



CRIME OVER MIAMI

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CHAPTER I. CRIME'S TWO ACES

THERE was no moon over Miami.

Instead, the city itself provided a mass of glow against the January twilight. Seemingly, Miami was afloat upon the sapphire waters of Biscayne Bay. The Magic City provided illusion, along with grandeur.

In atmosphere, as well as appearance, Miami was deceptive. Some regarded it the hub of a tropical paradise, where care was forgotten and gaiety ruled. To others, Miami was a happy hunting ground wherein they could swoop, like vultures, upon hapless prey, then wing back to hidden nests.

Among the throngs that teemed the hotel-lined boulevard, millionaires rubbed shoulders with marauders. In bars, they sat elbow to elbow, and it was difficult to tell which was which. Talk was cheap during the winter season, but it carried importance when backed by a heavy bank roll. Such money was plentiful; where it came from, was the question.

The big spenders of tonight might be the four-flushers of tomorrow. One lucky afternoon at the Hialeah racetrack could turn a comparative pauper into a temporary plutocrat. On the contrary, men of actual wealth were apt to tighten their purses after a bad day. Weeding the real from the false was something that bothered no one, except the Miami police.

Spotting crooks in Miami was always more difficult than in other cities. Shady characters came from all parts of the land, and usually failed to announce themselves. In addition, hoodlums and racketeers always had an alibi for their presence. Miami was a place where people came for a vacation. A man might choose to take time off from a crooked vocation, as well as a straight one.

On this particular evening, two men chanced to meet on a side street just off Biscayne Boulevard. One was sleek and smooth-faced; his olive complexion seemed unusually sallow, in contrast to his white gabardine suit and Panama hat. The other, heavier of build, had a broad face, topped by a high forehead. His head was hatless; he was wearing a light summer suit of dark gray.

Their eyes met in mutual recognition, but neither showed a change of expression. Almost by accident, it seemed, they strolled in the same direction, toward a convenient arcade that was well lighted, but not thronged. Being casual was part of their act; they were a pair of crooks who knew how to cover their identities.

The sallow man, in white, was Lee Clesson, ace of swindlers, who handled all big con games in town. The broad-faced, gray-clad individual was Hawk Silvey, who pulled the strings in every major robbery that occurred in Greater Miami. Each was an important cog in the criminal machine that was active during the current season.

Crime had taken a new turn in Miami. Behind it was a brain who worked through lieutenants like Clesson and Silvey. Yet, like the devilfish of tropical climes, that brain was hidden. On the surface, all was much as usual. Con men, stick-up specialists were active, as always, but this year they were taking orders.

There were indications of the new regime. Crime was taking a more than normal toll, whereas arrests were below par. There was other evidence, too, that criminals had banded for the season, but, so far, the law had gained but scattered inklings of systematized crime.

Investigation had not yet disclosed lieutenants like Lee Clesson and Hawk Silvey, aces in the hand of a hidden master criminal whose existence was scarcely suspected. Storm warnings were out; but how hard crime's hurricane might hit, was still a matter of sheer speculation.

Two men, at least, knew certain phases of crime's strength; those two were Lee Clesson and Hawk Silvey. As they emerged from the arcade, they continued to a common goal, a pretentious side-street doorway that bore the sign:

PALMETTO CASINO

The place in question rated as a private club. It was open to members only, though the qualifications were not strict. The Palmetto Casino had been nurtured through several seasons by Commodore Denfield, long known in aristocratic gambling circles.

No one knew how far the commodore expected to get with his venture; but certain things were evident. Unless he anticipated some lucrative future, Denfield would not have opened the casino. Once having opened it, he had been on constant watch for any changes in local policies that might further his enterprise.

A man of reputed wealth, experienced in the handling of gambling establishments, Commodore Denfield had a unique reputation. Though of doubtful repute in higher social circles, he was strictly apart from the underworld.

Similarly, though famed for his willingness to take risks, Denfield made it a policy to stay within the limits of the law. Whenever he pushed himself into trouble, the far-sighted commodore provided himself with

means for a graceful retreat.

Admission to the Palmetto Casino was by membership card, and a stalwart doorman blocked the entrance to the upstairs premises with stern demands for such tokens. He kept check on all arrivals; they were listed on a register in the preserves above.

Everything at the Palmetto Casino was on the up and up. As some wiseacres translated "up and up," a visitor went up the stairs, and then up the river— to the extent of his bank roll.

Nevertheless, Class A patrons were never lacking in the Palmetto Casino. As for persons of a Class B status, they simply were not admitted. When Clesson and Silvey paused enviously in front of the lower door, passers-by who knew the repute of the Palmetto Casino would have given odds that neither man would be admitted.

The doorman eyed the pair suspiciously, as their hands drifted to their pockets. Edging closer, Clesson and Silvey extended their fists and opened them. Neither man showed a membership card. Instead, each displayed a small wooden ball; each sphere had a flattened surface that bore a number. Lee's number was 16, Hawk's was 25.

Eyes toward the street, the doorman let his gaze go from one direction to the other. Hand behind his back, he pressed a buzzer beside the door. Stepping between Lee Clesson and Hawk Silvey, the doorman advanced a few paces to the sidewalk. The doorknob began to click; pocketing the balls that bore the numbers, the two crooks moved into the Palmetto Casino, ignored by the doorman.

Up the stairs, through a spacious lounge, between a pair of ornate curtains that led to an inner gaming room, the pair continued their way unchallenged. Eyes were turned the other way when they went by; alone of all visitors to the casino, they were not requested to sign the membership book.

There was life in the gaming room. A dealer was busy at a faro table; patrons surrounded a tipping chuck-a-luck cage. Roulette wheels were spinning merrily, while the clatter of slot machines came from along one wall. As Clesson paused near the chuck-a-luck cage, Silvey nudged him and gestured toward the slot machines.

"I'll waste a few bucks on the one-armed bandits," Hawk undertoned to Lee. "Meet me over at Manuel's wheel as soon as he goes off duty."

Manuel was a croupier at one of the roulette tables. His heavy face was double-chinned, his dark eyes thin-slitted. He paid but little notice to any of the patrons; when his shift was finished, he turned to see two men standing by.

The arrivals were Clesson and Silvey; their fists opened, displaying the balls with the numbers. Manuel gave the slightest of nods and stalked to a cigar counter. The pair followed.

There, the wooden balls dropped into Manuel's pudgy hand. From a pocket he produced two other spheres, with the identical numbers 16 and 25, slipping them to Lee and Hawk, respectively. Then, in a low, oily voice, Manuel informed:

"Coppers coming up soon. The rear route is open, if you need it."

EXCHANGING glances, Clesson and Silvey shook their heads. They decided that they wouldn't have to use the rear way that Manuel had mentioned.

"We'll mix with the customers," remarked Lee in a smooth, confident tone. "Why should any dumb copper figure us as different from them?"

"Yeah, why?" queried Hawk, his voice harsher. "Besides, what chance has any copper of taking a look-see in this part of the joint? The commodore is strict, ain't he?"

Even Manuel grinned at Hawk's last comment; the croupier went his way, and the two crime aces remained by the cigar counter, which had no attendant. Turned away from the rest of the patrons, Lee and Hawk were examining the spheres that Manuel had exchanged for theirs. Each ball was a trick one. The center unscrewed when twisted along a left-hand thread.

From the cavities within, the crooks obtained thin-wadded papers. Each screwed his hollow ball tight shut again, dropped it in his pocket. Individually, each examined the message that had reached him through Manuel.

"Get a line on this," undertoned Lee. "I'm to dig up a couple of the boys and put the heat on a stiff named Harvey Brenbright. That's him, the fat guy playing over at the faro board. From the piker bets he's making, you wouldn't figure he carried a big roll."

Hawk threw a sideward squint.

"Thought you had your schedule all mapped out, Lee."

"This won't be a trim," returned Lee, smoothly. "It's to be a stick-up, after Brenbright leaves here. Kind of away from my line, but the boss knows best. It will get the coppers after a lot of smart guys who haven't lined up with the racket."

Hawk nodded. He seemed pleased by the instructions that he had received.

"It's a double," he told Lee. "Mine's a society dame named Marcia Tyrone, and her boy-friend Georgie Agnew. There's the dame, over by Manuel's wheel. She's the one that looks like a jewelry-store window. The glamour boy with the marcel and the stack of fifty-dollar chips is Georgie."

Turning to view the persons mentioned, Lee saw a stir beyond the curtains that led to the outer lounge. He nudged Hawk and the pair parted, to make themselves inconspicuous.

Word had been flashed to the manager of the gaming room that unwanted visitors, representing the law, were on their way up to see Commodore Denfield. Neither Lee Clesson nor Hawk Silvey had forgotten the admonition of Manuel, the croupier.

Lee slid his thin frame among the chuck-a-luck players, while Hawk disposed of his bulkier figure near a corner slot machine, where he was practically out of sight. Both aces were anxious to escape surveillance, and they were luckier than they supposed.

In another corner was the concealed door of the rear passage that Manuel had mentioned, a portal concealed by a portrait of a Spanish grandee, that Commodore Denfield had brought from Cuba. The center jewel of the painted grandee's belt was a peephole, through which an eye was viewing the scene in the gaming room.

The eye was keen, its probing gaze the sort that could ferret out rats, no matter how they disguised themselves. Fortunately for two such unworthies, Lee and Hawk, the probing eye was attracted away from their direction.

Between the double curtains that hung across the entrance to the gaming room, a steel door was slithering shut, to block off the gambling preserves from the outer lounge.

The eye moved from behind the loophole. A black-cloaked form shifted in the deep rear passage that

formed the emergency exit from the Palmetto Casino. There was a swish in the darkness, the whisper of a low, repressed laugh.

The intruder who had found his way through the secret passage into the Palmetto Casino was none other than The Shadow, archfoe of crime. Intent upon rendering service to the law, The Shadow had chosen the hottest of Miami's hot spots as the place to begin his operations!

CHAPTER II. THE LAW INQUIRES

As the slithering door of steel sealed the hidden gaming room, cutting off all sight and sound, two men reached the lounge of the Palmetto Casino through its main entrance. One man was rangy, tanned of face, and solemn in expression. Mere sight of him brought polite bows from attendants in the lounge.

The rangy man was Detective Steve Galden, of the Miami force. His companion, stocky of build, swarthy of complexion, was easily labeled as a visiting official from some other city, particularly when seen with Steve. It was Galden's habit to show such visitors around the town, and the tour often included the Palmetto Casino.

Galden gave a steady eye to the overpolite head waiter who sought to bow the new guests to a table.

"Cut the courtesy, Tony," snapped Galden. "We want to talk to the commodore. Tell him we're here."

Tony did better than Galden requested. He bowed the visitors across the lounge to a door that he opened without ceremony. They stepped into an office, where a baldish man with a smooth face and high-bridged nose was dictating letters from behind a desk.

Looking up, the baldish man adjusted a pair of pince-nez glasses and smiled a greeting.

"Hello, Galden!" he said, in a pleasant tone. "Close the door and have a chair. Glad to see you."

"Glad to see you, commodore," returned Galden, in a terse tone. "Meet Inspector Joe Cardona, from New York."

Commodore Denfield extended a long arm across the desk and gave the visitor a firm handclasp. Sweeping a box of cigars from a drawer, he pushed them across the desk and continued with his dictating, which he finished promptly. Dismissing his secretary, the commodore folded his arms and settled back in his chair.

"What can I do for you, Galden?"

Professionally, Galden let his gaze sweep the room. He noted a portrait of a musketeer behind the commodore's desk and fancied that it led to a passage that would give access to the hidden gaming room, as well as exit from the Palmetto Casino. But those factors did not concern Galden for the present.

What the detective failed to notice was an eye that peered through a button on the portrait's shoulder. The Shadow had found a new scene to interest him: Denfield's office.

"No favors wanted, commodore," informed Galden. "I just dropped in to do you one, gratis. You're through in Miami, and it's about time you knew it. A few days more and we're going to crack down, if you're still here."

"But I thought -"

"You thought you had a private club," interrupted Galden, "and that you could get an injunction restraining us from interfering with you while the season lasted. It won't work, commodore. We're ready to give you both barrels!"

Commodore Denfield arose; for the first time, Cardona noted the gambling czar's stoop-shouldered posture, which had not been evident while the man was seated. Wearily, the commodore shook his head.

"I thought I was entitled to a better break," said Denfield, in a disappointed tone. "I've been rendering you fellows an important service by running the Palmetto Casino."

"I know what you mean," rejoined Galden. "But it isn't working out. We weren't sorry when you opened, because we wanted to keep winter visitors away from the jook joints out in the sticks, where sharpshooters were spotting them. Business has been falling off in the jooks, but things are as bad as ever. Swindles, robberies -"

"You've had better luck stopping them," broke in the commodore. "You can't deny it, Galden."

"Only because they've been more concentrated," argued the detective. "But the spotting is going on just the same as before. For all we know"—he eyed Denfield coldly—"it may be happening right here in the Palmetto Casino."

"Not a chance in the world," returned Denfield. "It might be"—he tilted his head as he spoke—"that those jobs originate over at the Beach."

CARDONA recognized that Denfield had scored a hit. Joe had been learning things during this vacation in Miami. He knew that "jook joints" were the Florida equivalent of Northern roadhouse: dives located outside the city limits, hence beyond the reach of the metropolitan police.

Also, Cardona knew that Miami and Miami Beach, though part of the same resort area, were under different police jurisdiction. When crime shifted back and forth across the Bay, each bailiwick blamed the other.

Cardona was inclined to favor Miami rather than the Beach, not just because he knew Detective Galden, but because Miami was the more important area and therefore entitled to consideration.

Beneath his breath, Galden muttered some reference to the Beach, and Cardona saw Denfield smile. But the detective wasn't going to let the commodore's argument stand.

"If you're right, commodore," declared Galden, "it's your hard luck, just like it's ours. If we accuse the Beach of harboring scum, they'll pass the compliment right back to us. We need to show a clean slate, first."

"Wait here," suggested Denfield. "I shall be right back."

Commodore Denfield left by the main door of his office. Galden and Cardona puffed their cigars under the watchful eye of The Shadow. Soon, Denfield returned with the registration book.

"Tonight's patrons," he stated. "I should say members. Look over the names, Galden. You will find that all are reputable persons. Probably Inspector Cardona can identify many from New York."

Saying that he would have to return the register to the door, to check the leaving times of patron's, Denfield pressed a buzzer for his secretary.

Galden said he would like a copy of the list, so the commodore ordered the arriving secretary to type one. Then, from behind his desk, Denfield queried:

"Tell me, Galden—why should you or anyone else presume that crime spotters are working in this casino?"

There was a tense lull, while the clatter of the typewriter dominated.

Then abruptly, Galden came to his feet. One hand clamped to the desk, he thrust the other in his pocket. Cardona thought that Galden was reaching for a gun, until he saw that his friend's fist was tight-clenched.

"Crime is organized, commodore," spoke Galden, meeting Denfield eye to eye. "If you don't believe that mobsters are working together"—there was sarcasm in the detective's tone—"take a look at these!"

Galden spread his hand wide. In his palm lay three wooden balls; each small sphere had a flattened surface that bore a number. They were tokens of the solid type that Lee Clesson and Hawk Silvey had so recently handed to Manuel, the croupier. But these did not bear the numbers of crime's two aces.

"Bolita balls." Denfield gave a shrug as he spoke. "What have they to do with crime, Galden?"

"We've taken them from crooks," returned the detective. "Men who said they were carrying them for luck. We think different. It could be that thugs flash these to one another to prove they belong to the organization."

"An excellent theory, Galden." Denfield seemed impressed. "But what has it to do with me?"

"Just this. Bolita is the biggest gambling racket in the South. It also happens that gambling is your trade, commodore."

Rising from the desk, Denfield delivered a chuckling laugh. He clapped an affable hand on Galden's shoulder, and reached to receive the list that the secretary was drawing from the typewriter.

Denfield suggested that Galden check the list with the membership register, which the detective did. Then, as he ushered his visitors out through the door, Denfield said:

"If I could organize bolita, Galden, I wouldn't be bothering with the Palmetto Casino. But no one ever has controlled bolita, and never can. It's a type of gambling that is entirely out of my line -"

THE door closed, cutting off the rest of Denfield's speech. The secretary was following the commodore, and both had forgotten an important article: the membership register.

Since Galden and Cardona had also left, the office was open to The Shadow. He found a catch behind the musketeer portrait; pressed it.

With The Shadow, it wasn't a case of comparing the register with a duplicate sheet that he could examine at later leisure. He had to make the most of a brief opportunity, mentally tabulating the names he saw. The glint of keen eyes showed that the cloaked visitor was doing so, in remarkable style.

Few of the names were unfamiliar to The Shadow. He had looked into matters concerning the Palmetto Casino before paying this visit.

Knowing the "membership" of the gambling club, The Shadow was able to check the register. The names were bona fide; as Denfield claimed, the list consisted of reputable persons only. No known crooks carried admittance cards to the commodore's preserves.

The Shadow's keen ears caught hurried footsteps beyond the door. With a swish, the cloaked investigator was gone beyond the panel, when the secretary entered the office to reclaim the registration book that the commodore had forgotten.

The fellow was putting check marks beside some names, as he went out; evidently they were those of persons who had left the gaming room while Denfield was entertaining Galden and Cardona.

Along the darkened secret passage, The Shadow stopped at the peephole which opened into the gaming room. A brief survey told him that several persons must have left, for the crowd looked smaller. Mentally repeating the list of names, looking for persons whose faces he knew or whose photographs he had seen, The Shadow accounted for those who had gone out.

Obviously, Commodore Denfield had passed the word that any patrons who wished could leave while he was entertaining Galden and Cardona. Several had taken advantage of the opportunity, but the steel door was again closed, which meant that Cardona and Galden were still in the lounge.

This was The Shadow's opportunity to look for faces that did not belong, and he made the most of it. Unfortunately, The Shadow was scanning the group too late. The only persons of the type he sought were gone; two of them, Lee Clesson and Hawk Silvey. The brief opening of the steel door had enabled them to stroll out with a small flock of legitimate customers.

As always, The Shadow made due allowance for whatever he might not have observed. He knew that if Commodore Denfield franked crooks into the gaming room, their names certainly would not be on the registration list.

Though, as yet, The Shadow had no trail to Lee or Hawk, he was considering men of their type as factors in current crime. Such crooks, or spotters working for them, could have viewed the patrons of the Palmetto Casino.

The thing was to pick the patrons most likely to be targets of crime, and The Shadow promptly chose one man from the throng. His guess was accurate; he picked Harvey Brenbright. The Shadow happened to know a great deal about the "fat guy" who carried the big bank roll.

Brenbright lived pretentiously at Miami Beach, and made a habit of displaying large sums around his hotel, though he was tight when it came to spending money.

Here, at the Palmetto Casino, the portly man was more careful. He fished in his pocket, sliding small bills into sight, one by one. But it was apparent to The Shadow that Brenbright had plenty of cash with him, in case his luck should warrant a plunge at faro. Brenbright was one person who would need prompt protection when he left the casino.

From the rest, The Shadow picked one through observation. Again, his choice was accurate. The Shadow selected Marcia Tyrone, because of the jewels that she wore. Marcia was a stunning brunette who fancied diamonds, and the sparkle of those gems gave a rainbow effect that marked them as genuine. Crooks would regard such trophies as worth while.

With Marcia, The Shadow saw George Agnew, who was evidently in luck tonight, for he was going heavily with the fifty-dollar chips, and his stack was sizable.

Ordinarily, Agnew might have been regarded as a protection to Marcia, but not under present circumstances, wherein he was worthwhile prey for crime. It happened, though, that Marcia and Agnew were with a group of friends and apparently intended to stay longer than Brenbright, who was becoming restless.

That fact placed the brunette and her escort into the field of future reference. For the present, The Shadow was concerned with Harvey Brenbright.

A whispered laugh passed unheard in the hidden passage behind the gaming room, as a cloaked figure moved toward the secret exit that led from the rear of the Palmetto Casino.

CHAPTER III. ACROSS THE CAUSEWAY

SEATED in a coupe, Steve Galden and Joe Cardona were watching the main entrance of the Palmetto Casino from a parking lot half a block away. To while away the time, Galden was explaining the game called bolita.

"Yes, it comes from Cuba," said Galden, "but it's not the game that's something like handball. You're thinking of jai alai"—Galden pronounced it "hi-li"—"that they play out at the Biscayne Fronton. There's plenty of money bet on jai alai, but it's legit. Bolita is different."

Cardona was ready to hear more about bolita, so Galden delivered the intriguing details.

"Down in Havana," explained Galden, "nine old gents sit around a big cage that's filled with numbered balls, and finally one of them yanks a gadget that sends a ball rolling down a track into a bowl, where a blindfolded orphan picks it out. Whoever has that number wins plenty of dough, because the numbers run up into the thousands.

"Up here, bookies take bets on the 'Cuba number,' as they call it, but they only use the last two figures. They use the Cuba number because it can't be fixed. It comes in over the radio every Wednesday, and then the local boys pay off."

It reminded Cardona of the numbers racket in New York. He could readily see, however, why Commodore Denfield had disclaimed all connection with bolita. The Cuban game and the local racket were entirely separate.

"What about those bolita balls you showed Denfield?" queried Joe, a bit puzzled. "They didn't come from Cuba, did they?"

Galden shook his head.

"They're the kind they use in the jook joints," he said, "here in Florida. They're only numbered up to a hundred, and they stow them in a bag and tie the neck. Then they play bean bag with the thing, all over the place.

"Finally, one fellow grabs a ball through the cloth. Somebody unties the bag, and all the rest of the balls drop out. The crowd looks at the one that's left, and it tells the winner. Small stuff, but if a wise bird like the commodore could get a cut from every bolita game -"

Galden broke off. He had been interrupting himself every time someone came from the Palmetto Casino. His eyes, at present, were on a portly man who wore a rumpled suit and was gesturing for a taxicab.

Cardona gave a grunt; it brought a query from Galden:

"Know who he is?"

"Harvey Brenbright," replied Cardona. "The worst tightwad in New York. I've seen him in the commissioner's office raising a squawk over a two-dollar parking ticket."

"Was his name on the commodore's book?"

"Yeah. Look at your list and you'll see it. I didn't bother to mention it, because Brenbright isn't crooked, whatever else he may be."

Brenbright was in his cab. As it pulled away, another car promptly followed it. The trailing machine bore a Florida license, and it whisked into sight so suddenly that neither Cardona nor Galden had a chance to glimpse the driver, who was seated deep behind the wheel. However, neither liked the look of the rakish car.

"Here's where we go." Galden pressed the coupe's starter. "Maybe we'll get some action out of tonight."

Brenbright's cab crossed the four-lane boulevard, to swing northward on the final lane. The trailing car did a suspicious thing; it took an in-between lane, where cars were allowed to park. Swinging over to the far lane, Galden said:

"Watch."

After a block, the rakish car emerged, again to pick Brenbright's trail. It veered in ahead of Galden's coupe.

"See that?" said Galden. "The fellow thinks he's smart. He acted like he was going to park, but kept on the move. We'll stick right with him."

Two more blocks brought another car into the picture. A trim sedan shot out from the parking lane, to move up beside Brenbright's cab. When the cab swung right, to take the Venetian Way leading to Miami Beach, the sedan veered with it. So did the rakish vehicle that had first roused Galden's suspicions.

"We'll join the caravan," announced Galden, grimly. "I guess I'd better pay fifteen cents at the toll gate, instead of bothering with a two-bit round-trip ticket. I usually take the County Causeway, not because there's no toll, but because I don't want people checking on my trips over to the Beach."

Recalling the situation between the separate police forces, Cardona understood. When they reached the toll house, Galden was looking Joe's way, to escape recognition as he dropped fifteen cents into the gatekeeper's palm.

Then they were crossing a succession of islands, still at the rear of the caravan. A trip of a few miles brought them to Dade Boulevard, a diagonal extension of the Venetian Way.

Flanked by a canal on the right, the cars were following a thoroughfare which had considerable traffic; nevertheless, its parklike fringes made Cardona class it as a route where anything might happen.

Things did happen, just when Joe decided that the hazard was past.

THE cars halted for a traffic light, where a street bridged the canal and cut across the boulevard. The fancy sedan eased up beside the cab, while Galden closed in on the rakish car, hoping to get a look at its driver.

While Galden was stretching from his window, Cardona saw a car spurt from the cross street and take a sudden lurch for Brenbright's cab.

"Here it comes!"

As Cardona voiced the fact, Galden sprang from his door to make for the rakish car. It was the wrong

guess. Cardona knew what had really happened. The signal for the coming crash had been given from the sedan, up beside the cab. It was the trim sedan, not the rakish car, that carried a quota of crooks.

There was a clatter as the cab took a jolt from the vehicle that lurched in from the bridge. Leaping from the far door of the cab, Brenbright was promptly grabbed by a batch of men headed by Lee Clesson. All were masked, for on this occasion, they were playing the part of stick-up men.

Cardona was on his way to stop them, shouting for Galden to follow. Joe was forced to take a long way around; as for Galden, he was also delayed. He had stopped to look into a rakish car that no longer had a driver!

