



THE GHOST OF THE MANOR

Maxwell Grant

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It guarded the destinies of Delthorn Manor, but death struck, unseen, again and again, baffling all - all but The Shadow, Avenger of Crime.

CHAPTER I. THE STROKE OF TWELVE

AN elderly, stoop-shouldered man was plodding his way along the sidewalk of a quiet avenue. The darkness of the cloudy night took on a sinister blackness beneath the heavy, creaking boughs of wind-swept trees that overspread the walk. Only the occasional lights that hung above the center of the street brought patches of yellow glow.

Off to the left were houses, set back from the avenue. The fronts of these large residences were obscured from the old man's view by trees upon the lawns. Like the street lights, the windows of the houses sent occasional gleams that could be seen from the sidewalk; but the hour was late for this fashionable suburb in the city of Newbury.

Most of the residents here retired before midnight, and it was now half an hour past eleven. The lights

from the houses were chiefly indications that certain members of Newbury's younger set had not returned home from social functions.

The old man who plodded through the lonely silence had no interest whatever in these indications. As he hobbled rapidly along, aiding his progress with the taps of a heavy cane, his head was bowed in constant thought. One patch of light revealed him momentarily.

It showed a thin, expressionless face, a mass of gray hair brimming from beneath a derby hat, and long, thin hands - one gripping the handle of the cane, the other clutching a bulky portfolio beneath the arm above it.

The cane tip crunched as it encountered the gravel of a driveway. It tapped again as the sidewalk was resumed. No lights glimmered from the left, where a high stone wall blocked all view. The old man was passing the broad front of an old estate which broke the row of newer residences, built tightly for space.

As exactly as if he had counted the taps of the cane, the old man turned left after he had gone a hundred paces. Instead of encountering the solid wall, he passed directly through a stone archway and followed a flagstone walk. With head still bowed, he approached the front of a huge gray house that rose like a ghostly mountain in the darkness of the night.

DIMLY lighted windows showed. They only added to the gloominess of the antiquated structure. The old man reached steps that led him to the heavy front door. Without looking up, he grasped a huge brass knocker and pounded upon the barrier.

The door opened. A solemn-faced servant in time-worn livery stood aside and bowed as the old man entered. Glancing at the servant's face, the visitor chuckled.

"You knew it was me, eh, Wellington?" questioned the old man.

"Yes, Mr. Farman," replied the servant. "You always come by the front door, sir - and always the knocker - never the bell."

The old man laughed and clapped the servant on the shoulder. There was a friendly gleam in his eyes.

"Years have brought changes to Delthorn Manor," he remarked, his voice taking on a sad tone, "but Horatio Farman still follows his original custom. You are a newcomer, Wellington, compared to me. You are still young, even with - how many years of service is it, Wellington?"

"Twelve, sir."

"Ah, yes. A brief period, Wellington. Old Hiram served here thirty-five before he died. Ah, well! Time goes rapidly. I must think of the present - not the past. Is all ready in the reception hall?"

"Yes, sir."

Wellington turned and conducted the visitor toward a pair of sliding doors at the right of the hallway. He drew one aside, and Horatio Farman hobbled into a huge room that seemed of mammoth proportions due to the dim illumination.

The vast apartment was a strange relic of the forgotten past. Unlike the hallway outside, it was not illuminated by electricity. Instead, candles provided the light.

Horatio Farman, with a sigh that resembled satisfaction, surveyed this scene that had withstood the inroads of modern invention.

The great height of the reception hall was due to a gallery that ran entirely around the room. This was reached by a circular staircase in the corner. The thick posts of the balcony railing were so close together that all was darkness between them.

The candles, too, added gloom to the gallery. The waxen tapers were set in brackets that protruded from the solid portion of the balcony beneath the rail posts.

A full hundred in number, these candles threw a weird light throughout the room. To offset the darkness in the center, a candelabrum had been placed upon a long table that was in the middle of the room.

Horatio Farman looked toward the table.

There were six chairs there; one at either end, two to each side. The elderly man approached the table and deposited his portfolio in front of one of the end chairs.

Forgetting his interest in the old room, Farman became suddenly businesslike, and turned to Wellington.

"Who has arrived?" he questioned.

"Mr. Winstead and Mr. Humphrey, sir."

"Jasper?"

"Not yet, sir."

"Marcia is here?"

"In her room, sir."

"Very well," stated Farman. "I shall be ready to meet all of them at twelve o'clock. You may usher them here at that time."

Wellington bowed and left the room, closing the door behind him.

Horatio Farman stood alone in the vast reception hall. With bowed head he gazed at the portfolio which he had brought with him. Suddenly, the old man's eyes became quizzical. He had the strange sensation that someone was watching him.

SWINGING about, Horatio Farman stared toward the balcony. Its blackness was weird. Despite the fact that he had been in this room often, during his years as attorney for Caleb Delthorn, now deceased, Farman had never overcome an uneasiness that gripped him here.

The flickering candlelight added to the mysterious gloom. At one spot on the balcony, Farman fancied that he saw a blot of extending blackness.

As he stared, the old attorney caught a momentary glimmer that gave the illusion of burning eyes gazing from Stygian depths. Those momentary spots disappeared. Farman repressed a shudder.

This room had been old Caleb Delthorn's pride. The dead owner of Delthorn Manor had been a recluse, and he had spent many long hours in this gloomy apartment.

It had been said - and Caleb Delthorn had believed it - that ancestral ghosts had chosen this hall as their abiding place; that all the meetings of the Delthorns held within this room were viewed by the shades of those who had passed before.

Horatio Farman had been too wise to laugh at this story when Caleb Delthorn had presented it. The lawyer had privately classed it as a foolish tale; nevertheless, he was forced to admit that a creepy atmosphere clung to the place.

It was Caleb Delthorn's belief in the supernatural that had caused the old man to provide for the reading of his will within this hall. That was the business set for tonight.

Farman still stared suspiciously at the gallery. He considered that protruding passage as the strangest feature of the room. It was a whispering gallery, through which any sound would carry to a remarkable degree. Caleb Delthorn had been proud of the balcony as a place of marvelous acoustic properties.

The old lawyer smiled. He wondered about this huge reception hall. He liked it because of its antiquity; he dreaded it because of its strangeness. In the past, he had been here only with Caleb Delthorn. Now that his old client was dead, Farman, for the first time, felt a full sensation of foreboding gloom.

His mind reverting to Caleb Delthorn's theory of spectral visitants, Farman found himself half believing that the ghost of the last Delthorn might, itself, be here! But as he blinked and saw no further sign of the glowing spots that he had detected in the darkness, Farman set the whole thought aside as mere fancy and seated himself at the end of the table. He adjusted a pair of spectacles to his nose.

Extracting papers from his portfolio, the old lawyer began to sort them. Engrossed in his work, he forgot all about the end of the balcony behind him.

Once again those glowing spots appeared - this time they remained. A watcher in the darkness was viewing the man below!

Silence reigned. Horatio Farman considered his papers beneath the flickering light of the candelabrum. A huge grandfather's clock - a massive piece among the furnishings of the room - ticked away so softly that its mechanical noise did not reach Farman's ears.

It was only when a whirring sound came from the clock that the lawyer looked up, startled. He could barely see the face of the timepiece, but he did not need to observe the position of the hands. The chime of the clock followed the whirl, and it announced the arrival of midnight.

Musical notes; then twelve, slow, solemn strokes. Horatio Farman, as he instinctively watched the clock, never thought to turn about. Had he done so, he might have noted that other eyes were watching from the gallery!

THE twelfth chime sounded. Horatio Farman arose and turned toward the door. A moment later, one of the sliding barriers moved back. Wellington, in the outer hall, was motioning to a group of persons who stood beside him.

Two men and a girl entered. Before Wellington could slide the door shut, another man appeared from beyond, and hastily slipped into the big room.

The sliding door closed. Horatio Farman, stoop-shouldered at the table end, was facing the heirs of Caleb Delthorn.

CHAPTER II. WEIRD ECHOES

WHERE Horatio Farman had been seated alone, a small group now surrounded the table. The old lawyer, resting back in his chair, surveyed the visitors as he tapped his fingers upon the papers that he had taken from the portfolio.

Clearing his throat, Farman addressed a man who was seated at the end of the table opposite him. This individual was nearly fifty years of age; and his cadaverous face and long, broad-bridged nose, showed a quibbling, discontented nature.

"You, Winstead Delthorn," announced Horatio Farman, "now occupy the head of the council table. You are the eldest survivor of the Delthorn family. You occupy the place which formerly belonged to your grandfather, Caleb Delthorn."

After this comment, Farman fumbled with the papers. He made a brief consultation, then removed the spectacles that he was wearing, and spoke as though from memory.

"The terms of Caleb Delthorn's will," stated the lawyer, "are as follows:

"One month following the conference here tonight, the estate shall be divided among all his grandchildren who may then be living.

"This is a simple proviso, particularly so as the grandchildren are few and easily traceable. Despite the fact that Caleb Delthorn had three children of his own - all now deceased - and lived to the age of ninety-seven, there are only five grandchildren, and no great-grandchildren.

"You know this fact as well as I; but in order to be precise, I shall name the descendants who are entitled to share in the apportionment of the estate.

"First, the three sons of Howard Delthorn, son of Caleb. Those three sons are Winstead Delthorn" - Farman indicated the man at the other end of the table - "Humphrey Delthorn and Jasper Delthorn."

Farman completed this statement by pointing twice to his right. He paused to study the men whom he had indicated.

Humphrey Delthorn, seated near Winstead, was the counterpart of his sour-faced brother. Jasper, the youngest of the three, was a thick-faced man of a more active type, although he bore the Delthorn features.

"Next," continued Farman, "comes the one child of Caleb Delthorn's daughter Marcia. I am speaking of Warren Barringer, who is not present with us tonight."

Farman looked toward a vacant chair as he spoke. Finally, he studied the only woman present - the quiet-faced girl who sat beside the empty seat.

"The youngest of the heirs," remarked Farman, "is the one child of Caleb Delthorn's second daughter. You, Marcia Wardrop, are the last of the grandchildren.

"I may mention, however" - the lawyer's tone became sentimental - "that your grandfather felt an especial bond of affection toward you, Marcia, due to the fact that you lived in this house since childhood. In fact" - Farman's tone now became critical - "you were the only relative whom Caleb Delthorn saw during the final years of his life."

NO one commented as the lawyer paused. Winstead Delthorn, sour and expressionless, simply stared at Farman. Humphrey Delthorn copied his brother's glance. Jasper, however, indulged in a smile that added no pleasantness to his puffy, ugly lips.

"I have enumerated the descendants," resumed Farman. "I shall list them again, in order. Winstead Delthorn, Humphrey Delthorn, Jasper Delthorn. Then Warren Barringer and Marcia Wardrop. That is the order of progression, from the eldest to the youngest."

Something in the lawyer's tone brought an anticipative smile to the thin lips of Winstead Delthorn, who was watching opposite. The new head of the family sensed that the mention of age might have an important bearing on the will. The surmise proved correct.

"The estate of Caleb Delthorn," said Farman, "first involves the bestowal of Delthorn Manor, this ancestral home. It is to become the property of the head of the family; to remain so until his death, then to pass to the next in line. This is in accordance with the Delthorn custom. I may remark, in passing, that all members of the family preserve the right to live in this home."

No comment followed from the listeners. The statement had been expected. All were tensely awaiting the decision concerning the funds of the estate.

"Caleb Delthorn," stated Farman, "left approximately thirteen million dollars. The division of this wealth is to be made - as I remarked before - among the surviving heirs, one month from tonight.

"To the eldest survivor, one half of the estate. To all others, an equal apportionment of the other half."

Horatio Farman replaced his spectacles upon his nose, and sat back in his chair. He studied the expressions upon the faces of those who had heard the final statement.

The mention of thirteen millions, Farman knew, had brought exultation to the listeners. The lawyer knew well what the reaction would be among them, now that the actual division had been stated.

Winstead Delthorn was wearing a thin smile. Why not? He was to receive six and one half million dollars.

Humphrey Delthorn, however, was glowering. Jasper Delthorn showed a sneer. Farman knew the reason.

Instead of sharing equally with all, or having provisions made as second and third in line, these two men would each gain only one eighth of the total wealth. Something over a million and a half would be the individual share that each would receive.

Horatio Farman glanced toward Marcia Wardrop. The girl displayed none of the resentment evidenced by Humphrey and Jasper. She was satisfied with this ample legacy. But Farman knew Humphrey and Jasper for what they were - men who wanted all that they could gain.

"LET me ask you a question, Farman," blurted Humphrey suddenly. "When and how does this division take place - and why the delay?"

"I shall answer that," returned the lawyer, referring to a paper. "All the heirs must assemble here again - one month from tonight. They must be present to be eligible. The time provision is to allow liquidation of the estate - a matter which is in my hands.

"I shall, however, follow the advice of Winstead Delthorn in my activities. There are many provisions to be discussed in detail. I have merely given those which express the exact apportionment -"

"Just a minute," interrupted Jasper, in a gruff voice. "You sent word to me that I would have to be here at midnight, tonight. You said it was important. What if I had not been here?"

"I summoned you," returned Farman quietly, "to represent your own interest. I sent the same word to all the other heirs. I cannot see where your supposition of absence has any bearing upon the terms of the will."

"Did it specifically mention that I must be here?" persisted Jasper.

With an annoyed glance, Farman picked up a document and read:

"I, Caleb Delthorn, being sound in mind, do hereby declare to my lawful heirs here assembled that one month from this time and date they shall again assemble to be granted final apportionment of my estate. To the oldest heir, one half of the full apportionment; to the remaining heirs an equal division of the remainder -"

"Wait a minute!" blurted Jasper. "That's what you should have done in the first place - given us a reading of the document. It is addressed to the heirs here assembled, isn't it?"

"Exactly," retorted Farman. "That is why I made it urgent for you to be here."

"Then," said Jasper shrewdly, "if I hadn't shown up, I would have been out. Well, I'm here, so I'm in. But Warren Barringer isn't here. That lets him out. The split is between Humphrey, Marcia, and myself."

Farman rose to his feet and pounded the table indignantly. The lights in the candelabrum flickered, and gobs of wax dropped upon the polished table.

"Outrageous!" exclaimed the lawyer. "Outrageous! You have misconstrued the meaning of the will entirely!"

"To my lawful heirs here assembled," mocked Jasper, repeating the phraseology of the document.

Humphrey Delthorn had been eying Jasper suspiciously. It was plain that there was no brotherly love between them. But now, with the point at issue, a spreading grin appeared upon Humphrey's lips.

"Jasper is right," argued Humphrey to Farman. "Warren Barringer has failed to appear. He loses his right to share in the estate."

Horatio Farman glanced toward Marcia Wardrop. He saw the disdain on the girl's face as she looked at her wrangling, avaricious cousins. Here was one supporter. Farman studied Winstead Delthorn; then made his appeal to the new head of the family.

"The settlement of the estate," declared Farman, "comes one month from tonight. The time element was allowed so that all relatives could arrive after being summoned. I called you all, as was provided, and expected all to be present if possible.

"In the case of Warren Barringer, presence was impossible. Caleb Delthorn died less than two weeks ago. I cabled Warren Barringer in Hongkong. He is on his way home. He authorized a proxy, by cable.

"I received word from a man in New York, named Lamont Cranston. He stated that Warren Barringer had requested him to appear as the proxy. I replied that this first meeting would be purely a preliminary one, and advised Cranston that a proxy was unnecessary, although he might attend this meeting if he chose to do so. I promised that I would sustain Warren Barringer's rights."

"A proxy!" rasped Humphrey Delthorn. "Preposterous! The truth is self-evident, Farman. Warren Barringer loses his rights by not being here tonight."

It was apparent that Humphrey and Jasper both figured the million and a half that they might usurp as being far more important than a spirit of fair play. Horatio Farman, however, met Humphrey's challenge with promptitude.

"You are not the one to make a decision," remarked the lawyer sternly. "You forget that I am the administrator of the estate.

"If any one of the heirs has a right to demand such an interpretation of the will, it is Winstead Delthorn. He is the head of the house; furthermore" - Farman's note was ironical - "he has no selfish interest involved, as his proportion of the estate is already established. I leave it to him, therefore, to agree with me."

This statement shifted the attack. Both Humphrey Delthorn and Jasper swung to Winstead.

Horatio Farman suddenly realized his mistake. Neither Winstead nor Humphrey were on good terms with their brother Jasper, but their own sour dispositions were somewhat mutual. There was every reason why Winstead would favor brother Humphrey in preference to an unknown cousin, Warren Barringer.

The oldest of the Delthorns held up his hand for quiet. He studied the situation thoughtfully. The lights flickered throughout this gloomy room, and showed the faces in grotesque light.

Winstead was pondering; Humphrey and Jasper were silently gloating; Marcia Wardrop was biting her lip in indignation. Horatio Farman looked on with anxiety. He expected the question that was coming.

"How much weight," questioned Winstead Delthorn, "will my decision carry?"

"A great deal," admitted Horatio Farman frankly. "The documents which your grandfather left place considerable authority in the hands of the eldest survivor. They also stipulate that all possible heirs be decided upon at this meeting."

"Then if I decide in favor of Warren Barringer," declared Winstead, "there can be no further question."

"None at all."

"And if I decide against him?"

"It will be difficult for him to prove his case."

Humphrey Delthorn shot a significant glance at his chief brother. Horatio Farman saw that Winstead was about to weaken. The lawyer ejaculated a quick warning.

"Remember, Winstead!" he exclaimed. "Your grandfather placed great trust in you as the eldest of the Delthorns. You are in the home that was his - in the hall where he believed his fathers dwell! This meeting is held here tonight because Caleb Delthorn actually believed that he would attend it in spirit if not in flesh!"

The lawyer's words sounded impressive amid the flickering light of the gloomy room. Winstead Delthorn paled noticeably. Humphrey's eyes became cold. Jasper, alone, broke the tension with an ugly chuckle. The sound made Humphrey smile.

"Ghosts," he said to Winstead. "have no part in this procedure. We await your opinion, brother. Say, rather, your decision."

WINSTEAD DELTHERN cleared his throat. He nodded, and it was plain which way he intended to turn. His own rights safe, he was ready to favor Humphrey's claim.

"Farman," declared Winstead coldly, "I can see but one possible decision. I shall make it with emphasis. Warren Barringer's rights are not -"

The slow tones ended. Winstead Delthorn's face became frozen. Words stopped upon his lips as a strange, uncanny sound came to his ears.

The others heard it also - a rising sigh that seemed to spring from the very air of the room. While every person in that great room sat as solid as a statue, the weird sound broke into a mighty shudder.

Then, from unseen lips, came the sound of an eerie laugh that chilled the listeners. The sinister mirth broke like a crashing wave. The candle flames seemed to waver as the burst of ghostly mockery swept through the gloomy hall.

As the laugh died, weird echoes took up the cry. The sardonic tones reverberated from the very walls of the room, coming in breaking waves that might well be the merriment of a horde of invisible demons.

A myriad of gasping taunts resounded; then, through the gloom came the final touch - strange sibilant gibes that swept along the passages of the whispering gallery.

Faces filled with frozen fear surrounded the table in the center of the room. None of the persons assembled there dared move. Stark terror ruled.

Those weird echoes had come as the laugh of a ghost!

CHAPTER III. THE SHADOW DECIDES

MINUTES after that ghoulish mirth had swept through the great reception hall of Delthorn Manor, Horatio Farman spoke. The lawyer, despite the pangs of chilling fear that had swept over him, was the first to regain his voice. It was fitting that he should restore calm to the gathering, for it was he who had invoked this ghostly aid.

"Winstead Delthorn," spoke Farman calmly, despite the trembling of his lips, "we are still waiting the conclusion of your remarks regarding Warren Barringer."

Winstead Delthorn held up his hands pathetically. He was quivering from terror. He could not speak. He turned toward Humphrey on his left. In his brother's face he saw the same unmistakable fright. Winstead buried his face in his hands.

Horatio Farman glanced toward Marcia Wardrop. He saw that the girl was trying to be brave, despite the pallor on her countenance. The lawyer turned to Jasper Delthorn.

Here, again, Farman saw a face that betrayed fear. Yet, in Jasper's eyes was the gleam of challenge. Jasper caught Farman's glance and laughed huskily.

"What is this?" he growled. "Some trick you're playing on us, Farman?"

Winstead Delthorn heard the words. He groped his way to his feet. Clinging to the table, he faced his youngest brother and tensely answered Jasper's words.

"Do not mock the dead!" gasped Winstead. "Be silent, Jasper! Be silent!"

The ugly smile remained upon Jasper's lips, but the youngest Delthorn made no reply. Winstead, eyes staring and lips trembling, spoke pitifully.

"It was the voice of the dead!" he asserted. "For years - for decades - they have said that the spirits of our fathers met, invisible, within this very hall. My grandfather believed it; but I was a doubter. I confess it."

"Now, I believe. I know why it is that every Delthorn, upon his deathbed, has ordered his heirs to meet in this great hall. I, too, shall follow that example. There is no need to fear the shades of those who have gone before us, so long as we honor their memory and their wishes."

Winstead Delthorn paused impressively. Horatio Farman was amazed at the light which shone in the speaker's eyes. He noted that Humphrey and Marcia - even Jasper, to a degree - were listening solemnly.

"You ask me," declared Winstead, in a voice now steady, "to conclude my statement regarding Warren Barringer. I recall the words that I was saying when the strange phenomenon occurred; that weird manifestation that we all heard. I shall complete my statement now."

"Warren Barringer's rights are not to be disregarded! He - like my brothers and my cousin Marcia - is a lawful heir to his proper portion. I sustain your opinion, Farman. My decision is final!"

His words ended, Winstead Delthorn slumped back into his chair and rested his face between his hands. He stared directly at Farman, who nodded his accord.

"Our business is finished," asserted the lawyer, in a quiet tone. "Our meeting is ended. One month from tonight, we shall assemble again to arrange the final settlement of Caleb Delthorn's will."

ONE by one, the heirs rose unsteadily from the table. Horatio Farman walked steadily to the door and drew it open. Wellington approached from the outer hall. The glow of electric lights gave new courage to the group.

Winstead Delthorn, with the air of a man who has discharged a momentous duty, turned to the others and announced that he intended to take up his residence in Delthorn Manor.

"Such is the provision of the will," he said. "I shall carry out every term to the letter. You, Marcia, intend to remain here?"

The girl nodded.

"You, Humphrey?"

The second of the Delthorn brothers paused thoughtfully. He glanced cautiously about the huge reception hall; then stared toward Winstead.

"I shall live here," he agreed. "It - it may be my duty also."

"Jasper?" questioned Winstead.

"Live here?" responded the youngest brother, with a forced laugh. "Not a bit of it! Say - I'm glad that you and Humphrey are between me and the top. I don't want to hang out in this old place. The club will be all right for me."

"That is your privilege," declared Winstead, in a cold tone. "I am leaving now. I shall return to occupy this home tomorrow."

Winstead stalked across the outer hall; Humphrey followed him. Horatio Farman was talking with Marcia Wardrop. Jasper Delthorn stood by the door of the reception hall, watching the departure of his brothers.

As soon as the elder Delthorns were gone, Jasper swung toward the lawyer.

"Look here, Farman," he demanded, "what was the idea of this hokum tonight? What's your game? Trying to make Winstead play the way you want?"

"Jasper!" interrupted Marcia, in a tense tone. "It is not right for you to insult Mr. Farman. Remember, this is still my home!"

"Jasper," said Farman quietly, "if you are referring to the strange laughter that we heard tonight, I can assure you that I am quite ignorant of its cause."

"You believe in the ghost stuff, eh?"

"No. I do not. Nevertheless, I know that Caleb Delthorn believed that strange manifestations could occur in this great room. We have had the proof of it. It is unexplainable - that is all that I can say."

"Grandfather told me the same," interposed Marcia Wardrop, in an awed tone. "He told me - many other things, Jasper. I - I know that this is a weird old house. It frightens me sometimes; but, after all, I do not see what harm can come to me here. I - I don't know whether to believe in ghosts or not -"

"I'll find out about the ghosts!" snarled Jasper. "If some smart stuntster pulled that laugh on us, he's in here yet. I'm going to look around and see."

JASPER swung into the candle-lighted room, and prowled from one end to the other. Horatio Farman watched him with interest; Marcia Wardrop with alarm. A cursory search failing, Jasper spied the circular staircase that led to the whispering gallery.

"Maybe it came from up there!" he growled. "I'm going up to see."

With a scowl toward the others, Jasper ascended the circular steps. A few moments later, his head and shoulders showed above the rail of the balcony. Jasper turned to face the people below.

"It's dark as pitch up here!" he snarled.

Sibilant tones responded. Mimicking voices caught up Jasper's words. The investigator gripped the rail of the balcony.

"It's dark as pitch up here - dark as pitch - up here - up here -"

Echoing whispers lisped along the gallery. Jasper stood dumfounded at the effect which his words had created. Turning, he sped down the steps and reached the floor of the reception hall. As he neared the door, he regained his composure.

"Say" - Jasper's comment was gruff - "that's a spooky sort of place, that whispering gallery. Do you know, my voice seemed to come back louder and louder."

"Perhaps that explains what we heard," remarked Farman. "A small sound could be greatly amplified, perhaps. But that laughter - it was uncanny."

Marcia Wardrop held up her hand for silence. Wellington was coming across the hallway.

"Say, Wellington," greeted Jasper, "get a flashlight. I want you to come up in the gallery with me. Want to look around a bit."

"I - I'd rather not, sir," protested the servant. "I don't believe a flashlight is available, sir. You might take one of the candles if you wish to go -"

"I want you to go with me."

Wellington glanced in protest toward Marcia Wardrop. The girl explained the reason for the servant's unwillingness.

"Grandfather never let anyone go in the gallery," she said. "That included Wellington. I don't think - that even now - Wellington would want to disobey grandfather's orders. You may go, Wellington."

Jasper Delthorn thrust his hands in his pockets. He laughed as he saw Wellington departing. He started to stroll away; then turned and spoke parting words to Horatio Farman and Marcia Wardrop.

"Have your ghosts!" he growled. "Believe in them if you want - like those goofy brothers of mine. You're welcome to the whole house. Why should I worry? I'm getting my cut out of the estate - even though Barringer is grabbing a slice that should belong to me.

"I'll take the club - that's where I'm going now. Place where I can get a drink when I want it - and after this crazy house, I'll need a couple pretty quick.

"Since you're the lawyer for the whole shebang, Farman, I'll leave it to you to remind me of the meeting a month from tonight. I might forget it even if I was due for the big money that Winstead is getting."

With these remarks, Jasper Delthorn left. A few minutes later, Horatio Farman bade good night to Marcia Wardrop. The girl went upstairs.

ONE door of the great reception room remained open. A vague motion occurred upon the balcony. The slight swish of a garment sounded from the spot at which Horatio Farman had imagined he had seen burning eyes.

As the swish moved along the rail, each of the candles flickered, one by one. More than forty of the glowing flames responded in this singular fashion.

Shortly afterward, blackness loomed at the foot of the circular staircase. It became a solid mass. It developed into the figure of a living being.

Had any of the persons who had heard the ghostly laugh been there to see this strange phenomenon, they would have believed that a ghost of Delthorn Manor was materializing itself into substance!

