



THE MAN FROM SCOTLAND YARD

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- ? [CHAPTER I. TRAILS CONVERGE](#)
- ? [CHAPTER II. ON THE WATERFRONT](#)
- ? [CHAPTER III. THE RAID](#)
- ? [CHAPTER IV. THE LOST TRAIL](#)
- ? [CHAPTER V. MEN IN THE DARK](#)
- ? [CHAPTER VI. HOPE IN THE NIGHT](#)
- ? [CHAPTER VII. THE RESCUE](#)
- ? [CHAPTER VIII. ABOARD AND ASHORE](#)
- ? [CHAPTER IX. MR. JARVIS KNIGHT](#)
- ? [CHAPTER X. SILVER RUPEES](#)
- ? [CHAPTER XI. AT THE CAPITAL](#)
- ? [CHAPTER XII. FROM THE STRONG ROOM](#)
- ? [CHAPTER XIII. CADY REPORTS](#)
- ? [CHAPTER XIV. THE CHANCE CLUE](#)
- ? [CHAPTER XV. THREE IN A ROW](#)
- ? [CHAPTER XVI. CRIME FORESEEN](#)
- ? [CHAPTER XVII. IN THE STRONG ROOM](#)
- ? [CHAPTER XVIII. THE FINAL WORD](#)
- ? [CHAPTER XIX. A MASTER'S DOOM](#)
- ? [CHAPTER XX. FACTS OF THE PAST](#)

CHAPTER I. TRAILS CONVERGE

NIGHT-THICKENED fog lay heavy above Manhattan. Grimy, hazy blackness held pall above the great metropolis. City lights were smothered in the mist.

That shroud which dampened the brilliant districts held greater grip upon areas that were ordinarily gloomy after dark.

Near the waterfront, the grimy blanket had full reign. Steaming surges of mist were rising from the river, clinging to piling and piers, rolling in upon the dim-lit thoroughfares. Basso blasts of steamship whistles blared in from the water, accompanied by the staccato shrills of tugboats.

Such sounds alone cleaved the fog laden air. Other noises, clicking footsteps of passers, rumbles of occasional trucks, were muffled by the thickness. People themselves were swallowed by the mist. Where feeble lights showed dim areas, forms came into view, then disappeared.

Humans had become ghosts down by the river. Wafted in from the bay, the fog had taken a liking to the land. Literally, it was enveloping Manhattan like a monster from the deep, creeping forward to a total triumph that would end only when rising winds came to dispel it.

A muffled wayfarer was tramping along a street that led in from the river. The night was not cold; dampness could be the only excuse for his upturned coat collar. Yet long, hunched shoulders and down-turned face were indications of a menace other than the fog.

It was plain that the tramping man wanted to escape recognition. His gait betrayed the fact; his choice of streets was added indication. Moreover, he showed a furtiveness when he peered back at every crossing. The wayfarer feared followers.

The fog gave the man confidence as he reached the moisture-surfaced structure of an elevated railway. He had put distance between himself and the waterfront. The grime of blackened pillars seemed to please him.

Dull lights of shop windows gleamed from the avenue and showed a pallid, long-featured face. Protruding teeth glittered as the muffled man delivered an unpleasant smile. A quick glance over shoulder; the fellow ducked into the obscurity of a side street.

Fear of followers had passed from the wayfarer's thoughts; had he lingered longer, his trepidation would have returned. Hardly had the long-limbed individual cut away from the avenue before another hunched figure shambled into view beside the "el" pillars.

Crafty eyes from a wizened face made thorough search along the avenue. Quick-gazing, those optics picked the very street that the long-limbed man had taken. Shuffling cater-cornered across the street, the newcomer headed for the same route.

Though this New York fog was as thick as the traditional London "pea-souper," the follower had kept on the quarry's trail. Wherever the long-limbed man was going, the shorter fellow would remain close behind him. Strange figures of the underworld, the two were playing an odd drama of the night.

Of the pair, the wizened-faced trailer was the more intriguing. Any man who could stalk prey through this fog must unquestionably be clever at his chosen game. That little trailer was indeed clever. He had a reputation for his ability. In the scumlands of New York, he was known as "Hawkeye," the craftiest of all spotters.

One person alone was conceded to be Hawkeye's better at such tasks. That one was the mystery figure of the underworld - The Shadow. Crooks gave The Shadow credit for superhuman powers; it was little wonder that they were willing to acknowledge him superior to Hawkeye.

Gunners had claimed that they could outshoot The Shadow; cracksman had bragged that they possessed greater skill than that unknown champion of right. Listeners had laughed at such boasts. Those of the underworld knew this much of The Shadow - that he had no equal in any line of endeavor that came within his sphere of action.

So Hawkeye, had he claimed himself on par with The Shadow, would have been greeted with jeers. But Hawkeye, oddly, possessed a modest spirit regarding his own ability. The little trailer never made mention of The Shadow; and he had good reason for preserving silence. Hawkeye was in The Shadow's service.

The Shadow had found the little spotter to be a useful aid. Master who battled crime, The Shadow had supertasks of his own. Known as the scourge of crookdom, he was forced to leave lesser work to others.

Tonight's trail was one that The Shadow had passed to Hawkeye. Under secret orders, the little spotter had been told to pick up the trail of a fellow named "Scud" Paffrey. Hawkeye had previously seen Scud

close to the waterfront. It was that vicinity that Hawkeye had chosen tonight.

Scud had been coming back from somewhere. Hawkeye had spied him slinking through the fog. One glimpse of long, hunched shoulders and muffled face had been all that Hawkeye needed. The spotter was still on Scud's trail.

Entering the side street that Scud had chosen, Hawkeye spied a glimmering light ahead. Fog rendered the street lamp dingy; but Hawkeye knew that Scud could not get by that lighted patch without revealing his stooped figure in the mist.

Close enough to have reached the street before Scud gained the light, Hawkeye knew also that the long-limbed man must be close by. Creeping forward, The Shadow's agent advanced with caution. Hawkeye had gained a hunch that the end of the trail was near.

Thirty yards from the corner, Hawkeye paused. Scud had not reached the street lamp. Here, on the near side of that glow, blackness was complete. Hawkeye's eyes could spy nothing; the spotter was relying on his ears. To his keen hearing came the sound of whispers, muffled, seemingly, by the mist.

Hawkeye reached out in the darkness. His hand encountered the fog-dewed surface of a brick wall. Using this as a guide, Hawkeye crept ahead. The wall ended with an invisible corner. Voices became audible. Hawkeye crouched.

Scud Paffrey was whispering to someone in the darkness. The rendezvous was being held in a passage between two buildings, indiscernible in the overhanging blackness. Hawkeye caught the tones of a low, half-growled voice. Detecting words, he realized the identity of the man whom Scud had met.

Detective Joe Cardona! Known as the ace of New York headquarters, this sleuth had contacts in the underworld.

TO Hawkeye, the presence of Cardona indicated an astonishing fact. Scud Paffrey, accepted as an average denizen of the underworld, was a stool pigeon, reporting to the law.

The Shadow must have known that fact. That was why he had put Hawkeye on the job of watching Scud. The law was after information; Scud had access to it. The Shadow had decided to use Scud as a lead.

Hawkeye grinned to himself in the darkness. He had been late in trailing Scud; hence he had not learned the stoolie's objective. Here, however, lay opportunity. What Scud was telling Joe Cardona, Hawkeye could also hear. The little man listened.

"No trace of any of them, eh?" came Cardona's growl. "Looks like you're laying down on the job, Scud. You told me you'd find Rigger Luxley. But you haven't got a trace on him or any of his pals."

"I told you about Sailor Martz," insisted Scud, his whisper half a whine. "He's due down at Dory Halbit's joint. Back from the fruit pier. He's comin' there tonight, Joe."

"What of it? That don't tell us anything about Rigger. He wouldn't be there."

"But Sailor was in with Rigger's outfit. No foolin', Joe; that's somethin' I know, for sure. An' maybe Sailor's got some pals that was in with the mob."

"But that's something you're not sure about. Say, it looks like the dragnet is going to be the only bet, after all."

"That won't be no use, Joe" - Scud's whisper rose in frantic protest - "honest, it won't! It's curtains for me, if you spring the dragnet. Too many guys would know that I might've spilled somethin' about Rigger Luxley."

"But what if I pinch this Sailor Martz?"

"Nobody'll know nothin'. Sailor Martz never seen me aroun' with Rigger. Nobody down at Dory's joint will know nothin' about me. But they may know somethin' about Rigger. See?"

"Does Sailor Martz talk much to guys he knows?"

"Maybe. I can't say for sure; but he's got pals down on the waterfront. He might've talked to them. An' they ain't likely to be all for Rigger. Some of them guys might talk."

Conversation ended. In the tenseness, Hawkeye could hear Scud's breathing, coming in wheezy fashion. The stoolie was nervous as he awaited Cardona's decision. At last, the detective grunted a verdict.

"All right," declared Joe. "it's a raid. There's been coke peddlers seen down at Dory's joint. That's a good enough reason to grab the gang that's down there."

"Then I can slide along?" queried Scud, anxiously. "So's I can be down at the Pink Rat before you head for Dory's?"

"Sure. Keep yourself alibied with the guys that know you. I'll need you later, Scud."

"T'anks. Joe."

Scud edged from the space beyond the house corners. Hawkeye could have touched the fellow as he came shiftily to the sidewalk. Scud chose the direction toward the street lamp. Hawkeye listened to his clicking footsteps.

A minute later, Joe Cardona emerged. Stocky, but muffled like Scud, the detective came along past Hawkeye. Joe's coat almost grazed the shoulders of the crouched spotter; but the detective did not spy the huddled form.

HAWKEYE waited after Cardona had passed. Well did he know that either Scud or the detective might peer back after reaching their respective corners. While he lingered, Hawkeye did some thinking. His findings gave him a single answer.

A raid was due at "Dory" Halbit's, the waterfront dive that Scud had named. The raid, however, would be delayed. First, to allow "Sailor" Martz time to get there; second, to let Scud establish himself at the underworld joint known as the "Pink Rat"; third, to give Cardona a chance to form a picked squad at headquarters.

All of which gave Hawkeye satisfaction. With one hour - perhaps two - before the law took action, Hawkeye could complete his own work and allow The Shadow ample leeway. Realizing this, the little spotter waited a full five minutes before leaving the wall by which he crouched.

Hawkeye sneaked back to the avenue. He saw no sign of Cardona as he paced along the dingy East Side thoroughfare. Shambling across the street. Hawkeye headed northward until he reached a drug store that looked like a palace of luxury on the fringe of this decadent district.

Entering, Hawkeye found a telephone booth. After glancing warily to note that he was unobserved, the spotter dialed a number. A quiet voice responded:

"Burbank speaking."

In a half whisper, Hawkeye poured out his news. He was talking to a man whom he had never seen, the contact agent who received the reports of active workers and passed them along to the chief. Hawkeye had spoken to Burbank only by telephone; he regarded the contact man somewhat as he did The Shadow.

For Burbank seemed on the fringe of that mysterious blackness that surrounded the master sleuth. A quiet voice, always responding, ever ready with instructions. Such was Burbank, as Hawkeye knew him.

"Off duty."

Burbank's quiet tone was a command to Hawkeye. The little agent hung up the receiver and slouched from the drug store. He had given his report. His task was done. Though Burbank had given no commendation, Hawkeye knew that his successful work would not go unforgotten.

Hawkeye had gained an inkling that The Shadow, too, was out to trail "Rigger" Luxley's missing band. That outfit was a dangerous crowd that had been missing from New York until recently. Rigger and company had bobbed into view ten days ago; then had gone suddenly to cover.

The law was after Rigger. So was The Shadow. Sailor Martz, apparently, was the one man through whom Rigger could be reached. Who would corner Sailor first: the law or The Shadow? Hawkeye grinned as the question struck him while he shambled through the darkness.

Hawkeye knew the answer.

The Shadow.

CHAPTER II. ON THE WATERFRONT

FOG was relentless along the waterfront. Moving in from the sea, it had tightened its grip upon the land. Thicker than ever, it clung most heavily to the spot of its first choice: where water met with shore.

There was nothing of comfort in the heavy-throated blares of whistles that came from the river. Those blasts were ghoulish at close range. They were like the voice of the fog itself. Yet to those who frequented these sodden spaces, the tones were commonplace.

Dory Halbit's dive was not a place for particular patrons. It attracted the riffraff with its cheap grog. Hard-visaged huskies, rat-faced roustabouts, suspicious-eyed loungers - these were the customers who slouched about at battered tables, undisturbed by those long-echoing blares from the river.

Dory Halbit was present in person. He always was. An ex-seaman, Dory had retired after being crippled in a storm. The possessor of a wooden leg, he found land navigation troublesome and seldom left the grog shop.

Tonight, as on all nights, the proprietor was leaning against the bar in the corner of the dive, keeping a gleaming eye on all who entered or left. For Dory was on the lookout for trouble; when it came, he was capable of handling it. Sleeves of his tattered shirt rolled to his elbows, neck bared, Dory looked formidable. Tattooed arms and chest were brawny; and Dory's love for a fight made him forget his wooden leg when action started.

Joe Cardona had stretched no point in stating that a raid would not cause surprise at Dory Halbit's. The one-legged dive owner had many doubtful acquaintances. His place had come under frequent police surveillance. It was Dory's caginess that had caused the law to desist. If the man happened to be working

in cahoots with dope smugglers, it was a sure bet that he would be able to cover up in a pinch.

It was conceded that when - if ever - the law did raid the dive, Dory would enjoy a good laugh the morning after. Tonight, Cardona was ready for the thrust that would prove fruitless in incriminating the proprietor. But in his drive, the detective would perhaps gain results of a different sort.

Through a general round-up of the dive's habitue's, Cardona might capture men who would give him information. Joe wanted facts concerning Rigger Luxley; and if Sailor Martz failed to talk, others might know something. Good reasoning; for these fellows at Dory Halbit's would not mind spilling whatever they might know about a landlubber mobleader.

QUIET prevailed at Dory Halbit's. Quiet, according to the proprietor's view. Unshaven seamen were swapping coarse jests; rowdies who had cash were growling for drinks; raucous greetings were being exchanged between newcomers.

Such commotion, to Dory, was more pleasing than silence. So long as the customers were engaged in trivial conversation, no brawls would begin. Much though he liked a fight, Dory did not want to see one start. Fights meant cops; and Dory veered clear of trouble with the police.

Wisps of fog were creeping through broken windowpanes of Dory's dive. The place was below street level; moisture-laden atmosphere picked it as a settling spot. Encroaching mists were driven back, however, by the clouds of smoke that issued from the mouths of customers.

Medleys of tobacco were always common at Dory's. Dutch sailors were puffing at big pipes; gesticulating Spaniards and Italians were consuming cigarettes of many foreign blends; squatty Malaysians were smoking rank-odored cheroots. The haze of tobacco smoke was tinged with curls of yellow and blue, and through that shifting cloud, Dory kept constant watch on all newcomers.

There were three doorways that led into this dankish, stone-walled retreat. One came directly from the broad street that ran beside the piers; the second was from a side alleyway. The third was an interior door, used only by chosen customers. It led into an adjoining house.

There were strangers here tonight. That was not unusual; but Dory always sized up strangers as soon as they entered. He knew that feuds of shipboard often found their culmination on the waterfront. Dory kept tabs on usual customers and knew when some required watching. Strangers, however, were always a doubtful quantity. Dory checked all of them for future reference.

Ribald oaths sounded at the main door as three rough fellows entered. All were garbed in oilskins. Dory recognized the trio as crew members of a coastwise barge flotilla. He watched the three men take a corner table and pound riotously to summon a greasy-aproned waiter. Then Dory's watchful eyes shot back to the door. Another man was entering, quietly. Beefy-faced and evil-eyed, the newcomer stared about the room, a coarse smile on his lips. Dory knew the fellow, he was an ex-seaman whose friends were landlubbers. To his pals, this ugly-eyed specimen was known as Sailor Martz.

Others went back to their ships when they left Dory's. Sailor Martz stayed ashore. He had no ship. Dory knew, however, that Sailor was not always in New York. He had been absent during a period of nearly two months; it was only recently that he had returned.

Whether or not Sailor Martz had filled a temporary berth on some ship was a matter which did not concern Dory Halbit. He recognized Sailor as an accepted customer; the fellow's business was his own. Moreover, Sailor's patronage was profitable to Dory. On more than one occasion, the bad-eyed customer had paid the proprietor for the use of rooms in the adjoining house. Sailor had held meetings there. That was all that Dory knew.

SAILOR caught the proprietor's stare. His ugly grin widened. Shaking his dark-colored slicker, shoving his cap up from his forehead, Sailor strolled over to the bar and thrust a foot upon the broken-down brass rail.

Dory leaned back and produced a bottle and glass. He placed these articles on the bar so Sailor could help himself.

"Looking for somebody, Sailor?" queried Dory.

"Yeah." Sailor stood with glass in hand and stared suspiciously about the dive. "Lookin' for a mug that I don't know. Maybe you can help me, Dory."

"How's that? If you don't know the guy?"

"I may be able to pick him out, if he's here. What I want to lamp is strangers. Tell me where to spot 'em."

"Couple of Filipinos over by the side door."

"Not them. This mug's an American."

"Fellow by the middle post. The one with the underslung jaw."

"Who else?"

"Dark-faced gent down in that inside corner. The one with the dark mackinaw. Might be a furriner, but I don't think he is."

Sailor flashed a sidelong glance. He spied a thick-set man who was seated alone. Something in the fellow's bearing rendered him inconspicuous. Sailor would not have noticed him but for Dory's suggestion. "Look's like the mug," stated Sailor, his growl lowered almost to a whisper. "I'm slidin' over to talk to him, Dory. Maybe he'll start somethin'; so be on the lookout."

"Yeah?" queried the proprietor, his voice as hard as Sailor's. "Take another guess, matey. This ain't no joint for a fight."

"It won't be no fight," assured Sailor, bringing a clenched hand from a pocket of his slicker. "Not if you use your noodle, Dory. Here - snag this."

He transferred a crumpled wad of bills to the proprietor's hand. Dory eyed the money, nodded and thrust the bills into his pocket.

"Pass the high-sign to the regulars," whispered Sailor. "When I start it movin', they pitch in. Drag the guy out through the side way, into the house. I'll talk to 'im there."

"All right," agreed Dory.

As Sailor strolled over to the indicated corner, Dory shifted behind the bar. Some of the customers had noted him talking to Sailor and were staring curiously. Dory caught the eyes he wanted. He gave a significant nod and a nudge of his thumb. Nods were the responses of the regulars. Eyes shifted to the corner.

Sailor had stopped by the table where the stranger was seated. He was looking at his quarry; the man was staring up to meet his gaze. Sailor eyed a face that was unshaven, with an upper lip that displayed a short-clipped mustache. He gained the hunch that the sallow complexion had been increased in darkness

by a dye.

"Howdy, mate," he greeted. "Ain't I seen you somewhere? On the Colombo, when I shipped from Buenos Aires?"

"Don't remember you," returned the stranger, with a short growl. "Maybe we've met; maybe we haven't."

"Old Halyard Lubin was the skipper," recalled Sailor, seating himself at the table. "You heard of him, ain't you?"

"Sure." The dark-faced man shoved a bottle and glass to Sailor. "Heard a lot about him. Never met him, though."

"You heard what they said about Lubin in Puerto Rico?"

"Yeah. But I never got the story straight. What was it?"

Sailor's grin hardened. His tone was contemptuous as he leaned forward across the table. "You heard about Halyard Lubin, eh? In Puerto Rico? Well, he never was there - because there ain't no such guy! I thought you was the landlubber I was lookin' for -"

As he spoke, Sailor came up from the table. His arms shot forward; his long-nailed fingers clawed for the dark man's throat.

The stranger, too, was in action, and he moved too swiftly for Sailor. Twisting away, the landlubber sent his chair crashing to the floor. With one hand he made a grab for the bottle. Whisking it from under Sailor's nose, he started a side-swiping swing straight for his antagonist's head.

Sailor ducked as he threw up a warding arm. The swing went wide; the landlubber shifted for a downward drive before Sailor could stop him. That second blow would have brought results, but for an attack from another source.

The regulars had responded. They were surging forward en masse. Half a dozen ruffians, followed by a dozen reserves, all were springing at Dory's beck to aid Sailor Martz. The leading attackers caught the landlubber before he could swing the bottle.

Twisting fiercely, the lone man yanked clear. He swung the bottle like a cudgel. He cracked the skull of one assailant and smashed the bottle upon the capped pate of a second. Diving out front the corner, he grabbed up a chair and swung it into the ranks of the foe.

Knives flashed. Revolvers came into view. Three men surged forward. The landlubber staggered as a fist reached his jaw. Sprawling against the wall, he looked up to see Sailor Martz diving straight for him. Sailor's face was venomous; his right hand was driving downward with a long-bladed knife.

Others stopped stock-still to let Sailor snag his prey. Death loomed with seeming certainty for the fighter who had sagged beneath the force of numbers. Sallow lips pressed firmly shut as the eyes above them saw the descending blade which the half-groggy victim could not stop.

THEN, from amid the chaos of commotion came a thunderous roar from an unexpected quarter. The burst of an automatic spelled a new entrant into the one-sided fray. Sailor Martz's upraised body doubled backward instead of forward. With a wild scream, the would-be assassin staggered sidewise; his fist opened and his brandished knife clattered to the floor.

A fierce laugh broke the silence that the gunshot had brought. Hard-faced men wheeled about, fuming oaths as they whirled toward the direction of that sinister mirth. Facing the interior door of the dive, they saw the marksman who had crippled Sailor Martz.

A cloaked figure had emerged from the darkness of that inner doorway. Gloved fists projected from the folds of his sable-hued garb. The brim of a slouch hat concealed the features above the cloak, save for a pair of burning eyes that challenged all.

The Shadow had arrived upon the field of fray, to snatch a helpless victim from the toils of murderous men.

CHAPTER III. THE RAID

THE denizens of Dory Halbit's dive were not of mobland's ilk. Yet these ruffians who had aided Sailor Martz were cutthroats in their own right. To them, the name of The Shadow might be hazier than it was to crooks of the underworld; that fact only made this squad of murderers more dangerous.

Crooks had faded often at The Shadow's advent. Rats of crime knew the menace of The Shadow. This crew lacked such information. They saw The Shadow as an unexpected intruder who had balked them of a kill.

Revolvers crackled as knife-wielding fighters charged forward, driving low. Under a high barrage, the men with dirks were aiming for the intrepid stranger who had come from blackness. They, like Sailor Martz, were to learn The Shadow's power.

Doubling to the floor, The Shadow sprang straight against the attacking ranks. Bullets whizzed above him, aimed too high and too late. Mighty automatics belched flame into the phalanx of knife-armed men. Snarling rogues sprawled to the cement floor.

One wounded assassin caught himself and sent a blade whizzing through the air. His stroke was late. The Shadow had whirled from the charge. Diving along the wall, he gained the bar where Dory Halbit was stationed. The brawny proprietor sprang forward to stop the sweeping figure. Gun-fisted hands shot upward and sent the one-legged foeman clattering across the floor.

Revolvers burst anew. The automatics answered. The Shadow had found the vantage point he wanted. There were full barrels beneath Dory's counter. They served as a bulwark against bullets. His guns upon the counter level, The Shadow blazed responding shots.

Attackers broke. They had not counted upon conflict with a vengeful, sharp-shooting foe. They valued their hides too much to keep up the quarrel on behalf of Sailor Martz. Wild with desire for escape, the armed men followed the noncombatants who had already scurried through the doorways to the streets.

Sprawled figures told of The Shadow's prowess. The cloaked fighter had not aimed to kill. He had dropped his adversaries with quick, clipping shots; his wounded foemen were crawling toward the doors that offered escape.

There was one exception. Sailor Martz, half doubled in agony, was picking up his knife. His bleary eyes were looking toward the landlubber whom he had failed to slay. He was out to get that victim at any cost.

The dark-faced man had risen also. Grogginess ended, he was ready to pounce forward the moment that Sailor made a move. The Shadow watched the coming drama. He knew that the full advantage lay with the man whom he had saved. Sailor Martz surged crazily forward; the landlubber caught him and sent

him staggering back.

Then came a shrill interruption from the doorways through which escaping rogues were diving. Police whistles told the entry of the law. Ruffians came staggering back; plainclothes men piled down the steps into the underground dive.

Cardona's raiding squad had arrived. They had caught men who were seeking flight, not fight. The police were just in time to make a complete round-up of the scattering customers from Dory's dive.

THE SHADOW dropped behind the counter. His whispered laugh faded. His work had been accomplished. He had come here tonight to back the law. He had entered only because a crisis had arrived before the raid. He had wounded Sailor Martz. The man was helpless. The law could have him.

But the law was due to blunder. Sailor Martz had sagged to the floor under the pressure of the landlubber with the dark-hued skin. A bulky plainclothes man bounded forward; the dark man swung about to speak.

The dick placed a hard punch to the dyed jaw. The landlubber crumpled. Half recovering, he came up; another plainclothes man sprang in and clubbed him. Together, the two officers dragged their limp victim to the door.

Sailor Martz came to his feet. He swayed a moment; then grinned in sickly fashion. Unnoticed by the raiders, he turned about and staggered through the inner door that led to the adjoining house.

Clattering footsteps now sounded on stone. The raiders had done most of their work outside; they were dragging out the last of their prisoners. Joe Cardona appeared in the side doorway; looking about, the raid commander saw that the work was complete.

But Joe did not spy the figure that rose hazily behind Dory's counter. That spot was out of the light. The Shadow, peering forward, was unobserved as he, too, made a survey of the scene. The Shadow spied Joe Cardona; he followed the direction of the detective's gaze toward the front door of the dive.

There The Shadow's eyes were fixed. Between two plainclothes men he saw a figure that he recognized. Instantly The Shadow realized the mistake that the raiders had made. They were dragging out the rescued man. Sailor Martz had disappeared.

Impatiently, The Shadow waited. He watched Joe Cardona turn about and leave. The dive was deserted. Dory Halbit had been thrust out with the rest. Swiftly, The Shadow moved from behind the wooden bar. He swung toward the inner doorway and merged with the darkness beyond it.

The law, confident of the swiftness of its clean-up, had failed to bag the one man that it sought. Sailor Martz had made a get-away, despite his wound. The Shadow, alone was on the fellow's trail.

OUTSIDE the dive, Joe Cardona was watching clanging patrol wagons pull away into the mist. Prisoners had been herded aboard. In the crowd somewhere - Joe was sure - would be the man he wanted: Sailor Martz.

Cardona smiled as he stepped aboard a police car. The fight in the dive, just before the raid, had been a fortunate break according to the detective's reasoning. It offered a good pretext for the raid. Dory Halbit could make no howl.

Clanging through the fog, the car reached the nearest precinct. Alighting, Cardona walked up the steps of the building and entered the big room to survey the prisoners. He found half a dozen who were due to be shipped in an arriving ambulance. Not one of this crowd answered the description of Sailor Martz.

Lines of mugs greeted the detective as he studied the remainder of the sullen prisoners. Cardona's face showed a scowl. The detective came to the end of the line; there he encountered Dory Halbit. The one-legged man was nursing a black eye that he had received in combat with a dick.

Cardona motioned the proprietor to one side. In a growled undertone he inquired regarding Sailor Martz. Dory shrugged his shoulders.

