly the point of Joe Cardona's sudden response when he had heard mention of the number 13.

This report was going to The Shadow. Through Clyde Burke, the master sleuth had gained the end he sought. The list that was being compiled for Joe Cardona was actually under preparation for The Shadow!

CHAPTER XVI. THE SHADOW'S LIST.

IT was six o'clock when Clyde Burke reappeared at detective headquarters. Despite his nonchalant air, The Shadow's agent was tense. He had a new duty to perform; one that would require greater strategy than the morning's job.

Clyde had given his report to Rutledge Mann. The investment broker had forwarded it to The Shadow through a special mail chute in the door of an empty office. Later in the day, a new message had been brought to Mann by a telegraph messenger.

Clyde Burke had visited Mann to get his new instructions. Clyde had not been surprised at The Shadow's orders. The Shadow had picked the very point that Clyde had noted: the willingness with which Cardona had complied with the request to order the list of names.

The Shadow, however, had seen further than had Clyde. His keen brain had divined that Cardona must have gained a clew. It was Clyde's task now to discuss that subject with the ace detective. Through pleas or threats; through both, if necessary, Clyde must gain the truth from Joe Cardona.

Headquarters was practically deserted when Clyde Burke arrived. A light was shining from the open door of Cardona's office. The detective had told Clyde that he would be here. Clyde found him at his desk. Cardona looked up and delivered a sour smile.

"There's your brain child," the detective remarked, pointing to a huge stack of papers. "Six copies of the list you talked about. Take a look at one--but don't let it throw you."

Clyde picked up a sheaf of typewritten pages. Despite the thinness of the sheets, the stack was bulky. It was fastened at one end by a massive paper clip. Clyde estimated a hundred pages in the sheaf.

"All six lists here?" inquired Clyde.

"All six?" Cardona snorted. "What do you think that big pile is on the table for? That's just one list you've got there, young fellow. Look at it--three columns to a page--more than a hundred pages."

"I didn't know there would be so many," protested Clyde.

"Neither did I," grumbled the detective. "If I'd known it, I wouldn't have gone in for this cuckoo idea of yours. Do you know how many names there are with the number thirteen somewhere in the phone number? I'll tell you. Ten thousand--and that's a conservative estimate."

"It's a wonder you ever got the list."

"I wouldn't have, if it had been anybody but the phone company. I told them, what I wanted; I said I had to have the list. They never called back to tell me how big it was going to be. They put a whole office staff on the job to get the list here by five thirty. I nearly dropped dead when I saw the size of the bundle."

CLYDE BURKE sat down and lighted a cigarette. He glanced through a few pages of the list that he was holding; then tossed it on the desk.

"There's only one point in your favor, Burke," said Cardona, in a conciliatory manner. "This goofy idea of yours won't stop a murder; but it might lead to some further step. That doesn't help me now, though. If another victim goes the route, it won't help him much just because he has thirteen in his phone number."

Cardona paused glumly. Clyde Burke eyed the detective narrowly. The Shadow's agent saw his

opportunity.

"Look here, Joe." Clyde tapped the list that lay near him. "Why did you take up this idea when I suggested it?"

"Why?" parried Cardona. "Because I'm as cracked as you are, I guess."

"That's hokum, Joe," said Clyde, with a grin. "I remember what you said this morning. You pulled the stall that you were superstitious. That's why you took up the matter of number 13. That was hokum, too."

"Do you think so?"

"I know it. There's something you haven't told me about--something you're trying to keep out of the newspapers. You know me well enough, Joe. I'm with you. I'll keep mum on whatever you say. But why not put me straight?"

"Burke," remarked Cardona, seriously, "you've been hunting too much news down in Chinatown. You must have found too many hop joints. Too bad"--Cardona clucked sadly--"just another reporter gone down the slide."

"Now I know you're stalling." Clyde was emphatic. "Listen, Joe. I've been on the level with you. I gave you an idea and you took it up. I want to know why you grabbed that thought about the number thirteen. I'm going to find out, because you're going to tell me."

"I am?" Cardona's question was harsh.

"You are," retorted Clyde. "You are--or else--"

"Or else what?" barked Cardona.

Clyde paused. He studied the detective. Cardona's fists were clenched. Clyde had gone beyond the limit. Yet The Shadow's agent remained unperturbed. Clyde had received full instructions. Cardona's challenge had been anticipated by The Shadow. His message had provided the answer that Clyde Burke was to give.

"I'll tell you," declared Clyde quietly. "These lists here on this desk are a story in themselves. The number thirteen makes a corking tie-up. I'm ready to bust it if you bounce me out of here.

"I've got more than a hunch. I know that the number thirteen figures in these murders. You wouldn't have jumped if it didn't. If you don't come clean, Joe, I'm going to shoot this thirteen story for all it's worth.

"Thirteen clew in Neville-Engliss murders. Sleuth turns superstitious." Clyde was staring toward the ceiling as though he pictured headlines there. "Phone company aids police search--"

"Lay off, Burke!" Cardona was on his feet. "You started this goofy idea of--"

"And you went through with it," interrupted Clyde. "You can have the credit."

CARDONA'S dark eyes were ferocious. Clyde met them with a steady stare. Two determined men were face to face. Clyde Burke could see that Joe Cardona was in a fury.

"You can't do this, Burke!" came Cardona's hoarse challenge. "What do you want to do--put me in Dutch with the commissioner? I'm on the trail of murder--I'm no bait for newspaper ridicule."

"I don't see it, Joe," rejoined Clyde. "If this thirteen business means nothing to you, why should you get

sore about it?"

Cardona had no reply. He stood glowering, not knowing what to say.

"But if it means something to you," asserted Clyde, in a steady tone, "I'm with you to the limit. On one condition only--that you tell me what it's all about.

"I'm not asking anything unfair. I brought you something that you thought was worth while. I don't want to see my theory go in the ash can. I played fair. You know I always do. And fair play means a fifty-fifty break."

Joe Cardona sat down behind his desk. He nodded thoughtfully. He had received the import of Clyde's challenge. He was weighing the proposition. His capitulation came.

"You win, Burke," declared Cardona, slowly. "I've got a clew that fits in with what you gave me. That's why I rushed these lists. You always have played fair. Do I have your word that you'll say nothing about what I show you?"

"Absolutely," agreed Clyde.

Cardona reached in his vest pocket. He produced a folded envelope. From it, he drew the torn fragment of paper. He placed it on the desk in front of the reporter.

"I found that at Crane's," stated Cardona. "It was under the wastebasket. I discovered it after you were gone."

"Men thirteen," read Clyde. "Say, Joe--this does fit in with my idea."

"Strangler Hunn wrote that," asserted Cardona. "He must have made some notation from papers he found at Crane's. He tore the paper when he knew there was a fight coming."

"After he had killed MacAvoy Crane," commented Clyde. "Say, Joe--just what kind of investigation had Crane been doing?"

"I've told you enough, Burke," growled Cardona. "You wanted to know why I followed up your idea on number thirteen. I've told you. I thought that maybe this piece of paper meant something about thirteen men. After I heard your idea, I decided that I might be wrong."

Clyde nodded. Tactfully, he came back to the subject of the paper alone. Picking up a pad that lay on Cardona's desk, he printed with a pencil.

"It might read something like this," suggested Clyde, as he handed the result to Cardona. "Other words on both sides of men and 13, with the little chunk out of the center of the paper."

CARDONA studied Clyde's inscription. In copy of Strangler Hunn's wide-spaced style, Clyde had printed:

K I L L M E N W I T H

N U M B E R 1 3 T E L E P H O N E S

"That might be it." Cardona shrugged his shoulders as he tore up Clyde's effort and threw the pieces on the floor. "We've got two keys--'men' is one and '13' is the other. But you can guess anything for the rest of it.--"

The detective paused. A shadow had appeared at the door. Clyde Burke swung to see who had arrived. It was Fritz the janitor. Cardona grinned.

"Bucket and mop on the job again," was the detective's comment. "All right, Fritz. Start to clean up. We're leaving."

"Yah." was Fritz's dull reply.

The janitor shambled toward the desk. He set his bucket close by Clyde Burke's chair. His head was bent. Joe Cardona did not see the keen light that showed in Fritz's eyes as they spied the paper fragment which lay in front of Clyde Burke.

"That's all," asserted Cardona. He reached over and picked up the bit of paper. "I've answered your question, Burke. If this clew brings any new result, I'll let you in on it--when we're ready to shoot the story. But in the meantime, I'm trusting you. I showed this paper to the commissioner and he said to keep it out of sight."