The strange shape took on the form of a man clad entirely in black. From his shoulders draped the folds of a cloak; over his eyes was the brim of a slouch hat. The headpiece concealed the stranger's features; but they did not hide the glow of the eyes that looked about the room.

Even the hands of the strange visitant were garbed in black. Gloves showed as those hands rested upon the table where the conference had been held.

Now, from hidden lips, came a strange echo of the weird laugh that had been heard before. Low and sibilant, it was a fanciful reminder of that terrible sound. It wafted through the room; its tones reached the gallery above. There, they were sent back in shuddering whispers that came to a repeated, sighing close.

Here, in the great reception hall of Delthorn Manor, stood the amazing being whose laugh had been taken for a ghostly manifestation. He was a personage of whom neither Horatio Farman nor the Delthorn heirs had heard, yet whose name was well known and highly feared by denizens of New York's underworld.

The Shadow!

Master of darkness, a supersleuth who fought with crime! He had been here tonight. His eyes had watched the assemblage. His lips had uttered that astounding mockery that had made Winstead Delthorn quail.

Within the range of the flickering light that came from the candelabrum on the table, The Shadow's silhouette made a long, sinister blotch of darkness upon the door. A weird setting for so mysterious a personage - this antiquated room in Delthorn Manor!

FOOTSTEPS sounded beyond the open door. The Shadow moved silently and swiftly to the side of the reception hall. His figure merged with gloom, as Wellington entered the room, carrying a long candle-snuffer.

Using this antiquated implement, the servant walked around the hall, extinguishing the lights one by one. Wellington's gaze was always upward.

The servant passed within three feet of the spot where The Shadow had merged with the blackness beneath the balcony. But Wellington kept on, ignorant of the fact that a living presence was concealed within the apartment.

With the hundred-odd candles extinguished, Wellington went to the center of the room and snuffed out the lights of the candelabrum. A few seconds later, the door of the reception hall slid shut. Total darkness remained.

Again, the laugh of The Shadow sighed softly through the room and woke echoes that whispered back ghoulish sounds to the summons of their master. Before the weird reverberations had completely died, the door of the room again slid open. The hall beyond was darkened now, for Wellington had gone upstairs. The Shadow, invisible, moved through the blackness.

The door was closed behind his departing presence. The old reception hall of Delthorn Manor remained silent and grim, filled with memories alone. But in all the history of this strange apartment, nothing had ever rivaled the occurrence of this eventful night, when the ghostly cry had echoed through the huge room.

There, with his terrible laugh which had brought fear to Winstead Delthorn, The Shadow had decided in favor of Warren Barringer. No ghost from the past, but a living presence, had caused the eerie echoes that had made Winstead agree with Horatio Farman's plea for justice.

The Shadow was gone, but his mission at Delthorn Manor had been accomplished. Hidden in the blackened confines of the whispering gallery, The Shadow had served as proxy for Warren Barringer!

Soon the absent heir would reach America. Then he would meet the personage who had acted in his behalf. But Warren Barringer, like the other legatees to the Delthorn millions, would remain in ignorance of The Shadow's presence on this night.

Delthorn Manor loomed gray in the dark night. The living presence that had been ghost as well as proxy was no longer within the mansion's stony walls!

CHAPTER IV. A TRAVELER RETURNS

THREE days later, Warren Barringer, the one absent heir to the Delthorn millions, found himself riding along a thronged New Jersey highway in the back seat of a luxurious limousine. Idly puffing a cigarette, the returned traveler considered the sequence of events that had brought him to this state of glory.

It was two years since Warren Barringer had left the United States, as the representative of an American oil concern.

In Java, he had made the acquaintance of an American traveler named Lamont Cranston. In the course of their friendship, Cranston had warmly requested Warren to call on him, should the young man reach New York.

Warren had smiled at the invitation then. He had not expected to come back to America for several years at least. But fate had decreed differently.

In Hongkong, not long ago, Warren Barringer had been notified that he was the heir to a considerable portion of his grandfather's fortune. Planning to return, he had cabled Lamont Cranston, requesting the friendly American to take charge until he could reach New York.

At the pier, in New York, Warren had been met by a man in uniform, who had introduced himself as Lamont Cranston's chauffeur. Customs formalities over, Warren had entered the waiting limousine, and was now on his way to Cranston's New Jersey home. Through the Holland Tunnel, across the heavy-traffic highways - now they were in the country, nearing the destination.

Stanley, the chauffeur, suddenly turned from a main road and drove along a narrow highway. It was late afternoon; in the fading light, Warren Barringer caught sight of a large house set back from the road. The chauffeur turned the car into a driveway, and pulled up before Cranston's abode.

Warren Barringer knew that Lamont Cranston was a wealthy man; nevertheless, he was amazed by the splendor of this edifice. A brilliant light shone above the front steps. There, on the porch, Warren spied his friend. The young man leaped from the car and advanced to shake hands with Lamont Cranston.

BEFORE him, Warren saw a man who had not changed a whit since that meeting in Java, more than a year ago. Tall, well built, Cranston was a man of imposing appearance. His firm face was a chiseled countenance, almost immobile in expression, save for a slight smile that played upon the lips. Warren stared into keen eyes that studied him with quiet but knowing gaze.

"Glad to see you, Cranston," greeted Warren. "Mighty sporty of you to have me met at the pier. You haven't changed a bit since I saw you last, old top."

"Nor have you changed," came the quiet response.

The lips retained their smile. The eyes studied Warren Barringer.

They saw a strong, vigorous young man, who showed the bearing gained by strenuous life. They saw a frank, well-molded face, bronzed by southern suns.

"Come in," suggested Cranston. Then, turning to an attendant who had arrived upon the porch: "Bring in the luggage, Richards. Mr. Barringer is staying overnight."

Lamont Cranston led the way to a sumptuous living room. He waved Warren Barringer to a chair, and took a seat for himself.

"What about the estate?" was Warren's first question.

"Excellent," responded Cranston, still wearing his slight smile. "You are the heir to something more than a million and a half."

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Warren; then, with a note of sadness: "It hits me, though, to think that

grandfather died before I came back to the States. Still, I never expected him to live until I returned. He was close to one hundred years old."

"Ninety-six," remarked Cranston. "When did you see him last, Warren?"

"When I was a child," said the young man. "I'm twenty-eight now - I guess the last time I was in Newbury was when I was six years old. Twenty-two years ago."

"You do not recall your other relatives?"

"Just dimly. We moved to California. After my father and mother had both died, I went to the Far East. Mother seldom spoke about her relatives. Grandfather didn't like it when she married father. The Deltherns are a rather proud race, you know."

Cranston nodded thoughtfully.

"Yes," he remarked. "I corresponded with the family attorney, Horatio Farman. I offered to appear as your proxy at the family meeting. He said it would be unnecessary."

"I received a letter from him later, stating that you were recognized as a lawful heir by the provisions of the will. You will have to go to Newbury, of course."

"Certainly," agreed Warren. "I'll start there as soon as possible. Say - it was lucky that you were here when I cabled. A globe-trotter like yourself might be anywhere."

"Yes," agreed Cranston. "I go and I come as I please. So much so that I often confuse events in my mind. I remember people; but time and places are often troublesome. Let me see - when did I first meet you -"

"In Java," said Warren. "You remember that night at the American Club in Surabaya -"

"Go on," urged Cranston quietly, offering Warren a cigarette.

WITH this suggested topic, Warren began a complete resumption of the events that had led to his friendship with Cranston. The millionaire smoked and smiled, nodding his recollection of the events that Warren was recounting. As the discourse ended, Richards entered to announce that dinner was ready.

"Yes," observed Cranston, as he and his guest sat down to their meal, "all comes back to me in detail as you discuss it, Warren. This is my permanent residence. The servants are always here, but I am apt to be anywhere. I cut loose from these surroundings and travel as I please."

"Nevertheless, I always seem to be at home when something important happens. I have an uncanny faculty for that, Warren. I was very glad to be of slight service to you in this matter of your legacy. As a matter of fact, I did not appear in Newbury at all."

"At the same time, there may be complications ahead. I have the very definite opinion that there may be friction among the heirs of Caleb Delthern. I advise you to study conditions."

"Should you find that because you are alone in Newbury - and a total stranger - that forces there are working against you, be sure to notify me at once."

"Thanks," responded Warren.

"Not at all," returned Cranston. "I do not make many friends. Those that I do gain are permanent."

Dinner finished, Lamont Cranston showed Warren about the huge house. A radio-sending station on the top floor brought the young man's enthusiasm, but this was surpassed when Warren visited Cranston's curio room, which contained rare objects from all parts of the world.

"I prize these possessions highly," remarked the millionaire, "but of all the curios that I own, this is the most precious."

Thus speaking, Cranston extended his left hand. Upon the third finger, Warren Barringer observed the most remarkable jewel that he had ever seen.

It was a large, translucent stone that seemed to emit tiny sparks. Glowing like living coal, the gem changed in hue as Warren watched it. Crimson, mauve; then rich purple - the jewel seemed imbued with undying power.

"A girasol," explained Cranston. "It is a variety of fire opal; and this particular stone is unmatched in all the world. It is one of the genuine jewels of the Romanoffs."

Even when he gazed at the gem no longer, Warren Barringer still remembered its glittering rays. A mysterious object, that girasol; and Cranston seemed to share its mystery.

At times, Warren studied Cranston's inflexible features. The millionaire was wearing a face so firm that it might be other than his own, yet it was exactly as Warren had always remembered it. Strangely, Warren could make no estimate as to Cranston's age. The man might have been anywhere between thirty and fifty.

IN the morning, Cranston informed his guest that he had made a sleeper reservation for Newbury, and that Warren could leave after dinner. During the day, they went to an airport where Cranston owned several ships. They went for a flight over New York City, then landed at the airport, and returned to Cranston's home.

Evening arrived rapidly; with it dinner. Promptly at eight o'clock, Stanley appeared with the limousine, and Cranston informed Warren that it was time for him to leave for New York. The millionaire accompanied his guest to the car, and expressed his regrets that he would be unable to drive into the city with him.

"But you can reach me here," stated Cranston quietly, "any time within the next month. I do not intend to go away for a while. Perhaps a short trip - but nothing more. I seldom mention such facts, even to my friends. As a matter of fact" - Cranston laughed softly - "so far as most of my friends know, I might be in Timbuktu at this very moment!"

When Warren Barringer had driven away in the limousine, Lamont Cranston still stood upon the porch, wearing his strange smile. A soft, mysterious laugh came from his immobile lips. That laugh was significant. It depended upon the final words that Cranston had spoken.

Timbuktu!

ACTUALLY, Lamont Cranston was in Timbuktu at this very moment. This personage who stood upon the porch; this one who wore the very countenance of the globe-trotting millionaire, was not Lamont Cranston!

Those eyes which burned as they gazed after the departing car had never beheld Warren Barringer until the young man had arrived at this house. This person whom Warren had accepted as Lamont Cranston was not Lamont Cranston!

Instead, he was a strange unknown: a masquerader so remarkable that even Stanley, Richards, and the other servants believed him to be their master. He was a being of strange abode, a master of disguise who found it convenient to play the role of Lamont Cranston during those periods when the traveling millionaire was far away from home.

Fiends of the underworld had long sought to find the spot where their most relentless enemy kept vigil, unsuspected. They had never succeeded. They had never managed to unveil the shroud of mystery that clung about The Shadow's whereabouts.

Had any supercrook been here at this New Jersey mansion tonight, he would have suspected the truth. But no mind of crime was present. That was the reason why the personage who stood upon the porch, alone, gave audible clue to his identity.

A soft laugh came from unmoving lips. The weird tones of that laugh were a whisper that carried a strange touch of mystery. Such a laugh had never come from the lips of the real Lamont Cranston.

This amazing impostor who bore the countenance of the absent millionaire was The Shadow!

He it was who had received the cable from Warren Barringer. The Shadow had recognized that Warren must be a friend of the absent millionaire. He had taken up the mission; but not as Lamont Cranston. As The Shadow, he had visited Delthorn Manor to protect the interests of Lamont Cranston's friend.

Now, still posing as Lamont Cranston, The Shadow had welcomed the returned traveler and had sent him on his way to the town of Newbury. Still as Lamont Cranston, The Shadow stood ready to respond to any requirement that Warren might impose.

The ghostly laugh of The Shadow had echoed through the reception hall of Delthorn Manor. The presence of The Shadow had served Warren Barringer well. The way was clear for this young man to gain the wealth that was rightfully his own.

Was the laugh of The Shadow prophetic? Did it indicate new barriers that might obstruct Warren Barringer's path?

Only The Shadow knew!

CHAPTER V. IN NEWBURY

WHEN Warren Barringer arrived in Newbury, the following afternoon, his first act was to register at the Century Hotel; then to make an appointment by telephone with Horatio Farman, the attorney.

Farman was not in his office when Warren phoned, but the lawyer's secretary arranged the time for the young man's visit. During the interim, Warren sat in his hotel room and pondered over his presence in Newbury.

It seemed strange to be back in the city where he had been born. Newbury, as Warren saw it from the hotel window, was a thriving and prosperous town. Warren liked the place, and was glad that he had returned. With the legacy that he was to receive, he could settle here and live in comfort.

Lamont Cranston had intimated that Warren would not find his relations friendly. Reviewing Cranston's words, Warren now realized that the millionaire had issued many subtle comments.

In fact, Cranston had suggested that trouble might be brewing among the Delthorn heirs, and had warned Warren to watch out for it. Warren had promised to let Cranston know if any peculiar events should occur. But now that he had reached Newbury, Warren had secretly determined not to annoy Cranston.

In his appreciation for Cranston's kindness in communicating with Horatio Farman, Warren Barringer felt the friendly millionaire had done enough. Come what might, Warren was determined to meet all emergencies himself.

When the time arrived for the appointment with Farman, Warren was at the lawyer's office. The secretary ushered him into Farman's private room, and Warren shook hands with an elderly, stoop-shouldered individual who greeted him with an amiable smile.

WARREN BARRINGER liked Horatio Farman. The attorney showed friendliness from the start. It was plain, however, that legal duty was Farman's inspiring motive. He began to discuss matters purely from the standpoint of a lawyer.

"The terms of the will are plain," explained Farman. "The eldest surviving heir of Caleb Delthorn will receive one-half of the estate upon the specified date, subject to his appearance at Delthorn Manor. Each of the others are to receive an equal share of the remaining half.

"Since there are four of the secondary heirs, that means that each will receive one eighth. Such will be your portion; provided, of course, that nothing alters the situation between now and the date provided."

"What could alter it?" questioned Warren.

"Various circumstances," returned Farman. "I have not discussed them in detail, as my position is one of total impartiality. However, I feel that I am bound by duty to explain one possibility that was rejected, inasmuch as it concerns yourself.

"There was a question at our preliminary meeting regarding your eligibility as an heir. It was suggested that you had failed to assert your claim - your absence being self-evident proof of that fact. Had you been ruled out at that time, it would have required considerable litigation to reestablish you as an heir."

"You mean," questioned Warren, "that the other heirs wanted me to be rejected so that they might each gain a greater portion?"

"That appeared to be the motive," admitted Farman. "The proposition was overruled, however, by Winstead Delthorn. He decided that you were entitled to your portion."

"One friend," said Warren, with a smile. "I should like to meet Winstead Delthorn."

"It was not exactly friendship," returned Farman, "that inspired Winstead to his decision in your favor. As a matter of fact, he wavered, but finally followed his sense of duty. Winstead could afford to be quite impartial. He receives fifty per cent of the estate, irrespective of the other claims."

"I see!" exclaimed Warren. "Surely! Winstead is the eldest, and gets half anyway. The discussion was about the apportionment of the second half."

"Precisely," stated Farman.

"Well, everything is settled now," said Warren. "All will end well. I'm satisfied."

The lawyer eyed the young man thoughtfully. He began to tap upon his desk. Something in Warren's frank expression prompted Farman to resume a new discussion.

"Warren," said the old attorney, in a fatherly tone, "I have handled the affairs of the Delthorns for many years. Caleb gave me opportunity when I was a young attorney. I admired him and esteemed him as a friend.

"But I was forced to the opinion that the younger Deltherns were both ungrateful and avaricious. Of them all, there was only one whom I felt to be deserving. I speak of Marcia Wardrop, the youngest grandchild, who lived with Caleb Delthern.

"Marcia has a sense of gratitude; nevertheless, her life has been a restricted one, and she has developed a reserve that sometimes approaches melancholy. When you meet your cousins, you will find that three - Winstead, Humphrey, and Jasper - will receive you with marked antagonism.

"Marcia, alone, will be cordial; yet it will be impossible for you to understand her. She lives very much alone. She has very few acquaintances, and no real friends, to my knowledge. She does not care for her relatives, because she has learned to mistrust every one of them.

"I am sorry for the girl. Perhaps there is someone to whom she has expressed her innermost thoughts. If so, I do not know who the person may be."

COMPLETING this dour summary, Horatio Farman paused. He studied Warren Barringer's frank face, then resumed his discourse with a return to the fatherly tone.

"When I learned that you were coming to this office," declared the attorney, "I expected to find you to be another specimen of a decadent generation. Instead, I discover that you are fair-minded, with no traceable faults of the Delthern character. Therefore, I advise you to do no more than make a passing acquaintance with your relatives.

"The attempt to disinherit you was a coordinated effort on the part of Humphrey Delthern and his brother Jasper. Their concerted action has made me apprehensive. Nearly one month remains before the estate will reach its final settlement. I hope that no complications will arise during the interim."

The old counselor smiled warily. He made no further effort to continue. He seemed to be leaving comment to Warren. The young man nodded thoughtfully.

"I can see why you are anxious," he said. "If Humphrey and Jasper are dissatisfied, they may try to press the point which they started. I shall naturally insist upon my rights, Mr. Farman. Nevertheless, I am not dependent upon this legacy. I possess a fair-sized fortune that was left me by my own father. He was a successful man; I intend to be the same."

Warren Barringer arose from his chair. He advanced to shake hands with Horatio Farman. The lawyer motioned him to sit down again.

Warren wondered why Farman wished to continue the interview. The reason became apparent when the attorney spoke.

"Warren," said Farman kindly, "I can be frank with you now. I have felt it was my duty to express the actual status of the Delthern estate to the interested parties, but I tempered my desire because I felt that it would be unwise to point out the flaws of Caleb Delthern's will to those who themselves were seeking loopholes.

"Since you have shown your true feelings, I can follow duty so far as you are concerned. I shall tell you exactly why I am dissatisfied with the arrangement that Caleb Delthern made. It did not occur to me until the other night, when Humphrey and Jasper revealed their malicious natures.

"I learned then that the will should have named the legatees. I learned it, not only because of the attempt to disinherit you, but because of a much greater reason, which, I hope, has not been detected by either Humphrey or Jasper."

"I cannot figure the reason," remarked Warren, as Farman paused. "Do you mean that there may be other claimants who may appear within the coming month?"

"No," responded the lawyer, with a shake of his head. "The fault lies in the apportionment of the estate. One person is to receive one half. Who is that person, Warren?"

"Winstead Delthern," returned the young man promptly.

"No!" announced the lawyer. "It is not Winstead Delthern! It is to be the eldest survivor of the lawful descendants - the eldest survivor at the time when the estate is to be actually apportioned!"

THE old counselor was tapping the desk as he spoke. He saw a glimmer of understanding come over Warren Barringer's countenance.

"You mean" - Warren's tone was sudden - "that if Winstead Delthern fails to appear upon that night - or if -"

"I mean," interposed Farman, "that one half of the estate will go to the eldest surviving heir. At present, that person is Winstead Delthern. I hope that the same condition will be true upon the appointed night. Otherwise, the status of the estate will be entirely changed."

"Why are you telling me this?" blurted Warren. "You have expressed a horrible thought, Mr. Farman! I cannot believe that anyone would seek to eliminate Winstead Delthern in order that another might gain his appointed wealth."

"I trust that such could not be the case," agreed Farman. "Nevertheless, such things can happen. I have spoken to you, Warren, because you are honest; also because you are the fourth in line."

"But I felt that it would have been unwise for me to have suggested this condition to Humphrey Delthern, the one who would profit most should Winstead die before the final settlement. I also hesitated to tell Jasper. The lessening of the heirs would increase his share; furthermore, only Winstead and Humphrey stand in his way. Of all the Deltherns, Jasper is the most unscrupulous."

The lawyer arose and walked with Warren to the door.

"Preserve silence," warned Farman. "This discussion has been entirely confidential. I felt it my duty to inform you of these unfortunate possibilities. An attempt was made to eliminate you as an heir. Open measures failed; secret methods may follow."

"Remember that I am your counselor" - the old lawyer rested his hand on Warren's shoulder - "and whatever may occur, you can rely upon my advice. At the same time, I am the impartial representative of all the heirs. I expressed my opinions to you only because circumstances nearly caused you injury."

"Your relatives know that you have returned. You will probably want to meet them, particularly as all but Jasper are living at the old manor, which you will undoubtedly wish to visit. But" - Farman's eyes gleamed wisely - "it would be best to remember my advice. Be cordial but restrained until after the settlement of the estate."

Warren Barringer nodded as he left the old attorney. On the way back to his hotel, he pondered over the possibilities that Horatio Farman had expressed. At last the brightness of the day dispelled his apprehensions.

Horatio Farman had suggested sinister possibilities. To Warren Barringer's honest mind, those thoughts were beyond the range of probability.

CHAPTER VI. WARREN FINDS FRIENDSHIP

THAT evening, after dinner, Warren Barringer performed his next duty as a member of the Delthorn family. He went to a telephone in the hotel lobby, and called Delthorn Manor. A solemn voice answered him.

"I would like to speak with Mr. Winstead Delthorn," announced Warren. "Is he at home?"

"Mr. Winstead Delthorn is engaged," came the response. "Is there any message, sir?"

"Yes," said Warren. "Tell him that his cousin - Warren Barringer - is calling."

"Yes, sir. Hold the line, please."

A few minutes later, the same voice came over the telephone. Warren, by this time, had decided that a servant must be speaking.

"I am sorry, Mr. Barringer" - the speaker seemed to express regret - "but Mr. Winstead Delthorn says that he will be unable to converse with you at present. However, sir, he states that it is your privilege to come to this house at any time that you may choose. He will meet you if you make such a visit."

Indignation filled Warren Barringer. He saw the motive behind this message. Winstead Delthorn was making it plain - through a servant - that he did not care to make the acquaintance of his returned cousin. At the same time, Winstead was abiding by the duty imposed upon him as the new master of Delthorn Manor. The door was open, should Warren choose to come.

The first impulse on Warren's part was to deliver a sharp return message; to tell the servant at the other end that Winstead Delthorn need never expect a visit from his cousin. But as he began to speak, Warren realized that this would be the very answer that Winstead wanted. Curbing his indignation, Warren made a different statement.

"Tell Mr. Delthorn," he said, "that I shall accept his invitation. He may expect a personal call from me tomorrow evening."

Despite the friendliness of his disposition, Warren Barringer was inclined to anger when treated unjustly. His natural temper was a fault which he ordinarily managed to control. He expressed it now when he banged down the telephone receiver, and strode, scowling, into the lobby. A man arose from a chair and blocked his path.

"Warren Barringer?" questioned the fellow.

"Yes," responded Warren, cooling quickly. He did not like the face of this man whom he had encountered. He wondered what the stranger wanted.

"I'm Jasper Delthorn," came the greeting. "Old Farman told me you were in town. Glad to meet you."

WARREN accepted Jasper's handshake. His first impulse was one of distinct antagonism. Jasper Delthorn's countenance was an unpleasant one. Shifty eyes, puffy lips, and a leering expression, made a bad impression. Jasper's handshake, though firm, was of a crunching type, that betokened boastful strength rather than sincerity.

One factor, however, caused Warren Barringer to accept Jasper's presence. That was the rebuff which had just come from Winstead. Anger toward one cousin caused Warren to soften toward the younger man, who had voluntarily come to greet him.

"Hello, Cousin Jasper," said Warren. "I'm glad to find one relative who isn't sorry that I'm back in Newbury."

An ugly smile wreathed Jasper's lips.

"Who were you talking to on the phone?" he questioned. "My brother Winstead?"

"To his servant," stated Warren. "Winstead apparently refused to talk to me."

"He put Wellington on the wire, eh?" laughed Jasper. "Well, that's Winstead for you. A dried-up fossil, that brother of mine. Looks twenty years older than he is. Humphrey's just as bad. What did Wellington tell you. Doors open, and all that?"

"Yes."

"Open for me, too. Fat chance of my going up to live in that mausoleum. The club's the place for me. Come on along with me - down to the City Club."

Warren consented. He fancied that he would continue to dislike Jasper Delthorn the more he saw of the man. Nevertheless, his cousin's invitation seemed a fair one. Warren accompanied Jasper to the street, and they walked a block to a large building which bore the title "City Club" above the door.

It became quite evident to Warren that Jasper had been drinking. The man's steps seemed wobbly as they entered a small grillroom. Jasper plopped into a chair beside a table, and waved his hand around the room.

"Like the City Club?" he questioned. "Not a bad place, what?"

"Very nice," commented Warren.

Jasper Delthorn spied a man at the other side of the room and beckoned. Warren saw the stranger hesitate; at last he arose and came over to the table where the cousins were seated.

"Meet Clark Brosset," volunteered Jasper. "Big fellow in this club. Big fellow in Newbury. Howdy, Clark. Meet my cousin, Warren Barringer."

Warren arose to shake hands with the newcomer.

CLARK BROSSET was a man of about forty years. His face was both stern and handsome. It showed the capability that marked a successful man.

"It is a great pleasure to meet you, Mr. Barringer," said Brosset. "It may interest you to know that I knew your father when he lived in Newbury. I remember seeing you when you were a very small child. I am glad to welcome you back to the city of your birth."

"Big guy, Clark is," commented Jasper. "Knew your father, Warren. Hear that?"

Jasper pulled a bottle from his hip pocket. He uncorked it, and held it out toward the others as they sat down.

"Have a swig," he offered. "Good stuff, this is -"

Clark Brosset's eyes flashed. He interrupted Jasper with a stern tone.

"Liquor is not permitted in the City Club," he declared. "You know the rule, Jasper. You have violated it

too often."

Jasper Delthorn grinned. He placed the bottle to his lips and took a long swallow. He corked the bottle and put it back into his pocket, with a derisive sneer.

Clark Brosset turned to Warren Barringer and resumed his conversation.

Like Farman, Brosset seemed to see unusual merit in this Delthorn descendant. Ignoring Jasper Delthorn's occasional remarks, Clark Brosset continued to further his acquaintance with Warren.

While the two men conversed, Jasper Delthorn slouched in his chair, and stole occasional drinks from the bottle. His jocularly was decreasing. At last he took advantage of a lull in the conversation to insert a sneering remark.

"Big guy, Clark Brosset," he said. "Thinks he owns the City Club. Owns a lot of real estate around town, but he don't own this club. You'll find that out, Warren!"

Jasper again drew the bottle from his pocket, and placed it to his lips. Clark Brosset, stern, but calm, reached over and plucked away the flask. Jasper made a clutch for it; the bottle fell and crashed upon the stone floor.

With an angry snort, Jasper Delthorn leaped to his feet and lunged at Clark Brosset. The other man was too quick for him. Rising, he warded off Jasper's blow and sent his antagonist spinning across the floor. Jasper sprawled beside the wall, muttering oaths.