Thugs would have made an easy getaway, with Brenbright as their helpless prisoner, if another figure had not entered the scene. The challenger came from the surrounding night itself, a figure cloaked in black. He arrived with a mocking laugh, as sinister as it was timely: The Shadow!

He was the driver of the rakish car. The Shadow had taken Brenbright's trail before the crook had picked it up. His purpose had been to bring Cardona and Galden along!

Like a living avalanche, The Shadow was among the startled crooks, slugging with heavy guns that he wielded in black-gloved fists. Masked men were dropping Brenbright, to aim at their unexpected foe, but The Shadow was too swift for them. He sprawled the nearest thugs, sent the others dodging. As the scattering tribe turned to aim from greater distance, The Shadow served them bullets.

He was blasting like a human gun turret, as he revolved near the vacated sedan. Brenbright, huddled by the running board, was safe from harm, for the return shots that gunmen supplied were frantic and wild. Moreover, new guns were entering the fray. Galden and Cardona were following the proper instinct, opening fire from their angle.

The battle ended as suddenly as it had begun. The intensity was fierce while it lasted; the abrupt conclusion was a tribute to The Shadow's might.

Leaving mobsters sprawled on the boulevard, Lee Clesson and a few others made a frantic, but successful, scramble into a reserve car that whipped up from the opposite curb, only to veer wildly, skittishly away as its driver heard the challenge of The Shadow's laugh.

There would have been no rescue for Lee Clesson and his few remaining pals, had the reserve driver realized that they were dealing with The Shadow. Spurting the car across the bridge, the fellow was lucky enough to find intervening traffic that prevented The Shadow from shooting after him.

Plucking Brenbright to his feet, The Shadow shoved the portly man into the arms of Cardona and Galden. Then, with a triumphant laugh, the black-cloaked fighter sprang into the cab and ordered the driver to follow after the departing attackers.

Though damaged, the cab was still capable of pursuit. Astounded by sight of the cloaked apparition that replaced his former passengers, the cabby stammered his obedience.

The cab whisked away. Looking about for new foemen, Galden and Cardona saw none. Putting away his gun, Galden gestured for Joe to do the same. They were helping Brenbright to their own car, when khaki-clad police arrived upon the scene.

What they thought upon finding Galden on the Miami Beach side of the Venetian Way was something they did not express. It happened that the Beach police recognized Cardona, and knew that he was stopping at an ocean-front hotel. Galden let Cardona tell the story.

RECOGNIZING the delicate situation, Cardona handled it well. He'd met Galden in Miami, so he said, and the detective had offered to drive him back to his Beach hotel. They'd seen the tangle of cars ahead, heard the sound of gunfire. But the battle had wheeled away before they had a chance to join it.

Galden held back a knowing smile, when he noted how reticent Cardona was in describing The Shadow. Some battler had thinned the crooks and pursued the remnants in a taxicab, according to Cardona.

Accepting Joe's statements, the Beach police obligingly gathered in three crippled hoodlums and took them to the hospital, along with the vacated cars. Cardona and Galden followed in the latter's coupe.

Later, they arrived at the Beach police headquarters, where Brenbright told his story. He couldn't identify his assailants, and he shook his head, completely puzzled, when officers showed him three bolita balls that they had taken from the pockets of the crooks who went to the hospital.

To Galden, the bolita balls were an important detail, but he did not mention the fact. He regarded them as links to the situation in Miami, and preferred to keep the matter to himself, unless the Beach police asked his opinion, which they didn't.

By then, a new witness had arrived. He was the cab driver from Miami. He showed up in his battered cab before the police could start in search of him, and he told a simple, coherent story. His cab had been attacked, and, later, commandeered by a lone fighter who had battled off the crooks and wanted to pursue them.

There had been a pursuit, but the mobsters had dodged the cab driver by taking to the byways of Miami Beach. He had finally found himself alone; the mysterious passenger had dropped off somewhere.

The Beach police accepted the cab driver's story, on the combined testimony of Brenbright and Cardona. It happened, too, that Galden knew the cabby and agreed to produce him when needed.

Outside headquarters, the cab driver approached, to proffer thanks to Galden.

"Forget it, Tim," said the detective. "Everybody knows you're all right. You told the whole story."

"Not all of it, Steve," Tim undertoned. "I didn't mention this. The guy in black said not to."

Into Galden's hand the cab driver dropped a small ball, quite different from those that the detective had previously acquired. It wasn't a bolita ball, for it was perfectly round and bore no number. Jet-black, it was a token from The Shadow.

Handling the ball, Galden found that it was loose in the center; it unscrewed into two sections; within, the detective found a wadded note.

A thought struck Cardona while Galden was reading the message. The Shadow knew about the bolita balls; this was his way of proving it. Furthermore, it might be that some of the bolita balls were tricky, too; that The Shadow was using this device to give Galden an idea for future reference.

Looking at the message that Galden had unfolded, Cardona was too late to read it. He saw blue-inked words fading from view, leaving the paper blank.

Such was the way with The Shadow's special ink, as Cardona knew from past experience. Though Joe had failed to read the message, Galden had devoured it, as was evident when the Miami detective urged his New York friend into the coupe.

"We're going back over the Venetian Way," asserted Galden, "and in a hurry, too. Something else is due,

more serious than the attempt that mob made to stick up Brenbright. This time"—Galden's tone showed anticipation—"we'll be in on the finish, not just the beginning. Whatever happens will be on my side of Biscayne Bay!"

CHAPTER IV. MIAMI MADNESS

MARCIA TYRONE was stopping at the Hotel Bayside, which overlooked the park along Biscayne Bay. Many of her friends, Georgie Agnew included, were over at Miami Beach, and Marcia talked of moving there later.

For the present, however, she preferred a luxurious suite in Miami to a single room in an ocean-front hotel. Late in making her reservations, Marcia had failed to get the accommodations she wanted at the Beach.

The party broke up as soon as Marcia and Agnew left the Palmetto Casino. It happened sooner than The Shadow expected, for some of the crowd had become heavy losers.

Finding herself deserted by her glum friends, tired of listening to Agnew boast about his heavy winnings, Marcia decided to return to her hotel, which was close to the casino.

She entered the lobby with Agnew, who was protesting that they ought to visit a few night spots. The argument continued all the way up to Marcia's floor and to the door of her suite, where she knocked, expecting the maid to answer.

"The evening's still young," insisted Agnew, "and the moon isn't out yet. Let's go for a sail, Marcia."

There being no response from the maid, Marcia was unlocking the door with her key. As she pressed, the door resisted; Agnew gave it an inward shove across Marcia's shoulder. There was a thud from the other side.

Half plunging across the threshold, Marcia and her companion nearly stumbled across the maid, who was lying bound and gagged within the living room.

Others were present—masked men who stood with drawn revolvers. They were three in all; their leader was heavier than the companions who flanked him. The leader happened to be Hawk Silvey, but it was impossible to recognize him. Even his high-bridged nose was completely covered by the drape of a handkerchief mask.

Hawk's eyes had a sharp glint through the slits of the mask. He saw Agnew ease back toward the door and snapped a command for the fellow to remain.

Marcia's fright at meeting the masked reception committee was suddenly ended by her indignation over Agnew's action, which she mistook for cowardice.

Hands raised, Marcia turned accusing eyes toward her Tuxedoed companion.

"Why... why"—anger accounted for her stammer—"I believe you were going to walk out on me, George!"

Agnew winced; then gave his lifted hands a shrug. He glanced at the masked thugs, and spoke as though accepting them as witnesses to the excuse he gave.

"I thought I might get help," he said. "That wasn't walking out, Marcia. A try seemed worth while."

By then, Hawk Silvey had moved his two pals forward. Sliding behind the prisoners, one crook closed the door without observing that Marcia's key was still in the lock. Marcia still registered indignation, which she directed chiefly at Agnew, whose explanation didn't satisfy her.

Sizing up the situation, Hawk acted cleverly. He motioned his two men toward Marcia.

"Peel those sparklers off the doll," ordered Hawk. "I'll take care of this Fauntleroy."

The Fauntleroy was Georgie. The term momentarily annoyed him; then, seeking to mollify Hawk, Agnew gave a sickly grin and questioned if he could light a cigarette. Approaching, Hawk slapped Agnew's pockets; finding that they lacked a gun, he gruffed:

"Go ahead."

It was smart work on Hawk's part. He wanted to make Marcia think that Agnew was in the game, and the ruse succeeded. At that moment, Marcia was suffering new indignity, as thugs deprived her of necklace, bracelets, and finger rings in none too gentle fashion.

"I say!" protested Agnew to Hawk. "Have those chaps go easy with Miss Tyrone!"

"Sure, sure," agreed Hawk, through his mask. "Take it easy, boys. We're in no hurry."

Marcia didn't thank Agnew for his effort in her behalf. She simply became more convinced that he had invited the mask men to be on hand, and was trying to cover his part. While one thug kept a gun pressed against the girl's neck, the other brought the jewels to Hawk, who received them in a widespread paw.

"Good enough," Hawk told his pal. "We've got what we came for. Wait, though"—his voice lost its roughness—"maybe this guy Agnew has some dough on him. Find out."

The loose thug began to go through Agnew's pockets. He soon found the money that Georgie had won at the Palmetto Casino. Holding his cigarette in a lifted hand, Agnew gave a hopeless glance toward Marcia, who returned a glare. Even more than before, this seemed a cover-up.

GUN in one hand, jewels in the other, Hawk padded for the thug to bring him Agnew's bank roll. Neither of the pair noted the peculiar stretch of darkness that was encroaching inward from the door.

Silently, that door had eased inward, to admit a tall figure that blocked the dimmer light of the corridor.

It glided along the wall, an entering shape that cast blackness ahead of it. Three figures cut off Hawk's sight of the intruder. Agnew, Marcia, and a thug formed a little cluster fronting the gliding form that moved with ghostlike stealth. The first person to learn of the strange entrant was the thug.

A gun muzzle pressed the crook's neck. A voice whispered in his ear, telling him to lower his own revolver. At the same moment, a gloved hand pressed past the fellow's shoulder, clamping upon the revolver itself, ready to jerk the weapon if the thug tried to move his trigger finger.

The crook froze. His eyes went glassy through the mask slits. He knew the identity of this strange challenger who had trapped him in the midst of crime, in the very presence of his pals.

The Shadow!

Fingers numbed by The Shadow's touch, the mobster let his revolver drop. It hit the floor with a thud that brought Hawk and the other thug about. Deftly, The Shadow sent his prisoner forward with a knee-shove; caught him with a hooking foot to turn the jolt into a sprawl.

The unarmed thug hit the floor beyond his lost gun. Stepping between Marcia and Agnew, The Shadow delivered a mocking laugh as he covered Hawk and the remaining crook with a brace of looming automatics!

Caught flat-footed, the pair stood helpless. The thug let his gun fall from his hand, as token of surrender. Hawk stiffened, still hoping to resist. Then bills began to flutter from his left hand: the money that had been taken from Agnew. As the cash strewn the floor, jewels began to trickle. Marcia's gems became a spread of glitter among the green bank notes.

Hawk's gun hand was going downward inch by inch. His fingers opened to release it, but the revolver clung to their tips, by the trigger guard. With a snarl, Hawk made a last gesture to grip the weapon. Then, seeing The Shadow shove a .45 forward, Hawk decided to let it go. It was Agnew who prevented him.

George had made a series of mistakes, and this one topped the list. He thought that Hawk's convulsive grasp was done in earnest. Anxious to show his right colors, Agnew couldn't hold back. He knew that he could gain Hawk's gun with a quick grab, so he made the effort.

With a long lunge and an excited cry, Agnew sprang across The Shadow's path of aim and fell upon Hawk Silvey.

As they reeled, Agnew grabbed the gun, plucking it by the barrel. He tried to slug Hawk with the handle, and nearly succeeded. The Shadow, meanwhile, swung to make sure that the other thugs were properly cowed. He was willing that Agnew should redeem himself by overpowering Hawk, the masked leader of the trio. Unfortunately, the delay was costly.

A shriek from Marcia brought The Shadow full about. The door of the room was swinging inward. On the threshold were three more men—a leader and two masked companions. Though he could not see their faces, The Shadow knew where they had come from. They were the fugitives from the strife in Miami Beach.

Knowing where Hawk Silvey had gone, Lee Clesson had decided to go there, too, just in case The Shadow had moved in on another scene of crime. Lee half expected to find The Shadow, but not as suddenly as he did. Thanks to Marcia's warning scream, the cloaked fighter was full about before the invaders saw him.

Lee made a rearward twist, as his pals shoved through the doorway. There was a double blast from a brace of automatics, as crooks fired at a side-shifting figure in black.

Puny in contrast to The Shadow's gun stabs, the shots from thug-owned revolvers were useless, as well. The slugs from the automatics drilled home, while revolver bullets went wide.

Of the invading three, only Lee was safe. He was dodging out into the corridor as his two companions sprawled. The fierce crescendo of The Shadow's laugh, threatening prompt pursuit, was anything but music to the fleeing crime ace. Right then, The Shadow seemingly had everything in hand; but there was something else afoot.

IN his shift, The Shadow had come close by the thug whom he had first shoved to the floor. As The Shadow wheeled away, to take a quick look around before heading to the corridor, the cowering crook grabbed the cloaked fighter's ankle. The frantic, half-scared action brought results.

Caught off balance, The Shadow stumbled across the room. Grabbing up his lost revolver, the thug lurched after him. Another masked man was still standing stupidly in the center of the room; he also came to life. Before Marcia could reach him, the fellow had scooped his gun from the floor and was after The

Shadow, too.

It was amazing, the way The Shadow recovered balance and swooped in upon the pair. He drove straight between the fire of their converging guns, escaping the bullets that actually flicked his coat sleeves. They tried to turn the fray into a grapple, but they couldn't stop The Shadow's flailing arms. In that melee, the skulls of thugs took solid blows from hard-swung guns.

Triumph would have been complete, if George Agnew had not furnished another mental lapse. Viewing The Shadow's temporary plight, Agnew sprang about, hoping to give aid that wasn't needed. Agnew had Hawk's gun and tried to aim it. Hawk rallied, and prevented him.

Free to pounce upon Agnew, Hawk did so. He pummeled his adversary to the floor, snatched up the revolver when George dropped it, and aimed it at the hapless young man. Springing for Hawk, Marcia grabbed the crime ace's gun hand and sent his shot wide. Therewith, Hawk's whole scheme vanished.

His murderous attempt proved that Agnew was not working with him. Hawk's delay in attempting to settle Georgie ruined his chances of downing The Shadow, who had by that time flattened the attacking thugs.

The best that Hawk could do was make for the door, hauling Marcia along with him. Still trying to grab Hawk's gun, the girl was unwittingly serving as a shield.

The Shadow overtook the pair; wresting Marcia away, he sent her spinning back into the room, to land, quite surprised, among her scattered jewelry.

Hawk profited by The Shadow's rapid twist. Though unable to aim as he stumbled forward, the released crook managed to hook the door and haul it with him, as he dived into the corridor.

Like Lee Clesson, Hawk heard the mocking tone of The Shadow, the mirth that promised immediate pursuit. He caught a shout from Lee, who was at a stairway. Foolishly, Hawk dashed for the elevators instead. Lee sprang out to grab him and steer him in the other direction. They were at the elevator, when a door slashed open.

Out lunged two stout warriors: Steve Galden and Joe Cardona. Arriving on The Shadow's tip-off, they were drawing their guns when they emerged. But they dived for doorways along the corridor, the elevator operator with them, when they saw the two masked men lunge for them.

Never had Galden or Cardona faced such a frantic, murderous pair. Lee Clesson and Hawk Silvey were aces of crime, dangerous at any time. But with The Shadow close behind them, they would willingly have tried to blast their way through a whole police squad. They wanted the elevator, and took it.

Given a few more seconds, they would have settled Galden and Cardona into the bargain. They were aiming for the doorways where the arriving men had dived, when a laugh came from Marcia's suite.

Lee slashed the elevator door shut just as The Shadow's guns began to spurt. With bullets pounding the closed barrier, Hawk yanked the control lever and started the elevator on a downward trip.

Amazed to find themselves unscathed, Cardona and Galden saw The Shadow reach the stairway, to continue his pursuit. Joe and Steve would have followed, but they heard calls from Marcia's suite and decided they were needed there.

Hurrying in, they found Agnew and Marcia struggling with two groggy crooks; the pair who had taken The Shadow's gun strokes.

The thugs turned to fire at the new arrivals, but Cardona and Galden beat their slap-happy foemen to the shot. Like Lee's two henchmen, Hawk's pair of followers coiled to the floor. The Shadow had left them alive, to testify against the crime ring. Dead, the thugs were reduced to the status of evidence.

OUTDOORS, two men were speeding away in a car that had pulled up to receive them. Snatching off their masks, Lee Clesson and Hawk Silvey exchanged sour glares. They didn't have to talk about the past. They could express their complete chagrin by snarling a single name: "The Shadow!"

Then finding themselves clear, the pair expressed their opinions of the future.

"We can't play the strong stuff any longer," voiced Lee. "We'll have to go after the set-ups."

"That's what we figured anyway," returned Hawk. "It's come sooner than we expected, that's all."

Dour looks turned to grins. Both aces were thinking of the crime king who ruled them; the plans that he had already made for deeper, darker deeds. Crime wasn't through in Miami. It was just beginning, and would continue despite The Shadow.

Back near the Hotel Bayside, a black-cloaked figure with a slouch hat was vanishing into the gloom of one of Miami's many arcades. Neither Lee Clesson nor Hawk Silvey would have felt so secure, had they been near to hear the sinister, prophetic laugh that the disappearing fighter uttered.

The Shadow, too, could picture crime's future trend. He was confident that he could still deal with the criminal madness that existed in Miami, whatever its new turn might be!

CHAPTER V. THE LAW WAITS

OUT of chaos came a quiet that lulled Miami for the remainder of the week. Crime had taken a serious setback, and for the first time, the public was learning how serious things had been. Working first in the outskirts, then toward the heart of Greater Miami, crooks had managed many crimes, until they became too bold.

The attack on Brenbright, the attempt to rob Marcia Tyrone of her jewels, were the final strokes that had followed earlier activities. Success would have given crooks a mighty grip in Miami, for all the scum would gladly have joined a crime ring that could prove itself stronger than the law.

Instead, double defeat had reversed the situation. Crime had been licked on both shores of Biscayne Bay. Blue-clad police who patrolled Miami, those in khaki who covered Miami Beach, were on constant lookout for small-fry hoodlums, who, as a result, were making themselves quite scarce.

In Miami, Steve Galden summed up the situation for Joe Cardona in a way that won approval. As he chatted, Galden stared steadily at his desk, where a row of bolita balls was on display.

"Everyone of those mobbies had a bolita ball on him," growled Galden, "but we still haven't found the numbers that we want. Too bad the four guys died on us up in the Hotel Bayside. Some of them might have talked."

For the first time, Cardona disagreed.

"It wouldn't have helped," said Joe. "They took some of the crew alive over in Miami Beach. None of the prisoners knew anything."

"I guess not," conceded Galden. "The ringleaders are keeping themselves well covered, even from most of their own men. It points to an even bigger man behind the racket; one who may be keeping his

lieutenants in the dark."

"Commodore Denfield?"

"I'd say so, if we could only prove it." Galden scowled at the balls on the desk. "But the commodore is smart. He meets you more than halfway. Gambling is his business, but he disclaims all connection with bolita, and makes it logical."

"Just like he did when he gave us a copy of his register. There were three names right on the list: Harvey Brenbright, Marcia Tyrone and George Agnew. All we had to do was pick them and protect them. We muffed the thing, but The Shadow was smart enough to steer us right."

"So how can we blame the commodore? On the surface, he is trying to help us. He won his point, too. Because of his co-operation, the order is out to leave the Palmetto Casino alone; and while his club is running, why should the commodore be mixing into anything else?"

Cardona couldn't answer the final question. Joe wound up with a headache, every time he tried to analyze the commodore's case. Either Denfield was the straightest of shooters, or the twistiest double-crosser who ever flimflammed the law. One thing, however, was certain.

The answer to crime would never be gotten through Commodore Denfield. The law would have to work up from the small fry, through the lieutenants, to find the proof that would convict the headman of the mysterious ring.

"You've helped a lot, Cardona," said Galden, "by identifying some of those thugs as imports from New York. We like it when you fellows of the 'foreign legion' give us a lift."

"I won't be in the legion long," returned Cardona, grimly. "I had word from the police commissioner today. He's coming down here on vacation, and that means I'll go back to New York."

"But we still may need you -"

"Commissioner Weston won't think so," interposed Cardona. "Not with the way you've put the clamps on crime. Unless there comes a new crime wave, my vacation, if you can call it such, is over."

Rising, Galden clapped his hand on Cardona's shoulder and gave a chuckle.

"Come on and have some fun," suggested Galden. "I've got an assignment that's a real laugh. More fun than hunting for a lot of crooks that nobody can find."

THEY rode in Galden's car to the Miami Yacht Basin, just south of the County Causeway.

Cardona was intrigued at sight of the Miami Aquarium, which was an old ship, moored in sand. Galden told him that it was an old Danish barkentine which had sunk, and blocked the harbor, during the boom. "Maybe it was just a coincidence," said Galden, sagely. "Anyway, it cut off shipping at a most important time. The hurricane of '27 beached the old tub, and she was converted into a hotel with a hundred rooms. Later, they made her into an aquarium. But she isn't the boat that we came to see."

Galden parked farther down the basin, where concessions lined the shore and barkers shouted the merits of fishing trips, canal tours, and boat trips to the Everglades. Customers were few, for the crowd had assembled elsewhere, to look at a strange craft that had pulled up to the shore.

The vessel was a crude, decked affair, a mongrel of the shipping world. At best, it was a cross between a sloop and a yawl, but it was also fitted with clumsy outrigger pontoons. It had a single mast, adorned

with a sail of old patched canvas, and at the rear was an ancient outboard motor that served as an auxiliary.

The captain was as curious as the craft itself. He was a bulky, bearded man, whose ruddy hair glistened in the sun. His garb consisted of a leopard skin, and he wore a pair of open-work moccasins that could have been classed as soft-soled sandals.

Though his ship was large enough to accommodate more than a dozen persons, the leopard-garbed captain depended upon a crew of two, who were funnier-looking than himself.

They were emaciated youths, attired in deer hides. They had half-grown beards that looked like parodies of their leader's ruddy whiskers. Having moored the boat, they went below deck, and came up lugging chunks of coral that looked like ballast.

"That's Miles Laxter," stated Galden, indicating the bearded man. "He runs a nature colony on Coquina Key, over in the Gulf. But it didn't pan out like he expected."

"Why not?" queried Cardona. "Those fellows look like they could live on gulls' eggs and seaweed."

"That's about what they've been doing," expressed Galden. "Laxter expected to make the colony self-sufficient by digging up coral rock and peddling it to the world. But he hasn't had much luck so far. That's why he's come to Miami."

"To sell coral?"

"To get funds, first, and buy supplies, so his colony won't starve. He wants help from some of the millionaires over at Miami Beach. They fall for that sort of stuff."

Police were shoving back the crowd, to let Miles Laxter come ashore. A uniformed chauffeur conducted the leopard man, through a pathway to a limousine, then went back to get the specimens of coral and some sponges which were on the deck.

Laxter's two seamen remained on the crazy craft, staring enviously at persons who were eating hot dogs on the wharf. Some wag tossed a handful of peanuts to the deck. To the delight of the crowd, the bearded men snatched up the peanuts and began devouring them, shells and all.

"Hungry, all right," commented Galden. "The crowd will be throwing coconuts at those monkeys, next. But there's no use staying any longer. Let's follow the escort and see where Laxter winds up."

Miami motorcycle cops kept ahead of the limousine, as it followed the County Causeway across the Bay. Longer than the Venetian Way, the route crossed at an angle, toward the lower end of Miami Beach.

At the dividing line, the blue-clad officers wheeled their motorcycles about, and a waiting group of Beach police took over the escort job. Galden kept his coupe among a caravan of trailing cars filled with curiosity seekers.

Reaching Collins Avenue, the parade went northward until it reached the palatial Hotel Sevilla, newest of the Beach resorts. There, police blocked off the curious throng, while Laxter alighted from the limousine and strode importantly into the hotel.

Galden parked his car; he and Cardona strolled around the corner and entered the Sevilla from a promenade that ran between a front patio and the beach.

In the lobby, they found Laxter talking with a reception committee. Most important of the group was a gray-haired man of dignified appearance, whose face was heavy-jowled, yet strong of profile. He was attired in a white linen suit, which rendered him conspicuous among the throng.

"Damon Trendle," identified Galden. "It was his car that brought Laxter over here. Too bad that a swell guy like Trendle would fall for the hokum that Laxter hands out."

"Trendle has a lot of money?" inquired Cardona.

"He's lousy with it," replied Galden. "He's a retired manufacturer from the Middlewest, who knows how to make his investments pay. He's turned philanthropist, and is always ready to boost a worthy cause."

"Like Laxter's colony?"