"Sailor ain't here," he told the ace. "Look 'em over. You won't find him."

"He was in your joint tonight?"

"Sure! It was him that started the trouble! I'm off the guy. Wish you'd have landed him. But he ain't here."

"Where did he go?"

"Don't ask me. I didn't see Sailor after the fight got started."

"All right."

Cardona strolled away, muttering to himself. He knew that Dory had spoken the truth. Sailor Martz was not in the throng of prisoners.

A police sergeant approached.

"We've got the fellow who started the trouble," informed the officer. "The boys knocked him cold, when they dragged him in."

"Where is he?" questioned Joe, quickly.

"In the lieutenant's room," replied the sergeant. "We laid him on the couch. He's still out."

Cardona hurried into the lieutenant's room, expecting to find Sailor Martz.

He shook his head as he surveyed the dark-dyed face of the stocky man who lay sprawled upon the couch.

"Not Sailor," decided Cardona. "but this fellow may do some talking when he comes to. Dory says Sailor started the battle. It must have been with this guy.

A policeman passed Joe a slip of paper, stating that he had found it in the unconscious man's pocket. Cardona read a name and address.

"What's this doing here?" he asked aloud. "Name of Caleb Wesdren, Hotel Marrington. This guy must know somebody important, who lives at the Marrington. Unless he was figuring on making trouble up there. Get the Marrington; tell them I want to talk to Mr. Wesdren."

The sergeant put in the call. Meanwhile, two plainclothes men sauntered into the lieutenant's room. They were the ones who had slugged the dark-faced man. They seemed pleased with their accomplishment.

The sergeant completed the call. He handed the telephone to Cardona. The detective spoke briskly. The others heard his words.

"DETECTIVE CARDONA, of police headquarters," announced the ace. "We just raided a dive on the waterfront, Mr. Wesdren. Brought in prisoners. One had your address in his pocket... What's that? Oh,

yeah... That's right... Dark face... Looks like it was dyed, all right... Yeah... What's that? Say, you don't mean -"

"Why certainly, Mr. Wesdren... Absolutely... Yes, I'll bring him right up... You'll call the senator?... Good... Don't worry. He'll be all right."

Cardona hung up and turned to the plainclothes men, who greeted him with wise grins. One of them offered a husky question.

"Well?" asked the dick. "Is this the mug you want? Sailor Martz?"

"No," retorted Cardona, "but he'll tell us plenty about Sailor. Which one of you slugged him?"

"Clancy did. He was the first to get to him."

"Did he put up much of a fight, Clancy?" demanded Cardona.

"Didn't give him no chance," was the reply. "He was beatin' up a guy that was wounded, so I piled in on him. Morey here helped me."

"And the other fellow? The wounded man?"

"Don't know what happened to him."

Joe Cardona fumed.

"That was Sailor Martz," he growled. "The guy we wanted. The wounded man, I mean."

"But we got this bird."

"Sure you got him - and can you guess who he is?"

Heads shook as Cardona paused. Emphatically, the ace detective added a statement, from information that he had just gained from Caleb Wesdren.

"This fellow you slugged," he stated, "was smart enough to get in ahead of us. He was clever enough to grab the bird we wanted. He'd have handed Sailor Martz to us, if you'd let him,"

Joe stopped to gesture toward the unconscious man upon the couch. His final words, sarcastically directed toward the plainclothes men, served also as a belated introduction.

"This gentleman," declared Cardona. "was working in disguise. He is Vic Marquette, of the United States Secret Service."

CHAPTER IV. THE LOST TRAIL

ALL had quieted on the waterfront. The departure of clanging patrol wagons had left this area to the envelopment of the fog. River whistles still persisted with their blasts but human tumult had completely died.

Raiding police had swooped in and carried out their prey; all traces of that episode had passed. Yet there was evidence of an aftermath to the short battle; traces that led away from Dory Halbit's deserted dive.

A light was glimmering upon the roughened timbers of a pier. A tiny glow, the little flashlight cast a concentrated disk that was concealed by the form above it. The Shadow was following a trail that he had

picked up after the departure of the police.

A splotch of blood showed beneath the light. It was not the first mark of its kind that The Shadow had discovered. Through alleyways, past lurking spots, he had continued along his path, seeking the course that a wounded man had followed. The Shadow was close behind Sailor Martz.

The trail was not an easy one. Blood stains on cobbles, sidewalks, timbers, were infrequent in their intervals. They were tokens of times that Sailor Martz had paused in crippled flight. Where Sailor had lost ground because of his wound, The Shadow, too, had encountered handicaps.

For Sailor's course had been a zigzag one; and each blood splotch had demanded a surrounding search before the next could be discovered. Yet The Shadow had made gains. He could tell that from his inspection of the newer bloodstains.

Here, on the timber of the pier, the roughened wood should have absorbed the crimson fluid, despite the dampening influence of the fog. The splotch, however, was fresh. Sailor Martz had passed this spot only a few minutes ago.

Blinking out his light, The Shadow stared through the enveloping mist. Even to his hawkish gaze, the blackened atmosphere was impenetrable. Yet The Shadow sensed that he had neared the end of a trail. Splotches of blood had been more frequent. They were larger than before. Sailor Martz must be nearly through.

That fact meant that his detour to this pier had not been a blind one to cover up a trail. Sailor had used such tactics after leaving Dory's dive. Realizing that he could hold out no longer, the foiled assassin had straightened from his zigzags. Instead of pursuing a circling search, The Shadow moved outward through the blackened fog. He wanted to learn what was at the end of this pier. There, perhaps, would be quickly gained evidence of Sailor's whereabouts.

Husky whistles seemed to bellow a welcome from the channel as The Shadow neared the end of the pier. Then came a silence of those blasts. The Shadow caught new sounds, faint ones. Mingled with the slight lapping of pier-nibbling wavelets was the groan and scrape of wood against wood.

Stooping, The Shadow ran a gloved hand along the edge of the pier, in the direction of the sound. His fingers encountered a water-soaked rope. Following that tracer, the cloaked investigator suddenly discerned a solidness in the blackness off the pier. Edging past the timbers, The Shadow dropped to the deck of a moored barge.

PROBING forward, The Shadow encountered new solidity. It was the top of a cabin that projected up from the barge deck. Searching hands found a closed door. Sinking into a cockpit, The Shadow opened the barrier. Light glimmered from within. A groaning voice came to The Shadow's keen ears.

Entering a first cabin, The Shadow closed the outer door as softly as he had opened it. He turned toward the light; it came from an inner door that stood ajar. Advancing, The Shadow peered into a dirty bunk room. The light of a hanging lantern gave him view of the scene.

Sailor Martz was stretched upon a lower bunk. The groans had been his. Eyes glassy, Sailor was holding conversation with a rough, sweater-clad barge-man who stood beside the bunk. The Shadow listened.

"I'm through, Beef," coughed Sailor. "I - I was out to get a guy; but some mug got me instead. I'm through."

A grunt was "Beef's" response. Sailor spoke again; his words were a mumble; the rough man was forced

to lean forward to hear.

The Shadow crept into the bunk room. He moved almost to the edge of the light. He breathed a sibilant hiss that Beef alone could hear. The barge-man swung about. His eyes stared; an oath started from his lips. Then Beef's outcry ended.

With a swift drive of his gloved hands, The Shadow caught the barge-man in a twisting hold that brought choking fingers to Beef's throat. With a backward whirl, he snatched the big man away from Sailor's bunk. Out through the door into the darkened cabin; there, The Shadow's fingers tightened.

Beef subsided; his body sagged limp. The barge-man was out. The Shadow let him slump to the floor.

"Beef!" Sailor's hoarse gasp sounded from the bunk in the inner room. "Beef - where are you? I - I've got to talk! Beef!"

The Shadow reentered the bunk room. He approached Sailor's resting place and bent forward, his figure on the near side of the dying man's head. The Shadow spoke in a hoarse growl, that Sailor took for Beef's.

"Spill it, matey," he ordered. "I'm here, listening."

SAILOR strained his head upward, trying to see his companion. The effort was too great. Sailor groaned and closed his eyes. He heard a grunt from above. Satisfied, Sailor spoke wearily.

"You - you gotta do somethin' for me, Beef," insisted the dying man. "I - I fixed things, see? Fixed 'em with a guy named Rigger - Rigger Luxley. Shipped him and his outfit aboard the Zouave."

A grunt from The Shadow. It resembled Beef's usual type of comment.

"You know the ship," persisted Sailor. "Hilder's the skipper, Jason Hilder. Owns a half interest in the tub. Wasn't nobody wanted to ship aboard that tramp. I talked Hilder into takin' Rigger aboard, with a mob to fill out the crew. Hilder - Hilder got five grand for the deal.

"I was - I was coverin', here ashore - coverin' for Rigger" - Sailor paused wearily - "an' I - I gotta tip him off. You can do it, Beef - do it for me - with a wireless to the Zouave. I - I'll tell you how to spring it -"

A spasm of coughing shook Sailor's frame. Vainly, the dying man tried to speak. When he did find words, they were maudlin. Disconnected phrases came in a choking voice.

"I'm coverin' - coverin' - for Rigger. Aboard the Zouave. Gotta - gotta tip him, Beef. There - there's a guy here in New York. Yeah, I - I was coverin' when they got me -"

A snarling sound came from bloated lips. Sailor's body tightened; then dropped limp as a final gulp came from his throat. Glazed eyes froze. Sailor Martz was dead.

THE SHADOW stepped into the light. A sinister figure, he might well have represented death itself, come to gloat above the corpse of another traveler to the realm of oblivion. But The Shadow's purpose was one that concerned the living, not the dead.

He had learned much. He knew a spot where crime was due - aboard the tramp steamer Zouave, captained by Jason Hilder, with Rigger Luxley, missing mobleader, on ship accompanied by a squad of killers. The Shadow knew that the Zouave could be traced. The tramp had cleared port only a dozen hours ago.

But The Shadow wanted more facts. Swiftly, deftly, he searched Sailor's body for articles that might mean new clues. The Shadow found nothing of value.

Turning about, the phantom-like figure moved through the outer cabin. Beef was stirring on the floor; but the big man had not fully regained his senses. The Shadow went out to the fog-laden deck. He stepped back upon the pier and made his way ashore.

From then on, The Shadow's course tended away from the waterfront. It stopped at one point only; when The Shadow heard gruff voices and the clatter of footsteps. The Shadow flattened against a wall as three policemen shouldered past through the fog. The Shadow resumed his course; a soft laugh whispered from his lips.

The presence of bluecoats meant that Joe Cardona had learned that Sailor Martz was missing from the crowd hauled in during the raid. A search was on for Sailor; sooner or later, it would lead to the old barge at the end of the pier. But Sailor Martz, when the law found him, would be of no value as an informant.

Hazy street lamps showed a looming figure emerging from mist as The Shadow reached a lighted avenue beneath an elevated structure. A taxicab was standing by the corner, its driver lounging behind the wheel. The Shadow entered the cab; he spoke in quiet tones.

The driver heard the instructions and looked puzzled. He wondered why a passenger wanted to go to Newark in all this fog. That, however, was the passenger's business. The taxi driver chuckled at thought of the coming fare.

UP in a luxurious suite at the Hotel Marrington, four men had gathered for conference. Detective Joe Cardona was standing by the living room window, oblivious to the glistening glow of city lights that formed an aura through the outside fog.

Vic Marquette, still in his rough disguise, was seated in an easy-chair. The secret service operative still looked weak from the slugging that he had taken in combat with two dicks. Dye, however, covered the pallor that would naturally have been upon his face.

The others were men of dignity. One was middle-aged, heavy-set and square-jawed. His black hair showed but traces of coming gray. He had the look and manner of a big business executive. This was Caleb Wesdren, whose name and address Vic Marquette had carried in his pocket.

The other was a kindly faced, gray-haired man, whose features, despite their mildness of expression, held a ruggedness that was backed by steely eyes. Joe Cardona had heard of this man often. He was Senator Ross Releston, who stood high in importance among the Washington solons.

Cardona felt a trifle sheepish as he caught the glint of the senator's steady-gazing eyes; then Releston's smile put the detective at ease.

"A mistake was made tonight," stated Releston, "but it was one of overreaction. It could have been avoided, Detective Cardona, had you been informed that Marquette was engaged in trailing Sailor Martz."

"That's a fact, senator," returned Cardona. "I wish I'd known what was up. Maybe we'll get Sailor, though. I've got a whole squad searching the waterfront. He was wounded. He couldn't have gone far. But maybe if I knew why Marquette here was after Martz -"

Cardona paused as Releston smiled. The senator motioned for silence, then began his explanation.

"Briefly," he declared, "the matter concerns war secrets. Various governments have been cooperating to prevent the theft of important inventions. Mr. Wesdren, as head of a large syndicate of manufacturers, has custody of valuable models and plans which pertain to devices useful in case of war."

"All these are protected in my vault at Washington," put in Wesdren. "But Senator Releston has informed me that international spies may be after them."

"We received information from England," explained Releston, "that involved thefts accomplished there. One of Scotland Yard's undercover men is coming to New York on the Steamship Doranic. He is due tomorrow. What is the man's name, Marquette?"

"Eric Delka," responded the operative. "But he's reserved his rooms at the Goliath under the name of Jarvis Knight."

"Delka will be contacted after his arrival," remarked the senator. "But, in the meantime, we received cabled advice from London which named two men for whom we should be on the lookout. Give Detective Cardona the details. Marquette."

"One chap," declared Vic, turning to Joe, "goes under the name of Jed Barthue. Slippery customer - I've heard of him before. Talks a bunch of languages and goes everywhere. International spy and nobody's got a good idea of what he looks like.

"Barthue swiped some British inventions and shipped the models out of Liverpool. That's as far as Scotland Yard traced him; but they did pick up a line on a fellow calling himself Sailor Martz. He had been seen around the Liverpool docks.

"The Yard found out that Martz shipped for New York. That made them think that Jed Barthue would be coming to America, too. Looked like another hook-up coming. So the idea was to find Sailor Martz and watch him. That was my job; I came to New York and spotted Martz on the waterfront."

"WHEN did you first see him?" inquired Cardona.

"Last night," replied Marquette. "I saw him coming out of Dory Halbit's. That's why I was back there tonight. This afternoon, though, I reported to Senator Releston, who was in town."

"I was stopping at the Hotel Nestoria," remarked Releston. "I am going to Washington by sleeper, tonight. That was why I gave Marquette the information that he could reach Caleb Wesdren here at the Marrington, in case of important news."

Cardona nodded. This explained why Vic had carried the slip of paper that dicks had found in his pocket.

"I telephoned here myself," went on Releston. "That was at four o'clock, Wesdren. You had not arrived; so I left Marquette's information for you."

"With whom?" demanded Wesdren.

"With Craig Jollister," replied the senator.

"Jollister!" exclaimed Wesdren. "I thought that he had gone to Washington. He was not here when I arrived."

"He left no message for you?"

"None. But, after all, the man is an absent-minded sort. Eccentric and useless except in his particular work."

"Who is Jollister?" inquired Cardona.

"A designer of safes and strong boxes," replied Wesdren. "He fitted the door to my vault room; also the door to the vault itself. He is in Washington most of the time; occasionally he has business here in New York. I suppose he stayed longer than he had intended to, on this present trip."

"Well," declared Vic Marquette, breaking a short silence, "I ran into trouble with this fellow I was watching. Sailor Martz was no easy customer. That raid of yours came in a pinch, Cardona. I needed help. It would have worked just right, if you men had nabbed Martz."

"It took a pair of mugs to muff it," chafed Cardona.

"So we will have to count on Inspector Delka," decided Vic. "I'll meet him tomorrow. You can come along, Cardona; we might as well cooperate on the New York end of this business."

"You will have Delka see me in Washington?" inquired Releston.

"Yes," replied Marquette, "as I bring him there, senator."

"When are you coming back to Washington, Wesdren?" asked Releston, turning to the black-haired executive.

"As soon as possible - tomorrow," replied Wesdren. "I shall communicate with you, senator, after my arrival."

"Do you think that Jollister has gone to Washington already?"

"I doubt it. He's probably staying here in New York, somewhere. He'd probably show up in a few days. After all, I cannot find fault with him. He has practically completed his work in my vault room. His time is really his own."

A TELEPHONE bell rang. Wesdren answered the call. He spoke a few words; then passed the instrument to Joe Cardona. The detective talked to headquarters then hung up with a sour smile.

"They've found Sailor Martz," declared Cardona, "but the fellow's dead. He got his in that fight at Dory's joint."

"Where did they find him?" questioned Marquette.

"In an old barge off the end of a pier," replied Cardona. "They heard some fellow scramble away; but they couldn't trace the man in the fog. A pal, maybe, of Sailor's. Sailor was dead in a bunk aboard the barge."

Marquette grunted; then Cardona added a comment in a tone that spoke of finality.

"It's a lost trail," decided the ace. "One that nobody will follow further, now that Sailor Martz is dead."

"You're right," agreed Marquette. "Whatever Martz knew died with him."

Ross Releston and Caleb Wesdren nodded their glum accord. The trail was lost; the only course was to await a new one, after the arrival of Inspector Eric Delka.

Four men had guessed the same; their unanimous conjecture was wrong. The trail that Sailor Martz had furnished was not one barren of results. The Shadow had gained facts when he had tracked the dying man.

Already, The Shadow was taking measures to follow up the word that he had learned. Craftily had The Shadow tracked the lost trail. On his own, that master who countered crime was preparing new action.

Hidden facts remained; cross-currents lay beneath the smooth surface that covered crime. The Shadow, himself, had taken it upon himself to enter a game already in the making.

CHAPTER V. MEN IN THE DARK

INCOMING fog had completed its conquest of Manhattan. The city lay almost at a standstill, awaiting the faint relief that grayish dawn would bring. Black gloom had swallowed The Shadow; even he, the master of darkness, had held no welcome for this shrouding mist.

Night, alone, was sufficient cover for The Shadow. He had set out upon a daring quest; and the fog was a handicap that threatened his purpose. He was gambling much upon the hope that the in-rolling fog would lessen elsewhere; for The Shadow had chosen a quick departure from New York. His next thrust against crime would involve a new objective.

Out at sea, the sky showed glimmering starlight, for the fog banks were rolling into shore. There, a great ship was plowing slowly shoreward, through waters streaked with remnants of the mist. The liner was the Doranic, on the last leg of a rapid schedule. The captain had chosen to let the fog roll in ahead; it would be noon before he brought the massive ship in through the lower bay.

Though midnight was long past, passengers were still about, for they had learned that the liner was to lie offshore. That gave opportunity for prolonged merrymaking; and it was rumored that Captain Joseph Murgin, grizzled commander of the Doranic, would drop in to observe the festivities.

The rumor was correct. Captain Murgin had left the bridge; but he was making a brief stop on his way to the main saloon. He had reached the door of a first-class cabin that bore the number 646.

A cautious voice had replied to the captain's knock. Murgin had announced his identity. Someone within was opening the door. Observant eyes had spied Captain Murgin's arrival. They were peering from the door of an adjoining cabin, no. 644.

As soon as the captain had entered 646, this watcher closed his door. Through darkness, he crossed Cabin 644 and listened at a door to the adjoining cabin. Cautious, chuckled breathing told that he could catch the words of a conversation.

CABIN 646 was dark. Within its gloom, Captain Murgin was talking to the man who had so secretly received him.

"I have come here, Mr. Knight -"

"You may call me by my right name, captain." The interrupting voice was quiet. "I am Jarvis Knight to other passengers; but you, of course, have known that I am actually Eric Delka, inspector from Scotland Yard."

"Of course," acknowledged Murgin. "I was informed of that fact when you came aboard. But tonight is the first time that I received a request to call on Mr. Jarvis Knight."

"I had no problems previously. But tomorrow, I shall be confronted by one. I am anxious to go ashore

unobserved. Can you arrange it, captain, when we dock in New York?"

A pause. Captain Murgin was deciding upon a plan.

"It can be arranged," was his verdict. "Simply remain in this cabin, Inspector Delka. I shall tell Third Officer Donaghy to come here and ask for Mr. Knight. Answer to that name and he will conduct you ashore."

"My luggage is in the hold," remarked Delka. "The purser has the number of the locker which contains my trunks. Can you have them go through a customs inspection; then be sent directly to the Hotel Goliath, in New York?"

"Do they contain anything dutiable?"

"No. Of course, they hold papers of a semiconfidential nature -"

"Those will help me explain matters to the customs officials. Shall I have the trunks sent to the hotel under the name of Jarvis Knight?"

"Absolutely. I have reserved Suite 3612 under that incognito."

Delka struck a match and lighted a cigarette. The captain glimpsed the Scotland Yard man's face. He recognized it plainly in the glow.

"I have seen you before, inspector," remarked Murgin. "I was visiting aboard The P.O. liner Canopus when you took passage to Bombay."

"I was a mystery man on that trip, too," chuckled Delka. "I went to India to team with the C.I.D. on a matter that concerned counterfeiting. Incognito, as usual. Unfortunately, captain, there are certain criminals who would recognize me on sight, as well as by name. That is why I remain in my cabin, and cultivate the rather pleasureless habit of smoking in the dark."

Captain Murgin spoke in troubled tone.

"Do you believe," he inquired, "that dangerous criminals are aboard my ship, at present?"

"One may be," replied Delka, calmly. "Do not be alarmed, however. This fellow will not pillage passengers. He is an international spy, a most capable chap named Jed Barthue. It is possible that he may already be in the States, but I am taking no chances. Barthue has me topped in one respect."

"What is that?"

"He might recognize me; but I do not know him by sight. So I took this cabin, with a bulkhead for one wall, an empty cabin on the other side. I reserved 644, but never occupied it. Well, captain, our business is ended. I shall accept any word that comes from Third Officer Donaghy."

CAPTAIN MURGIN departed, leaving Eric Delka - otherwise Jarvis Knight - to the solitary darkness of Cabin 646. The Scotland Yard man continued to smoke beside the faint light of an opened porthole. Minutes lapsed, yet his ears were not keen enough to hear the slight noise within the adjoining cabin.

The door of Cabin 644 opened. An overcoated form appeared. Stooped and muffled, the eavesdropper closed the door softly behind him; then sneaked along a passage and found an opening to a deck.

Five minutes later, this same muffled man appeared upon a lower deck near the steerage. He had lighted a cigar; its glow produced a bright spot near the rail. As he stared across the water, the man moved the

cigar end up and down.

A watcher saw the lighted speck from a bulkhead door. This fellow was a crew member; he sneaked away as soon as he caught the flash. Soon a white-coated room steward appeared at the bulkhead door. He approached the man by the rail and gave a whispered signal.

"Psst!"

The man at the rail turned about. The steward caught a glimpse of his face; then it was muffled again by the collar of the overcoat. The steward made whispered inquiry

"What's up, Jed? Kerry found me near the purser's office. He said: 'listen, Cull - Jed Barthue's ready.' So I told Kerry to slide back; then I -"

"Cut the details, Cull." Barthue's tone was gruff. "Can Kerry get those other blokes in a hurry?"

"Sure. They're on call, Jed. What's to be done?"

"First off" - Barthue's growl was brisk - "you're to go to 646 and rap until Delka answers."

"Blimmie, Jed! That will mean trouble -"

"Do as I say! Ask Delka if he is Mr. Jarvis Knight. Then tell him that Third Officer Donaghy wants to see him down here."

"Cull" nodded. He did not grasp the scheme; but he knew that Barthue was working to some definite purpose.

"After that," resumed Barthue, "wait for half an hour. Then come back to 646 and ask for Mr. Knight again."

"You mean that Delka will be back there, Jed?"

"Don't ask questions. Do as I order. On your way to Delka's cabin, right now; post Kerry and his pals by the bulkhead."

CULL departed, still half wondering. Jed Barthue, by the rail, raised one arm and drew back his sleeve to consult the luminous dial of a wrist watch. The time was ten minutes of two. Barthue chuckled, as he pitched his cigar stump overboard. He drew a fresh perfecto from his pocket and lighted it as he stood gazing toward the swishing waters.

Jed Barthue had planned well for this night. He had boarded the Doranic as a stowaway, thanks to Cull, the crooked room steward. He had guessed Eric Delka's real identity; figuring that the Scotland Yard man would not worry about the unoccupied cabin, 644, Jed had boldly taken it for his own quarters during passage.

Tonight, Barthue had been ready for a mass attack on Delka; for he was backed by bribed crew members, brought aboard by Cull. Luck had given Barthue a break. Overhearing Delka's chat with Murgin, Jed had found a way to lure Delka into a perfect trap.

Ten minutes passed. Jed Barthue glanced impatiently at his watch, then looked across the water. Wisps of fog made white apparitions in the darkness. The Doranic was gliding through a district where mists had but recently lifted. Barthue delivered an ugly growl; then shrugged his shoulders. Obviously, some portion of his plan was still to be established. Looking about, the muffled man saw someone coming from a

passage. Despite the darkness, Barthue knew that it must be Delka.

"Mr. Knight?" he inquired, his gruff tone cautious.

"Yes." Delka's tone was quiet. "You are Third Officer Donaghy?"

"The same. Captain Murgin told me to get in touch with you. I put on civvies, to look like a passenger. I thought it best to see you tonight -"

"I understand," interposed Delka, his voice hardening. "I've caught on, Barthue. It looked like a spoof, that steward coming to my cabin. I doubted that I would find Donaghy here.

"Keep your hands as they are! Hold the cigar just as it is, in your right. Your left is nicely placed along the rail. I hold you covered, Barthue!"

Delka's right hand was in the pocket of a light overcoat. Barthue knew by Delka's tone that this was no bluff. Nevertheless, the crook managed a harsh chuckle.

"Clever of you, Delka," he sneered. "Jarvis Knight, eh? Well, it didn't work with me, old top. That's why I sent for you - so we could talk things over, on neutral ground, so to speak."

Barthue's tone had gained a persuasive smoothness, despite the slight persistence of the gruff voice which seemed part of his personality.

Delka started to reply; his voice was drowned by a deep-throated blare that sounded high above. The mighty whistle of the Doranic was delivering a blast. An answering whistle sounded, from off the liner's starboard bow.

"Seven minutes after two -"

Barthue made the comment, staring at his wrist watch without moving his left arm. Casually, he let his right hand move slowly up and down.

Delka noted the motion; but never guessed that watchers were spying it from the bulkhead, spotting the motion of a glowing cigar tip.

The Doranic whistled another basso signal. Amid that drowning sound, three men surged from the opening in the bulkhead. Kerry and two others formed the trio; they drove upon Delka in a body, burying the Scotland Yard man beneath them.

Delka's head cracked against the planking of the deck. Kerry yanked Delka's hand limp from its pocket. The blow had knocked the victim senseless.

A SHIP'S whistle was again answering the Doranic's signal. Tiny lights showed from the ocean's half haze. A boat lay off to starboard, engines stopped, awaiting the passage of the liner. The vessel looked like a small freighter, its lights far apart.

"The Zouave," chuckled Barthue. Then, surveying Delka: "Well, it's lucky for this blighter. He may have information that might prove valuable. My instructions were to take him alive, if possible. Come on, Kerry! Don't start to tie him up. Strap him with the life belts. Give me the flare. Hurry!"

While Kerry dashed back to the bulkhead, the other two men tossed aside a rope and produced two life belts from a rack. They strapped the preservers under Delka's shoulders. Kerry came back with a flare. Barthue pointed it upward and attached it to the belt on Delka's back.

