



DEATH BY PROXY

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CHAPTER I. MANSION OF GLOOM

ALL the residents of Glynwold knew this mansion by sight. They knew, by sight, every member of the family that lived in it. They knew, too, of the tragic events which had fallen upon it. But no one imagined the menace that hung over it. No one knew—no one even guessed—what was to come.

It was a massive gray-stone mansion, rambling, topped with conical turrets. Spacious lawns, well-placed landscaping, gardens and woodland walks were part of the estate. But there was a grimness about it, accentuated now by a steady drizzle which made the gray-stone mansion seem like a crouching monster, ready to take hapless victims into its maw.

Through the constant rain a small coupe drove to the entrance. A young man stepped out. Tall, slouchy, loose of frame and gait, bulgy brows, high-bridged nose, sharp cheekbones, and high forehead damp with the rain, Owen Lengood strolled through the unlocked door and into the mansion.

Seated at one side of the fireplace were two men, both younger than Owen. They turned when he entered; the firelight showed the similarity of their faces. Not only did they look alike; their features also matched Owen's. Near the two men was a girl; she had Lengood features.

“Hello, Roy... Hello, Walter.” Owen Lengood was brisk with his greeting. “Well, well. My cousins look glum to-day.” He turned to the girl and smiled. “Hello, Eleanor. Guess you were worrying about me, weren't you, sis? I know I should have driven in here yesterday, but—”

A voice interrupted from the other side of the fireplace. Owen looked toward a heavy-built, elderly man who had risen from his chair. The man was gray-haired, blunt-faced with heavy chin. But his face showed kindness and sorrow. His voice, though deep, was modulated.

“We have bad news for you, Owen,” announced the elderly man. “It was unfortunate that you did not arrive home yesterday.”

“What is it, Mr. Joland?” queried Owen, puzzled. “Something about the estate?”

“Yes and no. It concerns James. He died yesterday.”

“At the sanitarium?”

“Yes. Doctor Denburton received report that his condition was serious. I went there at once, taking Roy and Walter with me. They were beside their brother when he passed away.”

Owen shook his head.

“Poor Jim,” he said, sadly. I scarcely thought that he would go suddenly. I supposed that there was hope for him. I am sorry to learn this.”

Owen strolled to the fire; began to warm his hands there. His cousin Roy arose suddenly and approached him.

“So you're sorry about Jim?” quizzed Roy, in a gritted tone. “You don't seem to show it, Owen. You haven't asked what he said before he died. You haven't asked about the funeral—”

“Easy, Roy,” interjected Walter, rising to draw back his brother. “People take things differently, you know. Don't be harsh with Owen.”

Owen turned from the fireplace. His eyes showed anger; then relaxed.

“I intended to ask those questions,” he told Roy. “I should like to know what Jim's last words were; also when the funeral will be.”

“Jim told us to remember him to you,” put in Joland, stepping between the cousins. “He kept asking for you; said that he wanted to see you before he went.”

“And you never came!” exclaimed Roy, hotly. “If you'd put yourself out enough to telephone here from wherever you were, you'd have learned that Jim was dying—”

“I'm sorry, Roy—”

“Sorry? Why should you be? All you're thinking is that there's one less of us to share the estate. As for the funeral, you're spared some trouble there. We buried Jim this morning.”

Owen's fists had tightened. He struggled to suppress his rage. Joland was helping Walter to calm Roy; Eleanor came over and grasped Owen's arm. Slowly, Owen eased. When he spoke, his tone was crisp.

“You are forgetting one thing, Roy,” he declared. “One year ago, there were six of us in this house. Eleanor and I had an older brother, like you and Walter had. We cared for Howard as much as you

cared for Jim.

“When Howard was thrown from his horse in the polo match, he was killed instantly. He had no chance to speak to any one. That was a year ago; my grief has never lessened. But not once would I ever have accused you of being glad that Howard was dead.

“I thought that all of us had grieved for him. I have learned that I was wrong. You never grieved for Howard; and it is your own guilty conscience that has caused you to think that I am glad because Jim has died.”

COLDLY, Owen turned away from his cousin and walked from the room. Roy stared; then sank to his chair, where he stooped and clasped his hands to his forehead. Walter remained beside him; Eleanor hurried after Owen. She overtook her brother near the front door.

“You must forgive Roy,” pleaded the girl. “He is not himself to-day, Owen. He is broken by Jim's death.”

“I understand,” returned Owen. “I feel it, too, Eleanor. That is why I am going out. I can talk to Roy when I return to-morrow.”

“Where are you going?”

“To Baltimore, as I originally intended. You knew that I had to be there to-night to see that chap who talked about buying my stock in the speedboat company.”

“But it is only a matter of a few thousand dollars, Owen. Since Jim has died, you should stay here.”

“I would stay, Eleanor. I was going to postpone the Baltimore appointment; but it's better for me to go to-day. It will give Roy a chance to come to his senses.”

Joland arrived from the living room just as Eleanor began a new plea for her brother to remain. Quietly, the elderly man joined sides with the girl; but Owen shook his head.

“I'm on my way,” he announced firmly. “I'll stop a few minutes to see Doctor Denburton when I drive by his house. You will be able to reach me at the Colonial Hotel in Baltimore, this evening.”

Owen strode from the house. They heard his car drive away. Joland shook his head; then turned to Eleanor.

“You Lengoods are temperamental,” he told the girl. “Just like your grandfather. That is, all of you except Roger. I have never met him during the few years that I have been the administrator of the Lengood estate.”

Eleanor managed a smile. Joland's reference was to her brother Roger, younger than Owen but older than Eleanor. Five years ago, Roger had gone to China; Eleanor had heard from him only at long-spaced intervals since his departure. She imagined that Roger might be the most temperamental of all the Lengood family.

Joland and Eleanor walked back to the living room, to find Roy apologetic; sorry that he had quarreled with Owen. He wanted to talk to his cousin; Joland decided that a telephone conversation would be the best means. Going out into the hall, Joland picked up the telephone and called a number. The others heard him speak.

“Hello... Doctor Denburton?” There was a short pause; some one was summoning the doctor. “Hello, Doctor... Yes. This is Louis Joland... Is Owen Lengood there?”

"I see... You talked to him out front... He drove away just as you came into the house to answer this call... Yes. He told us he was going to Baltimore... Thank you, Doctor..."

Joland hung up and returned to the living room. He placed his hand upon Roy's shoulder; told the young man to forget his worry until evening, when he could call Owen by long distance to Baltimore. While Joland was speaking to Roy, the telephone rang. Eleanor started to answer it; but stopped when she heard a crackly voice in the hallway. It was Peters, the butler.

A few moments later, Peters appeared at the doorway. Stoop-shouldered, with wrinkled face topped by white hair, he surveyed the group with eyes that showed surprising sharpness for a man so old.

"It's for Mr. Owen," he stated. "A gentleman named Mr. Cranston, calling from New York. I believe that he said something about the speed-boat company."

"Tell him that Owen has gone to Baltimore," returned Joland. "That he can reach him at the Colonial Hotel in about three hours."

"Very well, sir."

Peters went back to the telephone. There, the old wrinkled servant delivered the message. He heard an even-toned voice express its thanks across the wire. As he hung up the receiver, his face showed puzzlement.

STANDING in the deep gloom of the great hallway, Peters received a strange impression of a weird echo that sounded like a grim, foreboding laugh. So distant had it seemed, that the servant could not believe it real. He glanced suspiciously about the hall then looked at the telephone. After that, he shook his head. He believed that the sound had been a product of his own imagination.

Peters was wrong. Grim and sinister, that solemn laugh had come from the telephone receiver that he had delayed in placing on the hook. It was like a prophecy, that tone; for it foretold the entrance of a master being into the affairs of the Lengood heirs.

The speaker who had called himself Cranston was actually The Shadow. Master sleuth who delved into all matters that signified the presence of hidden crime, The Shadow had decided to investigate the death of James Lengood.

One year ago, Howard Lengood had died an accidental death only a few weeks before he reached the age of twenty-five. Yesterday, his cousin James had died in a sanitarium; like Howard, James was not quite twenty-five.

In choosing to contact Owen Lengood, The Shadow had picked that young man as the oldest of those who remained. Within the next week, Owen Lengood would be twenty-five. In New York, The Shadow had learned of Owen's interest in a speed-boat company. He had chosen to use that factor as a means of contact.

Owen's quarrel with Roy had disturbed The Shadow's plan. The call from the supposed Cranston was just too late to make the contact. There was reason for the foreboding tone of The Shadow's mirthless laugh. The Shadow foresaw immediate danger to Owen Lengood.

Circumstances had left an interval wherein doom could strike another person who dwelt within the mansion of gloom. Owen Lengood, en route to Baltimore, might be facing hazards which even The Shadow could not forestall at this late hour.

CHAPTER II. DEATH BY MISADVENTURE

LESS than two hours after its departure from Glynwold, Owen Lengood's powerful coupe swung into a paved highway in southern Pennsylvania. A detour sign pointed to the right; the arrow showed the direction to Conowingo.

As the coupe turned right, it passed another sign that marked the limit of a town called Duxton Square. Though it boasted a population of two thousand, Duxton Square was a sleepy place, for it was off the main highway. Flooded streams had forced detours which temporarily brought through traffic to the town.

Owen's coupe whined in high-speed second gear. Though the highway was narrow and shouldered with rows of trees, the driver preferred fast progress. The coupe whizzed past two other cars; its gears shot into high.

The car was doing forty on a slippery road where signs warned that the speed limit was twenty miles an hour. Straight ahead was a parked truck, with two men standing beside it working on the motor.

Cars were coming from the opposite direction. The truckmen observed that fact suddenly, just as Owen's car was bearing to the left to pass the stalled truck. Simultaneously, the two men shouted warnings. One waved his arms at Owen's car; the other gave wild hand signals toward the automobiles that were coming from the south.

Oncoming traffic stopped. Owen's coupe roared rapidly past the truck; the two men leaped for safety. A crash looked certain. All that prevented it was prompt action by the driver of the coupe.

Owen's car skewed across the road. Skidding half about, the driver shot his powerful machine through a space between two trees. The car floundered through a ditch, demolished a picket fence and lacerated the soil of a rain-soaked lawn.

For the moment, it looked as though the coupe had swung to safety; it was headed for an old farmhouse, but the building was forty feet away and the distance was sufficient for the car to halt.

Then disaster intervened.

The coupe careened as its tires slithered in the slippery turf. Bearing to the left, it crashed head-on against a large tree. Radiator and hood were crumpled; the halted car tipped crazily.

As the coupe righted itself, the door by the driver's seat ripped open. The driver tumbled headlong, to sprawl upon the lawn.

ONE truckman made a motion as if to start toward the wrecked car. The other grabbed his arm and growled:

"Hold it, Blimp. Let some of the mugs get there first."

The eager truckman subsided and gave a short nod.

"O.K., Slug," he responded. "You're runnin' it."

The pair stood motionless, while motorists leaped from their stalled cars and dashed toward Owen's coupe. Suddenly, "Slug" gave "Blimp" a nudge. Slug had seen a tall, bald-headed man come from the front door of the house. The fellow was standing on the porch, looking toward the scene of the crash.

"There's the horse doctor," growled Slug. "In his office, like we'd figured he'd be. Come on, Blimp. Here's where we do our stuff."

The truckman hurried to the wrecked car. Arrived there, they found men bent above a motionless figure on the ground. The face of Owen Lengood was turned upward, with eyes fixed in a glassy stare.

"Give him air," growled Slug, shouldering his way through the circle of onlookers. "Say—this guy looks like he's croaked!"

The bald-headed man had arrived from the porch; he, too, was pushing his way through the throng. Blimp made a motion to stop him; then questioned:

"You a doctor?"

"I'm a veterinarian," replied the baldheaded man, briskly. "Perhaps I can serve in this emergency. Carry the man into my office."

Slug and Blimp followed the order. They lifted the body with effort. Slug made comment to the veterinarian:

"Feels like a dead weight, doc—"

Other witnesses followed the truckmen into the house, passing a door where a weather-beaten sign announced the veterinarian's name as "J. R. Kolbel." At Kolbel's order, Slug and Blimp placed their burden upon a rickety surgical table in the center of a room that was surrounded by cages.

Penned dogs began to growl and whimper, sensing that something had gone wrong. Doctor Kolbel began a prompt examination of the crash victim. A timid-faced witness shouldered through the doorway, passing Slug and Blimp, to lay a wallet upon one of the dog pens.

"I found it on the ground," explained the witness in a whisper. "His license cards are in it. His name is Owen Lengood; he's from Philadelphia."

Doctor Kolbel was staring in puzzlement at the face of Owen Lengood. The vet shook his head; then placed his fingers above the victim's ears. As he moved his hands down toward the man's neck, Kolbel stopped suddenly. His nod was solemn.

"A chance blow at the base of the skull," he announced, seriously. "Always a bad spot. He must have struck his head heavily at the time the door broke open."

"Say, doc," gulped Slug, "you don't mean that the guy's dead?"

"He is quite dead," assured Kolbel. "I recognized that fact almost immediately. I was merely seeking to ascertain the cause of his death."

"I was going to suggest taking him to a hospital, doc. We got a truck out on the highway. Maybe we'd better take him anyway."

"That would be unnecessary. There is a morgue in town. That is the proper place to take the body."

SLUG and Blimp motioned other witnesses away. They were about to lift the body from the table when there was a stir at the door. A State policeman shoved his way into the room. He looked at the body, then turned to Doctor Kolbel.

"Dead?" queried the policeman. Kolbel nodded.

"I told these truckmen they could take him to the morgue," said the veterinarian. "The man's name is Owen Lengood; here is the wallet with his license cards. Most of these people witnessed the accident."

"I'll talk to them," declared the trooper. He looked doubtfully at the body. "You're sure the man's dead, doc?"

"Positive! There is a swelling at the base of his skull. Any physician will make the same statement."

"You're not a physician?"

"I am a veterinarian."

The trooper shook his head.

"I'm not doubting your word, doc," he declared, "but I'm not letting this body out of my sight until I get a medical doctor's statement."

The officer paused, to turn to Slug and Blimp.

"Take the body out to the patrol car," he ordered. "I'm carrying it into Duxton Square myself."

Slug and Blimp hoisted the body. When they reached the porch, Blimp looked over his shoulder and saw that the trooper had lagged.

"What about it, Slug?" he questioned anxiously. "Do we make a run for it?"

"Not a chance," returned Slug. "We know where the morgue is. That's where we go."

They reached the trooper's car, a roadster; they propped the body beside the driver's seat. The policeman arrived and took the wheel. Witnesses had thronged about; he ordered them all to drive into Duxton Square and give their testimony at the morgue.

THE crash had occurred in the late afternoon. The steady drizzle was bringing early dusk. Streets were gloomy when the State policeman reached the old funeral parlor that served as the town morgue. Other cars arrived, bringing witnesses. The officer looked for the truck. It had not arrived. Deciding not to wait for the truckmen, he ordered two other witnesses to help him carry the body into the morgue.

A lone attendant met the procession; he conducted them to a small basement room, where three flat slabs were in a row along the floor. The attendant pulled out the middle slab; they laid the body on it. The attendant pushed the slab back in place. The trooper motioned to his companions.

"We'll go upstairs," he told them. "Doctor Kolbel has called a local physician; he'll be here any minute to make his examination."

The group ascended the stairs, the morgue keeper with them. A single electric light cast its insufficient glow through the musty room. It showed the upturned face of Owen Lengood, its aristocratic profile distorted and whitened.

The light showed a flight of steep steps at the back of the basement room. Above them was a slanted door. A scraping came from beyond the barrier; so slight was the sound that it might not have been heard even if persons were present.

The door lifted a few inches. Some one outside peered through. The door was fully raised. A man came down the steps. It was Slug. Following him came Blimp; the two were lugging a body between them.

The two came to the nearest slab. They stretched the body upon it. Blimp looked nervously toward the stairs that led up to the office of the morgue. Slug motioned him to wait. The pair stepped back from the slab.

Side by side upon the flat surfaces lay two bodies. Both were dressed alike; but the similarity did not end there. Feature for feature, the motionless faces were the same. Two dead Owen Lengoods lay stretched upon the slabs of the morgue!

Slug studied the body that the State policeman had brought. Stooping, he adjusted the new corpse that he and Blimp had just carried in from their truck. He turned the head a trifle to one side. He raised an arm and laid it along the side of the slab. Standing back, he compared the positions of the two bodies. They suited him.

Slug leaned above the first of the two forms. Close to the center slab, he spoke in an undertone:

“All right, Dagbar.”

INSTANTLY, a change came over the motionless victim of the automobile crash. The eyes lost their glassy stare. Arms moved slowly. The first of the two Owen Lengoods came to life. Rising to a sitting position, the man called Dagbar grinned. He looked at the body that lay beside him—the one that represented the real Owen Lengood.

Climbing from the center slab, Dagbar began to dig in his pockets, bringing out various items: money, watch, keys and handkerchief. As he produced these items, he gave an order in a low, harsh tone:

“Get busy, you two! Shift those slabs! Put Lengood's in the center.”

The wheels of the flat carriers squeaked slightly as Slug and Blimp pushed them along the floor; but the truckmen managed the shift without great noise. Dagbar stooped above the body of Owen. He began to put the articles that he had taken from his own pockets into those of the dead man.

Halfway through the task, Dagbar heard sounds from above. He stopped to listen, then motioned toward the back door.

“Scram, you two!” he hissed to Slug and Blimp. “Be ready to travel as soon as I join you.”

Slug and Blimp made for the rear door. Dagbar was alone with the body of Owen Lengood. The scene was grotesque as the living man bent above his dead double. Quickly, Dagbar stuffed the handkerchief into Owen's pocket; shoved the watch into the dead man's vest.

There were footsteps on the stairs, voices: the State trooper talking to the physician who had just arrived. Coming up from beside Owen's body, Dagbar took a long, loping course toward the exit that Slug and Blimp had used. His lengthy strides were on tiptoe; they made but little noise.

With catlike speed and silence, the fake dead man clambered up the steep steps. He swung through the doorway above, shut the barrier behind him. All was silent when the doctor and the trooper reached the bottom of the stairway.

The physician began an examination of Owen's skull. After a few moments, he nodded to show that he agreed with the veterinarian's statement regarding the cause of death. All the while, there were slight sounds from beyond the door through which Dagbar had gone; but the trooper, like the physician, was too intent in his study of Owen's body. Neither heard the scrapes.

Outside, in back of the morgue, Slug and Blimp were in the front seat of their truck. The street was gloomy and deserted. The truck was lightless. Listening, the pair heard a sound at the rear of the truck. Some one clambered aboard. It was Dagbar. His order came:

“All right, Slug. Get going.”

The truck rumbled away, heading for the town limits of Duxton Square. It had brought in the real Owen Lengood, dead. It was carrying away Dagbar, the man who had faked death as Owen's double.