"No one else has seen it?"

"No one except--well, no one except you."

"All right, Joe. I'll keep mum."

"You'd better. If anything is said about this chunk of paper"--Cardona was putting the fragment in the envelope--"I'll know who's to blame."

Fritz had slouched to the side of Cardona's desk. He was standing there as Clyde Burke arose. From the corner of his eye, the false janitor saw the reporter pick up the list of names that Cardona had given him for examination.

"Wait a minute, Burke!" Cardona shot a paw across the desk. "You don't get that list!"

"Why not?" questioned Clyde, in a surprised tone.

"You've got no use for it," snorted Cardona. "What's more, it's my idea now. I showed you the clew. I keep the lists."

As Cardona plucked the single list from Clyde's hand, Fritz placed his palm upon the stack of lists that lay at Cardona's side. Neither detective nor reporter saw the single, rolling motion with which the fake janitor coiled a paper-clipped list into a cylinder. Turning toward the wall, Fritz thrust the packet into his overalls.

"I don't get you, Joe," pleaded Clyde. "I'd like to look over one of those lists. Maybe I'd get another idea. I won't show it down at the Classic office."

"Nothing doing," growled Cardona. "I know you'll keep quiet about the paper I showed you. But a list like this is something that could lay around. I'm taking these lists up to the commissioner's to-night. Nobody gets a copy until he says so."

FRITZ had stooped beside the desk. He came up with a cluster of torn envelopes that Cardona, who scorned wastebaskets, had chucked on the floor. Thrusting an envelope in front of the detective's eyes, Fritz inquired:

"Any goot?"

"No," returned Cardona.

Fritz dropped the envelope in front of Clyde Burke, turning it over as he did so. He thrust a second envelope in front of Joe Cardona.

"This one," asked the janitor. "Any goot?"

"No!" shouted Cardona. "None of them are any good. That's why I threw them on the floor. Chuck them all out, Fritz."

Clyde Burke was staring at the envelope which Fritz had laid in front of him. On the flap--the side that Fritz had turned upward--was a coded sentence in blue ink. A message from The Shadow!

"List not needed," read Clyde. "Agree to all Cardona asks. Off duty." The words faded as though an invisible hand had wiped them from the envelope. Clyde was still staring when Fritz turned and picked up the envelope--now blank--to take it away with the others that the janitor held.

Joe Cardona still held the list that he had taken back from Clyde Burke. The detective placed it on the stack that lay beside him. He bundled up the lists and arose from his desk.

"I guess you're right, Joe," remarked Clyde. "I can't do anything with that list--maybe you can. Take credit for it when you talk with the commissioner. If anything comes out of it, the trouble will be worth while."

"The commissioner will like the idea, all right," asserted Joe. "He's strong for this deductive stuff. But he's a critical bird too, Burke. Ten thousand names"--Cardona shook his head doubtfully--"it's an awful lot. Too big a list, Burke. Too big."

Clyde had risen. He paced beside Cardona as the detective started from the office. Clyde preceded Joe through the door. Momentarily, from the corridor, Clyde glanced into the office. Fritz was facing the wall, busy with his mop. Overalls and stooped shoulders were the only impressions that Clyde gained in this parting glance.

Even to his agent, The Shadow's disguise had been perplexing. Clyde Burke, as he walked forth with Joe Cardona, still wondered how that message had come upon the envelope which the dull-faced janitor had picked up from the floor. Clyde had rejected the truth--it seemed incredible--that the supposed Fritz was The Shadow. Yet Clyde had obeyed the message; for it had been in the code that The Shadow always used.

IN Joe Cardona's office, the tall figure of Fritz ceased mopping. The false janitor moved into the corridor and reached his locker. He deposited mop and bucket. He drew black objects from the locker.

Two minutes later, a phantom form glided from the side exit. The Shadow, guised in blackness, merged with the gathered dusk. A soft laugh came from his hidden lips.

The Shadow had seen Cardona's clew. The Shadow had gained a copy of Cardona's list. His strategy had worked, through Clyde Burke's capable following of instructions.

Headed for his sanctum, The Shadow was prepared to combat coming crime. While police were engaged in twofold search for plotter and murderer, The Shadow had chosen the final method as his own.

The Shadow planned to frustrate crime by discovering the next victim whom the killer sought!

Clyde Burke had suggested the making of a list. Cardona had followed the reporter's idea. Ostensibly, the plan was Burke's; apparently, the list was now Cardona's.

Actually, both the idea and its completion belonged to The Shadow. He had supplied the purpose; he had gained the copy that he needed.

Ten thousand names! Such was the list that The Shadow had acquired. With his sight of Cardona's clew, he was ready to put the list in use!

CHAPTER XVII. MOVES IN THE GAME.

Two hours had passed. The blue light was burning in The Shadow's sanctum. Upon the table lay a torn fragment of paper. It was an exact replica of Cardona's clew. The Shadow had prepared it from memory:

M E N

1 3

Beside this reminder lay the stacked up papers of the list which The Shadow had taken from Cardona's office. Long-fingered hands were running down the columns of a final page.

A strange clock rested upon the table. Instead of hands, it showed marked circles which registered the passage of seconds, minutes and hours. Each second seemed to pause as though waiting The Shadow's order to depart. Meanwhile, the hands were finishing their task with untiring swiftness.

Though The Shadow's work was thorough, his rapid study of the listed names had been moving at the rate of one page a minute. Allowing for the time that it had taken for him to reach the sanctum, with brief minutes out for calls to Burbank, The Shadow had reached the finish of his survey in one hundred and twenty minutes.

With the last page checked, The Shadow gathered up the heap and deftly removed four pages. He spread these upon the table. Each page bore a mark--a penciled circle around a chosen name.

One page showed the marked name of Jerome Neville, with the telephone number Quadrangle 2-4138. Another revealed a circle about the name of Hiram Engliss, the telephone number Midtown 9-1362. The Shadow placed these pages aside.

The third page showed the marked name of Dudley Arment, with the telephone number Carmody 5-9213. The fourth also had a marked name: Clement Hessling, Riverview 6-3130.

Earphones clicked as The Shadow drew them from the wall. Burbank's quiet tone came across the wire:

"Burbank speaking."

"Report."

"Report from Marsland. He is at the apartment house where Clement Hessling lives in Greenwich Village. There is a party at Hessling's. Marsland on watch."

"Instructions. Marsland to remain on duty."

"Instructions received."

A pause; then came Burbank's next statement:

"Report from Vincent. He is stationed outside Tewksbury Court. Dudley Arment out of town. Expected back to-night."

"Instructions," ordered The Shadow. "Vincent to remain on duty until nine thirty. Then to join Marsland."

"Instructions received," came Burbank's final reply.

A map of Manhattan came into view upon The Shadow's table. A long, white finger touched one spot; then another. The Shadow was picking the locations where Clement Hessling and Dudley Arment lived.

IN some remarkable fashion, The Shadow had picked these two men from the entire list of ten thousand. He had narrowed the total number of potential victims to four. Two had already died: Neville and Engliss. Two were still in danger: Hessling and Arment.

During his checking of the list, The Shadow had ordered agents on duty.

First, Harry Vincent to watch Dudley Arment, when The Shadow had selected Arment's name. Second: Cliff Marsland to guard Clement Hessling.

Should either of these possible victims be threatened, a stalwart aid of The Shadow would be there to encounter Shakes Niefan. The Shadow had found no other possible victims, according to his survey of the list. He had decided, therefore, to participate in person.

Why had he chosen Dudley Arment in preference to Clement Hessling? Only The Shadow knew; his soft laugh came in mocking tones as his fingers picked up the torn slip of paper which he had prepared as a duplicate of Cardona's clew.

Of two men, Dudley Arment was the one whom The Shadow intended to visit. Still planning to guard Clement Hessling, he was ordering Harry Vincent to join Cliff Marsland. Two agents would form a better guard than one.

The Shadow's finger pointed to a spot on the map. It marked the location of the Cobalt Club. It moved to the district where Dudley Arment's apartment was located--Tewksbury Court was the name of the big apartment house. This indicated that The Shadow would first travel to the club; then to Arment's uptown residence.

The dialed clock was nearing the hour of nine. Hands folded the map. The light clicked out. The sanctum was in darkness. A swish; then an eerie laugh. The Shadow had departed.