"Set for fifteen minutes?" he inquired. "Waterproof, as I ordered?"

Kerry nodded.

"Overboard," ordered Barthue.

The three underlings hoisted Delka's unconscious form. Over the rail plopped the inspector's helpless form, scraping the side as it fell. The life belts brought Delka's head upward. Barthue chuckled; then motioned his aids back to the bulkhead. He saw a distant spurt of flame from the deck of the freighter.

The liner's engines were thrumming. The Doranic was again moving forward. Leaning outward from the rail, Barthue saw Delka's figure float away into darkness. Chuckling, the crook strolled in from the deck.

WHEN Cull knocked later at the door of 646, he was astonished to hear a growled command to enter. Cull had recognized the voice of Jed Barthue. The steward entered, to find the man who had taken Eric Delka's place.

"The job is done," announced Barthue. "Send the radiogram. It was the Zouave, Cull; but they were late with their flare. Delka's flare was set for fifteen minutes. They've seen it by this time.

"Tomorrow morning I meet Third Officer Donaghy when he comes here. I shall be Eric Delka - or, rather, Jarvis Knight. Always Jarvis Knight, except to those who know that Knight is Delka. But I shall not go about it badly.

"Suite 3612, at the Goliath. The luggage will be there. As Jarvis Knight, I shall prove that all the competent investigators are not in the employ of Scotland Yard."

Cull, leaving the cabin, pulled out a written radiogram. It was addressed to Stephen Lorry, Altano Building, New York. It contained a home-coming greeting signed "Wallace"; but Cull knew that it was word to someone higher up. Word to a hidden master crook, telling that Jed Barthue had succeeded in his scheme.

Crime had struck the Steamship Doranic; cunning crime that none aboard would suspect. A smooth crook had gained an opportunity to pose as a man from Scotland Yard. The Shadow, wherever he might be, as yet lacked any inkling of the full events aboard the liner that lay beyond the fog banks.

CHAPTER VI. HOPE IN THE NIGHT

CLICK - CLICK -

The half-muffled sound came dully to the ears of Eric Delka. Amid darkness that seemed abysmal, the Scotland Yard man listened. Delka's eyes had opened but they could see nothing. His ears, however, had managed to hear the repeated sound.

Click - Click - Again the noise ended. All remained black to Delka; but by this time he had sensed something of his surroundings. Stretching out a hand, he could feel the blankets of a bunk. From somewhere, came the throb of ship's engines.

Hazily, Delka remembered that scene on the Doranic. Jed Barthue, muffled in darkness, backed against the rail. Delka had covered the man he was after; he had felt the joy of triumph on that lower deck of the big liner.

Then had come a sweeping surge. Oblivion; after that, a brief respite of semiconsciousness. Delka could recall floating in the water. He remembered hands pulling him aboard a small boat.

Also, he recollected a struggle. A fight against men who seemed to be new enemies. He had tried to ward off a swinging oar blade. He had failed. Again, in that small boat, he had been treated to a knock-out blow.

Throbbing of engines meant that he was again aboard a ship. It was not the Doranic; the liner's engines were smooth, almost vibrationless. Delka knew that this dank cabin wherein he was bunked must be aboard an older, smaller ship. Some freighter, perhaps, from which the small boat had come to pick him up.

His clothes were dry; but they were not his own clothing. Rubbing fingers along a sleeve, Delka found that he was wearing a rough sweater. His trousers were of khaki. His shoes, when he felt them, proved to be canvas sneakers, three sizes too large.

Click - Click -

Again the Scotland Yard man heard the sound. This time, he located it on the opposite side of the cabin. Rising from his bunk, Delka felt his way through darkness. Reaching the wall, he discovered a closed porthole.

The rounded window was covered with cloth. Captors had made a blackened cell out of the cabin. Delka's first thought was to snatch away the covering; then he changed his mind. He found the catch of the porthole and began to undo the screwed fastening.

Click - Click -

The sound was from the other side of the porthole. Something tapping twice against the glass. The fastening was loose! Delka yanked open the port.

It was black outside; but the air of the sea came surging into the cabin. Then, as Delka thrust a hand out through the porthole, he encountered a smooth object in the space.

A small bottle. Hanging from a string.

THE bottle slipped momentarily from the prisoner's hand but it swung back again, in pendulum fashion. Delka drew it into the cabin. He shook the bottle. Something clattered softly inside it.

Light objects slipped into Delka's hand as he inverted the bottle. The prisoner recognized them by their touch. Loose matches, wisely provided by whoever had lowered the bottle. Delka struck match against the wall beside the porthole. The glimmer showed him that the bottle contained another item - a twisted roll of paper.

This proved to be a message, when Delka opened it. By the tiny flare of a match, the Scotland Yard man read a note inscribed in pencil. Hastily written, crudely spelled, it offered opportunity:

Dear Sir: We are loyal crew members who want to give you help.

You hav enemys on bord. May be we can sav you from them. It will meen

risk for us so we want 1000 dollers you must promis.

Friends.

The match light showed the stub of a pencil in the bottom of the bottle. The men on the deck above required a reply. Delka did not doubt that they were actually friends. The note asked for money only; to

promise it would mean no greater risk than that which already existed.

Extinguishing a match. Delka felt in the pockets of his trousers; then realized suddenly that his own clothes were gone. He had been carrying a considerable amount of cash at the time of his capture. The money now belonged to his enemies.

But Delka had another possibility. He stretched his right hand to his left wrist and gripped a bulky wrist watch that was strapped there. His captors had not removed the timepiece. Probably they had considered it worthless after being in the water.

Delka removed the watch from his wrist. He pried open the back. Dry paper crinkled; its presence indicated the reason for the bulkiness of the wrist watch. Only a portion of the interior contained watchworks. The rest was a half-inch cavity wherein Delka kept reserve funds.

The prisoner struck another match. This glow showed British bank notes, all of high denomination. Delka knew that his would-be rescuers would accept pounds as readily as dollars.

He stuffed a few large notes into the bottle; then returned the others to his wrist watch. He tugged at the cord as signal; then let the bottle swing from the porthole. He heard the bottle click upward.

Crumpling the note, Delka tossed it through the port and chucked the matches after it. He closed the porthole; the wisdom of his prompt action became apparent just as he was fixing the fastening. Behind him, Delka heard the sound of a key grating in a lock. Someone had come to the cabin.

DELKA slid across to the bunk and slumped there. An instant later, dull light flooded the cabin from an outer passage. Two ruffians entered the cabin; one flashed a light in Delka's face. The Scotland Yard man opened his eyes and blinked.

"Come along," growled one of the arrivals, grasping Delka's shoulder. "Get movin', you! We've been waitin' for you to wake up."

Delka started to rise: then made a pretence of weakness. He sagged back with a groan and lay motionless upon the bunk. The man started to shake him; then the fellow's companion offered an objection.

"Leave him lay, Steve," said the second rowdy. "Wait'll I yank open that porthole an' give him some air."

"Oh yeah?" growled Steve. "Well, what's Rigger goin' to say about it? He said bring the mug up to the bridge."

"He said bring him up if we can move him."

"Well, ain't that what I'm doin', Bert? Wakin' him up?"

Bert had opened the porthole. He turned around to argue with Steve, while Delka continued his role of possum with two purposes. His first was to give opportunity for the men who had sent down the bottle; they might need the time to plan his rescue. His second idea was to learn all he could by listening to Steve and Bert.

"Rigger ain't in no hurry, Steve," Bert stated. "He's got to talk with the old man, up on the bridge. Get him primed to lay down the terms when we show up with this bird Delka."

"The skipper's welchin', eh?" questioned Steve, glancing at Delka and flicking his light to make sure the prisoner was motionless. "I thought maybe he was gettin' cold feet. What's Rigger doin' about it?"

"He don't have to do nothin'. We own the boat, don't we? Hilder may be captain of the Zouave, but Rigger Luxley gives the orders."

"Then why is he lettin' Hilder stall?"

"Just soft-soapin' the old man, that's all. Makin' him think we ain't goin' to be too tough. Hilder's got to cruise aroun' in this tub after we're through with it. An' what's more, he's got to navigate it while we're still on board. Savvy?"

"Sure! I get it, Bert. Well, leave it to Rigger. He'll keep the old man in line."

Steve began to shake Delka. He waited after one attempt; then became more rough. This time, the prisoner decided to respond. He came up to a sitting position and stared stupidly at the men who had come for him.

"O.K., Steve," decided Bert. "Hoist him up."

BETWEEN them, the two thugs supported the Scotland Yard man and moved him from the cabin. Stumbling between them, Delka kept up the pretence that he was groggy. They reached a companionway. Delka became a heavy burden going up the steps. At last they reached the deck. Here the pair halted to regain their breath.

Eyes half opened, Delka looked cautiously about. He was on the forward deck of the tramp steamer. Dim lights showed battened hatches and small, antiquated loading cranes. The bridge was just above; another flight of steps would be the next course.

There were men about the deck. Delka could make out their scattered figures. They looked like seamen but probably they were ruffians, like Steve and Bert. All except two; perhaps a few more. For Delka was positive that the note in the bottle had come from real friends on board.

Crew members had promised to aid him, if they could. But would their task be possible? From the conversation between Steve and Bert, Delka had learned that crooks must certainly outnumber real seamen aboard the Zouave. Hope dwindled within the prisoner as Steve and Bert began to move him toward the steps to the bridge.

It was then that Delka sensed a peculiar thrumming that sounded above the pounding of the Zouave's engine. The purr was from high above, like the roar of an airplane motor. Steve and Bert heard it also; they stopped short and looked upward.

Dark night persisted above the feeble glow of the freighter's top lights. No sign of an airplane's riding lights. Nothing but a dreary half haze that formed a remnant of the broken fog.

Then the thrumming ceased. Silence reigned and the higher blackness. Steve and Bert stood puzzled. They exchanged remarks.

"Sounds like some airplane," growled Steve. "But what's it doin' offshore without no lights?"

"Maybe some guy got lost in the fog," returned Bert. "Comin' up from Florida or somewhere, maybe. Guess he's spotted our lights, an' is takin' a chance on landin' in the water."

"So's we'll pick him up, huh? That's a laugh, ain't it? Fat chance Rigger will worry about that guy."

"Well, it's a cinch he won't try to land on the deck. So what's we got to do with it?"

The two thugs turned to drag their prisoner toward the steps to the bridge. At that moment, a man appeared at the doorway from the steps.

Delka was the first to see the new-comer, he needed no introduction to know that this was Rigger Luxley. Hard-faced, big-fisted, the man from the bridge glared at Steve and Bert."

"WHAT'S holding you mugs?" demanded Rigger. "I told you to bring Delka up to the bridge."

"We're bringin' him, Rigger," replied Steve.

"And mooning on the way," snorted Rigger.

"On account of the airplane," stated Bert. "We was listenin' to it, Rigger. Up over the ship."

"What airplane?" quizzed Rigger. "I didn't hear any. I don't hear one now."

"Maybe it's hit the water," returned Steve. "We was just wonderin'. Anyway, Rigger, we had to get Delka awake before we could move him."

"An' we knew you was talkin' to the skipper," put in Bert. "Primin' him for -"

"You mugs know too much!" rasped Rigger. "Come on! Load this dope up the steps so's the old man can talk to him. I'm following."

Rigger glared as his henchmen shoved Delka toward the steps. With a snort, the mobleader prepared to follow. Then, suddenly, Rigger wheeled. A downward swishing sound had caught his attention; following it came startled cries from along the deck.

Staring, Rigger saw a monstrous object as it swooped straight downward like a bird of prey. An autogiro, descending straight from the night, squarely upon the deck of the Zouave.

The huge, windmill blades above the ship were spinning as the pilot made his precarious landing. Then the autogiro reached the end of its descent. One wheel struck a hatch and jounced; the other wheel tilted to hit the deck.

For an instant, it looked as though the landing would prove disastrous. The lower wing keeled heavily, starting toward a sidewise overturn. Then the autogiro righted, swung half about. The lower wing crashed against a derrick. Struts crackled momentarily then the craft wavered to a standstill.

RIGGER LUXLEY bounded forward upon the deck, hand thrust to pocket, ready to draw a revolver. He wanted to meet these intruders from the air; to challenge them and learn their identity. Rigger wanted no uninvited guests aboard the Zouave.

Half way to the autogiro, Rigger stopped short. He saw someone dropping from beside the plane. Rigger stared into the gloom, to make out the figure that he could barely discern.

Then from Rigger's startled hips came a wild cry - one that was echoed by his minions as they rose from beside the rails of the Zouave. Leader and henchmen - all of New York's underworld - had recognized the being from the autogiro.

In mocking challenge to the shouts of crooks came the burst of a strident laugh. Weird merriment broke from hidden lips beneath the lowered brim of a slouch hat. Automatics showed in the gloved fists of the cloaked figure that swept toward the center of the deck.

In one amazing second, men of crime had recognized their unexpected foe; and had heard his answer to

their frantic outcry. The Shadow had come aboard the Zouave!

CHAPTER VII. THE RESCUE

To Eric Delka, the events which succeeded The Shadow's arrival were startling episodes of furious battle. Steve and Bert had turned about at the foot of the steps, their action an instantaneous response to Rigger's cry.

To Delka's amazement, he was forgotten. He saw a revolver glimmer in Rigger's hand; he realized suddenly that Bert and Steve were yanking guns as well. Like their leader; like the thugs along the deck, these two were springing out to deal with the common foe.

Automatics roared the opening of the fray. Delka saw tongued flashes from the cloaked apparition on the deck. He watched The Shadow whirl about and perform a sweeping fadeaway, as crooks fired in return.

Revolvers were barking in staccato unison. Wild men were aiming toward an elusive target. All the while, automatics were tonguing flame. The Shadow had become a living turret, stabbing shots toward every quarter.

Blinking, Delka saw men plopping to the deck. Sprawling figures were an immediate sequel to The Shadow's swift barrage. Others were pumping bullets viciously; but they lacked the uncanny prowess of the cloaked opponent.

Rooted during those first swift seconds, Delka realized that force of numbers could down that formidable fighter. The Shadow would be doomed, unless aid came. His deceptive tactics had succeeded only because his foemen had been too quick with their first shots.

Rigger Luxley had fired four wild bullets. The chief crook steadied for his next delivery. Then came the aid that The Shadow needed. A gunshot ripped from the cockpit of the autogiro. An unsuspected marksman - companion of The Shadow - had taken steady aim.

Rigger spun about, clipped by that timely shot. The Shadow's laugh resounded. Crooks wavered as they saw their leader slump. Delka heard a loud shout from the bridge above. He caught the boom of another timely weapon. An aiming crook sprawled. The captain of the Zouave had sided with The Shadow.

That shout was a command. Men came bounding out from crannies. They were crew members who had resented the skipper's sell-out to Rigger Luxley. They were eager to aid in downing men of crime.

Unarmed, they leaped for spots where crooks lay sprawled. They seized upon ready revolvers that had dropped from loosened hands. Crooks turned to meet these unexpected fighters.

THE sudden turn was fortunate. Rigger had brought more henchmen than those who had been on deck at the start of the swift battle. Reserves were surging up from the companionways. Crooks still outnumbered those who fought them.

But The Shadow had gained the edge. He had swung beyond a hatchway, having cleared away the closest opposition. While crew battled crooks, The Shadow dropped his guns and produced a second brace of automatics. With these new weapons, he thundered destruction into the ranks of new attackers.

The aid in the autogiro was sniping crooks. The captain was adding new shots from the bridge. It was Delka's turn to enter. The Scotland Yard man saw his opportunity. It lay against the very men whom he preferred to combat: Steve and Bert.

That pair had dropped back when Rigger staggered. Forgetting Delka, they were concentrating on The Shadow's hatchway, hoping to bag him while he fought the others. Steve and Bert were prone upon the deck, hard targets for The Shadow to uncover.

Fiercely, Delka pounced forward and landed squarely upon Steve's back. With downward driving fist, he smashed the crook's head to the deck. One instant more and he would have had the man's gun. Bert, however, intervened.

Swinging up, the second crook snarled an oath and jabbed his gun at Delka. Too late to get Steve's weapon, the ex-prisoner made a grab at Bert's revolver. He caught the thug's wrist. Bert's shot went wide. Then Delka and Bert went into a rolling grapple.

It was fast, equal combat, to the tune of roaring guns. The strugglers came half to their feet and staggered to a companionway. Bert twisted free and tried to aim. Delka jammed a punch to the crook's jaw. Bert toppled; then caught Delka's neck. Together they wavered, then pitched head-foremost down the companionway.

The fall favored Delka. He was resisting Bert's attack as they took the unexpected drop. He managed, somehow, to twist himself about as they skidded down the precipitous steps. Bert was beneath when they struck. The skull-crushing fall finished the vicious crook.

Delka rolled jouncingly along the passage. Eric thudded a wall; then came up to his hands and knees. Dizzy, weakened, he looked for Bert and saw the crook lying motionless. From the deck above, he heard the barking of guns, a sound that seemed strangely far away.

Delka came unsteady to his feet. He stared at an opened door; he saw two rough-clad men come into view. One uttered an excited cry as he observed Delka's face in the passage light. The other answered with a nod. Together, they grabbed Delka's arms.

The Scotland Yard man took them for new enemies. Vainly, he tried to use his fists to beat them off. Weakened by the fall, he found resistance useless. The pair overpowered him and dragged him, limp, along the passage toward the stern of the freighter.

It was fresh salt air that revived Eric Delka. He had taken his share of beatings tonight; his final lapse into unconsciousness had been through sheer exhaustion. Once again, Delka came into hazy surroundings.

He was in a small boat, chugging under the power of a wheezy motor. Back through the darkness were the distant lights of the Zouave. Faint crackles announced that the battle had not yet ended aboard the freighter. Apparently crooks must have scudded through the ship, followed by vengeful crew members.

Two men were in the boat with Delka. As the Scotland Yard man groaned, one reached forward and roughly clamped his shoulder. The fellow spoke in a gruff but friendly tone.

"You're all right, matey," he informed. "We was comin' up to get you when you spilled down the companionway. Guess you didn't figure who we was."

"We're taking you ashore," volunteered the second. "Like we promised, when we sent you the bottle. It ain't far to the Jersey coast. We knows our bearings."

"We snook up from the engine room," said the first man, "so's we could slip you the bottle. We had to go down again. We was there when the fight started. That's why we couldn't come no sooner."

These were the crew members who had promised aid. They were stokers that accounted for the fact that they had been unwatched by Rigger. Delka knew that these loyal men must have overheard talk

concerning his capture. They had done their best to rescue him. Nevertheless, he had cause for protest.

"Go back to the Zouave," he ordered. "We may be needed there, to help defeat the criminals."

One of the stokers shook his head.

"No use, matey," he decided. "That fight's won or lost by this time. Three of us ain't enough to cut no figure one way nor tother."

"Besides," prompted his companion, addressing Delka, "you're done up, matey. You wouldn't be no help, no-how. We're sticking to our bargain. You're going ashore."

Delka nodded weakly as he rested back on a gunny sack at the bow of the little motor boat. The lights of the Zouave were gone. The distant bark of guns could be heard no longer. There could be no use in returning.

Yet, as the boat chugged shoreward, Delka could do nothing but remember that fierce fray that he had witnessed. His thoughts concentrated upon that amazing figure of the night, that master battler who had come from nowhere, to overwhelm men of crime.

Dimly, Delka could remember rumors of strange events in London, years before. Of a fight down Limehouse way, in which a cloaked avenger had wiped out a horde of ruffians, to save a squad from Scotland Yard.

He had heard that being mentioned by a name. "The Shadow," they had called him. As he pieced together those recollections of the past, Delka decided that, once again, he had been treated to a sight of that weird battler's power.

Eric Delka was sure that he had been rescued by The Shadow. He felt elated at the thought that he was going safe ashore; he felt sure that The Shadow had triumphed in the fray aboard the Zouave.

Events had taken a turn to the Scotland Yard man's liking; but it was well, perhaps, that Delka's thoughts were dwelling on the past and not the future.

For Eric Delka, unsuspecting, was going straight toward new danger; into a spot where The Shadow would not be present to aid him against the threat of death.

CHAPTER VIII. ABOARD AND ASHORE

FAINT streaks of clouded dawn had touched the ocean's sky. Battle had long since ended aboard the tramp steamer Zouave. Sprawled bodes lay upon the forward deck; beyond them, the hulking shape of The Shadow's autogiro.

Captain Jason Hilder stood at the wheel, looking downward from the bridge. He was a rough man, calloused in his ways; but this morning, Hilder's face was grim. The skipper felt that tragedy had stalked the Zouave; and he knew that the fault was his own.

A mysterious fighter had dropped aboard to wage combat with crooks. Crew members had aided at Hilder's word; criminals had been driven below and hunted until all were annihilated. Full reports had come to the bridge.

But nothing had been heard from the real victor - that cloaked battler who had come by autogiro. He, too, had followed the fray when it went below; a man had sprung from the autogiro to join him. Both had taken up the chase of Rigger Luxley's evil cohorts; neither had returned.

Hilder wondered. Two of his crew had been killed: three had been wounded; two were missing. Reports had accounted for all of them. But the cloaked fighter had faded ghostlike, as weirdly as he had arrived. A complete search of the ship would be the only way to solve the mystery.

As he pondered, the captain gained the sudden impression that someone had come beside him. Turning from the wheel, he stared at a calm-faced stranger who had entered without a sound.

The arrival was attired in a well-fitting suit of black. His countenance was the most extraordinary one that Hilder had ever seen. It seemed masklike, with features chiseled as firmly as the profile of a statue.

Instantly, the captain realized that this must be the battler of the night before. Shifting to the wheel, Hilder stared uneasily toward the bow.

He felt qualms of conscience, even before the stranger spoke. When words did come, they were in a level monotone that told the captain that his guilt was known.

"MEN of crime," came the accusing words, "were aboard this ship with your knowledge. You were paid to take them as members of your crew. The sum that you accepted was five thousand dollars."

Hilder thrust a hand to his belt. He pulled out a thick wad of currency and tremblingly thrust the money toward his accuser. Huskily, the captain spoke.

"I took the money," he admitted. "I made the deal through a fellow called Sailor Martz. It was Rigger Luxley who came aboard. But I didn't know their game; that didn't come out until too late. I don't want the money that they paid me."

"You will keep it," stated The Shadow, "to be divided evenly between the families of the two loyal men who died in last night's battle."

"All right." Hilder nodded eagerly. "I'll do more than that! I have money of my own. I want to make amends for my mistake."

"Then state exactly," prompted The Shadow, "what occurred on board after you cleared New York. Tell why you shipped the criminals at all."

"They wanted to get away from New York," blurted Hilder. "That was what Martz told me; and I believed him. He said the police had nothing on them; but the town was too hot for them. Or likely to be. I was wrong -"

"Yet Martz made no statement of crime on sea?"

"Absolutely none! It was Rigger who brought that up, after we had cleared. He told me to lie to; near the path of the Steamship Doranic."

"State his purpose."

"He was to pick up a man thrown overboard from the liner. An Englishman named Eric Delka, from Scotland Yard. Rigger had a pal on the Doranic. He mentioned the crook's name. It was Jed Barthue."

"Continue."

"Rigger had brought more men than I expected. He held control of my ship. I had to follow his instructions. He picked up Delka, about a half hour before you came aboard. Maybe longer than that - pretty near an hour, I reckon."

The Shadow made no comment. Hilder stared straight ahead and continued his story.

"Delka was a prisoner in a cabin," stated the captain. "Rigger wanted to question him; to find out how much he knew about Jed Barthue. But Rigger wanted me to do the dirty work; to question Delka and to threaten him."

"Two men were bringing Delka up to the bridge. I was up against it; only thing I could do was go through with Rigger's orders. I was looking for a way out; but there was none, until you arrived."

"When you started that fight, I had my chance to chip in. I had a revolver hidden away up here. I used it, and I shouted to the crew to help. They knew what I was up against. They didn't lose much time."

"After the fight was over, I sent men to look for Delka. He was gone; but the first mate found out where he went. Two of the stokers had managed to make a deal with him. They took him ashore in the little motor boat. That happened while the fight was still going on."

HILDER ended his statement. His words had been spoken frankly. The Shadow knew that the captain honestly regretted his past actions. Steady eyes fixed on Hilder's troubled face, The shadow understood more.

Hilder was thinking of the future wondering how he could explain matters when the Zouave reached port. The Shadow spoke an answer to that problem.

"Send out a wireless report of mutiny," he ordered. "State that the mutineers were criminals who shipped as crew members. Chart your course to Norfolk. Make a simple report. It will be accepted. The dead men will be identified as crooks."

Captain Hilder managed a smile.

"That will cover it!" he exclaimed. "The regular crew will be commended. Helping to suppress the 'mutiny.' But" - he paused, frowning - "but what about your plane, there?"

"I shall go aboard the autogiro," returned The Shadow. "Send the first mate to your cabin. There he will find a man named Miles Crofton, who assists me as pilot. Crofton will ask for crew members to aid him in repairing the autogiro. The work may be accomplished in a few hours. The autogiro, however, will take off before the Zouave reaches Norfolk."

Captain Holder nodded. His smile returned. He started to speak; then ended suddenly. Looking down from the bridge, he saw the tall stranger crossing the deserted deck. The Shadow had left the bridge without Hilder realizing it. Gaping, the skipper saw the tall stranger enter the autogiro.

Hilder called for the first mate. He learned that some of Rigger's men had damaged the wireless equipment, but that it would be in working order later. That was as well, thought Hilder. No need to rush the dispatch concerning the mutiny, now that the course lay for Norfolk.

He sent the mate to find Miles Crofton. Soon, a stolid, methodical appearing man appeared on deck and began to repair the wing struts of the autogiro. Crew members came to help as he might need them.

At the wheel, Hilder chuckled. He noted that the crew was eyeing Crofton with awe. They thought that he must be the cloaked fighter of the night before. As he guided the slow-moving steamer, Hilder watched the repair work progress. It was about half done when he received word that the wireless was repaired. He ordered dispatch of the mutiny report.

IT was eight o'clock when the wireless message left the Zouave. Nearing noon of that same morning, a

wiry, stoop-shouldered man picked up the earliest edition of a New York evening newspaper. Standing by a subway entrance, the man read headlines that told of mutiny at sea. Thrusting the newspaper in his pocket, he looked about suspiciously; then dived into the subway.

Fifteen minutes later, this same man appeared at the entrance of a large apartment building. He went through the lobby and took an elevator to the tenth floor. He rapped at a door marked 10 B. A harsh voice responded:

"Who's there?"

"Cady," informed the arrival. "Let me in, Clink. I got something important!"

The hallway light showed a troubled scowl on the stoop-shouldered man's face. There was a twitch to Cady's features that accentuated a ratlike expression that seemed to be a permanent imprint. Cady showed increased anxiety as he waited for the door to open.

As soon as the barrier was released, Cady darted into the apartment, pushing back a tall, dark-faced man who had admitted him. This individual was attired in a garish dressing gown. He possessed a furrowed face, with eyes that blinked from beneath heavy, lowered brows.

"What's the idea, Cady?" snarled the man in the dressing gown. "How come you're barging in here like a wild man gone goofy?"

"Look at this!" exclaimed Cady, thrusting out the newspaper. "Read them headlines, Clink. About the Zouave!"