Misty drizzle seemed to enshroud the departing truck in mystery. How Dagbar—not Owen—had happened to be in the coupe; how Dagbar had faked the game so cleverly; what was the real cause of Owen's death—these were questions that remained in darkness.

They were questions that would doubly tax any sleuth, for an investigator would first have to suspect that the questions existed before he sought to solve them.

Strange facts would have to be uncovered by The Shadow, the master sleuth who had already anticipated danger for Owen Lengood.

CHAPTER III. FACTS FROM THE PAST

EVENING found a group assembled in the borough hall at Duxton Square. Seated at the head of the long table was the local coroner. With him was the State trooper who had brought Dagbar's body to the morgue; also the veterinarian and the physician who had made separate examinations: one of Dagbar, the other of Owen.

The morgue keeper was also present; he was seated with a few witnesses who had remained in Duxton Square after the accident. Chief attention, however, was centered upon two visitors who had arrived from the neighborhood of Philadelphia.

One was Louis Joland, administrator of the Lengood estate. For the second time in two days, Joland had been summoned because death had struck one of the Lengood heirs. With Joland was another man who had undergone the same experience. He was Doctor Rufus Denburton, the Lengood family physician.

Denburton formed a contrast to Joland. The physician was a dozen years younger than the gray-haired administrator. Where Joland was patient and easy of manner, Denburton was brisk and abrupt. He was of middle height, but bulky; his face was flat-featured. There was a hard challenge in the dark-brown eyes that shone from beneath Denburton's heavy brows and shocky black hair.

Witnesses had been heard. The coroner was prepared to sum the story and deliver his verdict, when an attendant entered to announce a visitor. He gave a card to the coroner, who turned to Louis Joland.

"A man named Lamont Cranston," declared the coroner. "He states that he was a friend of the deceased. Is that right, Mr. Joland?"

"Lamont Cranston?" Joland repeated the name in puzzled tone; then gave a sudden nod. "Ah, yes. He called from New York to-day. He wanted to talk to Owen about a small business matter. I suppose that he was one of Owen's New York friends. It is quite all right for Mr. Cranston to join us."

The attendant ushered in a tall, calm-faced visitor whose face was immobile, almost masklike. Joland arose, shook hands with the newcomer. He introduced himself, then did the same with Doctor Denburton. The Shadow sat down with the group.

"To sum the testimony," declared the coroner, "we have witnesses who state that Owen Lengood was driving at an excessive rate of speed. The accident was entirely his own fault; he must be credited with wrecking his own car in order to avoid injuring others.

"Death was instantaneous, caused by a sharp blow at the base of the skull. This fact was recognized by the veterinary surgeon who examined the body immediately after the accident. His statement was substantiated by the medical examiner.

"Therefore, the verdict is death by misadventure, unless statements can be given to show other contributory causes."

AS the coroner looked about, Louis Joland spoke.

"The account of the accident seems definite," he announced. "Nevertheless, there is peculiar coincidence in this death. One year ago, Owen Lengood's brother, Howard, was killed instantly by a fall from a polo pony. Only yesterday, Owen's cousin, James, died suddenly after a long siege of heart trouble."

"Those deaths show no bearing on this case," intervened the coroner. "We are concerned only with facts that relate to Owen Lengood."

"There is a bearing," persisted Joland. "All three of these young men died just before they attained the age of twenty-five, when each was due to gain his share of the Lengood estate."

The coroner showed a flicker of interest.

"The estate," added Joland, "totals approximately eight million dollars."

"Tell me," questioned the coroner, "who will receive the shares that were intended for the deceased?"

"The remaining heirs," replied Joland. "Each will receive a proportionate share of the total when he or she reaches the age of twenty-five."

"Then the fewer the heirs, the greater the amount that each will receive?"

"Precisely. Unless all should die. In that case, the money will be divided among charities and institutions, in accordance with the stipulations of the grandfather's will."

The coroner drummed the table. Suddenly, he asked: "Had any threat been made against the life of Owen Lengood?"

"None," replied Joland. "I must admit that if he had feared danger, he would not have left for Baltimore alone."

"Then why do you see significance in the death?"

"Owen quarreled with his cousin, Roy," remarked Joland, slowly. "Still, that could hardly be regarded as important. What puzzles me chiefly is why Owen took so long to reach Duxton Square after leaving Philadelphia."

"Bad roads delayed him," put in Doctor Denburton suddenly, swinging toward Joland. "You saw their condition yourself, Joland, when we drove down here."

"We made as good time as Owen did," objected Joland, "and he always drove much faster as a rule."

"Not to-day," retorted Denburton. "I talked to Owen, just before he left. He was dejected over the death of his cousin, James. A man seldom drives rapidly when he feels morose."

"Owen was driving at forty miles an hour after he entered this town. He was making that speed through traffic and against signs that called for a twenty-mile limit."

There was logic in Joland's statement; then Denburton squashed it with a decisive argument.

"Owen had reached the end of the detour," declared the physician. "He probably realized that he had

lost a great deal of time. He intended to make up for it.”

Joland considered the statement; then decided that Denburton was right. He produced a different argument.

“Owen always handled a car well in an emergency,” declared the administrator. “He showed his mettle to-day; he was safe after he left the road. Suddenly, he skidded into a tree. I cannot understand it.”

THE coroner smiled. It was his turn to give the answer.

“You saw the wrecked car, Mr. Joland,” he remarked. “Did you particularly note the tires?”

Joland shook his head.

“They were thickly caked with a reddish mud,” stated the coroner, “that the car had picked up on the detour. The mud rendered the treads useless after the car reached the soft turf of the lawn. That explains the final skid, Mr. Joland.”

Joland considered the coroner's statement, then nodded to show that he was finally convinced. Doctor Denburton glowered; he seemed annoyed because Joland had been such a stickler.

“In view of Mr. Joland's statements,” declared the coroner, “I shall lay emphasis upon certain facts. We have witnesses who saw the entire course of Owen Lengood's car after it came from the detour. They affirm that he was driving in reckless fashion, but that he showed remarkable control of his car in the emergency.

“Owen Lengood was unquestionably alert; in full possession of his faculties. When his car crashed, witnesses arrived immediately. They testify that Owen Lengood was alone in his car; that the injury causing his death must have occurred at the time of the crash.

“We have the veterinarian's statement as to the cause of death; the statement of a State policeman that he himself brought the body to the morgue, the physician's statement that substantiates the one made by the veterinary surgeon. My verdict, therefore, is death by misadventure.”

With a thump upon the table, the coroner looked about, as if inviting objections. Doctor Denburton looked sharply at Louis Joland; but the latter remained silent. Only the State trooper made remark.

“One thing I wanted to ask you about, coroner,” said the officer. “Those truck drivers were witnesses; but they didn't show up along with the rest of the people, like I told them to.”

“They were not the first to reach the victim,” declared the coroner. “We have plenty of better witnesses. The truckmen probably feared that they would be held partly responsible because they were parked on the highway. But the truck had a right to be where it was.”

Having settled the matter of Slug and Blimp, the coroner arose. He was halted by another remark that came from the morgue keeper.

“There's something I just found out, coroner,” stated the morgue keeper. “That body was moved after it came into the morgue.”

“What!” exclaimed the coroner. “You sure of that, Seeds?”

“Yes, sir. Somebody moved that body!”

“Seeds doesn't know what he's talking about,” injected the State trooper. “I saw the body laid out. I

came down afterward with the doctor. The position was just the same.”

“It wasn't the body itself that was moved,” protested Seeds. “It was the slab. You see, I got letters marked underneath them: A, B and C. It was slab B, the middle one, that we put the body on. But after the body was took off, I happened to look at the slab and found it was marked C.”

The coroner indulged in a laugh; others about him joined. Seeds looked chagrined as the coroner tapped him.

“You probably had the slabs in the wrong order to begin with,” declared the coroner. “Since the letters were underneath, you couldn't have looked at them beforehand.”

“Guess you're right, coroner,” muttered the morgue keeper. “I thought I could recognize those slabs, though. Mebbe they got shifted some time before. It's been a couple of weeks since we had any corpses down in the basement.”

The inquest was ended. Seeds had provided the relief that enabled those present to depart with smiles at the morgue-keeper's stupidity. Seeds, however, was not smiling; he looked puzzled and one person noticed it.

That person was The Shadow. He watched Seeds intently for several moments, then turned toward the door.

Louis Joland was departing with Doctor Denburton. The Shadow overtook them. In the calm tone that he used as Cranston, he expressed his regret at Owen Lengood's death, then added:

“I knew that Owen was anxious to dispose of his stock in the speed-boat company. I had hoped to make a transaction with him.”

“That would have been excellent,” smiled Joland. “Owen used to dabble with his income. He sank at least four thousand dollars in that speed-boat enterprise. Frankly, I considered it money lost.”

“It was a losing business,” admitted The Shadow. “Still, I am something of a dabbler myself. I would like to acquire that stock, Mr. Joland, at the price Owen Lengood paid for it.”

“That can be arranged, Mr. Cranston. As administrator of the Lengood estate, I shall have charge of Owen's affairs. You can reach me at Lengood Manor.”

When they walked from the borough hall, The Shadow entered a large, high-powered roadster of foreign make. Joland and Denburton boarded a sedan.

While Joland was starting the car, Denburton eyed The Shadow's roadster. He saw that the car carried New Jersey license plates; he watched it start off on a road that led to the east. The physician decided that Lamont Cranston intended to cross the Delaware River by ferry, below Philadelphia; but Denburton made no comment to Joland.

In fact, the two had very little to say when they started off toward Philadelphia. The disagreement in the coroner's office had been slight; but it showed that Joland and Denburton were none too cordial. Only a matter such as Owen's death could have brought them together for a journey.

SOON after the sedan had left Duxton Square, The Shadow's big roadster reappeared. It took a narrow street and rolled into a garage. There, The Shadow alighted, still in the guise of Cranston.

Owen Lengood's wrecked machine stood in a corner of the garage; carrying a briefcase, The Shadow

strolled over and inspected it. Not only did he observe the caked mud in the tire treads; he also noted the condition of the tires, their size and their make.

In Cranston's quiet fashion, The Shadow told the garage man to keep the big roadster for the night; that he intended to take a trip to a friend's house and would not be back until the morning. Leaving the garage, The Shadow walked to another street; there he entered a parked coupe, a small car that bore a Pennsylvania license.

The briefcase came open. The Shadow drew forth a black cloak. Folds of cloth slid over his shoulders; he placed a slouch hat on his head. After packing a brace of automatics beneath his cloak, he donned gloves of black.

The Shadow started the coupe. The car moved in the direction of the Philadelphia road. Soon, it reached the veterinarian's house; just beyond, The Shadow swung into the detour from which Owen's car had come just prior to its crash.

A soft laugh sounded within the confines of the small coupe. Suppressed, those tones carried a significance that spoke of understanding. The mirth was eerie; it foretold that The Shadow expected adventure before this night was ended.

The Shadow had drawn clues from the past. From the statements made in the coroner's office, he had divined that mystery enshrouded the death of Owen Lengood. If so, incidents of Owen's trip from Philadelphia could carry high importance.

The Shadow was seeking a trail which he believed would bring him to a scene of recent crime.

CHAPTER IV. THE MUDDY TRAIL

FIFTEEN miles north of Duxton Square, The Shadow reached the end of the detour. There, he wheeled the coupe to the side of a broad highway and consulted a road map by the glow of the dashlight. As he studied the map, The Shadow calculated the time interval shown on the dash clock.

In coming from Philadelphia, Owen Lengood had encountered good roads as far as this detour. At an average speed of forty miles an hour, he would have still had forty-five minutes to reach the town of Duxton Square. The Shadow was positive that Owen had averaged at least forty on the trip.

Thanks to the telephone call that he had made to Lengood Manor, The Shadow knew almost the exact time of Owen's departure. It was a known fact that Owen preferred to ride at high speed.

Doctor Denburton's opinion that Owen had dallied because of melancholy might be the physician's honest belief; but The Shadow did not share it. From his own observation of such cases, The Shadow had found that persons in a morbid mental state were apt to drive more recklessly than usual.

There was proof of that in the wrecking of Owen's car; nevertheless, The Shadow was not willing to accept the accident as mute testimony. The Shadow had not forgotten the statements at the inquest. The disappearance of the truckmen; the claim that slabs had been shifted at the morgue, were facts that added sinister emphasis to the other peculiarities of Owen's journey.

The road map showed only one detour. That was the fifteen-mile stretch that now lay between The Shadow and Duxton Square. The Shadow swung the car about, headed it toward the town from which he had come. Slowly, he started back along the detour. He was taking the exact course that Owen had followed earlier in the day.

In choosing this route, The Shadow was making use of a clue that others had mentioned and forgotten.

Though the sectors of the detour included stretches of dirt and gravel, at no spot had The Shadow encountered a stretch of reddish mud.

The conclusion, therefore, was that Owen had lost the route, somewhere along the detour. The red mud was proof; it explained why Owen's car had been late in reaching Duxton Square. To The Shadow, it also indicated that unsuspected circumstances could have intervened.

Had Owen lost the route by accident, or had he been deliberately drawn from the proper road?

Those were questions that The Shadow intended to answer for himself. In search of potential clues, he slowed at every side road and used a spotlight, in order to examine the ground. Wherever he spied a detour sign, he stopped to study it.

FIVE miles brought The Shadow to a crossroad. He was traveling a poorly paved highway; the one that crossed it was no better. There was a clump of small trees at the opposite corner of the crossing; they formed the background for a large white sign that displayed the word "DETOUR" in conspicuous letters. The detour sign pointed to the right.

Had that sign been absent, any motorist would have kept straight ahead, for detour signs were used along these roads only when necessary. The Shadow halted his car, extinguished the lights. Stepping out into the drizzle, he approached the detour sign and examined it with a flashlight.

The post was jammed deep in the ground. It could easily have been removed and replaced. However, the sign itself gave no trace of any such action. The Shadow looked elsewhere; he promptly found the clue that he wanted.

This lay in the clump of trees just behind the sign. Saplings gave the space the semblance of a thicket. The Shadow's flashlight showed the ends of broken branches; a place where underbrush was trampled. It was obvious that lurkers had been at this spot.

The Shadow could see the answer. Men had been ready to wrest the detour sign from its moorings as soon as they knew that Owen's car was due. They had remained to replace the sign as soon as Owen had passed along the road that lay straight ahead.

The Shadow returned to his coupe. He started along the road ahead. Half a mile brought him to the bottom of hill; there, the paving ended. Ruddiness reflected the glow of The Shadow's headlights. The road ahead was caked with reddish mud.

Passage was not difficult, for the road was solid beneath the muddy surface. Ruts marked where cars had gone. The Shadow saw thin tire tracks; with them, broader belts that crisscrossed. One path looked wide enough to represent Owen's heavy coupe. The other ruts had certainly been made by a truck.

Near the end of a muddy mile, the road humped to cross an old stone bridge. As he neared the structure, The Shadow stopped his car. He turned the spotlight to the side of the road. There he saw tire marks that indicated where a car had backed half into a ditch.

Alighting, The Shadow approached the marks and examined them. He measured their width; studied the pattern of the tread. Those were the tire marks of Owen's car.

Many investigators would have supposed that Owen had simply guessed that he was on the wrong road and had, therefore, decided to turn around. The Shadow looked for other clues. The light showed the side of the bridge. The Shadow noted that the bridge spanned a small stream that had not yet flooded to its high banks. He approached the space beneath the bridge.

Just under the projecting shelter of the bridge, The Shadow saw some flat pieces of wood. They were dry, for the rain had not reached them. Beyond those pieces, however, lay another board that was rain-soaked. The Shadow examined the moist piece of wood; turning it over, he read painted words on both sides. The board was an old sign that said: "BRIDGE CLOSED."

The wetness of the sign was proof that it had been hung across the bridge at some time to-day; that, later, it had been tossed beneath the bridge, where men had probably first found it. The sign had been used to halt Owen Lengood at the bridge.

RETURNING to the road, The Shadow made another examination of the tire tracks. He found that Owen's car had backed, but had not turned. Instead, it had resumed its course across the bridge.

The answer was plain. In broad daylight, attackers had boarded the coupe and overpowered the driver. They had taken their prisoner across the bridge in his own car.

Entering his coupe, The Shadow crossed the bridge and continued along the highway. He came to a road that led to the right. The tire tracks curved there. A quarter mile more, they were lost. Stopping, The Shadow alighted to discover that they left the road and went through an opening in a fence.

Rain was increasing as The Shadow drove through the space. Crooks had calculated well in their handling of Owen Lengood. The final traces of their tire tracks were barely discernible, for they had driven through heavy grass on this final stage of their journey. As for the marks in the muddy road, a heavy rain would probably clear them.

The Shadow had driven into a field; trees were all about. As he swung the spotlight, he spied an old frame farmhouse with boarded windows. The Shadow pulled up beneath a cluster of trees. He extinguished all lights; then moved silently through the rain, as he approached the house.

Every factor, so far, had indicated that crooks had left this district. The Shadow had reasoned that they would be absent. He knew that they had waylaid Owen Lengood; that they had then gone to Duxton Square, for The Shadow had centered upon the truckmen as suspicious characters. The crooks might have had reason for returning here; but, certainly, they would have had little occasion to remain.

To speed up his search, The Shadow had made no great attempt at secrecy. In fact, up to this time, he had been hoping to lure any existing lurkers into action. Investigation, however, had shown The Shadow that no enemies were about. Only one chance remained: some one might be hidden in the old farmhouse.

CIRCLING the abandoned building, The Shadow made an intensive search. He listened at windows and doors, peered through shuttered cracks. Had there been any one within, that person would have been detected by The Shadow. Satisfied at last that the house was empty, the cloaked investigator approached a door.

The door was locked, but The Shadow opened it easily with a keyhole pick. Moving through the ground floor, he discovered empty rooms. Old boxes, stacks of yellow newspapers and magazines were all that the ground floor contained.

The Shadow went to the second floor. He glimmered his light through other empty spaces. One front room showed unshuttered windows. The Shadow doused the light the moment that he discovered them.

Returning to the ground floor by a back stairway, The Shadow began to move boxes. He made an immediate discovery: a trapdoor in the floor. The barrier was held by heavy hinges at one side; at the other, a big padlock held hasp and staple.

The padlock was of expensive pattern. It represented an item that was out of place in this abandoned house. The hinges, too, were overlarge; evidently they had replaced old ones.

The Shadow saw a reason for these new fittings. Heavy lock and strong hinges could make the trapdoor formidable. In case crooks had decided to use the cellar as a prison, it would have served.

Picking up a small stick of wood, The Shadow cracked the padlock by the catch. The single blow snapped the lock open. This was the weakness that The Shadow knew concerning many makes of expensive padlocks. Struck with wood, they would snap open, yet remain in perfect working order.