"That's it. Only, Laxter is a nature faker. He and his hooch went to Coquina Key to get away from the world. They couldn't make a go of it, so they're crying for help. I don't like whiners. Still"— Galden's expression became more tolerant—"it's all a matter of opinion. Maybe those dopes on Coquina Key deserve a lift."

Galden silenced to hear what Trendle had to say. The white-garbed millionaire was telling Laxter that the committee would give his plea a sympathetic hearing.

"You will be the only speaker at our luncheon," said Trendle, "and we have extended an open invitation to all who care to aid. Shake hands with the men about you, Laxter, and consider them your friends."

Laxter's eyes showed a gleam at mention of luncheon, though he didn't look as starved as the men he had left back on his curious boat. Trendle frowned suddenly, but not on Laxter's account. Turning, Damon Trendle saw another arrival: Commodore Denfield.

"I heard you were coming here, Denfield," said Trendle, in an icy tone. "Unfortunately, we could not prevent you, because -"

"Because the affair is open to all," interposed the gambling czar, a smile on his dryish lips. "If I wish to aid the Coquina colony, my money should be as good as anyone's."

"Quite," agreed Trendle. "Considering that it rightfully belongs to other people! I know your real purpose, Denfield. You are simply taking advantage of this chance to press yourself into society that does not care to accept persons of your sort!"

Turning on his heel, Trendle strode away. Something in Denfield's smile told that the gray-haired philanthropist had struck the truth. But Detective Galden suspected more behind the smile. He stepped toward the baldish gambling king.

"Hello, commodore," said Galden. "I just thought I'd tell you that I'll be dropping in to see you soon, at the casino. What's this?" He indicated a printed folder that Denfield held. "Another list of your club members?"

Smiling, Denfield handed the folder to Galden and shook his head.

"It's a souvenir program for today's luncheon," said the gambling king. "It gives the names of subscribers and their photographs. Look it over, Galden. You'll find that Trendle didn't care to include my picture."

Showing the program to Cardona, Galden was struck by one of the photographs. It showed a hawk-faced man whose features had a maskish touch. Immediately impressed, Galden looked at the

name beneath the portrait and read it aloud: "Lamont Cranston."

"Here, at Miami Beach?" exclaimed Cardona, in surprise. "It's news to me, Galden."

"You know this man Cranston?"

"Certainly! He is a friend of Commissioner Weston. They belong to the same club in New York."

"I don't see him anywhere." Galden was eyeing the luncheon guests, as they filed toward a palm-decorated room. "Sometimes, Cardona, I wonder about these important people who subscribe to certain causes and then fail to show up."

"You don't have to worry about Cranston," assured Cardona. "He's liable to be anywhere except where you expect him. You know, at times I have actually believed that Cranston might be -"

Cardona cut himself short before adding the name: "The Shadow." It was a point on which Cardona had no proof; to suggest it to Galden might mean complications. Busy watching the luncheon guests, Galden did not catch the import of Cardona's unfinished sentence. The fact made Cardona smile.

If Steve Galden wanted to regard Lamont Cranston with suspicion, it was all right with Joe Cardona. The New York police inspector had no worry regarding Cranston's welfare. Cranston had proven himself quite competent in looking after his own affairs.

Quite curiously, Cardona's opinion was to undergo a sharp reversal before this day was ended. The time was due when Cardona would suffer real concern over a certain Mr. Cranston, who might be The Shadow!

CHAPTER VI. THE NEW ARMY GAME

WHILE Commodore Denfield was lunching with respectable people in Miami Beach, a very different scene was in progress on the other side of the Bay.

Three men were congregated at a table in the rear of a Biscayne Boulevard barroom. Lee Clesson, who dominated the trio, was giving orders to the other two.

One of Lee's companions was a darkish shrewd-faced man who answered to the name of Nipper. The other, somewhat wizened, had the look of an ex-jockey, and Lee called him Skeet. The things that Lee confided interested them immensely.

"We're ready to pull the trim," stated Lee. "We've been working on Claude Vornal long enough; it's time we took his dough. So we're going after it this afternoon, to the tune of fifty grand."

Both listeners knew who Claude Vornal was. Vornal came from Oregon, where he rated as a rich owner of timberland. That Vornal could lay his hands on fifty thousand dollars, was something very obvious. But it was also a fact that Vornal seldom carried more than a few hundred dollars in cash.

"Skeet and I have been tipping Vornal right," said Lee, addressing Nipper. "We've got him almost thinking that we fix the races out at Hialeah. We're going up to his hotel room this afternoon and talk him into betting on the third race."

"Your job, Nipper, is to learn the winner and slip the news to us. Then tap in on the radio and pipe a phony description of the race. Pick up the regular announcement on a record, and give us the repeat."

Nipper shook his head.

"I thought you were taking Vornal over," he said. "But this stuff will only be a build-up. You're doing nothing else but work the old army game?"

"You're wrong, Nipper," returned Lee. "This is the new army game. It's got twists you never heard of. Do like I tell you. Skeet and I will handle the rest."

Despite his wealth, Claude Vornal was stopping at a comparatively cheap hotel, the Crescent, which stood a block back from Biscayne Boulevard. Pinch-penny methods had been the basis of Vornal's fortune, and still maintained his system. Coming to Miami, Vornal had been horrified by the prices charged at the fancier hotels, and even begrudged the price he paid at the Crescent.

Vornal was a flabby man, his very expression miserly. But he delivered an avaricious smile when he heard a knock at his door, and opened it to find Lee and Skeet standing there. The smile was meant for Lee Clesson in particular.

Lee had met Vornal through a scouting tout, who had spotted the flabby man at Hialeah Racetrack. Vornal liked to play the ponies, though many of his bets were made at the two-dollar window. Gradually, Lee had worked him up to higher figures, by introducing Skeet as a jockey who had been banned from the track for being too wise.

At present, Vornal wasn't visiting Hialeah. Instead, he made his bets from his hotel room through a bookie named Chris Dorr, who ran a horse parlor in Miami. According to Lee, tips could be phoned from the track very easily, but it was dangerous to pick them up under the watchful eyes of the Hialeah police.

Stretching themselves in easy-chairs, the visitors gingerly accepted some of Vornal's cheap liquor. Nudging toward the radio, Lee turned to Skeet:

"Tune in, Skeet, and let's hear what's doing at the track."

Vornal remarked that the radio was out of order, but after Skeet fiddled awhile, it began to operate. Lee knew that Nipper had fixed things in the room below, and was ready to pipe through. A moment later, the telephone bell rang. With a wise nod, Lee answered it.

"A sure one on the third?" he queried. "Say—I thought that was going to be anybody's race... Yeah, I'm holding one. But don't hand me a bum one... What's that? Hesperus?... Say, I thought that gopher was slated for the glue factory -"

Gradually, Lee's headshakes ended. He looked convinced, as he hung up the telephone.

"Hesperus, at ten to one," he declared. "A sure thing, on the nose. I wouldn't have believed it, only the tip came from -"

Lee halted, as though loath to mention any names. He had used such measures in the past with Vornal. Eagerly, the flabby man exclaimed:

"I'll pay you the usual ten percent, Clesson, if Hesperus wins. How should I bet? Fifty bucks?" He paused; then, with a plunger's air, he added: "Or maybe a hundred?"

"If you take my advice," returned Lee, in a tone of cold assurance, "you will put five thousand dollars on Hesperus."

"Five... thousand... dollars!"

WITH each word, Vornal's lower jaw seemed to unhinge itself. Then, his eyes reduced to darty beads, he threw suspicious glances from Lee to Skeet.

Though Lee was unperturbed, Skeet became shifty. He had expected something of this sort; Vornal was too wise to fall for such big talk. But Lee was banking on Vornal's avarice.

"You can't lose, Vornal," said Lee, cagily. "I'm going to tell you why. You place your bets through Dorr, don't you? And you let Skeet phone in for you. Am I right?"

Still suspicious, Vornal finally nodded.

"Then here's the set-up," confided Lee. "If Hesperus wins, you go around to Dorr's and collect the fifty thousand. If the nag loses, Skeet clears town. You just don't know anything about it. Dorr won't be a loser, so he won't put up a squawk."

Lee had judged Vornal correctly. As the scheme impressed itself upon the flabby-faced lumberman, Vornal's eyes took on a shrewd gleam. His wealth was the result of shady deals that had all been within the law. This went a step further, but it was still within Vornal's bounds.

"I'll say that I was up here with you," added Lee, "and that Skeet wasn't even around. With two of us telling the same story, Dorr will have to believe us. That is, if Hesperus loses. But that hay-burner looks like a sure bet to me."

Vornal threw an anxious glance toward Skeet.

"What about him?"

"Listen, bud," spoke Skeet. "I'm heading for Mexico anyway. I've got a chance to do some riding under another moniker. If this goes haywire, slip me a century for traveling expenses and I'll be on my way. What've I got to lose?"

Digging in his pocket, Lee pulled out some money and peeled off fifty dollars, as his share of the emergency fund. The example was enough for Vornal. Hurriedly fishing out the same sum, he gave the cash to Skeet, saying:

"Call Dorr quickly and place the bet."

Vornal's present worry was that Skeet wouldn't get in ahead of starting time. There was no reason for such alarm. The third race was already run, with Hesperus the winner. The "tip" that Lee had received from the track was actually a call from Nipper, naming Hesperus and giving the correct odds.

In calling Dorr's, Skeet was simply going through with a game expected at the other end. Apparently, Dorr had gone out, so Skeet placed the bet with an assistant named Jerry, emphasizing that he was putting five G's on Hesperus, in Vornal's name.

As Skeet hung up, to announce that the bet was made, Lee thumbed the dial of Vornal's radio.

He tuned in on the record that Nipper was piping through, a replica of the news description from Hialeah, which Nipper had recorded more than ten minutes before. The announcer's voice was saying that the horses were off. From then on, it took the combined efforts of Lee and Skeet to keep Vornal from throwing a fit.

When the word came through that Hesperus was the winner, Vornal collapsed in the arms of his fellow-conspirators. They brought him back to life with a slug of his own whiskey. As Vornal's eyes

closed happily, Skeet started to pour him another drink.

"Lay off the varnish," undertoned Lee. "He's coming around. We want him sober for what happens next."

Then, as Vornal staged a complete revival, Lee clapped him enthusiastically upon the back.

"The next stop is Dorr's," announced the con man. "I'll go along with you, Vornal. We'll take Skeet, of course. Here's where we collect. But remember, I'm getting ten percent of the fifty thousand." He turned to Skeet: "One thousand of my five goes to you."

Rather than wait for an elevator, Lee suggested that they go down the stairway, for Vornal's room was only three floors up. The stairs brought them to an obscure corner of the lobby, and Lee led the way through a side door into an open-air arcade. He and Skeet had come in by that same route. They didn't want to be seen in the Crescent Hotel.

Their choice of the side exit was more fortunate than the crooks supposed. Hardly had they gone, before a tall calm-faced stranger strolled into the Crescent lobby and inquired for Mr. Vornal. The clerk rang Vornal's room, and decided that the guest must have left.

A bit puzzled, he thumbed through some slips of paper at the switchboard and found the number which someone had called from Vornal's room not long before. He suggested that a call to that number might reach Vornal.

The number that the clerk mentioned belonged to Chris Dorr, the racing bookie. The tall stranger recognized it, but his face was maskish as he turned away. Those features were strangely hawklike, the sort that impressed everyone who saw them, even when they appeared in a photograph.

The stranger who had inquired for Claude Vornal was wearing the features of Lamont Cranston; but the whispered laugh that escaped his immobile lips pronounced his real identity. He was The Shadow, on the trail of new crime!

CHAPTER VII. THE PAYOFF

IT wasn't far to Dorr's, and the bookie was back in his office when Vornal and two companions arrived there.

Dorr's parlor was in back of a cheap grillroom, behind a big blackboard that carried all the late racing returns. However, Lee Clesson steered Claude Vornal in through a side-street door. He wasn't anxious for people to see him enter; nor did he want Vornal to view the grillroom charts. More races had been run since the third.

Chris Dorr had a habit of always looking worried. His strained face took on a blank stare when Vornal demanded his payoff on the third race. Calling for Jerry, Dorr asked how much money Vornal had placed on Hesperus. When Jerry named five thousand dollars as the sum, Dorr sank back, staggered.

Obligingly, Skeet produced the bottle that he had brought from Vornal's room. One taste of that unaged blend brought Dorr upright; he was shaking his head emphatically.

"I won't pay!" he wheezed. "It's against my rules. Look there; you'll see the sign. 'Cash on the line.'"

"You've taken phoned bets before," began Vornal, indignantly. "If you don't pay, Dorr -"

"He'll come across," inserted Lee, smoothly. "Better think it over, Chris. I was up with Vornal when he

placed the bet."

"But Skeet made the call -"

"Sure! Like he always does. You told Vornal he could make his bets that way. Just because he took a dive off the deep end, and came up again, is no excuse for you."

Dorr licked his lips, seeking another excuse. At last he found one, and put it artfully.

"I said something else," he reminded. "I told Vornal, when he first became a customer, that I would take bets over the telephone, but only from people who would guarantee to show me the full amount, if demanded. If you have the required cash"—he turned to Vornal as he spoke—"I'll pay off."

"I can show five thousand dollars," returned Vornal, proudly, "any time you want to see it."

"Not five thousand," corrected Dorr, shrewdly. "Fifty thousand. That's the amount you expect me to pay. What's more, I want to see it this afternoon, not next week."

Dorr turned to open a cash box. It was well stuffed with money, which caught Vornal's eye. Lee began a well-faked protest in behalf of Vornal, but the flabby-faced man cut him short. A glance at Dorr's clock inspired Vornal.

"Fifty thousand dollars," chuckled Vornal. "I have more than that on deposit in a Miami bank. I came here, intending to buy some acreages of Southern pine. I still have time to reach the bank before it closes. If I return here, with the fifty thousand dollars -"

He finished his statement with a cold stare toward Dorr. Weakly, the bookie nodded, and gulped:

"I'll pay."

"I'll stay right here to see that he does," promised Lee. "Grab a cab and get over to the bank, Vornal. Chris will have the money counted out for you by the time you're back."

SKEET elected to remain with Lee, which pleased Vornal, as he didn't care to be seen with such a dubious companion when he visited the bank. He thought for a moment of taking Skeet along and leaving him in the cab outside the bank; but that would mean the extra cost of a running taximeter. Even when thinking in terms of fifty thousand dollars, Vornal still remembered nickels.

As soon as Vornal had gone, Lee told Dorr to shove the contents of the cash box into his pocket. As the bookie obeyed, Lee added other admonitions.

"Go out through the grillroom, Chris," he said, "and tell them you're closing up and going North on the streamliner. Get some friend to take you over to the station, and pick a guy that you can count on. Remember: you're building an alibi."

Dorr nodded.

"The boys will take care of Vornal," added Lee. "They're waiting for him outside the bank. I'll fix an alibi for myself and Skeet, though it won't matter much. Vornal is never going to tell. Say—did he grab the bait! I didn't even have to suggest that he ought to go to his bank."

Lee and Skeet went out by the side door, and Dorr promptly locked it. He handed some cash to Jerry, who was in another room where he hadn't seen the visitors, and told him to come along.

"We're busted, Jerry," said Dorr, as they went into the grillroom. "So run along and forget it."

Jerry accepted the news with a shrug. He had not expected Dorr's business to last. In the grillroom, Dorr shook hands with friends and announced that he was going North. He soon managed to pick up a lift to the station. Riding away with a friend, the bookie grimaced a farewell to his old place of business.

Within a few minutes, a cab pulled up to the side door of the abandoned horse parlor. The man who stepped from the cab was The Shadow, still guised as Cranston. Trying the door, he found it locked. Calmly, The Shadow returned to the cab and gave the driver another destination.

Meanwhile, Claude Vornal had reached his bank. He drew out the entire sum that he had on deposit, some fifty-five thousand dollars. Lee Clesson had gauged Vornal's assets very well, by the simple expedient of glancing at the lumberman's bank book during a previous visit.

As Vornal considered it, closing the account was the easiest process, as Florida banks were accustomed to such action by persons who were returning North. Not for a moment did Vornal suspect that he was sweetening the kitty for Lee Clesson by an added five thousand dollars.

Fifty-five thousand for Lee meant that much for the hidden head of Miami's crime ring—a man who, so far, was beyond all reach of the law!

His cash stowed deep in a pocket, all in bills of large denomination, Vornal came from the bank and hailed another taxicab. His signal was picked up by a cab across the street; Vornal considered it lucky that one was so close at hand. He changed his opinion the moment that he entered the cab.

Two passengers were already present, leaning deep in the rear seat. They grabbed Vornal as he entered and jabbed guns into his ribs. He stared at masked faces, listened to harsh voices. His captors were telling him what to do, and also what not to do.

"Hand over the dough," said one. "Make it quick, and naturallike!"

"Then sit tight," growled the other. "It's daylight. We don't want nobody to see us."

"But they'll be seeing daylight through you," reminded the first thug, "if you pull anything funny!"

"Ever see a sieve?" asked the second man. "That's what you'll look like, Fish-face! Take our word for it."

Weakly, Vornal handed over his money. In the mirror, he caught a glimpse of the cabby's face. From its thuggish appearance, he realized that the driver was another of the crooked crew. Through Vornal's none-too-brilliant brain thrummed the horrifying thought that he was going for a ride, of the sort that he had heard about.

A CAR was following along the cab's trail, but it wasn't keeping too close. Another cab cut in between; it didn't attract the suspicion of the cover-up crew, because traffic was heavy in this section of Miami.

A strange, impressive drama was unfolding itself. Vornal was ignorant of the true situation; so were the crooks who led him captive.

The Shadow was in the game, right in the very center. Looking for obscure dupes, new prey for the crime ring, he had come across the name of Claude Vornal as being among persons visiting Miami. The Shadow knew that Vornal was scheduled for a one-way ride, but he also recognized that mobsters were handicapped by daylight.

It was a situation wherein the odds were distinctly against crime. Cagily, The Shadow was planning a real surprise for Vornal's captors.

Chance intervened, in a most singular fashion. It happened that the crook-manned cab swung past the Crescent Hotel. Sight of his own habitation roused Vornal to a sudden, mad desire for escape. Before the ride had taken on a real menace, Vornal made a wild grab for a door, in search of escape.

Guns blasted as the cab swerved the corner. The door flung open and Vornal's flabby form went headlong to the street, riddled with the bullets that the gunmen had promised. It was murder in broad daylight, committed in the very center of Miami! But the perpetrators, like the victim, had acted on sheer instinct.

Instantly, The Shadow was in action. He was still Cranston, as he shoved his fist from the window of his cab, to open fire on the killers ahead. All that saved those crooks was the swerve that spoiled The Shadow's aim. His cabby, alarmed by the shots ahead, had taken for the curb.

One stroke of ill luck provided the murderers with a quick escape, and placed The Shadow in sudden danger. Knowing that a cover-up crew was on the trail, The Shadow slashed the door open and sprang to the sidewalk. He wheeled as he fired at the car which bore down upon him—a car from which guns had already begun to blast!

It was daylight, and The Shadow was Cranston. But from his lips came a laugh of challenge, recognizable at any hour. To the crooks who thought they had an easy victim, that mirth was like lightning from the blue. It meant that they faced The Shadow, whoever else he might seem to be!

Like lightning, too, were the shots that The Shadow delivered. His bullets had the flay of a lashing whip. His aim was perfect, in contrast to the hasty fire that came in his direction.

He picked off thugs who were stretching too far from their car, brought them plunging to the street, as doors swung wide under the sagging pressure of the forms that struck against the handles.

Vornal's body was a dead hulk in the street. Murderers were away to safety. But a whole carload of vengeful crooks were receiving the wrath of The Shadow, as they tried to down their superfoe.

The Shadow was telling them off with bullets in no uncertain terms. To save his own life, he was drilling enemies who thought that they could deal with him as others had with Vornal!

The rattle of guns brought quick results. Blue-clad police appeared upon the scene, with a speed that spoke well for the Miami force. Mere moments, however, had produced a change. Masked crooks were away in their cab; the officers saw only what remained.

Vornal's body was in full sight. So were the sprawling forms of others, who could not be identified as criminals at such short notice. Beyond was a single marksman handling a brace of guns, a man with a hawkish countenance, who looked like a madman bent upon slaughter. Police revolvers began to bark in the direction of Lamont Cranston, otherwise The Shadow!

CHAPTER VIII. THE PERFECT ALIBI

DARKNESS, not daylight, was The Shadow's proper habitat. Never, in all his career, had he been confronted by a situation like the present one. To all appearances, he was a killer, and a mad one. He had stopped a criminal thrust in his best style, but that endeavor had marked him for doom.

He couldn't shoot at the police, who were converging toward him, half a dozen in all. Nor could he rely upon tactics that had served him in similar dilemmas. He needed his cloak, slouch hat, and the shroud of darkness. As Cranston, in daylight, he was helpless!

Not quite. An avenue provided itself. Wheeling to seek a doorway, The Shadow found an open space instead. It was the open-air arcade beside the Crescent Hotel, one of those lovely passages that added to the beauty of Miami.

With a long spring, The Shadow was gone. The police witnessed his departure and never guessed that he was the strange ally who had helped down crime a few nights before. They still regarded him as a long-limbed murderer, and they went after him with zest.

The arcade had a kiosk in the center, a circular affair that was divided into shops and travel bureaus. Had darkness shielded him, The Shadow would have rounded the cheese-box structure and kept on through to the next street. But in daylight, such policy was useless.

The Shadow was a man, not a living ghost. He could not perform a fade-out. He needed an unusual route to effect a proper escape, and the first way that offered was the one he took. It was the side entrance to the Crescent Hotel.

Dashing into that passage, The Shadow hoped that his ruse would send the police along the wrong trail.

It should have, for The Shadow's change of direction was prompt enough. But in springing for the passage, The Shadow saw a man coming out. Instinctively, he dodged, thinking that the fellow would shout for the police.

The man was carrying a suitcase; he looked like a hotel guest, checking out. Then, from the corner of his eye, The Shadow caught the glimmer of a gun in the man's other hand. He lunged for his new opponent.

The man was Nipper, the radio expert who worked for Clesson. Making his own departure from the Crescent Hotel, Nipper was just in time to render service to The Shadow!

It wasn't a case of mutual recognition. The Shadow had never seen Nipper before; nor did Nipper suspect that the tall fugitive was The Shadow. In dodging through the arcade, The Shadow had shoved his guns into holsters beneath his coat. He was simply Cranston, getting away from trouble.

However, upon sighting the gun in Nipper's hand, The Shadow knew the fellow was a crook; whether or not he belonged to the crime ring, did not matter.

In his turn, Nipper saw Cranston as anything but a crook. It struck him that this tall stranger might be some friend of Vornal's, who had somehow mixed things up for Lee Clesson.

That was why Nipper pulled his revolver. He expected that a mere flourish of the weapon would send Cranston on his way. It did; but The Shadow's way was straight toward Nipper. His lunge combined speed with power. As Nipper gave the suitcase a warding upward sweep, and tried to level his gun above the bag, The Shadow settled matters with one swoop.

He drove the bag right back against Nipper's face; the suitcase thumped the crook's revolver, jolting it high and wide. Nipper's tugging forefinger released shots that nicked stucco from the ceiling of the hotel entrance. With the second of those shots, Nipper found himself floundering on the floor.

The crook lost the suitcase as he sprawled. It cracked open, disgorging a quantity of undesirable evidence in the shape of Nipper's wiretapping equipment.

With a snarl, the darkish thug came to his hands and knees, looking for the adversary who had exposed his part in recent crime. He saw no sign of Cranston; instead, his attention was diverted to the arcade, where officers were arriving with smoking guns.

Nipper did what every heedless crook would have done. He aimed for the cops. He hadn't a chance to stop them, for they were expecting trouble and were ready for it. Besides, the officers were backed by the very man they mistakenly sought.

Just past a convenient corner within the hotel, The Shadow was aiming a .45 for Nipper, ready to nail the mobster before he could fire.

Fortunately, The Shadow's shot wasn't needed. A barrage of police bullets downed Nipper in his tracks. He got off a few shots as he flattened, but the slugs merely nicked the cement flooring. Nipper was coughing his last when the police reached him.

SHOOTING had attracted attention in the lobby of the Crescent Hotel. The clerk, who had first stared toward the street, was now facing around to the arcade. He halted abruptly at sight of the same hawk-faced stranger who had inquired earlier for Vornal.

Before suspicion could flash to the clerk's mind, The Shadow coolly asked if Vornal had returned.

Weakly, the clerk shook his head.

"Tell him that he can reach me at my hotel," spoke The Shadow in a calm-voiced tone. "The Sevilla, over in Miami Beach. Listen to that truck!" He stepped toward the street door, as if peering at a vehicle outside. "I never heard a motor give so many backfires!"

His nerves quieted, the clerk settled back behind the desk. He was glad that he hadn't made a fool of himself over sounds that he had mistaken for gunshots. He'd forgotten to ask the name of the gentleman who had inquired for Vornal, which rather troubled him. Then, a bit puzzled, the clerk began to wonder why he had supposed that some of the imaginary shooting had come from the arcade.

