THE ROBOT MASTER

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CHAPTER I. TERROR STALKS

THE old man who stopped by the newsstand looked feeble, kindly and poverty-stricken. His hand trembled as it came from his pocket; he smiled when he found he had a few pennies. Finally, he hesitated when he bought a newspaper, as though trying to choose the one that would give him the most value for his coppers.

Appearances were deceiving in the case of Professor Adoniram Durand.

He wasn't feeble. He was tired from a long day's work and out of breath from his hurried climb up the stairs from the subway.

Nor was the professor kindly. His smile was a mask that he used whenever his shrewd brain was at work on clever schemes that he preferred to keep to himself.

As for being penniless, Professor Durand was - in a sense. He was spending his last change on a newspaper. But in the pocket that bulged from inside Durand's overcoat, was a wallet stuffed with more than a thousand dollars in currency.

A queer old chap, Professor Durand; and he was in keeping with this neighborhood, one of the ugliest and gloomiest sections of Manhattan. People who came from subway stations in this neighborhood usually looked around to make sure that no "muggers" were in the vicinity. Often they waited until they saw a policeman going their direction, then requested the cop's services as a convoy.

But Professor Durand seemed to rely upon his shabby appearance to see him on a route to safety. He wasn't worried about anything except buying the right newspaper

What Durand bought was a five-star final which he began to spread rapidly, scanning its pages by the trickly light of the newsstand. Along about Page 40, he came across a picture of himself, a small one, which was recognizable only by the name beneath it, for the photograph was about twenty years old.

Under the picture was a modest headline:

ROBOT TEST GRANTED

Durand's breath wheezed with a satisfied hiss. Hearing it, the news dealer thought it was a noise from the subway. Durand's face wasn't visible behind the outspread newspaper, which was fortunate. For the masking smile was gone; the professor's lips carried a gloat that matched the expression of the pin-point eyes that shone from his sharp, gray-hued face.

There was more to the story, though Durand didn't bother to read it closely, for he knew exactly what it was. For months, the National Production Board had been waiting for the professor to demonstrate a machine of his invention, which he termed a "humanized mechanism." The delay had been partly the fault of the N.P.B., and partly Durand's own.

Today, the N.P.B. had announced competition. A manufacturer named Rodney Moyne was going into the robot business, claiming that he could not only match Durand's invention, but could outproduce the old professor. So Durand had phoned the board demanding an immediate test of his newly completed robot.

The item in the newspaper was the answer. The request was granted; the test would be held tomorrow. That fact made Durand more eager than ever to complete certain business that he had scheduled for this evening. It was on that account that he had put on his oldest clothes, left his New Jersey residence and come to this disreputable portion of Manhattan.

Tucking the newspaper under his arm, Durand thrust his hands in his coat pockets and stalked across the street. His step was spry. In one pocket his hand was toying with a small box that gave little clicks as he thumbed a button. Durand's eyes were sharp, quick in their glance, but they finally centered on a truck that was swinging into the next block and slowing to a stop.

What Durand should have noticed, but didn't, were the figures of skulkers in doorways down the avenue. As soon as the professor passed the corner of the side street, those hunched forms shifted. Turning another corner, they took a direction of their own, but it was along a line parallel to Durand's.

FARTHER up the avenue, the dim lights of a parked taxicab came to life. Within the thick gloom of the cab's interior, a whispered voice spoke from what was seemingly shapeless void. The cab eased into gear and swerved a corner, its driver acting in response to the weird command.

The dimmed light of a passing street lamp showed a human outline so vague that not one eye in a thousand pairs could have detected it. The passenger in the cab was part of the gloom because he was cloaked in black. His face was obscured by the brim of a slouch hat that matched the cloak's jet hue.

That passenger was The Shadow.

Strange personage whose unseen hand could shape the destiny of others, The Shadow was like a presiding power over the affairs of Professor Adoniram Durand!

The Shadow made it his business to check on all inventors whose creations might prove useful in combating crime, or which might, conversely, be of value to criminals should they acquire such devices. Durand's invention fell into that double classification.

Several days ago, The Shadow had paid a secret visit to Durand's New Jersey home, and from there had trailed the elderly professor to this subway station in Manhattan. Just why Durand should come to this area was still a question, but it doubtless had to do with his invention.

Tonight, with the success of the invention at stake, The Shadow had played a hunch that Durand would venture here again. The subway trip was safe enough, but from then on, the professor's journey could prove hazardous. So The Shadow was literally picking up the trail from the point where he had dropped it on the earlier occasion.

Circling half a dozen blocks in less time than it took the professor to walk one, the cab enabled The Shadow to scout the neighborhood in expert style. He glimpsed those skulkers who had been watching for Durand, saw them slide into an alleyway as the cab went by.

They had the way of "muggers," those thuggish prowlers who infest bad neighborhoods in squads, to rob and sometimes kill. But they weren't behaving true to mugger form in choosing a man like Durand for their quarry. The Shadow, too, had studied Professor Durand and classed his shabbiness as flawless.

These muggers, to term them such, were on the lookout for Durand. Otherwise, they wouldn't have guessed his route beforehand. For when the cab rounded the block, The Shadow saw Durand spryly pacing this direction, weaving a course for the danger that lay ahead!

Speed was one of The Shadow's greatest assets, and he had trained his cabby, Moe Shrevnitz, to an instantaneous response. One whispered word, and the cab had swung again into a darkened street. A mere pause by the curb, and a door was open and shut again, all in the blink of an eye.

Yet in that interval, The Shadow was out of the cab and merged with the surrounding darkness, while the cab was slithering along its way as though it had not slackened pace at all.

There was a swish as The Shadow turned about to glide back toward the corner that Durand had almost reached. Then, as if sensing a change in things, the cloaked figure drew back against the house wall and waited.

Immediately, Durand came from around the corner. The Shadow's conjecture was correct. Durand wasn't going straight ahead; he was turning into this block, the slight change in his footfalls being an index to the fact.

Stealthily, The Shadow glided ahead. His hand struck space which he knew must be the entrance of a narrow alleyway, perhaps connected with the one in the next street where the muggers had performed their slink. With a quick twist into that darkness, The Shadow paused and listened.

There were no sounds from deep in the passage. No matter how well they knew this neighborhood, those skulkers couldn't be coming through without some noise, unless they were using flashlights which, even if well guarded, could be spotted by The Shadow. So the simple system was to wait and let Durand go past.

Once The Shadow was behind the professor, stalking him like a shaft of night itself, no thugs would have a chance at ugly work. One of The Shadow's specialties was that of flinging himself from nowhere upon thugs who tried to pounce upon an unsuspecting prey.

Professor Durand was fortunate in having a powerful guardian tonight. More fortunate than even The Shadow knew!

That paradox was soon to be proven.

FOOTSTEPS arrived with falls that were light but sharp. They were Durand's, and with them the professor went bobbing by the outlet of the alley, almost within arm's reach of The Shadow. Durand was humming a little tune, with just a slight lift in its melody. It became a monotone when he had gone by, and The Shadow was gauging by it, along with the footfalls, to pick the right moment to follow.

At the same time, The Shadow hadn't forgotten the alley's depth. His attention was somewhat strained in that direction. Hence it wasn't surprising that he did not hear another sound approach until it had almost arrived.

It was following Durand's footsteps at the speed of the professor's own pace. It came with heavy precision, a tramp that carried a muffled clang.

Clump - clump - clump -

The third step was at the very corner of the alley, and with it The Shadow detected a metallic whir. Already moving outward, The Shadow swished sideways as another clump thudded hard upon the sidewalk. Cement seemed to crackle under that pound, and with good reason.

Against the dim light of the street, a monstrous figure loomed above The Shadow. Fully eight feet high, the thing was something more than human, though it had the rough shape of a squatly man. What proved it to be mechanical was its glisten - that of steel.

The professor's robot!

Durand's own footsteps had halted. Knifing through the robot's clatter came a cackled laugh, telling that the owner of this mechanical monstrosity had purposely dispatched the metallic creature into the alley where The Shadow waited!

The automatic that The Shadow whipped from beneath his cloak seemed puny, indeed, compared to the steel bulk that towered over him. Fortunately, he realized how useless bullets would be against so formidable a foe. Even as he drew the gun, The Shadow wheeled away, and he was none too soon.

The robot's stride, its reach, its very bulk, were geared beyond anything that The Shadow supposed.

Huge feet the size of snowshoes clumped forward at the ends of stout plunger-legs that had the girth of stovepipes. They covered five feet at a stride; and the massive metal arms, that made a circular thrust, covered an equal range.

Attached to those arms were great steel hands that could have pressed a telephone book between their metal palms, and the fingers that ripped The Shadow's cloak were sharper, stouter than the prongs of ice tongs. The thing's body was boiler-shaped, like the head that topped it, and the breadth of that body, plus the sweep of the circling arms, filled the alley entrance, making escape impossible.

Narrowly eluding the grotesque creature's clutch, The Shadow sprang deep into the alley. His course was suddenly barred by a door set in a high arch. Grabbing the door, The Shadow pulled it open and

dived through, as the great piston-arms swung the mighty steel hand at his back.

They were slapping in at different levels, those hands. One missed because it was too high. What slackened the other was the door, for the robot's metal claws encountered it.

But this thing of Durand's invention was geared to handle obstacles. As one hand ripped the door from its hinges, the other came in and grasped the other side. Stumping through the arch, the metal giant flung the door straight forward like a missile made of straw.

The Shadow was twisting toward the side of a narrow courtyard as the barrier flew by. He saw the door land and bounce upon a pile of metal pipes lying in front of a brick wall that was about the robot's height. The steel Goliath was swinging its arms with wider range as it reached the little court. To dodge it would be impossible!

Instead, The Shadow made a swift spin deep into the court. The door was lying lengthwise across the pile of pipes, its far end propped against the brick wall. By using the door as a runway, The Shadow could clear the wall in the few seconds that would still be his before the robot's flaying arms arrived.

The laugh that The Shadow gave was not intended for the robot. He wanted the taunt to be heard by Professor Durand, creator of the mechanical contraption. Fierce, strident, the tone filled the courtyard like a challenge to all-comers.

It brought results, that mirth. From atop the wall came the glare of flashlights, burning downward; in their glow, the faces of the men who owned them.

The lurkers who were waiting for Professor Durand!

Coming through this blind alley from the other side, men of crime, armed with knives and guns, had found their archenemy, The Shadow, already in a dilemma which promised his absolute doom!

CHAPTER II. THE DOUBLE TRAP

IF ever The Shadow calculated in terms of split seconds, this was the time. He was between two threats, with nothing in the way of choice. To battle Durand's robot would mean certain death, considering the cramped size of the courtyard.

Whereas an effort to scale the wall, was merely to give human killers a chance to compete with one another. There were three thugs at the top. One thug with a gun was flanked by a pair with knives. One weapon, at least, would drive home before The Shadow could take care of the trio.

The Shadow might have tried the surge, despite the odds, if only to put a fighting finish to his career. But in that instant a thought flashed home. The robot, being mechanical, could not be aware of the human threat that also loomed upon The Shadow.

Were those killers on the wall aware of the robot?

Even as the query swept him, The Shadow acted. Halfway up the leaning door, he dropped back, as if to escape the glare of the revealing flashlights. There was a hard clang from the middle of the tiny court as the robot clumped straight toward its prey, The Shadow. One more thump and the clutch would come!

If the thugs on the wall recognized the menace of that steel clash, if they sprayed their flashlights past the lower end of the tilted door - where The Shadow was halting his sudden recoil - all would be lost. But the killers did neither.

They thought only that The Shadow was diving away from them; that he must have stumbled into something that produced the clangor. The two who gripped knives weren't going to give their gunner pal any priority on the question of settling The Shadow. In his turn, the man with the gun preferred to use it at close range.

As a result, the three sprang down from the wall the moment that The Shadow wheeled from the flashlight beams. Their triple weight hit the high end of the door and turned it into a springboard. The pile of pipes served as the fulcrum that sent the near end flying upward, with The Shadow on it!

Catapulted by the improvised teeter, The Shadow zoomed right between the sweeping arms of the gigantic robot. This time, the hooking hands didn't even skim The Shadow's cloak. Like the star performer of an acrobatic troupe, The Shadow was scaling the wall, over the heads of the foemen whose springboard jump pitched him to that realm of safety.

So fast did The Shadow go, that a pair of flying knives found the space where he had been. Those blades glanced from the turret body of the robot, while the slugs from a barking revolver flattened themselves upon the same impregnable target. Amid that brief interlude, the steel monster did not miss a stride.

The robot's next clump brought it against the raised end of the door, which telescoped into kindling. Those great arms took three figures in their next huge sweep and bashed them into one mangled mass that gave a unified shriek.

Sprawled beyond the wall, amid a pile of boxes that the thugs had used for a ladder, The Shadow heard the combined cry go as dead as the men who uttered it. Then, before he could reach his feet, The Shadow was met by a spray of bricks as the robot hit the wall and crunched it.

Flattening backward on his elbows, the cloaked fighter saw the robot tower through the gap and stop short. There was a muffled whir and the metal monster did an about turn. From its spreading hands fell lifeless bodies that were buried promptly by an avalanche of bricks, caving into the space that the robot left.

The steel destroyer was returning to the street, to resume its duty as mechanical bodyguard to its master and inventor, Professor Adoniram Durand.

UNSTEADILY, The Shadow arose. His flying trip across the wall had jarred him, and the flay of brickbats wasn't a pleasant aftermath. In fact, The Shadow had lost his sense of direction, for he blundered into the sides of the new alley where he found himself. He finally decided to choose the easiest route out which was toward the street from which the muggers had come.

Windows were popping open; people were calling back and forth when The Shadow reached the street. But no one saw the cloaked shape that reeled along in darkness.

Moe's cab wasn't anywhere around, because The Shadow had dispatched it to another destination. He had a general idea where Professor Durand was going, though he didn't know the exact address. So The Shadow picked his course on foot, almost oblivious to the faint whine of police sirens that were converging back toward the area that Durand and the robot had already left.

All the while, The Shadow's mode of progress was becoming more like his accustomed glide. The same instinct that guided his footsteps was pulling him out of his dazed state. Steadying himself at corners, he kept looking for Durand and the robot, without success, until from a neighboring block he heard a faint clump-clump.

Immediately, The Shadow was on the trail of the metal terror that had so nearly conquered him. Oddly,

the sound became elusive as The Shadow approached it, until it was gone entirely. Coming to a corner, The Shadow looked one direction and saw a parked truck, its lights out. Turning at a right angle, he spied a stooped figure entering a doorway halfway along another block.

The stooped man was Professor Durand. Steadying, The Shadow headed for the door in question, keeping a sharp lookout.

Reaching the door that Durand had entered, The Shadow found that it was unlocked. Unless the robot happened to be telescopic, it couldn't have preceded Durand indoors; therefore, The Shadow decided that any lurking trouble would be provided by the professor himself. The Shadow drew an automatic as he entered the door.

THE place looked innocent enough. It was just an old house, poorly furnished and apparently very sparsely occupied. What The Shadow entered was a dimly lighted hall, that boasted only a hat rack and a chair. There were doors alongside the hall, adorned with cobwebs, proving that they hadn't been opened in weeks or months.

Obviously, no one was living on the ground floor. As further proof, The Shadow noted that the dim light came from the top of the stairs. There were creaks on the floor above, indicating that Durand had gone there without his robot, which probably would have crunched right through the stairway if its master had sent it on ahead of him.

The Shadow wasn't as swift as usual in climbing the stairs, but his ascent was silent. Moreover, he was in time to spy Durand, because the professor was detained by a locked door at which he had stopped to rap.

The door was just opening when The Shadow arrived at the stair-top, and his old speed returned while Durand was entering and shutting the door. Just as the door closed, The Shadow reached its corner and gave his cloak a sweep. The hem of the black garment flicked into the door edge and tangled with the closing latch.

Half a minute later The Shadow was inching the door open, thanks to the bunched cloth that retarded the latch. Durand and another man were seated in a little room furnished like an old-fashioned parlor.

The other man was a bit younger than Durand, but his face was haggard. Whether his pallor was due to illness or merely nerves, was difficult to tell. Even Durand, who apparently knew the man quite well, was having trouble in analyzing his state.

Durand was saying, "Tell me, Talman, how soon will you be able to return to work?"

Talman spoke in a wheezy tone. "I don't know," he said. "You see... the doctor -"

"You told me all about the doctor," interrupted Durand. "I was here only a few days ago. Remember?"

Talman's nod showed that he remembered; but his manner was more nervous than before, something which Durand did not fail to notice.

"You seemed very worried then, Talman. So worried that I thought you might be getting delirious. You know, in a delirium, a man sometimes repeats things he shouldn't - such as giving the details of somebody else's invention!"

Talman licked his dry lips. He forgot his wheeze as he exclaimed:

"No, no, professor! I wouldn't -"

"Of course you wouldn't," soothed Durand. He reached over and clapped his hand on Talman's shoulder. "Why, I've trusted you for years, Tim. That's why I brought you a little bonus."

Laying his newspaper aside, Durand brought the wallet from his inside pocket and began to count the money slowly. Talman was staring with an avaricious glint in his watery eyes, when Durand remarked:

"Tell me when it's enough, Tim."

"Enough?"

"Yes. In proper proportion to the amount that Rodney Moyne paid you."

Frantically, Talman pushed Durand's money aside. Coming to his feet, Talman remembered his wheeze as he started to pace across the room, protesting all the while that he'd never seen or even heard of Rodney Moyne. At the finish, Durand shook his head.

"You've heard of Moyne," said Durand. "He was one of the men that I sent Zarratt to see. Moyne said he'd finance my invention, but only on his own terms. So Zarratt and I crossed him off the list."

"But I wasn't there -"

"Yes, you were, Tim," interposed Durand. "If you don't believe me, I'll phone Niles Zarratt -"

Talman stammered that it wouldn't be necessary to call Zarratt. He'd just recalled the incident in question. In the same breath, Talman wheezed that he was still loyal to Durand. Apparently convinced, Durand put away his money, smiled, and thrust his hands into his overcoat pockets.

Talman misunderstood the motion. Madly, he sprang to a desk, yanked open the drawer and pulled out a gun.

Durand pounced over, twisted the fellow's wrist and wrenched the weapon away. With one hand, Durand shoved Talman to a chair; at the same time, Durand's other fist tightened on the gun.

By then, The Shadow's own gun was drawn. If the professor intended to kill Talman, The Shadow was prepared to prevent the deed, whether Durand was justified or not. But Durand promptly relaxed and tossed the gun into a chair. So The Shadow relaxed, too, by cloaking his automatic.

Durand could afford to ease; not so The Shadow.

Hardly was The Shadow's gun away before the pressure of a muzzle poked beneath his elbow. The Shadow turned, almost expecting to see the robot monster looming beside him, a gun in its metal fist.

What The Shadow viewed was anything but monstrous.

On the other end of the revolver was a girl, whose determined expression detracted nothing from her charm. Her eyes, however, had a glint as steely as the gun; her tone was low, but sharp, as she ordered The Shadow to step back from the door.

Professor Adoniram Durand was having more than his share of protection this evening. He had begun with The Shadow as a guardian, switched to a mammoth robot, and had finally wound up under the escort of a blonde!

CHAPTER III. MURDERER'S FLIGHT

THE SHADOW did not have to ask the girl who she was. He knew that professor Durand had a

daughter named Sheila, and the blonde could be none but she. The girl's eyes were narrowed in the fashion of Durand's, and they were merely an index to the family relationship.

Sheila's features had the aristocratic mold that characterized her father - the same high nose and firm lips. But whereas age and long experience had given Durand's visage the semblance of a mask, the girl's face was fresh and natural. The Shadow observed something else.

In back of Sheila was another stairway, leading up and beyond a solid wall. Very obviously the girl had been waiting in that unnoticed nook until her father arrived. Therefore, it was unlikely that she knew anything about Durand's adventures on the way here.

The Shadow resolved to gamble on that factor.

Voices were rising beyond the door. Durand was denouncing Talman as a thief and a traitor.

In return, Talman's voice was reaching a frantic scream, high-pitched with denials. So earnest were both Durand and Talman, that neither guessed what was happening outside the door.

There, Sheila's eyes were probing for some sight of The Shadow's features, hidden beneath the brim of his slouch hat. All that the girl could see was the upturned collar of The Shadow's cloak, hiding the portion of his face that the hat brim did not shield.

One of The Shadow's raised hands made a gesture toward the door. Timed to another of Talman's denying shrieks, The Shadow spoke in a whispered tone:

"You can hear for yourself, Miss Durand. Talman is threatening your father. I came here to protect Professor Durand. Thus you are making a great mistake."

The girl hesitated, which proved that she knew nothing about Durand's use of the robot as a convoy. Indeed, Sheila would have taken The Shadow at his word, but for a change in Talman's tone. The accused man was weakening, pleading with Durand to listen, promising that he would tell the whole truth. Above Talman's voice came Durand's, firm and masterful, saying he would listen.

Sheila spoke. Her words were as accusing as her father's, and were directed to The Shadow.

"My father needs no protection," the girl asserted. "He has nothing to fear from a weakling like Talman. You can hear for yourself."

"You can see for yourself," spoke The Shadow. "Eyes can learn more than ears. Look into the room and you will view the real menace that threatens your father!"

Sheila's eyes gave a quick dart toward the door.

"Beyond Talman you will see an inner door," continued The Shadow. "It leads to another room. From that door, a revolver is covering Professor Durand, ready to fire the moment that Talman breaks down!"

Sheer bluff, The Shadow's statement. He had noticed the door he mentioned, but it was tightly closed. Nevertheless, his ruse was a good one. Knowing that Sheila's concern for her father was great, The Shadow was supplying the perfect diversion. Should the girl forget The Shadow, if only briefly, he would be able to seize her gun before she used it.

Sheila caught herself in time. About to turn to the door, she shifted, so that she could look across The Shadow's shoulder, past his raised arm, at the same time keeping him covered. She didn't realize that she'd be putting her gaze out of focus thus giving The Shadow part of the opportunity he wanted.

Not enough for The Shadow to grab the gun as he wanted, but sufficient for him to knock it aside. Unwillingly, The Shadow was forced to switch his own plan, that of handling Sheila silently, to that of ridding himself from his present predicament at cost of breaking up the conference between Durand and Talman.

To The Shadow it was a foregone conclusion that Durand and Talman would forget their argument if they heard Sheila's gun start shooting in the hallway. Still, it was the only way, so The Shadow inched his elbow downward, intending to knock the muzzle away from his body.

BEFORE The Shadow could deliver the elbow jog, Sheila rendered the move unnecessary. With a sharp gasp that widened her eyes along with her lips, the girl whipped the revolver clear of The Shadow and thrust the weapon toward the opening at the door edge. Her eyes reflected the same horror that her gasp proclaimed.

The girl was totally forgetting The Shadow; so totally that it was plain she must believe the things he had stated. His back toward the door, The Shadow couldn't see what Sheila saw, but he needed nothing more than his present view of the girl's face.

In a trice, The Shadow took over.

With one arm, he hooked Sheila's passing gun hand and jarred it upward so sharply that the revolver left the girl's grasp. Catching the barrel of the flying weapon, The Shadow didn't waste time juggling it. Instead, he simply flipped it over the banister of the lower stairway, and with the same sweep sped his hand beneath his cloak to draw an automatic.

Spinning about, The Shadow used his other hand to propel Sheila the other direction. Landing back on her elbows, the astonished girl found herself a dozen feet from the doorway, through which The Shadow was already driving, pushing the door ahead of him with a shove of his automatic.

With the very start of that surge, The Shadow saw the proof he expected. The bluff that he had given Sheila was fact. From the door of the inner room, at an angle behind Talman, a revolver muzzle was projecting, trained directly upon Durand!