Had the lock been a cheaper one, The Shadow would have been forced to pick it, thus delaying his entry to the cellar; or to smash it with a chunk of metal and thus leave evidence of his visit.

Having disposed of the padlock in a single second, The Shadow pocketed it in open condition. He raised the trapdoor, saw steep steps that led into musty cellar. From the blackened depths The Shadow detected a burnt odor.

About to descend, The Shadow paused. Closing the trap, he produced a screw driver and removed the screws from the floor side of the hinges. Inserting the screw driver in a screw hole, The Shadow used it as a gimlet, to enlarge the hole. He did the same with the other screw holes. After that, he replaced the screws; raised the trapdoor and descended into the cellar. He closed the trap above him.

THE first rays of The Shadow's flashlight told him that he had been correct in his surmise that the cellar might have been intended for a prison. Walls were of stone; small windows had been fitted with iron grates, sunk deeply into the foundations. The cellar was vacant except for flimsy boxes.

There was an old furnace; from it, The Shadow detected the burnt odor that he had sniffed before. He opened the furnace; his flashlight showed a mass of ashes. Plucking some of these, he recognized the ashes as the remains of burned cloth.

A further probe revealed a fragment of cloth itself. The piece had dropped halfway through the grate; smoldering ashes had served to preserve it. The Shadow noted that this bit of evidence was a portion of light-gray tweed; expensive cloth that had been used in a suit of clothes.

Owen Lengood had worn a light-gray suit to-day. The Shadow had learned that in Duxton Square. A witness had mentioned the lack of bloodstains on the body, stating that blood would have shown conspicuously on a light-gray suit.

Methodically, The Shadow pieced the past.

Owen Lengood had been guided from the detour. He had been waylaid, brought to this house. He had been murdered by a well-placed blackjack blow against the base of the skull. After the delay, another man had driven Owen's car back to the detour; then on to Duxton Square.

The truck had been waiting just past the detour. The man in Owen's car had purposely wrecked it. He had done a tumble to the ground; had faked death well enough to bluff the veterinary surgeon who had examined him.

The Shadow had divined the existence of the man called Dagbar. He saw the exact part that Dagbar had played, even though he did not know the faker's name. The Shadow also saw the purpose of the truckmen.

They had gone ahead, carrying Owen's body hidden in their truck. They had picked a spot where witnesses would see Dagbar's crash; where a man sufficiently qualified—the veterinarian—would

pronounce the victim dead. The truck drivers had offered to carry the supposed body either to the hospital or the morgue. They would have delivered Owen's body, keeping Dagbar hidden in the truck.

The State trooper had unwittingly forestalled the move by taking the body to the morgue. That had forced a later switch of a dead body for a live one. The facts told why the truckmen had not returned as witnesses; also why the slabs had been moved at the morgue. Crooks had returned to this house.

There they had burned the duplicate clothing that the fake Owen Lengood had worn. That explained the bit of cloth that The Shadow had discovered.

NOT only did The Shadow picture every detail of the incredible game; he saw also that Owen's death could be the third murder, not the first. Howard Lengood's polo fall a year ago; James Lengood's death at the sanitarium were both cases where a clever faker could have supplanted the men while they were still alive.

The impostor had pretended death in the presence of witnesses. In each case, murderers had seized a victim and killed him elsewhere. After that had come the substitution.

The past teemed with possible clues; but the future offered better. Other members of the Lengood family still lived; those heirs would also be slated to die. By watching the potential victims, The Shadow could accomplish two aims. He could protect threatened persons, and at the same time await revealing moves by the unsuspecting murderers.

Closing the door of the furnace, The Shadow turned toward the steep steps. No need for further search here; his goal was the Lengood mansion. Yet, within three paces, The Shadow learned suddenly that trouble would intervene between him and his new quest.

The Shadow heard the floor creak above his head. Some one had arrived in the house; had entered the kitchen where the trapdoor was located. The Shadow sprang for the steps, noiseless despite his speed. He had an automatic drawn from beneath his cloak. The gun was to prove useless, for the present.

Just as The Shadow reached the steps, a clanking blow sounded from the trapdoor above. Another hammer stroke followed. It was sufficient. The Shadow knew what had occurred. Returning crooks had found the trapdoor uncovered and with its padlock missing. They had lost no time with the opened barrier. They had driven a metal spike through the staple, thus fixing the hasp in place.

The crooks themselves knew the strength of the cellar prison. They had trapped The Shadow in the very place where he had gained the final clue to Owen Lengood's death!

CHAPTER V. THE SHROUDED VISITOR

THE room above the trapdoor was bathed in the glow of a powerful electric lantern. Its glare could not reach The Shadow, for the trapdoor fitted tightly in the floor. Four men had entered the room. Two were Slug and Blimp; the other pair looked even tougher than the men who had handled the truck at Duxton Square.

Slug was the leader of the group. Standing in the center of the room, he glowered his approval as Blimp arose from the trapdoor. Blimp had a hammer in his fist; he was the man who had spiked the staple that had formerly been equipped with a padlock.

"Whoever's down there will stay," decided Slug, in a harsh tone. "Guess the lug didn't figure we'd be back. He pulled a boner, leaving his car out there where we could spot it. With the keys in it, too."

"We wouldn't have found it, Slug," put in Blimp, "if Canary here hadn't lamped that flashlight from the

second floor. We was only drivin' past; we wouldn't have suspected nothin', ordinarily."

"I'm giving Canary credit for it, Blimp."

The man they called "Canary" grinned. He was a rangy ruffian, with a yellowish face and nose that looked like a bird's pointed bill.

"We'll lam with the truck," announced Slug to Blimp. "You stick here, Canary, until Greaser is ready with the torch. Keep the trapdoor covered, in case the guy tries to smash through it. Then get out to the guy's coupe and lam as soon as Greaser joins you."

Canary gave another grin as he nodded. He drew a revolver, stood back from the trapdoor and covered it. "Greaser," a mammoth husky who dwarfed his companions, went to the door and dragged in two large cans of gasoline.

"Get busy, Blimp," ordered Slug. "We'll get things set for Greaser. Grab up a batch of those newspapers. Haul boxes in here."

WITH Canary on guard, the others set to work. They piled boxes and newspapers in the center of the floor; poured gasoline over the rubbish. Greaser scowled viciously as he strode about, arranging the debris to suit himself. Five minutes was all that the crew required. At the end of that time, the sides of the room were littered with combustible materials.

Blimp paused to question Canary, who was leaning close to the trapdoor. "Hear anything, Canary?"

Canary shook his head. Slug growled at Blimp.

"What's biting you, Blimp? That guy down in the cellar won't stage a break."

"Maybe not," retorted Blimp, "but he's been keepin' too quiet. It's botherin' me."

"Yeah? That's just why he's laying low. Hoping we'll barge in on him. He figures his only chance is to shoot through; but we're not giving him what he wants."

"You think he knows what we're doin' up here?"

Slug guffawed at Blimp's question.

"He ought to," snorted Slug. "Like as not, he heard me talking. We've been moving around, too; and if any of that gasoline has leaked through the floor, he's sniffed it by this time."

Blimp looked worried.

"Who d'you think the guy is?" he queried. "It ain't natural for a mug to lay low when he knows he's in for a sure rub-out. He ought to be squawkin' by this time."

"Maybe he's The Shadow!"

Slug's tone was contemptuous and hopeful; but the words made Blimp look uneasy. Canary darted a troubled look toward Slug. Greaser paused to give an ugly scowl. With this hardened crew; the name of The Shadow was no joking matter. They had heard too often of the master fighter whose power was a scourge to the underworld.

"Skip it," growled Slug. "Forget about The Shadow. We don't know who the guy is down there and we don't care. We decided to put the torch to this joint if we figured anybody was sneaking around the

place. We spotted a guy, so we're giving the joint the torch; and he's going with it.

"Come along, Blimp. Stick with Greaser, Canary. Work it like I told you. Join up with us afterward. You know where. Make it snappy with the torch, Greaser. Blimp and I don't need much headway."

SLUG and Blimp departed. Canary kept a steady bead on the trapdoor. Slug's reference to The Shadow had added to the crook's alertness. Five minutes passed; Greaser grunted that he was ready to stage the torch act.

"I'll get in the guy's car," announced Canary. "I'll be moving when you join me. Give it the torch in a hurry, Greaser."

Canary's footsteps pounded away from the trapdoor; the sharp-nosed crook took the electric lantern with him. Greaser struck a match, applied it to a wad of fuel-soaked newspapers. Flames sprang up; the flare gave vivid light to the room.

Greaser did not start away. Instead, he stood looking first at the flames; then at the trapdoor. He wanted to make sure that fire enveloped that spot early. He kicked a box over the edge of the trap; threw some newspapers between it and the flames. Greaser wanted another box; he turned around to get one.

For the first time, perceptible motion occurred at the trapdoor. Previously, that wooden barrier had inched up; but no one had noticed it, not even the alert Canary, for the door had lifted at the hinge side. It was barely high enough for some one to peer through at the moment when Greaser turned away.

But when the big ruffian no longer saw the trapdoor, the hinges broke smoothly from their moorings. Powerful shoulders wedged it upward. The leverage bent the hasp at the other side. Box and oil-soaked papers slid away. Into the vivid glare of the room came the head and shoulders of The Shadow.

Flames were crackling furiously. Leaping fire whipped toward Greaser. The big thug swung about to avoid the flames; chance turned him straight toward the trapdoor. Amid the brilliant flicker of the fire, Greaser saw The Shadow.

Greaser was no dullard. He was shrewd; that was why Slug had chosen him as a "torch." In one glance, Greaser recognized The Shadow's trick. None of the crooks had thought to examine the hinges of the trapdoor. The Shadow had heard everything; he had bided his time until Canary left.

The Shadow had only one man with whom to deal. That was Greaser, who at this moment was almost surrounded by the flames that he had started. Looming from The Shadow's fist was a huge automatic. Its muzzle yawned straight for Greaser.

At that instant, chance played its part.

A CRACKLE burst suddenly from Greaser's hands; flames seared the giant's face. Flames had leaped to the box that the huge crook had just picked up. With a fierce yell, Greaser performed an act which gave him a chance to rid himself of two menaces: the fire and The Shadow.

Spinning, Greaser hurled the flaming box straight for the open trapdoor. The Shadow dropped, pulling the trap with him. The box hit squarely upon the hinges, bounced and carried its mass of blaze clear to the farther wall. Greaser bounded after it, hoping to clamp down the trapdoor before The Shadow could again appear.

The Shadow was too quick for the husky ruffian. He swung the trap upward, sped a gloved hand into view.

Greaser shifted wildly, whipping out a revolver as he tried to change the direction of his leap. As The Shadow swung about, halfway from the hole in the floor, a burst of fire swept toward his face. He lifted his free arm, covering his eyes as he stabbed a shot with his other fist.

The bullet missed Greaser by an inch. The giant wheeled, made a headlong leap for the trapdoor. The Shadow lunged out to the floor as Greaser landed. The door clamped shut; Greaser's surge carried him straight on to his opponent.

The Shadow had no chance to avoid a grapple. Despite the increasing menace of the flames, he took a clinch as the only course in the emergency. Greaser's bulk made the odds bad ones; but The Shadow sensed that his foe would fight wildly and without caution, since the flames were on the rise.

The two locked. They swayed across the floor, kicking half-burned boxes, stumbling through the remnants of ignited rubbish. The flames had reached the walls; they were eating at the shutters of the windows, blazing at the doorways, licking to the beams of the ceiling. Though the menace of the fire had increased, a space had cleared for the fray upon the floor.

The Shadow struggled strongly with his adversary, hoping for a false move by Greaser. The huge crook seemed to know The Shadow's purpose. He steadied, in hope of wearing down the cloaked fighter.

The room was alive with crackles. Echoing sounds came from everywhere. Black smoke was pouring through the house. The entire building had taken fire. The dried interior was like kindling wood.

Flames lashed the ceiling. Chunks of beams began to fall. The Shadow and Greaser formed a grotesque pair as they struggled in that lurid setting. Unless a break came, both would be due to perish in the flames. A few minutes more would mean disaster.

At one moment, both fighters avoided death only by a mutual twist away from a mass of ceiling that tumbled squarely beside them.

The floor was ablaze. Licking flames had come in from the wall. Greedy fire-tongues were everywhere; this floor, like the one above, was due to collapse at its weakest spots. The Shadow lunged with sudden vigor. He was loosing all his reserve strength in hope of victory.

As The Shadow twisted Greaser across the floor, there was a shout from the doorway. Across Greaser's shoulder, The Shadow saw Canary. The crook had come into the doorway; he was standing at the only gap between the flames.

From that opening in the fiery curtain, Canary saw The Shadow. With leveled revolver, he was urging Greaser to break away. Canary wanted a chance to shoot.

Greaser tried to cooperate; but The Shadow resisted. Each still held a gun; all their grapple had been a struggle of free hands gripping upon gun wrists. Greaser knew that he needed no chance to fire. Canary would take care of that. But The Shadow kept Greaser between himself and the door.

They swung almost to the far wall, beyond the trapdoor. Floor boards quivered under foot. The Shadow shoved Greaser forward, then suddenly relaxed.

It was the chance that Greaser wanted. Instead of flinging himself upon The Shadow, he wrenched away, making a long dive in the direction of the door where Canary stood. Greaser's game was to flatten; to let Canary shoot above him. If The Shadow took a pot-shot at Canary, Greaser thought that he could get in the next bullet.

Greaser had miscalculated one thing only; that was why The Shadow had let him writhe away at that

particular spot and in a forward direction. Sprawling, rolling on one shoulder to gain aim with his gun, Greaser struck the trapdoor.

Guns blasted above the rolling killer. The Shadow and Canary had both fired with quick aim. But Greaser never saw the result; nor did he gain the chance that he had wanted with his gun. The Shadow had let Greaser launch himself headlong upon the weakest spot in the entire floor.

The trapdoor collapsed as Greaser struck it. Flaming floor boards ripped downward. Greaser's bulky body disappeared amid a shower of flame. The crook traveled to his doom, down into the very pit where murderers had expected The Shadow to travel.

Amid the flames above, The Shadow stood motionless upon the very brink of the fiery pit. He was looking toward the doorway; there, Canary was sagging. The outside crook had fired wide; but The Shadow's simultaneous shot had clipped him.

Side-stepping the shattered trapdoor, The Shadow sprang for the spot where Canary lay. Flames whipped with gusto, lashing in from walls to seize their last prey. Half the ceiling tumbled. A beam struck The Shadow's shoulder, hurling him half about. Black smoke poured its sulfuric reek, as if it, too, had joined with hope of halting the black-clad victor.

The Shadow stumbled across Canary's body, regained his footing and staggered through the door.

One last lash of flames licked out at him as The Shadow shouldered out through the side doorway of the house. His cloak was raised above his face; scorched by the heat, it could have been ablaze without his knowledge.

Sprawling as he struck the grass, The Shadow rolled over beneath the drenching rain.

FOR moments, the victor lay gasping; then, slowly, he came to his feet. The Shadow had rolled a dozen yards from the house, but the heat of the fire was coming like a blast from the furnace. The outer walls had caught. Flames were reaching above the roof. The old building was tumbling, like the structure of a funeral pyre.

Canary's body, like Greaser's, was engulfed within the fiery depths. Two of the band that had murdered Owen Lengood had paid their final penalty.

The Shadow reached his coupe. Taking the wheel, he drove to the road. He needed no lights for a quarter mile; the blazing farmhouse supplied sufficient glow. On the muddy road, The Shadow turned on headlights and sped toward the detour. He gained it before other cars appeared. The swiftness of the fire; the seclusion of this district allowed ample time for departure before people arrived.

The Shadow knew that it was useless to trail Slug and Blimp. Instead, he headed straight for the Philadelphia road. Reaching the highway, he pushed the coupe to the limit of its speed. Miles passed while The Shadow's coupe roared through the driving rain.

Later, the coupe neared the suburbs of Philadelphia. It whizzed along the Mill Valley Road, where the surging creek had reached new turbulence from the heavy rain. The Shadow passed the ruins of the old mill. The waterfall beside that landmark was roaring like a miniature Niagara.

Soon, the coupe slowed among the lanes of Glynwold. After a lazy, circuitous route, The Shadow passed the entrance of Lengood Manor. He drove away, found the driveway of an empty house and parked his coupe in back of the secluded structure. On foot, he returned to the estate.

From then on, The Shadow's course was hidden by the rain. All were asleep in the huge stone house, for

the hour was late. The only token of The Shadow's presence came when the tiny flicker of a flashlight appeared inside a window.

At intervals, that glimmer reappeared. It was so slight that it could not have been observed outside the house, even if watchers had been there to look for it. Only at the windows themselves was that interior light visible.

The Shadow had gained entry into Lengood Manor. Moving unsuspected within the vast mansion, he was searching for some forgotten place where he could establish temporary abode. The tiny glow of the flashlight appeared at a small corner window on the third floor, directly beneath one of the conical turrets that adorned the mansion.

After that, the light flickered no longer. Like a will-o'-the-wisp, it had vanished. The Shadow had chosen a spot where he could remain. Like a family ghost, he had become a vigilant watcher over all who dwelt within Lengood Manor. Crime, should it rear itself again, would find a formidable adversary in wait for it.

The Shadow had traced the evils of the past. He was prepared to offset all doom that was scheduled for the future.

CHAPTER VI. THE OUTSIDE WATCH

TWO hours after The Shadow's arrival at Lengood Manor, another car splattered along the Mill Valley Road in the direction of Glynwold. Half a mile short of the suburb, this car turned off, taking a steep, narrow road that led up from the valley.

With middle gear grinding as it reached the top of the slope, the car swung into a bumpy lane that was marked with a sign: "NO OUTLET." There was a steep descent ahead; the driver wisely kept his car in second gear, otherwise he might have encountered trouble when he reached the end of the lane.

The road stopped abruptly, on a sharp downward angle; only a flimsy fence with a red warning sign stood between the car and a thirty-foot ravine.

This was but one of the many dead-end lanes in the vicinity of Glynwold. Every stream hereabouts had a gorge; all of them emptied into the Valley Creek, which carried its collected waters into the ample Schuylkill River.

A man stepped from the stopped car. Using a flashlight, he found a path that led from the road. Following it, he came to a two-story house that stood alongside the ravine. Secluded among the trees, this old stone building could not be seen from the lane. That fact, however, did not mark it as unusual. There were many houses of this sort near Glynwold. Seclusion was the rule, not the exception.

The house was dark and silent. The visitor searched for a bell-button with his flashlight. Finding the desired object, he gave three short rings, then a long one. He waited in darkness for less than fifteen seconds, until a light suddenly flooded him from beneath a small roof that sheltered the front door.