Things were explained, in part, when three officers came into the lobby from the arcade entrance. Two of them were carrying the limp form of Nipper; the third had the crook's open suitcase. Turning to the clerk, one officer asked:

"Ever see this fellow?"

The startled clerk stared. Nipper's face was vaguely familiar, and he said so. But he didn't know the dead man's name. By then, the officers were studying Nipper's face in the light. One shook his head, saying:

"This isn't the fellow who started that shooting out in the street. He was a tall guy."

"With a face like a hawk," added another. "I got a look at him before he ducked."

The third cop swung to the clerk, said, "Anybody come through here?"

"There was a gentleman asking for Mr. Vornal," replied the cleric. "He sort of answers your description. He didn't give his name, because he was gone before I could ask him -"

The officers were starting toward the street door, the direction in which the clerk pointed. They were suddenly blocked by the entering figure of Detective Galden, who was followed by Joe Cardona. Behind were men in uniform, bringing in the crumpled shape of Claude Vornal.

"That man you went after is gone," announced Galden, bluntly. "We saw a cab beat it around the corner, just as we were coming in from the Beach. Tell me what you know about him. We've got a partial description already."

The partial description was given by the driver of the original cab which had brought The Shadow to this scene. The cabby described his passenger as a "keen-looking guy" who had proven handy with his guns. He wasn't at all sure that his passenger had shot Vornal.

As the cabby remembered it, the victim had come headlong from another cab before the shooting started. But Galden wasn't listening to secondhand excuses.

"One bunch got away in a cab," growled Galden, "and some more fled in a car, dragging the cripples with them. A bunch of scum, the lot of them! But I'm looking for somebody more important. I want this 'keen-looking guy,' as you call him, who doubled in and out of everywhere and kept on his way."

Officers added to the cabby's description. When they likened the fugitive's face to a hawkish profile, the cab driver nodded. The hotel clerk testified that the description was accurate, and remembered a further fact.

"He said he was stopping over at the Beach," said the clerk. "He wanted Vornal to call him at the Hotel Sevilla."

"The Sevilla!" Galden swung to Cardona. "That's where we were! Most of the people who belong at that hotel were at the luncheon, along with Damon Trendle, Commodore Denfield, and that bush-faced guy who lives on periwinkle broth, Miles Laxter. Say, I wonder -"

CARDONA knew what was in Galden's mind and gave an uneasy shift. Galden pulled the luncheon program from his pocket, opened it to show a double-page spread of contributors who were offering aid to Laxter's nature colony.

"Look at these mugs," suggested Galden. "Tell me if any of them fit the fellow who started all this trouble."

The cab driver and the hotel clerk studied the photographs. Each began a slow nod, as did one of the policemen who had pursued The Shadow through the arcade.

"Point him out," ordered Galden. "Each of you."

Three forefingers settled on the portrait of Lamont Cranston. Galden swung to Cardona, half glaring, half triumphant.

"Your commissioner's friend!" scoffed Galden. "The one man who didn't show up at the luncheon. I was right! The man behind this crime ring is putting up a false front: Lamont Cranston, the millionaire!"

Cardona tried to argue otherwise. It didn't go with Galden. When Joe said that Commissioner Weston would soon be in Miami, coming from New York by nonstop plane flight, Galden's triumphant tone increased.

"Good enough," he said. "We'll go out to the airport and meet Commissioner Weston. By the time we've told him all the details, he'll be the first person to admit that his friend Cranston is a phony; that he was pulling the stuffed-shirt game as a bluff!"

Enthused by his findings so far, Galden went after further facts. The equipment in Nipper's suitcase was a clue to the fake radio hookup, which pointed to a racing swindle. The cab driver remembered that Cranston had stopped at Dorr's horse parlor, which carried the trail to that quarter.

Finding that Dorr had closed his shop, Galden learned that the bookie had taken the train North. Galden called Fort Lauderdale, where the train was due, only to learn that it had just left, and that a passenger

answering to Dorr's description had been seen getting off.

By then, word had come from the bank regarding the money that Vornal had withdrawn. Promptly, Galden pieced the facts as he saw them. Most of his theory was correct.

"They took Vornal over," voiced Galden. "The dead guy with the radio junk helped them fake a race announcement. Dorr took Vornal's bet, and later wanted to see his dough. That's why Vornal went to the bank, and the stick-up crew was laying for him.

"Dorr built himself a swell alibi. Like any bookie, Chris would lam if he couldn't pay off. That's what he wanted us to think he did. But Chris must have gotten jittery, once he was on the train. He had his alibi by then, but he knew what was coming to Vornal. That's why he beat it at Fort Lauderdale.

"It's all part of the crime ring's racket. Look at this, Cardona"— Galden opened his hand, to show a bolita ball that bore the number, 77 - "and guess where I got it. No, don't guess. I'll tell you. It was in the pocket of the dead guy back in the Crescent Hotel."

Cardona saw the value of the evidence. By linking Nipper to the bolita ring, Galden was including Dorr and others as members of that organization. So far, Cardona was willing to agree with Galden. His face turned glum, however, when Galden supplied the conclusion.

"Crime for all," asserted Galden, "and all for one. That's the way it's being handled, and the brain behind the whole outfit is your esteemed friend, Mr. Cranston!"

With that, Galden glanced at his watch, saw that it was nearly time for the plane to arrive from New York. He told Cardona to come with him to the airport. In another car, Galden brought along witnesses to convince Commissioner Weston of Cranston's criminal actions.

THEY reached the airport, in the wide-open northwest section of Miami, and waited until the New York plane arrived, winging down into the early dusk.

Galden strode forward with brisk step, Cardona dragging heavily beside him. Behind them came the witnesses: a cab driver, a patrolman, a hotel clerk, all with Cranston's face in mind.

As Weston stepped from the plane, he saw Cardona, who pushed Galden forward to introduce him. The commissioner shook hands, but before Galden could speak his place, Weston turned back to the plane, saying:

"One moment. I have a friend with me."

Then, to the amazement of Galden, the joy of Cardona, and the bewilderment of the three men behind them, Weston's friend stepped from the ship.

The friend was a tall man, his calm features firmly molded, hawkish in their profile. To Galden, Weston's words of introduction bordered upon the incredible.

"Detective Galden," said the commissioner, "I would like you to meet a friend who came with me from New York: Mr. Lamont Cranston."

If Galden couldn't believe his ears, the others weren't able to trust their eyes. They thought that they had seen Cranston before, but at the same time were convinced they hadn't. It was all a mistake. It had to be, considering that Cranston must have been in the plane with Weston at the time when battle was occurring in Miami.

Without realizing it, Commissioner Weston had made his greatest contribution toward aiding the law in its campaign against crime. By bringing Lamont Cranston with him, he had provided The Shadow with a perfect alibi.

Freed of false charges, The Shadow would soon again be leading the way in the search for the real leader of the insidious crime ring that had gained too strong a grip upon Miami!

CHAPTER IX. CRANSTON MEETS CRANSTON

THE night sea glistened under the rising moon; tumbling waves seemed to guide the breeze that wafted through the open windows of an ocean-view room in the Hotel Sevilla.

Standing by a window, Lamont Cranston gazed across the patio, beyond the promenade, to the private beach with its double row of flanking cabanas.

It was pleasant at Miami Beach; the setting seemed one where worry was forgotten. Yet, much as he enjoyed the scene, Cranston still felt troubled.

Arriving in Miami, he had been confronted with a riddle to which he thought he knew the answer. But Cranston still required the human evidence that would prove the truth of his conjecture.

A slight click of the door latch brought Cranston full about. He saw blackness, that acquired the shape of a cloaked human figure as it approached in the moonlight. A softly whispered laugh told Cranston that this was the expected visitor. The noise from the door had been intentional: an announcement of The Shadow's arrival.

There was something uncanny in the sight, as The Shadow approached the window like a ghost issuing from a cloud of smoky gloom. Then the illusion was dispelled, as hands removed their gloves and took away a slouch hat. The dropping of the shrouding cloak revealed The Shadow in human form; but the disclosure, in itself, was startling.

In the moonlight, Lamont Cranston saw his double. Unknown to persons other than the participants in this moonlight drama, Cranston was meeting Cranston!

If The Shadow's make-up had been a mirrored reflection of Cranston's features, the thing would have been remarkable enough. As it happened, his face was not identical with Cranston's, a fact which made the deception even better. By choosing to resemble Cranston, rather than to duplicate him, The Shadow avoided any stiffness that could have excited suspicion.

Cranston's own face was calm, but not masklike. It had a hawkish trace, suggestive of The Shadow's own profile. What The Shadow had done was to temper down his own visage to what could have been termed Cranston's level. That fact accounted for the masklike contour of The Shadow's features.

Seen together, Cranston and his impersonator looked different, except when The Shadow chose to be Cranston to exactitude. Then, their faces could have been meeting in a mirror's surface, in fashion that made it impossible to tell which was flesh and which reflection.

But they were never seen together, except by themselves. This was one of their rare get-togethers.

The Shadow spoke first. It was amazing, how he copied Cranston's manners and gestures—the factors which perfected his impersonation. He was taking advantage of this meeting to brush up on a few important points, though Cranston, as he watched, could see no need for improvement on The Shadow's part.

"My thanks, Cranston," said The Shadow. "Things were becoming a trifle difficult in Miami. I wired you to come, so that I could account for certain activities in the daytime."

"I'm glad I made the trip with Weston," returned Cranston. "It made your alibi letter-perfect. Those chaps out at the airport changed their minds completely by the time we reached town. It didn't occur to them that I might have a double."

"None of them saw me closely, Cranston. They were acting largely on Detective Galden's suggestion."

"Of course." Cranston gave a chuckle. "And since Galden did not see you at all, he has decided that his guess was the worst of the lot."

There was a pause, while the two Cranstons gazed beyond the beach, toward the wave-shimmered moonlight. Then, suddenly, the real Cranston queried:

"How do you happen to know what Galden thought?"

"I've just been chatting with him," replied The Shadow. His chuckle was a perfect replica of Cranston's. "He's downstairs in the lobby. He mistook me for you."

For the first time, Cranston observed that he and his uncloaked friend were attired exactly alike. Both were wearing tropical evening clothes—white jackets, with Tuxedo shirts and black bow ties.

"Crime reached its peak a few nights ago," confided The Shadow, still using Cranston's tone. "Fortunately, it received a double setback. The Brenbright holdup, the Tyrone robbery, were crime's last open thrusts. The police thought those attempts marked the end of the wave.

"Instead, crime dipped beneath the surface. Vornal's murder might be likened to a submarine attack. Finding Vornal, classing him as a prospective victim, was a problem which, unfortunately, I solved too late."

There was regret in The Shadow's tone. It vanished, as he spoke in future terms.

"Another hidden thrust will come tonight," predicted The Shadow. "Wait here, Cranston, until I return. Another quarter hour may be all that I require."

DESCENDING to the spacious lobby of the Sevilla, The Shadow found Commissioner Weston chatting with friends near the entrance of a small, but ornate, ballroom.

Taking The Shadow for Cranston, the commissioner introduced him to Damon Trendle and several other wealthy men. Then The Shadow was shaking hands with a bearded freak who wore a leopard skin.

"Miles Laxter," announced Trendle. "You know all about him, Mr. Cranston. Sorry you weren't here for our luncheon. We subscribed a fund to buy supplies for Laxter's colony at Coquina Key. Here is the list of contributors -"

"You may add my name," interposed The Shadow. "Mark me down for five thousand dollars."

Trendle gave a pleased exclamation. His own name headed the list, with ten thousand dollars, but the other contributions had been comparatively small, though numerous. Cranston's generous addition came close to completing the required total of fifty thousand.

"Laxter is giving us an illustrated lecture," said Trendle. "It will be held in the ballroom, in a half hour. All the hotel guests will be present. I am sure that we can obtain pledges for the few thousand dollars that we

still require. If not, I shall make up the difference personally."

A dryish voice spoke from the fringe of the group:

"And then?"

Turning, Trendle saw Commodore Denfield. The Shadow observed the annoyed expression on Trendle's features and knew that the gray-haired man regarded Denfield as an interloper. But the baldish gambling czar was in no wise ill at ease.

"You have ignored my offer, Trendle," spoke Denfield. "You seem to consider that my money bears a taint, though you also claim that I pillaged it from respectable persons. Remember, however, that you will need more cash than the fifty thousand dollars. You have the added cost of shipping the supplies to Coquina Key."

Angrily, Trendle chewed his lips. He remembered that he had spoken of that very problem during the luncheon. But he was still determined to fight off Denfield's offers.

"Your money is not wanted," said Trendle, testily. "Even though I must tolerate your presence, Denfield, and even accept your suggestions, or efforts, I do not have to take a single penny from you!"

Denfield's smile increased.

"I do not have to offer money," he said. "I can solve your problem without it. My yacht, the Wanderlust, will be ready at call, to transport the supplies to Coquina Key."

Sputters came from Trendle. But he was outvoiced by other committee members present. More tolerant than Trendle, they leaned toward Denfield's side, considering that the commodore, whatever his shortcomings, had a right to devote funds to charity.

In their opinion, Denfield's offer of the yacht settled the situation. Trendle still had his way; he wasn't taking any of Denfield's money. As for Denfield, he felt that he was donating the equivalent of funds, and therefore would no longer bother the committee.

Outvoted, Trendle finally nodded his acceptance. Instead of gloating, Denfield shook hands all around, saying that he couldn't stay for Laxter's lecture because of business in Miami. With a parting smile, he addressed Trendle with the rest:

"You will know where to find me."

It was Galden, standing by with Cardona, who added, a trifle too loudly:

"At the Palmetto Casino."

"Of course!" Turning, Denfield bowed an invitation. "Why don't you come with me, Galden, and bring Cardona? Some of my patrons might need protection when they leave. Harvey Brenbright, for instance, or Marcia Tyrone."

"I'll come," returned Galden, bluntly. "Maybe this will be my last opportunity."

Denfield's smile turned wry. He was expecting the law to clamp down on the Palmetto Casino, but this was the first official indication of the coming catastrophe. Meanwhile, Cardona was catching a nod from Commissioner Weston, signifying that he could go along.

"A break for me, Steve," confided Cardona, as he and Galden followed Denfield across the lobby. "I

guess the commish figures I'm useful in Miami. I may be able to extend my vacation into a leave of absence."

MILES LAXTER was going into the ballroom, followed by Damon Trendle and the other committee members. Turning to look for Cranston, Weston saw his friend entering an elevator. The Shadow pointed to the ballroom, then spread his hand to indicate that he would rejoin the commissioner in five minutes.

The real Cranston was waiting to hear what had happened below. Learning that Galden and Cardona had left, at Denfield's invitation, Cranston queried:

"Do you think that the commodore is building an alibi for something that may happen tonight?"

"Not necessarily," returned The Shadow. "He could have had one by staying here with the crowd that is attending Laxter's lecture. One thing is proven, however: Galden's suspicions of the commodore have risen again."

"Are you going to the lecture?"

"I'd like you to attend it, Cranston. It may prove very interesting. Don't be alarmed, whatever happens."

Cranston's eyes turned quizzical.

"I'm going to look around this hotel," explained The Shadow. "Considering that all the guests have been invited to the lecture, the Sevilla may be the very place that crooks have chosen for their next venture. The rooms will be empty, offering an easy chance for entry."

Cranston understood. He saw The Shadow reaching for his cloak and hat. Evidently The Shadow intended to begin his inspection from this base, for he waited while Cranston went to the door. Then, in a reminiscent tone, The Shadow added:

"I put you down for five thousand dollars, Cranston, to help the colony at Coquina Key. A good thing to know, in case Trendle mentions it."

The door closed, with Cranston outside. Staring back, Cranston started to utter a protest; then, smiling to himself, he strolled away.

To a millionaire like Lamont Cranston, the humor of the thing was worth five thousand dollars. He could understand, too, how such a pledge was proof of wealth; that it helped remove the stigma of this afternoon, when the name of Cranston had mistakenly been linked with crime.

Offsetting that was the fact that Commodore Denfield had likewise sought to make a contribution, and had finally managed to force his yacht upon Damon Trendle. The matter was really puzzling to Cranston.

The thing that made it doubly so was the whispered tone that Cranston heard from his own closed door.

The laugh of The Shadow!

CHAPTER X. CRIME'S SECOND BARREL

THE SHADOW was both right and wrong when he stated that the rooms throughout the Hotel Sevilla would be empty because of Laxter's lecture.

He had overlooked the point that wealthy guests in such a hotel were seldom punctual.

Though the scheduled hour had arrived, some persons considered it fashionable to be late, and among

such guests was the Sevilla's star boarder, Princess Cordaza.

To fully understand Princess Cordaza, one had to know her history. Born in Nebraska fifty years before, she had benefited by the lush days of vaudeville to hoof her way to fame with a dance routine as corny as the celebrated husks which flourished in her native State.

One critic had suggested that all she needed to improve her dance was a pair of house shoes. The remark was not merely unkind; it was inaccurate. If any persons had a full endowment of luck, that lady was La Princesse Ak-sar-ben (Nebraska spelled backward).

The jazz age struck when she was in her prime. Europe wanted jazz, in music, song or dance, provided that it was supplied by American artists. The lady from Nebraska crossed the Atlantic. Graduating from the laugh of Broadway, she became the delight of the Continent. Her horrible hoofing was different enough to be regarded as something unique.

Fascinating a real Spanish grandee, Prince Cordaza, she married him and thus became Princess Cordaza. Came the revolution in Spain and the prince departed his native land, taking along his princess, and all the family jewels, the heritage of a dozen generations.

Came the Cuban revolution and Princess Cordaza left for Miami, carrying the gems, but not the prince. He had died from too much excitement during the overthrow of the then present Cuban government.

Princess Cordaza liked the new Hotel Sevilla at Miami Beach. Its name reminded her of old Spain; besides, the architect had wisely included a royal suite, which pleased the taste of the princess. So she was living at the Sevilla in splendid style. She had sold enough gems to buy a sizable annuity and still had enough jewels to bedeck herself in gaudy splendor.

Though she had grown stout, the princess did not mind it. The fatter she was, the more jewels she could wear. At present, she was seated in her boudoir on the top floor of the Hotel Sevilla, trying to decide which set of sparklers would be most impressive when she made her grand appearance in the middle of Laxter's lecture.

She intended to wear diamonds, of course, a hundred thousand dollars' worth, just as a background for the other jewels. For the real flash, her decision wavered between rubies and emeralds. Each group was valued at a quarter million, and lay upon her dressing table, with the diamonds, in front of the open wall safe.

Partridge, the secretary, had suggested that she wear the rubies, while Marie, the maid, leaned toward the emeralds. That left the decision to Princess Cordaza herself.

Shutting her eyes, she swung her pudgy hand from one pile to the other, mumbling "eeny-meeny-miney-mo." But before she could finish the counting process, there was a knock at the door of the boudoir.

It was Partridge. The secretary had come to remind the princess that she was to interview a young lady who wanted a job as a traveling companion. A call from the lobby had announced that the applicant, June Marwyn, was waiting downstairs.

"Very well, Partridge," said the princess, haughtily. "Show her up at once. Perhaps"—the princess brightened—"she can decide between the rubies and the emeralds!"

Returning to the outer room, Partridge picked up the telephone. In a tenor tone that suited his pale complexion and frail physique, he announced:

"Very well, Miss Marwyn, you may come upstairs in precisely ten minutes."

FROM that moment, Partridge became very busy. Springing to a little dressing room, he turned on a lamp and opened a suitcase. First, he laid a photograph on the table; it was the picture of a very attractive blonde, who happened to be June Marwyn, the job-seeker.

Next, Partridge produced a blue dress. Removing his coat, he slid the garment over his shoulders. He kicked off his shoes and put on a pair of high-heeled slippers. His socks did not have to be changed for stockings, because the blue dress was of the trailing variety.

From the bag, the frail secretary brought a blond wig, which fitted him perfectly. His make-up was the next process; a generous supply of rouge and lipstick reduced his pallor, and when he had finished with those, he used an eyebrow pencil.

Setting June's portrait against the mirror, Partridge added the finishing touches to his make-up. Adding a winsome smile, he became the perfect imitation of June Marwyn, and the comparison increased his grin.

When an ex-vaudeville hoofer became the Princess Cordaza, it was only logical that she should employ another actor as her secretary. But Partridge, in applying for his job, hadn't told the princess that he had played the Sun time and the Pan circuit as a female impersonator.

It had been Partridge's idea to shake down the princess for a little extra salary, or a fair-sized lump sum, by reminding her that her name had once been Minnie Bates. But before Partridge had ever sprung that game he had met a man named Hawk Silvey, who had bigger dough for helping in an enterprise that was made to order for one of Partridge's talent.

Downstairs, Hawk Silvey had entered the lobby of the Hotel Sevilla. Hawk had an air of a man who stopped at the best places, hence his appearance did not attract suspicion. Moreover, Hawk had a very good right to come to the Sevilla. He was carrying a guest card that would admit him to Laxter's illustrated lecture.

Looking about, Hawk saw June Marwyn. The blonde was quite as attractive as her picture; she was wearing the blue dress that she had bought in a bargain shop the day before.

After studying the blonde's slim figure from her slippers to her over-the-eye hat, Hawk motioned to a pair of stocky bellboys; then entered the lecture room.

Miles Laxter was on the platform; a movie projector was running, showing color pictures of life on Coquina Key. No one noticed Hawk, as he pushed toward a pair of curtains near the rear of the ballroom. There, Hawk thumped his knuckles against a hidden door.

A key grated from an outside lock. Drawing the curtains close to hide his progress, Hawk Silvey stepped into the open-air patio, where the bellboys awaited him, one holding the key.

"Leave it open, Larry," said Hawk, in a low tone. "I'll need it later. You got the masks, Mort, and the sweaters?"

Mort supplied them. Sneaking to a stairway, the three men put on the sweaters, then adorned their faces with the accustomed handkerchief masks. Fishing in his vest pocket, Hawk brought out a bolita ball; Mort and Larry did the same. They knew that they might need the tokens when they met Partridge.

As they neared the top floor, the trio produced revolvers. It was Hawk who tapped lightly with a gun butt at the door of the royal suite. When Partridge opened the door, Hawk gave a blink, along with his muffled chuckle. He knew that he was staring at Partridge, but he could have sworn that the person was

June Marwyn.

Hawk showed his bolita token, and Partridge did the same. Then Hawk noticed the one touch that Partridge lacked: He gestured to the crooked secretary's blond wig.

"The dame's wearing a cockeyed hat," reminded Hawk. "You've got one, haven't you?"

Partridge nodded. "What about the handbag?"

"She has a blue one," replied Hawk. "It matches her dress."

Lifting his hand daintily, Partridge showed that he was already carrying a handbag that matched the blue ensemble.

Hawk's eyes glittered approvingly through mask slits when he saw that the bag was heavy. He watched Partridge step to the dressing room; there, the disguised secretary plucked a tilted hat from the suitcase and affixed it to his blond wig.

A LAST glance at the photograph of June, and Partridge was tripping mincingly toward the boudoir of Minnie the princess. Drawing the handbag in front of him, he unclasped it as he reached the threshold. Then, in a modulated alto tone, Partridge spoke quite timidly:

"Princess Cordaza?"

The fat lady tilted her head to look into a mirror. Seeing the blue-clad blonde in the doorway, the princess smiled.

"Why, yes," she said. "You must be Miss Marwyn. Come right in, honey, and help me make up my mind."

Turning about, the princess showed a glitter of diamonds which already decorated her ample person. But her hand, heavy with sparkling rings, gestured toward the table where two sets of differing gems shone like the lenses of a traffic light—one heap a ruby-red, the other an emerald-green.

"Which would you prefer?" queried the princess. "Rubies or emeralds? I'll wear whichever you take."

"I'll take both!" Partridge's tone, though firm, still carried an alto pitch. "Put up your hands, princess, and tell your maid to do the same!"

In his hand, Partridge held a small pearl-handled automatic that he had taken from the blue handbag. Staring, Princess Cordaza could see the glisten of polish on his fingernails, an added touch to Partridge's impersonation of June Marwyn.

There wasn't any doubt that the princess was mistaking the crooked secretary for a blond young lady. Despite the gun, big Minnie was defiant as she raised her jewel-laden hands.

"Why, you little snip!" began the domineering princess. "I won't let you get away with this! Slap her down with something, Marie, and call Partridge. This girl won't dare to use her gun!"

Partridge turned his head and gave a sweet smile toward the outer room. Three masked men appeared, with big revolvers that made Partridge's gun look like a toy, in comparison. One, Hawk Silvey, took his stand beside Partridge. The others, Larry and Mort, followed the fake blonde's gestures; they approached the princess and peeled her diamonds from her.

Those gems went into a cloth bag which Larry held, while Mort added rubies and emeralds, scooping

them in handfuls. The bag, itself, was appropriate. It was a bolita bag, and the gems went into it like numbers ready for a raffle. As a final touch, Larry took the bag to Partridge, who tied the neck in the usual fashion of a bolita bag.