DOWN in Greenwich Village, Cliff Marsland was loitering beside the only entrance to the small apartment house where Clement Hessling lived. The sound of boisterous laughter was coming from opened windows in the second story front. A party was in progress in Hessling's apartment.

A stroller stopped his pace on the other side of the street. His right hand shook as it raised a match to light a cigarette. The flame revealed the face of Shakes Niefan. Cliff, though he glanced across the street, did not observe the countenance because of the raised hand.

As he tossed the match away, Shakes glanced toward the lighted windows of Hessling's apartment. He heard the revelry. With a scowl, he moved along the street. He turned a corner, entered a telephone booth and made a call.

"Hello..." Shakes announced himself by his tone. "Yeah... I'm down here... The guy's throwing a party... Listen; what about the other bird? Suppose I go up there to-night and pick this fellow tomorrow..."

"You called his place, eh? I see... No answer... Well, maybe he'll be in when I get there... Sure... If he isn't there, I'll come back here later on..."

Shakes left the telephone booth. He sauntered from the store and walked at a rapid pace until he neared an entrance of the Eighth Avenue subway. Shakes descended.

IN his darkened room at the Hotel Morrisette, Lester Drayson, alias Martin Hyslop, was gazing from the window. The glow of his cigar kept flickering as the smoker took quick, short puffs.

Gazing to the street, Drayson saw a limousine pull up in front of Wimbledon's. Two men alighted. One was Commissioner Ralph Weston; the other was Detective Joe Cardona. An impatient growl came from Drayson's throat.

The hiding man sensed danger in this new visit. Well did Drayson know that through Wimbledon he could be brought to trial and convicted for his connection with the Universal Aircraft Corporation. Wimbledon in touch with the police commissioner. This was a repeated token that time could not be lost.

Moving back into the room, Drayson picked up the telephone. He hesitated; then replaced the instrument on the table. After a few impatient paces, he again picked up the telephone and spoke to the clerk below.

"Call that number again," he ordered. "Carmody 5-9213."

The number of Dudley Arment's telephone! While The Shadow and Shakes Niefan, each with a different purpose, were on their way to find if Arment had returned, Lester Drayson was choosing this method to learn if the man had returned home.

There had been a peculiar accent to Drayson's voice, when he had spoken to the clerk. Arment, should he be at home, would not recognize that tone, even though he might know Drayson's usual manner of speaking.

A few apologetic words--a bluff about a wrong number--these would suffice if Drayson chose to conceal his identity. But no need for such measures came. As Drayson waited, the clerk's voice responded with the statement that the number did not answer.

TEN minutes after Lester Drayson had made this futile call, a man appeared at the nearest corner to the towering building known as Tewksbury Court. Shakes Niefan, agent of death, had arrived to seek his newest victim: Dudley Arment.

CHAPTER XVIII. THE RETURN.

"THE street is blocked, Mr. Cranston."

The statement came from the uniformed chauffeur in the front seat of Lamont Cranston's limousine. The man was speaking through the lowered window between the front and the back.

"All right, Stanley." The words were in Cranston's quiet tone. "I shall leave you here. Go up to the next street and turn down the further avenue. Wait for me at the corner of this street and the avenue."

"Very well, sir."

As Stanley spoke, the door opened and Lamont Cranston stepped to the street. The action was performed before the chauffeur could alight. As Stanley began to back the limousine, he looked in vain for signs of his master. Lamont Cranston had disappeared upon the darkened sidewalk.

There was a reason for his remarkable departure. A small bag lay in the back seat of the limousine. It was a bag that Cranston always carried in the car. The bag was empty. Entering the limousine as Lamont Cranston, The Shadow had taken cloak and hat from within that bag. In his black garb, he had alighted.

The street was under repair. An unexpected barrier had caused The Shadow to disembark a half block from his goal. This was the street in back of Tewksbury Court. The Shadow had chosen to make his entrance from this direction.

IN the lobby of Tewksbury Court, a young man was seated by a potted rubber plant. This was Harry Vincent, agent of The Shadow. Harry's eyes were roving constantly between two spots; a pigeonhole behind the clerk's desk; the clock above the desk itself.

The pigeonhole bore the number 18 M. That was the number of Dudley Arment's apartment. Mail showed in the pigeonhole, along with a key. That was the sign that Arment had not returned.

The long hand of the clock had reached its lowest point. Half past nine had arrived. Harry's vigil was ended. Rising, The Shadow's agent strolled from the lobby. He had called Burbank fifteen minutes before. He was following new instructions. Harry was to join Cliff Marsland.

Harry had not seen Shakes Niefan enter. He had not been looking for the killer. Harry had been appointed to cover Dudley Arment should the man return. Harry had fulfilled that duty.

The Shadow had arranged a clockwork schedule to-night. Two unforeseen factors had interfered. One was the closed street behind the large apartment house. That had delayed The Shadow, withholding his arrival to the final minute.

The other factor was the clock above the lobby desk. It was nearly five minutes fast. Harry Vincent had neglected to check the time. Hence an interval occurred between the departure of Harry Vincent and the arrival of The Shadow.

At the very beginning of that interim, a middle-aged man walked into the lobby of Tewksbury Court. He approached the desk. The clerk nodded in greeting.

"Good evening, Mr. Arment," he said. "A pleasant trip?"

"Yes." Arment shifted a suitcase to the floor. "My key, please, and my mail."

Receiving these, Arment picked up the bag and entered a waiting elevator. He was whisked to the eighteenth floor. He walked down a hallway, past the shaft of the service elevator and unlocked the door of his apartment. He entered and turned on the living room light.

The room seemed stuffy. Arment opened a window to an inner courtyard. He recrossed the room and opened his suitcase. He brought out a small packet of folded papers, which he laid upon a table.

Next he unlocked a table drawer, using an oddly-shaped key from a ring which he brought from his pocket. He took more papers from the drawer, added them to those on the table and delivered a satisfied smile.

Arment went through the letters that he had received from the clerk. One impressed him. He tore open the envelope and unfolded a sheet of paper. His mouth opened as his eyes stared.

Dropping the letter to the table, Dudley Arment reached for the telephone. His hand stopped before it had gained the instrument. A snarling voice brought the interruption. Arment looked up.

STANDING at the door of an inner room was a man in hat and overcoat. His eyes were shifting; his lips had a twitch. His right hand, shaking with a peculiar wobble, held a stub-nosed revolver.

The intruder had evidently entered before Arment had arrived. The sight of the revolver was disconcerting; the shake of the hand momentarily nullified Arment's qualms. Another glance at the man's face, however, convinced Dudley Arment that he faced a real menace.

"Don't mind these shakes," sneered the intruder. "That's what they call me--Shakes. Shakes Niefan. I don't mind telling you the name. You'll never spill it."

The killer was moving toward the table. Arment, his hands half-raised, was staring. Shakes changed to a circling course. Constantly facing his intended victim, the murderer gained the window and placed his gloved left hand upon the raised sash.

From where he stood, Dudley Arment could view both door and window. He was at one point of an imaginary triangle; Shakes Niefan was at the second; the door marked the third. Instinctively, Arment gazed toward the door.

"Stand where you are," growled Shakes. "There's nobody coming in that door. You latched it when you shut it. You aren't going out that way, either--not until they carry you out."

"What do you mean?" blurted Arment. "Do you intend to kill me?"

"I do," retorted Shakes, with an ugly grin. "With this window down, nobody's going to hear the shot. I'm leaving with those papers of yours--and you'll never tell anybody what they were about."

Shakes had paused in the delivery of this challenge. Again his gloved hand gripped the sash. Arment, in desperation, stared toward the door. A gasp of a different tone came from his lips.

The glass knob of the door was turning. Silently and almost imperceptibly, a motion was in progress. Some one on the other side had inserted key or pick into the lock; the latch was yielding and the knob was acting with it!

INSTANTLY, Dudley Arment realized his error. His gasp had been a tip-off to Shakes Niefan. Had Arment kept silent, all would have been well. The time that Shakes was taking to lower the window might have allowed the door to open.

Now, however, as Arment glanced again at Shakes, the killer was alert. He was staring at the doorknob. His left hand rested motionless upon the sash; his right hand was unconsciously turning its weapon toward the direction of the door. Forgetting Arment, Shakes was preparing for an unknown enemy.

Desperation brought action. With a wild effort, Dudley Arment sought to make up for his mistake. Shakes Niefan was momentarily off guard. That gave the opportunity. With a ferocious leap, Dudley Arment hurled himself across the room to grapple with Shakes Niefan.