The man outside the door was Slug. He had left Blimp somewhere, to come to this secluded house alone.

Eyes must have surveyed Slug from a darkened window, for the light was promptly extinguished. Soon, bolts grated; the door opened inward. Slug stepped through into a darkened hall. The man who had admitted him bolted the door, then turned on a dim light.

Slug nodded as he saw a tall, dark-skinned man who was clad in somber garments. The fellow was an Egyptian; his bulk matched his towering height. The man was six feet six and he weighed considerably more than two hundred pounds.

“Hello, Bela Bey,” remarked Slug. “Where's Dagbar? Downstairs with Doctor Guyak?”

“Both are there,” responded Bela Bey, in a cold, slow tone. “I shall conduct you.”

The Egyptian led the way to the basement; he gave three quick raps, then a long one, upon a closed door. A voice ordered him to enter. Bela Bey opened the door; Slug went into the room.

THE door itself was of metal, and the large space within was divided into three rooms. The one that Slug entered was fitted like a laboratory. It had benches equipped with Bunsen burners, test tubes and beakers. All about were bottles that contained small supplies of chemicals. There were other items of equipment; a device that looked like an X-ray machine and other apparatus used by physicians.

The room to the rear contained other apparatus and a few benches; but it was stocked chiefly with boxes and huge five-gallon bottles of dark-green color. It was obviously a storeroom that went with the laboratory.

Beyond the lab was a small, narrow room. It was dark; but the glow from the laboratory showed that the room probably served two purposes. It was a projection room, where photographs could be displayed upon a screen. It could also be used as a dark room, to develop plates.

On the far side of the projection room was another metal-sheathed door that barred exit to the outside. This door was slanted atop a short flight of steps.

Two men were standing at a laboratory bench. One was Dagbar, attired in darker clothing than the garb that he had worn when doubling for Owen Lengood. Dagbar's face had also changed; though it resembled Owen's, certain make-up had been removed. The change displayed ugliness that existed in the contours of Dagbar's normal countenance.

The man with Dagbar was short and squatty. He was clad in a white smock; above the garment showed a pointed beard and mustache, both of jet-black hue. The man's hair was also black, but his head was somewhat bald. His dark eyes carried a sharp glisten. This was the man to whom Slug had referred as Doctor Guyak.

It was Dagbar who responded to Slug's greeting. In a harsh voice, the death-faker demanded:

“Why did you come here, Slug? I told you to stay away.”

“I had to head here, Dagbar,” returned Slug. “Things went sour down at the farmhouse.”

“You should have telephoned me.”

“I couldn't chance spilling it over the telephone.”

Dagbar's hard gaze showed interest. Doctor Guyak's glistening eyes were troubled. Though Dagbar seemed unconcerned over Slug's preliminary report, the bearded man did not share that feeling.

“Spill it, Slug.”

Dagbar rasped the order. Slug nodded.

“We went back to the farmhouse,” he reported, “like we was supposed to. It looked all jake until Canary spots a light up on the second floor. It was a cinch that somebody was in the joint. So we barged in there.”

“Who was it?” queried Dagbar, impatiently. “You didn't let him get away, did you?”

“Whoever it was,” returned Slug, “he was in the cellar, doing some snooping. We spotted his car outside; and the keys were in it. So the easy way was to clamp him in the cellar—he’d busted the trapdoor padlock—and give the joint the torch.”

“So you did?”

“Sure! I lammed with Blimp. Left Canary to keep the trapdoor covered while Greaser did the rest.”

DAGBAR emitted a harsh chuckle. He turned to nudge Doctor Guyak.

“Hear that, Pierre?” queried Dagbar. “Slug covered the trail. All your worry was for nothing.”

Slug interrupted.

“That’s not all of it,” he told Dagbar. “Greaser gave the torch, all right. Blimp and I saw the fire from the top of a hill, seven miles off. But Greaser and Canary never showed up in Chester, where we told them to meet us.”

“That’s bad,” growled Dagbar. “Do you think those boobs got nabbed by some fat-headed copper?”

Slug shook his head.

“There’s a guy in Chester who could have sprung them,” he explained. “They’d have given him a buzz. Only they didn’t. Listen, Dagbar: I’ve got an idea that they never got out of the farmhouse.”

“You mean the man in the cellar—”

“Could have bumped them? Yeah. If he’s who I kind of guessed he was. I made a wise crack that maybe he was The Shadow—”

Dagbar interrupted with a snarl. The death-faker’s face was furious. Doctor Guyak registered complete alarm. The bearded man looked shaky. Dagbar’s whole emotion, however, was fury. He chewed his lips as he paced the floor. At last he paused to question Slug.

“What about the car?” snapped Dagbar. “Was it a big roadster, with a New Jersey license?”

Slug shook his head.

“It was an old coupe,” he replied. “Had a Pennsy tag on it.”

“Well, that’s one idea that doesn’t fit,” decided Dagbar. “Still, we can figure The Shadow in it. He’s probably wise that we killed Owen Lengood. That means he may come to Lengood Manor.”

“You’d better case the joint then, Dagbar.”

“That’s what I intend to do. But the job won’t be yours, Slug. You head into Philly; stay at your hide-out there, with Blimp. Build up the crew, like you were supposed to. Wait until you hear from me.”

Dagbar waved a hand toward the door. Slug nodded; turned about to find Bela Bey awaiting him. The big Egyptian conducted the visitor out. Dagbar turned around, saw Doctor Guyak staring with quivering expression. With a growl, Dagbar nudged the bearded man to the workbench.

“Go along with the experiment,” ordered Dagbar. “Don’t let that report worry you, Pierre.”

GUYAK steadied and resumed his work. He held a test tube above a burner; a purplish liquid bubbled

and fizzed. Guyak mixed it with a colorless liquid; purple dulled, then turned to green as Guyak again held the tube in the burner's flare.

At the end of five minutes, Guyak announced that his test was finished. Dagbar motioned him to a chair, then pressed a buzzer to summon Bela Bey. When the Egyptian arrived, Dagbar ordered him to bring the fire extinguishers in from the storeroom. Guyak emitted a sharp exclamation:

"You are preparing for emergency! Do you expect The Shadow here, Dagbar?"

"No," growled Dagbar, "but we might as well be ready for him. Here, Bela Bey"—this was to the Egyptian, who had reentered with a large extinguisher—"hook that one on the wall by the door. The other goes on the wall by the projection room. Handle them easily."

Turning to Guyak, Dagbar resumed his remarks concerning The Shadow. "The chief figured that Owen Lengood's death might bring The Shadow into it. Things are tougher than they were before. When I did that polo dive, a year ago, everybody was sure it was Howard Lengood. The switch was a cinch, in the clubhouse. My get-away was easy—in that truck that had brought the polo ponies.

"James Lengood was an easy job. He was sick to begin with; it was a cinch to get at him in the sanitarium. Of course, I had to lie there a couple of days, after Slug had snatched him. But I faked a perfect dying act; and afterward, the switch was nothing. Particularly, with the chief there to smooth it.

"To-day's job was good, in spite of the complications. The coroner's verdict suits us. If The Shadow wised to it, nobody else did. He can't stir the law to action; the police would laugh at a crack-pot theory of murder. All that The Shadow can do is act on his own."

Doctor Guyak shook his head in troubled fashion.

"Even alone, The Shadow will be bad for us," he declared. "Worse, perhaps, than if the law should be aroused. You, yourself, have said that he may come to Lengood Manor."

"Certainly," chuckled Dagbar—"and what will he find there? Nothing! We have planned the next death elsewhere. The Shadow will find no lead to it. Nor will he find clues to bring him here. These precautions"—he pointed to Bela Bey, who was hooking up the second fire extinguisher—"are just in case The Shadow blunders in on us."

DAGBAR stroked his chin; his eyes took on a far-away look that resembled the fixed glaze of death that the faker could so cleverly feign.

"The Shadow may already be at Lengood Manor," suggested Dagbar, slowly. "If he stays there during the day, or evening, the chief may learn about it. The only time that The Shadow can prowl will be at dead of night. He will be looking for something; finding nothing. While he searches, we can seek him."

"With Slug's crew? They would blunder!"

Dagbar shook his head at Guyak's outburst. Turning, the death-faker indicated Bela Bey.

"They say that The Shadow moves unseen," chuckled Dagbar. "So does Bela Bey. He knows every inch of the ground in this vicinity. Like The Shadow, he leaves no trail. But Bela Bey, if he searches, will hold the advantage. He will be looking for The Shadow, while The Shadow will not know of Bela Bey's existence."

Dagbar spoke to Bela Bey. He gave the Egyptian orders in English, interspersed with a foreign dialect. Bela Bey nodded that he understood. He retired from the laboratory. When he returned, five minutes

later, he was wearing a long, black poncho about his shoulders. His head was covered with a dark, hoodlike cap.

“Bela Bey will go to the manor by way of the ravine,” said Dagbar to Guyak. “He will return at dawn; will leave again at dusk. If necessary, I can contact him by taking the ravine and stopping at the old pergola on the edge of the estate. No one ever visits that forgotten summerhouse. Bela Bey may learn much by watching the manor; he may gain facts that concern others as well as The Shadow.”

Dagbar accompanied Bela Bey up to the ground floor; there, the Egyptian departed and Dagbar bolted the door from the inside. Slug's car was gone, when Bela Bey reached the dead end of the lane.

Obscured by darkness and rain, the mammoth Egyptian descended into the gorge by a steep, stony path among the rocks. Below, Bela Bey followed the course of a teeming rivulet. His path led upstream.

Soon he reached a spot where another swollen brook flowed into the one that he had followed. Taking the new ravine, the Egyptian continued for three quarters of a mile, his course amazingly silent amid the dampened underbrush. At last, Bela Bey ascended a steep wall of the gorge. A twenty-foot climb brought him to an iron picket fence. Posts wavered as he scaled the barrier, for the fence was loosened by the rain.

The Egyptian found the railing of a wooden summerhouse; he circled the octagonal structure and took an upward path. His silent tread told that he knew every foot of the route, where rain dripped from the overhanging tree boughs.

Then came a sweep of rain, driven by strong wind. Bela Bey had reached an open space. He was on the lawn that girded Lengood Manor. Wind lessened as Bela Bey advanced; finally, it stilled. Bela Bey had reached the shelter of the mansion.

Like The Shadow, inside, the Egyptian had taken a station. His watch, however, lay without, for Dagbar had not expected The Shadow to be already inside the manor house.

From this time on, the game would be double. The Shadow, should he move too far from the confines of the manor, would find an unexpected adversary, who, like himself, could move with stealth in darkness.

CHAPTER VII. THE INSIDE SPY

LATE the next afternoon, a trio of automobiles set out from Lengood Manor. The cortege was bound for Philadelphia, where Owen's body was to be buried from a funeral home. It was almost dusk when the first of the cars returned. From it stepped Louis Joland; with him was The Shadow, disguised as Lamont Cranston.

The Shadow had not remained in the mansion long after dawn. He had left there just after Bela Bey's watch had ended. The Shadow had driven his coupe to Duxton Square; he had come back to Philadelphia in his roadster. There, he had registered at a hotel; then had attended Owen's funeral.

Peters opened the door for Joland and The Shadow. The wrinkly servant watched the two enter a room that served as Joland's study. The door closed; the old servant's view was blocked.

Inside the study, The Shadow gazed about at paneled walls. Joland, offering a box with cigars, indulged in a smile at the visitor's interest.

“Every one likes this room,” stated Joland. “It belonged to old Croydon Lengood, the grandfather of the heirs. His will specified that I should have this room, as long as I remained administrator of the estate.”

The Shadow nodded as he accepted one of Joland's cigars.

"I suppose," he remarked, in the calm tone of Cranston, "that your term of service will continue until the first of the heirs reaches the specified age?"

"Longer than that," declared Joland. "The Lengood estate will always require my services."

The Shadow raised his eyebrows with a quizzical expression. Joland smiled as he sat down at the big desk in the center of the room.

"Each heir receives a proportionate share of the estate," explained the administrator. "The unfortunate deaths of Howard, James and Owen have increased the heritage of the others. Because of that, one of the heirs has already refused to accept the added amount. She has signed over most of her share to charity."

Joland chewed his lips as he finished the statement. By using the word "she," he had given away the fact that the heir was Eleanor. Realizing that, he spoke of the girl by name.

"Eleanor was originally entitled to approximately one million dollars," explained Joland, "for the estate was valued at seven millions. To-day, the girl will be eligible for two million. Only four heirs remain; and the estate has increased by a million dollars under my administration.

"Eleanor intends that the additional million should go to charity, along with half of the original sum that was hers. Thus, when she attains the age of twenty-five, she being the youngest of the heirs, I shall become the administrator of the charity fund."

Joland paused; his face showed a troubled look.

"There is, of course," he added, "the chance that Eleanor should not attain the required age. In that event, the other heirs would divide her legacy. There would be no charity fund to administer."

"But what of the others?" put in The Shadow quietly. "Eleanor would receive a percentage of their shares if they died. Would that go into the charity fund?"

"Yes," replied Joland. "Half a million dollars represents the limit that Eleanor intends to keep."

JOLAND'S face changed as he spoke. It showed deep concern. Reaching into the desk drawer, he pulled out a sheaf of documents.

"Mr. Cranston," he stated, "people would say that I was the person who could profit most by the deaths of the Lengood heirs, since I am the administrator of their estate, and would have full charge of it if all the heirs were dead. That is one reason why these deaths have distressed me. I must be prepared to show the fallacy of such a charge."

Turning to the desk, Joland scooped up the papers and spread them before The Shadow.

"Look at them!" he exclaimed. "See how I stand. Under my stewardship, the estate has increased. Yet I have received a fixed fee for my services. Should all the heirs die, I would simply administer the estate for charity, giving sums to museums and to various institutions. My fee would not increase."

"How large is that annual fee?"

"Twenty-five thousand dollars," returned Joland, pointing to a document that stated the amount, "and Eleanor has already assured it from the original half million which she declared she would leave with the

estate—”

Joland broke off suddenly. Looking beyond The Shadow, he detected a motion of the door. It closed cautiously as Joland stared. With a quick bound, the administrator came from behind the desk and sprang to the door. As The Shadow turned, Joland yanked the door inward.

Standing in the hallway was Peters. The old servant was turned half about, as though wondering whether to approach or draw away. His lips moved confusedly; at last, he managed to cackle an excuse.

“The others have returned, Mr. Joland,” he announced. “Since dinner will be ready soon, I came to inform you. I—I was not certain that you were in the study until I started to open the door. Then—”

“Very well, Peters.”

The servant went away. Joland closed the door and turned to The Shadow.

“You see?” he queried, in a cautious tone. “Such things happen in this house. Peters behaved suspiciously. Sometimes the members of the family quarrel. Minor incidents, all explainable, and yet—”

Joland paused, shrugged his shoulders. He came back to the desk and brought some papers from another drawer.

“Owen's stock in the speed-boat company,” said Joland. “You can buy it at the face value, Mr. Cranston. I hope that I have not disturbed you by my alarming statements. Two deaths in two days have overstrained me, perhaps. Come. Let us go to dinner.”

SOON, The Shadow and Louis Joland were seated at a huge dining room table. Dinner was a solemn affair; only The Shadow's supposed friendship with Owen made him an invited guest so soon after the funeral. As he dined, The Shadow noted the three Lengoods.

Eleanor was sad-eyed, but brave. She had lost a second brother. Walter showed grief that indicated he was still thinking of his own brother, James. Roy was haggard, more so than the others; and his actions were those of a man whose mind was burdened to the breaking point.

Eleanor was seated beside Roy. She laid her hand on her cousin's arm. “Be calm, Roy,” pleaded the girl. “Owen was my brother. I, too, suffer.”

“Perhaps it's the curse that lies over all of us,” gritted Roy, staring at Eleanor. “It grinds heavily, that curse! It took our parents! It is taking us! First Howard; then Jim; and then Owen—”

Roy broke off. He doubled his fists and began to beat them against his head. Walter sprang to stop him; Joland joined. Together, they stopped Roy's insane poundings and walked him from the room. Eleanor watched the departure. As Roy's shrieks died, the girl turned bravely toward The Shadow.

“You must excuse Roy, Mr. Cranston,” said the girl. “He's overwrought. He will be all right to-morrow, after Alice Besson arrives. Alice is Roy's fiancée. She knows how to reason with him when he has these fitful moods.”

Eleanor's face changed. “Unfortunately,” declared the girl, slowly, “we have all believed somewhat in a family curse. My grandfather lived to an old age; but all his sons and nephews died young or disappeared. Their wives, also. Here we are: Roy, Walter and myself—and my brother Roger, who is away—the remnants of two branches of the Lengood family. All of our parents died when we were children.”

“Yet the three of you will live.” The Shadow spoke the words in a quiet tone, but with an emphasis that made Eleanor gaze straight toward his eyes. For the first time, the girl observed those eyes; in them she saw a strange mysterious depth. The Shadow's words seemed like a living picture in her mind. They had carried a note of prophecy.

An unexplainable warmth of confidence gripped Eleanor. For the first time in days, the girl relaxed.

“May I ask about your brother Roger?”

The Shadow's calm-toned query broke the spell which he had woven. Eleanor smiled wistfully as she answered The Shadow's question.

“Roger is a year younger than Owen,” Eleanor explained. “He is on his way back from China, The last we heard from him, he and a friend were driving East by car.”

“How far had they traveled across the continent?”

“We do not know. We shall probably receive another letter, or a telegram, very soon. Roger only communicates with people when he feels in the mood.”

The Shadow was about to put another question concerning Roger, when a slight squeak sounded from the pantry door. As The Shadow and Eleanor turned, Peters stepped suddenly into the dining room.

“Pardon me, Miss Eleanor,” said the servant. “I—I thought I heard the doorbell. I—I was not quite sure. I did not want to interrupt your conversation—”

“If you heard the doorbell, see who is there.”

PETERS went out through the hallway. He did not return immediately. A few minutes passed; The Shadow distinctly heard the approach of a car outside the house. Soon, there came the sound of voices. Peters reappeared, conducting Doctor Denburton.

The Shadow knew that Peters had not heard the doorbell; that he had faked a delay there until Denburton arrived. Peters must have realized this, for he made prompt explanation.

“I talked with Doctor Denburton,” said the servant to Eleanor, “to tell him about Mr. Roy.”

“I should see Roy at once,” declared Denburton, briskly. “Did they take him to his room?”

Eleanor nodded. The physician went out; in the hallway, he met Joland and Walter coming downstairs. They reported that Roy had quieted. The doctor went up to see the patient for himself.

The Shadow and Eleanor joined Joland and Walter; all went into the living room. There, the sound of increasing rain could be heard against the windows. The day had cleared, only to be followed by a deluge. Quietly, Joland suggested to The Shadow that he remain overnight, to complete his business in the morning. The Shadow agreed.