"Humph." "Clink's" eyes scanned the newspaper and read the news flash below the headline. "This doesn't mean much. Rigger and his outfit just got busy with their gats, that's all."

"Yeah? Well, it says the mutiny was quelled, don't it?"

"Yes. I guess it was tough, for Rigger."

"Then he didn't get Delka, after all."

Clink thrust Cady into a chair; then tossed the newspaper on a couch. He strolled to the window and stared out toward the city. The fog had cleared since dawn; only a mild haze remained to dim more distant portions of the sky line.

"Rigger got Delka, all right," decided Clink, slowly. "Jed Barthue wouldn't have sent that radiogram if he hadn't been sure about it. That crew aboard the Zouave wouldn't have known who Delka was. Chances are, Rigger bumped him."

"But suppose Delka got away?"

"Jed will have to watch his step. We can count on Jed to do that. But I'll get in touch with the big shot about it. I think I know what we will do."

"What's that, Clink?"

"He'll have me send a message to Jed. You'll deliver it at the Goliath, Cady."

"Right off, today?"

"Sure. After we're sure that Jed's in there. Flash the gag when you see him. He'll give you the

countersign."

"And he'll send back a reply?"

"Sure. I think so -" A telephone bell began to ring. Clink answered the call; Cady listened while the big man talked in brief monosyllables. The conversation ended. Clink laughed as he hung up.

"No news to the big boy," he informed Cady. "He reads the newspapers, too. What he just told me was what I guessed he would. I'll write you out the message, Cady. It calls for a reply."

CLINK seated himself at a writing desk and brought a small book from the drawer. He began to prepare a code message while Cady looked on. As he worked, Clink talked.

"It's a sweet racket, Cady," he declared; "the best I've ever been in. Too bad we've had to use mugs like Rigger Luxley. But we won't need any more of them for a little while. When we do, I'll get them."

"Plenty of birds will work for Clink Huron," agreed Cady. "The way you keep clear of the bulls is hot stuff."

"Thanks for the compliment, Cady," chuckled Clink. "You've done fairly well yourself. That's why you're in on this proposition. But you've got to use your bean. Don't forget that."

"I'm remembering it, Clink."

Clink completed his message. He folded the paper, sealed it in an envelope and handed it to Cady.

"Mr. Jarvis Knight will be at the Hotel Goliath," he informed, in his harsh tone. "It is likely that Knight will be Jed Barthue. A clever fellow - Barthue. A few of us over here in New York have heard a lot about him."

"But this business on the Zouave," broke in Cady. "Maybe it means that Delka -"

"It's a chance," interposed Clink, "that Delka got away from the Zouave. If he did, he'll show up at the Hotel Goliath under the name of Jarvis Knight. That was his plan. Barthue slipped us the Goliath set-up from London. You found out that an Englishman reserved rooms there as Jarvis Knight."

"Yeah - by cable. But suppose Delka does show up. Suppose he runs into Jed Barthue, passing as Jarvis Knight."

"I told you Jed is clever. He'll read what's happened on the Zouave. He'll be on the lookout for Delka. Probably he'll stay under cover until he knows it's O.K."

"I get you, Clink. That's why I'm to flash the button."

"Right. If Jarvis Knight muffs it, he's Delka. If he gets it, he's Barthue. If it's Barthue, you're all set. If it's Delka, lay off until we get some word from Barthue."

A grin appeared upon Cady's ratlike face. Clink showed a harsh smile as he ushered his visitor to the door. Crooks had gained their warning. They were prepared.

CHAPTER IX. MR. JARVIS KNIGHT

SHORTLY before noon, a taxicab stopped in front of the Hotel Goliath. A stockily built man alighted and entered the lobby. He had no luggage; the suit that he wore was poorly fitted and looked like a ready-made affair that might have come directly from a clothing store dummy.

Arriving at the desk, the new guest spoke quietly to the clerk. He announced himself as Jarvis Knight; and stated that he had reserved Suite 3612. The clerk glanced curiously at the guest's attire, then noted that the man's face was a keen one. Jarvis Knight had the look of an Englishman who had traveled.

"You came in on the Doranic?" inquired the clerk, as he pushed a registration card across the desk.

"Yes," replied the arrival. "We were delayed a short time by the fog. We docked later than expected."

"Indeed? Your luggage is here already, sir."

"I was fortunate in having a prompt customs inspection. I did not leave the ship immediately. You know how it is: Friends met en voyage. 'Goodbye, old chappie. See you on some other crossing' - and things like that."

Jarvis Knight delivered a quiet laugh as he spoke. He applied his signature; the clerk bowed pleasantly. But he could not help observing that the guest appeared tired. He decided that the last night on the Doranic must have been a "large" one.

The stocky man stood stolidly in the elevator that took him to the thirty-sixth floor. The elevator operator glanced at him; he, too, observed the firmness of the new guest's square-jawed face. He recognized the man as an Englishman.

The clerk had passed the key directly across the desk, since Jarvis Knight had no hand luggage that would require a bell boy's services. Arriving at 3612, the square-jawed man unlocked the door and entered. He found himself in the outer room of his suite. Two wardrobe trunks were standing in the corner; beside them, a large suitcase.

There were keys upon a writing desk. Captain Murgin had sent them up along with the luggage. The square-jawed man unlocked the suitcase; then did the same with both wardrobe trunks.

He picked out a suit and placed it on the bed. He pulled odds and ends from his coat pocket and laid them on the writing desk. A small wad of American bills, a few coins and some time-tables constituted all the contents of his pockets.

He detached a heavy wrist watch and put it with the articles on the writing desk. He started to take off the suit that he was wearing; then stopped suddenly as he heard the ring of the telephone that stood upon a table in a corner opposite the trunks.

"Hello..." The square-jawed man spoke briskly, as soon as he had lifted the receiver. "Yes... Yes, this is Mr. Knight... That's correct. Jarvis Knight, of London."

"My word!" The speaker laughed pleasantly. "I had no idea that I would hear from you so promptly... Certainly, Mr. Marquette... Yes, come over immediately... An excellent idea. Come right to the room."

The receiver clicked. The square-jawed man went to the suitcase and brought out a wallet that lay upon a stack of shirts. He was about to draw some cards from the wallet when he heard a noise behind him. Wheeling about, he faced the door of the inner room.

Framed there was a sharp-faced man whose lips wore a disdainful smile. The intruder was holding a leveled revolver. He had entered ahead of the new guest; obviously, he had been lurking here in ambush.

SHARP eyes glittered as the man with the revolver delivered a gruff greeting. His sharp face showed triumph, which the square-jawed man did not share.

"Good day, Mr. Jarvis Knight," remarked the armed man, in a sarcastic tone. "I fancied that you would be coming here. I prepared for your arrival."

The square-jawed man made no response. He still held the wallet that he had taken from the suitcase. His face remained bluff as he eyed the gun in the others hand.

Once again, Eric Delka was facing Jed Barthue. This time, each had the opportunity to size the other up by daylight. It was no game of blind man's buff. The drama was different from that aboard the Doranic.

"You were kind enough," declared "Sharp-face," gruffly, "to invite a gentleman to call on Jarvis Knight. That was most considerate. He will meet Jarvis Knight when he arrives. But not the Jarvis Knight who spoke to him over the telephone."

Sharp-face was moving forward as he delivered this decision. Square-jaw stared stolidly into the muzzle of his enemy's revolver. His muscles tightened then, with a sudden sprint, he dived straight for the man who had him covered.

The attack was unexpected. The unarmed man was a trifle heavier than his adversary, though both were strongly built. The square-jawed man grabbed for the gun; the sharp-faced fighter lost it in the struggle.

Back and forth they surged across the room. Odds were with the husky who had registered as Jarvis Knight. He had offset the advantage of the intruder's revolver, he was driving his opponent toward the far wall of the room.

They clashed against a radiator; then tumbled toward the window sill beyond it. The window had been raised by the porters who had brought up the trunks and suitcase. The fighters were on the edge of an opening that showed a sheer wall to the street below.

The end of the struggle came with unexpected swiftness. "Square-jaw" drove a powerful blow with his heavy right fist. Sharp-face twisted his head; the fist went by. Then the man who had lost his gun seized a momentary advantage. His opponent was off balance; he had a lucky opportunity.

Though the lighter of the pair, he managed a tremendous upward heave as he caught his adversary beneath the arms. Snapping backward, he sent his husky foeman head foremost toward the open window.

A gasp came from the lips of the man who had registered as Jarvis Knight. The cry was too late; so was the wild flounder that the man made with his arms. Outward through the window went the square-jawed man, leaving his sharp-faced conqueror sprawled upon the sill, staring downward, face aghast.

Spinning down the granite-faced wall of the Hotel Goliath was a toy figure that whirled pitifully. A receding cry was fading toward the street. The man at the window stood transfixed; his hands tightened on the ledge as he saw the hurtling body reach its journey's end.

A sprawled splotch on the sidewalk marked the finish of the tragedy. Ten minutes before, a man had entered the Hotel Goliath, to register as Jarvis Knight. That man had been hurled from his room on the thirty-sixth floor. In his place stood another, who had come there to snare him.

THE new Jarvis Knight laughed gruffly. He moved unsteadily from the window; then looked about and showed a wise grin on his curled lips. He drew a pack of cigarettes from his pocket, extracted a cigarette and lighted it. With a few puffs, his strain ended.

He began to move about hastily. His first action was to take off the drab suit that he was wearing. He donned the clothes that the dead man had laid on the bed. They fitted him comfortably. He took the

money and papers from the pockets of his discarded suit and transferred them to his new clothes.

As a final thought, he removed his wrist watch and buried it under clothing in the open suitcase. He picked up the dead man's watch and placed it on his wrist; then carefully counted the other's money and pocketed it - bills in trousers, coins in vest.

Two objects lay on the floor. One was the revolver which the victor had used to back his surprise attack. The other was the wallet which the vanquished man had dropped in the fray.

The new Jarvis Knight buried the revolver as he had hidden his wrist watch. Hurriedly he pulled cards and papers from the wallet and began to examine them. He picked out ones he wanted and replaced the others. He slipped the chosen cards into his inside coat pocket and tossed the wallet back into the suitcase.

There was a rap at the door. The sharp-faced man looked about nervously; then walked over and turned the knob. A stocky, dark-faced man entered and nodded. He did not speak until the door was closed. Then he questioned, with a slight smile:

"Mr. Jarvis Knight?"

"Yes," returned the sharp-faced man, his gruffness modulated. "You are Mr. Marquette?"

"The same." Vic produced two cards and handed them to his host, eyeing the other man carefully. "These will complete the introduction."

"Thanks," replied the Britisher. He produced the cards that he had placed in his inside pocket. "These are my credentials. Look them over; after that, we can forget that I am Eric Delka."

"A good idea," agreed Marquette. "You might as well be Jarvis Knight to everybody. Those who know you're Delka don't need to be told." The Englishman nodded. He began to cough suddenly; then groped in the suitcase for a handkerchief. Finding one, he removed it; then shut the top of the suitcase and clicked the lock,

"Beastly night, last night," he remarked. "The fog about did me in. I can't seem to get the huskiness from my throat. It catches my whole voice at times."

"You didn't sound husky over the telephone," recalled Marquette.

"It's the draught from this outlandish window," decided Knight. He walked over and drew down the heavy sash. "You love your fresh air here in the States. In London, we keep our sashes closed when bad weather is about."

"Funny for a Londoner to be bitten by a fog," laughed Marquette. "It was a bad one last night, though."

"Worse than a pea-souper," agreed Knight. He looked sharply toward the door as he heard someone rap; then questioned: "Who can that be?"

"Detective Cardona, from New York Headquarters," explained Marquette. "I told him to meet me here. I'll answer it, Knight."

THE secret service operative opened the door to admit Joe Cardona. The swarthy-faced detective looked like someone who was bringing news. He shook hands and nodded wisely as Marquette introduced the Englishman as Jarvis Knight. Then Cardona nudged his thumb upward.

"A guy just jumped off the roof of this hotel," informed Cardona. "On this side of the building. I saw the crowd when I was coming by. I stopped to check up."

"Any clue to the man's identity?" questioned Marquette.

"No," replied Cardona. "First off, he flattened like a pancake. Not a chance of recognizing him. The patrolman couldn't find a single paper on him. No money. Nothing."

The man who called himself Jarvis Knight was lighting a cigarette while the detective spoke. Softening his harsh tone, he questioned: "What proof is there that the chap came from the roof? Are you sure he did not fall from some room?"

"The odds are against it," returned Cardona. "They've got an open terrace here on the fortieth floor. They don't watch the place like they should. About a week ago, a fellow jumped off before they could stop him."

"I see," nodded Knight. "This blighter must have read about it in the daily journals. The previous suicide gave him his inspiration. Do I size it?"

"Just about. That's the way those goofs do it. They need nerve for suicide. They like to pick spots that somebody tried before them."

Vic Marquette nodded his agreement with Joe Cardona's statement. A pursed smile flickered on the lips of Jarvis Knight: then faded as the sharp-featured Englishman puffed at his cigarette. Strolling across the room, Knight glanced through the closed window then shrugged his shoulders as if to dismiss the subject of suicide. Vic Marquette advanced and spoke in a confidential tone. The operative's words were half a suggestion, half a request.

"We ought to talk matters over, Knight," he said. "We've got a lot to tell you. I brought Cardona here because he happened to be in on some of it. Suppose we get to business?"

"It's quite agreeable," acknowledged Knight, turning from the window. "Am I correct in my conjecture that you have gained information concerning this chap Sailor Martz?"

"You've guessed it," replied Vic, with a nod toward Cardona. "We landed Sailor, but he was dead."

"Let me have the details." Knight waved his visitors to chairs; but himself remained standing by the window. "After that, I shall relate some facts of my own knowledge."

VIC MARQUETTE began the story. Knight listened, his gaze fixed in a meditative stare toward Manhattan's sky line. At times, the Englishman's lips showed their pursed smile; at other intervals, Knight delivered abrupt nods.

All the while, his expression showed him to be intent. Joe Cardona noted it and the detective gathered an increasing hunch that Jarvis Knight was speculating on the future as he listened to Vic's recital of the past.

Joe Cardona was right. The Englishman who held the credentials of Eric Delka was formulating definite plans. He was basing his coming actions upon the assurance that he had gained from Joe Cardona; namely, that the supposed suicide from the Goliath roof would not be identified.

There was reason for Knight's well-guarded smile. Chance opportunity had enabled him to dispose of the one man who could have balked his purpose. Established as Inspector Eric Delka, of Scotland Yard, this man who had struck from ambush could foresee success to the enterprise that had brought him to New

York.

CHAPTER X. SILVER RUPEES

"SAILOR MARTZ was secondary. Loss of him means nothing. If you had captured the bounder alive, I doubt that he could have furnished a solitary clue."

The statement came from Jarvis Knight. The Englishman presented it as a verdict when Vic Marquette had completed his tale of adventure on the New York waterfront.

"Sailor knew nothing?" queried Marquette, in apparent astonishment. "Why the reports from Scotland Yard stressed the point that Sailor was with the spy ring."

"The reports," corrected Knight, calmly, "declared that Martz was working for Jed Barthue."

"And Jed Barthue was named as the spy -"

"Not quite." Knight's lips curled in a smile. "Jed Barthue was a rover, the go-between. He made contacts in various countries. That is why he has come to the United States."

Marquette nodded. This was in conformity with what he had learned; but apparently there was more to be told. The secret service operative leaned back in his chair and motioned for the Britisher to continue.

"Some months ago," stated Knight, "the French concern, Freres Gautier, reported the theft of important documents in their possession. These pertained to an improved model of the famous seventy-five millimeter guns used by the French army."

"I know about that," nodded Marquette. "The Gautier outfit had begun to manufacture them for the French government. The stolen plans were sold to the Salavani arms corporation, which promptly began to produce them in Italy."

"Precisely. That fact was interesting to the investigators of various governments, including British agents. Scotland Yard was informed that Jed Barthue had been traced to both Paris and Rome during the time of the theft and the sale."

"He was seen in both capitals?"

"No. Barthue has a way of staying under cover. It was known only that he had dealt with parties in France and Italy. We decided that he might be in England. We learned that he was; but our discovery came too late."

"After the theft from the admiralty office?"

"Yes. Models of a new compression gun disappeared most mysteriously. Where they went remained unknown. How they were taken proved a riddle. But Barthue was definitely implicated. We decided that he had come to the States."

Knight paused in his story. From his vest pocket he drew forth a few coins and jingled them while he considered his next statement.

"VARIOUS suppositions," he declared, slowly, "supported our belief that Barthue had chosen America as his next destination. The man is something other than an ordinary adventurer. He is the type of spy who seeks lucrative employment."

"While European manufacturers are not averse to purchasing secrets that belong to firms in other countries, none of them would dare to back an espionage service. Relations are too strained to permit such practice.

"Barthue, we decided, must have been financed from some other source. By a simple process of elimination, we determined that his employers were probably Americans. Outside of the improved French 75s and the British compression guns, there were no startling developments in European munitions manufacture. Thus Barthue logically had an opportunity to report to his headquarters."

Knight was stacking the coins in his left hand, absent-mindedly clinking them. He picked out one, glanced at it curiously; then retained it in his right hand while he used his left to replace the others in his vest pocket.

"Furthermore," resumed the Britisher, "Jed Barthue had a new world to conquer. Your American government had dissolved the relationships between domestic firms and those of foreign countries, it had become common news that new manufacturers, certified by the United States government, were about to produce new inventions that might be of important consequence in warfare."

"That's right," acknowledged Marquette. "What's more, most of them have been tied up under one banner. They're all part of a large holding company: Wesdren Enterprises. Caleb Wesdren is the president. With one man at the head of the different companies, there is more security for the plans and models."

"The eggs are in one basket," chuckled Knight. Silver gleamed as he tossed his coin and caught it in his right hand. "A matter of protection, from one standpoint, yes. Also a remarkable opportunity for a clever beggar like Jed Barthue."

"I get it," nodded Vic. "If he can crack Wesdren's crib, he'll have the whole works. Just what Senator Releston said. Well, even if we can't spot this Jed Barthue when we meet him, we ought to be able to stop him."

"You are becoming forgetful, Marquette," remarked Knight toying with the coin. To Cardona, the silver disk looked like a fifty-cent piece. "Let us agree that Jed Barthue has come to America for purposes of theft. But I must remind you that I prefaced my remarks by stating that he is an agent - not a plotter."

"Sure. You said that some American was backing him. That's logical enough. Sailor Martz was working for Barthue; Sailor pulled something with a bunch of crooks who went out aboard a ship called the Zouave. They started a mutiny and got theirs. I'll agree that an American could be the big shot. But he's got to use Barthue for the job."

"Does he?" Knight smiled scornfully and shook his head. "That does not follow, Marquette. Why should Barthue be used for theft when his duty will come later?"

"Don't you get it, Vic?" chimed in Cardona. "I see the lay already. Barthue's the peddler. He's over here to grab the stuff when it's handed to him."

"I get it," growled Marquette. "But just the same, Barthue ought to be a lead to the big shot."

"Quite the reverse, old top," chuckled Knight. "The head of the ring might be the lead to Barthue; but that makes it the other way about."

"Which means we've got to watch for trouble at Wesdren's. To cover anybody who shows up there."

"Just so. I can assure you" - again the curled smile accompanied Knight's words - "that when Jed Barthue

receives stolen goods, the rascal promptly places himself beyond capture."

MARQUETTE paced back and forth across the room. He was nodding his full understanding. He finally paused, seated himself again, and spoke in a decisive tone.

"Senator Releston went down to Washington, last night," informed the secret service operative. "Caleb Wesdren left early this morning. I'm going this afternoon. I want you to go with me, Knight."

"I shall be pleased to accompany you."

"We'll make an appointment with the senator and Wesdren for tomorrow. Then we'll have a chance to look over the job that this fellow Jollister has done."

"Who, may I ask, is Jollister?"

"An expert on safes and vaults. He just finished fixing Wesdren's strong room."

"The place that will house the models?"

"Yes. Maybe we'll see Jollister when we're down there. He's somewhere around New York, at present. But he's due in Washington. If Jollister -"

Marquette broke off. Someone was rapping at the door. Knight delivered a quizzical look as he spun the coin that he was holding in his hand. Then he stepped across the room and opened the door. A bell boy was standing in the hall.

"Mr. Jarvis Knight?"

The bell hop put the question in a rough tone. Knight eyed the fellow and noted his shifty eyes and nervous twitch. The uniformed attendant was Cady.

"I am Jarvis Knight." The Englishman's tone was deliberate, despite its slight gruffness. "Why did you come here?"

CADY had edged one hand to the sharp-cut vest of his bell hop's uniform. He lifted an edge of the red cloth. His thumb pressed an object that hooked like a rounded badge.

Knight's sharp eyes saw the motion. They recognized the imprint of the silver disk that Cady showed.

The badge was a coin; its surface the reverse side of an Indian rupee. Cady caught Knight's glance. Shifting, the fake bell hop hunched his belt. The badge went from view beneath the gaudy red vest.

"I ask you again" - Knight's tone was gruff - "who told you to come here? I did not summon you -"

As he spoke, the sharp-faced Britisher opened his hand almost beneath Cady's eyes. The bell hop saw the gleam of silver. He stared at the profile of the British monarch, on the obverse side of a silver rupee.

Knight gave the coin a slight flip. It turned over and showed the reverse which matched Cady's badge. The rat-faced arrival grinned; his lips lost their twitch.

"Brought up a message for you, sir," informed Cady. He fumbled beneath his brass-buttoned coat. "Here it is, Mr. Knight. Thought maybe there might be an answer."

Knight received the envelope that Cady proffered. Stepping back into the room, he tore open the flap and drew out a message, which he read carefully.

Cady, at the door, stared toward Vic Marquette and Joe Cardona, noticing them for the first time.

The fake bell hop met Vic's gaze; but when his eyes turned to Joe's, the nervous twitch reappeared on Cady's face. For a moment, he appeared ready to bolt; then, with an effort, he held his ground.

"Any answer, Mr. Knight?"

The Englishman shook his head to Cady's strained question. He glanced at the fake bell boy; then pointed toward the suit that he had taken off before Marquette and Cardona had arrived.

"Have this pressed at once," he ordered. "Within the next half hour. Be prompt, my good fellow. I am packing shortly."

Cady muttered a reply as he picked up the discarded clothing. The action gave him a quick out. He took it.

Knight followed Cady to the door and closed the barrier when the man had gone. Strolling back, he gave another spin to the rupee. It jounced from his fingers and bounded along the carpet to where Joe Cardona was seated. The detective picked up the coin and glanced at it.

"What's this?" queried Cardona. "A shilling?"

"A rupee," replied Knight, receiving the coin. "Worth a few pence more than a shilling. I happened to have it with me when I returned from India, where I operated with the C.I.D. I've carried it since; as a lucky piece, you know."

Knight pocketed the coin, he swung briskly into a new subject: the matter of train times to Washington. Marquette stated that he would be leaving at half past two. Knight glanced at the wrist watch that he was wearing; the one which he had picked up from the writing desk.

"The bally thing has stopped," he remarked. "I must have forgotten to wind it. What time do you have?"

"Quarter past one," replied Marquette, glancing at his own watch. "I'll have to be packing, if I want to catch the two-thirty. Let's go, Cardona. You'll meet me on the train, Knight?"

"Positively." Knight shook hands as he accompanied his visitors to the door. "It won't take me long to pack, since I have scarcely unpacked for a starter. Goodbye, gentlemen."

As soon as Marquette and Cardona had left. Knight pulled out the envelope that Cady had given him. He had thrust the message in his pocket after his first perusal. Seating himself at the writing desk, he gave it a more careful study.

The message was in code. It formed a cryptogram that consisted entirely of numbers, separated by dashes. Knight smiled as he studied the symbols. All the numbers were between one and twenty-six.

Drawing a pencil from his pocket, Knight began to make check marks through the message. He had not quite completed his task when he heard a cautious rap at the door. Hastily, Knight pocketed the message. He opened the door to find Cady back again, with the suit unpressed.

"Come in," ordered Knight, abruptly. "Give me that suit. You blighter! Coming here so boldly!"

"I didn't know Joe Cardona would be here," pleaded Cady. "I hadn't figured on nobody. Who was the other guy?"

"A secret service man named Marquette."

"He looked like a Fed. Say, Jed, you'd better slip me that answer in a hurry. I don't want to hang around here no longer."

Knight glowered as he heard Cady's words. He gripped the fellow by one arm and spat low, hissed words.

"Who told you to call me Jed? Listen, you idiot; I'm Jarvis Knight! Move along now. There'll be no answer today.

"But the chief expects one -"

"Of course he does. Have him locate me in Washington. I'm going there this afternoon. I'll send him an answer later. You know what was in that note you gave me, don't you?"

"I don't know the code; but it was something about Delka - that maybe he got off that boat - off the Zouave -"

"You say 'maybe'?" Knight sneered. "Let me give you some real news. Delka did escape from the Zouave. He was here."

"Passing himself as Knight?"

"Certainly. But I was wise enough to anticipate it. I had a fierce struggle with him. That is when you should have arrived, you dummy."

"What happened to him?"

"I pitched him out the window!"

"Whew!" Cady stood open-mouthed. "Say - you don't mean that guy that they thought jumped off the roof -"

"It was Delka. And the detective - Cardona - was one of those who saw the body."

"Does he suspect?"

"No. Delka had taken his papers from his pockets. He was about to change attire. But Cardona is no one's fool. He eyed you closely, my man."

Cady nodded, worried.

"And that," added Knight, "is why we must make no blunder. You must leave here at once. I believe that Cardona is suspicious of you."

"I guess he thinks I'm trailing Delka."

"Precisely. And suppose he apprehends you before you have opportunity to leave the hotel? What would you do about it?"

"I'd put up a bluff."

"Certainly. But suppose you had my reply on your person?"

"I get it. The works would be gummed. Say" - Cady caught himself before repeating the name Jed - "say, you're as beany as they say you are. O.K. You'll be seeing somebody in Washington."

Cady ducked for the door. Knight stopped him, motioned the fake bell hop back and opened the door himself. He took a look along the corridor; then motioned Cady out.

Returning to the room, the Englishman called the porter and paced about until the man arrived.

"I am departing for Washington," he told the attendant. "See to it that my luggage is delivered immediately to the baggage room in the Pennsylvania depot. I shall be there myself to attend to its transportation. The name is Jarvis Knight."

THE Englishman left the suite and descended to the lobby. Carefully avoiding the desk, he went to the cashier's cage and paid for one night. The cashier seemed surprised when he discovered that the guest had only arrived a few hours before.

"If you speak to the clerk, Mr. Knight," he suggested, "he will call the manager. A rebate can be arranged, since you are checking out on the same day that you came here."

"I wouldn't think of it," responded Knight, brusquely. "By the way, I might just as well leave the key here, without delaying myself to stop at the desk."

The clerk who had seen the original guest who signed as Jarvis Knight did not recognize the substitute who passed the desk. The second Mr. Knight left the Hotel Goliath unquestioned by the one person who might have challenged him.

FIVE minutes after that departure, Joe Cardona came into the hotel lobby. Looking about, the swarthy detective spied a cadaverous fellow lounging by the desk. Cardona knew the man. He was Hyslop, a house dick in the employ of the Hotel Goliath.