The killer turned to meet the onslaught. Arment caught his wrist and thrust it upward. Swinging downward, Shakes delivered a vicious blow to Arment's head. The force of the stroke was hampered by the brakelike pressure of Arment's arm; but the metal of the gun, as it glanced from Arment's temple, had a stunning power.

Dudley Arment slumped. Shakes Niefan threw his left arm about the stunned man's body. Holding the helpless form as a shield, Shakes swung again to meet the menace from the door.

His action was not an instant too soon. The door had opened. Upon the threshold stood an avenging

form in black. The Shadow, automatic in his gloved fist, had arrived to thwart the killer!

CHAPTER XIX. INTO THE NIGHT.

Six feet lay between The Shadow and the men by the window. The brief struggle between Dudley Arment and Shakes Niefan had given The Shadow the final moments required for his entrance. Though Shakes had commandeered Arment's body as a shield, The Shadow still possessed a slender advantage.

Shakes, as he was turning toward the door, had chosen the best course for his own protection. He was thrusting his gun beneath Arment's left arm, so that he might fire at the door. Had The Shadow waited for a moment, he would have lost all chance to rescue Dudley Arment. To cope with Shakes Niefan, he would have been forced to fire through Arment's body.

The Shadow knew this. He performed the unexpected. Seizing the short interval which still remained--the moments necessary for Shakes to fire-- The Shadow sprang forward in a furious attack.

His left hand, picking the spot beneath Arment's arm, shot straight for Shakes Niefan's wrist. His right, dropping its automatic, caught Arment's body and whirled it from the killer's grasp.

Shakes fired. The hot tongue of the revolver flame seared the face beneath the cloak collar as the bullet blasted upward through the hat brim. The Shadow had turned the aim a fraction of an inch.

All mobsters feared The Shadow; but Shakes, a murderer to the end, forgot his dread. As his right wrist faltered in the viselike grasp, Shakes shot a hard blow with his left fist. It was a stroke that The Shadow could not parry.

The Shadow staggered as the punch landed below the hat brim. Dropping sidewise, he still managed to grip Shakes Niefan's wrist, while his free hand caught at the arm which had loosed the drive.

Shakes sought to deliver another jab. The Shadow's clutch prevented him. With both wrists clamped, Shakes gave a vicious twist. The Shadow's cloaked form went backward against the window ledge. Snarling, Shakes tried to force his enemy through.

The Shadow's left fist relaxed. That action changed the killer's purpose. With right wrist coming free, Shakes snapped backward and swung his gun directly toward The Shadow's hidden face.

THIS was the move on which The Shadow had counted. As Shakes pressed finger to trigger, The Shadow's hand tightened with a new twist. The gun barked. The bullet zipped past The Shadow's shoulder, into the window frame. Then, as the twist increased, Shakes felt his fingers loosen. His revolver clattered to the floor.

The killer straightened with new fury. As The Shadow twisted sidewise, to avoid the danger of the low-silled window, Shakes launched his body forward with terrific power. Catching The Shadow off balance, he sent the black-garbed warrior sprawling.

The fighters grappled as they struck the floor. Shakes saw a long black arm stretch out to grip the automatic which lay three feet away. With a quick kick, Shakes sent the weapon skidding across the floor, past the spot where Dudley Arment, half-dazed, was raising himself to one elbow.

Then, as The Shadow looked for another grapple, Shakes introduced a trick that he had learned from his old pal, Strangler Hunn. The fighters were half risen; they were equal in their grapple; but The Shadow's back was toward the wall. With a furious thrust, Shakes hurled The Shadow's shoulders forward. The slouch hat struck the wall. The blow, though glancing, was sufficient for what Shakes Niefan wanted.

As The Shadow slumped, with loosening grip, Shakes Niefan wrenched free. He dove for his gleaming revolver, which lay on the floor by the window. Pouncing upon the weapon, he swung as he arose erect. Back to the window, he aimed for The Shadow.

The cloaked fighter had risen to his left knee, with his right arm stretched out as a support. His cloak had been ripped in the struggle; the tattered collar lay across his face. Above it, burning eyes peered from beneath the hat brim.

His lost automatic still lay beyond Dudley Arment, who, in turn, had weakened and slumped to the floor. Shakes Niefan had been lucky, so far. He was out to kill before The Shadow could renew the struggle. Shakes had his revolver swinging into aim. The Shadow's automatic was far away from reach.

BUT Shakes had not reckoned with The Shadow's methods. Never did The Shadow rely upon a single weapon. Shakes, unknowingly, had played into The Shadow's trap. By freeing himself from The Shadow's grasp, he had given The Shadow a better opportunity than his own.

The Shadow's free left hand was swinging from beneath the folds of the black cloak. Shakes Niefan was too late. Before the forefinger of his steadying hand could press revolver trigger, the blackened muzzle of an automatic belched forth its message of retaliation.

The Shadow's left hand was perfect in its aim. The force of the bullet seemed to send Shakes tottering backward. The killer's arms flung upward. The revolver sped from nervous fingers. Shot close to the heart, Shakes lost his balance as he sprawled across the window sill.

The murderer's body poised; then helpless and lifeless, it toppled on the brink. Head foremost, Shakes Niefan's dead form went hurtling toward the courtyard, eighteen stories down. Into the darkness of the night, the murderer took the plunge that followed the death which he deserved.

A grim laugh sounded as The Shadow gained his feet. While his mockery whispered through the room, the black-garbed avenger glided forward and regained his first automatic. His burning eyes turned to the table. They saw the letter which Arment had read.

The laugh was repeated. This time, it came in a tone that told new understanding. One glance at the papers on Arment's table: The Shadow knew the story. Gathering letters and papers together, The Shadow turned toward Dudley Arment.

The rescued man was seated on the floor. His hand was pressed to the side of his head. Still groggy from the blow that Shakes had given him, Arment was trying to regain his faculties.

Papers and letters swept beneath The Shadow's cloak. The Shadow stopped and thrust his arm about Arment's body. He raised the stupefied man to his feet. While Arment aided with faltering steps, The Shadow dragged him swiftly into the hall and swung the door of the apartment shut.

The door of the service elevator was open. The Shadow pulled Arment in the car and closed the door. The elevator moved downward. Its drop was neatly timed. Five seconds after the departure of The Shadow and Dudley Arment, a regular elevator stopped at the eighteenth floor. Two attendants hurried to the door of Arment's apartment and began to pound upon it.

FRESH air revived Dudley Arment as The Shadow brought the man to the rear street. Yet Arment was still a bit bewildered. Instinctively, he allowed himself to be led along by this stranger who urged him to more rapid pace.

Eighty feet brought them to the corner of the avenue. Stanley, drowsing behind the wheel, looked up as

he heard some one stagger into the rear of the car. Then came Cranston's voice from the darkness. Hearing his master's order, Stanley nodded. He started the motor as the rear door closed.

The window was shut between the front and the back. Dudley Arment, slumped in the comfortable cushions, found himself listening to a whispered voice that spoke in uncanny tones. Dully, Arment nodded his understanding. He clutched papers and letter that were thrust into his hand. Fumbling, he thrust them in an inside pocket.

A gloved hand rested on Arment's shoulders. The other hand produced a small vial and pressed the bottle to Arment's lips. The rescued man gulped as he tasted a biting, pungent liquor. Then came a burning as new vigor possessed him.

As the car stopped, a hand reached forward and opened the door. Hidden lips hissed their command in a voice that Dudley Arment could do naught else but obey.

"Go! Do as I have ordered!"

Dudley Arment stepped to the curb. His head was swimming; he saw the limousine pull away. Then the dizziness ended. The potency of The Shadow's draught produced a swift effect. Dudley Arment steadied. His hand pressed against his pocket. His lips became firm. He studied his surroundings and nodded as he gained the location. He hailed a passing cab and entered.

The voice of Lamont Cranston was sounding through the speaking tube of the limousine. Stanley nodded and turned at the nearest corner. In the darkness of the limousine, a slouch hat tumbled into the opened bag; gloves fell into the inverted hat; then came the folds of the discarded black cloak.

The limousine took another corner. It rolled past the entrance to the Hotel Morrisette. It drew up in back of Commissioner Weston's big car. The door opened. Lamont Cranston stepped out. He ordered Stanley to await him. He ascended the steps of Roscoe Wimbledon's home.

Lester Drayson, staring from the darkness of his hotel room, observed the arrival of Lamont Cranston. He wondered why this new visitor had come.