Then, coyly, Partridge tossed the bag to Larry, who grinned beneath his mask. He flipped it to Mort, who returned it to Partridge. True to feminine style, Partridge almost muffed the easy catch. The bag in his possession, the fake blonde darted from the boudoir, motioning for Larry and Mort to follow.

Only Hawk had remained aloof from the by-play. He was keeping both the princess and her maid covered with his gun. He was waiting for Partridge to finish the act, that had, so far, been perfectly staged.

In the little dressing room, Partridge was pointing to the open suitcase, where Larry and Mort saw ropes tied in slipknots, and a large handkerchief. Laying the gem-filled bolita bag on the dressing table, Partridge opened a jar of cold cream.

"I'll pack this rig in the suitcase," spoke Partridge, referring to his feminine attire. "When I get rid of my make-up, you can tie me. Your job is to take the swag, Larry, along in the suitcase, and give the word to Hawk. Mort's is to corner the Marwyn dame when she shows up."

About to remove the blond wig, Partridge halted, and knocked the telephone from the dressing table. The instrument fell from its hook when it hit the floor.

"They'll notice that downstairs," he whispered. "Don't gag me too tight. I'll want them to hear when I try to holler -"

Again, Partridge paused. A sound had attracted his attention, from the outer door. It was repeated. To his thuggish companions, the masquerading crook whispered one more word:

"Listen!"

CHAPTER XI. DOUBLE DOUBLE

SOMETHING seemed wrong in the royal suite. It made June Marwyn wonder if she had come too soon. Her knock had not been answered; instead, the door had yielded under her light taps. She was stepping into the outer room, only to find it empty and rather gloomy.

All was so still that June felt that she had entered a huge mausoleum. Unwilling to disturb the silence, she waited, hoping that someone would come to greet her.

Trying to analyze her dread, she remembered an odd impression that had gripped her in the hallway. As June recalled it, things had begun when she stepped from the elevator.

The corridor itself was gloomy. Its blackness had actually seemed to move. Shuddering at her recollection, June stepped farther into the living room, gave an anxious look back over her shoulder. Again a sense of the uncanny gripped her. She saw the half-opened doorway, but no glow beyond it.

Some ghostly thing, a mighty living blot, was encroaching on the suite, following close upon June's own footsteps!

The girl gave a stifled cry, fearful that the menace would take on some horrible shape. Her gasp brought an answer, not from the door but from deeper in the suite itself. A raspy, low-pitched voice challenged her with the words:

"Stick 'em up!"

June turned to stare at a masked man, who happened to be Mort. She didn't recognize him as a bellboy, for Mort was wearing a rough sweater over his fancy uniform jacket, and his trousers were simply a plain black.

He was backing his words with a revolver, and from his angle, he blocked off June's return to the outer door, not guessing that she had no desire whatever to flee in that direction.

Seeing June tremble, Mort became careless with his gun. He gestured her farther into the room, and she followed his motion gladly.

Meanwhile, at the doorway, the thing that June dreaded was taking place. A mass of blackness was materializing into a cloaked shape. Beneath the brim of a slouch hat, a hawkish profile silhouetted itself against the woodwork of the door frame.

June did not see that weird manifestation, but she heard the sibilant whisper that came from hidden lips.

So did Mort. As the girl shuddered, the crook wheeled. His gun was already half pointed to the door. With June fully cowed, Mort was more interested in looking out for other factors. But he had picked a task for which he hadn't bargained. Before he could complete his swing, Mort saw the challenger at the door.

Mort was covered by the muzzle of a .45 that projected from a gloved fist. Above that evil-looking weapon were eyes that had a burn so fiery that it promised a blister of bullets, should Mort make one false move.

The sight froze Mort. But his lips, already moving, gave words to the hoarse cry that, issued from his throat:

"The Shadow!"

Things happened swiftly. As Mort dropped back, June turned about, giving a cry of her own at viewing the black-clad figure which she knew must be friend, not foe. Impulsively, the girl started toward the protection of the very menace which she had earlier feared.

June's course was bringing her toward the path of The Shadow's aim, a mistake which might inspire Mort to use his trigger finger. To forestall the danger, The Shadow wheeled into the room, caught June with a rapid whirl and sent her spinning off to a corner beyond a divan.

It happened too speedily for Mort to profit. June was on her way before the thug could fire.

In the center of the room, Mort saw The Shadow halted, half dipped to one knee, as though he had lost his balance in flinging June away. Mort didn't guess that the pose was planned. The Shadow was making himself a temporary target, to draw Mort's aim from June.

Then, as Mort did aim, The Shadow was again in motion, whipping for the opposite side of the room. Mort blasted one shot, very wide, for he was aiming at where The Shadow had been.

Thinking he had The Shadow cornered, Mort followed with his gun. By then, The Shadow was reversing his course, picking up a light, gold-decorated chair as he whirled.

Swept from the floor in backhand style, the chair was flying straight for Mort. The crook dodged as he fired. His second shot went wide, and with it, his opportunity for further fire.

Still swirling, The Shadow seemed to pivot on the point of his automatic, which at last covered Mort. The big gun spoke; with its chow, Mort jounced like a marionette figure when tugged by all its cords.

His gun flying from his hand, he hit the floor flat, jarred by the impact of a slug that carried all the wallop of a mule's hind hoof.

MORT'S shout and the rapid fire brought others to the scene. The first was Larry. In one hand he had a revolver; in the other, the bolita bag which held a half million, and more, in jewels. Partridge was calling from the dressing room, using his own voice, not June's, telling Larry to wait.

Larry's blind lunge brought him squarely upon The Shadow, who was turning around to meet him. Neither had time to aim; they met in a sudden grapple. Knowing that others would soon arrive, The Shadow twisted Larry around to use him as a shield. Instead of slugging the crook's head, he numbed Larry's gun hand with a hard downward stroke.

As Larry howled, and gave a helpless squirm, The Shadow hooked the numbed arm behind the thug's back. Then Larry's gun hit the floor, The Shadow's automatic came across the fellow's shoulder. From that position, The Shadow could either give Larry a sideward stroke, or take a shot at new arrivals.

One such was at hand: Hawk Silvey. From the man's action, The Shadow knew that he must be one of crime's real lieutenants.

Hawk came bounding from the inner room, rasping defiance through his mask, aiming as he came. He saw that he couldn't drop The Shadow without first plugging Larry. By then, Hawk would be feeling the withering blast of an automatic.

Hawk didn't attempt to solve the problem. He thought that Larry could hold off The Shadow long enough for Hawk himself to get clear. Hawk would not have considered flight as the most necessary step, if he hadn't seen the bolita bag in Larry's hand. The swag was worth anything, even the life of a pal.

"The bag, Larry!" voiced Hawk. "Chuck it!"

Larry didn't sense the double cross. He wanted a chance to regain his gun. With his right hand numbed, he would have to use his left, which happened to be burdened with the bag. So Larry, to get his hand free, gave the bolita bag the fling that Hawk demanded.

The bag didn't leave Larry's fingers. They were tangled in the knot. But Hawk, swooping past, snatched the bag with his free hand, like a mail car picking up a waiting sack. The Shadow's gun spouted a volcano thrust with a roar that almost split Hawk's ears; but the bullet sped above the mobster's head.

With the wild fling, Larry's arm had driven The Shadow's gun hand high at the very instant when Hawk's life wasn't worth the value of the bolita bag, much less the jewels in it.

Hawk didn't stop to shoot it out. He had the swag; he wanted the doorway. Determined to overtake Hawk, The Shadow settled Larry in the most efficient fashion.

Saving time by bowling Larry toward the door, The Shadow felled his captive with a sideward swing of the automatic. By rights, The Shadow should have been clear to pursue Hawk, but Larry's final stumble carried both himself and The Shadow across a footstool.

Striking on hands and knees beside the stunned form of Larry, The Shadow gave the offending footstool a kick that sent it to a corner. At that moment, he caught a flash of blue and saw June, out from cover, picking up Larry's gun.

Hawk was disappearing through the doorway, out of The Shadow's range. With a sweeping gesture from June's direction toward the doorway, The Shadow ordered:

"Aim for him!"

Expecting a shot that might, by some chance, clip Hawk, The Shadow came to his feet, intending to follow up June's fire. The thing that halted him was the girl's frantic shriek, coming not from the place where The Shadow had seen her last, but from the corner where the cloaked fighter had first flung her.

The Shadow had not seen June a second time. The person who scooped up Larry's gun was Partridge, still in blond wig, blue dress, and high-heeled slippers!

PARTRIDGE was aiming, but not in Hawk's direction. He had chosen a closer target, one that he did not intend to miss: The Shadow.

From her corner, June had managed to disentangle herself from the divan in time to stop the footstool that The Shadow had kicked, by chance, in her direction.

Then she had shrieked at sight of Partridge. Seeing herself picking up a gun, to aim at The Shadow, was something of a nightmare fancy that might ordinarily have stiffened June to the point where she couldn't shout.

But by this time, June was so inured to the incredible, that she gave her vocal chords full play. Moreover, she grabbed a weapon, in the shape of the footstool, and flung it at Partridge as she screamed her warning to The Shadow.

In the midst of it, The Shadow showed instinctive skill. Half to his feet, he turned his rise into a long dive that stretched him full length on the floor, where he went into a roll that would bring him around for further action.

He heard the bark of Partridge' gun, the whistle of a bullet, and the thud as the slug smacked the wall.

The shot was inches high. The Shadow's dive, June's fling of the footstool, had combined to ruin Partridge's sure aim. His shoulder jarred by June's missile, Partridge didn't wait to face The Shadow's gun. His high heels clattering, Partridge dived for the door, hoping to follow Hawk Silvey to safety.

There were howls from the inner room, voiced by Princess Cordaza and her maid. Whatever had happened there, The Shadow knew that June did not belong in the picture. The girl had reached The Shadow, to see if he was hurt. Coming to his feet, the cloaked fighter swung an arm about June and whisked her out to the hall.

As they reached the door, they saw Partridge. He was at the top of a stairway, about to start below. The Shadow aimed and fired, but the shot was late. Partridge had already made his dive to shelter. Nevertheless, The Shadow's shot produced a strange result.

It seemed to bring a muffled echo from somewhere below. Back from cover came Partridge, still a slim, blond-wigged creature in blue, but his features were neither his own nor June's. If ever a face had taken on a hideous contortion, it was the visage of the treacherous secretary.

From one hand, Partridge dropped the duplicate blue handbag. His other fist let fall Larry's gun. June's double was dead when The Shadow and the girl reached him. A strange, low whisper from The Shadow's lips told what had befallen.

Partridge's impersonation, good enough to deceive The Shadow, had fooled Hawk Silvey, too. Hawk

hadn't supposed that Partridge was still attired as June's double.

In flight, down the stairs, the escaping crime ace had looked back to see a girl with a gun. Thinking it was June, working for The Shadow, Hawk blasted the shot that marked the end of Partridge.

Elevator doors were opening on the top floor. The shooting had been heard over the telephone circuit that Partridge had left open. Quickly, The Shadow drew June down the stairway. They were halfway to the ground when shouts from above told that Partridge's body had been discovered.

Reaching the patio with June, The Shadow heard the spurt of a departing car. It meant that Hawk Silvey, his identity still unknown, was escaping with the spoils of robbery.

Hotel employees were racing along the promenade; The Shadow saw a khaki-clad patrolman mount a motorcycle, to begin a chase. Soon, the patio would be alive with people. The gloomy fringes of the open court offered easy departure for The Shadow; but June's removal was a different problem.

THE SHADOW wanted to give the girl an alibi that would free her from all false blame. Looking for an outlet, his keen eyes noted an obscure door, its key still in the lock. Hawk had forgotten the door, in his haste.

Drawing June to the door, The Shadow removed his slouch hat and let his cloak collar fall. Staring at a calm, hawkish face, June heard the low, steady tone:

"I am Lamont Cranston. Look for me in the ballroom as soon as you enter. Introduce yourself, and tell me your whole story."

Before the bewildered girl could answer, The Shadow had pressed her through the doorway. The door itself went shut; the key turned in the lock. Outside, The Shadow pocketed the key beneath the cloak. He became a gliding shape, as searchers clattered into the patio.

Some of those hunters thought they heard a whispered laugh, that faded with the sea breeze. The walls of the patio were like a sound box, that made the tone evasive. In seeking the author of that elusive mirth, the searchers looked in the wrong direction.

A cloaked shape glided across the promenade, melting into the shelter of the beach cabanas. A fading ghost of the night, The Shadow was absorbed by darkness, through which no eyes could hope to trace his course.

CHAPTER XII. CRIME TAKES A HOLIDAY

ALL the excitement around the Hotel Sevilla had failed to penetrate the ballroom, where the walls were very nearly soundproof. Furthermore, Miles Laxter was holding the attention of his audience with his pictures of Coquina Key.

Life on that coral isle appeared ideal, except for the lack of food. Most of the colonists were men, and the pictures showed them diving for coral and sponges, the commodities which they hoped to send to profitable markets.

The scene shifted to the interior of the island, where men were chopping at coquina rock. Lacking proper tools, they were having trouble, and Laxter explained that with proper equipment, the quarrying industry would prove better than coral and sponges. Coquina rock was much desired for building construction throughout Florida.

Then came pictures of young coconut palms and breadfruit trees, which the colonists had planted. These

were proof that within a few years, the Coquina colonists would be economically independent. Laxter was using all such arguments to justify his campaign for funds.

Damon Trendle found the lecture highly intriguing, as did Commissioner Weston, who was seated with him. To Lamont Cranston, the whole thing was a bore. His travels had taken him to far reaches of the globe, where he had dwelt with tribes that were really primitive. Laxter's idea of life in the raw, as evidenced by the pictures, was too stupid to even be funny.

Cranston liked people to be one way or the other; either truly primitive, or wholly civilized. As his attention wandered from the movies, he saw a person belonging to the latter class, who also lacked interest in Laxter's lecture. She was a blonde of very charming appearance, even in the semigloom of the ballroom.

The girl had stepped from curtains near a corner, and was anxiously studying faces. She saw Cranston's and gave a nod of recognition. Without a word to Weston, Cranston stepped from his chair and bowed the girl to a spot where they could be alone.

It happened that Cranston knew the ways of The Shadow. Anything might turn up when The Shadow promised results, and a blonde was no exception to the rule. Cranston particularly liked this lady; her bewilderment was genuine, and there was a trustful touch to her hand when it gripped Cranston's arm.

"You're Mr. Cranston," she whispered. "I'm June Marwyn. I've run into a lot of trouble, and I still can't understand it. You told me to tell you all about it, though you ought to know more than I do."

"Go ahead," suggested Cranston, calmly, as June paused. "Whatever I said, I meant it, Miss Marwyn."

It didn't occur to June that Cranston might have a double, as she had. Partridge's masquerade had rather horrified the girl. She almost felt that she had aided in crime.

It might have gratified her to learn that Cranston, himself, had been a silent partner in the campaign against crime; but June still thought he was The Shadow. Considering the amazing prowess of The Shadow, it wasn't surprising to find him in the ballroom, too.

June poured out her story in a breathless undertone. She knew that she had been framed, but she couldn't understand why. It was quite plain to Cranston, however, for he had talked about the crime situation with The Shadow.

As the lights suddenly came on, bringing an intermission to the lecture, Cranston told June to remain calm.

Something serious was up. Police had entered the ballroom, and were checking on the guests. Clinging close to Cranston, June felt a new security, as he calmly told her not to worry. Cranston understood what The Shadow wanted; he was confident that this emergency would soon pass.

THINGS smoothed out as soon as Commissioner Weston talked to the Beach police. Learning of robbery in the hotel, Weston assured them that all had been quiet in the ballroom. The police invited him to go upstairs with them. They also announced that people were free to leave the ballroom, but that no one would be allowed to return.

Quite a few took the privilege of leaving. Seeing Cranston among them, Weston approached; then stopped short, with a bow, as he saw June. It was quite a surprise to find Cranston escorting a lady, but Weston was prompt to concede that his friend had shown excellent choice.

"Sorry, commissioner," said Cranston, with a smile. "I am already engaged for the evening. You can tell

me all about the matter later."

Then, through the very midst of arriving police, Cranston escorted June out through the patio, to the promenade, toward an exit where taxicabs were stationed. A policeman followed, much to June's alarm, until she realized that he had simply come along to see that no one challenged their departure.

In fact, it was the cop who called the taxicab and opened the door. June was stepping forward; Cranston was about to say good night, when he caught a whisper from a hibiscus hedge, close by. The whisper, said:

"Go along, Lamont. Call your room before you return."

Entering the cab with June, Cranston saw the policeman mount a motorcycle. So did The Shadow. Sliding from his cloak, he left it in the hedge, along with his slouch hat. When he stepped into sight, he was the double of Lamont Cranston.

Later, Commissioner Weston found The Shadow lounging in the lobby. Taking him for Cranston, the commissioner told of the robbery that had occurred in the royal suite. Princess Cordaza had lost her gems, in exchange for three dead crooks.

"Two of them were bellboys in disguise," stated Weston. "One was shot through the heart. The other died from a blow on the head."

The Shadow knew about the first crook, Mort. His death had been necessary. But he had tapped Larry quite lightly, hoping that the fellow would serve as a witness against the crime ring. The Shadow seemed surprised that the second crook had died.

"It won't surprise you, Cranston," said Weston, "when you meet Princess Cordaza. The thug was merely groggy when she found him. He started trouble, and before anyone could stop her, she picked up an ash stand and hit him with it. The blow had about three hundred pounds of beef behind it."

"You said there were three dead thugs, commissioner."

"I'm coming to the third," returned Weston. "He turned out to be a fellow named Partridge, who worked as secretary for the princess. He was trying to cover up his crime by posing as a woman. He pretended that his name was June Marwyn."

"Do you know, Cranston"—Weston was very serious—"it fairly jarred me, when I saw Partridge. I would have sworn, for the moment, that I was looking at the very girl who was with you when you came from the ballroom!"

Usually, Cranston merely smiled at anything ridiculous. This time, Weston saw him laugh, and joined in the mirth. Of course, it was The Shadow who laughed, but he chortled in Cranston's style. Weston's mistake was so preposterous, that it was really funny, and the commissioner saw the humor of the thing, himself.

Weston didn't mind having Cranston laugh at his expense, but it could matter with other persons. Hence, the commissioner resolved to say nothing more concerning the trick that his eyes had played him.

He decided that the girl who looked like June Marwyn was really someone else; that June had not figured in the case at all. Partridge had probably arranged the whole masquerade from the start, even to telling Princess Cordaza of an imaginary girl who wanted a job as traveling companion.

The Miami Beach police were of the same opinion. They were completing their investigation, when

Galden and Cardona arrived. Rather than have a run-in with the boys from the wrong side of the Bay, Galden remained in the background, hoping that Cardona would find out all there was to know. Joe did.

CARDONA met Galden later, in the lobby, where Weston was chatting with The Shadow. When Joe spoke, The Shadow overheard.

"They were all carrying those bolita balls," said Cardona to Galden. "One thug had No. 28, the other 55. Partridge's number was lower. It was 14. Maybe he was in the racket longer."

Galden jotted down the numbers.

"Too bad none were alive to talk," he said. "If they had been, we might be taking a trip back to the Palmetto Casino."

"To have it out with Denfield?"

"That's what I mean. The commodore pulled a fast one on both of us, taking us along to fix him up an A-1 alibi while the bolita mob was working over here."

Cardona stared across Galden's shoulder; Joe's swarthy face went darker.

"Here's Denfield now!"

The commodore had entered the lobby, looking surprised when he saw small groups engaged in earnest discussion. He stopped near Damon Trendle and Miles Laxter, who were hearing details from some of the Beach police. Denfield seemed quite disturbed by the talk of new crime.

"It is bad for all of us," he said, dryly. "By the way, Trendle, wasn't Princess Cordaza a contributor to the Coquina fund?"

"She promised us two thousand dollars," admitted Trendle, "which she naturally cannot pay, considering her recent loss. I shall have to make up the deficit myself."

"We'll need some extra money, Mr. Trendle," reminded Laxter. "I had forgotten the machinery required for the quarrying operations on Coquina Key. It might take ten thousand dollars in all."

As Trendle hesitated, Denfield reached his hand into his pocket and brought out a half dollar, which he flipped.

"A sporting proposition, Trendle," he suggested. "You say my gambling methods are crooked. I'll show you that they aren't. I'll match you for ten thousand dollars. One toss, cash on the nose, the money to go to Laxter."

The challenge was too much for Trendle. He told Denfield to toss the coin; that if it came heads, he would pay, while tails would make the commodore a ten-thousand-dollar loser.

Denfield tossed the coin; it rolled under a chair. Pushing Denfield back, Trendle shoved the chair aside. Denfield chuckled at Trendle's dismay. The coin was lying heads; when Trendle grabbed it up, it proved to be an ordinary coin, with only one head.

Bringing a check book from his pocket, Trendle wrote out a check for ten thousand dollars, to cash. Coolly, Commodore Denfield took it from Trendle's hand and told the gray-haired philanthropist that he would cash it for Laxter.

"Gird up the leopard skin, Laxter," added the commodore, "and come along. I have plenty of cash over

at the casino, and I'll see you safely to that scow of yours. Maybe you'll need police protection at the yacht basin. How about it, Galden?"

Galdden replied that he would see to everything on the Miami side. Denfield and Laxter went out to the commodore's car. The Shadow watched their departure, but did not follow. At that moment, an attendant approached paging Mr. Cranston, saying that he was wanted on the telephone.

It was the real Cranston on the wire. He had taken June to Miami, and introduced her to Marcia Tyrone. Like June, Marcia had been a near-victim of crime, and had therefore promised to look out for her. Cranston wanted to know how soon he was to return to Miami Beach.

"The evening isn't over," remarked The Shadow. "Why don't you take Miss Marwyn to the Palmetto Casino, say in about half an hour? You won't need a membership card. Just send your name up to Commodore Denfield."

The Shadow could hear a surprised exclamation as he hung up the receiver, but he knew that Cranston would go through with it. Strolling from the lobby, The Shadow gathered his cloak and hat from the hibiscus and headed for Miami in a cab.

MILES LAXTER was leaving the Palmetto Casino, when Commodore Denfield was informed that a gentleman named Cranston had arrived, with a lady. Denfield said they could come up; as he shook hands with Cranston, he eyed the latter's blond companion quite intently. When they entered the gaming room, both Cranston and June came under further scrutiny.

Lee Clesson and Hawk Silvey were over in a corner, confiding in each other regarding their individual crimes. Lee's troubles had been mild, compared to Hawk's. Lee was agreeing on that point, when Hawk suddenly undertoned:

"Look! That dame in blue! She's the one that helped The Shadow mess things up at the Sevilla!"

"And the tall guy," added Lee, harshly, "may be the bird who staged the rough stuff this afternoon."

"Let's slide outside and wait for them."

"O. K. We can pass Manuel, on the way."

Manuel hadn't left his wheel, but when he saw the two lieutenants coming, he turned toward the cigar stand and slipped them bolita balls in exchange for the ones they carried.

As luck had it, Lee and Hawk were again gone from the gaming room when The Shadow's eye appeared behind the peephole portrait.

Studying the other players, The Shadow made quite sure that none were watching Cranston and June. If trouble was due for either, it would occur outside. The Shadow made a prompt departure by the rear exit; but once more, delay had cost him a double trail.

In a car opposite the Palmetto Casino, Lee and Hawk had drawn messages from the bolita balls that Manuel had given them. As they read new instructions, they grunted their comment.

"The big guy wants a lay off," voiced Lee. "That means we can't put the blast on the dame and the stuffed shirt with her."

"We can tag along, Lee," suggested Hawk, "and see where the dame is staying."

"Not even that, Hawk. We can't risk a move until the boss says go."

"I guess that's it. Lay off means to lay off!"

The car was gone when The Shadow neared the front of the casino. When Cranston left with June, The Shadow trailed them to Marcia Tyrone's hotel. Nowhere along the route did he see signs of any lurking crooks.

In abiding by the orders from higher up, Lee Clesson and Hawk Silvey had saved themselves some heartaches, in the form of The Shadow's bullets.

Later, The Shadow became a shrouded driver behind the wheel of a coupe. He took the driveway leading to the Miami yacht basin; parked near other cars, whose occupants were enjoying the moonlight.

On the silvery bay, a misshapen blotch represented Laxter's odd craft. Its owner was evidently on board, for the two scrawny crew members were asleep on the deck. Besides, The Shadow noted a pair of officers patrolling the water's edge, probably posted on such duty at Galden's suggestion.

Miami was very peaceful, without a criminal in sight. The Shadow understood the reason for the calm. Crime was taking a holiday. To The Shadow, it meant that a certain brain was plotting further evil, on a newer, larger scale.

Crime's holiday would aid The Shadow. When trouble broke anew, his preparations, too, would be complete. Already, he was planning countermoves, to combat men of crime.

CHAPTER XIII. NIGHT OF BATTLE

NEXT day, at noon, Miles Laxter hoisted sail and set out for Coquina Key. Only a small crowd was on hand to see him off. The bearded man in the leopard skin had ceased to be a novelty in Miami, where the season invariably produced a parade of oddities and freaks.