Half an hour later, Doctor Denburton came downstairs and reported that he had given Roy an opiate; that the young man would rest until morning.

An hour passed; Denburton prepared to leave. Peters showed The Shadow to a room on the second floor. Within that room, The Shadow heard others come upstairs. He recognized the footsteps of Eleanor, Walter and—finally—Joland.

FROM his suitcase, The Shadow brought cloak and hat. Donning the garments, he stepped out into a

gloomy upstairs hall. No one was about. The Shadow approached the head of the stairs. From that vantage point, he heard whispers downstairs.

Peering to the lower hall, The Shadow saw Doctor Denburton in conference with Peters. Apparently, Joland had seen the physician out to the car, then had retired; but Denburton had returned for a final word with Peters. The conference ended. Denburton tiptoed out through the front door.

Returning to his own room, The Shadow listened just inside the door. After a prolonged vigil, he heard the creak of cautious footsteps. They stopped outside his door; continued along and paused at other rooms. Only The Shadow could have heard that cautious tread. He recognized the maker of the footsteps without opening the door.

The prowler was Peters.

As the creaking died, The Shadow opened the door and glided out into the hallway. He heard distant creaks from the stairs. He followed, heard Peters go into a third-floor room that was probably the servant's own.

The Shadow moved to the turret room where he had rested on the preceding night. From its window, he looked along the wall. He could see a window of the room where the servant had gone. As The Shadow watched, he saw a glow of light that blinked with intermittent flashes, long and short.

The Shadow could not see the direction of the light; he was noting its reflection. Peters was signaling from a window past the corner of the house. His blinks were in ordinary Morse; The Shadow learned that the servant was reporting all quiet in the house.

Silently, The Shadow left the turret, returned to his own room. He needed no further facts to tell him to whom Peters had signaled. To-day, Joland had pointed out Doctor Denburton's house as they passed it. Immediately afterward, they had seen the roof of Lengood Manor, above the intervening trees.

Peters had flashed his signals from the side of the house that faced toward Doctor Denburton's. His report was simply a follow-up of instructions that Denburton had given him.

Though The Shadow had not yet learned of an outside watcher, in the person of Bela Bey, he had discovered the presence of an inside spy. That spy was Peters; he was working for Doctor Denburton.

Denburton's interest in affairs at Lengood Manor was something that The Shadow intended to learn during his prolonged vigil in the lonely mansion.

CHAPTER VIII. THE MESSAGE AT DUSK

THE next morning, The Shadow held another conference with Louis Joland. As Cranston, The Shadow made his purchase of the stock that Owen Lengood had owned. Joland marked the transaction in a ledger that contained a list of Owen's accounts.

In the course of conversation, Joland brought up the subject that they had discussed on the previous evening; namely, the general administration of the Lengood estate. Remarking that their previous talk had been interrupted, Joland again produced the documents and requested The Shadow to study them more fully.

One paper listed the names of all the Lengood heirs. The Shadow read them, then put a casual question:

“Who is Roger Lengood?”

"A brother to Howard and Owen," replied Joland. "Therefore, he is Eleanor's only remaining brother. Roger is about the age of his cousin Roy."

"Where is Roger at present?"

Joland smiled at the question. He produced some post cards and telegrams, tossed them across the desk.

"Somewhere in the United States," replied Joland. "If any one could tell me his exact whereabouts, I would appreciate it. Here is a post card from Vancouver, stating that he intended to come East by railroad, over the Canadian Rockies. Here is one from San Francisco, saying that he was visiting the Yosemite instead.

"This telegram from Los Angeles tells that he went there, bought a car and was ready to drive East with a friend, by way of the Grand Canyon. Here is a postal from Salt Lake City. They went there instead of to the Grand Canyon."

"And this telegram?"

Joland took the one that The Shadow handed him.

"From Chicago, two days ago," remarked Joland. "The last one I have received. Roger states that he will need some money; that means he will probably notify me where he intends to stop on his trip East."

Putting the papers away, Joland added:

"So far, Roger has received no money this year. I sent his income to China, where he was in the employ of an oil company. He expected to retain that position; but he suddenly changed his mind. The first I knew of it was when I received the post card from Vancouver, announcing that he had returned to America. Since then, some of his income checks have come back from China. I have mailed no more of them."

"Then Roger must be traveling on money that he saved?"

"Probably so. If he wires for money, I shall send it promptly from the funds that are due him."

THE SHADOW was ready to leave. He walked to the front door with Joland; there, a car was waiting to take the guest to Glynwold station. Before The Shadow could enter the car, Walter Lengood came hurriedly from the house to say good-by.

"Eleanor has gone to meet Alice Besson," said Walter. "She asked me to speak to you, Mr. Cranston, to tell you that she was sorry she could not be here to say good-by. We all hope that you will pay us another visit."

"Thank you," replied The Shadow. "Kindly extend my best wishes to Miss Lengood, and also to your brother. I hope that he is feeling better to-day."

"Roy is still moody; but Doctor Denburton expects him to snap out of it. After Alice talks to him, he will brighten up. Roy always does."

The car carried The Shadow to a branch line station; there, he boarded an electric local for Philadelphia. Riding into the city, The Shadow made plans for the future.

It was imperative that he return to Lengood Manor; but the trip would not be necessary until late

afternoon. Plots were brewing there; but The Shadow was confident that they would be slow in development, so far as the present residents of the mansion were concerned.

Artful death had been dealt to three members of the Lengood family; death so cunning that only coincidence had given inkling of murder. If Roy and Walter were slated for doom, murderers would bide their time. The Shadow foresaw an interval, like the one that had followed Howard's death.

The doubtful factor was Roger Lengood. He was due to arrive at Lengood Manor, to dwell there with the other heirs. Therefore, there would be three potential victims for the future. Murderers certainly held design upon the Lengood fortune. Unique death was their method of eliminating the heirs.

Eleanor Lengood was doubly protected against doom; hence The Shadow felt that no threat existed against her. The girl had already renounced the bulk of her expected fortune, which made her death comparatively unimportant. Moreover, The Shadow knew that substitution of a dead man for a living one was the subterfuge by which all crime had been covered. Substitution would be difficult in the case of Eleanor.

Roger Lengood.

As the local glided into the Thirtieth Street Station, The Shadow was deeply concentrated upon that single name. If murderers were content to bide their time, Roger would be safe. If not, their game would be to strike down Roger before he arrived at Lengood Manor.

Both Eleanor and Joland had spoken to The Shadow concerning Roger. Their statements had coincided. Joland had provided details which Eleanor had not mentioned. By this time, Roger had left Chicago and was driving in to Philadelphia. If murderers intended to block his path, their stroke would come soon.

Too soon to gain any lead to Roger by tracing him from Chicago. The Shadow could count upon but one lead: that was the telegram which Joland expected to receive from the missing heir. It was a long chance; yet The Shadow was ready to rely upon that possible message.

So far, crooks had apparently made no effort to intercept communications that Roger sent to Lengood Manor. The Chicago telegram was proof of that fact. Moreover, its wording had been emphatic. Roger had wired that he would need money; hence it was almost a certainty that Joland would receive another wire from him.

The worst move that murderers could make would be a stroke against Roger before he dispatched his final telegram. Their move would follow the expected message. Since the telegram would call for money, it would state where Roger could be reached. That fact clinched The Shadow's plan to return to the mansion.

AFTER alighting at the Broad Street Suburban Station, The Shadow went to his hotel. He called the garage, obtained his roadster and drove west on Walnut Street. Reaching the limit of that one-way thoroughfare, he swung north to Market; drove through the borough of Millbourne and arrived at the bottle-neck district of Sixty-ninth Street.

There, The Shadow left his car in a garage and picked up a coupe that had been brought there for him. The coupe was a newer model than the car that he had used near Duxton Square; but, like that vehicle, it bore Pennsylvania license plates.

The sky was clearing when The Shadow drove through Llanerch. By the time he had reached the "Main Line" suburbs, it seemed apparent that the prolonged rainy spell had ended. This was fortunate, for many streams had reached flood level. The Shadow noted that fact particularly when he took the Mill Valley

Road. The waterfall by the ruined mill was roaring even more fiercely than it had before.

Reaching Glynwold, The Shadow parked his car in a deserted driveway; then took a course on foot through wooded stretches. He neared the vicinity of Lengood Manor and found a dry lookout spot beneath a cluster of bushes.

Not long after The Shadow had stationed himself, a car swung from the gates of Lengood Manor. It kept along the road until it reached Doctor Denburton's house. There, it pulled into the driveway and the physician himself alighted. Denburton had evidently made a visit to see if Roy had improved.

Half an hour later, Denburton came from his house and drove in the direction of Glynwold, probably intending to make more calls before his late office hours began. Soon after Denburton had departed, a car came from another lane and drove into Lengood Manor. The Shadow recognized the driver. He was Louis Joland.

The answer was plain. Doctor Denburton must have seen Joland drive away from the mansion. The physician had called at the house immediately afterward. Denburton had unquestionably figured that contact with Peters would be easier during Joland's absence.

Another hour passed. Afternoon was waning; new storm clouds were gathering in the west. Daylight was dimming almost to a point of dusk. From his briefcase, The Shadow brought black garments. The time had come when he could risk an approach to Lengood Manor.

A coupe wheeled suddenly into view. It slowed to enter the mansion driveway. At the wheel The Shadow saw Eleanor Lengood; with her was another girl. The Shadow knew that Eleanor's companion must be Alice Besson. Roy's fiancée was attractive; her auburn hair and light complexion contrasted noticeably with Eleanor's brunette appearance.

THE SHADOW entered the grounds. Keeping beneath the shelter of trees, he circled to a spot that offered closeness to the mansion. As clouds obscured the setting sun, The Shadow followed a long stretch of blackness. Like a portion of gloom detached from beneath the trees, he moved steadily toward the shelter of the mansion walls.

Obscured there, The Shadow followed the wall until he reached the window of Joland's study. Gripping gray-stone projections, The Shadow rose to a window; he found it unlocked. He eased the sash upward, pressed aside a curtained drape, then entered the study itself.

The room was empty. It was almost dark, thanks to the hangings at the windows. Using his flashlight, The Shadow began a search through Joland's desk.

It was a ticklish task, for Joland might enter at any moment and the windows were too distant to be quickly reached. The Shadow, however, had picked an emergency spot. It lay beyond a huge filing cabinet against the wall near the desk. The space between the filing cabinet and the inner corner of the room was deep and inconspicuous.

There were no new papers on Joland's desk. The Shadow found the correspondence that had come from Roger. Nothing had been added; apparently Joland had not yet received the expected telegram.

The Shadow searched through the papers that pertained to the estate; gave them a more thorough scrutiny than he had as Cranston. The documents were complete, exact in detail. They proved conclusively that all the affairs of the estate were exactly as Joland had represented them.

Finished with this, The Shadow went to the filing cabinet. There, he began a careful, prolonged search,

going through every file that offered possible facts. The Shadow examined each folder singly; he was ready at any moment to replace the one he held and close the cabinet in an instant.

Among these files, The Shadow discovered batches of letters that dated back four years. They represented correspondence between Joland and various individuals—some of them attorneys—who had raised questions regarding the Lengood estate. Second cousins and distant relatives of the present heirs had tried to claim a share.

Carbon copies of Joland's replies showed that the administrator had proven such claims to be invalid. He had invited any one to attempt a contest of the will. There had been no takers of the challenge.

In certain cases, where distant relatives had been reasonable, Joland had paid sums of a few thousand dollars each, from a special fund provided. This was termed a "nuisance fund," its purpose to quiet people with useless claims, rather than have them annoy the heirs by starting futile lawsuits.

This was not an unusual procedure on the part of an administrator. Joland's handling of these matters was simply a further proof of his sound business ability. From his survey of the files, The Shadow thus gained new details of Joland's competent management. More than an hour had passed during The Shadow's methodical search. Dinner time had arrived; Joland must have gone to the dining room without coming to the study. The Shadow was putting away a last folder when he heard a faint tingling sound. He recognized it as the front doorbell.

CLOSING the file cabinet, The Shadow moved to the door of the study. He opened it; gained a short passage to the main hall. He was just in time to see Peters open the front door. By the dingy lights of the hall, The Shadow could see a telegraph messenger on the threshold.

Peters shot a quick glance toward the dining room. Gripping the pad and pencil that the messenger offered, the old servant signed with hurried, shaky hand. He closed the door in the messenger's face and quickly thrust a yellow envelope into his pocket. Peters got rid of the telegram just in time.

The Shadow saw Louis Joland come from the dining room. The administrator stared at Peters, then questioned quietly:

"Who was at the door?"

"No one, sir," returned the servant. "That is—no one important. Just—just the grocer's boy, bringing a list that he forgot to leave."

"Why didn't he go to the service entrance?"

"This wasn't the regular boy, sir. Wait a moment, Mr. Joland." Peters fumbled in his coat pocket. "Yes, here it is. This is the list he brought."

Peters produced a crumpled paper that he had probably been carrying all afternoon. Joland seemed convinced. "Very well, Peters," he said. "If a telegram comes, be sure and bring it to me at once."

With that, Joland headed for the study.

The Shadow had only one choice; that was quick retreat to his hiding place. He regained the study; he was past the file cabinet when Joland entered.

The administrator turned on the light; he strode to the desk and picked up a pocketful of cigars. He looked about in worried manner, apparently recalling how Peters had eavesdropped the night before.

Joland started from the study, found that he lacked matches and came back to get some from the desk. He lighted a cigar, puffed it for half a minute, then made his departure, turning out the lights.

AS soon as Joland was gone, The Shadow glided from his hiding place. He reached the window, dropped out to the ground below. He made a quick dash across the darkened lawn, to gain a view of Peters' window.

Forty feet away from the house, The Shadow spotted a glimmer from high above. Two coded blinks flashed; they were all. Turning, The Shadow gazed off beyond the trees. He saw a short series of blinks that came from a top window of Doctor Denburton's house. The physician was signing off.

Peters had made good speed up to his room, reading the telegram on the way. He had flashed the contents promptly, while The Shadow had been forced to remain in Joland's study. Peters' present job was done. He had sent full word to Doctor Denburton.

Unquestionably, the telegram that Peters had intercepted was the expected one from Roger Lengood. The all-important message had arrived at dusk, while The Shadow himself was inside the mansion.

Chance had tricked The Shadow, through Joland's brief visit to the study. Though Peters had read the telegram and flashed its entire contents through the night, The Shadow still lacked the message that represented his present quest.

CHAPTER IX. FACES IN THE NIGHT

SHROUDED beneath the darkness that had come with dusk, The Shadow watched Peters' window for a full three minutes. There was a chance that the servant might have remembered something else that he wished to flash to Denburton. No new blinks appeared, however.

The suppressed laugh that came from The Shadow's lips was a barely audible whisper. The Shadow could see ways to obtain the message that he had missed. Two men knew the contents of the telegram: Peters and Denburton. Either one could be made to divulge his knowledge, under correct persuasion.

Peters was closer. He was the weaker link, for he served merely as Denburton's spy. Moreover, there might be a way to gain the telegram itself without Peters' knowledge. Peters might have decided to leave the telegram in his room, believing that no one would go there. A search of that room would be The Shadow's next step.

The Shadow moved toward the mansion; he stopped suddenly as he neared the wall. From somewhere close by, he heard a guarded sound that indicated another person in the darkness. The Shadow listened; the sound was not repeated. Silently, The Shadow moved away; he listened again. He heard nothing.

From then on, The Shadow's moves were noiseless. He made a wide circuit of the house, intending to reach a rear window that would give him quick entry. He came beside a hedge at the back of the mansion. Just as he reached that vantage spot, there was a distant flare of light from the western sky.

Instantly, The Shadow dropped behind the hedge. The flash had been sheet lightning from the clouds that had gathered earlier. If a lurker had come to these premises, he would have a chance to spot The Shadow when another lightning flash arrived. Therefore, The Shadow kept low beside the hedge.

While he waited, he watched on his own. Lightning flickered, more vivid than before; but The Shadow could see no one when he peered from the top fringe of the hedge. While he waited for another flash, a door opened from the house. A light came on above a porch; the glow showed Eleanor Lengood and Alice Besson.

The girls were coming to a small garden in back of the mansion. The garden was fenced with hedges; The Shadow was behind one hedge, outside the garden's limit. He glimpsed the far hedge, saw it rustle slightly, as if some one had moved away from the distant side.

Lightning flashed; amid the flicker, The Shadow detected the motion of shrubbery some distance beyond the hedge. The next glare showed that the shrubbery had stilled; but there was a convenient hedge just past the bushes and beyond that hedge were trees. The Shadow could almost picture the path taken by a lurker.

While he watched for further signs, The Shadow overheard a conversation between Eleanor and Alice, for the two had seated themselves on a bench near the hedge.

THEY were talking about Roy; and both agreed that his condition was due to overstrain. Eleanor, having gone through a recent ordeal of her own, felt that there was no deeper cause for Roy's breakdown; but Alice disagreed.

"Matters are not right at Lengood Manor," declared Alice. "I have sensed that, Eleanor, in the few hours that I have been here."

"That is scarcely a sound opinion," protested Eleanor. "If things were really wrong, I would have noticed it."

"This is your own home, Eleanor. The house would seem natural to you. But to an outsider like myself, odd conditions would be noticeable."

"There was an outsider here last night. A gentleman named Mr. Cranston—a friend of Owen's. I wonder if—"

"You wonder if there was a secret purpose to his visit?"

"No, no. He was a remarkable man, Alice! When Roy broke down, I was tremendously shaken. But when Mr. Cranston spoke to me, a complete confidence came over me!"

"Because of his voice?"

"Yes; and because of his eyes. They carried a depth, a glow. What I was going to say, Alice, is that I may have been lulled; so comforted that I can not see the danger that may exist."

Eleanor paused; then added:

"Since I talked with Mr. Cranston, I have experienced a sense of complete security. This house, all in it, seem to be under protection."

Alice laughed indulgently.

"Roy does not feel the way you do," she declared. "For the first time, Eleanor, it seems that I can do nothing with him. That is why I told Walter that I wanted to talk to Doctor Denburton. I want his advice about Roy."

"Walter called Doctor Denburton, but the line was busy. So he has driven over to get him."

Alice sighed.

"That gives us a little while longer," she said. "Come, Eleanor. Let's go down to the old summerhouse. We can be back in ten minutes."

A cool breeze whipped the hedge as Alice spoke. A lightning flash was followed by the distant roll of thunder. Eleanor objected to the trip to the summerhouse, fearing that a storm would soon arrive. She added that she felt chilly.

"You had better go indoors, then," suggested Alice. "I'll stroll down to the summerhouse alone. The walk will do me good. It's so refreshing there, especially in the darkness, with only the ripple from the brook deep in the ravine."

Eleanor shuddered. She dreaded darkness. Alice watched her return into the house, then started along the path that led toward the ravine.