There was plenty of clatter to The Shadow's entry, and with good reason. He wanted to do more than startle Durand and Talman. His purpose was to attract the attention of that unseen marksman beyond the far door.

The Shadow succeeded.

Sight of The Shadow, fully caparisoned in black and brandishing a huge automatic, was quite enough for the prospective murderer who lurked in Talman's inner room. The aiming gun swung from Durand and centered on The Shadow, all in a twinkling.

But the gun muzzle didn't twinkle.

It blasted with a fiery cough meant for The Shadow, a spurt of deadly flame that would have delivered a knifing bullet into any ordinary fighter unwary enough to dare the hidden killer's aim. Had it stabbed twice, it might have clipped The Shadow; but once was not enough.

The Shadow wasn't trying to jump the distant gun. His surge was turning into a low, long dive, the moment he was through the doorway. The hidden assassin didn't realize that The Shadow's sprawl was a split second ahead of the gun shot. Thinking that he had winged The Shadow, the unknown swung his revolver back toward Durand.

The Shadow was a jump ahead.

Durand was rising from his chair, making himself a perfect target for the aiming assassin, when The Shadow arrived with a lashing roll along the floor and whipped the chair from under the old professor.

Durand was taking an involuntary dive as the assassin's gun tongued for the second time. Again a bullet whistled through space, less than a foot behind Durand's shoulders and about the same distance above The Shadow's head.

His own gun as yet unfired, The Shadow was scoring over the unknown man who had twice tried murder without success. Finishing his roll, The Shadow was coming up to aim. Once the initiative was in his own hands, he could settle scores with the man beyond the door.

THE odds had shifted to The Shadow's favor. The only thing that could thwart him was an intervening factor. Such came, in a most unexpected form - that of the one man who seemed definitely out of things: Tim Talman!

Earlier, Talman had shown a sporadic outburst, largely in self-protection. Whatever his various faults, Talman wasn't inclined toward murder; otherwise he would have used his gun against Durand when he had the chance. That gun was now lying in a chair or, at least, it had been when The Shadow surged in from the hall.

At present, Talman was regaining it.

Probably Tim Talman knew the identity of the assassin beyond the inner door. Possibly Talman's loyalty had shifted back to Professor Durand. Most certainly Talman wasn't going to see murder done here on his own premises. His gun in hand, Talman was lunging for the door, blocking off The Shadow's aim.

As he went, Talman shrieked an incoherent challenge that was promptly answered. Three gunshots came in quick succession, and they weren't from Talman's revolver. With the echoes of those rapid reports, Talman collapsed, his gun dropping from his grasp, unfired.

Smoke was curling from the crack of the inner door in a curious, short-clipped weave. The door had been slammed hard upon those close-range shots. The man beyond that door was no longer a failure as an assassin. He was a killer in reality; his victim was Tim Talman!

In thoroughly riddling Talman, the murderer had disclosed his last resort. He could have afforded to let Durand die by degrees; not so with Talman. There were things that Talman could have told, even in a dying breath, and the murderer wasn't giving him the chance. His heart pummeled with bullets, Talman was dead as he struck the floor.

Reaching the slammed door, The Shadow tried to open it. The door wouldn't give. With all his haste, the murderer had been smart enough to throw the bolt. From beyond the door, The Shadow could hear the slash of a rising window and knew that the killer intended to drop to the ground outside. From the position of the inner room, the drop would land the killer in a short, blind passage beside the house, that would give him access only to the front street.

Evidently, Professor Durand had already foreseen that fact. The professor was scooping up Talman's discarded gun and starting for the hallway.

Turning about, The Shadow overtook Durand and brushed him aside. Out through the hallway, the cloaked fighter reached the stairway almost before the astonished professor realized that his black-clad protector had passed him.

Always, The Shadow was swift when on a murderer's trail. But this time someone was ahead of him. Sheila was dashing down the stairs when The Shadow reached them, likewise intent upon stopping the killer's flight.

But the girl took a detour when she reached the bottom. She had to look about in the lower hall to find the revolver that The Shadow had tossed across the banister.

THAT was why The Shadow was first to reach the front door in time to witness what occurred there. A young man, wearing a light-gray hat and overcoat, had paused outside the house and was staring upward with an expression that combined perplexity with alarm.

Apparently this stranger had been looking for a house number when he heard the shots from within. Whatever his quandary, it was settled almost upon the moment that The Shadow spied him. Out from the passage beside the house surged the killer who had dropped from the window of Talman's bedroom.

He was a stoopish man, but haste could have accounted for his pose. He was wearing a dark hat and overcoat, well suited to this doubtful neighborhood. His back was toward The Shadow, but in his hand the killer brandished the death gun that had done away with Talman.

If the killer had stayed in the open, The Shadow could have stopped him with a single shot. Instead, the stooped man flung himself upon the stranger in gray, so suddenly that the latter was taken entirely off guard. Together, they went reeling along the street, where they took a sudden stumble.

Apparently, the spill was of the killer's making, for he didn't sprawl. Instead, he loped past a building corner before The Shadow had a chance to aim. The young man in gray was on his hands and knees, his hat rolling to the gutter. But as he started to come to his feet, he looked at something in his hand.

It was the death gun, placed in his fist by the departing killer!

Given a brief chance, The Shadow could have settled that sham. Already he was springing down the steps, to aim along the street at the real killer who was racing away huddled in his tight-drawn coat. But the ruse, though failing with The Shadow, was working upon someone else.

From the house door came the sharp report of a revolver. There was a kick of dust as the bullet punched the sidewalk only a few feet from the young man in gray. Turning, The Shadow saw Sheila in the doorway, taking aim again. The determination on the girl's face was proof that she didn't expect her second shot to miss

It did miss - thanks to The Shadow.

Blackness rose from the steps to grip the girl's wrist as she fired. The second shot went high. But whatever her previous impressions. Sheila was no longer willing to accept The Shadow's present verdict. She was too sure that the young man on the sidewalk was the murderer who had tried to kill her father, only to dispose of Talman instead.

Thus Sheila struggled valiantly against The Shadow's efforts to wrest away her regained gun. In his turn, The Shadow was in a new dilemma. Unless he took the gun from the maddened girl, an innocent man would die for a crime another had committed.

And all the while the real murderer was getting farther away, his identity still unknown!

CHAPTER IV. CRIME'S QUESTION

FIGHTING to retain her gun, Sheila Durand could still see the man in gray across The Shadow's

shoulder. He was rising to his feet. But as he did, he turned away. The reason for his turn lay in a peculiar stiffness of his left leg. He didn't bend his knee at all.

That fact again impressed itself on Sheila when the man stepped toward the curb to pick up his gray hat, which had rolled into the gutter. As he stooped, he did it in stiff-legged fashion, keeping his left knee straight, while his right dipped.

Planting the hat on his head, the young man still didn't notice what was happening at the house door. Instead, he turned his back on those proceedings, to look along the street. He must have spied the real killer, bobbing out of some temporary hiding place, for the young man aimed the revolver. Then, halting, he suddenly lowered the gun, as though anxious not to make a serious mistake.

Apparently he was remembering those shots from the doorway, which must have been intended for himself. He made the mistake, accordingly, of presuming the murderer to be a legitimate fugitive. Besides, things were happening on the steps of Talman's house that stirred the young man to action.

There, a beautiful blonde was in the clutch of a cloaked figure who was undoubtedly a very dangerous personage, considering that he was wielding a large automatic. The girl's screeches for help were another feature that won the young man to her cause.

It didn't occur to the young man that the girl had fired those shots at him. By this time, Sheila had lost her gun, The Shadow having twisted it from her hand and flipped it back into the house. Nor did the young man realize that the girl's screams were a call to someone other than himself. Sheila happened to be yelling to her father, who was hurrying down the stairs from the second floor.

Sheila didn't see the young man turn her way, intent upon bringing aid with the very gun that incriminated him. But The Shadow saw the mistake that was in the making and wasted no time. It wouldn't do to let Sheila loose so she could pick up her gun and use it again. At this moment, her face was tilted upward very prettily, despite the glare of her eyes.

So The Shadow gave his open hand an upward jog, landing its heel squarely against Sheila's chin. Sheila went over backward and landed with a plop in the hallway, where she sat quite dazed.

To the man on the sidewalk, it seemed that the girl had literally disappeared, and The Shadow promptly did the same. One moment, the young chap was aiming at cloaked blackness; the next, he saw a swirl. Finally, nothing at all.

So swiftly that it seemed instantaneous, the living blackness reappeared from beside the house steps, where the astonished man halted. Caught in the grip of hands that were like vises, the young man in gray was whirled across the street to a cab that was halting on the other side.

It was all very neat, this swift maneuver by The Shadow, with Moe arriving at just the right time to cooperate. He was taking an innocent man from a neighborhood where he didn't belong, even though the fellow didn't want to go. There being no time to argue the merits of the matter, The Shadow settled it with a potent jab.

The Shadow's fist was lifting the gray-garbed man over the cab step and placing him inertly in the rear seat. The Shadow sprang into the cab himself, intending to overtake the real fugitive, who by this time had run around the corner of the next block.

THERE was just one difficulty. From up ahead came the whine of a police car. The Shadow gave a quick order to Moe, telling him to turn the cab around and head the other way, in advance of the patrol car. By swinging the corner, Moe would still have a chance to go after Talman's murderer and dodge the

police car in the bargain.

One witness viewed the cab's maneuver, which required considerable jockeying on Moe's part.

That witness was Professor Durand.

The canny inventor was standing in the doorway of the house, holding the unfired gun that had belonged to Talman. Near him was Sheila, still groping in befuddled fashion for her own gun.

Durand had glimpsed the man in gray and took him to be the killer. As for The Shadow, Durand doubted his full sincerity. The professor was the sort who doubted everybody, when the fate of an invention was at stake. He was inclined to regard The Shadow as a rival of Moyne, the man who Durand believed had bought his brain-child from Talman.

Such was the total of Durand's mistakes. He was too wise to attempt battle with The Shadow, or to fire shots at the gray-clad fugitive who had come under the cloaked fighter's protection. Though Durand raised his revolver, he didn't fire. Instead, he merely gestured to the truck that was parked around the nearest corner.

His other hand in his pocket, Durand kept pressing the box that gave out clicking sounds. His face had become a mask again, its lips forming their satisfied smile. He saw that Moe's cab would get to the corner ahead of the police car, but it wouldn't be sooner than the thing that was advancing from the truck.

The thing in question reared itself as Moe swung the corner. Beneath its advancing hulk, the cab looked like a toy. Once again, Professor Durand had called his mighty robot into action, and in the open, the thing reared far more monstrous than when The Shadow had first viewed it.

The robot was a veritable colossus. Paving crunched under its huge stamp. Its arms, stretching to their full spread, had the added width of the thick boiler-body which was more than a yard in diameter. In the alley where The Shadow had previously met his Gargantuan contrivance, the walls must have stopped the great arms from making their full play, for here the robot threatened to cover half the street.

Seeing the thing, Moe was about to jam the brakes in order to reverse the cab and head another way. It was The Shadow's quick order that made Moe do otherwise, a command given in the nick of time. Already in high gear, the robot would have caught the cab in the midst of the turn. Hence The Shadow's order was for Moe to give the gas instead of the brake.

Moe fed the car gas.

The cab spurted right between the clamping arms that were swinging in to meet each other like a pair of full-length scythes. Steel hands met with a clash of cymbals, and through the rear window of the cab The Shadow saw them finish that empty slam and separate again.

From around the corner came the patrol car, the robot squarely in its path. This time the metal hands met with a crunch that took the arriving vehicle between them.

The robot jolted upward as if from the impact, but it did not totter. Rather, it reared mechanically, acting in the fashion of a derrick, for it lifted the patrol car clear of the street. In using the brakes, the driver had ruined his only chance to bowl over the robot, but the sudden stop was helpful.

It saved the driver and his fellow cop from the fate that had overtaken the muggers at the brick wall. The patrol car tilted as the robot hoisted it, and the two officers went flying to the street. The car's fenders crumpled, but the body stood the strain; then, in the same fashion that it had finished its work at the brick

wall, the robot swung about.

Metal hands spread, letting the patrol car fly across the sidewalk where it telescoped against a house wall, marring the bricks and shattering windows on the second floor. While the cops were scrambling to their feet to dash away, the robot continued its turnabout and tramped back to the truck, where it toppled itself face-forward into the wheeled residence designed for it.

AROUND the next corner, The Shadow's cab was slackening to begin its hunt for a fugitive killer, there being no more need to worry about the patrol car. But the tour through the vicinity brought no results. It soon was apparent that the unknown murderer must have reached a parked car of his own and made good his flight.

Ordering Moe to drive from the area, The Shadow turned his attention to the gray-clad passenger who was still slumped in the rear seat. Finding a wallet in the young man's pocket, The Shadow examined its contents by flashlight.

The man's name was Frederick Corbin; the identification cards in his wallet listed him as a mechanical engineer. In support of that claim were two letters that intrigued The Shadow greatly. Both were addressed to Frederick Corbin, and they were signed by Timothy Talman.

In one letter, dated a week back, Talman stated that he had heard of Corbin and believed that he could serve efficiently as Talman's substitute in the employ of Professor Durand. In the letter, Talman complained of a prolonged illness which made him feel that such a substitute would be required.

The other letter was dated only two days ago. It requested that Corbin call at Talman's house. In the letter, Talman promised to give Corbin a recommendation which he was quite sure would clinch the job. In both these letters, Talman had definitely dodged the real truth, because he must have known that his own status with Durand was by no means as solid as he represented it.

Corbin stirred as The Shadow replaced the letters in his pocket. Hearing a whispered command, Moe eased to the curb. There, The Shadow slid from the door, during a pause too slight to be termed a stop. A whispered laugh sounded as the cab kept onward.

The Shadow was leaving it up to Moe to take Corbin to the address where he lived, as stated in the letters.

As for The Shadow, his present policy was to establish his own whereabouts this evening. That was why he shortly sauntered into the foyer of his favorite rendezvous, the Cobalt Club. The Shadow did not enter cloaked in black; instead, he was garbed in evening clothes, passing as a club member named Lamont Cranston.

There was something very complacent about Cranston's manner as he looked about the foyer. Settling himself, he waited calmly until a brisk man with a short-clipped mustache strode rapidly into the club. Cranston seemed half asleep when the newcomer reached him and shook him by the shoulder.

The arrival was the police commissioner, Ralph Weston. Cranston had been expecting him back from a banquet very shortly. Having the commissioner as a friend was very convenient, for The Shadow could think of no better man as an alibi for occasions like this evening.

Weston certainly could not suspect that his friend Cranston knew anything about the Talman murder, for word of it had reached the commissioner right after the event itself. Talman's place was farther from the Cobalt Club than was the hotel where Weston had been the principal speaker at the banquet

The important point was that Moe was a faster driver than Weston's chauffeur, and the cab had been unhampered by cross-town traffic which delayed the commissioner's official car. So Cranston behaved true to form, and showed mild surprise when Weston informed him that strange murder was afoot, demanding immediate investigation.

Five minutes later, the commissioner and his friend were riding to Talman's neighborhood, to study a case in which The Shadow already knew more than the law would learn!

CHAPTER V. THE ROBOT TEST

FRED CORBIN stared steadily at his visitor, trying to place him among the episodes that had occurred the night before. Failing, Fred settled back in his chair, satisfied that this couldn't be the man described as The Shadow.

By night, The Shadow had been a fanciful creature cloaked in black, who moved in and out of matters like a ghost. But by daylight Fred's visitor wasn't any ghost, nor did he show any tendency toward the swift action that so characterized The Shadow.

It was always that way with Lamont Cranston. His leisurely pose, amounting almost to indolence, was very helpful in concealing his dual identity.

A curious circumstance had brought Lamont Cranston to see Fred Corbin. Late last night, Cranston had received a phone call purporting to be from The Shadow, suggesting, that Cranston contact a certain cab driver who could tell him facts concerning the Talman case. So Cranston, being of a mildly inquiring nature, had followed the lead and found Fred Corbin.

Satisfied with the explanation, Fred relaxed. For one thing, Cranston had mentioned that the cab driver was sure that Fred had played no part in crime.

"All that I know," declared Fred, "is already in the newspapers." He gestured to a table beside him. "I take it that you've read them, Mr. Cranston."

Cranston had done more than read the newspapers. He'd heard Commissioner Weston question Professor Durand. Things had been rather difficult for the professor, not so much because he admitted that his robot had mashed the police car, but owing to the brick-wall episode.

However, the fact that the dead thugs in the alley were armed, and luckily identified as wanted criminals, no great blame could be attached to Durand.

As for Talman's death, Sheila's story tallied perfectly with Durand's. The position of Talman's body proved that he had been slain by shots from the inner room. The bullets extracted from the victim's body were of different caliber than Talman's gun and the revolver that Sheila admitted was her own.

The Shadow's entry on the scene was properly justified both by Durand and his daughter. What worried the police was the matter of a fugitive in a gray hat and overcoat. The cab in which the fugitive fled had been seen, though not identified, not only by the patrolmen, but by a man named Kennard, who was driving the truck that had brought Durand's robot in from New Jersey.

WHILE Cranston reviewed these facts, his eyes gave the impression that they were staring right through Fred. A trifle nervous, Fred at last gave way and looked across his own shoulder. Hanging in the corner of the room, where Fred had forgotten all about them, were the hat and coat in question.

"You win," declared Fred abruptly. "I'm the man they want. But why should I tell them so? I've done

nothing."

He produced the letters from Talman and handed them to Cranston, explaining that they were the sole reason for his visit to the victim's house. When Cranston asked about the gun, Fred hesitated, then produced it from a pocket of the overcoat, at the same time insisting that it had been thrust into his hand by the escaping murderer.

Calmly, Cranston accepted Fred's story. Then:

"You are quite right," he agreed. "You would only cloud the issue if you gave yourself up to the police. There is one man who certainly hopes that you will do so. He is Talman's murderer."

Fred's eyes showed unrestrained surprise.

"It is very simple," explained Cranston. "You were brought to Talman's to be the scapegoat for whatever happened. Assuming that Talman actually sold the plans of Durand's invention, or at least a portion of them, the murderer was there to see that Durand did not find it out."

Slowly, Fred nodded.

"An attempt was made to waylay Durand," Cranston continued. "His death - apparently during a holdup - would have covered matters nicely. But when Durand did arrive, the murderer tried to kill him. Failing, he disposed of Talman, whose usefulness was through."

"But why" - Fred paused, tapping the letters - "why did Talman send me these himself?"

Cranston thought a while before he answered. Not that he had not analyzed the situation; it was simply good policy to consider all questions in the leisurely style that was so unlike The Shadow's.

"Talman knew that Durand was to be waylaid," analyzed Cranston slowly. "Realizing that he might be questioned later, he wanted to appear on the friendliest of terms with the professor. To be writing Durand a personal letter, recommending you, would be an excellent thing for Talman to be doing at the time of Durand's death.

"The visitor in the next room was awaiting your arrival to see how well Talman carried matters through. When Durand appeared instead of you, there was a real dilemma. The best way out was murder, particularly since it might be blamed on you. The killer was lucky enough to have you arrive at the very time of his escape."

Fred's fists tightened. He hoped that he could sometime turn the murderer's luck the other way about. All the while, Cranston's eyes were watching, mild in their gaze, but behind them lay the keen perception of The Shadow. As The Shadow viewed him, Fred Corbin was the very man for the task that lay ahead.

"There's one thing certain," decided Fred. "Whoever is behind this, figured that Talman was the weak link."

Cranston gave a solemn nod of agreement.

"But look at the mess I'm in!" expressed Fred. "The police are looking for me, so I have to stay out of sight. If only I had that job I thought I was going to get - right in Durand's own workshop -"

Fred paused. Cranston was bringing out pen and paper, and beginning to write a note. While Fred stared, his visitor spoke musingly.

"Commissioner Weston was very courteous to Professor Durand," Cranston recalled. "I think the professor would be only too glad to do a favor for one of the commissioner's friends - such as myself."

There was a brief interval while Cranston's pen kept writing. Then, in the same calm tone, Cranston continued:

"Durand has hired a high-pressure promoter named Zarratt, to interest wealthy investors in the possibilities of robots. Since I am a wealthy investor, I am quite sure that both Durand and Zarratt would be glad to hire anyone that I might recommend, particularly as Talman's death leaves a vacancy in Durand's workshop."

Signing his name, Cranston passed the letter of recommendation to Fred, who received it with enthusiasm. The only thing that worried Fred was how and where he could contact Professor Durand without making the meeting too abrupt. The ever-resourceful Mr. Cranston had an answer to that problem.

Reminding Fred that today was the scheduled date for the test of Durand's robot, Cranston suggested that Fred accompany him to the proving grounds.

Fred was reaching for his hat and coat when Cranston stopped him. For the first time, the visitor's lips showed traces of a smile.

"Better not wear those," remarked Cranston. "Gray isn't a popular color nowadays. We'll stop on our way and fit you with something more in style."

THE robot test was being held in a baseball park in Jersey City, not to accommodate a crowd - because there wasn't any - but rather to keep out the curious. Only a few dozen people were present, half of them members of the National Production Board. They were seated in a box behind home plate, and with them was a middle-aged man with a square jaw and tawny face, who looked the acme of vigor.

Arriving with Fred, Cranston recognized the square-jawed man as Rodney Moyne, the manufacturer who boasted that he could ruin Durand's monopoly on robots. So far, however, Moyne hadn't been able to back his boasts. The robot test was about to be held, and only Professor Durand was in the field.

To be exact, Durand was in the outfield, where his truck was parked. He and Kennard, the driver, were poking about inside the truck, while Sheila watched them. With the group was a tall, thin man, who detached himself and came toward the grandstand where the members of the board were seated.

Just then Commissioner Weston arrived, accompanied by a stocky, swarthy man who was introduced as Inspector Cardona. After they had shaken hands with the committee, Cranston introduced them both to Fred, who found himself quite amazed to be shaking hands with the very members of the law who were most anxious to apprehend him.

The fact that Fred was a friend of Cranston kept him quite free of suspicion.

As the group settled to await the robot test, Cranston introduced Fred to Moyne, and for the first time Fred found himself under close scrutiny. Worried momentarily, Fred soon realized that this must be Moyne's way with everyone he met. Along with being dynamic, Moyne was blunt and outspoken, as he demonstrated quite promptly.

The thin man had arrived from the truck to announce that Professor Durand was ready. Stepping forward, Moyne thrust out his hand and declared:

"Hello, Zarratt. I wish you the best of luck."

Fred studied the thin man closely. This was Niles Zarratt, the promoter who was raising funds for Durand to continue with his robot experiments. Zarratt knew Moyne, because he'd tried to interest him as a backer, but without success. That effort had apparently soured Zarratt, for Fred could see the change of expression on the promoter's sallow face.

Zarratt didn't speak a word. Instead, he registered contempt to nullify the handshake which he felt that courtesy compelled him to give. Finishing the brief formality, Zarratt turned on his heel; then, seeing Cranston, he brightened somewhat and sat down beside Fred's calm-faced friend.

From Zarratt's low-spoken tone, Fred felt sure that the promoter was trying to sell Cranston on the merits of Durand's robot.

One of the board members arose and spoke through a public-address system, so that the announcement would carry to Professor Durand. The board was ready for the test of a mechanism which Durand termed a "multiple robot," capable of no less than five specific duties, all designed to replace human effort.

FIRST, it was to operate behind tank attacks, acting as advance for an infantry column; second, it was to construct bridges under machine-gun fire. Those two abilities constituted its use in warfare.