Of course, Damon Trendle was present, and before departure, Laxter turned over his ten thousand dollars to the white-haired philanthropist, asking him to add it to the fund. Money was useless on Coquina Key, Laxter insisted; nevertheless, his gesture was a tribute to his trust in Trendle.

Only one man present laughed at the transaction. Commodore Denfield thought it very funny that Trendle was getting back his own money, only so he could pay it out again.

When Trendle showed annoyance at Denfield's jocular mood, the commodore offered to match the philanthropist for another ten thousand, a suggestion that brought only a stiff stare from Trendle.

Denfield's laugh ended when he returned to the Palmetto Casino. He found a notice there, ordering him to close the club. He had expected something of the sort, but had not expected it so soon.

Calling his help together, Denfield told them of the edict and philosophically took the blame upon himself, for having thrust himself into the limelight.

The commodore blamed it partly on Trendle, but showed no trace of animosity. He simply began to take inventory, while his men packed the gambling equipment for shipment later.

Another day passed. Joe Cardona was still in Miami, and hoped to remain a few days longer. He stopped in to see Steve Galden, wishing that the local detective could cook up some argument that would induce Commissioner Weston to prolong the leave of absence.

Joe found Steve at his desk, with an array of bolita balls lying in a row, resting on their flat sides. At first glance, Cardona thought that Galden had made a few more captures.

"No more," said Galden. "Those extras were sent over from Miami Beach. They said they didn't need them, but heard I was collecting them. So I am, and I'm going to keep on, until I have a whole bagful.

"The word 'bolita' means 'little ball,' and there's one little ball that is bigger than the rest. It belongs to Number One, the brain behind this game! Maybe crime is through"—Galden thwacked the desk, then scrambled to grab the bolitas as they began to roll—"but I'm not! I won't be, until it's all cleaned up."

Rising from the desk, Galden added the abrupt suggestion:

"Let's go over and see Commodore Denfield."

They found the commodore stalking amid the barren walls of his erstwhile gambling palace.

"How do you like it, boys?" he queried, pleasantly. "Think it would make a good place for a barn dance?"

"What are you?" retorted Galden. "The ghost of the opera house? What's your idea in staying around Miami?"

"I'm just marking time," explained the commodore, dryly, "like you are, Galden. Only, you know what this means. The people that like to gamble are going back to the jook joints, and small-time dumps are opening all over town. It won't be easy to handle crime when it starts again."

Galden turned to Cardona, with a grin.

"Hear that, Joe? Tell it to the commissioner. He'll let you stick around awhile. But don't spread it too wide, or the Feds may move in on us."

"If they do," remarked Denfield, "they won't find me. I'm going down to Havana tomorrow."

There was a laugh from Galden.

"Getting out of your promise to Trendle?" he queried. "Taking a trip on your yacht, so you won't have to lend it to carry supplies to Coquina Key?"

"I never welsh," replied Denfield. "The Wanderlust is waiting to be loaded. She belongs to Trendle for the present, not to me. I'm taking a plane to Havana."

"You won't have a chance to get in on the gambling racket there, commodore. It's sewed up tight."

"I've heard it isn't, Galden. But if it is, I'm coming back to Florida. There are other towns in this State, besides Miami. Drive up the road some day and you'll see signs that say: 'The same sun shines in Tampa.'"

Galden confided opinions to Cardona, when they left the deserted casino. Denfield's trip to Havana was logical enough, but it could have a hidden purpose. Havana happened to be the home town of a game called bolita.

"As for Tampa," added Galden, "they play it there, too. Tampa has a bigger Cuban population than Miami, on account of the cigar factories. There may be more to this bolita business than we see on the surface. If there is, the commodore is behind it."

DURING those two days, and the one that followed, The Shadow was busier than Galden and Cardona combined.

By daytime, he was Cranston, appearing publicly in places where the real Cranston did not go. With darkness, he became The Shadow, strange, unseen figure who found the tropical night a perfect shroud for his widespread journeys.

The Shadow had a problem, identical with the one that troubled Detective Galden. Nearly two dozen crooks had been captured or killed, during the recent reign of crime. Unfortunately, the survivors knew nothing of the set-up; only the dead ones had contacted the lieutenants of the hidden brain.

Added to that, certain known criminals had disappeared; men of a sort who could have told facts, if located. Where they had gone was something of a mystery.

Furthermore, three days had brought an influx of strangers into Miami, men who obviously had not participated in previous events, but who might play a part in things to come.

The Miami police were checking on newcomers, but many filtered through, particularly those who came by way of Miami Beach. Over there, police were still hunting for the Cordaza jewels, in order to humor the wealthy guests at the ocean-front hotels. Picking up seashells would have been a more sensible occupation.

Among the respectable arrivals in Miami were certain men who immediately contacted The Shadow. They happened to be his secret agents, skilled workers whose ability made up for their lack in number. The agents were assigned to certain duties immediately upon arrival. They were men who either knew their way around, or could find it very promptly.

Near the end of the third day, Commodore Denfield left for Havana. Various persons thought it their duty to see him off. Steve Galden was at the Pan American Airways base. He and Joe Cardona were admiring the huge globe of the world that revolved in the center of the concourse, while they secretly took note of what occurred.

Dragging himself away from a crowd of sporting friends, the commodore approached Damon Trendle and some committee members who were aiding Coquina Key. Stiffly, Trendle extended formal thanks to Denfield.

"The Wanderlust is loaded, commodore," said Trendle. "She sails tomorrow for Coquina Key. We want to thank you for lending us so serviceable a vessel. We understand that the captain and the crew are thoroughly reliable."

"In my business, Trendle," smiled Denfield, "I have to hire reliable people. Glad you came down to see me off."

Commissioner Weston wasn't at the air base; he had gone on a fishing trip. But Cardona noted that Cranston was with Trendle's delegation. Evidently Cranston thought that fishing, even for tarpon and sailfish, would prove tame sport, compared to bagging tigers and elephants.

It didn't occur to Cardona that Cranston might actually have gone with Weston; that this visitor to the air base was none other than The Shadow.

WESTON wasn't coming back until dawn, because night was ideal for fishing. So Cardona dined with Galden at a sea-food restaurant which fronted on Biscayne Bay. As they chatted, Galden's tone became serious.

"Remember the night we went with Denfield?" he queried. "You know what the commodore stuck us for—an alibi. He might be doing the same right now."

Cardona nodded. Plane trips were a perfect alibi, as Cranston's case had once demonstrated.

"The brain in this racket doesn't have to be around," continued Galden. "He gives the word, and his lieutenants do the rest. But he's got to keep himself accounted for while it's going on. The commodore did it once; he could be doing it again."

"He's smart, the commodore. He hit the nail so hard, he drove it through the board, when he told us yesterday that closing his casino meant trouble. If it comes, there's fifty places where it could hit, counting the local joints, and the jooks."

Cardona inquired what Galden intended to do about it. Grimly, Galden replied:

"Whatever we can do, we've done. We've picked the spots most likely to give trouble, and put men there. But we haven't enough police to cover everywhere. We've got a flying squad all set. I only hope it won't be too late when it's needed."

A waiter approached, saying that Galden was wanted on the telephone. With a headshake, the detective went to answer the call, remarking that it was probably from headquarters. When Galden returned, he looked as if he had met a ghost.

"Do I look crazy?" he queried. "Will you believe me, if I say I've been talking to a guy who -"

He paused, shaking his head, as though he couldn't believe his senses. Steadily, Cardona completed:

"Who calls himself The Shadow, and talks in a whisper that makes you feel like all the juice in the phone wires was creeping out and grabbing you."

Astonished, Galden nodded.

"He's talked to me, too," stated Cardona. "There's one thing you can count on, Steve. Whatever The Shadow tells you, is right."

"Then we're all wrong!" exclaimed Galden. "The Shadow told me the places where things are going to happen. A dozen of them, and we aren't covering one of the lot!"

"I get it," returned Cardona. "The bolita mob is using spotters. They know your men by sight. That's why they've picked the other places. But they don't know The Shadow and the bunch that works for him, and they never will."

"You mean it's a real tip-off?"

"So real, that I'll say you're crazy if you don't hop to it. You're right on one thing, Steve. Crime is staging its blitzkrieg tonight, like you thought. What's more, it will be bigger than anything you ever dreamed about! Otherwise, The Shadow would handle it all alone."

Steve Galden spoke two words as he arose:

"Let's go!"

This was to be a night of battle; one wherein crooks expected to surprise the law by lightning thrusts. There would be lightning, but with it thunder, supplied not only by The Shadow's guns, but those of the police, who were acting under the guidance of crime's greatest foe!

CHAPTER XIV. BATTERED CRIME

THINGS started in a jook joint near Red Road, on the outskirts of Miami. A poker game was going on in the rear room, which was quite a usual procedure. But this game was striking a hundred-dollar limit, for it had drawn in some wealthy customers—formerly members of the now defunct Palmetto Casino.

Cash counted in such a game. It lay on the table, to a total of some fifty thousand dollars. The game itself was legitimate; suckers were merely trying to trim each other. But the quiet of the room had made them forget that it was located in the rear of a jook joint.

In the front room, couples were dancing to the music of a jook organ, the local name for a nickel-slot electric phonograph. Each number finished with a scramble among the male patrons, all anxious to drop in a nickel and thereby have the privilege of deciding upon the "request" music.

Two men, a thuggish-looking pair, became involved in an argument that required settlement. They stepped toward the back room, to have it out. Backs turned, they slid masks over their faces; drawing guns, they pushed through to the rear room.

Automatically, a crowd of astonished poker advocates found themselves playing showdown. Their cards were on the table; their hands raised.

Meanwhile, a stolid chisel-faced man stepped from a table in the jook joint and followed the masked pair into the rear room. He had a gun, too, a .45 automatic, and he addressed the masked men in a cold tone.

"Shed the rods," he said, "and hoist the dukes! If you wonder who's telling you, take a peek."

The revolvers hit the table. The two gunmen turned to stare. Both crooks were from New York; they didn't have to be introduced to the unmasked man who had them covered. He was Cliff Marsland, known in the underworld as the "one-man mob."

Crooks had never connected Cliff with his real calling. He had never let them guess that he was one of The Shadow's agents.

Studying the circle of astonished poker players, Cliff nudged his gun around the group. He picked the two men who showed the least fright.

"Grab those guns," ordered Cliff, "and keep these maskies covered. The rest of you gather up the dough."

His instructions followed, Cliff turned and whipped the door wide. He was just in time to greet another pair of thugs, who had figured that their pals might be running into trouble. Two more guns dropped to the floor, at Cliff's harsh command.

Then, above the heavy tone of the jook organ, listeners heard the wail of an approaching siren. With a wild yell, the second pair of crook dived for the outer room; others sprang up with guns, to shield them.

With one hand, Cliff pressed the light switch; with the other, he picked off gunners as he dropped low. His opponents didn't bother him. The poker players were shooting, too, as the first pair tried to regain their guns. Cliff didn't want trouble from stray bullets.

Five minutes, later, police were in charge of the jook joint, with half a dozen prisoners in their control. Shirt-sleeved poker players were explaining things, giving credit to an unknown man who had turned the whole game in their favor. But Cliff was no longer around to receive credit in person. He had other

places where he had to go.

So did the police. The leader of the squad referred to his list and started for another destination, taking the prisoners along.

NEAR the heart of Miami, some local newspapermen were entertaining a New York reporter named Clyde Burke. They had taken him to a gambling club that had opened the day when the Palmetto Casino closed.

Some twenty people were betting on a lopsided roulette wheel, when three stick-up artists entered the place and told everybody to act sensible.

Before the crooks could bundle up the loose cash, the smash of a door announced a police raid. The masked men went berserk; they were about to fire indiscriminately, when shots from within the gambling hall stopped them. Two men supplied the fire, from different angles.

One was Clyde Burke. He had crawled under a table, with the Miami reporters. The other marksman was one of the roulette players, a young man named Harry Vincent. Like Clyde, Harry was an agent of The Shadow.

Those shots brought reserve mobsters from a rear exit; but by then, the original thugs were staggering. Clyde and Harry met the reservists with bullets that stopped the surge. Inrushing police found crooks in flight and went after them, through the rear. In the chaos, Clyde and Harry slipped out and headed for a new location.

Near another jook joint on the outskirts, police were flagged by a little wizened man who didn't give his name, which happened to be Hawkeye. He was a spotter in The Shadow's service, though he didn't mention that fact, either. He showed the police a way in through the cellar, which was remarkable, considering that very few jook joints had cellars.

As a result, the police stepped into the picture just as some thugs were using guns to gather in the proceeds of a dice game. The shooting that began was one hundred percent in the law's favor. Crooks fled, those of them who could, and Hawkeye, squatting in the brush outside, sniped two of the fugitives as they went by.

Never had Dade County known such a clean-up. Back-room dives were exploding everywhere, ejecting mobbies like chunks of stone from a quarry blast. The jook joints actually seemed to quiver, like houses in an animated cartoon ejecting their quotas of trouble-makers.

It wasn't just a case of rounding up suspects. In this mop-up, crooks were being nailed in the midst of crime. The Shadow and his agents were sparking the process, and the police were decimating the ranks of the criminals.

Steve Galden was in the midst of things, and Joe Cardona with him. The New Yorker was learning Miami methods. He noted that many of the raiding officers preferred shotguns to revolvers, and proved that their choice was a good one.

Scouting police, on motorcycles equipped with radios, were wheeling in like shock troops to the spots named by The Shadow. Meanwhile, other officers were called from unnecessary posts, to follow up the opening attacks. Mobsters were on the run, in all directions.

Though Cardona recognized that The Shadow's agents were active workers in the cause, he couldn't understand why the black-cloaked fighter had not appeared in person. That riddle was answered, when

Galden tuned in on the latest short-wave report.

There had been battle outside the Miami area. At three fancy clubs, not normally classed as jook joints, crooks had tried to rob patrons of cash and jewels. In each case, a cloaked battler had smashed the crime and put the perpetrators to route. His shifts from one place to another had been remarkable enough, but he had accomplished something more.

Single-handed, The Shadow had driven crooks into converging highways leading toward Miami. After a few mistaken barrages at one another, the groups had joined, their ranks thinned somewhat by their errors.

They knew that The Shadow was somewhere behind them, but finding him would be like a needle-in-a-haystack hunt. Furthermore, the hinterlands were roused; too many farmers and grove owners were equipped with arsenals that they knew how to use.

THESE merging thugs had found a leader: Hawk Silvey. He was sure that crime had scored a heavy win in the Miami area, particularly because The Shadow had been out of town. At Hawk's order, the crooks started their cars into town.

Too late for their own benefit, Hawk and his tribe found themselves the center of an attack that closed in from all sides. Motorcycle police had reported the advent of the mob. Forgetting the straggling crooks that they were chasing, other police closed in, full force, upon the new arrivals.

Boxed among suburban streets, Hawk's men were almost trapped. A half dozen who fled with Hawk managed it only by getting deeper into trouble near the heart of the city. There, sheer luck aided them. They chanced upon another crew of fugitives, who had assembled when the police eased the pressure. The outfit was headed by Lee Clesson.

Crime's two lieutenants were together, their bands combined. With the police spread out, Hawk and Lee resolved to stage a whirlwind drive throughout the midtown sector; to meet batches of incoming police and whirl them off like dust from a buzz saw.

It might have worked, if the crooks had gotten started. They were challenged, however, before they could sweep into action.

From a car that bore down upon the mob came a titanic laugh, voiced by a black-cloaked driver whose stabbing gun added point to his mirth. It was The Shadow, catching up with his enemies, thanks to the delay in the suburbs.

He'd routed them once; but he couldn't do it again. Not even when he jerked his car to a curb and sprang for a sheltering doorway, which gave him a chance to get two guns into simultaneous action.

Weight of numbers gave the odds to men of crime.

Scattered pedestrians, huddled car drivers, saw a surge of frantic killers who were bent upon downing a lone, intrepid foe, even if it cost the lives of half of them. The Shadow was staving off the sally, but he couldn't hold out alone; not even with his extra brace of guns.

Then, from other doorways, hotel balconies, and arcades, came a timely flanking fire to support The Shadow's guns. The laugh from The Shadow's doorway was triumphant in its taunt. He had relied upon his agents to be in the midtown section, after finishing their tasks elsewhere.

The wave of criminal attackers broke. Both Lee and Hawk were yelling for them to get back to the cars and bring the wounded with them. Starting flight anew, the hoodlums left many of their numbers on the

ground. In rounding corners, fugitives were met by the very police they had sought to trick. Crime's forces scattered in utter rout.

No longer masked, crooks were recognized by Galden and Cardona. It was Steve who pointed out Lee Clesson. Galden knew Lee by sight, but had not classed him as a man with a bad reputation. In his turn, Cardona spied Hawk Silvey and promptly identified him as a crook once wanted in New York.

The truth was out. From the way that Lee and Hawk were howling orders to their pals, the pair were unquestionably the lieutenants who served the brains of the bolita ring.

Their cars abandoned, human rats sought holes where they could hide. In their scurry, they eluded the police; but by separating, they rendered themselves harmless. It was the whirlwind business in reverse, and the police were the flywheel that flung the opposition far and wide.

Weaving a course through emptied arcades, The Shadow was bent upon ferreting out the rodents. His agents kept following his beckons along the zigzag trail. Finally, in the same open-air arcade where he had once battled in the guise of Cranston, The Shadow spotted a cluster of thugs who were trying to break into the central kiosk, hoping it would serve them as a turret fortress.

CROOKS changed their plan, when The Shadow began his attack. Dashing for the boulevard, they were out of range when they jumped into emergency cars, parked in the central lane. Fleeing for the outskirts, they knew that The Shadow was in pursuit and acted as if a regiment pursued them.

Word came to Galden regarding the skirmish at the kiosk. Listening to short-wave radio reports, Steve nodded.

"They were going to barricade that cheese box," he said, to Cardona. "The Shadow chased them out, and my guess is that they've gone to Coconut Villa."

"Where's that?"

"It's an unfinished hotel in a subdivision that was never completed. If they're going to hold the fort against us, the Villa is a better bet than anything here in town."

Police cars reached Coconut Villa, a squarish, roofless, three-story hulk that looked like an exaggerated blockhouse. Guns talked from boarded windows as soon as police cars threw floodlights on the place. The police began to deploy.

"They've parked their cars in back," began Galden. "If we start to move around, they'll run for it. Wait, though -"

Galden was standing beside his car. He reached in and lifted out a rifle. He took a bead on the top of a cabbage palm that towered just above the top floor of the roofless hotel. The tree was beyond the hotel; it made an excellent spot from which a lookout could keep watch for police circling in from the rear.

"If there's a guy in that palm," declared Galden, "this will fetch him out -"

The cabbage cluster wavered as Galden spoke. Steve was pressing the trigger, when Cardona elbowed the gun and shoved it from the marksman's shoulder. The kick nearly caught Galden in the chin, but he was angrier because the shot had missed, until he heard Cardona's exclamation:

"Look, Steve!"

A cloaked figure had spread-eagled from the palm tree; the shape was parachuting down into the old

hotel. A strange laugh issued from inside the battered villa, followed by shots within the skeleton structure. Crooks were no longer sniping from the windows. They were trying to fight off a new menace in their midst!

First to reach the barricaded door; Galden and Cardona cracked through. They saw gunmen sprawling everywhere, except for a few who managed to dash out through the rear and take to their cars.

From the open framework of the unfinished top floor came a mocking laugh, an accompaniment to a final series of gunshots. Dropping in from the cabbage palm, The Shadow had broken up the crooked crew that had tried to stage an Alamo in Coconut Villa.

By the time the police had gathered in the wounded and overtaken most of the fugitives, The Shadow was gone. It was to be expected, considering his swift methods of departure whenever night offered cover. What puzzled Galden and Cardona was the fact that neither Lee Clesson nor Hawk Silvey were among the prisoners.

Evidently the two lieutenants and many of their tribe had found cover in the city. The next measure was to close all roads leading from Miami; then scour the town until the wanted men were found. Quite soon, the task was under way.

Searchers included the extensive stretch of park that lay between Biscayne Boulevard and the bay front. Rustic pathways and shrubbery circles proved free of lurking men. But when the searchers had gone, a lone figure appeared near the bay front.

Beyond a palm tree that cut off the floodlight, The Shadow stood motionless, unseen, as he surveyed the peaceful silvery bay.

Small boats were floating on the ripples. Fishing launches were coming into port, one bringing Commissioner Weston, who had missed all the fun. Farther south, Denfield's yacht, the Wanderlust, was outward bound, fully loaded with the cargo expected at Coquina Key.

It was a pleasant contrast to the streets of Miami, where crime had been battered to a pulp and the police were still searching for remnants of the mess. But the soothing lull of the bay did not deceive The Shadow.

His laugh, a whisper as light as the splashes of fish that jumped near shore, was prophetic in tone. It told that he regarded the defeat of crimedom's horde simply as another step toward the eventual exposure of an evil master whose rule, though broken in Miami, was still a menace that might strike again!

CHAPTER XV. DEPARTURE FROM MIAMI

COMMODORE DENFIELD returned from Havana to find himself a hero in certain circles. A tabloid newspaper, which was published weekly, had his picture on the front page, along with some of the commodore's own statements.

Denfield had predicted that when the lid was clamped on his casino, trouble would start in many places; and events had proven his views to be correct.

A hurricane of crime had swept Miami, and on the face of things, Denfield's absence meant that he had played no part in it. But there were certain persons who were not quite so sure, among them Steve Galden. He had done a lot in helping the city weather the storm, but there were still some things that bothered him.

On Galden's desk lay enough bolita balls to fill half a bag. One had been found on every crook that the law had captured, with The Shadow's aid. But fifty did not make a hundred, as Galden emphasized to Cardona.

"Two men are gone," declared Steve, halting his fist before it thumped the desk, because he didn't want to start the bolitas rolling. "One is Lee Clesson; the other is Hawk Silvey. Each of them stands for two dozen more. Maybe we were lucky to round up half the crooks in town. But we can't deny that the other half is missing."

"Maybe they went over to Miami Beach."

"I don't think so," returned Galden. "They'd have run too big a risk crossing the causeways. I'd say they scattered to the Everglades."

"Any chance of finding them there?"

"Not much. Only the Seminoles live there. Those Indians could pull as good a roundup as the force over at Miami Beach, but they're too indifferent."

Galden's telephone was ringing. He answered it, to learn that Feds were in town. He repeated the news to Cardona, adding:

"Their headman is a fellow named Vic Marquette. He wants to get together with me."

"I know Vic," returned Cardona. "You'll like him. Let's get hold of him and introduce him to Commodore Denfield."

They met Marquette at his hotel. The Fed was a stolid man, with a poker face that rivaled Cardona's. Vic's complexion was darkish, and he wore a heavy mustache that did much to smother his facial complexions. He was pleased at the chance to meet Commodore Denfield. Galden made some phone calls, and learned that the gambling czar was over at the Hotel Sevilla.

Traveling to Miami Beach, the visiting trio found Denfield chatting with Damon Trendle. Greeting Galden, Trendle beamed a smile and said:

"Our friend the commodore has reformed. He is going into the cigar business."

Wheeling to Denfield, Galden saw a smile flicker in the gambling king's lips.

"How about it, commodore?"

"Not exactly," replied Denfield. "I told Trendle that I failed to make a business connection in Havana, but found an opportunity instead."

"In both Havana and Tampa," put in Trendle, "cigar-making is the major industry."

"Except for gambling," snapped Galden. "I get it, commodore. You couldn't break into the Havana racket, so you're going to open in Tampa before the crowd shows up for the State Fair."

Denfield nodded, very pleasantly. He smiled when Trendle gave a disgusted glare. Turning away, Trendle spoke to Commissioner Weston and Lamont Cranston, who were standing close by.

"Since Denfield will be busy," said Trendle, "we need not ask him to join us on our plane trip to Coquina Key. After all, it is just as well. It would be unfortunate to take along anyone who might corrupt Laxter's colony."

At nine o'clock that evening, Commodore Denfield left Miami by train. He was taking the Cross Florida Short Line, and he waved from the window of his drawing room as the train pulled out.

Denfield's wave was meant for three men who had been inspecting the baggage car, where all of Denfield's gambling paraphernalia was stored. The three were Marquette, Galden and Cardona.

"Looks like he's opening up in Tampa, like he said," remarked Marquette, as they rode from the station in a cab. "How big a drag does Denfield have in that town, Galden?"

"Plenty!" replied Steve. "He's moved in and out of there for years. The commodore always tries Tampa around this season, if he can't locate anywhere else."

"I'm going to Tampa," announced Vic. "If you two could come along, I'd like it."

Galden was sure he could get a free week, considering how crime had faded in Miami; while Cardona had already prolonged his leave of absence into an indefinite stay. They completed their arrangements within an hour.

Soon after dawn, they joined Marquette again, at his hotel. Two more passengers were along: a pair of Feds who had come to Miami with Marquette.

As proof that Denfield meant business in Tampa, the commodore had taken along the employees from the Palmetto Casino, a dozen or more, including Manuel, the croupier. But Marquette considered the commodore and his crowd as something for the future.