Soon after she had gone, a lightning flash came with increased vividness. It brightened the spot beside the hedge where The Shadow had listened. That space was empty.

ALTHOUGH the path was damp and the ground dark, Alice had no difficulty picking her way to the summerhouse. Occasional lightning flashes guided her past hedges and shrubs, through clumps of trees.

The summerhouse showed whitish in the darkness, with a clear space above, when Alice approached it. She could hear the whistle of the approaching wind, feel the first spray of the coming rain. As she found the steps, jagged lightning split the sky.

Alice gave an involuntary cry. Standing in the summerhouse, leaning half across the rail as though speaking to some one on the ground below, was a man whose face was familiar.

At Alice's cry, the man spun about and glared straight toward the girl; saw her as the brilliance ended.

Complete amazement gripped Alice. She could not have been mistaken in the face that she had seen. The man in the summerhouse had the features that marked the members of the Lengood family.

For the moment, Alice had taken the man for Roy; he had been uppermost in her mind. She realized instantly that it was not Roy; he was ill in his room at the mansion. Her next thought was of Walter; it struck her suddenly that Roy's brother had gone for Doctor Denburton.

Another name came to Alice's mind. It was that of Owen Lengood. Staring in pitch blackness, the girl fearfully wondered if she had seen a ghost.

There was another flash of lightning. Alice's next view of the summerhouse terrified her more than before. The little pergola was empty.

It never occurred to Alice that the occupant could have leaped across the railing and reached the ground. She had been too startled to time the interval between the lightning flashes. Her impression was that the second glare had come almost immediately after the first. The fact that the man was gone chilled Alice with the belief that she had actually seen the specter of Owen.

SHRIEKING her terror, Alice sprang away from the battered steps. She started up the path toward the mansion, screaming as she ran. Darkness seemed to engulf her; she stumbled over tree roots, barely managing to regain her footing.

Lightning flashed; it showed the iron picket fence beside the ravine. Straight ahead, the flash revealed the clear space of the lawn; beyond, the lights of the mansion. With a convulsive effort, Alice shrieked again; her cry was loud enough to carry to the mansion before the peal of thunder came to drown it.

That shriek materialized the girl's fear. Behind her, Alice heard long, thudding footsteps. Mammoth hands swooped down and clutched her shoulders. As Alice made a last leap toward safety, she tripped and fell.

From above her came a looming form; a huge fist circled her throat and choked the last cry that she tried to give.

Blinding lightning crackled above a clearing in the treetops. Against the glare, Alice saw a darkish face. It was the glaring countenance of Bela Bey. The Egyptian's white teeth glistened; his eyeballs were large and bulging in their sockets.

Flashing beside the Egyptian's vicious countenance was a knife, clutched by his upraised right hand. As he choked Alice's throat with his massive left paw, Bela Bey poised for the thrust. His purpose was murder; to dispose of this unfortunate witness who had spied the face of Dagbar.

Alice saw the knife drive downward. With the beginning of the long, powerful thrust came the sudden darkness that followed the lightning flash. Blackness blotted out the stroke that Bela Bey had started.

But dark could never have stopped that stroke of doom. The downward swing of the murderer's blade was already pointed straight for Alice Besson's pounding heart.

CHAPTER X. THE VANISHED SHADOW

IN that instant when all view was obliterated, Alice Besson thought that time stood still. It seemed as though a darkened eternity lay between the commencement of the knife-thrust and the finish of the stroke.

Perhaps it was the clutch of the hand upon her throat that gave the strange illusion. Alice could almost feel the driving approach of the blade—as if the knife were a dooming meteor winging in from space.

Then, into that split-second interval came the interruption that brought Alice's brain to normal.

Something swished in the blackness. A speedy, clutching hand thwacked hard against a downward driving arm. Alice could sense that the knife point had stopped short, scant inches from her heart. She felt the surge of a body from beside her; she heard a vicious utterance from Bela Bey.

The Egyptian's bulk jolted away. A figure, lunging up from solid ground, had cast the huge man from his victim. Alice was jounced by the attacking form. Her neck was free from Bela Bey's grasp. Rolling, gasping, Alice clutched the turf with her fingers. As she did, something thudded the soaked ground beside her.

Instinctively, the girl reached for the object. Her hand encountered cold steel. Quickly, she withdrew her touch. The object was Bela Bey's knife.

Sounds of furious fray were close at hand. Two fighters had locked in a terrific struggle. As Alice came to hands and knees, she could hear the battlers ripping through the underbrush, their conflict carrying them away from the spot where she crouched.

Revealing lightning ripped the sky. Gazing in startled amazement, Alice glimpsed a struggle more incredible than any she could have imagined. These were living fighters that she saw; not ghosts.

Towering high was Bela Bey, a giant whose size seemed magnified in the sudden flash of lightning. His black poncho glistening with rain; his evil face damp and grimy, the Egyptian looked like a living fiend. His thick lips were distorted; his bulgy eyes glared. His ham-like fists were clutching with fury.

Locked with Bela Bey was a fighter even stranger than the Egyptian— a being cloaked in black, whose head was topped by a slouch hat. His gloved hands were gripping for Bela Bey's throat; to reach it, long arms were extended almost to their full length.

A rescuer materialized from the night, The Shadow had arrived to battle the monstrous murderer who had sought Alice Besson's life.

SIGHT of The Shadow gave the girl immediate encouragement; but her hope faded as the lightning flash ended.

As vivid as if it had been visible, the picture of the fray remained with Alice. Amazing though The Shadow's presence might be, there was one detail that horrified the girl. That was the comparative size of the fighters. The Shadow was dwarfed by Bela Bey.

To Alice, the conflict could promise but one result; victory for the giant Egyptian. One grip of his massive fists—and the girl could picture Bela Bey breaking The Shadow in two. Wildly, Alice found the knife that lay beside her. Bravely she gripped the weapon, believing that soon she would have to spring to the aid of the outbucked rescuer who had saved her from death.

A lightning flash brought Alice to her feet. She expected to see The Shadow helpless on the ground. Instead, she caught a new view of the struggle. Bela Bey had almost engulfed The Shadow; he was trying to smother the cloaked fighter to the turf. Yet The Shadow's strength had not faded. Bela Bey was swaying, staggering about, still unable to break The Shadow's strangle hold.

Alice saw Bela Bey lunge toward the picket fence. Counting on his sheer bulk, the giant was endeavoring to pin The Shadow against the ironwork. That objective gained, the fight would be Bela Bey's.

The flash was gone. Again in darkness, Alice felt a sickening helplessness. She could not chance a wild thrust in the blackness. A knife drive for Bela Bey might reach The Shadow instead. Alice's hand was trembling; she realized that her puny strength could not suffice if the time came to deliver a stab.

Hopelessly, Alice delivered another shriek. A clap of thunder drowned her cry.

Stillness followed. Alice feared that the fray had ended; that Bela Bey had conquered. Lightning came with a long, jagged flare that was followed by repeated, flickering tongues. In that period of brilliance, Alice witnessed an amazing sight.

She saw the fighters locked, motionless, almost at the picket fence. Their statuelike pose accounted for the previous silence. Bela Bey had forced The Shadow to within five feet of the barrier. There, The Shadow, gripping upward, had suddenly halted the Egyptian's push.

Bela Bey strained. With all his strength, the giant bore hard against The Shadow, pressed him downward, backward. Alice gave an anguished cry, thinking that her rescuer's strength had broken. At that instant, The Shadow snapped to action.

The cloaked fighter twisted, still clutching Bela Bey's throat. Shouldering upward, The Shadow whipped the Egyptian's body upright, as though Bela Bey were nothing but a bulky bag of straw. The Shadow's shoulders gave a swinging snap that faced him toward the fence, just as Bela Bey lunged hard.

The Shadow's own tremendous strength coupled with the Egyptian's ill-chosen drive. The result was instantaneous. Bela Bey's feet left the ground. His arms shot forward, his huge hands clutching the air. As The Shadow released his hold on the big fighter's throat, Bela Bey launched into the air.

A DIVING figure, five feet above the turf, Bela Bey pitched headlong straight for the picket fence. His hurtling course was aided by the downward slope of the ground, a factor on which The Shadow had counted. Arms first, then head and shoulders, Bela Bey struck the fence with terrific force. That clang against the metalwork was terrific.

Though the smash was tremendous, it could not have crippled Bela Bey. The Shadow recovered from his swing just as Bela Bey crashed the fence. He was ready to pounce anew upon his adversary. In darkness, Alice heard a clattering sound; then a hard thud. After that, a plunging crackle that faded into depths. Gasping, Alice wondered what had happened.

Lightning flickered, the girl saw.

The Shadow was standing at the exact spot where he had previously been. He had made no movement toward Bela Bey. Beyond The Shadow was a vacant space, where a portion of the fence had flattened. Bela Bey's own bulk, impelled by the powerful lurch, had taken the Egyptian out of the fray. Loosened fence posts had toppled; Bela Bey had plunged down into the depths of the ravine.

The Shadow turned; he spied Alice. Beneath the brim of the slouch hat, the girl saw eyes that burned with triumph. A confidence seized her as she awaited the approach of her rescuer. Lightning ended; Alice heard a whisper in the darkness. Like the eyes, that tone dispelled the remnants of Alice's fears.

Lights were bobbing from the lawn flashlights and lanterns. Alice knew that her early screams must have been heard in the mansion. She realized that The Shadow's terrific conflict with Bela Bey had lasted for brief minutes only. A voice whispered close to Alice:

"Speak quickly! State what you saw at the pergola!"

"I—I saw a man there," replied the girl. "First I thought it was Roy—then Walter—then I knew it could be neither. I thought that it was Owen's ghost—"

Lightning flashed momentarily. The girl saw The Shadow close beside her. Again, she looked into eyes that gave assurance. The flash was gone. Alice spoke quickly.

"I spoke no name," she told The Shadow. "I screamed—I ran for the house. I was overtaken—"

Thunder clapped; as it faded to a rumble, The Shadow intoned concise words:

"Tell no one. State that you were frightened by the storm. That you imagined ghosts; that you stumbled and lost consciousness. Let them find you by the fence."

A gloved hand gripped Alice's arm. Lights were on the path; The Shadow drew the girl toward the fence. Lightning showed shouting people from the house. Alice and The Shadow had left their view, to reach the broken fence. There, Alice dropped to the ground; she felt fingers pluck away the knife that she still clutched.

It was black again; lights bobbed from within twenty feet. Another flash came from the sky; Alice heard a shout, in Walter's voice. The first of the arriving group had spied the girl.

ALICE raised weakly from the ground. As she did, she gave a quick glance toward the spot where she thought The Shadow still must be. The being in black was gone. He had departed at the instant that the lightning quivered.

Joland was close behind Walter; then Peters arrived. They raised Alice to her feet. Stammering, the girl chattered:

"I—I was terrified—by the storm. I ran—I fell—I thought that something clutched me. I screamed—I tried to run again—I lost the path—"

The girl's voice broke. Supported by Joland and Walter, Alice began to sob. Her hysteria was real; with

The Shadow gone, Alice's thoughts reverted to the terror that she had felt when gripped by Bela Bey.

Peters carried the lantern, while Joland and Walter helped Alice toward the mansion. Driving rain whipped their faces as they reached the lawn; a cloudburst had come with the thunderstorm. Gasping, half sobbing, Alice was playing her part without effort. As they passed the fringe of trees, the girl momentarily managed to halt her sobs.

Above the drive of the rain, she had thought that she heard an approving whisper; a tone that was almost a mirthless laugh. The others did not notice it; Alice supposed that it was a recollection from the past. But the illusion gave the girl determination.

Setting her lips, she steadily lessened her sobs. Hysteria was all right; it would help when persons questioned her. But Alice knew that she must control herself sufficiently to keep the secret of the summerhouse. From The Shadow's warning, the girl had gained a clear idea of all that lay at stake.

As Alice had believed, matters were not right at Lengood Manor. Some one existed as a living threat—some one who looked enough like the Lengood cousins to pass for any of them. Some one who could have been Howard, James or Owen in the past.

That person—the man whom Alice had seen in the pergola—had striven to keep his very existence unknown. That was why the huge Egyptian had tried to silence Alice with a thrust of death. The Shadow had rescued the girl; he had counted upon her future cooperation, with good reason.

Enemies did not want to murder Alice Besson. If she pretended that she had not recognized the face in the summerhouse, they would make no new threat against her. Bela Bey's murderous attack had been inspired by desperation on the part of plotters. Somehow, whatever Alice might say would be carried back to the killers. She would be safe if she played her part; more than that, she would aid greatly in The Shadow's campaign against the evil plotters.

Through his brief instructions, The Shadow had conveyed these thoughts to Alice. Bravely, she determined not to fail her amazing rescuer.

WHEN they reached the mansion and entered the door from the garden, Alice saw Eleanor Lengood with Doctor Rufus Denburton. The physician had not returned with Walter; he had come a few minutes later, in his own car. Anxiously, Eleanor asked what had happened. Walter answered, as he and Joland helped Alice to a couch in the living room.

"The storm frightened Alice," he explained. "She started running to the house. She stumbled and screamed; then ran on again. She smashed up against the picket fence."

Eleanor gasped anxiously. Alice managed to smile and nod.

"It was a close call, too," added Walter. "That fence was weak. It sagged when she struck it. Lucky for you, Alice, that you collapsed. If you hadn't, we'd have found you at the bottom of the ravine."

Alice noted that Joland was nodding his corroboration of Walter's story. Peters, too, looked convinced. Alice knew that she had deceived them perfectly; that whatever opinions any of them might hold, none of the three would credit her with knowing more than she had stated.

The one person who looked dubious was Doctor Denburton. The physician's eyes were sharp.

Denburton turned to Eleanor.

"Put Alice in bed," he told Eleanor. "Give her some brandy. When she feels rested, let me know."

Eleanor turned to help Alice from the couch. Alice smiled and arose, quite steadily. After she had gone with Eleanor, Denburton shook his head and spoke to the others.

“Sometimes,” said the physician, “these frights have bad after-effects. A shock such as Alice must have experienced cannot be taken too lightly. By the way, how is Roy?”

“He was asleep when I came back,” replied Walter. “I came downstairs; Eleanor had opened the door to call for Alice. That was when we heard Alice scream.”

It was fifteen minutes later when Eleanor appeared in the living room to state that Alice was resting in bed. Denburton went upstairs with Eleanor; they entered Alice's room. The physician sat beside the bed, felt Alice's pulse, then asked:

“Just what frightened you most, Alice?”

“The storm,” replied the girl. “I did not realize that it was so close. Lightning came very suddenly.”

“Despite the trees?”

“I was at a clearing—”

“By the summerhouse?”

“Yes.” Despite herself, Alice began to talk. Denburton's voice was smoothly persuasive. “It was when I saw—”

Alice was looking past the physician. The door was ajar. Blackness obscured the gloom of the hall. A sudden confidence seized Alice, like the tinge of a mild electric shock. Against the gloom, Alice saw the outlined figure of The Shadow.

Steady eyes drilled their assurance. Alice felt almost that she could hear an encouraging whisper. Looking straight ahead, as though trying to visualize her experience near the summerhouse, the girl spoke steadily to Doctor Denburton.

“It was when I saw the summerhouse,” she declared, firmly. “For an instant I thought that I saw some one there. The lightning came again. All that I had seen was one of the posts supporting the roof. But when the thunder roared, I was terrified!

“Running along the path, the sweep of the rain made me think that some one was pursuing me. I fell; I must have struck my head a glancing blow. I remember trying to rise; I recall that I screamed. I stumbled; then I saw flashlights and lanterns.”

The Shadow's eyes burned their approval. Alice looked squarely toward Doctor Denburton. The physician nodded, and arose from beside the bed. He asked casually:

“You fancied nothing else?”

“Nothing else.”

THE SHADOW was gone when Denburton reached the doorway. As the physician's footsteps sounded on the stairs, Eleanor spoke to Alice.

“You saw nothing, Alice?”

Eleanor's question was a cautious whisper. Alice smiled; she replied:

“I saw nothing, Eleanor. No one. Why do you ask?”

“Because of your eyes, just now,” answered Eleanor. “They looked as mine must have looked when I talked with that visitor who gave me so much confidence. I thought—perhaps—”

“That I had seen some one like him?” Eleanor nodded; Alice shook her head and rested back upon the pillow. She looked weary. Alice turned out the lights; she left the room and went downstairs.

Every one was in the living room. Eleanor entered. Soon afterward, there was motion in the hall. The Shadow appeared; his black cloak showed no glisten despite the fact that it was rain-soaked. Watching, The Shadow saw Denburton speak to Joland.

“Alice is quite all right,” declared the physician. “She merely imagined that she saw a figure in the pergola. Another lightning flash proved that it was a post. She ran; she thought the sound of the rain was some one pursuing her. It takes very little to stimulate the imagination during a thunderstorm.”

The Shadow could see that Denburton's tone of conviction was intended for Peters, who was standing close by. Denburton prepared to leave. The Shadow glided toward the stairs that led to the second floor.

The episode was finished. Alice had played her part. The girl would be safe. Nor could The Shadow foresee immediate danger to any others who were in the mansion. His thoughts were concentrated solely upon the one heir who was absent: Roger Lengood.

The Shadow knew that Bela Bey had been on watch; that the Egyptian had contacted the crook who had played the death-faker after three murders. These facts pointed to new crime in the near future. Moreover, murderers had found a reason to move swiftly. Bela Bey's failure to murder Alice Besson was proof that The Shadow was deep into their game.

The Shadow reached the third floor, entered Peters' room. He heard the rumble of Doctor Denburton's departing car; it came just as The Shadow began a guarded search with a tiny, shielded flashlight. The Shadow had returned to his former quest. It was imperative.

The Shadow needed the all-important telegram that had come from Roger Lengood. That message had become the vital link in the chain of insidious crime.

CHAPTER XI. CROOKS COUNTER

SOON after Denburton's departure from Lengood Manor, a trio assembled in the laboratory of the secluded house near the deeper ravine. Chief of this group was Dagbar; with the death-faker were Pierre Guyak and Bela Bey.

Dagbar had come back to the house beneath the shelter of trees. His clothing was scarcely more than damp, despite the intensity of the rain. Bela Bey, however, was as soaked as if he had swum a stream.

The huge Egyptian showed other signs of his conflict in the clearing. He had taken a terrific smash against the fence; his forehead showed an ugly gash that Doctor Guyak had patched with plaster. The bounding plunge into the depths of the ravine had given Bela Bey additional jolts; his clothes had been ripped by underbrush and stones; one bared shoulder showed long scratches and a large bruise.

Bela Bey had limped badly when he reached the house. Dagbar made reference to the fact.

“You were lucky, Bela Bey,” declared the death-faker. “Fortunately, there were enough soft spots from the rain. One bad bounce, and you would still be back in the ravine.”