Little did the watching fugitive realize what had happened at Dudley Arment's. Lester Drayson did not know that he was soon to learn the power that The Shadow held!

CHAPTER XX. THE FUGITIVE APPEARS.

"MR. LAMONT CRANSTON is here, sir."

It was Harkin who made the announcement from the door of Roscoe Wimbledon's library. The president of the World Wide Aviation Company looked toward Police Commissioner Ralph Weston.

"Shall we have Cranston join us?" questioned Wimbledon. "Or shall I have Harkin tell him to wait?"

"Let him come in," decided Weston. "I sent Ross Harlton to the testing field," stated Wimbledon, as soon as Harkin had departed, "because I did not think it wise for him to be at this conference. Of course, commissioner, Cranston is a friend of yours, as well as mine. I suppose it is all right for him to enter."

"I think it is," declared Weston. "I remember that Cranston gave us some excellent suggestions when he was here before. Perhaps, if we take him into our confidence--"

Weston paused. The door had opened. Lamont Cranston, quiet of demeanor and perfect in attire, was standing on the threshold.

"Good evening, commissioner," greeted the arrival. "I thought I recognized your car outside the house. Good evening, Cardona."

With a quiet smile, Cranston stepped forward to shake hands with Roscoe Wimbledon, who had advanced to greet him. Then, before taking a chair, the visitor inquired:

"I am not intruding?"

"Not at all," asserted Weston. "Sit down, Cranston. Our conference may interest you. We are still on the subject of murder."

"No clues to the death of MacAvoy Crane?"

"Yes--and no. There have been two killings since then. Two men: Jerome Neville and Hiram Engliss have been slain. We fear that a second murderer is at work--following up the evil deed of Strangler Hunn."

"I believed that such might happen," Cranston spoke seriously as he leaned back in an armchair. "I noticed in the newspapers that Neville and Engliss were killed by the same gun. What connection have you found between the two men?"

WESTON glanced toward Cardona. The swarthy detective nodded. The naturalness of Cranston's statement answered a point that Cardona had been making; namely, that the thirteen clew had merit as the only link between two deaths.

"We have very little," stated Weston. "Cardona has noted that both Neville and Engliss had phone numbers that contained the number thirteen. He has obtained a list"--Weston raised a sheaf of papers from his lap--"of all such numbers in Manhattan. Our theory is that other murders are coming; that in this list we have the names of men who are threatened."

"And the list contains how many names?" quizzed Cranston.

"Ten thousand," replied Weston, glumly.

There was a pause. Roscoe Wimbledon shook his head. His attitude showed disappointment.

"Too bad," he remarked, "that Crane did not manage to communicate with me. Too bad that Drayson cannot be brought to justice. This list of names seems too hopeless."

"Ten thousand names." Cranston was speaking quietly. "Number thirteen. Can you tell me this, commissioner: why did the number thirteen appear so significant?"

"Because it was in both telephone numbers," broke in Joe Cardona.

"So I understand," rejoined Cranston. "But from the importance that you attach to it, I can see that there is something behind it all. Some clew--some document--perhaps an incomplete notation--bearing the number thirteen."

Commissioner Weston stared at the speaker. Then he swung to Joe Cardona.

"Cranston has hit the bull's-eye," declared the commissioner. "If he can do that, he might have something better to tell us if he saw the clew itself. Show him that paper, Cardona."

The detective produced the folded envelope. He removed the paper fragment. He carried it to Cranston. The visitor studied it with interest. The Shadow had viewed that torn, bit while disguised as Fritz, the janitor. Seeing it now, in the guise of Cranston, he acted as though he had never observed it before.

"That paper," announced Weston, "was found in MacAvoy Crane's apartment. The scrawl--letters and figures wide apart--indicate that it was done by Strangler Hunn."

"The remains, I suppose, of a paper that Hunn destroyed?"

"Probably."

"And something, I assume, that Hunn copied from Crane's papers?"

"That is our assumption."

"Thirteen," mused Cranston. "Part of a telephone number. What do these letters mean above? M--E--N

"Something about men," stated Cardona. "Maybe a message like kill men with number thirteen telephones, or something to that effect."

"Write down the names of the two men who were murdered," suggested Cranston. "Put the proper telephone number beneath each name."

Cardona took a sheet of paper from Wimbledon's desk. The aircraft magnate and the police commissioner leaned forward in new interest as Cardona followed Cranston's order. The detective passed the notations to the millionaire. A thin smile came to Cranston's lips.

RISING, Cranston handed the torn bit of paper to Weston. Pointing to it, Cranston said:

"Those letters: M--E--N. Crudely formed and poorly spaced, they might be part of one word. On the contrary, a separation might be intended between them. M, for instance, or E, might end a word. The next letter might begin one."

"Yes," agreed Weston. "At the same time, they could all belong to one word--like 'men'--"

"I am not disputing that," interposed Cranston. "I merely wanted to call your attention to the fact that you have a more complete clew than the mere number thirteen. Look at these names."

He passed Weston the paper that Cardona had just written, with the names and telephone numbers:

Jerome Neville

Quadrangle 2-4138

Hiram Engliss

Midtown 9-1362

"The name Jerome," remarked Cranston, casually, "ends with the letters M and E. The name Neville begins with the letter N. There you have it.

M--E--N.

"Now look below. Hiram ends with M. Engliss begins with E; its next letter is N. Again the same rotation.

"That's it!" cried Weston, excitedly. "Look here, Cardona! The torn paper is explained! Strangler Hunn wrote a name--below it the telephone number!"

"Let me have your list, commissioner." Cranston took the sheaf of papers from Weston. "Yes, it would

be a great task to kill off all people in New York who have a thirteen in their telephone numbers.

"But I should judge that we will find very few who have the M--E--N combination in their names. This is a double clew--based on your paper slip, Cardona. One man is wanted by the killers. So they have decided to eliminate all. Evidently they are taking no chances."

Cardona grabbed a copy of the list that was lying on Wimbledon's table. He began to run down the columns-- something that Lamont Cranston was already doing.

"We can cut this list down to almost nothing!" exclaimed the detective. "We've got all the names with thirteen. I'm looking for names with M--E--N in--"

"Here's one," remarked Cranston. "Under letter A. Dudley Arment; telephone is Carmody 5-9213."

Writing the name and number on a sheet of paper, Cranston handed the data to Cardona. The detective stared at the information; then jumped to the telephone.

"I'm going to talk to this man Arment," he asserted, as he dialed the number. "I'll be foxy--he won't suspect anything. If he's at his place, I can go over there and find him--"

Cardona paused. A voice was clicking over the wire. Cardona parried with his conversation.

"Hello..." Cardona was planning to fake that he had the wrong number. "Is that you, George? What's that?... No... I think I've got the wrong number... Yes... You say George is there... I mean George Jennings... He's there?"

Cardona lowered the phone and held the mouthpiece against his chest. He spoke in a low tone to Weston.

"I don't get this," admitted the detective. "I fake the name George--they say they'll let me talk to him. So I fake George Jennings--they say that's the guy that's there--"

CARDONA broke off. The receiver was clicking. Weston and Wimbledon seemed puzzled. Cranston, making notations on sheets of paper, was unobserved as he enjoyed a quiet smile.

"George Jennings?" Cardona was inquiring. "My name?... Terry Drake... Yes... Where am I calling from? Say... Cardona's scowl suddenly changed. "Say... Is that you, Inspector Klein? Yes... This is Joe Cardona. I had a tip that there was going to be trouble where you are... Yes... Yes... Right. I'll call back."

Cardona hung up. With a grim face, he turned to Weston. The commissioner was staring anxiously, awaiting the news.

"I was stalling" declared Cardona, "and so was Inspector Klein. It looks bad, commissioner. Man shot--thrown out the window eighteen stories into the courtyard. They think it's Dudley Arment. They're trying to identify the body."

"Another murder!" blazed Weston, rising. "The same clew. You're right, Cranston! They're killing innocent men to get the one they want. Neville, Engliss--now Arment--"

"Dudley Arment," interposed Cranston, "is the one the killers wanted. They did not need to murder Jerome Neville and Hiram Engliss."

"Why not?" queried Weston.

Cranston passed him three sheets of paper. On each one, the millionaire had printed a name and a telephone number, using capital letters. The papers read:

JEROME NEVILLE

QUADRANGLE 2-4138

HIRAM ENGLISS

MIDTOWN 9-1362

DUDLEY ARMENT

CARMODY 5-9213

"The name on one line," remarked Cranston. "The telephone number beneath. Probably the address below-- that part was destroyed. Even allowing for Strangler Hunn's unique scrawl, it is obvious that Dudley Arment is the man.