At present, he was seeking traces of the crooks who had scattered after the Miami battle. Hence, instead of striking out for Tampa along the southern route, the Tamiami Trail, he drove the car northward to Palm Beach and there struck west, along a canal, to Lake Okeechobee, which lay fifty miles inland.

"I can't picture Clesson and Silvey hiding out in the Everglades," Marquette told Galden. "They'd be spotted too easily, out of a bunch of Seminoles and alligators. They could have gotten to Pahokee just as well. So I'm going to stop there."

Cardona had never heard of Pahokee. Once he saw the town, he would never forget it, according to Galden.

They reached Lake Okeechobee first. Viewed through the hurricane gates at Canal Point, it appeared as a huge inland sea, stretching off to the horizon like one of the Great Lakes.

Following a huge dike that cut off further view of the lake, they came to Pahokee, a sort of town that Cardona never expected to see east of the Rocky Mountains. It had all the mushroom characteristics of a Western mining town in the days of the gold rush. Pahokee's "gold" happened to be winter vegetables, shipped North in huge quantities.

None of the frame buildings were more than two stories high. Boarding houses squeezed themselves between gin mills and gambling houses. As Galden put it, the business section was "one big jook," that operated on a twenty-four-hour shift.

Hordes of vegetable picker's were in town. Marquette and his companions spent the rest of the day watching them plod in and out from the fields. By night, the jooks were in an uproar, milling with crowds that poured in from trailer camps to squander the day's earnings.

Out of all that melee, neither Galden nor Cardona recognized a single face. They were worn out when they left, after midnight, in Marquette's car. During the long ride to Tampa, Galden expressed a humorous

thought.

"We ought to get the commodore to open a casino in Pahokee," he said. "His place would close itself up the first night. That crowd would take the chromium trimmings off his roulette wheels and swipe his fancy green layouts for trailer rugs. Pahokee would be too tough for the commodore."

"It's too tough for Clesson and Silvey, too," observed Cardona. "One look at the town would scare off that pair, and the rats they have with them. Those Pahokee boys wouldn't put up with crooks. The wrong kind of strangers would wind up on the wrong side of the dike."

"The Everglades are off the book," summed Marquette, in a businesslike tone, "and so is Pahokee. We'll look for the men we want when we get to Tampa."

It was well after dawn when they did reach Tampa. At that same hour, a seaplane was taking off from Miami. It was a private ship, owned by Damon Trendle. With Trendle and his friends were Commissioner Weston and Lamont Cranston; the latter had brought along a last-minute passenger.

The added member of the party was June Marwyn.

So much had happened since the Cordaza robbery, that Commissioner Weston did not recall the girl's resemblance to the masquerading secretary, Partridge. Weston smiled when the blonde arrived, for she made a welcome addition to the group.

The night before, Cranston had persuaded June to make the trip, assuring her that she was quite free of any blame for crime. He had argued, too, that she would be safer at Coquina Key than in Miami, and June had believed it, although danger no longer existed in Miami.

Cranston might have felt qualmish about the matter, had he been going to Coquina Key. But Cranston was staying at Miami Beach. The Cranston who met June and brought her to the air base happened to be The Shadow.

Crossing Florida above Cape Sable, the seaplane soon sighted Coquina Key, a verdant isle rimmed by a beach that glistened white amidst the deep-blue Gulf of Mexico. Below, a ship was gliding from a small crescent harbor. It was Denfield's yacht, the Wanderlust. She was heading north.

"Bound for Tampa," explained Trendle. "Denfield claimed it would be a shorter trip, with less hazards. She will return, tomorrow, with more supplies."

Tiny figures were crowding to the water's edge, to greet the arriving seaplane. Laxter's leopard skin was conspicuous among the deer hides that his followers wore. June saw women, too, costumed in short skirts and narrowed girdles which appeared to be of woven grass, trimmed with Spanish moss and sea shells.

The eyes of all the party were toward the shore, except those of The Shadow. His gaze, a casual one that suited the role of Cranston, was in the direction of the departing Wanderlust.

CHAPTER XVI. THE TROPICAL ISLE

LIFE on Coquina Key was perfect, according to Miles Laxter, though none of his followers supported his statement. They were a silent lot, who stared at the visitors, then went their way. Laxter explained their indifference.

"It's been a hard trek," he said. "They were about half starved until the first supplies came, and they're only getting over it gradually. I was forced to feed them on promises, and they're making sure that they

are due for plenty before they make friends.

"They resent strangers, as I do, except in the case of friends. We all came here to get away from the outside world. I only wish"—his eye lighted on June, as he spoke—"that some of you could remain more than a few days."

They had already spent one day at Coquina Key, and Laxter had made the same remark before, always for June's benefit. The rest of the time, he had been showing his guests around.

At present, it was mid-afternoon, and they were standing on the north shore of the island, looking out to distant reefs where men in tiny boats were gathering coral.

The men were wearing shirts and hats, which were necessary for those who stayed out in the sun. On the shore were piles of coral, ready to be carried across the island.

Turning about, Laxter led his friends along a route that skirted the coquina quarry. He pointed out chunks of building rock, already cut.

"We'll load coral and coquina on the Wanderlust," he said. "She will arrive by dusk, and can be unloaded in a few hours. She can put out again before dawn, taking our first real shipment. We intend to put Coquina Key on a self-sustaining basis.

There were shacks on the far side of the quarry, quite different from the thatched huts in which most of the colonists lived. Laxter pointed them out as the quarters used by the colonists who hewed the coquina rock.

The workers were through for the day, but a visit to the huts would be difficult because the quarry pit was treacherous. So Laxter led the party back to the south shore.

June was comfortably clad in white, an excellent garb for this tropical clime. She was standing at the shore, looking out into the Gulf, feeling cool and contented, when a voice spoke smoothly from beside her.

It was Laxter's tone; his purr suited the leopard skin that seemed to be his permanent costume.

"You would like it here, Miss Marwyn," he said. "Surely, no business compels you to return to Miami?"

"Nor to stay here," rejoined June. "None of your lady residents have invited me to any receptions, Mr. Laxter. They seem to be what you term 'self-sustaining.'"

"They can't regard you as one of them," explained Laxter, "until you have settled on Coquina Key."

"If you're trying to sell me one of those grass costumes," returned June, "you're wasting your time. I'm quite pleased with my own clothes, thank you."

She turned on her heel and walked away, to enter the guest hut that had been assigned to her. The first thing that June saw, lying on a chair, was one of the grassy costumes. Examining the outfit, she found it flimsier than she had supposed.

Angry at Laxter for presuming that that silly gift would induce her to remain on Coquina Key, June decided to find him and throw the costume at him. At the door of the hut, she paused, wondering if a display of temper would be advisable. At the same time, she was looking for Laxter, and saw him near a clump of palms.

He was gesturing to some men who had crept up beside him. They held a short confab; then the others crept out of sight. Laxter turned toward June's hut; tossing the grass things back on the chair, the girl strolled out into the dusk.

She was strolling toward a little community house, when Laxter overtook her. He asked if she had changed her mind regarding the Coquina Colony, and June sweetly replied that she had not.

They reached the community house, where they learned that the Wanderlust had been sighted. Trendle, Weston, and the rest, were going down to see the yacht come in.

Laxter went along. June found herself standing alone with Cranston. He spoke to her in an undertone:

"Stay here at the community house, with Weston, until I return. Later, I shall tell you why."

WITHOUT waiting for a reply, Cranston walked away. He didn't go toward the shore; instead, he lost himself in the gloom beyond the huts. June stood, wondering; but her natural feeling was to obey the instructions of her friend.

Then rebellion seized her. It wasn't Cranston's fault; Laxter was to blame. Unfortunately, June hadn't told The Shadow about her tiff with the man who wore the leopard skin. Something was wrong on Coquina Key, and June decided that she had as much a right to know as anyone else.

The men who had talked with Laxter were gone, in the direction of the coquina quarry, which was probably where Cranston had started, too. June wanted to learn things for herself, and an inspiration gripped her.

She'd be recognized if she prowled the island all in white, but if she went native, it would become a simple matter. By moonlight, she would be mistaken for one of the women who belonged on Coquina Key.

Hurrying back to her hut, she sneaked inside and listened to make sure that no one was about. Instead of lighting the oil lamp with which the hut was provided, she undressed in the darkness, keeping back from the moonlight that invaded the doorway.

Folding her own clothes, June tucked them under the mattress and groped for the grass garments on the chair. Finding them, she put them on and stepped out from the hut.

Wholly freed from civilized garb, June was forced to the reluctant admission that the native costume was an improvement. It was no scantier than a streamlined bathing suit, and it seemed in keeping with the freedom of the coral isle. The grass skirt crinkled, and its trimmings caught the moonlight's shimmer. The soil felt powdery under foot.

Picking the path that led to the interior of the tiny key, June came to a fork and took the branch which led to the shack side of the quarry. The ground became rougher, a bit difficult for barefoot travel, so she crept along more cautiously.

Nearing the shacks, it was easier; noting that one of the little buildings was lighted, June stole up beside it and peered through a small screened window.

At first, she saw only blackness that blocked off much of the light. As the darkness shifted, June recognized it as the cloaked form of The Shadow!

Beyond were two rough-clad men. One had a hard-set face, streaked with sweat. The other was a little wizened creature, whose eyes were sharp as gimlets and whose pasty lips wore a fixed grin. One look

convinced June that the pair were rogues.

Appearances were more than deceitful; they were purposeful. June was looking at two men who had vanished of their own volition the night when The Shadow had ruined crime in Miami.

The pair were Cliff Marsland and Hawkeye, the agents that The Shadow always delegated for double duty. They had hunted with the hounds, then run with the hares, that night in Miami.

At present, they were showing tokens to The Shadow. Each held a bolita ball that bore a number. Again, June misunderstood. Cranston had told her something about the bolita ring that the law was tracking down; how possession of such tokens meant that men were crooks, ruled by a criminal chief.

Lamont Cranston was The Shadow; of that, June was sure. Here were men reporting to him, showing the very symbols that marked him as a master of crime, not of justice!

Had June paused to reason, she might have seen the truth. Her own rescue, accomplished by The Shadow, was proof-evident that he stood on the side of right. A few words between The Shadow and his agents would have told her that they were engaged in what amounted to espionage against crime; hence the bolita tokens.

But the conference was finished when June looked through the window.

The Shadow stepped through the doorway of the shack; the two men followed. Huddling low, June tried to find The Shadow in the gloom, but failed. Hearing the others go on past the remaining shacks, June presumed that The Shadow was accompanying them.

Waiting a full minute, June started to retrace her route. She shuddered at patches of blackness along the path ahead. There were moments when she halted, her fingers clenching the grass girdle, for she fancied that she saw streaky blotches move ahead. Then, when she neared the end shack, a new fright seized her.

A lantern was coming along the path; she heard the voices of two men. They couldn't be the pair who had been with The Shadow, but their tones had a roughness that June did not like.

She dropped to the near side of the shack. The men did not pass; instead, they entered the shack, with the lantern.

JUNE had seen and heard enough. She decided to do exactly what The Shadow had told her to do—join Commissioner Weston. When she did so, she would tell him her whole story, accusing Cranston of complicity in crime.

With a quick bound, June left the shelter of the shack, intending to scamper along the path. She stumbled on a jutting ledge of coquina, gave a helpless cry as she flattened on her face.

The two men pounced from the shack, swung the lantern toward her, then scooped up June and dragged her inside. As they were hurling her to a corner, June heard one say:

"She's one of those dumb dames from the colony!"

"Like nothing!" grated the other, in a tone that June recognized. "This is the blonde that I thought I'd clipped the other night. This time, she gets it!"

The face that thrust into the light above a drawn gun belonged to Hawk Silvey!

Eyes shut, June fancied herself very close to death. It happened that death was very near at hand. A cloaked figure had stepped into the doorway; burning eyes were upon Hawk, as a firm hand leveled an automatic for the crook.

The Shadow had been ahead of June on the path. Stepping aside to let the two men pass, he had returned in their wake and had witnessed June's capture.

Drilling Hawk would have been a pleasure for The Shadow. Fortunately for Hawk, his companion grabbed the crook's gun away from him. The gun grabber proved to be Lee Clesson. His face, when it thrust into the light, showed anger, in contrast to Hawk's stubborn expression.

"What do you want to do?" demanded Lee. "Blow off the lid on this fool island? What if people hear some shooting and then find that the doll is gone? Where will we stand?"

With a grumble, Hawk pocketed his gun. He looked at June, who was still in a half-helpless daze.

"We can't let her go back, Lee -"

"Why should we?" interposed Lee. "The bunch that came in from Miami is taking off at dawn. They won't be surprised if blondie don't show up. They know that Laxter has been trying to talk her into staying here, so they'll think she took up the invite and is sleeping late."

"But why not croak her, anyway? Quietlike?"

For answer, Lee dug out some ropes that were used for hauling sledges loaded with quarry rock. He grabbed June by the shoulder, brought her half to her feet and twisted her arms behind her, so that Hawk could bind them. When June started to scream, Lee smothered her outburst and gagged her with a handkerchief.

June's kicks were useless. By then, she was flat on her face, and Hawk was sitting on her feet, while he tied her wrists. The girl's ankles were bound later; with the other rope, while Lee was telling Hawk:

"Laxter was supposed to keep her here, alive. He takes his orders from the big guy, like we do. But we can't leave her with Leaping Leo now, because she knows too much."

"We're taking her along with us?"

"It's the best bet, Hawk. What else she finds out, won't hurt. We'll bring her back later. If Laxter can teach her to keep her trap shut, he can have her for an exhibit, along with those other saps that belong to his colony. They've learned not to squawk."

The Shadow withdrew from the doorway as the crooks lifted their prisoner. June's capture was helpful to his own plans, and since she had brought the plight upon herself, it was best to let her undergo the present ordeal. Unwittingly, June was taking on an assignment for The Shadow.

A few hours later, when the Wanderlust had been unloaded, The Shadow, in Cranston's guise, stood beside the crude pier in the crescent cove. With Weston and Trendle, he watched the scrawny members of the Coquina Colony drag heavy boxes to the dock, so that the yacht crew could lift the new cargo on board.

According to Laxter, those boxes contained coquina rock and choice coral. One box must have been especially valuable, because instead of being placed in the yacht's hold, it was carried to a cabin.

The Shadow knew that the only coral in that box consisted of ornaments adorning the crinkly grass

costume for which June Marwyn had voluntarily exchanged her more civilized attire.

As on the night of battle in Miami, the keen eyes of The Shadow watched the dwindling lights of the Wanderlust, as the yacht moved out to sea.

CHAPTER XVII. CARNIVAL IN TAMPA

AT dawn, Trendle's seaplane took off from Tampa, with all its former passengers except June Marwyn. Miles Laxter was on hand, smilingly informing the departers that June had decided to try life at Coquina Key, and perhaps become a permanent resident of the happy colony.

From the air, the coral isle looked very peaceful. An hour later, the plane passed the Wanderlust, which was churning northward through the blue Gulf. Then, in surprisingly short time, came the broad expanse of Tampa Bay, with the city of St. Petersburg on its western promontory.

Gliding toward the smaller stretch of Hillsborough Bay, the winged ship reached the seaplane port. Coming ashore, the passengers took automobiles to the heart of the city, which was reached by a boulevard.

On the way, they passed spacious Plant Park, beyond which lay the grounds of the State Fair, with its many permanent buildings. But they did not have to detour to those grounds to learn that the Fair was going on.

This was the day of carnival in Tampa—Gasparilla Day, so named in honor of the notorious pirate, Gasparilla, who had begun his career by stealing a ship of the Spanish navy. Though Jose Gaspar had been dead a hundred years, his "pirates" annually raided Tampa upon this day in February.

The streets were filled with masquerading citizens in many types of costumes, awaiting the pirates, who were masqueraders, too, and were due to arrive in gayly bedecked sailing craft from somewhere in Hillsborough Bay.

Sight of the festive crowd pleased The Shadow; he decided to take a stroll from the hotel. To Weston, such a stroll was merely another of Cranston's whims. The commissioner decided not to go along.

Meanwhile, from another hotel, three men were watching throngs. One man, Vic Marquette, was staring glumly. His companions were Joe Cardona and Steve Galden. They were somewhat moody, too. All three had stayed up late the night before, at the Club Habana, Denfield's new casino in Tampa.

"So far, no luck," growled Vic. "You fellow's didn't spot a single mug last night. I guess the bunch we want are smart enough to stay away from Denfield's. Maybe you can do better looking around in the daytime."

"What chance have we today?" queried Cardona. "Half the people in town will be wearing masks. I've a mind to put on a costume myself and join the party."

Marquette gave a grunt.

"Masquerades!" he said. "I'm thinking of something more important. Do you know that there's a lot of cash in Tampa?"

"There should be," returned Cardona. "People are spending plenty."

"It's more serious than you think," spoke Marquette. "One of my men just called up from police headquarters. They're worried about this talk of crooks in town. Take a look at those motorcycles."

MARQUETTE pointed from the window, to motorcycle police who were wheeling in the direction of Ybor City, the Spanish section of Tampa. It was in Ybor City that Commodore Denfield had established his Club Habana, on the premises of an old centro, or Spanish club.

"No, they're not going to call on the commodore," continued Vic.

"Their job is to watch some cigar factories that didn't have time to bank their money because of the holiday. A good percentage of the Tampa police will be over in Ybor City all day."

"What about this part of Tampa?" inquired Galden. "Maybe they're making the same mistake we did in Miami."

"The town ought to be safe enough by daytime," declared Cardona, "considering that everyone is busy having a good time."

"I think so," agreed Marquette. "The banks are heavily loaded with money from the Fair. One in particular, the City Trust, has more than a half million in cash from the concessions, and what not. It handles pay rolls, too. I'd say that there was an easy million in that bank alone. But nobody would try to crack a bank until after dark.

"The City Trust has its own watchers. If anything, the police are anxious about the hotels. The clerks have to cash a lot of checks during Fair week, and a stick-up in a hotel would be a cinch. The police are watching out for such trouble."

The telephone bell was ringing. Marquette thought that one of his men was calling. But from the moment that he lifted the receiver, Vic's darkish face underwent a change.

Noting the expressions on Vic's usually emotionless features, Cardona and Galden looked at each other. They nodded, as Marquette turned from the telephone to say:

"The Shadow!"

Amazing things were coming over the wire, judging from Marquette's eagerness to hear more. When the call was finished, Vic stared as if he had listened to the incredible. Then, planking the telephone aside, he told the others:

"Come on! We've got a lot to do! It's going to be done the way The Shadow wants it. Our first stop is police headquarters. I'll tell you all about it on the way there."

CARNIVAL was increasing in Tampa. Crowds were heading for the docks, where the Gasparilla procession was soon to arrive. Up through the bay came the gaudy parade of pirate ships, sails fluttering, while auxiliary motors propelled the boats.

Upon the decks were the colorful masqueraders, a half hundred of them, their pirate costumes vivid as the rainbow, their heads adorned with colored handkerchiefs. Only those head adornments lacked variety. Most of the handkerchiefs were red, but there were a few blues among them.

The whole shore was lined with people in other types of costumes that suited every fancy of the imagination, from bearded Neptunes to Hawaiian dancers. Many of the shore costumes were Spanish, in keeping with the Gasparilla fete, and there were a few pirates among them who happened to be wearing blue handkerchiefs.

As the boats docked, the pirates on board began to yell. Their faces were dyed brown, which made their grinning teeth show very white. They were waving cutlasses as they swarmed ashore, and the crowd

began to scatter, shrieking in fun. This was the usual custom when the "pirates" arrived. It represented Gasparilla and his crew capturing the town.

Today, the acting was unusually dramatic. After chopping down imaginary victims, the pirates turned and threw their cutlasses on board the boats. Then, grimacing, they flocked among the crowd, pretending to grab prisoners. Next, they were off in a band toward the business section of Tampa, as if they intended to sack the town.

Men on shore who wore pirate costumes saw their chance to join in the sport. They joined Gasparilla's crew, and other merry-makers flocked along. The unarmed pirates began entering stores; they came out again, pretending that they were carrying heavy burdens that represented loot.

Then, by mere chance it seemed, the pirates were in a huddle in the middle of a street that had been blocked off from traffic, to allow an open-air dance. Fringing the sidewalks were laughing people in costume, wondering what the pirates intended to cook up next.

It came, in a fashion that brought a great gasp from the crowd. Whipping about, the pirates reached deep in the sashes of their costumes and hauled out revolvers. They waved the weapons toward the crowd, which promptly scattered. Then, some scoffers remaining, the pirates aimed at windows just above the level of heads, and fired.

Bullets whistled; windows shattered. This was no longer fun. The remnants of the crowd began to scramble for shelter; some, reaching cover, saw the next thing that the pirates did. While one batch stood ready with their guns, others produced roundish objects in the form of bombs, and headed across the street.

At the corner which the pirates had chosen for this climax stood the City Trust, the most cash-burdened bank in Tampa. Gasparilla's men were preparing to bomb their way into the building and loot it of an actual treasure!

These weren't the masqueraders originally slated to play the part of Gasparilla and his men. The real procession was still down the bay. These were real pirates of a modern breed. They were the crooks who had fled Miami less than a week before.

There were two Gasparillas in the throng, leaders who were sharing the evil work: Lee Clesson and Hawk Silvey. They had come with all their men from Coquina Key, where they had been hiding out. All had been loaded aboard the Wanderlust in boxes.

These men were fishermen from the boats off the Key; they included the quarry workers who had lived in the shacks. The visitors to Coquina Key had been artfully deceived by Miles Laxter. One person, however, had recognized the situation all along.

He was The Shadow, at present here in Tampa, where streamlined pirates were actually taking over a helpless city!

CHAPTER XVIII. CRIME'S WATERLOO

IT didn't occur to men of crime that, so far, all had gone too well. They were expecting this work to be a push-over, so it seemed in accord with plans. They knew the set-up in Tampa—that the police had more to do than watch a festival, or guard a bank that was as strong as a fortress.

Lee Clesson was arranging the matter of the bombs, deliberately pointing the best spots to plant them. Hawk Silvey was in charge of the cover-up crew; he and his gunzels were laughing at the way the crowd

had scattered. Then, suddenly, Hawk spied something that he didn't like.

Among the braver witnesses to crime—men who had gone to shelter, instead of deserting the scene completely—was a man in clown's costume who was easing back into a doorway. Hawk saw the clown's hand go to his hip and partly draw a gun. Hawk's quick eyes roved elsewhere. He saw more.

A masquerader in a red devil's garb was also reaching to his hip. Others among the lurkers looked suspicious. With a snarl to his crew, Hawk ordered:

"Aim for those doorways! Give it!"

The pirates obeyed. With the same speed, the opposition snapped to action. Clown, devil, others, were shooting at the order they received from a squatty masquerader who represented Humpty Dumpty.

Vic Marquette was Humpty Dumpty. Joe Cardona was the clown, Steve Galden the devil. They had a dozen other sharpshooters with them; some were Feds, the rest Tampa detectives. Though outnumbered, their doorways gave them shelter. Their shots drove Hawk's crew into a quick retreat.

Unfortunately, the fireworks had begun too soon, and Marquette knew it. He had been told to await a signal, which had not come. Hawk Silvey had started things before the right time. Moreover, Marquette feared trouble from this premature outburst.

The Shadow had ordered a wait until crooks blasted the door of the bank; the most timely moment to attack them. His arrangement called for the crooks themselves to give the signal. Marquette had approved the idea, because it would further establish the actual proof of crime against the men involved.

But there was another reason for The Shadow's instructions; one that Marquette suddenly saw. Hearing the gun fray, Lee Clesson turned.

Seeing Hawk's crew in retreat, Lee ordered his outfit to snatch up the unexploded bombs!

"Get busy with those pineapples!" shouted Lee. "Chuck them at those guys in the doorways! Put the blast on them right!"

Bombs threatened to do what guns had not. Marquette and his sharpshooting squad were trapped. Harried by Hawk's gunners, they couldn't get time to aim at Lee's crowd of bombers. But there were others among the bombers themselves who suddenly filled the breach.

They were five in number; all pirates who wore blue handkerchiefs instead of red. Two of them, Cliff Marsland and Hawkeye, had come up the bay with the fake Gasparilla boats. The other three were Harry Vincent, Clyde Burke, and an agent named Burbank, who had acted as a contact man in Miami, but was finding active service in Tampa.

These three had been the pirates on the shore; they had joined the tribe of crooks in the dash to the business district. Like Cliff and Hawkeye, they were bringing out their guns. Dropping away, they fired at the bombers.

Lee shouted too late. The first bomb went askew, as the man who tried to throw it was staggered by a clipping bullet. The "pineapple" sailed to the center of the street, where it struck with an explosion that tore a large hole in the asphalt. Another crook dodged as he threw; his missile exploded close to Hawk's crew, wounding a pair of gunners.

Others were turning to bomb The Shadow's agents, who by that time were wheeling for shelter, to escape gunfire. But the signal had been given, in the form of the first explosion. Crime's Waterloo had

really arrived.