Bela Bey glared viciously. His bulging eyes told that he was eager for new battle with The Shadow. Dagbar understood.

"Maybe you'll get another chance, Bela Bey," he declared. "If that girl saw too much and blabbed it—"

A telephone buzzed. Dagbar fished the instrument from beneath a lab bench. The conversation that he held was brief, scarcely more than a few grunted words that told nothing. Dagbar smiled, however, when he hung up the receiver.

"The girl saw nothing," he declared. "That's all we needed to know. It's up to us to go ahead the way we figured."

Guyak shook his head in objection.

"What about The Shadow?" he queried. "No matter how cleverly we work our game with Roger Lengood, he will suspect something. Even though you intend to fake death first, on this occasion, and handle murder afterward, The Shadow will—"

"I've figured on The Shadow," interrupted Dagbar, angrily. "I told you that, Guyak! The job is to decoy him!"

"But you have no way to do so."

"I had no way; but one occurred to me. I didn't mention it, simply because we didn't think The Shadow was around."

Smiling uglily, Dagbar leaned back in his chair and began to express his plan.

"FIRST of all," declared the death-faker, "Slug got word from Leigh Harbrook, the fellow who is traveling with Roger Lengood. Roger sent a telegram to Joland to-day, saying that he would be in Clearfield to-night and asking him to wire money there to-morrow."

"But Joland will never wire the money."

"Of course not. Because I will show up the first thing to-morrow as Roger."

"And Roger?"

"Will leave Clearfield and drive for Philadelphia with Harbrook. After Harbrook digs up some cash that he forgot he had."

Dagbar smiled to indicate that the events just mentioned would have an insidious sequel. It was plain that Dagbar never expected Roger Lengood to reach the manor.

"Of course," continued Dagbar, "Joland has not received Roger's telegram. Peters did a neat job intercepting it; and he flashed the dope to Denburton. Bela Bey had just mentioned that the signals went through when the girl showed up at the summerhouse."

Guyak nodded; but his look was quizzical. He did not yet see how these events concerned The Shadow. Dagbar reached for the telephone, called the operator and gave a suburban number. Soon there was an answer: Slug's voice. Dagbar spoke only two words:

"Get posted."

Hanging up, Dagbar faced Guyak.

“Sooner or later,” explained Dagbar, “Peters will have to put that telegram on Joland's desk. He'll do that some time to-night, after Joland has turned in. Joland will find it in the morning. Peters will have to explain why he didn't turn over the telegram earlier; but he has a swell alibi on that count. He can say that the telegram arrived after all the excitement took place.”

Guyak nodded at Dagbar's statement.

“All that didn't matter much,” resumed Dagbar, “until this mix-up with The Shadow. Our job is to handle The Shadow; and we've got to figure that he knows a lot. We can swing it, though, with that telegram.”

“But Peters has the telegram; and you can't risk going to the mansion—”

“I don't have to go there. I'll go to Denburton's, and give Peters the flashes from there. Chances are he'll be on the lookout.”

“But what will you signal to Peters?”

“I'll tell him to put the telegram on Joland's desk as soon as possible. That's where The Shadow will find it. It's a sure thing that The Shadow is in the mansion. When he finds the telegram, he'll start for Clearfield.”

Doctor Guyak chuckled at Dagbar's prophecy.

“That's right,” agreed the physician, “and he will drive by way of Mill Valley Road.”

Dagbar was grinning as he donned a raincoat. He motioned for Bela Bey to follow him. The big Egyptian moved willingly, despite his pronounced limp. Doctor Guyak followed the two upstairs, unbolted the door and let them out into the night.

RAIN had become steady, following the passage of the first cloudburst. Its beat drowned many sounds. The Shadow had recognized that fact during his search of Peters' room. Hence he had been especially wary, in case the servant returned.

His search almost completed, The Shadow chanced to turn toward the window. He saw a blink of light. It was repeated. The elusive signal came from the direction of Denburton's. It was the physician's call for Joland, dispatched from the third floor, as before.

Blinks ended. They were repeated. Another lapse. The Shadow glided from the room, found another door and entered. Soon came a sound that he expected: the creak of Peters' footsteps on the stairs.

From somewhere below, the servant had looked from a window and caught a slight glimpse of the physician's signal. The Shadow watched Peters enter his room. The servant left the door ajar, in case any one summoned him from downstairs.

The Shadow glided to the door of the butler's room. The servant's eyes were glued to the proper window. The Shadow watched Peters signal back with a flashlight. Then came the message, in the usual Morse:

“Put telegram in study as soon as Joland retires.”

Peters signaled his O.K. The distant flash responded. It was Denburton's sign-off order.

The Shadow drew away from the door. Peters came out almost immediately. He was clutching something in his coat pocket. He had been carrying the telegram all the time.

After Peters had gone downstairs, The Shadow descended. Joland was still in the study; but Walter and Eleanor had retired. Peters stayed in the living room. The Shadow found a watching place behind the stairs.

It was a long, slow vigil, but The Shadow chose it as the best course. Delay was bad; but it was preferable to an encounter with Peters, particularly with Joland at hand. If crooks were spurring to action because of The Shadow's encounter with Bela Bey, their speed would double if they had actual evidence of The Shadow's presence in the mansion.

AN old grandfather's clock was chiming in the hallway when Joland appeared from the door of the study. The Shadow could see the gray-haired man's face; it showed concern. Joland came to the telephone, called the operator and asked for the telegraph office.

The Shadow witnessed a stir in the living room; Peters was sidling away through a far door. The servant guessed that Joland had begun to wonder why Roger's telegram had not arrived. Peters did not want to be around to answer pointed questions.

Over the wire, Joland learned that the telegraph office was closed. The administrator went upstairs; Peters came smirking from the living room. One look at the servant's face told The Shadow that Peters had thought up an alibi for the morning. He could easily explain that he had thoughtlessly pocketed a telegram that came right after the episode with Alice Besson.

Pulling the yellow envelope from his pocket, Peters sneaked into the study. Soon he reappeared, to peer about the hallway. Listening to make sure that Joland had gone to his room, Peters decided that the way was clear. The wrinkly servant sneaked upstairs.

The Shadow reached the study. His flashlight glimmered on the envelope that lay on Joland's desk. The flap had been loose when Peters had opened it; the servant had moistened the gum; but it was not yet dry. The Shadow peeled the flap; quickly drew out the message.

The telegram was from Clearfield; it named the hotel where Roger intended to be until the morrow. Replacing the telegram, The Shadow sealed the envelope. Clearfield lay miles to the northwest of Harrisburg; but despite the driving rain and slippery roads, The Shadow could make the town long before dawn.

The Shadow doubted that ill would befall Roger in the town that he himself had chosen as a stopping place. In every previous crime, murderers had prepared a setting that was to their own preference.

The study window opened. The Shadow dropped to the ground outside. Silently, he strode through the rainy darkness of the night, heading toward the spot where he had left his car. The Shadow had gained the lead he wanted; he was starting on a quest that promised action.

A curious crisscross of circumstances had tricked The Shadow. His own keen analysis of the situation at Lengood Manor had placed him open to the counterplans of crooks. The Shadow was bound for a trap upon which his enemies counted to eliminate him from further interference with their schemes of death.

CHAPTER XII. THE BROKEN STRONGHOLD

TWENTY minutes after his departure from the mansion, The Shadow was driving down the slope to Mill Valley Road. Sweeping rain drenched the headlamps of the coupe and made vision difficult. The Shadow had chosen to take this stretch slowly. Afterward, he could make up for the short time lost. A few miles ahead lay a broad stretch, through Pennsylvania highway.

As he reached the valley road, The Shadow could hear the turbulence of the stream. The coupe's wheels splashed water; then struck hard road. A few rods on, they splattered deep again. The creek had reached a flood state; it was over the banks at every low spot.

One curved sector of the road brought water to the coupe's hubs. Forging it slowly, The Shadow reached a rising slope, where he could hear a deafening roar just ahead. He was on the higher bank that skirted the creek just below the falls. The headlights gave a view of an old abandoned mill.

The road would be better there. That tumble-down building, the old Copeburn Mill, had been ravaged by time, but its foundations had never collapsed. Floods had weakened the base of the structure, but it would be many years before the foundations would finally give. Rocky strata marked this portion of the bank along the creek.

The Shadow pressed the accelerator to the floor board. The coupe lurched up the slight slope. The roar of the motor brought rattled echoes from the walls of the old mill. For the instant, The Shadow saw clear road ahead. Then his foot sped suddenly to the brake pedal.

The Shadow had gained an instantaneous warning. A spotlight had glimmered from an angle to the right; The Shadow glimpsed another glow from a turn in the road ahead. Two cars were suddenly converging. One was coming from the valley road itself; the other, from the side road that was represented by an upward fork to the right.

Coincidentally, a brilliance flashed from the rear-view mirror above The Shadow's eyes. A third car had swung in behind the coupe, coming from a steep dirt road that formed an almost forgotten lane on the hillside. In that instant, The Shadow saw the trap.

Foemen were ready to risk a crash, with one or all their cars. Slug and a fresh crew of followers were here to get The Shadow. Knowing their adversary, they were prepared to risk their own necks on the chance of overwhelming him.

AS the coupe twisted in a skid, The Shadow ripped open the door beside the wheel. He took a long dive for the turf beside the mill. He had hardly swung about before the cars arrived. Brakes jammed; the crook-manned vehicles barely missed crashing the coupe.

A machine gun tattooed the opening fire, riddling the sides of the coupe. The Shadow jabbed a return fire from the ground, stabbing true thrusts with an automatic.

The machine gun stopped; The Shadow had clipped its handler. Hard on the echoes of his gun blasts came The Shadow's taunting laugh of challenge.

Shouts rose from the halted cars. Lights went out as if by signal. Another machine gun rattled, driving its spray of bullets for the spot where The Shadow had been. Crooks were out of their cars, spreading, deploying in a wide circle.

Again, The Shadow's .45 stabbed the night. He had fired from a spot yards away from the machine gun's range.

Slug's hoarse voice shouted for lights. They came, from lone reserves crouched low in the cars that crooks had left. Shafts of brilliance cleaved the misty rain. The blaze showed The Shadow, wheeling about in front of the old mill building, his blackened shape a weird silhouette against the yellowish wall. Revolvers barked; their shots were wide. Slug bawled for the machine guns.

"Start the typewriters, you lugs!"

The Shadow's automatics roared a parting answer; he had picked enemies by the flash of their revolvers. As crooks dived, the machine guns unlimbered. The Shadow wheeled as the first rattle began. He was squarely between two fires that were swinging in to blast him; but he had a spot of security.

With a long leap, The Shadow dived through the blackened space that had once been the doorway of the mill. Machine-gun bullets flattened against stone walls and sizzled through a vacant space. The Shadow was gone. He had taken the mill for his stronghold.

Slug shouted for a mass attack. Machine guns rattled a barrage; ceased instantly as men leaped forward to spring through the door. The muzzle of an automatic jabbed into sight, timed with the halt of the machine gun. With one shot, The Shadow clipped the first invader before the man could aim. He winged a second foeman as the fellow fired. The thug sprawled; his shot went wide. Others dived for darkness.

Slug had a strong crew, but he could not afford to let it dwindle at this rate. He snarled to Blimp, who was beside him; told his companion to take two other men and get around to the other side of the mill.

That order given, Slug tried a bluff. He ordered the machine guns to deliver a barrage, then halt, as if attackers meant to approach the mill on foot. He instructed the machine gunners to let loose the moment that The Shadow unwarily poked into view.

The barrage was delivered, straight through the old doorway. Fire ceased. Gunners waited. No gun muzzle appeared. Instead, The Shadow's mocking laugh trailed weirdly from the hollowed interior. The Shadow had guessed Slug's game.

MINUTES passed. Blimp returned to report.

"There ain't no windows in them walls, Slug," he informed. "Not except in the side toward the creek; an' that's a high one. It'd take a monkey to get up to it an' wiggle through."

"What about Rabbit?" Slug nudged a hunched-up thug who crouched beside him. "Think he could make it?"

"He might," returned Blimp. "I'll take him around with me. Say, though, Slug—there ain't no roof to that mill. An' there's a big tree on one side."

"Good! While Rabbit's getting to the window, I'll send a couple of gorillas up by the tree. I'll have another bunch ready to barge through the door."

Inside the mill, The Shadow noted the silence that followed. He divined that a spread-out attack was in formation. He knew that Slug would have a signal to start all his horde at once. The Shadow waited for it, knowing that it would have to be loud to be heard above the roar of the tumultuous waterfall. The signal came. Two shots rifled the outer darkness. Spotlights from the cars flooded through the doorway. A flashlight shot on from above. The spotlights did not show The Shadow; but the powerful flash did. The Shadow spun about beneath the roofless walls. He ripped one bullet that crackled the flashlight; but found no living target with it. The man who had brought the flash had been wise enough to rest it on the wall.

Thugs returned the fire, shooting madly in the direction of The Shadow's spin. He had outguessed them, by turning his twist to the opposite direction. Crooks, however, could not alter their position. As their shots zipped wide, The Shadow jabbed bullets for the top of the wall.

Like pipes in a shooting gallery, thugs began to drop. Two went; the rest joined them in a mad leap from the ten-foot wall to the soft ground outside. A gun barked from the creek side of the mill. "Rabbit" had

spotted The Shadow's gun stabs; he was trying to clip the cloaked fighter from an angle.

Rabbit's mistake was that of aiming for The Shadow's blazing guns. The Shadow was not facing him. Rabbit's fire was a sidelong one. His bullets whistled in front of The Shadow. Wheeling, the cloaked fighter shot one arm high and wasted a bullet as a last misleading shot.

Rabbit fired again, tricked into a shot that was wider than before. With his other hand, The Shadow jabbed straight for the crook's flaming gun.

A spotlight tilted upward at that moment. It showed Rabbit, wedged half through the little window. His gun was dropping from his hand; his arms were widening, his fingers clawing to hold him in his precarious position. Wounded, Rabbit was not equal to the effort. His body slipped from view; hurtled out into the creek. Rabbit's splash was lost in the turbulence of the stream. His last shriek was drowned by the roar of the raging waterfall that carried his punchy body over the brink, to be dashed upon the pointed rocks below.

THE SHADOW was swinging toward the door before Rabbit slid from sight. This time, attackers were coming. He met them as they entered, springing full upon them, flaying hard with fists that wielded the heavy automatics which he had emptied in the fray.

Thugs sprawled; scattered. The Shadow wheeled back into the mill as the machine guns cut loose.

Lights flashed from the road above the fork. Slug rasped an oath as he saw an approaching car stop and jerk backward. Some chance driver had arrived; had heard the roar of gunfire and had seen the brilliance at the mill. There was no chance to halt the witness. The car was heading away; soon the law would be aroused.

It was that freak occurrence that spurred Slug to a wild order that should have brought annihilation to his crew, but which was due to be a lucky break instead.

Springing toward the doorway of the mill, Slug shouted to the crew members there. Machine guns quit as Slug thoughtlessly dashed straight for their path.

"Inside, all of you!" roared Slug. "He's out of bullets! Gang the mug!" Slug's own dash inspired the others to follow. In a cluster, the crooks bucked through the doorway, half a dozen strong, their revolvers leveled. Flashlights gleamed from their free fists. The combined glow showed The Shadow.

The cloaked fighter was wheeling from the wall. His automatics loomed; his fingers pressed the triggers. Muzzles blazed. The Shadow had unlimbered a fresh brace of guns. His quick, opening blasts were designed to make crooks scatter. They did.

Only Slug and one other maniac still surged forward. The others retreated wildly, leaving one clipped companion in the doorway. Slug and the man beside him fired; their blasts were futile. The Shadow had wheeled straight across the patched floor of the square room, passing the door with the knowledge that machine guns would not recommence while Blimp and other hoodlums were diving pell-mell to the grass outside.

Almost to the far wall, The Shadow swung his guns simultaneously; one .45 covered Slug; the other pointed to the second thug. Both crooks were caught flat-footed, their own flashlights betraying their position. It was only the unexpected that saved them.

Timbers crashed beneath The Shadow's stride. Boards ripped loose; a beam buckled. The Shadow's fingers tugged triggers; his bullets whined above the heads of the men who had been his easy targets.

With the soft thuds of the flattening bullets, The Shadow was gone from view.

A crash sounded from a depth beneath. The Shadow had dropped into the pitlike space that had once been the deep cellar of the old mill. His fall had been a long one, judging by the crash.

The floor of the old mill had been patched frequently in years past, as the only way to protect sightseers and youths who visited it. The Shadow had found the one rotted spot. His plunge had been instantaneous; it had taken him entirely out of the fray, just as he was set to complete his victory.

The Shadow had intended to pick off Slug and his pal; then follow through the doorway to down Blimp and the rest. He could have dodged away before the confused machine gunners opened fire. A bold plan, but the sort with which The Shadow had gained triumphs in the past. That plan, however, was ended.

SLUG shouted to his companions. They came; Slug crawled to the spot where The Shadow had disappeared. He shoved a flashlight through the floor, saw nothing but hazy blackness below, with the glimmer of scummy water that had trickled through to cover the cellar floor. Slug emptied his revolver into the depths.

Two thugs came lugging a machine gun, with Blimp behind them. The heavy weapon nearly slipped from their grasp as they placed it on the floor, but they managed to tilt the barrel through the space and deliver a circled fire about the center of the water-logged pit. That done, Slug ordered the crew outside.

"No use of sending guys down there," he growled to Blimp. "We got a rope; but that floor's liable to buckle under the weight of the guys that do the hauling."

"We got The Shadow, all right," returned Blimp. "He didn't make no squawk. Didn't take no pot shot up at us. He was out cold, probably, from the drop he took."

"I'd like to take a gander down there, though," Slug paused and shook his head. "No. It won't do. There'll be coppers here inside of half an hour. We got to lam. We'll come back tomorrow night after the body. I'd like to lamp The Shadow's real mug."

Slug ordered his men to their cars. Wounded thugs were hauled into the automobiles, along with a few limp bodies of their fellows. Blimp and another hoodlum made a lucky find of Rabbit's body, stranded on the rocks below the waterfall. They loaded the corpse into a touring car. Blimp took over The Shadow's coupe.

Four cars departed. Only blackened night remained, with the terrific roar of the defiant waterfall, that seemed to glory because it was no longer rivaled by the rip of gunfire. At last, there came the wail of sirens. Motor cycles roared up beside the mill, with a police car behind them.

Poncho-clad suburban police made a search with flashlights. Battered walls gave no token of the gun fray; close search for evidence was impossible in the increasing rain. The police noted the break in the far floor of the mill; used their flashlights to peer below. They shouted; there was no response. An examination of the rotted timbers made them finally decide that the floor had simply given under its own weight.