Next, the mechanical man was to supplant welders in shipyards. It was fourthly required to drive rivets on a scale ten times that of a human worker. Finally, the robot was to take its place on a belt line, stepped up to five times normal operating speed.

Professor Durand was walking in from the truck while the announcement was in progress. Men were coming from beneath the grandstand, lugging equipment for the various tests. Durand kept waving them back until he saw four men who were bearing timbers intended for a skeleton bridge. He instructed them to place the pile at second base. Pointing to first and third, Durand placed two soldiers who arrived with machine guns.

Silence settled as Durand strolled in from second base, pausing at intervals along the way. So still was everyone that Durand could be heard humming happily to himself, as he did when things pleased him. Finally pausing, Durand lifted a cane that he carried and thrust it in the ground as a marker.

Coming to the grandstand, Durand drew a compact box from his pocket and showed it through the netting, announcing that it was his radio control. He wanted the announcer to declare "Ready" through the loud-speaker, so that Kennard would know when to open the back of the truck.

Again all was silent, with all eyes strained toward the truck, watching for the robot to appear. The only person who chanced to turn about was Fred Corbin. He wanted to look at Lamont Cranston, to see if his new friend's face was as calm as ever.

It was.

Nothing, so it seemed, could disturb Cranston's complacency. His eyes showed interest, but only of a casual sort. Then, very suddenly, Fred forgot Cranston, Durand, the robot, even the police officials present. Fred's attention was riveted upon one man: Rodney Moyne.

Thinking himself totally unwatched, Moyne had let his square-jawed face relax into the most gloating expression that Fred could picture on a human visage. With it, Moyne's eyes were wandering from the pile of timbers and the machine guns, over toward the men beside the grandstand, who were standing with the other properties that they had brought.

Moyne's gloat unmasked the thoughts behind it. Despite the luck that he had wished Professor Durand, Rodney Moyne was planning a way to nullify whatever tests the robot might complete!

CHAPTER VI. THE COMPROMISE

"READY!"

As the voice roared from the amplifier, Professor Durand pressed the button of the radio control. The back of the truck dropped open and the robot emerged like an opening telescope, to turn and rear full-height. Glistening in the sun, the mighty mechanism strode across the dry grass toward the waiting pile of timbers.

Gradually, the great bulk of the contrivance dawned upon the onlookers, and Fred could hear amazed gasps from all about. All that while, Durand was giving occasional clicks to the radio control, until suddenly his thumb began to beat a swift rat-tat-tat.

The robot had reached the timber pile and was stooping mechanically to pick up the beams in pairs. Taking one in each hand, it lifted them like straws, brought them forward and planted them, as Durand manipulated the control box.

Under the professor's remote guidance, the robot swung back to bring another pair of beams, which it carried and affixed to the ends of the first. What it was doing was laying a track, rather than a bridge, but since these were the main timbers, the operation was the same.

It was time for the chief feature of the test. A committee member spoke to the professor, who nodded without taking his eyes from the robot. An order was given to the machine gunners, who promptly went into action. As the metal Goliath stalked forward with another pair of timbers, a deluge of bullets began to pepper its steel sides.

If this was where Moyne expected Durand to fail, the guess was wrong.

Only the timbers suffered from the test. The bullets from the machine guns splintered them into a mass of jagged slivers, but the robot placed the remnants and went back for more. The pommeling stream of lead scarcely dented the robot, for its rounded legs and body caused most of the bullets to glance away.

The arms were taking their share of the leaden hail, as was the rotunda head, but Durand's mechanical marvel went through its task, bothered less than a person would have been by flies or other stingless bugs. Triumphantly, Durand kept working the control until the robot came so close that bullets were actually ricocheting toward the grandstand box. Then, with a final clack, the professor cut off the control.

The robot stopped motionless, facing the professor, half-raised from the final pair of ruined timbers. As the machine guns quit their rattle, the professor galloped out and patted the huge body of the robot, running his hands along its surface to show how few dents it had suffered. Waving to the truck, Durand brought it across the field, while he strode to the grandstand to receive congratulations.

So enthused was everyone that even Fred failed to notice gestures that Moyne made. The only person watching the square-jawed man was Cranston. Congratulations were showering upon Durand, and had anyone called for a vote at that moment, the professor's robot would have been unanimously approved.

Then, above the babble, came Moyne's booming tone:

"What about the other tests, professor?"

LOOKING through the wire screen that fronted the box, Durand fixed his smile on Moyne. It was

Durand's way to retain his smile when anger seized him.

"We can eliminate one test," conceded Moyne in a dry tone. "Last night, your robot proved its merit as a destroyer. I doubt that it could handle tanks the way it mashed a police car; still, it operated reasonably well. But there are other things to be done.

"Over there are welding outfits." Moyne gestured toward the men who had begun to bring them at his beckon. "Riveting machines, too. The workmen are about to set up a special belt line, to see how fast your robot can operate it. Proceed."

Durand lost his smile as he began to sputter excuses to the committee. He pointed through the wire to the list of specifications, which called for the robot to go through with any test. Durand argued that the committee had left the choice to him and he had let the robot lay the bridge timbers under fire, as a sample of its work.

Moyne's tone knifed sharply:

"The specifications say any test, professor. I interpret that to mean not one, but all."

"Any does not mean every," stormed Durand, in return. "I can meet the tests singly, but not without separate preparation."

"I thought your machine was a multiple robot," chided Moyne. "Come, professor - are you admitting that you misrepresented the contrivance?"

"Not at all! But the setting is different for each test. It will take half a day, perhaps longer, to change it. Why should that matter?" Durand swung to appeal to the members of the board. "You want robots for specific purposes. I can provide them -"

"The specifications call for one robot!" interrupted Moyne. "No mention is made of time allowance between the various tests. Unless you proceed, professor, you will concede your failure."

Angrily, Durand strode out to the robot as though to unleash it on the occupants of the grandstand box, but such was not in his mind. The truck had arrived, bringing Sheila and Kennard. Durand ordered Kennard to back the truck against the robot. When that was done, the bulky metal man automatically toppled forward and telescoped inside the truck.

If Durand thought that his removal of the robot would win over the committee, he was wrong. By the time he returned, the members were nodding as they listened to Moyne.

In a very impartial tone, Moyne was explaining that the call for a multiple robot had been his own stumbling block as well as Durand's. Moyne approved of the multiple plan, because he felt that the machines should be convertible, adapted to all purposes. Such could be achieved, if Moyne and Durand worked together on fair terms of partnership.

The committee did not have to retire to talk it over. They agreed with Moyne and said so to Durand. Since Moyne insisted upon multiple robots that could switch from one test to another, Durand's invention could not be accepted until it fulfilled such qualifications, unless Moyne should withdraw from future competition.

STANDING beside the truck, Durand looked very dejected when Cranston approached, bringing Fred along. Zarratt was present, giving the professor a pep talk. The promoter paused to introduce Cranston and Fred, not only to Durand, but to Sheila.

It was meeting Sheila that worried Fred, but his brown attire passed muster. Not for a moment did the girl connect Fred with the fugitive from Talman's. Contrarily, she greeted him quite cordially, and when Cranston added that Fred was a competent engineer, who wanted a job with Durand, Sheila gave an enthusiastic nod.

"You'll need new men, dad," Sheila told her father. "You'll practically have to start all over, if you hope to make Thronzo do five tasks at once."

Fred took it that Thronzo was the name of the robot.

"Besides," continued Sheila, "You need a man, now that you've lost Talman -"

"Don't mention Talman!" stormed Durand. "He was the cause of all this failure!" He took a long stare at Fred, then turned to Zarratt. "What about funds, Niles? Will they stand an addition to the payroll?"

"At present yes," returned Zarratt. "I would advise hiring Corbin. He is well recommended."

Zarratt glanced at Cranston, as though adding another check mark toward his merit as a prospective backer. At that moment, Durand glanced past Fred and let his eyes narrow to a glare, which he immediately replaced by a smile.

Rodney Moyne had arrived to join the group. He face showed sympathy as he extended his hand to Durand. To Fred's surprise, the professor accepted the clasp.

"Why not talk business, Durand?" suggested Moyne. "My factory is just across the Meadows. Come over and have a look at it. Bring your friends along."

Durand bowed his acceptance of the invitation. Soon they were all riding to Moyne's factory, with the exception of Kennard, who was taking Thronzo home in the truck.

The factory itself was quite a surprise, and a tribute to Moyne's ingenuity. He had taken over an old plant on the fringe of the Meadows and it was equipped with the machinery necessary for the manufacture of robots. The place had a foundry, a stamping room where bodies could be made. There was a machine shop with its benches and a long assembly line.

"I could do a dozen things with this plant," Moyne told Durand. "But most of all, I would like to turn out robots. Picture it, professor, this whole plant given to such manufacture!"

STANDING with Sheila, Fred saw Durand nod as though the idea pleased him. Cranston was looking over the factory with Zarratt.

"With your robot as a model," continued Moyne, "there is no limit to the number we can produce. You have the model, I have the machinery - and there will be profit for us both."

"I am not thinking of profit," put in Durand. "That is the point on which we disagree, Moyne. My aim is to help industry and to further the war effort -"

"Which you will be doing," inserted Moyne. "I am not asking more than any other manufacturer would. Your idea that you should control the manufacture of your robots is preposterous, professor."

"Perhaps," admitted Durand, in a tired tone. "Still, it seems the ideal way."

Moyne's tawny face darkened.

"I am giving you one chance," Moyne told Durand. "Bring your robot here. Let it demonstrate everything

it can do. Go as far as you wish. I shall guarantee to duplicate the robot and turn out quantities."

"Geared for multiple duty?"

"I think we can get around that," returned Moyne with a smile. "You can't blame me, professor, for holding up the game the way I did. I have been so busy getting the plant ready that I was unable to perfect the robot that I hoped would rival yours."

Durand gave Moyne a very steady stare.

"If you mean that Talman's stolen plans would not work," asserted Durand, "I can tell you why. I never told Talman the real secret of my radio control. Without it, all the mechanisms are useless."

There wasn't a flicker of expression from Moyne's tawny countenance. Durand's accusation glanced from that poker face just as the machine-gun bullets had skidded from Thronzo's steel hide.

"You are wrong, professor," spoke Moyne steadily. "I never saw Talman nor did I buy anything from him. Going into the robot business was my own idea. I simply did it the other way around, by planning for production in advance.

"Come along with me; and bring your new man, Corbin." His tone turning affable, Moyne rested a broad hand on Durand's shoulder. "I shall show you the plant from A to Z. I am quite sure the tour will convince you that a partnership is our best plan, professor."

Durand apparently enjoyed the buzz and clatter of the machinery, for he kept humming a discordant tune as Moyne took him around the place. Fred followed along with Sheila and when they finished the circuit, they found Cranston and Zarratt waiting at the outer door.

"This evening," announced Moyne, "Professor Durand will bring his robot here. I have asked him to put it to any test he chooses, so that my workmen will gain an idea of its possibilities.

"The rest of the deal is very simple. Professor Durand will leave his robot here for mass duplication, provided that I can prove my ability to go into immediate production following the demonstration. Is that our understanding, professor?"

Durand nodded, brushing Sheila aside as she began a protest. Evidently the tour through the plant had enabled Moyne to sell the professor fully on the partnership idea. Bowing the group to his office, Moyne produced an agreement, already typewritten in triplicate. With due ceremony, he and Durand applied their signatures, the others signing as witnesses.

As they left the plant, Fred turned to join Cranston, only to receive Durand's hand-clap on his shoulder.

"Come, Corbin," expressed Durand. "I still shall need you."

There was something cryptic in Durand's tone that struck home to Cranston. As he walked alone to his car, Cranston phrased a low, whispered laugh. Durand's sudden capitulation to Moyne's terms was an odd reversal of the professor's usual form, so odd that Cranston sensed a deeper plan within it.

Whatever the result of the coming demonstration, Lamont Cranston intended to witness it. He, too, was coming to Moyne's factory again this evening, but in another guise.

Lamont Cranston would be The Shadow!

CHAPTER VII. THE ROBOT'S REVENGE

DINNER was over at Durand's, and Fred was anxious to see the workshop. He knew where it was located in the rambling old mansion, for Sheila had pointed out the workshop wing when they came in by the driveway. But instead of going to the workshop, Durand led the way into a little parlor.

Fred heard Sheila give a sigh.

"Dad's hobby again!" the girl whispered.

Fred didn't have to ask what Durand's hobby was. All around the parlor were cabinets lined with old-fashioned music boxes. Durand began to take them down and play them.

Now music boxes were pleasant enough, and Durand had some quaint specimens among his collection. What impressed Fred was the size of some of them. They had brass cylinders as large as the rolls that went with player pianos, and those cylinders were studded with hundred of the tiny pins that slowly plucked the tuned prongs, to give off musical chimes.

Of all things, music boxes should be played separately, but Professor Durand didn't seem to recognize it. He couldn't handle a music box without putting it into operation, with the result that he soon had a dozen going at once!

The result exceeded Fred's imagination. Never had he heard the air filled with so much discord. Relief arrived when Durand came across a music box that wouldn't work, and promptly began to fix it, forgetting all about Sheila and Fred.

Drawing Fred out the door, Sheila closed it and beckoned along a hall to another parlor on the far side of the spacious house. There, the girl supplied a relieved smile.

"Dad won't know that we've left," she said. "Once he starts a repair job, he drops everything else. We can go back later and remind him that we must soon start to Moyne's factory."

"Maybe we shouldn't remind him," remarked Fred. "He made a big mistake this afternoon."

"The mistake was going to Moyne's factory," declared Sheila firmly. "But since dad has signed the agreement, he has no choice but to go through with it."

Fred didn't quite agree, but he wisely refrained from disputing the point. It wasn't his province to begin his job at Durand's by criticizing the old professor's ways. So Fred turned the conversation to other topics and kept with them until Sheila suggested that they go back to the music-box parlor.

The only thing they heard when they arrived there was Durand's own humming. At last Fred could understand how the professor gained his queer idea of tunes, if they could be called such. Apparently, Durand picked up the most noticeable discords from the mingled chimes of dozen music boxes, for the strain that he hummed sounded very much like the worst notes from the bedlam.

Durand smiled when Fred and Sheila entered. He had almost finished fixing the music box. When Sheila reminded him that it was time to start for Moyne's, Durand stared blankly for a few moments, then nodded. He started for the workshop, carrying the music box with him, still poking at its clockwork as he went along.

It was Kennard who returned a short while later, saying that Durand wanted the others in the workshop. When they arrived there, they found the robot standing open. Beside it was a block of intricate machinery about a foot square. Durand told Fred to help him put the mechanism in the body, so he could have his first lesson in attaching it.

Fred learned very little. There were dozens of levers and gadgets that had to be hooked up, and Durand put them in place so rapidly that there was no chance to follow his movements.

Finally, Durand picked up the head, which was resting on a table. Climbing a ladder, he planted the head on the monster's mammoth body and finished the last few attachments.

The truck was standing at the wide, high door of the workshop. Durand ordered Fred and Kennard to push the robot forward. As they did, there was a brief whir, then Thronzo's huge bulk did its telescopic topple into the truck.

THE trip to Moyne's factory took more than half an hour, since the Meadows were about ten miles south of the suburban town where Durand lived. When they arrived, Moyne was there to greet them, and Sheila tried to be as affable as her father. Fred performed in the same style, but Zarratt refused to play along.

All during dinner Zarratt had been grumbling because Durand had sold out to Moyne. He'd gone out for a walk afterward, but it hadn't improved his temper.

When the truck appeared, Durand ordered work stopped in the factory. The employees assembled at the doorway to watch Thronzo come toppling into sight. Along with the workers were some tough-looking bystanders, who grinned at sight of the robot, but the rest of the witnesses were rather impressed.

Thronzo was indeed formidable as he advanced in response to Durand's clicking of the radio control. Walking close behind the robot, Durand steered the clumping figure straight into the factory as though to acquaint Thronzo with the place where he was going to be duplicated. At last the figure came to a stop.

Moyne beckoned for workers to bring ladders, so they could take the giant machine apart and examine its insides. Moyne himself was specially interested in the control box. He came over to Durand and asked if he could examine the short-wave device, but the professor apparently didn't hear him Durand was staring in faraway style, his lips moving as though he were talking to himself.

Just as Moyne reached for the control box, Durand gave it a few sharp clicks. Wheeling to Moyne, the professor gave a cackled exclamation.

"You said I could show you all that the robot could do!" Durand's triumphant tone was accomplished by continuous clicks. "Very well, Moyne! Watch!"

The last word wasn't needed. Moyne was already looking at Thronzo. The mighty robot had gone into sudden action, with a wide swing of its vast arms that sent the ladders flying and the workers dodging. Then, with thumping stride, the robot was off on a tour of its own.

Thronzo's first stop was the machine shop. There, the robot picked up benches and shattered them with mighty slashes. When those steel fists encountered chucks and lathes, they mashed them. What the robot didn't crush with its hands, it trampled underfoot.

Entering the foundry, Thronzo battered flasks and molds into chunks, then smashed a cupola that promptly delivered molten metal, which splashed over the floor in huge puddles. By this time, a dozen workers were chasing the robot with great steel rods. But when the monster turned on them, they fled.

Moyne had reached a balcony and was howling for his workers to grab Durand, since they couldn't stop the robot.

But capturing the professor was a problem in itself. Except when he side-stepped the flowing metal,

Durand was keeping right behind the robot, his cackle sounding happily above the monster's clatter. Out of that high-pitched laugh came Durand's repeated words:

"You asked for this, Moyne. You told me to show you all that my robot could do!"

Thronzo did plenty to the assembly line. He mangled its rollers into a twisted variety of pretzel patterns. He pulled steel supports out of their concrete beds and rolled them up in metal table-tops.

Reaching the stamping room, the robot plunged right through it, flinging those metals arms with sweeps that turned the place into a shambles. There, a squad of a dozen workmen thought they had their chance to overtake Durand, but the professor clicked the control box and dodged beneath the robot's great arms as the thing reversed its stride.

STRAIGHT in the robot's path was a huge stamping press that formed a real barrier. Men drove in from the sides, hoping to batter the robot when the press stopped it short. But the press didn't even slacken Thronzo's stride. He uprooted it, crunched it, slammed it and trampled over the remains. While men dived for the far walls of the room, Professor Durand followed the devastating robot right through the heap of junk.

Two watchmen had joined Moyne on the balcony. They had rifles and were firing at the advancing robot. Naturally, the bullets did nothing to the body that had survived the volleys from machine guns. But as the robot bulked beneath the balcony, Moyne pointed to Durand, and the watchmen aimed at the professor.

From a corner, Sheila screamed and started forward, only to be pulled back by Fred, who saw what was due to happen.

The robot's great arms hooked the posts of the balcony as the creature marched beneath. Durand scudded through behind his metal protector, in time to escape the balcony's collapse. Moyne came tumbling down with the watchmen, whose rifles clattered ahead, while the men were grabbing the balcony rail.

The robot's revenge was complete. Durand had paid back Moyne for spoiling the tests that afternoon. Moreover, Durand had nullified the contract that he signed, because Moyne would now be unable to go through with the provisions of the second part.

No longer did Moyne have the necessary machinery to put robots into quantity production. Indeed, Moyne would soon be without a factory, for great flames were rising in the foundry, coming with a sweep that promised to engulf the entire plant.

Dropping from the sagging balcony, Moyne shook his fists and shouted for his workmen to continue their own campaign of retaliation.

The excited workers needed no urge; two of them snatched up the rifles, while others clashed forward with improvised weapons.

Again, it took Fred's full effort to haul Sheila away. The girl thought that her father was trapped beneath the balcony and would be flanked there, when Thronzo turned around to march through the plant again. But Fred foresaw a different result, on the basis that the robot's tour of destruction was finished.

Rushing Sheila out through the main door, Fred piloted her around a corner of the factory. As they arrived, they heard the wall crash; out through a great gap of flying brick came the robot, with Durand in his wake. Instead of detouring by the door, the professor had simply steered his mighty robot through the factory wall, on a short-cut to the waiting truck!

Reaching the truck, the robot did its usual collapse to the interior. Kennard promptly pulled away

Out from the factory, both by the door and the wall gap that Thronzo had hewn, came a maddened crowd of vengeful men, their faces demoniac in the ruddy glare of the rising flames that were completing the robot's destructive work.

That tribe had one thought only: that of mob violence, with Professor Durand as the victim!

Fred sprang forward to dissuade them. He saw Zarratt coming from another angle with the same intent. Both Fred and Zarratt were brushed aside, as the mob swept onward toward the spot where Durand stood rooted, protected only by his daughter.

Having sent away his robot, Professor Durand was helpless. It seemed that nothing could stop the fury of the onrushing mob. Then, like a cry from another world, came a mighty challenge that stopped the fanatics in their tracks.

It was a laugh, so weird and sinister that no human listener could ignore its defiance.

The laugh of The Shadow!

CHAPTER VIII. PARTED TRAILS

WHAT happened next was like a vivid nightmare against a lurid background. Halted briefly, frenzied men would have resumed their drive the moment that the weird laugh shivered into echoes, but for the fact that the author of the mirth made his prompt appearance.

It wasn't exactly that The Shadow lunged in from outer darkness. Rather, a flare from the burning factory supplied the glow that dispelled the gloom through which The Shadow charged. He came like a cloaked shape launched from space, so like a ghost that his mere advent should have scattered terror among Moyne's factory hands.

This was once when The Shadow's formula failed.

Fantastic though his arrival was, the cloaked fighter looked merely human, and puny, to the score of men who saw him.

Who were they to be frightened by any creature less than eight feet high, constructed of a material less durable than steel, considering that they had so recently been hounding a mammoth robot that answered to such specifications?

Professor Durand had made a double mistake in sending Thronzo away. Not only had he deprived himself of the robot's protection, he had given his enemies the erroneous idea that they had become too bold, too organized for the steel giant to compete with them.

What they couldn't do to Thronzo they would do to The Shadow. Such was the belief of the frenzied throng that flung itself upon the cloaked challenger.

Had those workers been equipped with revolvers, they might have blasted The Shadow as they surged. But their only firearms were two rifles, and the men who gripped them preferred to use the weapons like bludgeons, as the others did with their assortment of makeshift weapons.

The factory hands flailed high with their cudgels. and in so doing they laid themselves wide open. In among them, The Shadow became a human hurricane. Swinging fists that carried the weight of automatics, he punched a swath right through the center of the crowd; then, with a whirling circuit, he

came slashing through the divided throng from another angle.

It was the old system of breaking up a riot - cut the mass in halves, then in quarters. The Shadow was making a one-man job of a task that should have required several.

From outside the doorway of the blazing factory, Moyne stared in wonderment at the way The Shadow broke up the riot. It was a stopgap, pure and simple, so that Durand could get away. Sheila was responding by rushing her father toward his car, where Fred and Zarratt arrived to join them.

Sheila was at the wheel, ready to go, when Zarratt shouted frantically that workers were reaching their own cars, intending to block Durand's flight. Grabbing the professor, Zarratt started toward a far corner of the factory, bawling that they could find safety in the Meadows. When Durand stumbled, Zarratt kept on ahead, beckoning for the professor to follow.

Moyne saw what was happening and gave a gesture of his own, pointing the flight out to workmen who had staggered from the human maelstrom created by The Shadow. Men started for the corner of the blazing factory to intercept Durand. The Shadow suddenly came from the whirl to take the same route.

By then, Zarratt was past the corner. But Durand was far behind. Overtaking the professor, Fred hauled him around and rushed him back to the car. Shoving Durand into the back seat, Fred sprang in front with Sheila, who whipped the car away. It proved the best choice, for they were spinning out from the factory yard before a single car arrived to block them.

Flames were wavering high above the factory roof. On the ground, groups of men seemed to mimic the fire's waves. First toward the corner of the factory, then back again, to chase the professor's departing car - such was the course they followed.