OTHER club members were on their feet, coming to Clark Brosset's aid. This was unnecessary. Jasper Delthorn, despite his big size, was too intoxicated to even rise from the floor.

"Good work, Clark," came a commending voice.

"Suspend Delthorn's membership!" was another comment. "We've had too much of him!"

Clark Brosset held up his hand. Silence followed. Facing Jasper Delthorn, Brosset delivered a cold, unmistakable ultimatum.

"Jasper Delthorn," he said, "as president of the City Club, I give you final warning. One more display of this sort - immediate expulsion will be the answer. We place no proviso upon your habits. You may be as intemperate as you choose. But do your drinking elsewhere, and behave yourself when here. This is final!"

A buzz of approval came from the listeners. Warren Barringer gave silent agreement. He felt ill at ease, having been brought to this place by a member in such bad standing. Jasper Delthorn was still muttering, but his oaths were now inaudible. He managed to gain his feet; then toppled unsteadily.

"Take him to his room," ordered Clark Brosset.

Two uniformed attendants sprang forward and caught Jasper just before he fell. Warren Barringer watched his slouching cousin go, half carried, from the room.

In embarrassment, Warren turned toward Clark Brosset. He was greeted with a friendly smile. Placing his hand upon Warren's shoulder, Brosset spoke to the dozen men who were present.

"Gentlemen," announced Brosset, "this is Warren Barringer. He is a grandson of our old departed friend, Caleb Delthorn. Warren's father was a man whom I knew and admired. Warren has just returned to

Newbury after an absence of many years. I have given him my welcome; I hope that you will join me."

The request met with an enthusiastic response. The other men crowded up to make Warren's acquaintance. Clark Brosset's recommendation completely counteracted the bad impression that Warren Barringer had dreaded.

HALF an hour later, Warren Barringer and Clark Brosset were seated together in the upstairs lounge of the City Club. The unfortunate incident in the grillroom had served to produce an immediate friendship.

In their talk together, these men had found mutual interests. Clark Brosset, successful real-estate operator, was a man whose family, like the Deltherns, had long lived in Newbury.

"I shall arrange a membership for you," remarked Brosset. "You will like the City Club. You will find it an agreeable place to spend your time. Particularly so, now that we are friends.

"Jasper Delthern, I am sorry to say, is a nonentity. He has a penchant for making himself unpopular; his heavy drinking, which has increased abnormally within the past week, has added to the bad impression which he naturally creates."

"He met me in the hotel," remarked Warren. "Walked up to me and said hello. Since he was my cousin _"

"I understand," interposed Brosset quietly. "Relatives are often unfortunate possessions. Have you met either of Jasper's brothers?"

"No," said Warren grimly. "But I am going to see Winstead Delthern tomorrow night."

Brosset noted Warren's expression, and raised his eyebrows quizzically. Warren saw this and hastened to explain by telling Brosset the details of the telephone call which he had held with Wellington.

"That sounds like Winstead Delthern," decided Brosset. "My advice to you, Warren, is to ignore the man entirely. Why bother to go and see him?"

"I'm going - once," responded Warren. "That will be tomorrow night. I'll give Winstead a fair chance to make friends. After that, I am through."

"You will be through with him," smiled Brosset. "One interview will convince you of his crabbiness. After you leave him, Warren, drop down here. You'll be glad to talk with someone human - myself, for instance - after you have spent a half hour with your crabby cousin."

"All right," agreed Warren, as he arose to leave. "I'll see you tomorrow night, Clark."

BACK at the Century Hotel, Warren Barringer breathed a sigh of relief. He was glad to be freed of Jasper Delthern's obnoxious presence; even better, he was pleased to have gained the friendship of so influential a man as Clark Brosset.

Yes, Warren decided, he had a definite friendship. He would be able to rely upon Clark Brosset, he was sure. That surmise was almost prophetic.

During the days to come, strange events were to happen - events that were already in the making. Those occurrences were destined to bring new reliance upon this new-found friend; and Warren Barringer was to find in Clark Brosset a man who could give careful and precise advice.

The Shadow had not foreseen the fact that Warren Barringer was to gain so influential a friend in

Newbury.

CHAPTER VII. DEATH AT THE MANOR

WHEN Warren Barringer arrived at Delthorn Manor on the following evening, he used the method of approach commonly taken by Horatio Farman.

Most visitors entered by the side drive. Warren chose the narrow front way. Moreover, he ignored the bell beside the door, and rapped with the heavy brass knob.

Wellington opened the portal. The servant stepped back in momentary surprise. He had expected to see Horatio Farman - not a stranger. Warren, although puzzled by Wellington's action, made no comment. He merely announced himself as Warren Barringer. Wellington bowed and went toward the towering stairs that led to the second floor.

Warren Barringer gazed curiously about him. He noted the large doors that barred entrance to the huge reception hall. He looked in the other direction, and spied the opening of a living room. He saw other doorways, and realized then that visitors must usually enter by the side of the house.

It seemed to Warren that he had invaded an atmosphere of privacy. This silent hallway, illuminated by a few electric lights, seemed a portion of an abode not intended for visitors.

Warren smiled at his own thought. Delthorn Manor might well be his home in Newbury, should he insist upon his privilege of living here.

Footsteps sounded on the stairway. Warren looked up, sensing a step lighter than that of Wellington. He saw a girl descending the stairs.

She paused momentarily at the sight of a stranger, then continued to the bottom and turned toward the living room. Warren Barringer stepped forward.

"Marcia Wardrop?" he inquired.

"Yes," responded the girl, in an uncertain tone. "You have come here to see me?"

"Partly," smiled Warren. "I am your cousin - my name is Warren Barringer."

"Oh!" Marcia's exclamation showed surprise. "I remember now; Cousin Winstead mentioned that you had arrived in Newbury."

Warren bowed. He expected Marcia to make a further comment, but the girl was silent. Noticing her face, the young man realized that Horatio Farman had described Marcia very precisely. The girl seemed to possess more than normal reserve. Her face showed a saddened, worried expression.

"I came here," remarked Warren, "to visit Winstead Delthorn. I also hoped to meet you, Marcia. It is good to see one's relations after years of absence."

Marcia still remained speechless. The clouded look upon her face seemed to indicate that she had undergone an experience that prevented her from agreeing with Warren's opinions on relatives. Marcia's silence became embarrassing, even to so affable a person as Warren Barringer.

An interruption brought an end to Warren's hopeless effort toward conversation. Wellington appeared upon the stairs to announce that the visitor might come up.

With a smile toward Marcia, Warren went upstairs. Wellington met him at the top landing, and conducted him along a hall. The servant stopped before a door on the right, and rapped. A querulous voice gave an order to come in. Wellington opened the door to admit Warren.

THE visitor's first impression of Winstead Delthorn was that of a lean, hunchy, sour-faced man huddled in back of a huge desk in the center of a large, paneled room.

The place was an old-fashioned study, with large, antiquated furnishings. Winstead Delthorn, seated in a mammoth chair, made Warren think of an undersized peanut ready to rattle in its shell.

"You are Warren Barringer?" rasped Winstead.

"Yes," responded Warren.

"Sit down" - Winstead motioned toward a chair beside the desk - "and tell me the purpose of your visit."

Warren Barringer complied. He eyed his eldest cousin coldly. Winstead was evidently waiting to hear him state his business. Warren decided to oblige him.

"When one has been abroad for many years," he remarked, in a quiet tone, "he usually visits his relations upon his return. That happens to be my situation."

"I presume," returned Winstead Delthorn. "that you expect me to regard that as a natural impulse. It is one that I have never experienced."

"No," rejoined Warren, in a more emphatic tone, "I regard it as much a courtesy as an impulse. But I do feel that when a traveler has returned from a great distance, it should be a natural impulse for his relatives to extend him a greeting."

"Is this," demanded Winstead. "to be taken as a criticism of myself?"

"Not a criticism," retorted Warren. "Purely an analysis. I have stated what any intelligent person would regard as a normal action. If you happen to lack the fundamental courtesy of a human being, that is your own misfortune - not mine."

Winstead Delthorn sprang to his feet. His peaked face was flushed with anger. He pounded upon the desk like a martinet.

"Outrageous!" he exclaimed. "You forget that I am the head of the Delthorn family. I am not here to receive insults from an upstart like yourself."

"Of course not," responded Warren, also rising to his feet. "You prefer to deliver insults - as you did last night. You are a generous man, who would rather give than receive - so far as insults are concerned."

"I shall not tolerate this!" stormed Winstead Delthorn. "Here, in my own home, you are daring to berate me. I am grateful only that you do not bear the name of Delthorn!"

Warren Barringer's fists tightened. Towering above his cousin, he was ready to avenge this last thrust. Only a great effort enabled him to restrain himself.

"Wellington!" screamed Winstead. "Wellington! Come here at once!"

Fuming, Winstead Delthorn glared at Warren Barringer, who was standing quietly now. The door opened, and the servant entered. Winstead Delthorn spoke again to Warren Barringer.

"I cannot have you ejected from this house," he declared. "Nevertheless, I expect you to leave at once. You can return when you please - because of privilege alone - but do not expect another interview with me."

"I am leaving," remarked Warren quietly. "This is my final word to you, Winstead Delthorn. Hear me out, if you expect to be rid of my presence."

"You stated that you were grateful only because I do not bear the name of Delthorn. Let me add that I, too, am grateful, now that I have learned the low caliber of those who still call themselves Delthorn."

Warren turned on his heel and gave no further attention to the parting thrusts that Winstead Delthorn uttered. He waited until Wellington had closed the door; then accompanied the servant downstairs.

"Good night, Wellington," said Warren, as they neared the front door.

"Good night, sir," responded the servant. "Good night, Mr. Warren."

Noting Wellington's face in the dim light, Warren saw a gleam of approval on the servant's face. He realized that this man had served his grandfather, and had probably come to the very opinion that Warren had expressed.

NOT long after Warren Barringer had departed, Marcia Delthorn returned from the direction of the living room. The girl was carrying her hat and coat. She had been out during Warren's session with Winstead Delthorn. She saw Wellington standing in the hallway.

"Has the visitor" - the girl corrected herself - "has Warren Barringer gone?"

"Yes, Miss Marcia," said the servant.

"I should like to have talked with him," stated Marcia. "His arrival was so unexpected - I - I did not know what to say. I suppose he will call again."

Marcia went upstairs. Wellington went through the living room. The house became as silent and as gloomy as a tomb. The dim light cast a morbid gloom amid the solemn hallway.

Up in the study, Winstead Delthorn still fumed at his desk. Mutterings came from his pasty lips. His rage at Warren Barringer had not subsided.

"The young upstart!" he mumbled. "I wonder if he had the affrontery to speak to Wellington after he left this room! I shall learn! I shall learn!"

Rising suddenly from his desk, Winstead Delthorn paused to listen. He imagined he had heard a noise close at hand. He stared about him suspiciously; then opened the door and went into the dark upstairs hall. He stopped when he came to the landing at the head of the stairs.

The landing was a peculiar alcove that jutted from the second floor. It ended abruptly in the steep steps that went downward.

Winstead Delthorn, standing in almost total darkness, rested his hand upon the rail, and peered into the gloomy depths to see if Wellington were about.

Winstead's pale face loomed ghostly in the darkness. The side of the stairway, like the walls of both upper and lower hallway, was formed of dark panelling that added to the dullness of the surroundings.

Not sure that Warren Barringer had actually departed, Winstead Delthorn listened in silence. If the

upstart should still be below, talking with Wellington, there would be action to follow!

Warren might be a relative, and therefore immune from Winstead's anger; Wellington, however, was only a servant. Mean in disposition, Winstead was actually hoping that he could catch Wellington speaking secretly with Warren Barringer.

SEVERAL minutes went by while Winstead Delthorn listened. Suddenly his ears caught the same sound that he had imagined in the study. Winstead could not place it. The sound was very slight; no more than a dull scraping noise.

Then, acting upon sudden instinct, Winstead Delthorn turned. A gasp came from his lips as two strong hands gripped his throat in the darkness. Struggling to break this terrible grasp, Winstead staggered toward the wall; the hands slipped from his throat to his arms.

A cry came from Winstead Delthorn as he triumphed in his momentary freedom; then the shout turned into one of recognition. An instant later, Winstead Delthorn's staggering form was thrust back to the edge of the stairway. His powerful assailant released him with a terrific fling.

Plunging backward, Winstead Delthorn shot head-foremost down the steep stairway. His cry trailed to a long scream of terror; then his head smashed against the steps.

The scream ended as the man's body continued downward, whirling in a succession of long bounces that terminated only when Winstead Delthorn's form struck against the floor of the lower hallway.

Rolling over half a dozen times, Winstead Delthorn lay crazily sprawled at the foot of the stairs. He never moved again. Death had overtaken his whirlwind plunge. The twisted position of his head indicated that his neck was broken.

All was dark at the head of the stairs. No sign of Winstead's assailant remained. Only the echoes of that terrific crash remained, dying away through the spaces of Delthorn Manor.

Seconds rolled by. Then Wellington appeared, coming hastily from the living room. The servant rushed forward as he spied the body.

His cry of horror was echoed from above. Marcia Delthorn, attired in a dressing gown, had arrived at the head of the stairs. Seizing the rail, she hurried down to join Wellington.

While the two bent over the dead body of Winstead Delthorn, another person arrived from the living room.

Humphrey Delthorn, who had gone out early in the evening, was returning home. This man, the living counterpart of his now dead brother Winstead, rushed forward to join the pair at the foot of the stairs.

"I was in the living room, Mr. Humphrey," explained Wellington. "I heard someone tumbling down the stairs. I arrived just after the fall."

"Yes," agreed Marcia. "I heard the crash while I was in my room. I reached the stairs just as Wellington arrived."

"A terrible accident!" exclaimed Humphrey. "Terrible. Terrible. We must send for a physician at once."

The doctor arrived to pronounce Winstead Delthorn dead. The body was carried to an upstairs room. The physician attended Marcia, who was on the verge of collapse. Wellington went up to get instructions from the doctor.

Humphrey Delthern remained alone in the lower hallway. He paced the floor where this tragedy had reached its climax. He recalled the very words that he had uttered. This had, indeed, been a terrible accident.

Suddenly a thin smile manifested itself on Humphrey Delthern's thin face. A terrible accident - yet one not entirely to be regretted. Winstead Delthern was dead. Humphrey was now the eldest survivor - the head of the Delthern family!

Humphrey Delthern uttered a muffled chuckle; then his evil face clouded. He began to ponder upon the strange fortune that had brought this accidental death. Then a look of worryment became his sole expression.

"Murder!" muttered Humphrey Delthern. "Murder! Someone has murdered my brother Winstead!"

CHAPTER VIII. THE SHADOW KNOWS

A CHUBBY-FACED man was seated at a desk in a New York office. From his window he could see a jutting vista of Manhattan skyscrapers. The city scene, however, held no interest for this methodical individual. His entire attention was centered upon a pile of newspapers that lay on the desk.

One of these was a local daily from the city of Newbury. The chubby-faced man looked down the columns. He came to an item that announced the burial of Winstead Delthern. Just as the man picked up a pair of scissors to clip the paragraph, the telephone rang upon his desk. He answered it.

"Yes," he said, in a quiet, even tone, "this is Rutledge Mann. Yes, Mr. Barker. Certainly. I shall be pleased to investigate Leviathan Copper. It may prove to be a sound investment. I have my doubts, however."

His call concluded, Rutledge Mann again took the scissors and sliced out the clipping that pertained to Winstead Delthern's funeral. He read the item carefully. He particularly noted two words that were conspicuous: they formed the phrase "accidental death."

Rutledge Mann added the clipping to others that were upon his desk. He picked up another newspaper - a Cincinnati daily - and cut out a front-page story that told of the amazing capture of a trio of bank robbers. The police had arrived to answer an alarm; they had found the crooks locked in the bank vault, all three in a dazed condition. Not one of the arrested men had been able to explain how he had landed there.

Rutledge Mann smiled as he added this clipping to the others. He doubted that it would be necessary. For Rutledge Mann, agent of The Shadow, performed the function of gleaning information concerning current crime which would be of interest to his mysterious chief.

It required no great sagacity on Mann's part to decide that The Shadow must know all that was needed concerning the affair in Cincinnati! Such a coup as the locking of three bank robbers in the vault that they had come to rifle could only have been accomplished by The Shadow himself.

As Rutledge Mann was placing the clipping in an envelope, he stopped and again examined the one that told of Winstead Delthern's burial. A trace of worryment appeared upon Mann's chubby countenance.

A FEW days before, the investment broker had cut out a clipping which told of Winstead Delthern's accidental death. Acting upon special instructions, Mann had been keeping close tabs upon affairs in Newbury. Calculating now, Mann realized that if The Shadow had gone on an emergency mission to Cincinnati, he could not possibly have received that first clipping.

With a perplexed smile, Mann replaced the Newbury clipping with the others, and sealed the lot in the envelope. It was not his part to wonder about the doings of his mysterious chief. Obedience to instructions was Mann's sole duty.

Ending his idle speculation, Mann decided that The Shadow had, in all probability, arranged some other method of contact with matters in Newbury. These clippings might be merely a form of routine as a check-up.

To Rutledge Mann, The Shadow was a being of mystery.

Once - it seemed long ago - Mann had been on the brink of despair. A failure in business, he had seen only a hopeless future ahead of him. It was then that he had received a strange visit from The Shadow. A weird personage garbed in black had given him instructions which he had followed to the letter.

Installed in an excellent office, supported by funds that came regularly by mail, Rutledge Mann continued his business as investment broker. That, to the world, was his sole occupation.

Secretly, however, Mann followed the mandates of The Shadow, and served as contact agent for the unknown master who warred against crime.

His envelope sealed, Rutledge Mann left the office and taxied to Twenty-third Street. There, he entered a tumble-down building and went up a flight of stairs. He stopped before the glass-paned door of a deserted office.

To all appearances this room was unoccupied. The name "Jonas" appeared upon the dingy glass; but Mann had never met anyone who answered to that title.

In all probability, Jonas was a myth; this office a room that was rented, but never opened. Mann had no idea what lay behind the frosted cobwebbed pane in the door. The investment broker simply inserted his envelope in a mail slit and went his way.

This was one of his daily duties - the delivery of current clippings at the Jonas office. This envelope - like the others that Mann had deposited - would eventually reach The Shadow.

At present, Rutledge Mann was enjoying a partial vacation. It was not late in the afternoon, but his work was completed for the day. The investment broker took a taxi to his club, met a friend who had a car, and together they set out for a game of golf on a New Jersey course.

An hour after Mann's visit to the Twenty-third Street office, they were riding past a Jersey airport. Rutledge Mann stared admiringly at a swift, shining monoplane that was heading downward for a landing.

STRANGE that Rutledge Mann should have noticed that ship! For although the investment broker never suspected the fact, the arrival of the monoplane had an important bearing on those clippings which Mann had left in the Twenty-third Street building; and, specifically, it concerned matters in the city of Newbury.

On the landing field, a man stepped out of the airplane. A uniformed chauffeur ran up and made a half salute.

"The car is here, Mr. Cranston," he announced.

"Very well, Stanley," returned the pilot of the plane. "I shall go to the house immediately."

Half an hour later, the amazing personage who bore the features of Lamont Cranston was at the

millionaire's home, changing his attire. He questioned Richards, while he dressed.

"No letter at all?" asked Cranston. "You are positive that no word has come from Warren Barringer?"

"No message whatever, sir," responded the servant. "I would have notified your hotel in Cincinnati, sir, as you instructed me."

"Very well, Richards. Tell Stanley to be here with the limousine in five minutes. I am going to New York."

It was still daylight when Lamont Cranston alighted from his limousine on Twenty-third Street. He instructed Stanley to meet him at the Cobalt Club.

From then on - even in the light of afternoon - the millionaire's actions were no longer apparent. He disappeared in a gloomy alleyway between two buildings, and no trace remained of him.

Some time later, a light clicked in a windowless room. Bluish rays shone from beneath a shade and focused the glow of the lamp upon the reflecting surface of a polished table.

White hands appeared as from nowhere. Long fingers held the envelopes that Rutledge Mann had delivered to the Jonas office during the past several days.

Shining from a finger of the left hand, a strange, glittering gem sent ever-changing rays up toward the light. The girasol, strange emblem of The Shadow, betokened the mystery of the personage who wore it. This gem, which had fascinated Warren Barringer, glimmered in fantastic colors.

Clippings poured upon the table as the envelopes were opened. Deft fingers separated them, seeking only those that had come from the Newbury daily. Sharp eyes discovered the items and read them.

The first of the clippings told of Winstead Delther's death. It recited how the chief heir to the Delther millions had been found sprawled on the floor of the lower hallway. Winstead Delther, a man of poor health, had been subject to spells of dizziness. Such a fit, the coroner had decided, must have overcome him upon the upper landing.

The long, spinning fall down the precipitous stairway had resulted in instant death. The body had been found by Winstead's brother, Humphrey; his cousin, Marcia Wardrop; and the servant, Wellington.

The second clipping referred to the funeral. It was the one that Rutledge Mann had cut out today, and it gave no further information.

The girasol sparkled as the left hand replaced the clippings in their envelopes. A soft laugh came from hidden lips above the lamp. The light clicked out. The whispered laugh increased in sound. It broke in strident mockery; its sinister tones came shuddering back from blackened walls.

Dying echoes faltered, lingering with long, uncanny rhythm. When their last faint lisps had ended, the room was no longer occupied. This strange abode of darkness, the sanctum of The Shadow, was empty. The master had departed.

Not long afterward, Lamont Cranston appeared at the entrance of the Cobalt Club. Stanley, at the wheel of the parked limousine, spied his master, and drove the car to the entrance. Entering the automobile, the millionaire gave his order to the chauffeur.

"To the airport, Stanley," came the quiet, even tones of Lamont Cranston's voice. "I am taking another flight."

The chauffeur nodded, and tipped his cap. He was used to such instructions. Lamont Cranston was a man who came and went as he pleased.

The chauffeur did not know that the man whom he served as Lamont Cranston was actually that strange being called The Shadow. Nor did Stanley realize that any adventure, other than a trip by air, lay ahead of his employer.

Such were the ways of The Shadow. Back from one episode in his career against crime, the master of the night was starting on a new mission, about to move to his destination with all the swiftness at his command - a swiftness almost unbelievable.

The Shadow was on his way to Newbury!

CHAPTER IX. HUMPHREY ACCUSES

WHILE The Shadow's swift plane was speeding toward Newbury, a gentleman in that city was utilizing a much more primitive form of locomotion. Horatio Farman, the attorney, was hobbling along the sidewalk of the avenue that led to Delthorn Manor.

It was early evening, and Farman chose the old front entrance to the gray-stoned mansion. He rapped on the big door, and was admitted by Wellington, who immediately conducted the visitor to the upstairs study.

The scene that Farman viewed was very much the same that Warren Barringer had observed on his visit to the Manor several night ago. A crabby-faced man was seated behind a large desk, looking like a dried peanut in its shell, as he occupied a chair of great proportions.

But on this occasion it was Humphrey Delthorn, not Winstead, who occupied the seat of honor. The new head of the old family glanced up with a querulous look as Farman entered, and waved the lawyer to a chair with the same imperious gesture that his dead brother had affected.

"Good evening, Farman," rasped Humphrey Delthorn. "I sent for you because I have an important matter to discuss."

"So I presumed," responded the attorney, with a smile.

"It concerns the death of my brother Winstead," announced Humphrey abruptly.

"A most unfortunate accident," observed the old lawyer, in a solemn tone.

"Accident?" Humphrey's voice was indignant. "You believe it an accident, Farman? Winstead's death was no accident! I know my brother was murdered!"

A startled look came into Horatio Farman's eyes. The old lawyer's gasp proved that this statement came to him as an amazing theory. He stared at Humphrey as one might gaze at a madman.

"Murder!" exclaimed Farman. "I cannot believe it, Humphrey. It is totally incredible!"

"Not at all," responded Humphrey shortly. "I suspected it that night, when I came in and found Winstead's body. But I had no proof then, Farman. It was not until afterward that I began to form a theory."

"But the coroner -"

"He declared it death by misadventure. I let the verdict pass. Since then, I feel more and more convinced that Winstead was slain by a man who visited this house that night."

"You suspect someone? Whom?"

A gleam of malice appeared in Humphrey Delthorn's eyes as the new head of the Delthorn house released the bomb that he had prepared for Horatio Farman.

"Warren Barringer," announced Humphrey.

HORATIO FARMAN sprang to his feet. The old attorney flamed with indignation. His hands trembled in momentary anger.

"Absurd!" he cried. "Preposterous! You have no right to even consider such an allegation!"

"Warren Barringer visited Winstead that night," retorted Humphrey. "He was in this very room. Winstead died shortly after Warren had gone."

"Warren Barringer was here?"

"Yes; and he had words with Winstead. I have questioned Wellington. The servant has admitted it."

"But you say that Warren was gone when -"

"Precisely. But that does not mean that he could not have returned."

"That would have to be proven, Humphrey. You, yourself, know that Winstead had a quarrelsome disposition. I am not surprised that he should engage in argument with Warren Barringer. That fact means nothing. Particularly as you have only Wellington to state that Warren was here."

"Marcia saw him also."

"Saw Warren here?"

"Yes," declared Humphrey, with an evil leer. "Warren called up Winstead and stated, through Wellington, that he would call. He came, and Wellington admitted him by the front door. Warren talked with Marcia in the lower hallway."

"After that, Wellington conducted Warren upstairs. Marcia went out; I was out. Only Wellington remained. He admits, since I have questioned him, that there was an altercation. In fact, Winstead summoned Wellington and told him to show Warren to the door."

"Did Wellington do so?" inquired Farman.

"He claims to have done so," stated Humphrey. "I questioned him very carefully upon that point. But it would have been an easy matter for Warren Barringer to return and resume his controversy with Winstead."

"This is all mere conjecture," asserted the lawyer. "I advise you to forget the matter."

"Forget it?" echoed Humphrey. "Do you realize, Farman, that the young upstart must actually have threatened my brother Winstead? That Winstead died by violence shortly afterward? My own life may be in danger!"

"Here" - Humphrey drew two papers from the desk drawer - "are sworn statements made by myself and

Wellington. They state the facts that I have mentioned. I order you to take them and keep them. You are my attorney; I expect you to show an interest in this important matter."

"I represent all the Delthorn heirs," returned Farman. "I cannot be concerned with this, Humphrey. It is a serious step to make unsubstantiated charges against another man."

"You talk like Marcia," challenged Humphrey. "She refused to sign a statement of her own. Refused, mind you, even though she could be forced to declare that she saw Warren here the night that Winstead died."

"Fortunately, Wellington could not refuse to make his declaration. I threatened him with dismissal unless he was willing to put the truth in writing. He accepted my ultimatum. I have warned Wellington that there may be danger. He is standing by, ready to aid me should any attempt be made upon my life."

HORATIO FARMAN raised his hands in a gesture of complete neutrality. He turned toward the door, signifying that he was about to leave. Humphrey Delthorn sprang from the desk and blocked the way.

"You are making a mistake, Farman!" he stormed. "You will regret this! A dangerous killer is at large; should I die, my blood will be on your hands!"

"Your animosity is speaking now, Humphrey," returned the lawyer calmly. "You sought to disinherit Warren Barringer. Your present actions make it appear that you are attempting to accomplish what you failed to do before. Let me remind you, however, that Winstead's decision in favor of Warren Barringer cannot be overruled now."