"Hello, Bill," greeted Cardona, approaching the hotel detective. "Say, there's something you can do for me. There's a guy I'm looking for that used to work places as a bell hop. I've got a hunch he may have grabbed a job here."

"Yeah?" queried Hyslop, arching thin eyebrows. "What was the bird's name?"

"Don't know it. That's the trouble. Best way to describe him is that he looks like a rat and has a twitchy face."

Hyslop nodded wisely. He gestured to the bell captain, who approached to join the conference. Hyslop introduced the fellow to Cardona.

"Looks like Joe here is looking for Cady," informed the house dick. "Tell him about the guy, Jerry."

A tall man had entered the lobby and was crossing to the desk. Keen eyes, peering from a masklike face, observed Cardona and the others. The stranger stopped close by. He stood unnoticed, as strangely stealthy as when he had left the bridge of the Steamship Zouave. The stranger was The Shadow. He had returned to New York.

"Parker Cady was a funny mug," the bell captain was telling Cardona. "Only been on the job a couple of days. Five minutes ago, he turned in his uniform and walked out. Acted like he was sore about something."

"I asked Jerry if he thought the guy had pulled something," put in Hyslop. "But Jerry wasn't sure, so we let him slide. We've got his address where he used to live; but I guess you won't find him there if he's taken it on the lam."

"Maybe he handed you a phony moniker," suggested Joe.

"Not likely," said the house dick. "We check close on new employees. The guy may be phony; but his name's straight. Come on over to the office; we'll check on it."

THE trio departed. A clerk noticed the silent stranger by the desk, and approached him. The Shadow made quiet inquiry concerning a friend.

"Odd that I should have forgotten the chap's name," he remarked. "He just arrived today, by the Doranic. I believe that he is stopping here -"

The clerk nodded and went away. Such inquiries were not entirely unusual; they were accepted if the questioner appeared to be a person of importance. Soon the clerk returned.

"A Mr. Jarvis Knight was here," he stated. "He registered from London; but he left unexpectedly. He has gone to Washington; but he left no forwarding address."

The Shadow strolled from the lobby. A soft laugh whispered from his fixed lips. He had picked a dozen possible hotels as possible destinations for either Eric Delka or Jed Barthue. The Goliath had been his third choice.

The sudden departure of Jarvis Knight was significant. It gave The Shadow the lead he wanted. The Shadow, too, had found a new objective. Washington would be his destination.

CHAPTER XI. AT THE CAPITAL

THIRTY hours had passed since The Shadow's brief visit to the Hotel Goliath. Evening was settling above the city of Washington when The Shadow entered the lobby of a cumbersome, old-fashioned hotel known as the Barlingham.

As before, The Shadow was clad in street attire. He was wearing that same masklike countenance that had impressed Captain Hilder and the clerk at the Goliath. When he entered the Barlingham elevator and announced his destination as the sixth floor, the operator nodded to himself.

This stranger looked like a visitor to the sixth. For on that floor was the suite of Senator Ross Releston, the most distinguished resident of this old-fashioned establishment.

The Shadow knew his way when he reached the sixth floor. He had been here before. He entered a corner suite and stepped into a large lounge room. A secretary bowed in recognition.

"Good afternoon. Mr. Cranston," The man stated. "Senator Releston is awaiting you. In his office, sir."

The Shadow strolled leisurely through a hallway. He turned left and entered a large room that served as the senator's office.

Releston was seated at a large desk. He arose to give hearty greeting to his visitor.

"My apologies, Cranston," declared the senator. "It is seldom that I have been forced to keep you waiting for an appointment."

A quiet smile appeared upon The Shadow's thin lips. As Lamont Cranston, millionaire globe-trotter, he was always a welcome guest at Releston's. Actually, Senator Releston had never met the real Lamont Cranston. That gentleman was usually engaged in travel. During his absence, The Shadow adopted Cranston's personality.

"Glad to see you in Washington again," resumed Releston, warmly. "But you certainly chose a time when I am busy. These committee activities are problems, Cranston."

As his guest seated himself, the senator picked up a copy of a New York morning newspaper and pointed to the headlines. The Shadow took the journal and nodded as he read it. The front page contained an account of an interview that a Washington correspondent had held with Releston.

"Munitions and armaments are predominant," stated the senator, as The Shadow turned pages to continue reading. "Too much publicity has been given to such matters. We have been fortunate, however. The manufacturers, themselves, have combined under one head.

"That enables us to watch the development of new inventions. Take the improved process for atmospheric nitrogen, as an example. It has possibility as a strictly commercial product. If it were shared by numerous concerns, it would be impossible to guide its future. But it happens to be controlled by the Super Process Corporation, now a subsidiary of Wesdren Enterprises.

"The same is true of the Galloy Aircraft Company, which has developed a form of tubular construction in metal. Likewise the Paragon Tractor Company, which has obtained the contract to build dreadnought tanks.

"All are under common supervision. Plans and models are held by the Wesdren Enterprises. Every point of manufacture will be supervised by the proper governmental authorities. We deal directly with one man. Caleb Wesdren, and he is here in Washington."

THE SHADOW completed his perusal. His eyes, however, turned to a column on an opposite page. There he noted a brief story of suicide the day before. An unidentified man had leaped to death at noon, from the fortieth story of the Hotel Goliath, New York.

"I suppose," remarked The Shadow, as he folded the newspaper, "that you have insisted upon every precaution to protect the models that you have mentioned."

"Absolutely," said the senator. "Wesdren's first step was to advertise for experts in vault construction. I interviewed the applicants personally. Like Wesdren, I chose Craig Jollister. The man is a genius. You should see the work that he has accomplished at Wesdren's."

"Like all geniuses" - Releston smiled indulgently - "Jollister is eccentric. He takes vacations when he chooses; he demands complete solitude when he works. But he does work; and he has done this job so capably that we have already placed the models in Wesdren's strong room vault. They will be safe there."

Releston spoke with a tone that indicated assurance; but as he concluded his statement, his face assumed a troubled expression.

"Offsetting our precautions," he added, "we are faced by the fact that important inventions have been stolen. Not here, but in foreign countries, despite the close guard that has been kept over plans and models.

"In England, I have learned, the secret of a new compression gun was taken from the admiralty office. That occurred only recently. We have been warned that a criminal ring is at work."

"With headquarters abroad?" The Shadow inquired.

"No," returned Releston, soberly. "That is the puzzling part of it. Apparently, the master mind is here in America. His agents have operated in Europe; this country may be their next objective."

"And specifically, I suppose, they would concentrate upon the inventions which Caleb Wesdren holds in safekeeping?"

"You are correct, Cranston. Only today, I held an important conference with persons who understand the situation - both from the American and the foreign angle. We have gained cooperation from another government. That is all I am at liberty to state.

"Although I might add" - Releston smiled dryly - "that the reason I postponed my appointment with you was because of the conference that I have mentioned."

The Shadow leaned forward to place the newspaper upon the desk. As he did, he noted an oblong object. It was a metal cigarette case that bore the initials "E.D." The Shadow passed the case to Releston.

"Someone must have left this here," he remarked. "My recollection, senator, is that you smoke cigars exclusively."

Releston looked at the cigarette case and nodded. He rang the bell for his secretary. While he was waiting, he placed the cigarette case in an envelope, which he sealed. The secretary entered.

"Take this envelope to the Skyview Plaza," ordered Releston. "Leave it there for Mr. Jarvis Knight. Make sure that it goes in the proper box. Number 604."

"Perhaps I should inquire for Mr. Knight?" suggested the secretary.

"He will not be there until later," replied Releston. "Simply leave it."

As soon as the secretary had left, The Shadow arose to end his interview with the senator. He stated that he would call again before he left Washington.

He left the suite and departed from the Hotel Barlingham. He hailed a taxi as he reached the curb and ordered the driver to take him to the Skyview Plaza.

As the cab wheeled crisscross toward a broad avenue, The Shadow laughed softly. The initials on the cigarette case stood for Eric Delka; but the senator had ordered its delivery to Jarvis Knight. That fact, and the report of yesterday's suicide at the Hotel Goliath, formed good reasons why The Shadow should take temporary residence at the exclusive Skyview Plaza.

It was eight o'clock when a sharp-faced man swaggered into the lobby of the Skyview Plaza and nodded to the clerk behind the desk. The arrival looked in the pigeonholed boxes; the clerk drew forth two envelopes.

"These were delivered during your absence, Mr. Knight," he stated. "Here is the room key, also."

When he reached Suite 604, Knight closed the door behind him and proceeded to open the bulkier envelope. He chuckled as he recognized the cigarette case that had come from Releston's. He tossed it into his opened suitcase.

The second envelope contained a coded message. Like the one delivered in New York, it consisted of a cryptogram in numbers. Knight walked past a corner where wardrobe trunks were standing, and entered an inner bedroom.

Here he seated himself at a writing desk and began a study of the code. Using a pencil, he checked different numbers in haphazard fashion. His brow furrowed as he worked; a scowl appeared upon his

curling lips.

Intent upon the message, Knight failed to see an almost imperceptible motion that was taking place close by. This room connected with one further on. The adjoining door was opening inch by inch.

Burning eyes focused themselves upon the Englishman. They watched Knight tap the desk with his pencil. They saw him mark new figures. The Shadow was studying every expression of the sharp face in the light from the desk lamp.

A telephone rang in the outer room. Knight opened a drawer and thrust the coded message out of sight. He stalked out into the living room and answered the call. The Shadow could overhear his end of the conversation.

"Certainly, Marquette..." The Britisher's tone was only slightly gruff. "A jolly thought... I agree. A bit of relaxation would be welcome... Twenty minutes... Make it a half hour... Very well..."

Knight hung up and came back into the bedroom. He strolled to the window and stared forth toward twinkling lights, as though comparing the brilliance of Washington with that of London. After a few minutes, he turned toward the writing desk; then listened intently as he heard a knock at the door of the outer room.

Something in Knight's expression indicated that he knew that knock. Moving stealthily, Knight went through the outer room. This time, The Shadow decided to remain no longer behind the adjacent door.

He stepped into the dull light of the bedroom, a weird shape, clad in his chosen garb of black. Spectral beneath his sable-hued cloak, this silent listener crossed to the living room door.

Peering through the crack, The Shadow saw the meeting between Knight and his unexpected visitor.

THE arrival was attired in the uniform of a bell boy. His face was pointed; his grinning lips betrayed a slight twitch. Knight was staring openmouthed, as he recognized Cady.

"You - you came here to Washington?" gasped the Britisher. "My word! This is folly on your part!"

"How come?" demanded Cady. "I had to scam from the big burg, didn't I? Joe Cardona's still in New York, ain't he?"

"Yes. But Marquette is here. I expect him any minute. He just called me on the telephone."

"I'll beat it, then. But give me the answer before I slide. You got the note from the box, didn't you?"

"Certainly. And that was a ridiculous place to leave it! But we can't discuss that matter. You must hurry away before Marquette arrives."

"O.K. But what about the answer?"

"Call for it in the morning. It would be too great a risk to prepare one while I am expecting Marquette."

"I get you. I'll slip the word along that you've got the new dope. You've read the note, haven't you?"

"Certainly. Tell the chief I understand. He will receive my reply in the morning."

Knight urged Cady out into the hall and closed the door. The Shadow withdrew across the bedroom. He was past the adjoining door when Knight returned. The Britisher did not go back to the writing desk. Instead, he made a trip to the living room, brought a tuxedo from a wardrobe trunk and proceeded to

don the evening attire.

A knock announced Marquette just as Knight completed dressing. The Englishman admitted the secret service man; then the two made their departure.

Shortly afterward, The Shadow emerged from his hiding place and approached the writing desk. From the drawer he removed two coded sheets.

The Shadow studied the first message that had been delivered in New York. Producing paper of his own, he copied it number for number:

10 21 8 3 1 22 17 5 11 6 6 22 21 16 19 18 25 25 25 1 12 21 4 18 18 2
9 24 5 9 8 15 7 20 9 9 11 10 24 7 7 14 3 20 1 9 26 26 16 5 8 6 3 23
4 5 5 24 6 26 25 17 2 20 1 17 18 4 9 21 3 3 6 5 4 20 22 20 14 1 41 18
13 16 3 24 10 10 13 25 22 19 11 20 8 2 3 26 24 1 1 18 2 3 4 3 25 24 4
4 4 16 4 7 17 18 19 4 18 18 1 19 22 24 24 15 5 24 3 9 8 19 9 9 22 1
22 15 9 20 20 26 25 1 19 8 5 18 20 23 1 8 24 1 4 4 20 1 9 7 19 6 6 7
20 19 7 20 2 20 24 6 25 25

The Shadow recognized the second sheet as the one upon which Knight had been working tonight. It was in the same code as the first. The Shadow copied it:

10 20 24 6 6 13 10 11 20 6 25 1 17 17 14 10 4 7 24 3 18 19 19 1 20 12
20 8 21 3 4 1 5 16 4 1 25 25 23 4 6 5 5 7 20 22 20 26 25 6 24 23 1 12
2 9 2 44 6 6 17 6 12 25 13 3 4 11 11 1 19 12 19 19 10 26 4 5 26 23 21
1 24 23 24 5 20 22 22 1 4 8 5 24 23 8 2 18 3 4 3 3 20 2 20 22 2 3 3
11 20 6 25 24 3 3 3 5 20 21 8 18 24 5 24 20 20 6 25 1 20 24 2 7 20 26
25 25

The Shadow replaced the original messages in the drawer. He did not seem to regard Knight's check marks as informative. The Shadow left the desk lamp burning, since Knight had forgotten to turn it out. Then the cloaked investigator departed through the connecting door.

SHORTLY afterward, a light clicked in a darkened room. The glow of a different desk lamp showed long-fingered hands. The Shadow was in his own room at the Skyview Plaza. His hands produced the copies of the code. Eyes from the darkness above the lamp were keen in their study of the numbered lines.

A rare girasol glimmered from the third finger of the hand that held the copies spread upon the desk. This matchless fire opal was The Shadow's emblem. Its glowing depths seemed to reflect the mystery that enshrouded the weird investigator.

The Shadow's right hand poised a pencil. A soft laugh whispered from darkness as The Shadow marked a circle about three numbers that appeared together in the first coded message. Each of these three

numbers was the figure 4.

Again a laugh crept through the darkened room as The Shadow picked three clustered numbers in the second message. Each figure in this group was a 3.

The Shadow had found a starting point. His work would continue until he had deciphered these cryptic messages that had been passed to the man called Jarvis Knight.

CHAPTER XII. FROM THE STRONG ROOM

AT twenty minutes after ten the next morning, Cady arrived in the corridor outside of room 604. The sneaky crook was wearing his bell-hop's uniform. He looked about cautiously, however, before he rapped at Jarvis Knight's door.

There was no response. Cady's face twisted. The phony bell boy gave another look along the corridor then rapped more loudly; he seemed determined to gain a response.

The door opened. Cady bowed in to find Jarvis Knight attired in slippers and dressing gown, blinking sleepily. Knight made no effort to close the door, so Cady took that duty upon himself.

"Well, well," laughed the Englishman, gruffly. "What's up? Why show so much excitement, chappie?"

"This is the fifth time I've been in here," whispered Cady, hoarsely. "I called on the telephone a couple of times. I was thinking that maybe you'd croaked."

"I had a large evening," explained Knight, sitting down and rubbing his head. "That beggar Marquette is a real man about town. Deucedly well acquainted with the bright spots of Washington. It was four o'clock when I rollicked home."

"It's twenty after ten now," informed Cady.

"My word!" exclaimed Knight. "Marquette is to be here at half after. It's fortunate that you finally roused me. You must bob out of sight before he arrives."

"I've got to get that answer," stated Cady. "Listen, Jed - I mean Knight - Clink gave me a buzz this morning. Told me I had to get that answer to him, so he could pass it along to the big boy."

"That's not astonishing," remarked Knight. "I presumed that Clink would be anxious. He did not display anger, did he?"

"He seemed sore about something," replied Cady. "Maybe it's because he's been keeping under cover since he blew into town yesterday. He slipped me that note when I met him at the Union Depot."

"You explained why I could not give you the reply last night?"

"Sure! He called me up from wherever he is. I told him all about it. Said he guessed he wouldn't need the answer. But this morning, he tells me he's got to have one. I'm to get it and hold it until he calls again and tells me where to meet him."

"And in the meantime," remarked Knight, staring severely, "keep that waistcoat downward. So it will cover the silver rupee that you are still wearing. I keep my coin out of sight, all the while."

He reached into the pocket of the dressing gown and produced the rupee. Cady nodded, as he understood that Knight always kept the coin on his person.

"Very well," decided the sharp-faced Britisher. "Clink shall have his answer. I shall prepare it at once."

THERE was a table in the living room. Knight went to it and produced paper and ink. Cady watched him behind the careful inscription of a note. Knight appeared to be using the code from memory.

Cady noted that the Britisher wrote several numbers swiftly; then paused to concentrate before he began another group. He had inscribed three times when he uttered a growl and crumpled the sheet. Knight tossed the paper in wastebasket and began a new message.

This time, he wrote the first lines swiftly; then resumed his process of deliberation. Cady was fidgety; and Knight noticed it. He shot an angry glance toward the bell hop.

"Stop making me nervous," growled Knight. "How can I write this message while you are shifting about? Curb your impatience -"

At that moment the telephone bell rang. Knight arose to answer it. Cady's face twitched nervously as the stoop-shouldered crook listened to the brief conversation.

"Hello..," said Knight, gruffly. "Oh, hello... Yes... Certainly, Marquette... What's that? Hello... Hello..."

Hastily, Knight clashed the receiver and swung to Cady. He motioned to the door.

"Marquette's on his way up," explained Knight. "I was about to tell him to wait in the hobby, when he said he would come here. He broke off before I could stop him."

"I'll scam," acknowledged Cady. "Slip me the note, quick."

"It's only half finished." Knight pounced upon the numbered sheet and crumpled it. "You will have to come back later. Just when, I can't say. Inform Clink of the complication. Hurry, fellow, hurry!"

Knight had fully aroused himself. He opened the door and pushed Cady into the hall. The rat-faced bell boy scurried along the corridor. A few seconds after he was out of sight, Marquette appeared from the other end of the hall. Knight waved a greeting.

Marquette entered the Englishman's room. Knight was still holding his crumpled, uncompleted note. He tossed it into the wastebasket, motioned Marquette to a chair and went into the bedroom to dress.

Ten minutes later, Knight returned. He found Vic standing by the window. The secret service operative seemed pleased by the quickness that Knight had shown.

"We'll snatch a cup of coffee," declared Marquette. "Then we'll head for Wesdren's. We ought to be there by eleven. That's why I wanted you to be ready at ten-thirty sharp."

"I overslept," said Knight. "A comfortable hotel, this. Well, old fellow, let's be on our way."

IT was ten minutes after eleven when a taxi pulled up in front of a massive brownstone mansion in the Northwest district. Marquette and Knight alighted. They ascended the steps, rang the bell, and were ushered into a huge hallway.

"Jove!" exclaimed the Englishman. "This place is a veritable fortress! Just where is the strong room, Marquette?"

"Downstairs," replied Vic. "We'll be going there soon. Here comes the flunky; I guess Mr. Wesdren is waiting for us."

A servant ushered the visitors into a room at the side of the hall. It looked like a reception room; a moment later, a further door opened and Caleb Wesdren bowed to the visitors.

"This is Mr. Knight," introduced Vic Marquette. "Meet Mr. Wesdren, Knight."

Wesdren shook hands with the Britisher. There was keenness in the executive's gaze as he studied this man who passed as Jarvis Knight. The Englishman could tell from Wesdren's manner that the executive had been informed that Jarvis Knight was an alias for Eric Delka.

A smile showed upon Wesdren's square-jawed face as Knight gave him a firm handclasp. The Britisher was forcible, even though his appearance was different from that of a usual Scotland Yard inspector.

Wesdren led the way into a magnificently furnished office. There the arrivals found Senator Ross Releston. While the gray-haired man was shaking hands, Wesdren pressed a button beside the desk. Three distant buzzes sounded.

"I am summoning Jollister," explained Wesdren. "Let us hope that he is somewhere about. He stayed here last night, instead of going to his apartment. And by the way, inspector" - Wesdren lowered his voice as he turned to Knight - "Jollister does not know that you are Eric Delka."

The Englishman nodded. Marquette whispered a warning word. Vic had heard approaching footsteps. A moment later a side door opened and Craig Jollister entered.

The vault expert was an odd-looking person. He was tall and long-limbed but his massive head seemed to be on the wrong shoulders. It would have better suited a bulkier, more squatty frame.

Jollister's face was sallow and deeply lined. His forehead bulged; his dark hair formed a bushy shock above his brow. His eyes were keen, deep-set orbs that carried a shrewd glare despite their noticeable blink.

"You wanted to speak to me, Mr. Wesdren?" rumbled Jollister.

"Yes," replied Wesdren, in a serious tone. "This gentleman, Jollister, is Jarvis Knight, a friend of mine from England. He represents banking interests in London. They are interested in the installation of new strong rooms."

Jollister showed eagerness in his nod as he shook hands with Knight. The Englishman was impressed by the firmness of Jollister's grip. He had not expected it from such a flabby-looking hand.

"On that account," resumed Wesdren, "I have offered to show my strong room to Mr. Knight. It might mean, Jollister, that he would turn some business your way."

"Good," rumbled Jollister. "I might be interested, if Mr. Knight likes the strong room. You told him, though, that I am going on a vacation?"

"That can be discussed later." Rising, Wesdren clapped Jollister on the back. "You are always talking about vacations, Jollister. I really believe that some time you will take one. A long one, I mean. You have taken plenty of short ones."

"My work is a strain." Jollister's glower was indication of the man's eccentricity. "I demand rest periods between my efforts."

"Certainly, Jollister," nodded Wesdren, in a humoring tone, "certainly. Come. Let us go down to the strong room."

THEY left by the door that Jollister had entered. Wesdren led the way down a rear flight of thick, stone steps. Knight observed that the walls were of concrete. They came to the bottom; there Wesdren pointed to a formidable door of heavy steel.

"Jollister's creation," explained the executive. "Triple-locked, with three combinations. I alone have the numbers. Kindly stand back, gentlemen, while I open the door."

Wesdren approached and began to turn the dials, obscuring them as he worked. He spoke to his companions as he proceeded with the unlocking.

"One lock is Jollister's," explained Wesdren. "It is the best of the three. But he insisted that other experts install the other locks. Men of my choice; not his."

"Quite fair-minded of you, Jollister," remarked Knight.

"Not at all," growled the expert. "My intention was to share the responsibility; that was all. I can't tell who is going to learn these combinations."

"Jollister's point," laughed Wesdren, as he finished with the third dial, "concerns the possibility of someone entering the strong room. He fears that someone may gain the combinations. Should the locks all be Jollister's, he might be under suspicion. But since three men have installed locks independently, no individual lock-maker could be held at fault."

Wesdren swung the big door outward. He stepped into a blackened room and pressed a light switch. The others entered; they found themselves in a square room that measured twenty feet in each direction.

Floor, walls and ceiling were of steel. Huge sheets of metal formed a solid paneling, with riveted strips as the dividing points. Wesdren turned to Knight: he noted an expression of admiration upon the Britisher's face.

"All these walls," explained Wesdren, "are backed by concrete. They are also protected by hidden wiring between the steel armor and the stone. It forms a permanent alarm system.

"Jollister chose the plans from a dozen that Senator Releston and I submitted to him. He had full charge of the installation. This vault, however, is entirely his own work."

Wesdren pointed to one side of the room. He indicated a shiny door that glistened formidably. Jarvis Knight nodded in admiration; his expression indicated that he had never seen a stronger-looking vault.

"The walls were nothing," spoke Jollister, suddenly, his bass voice booming through the room. "Bah! Apprentices can mold concrete and rivet steel. I left that duty to the workmen. This vault is my masterpiece."

"Open it, Jollister," suggested Wesdren; then, as the long-limbed expert lumbered forward, the executive added to the others: "Jollister's qualms were limited to the door of the strong room. He allowed other experts to insert their locks there; but considered it unnecessary with the vault."

"It is my masterpiece!" boomed Jollister, turning about, with his hand on a dial. "I would allow others to do work on the outside barriers. But I wanted none to share in this creation. I hold the combination, yes. But I cannot enter this strong room to use it, except by Mr. Wesdren's wish."

"Another point," laughed Wesdren. "Jollister has reference to his insistence that others place locks upon the strong room door. Those locks keep even him from coming here."

JOLLISTER finished with the combination of the vault. The glistening door swung wide. Through inner bars, the visitors spied coffered of varied sizes beyond the metal boxes were small doors in the depth of the wall.

"Models in the coffered," asserted Wesdren. "Plans in the deposit boxes. Well, gentlemen, you have seen all. Close the door, Jollister."

The expert obeyed. He turned the dials to lock the vault. Wesdren crossed the strong room; the others noted that the large outer door was shut. Wesdren laughed as Releston uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Do not worry, senator," said the executive. "We are not locked in. The door closes automatically but it is easily opened from this side.

"You see" - he drew down three handles, one by one - "no strong room needs a combination on the inside. The protection is necessary on the outside only."

Wesdren pushed the door open and ushered his visitors out into entry. He followed and spoke as the others were going up the stairs. At Wesdren's suggestion, all turned about. They watched the door of the strong room swing slowly shut of its own momentum.

The door stopped silently. Wesdren joggled the handle that opened it. The handle did not budge. Wesdren pointed to the three dials.

"The automatic closing loses the combination," he explained. "No matter if someone forgets to shut the door, the strong room will be closed. Of its own action."

The visitors started up the stairs, Jollister with them. Wesdren followed. He had turned out the light in the strong room; but there was still a glowing incandescent in the little entry.

Silence reigned beneath that single light. Then the glare showed an amazing manifestation. Slowly, the door of the strong room opened outward. A figure appeared from the gloom.

Garbed in cloak and slouch hat, this weird shape stepped clear of the strong room door. The big barrier, again released, moved slowly shut and finished with its silent swing. Hardly had it closed before the entry light went out. Wesdren had clicked it from upstairs.

A soft laugh sounded in the pitch darkness. It was an audible token of that strange being who had come so mysteriously from the strong room; a reminder of a shrouded figure clad in black.

A tiny flashlight glimmered. Its beam glittered on the stone steps. The unseen visitant was moving softly upward. No more did the whispered laugh of The Shadow sound within walls of stone.

Caleb Wesdren had shown pride in the formidable structure of his strong room. Craig Jollister had taken credit for the building of that impregnable chamber.

Yet hard on the departure of executive and expert had come proof that the steel-lined strong room was not impenetrable. Out of its depths had stepped a strange intruder, whose very presence showed that he had found a mode of secret entrance.

Like a living ghost, The Shadow had issued forth; his whispered mirth had sounded as a mockery of the stronghold which he had left.

CHAPTER XIII. CADY REPORTS

HALF an hour had passed since The Shadow's emergence from the strong room. Vic Marquette and Jarvis Knight had made their departure. Senator Releston and Caleb Wesdren were alone in the latter's study.

The two had been conferring on matters concerning manufacture. All the while, eyes had been watching them - eyes that peered through the crack of the side door. The Shadow had remained, on the chance that important matters might be mentioned.

A telephone bell rang: Wesdren answered it and held a brief conversation. Concluding his talk, he turned to Releston.