From the corner, The Shadow saw the human wave recede and make its new roll too late to overtake Durand. Then, a laugh upon his lips, the cloaked fighter gave a sudden wheel, to confront an unexpected threat. From around the corner, out of blackness that the firelight had not yet reached, surged a compact crew of men whose very style of onrush marked them as a murderous tribe!

THEY came with drawn revolvers that tongued as The Shadow slashed them aside. These weren't factory hands; they were thugs of the same caliber as those that The Shadow had met in the Manhattan alley where Thronzo had first strutted his mighty stuff.

Fred Corbin had noted those hangers-on awhile earlier, but they had slunk from sight before The Shadow arrived. Whatever their original purpose on these premises, they had dropped it for a newer motive. These thugs had one desire: Death to The Shadow!

The cloaked fighter stopped the onslaught cold. Battering blazing guns to right and left, The Shadow wheeled his back against the wall, intending to open a sweeping return fire. A moment later, be was pitching forward under a deluge, not of bullets, but masonry.

Under the increasing heat of the holocaust, the wall had caved, at a moment most untimely for The Shadow!

There was just one compensation, trifling though it might be. The collapse of the wall brought a glare from the fire within. The four thugs who had met The Shadow shoved their guns away, rather than have the weapons seen by the workmen who were beginning to organize as fire-fighters.

Stooping, the four gave appreciative snarls as they pushed aside fragments of brick and stone, to pick up the cloaked form that lay half buried. Knocked unconscious by the masonry, The Shadow was a listless

burden in their clutch. Close together, the four thugs rapidly carried their stunned prisoner to a cluster of parked cars.

Workmen who saw the departing four did not observe their burden. Black-clad, The Shadow was practically invisible in the group that carried him. His captors tossed him in an old touring car with a canvas top, the sort that gunners favored.

Two men climbed in front; two in back. Gunfire wouldn't be good, they decided. Whoever The Shadow might be in private life, it was better his body should be found without a lot of lead in it. In that case, the job would never be traced to this present crew, whose specialty lay in using guns.

Far behind, the blazing factory looked like an ancient funeral pyre, as the thug-laden car began climbing a long incline that fed into the celebrated Skyway crossing the Jersey Meadows. The man beside the driver growled that there might be cops along the Skyway. In return, the driver asserted that they wouldn't stay on it long.

He pointed out a high superstructure that crossed a river. Once over that stretch of bridge, the driver intended to take a ramp down the other side, leading to the bay front. There, if The Shadow proved to be alive, a battering treatment of gun butts would suffice before weighting his body and consigning it to the bay.

Hearing the verdict, the men who crouched in back decided to take a preliminary look at their doomed victim. One lifted The Shadow's hat; the other supplied a flashlight. They saw the face of Cranston and though they didn't recognize its owner, they marked him as a man of consequence.

Whoever The Shadow was, it didn't matter, since he wouldn't belong to this world long. His eyes were shut; his chin was drooping so weakly that it fell again, each time the thugs took turns clicking The Shadow's jaws shut.

Their fun caused them to get careless with the flashlight. The driver growled for them to "can the glim," so they did. One man pocketed the torch while the other was clamping the slouch hat back on The Shadow's head. Such trivial items as guns were very far from the minds of those playful assassins at that moment.

Both were entirely off guard when the gloved hands clamped their throats!

THE hands of The Shadow were sprouting from a form that the examining thugs had mistaken for a victim already dead!

Well had The Shadow played his act under the flashlight's glare. Now, with his arms interlacing those of his captors, he was giving them a treatment that prevented even an outcry! They writhed, that pair, trying to gain guns that they couldn't reach and all the while the powerful hands of The Shadow were sapping their strength!

A few minutes more and The Shadow could have laid his victims limp. That done, their own guns would have served as weapons to cow the men in front. But as the car took the rise toward the big bridge that crossed the river, the lights of a bus lifted from the other side. The man beside the driver turned to make sure his pals in back were keeping The Shadow out of sight.

The oncoming glare revealed The Shadow in control. Savagely, the front-seat thug whipped out a revolver. The Shadow made a grab for it, turning the weapon aside. But the pair in back, relieved of the choking hands, came back to life with vengeance. They were yanking their guns to sledge The Shadow while he struggled with the man in front. Even the driver was coming about, pulling a gun with his right

hand, intending to blast the cloaked fighter at any cost.

One against four and in the very clutch of those foemen, The Shadow lacked the scope for battle. Nor was he sufficiently recuperated from his encounter with a falling wall, to turn aside four guns at once. Even to continue the present fray, The Shadow needed a momentary grip on something firm.

So he took it - on the steering heel!

The clutch was inspiration. With a twist that rolled him from the rear seat to the front, literally upon the heads and shoulders of his foemen, The Shadow hauled the wheel hard to the left and veered the car into the path of the oncoming bus!

Only one thing could have happened. Having nowhere to swing, the bus met the veering car. Even though the bus driver was delivering the air brakes, the impact was terrific. The bus sent the touring car into a spiral lurch that carried it over the bridge rail. While the rail was ripping fenders, the car's flimsy top burst open like a pea pod.

Losing their clutch on blackness that they couldn't hold, four frantic men grabbed for the interior of the car. Their grabs were useless, but it didn't matter, for the car was coming with them as they flayed the air. It scooped them in its maw. flung them out again, and once more overtook their clawing shapes in the plunge to the tracks that were also below.

Pygmy things, those murderers, in the mighty glare that came zooming at them, accompanied by a thunderous roar and the quiver of steel rails. Then, like the wreckage of the car, those sprawled chunks of humanity were swept into oblivion by the huge locomotive that accompanied the headlight at a sixty-mile-an-hour gait.

Bus passengers had reached the rail when the last car of the fast express completed its whirlwind rattle beneath the bridge. All they could see was the glint of steel rails, where men and car had been. Crossing the bridge, they stared from the other side, looking for distant bits of wreckage as remnants of the tragedy.

That bridge was high above the tracks, its clearance more than double the amount required. To the bus passengers and others who joined them by the far rail, that fact seemed of little consequence. It didn't occur to them that clearance could mean survival.

Had they stayed at the near rail, through which the spinning car had crashed, they might have heard something from the blackness where their eyes had seen nothing.

That something was a whispered laugh, voiced from within a cloak that dangled from the blunt end of a bridge girder, just below the roadway. From that cloak came hands that embraced the girder, taking hold as the garment began to rip from the strain.

A few moments later, The Shadow was astride the girder, the torn cloak trailing from his shoulders. Again The Shadow laughed as he looked down upon the spot where his enemies had been obliterated!

CHAPTER IX. OUT OF THE PAST

PROFESSOR DURAND was in a jubilant mood. He had been that way for days, which was singular, considering the trouble that he had heaped upon himself. For, although Durand felt that he had scored a signular triumph in turning his robot loose in Moyne's factory, public opinion was just the opposite.

Factories like Moyne's were too scarce, too valuable, to be reduced to junk at an old man's whim. The

charge of sabotage lay heavy on Durand's shoulders, even though the professor treated it lightly. And today, of all days, Durand should have realized how serious that charge might prove.

For Durand was riding into New York to attend a final hearing of his case. The National Production Board had ordered him to appear, along with various witnesses. Sheila and Fred were both in the car with him, trying to be cheerful, but making a sad job of it.

Durand understood their mood, though he didn't share it.

"It's a marvelous day," chirped Durand. "I never saw it more beautiful at this season. Made to order for young folks like you two. Come, come! Enjoy it!"

"How can we?" demanded Sheila abruptly. "This may be the last bright day that you will see for a long time, dad."

"Nonsense," laughed Durand. "I'm not that old."

"Sheila means they may send you where you won't see any sunshine," put in Fred.

Durand chuckled. Then, indifferently, he remarked, "This will all blow over very quickly. Wait and see!"

Nosing southward through Manhattan, the car reached the towering financial district and stopped in front of a mammoth skyscraper. To one side of the building's main entrance were windows heavily equipped with steel bars. One window bore the sign:

MOYNE CO.

PRIVATE BANKERS

Getting out of the car, Durand saw persons he recognized, members of the National Production Board who had witnessed the robot test at the Jersey City ball park. Durand waved cheerfully, but the N.P.B. men turned away quite coldly and proceeded into the building.

"They consider dad guilty already," undertoned Sheila to Fred. "If he would only understand!"

"And they're holding the hearing in Moyne's own office," returned Fred indignantly. "Your father should have protested."

"That's what I told him, but he wouldn't listen."

All the way through Moyne's suite of offices, Professor Durand was taking birdlike looks at the surroundings. His eyes finally moved back and forth between an inner office marked "Private" and a grilled gate to a stairway that led downward. The office was obviously Moyne's, while the stairs evidently went to a vault room.

The visitors were ushered through a door marked "Conference Room," where they found Moyne at a long table, surrounded by half a dozen men who were spreading big sheets of diagrams and plans.

Seeing the arrivals, Moyne was immediately annoyed. He gestured for the men to roll up the plans, which they did very hurriedly. With the rolled sheets finally in one man's hands, Moyne motioned the fellow from the room.

Durand watched where the man went, as did Fred. Leaving the conference room, the man with the plans went through the grilled gate and down to the vault. Fred saw Durand give a very satisfied smile.

EXPECTING an immediate outburst from Moyne, Fred was much amazed when the square-jawed man advanced and extended a cordial hand to Professor Durand. Sheila was even more overwhelmed than Fred, while the members of the National Production Board showed their share of surprise.

Having gestured everyone to chairs, Moyne waited for proceedings to begin. The spokesman for the N.P.B. arose, gave an apologetic cough, and announced:

"It would be better, Mr. Moyne, if we had all the witnesses present. This investigation hinges to some degree upon certain statements that were made at your factory, coincident with the signing of a contract. So far, two witnesses have not yet arrived: Lamont Cranston and Niles Zarratt."

"Cranston is on the way here," returned Moyne. "As for Zarratt, you had better ask Professor Durand."

Durand declared that Zarratt was coming from his hotel and might be expected at any moment. Whereupon Moyne shrugged and remarked that he saw no reason why the hearing should not begin. The spokesman for the N.P.B. replied that he felt all of the witnesses should be present to hear Moyne's charges.

Moyne's broad eyebrows raised in surprise.

"My charges?" he queried. "Who am I to bring charges?"

Voices broke forth in expostulation. After all, it was Moyne's factory that had been ruined. His case against Durand was clean-cut. The National Production Board was basing its entire investigation upon the evidence that Moyne was to supply.

"Let me make it plain, Mr, Moyne," summed up the spokesman. "Any false interpretation that Professor Durand may have given to your request for a robot demonstration will carry no weight with this board. His overt act alone is sufficient to warrant criminal charges against him."

Moyne spread his broad hands for silence.

"Durand made no false interpretations," said Moyne bluntly. "I wanted to see the utmost that his robot could do. He showed me."

"But the wrecking of the plant -"

"Was a sheer accident," interposed Moyne. "It amounted almost to negligence on my part."

"Yet there were damages -"

"All covered by insurance. The trouble began with a fire in the foundry. What the robot did was purely incidental. Why" - Moyne gestured toward Sheila and Fred - "these very witnesses can testify to the fact."

Whatever Moyne's motive in exonerating Durand, his method was very crafty. He knew that Sheila and Fred would certainly minimize the damage that preceded the fire, even if their testimony bordered on perjury. Sheila, for one, was here to defend her father at any cost, and Moyne was giving her the opportunity.

But it wasn't necessary to go the limit. Even as Sheila began to talk, the members of the N.P.B. arose, bowed courteously, and started for the door. Fred saw the door open as they neared it and expected Cranston to enter. Instead, it was Zarratt who appeared.

The sallow-faced promoter stared as the board members filed by. Hardly had the door closed before Moyne delivered a hearty laugh. He looked at Durand, whose lips had formed their masking smile. Apparently Moyne saw through the professor's pose.

"You're pretending that you know it all," Moyne told Durand. "But you don't, professor. You still haven't guessed the reason why I let you off scot-free."

"It is quite apparent," retorted Durand. "I foresaw the whole thing, Moyne. You couldn't have collected insurance on damage done by a robot."

Moyne shook his head. As he did, his manner changed. He was his sneering self again, as he declared:

"I would have taken the financial loss, Durand, for the mere pleasure of sending you to jail. But if you were in the penitentiary, my future triumph would be empty."

Durand stared. He didn't understand.

"By my future triumph," Moyne elucidated, "I mean that I intend to construct a robot bigger, better and brawnier than that three-dimensional tin-type which you have named Thronzo. My robot will be a robot to end all other robots - Thronzo included!"

From Durand's glare, the way he tightened his fists, it looked as though the professor wanted to do the robot act himself and start operations on Moyne.

"You saw my engineers," continued Moyne. "They were the men who were here when you came. I hurried them away because I didn't want you to see the plans that they have completed. The plans for Superlo, a multiple robot that will do all you ever claimed for Thronzo - and more!"

WHILE Sheila was drawing her father toward the door, Zarratt plucked Fred by the sleeve and gestured for him to hurry. They were out through the offices, while the voices of Moyne and Durand still echoed loudly as the pair disputed the merits of robots, past and future.

"We'd better find Kennard and have him bring the car," Zarratt told Fred. "The genie will be having apoplexy if we don't."

Fred stared, puzzled, as he repeated:

"The genie?"

"Short for genius," replied Zarratt. "It's our nickname for Durand. Let's get out on the street and look for the car, while Sheila is bringing the old man down here."

The lobby of the building was built like an arcade. Turning one way, Zarratt gestured Fred the other. Passing a newsstand, Fred noticed some telephone booths, three in a row. The middle one was empty and, very oddly, the occupants of the other two booths were stepping out of them.

A telephone wouldn't help Fred, because if Kennard had parked the car in a garage, there wasn't any way of guessing what garage it was. So Fred started farther on his way, only to be overtaken by the two men from the booths.

At least it must have been those two, since there were no other persons in this portion of the arcade. Fred hadn't seen their faces when they stepped from the booths, and he still didn't see them. Nor did he care to look. The pair ordered him to keep looking straight ahead and they backed their argument properly.

They backed the command with revolvers.

Maybe it was Fred's blood that froze, for he thought he could feel the cold muzzles of the guns, even though their owners were poking them through pockets. It couldn't be real, this sort of business, done in broad daylight within a block of Wall Street.

Yet it was real enough!

They were marching Fred along, swinging him about, guiding him with gun prods, this pair who kept behind him. Men like the crowd who had tried to waylay Professor Durand on a blacked-out street; of the same ilk as the lurking crew that Fred had seen outside Moyne's factors; the type who had figured in a bridge accident that Fred had read about later!

Fred Corbin didn't own a handy robot, nor was he a superfighter like The Shadow. His one hope was that he might make a wild break for freedom as soon as this pair had marched him to the crowded street.

They didn't reach the street. Instead, Fred's captors swung him to the middle telephone booth and shoved him inside. The telephone bell was ringing, and the nudge of a gun indicated that Fred should answer it. Mechanically, Fred picked up the receiver and spoke a hollow "Hello?"

A voice answered, its tone low and forced.

"You are Frederick Corbin," it said. "You are working for Professor Adoniram Durand."

There was a pause. Although Fred didn't answer, the voice continued:

"You will learn the details of the radio control that Professor Durand uses with his robot. You will deliver that information when you are ordered to do so."

Fred started to reply, then hesitated. The voice took his gulp as an answer.

"There will be a penalty for failure," it declared in the same forced tone. "The penalty will be your death, through due legal process, for a crime that can be proven against you. The murder of Timothy Talman!"

So sharp was the receiver click ending the call that Fred thought it was the cocking of a gun. Dropping his own receiver, he swung madly; hoping to beat the shots of the revolvers that were covering him.

What Fred encountered was the closed door of the booth. Wrenching it open, he reeled out into the lobby to find himself alone. Fred's recent captors had slid away the moment that his attention was riveted by the mystery voice from the telephone.

Whoever had spoken was known to those thugs. Their threat had lifted, no longer needed, once Fred Corbin had begun to listen to the insidious terms on which his life depended!

CHAPTER X. DOUBLE TREACHERY

SLOWLY, Fred stepped from the elevator alcove, throwing wary glances toward both exits of the arcade. People were in sight, but none looked tough enough to be the thugs who had forced Fred into the booth.

Their orders, of course, must be to let Fred live. But whether they would do so under threat of exposure, was a question. However, since Fred didn't see them, that part didn't matter.

What did matter was Rodney Moyne. In Fred's opinion, Moyne must be the voice who had delivered the telephone threat. It was simple enough for Moyne to have thugs planted here in the lobby of his own building.

The thing was to trap Moyne in his own private office and properly denounce him. Maybe a pair of fists would have the same effect on Moyne that Fred had so recently felt from a brace of guns.

Fred went straight to the big entrance of Moyne's suite and yanked the door open. As he did, a girl stumbled through, and Fred caught her. The girl was Sheila. Angry for a moment, she laughed when she saw Fred.

"Why hurry?" asked Sheila. "The fight is over. Look - there's dad in the corner, making a telephone call. See how calm he is?"

Professor Durand wasn't exactly making a call. He'd just finished one, using one of the many extension phones in Moyne's office. At least he was calm, as Sheila said, a fact which roused Fred's sudden suspicion. Immediately that suspicion dwindled, for Fred could see no reason why Durand, of all people, would have forced his new assistant to listen to a phone call demanding a sell-out.

Fred threw a quizzical glance at Sheila.

"Where's Moyne?" he asked.

"He just went into his private office," replied Sheila. "I must admit he handled dad very well. He stopped the argument by saying that the police commissioner wanted to talk to dad."

"And it was Moyne who suggested that your father use the telephone?"

Sheila nodded. Fred looked toward the switchboard in the corner. There was no one at the board and only a single plug was socketed, indicating the call that Durand had just made. If Moyne had somehow managed to make the call that Fred received, he must have done it from an outside wire, which didn't seem plausible.

As Durand arrived at the door, he looked past Fred and Sheila, to give a genuine smile. Fred turned to see Lamont Cranston entering from the lobby in his usual leisurely fashion. Cranston's first words were an apology for being late. He wanted to know if the hearing had begun.

When Cranston learned that the hearing had not only begun, but was all over, his interest turned to the result. When Sheila told him that Moyne had exonerated her father, Cranston extended his congratulations to Durand. The professor prefaced his reply with one of his cryptic smiles.

"It was policy on Moyne's part," asserted Durand. "Moyne knows that if he charged me with sabotaging his plant, I might bring an even stronger accusation against him."

It was plain what Durand meant. He was referring to the Talman murder. But Cranston gave no sign that he caught the implication. Politely, he bowed himself through, and went along to Moyne's private office. Durand and Sheila were leaving, so Fred followed them, but his mind was fixed upon a new and startling idea.

That mystery call could have been made by Cranston!

THERE was one strong point to support such a theory. The one man who had heard Fred's full story was Lamont Cranston. He had come to see Fred as a friend, but that could have been a blind, to cover his real purpose. Cranston's delay in getting to Moyne's could easily have given him time in which to

make the mystery call.

As they reached the street, Fred looked at neighboring buildings and saw at least three which had signs denoting telephone pay booths. His thoughts were still working on the Cranston theory when Durand's car arrived, with Kennard at the wheel. Zarratt was riding in the front seat with the chauffeur, having found the car around the corner where it was parked.

On the way back to New Jersey, Sheila asked her father what the police commissioner had said during their telephone conversation. Durand replied that Weston had simply asked him if he could name any suspects in the Talman murder.

"I told him no," declared Durand emphatically. "If the police choose to reject the obvious, why should I mention it? Only Moyne would have bought out Talman; therefore Moyne is the only man who would have murdered him, to keep him silent. But the commissioner regards Moyne as too important to be a murderer."

"Has he said so?" inquired Sheila.

"Practically," replied Durand, tilting his head wisely. "He called Moyne in order to reach me. The police would never request a murder suspect to deliver a message to his accuser. Of course I haven't yet made a full-fledged accusation." Resting his head back, Durand smiled. "I think I shall wait until he has his robot ready."

His mind back on the robot subject, Durand took Fred to the work shop as soon as they reached the house. There, the figure of Thronzo was standing totally dismantled amid stacks of machinery, upon which men were at work.

Professor Durand discussed the anatomy of a robot. He described its skin as metal, its bones as steel rods, its nerves as a mass of wires. But a robot geared for multiple duty required many more features.

Paramount was motive power. According to Durand, an ancient inventor named Daedalus had made statues walk by filling them with mercury. Mechanical men were common in the middle ages, and frequently steam had been their motive force. But in the case of Thronzo, Durand relied upon a single-cylinder, internal combustion engine.

Standing in the center of the cluttered workshop, Durand raised a clenched fist and began to bring it downward, then upward, with slow beats. In time to the strokes, he strode across the room, to show how the actions corresponded.

"The single-cylinder action is like a human heartbeat," defined Durand. "It is ideal for a robot, a fact which many other inventors overlooked. Today, human beings are specialized in simple, mechanical operations. It dawned upon me that robots could serve as replacements for human labor. Machines to control machines! They are the creatures of the future!"

Durand stopped beside the massive cylinder block that belonged in the shell body of Thronzo. He declared that he had patterned it after a cannon, rather than an automobile engine.

"A cannon is actually an engine," declared Durand. "It is an engine that discharges its pistol each time it makes a stroke. So in my engine, I use a powerful explosive as fuel, but the piston is too heavy to be discharged.

"Each explosion operates Robot Thronzo's arms. The recoil actuates his legs. It took me years to work out the proper proportions of this explosive mixture." Durand picked up a bottle containing a green fluid.

"Unfortunately, I gave the formula to Talman. He sold it along with these."

By "these," Durand meant the stacks of machinery, some of which Fred had already studied. One machine was an adaptation of the Televox, which could answer telephones, read meters and report on them. Another was patterned after a tide calculator known as the "Big Brass Brain." But Durand had laid aside such receptive devices where Thronzo was concerned. The professor wanted a more active robot.

Five sets of machinery were enough for Thronzo. Too many, in fact, because Durand had so far been unable to combine them into one. He believed that he could do it, though it might require the construction of a greater Thronzo, two feet higher than the present robot. As he mentioned that point, Durand frowned.

"It depends on Zarratt," declared the professor. "He says he knows a man who will finance the construction, on fair terms. Zarratt has already seen the man in question, and assures me that he is not a profiteer like Moyne. That is the real bone of contention between Moyne and myself. He sees millions of dollars in robots, whereas I wish only a moderate return for my invention. The public is entitled to the rest."

Workmen were putting machinery into the robot's body. They lifted the head to set it in place, and Fred saw that the hollow cylinder was empty. He glanced at Durand and saw a smile play upon the inventor's lips. The mechanism that controlled the robot was Durand's own secret. No one else had ever seen the device.

THE afternoon moved swiftly. When dinner was ready, Sheila summoned Fred and Durand from the workshop, where they were still trying to rearrange the body machines so that all five would fit inside of Thronzo. Zarratt was at the house for dinner and he monopolized Sheila, while Durand kept drawing diagrams all over the tablecloth, for Fred's benefit.

It was becoming more and more apparent that Durand was satisfied with his new assistant, and taking full account of Fred's suggestions. But when dinner was over, the professor decided that they had talked machinery long enough. He suggested that they look at the music boxes. When Sheila started an objection, Durand smilingly promised that he would play them one by one.

The professor kept his promise and Fred found real relaxation in listening to the tinkly tunes. But there was something in the room that intrigued him more than music boxes. In a corner, Fred saw a strong box, built like an old-fashioned safe.

Already well acquainted with the premises, Fred was quite sure that the safe was the only place where Durand could keep the mechanism that formed the brain of Thronzo. And with the chime of the music boxes, words kept repeating themselves through Fred's own brain.