"Do you think I care about Warren's interest?" sneered Humphrey. "What does it matter now? I am the eldest of the heirs. My half portion is assured. I simply want to protect myself; to be safe from the menace which I believe exists. Warren Barringer is probably filled with animosity because of my previous attempt to protect my rights as they then existed."

"Have you met Warren Barringer?" questioned Farman.

"No," returned Humphrey. "I do not care to do so."

"It might be well," remarked Farman, "for you to speak with him. You will find him a man of very fair-minded principles."

"If he comes here," growled Humphrey, "I suppose I shall have to talk with him. I shall have Wellington at hand to protect me. I shall be wiser than Winstead!"

"You still persist in your strange theory?"

"Yes. I warn you, Farman, if you will not take measures to thwart this upstart, I shall employ an attorney who will get to the truth of Winstead's death. Do you realize that Warren Barringer has profited by killing my brother? The second half of the estate will now be divided among three instead of four."

A triumphant gleam kindled in Horatio Farman's eyes. The old lawyer had found the opening he desired.

He was recalling his own conversation with Warren Barringer; he felt that the young heir could never have been so foolish as to commit a crime which Farman, himself, had suggested as a potential menace. That fact, alone, convinced Farman that Humphrey was in error; and it also gave the attorney a chance to curb Humphrey's accusations.

"If personal profit," mused Farman, "can be regarded as a reason for considering Winstead's death a

murder, you are not the one to suggest it, Humphrey!

"Consider my words well. Until Winstead died, you were heir to only one eighth of the estate. Now you are to inherit half. Yours is the great gain. It would be logical to suppose that your interest in accusing someone else of murdering Winstead might be a cover for a crime that you, yourself, committed!"

The words staggered Humphrey Delthorn. With sagging arms, the thin-faced man groped for the desk. He reached his great chair and sat down suddenly.

"I think," added Farman convincingly, "that you would do well to forget your charges against Warren Barringer - certainly until you have more tangible evidence than the fact that he was here on the night that Winstead died."

HUMPHREY DELTHERN nodded slowly. His manner changed, and a hunted look appeared upon his face.

"This is terrible, Farman," he gasped. "I never thought of my position. That makes it far worse. My fears are actual; I really believe that Winstead was murdered. Should I speak - now - I, myself, might be accused. I am helpless."

"You are reasonable, now, Humphrey," declared Farman quietly. "Forget your apprehensions; they are the result of overstrain. I can assure you that Warren Barringer would not have been so foolhardy as to attack Winstead. The coroner has declared the death an accident."

"But my own life may be in danger!" pleaded Humphrey. "Don't you understand, Farman? Perhaps I am overstressed -"

"That is all," persisted the attorney. "Do not let your imagination saddle you with a mania. Keep Wellington here if you are apprehensive. Take my advice; be calm; and be careful that you do not act foolishly."

"I believe you may be right," nodded Humphrey. "I shall keep these sworn papers - and I shall be on my guard. But I shall hold my peace; and should Warren Barringer come to see me, I shall study him. You are right, Farman; I must not move until I know more."

The old lawyer departed. He met Wellington on the stairs. He spoke to the servant cautiously.

"Take good care of Mr. Humphrey," remarked the lawyer. "His nerves are taxed. He must not be left alone, unguarded. Remember, Wellington, it is your duty to the head of the Delthorn household."

"Yes, sir," said the servant. "I shall remember."

On the street, Horatio Farman pondered as he tapped the sidewalk with his cane. Of Warren Barringer's innocence, the old man had no doubt; but he was speculative regarding Humphrey Delthorn's sincerity.

The new head of Delthorn Manor had suggested murder. Was it the outcry of a guilty conscience? Horatio Farman wondered. The death of Winstead Delthorn had been an event which Farman had considered beforehand.

Winstead's death could not be revoked now. Humphrey, the lawyer decided, would hold his peace. A few weeks more, and the estate would be settled.

Yet even with this final thought - with the analysis that he had made concerning the respective situations of Humphrey Delthorn and Warren Barringer - Horatio Farman could not shake off a strange belief that

new menace might even now be impending at Delthorn Manor!

CHAPTER X. AT THE CLUB

SOME time after Horatio Farman's departure from Delthorn Manor, Warren Barringer entered the lobby of the City Club. He inquired for Clark Brosset, and was informed that the president was in his office on the second floor.

Warren went to the designated spot, tapped on the door, and received an order to enter. He found Clark Brosset seated at his desk.

The dignified president greeted his visitor with a quiet smile.

"Good evening, Warren," he said. "I wanted to meet you in the lounge, but I have been kept busy longer than I expected."

Brosset swept some account books from the desk and opened a small safe that was set in the wall. He locked the strong box, speaking as he did so.

"You are enjoying your membership here?" he asked.

"Immensely," returned Warren. "Thanks to you, Clark, I feel quite at home in Newbury."

"Bothered any more by Cousin Jasper?"

"Not at all. I have seen him once or twice. He just nodded sulkily."

"He is still sore because I called him down," declared Brosset. "I've had him on the carpet twice since the night I met you. In fact, he was just in here a short while ago, but I refrained from mentioning your name."

"I threatened him with expulsion if he repeated his nasty behavior. That's why he's watching his actions. He drinks outside, and keeps steady when he's in this place. He lives here, you know, and he likes it. In fact, the City Club is the only place where he is accepted at all. Jasper Delthorn - the black sheep of the family."

"I feel sorry for him," stated Warren. "In fact, Clark, I have felt very sober since the night when Winstead Delthorn died. You remember that I talked with you here immediately after I left Delthorn Manor."

"Yes," responded Clark Brosset, coming from the safe. "You had a pretty stormy interview with Winstead, didn't you?"

"That's just it," admitted Warren. "To think that he died so shortly afterward. Honestly, Clark, it makes me feel a sense of guilt."

Clark Brosset slapped Warren on the shoulder. The president of the City Club was calm and reassuring when he spoke.

"Forget it, Warren," he urged. "It's not wise to let such things prey upon your mind. I'm glad that you did not broadcast the fact that you were at Delthorn Manor that evening. If you had, there might be cause for apprehension."

"I am glad that you are the only person who knows it," asserted Warren. "Of course, we were talking in the grillroom. Someone may have overheard us."

"Not Jasper Delthorn, at least," stated Brosset. "The less he knows of your doings, Warren, the better. In

fact, he has become very shifty lately. He was not at all straightforward when I talked with him this evening."

"You don't think," questioned Warren, "that he bears me any malice?"

"I hope not," commented Brosset.

THE two men descended to the grillroom. They ordered sandwiches and coffee as they sat at a corner table. Suddenly, Brosset, who was looking toward the outer corridor, nudged Warren.

"There's Jasper now," whispered the president. "At the bottom of the steps."

Warren looked and saw his cousin standing alone. Jasper's eyes were turned down the corridor. His lips were moving viciously, as though engaged in silent comment. Warren stared.

"I wonder what's come over him," he remarked, in a low tone. "Look at his face, Clark! It's terrible!"

Brosset nodded.

"I don't like it, Warren," he murmured. "I've noticed that about Jasper before. There's something on his mind; that's certain. You know, he has done some mighty mean things in his time."

As Brosset finished speaking, Jasper, who had not seen the others watching him, moved rapidly along the corridor. A sharp exclamation came from Clark Brosset's lips.

"He's going to telephone!" said the club president. "One of those booths down the corridor. I'd better check up on this!"

He half rose from his chair; then sat down again and looked around the room.

"I'd better not go myself," he remarked. "It wouldn't be wise after the bawling out I gave him. Wait - I'll send Louie, the steward."

Brosset looked about, but the attendant was not in sight. The president hesitated, about to go himself.

"Maybe it's better not to send Louie," he said. "Jasper may be in some mixup. If so, I ought to know about it -"

"Suppose I go," suggested Warren, rising. "Wait here, Clark. I'll let you know if anything is up."

Reaching the corridor, Warren noted that one of the two telephone booths was occupied. He slipped into the empty one, and found that he could hear Jasper's voice from the next booth.

"That's right, Wellington," Jasper was saying. "You keep out of it, see? Like you did the other night... Don't worry now - I fixed number one, didn't I?... Leave it to me; I'll get number two... You'd better be out in the garage, talking with that new chauffeur, Holley. The alibi is your lookout. I'll take care of Humphrey."

Warren needed to hear no more. He slipped quietly from the phone booth and hurried back to the grillroom. He threw a glance as he went in the door, and saw a motion at the booth where Jasper was located. Just in time to escape his cousin's observation, Warren hastened to the table where Clark Brosset was seated.

"What's up?" came the immediate inquiry. "Warren! You're white!"

"Up in your office," whispered Warren. "I want to talk with you, Clark - in private!"

They saw Jasper go past the entrance of the grillroom as they were rising. The two men waited; then went out and ascended to Clark Brosset's office. As soon as the door was closed behind them, Warren blurted out the news.

"Jasper was talking to Wellington," he explained. "That's the servant at Delthorn Manor. He spoke about Humphrey Delthorn - said that he would take care of him like he took care of someone before. Told Wellington to get an alibi -"

"You mean," exclaimed Brosset, "that he may be plotting injury to his brother?"

"So it sounded," admitted Warren. "I didn't like the way he spoke about the past, either -"

"You mean Winstead!"

"Possibly."

"Whew! Accidental death. But what reason, Warren, could Jasper have in attacking his own brother?"

"The terms of the estate are still secret, Clark. The division comes in a few weeks. One half to the eldest surviving heir of Caleb Delthorn -"

Clark Brosset sprang to the telephone, holding up his hand as interruption.

"Humphrey must be warned at once!" he exclaimed. "I hardly know the man, but I must warn him!"

"Not that way," objected Warren, taking the telephone from Brosset. "Wellington will answer; he will ask for a message. You won't reach Humphrey, and Wellington will suspect."

"Then we must go to Delthorn Manor - one of us at least."

WARREN pondered. He realized the difficulties of the situation. Jasper Delthorn, conspiring with Wellington, was a dangerous and imminent threat. A telephone call; the sudden visit of two men; even the appearance of Clark Brosset at the mansion might give the servant the tip that plans had been discovered.

But it occurred to Warren that should he go alone, Wellington would suspect nothing. The servant had heard Warren bait Winstead Delthorn on a previous occasion; he would look for another quarrel, this time with Humphrey.

"Let me handle this," decided Warren. "We've let too many minutes go by already. It would have been best to have stopped Jasper."

"Hardly," returned Brosset. "A warning to Humphrey Delthorn is the logical suggestion. With Humphrey on his guard, Jasper may be trapped."

"You are right about the warning," agreed Warren. "I am leaving right away - straight for Delthorn Manor."

"One moment, Warren!" Clark Brosset's face was serious as his hand gripped Warren's arm. "Don't get into an argument with Humphrey. Be tactful - and if necessary, tell him to communicate with me."

"Remember; this may be serious. If any complications should occur, count on me. This is between you and Humphrey alone. Come back here as soon as you can. Rely upon my aid, and my discretion. Don't

be hasty, Warren!"

"I'll remember, Clark," agreed Warren, gripping his friend's hand. "You're right - the less said the better. No one will know that I am not here at the City Club -"

"And no one will know where you have gone, even if your absence is noted. After you have gone, I'll tell the doorman that you are with me, in my office."

Warren nodded his agreement. Clark Brosset accompanied him to the ground floor; after Warren had left by a side door, Brosset spoke to the doorman at the front.

"I shall be in my office," he said. "If anyone calls for Mr. Barringer, send the visitor up. Mr. Barringer will be with me."

RETURNING to the office, Clark Brosset opened the wall safe and removed club records, which he took to the desk. The trace of anxiety on his face showed that he was anxious to learn the outcome of Warren Barringer's interview with Humphrey Delthorn.

Brosset was well acquainted with the stubbornness that had long characterized Humphrey as well as his dead brother Winstead.

Brosset became restless. He closed the record book and sat pensively at his desk. Minutes drifted by; then came a rap at the door. Brosset sprang to the portal, expecting to see Warren Barringer. Instead, he found Bosger, the doorman.

"A gentleman to see Mr. Barringer, sir," said Bosger.

"To see Mr. Barringer," echoed Brosset. "Who is the visitor, Bosger?"

"A gentleman who stopped here on his way to New York. His name is Lamont Cranston."

"Show him up," ordered Brosset, after a moment's thought. "I shall speak with him here."

Pacing the floor with a troubled air, Clark Brosset regretted the untimeliness of this visit. He realized that Warren Barringer might have important details to discuss immediately upon his return from Delthorn Manor. What if swift action would prove necessary? What if complications involving Jasper Delthorn should arrive?

These troubling questions brought Clark Brosset to a quick decision. He planned to send Lamont Cranston on his way with very little delay.

CHAPTER XI. THE SHADOW LEARNS

CLARK BROSSET looked up from his desk. He closed the record book that he had opened, and arose to greet the gentleman whom Bosger had just ushered into the room.

"Mr. Cranston?" questioned Brosset.

"Yes," replied the visitor. "You are Mr. Brosset, I presume."

Clark Brosset acknowledged his identity. He studied his visitor as he motioned Cranston toward a chair. In very short time, Brosset had realized that this visitor was a man of keen intellect. Cranston's calm face and keenly penetrating eyes were impressive.

"You came to see Warren Barringer?" asked Brosset.

"Yes," returned Cranston. "I am on my way to New York. I inquired at the Century Hotel, and learned that Barringer was here. The doorman told me that he was in this office."

"He was here, until a few minutes ago," declared Brosset. "Perhaps you passed him on the way from the hotel. He may have stopped there."

"He will be back?"

"I hardly think so. Will you be in town overnight, Mr. Cranston?"

A slight sparkle showed in Cranston's eyes. That, alone, indicated that the visitor had sensed a hidden motive in Brosset's sudden question. The president of the City Club had spoken in a casual tone; at this moment, he was picking up the record book from the desk.

"Not overnight," responded Cranston quietly. "There are two trains - either one suitable to me. The first" - he glanced at his watch - "leaves in about twenty minutes. I shall take it to New York unless I have an opportunity to see Warren Barringer for a few hours. In that case, I can wait for the later train."

"Too bad," murmured Brosset. "If you had only arrived ten minutes ago you -"

"Why?"

"Warren Barringer told me that he was going to Wynndale - a town some thirty miles from here. Driving with friends. Unless some delay occurred, he has probably started."

"And will not be back here?"

"Not unless the trip has been called off. One moment; I can find out all about it."

Clark Brosset lifted the telephone. He told the club operator to call the Century Hotel. In another minute, he was talking with the hotel clerk.

"Mr. Barringer, please... Yes... He is? I see... When do you expect him back? Yes... Yes... Very well, then... Never mind... I can call him tomorrow."

Over the wire, Clark Brosset had heard the clerk stating that Warren Barringer could be found at the City Club. But in his own statements, intended for Cranston's ears, Brosset had given no such indication.

"Barringer has left," declared Brosset, as he laid down the telephone. "The clerk says that he started for Wynndale nearly ten minutes ago. He left word that he might not be back tonight. Wynndale is a very popular resort that attracts many visitors from Newbury."

Picking up the record book, Brosset carried it to the safe, deposited it there, and closed the door. With hand turning a knob, he spoke again to Cranston.

"There will be no need of your waiting for a later train," stated Brosset. "You can make the station in three minutes from here. There are cabs out front. I am mighty sorry that you missed Barringer. He is an old friend of yours?"

"I met him abroad," explained Cranston, rising. "He visited me upon his return to New York. I appreciate your interest, Mr. Brosset; I am only sorry that I missed seeing my friend."

"I shall tell him that you were here," said Brosset. "He is a member of the City Club, and spends a great deal of time here."

Brosset strolled toward the door as he spoke. His manner was leisurely, but effective, designed to draw Cranston with him. The visitor followed, and together the two descended the stairs. Brosset glanced at his watch; there was still ample time for the New Yorker to make his train, but Brosset professed a worried air.

"Sometimes traffic is bad, Mr. Cranston," he remarked. "A slight chance of a delay. The train is usually on time."

Stepping through the door, Brosset hailed a cab; he beckoned to Cranston, and ushered the visitor into the vehicle. He also gave prompt instructions to the driver, while the doorman was handing Cranston a light briefcase which he had left at the door.

"To the station," ordered Brosset. "Avoid the traffic. This gentleman wants to catch the New York Limited."

The president of the City Club extended his hand in parting, and gave Lamont Cranston a courteous smile. The cab shot away, and Brosset returned through the portals of the club. He did not go back to his office; instead, he remained in the lounge, to await Warren Barringer's return.

CLARK BROSSET was congratulating himself upon this quick disposal of a stranger who, while undoubtedly a friend of Warren's, might cause complications through his presence in Newbury. He knew that Lamont Cranston's cab would certainly reach the station in time for the train.

Had Clark Brosset been able to visualize the events that were happening on the way to the station, he would have lost his smile of surety. In the back seat of the cab which he had taken, Lamont Cranston was drawing a dark object from the briefcase which he carried.

The folds of a long cloak slipped over the passenger's shoulders. A flattened slouch hat developed into a broad-brimmed headpiece. The figure in the cab became obscured in darkness. Only a white hand showed; it protruded through the front window, and dropped a bill upon the driver's arm.

"Have the change ready when we reach the station," came the voice of Lamont Cranston.

"Right, sir," responded the driver. "We're at the last traffic light now."

The cab was standing beside another which was waiting to make a left turn. The driver did not hear the door open softly. The light turned green; the cab shot ahead. It whirled along the last stretch, and swung up before the railroad terminal. The driver, leaping to the curb, pulled open the door and held out a handful of change. His face went blank in amazement.

The interior of the cab, showing plainly in the light from the station, was entirely empty! The passenger who had boarded the vehicle at the City Club was gone!

This cabby was not the only taximan in Newbury who was experiencing a succession of creepy chills at that moment. The driver of the cab that had been set for a left turn at the traffic light was receiving a much more startling surprise.

Driving up a broad avenue, he gripped the wheel in terror as a white hand appeared before his eyes and let a bank note flutter from its finger tips. Managing to regain control of the car, the driver nodded instinctively as he heard a quiet voice give him an address on another street.

It was the sight of the money, the feel of the paper bill, that made the taximan regain his confidence; yet he wondered as he turned from the avenue. When and where had this mysterious passenger entered the cab?

The driver shrugged his shoulders. He would look at the man when he got out. That might give the explanation.

The cab sped on and slowed at a stop street. The door opened softly; the driver did not hear it.

The cab shot on and rolled along the silent avenue past Delthorn Manor. A block farther on, the cabman stopped. This was the address that his fare had given him. He, too, alighted to the curb to open the door and make change.

There was no response from the interior of the cab. The driver pulled a flashlight from his pocket, and flooded the back seat with illumination. The cab was empty!

The strange personage who had performed these silent mysteries was completely gone. Like a shadow, he had flitted from cab to cab; a phantom of darkness, he had dropped from the second vehicle.

Lamont Cranston no longer, he was moving through the darkness beneath a row of trees, a creature invisible. The only token of his presence was a whispered laugh that blended with the creaking of the tree branches above the sidewalk.

Undeceived by Clark Brosset's pretense that Warren Barringer had left Newbury, the visitor from New York had garbed himself in black. Still in the city, he had hastened to the spot where his keen brain had divined that trouble might be in the making.

Silently invisibly, The Shadow was approaching the gray walls of mysterious Delthorn Manor!

CHAPTER XII. DEATH IN THE DARK

WHILE Clark Brosset had been pacing the floor of his office at the City Club, Warren Barringer had made all haste to Delthorn Manor. Excited by the mission which took him there, the young man had found it difficult to feign composure when Wellington admitted him in response to a knock at the front door.

In the gloomy, quiet hall of Delthorn Manor, Warren managed to display a lack of concern. Wellington went upstairs to announce his arrival, and a few minutes later, Warren found himself facing Humphrey Delthorn in the upstairs study.

Although Warren did not notice it, Wellington was cautious when he closed the door from the outside. There were no footsteps telling of the servant's departure. But Warren was too intense to fancy that Wellington might be eavesdropping.

The sight of Humphrey Delthorn, seated in that oversized chair, brought back to Warren an exact recollection of Winstead. The second of the Delthorns looked very much like his brother; his air was an aping manner that made Warren ill at ease.

Humphrey Delthorn, in his attitude, seemed to express Winstead's dislike of an intrusion. Only the importance of his errand prevented Warren Barringer from meeting Humphrey's challenging gaze with a smile of contempt.

"What brings you here?" rasped Humphrey, as he eyed the visitor. "This, I understand, is the second time that you have come to Delthorn Manor."

"I want to see you, Humphrey," interposed Warren, with a serious air. "I admit that my visit is a rather abrupt one; but the circumstances surrounding it are vitally important - to you."

The added phrase "to you" caught Humphrey's interest. The man behind the desk shifted his position uneasily as Warren took a chair.

"I am your cousin," declared Warren, "and I want you to believe me when I state that I bear a real friendliness toward you. My visit tonight is in your interest; and if the facts I mention astound you, I can bring you proof of them from another person, whose word will prove reliable."

"Come to the point!" demanded Humphrey, in a challenging tone. "I don't understand your purpose here!"

"It concerns your brother Jasper," said Warren, swallowing his anger. "I met him several days ago. I have seen him since. He has been acting strangely."

"As usual," grumbled Humphrey. "How does that concern me?"

"Tonight," continued Warren, reassured by Humphrey's expressed disapproval of Jasper, "I noticed him - at the City Club - behaving in a most unusual manner. He went into a telephone booth. I chanced to overhear his conversation."

"Eavesdropping, eh?" sneered Humphrey. "I cannot commend you for the practice."

"You will before I have finished," retorted Warren. "I heard what Jasper said. It sounded very much like a threat upon your life!"

HUMPHREY DELTHERN eyed Warren coldly. There was a doubtful, inimical expression in his countenance that made the visitor feel ill at ease. Nevertheless, Warren continued.

"The gist of his conversation," said the young man, "was that he had managed to take care of one person; and that he intended to do the same with another tonight. He named you as the party in question."

Humphrey Delthorn half arose from his chair. His fists were on the desk. His eyes were flashing.

"Are you inferring," he demanded, "that Jasper had something to do with the death of my brother Winstead; that he also contemplates an attack upon me?"

"Exactly," responded Warren quietly. "Furthermore" - the young man lowered his voice - "I can tell you with whom he was conversing. It was Wellington, your servant. Jasper mentioned his name across the wire."

The effect upon Humphrey Delthorn was astounding. It was also entirely different from what Warren had expected. An accusation directed against Jasper, Humphrey's own brother, might well have aroused the man's momentary indignation.

But Warren was amazed to see Humphrey display a sudden, terrific fury. The man raised his clawlike hands and clenched his fists as though he would like to press them upon his visitor's throat.

It was a full minute before the rage subsided. The reaction was quite as unexpected. Humphrey Delthorn, weakened by his own frenzy, sank back in his chair, gasping. Then, with a strange recovery, he stared directly at Warren Barringer, and spoke in a cold, sarcastic tone.

"I appreciate your visit," he declared. "But before we discuss the matter further, let me ask you one question. Was this the same pretext that you used when you talked with my brother Winstead?"

"Pretext?" queried Warren, in surprise.

"Yes," said Humphrey. "I have heard that you aroused his anger. I knew that you must have done so by means of outrageous statements."

"You are wrong there, Humphrey."

"Perhaps" - Humphrey paid no attention to Warren's words - "you also warned him against a brother's wiles. Possibly you told him that I - not Jasper - was plotting to end his life."

"You mean that I -"

"I mean," said Humphrey clearly, "that I know the truth concerning Winstead's death. My elder brother was murdered; and his slayer was -"

"Jasper!" blurted Warren.

"Not Jasper!" exclaimed Humphrey in new frenzy. "Not Jasper, you fiend! You are the man who murdered my brother Winstead!"

Humphrey was on his feet again. He had pushed the chair back from the desk. He was standing close to the paneled wall, his pale face turned crimson, his lips trembling, and his fists shaking in anger.

Warren Barringer sat in astonishment. Fierce resentment swept his mind; but the startling effect of Humphrey's words held him motionless.

"You came here to kill Winstead!" accused Humphrey. "You are here to kill me! You will not succeed. I can call Wellington to my aid before you can overpower me."

With these words, Humphrey dropped his hand to his pocket. Sensing that his cousin might be drawing a revolver, Warren leaped to his feet. He started toward the door, believing that he could gain it before Humphrey could produce a weapon.

Then came blackness. At this moment of crisis, the lights in the room were entirely extinguished. A gasp of alarm came from the wall where Humphrey was standing. Warren, groping in the darkness, stumbled against a chair and nearly lost his footing.

AS he caught himself against the huge desk, Warren heard a long, rasping sigh. Something struck against the desk, and Warren felt the woodwork shift toward him. Rapping, clawing sounds rattled only a few feet away.

The lights came on. Warren blinked as he saw the same illuminated scene. Then his eyes bulged with horror.

Sprawled across the desk, face upward, lay the form of Humphrey Delthorn!

Dying fingers still beat a mild tattoo upon the woodwork. Staring eyes glared upward. The fingers ceased their motion, and Warren Barringer gazed in awe at the huge handle of a knife that jutted from his cousin's breast.

It required moments for the terror of this tragedy to impress itself upon Warren Barringer's mind. As he realized that this was no illusion, that the sight before him was reality, Warren shrank away from the desk, and gripped the arms of a chair.

How long the lights had been out, he did not know. It might have been only seconds - perhaps minutes. The passage of time escaped his recollection. But after he stared about the empty room, and saw no one,

Warren Barringer finally focused his eyes upon the figure of his cousin.

Humphrey Delthorn was dead; a knife blade in his heart. Silently, some murderer had done dastardly work amid the blackness. The handle of the knife bore mute evidence of evil crime. Warren Barringer was alone in the room with his murdered cousin!

Death had struck in the dark!

CHAPTER XIII. CRIME UPON CRIME

MOMENTS had seemed very long to Warren Barringer. Now, his numbed brain experienced a reaction. As he gazed at Humphrey Delthorn's body, the young man found a deluge of thoughts sweeping through his mind.

Death had struck. In the confusion of a blackened room, someone had slain Humphrey Delthorn. Warren realized that his back had been toward the door. He glanced in that direction. He saw the light switch.

Some daring murderer could have opened that door, extinguished the light, and made the swift attack. Such seemed to be the only explanation. Yet the man had gone as swiftly as he had come - and all his actions, including the murder, had occurred during those moments while Warren had groped and stumbled in the darkness.

The only trace that remained of the killer was Humphrey's body, a pitiful, scrawny form, with the token of death extending from it. Here was Warren, an innocent person, left in the room with his murdered cousin.

Jasper Delthorn?

The brother had plotted murder. Warren had heard him. He must have come up the stairs, listened through the door, and taken advantage of opportunity.

As for Wellington - Warren remembered now. Jasper had told the servant to establish an alibi, and to leave the way clear.

This gave Warren his cue. Winstead Delthorn had died in this house after Warren's departure. Suppose that Warren should be gone again when Humphrey's body was found? The thought of flight was distasteful; but the menace that lay here counteracted it.

It would be wise to get out before Wellington returned. The servant might be bringing the chauffeur with him, on some pretext. Warren thought of Clark Brosset, back at the City Club.

This was inspiration! Back to the club; a talk with Brosset; there they could decide what might be best. Humphrey Delthorn's safety was of no consequence now. The man was dead.