"The representatives of the subsidiary companies are at the Hotel Sorbonne," Wesdren told Releston. "The meeting will follow the luncheon. We should be leaving shortly. I suppose you are coming with me, senator?"

Releston considered then nodded. Wesdren started to rise from his desk; Releston stopped him.

"One point, Wesdren," mentioned the senator. "How does this man Knight impress you?"

"That is hard to say," replied Wesdren. "Frankly, though, I found it difficult to picture him as Inspector Eric Delka, of Scotland Yard."

"That much is unquestioned." declared Releston, with a smile. "He has his credentials. There is no doubt as to his identity. His pose as Jarvis Knight is good judgment. But outside of that, he seems to know very little."

"Concerning Jed Barthue?"

"Yes. Delka came here to put us on the trail of an international spy. I questioned him yesterday concerning Barthue and he said that he had never seen the man in England."

"I thought that Scotland Yard had trailed Barthue."

"They found traces of him; that was all. Delka confesses that he came over here on a blind quest."

"That is odd, senator. Well, after all, he may prove useful, in case Barthue is uncovered. But we have taken so many precautions that trouble seems impossible. Delka certainly was impressed by my strong room."

"He was impressed yesterday, Wesdren, when I informed him that your four servants were actually secret service men, placed here to keep watch."

Wesdren chuckled.

"They have not been overburdened by duty," he remarked. "Outside of myself and Jollister, no one has been about the house. That reminds me; I must summon Jollister and learn about this vacation of his."

Wesdren pressed the desk buzzer. In the hallway, The Shadow moved from the door and glided to a gloomy alcove. A few moments later, a door opened across the hall and Jollister stalked forth from a room which appeared to be his own temporary office. At the same time, a passing servant passed in the front hall and watched casually while Jollister entered Wesdren's office.

The door closed. The servant went on his way. The Shadow moved forward and opened the door imperceptibly. He was in time to hear the brief conversation that followed.

"This vacation, Jollister," questioned Wesdren. "Do you actually intend to take it?"

"I told you I did, sir," returned Jollister. "I intend to leave tonight, on the ten o'clock train."

"You are going west?"

"Yes, Mr. Wesdren. Possibly to Cleveland; maybe to Chicago. I have business prospects in both cities."

"When will you return to Washington?"

"I do not know. I may come back to New York. However, I shall see you later today, Mr. Wesdren. I am going to my apartment shortly; but I shall return after dinner, to pack up some drawings."

Wesdren was eyeing Jollister sharply. The vault expert met his gaze with an almost surly challenge; then rumbled words that sounded like "goodbye" and stalked toward the door.

The Shadow had edged away, anticipating Jollister's approach. He waited until the vault expert had passed; he saw Jollister go to the little room and close the door behind him. Again The Shadow approached the larger office.

Wesdren and Releston were leaving by the front way, through the reception room. The Shadow noted a frown on Releston's face. He caught the final words that the senator spoke to Wesdren.

"I was watching Jollister," confided the senator. "Did you notice the way he glared? His eyes showed suspicion but he changed his expression quickly when he realized that I had observed it."

"Jollister is eccentric," replied Wesdren. "Almost childish at times. Somehow, every mention of his vacation has become a sore point with him. He resents any statement that concerns his private affairs."

"He was here when you came back from New York?"

"No. He did not appear until yesterday morning. But I did not annoy him with questions."

Wesdren and Releston departed. The Shadow moved back to the alcove and lingered there. Pacing servants passed at times; knowing that they were secret service men, The Shadow kept out of view.

Half an hour elapsed. The door of Jollister's room opened; the long-limbed man peered suspiciously into the hall. He spied one of the supposed servants as the man turned casually about. Jollister's expression changed. He stepped from the room, carrying hat and coat.

"I shall return later, Egbert," he rumbled to the servant. "I have informed Mr. Wesdren of that fact."

Jollister strode to the front door and went from the house. The watchmen kept an eye on the door; then turned and went away. A short while later, The Shadow issued from the alcove. Obscure in the gloomy hallway, he moved unseen to the front door.

There, in a little vestibule, he removed hat and cloak. Peering about, he saw none of the secret service men. He stepped out to the street, closing the door behind him. In the deliberate manner of Lamont Cranston, he walked away, his features wearing the millionaire's guise. Cloak over arm appeared as a light overcoat; the slouch hat was beneath it.

The shadow's objective was the Skyview Plaza. He arrived there, went to his room and left cloak and hat. He strolled up to the sixth floor, unlocked the door of the room next to Knight's and entered. Then he slowly opened the connecting door to the Britisher's suite.

The Shadow did not expect to find Knight, for he had seen the key of Suite 604 in its pigeonhole behind the lobby desk. As The Shadow had anticipated, the Britisher was absent.

Passing through the bedroom, The Shadow reached the living room and made a brief inspection. He happened to note the wastebasket; he saw the crumpled wads of paper that Knight had tossed there.

Opening these, The Shadow noted the numbered lines, and copied them. He replaced the wads in the basket; then swung quickly into the bedroom as someone unlocked the door from the corridor.

It was the maid, coming to arrange the rooms. Her first act was to take out the wastebasket. The Shadow closed the connecting door beyond the bedroom. He strolled out to the corridor, arriving there just after the woman had gone back into Knight's suite.

Back in his own room, The Shadow made a study of the incomplete messages. He saw that the first part of the longer one was a repetition of the shorter. The first he read:

19 20 25 1 15 20 21 24 24 13 7 11 2

The Shadow inscribed letters on a piece of paper. They were as follows:

Y J X Q

The translation continued no further.

The letter Q brought it to an abrupt ending. The Shadow checked other numbers along the time, making little horizontal brackets that joined them in pairs.

Then he folded the two copies and placed them in the drawer with the papers that he had translated on the preceding night. He laughed softly as he took a hat and cane from a closet; then, with the leisurely manner of Cranston, he went from the room.

The Shadow paused when he reached the lobby. Several bell boys were on duty; but Cady was not among them. Knight's key was still in its box. Swinging his cane, The Shadow strolled out to the street.

THERE was a good reason for Cady's absence. The rat-faced crook who passed as hell hop was, at present, far from the Skyview Plaza. Attired in street clothes, Cady was at that minute entering the lobby of a cheap hotel on the other side of Washington.

There was no elevator in the hotel. Cady walked up a loosely carpeted stairway and found a door that bore the number 41. He rapped cautiously; the door opened. Cady stepped in, to face Chink Huron.

"Well?" The heavy-browed racketeer rasped his question. "Did Jed come back?"

"Yeah," returned Cady. "About an hour after he went out. But I didn't get a chance to talk to him."

"Why not?"

"Marquette was with him. The guy's like a leech. I was watching for Jed in the hall. When he went in the room, I snooped outside."

"That was dumb. I told you to be careful."

"Maybe it was, Clink, but it worked out good. I've been figuring that Marquette's getting leery of Jed, see? The way he's holding close to him, Jed don't have no chance. But I guess it's O.K., after what I heard."

"What was that?"

"Marquette was talking like a pal. If he'd been leery, he wouldn't have. He was talking about the place they'd been. A house where a guy named Caleb Wesdren lives. That's where the strong room is, and there's four mugs supposed to be flunkies. But they ain't. They're Feds

"Cut it," snapped Clink. "I'm wise to that lay. What I want to know is what happened afterward. Did they go out?"

"Yeah! Marquette and Jed together. I ducked when I heard them coming to the door. I stuck around, thinking maybe Jed would be back. He didn't come, so I did what you told me over the telephone."

"You found that half-finished message that Jed started to write?"

"Yeah. I used a pass-key to get in. One I swiped from the bell captain. Here's the copy, Clink. I chucked the one Jed wrote back into the basket, so Jed wouldn't be worried if he came back alone and found it missing."

Clink jerked open a folded paper that Cady handed him. The racketeer's brow lowered; his lips straightened and he nodded as he studied the numbered lines.

"Any good, Clink?" queried Cady. "Jed had got pretty well along with it when Marquette blew in this morning. I figured there might be enough to make some sense."

"It tells me enough," returned Clink. "Jed didn't need to write any more. This is all the big shot wanted to know."

"Then Jed should have slipped it along as it was."

"He hadn't finished, Cady. Marquette was coming up. Jed had to think quick. Don't bother your noodle about it. This is a break all around."

"How's that?"

"It means you won't have to go back on the bell-hop beat. We won't need to get in touch with Jed for a while. Sit down over there, while I call the big boy."

CADY sat down. Clink went to the telephone and dialed a number. There was no answer. He hung up abruptly and began to pace the room. He consulted his watch as he walked back and forth.

Twenty minutes passed while Clink made no comment. All the while, Cady watched the racketeer with blinking eyes, but he knew enough of Clink's ways to refrain from conversation.

At the end of the interval, Clink turned to pick up the telephone. It rang just as he was about to lift the receiver. Cady knew instantly that the coincidental call must be from the big shot.

"Hello..." Clink's tone was eager. "Say, Cady got that answer... Yeah, the part of it that Jed had written. You guessed what was in it, all right... Yeah..."

"Well, that wises us up... No, I haven't told Cady anything yet... Except that he don't have to go back to the hotel... Sure thing. I thought you'd want to use Cady... Yeah. I'll send him along with another guy..."

"Yeah, I think two's all you'll need... They'll leave the car outside... It's a swift boat, alright... With a big trunk for the bags..."

"You won't have to worry about the way I pull the big job. It's going to be a set-up, the way you've framed it... Sure. The other cars are all ready..."

"What's that?.. Yeah. I'll see him myself, down at the Skyview Plaza... Tomorrow night's soon enough. Marquette won't stick with him forever... I won't forget Cady's button... All right, chief..."

Clink hung up and turned to Cady. The racketeer's deep-lined face wore a satisfied grin. Clink snapped his fingers.

"Slip me that coin button, Cady," he ordered. "I'll need it tomorrow."

"You're going to see Jed yourself?" queried Cady.

"Sure," replied Clink. "I've got to introduce myself, don't I? He won't believe I'm who I say I am, unless I have that coin."

Cady produced the mounted rupee from his pocket and passed it to Clink. Still noting the racketeer's pleased grin, Cady ventured a question:

"You're pulling the job tonight, Clink? Without slipping the news to Jed?"

"He don't need to know until after. You've got enough sense to know that."

"Sure. I know his end is to beat it to Europe with the swag. But what gets me is how you're going to snatch it in the first place."

"That's all set, Cady. But the big shot needs you for something else. You and Cooler Caplan. He's the boy that can drive that big bus of mine plenty fast."

"I get you, Clink. Cooler and me - we're to help the big shot with his get-away."

Clink eyed Cady steady and noted an eager grin on the underlings ratlike face. The idea of meeting the big shot evidently pleased Cady. Clink nodded; he clamped an approving hand upon the seated crook's shoulder.

"I'll spill you the whole story later, Cady," proposed Clink. "Beat it out and eat; then come back. Cooler will be here then. I'll let you both in on the lay."

"Keep away from the Skyview Plaza. Let them think you've quit, like you did at the Goliath. You've got an important job tonight. You'll realize that when I spill the whole story."

Cady nodded as Clink conducted him to the door. He knew Clink's penchant for holding back important information until the zero hour. Cady had worked for the smooth racketeer before. With Clink, when you guessed his plans, it was wise not to say too much - so Cady knew from past experience.

CLINK HURON closed the door when Cady had gone. Taking the chair that Cady had occupied, the racketeer lighted a cigar and grinned as he puffed away.

Slow-moving events had reached the natural culmination that had been expected. Crime was ready to strike tonight. But with culmination had arrived new twists: cross-currents that demanded clever strategy.

Even yet, plans might need last-minute changes. That was one reason why Clink had dismissed Cady until later. But as Clink viewed the coming perspective, he could see success and nothing else.

Cady and "Cooler" would start out first. Clink would wait here until the big shot's final call. Then, with

ready henchmen, he would follow opportunity.

Puffing his cigar, Clink summed all possibilities and grinned in satisfaction. But in his summary, the confident racketeer gave no heed to a factor that was due to enter in the game.

That factor was The Shadow. As yet, Clink Huron had failed to suspect the presence of that unknown foe to crime.

CHAPTER XIV. THE CHANCE CLUE

EVENING had settled over Washington. The lights of the capital city formed a twinkling array when viewed from the entrance of the mammoth Union Depot. But the stocky man who beckoned to a taxicab, was no sight-seer. His tone was brisk as he snapped an order to the driver:

"Hotel Skyview Plaza. And make it snappy!"

The arrival was Detective Joe Cardona. Under his arm the New York sleuth was carrying a fiber folder. As the cab rolled from the terminal archway, Joe sat stolidly with eyes focused straight ahead.

The trip to the hotel took a dozen minutes. Cardona paid the driver in a hurry; then walked into the lobby, looking about suspiciously as he entered. He studied three uniformed bell boys; recognizing none of them, he approached the desk.

"Is Mr. Knight in?" queried the ace.

"Sorry, sir," replied the clerk. "Mr. Knight went out about fifteen minutes ago. He and another gentleman, sir."

Cardona hesitated; then drew back his coat and flashed the badge on his vest. "I'm from New York headquarters," he confided in a low tone. "My name's Cardona. I'm a friend of Mr. Knight's. Seeing he's not here, I'd like to talk to the manager."

"Certainly, sir," nodded the clerk. "The office is directly opposite. You will find Mr. Howley in there, sir."

Cardona went to the office and introduced himself to Howley. The manager was a dignified gentleman, who appeared quite surprised by the arrival of a New York detective.

"If you have a complaint, Mr. Cardona," he began, "you should take the matter to our Washington police headquarters, before coming here. We do not like to make any charge against a guest."

"It's not a guest I'm looking for," explained Cardona. "I'm after a guy who's working here as a bell hop. I traced him from the Hotel Goliath in New York. I've gotten some real dope on him; and my hunch is he's working here. Take a look at this photo."

Cardona had opened the folder. From it he drew a rogues gallery photograph and passed it to the manager. Howley uttered a surprised exclamation.

"It's that chap Cady!" he announced. "The new man who gave us the Florida references. We just had a letter from Florida this afternoon, stating that he had never worked at the places he claimed."

"I got this from Boston," announced Joe, tapping the picture. "Parker Cady is his full name. He was pinched up there, a couple of years ago. We hadn't anything on him in New York."

"I should be glad to aid you in apprehending the scamp," stated the manager, "but, unfortunately, Cady

has left our employ. He went off duty this afternoon and did not return."

"The same gag he pulled at the Goliath," growled Joe. "Have you any address? Know anything about him?"

"Absolutely nothing," replied Howley. "I shall have the house detectives on the lookout: if you wish, I can notify detective headquarters."

"We can do just that," agreed Cardona. "You've got enough for a complaint of your own against him. Grab him, if he shows up. I've got someone to see in the meantime."

There was a telephone book on the manager's desk. Cardona opened it and began looking for a name. He did not find it. He turned further back in the book.

"For what name are you looking?" inquired the manager.

"Releston," replied Cardona. "Senator Ross Releston; but he's not listed."

"He lives at some hotel, I believe," declared Howley. "It may, by chance, be the Barlingham. I am not positive but I can -"

"Here's another that will do," put in Cardona. "It's Caleb Wesdren. He's listed."

Cardona pointed out Wesdren's name. Howley noted the telephone number and the address; then remarked:

"That's not far from here. You could be there in a few minutes by taxicab."

"I could?" queried Cardona. "Then that's the bet. I'll do better by calling than by phoning. Pass the word to watch for Cady, will you, Mr. Howley?"

"Certainly," responded the manager. "I shall notify the house detective at once. Thank you, Mr. Cardona, for bringing this matter to our attention."

CARDONA departed abruptly. He hailed a cab outside the hotel and gave the driver Wesdren's address. The distance was further than the manager had stated. It was fully twelve minutes before the car reached the quiet street where Wesdren's house was located.

"Can't see the numbers, bud," informed the taxi driver, "but this ought to be it. Unless it's the big place up ahead."

"I'll find it," stated Cardona.

Leaving the cab, Joe noted the house at which the driver had stopped. It was an old brick homestead that did not impress him as Wesdren's logical residence. But the next house on the street was a brownstone mansion, with walls that looked like the bulwarks of a fortress.

The house occupied a wide front. Looking past it, Cardona saw that the grounds extended through to a row of squatty buildings on the next street. Squeezed between structures that looked like storage houses or garages was a brown building that matched the mansion.

It must have been a stable once, Cardona decided; probably it had been preserved and converted into a garage. Then Joe's speculation ended as he strode toward the steps of the mansion. Going up to the front door, Cardona noted a number on the steps. This was Wesdren's residence.

A chunky, wise-faced servitor admitted Cardona. The detective inquired for Mr. Wesdren; the servant wanted to know who was calling. Joe told him; the man went through the reception room.

Standing in the dimly lighted hall, Cardona sensed that someone else was watching him. He caught a glimpse of another servant passing through a living room on the far side of the hall; but even after that man had gone from view, the detective still felt uneasy.

He looked toward the rear of the hall; there he noted blackness that looked like a lurking spot. Cardona discerned the edge of an alcove; across from it a door. While he still stared, he heard the first servant returning.

"Mr. Wesdren will see you," informed the man. "Come this way."

Cardona was conducted to the office. He found Caleb Wesdren alone. The dark-haired man had remembered the detective from the meeting in New York. He shook hands, motioned his visitor to a chair and made query concerning the nature of Cardona's business.

"I'm playing a long shot, Mr. Wesdren," informed Cardona, taking a cigar from a box that his host extended to him. "I came down here on a hunch; and it's turned out to be a real one."

"Concerning matters that we previously discussed?"

"Yeah. It's about our friend Jarvis Knight. Somebody is wise to who he is. He's being watched."

"Have you informed Del -" Wesdren caught himself. "Have you seen Mr. Knight since you arrived in town?"

"No. He wasn't at his hotel. But I got the information I wanted. When Knight was at the Hotel Goliath, I spotted a phony bell hop watching him. The fellow beat it before I could make an arrest; but I learned his name. It was Parker Cady.

"I checked on the fellow. He had a record up in Boston. I've got all the data here in this folder. And get this, Mr. Wesdren: Cady was working as a bell hop at the Skyview Plaza, up until this afternoon."

"He is there no longer?"

"Apparently not. They're going to nab him if he shows up. But in the meantime -"

Wesdren gestured by way of interruption. Cardona broke off as the executive reached for the telephone. He watched Wesdren dial a number; then asked:

"You're calling local headquarters?"

Wesdren shook his head.

"I'm getting Knight," he replied. "He is with Marquette. Both are over at the Hotel Barlingham, in conference with Senator Releston."

Cardona settled back in his chair with a pleased grin. He listened while Wesdren was connected with Releston. He heard the executive inform the senator of this new development. Then Cardona's attention was suddenly directed elsewhere.

Straight across the room was a door. Calculating its position, Cardona decided that it was the door that led into the rear hall. As Joe stared, he observed a barely perceptible closing of the barrier. He watched the brass knob, which glistened conspicuously in the light. He gained the definite impression that the knob

was turning.

Wesdren was hanging up the receiver. He spoke to Cardona:

"Senator Releston is coming here immediately. Knight and Marquette will be with him. I had intended to go over there; but -"

Wesdren broke off as Cardona made a motion. The knob had ceased turning. Joe nudged a finger toward the door and whispered "Somebody's out in the hall. Better see who -"

Wesdren stared at the door; then arose and made stealthy strides in that direction. Cardona watched him reach for the knob; suddenly Wesdren turned it and yanked the door inward.

A MAN was standing there with upraised hand, as though he had been about to knock. Cardona noticed a long-limbed body; a bulky head upon stooped shoulders. He saw a sallow face that had a sudden contortion; eyes that glared suspiciously, then blinked.

"Ah, Jollister!" Wesdren's tone was mild; it showed quick thought on his part. "I was just coming to find you. I thought you might be busy packing. I did not want to interrupt you with the buzzer."

"I was about to knock, Mr. Wesdren," rumbled Jollister. "I was startled when you opened the door so suddenly."

"Of course. I suppose that my action was abrupt. What is on your mind, Jollister?"

"I expected to leave shortly. I still have a few papers to pack; but I am almost ready. I thought maybe you might want to see me before I went."

"There is nothing that I can think of, Jollister. If anything occurs to me, I shall call you."

The two men exchanged nods. Jollister turned about; Wesdren closed the door and came back to the desk. His face was serious as he threw a sharp glance toward the door.

"Was that Craig Jollister?" inquired Cardona. "The vault expert you spoke about in New York?"

"Yes," replied Wesdren. "I can't understand his action. What do you think, Cardona? Was the fellow eavesdropping?"

"It looked that way, Mr. Wesdren."

The executive glanced at his watch then shrugged his shoulder "Jollister is leaving for the middle West at ten o'clock," he remarked. "He was at his apartment this afternoon; it is between here and the depot. Probably he has packed. He has ample time. I do not suppose he will leave here for half an hour.

"I shall speak to him again before he leaves. But I can wait until after Releston and the others have arrived. They should be here in ten minutes. In the meantime, Cardona, prepare your data, so that we may begin a prompt discussion concerning this suspicious character whom you have uncovered."

WHILE Wesdren and Cardona were ending this brief conversation, events occurred in the hall outside the office. From the blackness of the alcove, a shrouded figure moved slowly into dim light.

Again The Shadow had effected secret entry into Wesdren's mansion. He had taken his former post, which gave him access to the side door of Wesdren's office and also enabled him to observe all who arrived or departed.

The Shadow came to a standstill as a door opened on the other side of the hall. Craig Jollister peered forth and looked about with a suspicious stare. Seeing no one, the vault expert turned out the light in his little office and walked into the hall. He was wearing hat and overcoat; under his arm he carried a leather briefcase.

With long stride, Jollister started for the front door. He stopped abruptly as a servant came out of the living room. Jollister spoke:

"I'm going to my apartment, Hamilton," he said, in his deep tone. "I have spoken to Mr. Wesdren. He knows that I am leaving."

Hamilton nodded. He watched Jollister stalk out through the front door. Hamilton's attitude became one of suspicion; then he shrugged his shoulders and walked back in to the living room. Jollister had passed muster with this secret service man who was playing the part of a servant.

Brief minutes passed. The Shadow edged forward to the front hall. His tall, black shape formed a moving silhouette against the wall. It was a creeping thing of blackness, silent in its progress.

The Shadow paused a dozen feet from the front door as another secret service man came down the stairs from the second floor. He waited until this man had gone through the rear hall; then The Shadow resumed his progress.

Silently and stealthily, The Shadow opened the front door. He glided easily into the outer darkness; he closed the door noiselessly behind him. A shade of blackness, The Shadow's tall shape descended the brownstone steps.

At the bottom, The Shadow wheeled suddenly toward the wall of the mansion, just as a taxicab swung from the nearest corner.

THE vehicle stopped in front of Wesdren's. Three men alighted: Releston, Marquette and Knight. They ascended the steps and rang the bell. The door opened immediately; Hamilton had given the visitors prompt admittance.

Blackness stole from the wall as the door was closing. The taxi driver did not see it; he was counting change at the wheel. Pocketing clinking coins, he drove away from Wesdren's.

One block from the brownstone mansion, that driver experienced a surprise. A quiet voice spoke through the window from the rear seat, while the cab was idling at a traffic light.

The driver blinked: then nodded as he heard his new passenger give a destination. The light changed, the taximan drove ahead, still wondering how his fare had entered the cab unheard.

The Shadow's vigil had ended. He had left Caleb Wesdren's with a purpose. He was moving forth to action and his immediate plans concerned the man who had just left the mansion.

For The Shadow had sensed the imminence of crime. His period of waiting had ended with the moment that Craig Jollister had departed from Caleb Wesdren's. The Shadow knew that crooks had also been waiting; from now on, they were free to move.

True, they could wait longer; delay might serve their purposes as well as promptness. But The Shadow knew the ways of crookdom. He expected action undelayed.

CHAPTER XV. THREE IN A ROW

MIDWAY on an arc between Wesdren's and the Union Depot stood the Medallion Apartments, where Craig Jollister lived. The Medallion was a modern building; but it stood in a portion of the Northeast section that was inconvenient to reach except by taxi.

Jollister had chosen the Medallion for two reasons. First, because he liked quiet; second, because he had been offered a month-to-month lease. The Medallion, because of its location, was only half-tenanted.

An old abandoned house stood at one side of the new apartment building. Jollister had taken an apartment on that side; he lived on the third floor; and his wing was practically deserted. Sometimes Jollister used the automatic elevator in the center of the building; on other occasions, he went up by a fire tower that served as direct entrance to the wing in which he resided.

A slight rain shower was beginning as a taxicab pulled up in front of the Medallion Apartments. The taxicab skidded a trifle as it stopped. The driver swerved it from the curb. As he turned about to speak to his passenger, a five-dollar bill fluttered from the window between front seat and back.

"Don't think I've got change, mister," began the driver. "If you've got something smaller -"

He stopped abruptly and gaped through the window. The passenger was gone. As singularly silent as when he had entered the cab, the mysterious rider had effected a disappearance.

The taximan stepped out and looked about. He saw no one going in the gloomy entrance of the apartment building; nor could he discern a single passer on the sidewalk. The man stepped back into his cab, pocketed the money and drove away, mumbling to himself.

A TRIM coupe was parked below the Medallion, directly in front of the deserted house. It was away from street lamps. The young man at the wheel of the parked car was huddled, so that no passers would notice him.

It was this man who gained the next inkling of a mysterious presence. Harry Vincent, agent of The Shadow, hunched suddenly as he heard a whispered voice speak through the open window on the street side of the coupe:

"Report."

The Shadow had approached from darkness; his advent had proven startling, even to the agent who served him. Speaking into the darkness outside the window, Harry whispered:

"Jollister arrived three minutes ago. I saw him go in. The lights just came on in his apartment. Also a report from Marsland. A high-powered touring car is parked in back of the apartment house. Marsland is watching for the lights in Jollister's. He should be due here -"

Harry broke off as a man stepped from the sidewalk and opened the door on the right side of the coupe. Cliff Marsland clambered aboard and closed the door behind him.

"Listen. Harry," he began. "There's two men in the touring car; they -"

Cliff stopped as Harry nudged him. Then came The Shadow's whisper; this for the benefit of Cliff:

"Report."

"Hawkeye and I spotted two men in the touring car," stated Cliff. "Hawkeye sneaked up and listened in. One's Cady, the bell hop that Hawkeye was too late to trail from the Skyview Plaza. The other's Cooler Caplan, a fellow that Hawkeye used to know.

"They're going up by the fire tower; whether they're just allowing a few minutes, or whether they're waiting for a signal, we don't know. Hawkeye ducked away so they wouldn't spot him. But they've been watching for Jollister's light."

"Instructions." The Shadow's whisper was sinister. "Join Hawkeye. Remain clear of the fire tower. Watch for four blinks of Jollister's light. Then come up by the tower."

"Instructions received."

With that acknowledgment, Cliff left the coupe and crept through the rain toward the spot where Hawkeye was awaiting him.

"Instructions." The Shadow spoke to Harry. "Remain here until further order."

"Instructions received."

Watching the front of the apartment house, Harry caught a fleeting glimpse of blackness that moved out of the rain. A tall shape momentarily obscured the gloomy light from the front entrance. Then the manifestation was gone.