"In his name, only, do the figures that form thirteen come directly beneath the letters M--E--N. You can search this entire list"--Cranston was tapping the sheaf which he held--"and you will probably fail to find another name that fills the requirement."

"If Arment has been killed!" exclaimed Cardona.

"It may not be his body that was found in the courtyard," suggested Cranston.

"If Dudley Arment is alive," shouted Weston, as he pounded Wimbledon's desk, "we'll find him. He is the key to all these crimes!"

"Why Arment?" questioned Wimbledon. "I have told you that Lester Drayson is the man in back of it. Why not find Drayson?"

"We shall find both!" announced Weston. "Every man of the force will be searching for them. I'll start the search to-night. Lester Drayson and Dudley Arment--"

"A search will not be necessary, came a sarcastic tone from the door."

Commissioner Weston wheeled to stare at two men who had entered during the excitement. One, with black hair and black mustache, was holding a leveled revolver. The other, middle-aged, was pale-faced as he stood unarmed beside his companion.

Joe Cardona had turned with Ralph Weston. Like the commissioner, the detective was startled. Roscoe Wimbledon was rigid behind his flat-topped desk, his hands spread on the woodwork while he glared at the intruders.

Only, Lamont Cranston appeared unperturbed. In leisurely fashion, the millionaire was raising a match to light a cigarette. The sight of the revolver did not trouble him. Like a playwright watching a drama of his own creation, The Shadow was ready to enjoy the coming scene.

CHAPTER XXI. DRAYSON SPEAKS

"WHO are you?"

The challenge came from Commissioner Ralph Weston as he faced the leveled gun. The man at the door

had finger set on trigger. The moving muzzle of the revolver warned all to hold their ground.

"I am Lester Drayson." The intruder raised his free hand to brush back his dyed hair. "I am the man for whom you have been searching. I have come to end the search."

"Heed my warning!" countered Weston. "You are wanted for fraud and murder--"

"No more words!" Drayson's fierce statement brought silence. "I am here to speak. Until I have finished, no one can interrupt me. Since I am wanted for murder"--Drayson's lips were scornful--"I promise you that I can shoot to kill. After I have told my story--then you may decide your answer."

Drayson paused to glare in challenge. Every member of the group was silent. Weston and Cardona were tense with suppressed rage. Wimbledon had paled. Cranston's firm-set visage had alone retained its calm.

"I have returned to New York," announced Drayson, in a cold tone, "to find a man named Dudley Arment. I have been living here under the name of Martin Hyslop, at the Morrisette Hotel. I have been evading the law because I have been awaiting Arment's return."

"Dudley Arment was once my secretary. He still served as my confidential man. When the Universal Aircraft scandal broke, I was in Chicago. Arment wired me to flee. I reached Canada. There, I received further word from Arment.

"Jackson Gleek, general manager of Universal, had been working to swindle Universal Aircraft. Falsified books, cheapened materials, faked expenses--all were his work. All the while, he was but the tool. A bigger man than Gleek was behind it. A man who was clever enough to know that by planting the blame on me, he could gain further millions.

"I wrote to Arment. I told him to await my return; to hold the papers which he had; to get more evidence outside of New York. He was not in town when I arrived. I sent another letter to his hotel, telling him where he could reach me."

Lester Drayson paused. Stepping aside, but with revolver still in readiness, he used his free hand to indicate the man beside him.

"This man," he announced, "is Dudley Arment. He has gathered the final documents--papers which will support my story--authentic letters received by Jackson Gleek from the master crook behind a game of crime. He has brought them for you, Commissioner Weston."

AT a sign from Drayson, Arment advanced and handed the documents to Weston. Drayson's gun still pointed its challenge, but the man's eyes no longer followed Weston. They were gazing straight across the room, toward Roscoe Wimbledon.

Joe Cardona shifted his hand to his pocket. Unobserved by Drayson, the detective began to draw a gun. To Weston, who was studying the papers, he mumbled:

"Be ready, commissioner. I'm going to fire on this guy."

"No, no!" exclaimed Weston, suddenly. He looked up and gripped Cardona's arm. "Don't touch Drayson! These papers prove his story. There is the man we want!"

The commissioner was pointing to Roscoe Wimbledon. The man behind the desk was livid. Afraid to move because of Drayson's gun, he could only scowl in fury when he heard Weston's statement.

"Cover Wimbledon," ordered the commissioner.

Cardona obeyed. Weston turned to Drayson.

"Your case is here," asserted the commissioner, tapping the papers. "We shall take care of Roscoe Wimbledon. You will have the opportunity to testify against him. Deliver up your gun, Drayson."

The man at the door stepped forward and gave his revolver to the commissioner. Weston tossed it in a chair. Drayson appeared both apologetic and relieved.

"They tried to murder Arment tonight," he explained. "Some unknown rescuer battled with the killer and Arment escaped. He came to me. I had seen your car from my window. The best course was to come here. I feared Wimbledon, however. Had I been unarmed, he might have shot me, before I could explain; hoping to justify himself because the law was seeking me."

"I understand," nodded Weston. "Your course was a radical one, Drayson, but it at least assured you of the hearing that you deserved."

Lamont Cranston was smiling. Drayson had not mentioned that the visit here had been suggested by Arment, who was acting under instructions that his mysterious rescuer had given him. The Shadow had arranged this climax, almost to the detail.

ROSCOE WIMBLETON had steadied. The exposed crook had feared Lester Drayson's wrath. With Cardona covering him, Wimbledon was not afraid to talk. He blurted forth denouncing statements.

"Forged papers!" was his cry. "Those are the documents that Drayson has brought you. You are treating with a crook, commissioner. Drayson is a fugitive from justice--a branded thief--a murderer--"

For a moment, Weston wavered. He had been convinced by Drayson's statements. Now he was on the verge of listening to Wimbledon's logic. It was Lamont Cranston who intervened.

"MacAvoy Crane was murdered," came Cranston's statement. "Why? Because he had learned the name of the one man who could aid Lester Drayson. Crane was honest. Had he seen that his investigation led to Dudley Arment's death, he would have spoken.

"So it was necessary to destroy Crane's evidence. It was necessary also to eliminate Crane. Strangler Hunn did that work; acting under orders, he wrote down the only data that he needed--the name, telephone number and address of Dudley Arment, the man whom Crane had learned was Drayson's secretary."

Cranston was speaking to Weston. The commissioner was nodding his agreement.

"Wimbledon hired Crane," resumed Cranston. "Wimbledon ordered Crane's death. That was paradoxical; therefore, it proved deceiving. Strangler Hunn destroyed his own notation. All that was left was the bit of paper that Cardona found as a clue. To whom did you show that paper, Cardona?"

"Only to the commissioner," replied Cardona, "and to Wimbledon here. They were the only ones that saw it, until--"

"Until you showed it to me," interposed Cranston, quietly.

Cardona nodded. He had been about to mention the name of Clyde Burke. Cranston had intervened in time to stop him.

"Wimbledon," asserted Cranston, facing the man behind the desk, "your guilt is proven. Why should any one follow the method of killing men whose names had the letters M--E--N and whose telephone numbers contained the figure 13?"

"Only one man would have chosen that method. You are the man--the only one who saw the clew and who recognized its meaning. You blundered when you ordered the deaths of Jerome Neville and Hiram Engliss. I mentioned that fact before Drayson arrived."

"How could I have found those names?" stammered Wimbledon. "Where was I to get the numbers--"

Cranston's tall form was beside the desk. Long fingers gripped a knob. A drawer came open. Cranston's hand pulled forth a stack of papers.

"Here is the final evidence." Cranston passed the crumpled sheaf to Weston. "Wimbledon formed a list of his own. He had four days to work on it between the time that you first came here, commissioner, and the night when Jerome Neville was slain."

Commissioner Weston was thumbing the papers. Lamont Cranston had guessed aright. This list, like the one that the telephone company had prepared in short order, was formed of names with number thirteen listings.

MORE damaging was an attached sheet which Weston discovered with the sheaf. It bore four names, with telephone numbers. Jerome Neville, Hiram Engliss, Dudley Arment and a fourth that Weston had not known: that of Clement Hessling.

"One more point." Cranston was emphatic with his final statement. "The compilation of this list was a private job; but it would have required the work of two persons to be completed within four days.