Warren turned toward the door. He seized the knob, and cautiously opened the barrier. He stopped, fancying that he heard footsteps. He drew back. A moment later, he knew that someone was creeping forward. Before he could take action, Wellington came from the gloom and stood before him.

THE servant's face hardened. Wellington stared from Humphrey's form to Warren Barringer. His lips tightened, and Wellington broke forth in accusation.

"You have killed him!" he exclaimed. "You - you murderer! He - he told me to be here. He was afraid of you! But I thought that he was safe!"

With a sudden rage, the servant precipitated himself into the room and clutched at Warren Barringer. The young man flung Wellington to one side, and as he thrust back the servant's attack, uttered his own defiant challenge.

"You know the truth!" cried Warren. "You - and Jasper Delthern! He is the murderer, and you know it!"

The two locked in struggle. Warren, young and powerful, hurled back the servant, whom he believed to be a traitor. But Wellington was not lacking in strength. The servant fought with a fury that could only come from actual belief that he was battling with the man who had slain his present master.

In the course of their grapple, the fighters jounced against the door and knocked it shut. They swerved across the room, struck the desk, and staggered on. Humphrey Delthern's body teetered lazily back and forth as the desk was shaken by the conflict.

Sudden chance favored Wellington. As the pair plunged toward the wall, Warren tripped, twisted, and struck his head against the paneling. He grunted as his teeth clicked. He lost his hold upon his adversary.

With a mighty effort, Wellington flung Warren to the floor. Half groggy, the young man rolled to his knees and held up his hands as protection when he saw Wellington towering toward him.

The servant, his face filled with rage, was preparing for a powerful lunge. Warren, despite his swimming head, was ready to receive it. Then, as when Warren had faced Humphrey Delthern, blackness intervened.

This time a slight click impressed itself upon Warren's brain as the lights suddenly went out. Momentary darkness; then came a muffled roar and a tongue of fire flashed within the room. The report dulled away. Something landed heavily upon the floor in front of Warren Barringer. The young man groped forward. The lights came on again.

Warren found himself staring at the prostrate form of Wellington. The servant, in falling, had twisted on his side. A gaping wound showed in his breast. A revolver lay on the floor beside him.

Half dazed, Warren reached for the weapon. He desisted as his swimming brain made him falter. He stared groggily about the room.

Again, the murderer had come and gone. Swiftly had he entered; swiftly had he left. Picking his target as he extinguished the light, he had slain Wellington as effectively as he had done away with Humphrey Delthern.

The same thoughts as before came drumming through Warren's brain.

Death! Menace! Need for flight!

That was final. The young man rose to his feet. He moved to the door and opened it. He went unsteadily along the hall; he caught the rail at the head of the stairs, and descended.

The lower hallway was as silent and as gloomy as before. The dull lights of the living room seemed ominous; the closed doors of the great reception hall seemed to be hiding eyes that were accusing, in spite of Warren's sense of innocence.

Out through the front door, down the flagstone walk. Warren reached the sidewalk, and breathed deeply of the cooling air. His wits came back to him with amazing swiftness. He walked quickly down the avenue.

ONE block from Delthorn Manor, Warren spied a taxicab parked beside the curb. The door was open. The young man saw the driver standing at the front of the car, gazing in the opposite direction. For a moment, Warren hesitated; then, on sudden impulse, he stepped into the cab.

The noise caused the driver to turn. He came toward the door as Warren closed it. Calming his voice, Warren ordered the man to take him to the railroad station. The driver clambered to the wheel, and shouted through the open window as he drove along.

"Were you the fellow that was in this cab before?" he questioned. "The guy that gave me the money?"

"Yes," answered Warren,

"Didn't see you get out," explained the driver. "What's the matter? Weren't the folks at home?"

"No," Warren replied.

The driver made no further comment. He sped along a side street toward the broad avenue that led to the depot. Warren, settled back upon the seat, was thinking clearly now. He was planning the next phase of action.

Crime upon crime. Warren Barringer had witnessed double murder in the second-story study at Delthorn Manor. He was sure that the killer was Jasper Delthorn; but the burden of proof would be his own!

CHAPTER XIV. A VISITOR VANISHES

WARREN BARRINGER had been fortunate in his flight. The shot in the study had been muffled. Its report had not reached the outside grounds of Delthorn Manor. Furthermore, the old house was in an isolated spot.

Yet Warren had not escaped unseen. As he had come from the old gate in front of the mansion, a pair of approaching eyes had spied him from the darkness.

Strange eyes! They were the only visible portions of the person who bore them. Hardly had Warren Barringer left by the arch before those eyes were staring in the direction of the mansion, piercing the darkness as they looked toward the gray walls of Delthorn Manor.

A soft swish sounded above the flagstone walk. The door of the great house opened softly. It closed. A shadowy shape glided across the floor of the lower hallway. It ascended the stairs, and followed the corridor. It stopped before the open door of the room where death had struck.

Keen eyes surveyed the scene. Intuitive ears listened. Then came the swish of a cloak. The sinister form of The Shadow loomed within the room of death. A solemn, whispered laugh drifted through the close atmosphere of the room.

Gliding across the room, The Shadow studied the body of Humphrey Delthorn. His eyes turned to the form of Wellington. They noted the gleaming revolver on the floor. A gloved hand lifted the weapon and replaced it.

Seating himself at the desk, The Shadow, close beside the ghastly body of Humphrey Delthorn, began to open and close the drawers. He found nothing of consequence. But his keen eyes noted one significant fact. In every drawer except one, the small collection of papers and envelopes were in perfect order.

Standing again, The Shadow visualized the scene of death. He studied Humphrey Delthorn's chair. He examined the space on the opposite side of the desk. He moved to the hall, and turned the rays of a tiny

flashlight upon the floor.

The entrance of Warren Barringer; the death of Humphrey Delthorn; the intervention of Wellington; these were events that The Shadow was reconstructing. Again, a low laugh echoed from his lips. Its strange tone denoted a tinge of regret that his arrival had been delayed.

Warren Barringer's precipitous haste; Clark Brosset's efforts to mislead Lamont Cranston; these were factors over which the murderer had had no control, yet they had proven to be important elements in crime. Because of those factors, The Shadow had arrived too late to prevent these killings.

Keen ears were listening now. Footsteps sounded vaguely from the floor below. A woman's voice was calling up the stairs.

"Wellington!" Marcia Wardrop was summoning the servant. "Wellington!"

The call faded. A gasp came from below. Hurrying footsteps announced Marcia's departure. The girl had sensed that something was amiss. Alone in the house, she had lost her nerve. She had rushed out of the old mansion to summon help.

THE SHADOW calmly returned to the room of death. His eyes looked toward the door. A laugh resounded from hidden lips. The Shadow's tall form moved across the room, and blackened itself against the paneled wall. It slowly crept along the surface, skirting the edge of the rug beyond the spots where the bodies lay.

At one point, The Shadow paused. He went on, then returned. Backed against the wall, he surveyed Humphrey Delthorn's body. Another laugh came from those mysterious lips - a grim laugh that betokened a strange discovery.

From this spot, The Shadow had detected a peculiar factor that involved both bodies. Black-gloved hands moved from the folds of the cloak. The Shadow moved toward the form of Humphrey Delthorn; then returned. He repeated the same procedure as he studied Wellington's body.

Pressing his tall form flat against the wall behind the desk, The Shadow still continued to visualize what must have happened. His tiny flashlight was in evidence, despite the fact that the room was well illuminated. It was along the floor beside the wall, then clicked off.

Again, The Shadow studied the bodies. With this inspection, his repeated laugh was expressive. Its new tone told that The Shadow had learned an important fact. These men had been slain by a hand that had not hesitated. A double murder, with Warren Barringer present, could not have been executed with delay.

Yet in each case, the stroke had lacked exactness. The knife in Humphrey Delthorn's body was buried at an angle. The shot that had slain Wellington had entered from the side. What could have caused these awful things to happen?

The Shadow knew. His next action proved it. Moving swiftly, the tall phantom reached the light switch by the door and extinguished the illumination. Only a slight glow from the hall entered the room. The Shadow glided back to the wall. There, in almost total darkness, his keen eyes seemed to perceive the situation as it had existed.

The flashlight gleamed in the left hand. The Shadow lunged forward toward the body of Humphrey Delthorn. He withdrew and swung in the direction of Wellington. He pressed himself more firmly against the wall; then stood motionless. His laugh sounded with a note of sinister elation.

VOICES came suddenly from below. The Shadow's form made no motion toward the door. Instead, it remained in the darkness. Feet were pounding on the stairs. No noise came from the spot where The Shadow had taken his position.

Men were in the hallway. They were coming toward the open door of the study. A voice growled. No response came from the room of death. A figure loomed in the gloom of the hall, and stared into the dark study. Another man appeared suddenly beside the first arrival.

"Nobody in here," growled the man who had spoken before. "That is, nobody - unless -"

There was a foreboding tone in the voice. It brought a grunt from the second man.

"Reach in there," said the first speaker. "See if there's a light switch by the door."

A hand groped along the wall. It found the switch, and clicked it. On came the lights, to show the dead bodies, with two uniformed policemen staring in from the door.

"Dead!" came the exclamation. "Both of 'em - Delthern and the butler. Say - the girl had the right hunch when she thought something was wrong!"

Searching eyes scanned the room. Both officers raised their heads and looked beyond the bodies, in sudden thought that the murderer might still be lurking here. They saw nothing but the paneled walls.

Staring directly at the spot where The Shadow had been, there was no sign of a living being. Save for the dead bodies of the murdered men, the room of death was empty.

No trace of The Shadow remained. Out of blackness he had come; into blackness he had gone, now that his inspection had been made. Active even to the moment when the policemen had hesitated just outside the door, The Shadow had managed to completely evade discovery.

Just as the murderer had eluded the sight of Warren Barringer, so had The Shadow escaped the detection of the police. The visitor from the void had vanished!

CHAPTER XV. WARREN GETS ADVICE

WARREN BARRINGER'S step was furtive as the young man entered the side door of the City Club. The lobby was deserted; only a few persons were seated in the lounge. Yet Warren was overly self-conscious as he turned his footsteps toward the stairway. He hoped that he would find Clark Brosset where he had left him - in the upstairs office.

Warren was fortunate. His tap at the door brought an immediate response. The barrier opened, and Warren entered to face Clark Brosset. The club president took one glance at his young friend; then quickly shut the door and locked it. He urged Warren to a chair; then snapped quick questions.

"What's happened, Warren?" asked Brosset. "You're as pale as a ghost - all tuckered out - no hat - clothes mussed -"

Apprehension showed upon Brosset's face as he made this staccato survey of Warren's troubled condition. In response, the young man stared vaguely across the room, and spoke in a voice tinged with horrible recollections of his late experience.

"Murder, Clark," came his hoarse tone, "murder! Humphrey Delthern - Wellington - both killed. Right while I was there, at Delthern Hall! So help me, Clark, I'm innocent!"

Clark Brosset surveyed his friend's face. He saw the changing emotions that flickered over Warren's countenance. He approached and gripped the young man's shoulder.

"Buck up, boy," he urged, in a low, steady voice. "I'm here to help you, Warren. Steady! Let me know what's happened. Easy, now - from the beginning."

Warren nodded. With a quick effort, he regained some of his composure. In an even monotone, he began his story. He told of his arrival at Delthorn Manor; of his interview with Humphrey Delthorn. Then came the episode of the first death in the dark; Humphrey with the knife jutting from his heart. Warren followed with Wellington's intervention; the second extinguishing of the lights; and the shot that slew the servant.

"Go on," said Clark Brosset seriously. "You left the house then? Did anyone see you?"

"I don't think so," declared Warren. "I found a cab about a block from the Manor. I took it -"

"A great mistake!" exclaimed Brosset. "That may cause you trouble, Warren. If the taximan saw you when you got out here -"

"I think I'm all right," interrupted Warren, as he managed to smile. "First of all, the driver was looking for someone who had left the cab and forgotten his change. He didn't see my face.

"Next, I had a hunch, and told him to take me to the station. It was while we were riding there that he mentioned the matter of the money. Said he would give me what was coming when we reached the depot."

"When the cab stopped, I watched the driver. I saw him fumbling in his pockets. I told him to keep the change as I stepped from the door; then I ducked past the back of the cab. All he knows is that he took a passenger to the railroad station."

"Good headwork," commented Brosset. The president was pacing the room; he turned and put another question: "How did you come here from the station?"

"Took a trolley," answered Warren. "A crowded car. No one could have noticed me. I came in through the side door."

"All right," said Brosset approvingly. "Come now, Warren. Spruce up a bit. Straighten your tie and brush your hair. Mirror in there by the washstand. We're going down in the grillroom together."

"You mean -"

"I mean that we're going to be seen together here at the club. I've been around the place all evening. Everyone knows that I've been here. You were with me up to the time you left. You'll be with me now."

"But those dead men - up at the Manor -"

"Listen, Warren." Clark Brosset's voice was severe. "Did you see the murderer?"

"No. It couldn't have been anyone but Jasper - after what I heard him say on the phone."

"But did you see him?"

"Not even a glimpse," admitted Warren.

"Well, then," remarked Brosset, "you're not going to say a thing about being at Delthorn Manor - not until

you have to say it - and that will be when the proper time has come. You were here, this evening, at the City Club. With me. Understand?"

Warren nodded.

"Where's your hat?" questioned Brosset.

"I don't know," said Warren suddenly. "I - I may have had it in the cab. No - as I remember it now, I gave it to Wellington. He must have placed it on a rack in a downstairs closet."

"Any identifying marks in it?"

"I don't think so."

"Well, we'll trust to luck on that point. Unless you left it in the room where the murders were committed you -"

"I didn't do that, I'm sure."

"All right. Come along downstairs. You look all right now. We'll talk this over in a quiet corner. Remember, Warren; this is not an alibi. I merely want to allow time for us to look into the matter."

THE two men left the office and descended to the grillroom. In company with Clark Brosset, Warren Barringer now felt at ease. As the pair entered the grill, it appeared as though they had probably been together for some time.

Various club members hailed them; and not long afterward Warren and his companion managed to find a corner table by themselves. Brosset gave Louie two orders for sandwiches and coffee.

"Young Delthorn was around here a few minutes ago," said the steward, speaking to the president in an undertone. "Thought we were going to have some more trouble with him."

"Liquor again?" inquired Brosset.

"Yes, sir," said Louie. "He's been in and out during the evening. Gets his drinks at some speakeasy, I guess. He could hardly stand up when he was in here last."

"What did you do about it?"

"Had a couple of the boys take him to his room."

"All right, Louie. Send word to me if you see him behaving badly after this."

When the steward had gone, Clark Brosset turned to Warren with a serious expression. First making sure that no one was close enough to overhear what he might say, the club president gave terse advice.

"You and I," declared Brosset, "know that Jasper may be the murderer of those two men. If he is, he's done a lot to establish an alibi. Here - at the speakeasy - well, he's probably been from one place to the other all evening. Maybe his drunkenness was a bluff at first; chances are he's well under now."

"As I see it, Warren, it would be a huge risk to accuse Jasper when the police discover the murders. To do so, you would have to admit your own presence at Delthorn Manor. Your own flight would be against you; and you can't say that you saw Jasper there."

"If Jasper is responsible, there's a chance that he will loop his own neck. Let the police suspect him first;

wait until they have him boxed. Then you can speak. It would be natural for you, as his cousin, to show reluctance in accusing him."

Warren nodded his agreement. He saw the logic of Brosset's opinion. He decided that he had done well to come to such a friend for advice.

"Remember," warned Brosset, in a cautious whisper, "that Jasper, by a clever persistence of innocence, could turn the suspicion on you."

"Except for one fact," mused Warren. "Jasper profits directly from the murder of Humphrey -"

"And you profit also."

Clark Brosset's frank statement made Warren realize his startling predicament. It was true that he also gained in the division of the Delthorn estate. Furthermore, he saw another dilemma ahead of him.

"Clark," he whispered, "if Jasper diverted suspicion toward me, it might look as though I had arranged the deaths of both Winstead and Humphrey. Besides that, Jasper could pretend that I had threatened him!"

Clark Brosset gazed about him as he nodded. Then, sagely, he added another admonition.

"Up in the office," he declared, "you told me that Humphrey denounced you as Winstead's killer. I know perfectly that you would not have committed such a crime. I believe you, because I am your friend. But will others believe you?"

"You told me also that Humphrey became indignant at the thought of his own brother plotting against his life. If it came to a question between you and Jasper, what would people think? I shall tell you, Warren. They would decide that a man would murder his cousin with less compunction than his brother."

WARREN BARRINGER clutched the edge of the table. He realized fully that he had placed himself in a serious position by going to Delthorn Manor.

"I see it now," he said slowly. "Wellington was in on the crime, because I heard Jasper talking to him on the phone. That's why Jasper killed Wellington also. He has rid himself of the one man who might testify in my behalf. Wellington should have been out of the house. When he showed up, Jasper Delthorn decided to take no chances."

"You are battling a fiendish schemer, Warren," decided Clark Brosset. "I am thankful that I know the truth; that I can aid you in this emergency. I know Jasper for a rogue; you for an honest man. I am with you in this crisis."

"There is only one course for us to follow. We must wait and watch. These murders will probably be discovered shortly. There will be calls for you and Jasper."

"Remember: you were here during the evening. Up in the office with me; here in the grillroom. I am going upstairs again. It would be a good plan for you to join a game in the cardroom."

"Jasper is too wise to be without an alibi. So we will counter with one for you. Simply subordinate the time element. Is that plain?"

Warren nodded his approval. He felt a surge of gratefulness toward Clark Brosset. Here was one man positive of Warren's interest. A true friend was priceless in an emergency like this. Warren's innocence; his knowledge of Jasper's scheming - these were justifications for the alibi, should it prove necessary.

Warren asked one question, to be sure.

"No one knows that I left the club?" he asked.

"No one," returned Brosset. Then, with a frown, he added: "Yes, one man; but he has left town. I forgot to tell you in the excitement. A friend of yours called to see you, and stopped in my office."

"What was his name?" inquired Warren anxiously. "I know no one in Newbury outside of yourself -"

"This man was from New York," interposed Brosset. "His name was Lamont Cranston. Do you know him well?"

"Lamont Cranston!" exclaimed Warren. "What was he doing in Newbury?"

"On his way back to New York," explained Brosset. "Stopped long enough to see you. He would have waited, but as I did not know how well you knew him, I said that you had gone out of town. I thought it best that no one should know you were at Delthorn Manor. I feared complications there."

"He left for New York, then?"

"Yes."

Warren Barringer breathed a sigh of relief. He glanced toward Clark Brosset with a new expression of gratitude.

"Lamont Cranston is a good friend of mine," he stated, "but I would not want him to know of this trouble that I have experienced. With you to count on, Clark, I do not need him. You did the right thing, old man. Thanks."

"Don't mention it. I used war thinking; that was all. Just a hunch that worked. Come."

With the final word, Clark Brosset arose from the table. He conducted Warren upstairs, introduced him to some club members in the cardroom, and waited until Warren had joined the game. Upon departing, Brosset stopped in the lobby and spoke to the operator at the telephone switchboard.

"I shall be in my office," he announced. "I expect to be working late. By the way, if any calls come for Mr. Barringer, switch them to me. He is likely to be up there with me; if not, I can communicate with him."

DOWN in the gloomy lobby of the City Club, a patch of blackness seemed to shift from the wall. A moment later, a tall, phantom figure traced its way silently through the lobby. The switchboard operator did not see this ghostly form. The men in the cardroom did not observe it as it glided past the door.

The figure merged with blackness near the stairs. That was the last visible trace of its presence. Yet the haunting form did not depart. Somewhere within the confines of the building it still trod its mysterious way.

Warren Barringer was in the cardroom. Clark Brosset was in his office. Jasper Delthorn had been taken to his own room on an upper floor. Here, at the City Club, were the only three men who could possibly know anything concerning the details of crime at Delthorn Manor.

That was the reason why The Shadow lingered. After his weird evanishment from Delthorn Manor, he had come to this place - to the spot where he could watch the men who knew!

CHAPTER XVI. THE POLICE THEORY

THE uniformed policemen were not the only persons who had entered Delthorn Manor to find the dead bodies in the upstairs study. With them were three or four neighbors whom Marcia Wardrop had called when she first left the house.

These men had crowded up the stairs after the officers; now they were down in the living room, consoling Marcia, while they awaited the arrival of police officials.

A siren sounded in the side drive. A man went to the door and admitted two chunky, square-shouldered arrivals. One was Sidney Gorson, the Newbury police chief. The other was his star detective, Harold Terwiliger.

Gorson asked a few brisk questions. Learning that none of the persons present knew anything about the crime, he motioned to Terwiliger, and the two ascended the stairs. They entered the room where the bodies lay. Noting two officers here, and none below, Gorson dispatched one of the policemen to the living room.

The police chief and his detective made a careful examination of the bodies. Gorson, square-faced and sober of demeanor, turned to Terwiliger and observed the solemn, methodical expression which the detective wore.

"What do you make of it?" questioned the chief.

"Plain enough," returned Terwiliger. He turned and pointed to the door. "Somebody sneaked in here and stabbed Humphrey Delthorn. Look at that knife. Driven in hard and fast."

"Then what?"

"I've given you the answer. He couldn't get the knife out quickly. The servant must have heard him sneaking up the stairs. He bobbed in, and the killer shot him."

"Sounds logical," agreed Gorson. "You get at things quick, Terwiliger. Odd thing, I took it - one killed with a knife; the other with a bullet."

"Well," said the detective, "I've explained it. The murderer used a knife because it wouldn't make a noise. The servant wasn't expected. So he had to shoot him, and make a quick get-away. He didn't figure he'd need two knives; but he probably had the gun for emergencies."

The detective picked up the revolver from the floor, examined it carefully, and replaced it.

"I'll tell you more," he declared. "Look at the positions of the bodies. I'll show you just what happened. First, the murderer came in through the door."

By way of description, Terwiliger strode to the door and assumed a crouching position, with one hand tucked under his coat, as though holding a concealed weapon.

"Delthorn was sitting at the desk," stated the detective. "See how he pushed back the chair? The criminal wanted to catch him unaware; but he wasn't quick enough. He got across the room in time, though, to stab Humphrey Delthorn. But he may have made some noise doing it. Maybe Delthorn managed to give a cry. Anyway, the murderer stepped back."

TERWILIGER, after having advanced across the room, withdrew with a dramatic gesture, and glared at Humphrey's body. He was giving his impression of a murderer viewing his handiwork.

"Then," continued the detective, "the killer suddenly heard a noise behind him. He turned" - Terwiliger paused to illustrate the action - "and found the servant leaping upon him."

Gorson nodded admiringly. He had a high opinion of Terwiliger's skill at crime detection.

"The killer had buried the knife," went on Terwiliger. "There it was, in Delthern's body. He had no weapon when he met the servant; but he backed away to pull out his revolver. The man jumped upon him; the killer broke loose and fired."

Terwiliger's final imitation was an attempt to reproduce a struggle between two men which finally brought the detective panting, against the wall, staring down at Wellington's inert form.

"He must have lost the revolver after the first shot," decided Terwiliger. "Maybe the servant was fighting him right to the end. But he thought just one thing" - the detective tapped his forehead to indicate the murderer's inspiration - "that was that someone else might be coming. He had to get out - in a hurry, too. He didn't want to be seen running with a gun. That's why he didn't stop."

His oration finished, Terwiliger resumed his natural pose. He became taciturn and wise of expression, displaying the confident manner of a man who is convinced of his own opinions.

Police Chief Gorson slowly turned over everything that the detective had said. Deliberate and methodical, he rubbed his heavy jaw as though seeking loopholes in Terwiliger's theory, and finding none. At last, he put forth an important question.

"What was the motive?"

A knowing smile appeared upon Terwiliger's face. The detective swung his arm about the room in an attempt to include the entire building in a single gesture.

"Burglary," he asserted. "The best bet in Newbury. A man living here who is the heir to millions. One servant in the house. Everyone in town knows that. Some smart crook came in here for a big haul. He didn't get it."

Terwiliger's tone was convincing. Sidney Gorson again nodded in agreement. Nevertheless, the police chief felt that the star detective could do even greater work by quizzing the persons below. He ordered the policeman to keep charge; then motioned Terwiliger to follow him. The pair descended to the living room.

MARCIA WARDROP and the neighbors were gathered in a cluster with the policeman standing beside them. Police Chief Gorson went directly to the girl.

"You were the first person in here?" he questioned.

"Yes," admitted Marcia.

"Talk to the lady, Terwiliger," ordered Gorson.

"Tell me what happened, Miss Wardrop," said the detective.

"It began when I was coming home," began Marcia, in a wistful, hesitating tone. "That is, it began - began when our car stopped just past the driveway."

The girl's words indicated that she had thought of some event previous to the actual arrival. Terwiliger, however, missed that point.

"Whose car?" he asked.

"Dorothy Garland's car," returned Marcia, "She was taking Harriet Saylor and myself home from a bridge club. They were in the front seat; I was in back. Dorothy went by the driveway before I stopped her. So I stepped out and came up to the side door."

"Then what?"

"I unlocked the side door with my key. I came in, but I didn't see Wellington."

"The servant?"

"Yes. He always used to reach the door just about the time I came in. I walked through the living room, and called him. There was no answer. Somehow - something" - the girl hesitated, then resumed - "something made me worried. I called Wellington from the foot of the stairs. There was still no answer. I was afraid. I ran out to tell the neighbors.

"They didn't want to enter unless they were sure something was wrong. Mr. Townley called the police station, and the two officers came. They were the ones who went upstairs."

Terwiliger turned to Townley. The neighbor corroborated the girl's story so far as it concerned him. The detective again questioned Marcia.

"You are sure you saw nothing? Here in the house, I mean - or in the driveway?"

"Nothing at all," declared the girl, in a firm tone.

Terwiliger began to talk with the men who were present. His indication that he had no further questions for Marcia gave the girl sudden courage. She turned to Police Chief Gorson.

"Would it be all right," she asked, "for me to call Mr. Horatio Farman? He is our lawyer, you know."

"Certainly," responded Gorson. "It would be a good idea to have him come here."

MARCIA left the living room, remarking that the telephone was in the central hallway. She reached a closet near the foot of the stairs. There, out of earshot, she picked up the telephone and gave a number in a low, steady voice.

Her tones became a whisper as she heard the response that she had expected. While she spoke, she kept a furtive eye upon the distant living room.

"This is Marcia... Yes... At home... Something terrible... Humphrey has been killed - and Wellington... I have been questioned, but there was something I didn't tell... Listen... Coming up the avenue, we passed a taxi that was going in the opposite direction... Yes, on the avenue... Warren Barringer was in it... I was sure he had been here... Yes... Yes... I understand... Say nothing... Yes, I promise."

The girl paused; then, quickly, she added:

"Someone is coming. I'll call later."

Marcia clicked the hook with her thumb just as Chief Gorson appeared from the living room. The man saw the girl at the telephone.

"Haven't you gotten Farman yet?" he queried.

"I'm still trying the number," returned Marcia. "Operator - operator, please -"

The response came, and Marcia gave the number, repeating it in an annoyed tone. Chief Gorson stood by, watching.

"This is Marcia," said the girl. "I - I've been trying to get you, Mr. Farman... Yes, I am at home... Humphrey Delthorn has been killed. Mr. Farman... Yes, the police are here... No... Wellington was killed also... You will come at once?"