They were the words of the voice that he had heard over the telephone, demanding that he complete the unfinished work of Talman, or take full blame for the traitor's death!

Being a strong box, the safe in the corner had a lock instead of a combination. Well acquainted with locks, Fred was sure that he could open it, if provided with the proper tools. Such tools were available in the workshop, which was at present deserted.

A bold idea flashed home to Fred. Knowing nothing of Durand's radio control, Fred was actually helpless in the present situation. But if he knew the real secret of the apparatus, he would be in a position to thwart Durand's enemies. Also, such a deed would be the stepping stone toward a move that would eventually trick the man whose voice had delivered an ultimatum that Fred could not ignore.

All that Fred needed was an opportunity, and it came.

Durand was about to wind another music box, when Zarratt suggested that they end the concert. Zarratt wanted to talk over some financial matters that couldn't wait, if Durand really hoped to beat Moyne in the robot race.

While Durand was locking the music parlor, Fred asked Sheila if she would mind forgoing his company for the evening. He wanted to return to the workshop and try out some of the ideas that Durand had mentioned at dinner. As Fred expected, Sheila rallied nobly to the suggestion, since it might prove helpful to her father.

Before Durand could argue that his new assistant had worked long enough for one day, Sheila decided that she was tired and ought to go to bed early. She waved good night from the stairs, and Fred was left with Durand and Zarratt. Since Zarratt had business to discuss, Durand handed Fred the key to the workshop as a matter of course.

The moment he reached the workshop, Fred became very busy with matters of his own. He selected the tools he wanted, tucked them into different pockets, and sneaked back to the music parlor. There, silence greeted him; silence so complete that Fred regarded it a golden opportunity.

Fred could be wrong in the step he was undertaking. On that score, he had no illusions. But this was one time when he'd rather be wrong than right, if this deed of seeming treachery could enable him to outwit the persecutor who threatened to brand him as a murderer!

CHAPTER XI. DEEDS IN THE DARK

COOLLY, Fred Corbin drew out the tools he wanted and began work on the door of the music parlor. For anyone with his mechanical knowledge, the door lock was easy. Yet Fred regarded it as the most ticklish part of his procedure.

While his hands worked, his eyes were peering over his shoulder, toward the stairs and off through the hall. The more Fred argued that he would hear footsteps if anyone came, the more he feared he wouldn't. At least he wasn't making any noise with the tools, but that indicated that he wasn't getting anywhere with his task. To help things, Fred turned the knob, intending to wedge a strip of metal between the latch and the socket, so that the door would yield the moment he unlocked it.

To Fred's surprise, the door gave. Either Durand had failed to lock it, or Fred's brief work with the tools had done the trick. Fortunately, the hallway was dark outside the music parlor, and the door didn't creak. So Fred felt safer as he moved into the room.

As he pushed the door shut, Fred looked toward the old safe. He could see it plainly by the moonlight that came through a narrow window set with bars. At first, Fred thought that the blackness which wavered across the safe came from shifting tree boughs, outside the window. Then, a dull click told him otherwise.

In the brief time that Fred had been in the workshop, someone else had entered the music room. That was why the door had been unlocked.

And now the intruder who had preceded Fred was a jump ahead on Fred's own contemplated task. That blackness at the safe front was a human figure, busily picking the old lock.

As Fred watched, the safe came open. A tiny flashlight glittered, showing the interior. From his angle, Fred could see the thing that the gleam disclosed. It was the precious control box that Professor Durand

carried every time he sent his robot into action!

A gloved hand reached forward. As it did, the black-clad figure shifted. By the moonlight, Fred saw a cloaked outline and realized who the intruder must be.

The Shadow!

In one sudden surge, Fred's chaotic thoughts swung into line. It amazed him how thoroughly he saw things. The Shadow himself was the whole answer to the riddle. He was the person who sought the secret of Durand's robot. Knowing that Moyne was also in the field, The Shadow was playing one against the other to his own advantage!

As for Cranston, The Shadow's friend, he fitted Fred's impeachment. He was the man who could most readily have made that mystery telephone call to which Fred had been forced to listen. Or it might be that Cranston had simply acted as a go-between, by notifying The Shadow that Fred had been thrust into the booth, ready to receive the call.

Unless Cranston was The Shadow!

That thought inspired Fred. It changed The Shadow from a superbeing into something humanly vulnerable. Picturing The Shadow as Cranston masquerading in a cloak, Fred was spurred into action. Here was chance for a thorough vindication - to trap the real murderer at Durand's own safe and turn him over to the law.

Poising for a spring, Fred saw an obstacle in his path. It was a chair, halfway to the safe. Only it wasn't an obstacle; it was a weapon. That idea put an end to Fred's hesitation. With one bound, Fred reached the chair and grabbed it. With his next stride, he slashed it, overarm style, down toward the cloaked figure that was turning to throw up a warding arm.

So useless did The Shadow's gesture seem that Fred delivered a contemptuous laugh along with the chair. That was the last thing that Fred remembered for a while.

ON the end of the arm was a fist that Fred didn't see. It came with the fling of the arm, and it picked a very visible target in the moonlight: Fred's chin. So suddenly did Fred stop, that the chair actually balanced from his wavering hands. The Shadow simply plucked it with one hand, while he caught Fred's sagging body with the other.

Setting the chair on the floor, The Shadow lifted Fred and rested him in it, turning his head toward the window so his face would catch the breeze. Patiently, The Shadow waited until Fred's eyes opened. Then, shaking the young man's shoulders, The Shadow placed a square box in his hands, and spoke in a whispered tone:

"We both came for this."

Fred nodded. Somehow, his faith in The Shadow was returning. He was realizing that criminals didn't treat their victims in such fair fashion.

"State why you came so soon."

The Shadow's words were dike a command. Involuntarily, Fred began to tell his story of the telephone call that had been thrust upon him. As he talked, Fred found himself eager to go on with it. So he went the limit, even admitting his suspicions of Cranston.

The Shadow's sibilant laugh carried an encouraging note. From beneath his cloak, he brought an object

that forced a stare from Fred's eyes. The thing was an exact replica of the box from Durand's safe!

"It was inevitable that you would be called upon to steal Durand's secret," declared The Shadow. "I foresaw that you would do so under pressure. However far you might have weakened, did not matter, since I was the person who induced Cranston to recommend you to Durand.

"So I prepared this duplicate box, containing a device of my own invention. A simple mechanism, but too delicate to stand any strain. I believe that it will operate Durand's robot, but it would immediately begin to fail. No amount of adjustment could improve it."

The Shadow opened the top of the box to show the mechanism. Fred didn't have to see the parts to admire the cleverness of the device. This would be a perfect present for anyone who was trying to steal Durand's own device. It would prove good enough to keep them guessing indefinitely.

Replacing the fake apparatus beneath his cloak, The Shadow handed Fred a folded sheet of paper that contained a diagram of the device. He told Fred to copy it and be ready to deliver it. The hoax could prove a help, both to Fred and The Shadow.

"The case is a strange one," asserted The Shadow. "Without a doubt, Moyne could profit by gaining Durand's invention. Moreover, Moyne would not have hesitated at buying out Talman. But Moyne would be too crafty to murder a go-between like Talman, unless he could turn the act into a perfect crime.

"If Moyne murdered Talman, we must find a way to prove it. If someone else is guilty, we must uncover the man. That is why I am meeting craft with craft. You are the weak link, Corbin; at any time you may be broken to end the chain. Instead of taking immediate measures, I am working to protect your position."

THAT statement cleared things thoroughly for Fred. He could understand why The Shadow had allowed him absolute leeway. Even if Fred had really tried to betray Durand, it would have helped the cause; nor would The Shadow have blamed Fred under the existing situation.

Nevertheless, Fred felt a thrill of pride at having won The Shadow's full confidence. Still, he found himself wondering how loyal he would have been to Durand, except for Sheila. The girl's confidence in her father had won Fred to her cause, and he couldn't deny that Sheila's extension of that confidence to himself was an added feature in the case.

The Shadow was turning to put Durand's box back in the safe. Pausing, he turned to Fred and said:

"This is only the control box. State what you have learned about the brain machine of the robot."

"I haven't learned anything," returned Fred frankly. "The head is empty and I haven't seen a mechanism that would fit inside it. I thought I was going to find the brain here in the safe."

The moonlight flooded most of the safe, but there were a few darkened corners. The Shadow probed them again with his flashlight and found them vacant. Weighing Durand's control box, The Shadow noted something that caused him to hunt for the catch that opened it. When he found the catch, the box flipped open.

Then Fred really stared.

The Shadow was tilting the box into the moonlight. Attached to the open lid Fred saw a small metal spring attached to the outside button. The spring was a mechanical clicker, of the sort that could be bought at any ten-cent store.

The box itself was empty!

The secret of Durand's radio control was that there wasn't any!

Utterly nonplused, Fred sat staring at the empty box until The Shadow closed it with a whispered laugh. Replacing the box in the safe The Shadow locked the latter with a peculiar shaped key and beckoned Fred out through the music parlor.

Maybe Fred was still too stupefied to worry. Perhaps it was The Shadow's presence that allayed his former fears. Whichever the case, Fred wasn't apprehensive of approaching footsteps even when they came. Durand and Zarratt were returning from their conference while lighter footsteps on the stairs told that Sheila was coming down.

The Shadow had locked the parlor door. With a quick sweep, he not only merged himself with darkness, but took Fred into that realm with him. Along with his cloaked friend, Fred found himself back at the workshop door.

"The police commissioner is coming here this evening," said The Shadow. "It is just as well that you do not see him. If you can find a reason to stay here in the workshop, so much the better."

Durand's footsteps were coming toward the workshop. The Shadow pressed Fred inside and closed the door. Picking up a measuring tape, Fred stepped over to the robot and began to check its dimensions. Almost immediately the door opened and Fred turned, expecting to see The Shadow, dodging into the workshop to avoid Durand.

Instead, Fred saw Durand himself!

Beyond the door was the dim-lit corridor, yet when Fred glanced along it, he failed to see the slightest sign of a gliding shape in black. Again, The Shadow had departed in his mysterious style, and to Fred the feat was baffling.

Except for the fact that Durand had been in conference with Zarratt, Fred Corbin would have readily believed that the professor himself was The Shadow!

CHAPTER XII. THE WRONG CHOICE

STANDING inside the door, Professor Durand kept watching his new assistant. The fact worried Fred, particularly Durand's silence. Fred wished that the professor would hum one of his crazy tunes; it would, at least, relieve the tension.

For Fred feared that there was suspicion behind Durand's unchanging gaze.

After all, Fred had come to the workshop ostensibly to try out some of the plans mentioned at dinner. Those plans followed the all-important pattern - that of rearranging the internal workings of Thronzo so that the robot's various units would all fit into the body. But at present Fred was still measuring the exterior, which indicated that he hadn't progressed far with his task.

It might be that Durand's shrewd brain was thinking of other things that his new assistant might have been doing in the past half-hour. Groping for an idea that would help his status, Fred turned from the robot, and declared:

"I have it, professor. What Thronzo needs is a square body. The present cubic capacity is sufficient, but it isn't the right shape. You're trying to put square pegs in a round hole."

Having thus given a reason for all the time spent in mere measurement, Fred watched for Durand's reaction.

To his surprise, there was none. There wasn't any fade of suspicion from Durand's face, because he hadn't any suspicion in the first place.

All this while, Durand had been looking at Fred with an expression of complete satisfaction, as though his new assistant's interest in the robot was itself a sufficient guarantee of Fred's loyalty and honesty.

"A square body wouldn't do," spoke Durand reflectively. "It would be all right, Corbin, except for the feature of bullet reflection, which you seem to have overlooked."

Fred nodded. Taking off his coat, he tossed it on a chair and started to open the robot's body. Before Fred could proceed with other work, Durand stopped him and drew him out through the workshop door.

"I like your zeal, Corbin," declared Durand as they walked toward the main part of the house. "But first, let me get to the crux of things. Zarratt tells me I need money. Otherwise, I can't compete with Moyne. Though Moyne no longer has a factory, he can raise all the funds he needs. Assuming that he does produce a robot the equivalent of mine, the question of quantity output will become the deciding factor. Do you understand?"

Fred nodded. "If you need a backer, why doesn't Zarratt find one? Why doesn't he talk to men like Cranston? They have money, but they aren't profit-mad like Moyne."

"We have already found the man we need," returned Durand. "His name is Clinton Grenshaw. He is a retired manufacturer who lives near New Rochelle. We should have closed the deal long ago. The trouble is that Grenshaw asks too many questions."

"Too many questions?"

"Yes - of a mechanical nature. Questions that Zarratt is unable to answer. So, this evening, I intended to go along and answer them. Unfortunately, while Zarratt and I were in conference, I received a phone call from the police commissioner saying that he was coming here to discuss the Talman case. And so -"

Durand paused as footsteps arrived. Fred turned and saw Zarratt strolling up, his hands in his coat pockets. With a glance from Fred to Durand, Zarratt asked

"What about it, professor? Is Corbin going with me?"

"I was just about to ask him," returned Durand. "I leave it to you, Corbin. Do you feel familiar enough with the robot subject to go in my stead, or would you prefer to spend this evening in the workshop, studying further details?"

NORMALLY, Fred would have decided in favor of further research. But he remembered The Shadow's admonition to avoid the police commissioner. Staying in the workshop was one method; to be gone from the house was another way, and better.

"I'll go," Fred told Durand. Turning to Zarratt, he queried: "How soon do you want to start?"

"Right away," replied Zarratt. "I'll phone Grenshaw and tell him we're on our way. Meanwhile, you'd better get into some other clothes. You've been working most of the day in those."

Sheila must have gone upstairs again, for Fred didn't see her anywhere around. Reaching his own room,

he had just changed to another suit when he remembered the coat that he had left in the workshop.

In the pocket of that coat was the diagram that The Shadow wanted Fred to copy as bait for the plotters who were seeking the secret of Durand's radio control!

It was too late to go back and get the sheet. Durand had locked the door when he and Fred left the workshop. Fred couldn't think of a suitable excuse to have Durand unlock the room again. Inasmuch as Durand wouldn't be returning to the workshop himself, Fred decided that the fake plan sheet was quite safe where it was.

Furthermore, Zarratt was waiting at the foot of the stairs when Fred came down. Having phoned Grenshaw and found him home, Zarratt was anxious to get started. So was Fred, for that matter, since the police commissioner might arrive at any moment.

So Fred left with Zarratt, while Durand saw them on their way from the door of the music parlor, which he had just unlocked, intending to receive the commissioner in that room.

As they rode out from the driveway in Zarratt's car, Fred glanced back at the sprawly mansion. The lights were still on in the workshop; Durand had forgotten to turn them off when he locked the door. However, it wouldn't matter, because the light switch itself was outside the door; hence Durand wouldn't enter when he did turn them off.

What really bothered Fred was the singular discovery that he and The Shadow had made in Durand's safe - the fact that the professor's own control box was an utter fake!

Where did Durand keep the mechanism that formed the brain of Thronzo? How did he manage to control it with a dummy apparatus?. Outside of Durand himself, Fred could think of only one person who might know the true secret of the robot's mechanical brain, namely - Sheila!

In that surmise, Fred was wrong. Sheila herself was much perplexed by many of her father's actions. That fact proved itself back in the mansion, soon after Fred and Zarratt had left. Attired in a fluffy dressing gown, Sheila appeared at the door of the music parlor, where Durand was amusing himself with his favorite hobby.

The professor wasn't playing his music boxes; instead, he had taken some of them apart. He was chuckling a little tune that had been bothering him all afternoon, and he was plucking the pins from one of the brass music rolls, to replace them in other sockets.

While Sheila watched, Durand finished his task. He was putting the roll back in the case when he looked up and saw the girl. For a moment Durand appeared startled; then, with one of his accustomed smiles, he said:

"Listen, Sheila! I have arranged a tune of my own composition - the one you heard me hum today."

DURAND started the music. It was the tune, all right, though how Durand had remembered so many discords Sheila couldn't understand.

"Please don't play it, dad!" admonished Sheila. "It jars my nerves. Tell me, why is the commissioner coming here tonight?"

"Mere routine, my dear," rejoined Durand, as he stopped the music. "He says that Inspector Cardona has a ream of reports that he wants me to look over."

"It couldn't be that they suspect you of killing Talman -"

"Impossible!" interrupted Durand. "If they doubted our story, they would have apprehended us both while we were in New York today. The police would never allow a suspicious party to leave their jurisdiction."

"Then it may be something that concerns the man in gray?"

"I believe so," nodded Durand. "Inspector Cardona has been tracing all Talman's old friends and associates. He will probably ask me to go over the list."

The doorbell announced the visitors. Durand went to admit them, and Sheila went up the stairs as far as the landing, where she stepped from sight. The girl saw Weston enter with Cardona, the latter carrying a fat brief case that evidently contained the report sheets and the photographs.

While the professor was conducting the arrivals to the music parlor, Sheila heard him ask why Cranston hadn't come along. The commissioner answered that his friend had begun to lose interest in the case, a common habit with Cranston when matters reached a routine state. Tonight, Cranston was making the rounds of his favorite night clubs, which was his idea of occasional exercise.

As the door of the music parlor closed, Sheila thought she saw what seemed living blackness, gliding from the front door toward the parlor itself. Gloom swallowed the shape so swiftly that Sheila felt that her imagination was tricking her.

Still, such blackness could be real. If so, it might have continued into deeper darkness farther along the hall.

Almost without thinking, Sheila glanced from a window on the landing toward the extension where the workshop was located. She noted that the lights were still on in the workshop. It was peculiar that the shop should still be lighted at the very time when a ghostly figure had vanished in that direction!

HURRYING to her room, Sheila found the revolver that the New York police had returned to her after waiving the prerogatives of the Sullivan Act. Clutching the gun tightly, the girl went down the back stairs. Reaching the workshop door, she didn't waste time wondering whether it was locked. Clutching the knob, Sheila turned it and gave a shove. The floor flew inward.

Silhouetted against the glistening bulk of Thronzo, Sheila saw a cloaked shape that was rising suddenly from a couch. The same figure that had gripped her at Talman's, that of the creature called The Shadow, who by some quirk of the law was regarded as free from any blame in Talman's death.

Grimly, Sheila aimed her gun. This time, she'd shoot first and let The Shadow explain later - if he proved able. Should she kill the intruder, Sheila could explain things herself. At present she was in her own home, where she had a perfect right to deal summarily with strangers who burgled their way into a workshop.

As she aimed, Sheila thought she saw The Shadow drop back to his crouch. Huddled low, his head was bunched forward and his arms were waving back and forth, as though he intended to raise them. Sheila allowed about half a second for the arms to come up; when they didn't, she tightened her finger on the gun trigger.

Blackness overwhelmed Sheila, gun and all. Again she was in the middle of a surprising whirl, as at Talman's. Her gun was gone, her slippers were flying as she somersaulted backward, to land suddenly, but lightly, as The Shadow broke her fall. Pulling the collar of the dressing gown from her eyes, Sheila looked up at The Shadow.

Bewildered, the girl changed her stare toward the thing with the waving arms. It was only Fred's work

coat, hanging over the back of a chair. The Shadow had been going through the pockets of the coat when Sheila made her precipitous entry. Wheeling the chair, he had set the coat arms in motion, holding Sheila's attention while he made a swift, circular drive to suppress her gunfire.

In terse, whispered words, The Shadow was demanding that Sheila tell him where Fred had gone. To her own amazement, the girl was giving the required facts, for she'd heard her father arrange to have Fred accompany Zarratt

That Fred had taken the wrong choice, seemed apparent from the grim laugh that issued from The Shadow's lips. Then:

"Phone Clinton Grenshaw," The Shadow ordered. "Tell him to leave before his visitors arrive. He can leave word to have them wait for his return, saying that he will be back within an hour."

Within an hour!

That would allow The Shadow ample time to overtake Zarratt and Fred. The fact was driving home to Sheila as she nodded, only to finish with a bewildered stare

The Shadow was gone!

Yet his instruction must be obeyed. The Shadow had stirred Sheila's curiosity to the pitch where she was doubting everyone, herself included, with one exception.

The girl no longer doubted The Shadow, that strange, mysterious master who somehow seemed to hold a grasp upon all things to be!

CHAPTER XIII. FRAMED CRIME

THERE was a party in progress at Grenshaw's house when Zarratt and Fred arrived there. The lights, the sounds of music and voices, annoyed Zarratt as though he expected them to interfere with the coming conference.

Instead of stopping at Grenshaw's front door, Zarratt turned the car along a driveway that ran past the sizable house. There, he stopped by a side door.

"I'd better phone the professor," said Zarratt nervously. "Maybe he wouldn't like it, there being so many people around. I'll drive down to the railroad station and make the call. You go in and tell Grenshaw I'll be along later."

"But I don't know Grenshaw -"

"Tell him you're with me. Only don't mention that I'm phoning the professor. Say that I went to a garage to have my tires checked."

Fred stepped from the car and Zarratt pulled away through the drive and out the other end. Finding a doorbell, Fred pressed it, and stood silent and puzzled. He wondered what he was going to say to Grenshaw, to kill time until Zarratt returned.

Nobody answered the door, so Fred rang again. At least this was a good stall for time. While he waited, he could still hear sounds floating from the front windows of the house, but they were drowned occasionally by the basso overtones of whistles from Long Island Sound.

Grenshaw's house was close to the water and a raw fog was settling there. The chill of the night caused

Fred to draw his overcoat tighter and raise its collar around his face and ears. Outside of being brown instead of gray, this new coat had further advantage over Fred's old one. It was heavier, better suited to the cold spell that had set in lately.

Fred was pushing the button the third time when the door suddenly opened. Inside stood a very old servant, who squinted into the darkness as though he couldn't see Fred at all. To help the man, Fred gave his name and said he wanted to see Mr. Grenshaw.

"Hey?" came the query. "Who shall I say?"

Evidently the codger was deaf and couldn't hear Fred's name, though he had made out that of Grenshaw. So Fred leaned closer and fairly shouted in the fellow's ear:

"Tell him I'm with Mr. Zarratt."

The servant repeated the name Zarratt half aloud, then nodded as though he remembered it. With a bow, he ushered Fred in through a hallway and into a side room that looked like a study. As Fred turned and dropped his coat collar, he saw only the servant's bowed back. The man was on the way to summon Grenshaw.

The two must have met in the hallway, for Fred heard a heavy voice inquiring:

"Who is it, Collins?"

Then came the word: "Good!" Footsteps followed and Grenshaw himself stepped into the study.

FRED saw a gaunt face, with rather friendly eyes, surmounted by thin hair streaked with gray. For a moment Clinton Grenshaw was surprised at not seeing Niles Zarratt; then, in blunt tone, he inquired:

"You're Corbin, the technician that Zarratt mentioned?"

Fred nodded and the introduction was sufficient. Grenshaw closed the door, crossed to his desk, shoved Fred a box of cigars, then declared:

"Go right ahead. Tell me all about the robot."

This was something of a quandary for Fred. He remembered Zarratt's annoyance at seeing so much going on at Grenshaw's. That situation was amended by the fact that Grenshaw was giving Fred a private interview. The trouble now was that Zarratt was not on hand to take his part in the conference. Rather hesitatingly, Fred mentioned that Zarratt would be right along; that perhaps they should wait.

At that, Grenshaw displayed annoyance of his own.

"Wait!" he exclaimed. "It's always wait, with Zarratt! I tell you candidly, Corbin, I can't understand the chap. He wants me to finance Durand's robot on the professor's own terms, and that part is fair enough. I'm to receive five percent on my investment and Zarratt is to go on the company pay roll at a proper salary.