UP in his apartment, Craig Jollister was standing by the telephone. He had just completed a call; he picked up some papers from a table and thrust them into an open suitcase. He closed the bag and added it to three others that formed a stack beside the wall.

Jollister had packed everything. He was leaving this apartment for good and the thought seemed to please him, for his sallow features wore a look of contempt as he glanced about the room. Window shades were half drawn. Two lamps alone were lighted. One was on the table near the window; the other was a floor lamp by the door. Jollister glanced at a big watch that he drew from his pocket. The time was half past nine. Reaching out, Jollister clicked the desk lamp and extinguished it.

After peering briefly through the closed window, Jollister paced back and forth across the room. He stopped, facing the window, and stood with head lowered. The door behind him began to open inward, slowly and without sound.

Jollister had a habit of peering upward; it was one which occupied him at the moment. His deep-set eyes blinked suddenly as he saw a reflection in the blackened window. Jollister was observing the slow, inward progress of the opening door.

Nothing else showed in that night-made mirror. No visible form in reflected blackness; simply the door, in its mysterious motion. Jollister stood, watching; then, with a quick swing to action, he whirled about and sprang directly toward the opened doorway.

By the light of the floor lamp, Jollister saw a living personage - a figure cloaked in black. One that stood plain when viewed directly. By catching the reflection of the opening door, Jollister had been warned of The Shadow's entry.

An upraised arm came from the cloak. As The Shadow's eyes met Jollister's, hidden lips hissed fiercely. Unarmed, The Shadow sought to stop Jollister's drive through sharp command alone. But The Shadow's action was too late.

A furious cry spat from Jollister's livid lips. With a mighty leap, the big-limbed man hurled himself upon the cloaked intruder.

The Shadow wheeled as Jollister's hands came shooting for his throat. Grappling, the two struck the

half-opened door and sent it slamming shut.

Wild viciousness had gripped Craig Jollister. In one instant, the man had gained the power of a living demon. His sole desire was to overwhelm this cloaked antagonist. Inspired by his fury, Jollister drove The Shadow hard against the wall. He forced cloaked arms upward. The Shadow's slouch hat fell to the floor.

One hand free, Jollister drove a big fist to beat down The Shadow's guard. The Shadow warded off the blow and with the action, performed a powerful twist. Jollister had jolted his adversary with that first drive; had he kept up his throttling tactics, he would have held the advantage. But his desire to send home a punch proved damaging to his chances.

Though momentarily groggy, The Shadow was able to react when Jollister loosed his clutch. In the interval that accounted for the punch, The Shadow's twist began. Slugging wide, Jollister recovered and tried to make up for his mistake. He grappled furiously to stop the foe who was slipping from his grasp.

The Shadow's body slumped; then came upward, rigid. Gloved hands caught Jollister beneath the arms; an upward driving head drove back Jollister's chin. Before Jollister could tighten his arms about The Shadow's body, the cloaked fighter sent his foe straight up toward the ceiling.

THE SHADOW'S motion ended with a jerk. Jollister shot head forward, arms outstretched. A hoarse cry ended on his lips as he thudded to the floor. His hands failed to break the blow as his head reached the corner wall.

Half stooping, The Shadow regained his slouch hat and placed it upon his head. He arose and stepped to where Jollister lay. The vault expert had rolled face upward; his lips were rigid with the vicious twist that had marked Jollister's spring to action.

The plunge had been sufficient to end Jollister's flight; the blow that had followed his overthrow had left him stunned and helpless. It would be minutes before Jollister could revive; in that space, other work must be accomplished by The Shadow.

Hoisting Jollister's big form, The Shadow carried the man into a darkened room. There he placed his adversary upon a bed. Jollister gave a deep groan; then subsided. The Shadow went back toward the outer room.

He stopped abruptly as he reached the fringe of light. That groan of Jollister's had produced the unexpected. By merest chance, it had drowned a slight sound from the outer room. The Shadow, unsuspecting danger's approach, had stepped squarely into the field of a new foe.

The outer door had opened. Halfway in the room was Cady. The stooped crook must have heard sounds of the fray, for he was crouching, with ready revolver, watching that door to the inner room.

Gun leveled, Cady had the doorway covered. He was waiting for someone to appear. But when he saw The Shadow, a quick twitch came to his rat-like face. Cady gasped an oath; his finger faltered off the trigger.

Cady was startled by the suddenness of the foe's arrival. He had heard no approach; to his beady eyes, The Shadow had materialized like a living specter. That was the first factor that caught Cady off guard. The second was the rat-faced crook's recognition of the enemy with whom he had to deal.

Clink Huron had mentioned nothing of The Shadow. Good reason, for not even Clink, though higher up than Cady, had any knowledge of The Shadow's presence in the game. Cady, thought a shrewd worker,

had a dash of yellow.

It showed in this crisis. A meeting with The Shadow was not to Cady's liking. Instinctively, the rat dropped back as he steadied his failing finger on the cold trigger that was his sole reliance.

Had The Shadow reached for an automatic, Cady would have fired. Some human gesture on The Shadow's part was the one assurance that the crook needed. Caught on the threshold of the inner room, The Shadow, himself, was in dilemma. His hesitation, however, lasted only for the slightest fraction of a second.

A SILENT bolt of blackness, The Shadow sprang forward in one mammoth leap. His cloak swished wide; its crimson lining flashed in the dull light. His stroke caught Cady on the instant of action. The crook broke at sight of the living avalanche.

Wildly, Cady scrambled for the door; catching the frame of the outer portal with his left hand, he turned to aim savagely with his right. Frenzied, he wanted to pump hot slugs from his gun; but his chance was gone. The Shadow was upon him.

One black-gloved fist gripped Cady's wrist. The other sped for the crook's throat. A gargle was the only sound that Cady made as his head went crashing against the door frame. Uptwisted fingers loosened. The revolver slipped from Cady's grasp. The rat-faced crook slumped helpless to the floor.

The Shadow's right hand shot beneath his cloak; as it emerged, whisking an automatic, the black-clad fighter wheeled. Full about, spinning to the center of the room - such was The Shadow's course. The move came just in time.

A hulking foeman was springing in from the hall. Cooler Caplan, picked by Clink Huron as Cady's running mate, was here to back up his fallen pal. Clink had chosen Cooler with a reason. This big gorilla was noted for his readiness with a gat.

Cady had left Cooler in the hall, to be ready with aid. Cooler was here, uncalled, a huge revolver bulging from his fist. That .45 was a murderous weapon; Cooler had used the big "smoke-wagon" often in the past.

Sight of The Shadow was no deterrent to Cooler Caplan. He had heard Cady's scuffle; he had piled in to aim for the first person whom he encountered. Springing over Cady's form, the big killer lunged for the whirling figure in the center of the room. With a hideous snarl, he pressed trigger.

At the same instant, The Shadow fired. Two shots sounded as one. Flame flashed from both .45s, revolver and automatic. Zinging bullets passed in air. Two figures came to a halt.

The Shadow stopped, five paces from the spot where he had been when Cooler fired. The crook had been too quick in aim at that elusive target. His bullet had whizzed through the folds of the black cloak. Missing The Shadow's body, it had found lodgment in the wall by the window.

But Cooler's halt came instantly. Stopped in his forward lunge, the would-be killer jolted upward. Both hands clamped to his chest; his right released the smoke-wagon and let the big gun clatter to the floor.

Blood stained Cooler's fingers as his lips spat incoherent words. Eyes bulged above an ugly, twisted nose. Knees sagged, then gave. Cooler sprawled forward and flattened to the floor.

THE SHADOW placed a smoking automatic beneath his cloak. Standing in the mellow light, he surveyed the scene before him. He had dealt with three contestants in swift succession. Each conflict had led to another.

Craig Jollister had furnished unexpected opposition. The Shadow had come here to approach him unaware. Had the surprise been as complete as The Shadow had planned, Jollister would have offered no resistance.

Cady had gained a lucky break. The Shadow had turned the tables with an unexpected stroke, based upon his recognition of the fellow's yellowness.

Cooler had driven in with murderous intent. Gun against gun had been the only course. The Shadow had slain a killer who deserved to die. The Shadow's one regret was that shots had proven necessary.

Silence had been his watchword on this expedition. He had come to change events at Jollister's without commotion. To stop Jollister's departure; to overpower Cady; then Cooler - such had been The Shadow's purpose.

Yet, as The Shadow listened, he could hear no distant shouts. No scurry of footsteps. The lack of tenants in this wing; the deserted house next door - those were fortunate factors. Apparently the simultaneous gun shots had not been heard outside.

The Shadow laughed grimly. His course was undisturbed. Striding toward the door, he stopped by the floor lamp. He pulled the cord again and again. Four times the light blinked; then remained on. The Shadow glided to the room wherein he had placed Craig Jollister.

A FEW minutes later, two stealthy figures arrived at the door of the apartment. One was a stalwart, chisel-featured man: Cliff Marsland. The other, a shrewd, stoop-shouldered fellow whose keen eyes peered from a wizened face. This was Hawkeye.

Cliff motioned the little man to remain by the door. Crossing the room, he came to the inner door. He heard a whisper. Cliff entered.

"Instructions," came The Shadow's low tone. "Remove Cooler's body to the touring car. Come back for Cady. Place him in the rear seat also, bound and gagged. Drive to the parking lot on M Street, near the Pelham Theater. No watchman is on duty; leave the car there."

"Instructions received," acknowledged Cliff.

The Shadow waited while his agents removed Cooler's body and came back for Cady. When they had taken the surviving crook, The Shadow, himself, hoisted Jollister.

Carrying the vault expert limp across his shoulders, The Shadow extinguished the floor lamp as he passed. He descended by the fire tower. He heard the touring car pull away.

Shifting his relaxed burden, The Shadow laughed softly as he moved forward through the rain. He was on his way to join Harry Vincent in the coupe. Between them, The Shadow and his agent would put Craig Jollister in a place where he would stay.

CHAPTER XVI. CRIME FORESEEN

WHILE The Shadow was finding action at Jollister's apartment, quieter events were developing at Wesdren's. A conference had begun in the luxurious office. Joe Cardona had held the floor while Releston, Wesdren and Knight formed a gallery of listeners.

His information given at length, Cardona awaited comment. A question came from Vic Marquette:

"Suppose we do find Cady? What then?"

"What then?" echoed Joe Cardona. "What's the idea of that question, Marquette? Once you've nabbed Cady, you'll have a lead on the whole gang you're after."

Marquette snorted; then shook his head.

"I'll admit we'll have a lead," he declared. "But it won't fit in with what we've learned already. We're after slick crooks, Cardona. Big shots; not small fry."

"But Cady's working for somebody."

"Granted. And if we ever get Cady, we'll find out that he can't tell us a thing about the big shot."

"Maybe Cady is more important than you think. What if he was this Jed Barthue you've talked about? He could be; that Boston record of his dates back a few years."

A chuckle came from Jarvis Knight. "My word, old bean," remarked the Britisher, "you are allowing your imagination to run rampant. That is an absurd theory, Cardona. I can vouch for it that this mysterious bell boy is not Jed Barthue."

"Maybe you shouldn't be too sure about that, Knight," asserted Marquette, suddenly swinging to Cardona's side. "You've been kind of sketchy in your descriptions of Jed Barthue. Maybe you've been buffaloes, too."

"I remember that bell boy at the Goliath," retorted Knight. "He was a crude sort. A boulder. Nothing like Jed Barthue."

"Quibbling will bring us nothing, gentlemen," put in Senator Releston, in a rebuking tone. "Let us consider this matter with less argument. I would suggest that we return to the Barlingham, for further conference. I see that Mr. Wesdren is already glancing at his watch. Perhaps it is time we should be going -"

"No, no," interposed Wesdren. "I was merely wondering about Jollister. He is leaving tonight at ten o'clock. He should have started for the station. I wonder if the absent-minded fellow has forgotten it."

Wesdren pressed the buzzer by the desk. The others waited, expecting Jollister to appear. Wesdren hummed again; then a third time, more impatiently than before. The door opened; but it was Hamilton who entered.

"Where is Jollister?" demanded Wesdren.

"He left quite a while ago, sir," replied Hamilton. "Almost immediately after I saw him speaking to you, here at the door. He went to his little office; then came out, wearing his hat and coat. He had a briefcase, also."

"Why didn't you inform me that he had left?"

"He told me that he had mentioned that himself, sir. We all knew that he was to leave on the ten o'clock train."

"Wait a minute. Hamilton."

WESDREN picked up the telephone and dialed a number. He listened intently there was no response. He hung up and looked at the others.

"Not at his apartment," announced Wesdren. "No answer there. He must have left for the station. Yet I can not understand why he did not come back here. Unless -"

Wesdren paused speculatively, then turned and looked to Joe Cardona.

"Tell me, Cardona," he questioned, "what was your opinion of Jollister's behavior? Would you, as a detective, regard it as suspicious?"

"What else could you call it?" Joe delivered a grunt. "He was behind that door, listening in, before you opened it. It looks like he didn't lose much time in clearing out of here."

"That is all true," acknowledged Wesdren. "Gentlemen, I wonder if - No, it seems impossible -"

"That Jollister could know Cady?" demanded Marquette. "It doesn't look unlikely to me. Say - wasn't Jollister spending a lot of time in New York, when he should have been here?"

"No," returned Wesdren. "Actually, his time was his own. His work here had been completed. And yet Jollister - well, I wish we still had a chance to talk with him, that is all. The fellow did behave oddly this evening."

"We can get him all right." Vic Marquette was on his feet, looking at his watch. "Hamilton, get in a car with Tobin and show us how fast you can get to the Union Depot. Snag Jollister and bring him here. Tell him it's important."

"The ten o'clock train, Hamilton," reminded Senator Releston, nodding his approval of the move.

"I know it, senator," replied Hamilton. "I saw his tickets. He had Berth 12 in Car 69. Tobin and I will bring him here."

HAMILTON departed in a hurry. A few moments later, the sound of a slamming door indicated that he and Tobin were on their way. Discussion lulled while the group waited for the report from the two Federal men who had played the part of servants.

A clock struck ten. Five minutes passed. Then the telephone bell rang on Wesdren's desk. The square-jawed man answered the call; then turned the telephone over to Releston. The senator held a short discussion. His face was serious when he concluded.

"They made it," said Releston, briefly. "Hamilton held up the train's departure for five minutes. He and Tobin went through every car. Jollister was not aboard."

"Are they coming back here?" questioned Marquette.

"Yes," replied the senator, "but they are stopping at Jollister's on the way. We should hear from them when they reach there."

Ten minutes more. Another ring of the telephone. This time Senator Releston answered it. He spoke briefly; then gave instructions.

"Jollister is gone," he announced, when he hung up. "The janitor opened his apartment. The place was empty, except for the furniture, which belonged to the building. All Jollister's belongings and luggage has been removed.

"Hamilton asked if he should make a thorough inspection of the place. I told him to come back here, instead. This is where he and Tobin belong on duty. Nevertheless, we must prepare to trace Craig Jollister.

"The man has behaved suspiciously. He has deliberately misrepresented his place of destination. Tonight,

we have made two important discoveries. One concerns a man named Cady; the other involves Jollister.

"I am ready to hear opinions. Suppose, Inspector Delka, that you give us yours. Incidentally" - Releston smiled slightly - "it is hardly necessary for you to preserve your identity of Jarvis Knight in surroundings such as these."

"Call me Delka, if you prefer," returned the Englishman. "Somehow, I have an inkling that the need for pretence will soon be ended. If you ask my candid opinion, I would say that the plotters are calling quits."

"How so?" queried Releston.

"Cady may be a link," returned Knight. "Jollister the same. When Jollister learned that Cady was under suspicion, he decided that it would be best for him to travel along, also."

"Just one point, Knight," put in Marquette, when the Britisher had finished speaking. "Don't you think you're shooting pretty low when you class Jollister with Cady?"

"I suppose so, Marquette. Yes, Jollister could be a more important factor than Cady."

"I'll tell you how much more important. Enough more to be the big shot!"

MARQUETTE delivered his statement with emphasis. He was on his feet, one fist pounding the edge of Wesdren's desk.

"There's only one way anybody could crack that strong room of yours," announced the secret service operative. "That would be from right inside this house, Mr. Wesdren. The one fellow who could do it is Craig Jollister!"

Wesdren began to nod; then shook his head.

"Hardly," he declared. "The door to the strong room has other locks than Jollister's. You know that yourself, Marquette."

"Sure I do. And why were they put on there?"

"Because Jollister insisted upon their installation."

"Sure. And after they were on there, didn't Jollister still keep working around the strong room?"

"Yes. He was completing his test of the vault door."

"Alone? Was he there alone?"

"Certainly, Marquette. Jollister always demanded privacy when he was at work."

"And wouldn't that have given him a chance to fix those other locks the way he wanted them?"

This time Wesdren began to nod and did not desist. The others, too, had caught the force of Marquette's point. Senator Releston was about to speak when Caleb Wesdren took the floor.

"Anything might be possible" said Wesdren, seriously. "Anything - if we go on the assumption that Jollister is a criminal. He might have some secret entrance to this house; through one of the side doors, for instance."

"The doors are locked, aren't they?" inquired Marquette.

"Supposedly," returned Wesdren. "But Jollister has had full run of the place. Do you know, I can not understand why Jollister has bolted so suddenly. I am beginning to wonder if he has actually fled at all."

"Maybe he hasn't," agreed Marquette. "He wants it to look like he's left Washington, that's all. Say - maybe he's coming back here. Using that train trip as an alibi. Flashing the ticket so Hamilton would see it."

"Suppose we visit the vault room," suggested Senator Releston. "Let us make sure that some crime has not already been accomplished."

Wesdren nodded his agreement. While the group was rising, Hamilton and Tobin entered. Marquette instructed them to stay and watch with the other two Federal men who were on the job as servants.

LEADING the way, Wesdren conducted his visitors below. He unlocked the doors of the strong room: turned on the light and ushered his companions within. Wesdren's next step was to open the vault. He followed by unbolting the inner grating.

With Releston and Marquette close at hand, Wesdren made an inspection of coffers and compartments. The checking of models and plans was complete. Wesdren closed the grating and locked the vault.

"Formidable," he remarked, solemnly, as he studied the glistening door. "But it would be no better than tissue paper, should Jollister come here to open it. He not only constructed it; he knows the present combination."

"One thing," put in Marquette. "If Jollister is coming here, it will be tonight."

"How is that?" queried Wesdren promptly.

"He's going to get it over with," insisted Marquette. "One night's as good as another, isn't it? All right; that makes the first chance best. But he won't come alone."

"On account of coffers?"

"Yes. And the weight of the stuff in them. That nitrogen extractor is a heavy machine. So is that tank model and those boxes of separate parts."

"Then what would you suggest? A guard here in the strong room?"

"That's the best idea yet. If Jollister's going to show up, why not let him?"

Senator Releston nodded his approval.

"Suppose you stay down here, Marquette. We can send Hamilton and Tobin down to join you."

"That would weaken our present arrangement, senator," objected Wesdren. "Those men are needed upstairs."

"Suppose I remain with Marquette?" The speaker was Jarvis Knight. "That will place two of us on duty."

"We should have three," declared Releston.

"Then leave Cardona," suggested Wesdren.

"That's the ticket," asserted Marquette. "If any one comes snooping around, they'll only see the regulars on duty upstairs. Leave Knight and Cardona here with me, senator."

"Very well," smiled Releston. "Since Delka has his Scotland Yard credentials and Cardona can identify himself as a New York detective, I think the arrangement would be allowable."

"Certainly, senator," agreed Wesdren. "Let us go upstairs and leave the strong room to these three."

WHEN Wesdren and the senator reached the office, they held a brief conference. Wesdren decided that Hamilton and the others must be promptly notified of the situation. He also suggested that it would be wise to call police headquarters, to learn if there was any news of Cady.

The senator went out to the hallway and summoned the four Federal men, while Wesdren was using the telephone. When Releston had instructed the four, he returned. Wesdren had just completed his call to headquarters. He announced that the police would issue a flier as soon as they had Cardona's data.

"Have a cigar, senator," suggested Wesdren, proffering the box. "We have nothing to do but wait. Unless something occurs within a few hours, we will know that nothing is due."

"I shall wait here until midnight," said Releston. "But the strong room must be guarded until morning. We can remove the plans and models then, and ship them to the war department."

"An excellent suggestion," approved Wesdren. "One that will most certainly relieve me of a great responsibility."

Conversation ended. Both Releston and Wesdren seemed to feel a tenseness in the atmosphere as minutes ticked slowly by. Both were thinking of that buried strong room, where three stalwart men were standing guard against crime that soon might come.

CHAPTER XVII. IN THE STRONG ROOM

"The door is the spot to watch."

Vic Marquette gave this advice to his two companions. The secret service operative had completed a brief survey of the strong room. He was pointing to the heavy barrier which had closed automatically after the departure of Releston and Wesdren.

"It looks tough," stated Cardona, as he eyed the door's interior. "But since Jollister was the guy who built it, he shouldn't have much trouble in cracking it."

Jarvis Knight made no comment. He had taken a cigarette case from his pocket - the metal one that bore the initials "E.D." Extracting a cigarette, Knight clicked the case shut. He struck a match and began to puff smoke while he stared in meditative fashion.

"What's on your mind, Delka?" questioned Marquette, as he noted the Britisher's concentration. "Figuring something we haven't thought of yet?"

"I am thinking about Jollister," returned the Englishman. "A canny sort, that chap. I wonder if he possesses the boldness for which we give him credit."

"You mean that you think he really took it on the lam?"

"Resorted to flight? I rather think so!"

"Then we're wasting our time here in the vault room."

Knight shook his head.

"There is no reason why Jollister should come here in person," he explained. "If he has planned a way to open that door, he could easily entrust the work to others. As for the vault itself, he could simply give the combination to his hirelings."

"You're figuring Jollister as the big shot?" queried Marquette. "Swinging around to our idea, Delka?"

"Yes," Knight nodded. "It is inconceivable that a group of raiders could enter this house utterly unseen. Even if Jollister has prepared a way for them, they would run the risk of a clash with the secret service men."

"Maybe Jollister doesn't know that Hamilton and the others aren't real servants."

"Quite true. That, Marquette, explains why he would be willing to risk a raid. Four stupid menials would offer poor resistance. Nevertheless, they must be taken into consequence."

BOTH Marquette and Cardona nodded. Knight puffed his cigarette and casually flicked ashes on the steel floor. He resumed his discourse, while the others listened intently. For the first time since his arrival in America, the Englishman was developing a theory in a manner that might befit inspector Eric Delka, of Scotland Yard.

"Let us consider Jollister," stated the man who called himself Jarvis Knight. "He had carte blanche in the construction of this strong room. He had a choice, of course: to do an honest job or to plan for crime.

"Whichever the case, his task ended with the completion of the strong room. It appears to be formidable; yet we know that the outer door might be easily opened, if Jollister has deliberately prepared it for simple access.

"Force of numbers; swiftness of action - those should prove to be essentials. Let us picture a coming raid. One that may strike tonight. A band of desperadoes, entering this house. An alarm given by Hamilton or some other man among the supposed servants.

"That would mean a battle upstairs. A squad of half a dozen, driving back the four guards. Keeping them occupied; making them believe that the strong room remained intact. Meanwhile, a picked band has entered here.

"Outer door - vault door - both yielding promptly, thanks to instructions given by Jollister. A rifling of the vault - a swift escape - all accomplished while those shock troops are still engaged in upstairs battle."

Knight paused to mote the impression that his words had made. Marquette looked at Cardona, who nodded; then Vic paced across the room. He swung about to face Knight.

"You've outlined it, Delka," agreed Vic. "It's a cinch that no one is going to blast through concrete and steel. I know that Jollister had a chance to frame this room the way he wanted and the door was the bet he needed."

"Particularly," chuckled Knight, "because he insisted upon those other locks. That, Marquette, shows the craftiness of a schemer; it also indicates the criminal tendency to overdo one point."

"Jollister's taken it on the lam," assured Marquette. "Maybe he'll show up in Chicago; maybe he won't show up anywhere. That's where he's wise. He's got an alibi if he wants it."

"And he's left an outfit to do the heavy work," put in Cardona. "That's where Cady came in. A go-between, with some guy like Rigger Luxley ready with a mob."

"He's not a go-between," corrected Knight. "Say, rather, a spy, keeping watch upon me. Let me develop the theory further, before we stress that point."

"GOOD idea," said Vic Marquette. "We're still on Jollister. He's beat it, probably in a car. The raid is scheduled for tonight. If the mob that heads for this strong room has time, they'll blow the whole place after they've snagged the swag."

"Suppose Jollister is down in Norfolk, or some place like that. He'll read about it. If the bluff has worked; if it looks like a regular soup job, he'll head for Chicago. He'll play innocent."

"But if something goes blooey, and Jollister's hunted, all he'll have to do is keep on going. Out of Norfolk, or wherever he's headed, while we're still trying to find him in the middle West."

"That sizes it," decided Cardona, "But either way - whether Jollister's named or not - what are the crooks going to do with the swag afterward?"

"I can answer that," smiled Knight. "The spoils will go to Jed Barthue. That is his specialty - smuggling things away. The man is crafty; as yet, we have encountered no trace of him. But we know that he is in the game."

"How's that?" demanded Cardona. "If we've got no trace of Barthue -"

"We have seen Cady," interposed Knight. "I have classed the man as a spy. His purpose has been to watch me."

"Because you're the fellow who's after Jed Barthue?"

"Precisely. Everything has been arranged. However, I fear that the one man whom we shall never capture is Jed Barthue."

"Too slippery?"

"No; he will be warned after we capture the raiders tonight. We have been speculating upon impossibilities. We have forgotten that we hold the trump cards."

"That hits it, Delka," declared the Federal man. "We've got it all doped out; we know that the crooks are going to pick this for a set-up. See it, Cardona? They won't be expecting to find us down here."

"All we've got to do is watch that door. When the mob barges in, give it to them. We'll drive them up; and, meanwhile, their pals will be getting more than they expect from Hamilton and the others upstairs."

"You're right about Barthue, Delka. He'll take it on the lam when he hears the news. He's under cover; he'll be due for a get-away. And maybe we'll have trouble nabbing Jollister."

"But our main idea is to protect this place and mop up the crooks. Then we'll be able to move fast, trailing Jollister and Barthue. They'll both be licked - without the swag - and with us holding prisoners who may be able to squeal."

"It's going to be a surprise stunt, all right; but we're the ones who are pulling it. We're taking no chances. The whole thing looks hot. Have your guns ready; I'm going to douse this light. Then we'll wait and listen."

Marquette pulled a short-barreled revolver from his pocket. Cardona and Knight prepared to draw their guns while they watched the secret service man step toward the light switch.

Then, in a moment of tenseness, came a sharp click from behind the trio. Instinctively, the three men wheeled to stare at the far wall of the strong room. Vic Marquette uttered a startled growl.

The click had come from beyond the steel wall. With it, a panel had slid back to reveal an opening. Framed in a lighted passage were three leering ruffians, each with a ready revolver. They held the watchers covered.

"Stick 'em up!"

RESISTANCE was useless. Marquette alone had drawn his gun; he had no chance to use it. He dropped the revolver; it clattered on the steel floor.

Ruffians bounded forward and backed the prisoners against the wall. They frisked their victims and took guns from Cardona and Knight.

Others were coming from the passage. The raiders numbered more than half a dozen. Joe Cardona, staring stolidly, realized from whence they had arrived. He remembered that old garage in back of Wesdren's mansion.