The girl hung up the receiver and nodded to the police chief. She managed to smile as though she had heard good news.

"Mr. Farman is coming right away," the girl announced. "He can tell you anything that is important."

"Nothing is important but the name of the murderer," returned Gorson grimly.

TWENTY minutes later, Horatio Farman arrived. The old attorney came by taxicab, instead of walking in this time of urgency. He found only Gorson, Terwiliger, and Marcia - a silent trio, seated in the living room.

The lawyer's first concern was for the girl. He asked if she had been questioned; receiving an affirmative reply, he wanted to know if she would be needed further. Gorson looked at Terwiliger. The detective was doubtful.

"What do you want to do about her?" he asked Farman.

"I want to see that she is with friends," declared the old lawyer. "This is no place for the girl. Where could you go, Marcia?"

Terwiliger offered a suggestion as Marcia hesitated.

"How about the girl friends that brought you home?" he asked. "Could you get in touch with them? I'd like to know if they heard anything after they left here."

Marcia went to the telephone to call Dorothy Garland. Gorson and Terwiliger suggested that Farman view the scene upstairs. The detective remained, while Gorson went with the lawyer to the study.

Dorothy Garland arrived with Harriet Saylor just as the attorney and the police chief reappeared. Terwiliger asked Marcia's friends a few questions. He finally told Gorson that it would be all right for Marcia to leave with the others.

Horatio Farman looked toward Marcia as the girl was about to leave.

"There is nothing you wish to say to me, Marcia?" he asked.

"No," replied the girl. "I - I have told everything that I know. Thank you for coming, Mr. Farman. I - I'm sorry I was so abrupt over the telephone; but it was so important for you to know that -"

"Quite all right, Marcia," interposed the lawyer. "Try to forget this horrible affair tonight. Don't worry, my dear. Just try to ease your mind."

"What about the other relatives?" questioned Sidney Gorson, turning to Farman after Marcia had gone. "Where are they?"

"Jasper Delthorn, the brother, lives at the City Club," explained Farman. "Warren Barringer stays at the

Century Hotel."

"Hm-m-m," mused Gorson. "Why aren't they living here, Mr. Farman?"

"Caleb Delthorn, the grandfather, lived alone," stated Farman, "except for Marcia, who has been here ever since she was a child. It is customary for the head of the Delthorn family to dwell at Delthorn Manor. Winstead, then Humphrey, followed that procedure."

"Call the hotel and the club, Terwiliger," ordered Gorson. "How about old Caleb's estate, Mr. Farman. Who was to get the money?"

"All the grandchildren shared," stated Farman. "The estate has not been settled; but every apportionment is considerably over a million dollars."

Terwiliger was listening with one ear while he held the other to the telephone receiver. He heard Farman mention that Caleb Delthorn had been very wealthy. But neither the detective nor the police chief noted a reserve in the attorney's manner.

Horatio Farman, as legal representative for all of the Delthorn heirs, was anxious to avoid too close a questioning. The mention of large sums for all the heirs spiked further queries on the part of Gorson, and enabled Farman to avoid a clash between police demands and the ethical right of an attorney to keep the affairs of his clients strictly to himself.

Gorson, leaning toward Terwiliger's theory of attempted burglary, held very little suspicion regarding Jasper Delthorn and Warren Barringer. His vague thoughts in that direction were ended when Terwiliger completed his efforts at the telephone.

"Just talked with Clark Brosset," announced the detective, approaching the two men, who were now at the entrance to the living room. "He's the president of the City Club. Jasper Delthorn was on a bender down there tonight. They had to carry him up to his room. Warren Barringer is at the club, too. Been with Brosset all evening; playing cards there now."

Police Chief Gorson turned to Horatio Farman. This information from a reliable source eliminated all consideration of either Jasper or Warren as persons who might have known of the crimes.

"Suppose," said Gorson, "that you go down there and break the news to them."

"Gladly," agreed Farman. "You will remain here?"

"Yes. Terwiliger and I will search for clews."

When the lawyer had gone, the police chief and the detective returned to the study. Gorson watched Terwiliger rummage about the room. The police chief was well satisfied with the detective's efforts.

Burglary that had resulted in murder. That was Terwiliger's idea, and Gorson liked it. The police had accepted it as the proper theory.

CHAPTER XVII. THE SHADOW'S PRESENCE

SEVERAL nights had passed since the deaths of Humphrey Delthorn and Wellington. Jasper Delthorn was seated at the big desk in the upstairs study of Delthorn Manor. His heavy bulk made a better impression in the huge chair which his older brothers had occupied before him.

An evil smile flitted over Jasper's face. The new head of the Delthorn family, the heir to one half of the

thirteen millions, Jasper Delthorn was well satisfied with the turn of affairs.

No one had advanced the theory that Winstead Delthorn had been murdered; nor had the police changed their opinion regarding the deaths of Humphrey and Wellington. Detective Terwiliger was still trying to obtain some trace of a mythical burglar.

The telephone rang on Jasper's desk. The leering man picked up the instrument, and broadened his smile as he heard the voice at the other end. He engaged in a short conversation which terminated suddenly as he heard footsteps in the outer hallway.

It was Holley, the former chauffeur, who had taken over Wellington's duties. The servant had come to announce that Police Chief Gorson was downstairs with Detective Terwiliger.

"Send them up," ordered Jasper. Then, half aloud, after Holley had left: "I wonder what's on their minds tonight?"

Jasper's question was soon to be answered. Gorson wore a serious expression when he entered the study, while Terwiliger strutted with a knowing air.

"Good evening, Mr. Delthorn," said Gorson. "We came to confer with you. I want you to hear what Terwiliger has to say. He is forming a new theory on this case."

Jasper motioned to chairs, and sat back in his own, while he coldly studied his visitors. There was nothing of the wastrel in Jasper's appearance now. The man was quite sober; in fact, his habits had been temperate ever since he had taken over the control of Delthorn Manor.

"It's about your brother Winstead," began Terwiliger. "I've been wondering about his death, Mr. Delthorn. It struck me sort of odd that he should have died just before Humphrey was murdered."

Jasper nodded thoughtfully. "Winstead's death was very sudden," he agreed. "But I can't see how it could have a connection with Humphrey's murder."

"No?" quizzed Terwiliger. "Well, look at it this way. Maybe Humphrey's murder had something to do with Winstead's death."

"That's simply putting the question the other way."

"Maybe. Maybe not. But I like to get at the beginning of everything. I've just been thinking - suppose that Winstead's death was murder, too."

Jasper Delthorn opened his mouth in amazement. He stared from Terwiliger to Gorson. He noted the serious expressions on the faces of both men.

"You don't mean" - Jasper's voice was filled with awe - "that my poor brother Winstead -"

"I mean," interrupted Terwiliger, "that Winstead's death looks mighty suspicious."

There was a long pause. Jasper began to nod. Police Chief Gorson motioned to Terwiliger to continue.

"A fall down the stairs," said the detective. "Accidental cause maybe. That's what everyone thought. But if it wasn't an accident, then there's more to this affair than I thought."

"You mean a plot?" queried Jasper, in an anxious tone. "If that is the case -"

"Don't worry, Mr. Delthorn," interposed Gorson. "There's going to be no more killings while I'm around."

We'll have detectives on hand. Terwiliger wants to stay here himself while he investigates. That's the first step."

"If you are asking my approval," responded Jasper, in a relieved tone, "you may have it this very minute. You have alarmed me, chief. It is terrible to think that Winstead may have been murdered. But it worries me tremendously to hear you suggest that my own life may be in danger."

"No danger," said Terwiliger methodically.

"This is very serious," asserted Jasper, shaking his head. "Something must be done at once."

"Leave it to Terwiliger," insisted Gorson. "He will have a free hand. He can start here, and go wherever he likes. I'm giving him all leeway."

The chief's declaration brought a response from the detective. Terwiliger rose to his feet and thumped his heavy fist against the palm of his other hand.

"Winstead Delthorn was murdered!" he announced. "So was Humphrey. It's all part of the same game. I don't know what's in back of it; but I'll promise you something. You, Mr. Delthorn - you, Mr. Gorson - mark my words! Right here in this room, when both of you are here again, I'll bring in the evidence that will get the man who was behind those killings!

"Remember that. I swear to it! I'll carry the evidence in this fist of mine, and I'll plant it here before you!"

The detective was at his best. His square form was drawn to its full height. Chief Gorson was quick to express his approval of the detective's spirited remarks.

"Terwiliger means it, Mr. Delthorn," asserted Gorson. "I've heard him talk this way before. He'll come into this room - while you and I are here - and he'll lay down the evidence. That's a fact!"

"I hope so," said Jasper seriously. "I shall aid you in every possible way, Terwiliger."

"I think it would be advisable," suggested Gorson, "for Detective Terwiliger to remain here from now on. He believes - no cause for alarm, Mr. Delthorn - that the murderer may return to this scene of crime."

"A very good theory," responded Jasper. "I shall arrange a room for you, Terwiliger."

"I'll just bunk down in the living room," said the detective. "I want to look around a bit tonight."

He arose, as though assuming that the matter was settled. Chief Gorson followed. Jasper came from behind the desk to join them. The three went downstairs. Terwiliger, stopping in the hallway, looked back at the steps.

"That's where Winstead Delthorn fell," he recalled, in a voice that sounded dramatic amid the gloomy setting of the hallway. "That is the way the murderer made his escape. He reached this very spot. Then _"

The detective turned slowly. He pointed to the living room as a possible avenue to escape; then to the front door; finally to the sliding doors that hid the great reception hall.

"Maybe through there," he suggested. "That may be the way the murderer went!"

"Hardly," laughed Jasper. "There's no possible exit from the place."

Terwiliger advanced and slid back one door. Jasper and Gorson followed him. As they entered the great

room, Jasper remarked that there were no electric lights. He struck a match and lighted the tapers in the candelabrum.

BOTH Gorson and Terwiliger stared wonderingly about the room. The feeble illumination imparted an impression of vastness. The outline of the whispering gallery seemed sinister as it loomed in the fringe of gloomy light.

"A spooky place," remarked Gorson. Even the gruff police chief seemed awed.

"My grandfather," observed Jasper thoughtfully, "believed that the ghosts of his ancestors dwelt in this hall. He believed that his own spirit would remain here."

"Ghosts do not kill," growled Terwiliger.

"I do not believe in ghosts," returned Jasper, with a short laugh.

Mirth was lacking in Jasper's tone. Something about this room made the new master of Delthorn Hall tremble.

Was it the recollection of that night when the heirs had assembled at the stroke of twelve? Or was it some mysterious presence that now inhabited the place?

Gorson and Terwiliger were leaving. Jasper went to the table and extinguished the candles. He turned to follow the others; as he did so, he fancied that he heard a sighing whisper pass through the room. A grim reminder of that terrible laugh that had cast its knell upon this place!

So had that laugh begun - in a rising, sibilant tone. Jasper stood stock-still, trembling in anticipation of a mocking burst that might echo from the walls. But the fearful event did not occur; the murmuring whisper drifted into nothingness. Jasper almost fled toward the door. The eerie sound had chilled him.

Terwiliger planted himself in the living room. Chief Gorson made his departure. Jasper Delthorn went upstairs. In the study, behind a closed door, he again picked up the telephone. His tone was guarded as he talked over the wire.

"That dumb dick is here," he said to an unknown listener, "parked in the living room. Thinks he's wise to some plot. Guarding me."

Jasper laughed. Then, in conclusion, he added a final statement that was derogatory to Terwiliger.

"Sure... I'll forget all about him... I'll keep my eye on him tomorrow... Just a joke; that's all he is."

Hanging up the receiver, Jasper prepared to conclude his work in the study. He went through several desk drawers; then arose and stretched himself.

IN the living room, Terwiliger, with one eye open, was looking toward the gloomy hallway. The detective was indulging in theory.

Perhaps it was the occupation of his mind that prevented him from noticing a splotch of blackness that slowly crept from the direction of the great reception hall; perhaps it was the silent slowness with which the dark patch moved.

Whatever the case might have been, Terwiliger did not observe that the sliding door was opening. He did not see the tall form that emerged from the reception hall. A strange figure stood within the hallway. The sliding door was moving shut behind it.

The phantom form became motionless, while burning eyes gazed toward Terwiliger. A being garbed in black waited and watched. Terwiliger closed his eyes. Then the strange shape glided toward the front door.

A few moments later, that door had opened and shut. The same stealthy form was invisible in the outer night. The soft, scarcely audible tones of a sibilant laugh, joined with the creaking of the tree branches above the lawn.

Once again, The Shadow had been at Delthorn Manor. It was he who had provided the great reception hall with a ghostly presence. His strange laugh proved that he had learned the events that had taken place within that mansion on this night.

Terwiliger had boasted that he would bring incriminating evidence against a murderer. Jasper Delthorn had laughed secretly in derision. That was the status of affairs at Delthorn Manor.

The Shadow knew!

CHAPTER XVIII. TERWILIGER TALKS TOO MUCH

DETECTIVE TERWILIGER'S eyes had closed as if in sleep. They remained so for fully four minutes. Suddenly, they reopened. The sleuth stared grimly toward the hallway. Another minute passed. The detective rolled from the couch and came to his feet.

Walking to the hallway, Terwiliger stared up the stairs. He turned and looked toward the closed doors of the reception hall. He hesitated; then, swinging back to the stairs, he started upward two steps at a time, and did not stop until he reached the closed door of Jasper Delthorn's study.

Without knocking, the detective opened the door and entered. Jasper Delthorn was standing, startled, by the desk. He was apparently about to leave the room.

"I've got it!" exclaimed Terwiliger excitedly. "I've got it!"

Jasper gazed at the detective with a puzzled air. Terwiliger grasped his arm. He drew Jasper out into the hall, and pointed toward the top of the stairway.

"I figured it out while I was half asleep," declared the sleuth, in a whisper. "I've got an idea of how your brother Winstead was murdered. Come along!"

Jasper followed the detective. Terwiliger stopped at the head of the stairs. He pointed down the precipitous flight of steps, then waved his hands to indicate the peculiar sort of alcove in which they were standing.

"Kind of an odd place, isn't it?" he queried.

"Yes," admitted Jasper. "But what has that to do with it?"

Terwiliger dropped to his hands and knees, and made a measurement of the uppermost step. He walked to the bottom of the stairs, counting as he went. He made a peculiar series of calculations upon his finger tips; then beckoned to Jasper to join him in the lower hallway.

When Jasper had complied, Terwiliger went mysteriously toward the portals of the reception hall. He pushed one door aside, and entered the huge, silent room. Jasper followed into the musty atmosphere.

This place had not been to Jasper's liking a short while ago; now, as Terwiliger flashed the rays of an

electric torch, the dark woodwork of the reception hall seemed to lose much of its somberness. Somehow, the eerie presence was lacking.

JASPER regained his composure and watched Terwiliger's beam flicker upon the balcony at the far end of the room. An exultant ejaculation came from the detective.

"What is it?" queried Jasper.

"As near as I can make it out," declared Terwiliger, "that gallery is on a level with the stairway landing. Not only that - it's just about on a line with it. Do you get what I mean, Mr. Deltherm? Maybe the gallery could be an extension of the landing!"

"There's a wall beside the stairway," objected Jasper.

"I know that," persisted Terwiliger, "but it's oak paneling, too - just like the finishing in here. Say - how do I get up to that gallery -"

He began to swing the light about the room. It finally lodged upon the circular stairway in the corner. Terwiliger was about to start in that direction when Jasper stopped him.

"It's rather foolish to go up there," suggested Jasper. "Why not try the landing? It's easier to get to - and its lighted."

"You're right," agreed Terwiliger. "You're getting my idea now. Come along, and we'll go up the stairway."

They reached the landing. Terwiliger chuckled as he tapped the paneling. He fancied that he heard a hollow sound. He suggested that fact. Jasper responded that all of the panels would probably sound the same, being set a trifle out from the interior wall.

"Maybe so," declared the detective. "I know what you figure - solid wall all the way down the stairs. But that doesn't mean that there can't be an archway at this spot. Look here."

The detective faced Jasper with a grim face. He went into his favorite role. Terwiliger loved to demonstrate the way that criminals might work.

"Here's your brother Winstead," explained the sleuth. "He's looking down the stairs" - Terwiliger hunched his shoulders - "and he doesn't notice what's going on behind him. All of a sudden -"

The detective shifted his position. He backed himself against the panel, and assumed a murderous attitude. He scowled and glared as he looked toward the head of the stairs.

"This panel opens," continued Terwiliger, playing the second part in his theme of death. "A man comes out" - Terwiliger's arms extended - "and grabs your brother Winstead. Sort of weak and sickly, wasn't he? Winstead, I mean.

"Well, this bird grabs him and gives him a big heave down those steps. Say" - the detective backed away from the precipitous descent - "it was a hundred-to-one shot that Winstead would never pick himself up after that bump!"

"Yet the panel is solid," observed Jasper. "A man not only would have to walk through it; he would have to see through it to do the things you say. Forget it, Terwiliger. You've been dreaming!"

"Dreaming?" snorted the sleuth. "Listen - when I talk, I mean what I say. This panel has got a couple of

divisions. Maybe one of them is a fake, if the whole thing isn't."

He began to work upon the smooth wood, but to no avail. Jasper Delthern expressed impatience as he turned to walk back to his study. Terwiliger looked up and raised his right forefinger impressively.

"Remember what I said?" he questioned. "I'll bring in the evidence on the man behind these murders? You'll be there - the chief will be there - in your office - when I hand it in with this fist?"

Terwiliger clenched his right hand, and laughed. He rapped the panel with his fist, and chuckled at a new idea.

"I'm on the right trail," the sleuth insisted. "Leave it to me, Mr. Delthern. Go back there in your study. Wait until I call you. You'll see me walking through this solid wall yet.

"How? I'll tell you. I'm going up on that gallery, and work at it from there. Ghosts! Maybe one will try to grab me in the dark. Ha-ha!"

Jasper smiled at the detective's derisive laugh. He placed his hand within the study door and rested it there for a moment.

"Go to it, Terwiliger," he said. "I'm turning in - my room's at the end of the hall. Call me when you find something - if you find it. I think you're wasting your time."

"You'll see," returned Terwiliger.

The detective went down the steps. Jasper entered the study. He stood just within the door; his forehead narrowed with a frown. He closed the door behind him and pressed the light switch. In the darkness, Jasper began to mumble to himself.

MEANWHILE, Terwiliger had reached the reception hall. The detective entered the huge, gloomy apartment, and closed the door behind him. He made for the spiral stairway with his flashlight, and ascended a flight of steep, creaky steps.

On the gallery, the detective noticed the hushed atmosphere of the place. His footsteps made peculiar echoes. Terwiliger paused. This gallery was spooky enough. What did that matter? He had a job ahead.

He turned the corner of the gallery. He chuckled as he neared the end wall, where the passage made another turn. The sound of his mirth traveled strangely. Terwiliger stopped and waited until the echoes had died. Then, nearing the end of the passage, the detective stooped and began to examine the wainscoting with his flashlight, using the luminous beam to form a close-up circle.

His free hand moved upward. It came to an ornamental molding. Terwiliger jockeyed with the bulky wood. Another chuckle came from his lips, and echoed along the gallery.

Click!

The molding raised. Terwiliger, peering close, found himself looking through a horizontal slit. He turned off his flashlight.

In the dim illumination from the other side of the panel, Terwiliger could see the landing at the top of the stairway!

Eagerly the sleuth began to look for another catch: one that would release the entire panel to allow the passage of his body. He tried a molding at the side. It seemed to move a trifle. Intense and breathing

eagerly, Terwiliger was unconscious of his surroundings until the big grandfather's clock began to whirl from the reception hall below.

The unfamiliar sound was startling. Terwiliger turned and quickly ran his flashlight's beam along the gallery in each direction. Then he shot its rays down into the reception hall.

The sleuth could see that both the gallery and the big room were empty; then his eyes and ears simultaneously discovered the cause of his alarm. Just as the flashlight's rays revealed the face of the grandfather's clock, the immense timepiece began to chime.

Terwiliger chuckled. New echoes came with the chimes. Again, the detective ran his light along the gallery to make sure that all was well. Just as the chimes were ending, he turned back to the panel that had engaged his attention.

The clock began to strike twelve. The booming sounds were loud in that musty, high-ceilinged chamber. They drowned out lesser noises.

As the strokes chimed, Terwiliger still worked at the vertical molding. It moved; he heard a slight click amid the strokes of the clock; but nothing happened.

Terwiliger turned out his light again, and let it fall into his pocket. With both hands, he pressed at the molding. Then, as the clock neared its final boom, the sleuth gargled huskily.

Firm hands were clutching his neck from behind. Powerful fingers were twisting at his throat. A strangling grasp was choking him; a powerful force was thrusting him downward toward the floor!

THE clock still clanged. Terwiliger, clawing vainly in the darkness, heard the final strokes amid a roaring sound that increased momentarily in his ears. His coughing gasps were stifled.

As the echoes of the stroke of twelve seemed to creep through the confines of the whispering gallery, Terwiliger's fight was lost. The detective's struggle was not ended; but his hands were feeble and his vain coughs were rattling in his throat.

The sleuth's body writhed spasmodically. The clutch of death still tightened. Time passed weirdly in the Stygian gloom. At last, the detective moved no more.

More time went by in Delthorn Manor. Some minutes after those clutching hands had performed their purpose with the unwary detective's throat, Jasper Delthorn was seated at the big desk in the second-floor study.

The youngest of the Delthorn brothers - only survivor of the three - was grinning with an evil leer as he rested his heavy hand upon the telephone. Slowly, Jasper picked up the instrument. His smile grew more intense.

It was a fiendish grin that betokened the consummation of an evil deed; Jasper, however, intended it as a leer of triumph. He was gloating over the end that had come to a man who had failed to use discretion.

New death had entered the walls of Delthorn Manor. Again, a murderer had stalked his prey. This time, the victim should have been forewarned; instead, he had unwisely prepared himself for the end that he had met.

Detective Harold Terwiliger, ace of the Newbury force, had gone to his doom. The sleuth had used keen deduction at Delthorn Manor tonight; but he had talked too much!

CHAPTER XIX. JASPER CALLS A MEETING

LATE the following afternoon, Warren and Clark Brosset were seated in the president's office at the City Club. The two men had been together frequently during the past few days. On each occasion their conversation had reverted to the subject of Jasper Delthorn.

"We're playing a safe game, Warren," observed Brosset, as he tapped his desk thoughtfully, "but I wonder where it is going to lead us."

"So far," returned Warren, "the police do not appear to have gained any clues that lead to Jasper."

"No," admitted Brosset, "but, on the other hand, they have not suspected that you were at Delthorn Manor on the night of the murders. That's why I have constantly advised you to keep peace for the present."

"Watch and wait," smiled Warren. "There's bound to be a break, Clark. When there is -"

"You can rely on me. Use discretion always, Warren."

"I have been doing so. Your advice to ignore the Delthorn affairs has been helpful. I haven't even seen Horatio Farman."

"Why should you? He is merely the administrator of the estate. Let well enough alone. I have a hunch, Warren, that Jasper will make trouble for himself. When that time comes -"

The ringing of the telephone caused an interruption. Clark Brosset lifted the receiver. A puzzled look appeared upon his face as he spoke.

"I think he is somewhere about," declared the president of the City Club. "Hold the line a short while."

He covered the mouthpiece and looked toward Warren with an anxious air.

"It's for you," said Brosset, in a low tone. "Old Horatio Farman. Listen, Warren - whatever he wants - even if it is just an appointment in his office - say that you are occupied. Ask him to wait a few minutes until you can find out about arranging your plans. Then you can tell me what it's about. Understand?"

Warren nodded. Taking the telephone, he spoke to Horatio Farman. Clark Brosset listened intently.

"Yes," said Warren. "Glad to hear from you, Mr. Farman... Yes... Yes... Why, I suppose so... But... Of course. There's no reason for him to be reluctant... Tonight? That is unexpected... I was going out with some friends from the club. I wouldn't like to cancel the engagement unless they are willing... All right. Yes. Suppose you hold the wire until I speak to them. They are in the lounge..."

Warren quickly covered the mouthpiece and spoke to Clark Brosset in a voice that was scarcely above a whisper. He gave the news in terse syllables.

"Jasper called Farman," he announced. "Wants a conference. Delthorn Manor. Tonight. Thought he'd better call Farman first. Will call me himself if Farman tells him I agree."

CLARK BROSSET held up his hand for a moment's consideration. At last, he nodded, whispering that Warren should express agreement.

"Hello, Mr. Farman," spoke Warren. "I can change my plans, I believe... Yes, have Jasper call me here... Surely, I'll be glad to talk to him... Yes... I understand... I'll be here..."

"Jasper was reluctant to call me," explained Warren, after hanging up the receiver. "He told Farman that he has become very serious-minded since assuming his responsibility as head of the Delthorn house.

"According to Farman, Jasper feels that he and I should be friends. He wants a family conference: he and I, with Marcia Wardrop - and Farman in attendance. Farman thought it would be an excellent idea."

"It's all right," nodded Brosset. "I see his purpose, Warren. He must figure that he's safe by now, and that family accord would be a good step. This police theory of attempted burglary is a great break for Jasper - and for you, in a way.

"Wait here until Jasper calls. Go to Delthorn Manor tonight. Jasper, when sober, is not hard to deal with. You won't have trouble like you did with Winstead and Humphrey - especially if the call comes from him.

"But keep your head, Warren. Don't let Jasper know that you suspect him of crime. Be affable. You will learn more that way."

"This may be a trap," said Warren, with a worried tone. "I've encountered trouble every time I've been in Delthorn Manor, Clark."

"Don't be superstitious."

"But Jasper is dangerous."

"Not to you, Warren. He's reached the point he wants. He is the chief legatee, Half of the estate is his. He's managed to get by. If any further trouble should occur there, it would put him in a real jam.

"Figure it this way, Warren. Jasper wants your friendship. You and Marcia are his safeguards. He cannot gain a cent more unless he eliminates the pair of you. A single murder would accomplish nothing.

"Jasper is trying to establish himself. He has sobered and is playing safe. Much of his previous irresponsibility may have been a pretense. The only way to meet his game is to form contact with him, now that he has paved the course."

Clark Brosset's emphatic tones were convincing. Warren saw the logic, and was glad that he had gained the benefit of his friend's advice.

"Pursue your former policy," added Brosset. "It worked before; it will work again. Rely upon my assistance, for I know the same facts that you know."

The two men chatted for a quarter hour. The telephone bell announced another call. Clark Brosset answered it and spoke in an affable tone. His lips silently phrased a name that Warren observed as Brosset handed him the telephone.

"Jasper," was Brosset's statement.

The club president listened while Warren talked with his cousin. Brosset caught the trend of the conversation from Warren's remarks.

"Hello, Jasper," greeted Warren. "Certainly... Always glad to hear from you, old man... I told Mr. Farman so... Yes, tonight will be fine... Nine o'clock? Surely. I'll be there... See you later."

"Great work, Warren," commented Brosset, after the call was concluded. "Suppose we go downstairs and have dinner. Then you can run up to Delthorn Manor later."

Warren agreed. He and Brosset descended. They dined in the grillroom, with other club members. They returned to Brosset's office, chatted a while, and finally noted that it was nearly quarter of nine.