"But all Zarratt does is keep harping on these terms, as though they settled the full question. Of course he takes time out to denounce men like Moyne, who want to take over the robot proposition and make too good a thing of it. But that isn't what I want to hear."

Chewing the end from his cigar, Grenshaw hauled open a desk drawer and flung a stack of papers Fred's direction. Looking them over, Fred saw that they were a typewritten prospectus covering the subject of

Durand's robot.

"There's everything in black and white," asserted Grenshaw. "It tells all that the robot can do, without saying how the thing does it. I've told Zarratt that I want to talk with Durand, but he can never seem to arrange an interview. Somehow, I've come to doubt that Zarratt really wants to promote Durand's robot."

Nodding despite himself, Fred found that he was beginning to agree with Grenshaw. Attached to the prospectus was a list of questions made up by Grenshaw, but none of them bore answers. Grenshaw explained that he'd asked Zarratt to take the list to Durand, but the promoter had twice forgotten it.

"Frankly, Corbin," summed up Grenshaw, "I'm ready to call off the deal. I was going to tell off Zarratt this evening, with you as witness. But since you're here alone - well, if you have anything to say -"

Fred had plenty to say and promptly began it. For one thing, he had Durand's own assurance that Grenshaw was entitled to know more about the robot. Taking the questions in order, Fred began to answer them. Soon he was drawing rough diagrams covering the matter of the robot's motive power and the actions of its body units.

DURING the half-hour that Fred lectured, Grenshaw kept lifting the telephone and clicking its hook, without getting a response. Each time he didn't bother very long, because he was too interested in the things that Fred was telling him. As for Fred, he was doing nobly. He was telling Grenshaw enough, yet not too much.

"You see," said Fred at length, "it wouldn't do for me to give you exact specifications of the motor or the body machines. These diagrams give a fair idea, without explaining too many details. I wouldn't want Professor Durand to think I was giving away the whole thing, or even as much of it as I know. That was the trouble with Talman."

Grenshaw nodded that he understood.

"Take the formula for the explosive," continued Fred. "I don't even know what it is, though I suppose Talman did. But I am sure that it is feasible. Therefore, everything is about covered."

"With one exception," said Grenshaw with a smile. "You haven't told me a thing about the remote control that Durand uses with his robot. That, I understand, is Durand's most precious secret, and I expect him to keep it."

Rising from the desk, Grenshaw carried the telephone with him, rattling its hook again. He gestured toward Fred's diagrams.

"These are sufficient," assured Grenshaw. "I am satisfied that the robot will work. If this telephone will only work, I'll call Professor Durand and tell him personally that I am willing to back his invention to the hilt. Only I want credit for the sale to go to you, Corbin, instead of to Zarratt -"

Interrupting himself, Grenshaw stared at the extension cord of the telephone. He had come all the way around the desk and the cord had followed him. Instead of being attached to the telephone box, the end of the cord was trailing along the floor.

"So that's it!" exclaimed Grenshaw. "Zarratt doesn't want me to phone Durand! He's been playing a double game all along, I take it. No wonder he didn't return as he told you he would. Did you see Zarratt clip that cord while he was in here?"

"Zarratt wasn't in here," replied Fred blankly. "He left me at the side door and told me to come in alone."

"How long were you there? Several minutes, I guess."

Grenshaw gave a knowing nod. He turned to a door in the rear corner of the study and beckoned to Fred.

"Zarratt is familiar with these premises," explained Grenshaw. "He probably climbed in through the storeroom window while you were waiting for Collins to admit you. We'll see what evidence we can find -"

There was to be more evidence than Grenshaw believed. Not evidence against Zarratt, specifically, but full proof that an intruder had come in by the storeroom. If Grenshaw had known what that evidence would be, he would not have looked for it so boldly.

THE evidence produced itself in the form of a glistening revolver that shoved from the darkness of the storeroom before Grenshaw could pull the door half open. Fred saw the glitter and sprang forward with an alarmed cry as Grenshaw recoiled.

But neither Fred's surge nor Grenshaw's retreat were quick enough. The gun stabbed twice, straight for Grenshaw's heart. With a jerk, the gray-haired man went backward, then began a forward topple that turned a side twist as the hand with the gun shoved farther through the door and roughly pushed the falling victim from its path.

Halting in momentary horror, Fred resumed his lunge. He was grabbing for the gun hand as it projected through the door, confident that he could seize it and retain its owner with it. This murder was as daring and vicious as the slaying of Talman, but the killer would have to deal with a young and active fighter like Fred Corbin, instead of old Professor Durand.

The killer dealt with Fred all right. He didn't try to whip away his gun hand; instead, he shouldered the door wide open in Fred's direction. His fingers almost on the smoking gun, Fred received the door full force against his forehead. His head seemed to burst with a flare of imaginary skyrockets as Fred went flying back into the room.

It was a hard jolt, but not enough to stop Fred's urge for vengeance. He came up reeling, one hand clamped to his head, another encountering a chair. He used the chair as a missile, the way he had with The Shadow, but this time Fred's move was a sideswipe that didn't leave his chin wide open.

The trouble was that Fred was groggy, though he didn't know it. Out from the storeroom, the killer cut past the swinging chair, grabbed the desk lamp and hurled it at Fred. Glancing from Fred's shoulder, the lamp struck the wall and crashed.

In the darkness, Fred's blunders became wilder. He grappled for the killer and found him, not realizing that it was exactly what his adversary wanted. Fred was grabbing for the gun and he found it in his fist, because his assailant planted it there.

With the same action, the man bashed Fred back against the wall, further jarring his still-scattered senses. Half slumping to the floor, Fred heard the door of the study open and slam, because it was close beside him. What his scattered wits couldn't sense was that the killer didn't go out through that door.

Instead, the murderer was creeping back through the study itself, carefully side-stepping Grenshaw's body in order to reach the storeroom and go out by its window.

Meanwhile, Fred was taking the bait that the killer gave him. Clutching the gun in one hand, Fred was groping for the knob of the hall-way door, hardly realizing that fists were pounding against it from the

other side.

The door was latched, so Fred yanked it open. He saw figures outside and rushed them, groggily thinking that one must be the murderer. As he brandished the gun, men fell back, only to surge in from other angles as Fred reeled past them. In the gloom of the hall, it didn't occur to Fred that they were seeking a murderer, too.

They were friends of Grenshaw, these arrivals, and their candidate for the role of killer was Fred Corbin!

Half a minute more and they would have held the prey powerless, for Fred couldn't seem to beat off the hands that gripped him. Then, with a swish from the side hall, came a human whirlwind that seemed a portion of the darkness brought to life.

Men were flying, scattering under the force of a cloaked tidal wave that literally scooped Fred Corbin from his clutches and swept him, still unrecognized, back into Grenshaw's study.

Only one being could have furnished such swift rescue:

The Shadow!

CHAPTER XIV. ALIBI TRAIL

As the door slammed, The Shadow's flashlight glimmered. It focused first on a big chair where The Shadow promptly shoved Fred, plucking away his revolver at the same time. The gun went beneath The Shadow's cloak, to be retained as another souvenir of an effort to plant murder on Fred Corbin.

Men were battering at the door anew. Voices were shouting to go around the house and block off the killer's escape. Seeing the open door to the storeroom, The Shadow observed dim light from an open window beyond it and recognized the route that the actual murderer must have taken.

The Shadow gave Grenshaw's friends priority in the task of stopping the real killer - if they could find him! More important at this moment was the job of getting Fred clear of another jam.

On the desk lay Fred's diagrams, along with the prospectus and the question list. Beyond those, The Shadow saw an open desk drawer, containing a few papers among its odds and ends. Rather than leave any chance evidence, he plucked the items from the drawer, rolled them inside the diagrams and the typewritten sheets. Thrusting the batch beneath his cloak, The Shadow turned to Fred, pulled the young, man to his feet and helped him on with his coat and hat.

Drawing Fred past Grenshaw's body, The Shadow stopped him at the storeroom window. Outside were men who saw the open window and were arguing what to do next. Some thought that the killer had already gone; others believed he might still be in the study. But the latter preferred to crouch outside the window, while the rest brought aid.

The debate ended just as two men took their stations and the others turned away. A black-clad avalanche swooped from the window, flattened the two crouchers and lunged upon the others who were just turning away. As The Shadow cleared the path in that swift fashion, Fred sprang down from the window and followed him across the lawn.

Crashes told that Grenshaw's study door had given. Shouts both inside the house and out announced that a chase was under way. It was a handicap for The Shadow, this dealing with Grenshaw's friends, since they, like The Shadow himself, were out for justice even though their idea of it was warped.

The men that The Shadow scattered were up again, leading the pursuit and making a good job of it, even though they shouted back that there were many fugitives instead of only two. The Shadow had sprawled men in such swift succession, that all thought they had met with different fighters.

Doubling back toward the driveway, The Shadow took Fred with him, straight for a car that was standing with its motor running and a driver behind the wheel. Fred hoped for the moment that the car was Zarratt's, but it wasn't. It belonged to one of Grenshaw's friends, who believed that the killer had already fled and wanted to go after him by car.

The driver came flying from the wheel so suddenly that Fred thought something must have broken loose and pitched him out; then, seeing blackness by the open door, Fred realized that The Shadow was again responsible. Hauling Fred in beside him, The Shadow started away in the borrowed car to the accompaniment of still louder shouts.

Then, for the first time, Fred heard The Shadow's whispered laugh. Wisely, the cloaked rescuer had preserved silence during his present mission. This wasn't a case like Talman's death, where the stories of witnesses like Durand and Sheila would tally with The Shadow's story, should he have to tell it.

There were no witnesses to Grenshaw's murder except Fred Corbin, who, if identified, would rate as suspect No. 1!

TUNED almost to The Shadow's laugh came the chime of a distant clock striking eleven. Those reverberations seemed to stimulate the whispered mirth that Fred heard. At least the time element in this case was well established, which helped The Shadow somewhat.

His laugh took a recollective note as he veered the car toward the Sound. One block and The Shadow made another sharp turn, threw the gear in neutral, and pushed Fred from the far door.

Ahead lay a long slope, extending for more than half a mile, a slight grade down which the car was coasting beneath the trees that arched above the narrow lane. The Shadow had set its wheels absolutely straight, as the taillights proved when they twinkled below the overhanging boughs.

The Shadow didn't wait, however, to watch the result of that decoy trail which would mislead arriving cars. Instead, he was drawing Fred away on foot, taking a short-cut along bypaths, through hedges, and finally across the lawn of a large old house close to the Sound.

Evidently The Shadow knew the place and there was no chance of anyone witnessing his arrival with Fred, because the huge house was closed. At first, Fred thought they were going to take refuge in the building; then The Shadow was hurrying him along a boarded walk, into a boathouse by the water front.

The fact that the boathouse was padlocked, did not matter. The Shadow trumped the padlock open with a single whack of an automatic butt. Next they were in a speedboat and The Shadow was gesturing for Fred to pull the lever that opened a door leading out to the Sound. As the door rumbled under Fred's tug, so did the boat's motor.

The Shadow had remembered this particular speedboat, owned by a man who had closed his house for the winter. Within a few days, the boat was to be removed for storage, but tonight it could serve The Shadow.

Serve him it did, in a fashion that took Fred's breath away. Scudding out into the fog-laden Sound, the trim craft thrummed into a display of speed that Fred did not deem possible.

Whether The Shadow was guiding by eye or ear, Fred could not tell, though he rather suspected the

latter. While the fog was not overly thick, the speedboat ate up the stretch of visibility at too terrific a clip to be handled by sight alone. Every time a whistle blared through the fog, The Shadow checked his course anew.

Fred hadn't begun to realize how far they'd traveled when he saw a great, graceful line rising in the fog. They swished under it so fast that the mighty structure was fading in the background when Fred turned around to look. It was the Bronx-Whitestone Bridge, from Long Island to the mainland.

Then a bulkier monster was looming from the mist, above a wave-capped lane where the speedboat jounced as though its double bottoms were battering each other. A line of light was slithering overhead, an express train crossing the great Hell Gate bridge.

This time they were under a span of the Triborough when Fred looked back and the speedboat was zooming down the East River, as though completing a race against time. Indeed, such a race it was, for The Shadow had clipped the minutes to a minimum. This zooming trip from the neighborhood of New Rochelle was something that could not be matched by land, what with traffic on the highways and railroad lines that fed into Manhattan Island.

Near a big bridge that crossed the East River, The Shadow cut off the motor and swung the boat for the shore. Amid a great swash of water, the craft not only reached an old pier that jutted to receive it, but went right under the pier, between the pilings. Shoving Fred out, The Shadow whisked him up to a dead-end street; around a corner, they came upon a cab parked near a riverfront apartment house.

IT wasn't The Shadow's cab, but it served quite as well. Leaning forward, The Shadow spoke to the drowsing driver in a quiet tone that Fred could scarcely hear. Evidently the cabby was used to customer's who had to keep appointments in a hurry, for he lost no time in getting started.

Traffic proved no problem, for the destination was a hotel on the east side of Park Avenue, reached without any cross-town congestion. The cab stopped at what appeared to be a service entrance and while the driver was gratefully admiring a five-dollar bill for which no change was asked, The Shadow hurried Fred into the hotel

Next, Fred was riding up in a service elevator which The Shadow operated as though he owned it. As they reached the top floor and stepped out, they could hear the chatter of many voices, mingled with music, from around a corridor corner. Remembering Grenshaw's party, Fred started to shy away. The Shadow stopped him; hands on the shoulders of Fred's coat, he spoke in low tone:

"This is the Hotel Manitou. Go around the corner of the corridor and you will find yourself in the roof garden. Look for Lamont Cranston. You will probably see him on the other side of the floor."

Turning to nod, Fred found that The Shadow was gone, more than that, he had taken Fred's hat and coat with him. Amazing though it seemed to Fred, this disappearance was quite simple. The Shadow had merely stepped to a convenient door near the elevator

On the way through a deserted banquet room, The Shadow rolled his cloak and hat inside of Fred's coat and placed the latter on a chair behind some potted palms. Reaching the roof garden through another door, he appeared as Lamont Cranston, leisurely as ever, and attired in flawless evening clothes.

Cranston's glance took in Fred entering by the far door. A gesture brought Fred across the floor and Cranston bowed him to a table, where an attractive brunette was seated. Introducing the girl as Miss Lane; Cranston paused to call a head waiter.

"We've been waiting ten minutes," admonished Cranston, "and still no service. I'm giving you until half

past eleven."

With that, Cranston gestured to a clock above the main door. It showed exactly eleven twenty-seven. The head water hurried away. Casually, Cranston turned to the brunette.

"Sorry, Margo," he said. "I had to meet Corbin at Grand Central. He came in on a local from New Rochelle. What time did you leave there, Fred - ten twenty-five, wasn't it?"

Despite himself, Fred nodded.

"It used to be forty-five minutes from Broadway," mused Cranston, with a slight smile, "but they've cut it down to thirty-five. I met you at Grand Central at ten minutes after eleven and we arrived here at quarter past. Didn't we, Margo?"

"Thereabouts," replied Margo. "I'd say seventeen minutes past, by the roof-garden clock. I was watching it like I always do when I wait for you, Lamont."

So far, Fred hadn't said a word. His nod was the only part he'd played in the building of his own alibi. So this was the reason for The Shadow's rapid trip. An alibi trail to offset the new attempt of enemies who were determined to pin murder on Fred Corbin!

There was a final touch that Cranston added, after giving an order to the waiter who arrived before the stroke of half past.

"An odd chap, Zarratt," remarked Cranston. "Driving you over to New Rochelle, then telling you he'd rather call on Grenshaw alone. Well, at least he left you at the station, where you were able to call me and catch the ten thirty-five. Now that you're here, Corbin, you might as well stay in town overnight. Meanwhile, I hope Zarratt makes out all right with Grenshaw."

How Zarratt was making out, Fred couldn't guess, but he felt that his own cause was safe in the controlling hands of Cranston, the calm, unruffled gentleman who teamed so well with The Shadow!

CHAPTER XV. MURDER'S QUESTION

PROFESSOR DURAND and his daughter Sheila were stepping from a taxicab outside the office of Moyne Co. It was mid-afternoon and they had just arrived from New Jersey. Both were filled with misgivings, though their reasons varied.

To Durand the death of Clinton Grenshaw was a serious financial blow. Coupled with it was the possibility that Niles Zarratt might be implicated, in which case, Durand would lack the man who promoted his inventions. Of course Durand was likewise somewhat concerned about the status of his new assistant, Fred Corbin.

To Sheila, Grenshaw's death was a real tragedy. She had tried to telephone him as The Shadow ordered, but without avail. Finally her effort had been interrupted by a call from Zarratt, who had been arrested for a traffic violation near Grenshaw's home. By the time Sheila had convinced Zarratt that Grenshaw was in danger, it was too late. The police were already receiving news of Grenshaw's murder.

Indirectly, Sheila felt culpable. What made it worse was the fact that the police blamed Fred Corbin. All today, Sheila had been wondering how Fred had managed to answer the charges brought against him. At last, she was going to find out, for the police commissioner was the person who requested Sheila and her father to come to Moyne's offices.

As they entered, Durand began to hum the tune that had been running through his mind the past few days.

He chopped it off as they entered the conference room. There, along with Weston and Cardona, Sheila saw others that she recognized, among them Fred Corbin. Noting Sheila's anxious gaze, Fred smiled to assure her that everything was all right.

Commissioner Weston promptly took the floor.

"Regarding the Grenshaw murder," he declared, "both of these men have been released."

Following Weston's gesture, Sheila saw Niles Zarratt seated in a corner. As Weston finished his hand wave, he was pointing toward Fred Corbin.

"The case occurred outside my jurisdiction," continued Weston, "so I have no authority in the matter. However, I approve the finding, since each gave a satisfactory alibi."

Durand looked from Fred to Zarratt, and back again.

"They pinched me for busting through a red light, prof," Zarratt explained. "When the cop started to lecture me, I told him to fine me and forget it. When he got me over to the police station, I found I didn't have any money. That happened around ten thirty."

"A little earlier," corrected Fred. "It was after you dropped me at the station, Zarratt. You were supposed to call me from Grenshaw's if you needed me, so when I didn't hear from you, I took the ten thirty-five into town."

From across the room, Lamont Cranston noted the way Zarratt's face tightened. He was afraid to match his word against Fred's, considering, the alibi that Fred had somehow constructed. According to reliable witnesses, Grenshaw's death had occurred only a few minutes before eleven o'clock.

Fred couldn't possibly have gotten from New Rochelle to midtown Manhattan in less than thirty minutes. Yet Cranston had met him in Grand Central at ten minutes past eleven; a girl named Margo Lane had seen him arrive at the Manitou Roof at quarter past; while the head waiter at the place valiantly avowed that their order was taken well before half past eleven.

Neatly, The Shadow had beaten crime at its own game, offsetting a clever frame-up with an even neater alibi.

AS luck had it, another factor had entered in Fred's favor; namely, Collins, Grenshaw's old servant.

Collins hadn't been able to identify Fred as the stranger who had come to Grenshaw's side door. In fact, Collins hadn't taken the man for a stranger, but supposed he was Zarratt, because he had given that name. Even with his own alibi established, Zarratt was thereby thrown on the defensive.

However convincing those tales of last night might be, they didn't entirely impress Inspector Joe Cardona. He regarded the Grenshaw case as a sequel to the Talman murder, and said so.

"Funny business on your part, Zarratt," challenged Cardona. "Going through red lights and getting yourself hauled in was pretty convenient right before a murder."

"It happened that way, though," argued Zarratt. "And why would I have wanted to kill Grenshaw?"

Fred could have answered that one, but this time he was forced to silence. He couldn't admit that Grenshaw had personally expressed doubt regarding Zarratt's loyalty to Durand.

"I guess you wouldn't have, Zarratt," conceded Cardona. "You were working for Durand's interests,

weren't you?"

Zarratt gave an eager nod - too eager.

"That's fine," added Cardona. "I guess you'd go a long way to do the professor a good turn."

"Of course I would," agreed Zarratt.

"That's very fine," Cardona emphasized. "Where were you the night that somebody put a load of lead into Tim Talman? Were you the guy who did it, Zarratt?"

Zarratt's sallow face didn't turn pale; it's hue was too deep-dyed. But those features did about everything else that made them look sickly. Cardona had struck something and struck it hard; at least, so it seemed - until Zarratt rallied.

"I was out at Grenshaw's that night," he argued hoarsely. "I went there often. It was a Wednesday night, wasn't it?"

"That's right," returned Cardona. "Wednesday, the twentieth."

Fumbling in his pocket, Zarratt brought out some letters. They were from Grenshaw in reference to the financial arrangements that he had discussed with Zarratt. One, written only a few days ago, contained the typewritten paragraph that Zarratt wanted. He read it aloud.

'"This letter will confirm our verbal conversation of the twentieth,"' read Zarratt. '"In the presence of my servant Collins, I agreed to finance the invention -"'

Zarratt cut short when Cardona snatched the letter from his hands. Settling back in his chair, Zarratt regained his poise.

"Go ahead and check it," suggested Zarratt triumphantly. "That's Grenshaw's signature. The letter was written on his own typewriter by a secretary. Collins will remember the interview."

HIS anger simmering beneath his poker-faced exterior, Cardona shoved the letter in his pocket. It was then that Professor Durand leaned forward and remarked:

"My suggestion, inspector, is that you question a person who might have wished to dispose of both Talman and Grenshaw." Turning, Durand looked squarely at Moyne. "Maybe you could help the inspector, Mr. Moyne."

A sharp stroke on Durand's part, but Moyne took it very bluntly. He simply waved toward Commissioner Weston.

"Tell Durand," suggested Moyne. "Where was I, commissioner, the night when Talman was slain?"

"You were at a banquet," replied Weston. "Sitting right next to me."

"And why did you leave the banquet, commissioner?"

"Because I received a telephone call from Inspector Cardona, telling me about the Talman murder."

Triumphantly, Moyne folded his arms and gave Durand a withering stare, not without a side glance for Cardona. Relaxing, Moyne smiled. Then, his face sobering again, he said:

"About last night, commissioner. Maybe Durand thinks that I could have murdered Grenshaw. As a

matter of fact, I never heard of Grenshaw. Durand himself should recognize that point, since he and Zarratt were keeping the Grenshaw matter a close secret. You knew nothing about Grenshaw, did you commissioner?"

"Absolutely nothing."

"We dined together last night, commissioner," continued Moyne. "The only reason that you left early was because you had to pay a visit to Durand. Otherwise, you would have come along with me to the Colossus Theater, to view my new robot -"

That was as far as Moyne could get with his second alibi. Professor Durand was on his feet, his fists waving in the air as he shrieked:

"What robot?"

"The one I told you about," returned Moyne. "Superlo, the multiple-duty robot, with a more than human brain. You saw the designs the other day. I turned the whole thing into a prefabricated job. It's just a matter of assembling the parts."

"Bah!" snorted Durand. "This Superlo, as you call him, cannot compete with a robot like Thronzo."

"Would you like to see Superlo?"

"I most certainly would!"

That ended the conference. Moyne suggested that they go uptown, to which everyone agreed. On the way out, Cranston suggested that Sheila and her father use his limousine, and in the course of things he included Margo with them, since she had come along to support Fred's alibi.

As a result, Fred found himself riding alone with Cranston in a cab, for which he was quite grateful, as he had a lot to say.

"You certainly helped me through," said Fred. "But I was jittery when Cardona brought up the Talman case."

"Why so?" inquired Cranston.

"Well," said Fred, "Zarratt proved an alibi. So did Moyne, and he was clearing himself on the Grenshaw death, too. Next thing, Cardona would have been asking me where I was the night Talman was killed."