This passage came from there. The concrete had been laid by workmen in the know. They had left an opening; it had been covered with a sheet of solid steel. But the metal formed a sliding doorway.

To Vic Marquette, the advent of the raiders was proof of supercleverness on the part of Craig Jollister. Vic remembered that the vault expert had spoken slightly of the concrete laying and the wall construction

In fact, Jollister had practically disclaimed connection with the preparation of the strong room itself. He had talked about the doors that he had created; he had boasted about his master vault. Yet the truth remained that Jollister had been given full authority to construct the entire strong room.

Crooks were growling as they brandished their revolvers. They had backed their prisoners to a corner near the vault. Their lips showed contemptuous grins as they stood away and held the victims covered.

Marquette was fuming with suppressed rage; Cardona was staring stolidly. Knight, however, was calm. His lips wore a slight smile. He had lowered his hands slightly; he spoke to one of the armed ruffians.

"May I help myself to a cigarette?" he inquired casually.

"Sure," snorted the crook. "We've frisked you. Smoke up if you want."

Knight reached in his pocket and extracted the cigarette case. Marquette and Cardona stared while the Britisher calmly drew matches from his vest pocket and lighted a cigarette. He replaced the matches: in their place he brought out a silver coin. Cardona recognized the Indian rupee piece that he had seen in New York.

"Where is Clink?" questioned Knight, looking at the half dozen rogues.

"He's comin' through," growled a crook. "Him an' a couple more, maybe. Whatta you want Clink for?"

"I must speak with him," replied Knight. "Ah" - his smile broadened as he saw a tall, dark-faced man enter from the passage - "this must be Clink."

Clink Huron stared at mention of his name. The crook who was covering Knight made a gesture with his gun.

"This guy wants to spill somethin', Clink."

"Sure," interrupted Clink. "Let him. I've never seen him before; but if he wants to talk, he can."

Calmly, Knight stepped forward. He had caught the glimmer of silver upon Clink's vest. The racketeer was wearing Cady's coin button. Knight pointed to the emblem.

"I can match it," he asserted. He extended his hand and showed his silver rupee. "This introduces us. There is no reason why I should keep my identity secret any longer. I am Jed Barthue."

KNIGHT chuckled as he made the statement. He threw a glance toward Marquette and Cardona. At sight of sneering lips, the two prisoners clenched their upraised fists. They would have been pleased to fall upon this man who had passed himself as Eric Delka, but they were restrained by the leveled guns of Clink Huron's henchmen.

"Cady mentioned you," remarked Knight, casually, spinning the rupee as he turned to Clink. "He was gone this afternoon, though, when I had an answer prepared for delivery through you."

"I have arranged everything. Take the swag to the Skyview Plaza and stow it in my wardrobe trunks. I have arranged to ship it aboard a tramp steamer. I shall notify you later regarding the name of the vessel; you can hold Marquette and Cardona until then. After that, bring them aboard."

"They will make good hostages" - Knight chuckled uglily as he glanced at Vic and Joe - "just as good as Eric Delka would have been. I had to get rid of him, you know, after he escaped from the Zouave. But these chaps will make no escape. I shall be aboard with them -"

"Yeah?" Clink interrupted with a savage growl that made Knight turn about. Knight stared as he saw the muzzle of a revolver, squarely in front of his eyes. "Well, you've got another guess coming! Your stall won't work!"

"Move back with those other mugs. Since you like to talk so much, we'll let you give us the real lowdown. We're in no hurry." Clink paused; then spat denunciation. "Come on! Spill the lowdown! We're listening to you, Delka!"

CHAPTER XVIII. THE FINAL WORD

"IT'S no use, Delka," sneered Clink Huron. "Your game was up when you muffed those coded messages. Cady got a copy the answer that you started, then threw in the wastebasket. It didn't click."

The man called Jarvis Knight made no response. He stared steady at Clink Huron. The heavy-brewed crook delivered another laugh.

"You're going on the spot, Delka," he insisted. "It's no use trying to keep up the bluff. We're rubbing you out along with Marquette and Cardona. So you might as well talk for their benefit."

"All right." The Englishman finished his cigarette and tossed it on the floor. "I'll square myself. I bluffed you chaps" - he was speaking to Marquette and Cardona - "because it looked like the best method. But I didn't bluff you about myself. I am Eric Delka. My only false information concerned Jed Barthue."

"You mean Barthue didn't come to New York?" queried Marquette, forgetful of his surroundings because of his surprise.

"He came, all right" - Delka's chuckle was a pleasant one - "and he encountered me aboard the Doranic, just before we reached the States. The scoundrel tossed me overboard, to be picked up by the Zouave."

"You were in the fight on the boat?" asked Cardona. "Mixed up in that mutiny?"

"At first, I was," returned Delka. "But some loyal chaps among the crew came to my rescue. They brought me ashore, somewhere in your state of New Jersey. They gave me dollar bills for some English pounds, and I bought a new suit of clothes and came to New York."

"You got there just before I called you at the Goliath?" queried Marquette.

"Not at all," said Delka. "I arrived much earlier. But I did not introduce myself to any one. I went to the suite that I had reserved and was lucky enough to find it unlocked, while expressmen were bringing up my luggage. I secreted myself in the inner room, to await Jed Barthue."

"Barthue?" quizzed Marquette. "You mean he -"

It was Clink who broke into the discussion.

"Yeah," snarled the leader of the crooks, "Barthue was coming there to pass himself as Delka, under the name of Jarvis Knight. Go on, Delka. Spill the rest of it."

"BARTHUE did come there," stated Delka, bringing out his cigarette case. "I watched him empty his pockets. The bounder was about to attire himself in a suit from my wardrobe. He answered your telephone call, Marquette. Very smoothly toned, he was. His gruffness must have been a pretence aboard the Doranic."

"I thought it time to stop the beggar's masquerade. I confronted him with a revolver. My word! Jed showed more fight than I had imagined he would. He actually wrested the weapon from me, and drove me back against the window ledge."

"Then fortune favored me; I gained a lucky opportunity and, almost without intending it, I pitched the blighter out through the open window. So there I was in my own capacity: Eric Delka, otherwise Jarvis Knight, with Jed Barthue finished."

"Say," put in Cardona. "that guy who we thought committed suicide -"

"Was Jed Barthue," inserted Delka. "I put on his wrist watch because my own was stopped when I was thrown into the water. Then, among Barthue's effects, I found a silver rupee. I wondered about that coin -"

"Until Cady flashed this one," snorted Clink. "I thought Cady pulled a boner. You were smart, Delka, to play ball with Cady. He thought you were Barthue, all right."

"But I couldn't master that confounded code," declared Delka, with a wry grimace. "That was what stopped me. You know, Cardona" - Delka spoke soberly as he turned to his fellow prisoner - "Before we go to blighty, I owe you an apology. I intended to tell you that the supposed suicide was Jed Barthue; I wanted to tell Marquette."

"But that bell boy, Cady, arrived most opportunely. It struck me immediately that if I tried Barthue's tactics, I would be top dog in the jolly old game. Jed Barthue was going to pretend himself Eric Delka. Why should Eric Delka not masquerade as Jed Barthue? For the benefit of such persons as this bounder."

Delka nudged a thumb at Clink, who growled a savage retort.

"Lay off the smart stuff, Delka," ordered the crook. "You don't have to tell us any more. You couldn't tell Cardona and Marquette or maybe you'd have run into some court hearings, to settle the identity of Jed Barthue.

"You were right. You were working with them best by keeping your trap shut. But you're no use to us now, any more than they are. With Barthue dead, there's no reason for finding out how much you knew about him, like Rigger was supposed to do on board the Zouave."

"Keep these mugs covered" - Clink shot the command to his henchmen - "while I work the combination on this vault. After we've got the swag, we'll shove them in there and hand them the works."

CLINK strode to the vault. He began to turn the dials. Delka and Cardona watched him silently. The Scotland Yard inspector was puffing nervously at his cigarette; the New York detective was stolid as he stared.

It was Vic Marquette who began a protest. The secret service operative was resorting to argument that he hoped would be effective.

"Murdering us won't help Jollister," reasoned Vic. "It's only going to add a death penalty to any of you who get caught. Jollister included."

Clink laughed raucously, as he finished with the combination.

"What of it?" he sneered. "Jollister's on his way. Nobody's ever going to hear from him again. We don't have to bother about covering up; that passage will be found anyway.

"Listen, you saps. If these bozos of mine weren't around, I might spill something that would knock you silly. Something none of you have figured. Something that would make you know how dumb you've been.

"Maybe I will let you in on it" - he paused as he swung back the huge door - "after you're all stowed away, ready for the works. All right, fellows" - this was to the gang - "there's the swag. Get busy."

As crooks sprang forward, Clink turned a key in the inner grating, to open that last barrier. He stepped back beside one lone henchman who still held the prisoners covered. Clink, too, had a gun in readiness.

"When I'm ready to rub you out," he promised, "I'll give you something to think about. You won't worry over it long; that won't be any use. It'll be the last word - the last word the three of you will ever hear."

Clink stopped short. A sudden sound pervaded the strong room. It was a ghoulish chuckle, a hideous tone of mirth that came like a presagement of doom. With a fierce cry, Clink spun about, his henchman with him.

Staring at the door of the open passage, the two crooks saw a being in black. Clink had left two guards back in the garage. They had failed to stop this formidable foe who had arrived to follow crooks along their path to crime.

The Shadow had delivered a surprise attack. He had found the passage that led into the strong room. His fierce, outlandish mirth was rising to a shivering crescendo.

It was a challenge to men of crime. A proof that the last word did not belong with evil fiends who contemplated murder. The last word would be The Shadow's. Automatics would voice his argument.

CHAPTER XIX. A MASTER'S DOOM

NEVER had The Shadow chosen a more timely instant to strike against great odds. His advent here had occurred some minutes before - at the time when Eric Delka had been so boldly announcing the part that he had played.

The Shadow could have entered then; but he had chosen to wait. He had foreseen that crooks would be deliberate; Clink Huron's decision to massacre victims in the vault had been proof of The Shadow's wisdom in delayed action.

Until the vault was opened, The Shadow had hesitated. As henchmen had advanced at Clink's bidding, The Shadow had seen the moment of opportunity. Two guards - Clink and another - were all who had actual control over the three doomed prisoners.

The Shadow's laugh had been delivered for surprise as well as challenge. His purpose was to startle those two foemen; to make them swing about in his direction. His creepy intonation, ghoulish in the metal walls of the strong room, had accomplished The Shadow's desire.

Wheeling, Clink and his pal saw The Shadow on the instant. That, too, was The Shadow's design. He had stepped into light as he laughed. He wanted guns to aim in his direction. He was ready as the two crooks sprang to fruitless action.

As snarling rogues pressed fingers hard to triggers, The Shadow's automatics flashed as one. The double roar was thunderous in the square-walled room. Tongues of flame were reflected in myriad flashes from shining walls.

Two bullets found their designated targets. Point-blank, The Shadow had stabbed these thrusts at the wheeling crooks. He gave no opportunity to Clink and the other thug. The Shadow's shots were straight to the hearts of murderers.

Both rogues toppled. They sprawled like clay figures on the steel-sheathed floor. Their revolvers clashed, unfired, upon the metal. The Shadow, swinging inward, wheeled toward the opened vault. He was ready for others. As Clink and his pal rolled to the floor, three men sprang to instant action. Vic Marquette dived for Clink's bounding gun. Eric Delka sprang forward to snatch up the other free weapon. Joe Cardona, just behind the others, made a leap for the outer door. He yanked the inner fastening and shoved the barrier outward.

His move was to bring aid from above. Unarmed, he could not aid in the fray. He knew that with the door opened, the sound of battle would be heard above.

Crooks were no less responsive than the rescued prisoners. Half in, half out of the opened vault, Clink's underlings reacted to The Shadow's double-barreled outburst. Like a tribe of swarming banditti, the crooks sprang from the vault.

They knew their common foe. Fierce oaths told that they had identified The Shadow. Revolver muzzles swung for common aim. Weapons spat as the cloaked warrior made a swift move for the passage that led to the garage.

Then came a sudden feint. With an unexpected twist, The Shadow whirled toward the center of the room. Some aiming killers fired wide; others, scattering, took new aim at the elusive targets. In that one instant of their indecision, The Shadow loosed new fire.

Crooks sprawled. Others dropped savagely back to the protection of the vault. Revolvers barked;

despite The Shadow's swiftness, shots were due to stop his weaving course. But before the accurate aimers could fire, two men were piling in from the flank.

Firing like madmen. Vic Marquette and Eric Delka jabbed bullets from close range. One crook sagged groaning, unable to take advantage of the aim that he had gained. Another fired, staggering. His perfect bead was spoiled. The slug that he delivered went whistling through The Shadow's hat brim.

Two aiming crooks swung about to meet these new attackers. Vic and one rogue fired simultaneously; the crook's shot clipped the operative's shoulder and Vic rolled to the floor. But Vic's bullet, too, had found a mark. His opponent sprawled writhing at the entrance of the vault.

Delka beat his foeman to the shot. But the Scotland Yard man's aim was wide. His snarling adversary rasped a vicious oath as he aimed before Delka could deliver a second bullet. The curse died suddenly as an automatic thundered from the other end of the strong room.

Delka's foeman jounced upward; his ugly face contorted; his revolver clattered to the floor. Then the crook followed the weapon downward. Face foremost he flattened, writhed, and lay still.

The man who had clipped Marquette was trying to recover. Half up, he aimed for The Shadow's fleeting form. His gun barked uselessly. The Shadow, a parting laugh bursting from his lips, had swung through the opened panel to the passage.

THEN came a burst of shots from the outer door. Hamilton and the Feds had arrived. They clipped the rising crook and two others who still came up to offer fight. The Shadow had heard the clatter of newcomers. That was why he had so quickly swung from view.

Joe Cardona was with the Federal men as they took possession of the strong room. Behind them was Senator Ross Releston. The gray-haired statesman stared at the scene of carnage. He watched Hamilton and another prop up Vic Marquette.

"I'm all right," growled Vic. "Just a nip - that was all, boys. Good work, Delka - and you, Cardona. We plastered them, didn't we?"

"We did our part," began Delka. "But -"

He stopped as he caught a nudge from Cardona. A glance at the detective, then at Marquette, told Delka that neither wanted mention of their rescuer. For a moment Delka was perplexed; then the truth dawned on him. He had seen The Shadow aboard the Zouave. He realized that both Marquette and Cardona must have also seen the cloaked avenger in the past. Like Marquette and Cardona, Delka was one of those who owed their lives to the protection of this mighty friend.

Shrouding blackness was The Shadow's habitat. The mystery that surrounded him was part of the strength that he possessed. It was up to those who understood to play the game as The Shadow wanted it. His ways must remain unknown.

Nodding, Delka strolled away to speak with the other two Federal men. Joe Cardona followed him. The detective was pocketing his revolver. The Scotland Yard man did the same. A group of four, they approached Senator Releston.

Then another entered. Caleb Wesdren had arrived from above. Releston turned to speak to him; to tell of what had happened. Wesdren looked about; he saw Clink Huron's body. Deliberately, he strode to the entrance of the vault.

The others watched him stare at the untouched coffers. They wondered at the strangeness of his actions.

They saw Wesdren stoop to look past the opened grating; then gasps came from all as the black-haired man whirled suddenly about.

In his fist, Wesdren held a revolver. Insanely he brandished the weapon as a warning. He spat a vicious challenge as he swung it from man to man, catching all off guard.

"Fools!" shouted Wesdren. "My secrecy has failed! But not my game! Look behind you! See what awaits you!"

"Get him!" cried Marquette, from the floor.

DELKA and Cardona made a dive together. Wesdren fired; his bullet singed Delka's hip. Then the two were upon the owner of the vault room, fighting to get Wesdren's gun, battling a would-be murderer who fought with fury.

The others swung about. Two Feds brought out their guns as they pushed Senator Releston behind them; the pair by Vic Marquette came to their feet. Clatter from the stairway told that they were too late.

Wesdren's cry had been a signal for a trio on the stairs. New crooks bounded into view with leveled guns, ready to beat all comers to the opening shots. The cause looked hopeless for the men of the law.

Then flame burst from the darkened passage that had played so great a part in tonight's attack. Roaring shots were thunderous from that low-ceilinged path of darkness. The foremost entrants toppled.

The third man aimed above his falling fellows. He fired at a form that he saw coming; a black-cloaked figure that swept out to the fringe of light. An automatic flashed a split-second after the crook's wild shot. The last minion dived to the floor, but the shout that resounded was not from his lips.

This cry, amid gun echoes, came from Caleb Wesdren. Powerful in his frenzy, Wesdren had downed Cardona with a savage stroke from his revolver. With a furious twist, he had broken loose from Delka. Clear away from the vault, he was aiming point-blank for that figure at the passage entrance.

The Shadow wheeled. Even as he swung, he fired. Wesdren had gained a perfect aim; but he had not calculated on The Shadow's swiftness. That shot from motion stopped the square-jawed man.

Revealed as the master crook, Wesdren had met The Shadow. Like other masters of crime, he had lost through that encounter. As Delka covered Wesdren's rigid form; as secret service men swung about to do the same, the square-jawed plotter sagged. Gun hand lowered. Wesdren sighed as he twisted to the floor.

A solemn laugh came startling from the stillness. Its tones resounded, rising; then broke into sardonic mirth. It was mockery of the efforts made by men of crime - The Shadow's final verdict of the doom that he had proclaimed.

Men turned about to stare in bewilderment. Delivered from doom, they looked for that rescuer who had lingered to meet the aftermath of first invasion. But The Shadow was gone - out through the passage by which he had arrived.

Dying echoes faded as a token of The Shadow's departure. But the weird notes of that laughter still rang in the ears of those who had been saved from death. Weird, outlandish in its tone of victory, that mirth could not be forgotten. Listeners had heard the triumphant laugh of The Shadow.

It meant deliverance to all but one. That lone hearer was Caleb Wesdren, coughing out his last breath on the burnished floor. A venomous gasp hissed from Wesdren's lips: then the super-plotter breathed no

longer.

An author of murder, a master of deep-plotted crime, Caleb Wesdren had gone to a deserved end, doomed by The Shadow's might.

CHAPTER XX. FACTS OF THE PAST

ONE hour had passed since The Shadow's triumph over the hordes of Caleb Wesdren. In the office above the strong room, Senator Releston was seated behind the huge desk. Vic Marquette, shoulder heavily bandaged, was propped in an easy-chair. They were awaiting someone.

A sound from the front of the house. A few moments later, Hamilton entered and nodded to the senator.

"They're here with Jollister," said Hamilton.

Arriving footsteps. Jollister stalked into the office, accompanied by Eric Delka and Joe Cardona. The vault expert delivered a smile as he accepted Releston's extended hand.

"Tell us about it, Jollister," urged the senator.

"There's not much to tell," returned Jollister, as he seated himself. "But what there is, will prove most astounding. You know, it was purely my own way of doing things that caused me to leave here without speaking again to Wesdren. I had no idea -"

"Wesdren's endeavor," interposed Releston, "was to frame you, Jollister. Even if you had been eavesdropping you would not be culpable."

"But I was not eavesdropping, assured Jollister. "It was purely chance that brought me to the door just as Wesdren opened it."

Joe Cardona smiled grimly. He said nothing. He knew the reason for the turning knob that he had seen while in conference with Wesdren. The Shadow had been beyond that door; he had closed it because of Jollister's approach.

"I went to my apartment," declared Jollister. "I called for a taxicab to take me to the Union Depot. While I was peering from the window, I saw the door open in the reflection. I turned about to face a strange person clad in black."

"Instinctively. I sprang against the intruder. I remembered a short struggle in which I was overpowered. When next I gained recollection, I was in a hotel room, lying in an easy-chair. Another man was present."

"He did not tell me his identity; but I knew he was not the fighter who had invaded my apartment. But he explained exactly what had happened. That black-clad stranger had come to my apartment to warn me against danger. I, like a fool, had battled him."

"Two crooks had been deputed to seize me and carry me away in a high-powered motorcar. So the only course my rescuer had was to overpower me. So the young chap said, and I believed him. Then he told me where I was."

"In my room at the Skyview Plaza," laughed Delka.

"Yes," nodded Jollister, "and I was to stay there. A telephone call came in eventually; the man there with

me answered it and told me to call here. Then he went out while I was making the call."

"And you talked with me," completed Releston. "I told you to wait for Delka and Cardona."

"Which I did," asserted Jollister. "And I can assure you, senator, that I had no knowledge of Wesdren's evil doings. I knew nothing about the concrete and the steel panels in the strong room. I merely saw the plans and approved them. Wesdren himself ordered the installation."

"That fact," declared Releston, solemnly, "would never have been recognized if Wesdren had triumphed." He looked about at the others. "All the crooked business would have been laid to Jollister."

"He'd have been the fall guy, all right," commented Joe Cardona. "It would have left Wesdren sitting pretty. Working everything through Clink. None of the outfit knew who was in back of it."

"Absolutely none," assured Releston. "Hamilton has quizzed those ruffians whom we found bound and gagged in the garage. They mentioned Clink Huron as their header. No one else. Incidentally, that secret door that covered the garage stairway would have been difficult to uncover if it had not been opened."

"Another piece of workmanship," snorted Vic Marquette, "that would have been laid to you, Jollister."

The telephone began to ring. The senator answered it; his eyebrows lifted in surprise. Then he hung up.

"THE police have just located a large touring car," he informed. "They received a mysterious call telling them to look in a parking lot on M Street. Two men were in the car. One has been identified as a crook called Cooler Caplan. He is dead.

"The other identity will interest you. The second man was alive, but bound and gagged. He and his companion were doubtless the ones deputed to seize Jollister. And the man who is alive is none other than Parker Cady."

Exclamations of elation from Cardona and Delka. Vic Marquette chuckled from his chair. Cady might be small-fry; but he was wanted. This capture was excellent news.

"And here, Delka," remarked Senator Releston, "is something which I found in Wesdren's desk. It appears to be the cipher to a code. Examine it if you wish."

Releston unfolded a sheet of paper and placed it on the desk. Delka approached and studied the chart. It read:

8 12 7 2 4 6 1 11 3 10 5 9 13

A B C D E F G H I J K L M

N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

20 22 17 21 24 26 18 16 23 25 15 19 14

The Scotland Yard man drew two sheets of paper from his pocket. They were the messages that he had received through Cady. Delka compared them with the chart. He began to nod; then looked puzzled. The others watched him for a few minutes; then saw him pound the desk.

"I've fathomed it!" exclaimed Delka. "Jove! It is perplexing, even when one has the cipher, yet absurd in its simplicity. Look, senator. Observe those numbers above and below the letters."

"Eight stands for, A," remarked Releston, "and twenty must signify N."

"Not exactly," corrected Delka. "Eight means either A or N; and twenty likewise."

"Then how can you tell A from N?"

"By the number which follows it. Look. If I wish to write A, I put down the number twenty. Now I must modify that, to aid the reader - and, incidentally, to confuse the expert. So I put five after twenty."

"Why five, Delka?"

"Because it is below thirteen. I could use six, seven, ten - it does not matter. Any number below thirteen means that twenty stands for A - not for N."

"And if you chose to write N. You could use either eight or twenty?"

"For the letter, yes. But after it I should have to place a number above fourteen, to signify that my first symbol was N, and not A."

Delka spread out the first message. He took a sheet of paper and began to decipher.

"TEN could be J or W. The number that follows it, twenty-one, gives us W. Eight, with a three following. That is A in preference to N. One means G or T; twenty-two after it proves that it is T. Seventeen - C or P - is proven as C, because of the modifying number, five. Last of all we have eleven, followed by six. H - not U. The word is W-A-T-C-H."

"Go on," suggested Releston.

Delka put down S; then Q. He looked puzzled; snapped his fingers.

"I see something else," he stated. "A space was needed after the word Watch. To indicate the space, the writer merely used a repetition of a figure. For H, you see, he used eleven, followed by six. So he used another six to signify the end of a word."

"So I begin again with twenty-two, followed by twenty-one. That is the letter O. Here comes U; then T. O-U-T. Two twenty-fives together - the latter is a spacer. The next word is F-O-R. Then comes" - he chuckled - "this is amusing - my name: Delka. Wait, I shall decode the entire message."

Delka worked swiftly as he consulted the chart. He finished his task and tossed the paper to the senator. Releston read:

WATCH OUT FOR DELKA HE MAY HAVE ESCAPED FROM THE ZOUAVE GIVE

REPLY TO BELL BOY STATING ALL PLANS

Delka was working on the second message. He decoded it. This one stated:

WE MUST MEET TONIGHT IF POSSIBLE COME TO WESDREN GARAGE AND

USE INNER STEPS

"The whole case was in my grasp!" exclaimed Delka. "Wesdren thought surely I was Barthue. He had the steps open, waiting for me. He must have been in the strong room."

"Ready to make plans when you showed up," declared Marquette, to whom Releston had passed the message. "But you didn't arrive. You were out with me, Delka."

"And when Wesdren got tired waiting," added Cardona, who was standing beside Vic, "he closed up shop and began to be suspicious about you being Jed Barthue."

"That stuff I wrote gave him final proof," said Delka. "I merely jotted down numbers at random, to make Cady think I was preparing an answer. I knew Marquette was coming to the hotel. So I stalled along."

"And Cady dug the rignarole from the wastebasket," added Marquette. "Well, Delka, that was one bluff that proved a boomerang."

"I fancied myself a code expert," said Delka. "This one, however, stumped me. You know, now that I know all about it, I see where I should have begun. The writer showed a bit of carelessness in each note."

"Here, in the first message, he used the number four as a modifier: then as a space; then to begin the first letter of the next word. In the second message, he made the same error with the number three."

"Good starting points, those. They showed that this was no ordinary code. You know, I was spending all my spare time trying to decipher these messages. But I failed. Actually, I don't believe that any one -"

DELKA paused. His lips pressed firmly. He looked toward Vic Marquette; the wounded operative was smiling. Joe Cardona was also wise in his expression; and Delka detected a smile on the lips of Senator Releston. Only Jollister was not in the know.

Delka knew the answer. The Shadow had found these messages and had copied them. Furthermore, The Shadow had solved them. The whole sequence was plain. From the information in the second message, The Shadow had paid a secret visit to Wesdren's old, unoccupied garage. There he had found the door left open for Delka, as Jed Barthue.

The Shadow had not entered then; but he had used that passage afterward. He had been here in this house. Watching its occupants and its visitors, he had sized the situation; he had ferreted into the schemes of Caleb Wesdren.

Moreover, The Shadow had learned something else of consequence. Like Wesdren, he suspected it; and he had gained the proof from those same crumpled papers in Delka's wastebasket. The Shadow had known that Jarvis Knight was actually Eric Delka; not Jed Barthue.

Silence prevailed in the room which had once served a master of crime. Men were thinking of Caleb Wesdren's downfall; how he, the protector of government secrets, had plotted to deliver them abroad, to reap millions while another took the blame.

But thoughts did not stop with contemplation of the crook who had died within his steel-walled strong room. To rescued men came recollection of that formidable being who had spelled the plotters doom.

Schemes had been met with strategy. Rogues had been checked at every point. The secret of their coded messages had been solved. When battle came, men of evil had been thwarted despite their strength of numbers.

Such was the prowess of The Shadow.

THE END