Clark Brosset shook hands warmly with Warren Barringer. He walked downstairs with the young man, and saw him through the front door of the lobby.

"No need for secrecy tonight," whispered Brosset, as Warren stepped into a taxi. "Use your head, old fellow. Do nothing rash until you talk to me. I'll be somewhere around the club when you get back."

SOMETHING was gliding along the floor of the City Club lobby as Clark Brosset returned through the front door. The president did not see it. A shadowy, substanceless blotch of blackness, it moved steadily toward the stairs and ascended them ahead of the man who followed.

Before Brosset had reached the head of the stairs, the door of his office opened at the touch of an invisible hand. A stealthy figure glided through. When Brosset arrived and turned on the light, there was no sign of a living form. Only the solid blackness beyond the jutting bulk of a filing cabinet indicated the spot where a living person might be standing. Yet there was no motion visible there.

The telephone bell rang. Clark Brosset answered the call, held a brief conversation, and hung up. The club president opened the wall safe and busied himself there, his actions plainly visible from the corner. He finally took out the record books of the City Club, closed and locked the safe; then deposited the books upon the desk.

After a few moments of thoughtful table drumming, Clark Brosset became restless. With hands thrust deep in his pockets, he paced across the room, extinguished the lights, and went out, closing the door behind him.

Something swished from the corner beyond the filing cabinet. A living form stalked through the office. A tiny disk of light, no larger than a half dollar, cast its gleam about the room.

The glow traveled along the desk. It paused upon the telephone; it rested on the unopened record books. It flickered across the room, and cast a shimmering beam upon the door of the wall safe from which those volumes had been taken.

A low laugh broke the silence of the office. That tone of mirth came as the climax of The Shadow's efforts. Its boding notes told of previous investigation; of a purpose behind the presence which had stalked the corridors of the City Club as secretly as it had moved within the gloomy walls of Delthorn Manor.

The knowledge of The Shadow was apparent in that laugh. This phantom of darkness knew the turn that present events had taken. He had lingered in this office before; he had learned the plans that Warren Barringer had made with Clark Brosset.

Jasper Delthorn was awaiting the visit of his cousin, Warren Barringer. Soon the two would meet at Delthorn Manor. It was too late for The Shadow to be there at the beginning of their interview.

This office was the place where Warren had promised to communicate later with Clark Brosset. It, like the Manor, was important. Before The Shadow started on his mission at the Delthorn Manor, he had work to do here, while Brosset was absent from the City Club office.

The shuddering laugh of The Shadow was repeated. It came as a final token of the secret knowledge which guided his plans upon this fateful night!

CHAPTER XX. THE WARNING

JASPER DELTHERN was standing at the open doorway of the great reception hall. The huge apartment was illuminated by its long rows of flickering candles that extended from the bottom of the balcony. The candelabrum on the table was also aglow.

Holley, the ex-chauffeur, approached the master of the Manor. He announced a visitor.

"Police Chief Gorson, sir."

"Show him in," ordered Jasper.

Holley went away and returned in company with Sidney Gorson. He brought the police chief to the spot where Jasper was standing. Jasper turned, shook hands with Gorson, and swept his other arm toward the room.

"Splendid sight, isn't it?" he questioned.

"Yes," agreed Gorson. "What's the idea of all the lights?"

"Family conference," explained Jasper. "Our old Delthern tradition, chief. You know what I told you last night. Ghosts of our ancestors -"

Jasper laughed as he broke the sentence, thus intimating his disbelief in supernatural forces. He spoke again, in a matter-of-fact tone, while he watched the flickering candles in feigned fascination.

"I called you about Terwiliger," he said. "Have you heard from him today?"

"No," returned Gorson. "That's why I was anxious to get here after I learned that you wanted to see me. What's it about? Where is he?"

"He left this morning," said Jasper calmly. "He didn't tell me where he was going. He merely said that he had gained a very definite clew. He asked me to call you and arrange an appointment in the study after he came back here tonight."

"That's odd," observed Gorson.

"Not at all," returned Jasper. "You remember what he said last night? That he would come into that room while both of us were together there, to lay the evidence before us?"

"Yes. He said he would get the goods on the man behind these murders."

"Exactly. Well, that was why he was so mysterious this morning. He wants to finish the job in a dramatic fashion. He seemed very confident when he left.

"I had planned a family conference for tonight. My cousin, Marcia Wardrop, is at home. My other cousin, Warren Barringer, will be here shortly. I expect our lawyer, Farman, at nine thirty.

"Inasmuch as we will be engaged in this room, discussing affairs of the estate, I thought it best for you to be here in case Terwiliger comes. You can wait for him in the living room. He stated that he would arrive around nine o'clock."

As Jasper concluded his statement, there was a knock at the front door. Both men stepped into the hallway, Jasper remarking that Horatio Farman usually came by that little-used route. Instead of the attorney, however, Holley admitted Warren Barringer.

"Ah! My cousin!" greeted Jasper, stepping forward eagerly to meet the visitor.

HE introduced Warren to Police Chief Gorson, and the three went back into the huge reception hall. Warren expressed his admiration of the great apartment.

"That's right," recalled Jasper. "You were never in here before, were you, Warren? This was grandfather's show place - this room. We held a meeting here shortly after his death; before you arrived home from abroad."

Warren nodded. Without looking toward his cousin, he was noting the change evidenced by Jasper's voice. The black sheep of the Deltherns was making a great effort to display a white fleece, Warren decided.

Police Chief Gorson was walking about the reception hall, studying the furnishings and looking up toward the whispering gallery. Jasper called to him from the door.

"Warren and I are going up to the study," he informed the police chief. "We will come down when Mr. Farman arrives. If Terwiliger shows up in the meantime, come on up to the study."

In the hallway, Jasper Delthern beckoned to Warren, and started up the stairway. Before Warren could follow him, a hand pressed against his arm, and he turned to face Marcia Wardrop. The girl had come from the living room.

She held her forefinger to her lips as Warren was about to speak. Then, in a quick whisper, she spoke. Her words seemed to be prompted by a strange intuition - a woman's knowledge that something must be wrong.

"Be careful," warned the girl. "You were here before when trouble occurred. When Winstead died - when Humphrey and Wellington were killed -"

Warren stared at the girl in real amazement. He had met Marcia the night that he had visited Winstead, but he had no idea that the girl knew of the visit on the night of double murder. Was this a trick to trap him? A look at Marcia's face convinced him that it was not. The girl's countenance was very pale and worried.

"Stay here," she added. "Do not go up with Jasper. I am afraid - for you - because I believe in you -"

Marcia did not complete the sentence. She was watching the stairs as she spoke. Seeing Jasper turn to glance back, Marcia managed to smile as she spoke in a louder tone.

"I am certainly pleased to meet you," said she. "You must come here often, Cousin Warren."

Taking the cue, Warren responded in like tone. Jasper pounded down the stairs, grinning in pleased fashion as he witnessed the meeting.

"Our cousin," he said to Warren. "Marcia Wardrop. I see that you have introduced yourselves. Marcia will be with us later, after Farman arrives. Let us go up to the study, Warren."

"You will excuse me?" Warren asked Marcia.

The girl nodded; but in her eyes was a pleading look that urged Warren not to go with Jasper. The gaze turned to a positive warning as Warren gave a very slight negative shake of his head.

IN spite of Marcia's plea, Warren was determined to go to the study. As he followed Jasper up the

stairs, Warren shook off the first effects of Marcia's warning. Somehow the girl had known that he had been here the second night; naturally, she was worried now.

But Warren could not help but wonder whether her concern was entirely for him. How could the girl know that he was innocent. Was it not logical for her to think that he might be the murderer; that he was stalking Jasper as new quarry?

These confusing thoughts made Warren weaken as he reached the landing. Although he was not superstitious, he felt a sense of awe as he neared the room where each of his visits had marked a prelude to sudden death.

The thought of Police Chief Gorson was the reassuring impression that made him continue on his way. He was going alone with a man whom he believed to be a murderer. But there were people in the house tonight - among them Newbury's principal officer of the law. In addition, Warren was forewarned regarding Jasper Delthern; and he had heard Clark Brosset's logical reasons why Jasper would attempt no crime tonight.

Warren's qualms had vanished when Jasper closed and locked the door of the study. This room of death did not seem overly sinister tonight. Jasper, seating himself in the big chair behind the mammoth desk, looked entirely different from either of his elder brothers.

Warren Barringer took a chair and stared directly toward his cousin. He noticed a serious expression upon Jasper Delthern's face. It was then that Warren sensed the importance of this conference.

The new proprietor of Delthern Manor had something startling to discuss. That was apparent from his first words; and as Warren Barringer listened, he began to realize that he should have heeded Marcia Wardrop's warning.

CHAPTER XXI. A KILLER SPEAKS

"TONIGHT," announced Jasper Delthern, "we are holding a meeting in the great reception hall. It will be the only conference before the final meeting at which the estate will be apportioned among the surviving heirs."

He paused, placed his hands upon the edge of the desk, and glanced narrowly toward his cousin.

"Perhaps," continued Jasper, "you have learned that there was some question regarding your claim upon the estate. That was due to your absence at the first meeting. You were sustained, by Farman and my brother Winstead.

"However, Warren, it will be essential for you to be at the final meeting if you wish to gain your share of our grandfather's millions. Should you be unable to be present, you will not share - unless Marcia and I voluntarily waive our rights."

"That's clear enough," returned Warren, as Jasper paused again. "I expect to be at the final meeting. We will all be there - all of us entitled to share in the estate."

"My brother Winstead will not be there," remarked Jasper sadly. "Nor will my brother Humphrey."

Warren Barringer's hands tightened upon the arms of the chair. He detected a ring of insincerity in Jasper Delthern's sorrowful tone.

"They were murdered!" added Jasper suddenly. "Murdered - both of them!"

He looked squarely at Warren. Evidently, Jasper's purpose was to test his cousin's reaction. Remembering the need for discretion, Warren responded calmly.

"I understood," he remarked, "that Winstead's death was accidental."

"It was not!" declared Jasper coldly. "The same person who stabbed Humphrey and shot Wellington flung Winstead from the head of the stairs. Have you any idea who that person was?"

Warren Barringer did not reply. He watched an evil, fiendish leer appear upon his cousin's face.

"Can you name the murderer?" queried Jasper, in a persistent tone.

Warren could see no reason for refusing an answer now. He was completely baffled by Jasper's attitude. The look on the fellow's face was proof enough that he was gloating over memory of evil deeds.

"I can name the murderer!" retorted Warren, in a low, tense accusation. "I do not need to tell you his name, Jasper Delthem. You killed both your brothers and Wellington!"

"I did," admitted Jasper coolly. "Nevertheless, there is no one living who will prove it. That includes you, Warren. On the contrary" - Jasper's tone became thoughtful - "it would not be difficult to prove that Warren Barringer was the murderer!"

THE thrust was delivered with a villainous deliberation. Jasper's cool admission of guilt had been astounding in itself; this nervy statement aroused Warren's indignation.

"You can prove nothing!" he ejaculated. "You know well that I am innocent -"

"Softly, softly," interposed Jasper, with malicious calm. "Someone might be passing in the hallway; someone who would overhear you if you talk too loud."

Warren settled back in his chair. Jasper grinned. The murderer was filled with confidence.

Warren began to realize his own difficult position. He remembered Clark Brosset's admonition to give Jasper enough leeway to enmesh himself. Warren resolved to listen until Jasper had finished.

"The proofs are here," remarked Jasper quietly. "Statements signed and sworn to by my brother Humphrey and his servant Wellington - statements that indicate you may have been concerned with Winstead's death.

"There is proof also that you came here on the night that Humphrey and Wellington died. Your hat" - Jasper laughed - "remained in a downstairs closet. The police were negligent in their quiz that night. I rather fancy that if they questioned my cousin Marcia they could learn more concerning your movements on that evening."

The warning!

It flashed back through Warren Barringer's mind. Had Marcia Wardrop divined Jasper's plan? Was she helpless also? Was this a hopeless trap?

Warren could rely only upon Clark Brosset. There was a friend who could help - yet well did Warren recall the need for caution that Brosset himself had expressed.

"You are thinking of my telephone call from the City Club?" questioned Jasper. "If so, let me inform you that I expected you to overhear it. I saw you approach the phone booths. I did not talk to Wellington that night. I faked the call to bring you here.

"Wellington dead was better than Wellington alive, after he had entered the room. In fact, he was a nuisance all along. I was thinking of your welfare, Warren" - Jasper held up his hand as Warren flashed a look of indignation - "because I had no quarrel with you. I preferred that no one should discover a murderer in the Delthorn family."

Jasper's evil statement had a twofold meaning. It signified that he did not want crime pinned upon either himself or his cousin. A smile of feigned solicitude replaced the leer on Jasper's countenance.

"Come," he said, as Warren preserved absolute silence. "Let us discuss terms. You are in a serious position, Warren. Remember, if we each declare the other as a murderer, the cards are stacked against you. One would suspect a cousin as a killer more readily than one would suspect a brother."

"Moreover, you as well as I have profited by the deaths of Winstead and Humphrey. You could profit further by slaying me. Suppose I should accuse you of threatening my life?"

Warren smiled scornfully. He had regained his wits, now that he saw the game. He was determined to meet Jasper's calmness with equal unconcern.

"This is interesting, Jasper," he remarked. "But where does it get you? Am I to assume that things are getting a bit too hot for you?"

"Not too hot for me," retorted Jasper. "Too hot for you, Warren. The detective on this job - a dumb cluck named Terwiliger - is out for business. He'll get the murderer, he says - and in characteristic fashion, he'll pick the wrong man. That ought to worry you, Warren!"

It did worry Warren Barringer. The young man had no knowledge of the happenings that had taken place in Delthorn Manor on the night before. Nevertheless, Warren felt sure that Jasper was leading up to some proposition. He wanted to find out what it was. Jasper saw his quizzical expression and laughed again.

"I'm going to make it easy for you, Warren," he declared. "That is why I called this meeting for tonight. When we confer with Horatio Farman, you will state that you have found it necessary to leave for California. That will naturally bring up the subject of your share in the estate."

"At my suggestion, Marcia and I will agree, in writing, not to dispute your claim. Your portion will be forwarded to you upon the date of settlement. You will keep one half of it."

"And the rest?" queried Warren calmly.

"You will split with me," decided Jasper. "That is a fair break. You get one eighth - the share originally yours. You have lost nothing. Your quarter share is really of my making; therefore half of it rightfully belongs to me."

In tone and manner, Jasper Delthorn had calculated well. His words had carried no great threat; indeed, they had shown a marked expression of welfare toward Warren Barringer. But the menace was there; now, Jasper chose to reveal it.

"Follow my instructions, Warren," ordered Jasper, in a harsh tone, "and you will come out of this uninjured! When I receive my split of the money that goes to you, I will destroy all the evidence against you. If necessary, I will send it to you that you may accomplish the destruction."

"But if you refuse; if you remain here any longer - that will mark the end of all your hopes. I will see that the police gain the evidence. You will be marked as a murderer. You understand?"

Warren nodded. He saw the meaning behind Jasper's game. He put the matter bluntly, so that his cousin would know he comprehended.

"My present share," considered Warren, "is more than four million dollars. Should I be eliminated, that amount will go to Marcia Wardrop. You would not gain a penny of it, for you are limited to your half.

"But if I agree to your plan, we will split that amount of money - about two million dollars each. An excellent thought, Jasper!"

WARREN was smiling; playing a cagy game as he pretended to agree with his cousin's scheme. He saw a chance to deliver a subtle stroke; and changed his tone accordingly.

"If I refuse, however," asserted Warren, "I may win out by staying here. Suppose you are discovered as the murderer, Jasper? That might lead to your elimination. That would give me one half share in the estate."

"Try it!" snarled Jasper, rising from his chair. "You will lose out. The cards are stacked against you. I can bluff it through!"

"If I run away," remarked Warren, "it will make it look as though I were the murderer."

"Not if you do it sensibly," growled Jasper. "I will stick to my part of the bargain. Why not? It will mean two million dollars. But I tell you, Warren, your refusal will cook your goose."

Warren was on his feet also. The two men glowered at each other across the big desk. Each was holding back. Jasper had not told what had happened to Terwiliger. Warren had not stated his reliance upon Clark Brosset.

Thoughts of the detective made Jasper overanxious to win his point. Terwiliger's disappearance might bring a troublesome investigation. Hope of aid from Clark Brosset made Warren ready to bring his fight into the open.

"Well?" snarled Jasper. "Do you accept my terms?"

"No!" retorted Warren. "I'm calling for a show-down!"

"You'll get it, then!" jeered Jasper. "Right now! Police Chief Gorson is downstairs. I can tell him plenty in a hurry. When he gets here, he'll find evidence of murder. I'll show it to him -"

Jasper's statement broke off. His unfinished words were to prove prophetic - in a way that Jasper had not anticipated. The lights went out. The study was plunged in darkness. Jasper's words ended in a stifled cry.

WARREN BARRINGER stood petrified with horror. This had happened on that other night. Why had it happened again? What was the answer?

A revolver roared through the darkness. A dazzling spurt of flame spat in the direction of the desk. Another shot; a second flash. Warren Barringer dropped instinctively to the floor. He thought that the shots were meant for him; that Jasper Delthorn had resorted to some cunning trick.

The lights came on. Warren clutched the edge of the desk. He peered over the top. He saw a body lying on the floor.

Warren gasped. He was staring at the dead form of Jasper Delthorn!

The young man stared wildly about the room. The door was still closed, the key turned in the lock; yet he was alone in the room with Jasper's body. There, on the floor, lay the man who had admitted murdering his brothers; aside from that dead form, and Warren Barringer's living body, the room was empty!

Jasper Delthorn was a murderer. He, in turn, was murdered. But this new deed of evil was shrouded with a veil of mystery. As on the night when Humphrey and Wellington had died, Warren Barringer had seen no human assassin.

Again, he stood in a room where death had struck in darkness. This time, the cards were truly stacked against him. A glittering revolver was lying on the floor not far from Warren's feet. People would be here - with them Police Chief Gorson - before he could escape.

They would find Warren Barringer alone - a weapon at his feet - the body of his murdered cousin sprawled upon the floor!

CHAPTER XXII. THE SHADOW ORDERS

WARREN BARRINGER staggered toward the door. He leaned against the barrier that separated this scene of crime from the outside world. He listened. His only hope was that the shots had not been heard.

Long minutes passed. Each was a moment of horrible waiting. At last, vague footsteps sounded in the hallway. Someone tapped upon the door. Warren gave no response.

"Mr. Farman is here, sir," said the voice of Holley. "Do you wish him to come up?"

Warren ventured no reply. He felt a momentary relief. The shots had evidently passed unheard. That was quite logical. If all the people had been in the living room, the thickness of the door, the great distance to the floor below, could easily have kept the shots from ears below.

"Mr. Delthorn!" Holley rapped sharply on the other side of the door. "Mr. Delthorn! Are you there?"

Warren tried to suppress his heavy breathing. He stared wildly toward Jasper Delthorn's body, as though expecting it to rise and cry out to the knocking servant.

"Mr. Barringer!" Holley was crying Warren's own name now. "Has anything happened?"

Warren offered no response. He could sense that Holley was listening for some sound. Then stumbling footsteps went hurrying along the hall, and Warren could hear Holley's shouts to those below.

What could be done now? The others would be here - Gorson and Farman - and Holley was outside blocking the only avenue of escape. Warren leaped to the revolver and plucked it from the floor. For a moment he was determined to fight his way out of here; then he realized that such a course would change his innocence to guilt.

Confronted by an incredible dilemma, Warren could only grope mentally until he found a middle course. He would remain here, hoping for the best. But he would not let the invaders through the door!

The young man's mind was dazed. He wanted to seize the telephone and call Clark Brosset; but now he heard new footsteps in the hall. To call Clark might incriminate his friend.

"Open this door!" Police Chief Gorson was shouting as he pounded on the portal. "Open this door! In the name of the law!"

Still holding the revolver limply in his right hand, Warren advanced step by step, moving like a somnambulist. He paused as he neared the door, sensing rather than hearing Gorson's new shouts.

AGAIN, the room was plunged in darkness. It came so suddenly that Warren merely accepted it as a natural occurrence. The clock on Jasper Delthorn's desk had ticked a full ten minutes since shots had echoed through this room; but Warren's groping brain had no sense of the time that had elapsed since the former period of darkness.

"Open the door!"

A light switch clicked close by the spot where Warren stood. Turning, the young man staggered in new terror. Standing before him was a tall being clad in black! Like a ghost, this phantom shape had appeared. Warren, bewildered, took it for a living portion of the blackness that had remained after the dark was gone.

Sensing a menace, Warren raised the hand that held the revolver. A long arm shot forward. A black-gloved hand gripped Warren's wrist. Finding himself staring into a pair of blazing eyes that glowed from beneath a broad-brimmed slouch hat, Warren let the revolver drop from his clutch.

The Shadow had arrived. Heedless of the pounding blows that were falling upon the door, the black-cloaked master calmly released Warren Barringer's wrist. He drew the glove from his left hand. Upon a long white finger, he revealed a glittering gem that shone in sparkling hues.

Warren Barringer tottered. The scene seemed to shift. He fancied almost that he was back in Lamont Cranston's curio room. For he was staring into the ever-changing depths of the spark-emitting girasol, that mysterious stone that could never be forgotten by anyone who had felt its spell!

A low voice whispered into Warren's ear. Its tones were commanding. The sight of the girasol made Warren know that a friend had come to aid him. The words impressed themselves upon his brain as effectively as if they had been his own secret thoughts.

"Be calm." The Shadow's tones brought confidence. "Whatever has happened, speak the truth. Protest your innocence. Demand that Clark Brosset be brought to testify in your behalf. His presence - the facts he knows - they alone can aid you."

The whispered voice paused as a shattering stroke shook a panel in the heavy door.

"Remember," resumed The Shadow. "Have Clark Brosset aid you. Here, in this room. At once. Insist upon his help to prove your statements. When I have gone, open the door. Submit to arrest without a struggle."

Warren Barringer nodded. Staring at the girasol, he saw the black glove slide over the finger that wore it. He turned his gaze upward after the strange gem had gone from view. He watched the eyes of The Shadow; but in his range of vision, he could see a black-gloved hand reach for the light switch.

Darkness. The swishing of a cloak, audible despite the heavy pounding on the door. Warren Barringer's ears caught the tones of a whispered laugh that crept weirdly through the blackened room.

On came the lights. Moving mechanically to the door, gripping the key with one hand, and the knob with the other, Warren Barringer prepared to admit the men who were pounding from the opposite side.

But his eyes were wandering about the room, wondering as they looked for the strange personage who had worn the talismanic ring of Lamont Cranston - the circlet with the mystic girasol.

There was no sign of The Shadow. The black-clad master of darkness had vanished completely with the coming of the light!

CHAPTER XXIII. EVIDENCE OF MURDER

JASPER DELTHERN'S study had become an inquest room. Police Chief Sidney Gorson was standing just within the door. Before him, seated in front of the desk, was Warren Barringer, head bowed and hands cuffed.

Two uniformed policemen were present. Horatio Farman, pale of face, was seated in a corner. On the floor, the gruesome body of Jasper Delthorn still stared upward in mute testimony of murder.

The revolver was lying on the floor where Warren had dropped it when The Shadow had been here. Police Chief Gorson was constantly shifting his gaze from the weapon to Warren Barringer.

"Well," growled Gorson, "we've got the goods on you, Barringer! You say you don't know how this happened, but it looks plain to me. Come along now - are you going to talk?"

"I'm waiting for Clark Brosset," responded Warren.

Chief Gorson laughed. It was the twentieth time that Warren had made that statement.

"He'll be here shortly now," promised the police chief. "We sent for him when you insisted. It's not going to help you, Barringer. There's only one man who could have killed Jasper Delthorn. That man is you."

Footsteps sounded in the hallway. Three men appeared: a policeman, Holley, and Clark Brosset. Warren Barringer raised his head, and his eyes gleamed hopefully. Brosset, serious of expression, approached and tapped him on the shoulder. Then, noting Jasper Delthorn's body, the president of the City Club stepped away in momentary horror.

"What's this, Warren?" he queried. "You - you haven't killed him?"

"No," responded Warren.

"Here are the facts, Mr. Brosset," informed Gorson, taking the floor. "Warren Barringer came up to this room with Jasper Delthorn. The servant came to summon them downstairs. He found the door locked. No answer. I was below. He called me and others. We hammered at the door, and Barringer opened it. We found him and Jasper's body."

"I didn't do it!" cried Warren. "I didn't kill him! There was a shot in the dark -"

"He asked for you," inserted Gorson, speaking to Brosset. "Said he wouldn't talk until you came. We can't see what that has to do with it."

"Tell them, Clark!" pleaded Warren.

"I KNOW why Warren Barringer wanted me here," declared Clark Brosset frankly. "He told me some time ago that he suspected Jasper Delthorn of murder. He overheard Jasper talking on the telephone at the City Club."

"To whom?" queried Gorson.

"To Wellington, the servant here," responded Brosset. "Warren Barringer came here immediately. Afterward, he returned and told me that Humphrey Delthorn had been murdered."

"Wait a minute!" Gorson was on his feet. "You mean that on the night when Humphrey Delthorn was killed, Warren Barringer came here -"

"Yes," broke in Warren. "I was here. In this room. Someone turned out the lights, and when they came on again, Humphrey was dead. Wellington came in; he grabbed for me. The lights went out again, and someone shot Wellington."

"What did you do then?" inquired the police chief, in a sarcastic tone.

"I left," admitted Warren. "I went back to the City Club and told Clark Brosset that Jasper Delthorn was a murderer."

"Ah! You saw Jasper here?"

"No," admitted Warren slowly, "I knew he was coming here -"

"You did, eh?" Gorson was derisive as he turned to Clark Brosset. "Did you know that Jasper was coming here that night?"

"Only because Warren Barringer told me," declared Brosset. "You see, Warren confided in me as a friend. He only came here twice. First, to see Winstead -"

"To see Winstead Delthorn?" broke in Gorson. "When? On the night that Winstead fell down the stairs."

"Yes," admitted Brosset, in a hopeless tone.

"So, now we've got it!" growled the police chief. "Frankly, I'm sorry about this, Brosset. You've let this murderer play you for a sap. We've been looking into these killings, Terwiliger and I. Now comes Jasper's murder. Here we find out that Barringer was up here twice before. Did you ever think, Mr. Brosset, that your good friend Warren Barringer might have bumped off Winstead and his brother Humphrey?"

"I trusted Warren Barringer," declared Brosset, in a serious tone. "I can't believe that he is a murderer. Surely - if what he says is true - there must be something that can prove it."

"Jasper Delthorn killed his brothers," asserted Warren suddenly. "He told me so, himself. Tonight -"

"Look around," suggested Brosset. "Have you searched the desk? Maybe Jasper left something there. I can't believe this about Warren -"

Police Chief Gorson was acting on the suggestion. He yanked open the top drawer of the big desk. He found an envelope. He opened it. He read two papers within.

"Look at these," he said grimly.

Clark Brosset took the papers. Gorson spoke while Brosset was reading.

"Just little statements," he declared. "Sworn to by Humphrey and Wellington before their deaths. Statements that Warren Barringer was here the night that Winstead died. Can you guarantee those signatures, Mr. Farman?"

The old attorney took the documents. He nodded sadly.