"You were with me," remarked Cranston. "Don't you remember? We were together just before I stopped off at the club, where the commissioner met me."

Fred stared for a moment. Then:

"You sure have the answers," he admitted. "Yes, I suppose you could see me through on the Talman question, too."

"Very easily," asserted Cranston. "Why, you'd never even heard of Talman. Just as Moyne never heard of Grenshaw."

"You mean -"

"I was merely citing a case in point," interposed Cranston. "Suppose we forget the question of alibis until after we have seen Moyne's new robot."

As they rode along, Fred kept glancing at his cryptic companion, wondering how much Cranston had divined that he did not choose to tell. At last, Fred was convinced that Cranston's calm was genuine; that he, like Fred, was simply waiting for some new clue to crack the riddle of two murder's.

No riddle could exist without an answer.

Perhaps The Shadow knew!

CHAPTER XVI. THE GAME TURNS

THE Colossus Theater was the pride of Times Square, and its reputation was deserved. Not only was it the largest of all movie palaces, with stage equipped for the largest spectacles, but it had added features that many persons overlooked.

One of these was the grand foyer on the lower level, a room so huge that it formed an auditorium in itself. Here, people could spend their time if the theater was crowded, for the place formed a mammoth lounge. Nor would time thus spent prove dull. The grand foyer was stocked with statues, paintings, even television screens that furnished passing entertainment.

At the end of the grand foyer stood two brass doors large enough to be the gates of Gath. These massive barriers formed the entrance to the great crypt, of which the Colossus Theater was dully proud. Through the portals of the crypt had passed the greatest treasures of the world, there to be safeguarded and exhibited.

The Rumanian crown jewels had been displayed in the crypt; so had other rare paintings and art treasures brought from Europe. Once, the crypt had housed a collection of dinosaur eggs valued at a quarter-million dollars. It was here that the world famous stamp collection of the late Major Winthrop had been on exhibit prior to its auction.

The brass doors were furnished with special combination locks, which were changed for each new exhibit, so that only the persons responsible for the valuable wares could enter. Unfortunately, the great crypt had waned in popularity because the management of the theater could not find enough remarkable displays to keep it open.

Being a great believer in publicity, Rodney Moyne had offered to display his new robot, Superlo, in the grand crypt. The Colossus Theater had more than welcomed the idea. The exhibit was to start on the day the next feature picture opened, but the crypt had meanwhile been turned over to Moyne.

While his companions sat around the lounge, Moyne consulted a sheet of paper which listed the new combination. He worked the big brass dials and pressed the switch that caused the ten-foot doors to open under electric propulsion. Lights appeared automatically in the crypt and Moyne waved the others into the stonewalled exhibit room.

There stood Moyne's answer to Thronzo.

As a rival to Durand's robot, Superlo deserved real consideration. Moyne had apparently profited by Durand's mistakes, for Superlo was a bulkier job than Thronzo. The arms bulged, as though equipped with steel biceps muscles, and noting them, Fred Corbin decided that Moyne's designers must have enlarged the arms to hold some of the machinery.

Professor Durand was not interested in improvements. He wanted to see how closely certain features resembled those of his own robot. He walked around the steel giant, staring up at it, and while he did, he glared. Turning suddenly on his heel, Durand strode the whole length of the foyer as though he intended

to leave the theater. Then, turning back again, he surveyed Superlo from a distance.

Even at that long range, people could see the smile that flickered over Durand's face. Approaching slowly, Durand kept tilting his head to observe the robot from new angles. He reached the great doorway and stood there, humming softly. Entering again, he walked about Superlo, tapping the robot's steel sides with his knuckles.

When he had finished, Durand faced Moyne.

"A nice job, Moyne," declared Durand. "In some ways, it is quite as good as Thronzo."

Moyne bowed his thanks.

"I would have to say so," added Durand, with a glare, "because you have obviously copied the best features of my robot!"

"Point them out," suggested Moyne.

"Operate your robot and I can," challenged Durand. "Make it turn around and it will show the sleeve-swivel system that I built into Thronzo. Of that, I am sure!"

Unfortunately, Moyne couldn't operate his robot. His contract with the theater prevented it. While he was ushering persons out and closing the brass doors, he invited Durand to be present the night when Superlo made his debut.

"If you wish," suggested Moyne, "you can bring Thronzo here, so that the public can compare our rival robots."

They were walking across the foyer as Moyne made the offer. Durand still wore his smile and was humming his tune, but he said nothing. That continued all the way up the stairs, out through the theater lobby until they reached the street. Crossing the sidewalk, Durand stopped abruptly at the curb, finishing his little tune.

"There is one thing you have not stolen," declared Durand. "You do not know my secret of control. Without it, your robot is brainless and will not operate!"

Moyne's only answer was a smile as cryptic as Durand's. Watching Moyne's eyes, Sheila saw a gleam that worried her. She wanted to mention it to Fred, but he was talking with Cranston. Then, before Sheila could look at Moyne again, he turned and walked away.

THERE wasn't a worry in Fred's mind when he dined with Sheila and her father at the hotel where Durand had decided to stay overnight. Zarratt was present and in the professor's good graces, but that pleased Fred all the more. In his few words with Cranston, Fred had learned all he needed.

Cranston had heard from The Shadow. In visiting Durand's house the night before, The Shadow had found the fake control plans missing from Fred's pocket. The only man who could have taken them was Zarratt, because the workshop, unlike the music parlor, had duplicate keys, although Fred did not own one.

From what Grenshaw had told Fred, Zarratt was a traitor in Durand's own camp, his part in framing Fred being simply further evidence of the fact. By the same inference, Zarratt had probably sold out to Moyne and induced Talman to do the same. The next step was to prove the case against the conspirators.

It still didn't point to murder, the thing most important to be learned. Fred's own double alibi seemed

tame, compared to those established by Zarratt and Moyne. Yet the deaths of Talman and Grenshaw couldn't be the work of hirelings, the sort who had tried to waylay Professor Durand and The Shadow. The murders had been too pat, too well timed, and in each case only a single hand had shown itself.

Dinner over, they went up to Durand's suite, Fred chatting affably with Zarratt on the way. Each was making apologies to the other over last night's misunderstanding, and all the while Fred felt triumphant. Twice, Fred's enemies had tried to frame him; until they could prove one case or the other, they wouldn't dare to harm him. So Fred, for the present, held the key position.

Durand had brought along some of his pet music boxes. Sheila gave a hopeless sigh when he went into the other room to play them. But the professor didn't let his hobby keep him long. He rejoined the group in about half an hour and suggested that they go out for the evening, to which Sheila, for one, agreed.

While Durand was chatting with Zarratt, Sheila confided her real fears to Fred.

"Dad may do something foolish," the girl said. "We must watch him as soon as we get back home. He might bring Thronzo into the Colossus Theater, as he did at Moyne's factory."

"I know," nodded Fred. "Moyne gave him the hint today, but this time it wasn't a full-fledged invitation.

"Last night I met -"

Sheila interrupted herself without mentioning The Shadow. She still wasn't sure that Fred had ever met that personage in black. With Sheila, The Shadow preferred to shroud himself in mystery, rather than have the girl mistrust him through one of her quick but misguided decisions. For Sheila's way of leaping to conclusions was something that she never could control.

"I met someone who might help us," compromised Sheila. "I only hope that we can reach him if we need his aid."

Fred was quite sure that The Shadow could be reached at any time, but he didn't say so. He preferred to wait and see how matters went at Durand's house. Since that meant waiting until tomorrow, there was no use in worrying tonight. That was why Fred brushed aside the matter with an indifferent shrug. Sheila gave Fred a very thorough stare, which pleased him all the more. Fred felt he was doing his part to keep The Shadow's campaign an absolute secret.

OUTDOORS, Durand gestured his companions into a taxicab and spoke an order to the driver before getting in himself. They rode for a while, before Sheila exclaimed in sudden surprise:

"Why, dad - where are you taking us? We're way down at the tip of the island - near Moyne's office!"

Durand chuckled as the cab stopped. Paying the driver, he gestured for the others to follow him - which they did, through the side door of a building next to Moyne's. The professor seemed to know his way, for he picked a flight of stairs that led down to the cellar, where a man in overalls awaited them.

Fred thought that the fellow must be the building janitor, until he saw his face. The man was Kennard, the tight-lipped handy man who had served Durand so long and faithfully. Opening a door to a cellar compartment, Kennard stepped back.

Within stood Thronzo, faced toward the wall!

Closing the door, Durand drew the little control box from his overcoat pocket and smiled as he held it into the light.

"I had Kennard bring Thronzo in today," declared Durand. "I shall tell you why. Beneath Moyne's office is a vault where he keeps all his plans. Once we have gained those plans, we can prove that they are stolen, and Thronzo alone can get them for us!"

Sheila started an objection, that Durand stopped with a wave.

"I am not mad," assured the professor solemnly. "This time, I have thought things out beforehand. I ask you to trust me, because I know what I am doing. Moyne cannot possibly suspect my purpose; if he did, he would not have tried to bait me by showing me his new robot."

Watching Sheila's face, Fred saw its eager flush. Again, the girl had leaped to a quick decision. She, for one, was won over to Durand's idea. As for Zarratt, his features began to twitch, proving indeed that Durand's plan was something unforeseen. That decided Fred. Like Sheila, he was sold on Durand's new idea.

The game had turned. With Thronzo leading the attack, Professor Durand was ready to turn the game upon men of crime, in a fashion that would surprise even The Shadow.

So Fred Corbin believed, not knowing that the first surprise was to be his own!

CHAPTER XVII. DEATH POSTPONED

HOLDING the control box in one hand, Professor Durand began to press the button while he placed his other hand against the back of Thronzo and pushed the big robot from the dead center on which Kennard had rested it.

Smoothly, almost silently, yet with a power that reminded Fred of a starting locomotive, Thronzo went to work. Great hands of steel drove into the wall and clutched like claws. They came back dripping crumpled brick and dried mortar. Again Thronzo dug and his great legs champed forward.

It was marvelous to watch. The wall might have been mere sand, the way the robot hewed it. Slowly, steadily, but with persuasive power, the robot was working in low gear, its actions timed to the continued clicks from Durand's control box.

There was a long way to go. It would take at least an hour to reach Durand's vault, through the intervening foundations. But nothing could stop Thronzo, nor even slacken him. That was proven when the robot encountered an old metal pipe, set among the bricks. Thronzo simply twisted the metal like putty.

Fred's attention turned suddenly to the control box. This couldn't be the dummy from Durand's safe. Still, its chatter sounded hollow, as though the box were empty. Moving close to Durand, who was following Thronzo through the wall gap, Fred tilted his head to listen more closely.

A moment later Sheila was beside him. Turning, Fred noticed a questioning look in the girl's gaze. Fred tried to smile away the idea that was in Sheila's mind - that he was showing too much interest in Durand's control box. It was then that Zarratt interfered.

Things were getting too tight for Zarratt. He was Moyne's tool, though only Fred knew it, and he couldn't afford to have this game go through. Whatever he could do in the way of bluff, he would, and he was trying it when he made a rough grab at Fred's shoulder.

Fred welcomed the interference. Now was as good a time as any to have it out with Zarratt, before the fellow became really desperate. Coolly, Fred demanded:

"What's the trouble, Zarratt? Afraid I might be learning something that your friend Moyne wants? Hasn't he paid you yet for the plans Talman handed over?"

Zarratt's hands were groping madly at Fred's throat. With a shove, Fred reeled the sallow man toward the door, then pounced before Zarratt could open it. For a moment, Zarratt's eyes were frantic; then, with a sharp grin that should have made Fred suspect something, Zarratt took a long, wide swing at Fred's head.

IT was easy to duck such a blow. All it did was knock off Fred's hat and send it over toward Durand. In return, Fred placed a short punch on Zarratt's jaw and watched the fellow slump down the door. Turning, Fred caught an admiring glance from Sheila and felt sure he'd won back her estimation. With that, Fred stooped to pick up his hat.

Long habit caused Fred to thrust his left leg straight as he dipped his right knee. He'd dislocated his left knee during his last football year at Tech, and had favored it ever since. Lifting the hat, Fred brushed it off and was putting it on his head - when he heard Sheila's voice, low and cold.

Turning, Fred looked right into the muzzle of the girl's favorite gun. Above it, Sheila's eyes had narrowed, as her father's did when they meant determination.

"You killed Talman!" accused Sheila. "You were the man in gray. "You're wearing a brown hat tonight, but you picked it up the way you did the gray one. I remember!"

Zarratt was getting up from beside the door. Rubbing his chin with one hand, he was drawing a gun with the other. Covering Fred, Zarratt looked toward Durand, who had turned, holding the control box idle in his hand.

"Hear that, professor?" queried Zarratt. "Sheila called this fellow's bluff. Better let me take care of him."

Durand gave a nod.

"Let me have your hotel key," suggested Zarratt. "I'll keep Corbin there until you get back."

While Durand was producing the key, an odd look traced itself on Zarratt's face. He was watching Thronzo plow his steady way through the wall. For some reason, Zarratt was so interested that he forgot about Fred. But there wasn't a chance for Fred to make a break. Sheila still had him covered.

Then, Zarratt was intent on Fred again, pushing him toward the door. Glancing over his shoulder, Fred saw Sheila and her father, both with accusation in their gaze; nevertheless, he decided to appeal to them. He knew they'd listen long enough for him to weaken their trust in Zarratt. So they might have, if Fred had thought of it soon enough.

Fred had waited too long.

"Keep moving," Zarratt told him. They were too distant for Durand or Sheila to hear. "If you don't, I'll blast you, and they'll thank me for it!"

Fred let Zarratt prod him onward.

OUTSIDE the building, Zarratt shoved Fred into a cab, keeping the gun from sight. Instead of going straight to the hotel, they stopped at a poolroom, where two thugs joined them at Zarratt's signal. They kept on to the hotel, where Fred behaved himself on the way up in the elevator. Good behavior was imperative, considering that three pocketed guns were ready to blast him.

With his two followers guarding Fred, Zarratt picked up the telephone and called Moyne at his home.

"Listen, boss," said Zarratt. "You'd better get down to the office... Important? I'll say so! The genie has Thronzo doing the mole into your vault room... Sure! To get the plans! That's what he says.

"How long? You've got a half-hour, anyway... By the way, I've got Corbin here... Yeah, he gave himself away, like we thought he would... Want me to freeze him for a future, or should I liquidate right now?... Good enough."

As he spoke, Zarratt turned Fred's way. Ugly though his gaze was, it didn't reveal whatever decision Zarratt had heard Moyne give. To Fred, it made no difference. If Zarratt wouldn't shoot, Fred had nothing to lose. If death was Moyne's verdict, it was better to go out fighting.

Fred lunged for Zarratt. The two men popped in from each side and caught Fred by the arms. Zarratt simply inverted the telephone and rammed its flat base up against Fred's chin, so hard that Fred felt the jar at the back of his neck. The thugs laid Fred limp in his chair.

"I just put Corbin by-by," Zarratt told Moyne. "Now listen, boss, here's something real... That control of Durand's. It's whacky... I'll tell you what I mean. Thronzo kept right on plowing through while the genie was forgetting to press the button!

An audible chuckle came across the wire. Then Zarratt stood puzzled as he listened to what followed.

"Say, I've heard that thing," remarked Zarratt. "Hold the wire just a minute... You still have time."

Laying aside the telephone, Zarratt went into the other room and came back with a music box. He set it by the telephone and started it. After the box had tinkled part of its discordant tune, Zarratt cut it off. He listened at the phone again.

"All right," said Zarratt suddenly. "I've got it."

Zarratt hummed a tune that he had heard from Moyne, one containing a series of quick trills, much different from the slower beat of Durand's music. Ending the call, Zarratt took the music box into the other room, saying as he went:

"I'll only be gone ten minutes. Meanwhile, drag Corbin into the bathroom. Wrap your gats in towels to make less noise and turn on all the spigots, so no one will hear what noise there is."

THE ten minutes were nearly up when the door from the hallway opened. The man who stepped into sight was Lamont Cranston. Any other sounds he might have heard, were drowned by the roar of faucets. Stepping over toward a doorway that teemed with steam, Cranston saw Fred resting weakly in a corner, faced by a hard-faced man who was wrapping something in a towel.

Cranston's action came with whippet speed. His hand lashed in and snatched the bundle. As his opponent resisted, another man came lunging from the steam, hauling a gun out of a towel to aim Cranston's way. Figures reeled; broke suddenly apart. A gun stabbed.

Sprawling heavily, a figure hit the tiled floor. It was the thug who aimed for Cranston. Opposite him was his pal, his hands still struggling with a towel, in search of a gun no longer there. The revolver was in Cranston's hand, its muzzle trailing a wisp of smoke that was absorbed by the steam.

The man who was doing the towel act made a mad lunge. Cranston raised one hand and brought it down, catching the towel in the center. Fists that were thrusting for Cranston's throat went with the towel, for they weren't free from its tangle. At the same time, Cranston's other hand stroked the revolver against

the thug's head.

There were two figures on the floor when Cranston helped Fred out the door. As they went, Cranston tossed the revolver back beside its stunned owner. He told Fred to call the desk and report a gun fray in the room.

Fred nodded, at the same time gesturing toward the other door.

A cane belonging to Durand was standing in a corner. Cranston took it to the door and found its length just right. He wedged it tightly across the doorway, about a foot from the floor. He gestured upward, indicating for Fred to talk louder. To gain a hearing above the roaring water, Fred shouted across the telephone.

The door of the other room yanked open and Zarratt lunged out, drawing a gun to aim at Fred. His lunge became a full length dive as his foot hooked the waiting cane. Head-on, Zarratt crashed a chair that Cranston extended in his path. When the gun bounced from the far wall, Cranston picked it up and pocketed it

With Fred, Cranston lifted Zarratt and they carried him to a stairway. They were on their way down, with Zarratt dropping from their shoulders, when the clang of an elevator door announced the arrival of house detectives to investigate the reported gun fray.

Out through a rear exit, Cranston and Fred put Zarratt between them in a waiting cab. Before Fred could start to relate new facts, Cranston anticipated them. He gave an address to the driver and Fred stared in amazement when he heard it.

The address was Moyne's office!

Fred had begun to believe that The Shadow knew everything. Now it seemed apparent that The Shadow shared such knowledge with his friend Cranston. Between them, they must certainly know all.

There, Fred was wrong.

One fact had escaped Lamont Cranston, otherwise The Shadow. He hadn't heard Zarratt's discussion with Moyne on the subject of music boxes. Nor could Fred inform him, for that little talk had taken place while Fred was limp and senseless.

As for Zarratt, the man who could have told, he was in the condition from which Fred had recently recuperated. Crime's rule was on the wane, but it was due for a revival.

Things were to happen that even The Shadow had not foreseen!

CHAPTER XVIII. CRIME DENIED

GAUNT skyscrapers stood dark and silent as the cab neared the towering tip of Manhattan. Evening traffic was so light that cars could be spotted blocks ahead, and Fred saw one that looked familiar. Across Zarratt's limp figure, Fred pointed it out to Cranston.

"Moyne's car," said Fred. "He's getting there ahead of us!"

Cranston nodded very casually. For a moment Fred was puzzled, then he thought he understood. Probably Cranston's friend, The Shadow, knew all about this situation and was at Moyne's office ahead of time. Fred was more inclined to the opinion when the cab stopped. Instead of hurrying out, Cranston suggested that they take their time and bring Zarratt along.

Moyne's office was unlocked when they reached it. Opening the door, Cranston pointed ahead. Moyne was already at the passage leading to the vault room, and a door was opening on his right. Turning suddenly, Moyne made a gesture toward his hip, then halted.

Inspector Cardona was steeping from the conference room with a drawn revolver. Seeing the gun, Moyne raised his arms. Then he shrugged.

"What's this, inspector?"

"You should be able to answer, Moyne." The man who spoke was Commissioner Weston, stepping out to join Cardona. "Wasn't it you who wanted us here this evening? The message came from you."

"I sent no message."

"Maybe it's a mistake," put in Cardona, putting away his gun. "I wondered what your idea was, coming in here when we expected somebody else. I had an idea it would be old Durand."

Moyne turned, as though expecting to see the professor. Instead, he faced Cranston and Fred, who were bringing Zarratt between them. As they dumped their burden in a chair, Cranston produced a revolver so suddenly that Moyne's hand stopped another hip move.

"Zarratt's gun, commissioner," informed Cranston. "I stopped at Durand's, as you suggested, but he wasn't there. I found Zarratt instead. He was going to shoot Corbin, but I took his gun away. Zarratt had a couple of other chaps to help him, but they fortunately became involved in a dispute between themselves."

Things were clearing in Fred's mind, except for the business of Moyne's message. All at once, that point became the plainest of all. Moyne himself denied the message to Weston, and it was obvious he hadn't expected the police here.

It was Durand who had summoned them in Moyne's name!

No wonder the professor said he had thought things out ahead. Somewhere below this floor Thronzo was digging onward toward the vault room, and Durand wanted the robot to arrive under proper auspices. Even as Fred completed that analysis, the floor began to quake.

Weston and Cardona stared, rather startled. Moyne's face went purple with anger. Only Cranston retained his calm - and Zarratt's gun. Toying with the revolver, Cranston absently kept its muzzle trained on Moyne, a thing which the latter noted quite well.

THE tremor became a quake. There was a crash of masonry from below. Starting for the stairs, Weston and Cardona arrived in time to see Thronzo come lunging through the final layers of stone and pound his way across toward Moyne's vault. Behind him, playing with the button of the control box, was Durand, who raised his other hand in a cheery wave.

"No use, inspector," called Durand, as Cardona drew a revolver. "Bullets won't hurt Thronzo. Let him continue his work. I shall stop him at the proper time."

It didn't seem properly legal to Cardona. He turned his revolver toward Durand as a better threat. Sheila stepped through the gap in the wall and calmly placed herself in the path of his aim. Kennard came next, to add a second buffer for Durand.

By then, Thronzo had reached the vault. His great steel fists were pommeling it into pulp. As the whole front caved, the robot thrust through and made one of its sudden stops, fists raised, one leg advanced.

Durand and Kennard gripped the steel giant and turned it around, ready to march it back through the tunnel that it had hewn. Leaving Thronzo standing thus, Durand gestured to the vault.

"Your turn, inspector."

"My turn?" queried Cardona. "To do what?"

"To find my stolen plans," explained Durand. "The only evidence you need against Moyne."

Moyne's own voice boomed from above.

"Suppose I object, Durand!" he said. "How far would this scheme carry, then?"

"I don't think you should object, Moyne," spoke Cranston. He was leaning forward and his hand rested the muzzle of Zarratt's gun against Moyne's back. "After all, you have claimed that the robot plans were your own. Durand is simply asking you to prove it."

Moyne making no objections, Cardona looked in the vault and found a portfolio containing the robot plans. He brought it up to the conference room, followed by Durand and Sheila. It was there that the plans were suddenly forgotten when Sheila saw Fred.

Bitterly, the girl began a denunciation:

"There's the man who murdered Talman -"

Before Sheila could go further, Cranston intervened. The girl was pointing toward Fred, but Cranston's gesture carried eyes beyond, to the chair where Zarratt, still slumped, was just beginning to open his dazed eyes.

"Quite right," interposed Cranston. "Zarratt murdered Talman. He tried to pin the blame on Corbin; in fact, he had practically done so. That was why he was trying to get rid of Corbin up at the hotel. Zarratt didn't want the whole story to be heard."

Commissioner Weston began to bring up Zarratt's alibi. Inspector Cardona was producing the Grenshaw letter that mentioned Zarratt's visit on the twentieth. Meanwhile, Cranston was pulling a small card from his pocket. He handed it to Cardona.