"I know now why Roscoe Wimbledon and Ross Harlton went into continued seclusion. Presumably, they were making a technical survey of the affairs of Universal Aircraft. Actually, they were preparing this murderer's list. There's another man you want, commissioner. Ross Harlton, accessory to the murders of Jerome Neville and Hiram Engliss--"

Lamont Cranston paused suddenly and swung to the door. The others followed his move. Keen ears had caught the sound of footsteps just in time. Standing in the doorway, his face glowering above the barrel of a raised revolver, was Ross Harlton.

Roscoe Wimbledon's accomplice had returned unexpectedly. From the hallway, he had sensed the truth. He was here to thwart the law; here to save Roscoe Wimbledon, the master crook whose schemes he had abetted!

CHAPTER XXII. THE BREAK.

THE arrival of Ross Harlton was the final proof of Roscoe Wimbledon's treachery. Lester Drayson, with Dudley Arment's documents at hand, had launched the accusation against the master crook. The Shadow--speaking as Lamont Cranston--had driven home denouncing arguments.

Ross Harlton, here to use force in rescue of his chief, had brought opportunity to Roscoe Wimbledon. The plotting president of World Wide Aviation had no chance to clear his blackened name, but Harlton's unexpected aid offered him a way to freedom.

Of the five men who had cornered Roscoe Wimbledon, only Joe Cardona had a gun in readiness. Warned of danger, the moment that he saw Lamont Cranston turn, Cardona swung to the door and

aimed for Ross Harlton.

One prompt shot from the detective's gun could end this attempt at rescue. The Shadow recognized that fact upon the instant. Playing the part of Lamont Cranston, he stood and watched, relying upon Cardona's ability to down the foeman at the door.

Ross Harlton had picked Cardona as the man whom he must meet. He saw the revolver in the detective's hand. Springing inward from the doorway, Harlton swung his gun in Cardona's direction: He was too late to beat the detective to the shot. Cardona fired.

The shot went wide by inches only. Cardona, deviating his aim when Harlton lunged, missed his mark by a scant margin. An instant later, Harlton's gun barked. Cardona dropped, a bullet in his shoulder.

Roscoe Wimbledon was yanking open a drawer at the left of the desk. From it, he was snatching a revolver. Trusting to Harlton for the present, the arch-crook grabbed his gun and sprang for a doorway at the far left corner of the room.

Commissioner Weston was drawing a revolver. He was the second enemy whom Harlton had to face. The murderous technician swung to cover the commissioner. This time the odds lay all with Harlton. His aim was completed while Weston's gun was half way from the commissioner's pocket.

THE SHADOW was acting. The instant that he had seen Cardona drop, he knew what was coming. Yet in this crisis, The Shadow had not forgotten his part--that of Lamont Cranston.

As Cardona toppled, The Shadow sprang forward, directly toward the chair into which Commissioner Weston had tossed Lester Drayson's revolver. As Harlton and Weston swung to begin their savage duel, the long arm of Lamont Cranston swept upward with a rapid aim.

Harlton's finger was on the trigger. It never pressed to send the death shot toward Ralph Weston. The Shadow's delivery was a split-second in advance. Drayson's discarded gun was a puny .32--but The Shadow used it with the same effect as a huge automatic.

The revolver barked. A bullet clipped Harlton's aiming wrist. The technician staggered backward with a cry as his own gun fell from his helpless hand. An instant later, Weston's gun blazed its belated message. Ross Harlton sprawled on the floor, mortally wounded.

In those fractions of seconds, The Shadow had performed a double action. Not only had he fired the shot that saved Weston's life; he was also on the move for the next event in the exciting conflict.

As he pressed the trigger of Drayson's .32, The Shadow dropped side-wise behind the armchair from which he had seized the gun. The act was timely. Roscoe Wimbledon, wheeling from the far doorway, had aimed at the very instant of The Shadow's shot. Wimbledon's gun blazed. A bullet whistled across the chair, past the very spot from which Lamont Cranston's tall form had made its sudden fadeaway.

As Wimbledon stood momentarily bewildered, the figure of Cranston bobbed up erect beyond the chair. The hand that held the .32 swung for new aim, while Wimbledon stood flat-footed in the doorway. The master crook was a perfect target. The Shadow's finger was on the trigger of the revolver.

Then came unexpected aid. Harkin, arriving at the door of the library, was just in time to see Lamont Cranston rising to new aim. With Wimbledon the target, the servant acted to save his crooked master. The Shadow had turned with back toward the door. Harkin, leaping furiously, landed upon his shoulders and clutched wildly at the aiming hand.

The revolver spat flame too late. The servant had destroyed the aim. The Shadow's bullet found its

lodging place in the door frame above Wimbledon's shoulder. As Harkin bore Cranston's body toward the floor, Wimbledon, seeing opportunity, aimed low to deliver a return shot.

AGAIN, The Shadow acted. The instant that Harkin fell upon him, the master fighter sought to bring quick end to the attack. His right hand dropped the revolver; it rose, with the left, to grip Harkin by the neck.

Knees on the floor, The Shadow lunged his shoulders forward. Harkin's body described a huge somersault that catapulted him over The Shadow's head. Sprawled, almost in a seated posture, the servant landed on the floor. He was the shield when Roscoe Wimbledon fired.

Just too late to clip the stooped form of Lamont Cranston, Wimbledon's bullet found its mark in Harkin's body. Catching the collapsing servant with his left hand, The Shadow snatched for the gun with his right. Still shielded, he was seeking opportunity for another shot at Wimbledon.

Had Wimbledon held his ground, he would have become The Shadow's prey. Another attack caused the crook to resort to flight instead. While Lester Drayson and Dudley Arment had taken shelter--Drayson in a closet and Arment behind a desk--Commissioner Ralph Weston was turning in response to Wimbledon's shot at Cranston.

Weston opened fire in a hurry. His bullets peppered the doorway. Wimbledon, unable to aim toward two enemies at once, decided to leap for shelter. He slammed the heavy door in back of him. Weston, pounding forward, reached the barrier just as the lock turned.

Two policemen came dashing into the library. Weston's chauffeur had heard the shots. He had given an alarm. The commissioner ordered the bluecoats to take up the pursuit. They hurried in chase of Wimbledon.

While Drayson and Arment, coming from hiding, were giving first aid to Joe Cardona, Weston seized the telephone and put in a call to headquarters. Hardly had he finished with his orders when one of the policemen arrived back in the library.

"He's made a get-away, commissioner," informed the officer. "Out through the back--he drove off in a car that was parked out there."

"Harlton's car!" exclaimed Weston. He turned to Lamont Cranston, who was examining the wound of the servant, Harkin. "Where can Wimbledon have fled? How can we stop him?"

"Harlton came from the Universal testing field," remarked Cranston. "There are ships there. Wimbledon is a skilled pilot--"

"We'll call the testing field!" declared Weston. "We'll stop Wimbledon before he can take off--"

"The field has been closed," interrupted Cranston. "There are watchmen there; but I understand that the telephone has been disconnected."

"Come along!" Weston seized Cranston's arm. "We'll start there in my car. Call headquarters"--this was to the policeman--"and tell them where I've gone. Order out cars--and planes and--"

EAGER for the chase, Weston dragged Cardona with him. The commissioner was talking excitedly as they reached the street.

"The testing field is out on Long Island!" he exclaimed. "Further than the regular airport. It will take Wimbledon half an hour. Come with me, Cranston--"

The commissioner paused abruptly beside his car. Lamont Cranston was wavering. He had clapped his right hand to his left shoulder. His face seemed pale by the light of the street lamp.

"What's the matter?" questioned Weston. "Are you wounded, Cranston?"

"Slightly," came the weak reply. "That shot of Wimbledon's--it must have grazed me--"

He stopped; then waved to a uniformed chauffeur. It was Stanley. Leaving Weston, Cranston half staggered toward his own car.

"Go ahead, commissioner," he called, as he leaned on Stanley for support. "My chauffeur will get me home--or to a hospital--"

Weston hesitated as he saw Stanley aid Cranston into the millionaire's limousine. Two patrolmen were alighting from a car. Weston waved one into the house; he told the other to accompany him.

"All right, Cranston," he shouted. "Take care of yourself, old man. I'm going after Wimbledon."

The commissioner's car shot away. Lamont Cranston's limousine followed a few moments later. A soft laugh sounded from the interior. A firm voice spoke through the speaking tube. Stanley was startled by this evidence of his master's recovery. The chauffeur, like the commissioner, had not detected that the wound had been feigned.