"Yes," he said, "they are genuine. I knew about those affidavits, Chief Gorson. Humphrey wanted me to keep them for him. I refused to do so."

"Jasper must have found them," grunted Gorson. "Poor chap. I guess he wouldn't believe it. Look at what he got."

TURNING toward Warren Barringer, the police chief became savage in his denunciation.

"You might as well confess to it, Barringer!" he said. "You see how far your bluffing has gotten you. Three murders - four - that's what we've got you for!"

Warren looked pleadingly toward Clark Brosset. He saw a look of anguish on that friendly face. He turned to Horatio Farman. The old attorney was solemn and challenging. Warren clutched at the last straw.

"Marcia Wardrop!" he cried. "Maybe she can tell you that I'm innocent. Maybe she knows -"

"Send for the girl," ordered Gorson. "I wanted to make it easy for her, but if she knows anything about this, we'd better find it out."

A few minutes later, Marcia Wardrop appeared in the room. The girl shrank back with a frightened gasp when she saw the body of Jasper Delthorn. She looked toward Gorson; then stared at Clark Brosset. The president of the City Club stepped forward to catch the girl as she began to totter.

Marcia regained her nerve as she felt Clark Brosset's grasp. Then Horatio Farman was beside her. The old lawyer took charge of the girl, while she looked toward Warren Barringer.

"What do you know, Marcia?" questioned Warren anxiously. "Help me - please -"

"On what other occasions," interrupted Chief Gorson, "did Barringer come to this house?"

Marcia Wardrop looked for friendly eyes. Clark Brosset stared sympathetically in her direction.

In a dull, frightened tone, the girl spoke:

"He was here - here the night that Winstead died. When Humphrey and Wellington were killed, I saw him again. He - he was in a taxicab on the boulevard. He - he - I noticed him because he had no hat. The - the hat is here - in the closet downstairs. Don't ask me any more - please - that's all I know. I couldn't believe it - really - I couldn't. I thought - I thought - I don't know -"

"Take her downstairs," said Gorson to Farman. "Stay in the big room - the place with the candles. That's all she knows."

Horatio Farman helped the sobbing girl from the room. Chief Gorson turned to Warren Barringer, while Clark Brosset stood to one side, his chin buried in his hand.

"Come on, Barringer!" growled Gorson. "We've got the evidence of murder. Give us your confession!"

CHAPTER XXIV. A DEAD MAN TELLS

HOPELESSLY, aimlessly, Warren Barringer persisted in his declaration of innocence. Still seated in the chair close beside the dead body of Jasper Delthorn, Warren refused to make the false confession that Sidney Gorson demanded of him.

"I didn't kill him," asserted Warren. "I didn't kill the others. Jasper, himself, told me he was the murderer."

"Who did it, then?" demanded Gorson. "You were here; you ought to know."

"I don't know!"

"A ghost, perhaps. There's supposed to be one around here."

Warren stared with startled gaze. A ghost! Was that what he had seen? He thought of the figure in black; that reassuring phantom form that had shown him the sparkling girasol. The glitter of the flashing fire opal seemed to appear in vivid glow before Warren's eyes.

A terrible theory suddenly asserted itself. That being in black had come here in some miraculous fashion. Could he have been here before?

For a moment, Warren held the wild thought that The Shadow might be the murderer!

Then his thoughts shifted. Warren realized that no killer would have revealed himself as The Shadow had done. There could have been no purpose in such action. Warren remembered The Shadow's words - only through a call for aid to Clark Brosset could Warren hope for a way out of his dilemma.

Yet Brosset was here, and his coming had served only to clinch the proof of guilt against Warren Barringer. With pleading look, Warren turned to Brosset now. He saw the club president shake his head sadly.

Warren understood. In the face of this terrible evidence, with the body of Jasper Delthorn upon the floor, Brosset could only believe that Warren had deceived him in the past. That ended the last chance of aid from the only person in Newbury whom Warren had regarded as a friend.

Prison; conviction for murder - these were the future that Warren Barringer faced. The evidence was all against him, and his clouded brain began to regard The Shadow purely as an apparition.

Warren realized that his nerves had been tense. Some flash-back to his night at Lamont Cranston's home had probably made him fancy that he had seen a black-cloaked visitor here.

To speak of such a personage could do no good. To turn to the theory of a visitor who appeared and vanished would savor too much of the ghost talk which Chief Gorson had just derided.

"You won't talk, eh?" The police chief's words drummed into Warren's throbbing ears. "Close that door. We'll make him talk. Say - if Terwiliger was only here -"

THE police chief broke off abruptly. A sudden thought was perplexing Gorson.

Where was Terwiliger?

Jasper Delthorn had said that the star detective would return at nine o'clock. Could anything have happened to him?

"Where is Terwiliger?" demanded Gorson, staring hard at Warren.

"Who?" asked the young man.

"You know who I mean!" growled Gorson. "Terwiliger - my detective. He was on your trail. Maybe -"

"Maybe you think I killed him, too," blurted Warren.

"That's just what I do think!" retorted Gorson. "I wondered why you were so stubborn. You might have had a break if you'd admitted to killing Jasper Delthorn. You could have pleaded self-defense. But the trouble is, your other crimes were on your mind by this time."

"I never met Terwiliger," persisted Warren.

"No?" quizzed Gorson. "Well, I'll tell you something then. Terwiliger was out to get the murderer. That means he was out to get you. Terwiliger keeps his promises!"

Swinging to Clark Brosset, the police chief gave additional words of information.

"It was this way, Mr. Brosset," he explained. "Last night, Terwiliger and I were here with Jasper Delthorn. We talked about these mysterious killings. Terwiliger had a theory that one man was in back of them.

"Terwiliger told us that he would come into this very room; that he would lay down the evidence before myself and Jasper Delthorn. I counted on Terwiliger to do it."

"Perhaps," mused Brosset, "the detective will arrive shortly. If so -"

"He'll bring proof," interrupted Gorson, in a decisive tone. "I can't see what we need. We've got enough evidence to convict Barringer in short order. But I'd like to see what Terwiliger has found. He won't come here empty-handed."

The police chief glared at Warren. Still holding to the thought that the accused man knew something about the detective's whereabouts, Gorson endeavored to catch the prisoner off guard.

"Maybe Terwiliger is downstairs," suggested the police chief. "Suppose one of you men" - he was speaking to the policemen - "go down and find out if he's arrived. I'll tell you this, Barringer" - Gorson was again addressing Warren - "and you can remember it. If Terwiliger comes into this room, he'll have the proof of murder in his fist. He said he would, and he will -"

As Gorson spoke, one of the policemen was walking toward the door. The other was standing in a corner. Clark Brosset was leaning against the desk. Chief Gorson, with a dramatic gesture that he had seen Terwiliger use, was pointing with his outstretched hand toward Jasper Delthorn's body.

Then came the unexpected - a startling occurrence that broke the police chief's statement. Once again, this room of death was plunged into total darkness!

THE one audible sound amid the blackness was an involuntary cry that came from Warren Barringer's lips. Warren had experienced this sudden darkness in the past. Each time, it had meant a strange and unexpected result. What would happen now?

On came the lights. The illumination revealed all the persons present in approximately their same positions. Warren, in instinctive apprehension, was gazing toward the other side of the desk. His second cry caused all eyes to swing in that direction.

Another man had entered the room. No one had seen the manner of his coming, and ghastly gasps were the responses that greeted his gruesome entrance. For this new arrival was a dead man!

Propped against the paneled wall, introduced there by some unseen and unknown force, was the body of Detective Harold Terwiliger. The sleuth's bulging eyes were glazed and unseeing; his whole shape made a morbid sight as it tottered there, as though imbued with life.

The dead form swayed crazily; then toppled forward as Police Chief Gorson uttered a frantic cry of recognition.

Sprawling as it struck the floor, Terwiliger's corpse rolled on its left side, and the right hand came upward

in a rigid gesture.

There, in a dead, clutching fist, Police Chief Gorson saw an envelope. Terwiliger's face, though hardened in lifelessness, still wore a dramatic expression. The slain sleuth seemed to be pleading with his chief. His outstretched arm was raised almost above the body of Jasper Delthorn!

"Terwiliger!" cried Gorson. "Terwiliger! Dead!"

Then came a weird realization. The manner of Terwiliger's death - who had killed him - the freak of chance that had hurled the body here - these thoughts passed from Sidney Gorson's mind.

All that the police chief could grasp was the recollection of Terwiliger's boast. The sleuth had said that he would get the man behind the murders; that he would deliver evidence in this room, while Sidney Gorson and Jasper Delthorn were present.

The trio was here now; of the three, only one man was living! Yet Terwiliger's promise had been kept! Dead, the detective had arrived to fulfill his self-appointed mission!

CHAPTER XXV. A MURDERER FLEES

OF all the astonished men who had witnessed the amazing appearance of Terwiliger's corpse, Sidney Gorson was the first to take action. Springing forward, the police chief seized the envelope that was clutched in the dead detective's hand. He wrested it from the stiff fist and stared at ink-inscribed lines that shone blue upon the wrapper of the packet.

"Jasper Delthorn is a murderer. He killed Winstead Delthorn. He killed Humphrey Delthorn. He killed Wellington. I, Harold Terwiliger, also died at his hand!"

Gorson's slow voice was reading from word to word. Unconsciously, the police chief continued to recite the statements that shone before his eyes. Warren Barringer looked on in amazement; Clark Brosset wore a puzzled air; the two policemen were stolid and unmoving, as Gorson continued in an awed tone:

"Jasper Delthorn himself was marked for death. The man with whom he plotted planned his end. Jasper was murdered by the master hand behind the scheme of crime.

"Within this envelope are documents that prove the murderer's guilt. They explain his motive. They were taken, tonight, from his safe, while he had gone to murder Jasper Delthorn."

There was a momentary pause, while Gorson's fingers fumbled with the envelope to find what lay within. It was then that Warren Barringer cried a spasmodic warning. He, alone, had been looking toward Clark Brosset. He had seen a hunted stare appear upon the club president's face.

"Look out!" shouted Warren. "Stop him! Stop him!"

Clark Brosset was edging toward the door as Chief Gorson swung to see him. The look on Brosset's face told its own story. This man was the murderer mentioned in those words upon the envelope!

While his countenance showed its fiendish, incriminating gleam, Clark Brosset was drawing his hand from his coat pocket. The nickel-plated barrel of a revolver came to view as the officer by the door leaped forward to prevent the murderer's escape.

With a cry of rage, Brosset dodged the policeman and sprang toward the door. The officer followed to stop him. Instead of snatching at the doorknob, Brosset managed to press the light switch and plunge the room into total darkness.

"I've got him stopped!" shouted the policeman at the door. "He can't get away!"

Promptly, the second officer aided with his flashlight. The rays of the torch revealed Warren Barringer huddled in the chair; then the door, with the policeman guarding it, revolver in hand.

CLARK BROSSET was not in view. The gleam swung across the room. It showed Police Chief Gorson, crouched beside the table, with the envelope in his hand, the murdered forms of Jasper Delthorn and Harold Terwiliger at his feet.

This time the beam showed Clark Brosset. In the darkness, the man was almost to the farther wall. Gorson, by backing away, had escaped him. Brosset's aim had been to snatch the envelope.

Before the president of the City Club could turn his gun toward Gorson, the policeman fired wildly from the door. His hasty shot went wide; but it gave the police chief a chance to scramble beyond the farther end of the desk, carrying the precious envelope along with him.

Clark Brosset fired at the door. The policeman uttered a sharp cry as the bullet clipped his shoulder. Brosset did not shoot again. With Gorson and the other officer drawing their revolvers, the self-revealed fiend feared the odds against him.

Diving toward the paneled wall, Brosset huddled to the floor and exerted upward pressure against the wall. The electric eye of the flashlight showed the panel moving upward. Like a scurrying rat, Brosset plunged through and let the panel drop behind him.

A moment later, the lights of the room came on. Police Chief Gorson thought that the wounded officer had pressed the switch by the door. Dropping the big envelope on the desk, Gorson leaped to the panel. It refused to budge. The opening had closed tightly, without a trace.

"Downstairs!" cried Gorson. "That's where I'm going! Block him if he tries to come back here! Get that wall open!"

With the power of an enraged bull, the police chief yanked open the door and dashed into the outer hallway. His hearty bellow carried to the depths below.

"Stop him!" shouted Gorson. "Watch out below! Get Clark Brosset! Get him! He's coming down through a secret passage!"

Uniformed policemen were arriving in the lower hallway as Chief Gorson reached the landing. They had been stationed there during the quiz of Warren Barringer. They were ready now to aid in preventing the escape of Clark Brosset, could the man be found.

A murderer was fleeing. The truth was known, although the details of the crimes were unrevealed. The incriminating envelope lay upstairs, guarded by a watchful officer.

Could Police Chief Gorson prevent Clark Brosset's escape? What would be the fleeing man's mode of exit from the secret passage which now refused to open at the end which terminated in the study?

These were important questions - and only one person in Delthorn Hall could provide the answer. That was the unknown being whose unseen hand had projected Terwiliger's dead body into the room of death.

Only The Shadow knew!

CHAPTER XXVI

GHOSTLY VENGEANCE

CHANCE directed Sidney Gorson's course as the police chief reached the bottom of the stairs. As three policemen awaited further orders, Gorson strode to the door of the great reception hall. He saw Marcia Wardrop and Horatio Farman standing by the big center table of the great candle-lighted room.

"Stay where you are!" ordered the police chief. Then, to the policemen: "Get going - look everywhere! I'll take care of matters here."

The officers scattered. Their duty was to search the house. Police Chief Gorson, striding up and down the big room, uttered words of explanation to Marcia and the lawyer.

"We're after Clark Brosset!" he growled. "He's in back of this! He made a get-away upstairs."

"Clark Brosset!" exclaimed Horatio Farman.

A startled gasp came from Marcia Wardrop's lips. The girl turned deathly pale. She staggered and nearly fell. Horatio Farman caught her. As Sidney Gorson looked for some explanation of the girl's sudden terror, he was dumfounded by a new interruption.

A sneering voice was speaking from the level of the whispering gallery. Despite the strange acoustics of the great hall, all present recognized the tones. Clark Brosset was delivering a warning!

"Stay where you are!" ordered Brosset. "The first one who moves will die. I want that envelope, Gorson. Call your men from the study!"

Furious, but helpless, the police chief answered with a challenge. He could not see the spot where Brosset stood, because the villain was on the gallery behind the illuminating candles. But he knew that Brosset was armed, and would not hesitate to shoot. Nevertheless, Gorson was stubborn.

"We've got you, Brosset!" he retorted. "We're keeping that envelope. My men are going through the house. You cannot escape."

"Keep the envelope, then," called Brosset. "I can leave without it. Hold your evidence and seek me. I prefer escape. One person alone can set you on my trail. I shall kill that person now. You looked for murder, Gorson. You will see it!"

A cry came from Marcia Wardrop, as the girl broke away from Horatio Farman and clutched the side of the big table, directly by the candelabrum. Acting with sudden boldness, Chief Gorson yanked a flashlight from his pocket and clicked its rays upon the gallery that bordered the room.

The light revealed Clark Brosset. The man's lips showed a fiendish grin. The glimmering revolver in his hand was pointed directly at Marcia Wardrop!

GORSON held his own gun useless. He knew that if he attempted to fire, the fiend would slay the girl. Clark Brosset emitted a derisive sneer.

"I am leaving you, Gorson," he proclaimed. "You will never learn my trail. But before I go -"

The police chief cried in horror as he saw Brosset's finger on the trigger. The cry changed to one of amazement. Gorson, Farman, and Marcia, even in this moment of terror, were bewildered by what occurred.

From the blackness of the gallery, a living hand stretched out to clutch Clark Brosset's weapon. Fingers

of black jerked the revolver from the villain's grasp. With a cry of evil disappointment, Brosset turned to grapple with a figure that had suddenly appeared beside him.

Police Chief Gorson stood motionless. He forgot that he held his own revolver. Like the girl and the lawyer, he was stupefied by an amazing conflict which suddenly occurred upon the darkened gallery.

Clark Brosset was in the clutches of a sinister shape that seemed the visible manifestation of a supernatural being! A mass of blackness, gloom of the gallery turned into solid form, had risen out of nothingness to seize the would-be slayer!

Clark Brosset's body twisted in the toils of some superhuman force. It writhed against a power that seemed to have come from the void to gain uncanny vengeance. As the trio watched from below, Brosset still fought with this stranger from another sphere.

A cry of exultation marked a sudden change. The black shape slumped as Brosset managed to regain his grip upon the gun. Gorson saw the revolver twist in Brosset's hand, as Brosset flung himself behind the balcony rail.

Another cry. It was a shout of momentary triumph from Brosset. The old wooden rail of the gallery quivered as a body thumped against it. A revolver roared. A flash spat through the posts of the railing.

The woodwork broke. Impelled by a terrific impetus, the railing broke apart. Amid a burst of splintering oak, the form of Clark Brosset plunged headlong through the shattered barrier.

The revolver clattered and bounced across the floor of the reception hall. Chief Gorson sprang forward. There was no need. Clark Brosset's body, as it crashed upon the floor below the gallery, doubled like a jackknife and lay still.

Bits of woodwork had followed from the railing. Gorson, playing his light upon the gaping break, saw only blackened nothingness.

MARCIA WARDROP was staggering toward Clark Brosset's body. She dropped beside the motionless form. Her voice came in a sighing cry.

"He's dead!" gasped the girl. "He's dead! Clark - is - dead -"

"Shot through the heart," acknowledged Gorson, as he stooped over the body. "Shot by his own gun - fighting something" - he paused, correcting himself - "fighting nothing but his own imagination!"

The police chief looked sharply at Marcia Wardrop. He could see an agonized stare in the girl's eyes. He put forth a short question:

"What do you know about Clark Brosset?"

The girl's lips quivered. Gazing first toward Gorson, then at Horatio Farman, Marcia Wardrop made her solemn answer.

"He was my husband," she said. "I loved him - I believed him - I obeyed him! I did not know he was a murderer - not until he wanted to kill me -"

Police Chief Gorson was silent. He arose and stood looking at the girl, crouched above the murderer's body. Horatio Farman raised Marcia Wardrop gently.

A strange whirl came from the other end of the room. Gorson swung quickly; then stood still as he

listened to the chimes of the huge clock. The mammoth timepiece began to dong the hour of twelve.

A strange, whispered murmur shuddered through the room. It rose in tone and became a quivering, eerie laugh. There was no mirth in that uncanny cry. Its strident notes held a spectral solemnity.

The laugh died. Echoes followed from the walls. Whispered reverberations sent their mystic message from the gallery after the laugh had ceased - long seconds after the grandfather's clock had sounded its final stroke.

"What was that?" gasped Police Chief Gorson, in an awed tone.

"The laugh of a ghost," responded Horatio Farman, pale-faced in solemn sincerity. "The spirit of Caleb Delthorn - the force that slew this man of murder!"

Gorson nodded, half believing. It seemed the only answer. The cry of a ghost - the shade of the former master of Delthorn Manor.

Such was the belief of Horatio Farman. The old lawyer's opinion would be unaltered now; and Marcia Wardrop, frightened, not knowing what to do, believed the same.

For the second time, the girl and the lawyer had heard the laugh of The Shadow!

CHAPTER XXVII

THE SHADOW WRITES

UP in the study of Delthorn Manor, with policemen at his beck and call, Police Chief Sidney Gorson reviewed the course of crime. With him were Warren Barringer, Marcia Wardrop, and Horatio Farman.

"We've got it pieced together now," declared the chief. "Since you showed us all about the secret panels, Miss Wardrop" - he hesitated, realizing that he had used Marcia's maiden name - "we've got the motive and the method. These papers prove the case."

He pointed to documents that had come from the envelope in Terwiliger's hand. One was the marriage license of Clark Brosset and Marcia Wardrop. Another was a confession signed by Jasper Delthorn. A third was a record of debts which Jasper had owed to Brosset.

"Clark and I were married secretly, a few months ago," declared Marcia, in a low tone. "He was a widower, and so much older than I, that we decided to keep the news from grandfather. I told Clark many things - and among them I described the secret openings in this house. Grandfather had told me all about the passages. No one else knew - not even Wellington, who lived here. Our old servant, Hiram, had known. After his death, grandfather confided to me."

"You did not suspect your husband?" questioned Gorson. "Even after the murders began?"

"I wondered," admitted Marcia. "I knew that someone could have opened the panel between the whispering gallery and the landing, to attack Winstead. When Humphrey and Wellington were slain, I knew that it could have been done through the panel in this wall."

"A great trick, that panel," said Gorson. "It can be opened only when the lights are out. That duplicate light switch in back of the panel did the stunt. It supports your story, Barringer."

"Death struck three times while I was here," remarked Warren solemnly. "Each time, the lights went out; then on. The murderer got away easily."

"HERE was the game," declared Gorson grimly. "Brosset saw how those passages could be used to advantage. The main one comes from outside the house - at that stone wall which runs alongside the grounds. It divides. One branch goes to the whispering gallery; the other to this study. Then there is the panel opening from the gallery to the landing. Is that clear?"

The listeners nodded.

"Jasper owed Brosset money," continued Gorson, tapping the record sheet. "Brosset probably advanced him more. He knew Jasper for a scoundrel. He showed him how he could cut in on the big share of the Delthorn estate.

"Brosset gave Jasper the lay of the secret passages. Jasper sneaked in here and bumped off Winstead and Humphrey. His call to Wellington was a bluff; and he killed the servant also. It was all part of the game, Barringer - to have you here as the goat. That was the protection for Jasper."

"Brosset had me fooled," agreed Warren. "I thought he was a friend, and he pretended to be hostile toward Jasper. I knew he talked to Jasper in his office, but it was presumably about Jasper's behavior at the club."

"From what you say," added the police chief, "everything you did was subtly suggested by Clark Brosset. But he was double-crossing Jasper, too. He must have slipped Jasper the idea to talk with you tonight; to try and scare you out of town. Then he had the opportunity to kill Jasper, and put the whole works on you, Barringer."

"Which would have eliminated Warren from his share of the estate," declared Horatio Farman. "I would have seen that Marcia alone inherited the Delthorn millions."

"Clark said that we would be married again," announced Marcia. "But he wanted to wait until after the estate was settled."

"He would have controlled the wealth through you," said Farman, in a solemn tone.

"I suppose," remarked Gorson, "that Brosset thought you would give us the tip on the passages, Miss Wardrop. He knew that you were in the big reception hall. That's why he came to the gallery. He wanted to kill you; then flee through the main passage that leads away from the house."

There was a long pause. Chief Gorson began to study the documents. One at a time, Warren Barringer, Marcia Wardrop, and Horatio Farman, arose and left the study. The lawyer accompanied the two heirs - who were now to share the thirteen millions equally, according to the will.

ALONE, Chief Gorson tapped the desk as he sat in the huge chair behind it. He spoke half aloud, as he considered the strange situation which had resulted in the discovery of two murderers - Jasper Delthorn and Clark Brosset.

"We've got the things that count," mused Gorson, "but there's parts that I can't figure. One of those birds knocked off Terwiliger. Which was it? Jasper or Brosset?"

"How did Terwiliger's body come into the room? Brosset had hopped back to the club at that time. Terwiliger was dead when he arrived.

"How did he get those papers out of Brosset's safe? This envelope" - Gorson picked up a blank container - "had writing on it when I took it out of Terwiliger's hand. Was I dreaming?"

The police chief shook his head.

"There's something strange in this," he mumbled. "There was some person - something behind it. I heard that laugh downstairs. Whoever gave it was the one who planted the goods on those killers.

"If it was a man" - Gorson's muttered tone showed a firm decision - "he has done his part. He was on the side of justice. If it was a ghost" - the police chief could not manage to repress a shudder - "it's all the same."

Gorson arose and put the documents in the envelope. He was thinking of that strange tragedy on the whispering gallery, where some amazing force had come from nowhere to strike down Clark Brosset.

The police chief shrugged his shoulders. Justice had been done. A murderer had gone to his deserved doom. This case was closed. Unanswered questions could be forgotten.

Only Warren Barringer had failed to tell all that he knew. The young man, after his story had been accepted, had decided not to speak of the strange being who had entered the strange room of death.

He half believed that it had been a dream. He was determined to say nothing, even to Lamont Cranston, should he again meet the friendly millionaire. The memory of that strange stone - the girasol - upon a long white finger, was something, however, that Warren Barringer could never forget.

FAR away from the city of Newbury, a solemn click sounded in a pitch-black room. Instantly, a bluish light appeared above the shining surface of a table. The changing hues of the iridescent girasol - the gem that was the token of The Shadow - appeared upon a long white hand.

Two hands became visible. They spread a massive volume upon the table. While the hand with the fire opal on its finger rested upon a broad blank page, the other hand produced a quill pen and began to write.

The Shadow was in his sanctum! Unseen, unheard, unknown, he was inscribing facts upon the page of a secret book. His steady hand was answering, in writing, the very questions that had perplexed Police Chief Sidney Gorson.

These statements appeared as definite portions of a narrative which The Shadow was relating in his annals; pointed words which showed how the master dealt with hidden crime.

The Shadow wrote:

To prove Clark Brosset's guilt, his plan needed to advance to its fulfillment. Until the final stroke, the superfiend was free from discovery.

The documents in his safe were indications of his purpose; but not proofs of complicity. Brosset's course was rendered obvious by careful consideration of those items.

Terwiliger's death was unfortunate. The man's own folly was the cause. He thrust himself unexpectedly into the field, to be slain by Jasper Delthern, who came upon him from the passage to the gallery.

Terwiliger's body, which Jasper concealed in the passage, could have been later removed after guilt had been placed upon Warren Barringer.

However, the body was found and used for a definite purpose. Terwiliger deserved to fulfill the mission he had imposed upon himself.

There was no occasion to thwart Clark Brosset's killing of Jasper Delthern. To obtain the papers during Brosset's absence was more important. Jasper Delthern deserved to die. Clark Brosset did not intend to

kill Warren Barringer, who was therefore safe. The killing of Jasper Delthern made Clark Brosset a murderer in fact.

The hand of The Shadow paused; then, slowly, it continued in response to the thoughts of the hidden brain that directed it.

Had Clark Brosset fled through the main passage, his progress would have been stopped. He could never have escaped.

A low laugh indicated that The Shadow had been waiting in that main passage. The hand wrote on:

His flight ended on the whispering gallery. There, he forced death upon himself by his stubborn struggle.

The hand paused again; at length, in a single line, it wrote this final sentence:

Let the ghost of Caleb Delthern be credited for the unknown deeds of justice.

The Shadow had written. The hand marked a mysterious symbol beneath the final statement. The chronicle was ended. The hands closed the massive volume.

THE light clicked out. A low laugh sounded through darkness. Shuddering whispers awoke amid the blackened room. Another chapter had been added to the strange career of The Shadow; now the big book would go back among the secret archives.

The laugh died away. The room was empty. The Shadow had departed from his sanctum. Yet whispered echoes still remained, echoes as spectral as those which had wavered through the gallery above the great reception hall in Delthern Manor.

The Shadow's task was completed. Murderers had been uncovered. Fiends were dead. The final facts had been recorded. Yet the soft reverberations in the empty sanctum carried weird memories of the past.

They were reminders of those eerie sounds that had been accepted as ghostly manifestations within the walls of Delthern Manor, where the laugh of The Shadow had foiled and triumphed over the plans of murderers.

THE END