"I've just come in from Grenshaw's," remarked Cranston. "I talked with Collins and managed to jog his memory. The evening that Zarratt saw Grenshaw happened to be Tuesday - not Wednesday, the night when Talman was slain."

"But Wednesday was the twentieth," reminded Cardona. "And the letter says the twentieth."

"Look at the card I gave you," suggested Cranston. "It's a calendar we found in Grenshaw's desk, Collins and I. A calendar that names the month, not the year. That calendar belongs to last year, inspector."

FRED remembered the odd items that The Shadow had taken from Grenshaw's desk drawer. The calendar must have been among them. Noting its flaw, The Shadow had sent it back - through Cranston - to be found as evidence where it belonged.

"A cute trick, Zarratt." Cranston faced the dazed man. "When Grenshaw was dictating that letter, you handed him this calendar to check the date of your previous visit. He knew you'd been there on a Tuesday and it fell on the twentieth, according to this calendar. So Grenshaw put the wrong date in this letter."

Zarratt's feeble snatch at the calendar was proof in itself that Cranston's theory was correct. Steadily, Cranston continued:

"You must have known that Grenshaw was marked to die, Zarratt. Otherwise, you couldn't have depended on a written statement that it might have later corrected."

"But I didn't kill Grenshaw!" Hoarsely, Zarratt was trying to dodge the Talman issue by concentrating on the later crime. "I was arrested before eleven o'clock!"

Cranston turned to Moyne.

"What about it, Moyne?" Cranston queried. "You had a real alibi the night Talman was killed. You were with the commissioner at a banquet. You dined with him again last night, but he left to go to Durand's. You still had plenty of time to get to Grenshaw's."

Arms folded, Moyne met the implication with booming denial. He still insisted that he'd never heard of Grenshaw; that he'd spent the previous evening in the great crypt at the Colossus Theater, making adjustments in the mechanism of his new robot.

But the more Moyne talked, the plainer it became that he was depending on an unsustained alibi. Nobody had seen him those few hours when he claimed he was in the crypt. It was obvious that he could have gone to Grenshaw's, bent on murder. The problem was to prove it - and with a man like Moyne, that was a task indeed.

Cardona was bearing down on Zarratt, whose face and whining voice were taking on the manner of cornered rat's. Zarratt was admitting things despite himself. He'd wanted money, big money, not the mere pittance that he'd receive by selling Durand's invention on the professor's own terms. Durand wanted the public to profit from the robot era that he hoped to begin; Grenshaw had been of the same mind.

The man who thought in terms of millions was Rodney Moyne. So Zarratt had sold out, beginning operations with his bribery of Talman, a man whom Zarratt could reach, though Moyne couldn't. It was Zarratt who had hired thugs, but only at Moyne's order; just as he had likewise threatened Fred and tried to frame him, first through Talman, later in Zarratt's own style.

ZARRATT wasn't blurting all this openly. He was giving it away as he answered questions which he tried to hedge, always too late. The final obstacle was Grenshaw. If he backed Durand, the professor's robot enterprise would ride too rapidly for Moyne to overtake it. Zarratt had told Moyne all about Grenshaw, leaving the rest to Moyne himself.

Apparently Moyne had expected Zarratt to rat when the crisis came. The more excited Zarratt became in his conflicting assertions and denials, the more did Moyne's air of confidence increase. As he listened, Moyne shook his head, as though saddened by the extent of what he termed Zarratt's falsehoods.

"Take the word of this murderer, if you wish," expressed Moyne. "Believe Zarratt when he says that I killed Grenshaw. Then try to prove that crime against me!"

"These will prove plenty," Cardona gestured toward the sheets of plans through which Durand had begun to paw. "If you didn't hire Zarratt to get Durand's plans, what were they doing in your vault?"

As Moyne returned a serene smile, Durand looked up from the batch of papers.

"These aren't my plans!" admitted Durand. "They are similar, but not the same. Moyne must have altered them" - Durand's face was briefly perplexed, then suddenly it lighted - "and I know why! He doesn't need them any longer. He has already built his robot!"

At that moment, Moyne was lighting a cigar. Cranston saw the flare of paper that accompanied the match and sprang across to stop the act. Thinking Moyne had started to make a break, Cardona blundered into it, unwittingly giving Moyne his chance to fling away the flaming paper slip.

"We'll go to the Colossus Theater," Durand was telling Weston. "We'll compare Moyne's robot with mine and prove the case against him."

"Careless of me," spoke Moyne. Despite Cardona's clutch, he was gesturing toward the ashes that had reached the floor. "I just burned the new combination to the great crypt."

Cranston was picking up the ashes. They crumbled in his fingers. Moyne's foot had pressed them as they fell, ruining all chances to trace the numbers originally written on the paper. There was triumph in the look that Moyne gave Durand, but it merely stimulated the professor's keen brain.

"I'll find a way into the crypt!" proclaimed Durand. "What worked once, will work again. I shall use Thronzo!"

CHAPTER XIX. WHEN ROBOTS MEET

A VAST crowd was assembling outside the Colossus Theater, gathered in response to a wildfire rumor. Something most amazing was to take place there. A creature called a robot, answering to the curious name of Thronzo, was scheduled to enter the theater, march through the grand foyer and batter down the brass doors of the great crypt.

There had been some delay about the arrangements. Objections by Rodney Moyne, whose rival robot, Superlo, was at present stored in the crypt, had been overruled, because Moyne didn't own the theater. The management had balked a while, but had finally agreed when promised compensation for whatever damage might be done to the brass doors.

That question settled, the only remaining factor was the time. Professor Durand had agreed to wait until after the last show was over. As a result, the news had time to spread, which accounted for the size of the crowd.

A truck pulled up to a space in front of the theater. In it were Durand and Kennard, getting ready to unleash Thronzo. From the lobby, Sheila and Fred were watching operations. Noting Cranston beside him, Fred turned and confided:

"I saw something odd tonight, something I should have mentioned. When Durand sent Thronzo through to Moyne's vault, he wasn't using a real control box. He had the same dummy that The Shadow found out at the house!"

A slight smile accompanied Cranston's nod.

"You know the answer?" questioned Fred. "The Shadow told you?"

"He mentioned a hobby of Durand's," replied Cranston. "I understand that the professor likes music boxes."

"Why, yes -"

"And that often he goes about humming old tunes, that he later arranges with the pins of music-box cylinders."

"That's right."

"I recall that Durand hummed a tune this afternoon," added Cranston, "when he was walking across the grand foyer and entering the great crypt to look at Moyne's robot."

The whole thing burst on Fred like a great light. No wonder Professor Durand had talked so much about his radio control. It was a secret that no one could ever steal, because there wasn't any! His short-wave box was a bluff!

Thronzo's brain was clockwork!

Clockwork in the form of mechanism used in music boxes, with their brass, pin-studded cylinders. Everything that Thronzo did was prearranged beforehand, studied out by Durand. The tunes he hummed coincided with his measurements; the pauses, the steady beats, accounted for delays in the robot's march and Thronzo's repeated actions.

Durand had hummed a tune at Moyne's factory, and Fred had heard him repeat it, probably to check it fully. Again, at Moyne's office, Durand had composed another of his discordant ditties, which he had later transcribed to a music-box cylinder.

And here, in the Colossus Theater, this very afternoon, the professor had made up another tune which he had recorded at the hotel. No wonder Thronzo could accomplish the marvels that he did! On open display in the music parlor at Durand's home were dozens of brass cylinders and their clockwork, each a replacement for the mysterious brain of Thronzo!

FROM the crowd came a great, hollow gasp of amazement as the back of the truck opened. Out moved Thronzo, unlimbering in his mechanical style. Then, with Durand clicking at the dummy box that shielded the real secret, the robot began its slow march into the theater. Police promptly intervened, to wall back the throng.

Fred and Sheila fell into step as Thronzo and Durand went by. Cannily, the professor was moving his lips, to make sure that Thronzo was in time to the recorded tune. He was giving the robot an unusual trial tonight. To reach the grand foyer, Thronzo had to descend a broad staircase that turned at a landing halfway down.

Durand must have chimed it to the dot. Thronzo took the stairs in perfect form. At the landing, the robot turned with a pronounced whir from its body. The sound issued forth because of thin slits that appeared whenever the metal giant swung about. They were the "sleeve-swivels," as Durand termed them, the feature that he had noted on Moyne's robot.

Those gaps were the only vulnerable spots in Thronzo's armor. But they didn't matter, because the machinery inside the body was set in metal casings which formed an inner shell. Again the sleeves gaped as Thronzo swung down the last flight of stairs and reached the grand foyer.

It was then that Fred looked for Cranston, only to find that he was gone. So Fred kept following Thronzo toward the big brass doors, without looking back, though it wouldn't have mattered if he had. The cloaked form that had arrived upon the landing was too well merged with the dark oak background, to be seen.

Lamont Cranston had become The Shadow.

There was a reason for the change. Up ahead by the brass doors, stood Rodney Moyne, watching the approach of Thronzo. Moyne was still a free man, in a sense, for he wasn't handcuffed like Zarratt, who was standing near him.

Of course Inspector Cardona was close by, keeping an eye on Moyne, but Joe's gaze was becoming more intrigued by Thronzo. The same applied to Commissioner Weston, a fact which Moyne could not fail to notice. When Thronzo reached the brass doors, all attention would be fully riveted, and then Moyne's chance would come.

His only chance, and last.

There wasn't a question about Moyne's robot, Superlo. Detail for detail, except in the mechanical brain, it was a swipe from Thronzo. Should Thronzo crash into the crypt and expose Superlo to a public survey, Moyne's whole defense would crash. A mere comparison of the robots would prove Zarratt's claim that Moyne was the man behind the sell-out.

As the thief of Durand's plans, the instigator of Talman's treachery and death, Moyne would have to answer for much, while the authorities were pinning Grenshaw's murder on him. So The Shadow was waiting for the break he knew would come. When Moyne took to flight, he would find a cloaked Nemesis blocking his only outlet.

While The Shadow watched, Thronzo reached the brass doors and raised his great steel fists. Here, Durand had paused and hummed a prolonged monotone, geared to the number of strokes that the robot would require to smash down the barrier. A steel fist gave a swing; the brass buffer trembled with a clang

Thronzo's other hand swept forward. It stopped in midair. Immediately, the robot whirred; the sleeve-swivels gaped as Thronzo turned full about. In amazement, Durand stopped clicking the dummy radio box.

The giant robot was out of control!

HOW far such unrestraint could carry, was immediately evidenced. No longer was Thronzo a slow-stepping monster packed with power only. The robot threw himself into high gear, swinging his massive arms with a tremendous lash. As people ducked away, Thronzo strode across the grand foyer, spinning, lashing, going after everything in his path.

Madly, Fred pushed Durand away from harm and snatched Sheila to a corner as the robot whirled their way. Then Thronzo was off on another spin that brought him up against a bronze-tinted statue almost his own size.

There was a smash of plaster as Thronzo wrecked the statue and strode away to find new victims, human or otherwise. Literally, the robot was berserk, on a scale so titanic that no one dared to block his horrendous path. Smashing into a great square pillar, Thronzo produced a shower of imitation marble. Spinning anew, he sent his huge steel hands toward a human victim in the person of Commissioner Weston, who had dodged the wrong way.

High above the clang of Thronzo's mighty advance came a challenging laugh that the robot could not hear. Flinging toward Thronzo moved The Shadow, only to halt against an intervening statue that he toppled forward into the robot's clutch.

Another mass of plaster went to dust. Through the white cloud Weston dodged to safety, while The Shadow dived the other way, to evade a chance whirl of the robot.

Thronzo almost had his big fists on the cloaked challenger, when The Shadow went beyond a pillar. Smashing the marble post, Thronzo drove ahead, but the encounter delayed him long enough for The Shadow to make another dodge.

Apparently The Shadow was hoping to convoy people from the foyer, but they were loath to go, considering the eccentric way in which Thronzo changed his course. To some degree, The Shadow was diverting that course, but he hadn't began to get the robot under control. It was in the midst of all such madness that Cardona felt a quick clutch on his arm. Turning, he saw Moyne.

"Quickly, inspector!" Moyne's tone was eager, earnest. "I remember the combination. I'll give you one dial while I take the other. I'll start Superlo going. He can settle Thronzo!"

Cardona wasn't in a mood to argue. He worked one dial with the numbers Moyne gave him, but all the while Joe watched Moyne at the other. What Cardona didn't catch were the words that Moyne side-mouthed to Zarratt, who was huddled by the corner of a door.

"Make a break!" ordered Moyne. "As soon as the doors come open! It's your only chance!"

The doors swung wide, their clang drowned by the furious clatter of Thronzo, as Durand's robot smashed another statue against a pillar. As Moyne started into the crypt, Cardona drew a gun and prepared to follow. That was Zarratt's chance. He started a mad rush across the foyer. Seeing him go, Cardona forgot Moyne and fired at Zarratt.

The bullet winged the murderer's arm. With a scream, Zarratt floundered. Before he could reach his feet again, he was in Thronzo's path. The robot picked up the handcuffed killer and flung him full force against the wall.

What happened to Zarratt was a sample of what all others could expect, should they remain too long. With one accord, they were willing to follow The Shadow's beck and make a run for the stairs, when their cloaked champion gave a sudden gesture that sent them back to the nearest corners.

All eyes followed The Shadow's gaze toward the brass doors of the opened crypt. Out from that strong room strode another metal giant, swinging its thick arms in a wide sweep that sent the brass doors clanging shut.

It was Superlo. True to his word, Moyne had unleashed his robot for a duel with Thronzo. Robot was striding to meet robot in what could only be a finish fight.

CHAPTER XX. THE BRAIN THAT FAILED

THERE was this difference in the manner of the robots. Not once had Thronzo ceased his incessant spins, which The Shadow had begun to fathom, thus avoiding them. Thronzo was spinning. anew as his rival strode upon the scene.

But Superlo was a creature of long, well-guided strides. He behaved as Thronzo should have - and more. Not only did Superlo cross the foyer under full control, he seemed attracted by the flaying figure of Thronzo.

Already, The Shadow had divined what was wrong with Thronzo. Between them, Moyne and Zarratt must have guessed the secret of the music boxes. Up in Durand's hotel suite, Zarratt had altered the professor's music box, adding a repeated trill of Moyne's composition. Thronzo had behaved true to form until he reached the crypt, then the changed notes had taken over.

All that was dawning on Fred Corbin as he saw the robots meet. But there was something else that stirred Fred's recollections; namely, the plans of a substitute control that The Shadow had given Fred. Zarratt had stolen those plans later and had turned them over to Moyne.

The Shadow had said that his control would work, but only briefly. How Moyne had managed to assemble the control device on such short notice was a mystery to Fred. But he hoped it would keep working longer than The Shadow expected. For that device, as the brain of Superlo, was the only thing that could halt Thronzo!

Glancing at the doors of the crypt, Fred could picture Moyne beyond them, operating a remote control. How Moyne was doing it, guiding Superlo though he couldn't see him, was something of a mystery in itself. Nevertheless, Superlo was responding in due form.

Meeting Thronzo as the other robot made a spin, Superlo took a back step that avoided a great arm sweep. In return, Superlo's own huge fists descended like massive mallets and pommeled Thronzo's broad shoulders.

Like an angry beat, Thronzo strode away and went into another of his wayward spins. This time, Superlo was moving in to meet him. Big fists smashed anew, knocking one of Thronzo's shoulders out of line. The next spin that Thronzo gave was crooked. Superlo bashed in with another pair of telling blows.

They were nearing the steps, those fighting robots, and for some reason The Shadow was keeping ahead of them. At moments he appeared to be trapped by their arriving flay. Then, as if in desperation, The Shadow reached the steps and started upward.

At that moment, Superlo proved his supremacy. He punched Thronzo as the latter turned the other way. Bashing his rival ahead of him, Superlo drove Thronzo to the stairs, toppled him there and rose in mighty stride to bring his great steel feet upon Thronzo's battered body.

Then, Superlo was stamping upward, practically undented from his duel, leaving Thronzo half wrecked in contrast. Though Thronzo's legs were clamping and his arms making wide swings, he couldn't reach his feet again, nor even spin.

In fact, Thronzo was all askew. He looked like a mechanical junk heap. Bounding over, Durand dodged the flapping arms and pulled the head from Thronzo's shoulders, which wasn't difficult, considering how loose Superlo had knocked it. As the head came off, the music cylinder lost its connections. Thronzo's arms and legs settled on the stairs.

Loudly, Durand was blaming Moyne for everything. When he asked where Moyne had gone, Cardona pointed to the crypt. But the brass doors were shut again and Cardona had only half the combination. He'd watched Moyne at the other knob and could guess at few of the numbers. The only thing to do was try them, take Moyne into custody, and have him bring back his victorious robot.

MEANWHILE, Superlo had reached the upstairs lobby. He was greeted with shouts from the crowd outdoors, for they thought he was Thronzo, coming back. So did Kennard, as he gazed from the front seat of the truck, for he could gain only a partial view of Superlo's approaching form.

Kennard had orders to drive Thronzo away immediately. He gave a wave and police began to press a path through the crowd. Motorcycle sirens shrieked, as did patrol cars. They were stationed here to escort the truck to the city limits, where it would return to Durand's mansion.

A dozen steps more and Superlo would have reached the truck that belonged to his rival, Thronzo. Curiously, with every stride, Moyne's robot was turning its head from left to right, as though its eyeless face sought something that it couldn't possibly see. Then, from a balcony high above, came a weird, chilling laugh - the tone of The Shadow!

Momentarily, Superlo gave a jolting halt, though no one noticed it. Something else was attracting more

attention. From that balcony above the theater exit, a spot that Superlo could not reach, The Shadow crashed a window, aimed a gun into the night, and opened fire at Durand's truck!

Not a bullet scathed Kennard, but every shot whistled close. Kennard didn't wait to wonder where the shots came from. He shoved the truck into gear and sped away, behind the motorcycles that promptly cleaved a path. The cops hadn't heard the shots amid the tumult of the crowd.

The wild flight of the truck was more significant than onlookers supposed. It meant that The Shadow had deprived Superlo of the carrier meant for Thronzo. For some reason that only The Shadow had divined, Rodney Moyne wanted Superlo to be taken from this area. The Shadow had balked that move!

In return, Superlo showed a mechanical vengeance that made Thronzo's recent madness seem mild. Raising its great steel arms, the robot bashed at the balcony where The Shadow stood. Unable to reach the balcony itself, the steel creature spread its arms and slashed broadside at two supporting posts.

The balcony collapsed, but The Shadow did not tumble with it. Instead, he sprang through the window that he had smashed, let himself hang from the outer ledge, and dropped to the sidewalk beyond. There was another stir amid the crowd as the cloaked fighter landed, then everything turned to utter bedlam.

Superlo was coming out through the door beneath the broken balcony. Big arms wide, huge steel fists spread like grappling claws, the mighty robot was looming down upon The Shadow, ready to destroy the rash interloper who had called off the truck trip.

As great arms slashed, their hands meeting in a cymbal clash, The Shadow was away. All that Superlo's steel claws clutched were a few tatters from The Shadow's cloak. But the robot was beginning prompt pursuit with long, great strides as swift as The Shadow's running gait.

IT looked like full flight on The Shadow's part, but it was not. All he wanted was space and scope, away from the crowd. Risking the chance that Superlo might overtake him, The Shadow followed the path that the truck had taken, keeping just ahead of his gigantic pursuer.

Then, space opened. There it lay - the very center of Times Square. Already free of any crowd, the space was clear of traffic, too, for cars were pulling off to side streets when their drivers saw the giant thing that was taking over Manhattan's main thoroughfare. All eyes were on the monstrous shape of Superlo, shining in its steely brilliance. Against such a background, the cloaked figure of The Shadow was vague.

What happened next was most amazing. Ending his forward stride, Superlo began to wheel. Not blindly, as Thronzo had, but with deadly purpose. With each spin, this robot of robots clamped its hands again, trying to clutch a black-garbed prey that looked like a swift beetle escaping a cat's claws!

Only briefly did witnesses glimpse The Shadow. Then he was cornered, against a building wall, dodging back and forth as Superlo tried to scoop him. The Shadow must have been desperate, for he was doing a seemingly useless thing. With every spin that Superlo gave, The Shadow stabbed shots at the robot's invulnerable body!

Under one slashing arm, The Shadow dodged from his temporary trap. Superlo came about like a battleship's turret. Over his shoulder, The Shadow jabbed another shot at a long, swivel slit that opened in the robot's side.

Then, off to another dart, The Shadow delivered a second well-placed slug as the slit opened on the robot's other side. Hurling forward, Superlo gave a long grab with those great mechanical hands, swooping them almost to the sidewalk. As they carried forward, The Shadow dived below the metal fists

and down into a subway entrance, where Superlo could not follow.

The robot's hands twisted the steel sides of the subway structure. Taking one step as if to crowd down through the space, Superlo turned away again, as though recognizing that his huge bulk could not squeeze into The Shadow's safety zone. From below came a strident laugh; with it, another gun stab.

This time, The Shadow had the perfect angle. His bullet slithered through the sleeve slit, carrying a few degrees farther upward. Astonished witnesses saw the great bulk of Superlo finish its whirl with a stagger. Paving cracked into a star pattern as the robot crashed like a falling tower.

From the theater, Inspector Cardona was arriving on the run, followed by others who had witnessed the duel between the robots. Joe Cardona was tugging at Superlo's head when Fred joined him. Together, they hauled the turret loose from its shoulders.

Out slid the figure of Rodney Moyne, to roll inertly beside the curb. His body showed the marks of several wounds from The Shadow's first shots. But the final bullet, fired from that deep angle at the bottom of the subway stairs, was the one that had ended the most spectacular getaway in the annals of modern crime.

Aimed upward through the sleeve slit, The Shadow's shot had reached Moyne's heart. With it, Superlo's actions had ended - for Moyne himself was the robot's brain!

FRED CORBIN was still staring at the robot and the body of its criminal master when he heard the voice of Lamont Cranston close beside him.

"At least Moyne was clever," observed Cranston. "He wanted to outdo Durand's robot, so he faked this one. There was plenty of room inside the body, considering that Moyne was only using a single unit of the same destroyer type that Durand placed in Thronzo the night he ruined Moyne's factory."

Fred gave a grim nod.

"I should have guessed it," he declared. "Moyne didn't have time to rig up the fake radio control The Shadow let him have. Anyway, it would have gone out of whack as soon as Superlo began to jolt Thronzo. It worked too long."

"And too perfectly," added Cranston. "Moyne could not have guided it from within the inclosed vault. There was only one place where Moyne could be - and that was inside Superlo!"

Sheila heard the words. Her arm linked to Fred's, she looked at the calm face of Cranston. Her own features were upset, as she said:

"Father never intended that Thronzo should harm anyone or anything. The purpose of the robot was merely to have it do a few mechanical operations, so that it could help with routine jobs being done in factories and defense plants."

"I understand that," said Cranston quietly. "But he was stampeded by Moyne's evil purposes. Moyne planned to learn the secret of Thronzo's operation. Knowing that, he figured he could make a fortune. Be was even willing to have men murdered in order to gain that end. Professor Durand is not to blame."

Relief showed in the girl's face. Smiling; she said, "It was a good thing The Shadow knew -"

"The Shadow always knows!" Fred put in.

Cranston was nodding as he turned away. His lips were opening while he glanced toward the shattered

subway entrance, but neither Fred nor Sheila saw them. Hence they did not guess that Cranston, himself, could have produced the tone that came, as from far below, with ventriloquial effect

What Fred and Sheila heard was a farewell laugh that seemed to trail away and vanish amid the arriving roar of a subway train, beneath. Weird mirth that, as it faded, rang with a note that symbolized triumph over crime.

The laugh of The Shadow!

THE END