"To the airport, Stanley," came Cranston's order. "Long Island. In a hurry."

Black garments came from the bag. Heavy automatics clicked. The Shadow's laugh came in a weird, reverberating whisper.

The regular airport was nearer than the testing field. Lamont Cranston's private plane was at the airport. The Shadow, despite his delayed start, could be in the air as soon as Roscoe Wimbledon.

While Police Commissioner Ralph Weston was hurrying in pursuit; while orders were out to have police cars take up the chase and for police planes to follow with their own pursuit, The Shadow was turning to a plan of his own making.

Should Roscoe Wimbledon, master of theft and murder, escape the closing meshwork of the law, he would find another foe to bar his path to safety.

The Shadow, relentless when he dealt with men of crime, was on his way to block the arch-crook's flight.

CHAPTER XXIII. ABOVE LONG ISLAND.

A COUPE came to a jolting stop in front of a heavy gate. Headlights, cutting a swath through the metal bars, revealed the flat acreage of the Universal Aircraft testing field.

Roscoe Wimbledon had arrived at the destination which The Shadow had declared. Fortune had favored the fleeing crook. Not only had he evaded all pursuit; he had reached his goal before the police had managed to get there.

The automobile horn honked raucously. A sleepy watchman appeared beyond the gate. Again the horn; the watchman seemed to recognize its tones. He opened the barrier. The coupe rolled through.

After closing the gate, the watchman came back to the car. He could not see its occupant in the dark; he

took it for granted that Ross Harlton was in the coupe. He climbed on the running board as a hand beckoned.

"Where are the pursuit planes?" came a voice. "Take me to their hangar."

"Who are you?" demanded the watchman. "You're not Mr. Harlton."

"I'm Roscoe Wimbledon," retorted the man at the wheel. "Harlton couldn't come with me. Hurry--show me the hangar."

"Over there, sir. Third on the right."

The coupe started forward. Since government tests had revealed faulty ships, this testing field had been closed. Ross Harlton, technician for World Wide Aviation, had been allowed admission since the new owners had taken over Universal.

Harlton's inspection had been largely confined to the Paraguayan planes which Washington had condemned. It was natural that Roscoe Wimbledon, president of World Wide Aviation, should come here to view the faulty ships.

Yet the watchman could not understand the reason for so late a visit. A second watchman also appeared as the coupe pulled up in front of the hangar. The first man's explanation that this was Roscoe Wimbledon was satisfactory to the second.

"Open the hangar!" ordered Wimbledon. "Show me the plane that Harlton has ready for a test!"

The watchman obeyed. The lights came on. A trim, one-seated plane was ready for flight. Wimbledon snapped another order:

"Bring it out!"

Reluctantly, the watchman obeyed. One of them voiced an objection as he aided in the wheeling.

"You can't go up in this ship, Mr. Wimbledon. The field lights are disconnected. Mr. Harlton can't even make a test until he gets word from Washington--"

"My company owns this field," snapped Wimbledon. "I've received the government permission. I'm testing this ship to-night. Spin the propeller!"

WITH these words, Wimbledon clambered into the plane. He found a loaded machine gun in readiness. He muttered in satisfied fashion as he examined the controls. This ship, fuelled and ready for flight, had been arranged by Ross Harlton. It had been planned to carry two in case of emergency. Wimbledon, alone, was taking it tonight.

"Spin the propeller!"

As the watchmen hesitated on the ground, a whining siren sounded beyond the gate. The lights of a car showed through the bars. Pursuers had arrived.

"Police!" cried the first watchman.

"Say--maybe they're after you--maybe you aren't Roscoe Wimbledon--"

"I'm Wimbledon!" came the snarl. "Spin that propeller."

"You can wait," growled the watchman. "Stay here, Jack. I'll let the cops in. Watch this guy."

"You bet I will, Mac," responded the second watchman. "Beat it to his gate."

Wimbledon arose from the pilot's seat. He clicked a flashlight. Its glare showed Jack's running form. With a growl, Wimbledon aimed his revolver and fired. Jack stumbled to the ground and rolled over, wounded.

"You're next!" snarled Wimbledon as he swung the light on Mac. "Spin that propeller or I'll drill you!"

Raising his hands, the watchman sprang to the front of the plane. He feared Wimbledon's threat. He seized a blade of the propeller. Shots burst from beyond the gate. The range was long; but the fire of the police gave Mac new impetus. They were firing at him as well as Wimbledon. He wanted to get clear of the mess.

The motor roared. Mac leaped aside and flung himself flat upon the ground as the trim pursuit plane started across the testing field.

Wimbledon was familiar with the controls. The ship took off within fifty yards. Going away from the gate, heading into a helpful breeze, Wimbledon was freeing himself from the clamoring pursuit of the police below.

Circling to gain a course, Wimbledon saw lights approaching in the air. A glaring searchlight found the rising monoplane. A police plane was sweeping up to challenge the escaping crook.

Wimbledon opened fire with the machine gun. The drilling sound of the weapon was music above the roar of the plane. Wimbledon snarled gloatingly as he saw the police plane skid into a bank. They had not expected this opposition.

A second police plane was approaching. Again the rat-tat-tat of the machine gun. The second ship swerved. Like the first, it was sweeping away to escape the fire. Wimbledon, his hands on the controls, swung to the straightaway course he wanted.

He knew that the police planes would follow. His fire had not crippled them. But he knew also that they could never catch this ship in which he was fleeing. These Paraguayan ships, despite their cheapened construction, had been built for speed. That was the only test which they were sure to stand.

WIMBLEDON and his henchmen, Gleek and Harlton, had agreed that other faults would pass unnoticed until after delivery. In their swindling of the Universal Aircraft Corporation, they had confined their efforts to other points of plane construction. Wimbledon was glad of it now.

Clear air showed a path to safety. Miles from New York, Wimbledon could land at some lonely spot and continue his escape unthwarted. The Canadian border was a possible goal. As the ship sped forward, Wimbledon snarled his elation.

Then came a roar from the left. Wimbledon heard it despite the rumble of his own motor. The beam of a searchlight clipped downward from the sky.

Another ship!

Swooping in from the direction of the Long Island airport, this challenger seemed determined to cut off the fugitive's flight. A swift monoplane, capable of equaling Wimbledon's speed, this was a menace greater than the police who had dropped behind.

Wimbledon opened fire. He realized that it was no use. The daring pilot of the other ship was heading straight for the pursuit plane. Unless Wimbledon took some other action, this suicidal drive would lock the two ships in midair!

FROM his seat in the approaching plane, The Shadow was hurtling squarely into Wimbledon's fire. He knew what the result would be should Wimbledon persist to handle the machine gun. Only seconds remained before the moment when the two ships would join in a double plunge to the ground below. But The Shadow was unyielding in his course. His keen brain told him that Wimbledon would lose his nerve.

A weird laugh sounded from The Shadow's hidden lips. The machine-gun fire had ended. Wimbledon, grabbing the controls, was taking heroic efforts to avoid a crash. The pursuit plane seemed to hurtle in the air as Wimbledon threw it into a sidewise roll to avoid The Shadow's swoop.

The maneuver was successful. The pursuit plane seemed to lurch upward as the nose of The Shadow's ship approached it. Twisting above the attacker, Wimbledon's roll continued as The Shadow passed.

The Shadow banked. Staring from his ship, he could see the finish of Wimbledon's roll. This maneuver, carrying tremendous strain, was more difficult than the stunt which had carried a naval aviator to doom in one of those condemned planes.

Struts snapped as Wimbledon's twist neared its end. One wing of the pursuit plane broke loose from the body of the ship. The other wing remained. Going into a crazy spin, the crippled plane shot downward toward the ground.

The Shadow saw the climax of the plunge. The one-winged plane crumpled as it landed in an open field. Searing flames flared upward as spattered gasoline produced a holocaust. The Shadow's sweeping ship straightened to its course as police planes came zooming toward the wreckage.

Again, a weird laugh sounded as The Shadow's swift monoplane took course back toward the airport. The tones that sounded with the thrumming of the motor were notes of strident triumph.

Roscoe Wimbledon, crook and murderer, had hurtled to deserved doom. His crash was of his own making. He had paid the penalty for his scheme that had brought ill-gotten wealth.

The burning plane was a pyre; The Shadow's laugh a parting knell. The Shadow had dropped the final curtain upon a murderer's career.

THE END