The Shadow's agents were making for the doorway of a small hotel, where various noncombatants had taken early refuge. Those watching masqueraders fled by a pair of steps, leaving only one, a new arrival, in the place that they had occupied. He had come through from the hotel lobby, and stood alone.

His costume was unique. He wore a slouch hat and black cloak. His hands were gloved. Many merry-makers had seen this masquerader among them and had taken him for a fellow mummer.

He was attired as The Shadow!

TO savage, wild-eyed crooks, themselves in costume, this was merely part of the general masquerade. The two who still had "pineapples" drew back their hands to hurl them.

They were going to cripple the pirates who had betrayed them, blast the Hotel doorway, and also obliterate the black-clad masquerader who hadn't shown sense enough to flee before their rush.

At that moment, the masquerade ended.

Only The Shadow could have displayed the marksmanship that stopped the bombers in their tracks. Gloved hands jogged from the folds of the flowing cloak, popping two gun muzzles into sight as if at a mere finger snap.

As they came up from The Shadow's hips, the two guns spoke. Human targets actually seemed to attract the stabs of flame that the guns mouthed.

One foe still managed to retain the "pineapple," and clutch it as he sagged. The other lost his missile; it hit the street ahead of him. With a roar of flame, the bomb was gone and the mobster vanished with it. Deafened crooks could not hear the blasts that The Shadow's guns continued to deliver; but they saw the tongues of flame and felt the bullet stabs.

Alone, The Shadow had broken the mass attacks. As crooks made a frantic effort to rally, he aimed a side shot at the unexploded bomb that had rolled from the hands of the man who fell with it. The perfect shot exploded the last "pineapple," staggering the only gunners who were getting in their aim at The Shadow.

By then, The Shadow's agents had found perfect cover; not in doorways, but among the crooks themselves! Originally, The Shadow had intended to start the battle and let the law finish it, aided by the agents among the pirate band.

The agents had returned to their original task, that of dragging down the men about them. Marquette and his costumed squad of Feds and police drove out from cover, guns blazing, to put mobsters utterly to rout.

In the confusion, crooks hadn't guessed that every pirate with a blue headpiece was a foeman in their midst. Some of the crooks were shooting at each other on suspicion, adding to their own dilemma. But The Shadow had posted Marquette to differ between blue and red, and none of his squad was color-blind.

They were clipping red-topped pirates right and left, avoiding the blue warriors who were doing such good work in the midst of the motley fleeing mob. Then, as crooks were spurred by the sound of a mocking laugh behind them, The Shadow's agents dropped aside, to await their chief.

The Shadow became the leader of the pursuing throng. In broad daylight, he was in the open, cloaked in

the garb that he usually reserved for darkness. With him, elbow to elbow, came the assorted squad of police and Feds. Blue-capped pirates joined the same force.

On this day of carnival, The Shadow's action was logical. He was in costume, like the rest. But where the others were in a sense, disguised, The Shadow was actually masquerading as himself, in one of the most singular exploits of his long career!

Flight being their only course, Lee and Hawk were breaking their mob into small detachments, which scattered. In his turn, The Shadow was detailing clusters of pursuers, spotting the alleys and other routes that crooks took.

Feds and police kept to the different trails by the simple expedient of nipping off crooks with gunfire. Sprawled pirates, all wearing red headgear, were like markers along the way.

Joe Cardona had talked about joining the masquerade, and had gotten his wish on a scale he hadn't expected.

Crooks headed toward used-car lots. Coming to Tampa by water, they planned to escape by land. Taking over cars for a getaway seemed easy, and the ruse was clever.

Again, thugs hadn't bargained with The Shadow's plans. He knew their destinations before they reached the parking lots, thanks to information supplied him by Cliff and Hawkeye. Crooks were scarcely in the cars before police bobbed up about them, not in costumes, but in uniforms.

They were the officers detailed earlier to Ybor City, switched to this new duty. They had converged on every used-car lot, and the rattle of their guns was deadly at close range. Cars skidded and crashed; some didn't get started at all. Marquette and others pursuers showed up in various lots, to complete the roundup.

Of two dozen pirate crooks, all were dead or captured, with the exception of their leaders.

Lee Clesson and Hawk Silvey hadn't been able to reach a used-car lot. They were dodging through alleys, stores, and hotel lobbies, to escape a pursuer who had outrun the rest and had a gun for each of crime's lieutenants.

GIVEN a few blocks more, The Shadow would have settled Lee and Hawk. A freakish chance enabled them to elude him. Coming out of a doorway near another bank, the two mobster leaders saw a light-armored truck that bore the name of a cigar manufacturer in Ybor City.

Skittish when police had left his factory unguarded, the cigarmaker had called his bank and arranged to send over his money. It was in a special strong box, that two men were starting to unload. This bank was distant from the battle zone; the truck crew expected no trouble, but they got it when Lee and Hawk arrived.

Firing random shots, the two lieutenants sent the truckmen diving. With no more ado, Lee and Hawk piled aboard, shoving the strong box in ahead of them, and slammed the door of the armored vehicle. They had the truck in motion when The Shadow opened fire. The protective armor resisted The Shadow's bullets.

Even the tires held out against The Shadow's shots, as the truck veered a corner. They were special tires, equipped with double inner tubes that lost part of their pressure, but did not flatten.

Commandeering a cab, The Shadow went in chase, but could not risk too close a pursuit, knowing that one of the crooks would be at the loophole in the rear of the truck, ready to fire back at the unprotected

cab should it come in range.

Wisely, the crime lieutenants didn't try to head out of town. The police had blocked the roads and could have barricaded cars in their path. The Shadow's chase ended near the water front, where he found the armored truck abandoned. There was no sign of the pirate leaders, nor the strong box that they had snatched.

Sending the cab away, The Shadow took to a secluded alleyway that was gloomy, even by day. There he waited the arrival of his own pirate crew, to assign his agents to new duty. As he waited, The Shadow delivered a low-toned laugh.

As with the capture of June Marwyn, the seizure of the strong box could prove a boomerang to Hawk and Lee. Crime's new success was giving The Shadow a sure opportunity to place full blame for crookery exactly where it belonged!

CHAPTER XIX. SOUTH OF TAMPA

THERE had been many witnesses to the amazing victory which The Shadow had scored over the crooked pirates. But none had gotten a better view of events than two men stationed in a hotel room quite close to the City Trust Building. Those two observers were Miami's famed philanthropist, Damon Trendle, and New York's police commissioner, Ralph Weston.

They really had a grandstand seat. From one window, they overlooked the street where battle had begun. When the chase turned the corner, they had another window, on that side. As crooks scattered, Trendle and Weston still could see them, for their windows were high enough above surrounding streets.

These observers witnessed some happenings at the used-car lots, but they lost sight of The Shadow in his lone chase of Lee and Hawk.

At intervals, Weston made gestures toward the telephone, intending to call police headquarters; but every time, he paused, realizing that The Shadow had already brought the forces of the law into action.

It was Trendle who finally picked up the telephone, exclaiming indignantly:

"Commodore Denfield is behind all this! We must find out where he can be located, and make sure that he is apprehended!"

Weston left that job to Trendle, but was sorry later that he did. Trendle had to call information to find out the name of Denfield's gambling club. That done, he called the Club Habana, to make sure that Denfield was there. He didn't talk to the commodore in person; instead, when he had finished certain inquiries, he hung up abruptly and said:

"I'm afraid they may suspect -"

"Of course they suspect!" stormed Weston. "Give me that telephone, Trendle. I'll call headquarters, like you should have. Let's hope that you haven't spoiled things."

AT the Club Habana, Manuel, the croupier, knocked at the door of Denfield's office. Admitted, Manuel delivered confidential information.

"Trendle just called," he said. "He didn't say what was up; he just wanted to know if you were here."

"Ah!" exclaimed Denfield. "My good friend Trendle."

"Not as good a friend as you think, commodore. I just heard from a customer that hell has busted loose in Tampa. A bunch tried to crack the City Trust, in daylight."

With a bland smile, the commodore folded his hands and leaned back in his swivel chair.

"My dear Manuel," he said, "who would ever presume that I could in any way be culpable of such a thing?"

"Trendle, for one," returned Manuel, "and a lot more people, too. Listen, Commodore. I'm for you, and so are some of the boys, as you know. But there's others who would sell you out for less dough than you'd toss a coin for."

The commodore gave his head a grieved shake. Manuel became insistent.

"You know how to alibi yourself," said Manuel, "but right now, things are tough. You'd better slide out and stay away, until this mess blows over."

Denfield's indifference ended. Coming to his feet, he began to gather papers from his desk, while he inquired:

"Has the Wanderlust reached port?"

Nodding, Manuel said that the skipper had called the Club Habana only a short while before.

"Get out the back way, commodore," he suggested. "I'll talk to the right fellows, and we'll keep the cops off your neck."

The Club Habana had a rear exit to an alley, where a car was available. The commodore made a quick trip by that route, while Manuel was picking the men he wanted from among the hired help. All were gathered at the broad front staircase leading up into the club, when Manuel told them:

"The coppers won't be here for a while yet. When they do show up, take it easy -"

Just then, a throng of masqueraders poured into the Club Habana. They were headed by a man in Humpty Dumpty attire; behind him came a clown and a red devil, with a mixture of other costumed men farther in the rear. All had guns, which they aimed as they came up the stairs.

Manuel's admonition to "take it easy" was something that he himself forgot. A crook by nature, he showed his hand, and it brought a gun from his hip. The men beside him, the "boys" who were all for the commodore, were of Manuel's ilk. They had guns, too, but like Manuel, they weren't quick enough.

Shots sounded from the stairway. Manuel and his pals toppled. Rolling topsy-turvy down the broad thick-carpeted stairs, they landed in the arms of the fighters who had clipped them.

Humpty Dumpty and the clown kept on into the gambling den, where they cowed the patrons and the employees, and took over in the name of the law. But the red devil remained on the stairs.

Ordinarily, Steve Galden would have followed along with Vic Marquette and Joe Cardona, but he had something special on his mind. He began to frisk Manuel and the others.

On everyone, Steve found a bolita ball, the tokens that proved them members of the crime ring. From Manuel's dying lips, Steve forced the confession that Denfield had fled for the Wanderlust.

Word of the commodore's flight reached Weston and Trendle at their hotel. Both knew that the Wanderlust was speedy when she needed to be; that by this time, the yacht might be far down Tampa

Bay. But that didn't phase Trendle.

"I'll find a speedboat," Trendle told Weston, "and get to our seaplane. We'll overtake the Wanderlust and keep circling, so that you can see us. Get the Feds, and hurry out to join me. Denfield can't possibly get away."

IN guessing that Denfield had reached the lower harbor, Trendle was correct. The Wanderlust was a very speedy craft when unburdened with a cargo. She was heading southward, out into the Gulf of Mexico, and Denfield was pacing the deck impatiently.

His crew was small, consisting only of the captain and half a dozen men. The captain had long been in Denfield's employ, but the crew had changed quite often. It had been quite a while since Denfield had been aboard his own yacht, for she had long been lying idle in Miami.

Earlier, crime had met its Waterloo. At present, Denfield had the air of a Napoleon on his way to Elba, as he paced with his hands behind him. He was thinking of his destination, and he finally spoke it aloud:

"Havana."

Denfield had many friends in the Cuban capital, and Havana was outside the jurisdiction of the United States. It would be hard to extradite Denfield on mere suspicion; hence Havana was the right place, until things had really blown over.

When it came to the matter of an alibi, or even a defense, Denfield felt very little worry, judging from the smile that came to his dryish lips.

With a wave to the skipper, Denfield went below. His own private cabin was locked, as he always kept it. Drawing a key from his pocket, he unlocked the door and entered. Through the starboard portholes, the setting sun cast its glow upon the commodore's smile.

Halting to stare at a squarish box in the corner, noting the lid that had been removed and was leaning against the wall, Denfield was suddenly startled by a voice behind him.

Turning, he found himself faced by a determined girl, whose blond hair was strewn across her firm-chinned face. Large blue eyes gazed at Denfield; but their expression was not lovely to the commodore.

The gun that the girl held outweighed her costume. The weapon was a heavy automatic, whereas her attire consisted of a brief grass skirt and a girdle of the same material, both much the worse for wear.

But June Marwyn wasn't thinking of appearances. She'd forgotten such trivial matters as dress during the past twenty-four hours.

"I've been waiting a long time," declared June, coolly. "Things didn't work as you planned them, commodore. I suppose you know that I ran into trouble on Coquina Key; that I found the crooks who were supposed to be hiding in the Everglades."

Denfield showed interest, rather than chagrin. He waited calmly for June to continue, which she did.

"I was a fool to let myself be captured," said June, "but it happened that The Shadow had placed his agents among the crooks hiding on Coquina, who were shipped from there on this yacht in boxes, as I was. They released me, and I witnessed what followed.

"I saw the crooks disguise themselves as pirates and take small boats into Tampa. They thought that I

was still helpless, but The Shadow's agents had changed it all about. They told me to take charge when the right time came."

For the first time, Denfield spoke.

"I suppose that this is the right time," he remarked, dryly. "But just how to you propose to take control?"

"Through you," retorted June, advancing with the gun. "Call the skipper through your speaking tube and tell him to heave to."

Only for a few seconds did Denfield hesitate. Then June's mettle won. She had nerve, as she had proven to The Shadow at the time of the Cordaza robbery, and the experience at Coquina Key had added to her strength of purpose.

His hands rising slowly, Commodore Denfield gave a grimace; then, stepping slowly to the speaking tube, he spoke the crisp order to the bridge. Again the power of The Shadow had prevailed; this time through his ally, June Marwyn!

CHAPTER XX. MASTER OF CRIME

A SEAPLANE was approaching the Wanderlust, as the yacht's motors ceased their churn. Drifting idly in the Gulf, the yacht lay to as the plane began to circle overhead. But it was a long while before tangible results occurred.

The swift yacht had outrun the harbor craft that Commissioner Weston had obtained. Only June's nerve had made it possible for the pursuers to overtake the Wanderlust. During the wait, June's nerve persisted, but she found her problem less difficult than she had anticipated.

Commodore Denfield had settled himself in a chair; he sat drowsing there, and only opened his eyes when June changed her position. At such moments, the crinkle of her grassy garb aroused the commodore, and always, Denfield smiled quite pleasantly.

Whether he was admiring June's remarkable nerve, or her equally intriguing figure, he did not say. It simply seemed that the commodore was satisfied to accept the fate that had befallen him, and under such circumstances, June did not care what might be in his mind.

Night had fallen and the drone of the seaplane continued, until vessel lights sliced in from the darkness. Then the chugs of vessel motors could be heard.

The plane's drone changed; splashes told that it had alighted. Rowboats pulled up beside the yacht; shuffling sounds and commanding voices told that men had boarded the Wanderlust.

They came to Denfield's cabin, bringing powerful electric lanterns. June marched the commodore into the glow; reaching the deck, they were in the flood of searchlights from the boats that had overhauled the fugitive yacht.

Chief among the group were Ralph Weston and Damon Trendle. In the background stood such men as Vic Marquette, Joe Cardona, and Steve Galden, who no longer wore their masquerading outfits.

In fact, June was the only person who had on an unconventional costume, and she felt quite sheepish when she explained why she adopted the native habit of Coquina Key, and described the trouble which her change to the primitive had brought her.

Smiles ended, however, when June gave a first-hand version of the Gasparilla fakery. Her testimony was

proving that Miles Laxter had sold out to the crime ring; that the bona fide colonists on Coquina Key were virtual slaves, kept there to disguise the fact that the place was a hideout for criminals.

Some crooks had unquestionably fled Miami with Laxter, but the larger crowd had gone with the Wanderlust the night that the yacht had sailed for Coquina Key. On that assumption, Galden searched the pockets of the yacht's crew and found that all were carrying bolita tokens, with one exception.

The captain had none. He protested innocence. He said that new crew members had mutinied, and forced him to do their bidding. He hadn't supposed that Denfield was in back of it—the skipper was glaring at the commodore— but at last he understood how badly he had been duped.

Accepting the skipper's story, Galden promptly searched Commodore Denfield, hoping to find the token that bore the all-important No. 1. But the commodore did not have a bolita ball in his possession.

"I might have known you'd be too smart," gruffed Galden, instead of returning Denfield's smile. "You let the dubs carry those bolitas, but if you had one, you probably threw it overboard. But we've pinned the goods on you, anyway."

"Just how?" inquired Denfield. There was defiance in the gaze that he turned toward the surrounding group. "I offered this yacht to carry supplies to Coquina Key, but I was practically induced to do so -"

"What about your bet with Trendle?" interrupted Galden. "It gave you a chance to talk with Laxter privately, didn't it?"

"Win or lose," returned Denfield, "I would have had to take Laxter to the Palmetto Casino, either to pay him off myself, or to cash Trendle's check."

Galden looked to others, particularly Marquette and Cardona, hoping that they would offer some suggestion that would crack Denfield's bluff. They had none.

"Even the captain here"—Denfield waved his hand—"is not sure that I hired the crew that forced him into dirty business. As for Manuel, and the few who gave you trouble at the Club Habana, I insist that they were traitors, hired by someone else.

"It is too bad that they died in the fight. They could probably have testified in my behalf, under proper persuasion. But it seems to me"—the commodore's tone became reflective—"that you lack a good persuader. I can think of only one who would fill the bill. He calls himself The Shadow."

As if in response to Denfield's statement, a ship came slicking through the blackish waters, its searchlight cutting a swath ahead of it. In the glow of other lights, its shape was recognizable. It had the hull of a navy destroyer.

Instead of bearing down upon the Wanderlust, the destroyer slackened in the direction of Trendle's seaplane, which was floating in the calm Gulf, a few hundred yards away. A sense of uneasiness gripped all who saw the destroyer; the worry was felt on the plane, as well as the yacht.

A desperate, futile gunfire broke suddenly from the plane. It was a crazy thing, that should have brought a blast from navy guns huge enough to blow the plane clear from the water. Instead, those revolver shots were answered by a laugh from the destroyer's deck. It was the mocking tone of The Shadow!

Guns opened from the destroyer; but they were small arms, like the revolvers. Nevertheless, they silenced the marksmen in the defenseless seaplane. The Shadow and his agents were the men on the destroyer's deck, and suddenly, the skipper of the Wanderlust explained the whole thing.

"That isn't a destroyer!" he explained. "She used to be, but she became obsolete. Instead of junking her, the navy sold her. She's the Gulf Stream, and she belongs in Tampa. A small-draft banana boat that brings back cargoes from Central America!"

Again, The Shadow's judgment was sustained. Somehow, he suspected that crooks were in Trendle's seaplane. Of all the available ships in Tampa, he had purposely hired the ex-destroyer, knowing that her appearance would throw consternation into the men he sought.

They hadn't stopped to reason that the thrum of the Gulf Stream meant that she was a converted boat, run by Diesel engines. They had lost their heads, and probably their lives, as a very natural consequence. Shots delivered at the hull of any destroyer, obsolete or in commission, could not compete with a barrage that reached the hull of a flimsy seaplane.

Unfortunately, others also lost their heads. When Vic Marquette climbed into a small boat to visit the silenced plane, Joe Cardona and Steve Galden wanted to go along. So did most of the others, until the yacht's deck was comparatively devoid of people.

Commissioner Weston stood in charge, with Damon Trendle beside him. June Marwyn was also present, as was the exonerated captain of the yacht. But Commodore Denfield still remained; and near him stood the sullen crew members, six in all.

Reaching the seaplane, the arrivals found its crew of two, sagged at their posts. Guns were lying beside them, which indicated that they were crooks. As proof, Galden found bolita tokens in their pockets. But there were two others, deeper in the seaplane's hull, both lying dead.

Those two were crime's principal lieutenants: Lee Clesson and Hawk Silvey. Between them was the strong box that contained ten thousand dollars belonging to a Tampa cigar factory, the loot which they had carried to the water front!

Two crooked crew members; two crime lieutenants. It was Vic Marquette who put two and two together—and made one!

"Damon Trendle!" Vic's shout carried across the water. "Lee and Hawk were waiting for him in a speedboat, with the swag! That's why he came to the seaplane alone. He's No. 1 of the bolita ring! The Shadow guessed it!"

"Trendle was better off than Denfield. He wasn't suspected of crime, but the commodore was. Passing those bolita balls was a cinch. Fixing Laxter was even easier. Trendle is the man we want!"

Cardona added a point.

"Trendle framed Denfield," said Joe. "The bolita set-up was swell, considering that the commodore was in the gambling business. Trendle worked some of his bunch into the Palmetto Casino—Manuel, for example—and they fooled the commodore. He even put thugs on board the Wanderlust!"

"Think of it," groaned Galden. "One time I had a bright idea. I was willing to forget Denfield, and pin things on a wealthy man who was putting up a front. But who did I pick? A swell guy named Cranston, instead of the real crook—Trendle!"

By then, all the speakers had other things to think about. Trouble was breaking loose on the Wanderlust. One man had caught the import of all that had happened. That man was Damon Trendle.

Still unsuspected by the people about him, he drew his hand from his vest pocket. In his palm, Trendle showed a bolita ball that bore the most significant of numbers: one!

It was a revelation to the six men who formed the crew of the Wanderlust. They were standing with raised hands, confronted by guns that Weston and June held. Until that moment, they hadn't known who had actually bribed them; indeed, they suspected that the game went back to Denfield.

When Trendle showed his hand, the bolita ball in its palm, the six crooks made a break. They grabbed for everything that was loose along the yacht's deck.

Totally baffled, Weston and June wouldn't have had a chance with their guns, if Denfield and the skipper of the Wanderlust hadn't rallied to their aid.

With a lunge, the commodore bowled Weston over the side. The yacht's captain seized June and flung her, amid a flutter of tattered grass, into the welcoming waters of the Gulf. Then, before Trendle and his crew could reach them, the honest gambler and the loyal skipper dived from the rail.

From the deck of the Gulf Stream came an impressive laugh. The former destroyer had drawn close; at the present range, The Shadow might have delivered timely shots.

But with people floundering in the water, needing immediate aid, he let the Wanderlust get under way.

Trendle and his six men were speeding southward. The first ship to follow was the Gulf Stream. By then, four thankful people were on board. Weston was shaking hands with Denfield, and both were slapping the yacht's skipper on the back, while June was gratefully sliding into an oilskin slicker that made a better costume than the garb of sea-soaked grass and moss beneath it.

Other boats were following the Gulf Stream, bringing all who had visited Trendle's plane. No one had managed to get the seaplane started; its crew had used their fading efforts to put the motor out of commission. Hence, the chase was destined to be a long one.

It led to Coquina Key, the only place of refuge open to Damon Trendle. All during the night, Trendle led the way, and perhaps his elation made him forget the inevitable. He should have known that The Shadow had foreseen the finish; in fact, prepared for it.

Dawn showed the Wanderlust entering the crescent cove, where Miles Laxter, roused from slumber, stood in wait for the yacht's approach. From the speed of the Wanderlust, which threatened to ground on the beach, Laxter sensed that something was wrong. Off beyond, he could see a grayish hull that followed the fugitive yacht.

Turning to the cringing men who made up his happy colony, Laxter combined authority with contempt, as he ordered them to bring rifles. They scrambled away in obedience to his command.

The man in the leopard skin smiled to himself. The dupes couldn't guess that an emergency was at hand. They would suppose that the Wanderlust was bringing its usual quota of hardened crooks, who would suppress any rebellion.

Of all the criminals so far involved in checkered crime, Miles Laxter, alone, was wholly unacquainted with the methods of The Shadow. He did not know that a man who called himself Lamont Cranston had once appeared, cloaked in black, among the colonists on Coquina Key, to tell them of an opportunity that would some day come their way.

The Wanderlust was almost on the beach. Trendle was gesturing from the deck. The members of the crew, entirely unarmed, were clustered close to him. They saw the spotted figure of Laxter; watched him turn to the emaciated men who were extending the rifles.

Then, Laxter was spilling on the beach, downed by skull-cracking thuds from the rifle butts. Before

Trendle and his men could find shelter on the yacht's open deck, those same scrawny men on shore were shooting at the Wanderlust.

WITH every hit, Laxter's dupes howled their glee. They kept on shooting with the rifles until the guns were empty, long after the fire had taken full effect. They threw the rifles to the sand and went into a circling dance.

The war whoops were still sounding, when Weston and Denfield stepped on board the Wanderlust from a little boat sent out by the Gulf Stream.

It was Commodore Denfield who turned and beckoned to the yacht's skipper, who was also in the small boat. But when June Marwyn arose and wrapped the slicker about her, intending to follow to the yacht's deck, Denfield shook his head.

The sight on the Wanderlust was not the sort for starry eyes like June's. Grotesque shapes, stiffened and contorted, lay all about the deck. In the midst of those who had met a death both rapid and deserved, lay a white-haired man whose features wore a sickly, horrible grin.

Damon Trendle, master of crime, secret head of the bolita ring, was staring skyward with unseeing eyes. Nor could his ears hear the weird, departing token that came across the bright blue waters of the cove.

It was a mirthless laugh, from the deck of the Gulf Stream, tuned to the churn of the propellers that moved the gray ship off into the golden dawn.

The triumph laugh of The Shadow!

THE END