The police departed, deciding that a regular patrol was all that would be necessary for the remainder of the night, in case trouble-makers returned. Again, the roar of the waterfall reigned supreme.

That sound was dull, however, within the confines of the old mill. A solemn hush, disturbed only by a muffled echo, lay over The Shadow's resting place.

CHAPTER XIII. DOOM FROM THE EAST

GRAY morning had come to Lengood Manor. Continued rain still swept the old mansion; lights were on in the dining room, where Eleanor Lengood and Alice Besson sat at breakfast. It was nearly nine o'clock. Every one had slept late because of the gloomy morning.

"If you're sure you feel well enough, Alice," remarked Eleanor, "we can drive over to Ardmore when we have finished breakfast."

"I'm fine," laughed Alice. "Really, Eleanor, last night's experience was nothing but my own imagination!"

"Very well, we shall start right after breakfast."

Peters was standing by. The servant made remark.

"I beg pardon, Miss Eleanor," he said. "If you intend to go to Ardmore, you must avoid the valley road."

Eleanor showed surprise. Peters explained.

"One of the tradesmen informed me that the road is closed," said the servant. "The creek has completely flooded it in places. Fortunately, there was a police patrol along the road last night."

"A police patrol? Why?"

"Because of some disturbance at Copeburn's Mill, so the tradesman said. Gunfire was reported; so the police went there. They found no one; but they were still on duty when the road began to flood."

A pleasant voice sounded from the doorway. The girls turned to see Louis Joland. The gray-haired man bowed his good morning; he ordered Peters to prepare his breakfast. He remarked that he was going to the study to pick up the morning mail that Peters always placed there; but he added that he would return in a few minutes.

Joland was back in less than the promised time. He stormed into the dining room; ignored the astonished looks that the girls gave him. Loudly, Joland shouted for Peters. The butler popped in from the pantry. Joland brandished an opened telegram.

"This came last night!"

"Yes, sir," nodded Peters, weakly. "I—I forgot all about it, sir. It arrived while—that is, just after Miss Besson was brought into the house. I did not remember it until after you had retired, sir—"

"So you put it on my desk and said nothing! What folly, Peters! You should have awakened me!"

Joland's indignation ended. He turned to the girls, spoke quietly as he displayed the telegram.

"From Roger," explained Joland. "He is in Clearfield. He wants money. I must wire it at once. I could have telegraphed it last night, if I had received the message then. Well"—Joland paused to glance at his watch—"I can probably get it to him before noon. Call the telegraph office, Peters. At once!"

BEFORE the servant could move, the telephone bell began to ring in the hallway. Peters hurried to answer the interrupting call. His crackly tones denoted surprise. The servant came into the dining room and spoke to Joland:

"It's Mr. Roger, sir—"

“Calling from Clearfield, I presume,” remarked Joland. “No wonder. He's puzzled because I haven't sent the money.”

“It's not a long-distance call, sir,” protested Peters. “Mr. Roger says that he is at the Glynwold station.”

“At the station? But he was to drive in by car! I'll talk to him, Peters.”

Joland went to the telephone, held a brief conversation. Finished, he shouted to Peters; told the servant to send the chauffeur to the station at once. Joland called another number; the line was busy. He came into the dining room with troubled countenance.

“Roger is ill,” he told the girls. “He managed to get to Harrisburg, and came in from there by train. For some reason, he doesn't want to come up from the station in a cab. He told me to summon a physician at once. I called Doctor Denburton, but the line was busy.”

They heard the car start from the garage. Peters returned, bringing Joland's breakfast. Joland pushed his plate aside; told Peters to keep calling Denburton. The butler made three tries; the third was successful. He announced that Doctor Denburton would come at once.

At that moment, the group heard the automobile arriving back from the station. Joland hurried to the front door, with Eleanor and Alice close behind him. Peters joined them.

As Joland opened the door, they saw a man coming slowly up the steps. Eleanor cried a welcome:

“Roger.”

THE man raised his stooped head, then slowly lifted his hands to motion the girl back. Eleanor saw a face that resembled her brother Roger's, as well as she could remember him after his years of absence. But the sight of the countenance made her tremble. Roger's face was chalkish.

“Don't—don't come near me, Eleanor,” protested the man. “I'm—I'm very ill! No one must touch me! Let me lie down.”

He dragged himself past the group, saw the door of the living room and stumbled in that direction. Inside the living room, he found a couch and sank upon it. The others thronged about him. The stricken man gazed with glassy eyes.

“The doctor?” he questioned. “Where—where is he? I told you to have him here when I arrived—”

The voice weakened and trailed. Eleanor replied to the unfinished statement.

“Doctor Denburton will be here any moment, Roger.”

The chalkish face displayed a weak smile. It was the first relaxed expression that the arrival had shown. Alice, in back of the others, saw an ugly curl to the corners of the lips, just as the smile faded. She started an exclamation; stopped it with effort.

Something about that face had impressed her; the smile told her why. There flashed a vivid recollection of a crackling lightning flare; a view of the abandoned old summerhouse. Though Alice Besson accepted this man as Roger Lengood, she realized instantly that he was the same person whom she had seen at the summerhouse the night before!

Alice might have betrayed herself but for a timely interruption. There were quick footsteps in the hallway. Doctor Denburton strode into the living room. Others stepped away; the man on the couch recognized

that Denburton must be the expected physician.

“Don't—don't touch me, doctor,” he warned. “I know what is wrong with me. I've seen the same symptoms in others—”

The weak voice broke. A spasm shook the man's body. Doctor Denburton stared; he was about to make an exclamation when the sick man himself supplied the answer:

“Cholera!”

Denburton nodded; he motioned the others away. He began to open his bag, telling Peters to hurry for water. Denburton fumbled among medicine bottles. Eleanor saw Roger's tremor end. The stricken man rose halfway from the couch; he gasped hoarsely.

“No use, doctor! You cannot help! I must have a specialist. At once! A man who has treated cholera. I have seen others with these spasms. I have seen them recover; then weaken. Only a specialist in the most malignant Oriental ailments can help me. One who has treated men in my condition. If such a physician can be had—”

THE period of recuperation ended. The stricken man contorted. He writhed on the couch, twisted in a violent spasm. His eyes rolled; his tongue prodded the air. That tongue was spotted, blackish.

Doctor Denburton stared; then suddenly exclaimed: “At once! Summon Doctor Guyak!”

“Doctor Guyak?” queried Joland. “Who is he?”

“Doctor Pierre Guyak,” returned Denburton. “French specialist in Oriental diseases. Living here in Glynwold. He has an experimental laboratory in his home. I have met him; he lectured on the subject of cholera.”

“He is listed in the telephone book?”

“No. Send the car to Malden Lane. His house is near the end. Hurry! It is life or death!”

Joland hurried out to the driveway, sent the car on its mission. Denburton hastily prepared a temporary remedy, gave the medicine to the man on the couch. The patient's spasm ended. He rested.

Minutes passed while all watched, hoping that another attack would be delayed until Guyak's arrival. At last, the roar of a motor sounded from the driveway. Joland hurried Peters to the door. They heard it open; there were rapid footsteps.

A hoarse cry from the couch. The sick man jolted straight upward. His face distorted; a wild gurgle came from his throat, ending in a rattle. His eyes bulged; his hands clawed the air. Into the room came Guyak, clutching objects from his medicine bag: phials with liquid contents, a ready hypodermic syringe.

Before the bearded man could reach the couch, Eleanor saw Roger's form collapse. Life seemed to wrest itself from the rigid form. The tortured man crumpled, rolled from the couch and sprawled on the floor.

Guyak sprang to his side, laid down the objects that he carried and tilted the chalkish face upward. He shook his head as he stared at the bulging eyes.

“Dead!” pronounced Guyak, solemnly. “Ah! The cholera strikes upon the instant. If I had only been summoned sooner. I have given aid to such cases, at almost the last moment. Ah! It was a mistake not to

tell me sooner.”

GUYAK was raising the crumpled body. Doctor Denburton helped him place it on the couch. The local physician began an examination. He nodded his agreement that the victim was dead. He went to call the health authorities. When Denburton returned, his face was grave. He motioned the others to the hallway, all except Doctor Guyak. Facing the bearded man, Denburton inquired.

“What of contagion in cases like this?”

Guyak looked to the hall; then asked: “Was there actual contact?”

“None,” replied Denburton. “Except by ourselves.”

Guyak considered.

“The cholera,” he stated, “will thrive only when it has the place it likes. It is very contagious sometimes, yes. But it is as nothing other times. This was a peculiar ailment that lurked. This man has come from China, yes?”

Denburton nodded.

“It was so that the chauffeur told me,” continued Guyak. They could hear his statements in the hallway. “Perhaps in China; perhaps on the boat, this man took the cholera. But if he has given the germ to others, I would say that such was done early; not so late as to-day, when death was so close.”

Turning toward the hallway, Guyak gave a sweep of his arm.

“Those people,” he inquired—“could they go from this house? To somewhere in Philadelphia, perhaps?”

Joland heard the question from the hallway and replied.

“We have a town house there, where we could go.”

“That would be good,” nodded Guyak. “The quarantine can then be placed upon this house. If you will talk with the health authorities, Doctor Denburton, I can say whatever else is required.”

It was not long before a county physician arrived. He made a brief examination of the body and pronounced Roger Lengood dead. Details were discussed with a health officer who accompanied the county medical examiner. The health officer was somewhat stumped by the question of cholera. It was not listed among the usual contagious diseases.

At last a decision was reached—partly at the suggestion of Doctor Denburton; partly through purred advice from Doctor Guyak.

“It's all right for the residents to go into Philadelphia,” decided the health officer. “They'll be out of the county. We'll make out the death certificate right away; and we'll put the house under quarantine as soon as every one is out.”

“I shall temporarily suspend my practice,” decided Denburton. “I intended to take a vacation about this time. As for Doctor Guyak, he is almost a recluse, always busy with his experiments.”

“He can continue them,” agreed the health officer. “But let me ask you about the body. If we keep it here in the house—”

“It must be placed in a leaden casket!” interposed Doctor Guyak. “Perhaps the local undertaker would

have one.”

DENBURTON called the undertaker's; learned that there was a lead casket at the establishment. It had come in with an unordered shipment, by mistake. Denburton ordered its delivery. He spoke to Joland in the hallway, then came into the living room with a new announcement.

“There is a crypt in the cellar of this mansion,” said Denburton. “I have asked Mr. Joland for the keys. The casket can be placed there. I would recommend an autopsy, say to-morrow.”

“You question that the case is cholera?” demanded the health officer in surprise. “I thought that you were positive in your diagnosis.”

“Doctor Guyak has pronounced it cholera,” returned Denburton. “Nevertheless, he is not a practicing physician. In view of an unusual sequence of death in the Lengood family, I feel that an autopsy is necessary.”

With that, Denburton hurled a challenging glance toward the hall. It was evident that Joland was the person who had suggested the autopsy; and that Denburton was determined to satisfy the administrator, rather than have an argument like the one in Duxton Square.

Joland's lips showed a pleased smile. He ordered Peters to summon Roy and Walter; told the girls to pack. Soon, all the residents of Lengood Manor were driving outward through the rain. Past the gates, their cars met the hearse bringing in the leaden casket.

That casket looked somber and formidable when it reached the living room. Its heavy metal sides were reinforced by strips of metal at the corners. The body was placed in it; the heavy lid was clamped shut and locked.

Doctor Denburton took the key. He suggested that they go down to the crypt and find how difficult the route would be when the casket was taken there.

The county examiner and the health officer accompanied Denburton. Guyak stood alone by the locked casket. The bearded man tiptoed to the window, looked out to see the undertaker's men waiting by the hearse. Guyak tiptoed back. He reached the foot of the lead casket, produced a small screw driver and unloosened three screws along a metal strip.

Pressing the front end of the casket, Guyak was rewarded by a click. The panel swung inward. A hunched form came out, feet first. Grinning as he dropped to the floor, the supposedly dead Roger Lengood turned to Guyak.

“All downstairs?” he questioned.

“Yes,” whispered Guyak. “But there are men outside. You must go by the back door, Dagbar.”

“That's easy,” returned Dagbar. “I'll see you at the house, Pierre.”

The death-faker ambled out through the gloomy hall and reached the garden door. Hidden by the house, Dagbar's get-away was simple, particularly with no one left to see him. The departure of Joland, Peters, Alice Besson and all the Lengoods had cleared the way to perfection.

Guyak replaced the loosened panel. He was seated near the casket when Denburton and the county officers returned from downstairs. They sent for the undertaker's helpers. Then came the task of carrying the casket to the crypt. All aided, including Guyak.

THE casket reached the yawning mouth of a crypt, in a remote corner of the cellar. It was shoved into a stone-walled space that was nearly sixteen feet square. The carriers solemnly retired. Denburton clanged a huge metal door and closed its massive lock. The physician pocketed the keys that he had received from Joland.

Death had been successfully faked again. This time, however, an empty casket had been stowed away. That coffin was to be opened on the morrow; then, a body would have to be found within it. A corpse that would show cholera germs when the autopsy was held.

Doctor Pierre Guyak smiled to himself, as he followed the others through the gloomy reaches toward the stairs that led up to the ground floor. He had played one part in crime; he was looking forward to further duty after murderers supplied the body of the real Roger Lengood.

Crooks had reversed their game. Dagbar's fake death had been staged ahead of murder. All that remained was the real death that killers had planned to accomplish with ease and precision. The law suspected nothing. No one could spoil the game to come. Such, at least, was the opinion that Doctor Guyak shared with his fellow workers in crime.

For killers were convinced that The Shadow had been eliminated. With that master foeman eliminated, no brain remained that could fathom the details of these murderous schemes.

CHAPTER XIV. THE SHADOW RETURNS

AFTERNOON had arrived. Steady rain had added to the flood along Mill Valley Road. Peters' morning statement was correct. Traffic had been closed on that water-swept highway.

The whole valley seemed filled with the surging roar of the creek. There was one spot, however, where the water's tumult was dulled almost to a tiny murmur. That spot was the deepest and most remote corner of the old mill cellar.

A shape stirred in the gloom. A figure raised itself against the slippery walls of the corner, then sagged back into the scummy water that covered the floor of the pit. Eyes saw a faint gleam of daylight off at a high, far angle.

The Shadow had survived his crash into the cellar of the mill; more than that, he had escaped the barrage that Slug and the other crooks had delivered before their departure.

When he had struck the scum-covered floor, The Shadow had made a plunge for the deepest point. Groggy from his drop, he had slithered to the farthest corner, where he had driven head-on against the wall. There, he had slumped into unconsciousness.

Huddled in shallow water, The Shadow had lain beyond the range of the haphazard machine-gun fire.

Recovery had been long postponed for The Shadow. His head had cracked a broken timber in the fall; the blow had given him a slight concussion. During those fitful intervals when he regained consciousness, The Shadow had been unable to gather his situation.

Hours had passed; the perpetual darkness had proven a benefit. For the first time, The Shadow's vision had lost its blur. His ears could distinguish the outside murmur from the creek. He began to piece his surroundings.

The Shadow remembered the fight up to the point of his last attack; but from then on it was a blank. To his recollection came the thoughts of what he had planned to do; he knew that he must have gone through with his intended action.

Thus did The Shadow reconstruct the scene almost to the exact detail. He could see that drive across the mill floor; he could imagine the crash of the breaking floor.

Daylight meant that he had been here for many hours. That brought The Shadow back to his original quest: his intended meeting with Roger Lengood, in Clearfield. The Shadow recognized that his planned goal could never be attained. By this time, Roger would no longer be in Clearfield.

The Shadow's own dilemma was of chief importance. Only by extracting himself from this pit could The Shadow hope to resume his campaign against men of crime. As he arose and leaned heavily against the wall, The Shadow realized that his plight was a serious one.

He was weakened; his left leg could not support his weight. The walls were slippery, covered with a slimy ooze that promised disaster if he attempted to scale them. The floor above was a full eight feet above The Shadow's head.

GROPING along the wall, The Shadow made slow progress. His fingers slipped against the slimy stone; at times, his leg gave and he floundered to the watery floor. His eyes tricked him; their gaze blurred and his head swam dizzily. When he reached the creek side of the mill, he rested. Ten minutes steadied him for new effort.

Looking up toward the opening in the floor, The Shadow felt the drizzle of rain that swept through from the roofless mill. The broken floor yawned far from reach. The hole was a few feet away from the wall. Even an ascent of the wall would not suffice. There was no way to travel the space between the wall and the hole in the floor.

Other spray than the rain was splashing The Shadow's shoulder. It came from the wall above his head. Reaching upward, The Shadow found the source of this flow. There was a crevice between the stones; water was trickling through it.

The Shadow's low-toned laugh sounded in the gloomy depths.

The cloaked prisoner had learned an important fact. This pit was well below the level of the portion of the creek that lay above the waterfall. The stream was over its banks; it was sending water down through the upper stones.

The cellar itself was almost watertight. The proof existed in the slimy water that lay on the floor; that water had come from accumulated rainfalls, pouring through the patched floor above. Adding these two circumstances, The Shadow saw a way out of the trap.

His flashlight was useless, but a search along the watery floor brought results. Among the junk that lay there, The Shadow found a piece of iron pipe that had been used as a temporary support, or as a lever, by workmen who had once strengthened the dangerous floor above. There was a hammer, also; but its handle was broken and the tool was useless. Like the pipe, it had dropped into the cellar and no one had bothered to reclaim it. The Shadow chose the length of rusted pipe in preference.

Returning to the wall, he began to pry at the stones above his head. He chiseled a space between two stones, jabbed the crumbled mortar with the end of the pipe. A stone loosened. The Shadow pried. Beyond, he found rock and dirt.

Prodding with the pipe, The Shadow was rewarded by an increased spray of water. He wedged a deeper space in the soil. A gush of water came through. The Shadow attacked the loosened stones of the wall. One wavered; the water flow increased. The stone came from its moorings. Water spouted into the cellar.

The Shadow hacked at the next stone. Gurgling water added its pressure. The stone came away. The Shadow chipped rocks that were in the soil. Chunks bounded through, glanced from his shoulders. Water was coming faster, bringing mud and more bits of stone.

The Shadow moved away; he started a new attack at another oozing portion of the wall.

The first opening had become a gusher. Flooded waters were pouring through in a torrent. Fresh water rose on the floor, from The Shadow's ankles almost to his knees. He finished his hacking; splashed away from the wall just as a new intake roared loose, bringing a sweep of earth and stone along with its sudden deluge.

No more work was necessary. Flood waters had taken over the task. Increasing as they greedily ate new channels, the spoutlike torrents were filling the pit where The Shadow stood.

Water reached his hips; came creeping to his shoulders. The Shadow wallowed to a side wall, dug his fingers into the only crevices that he could find. He was waiting, resting for a coming test.

MINUTES brought the water level to The Shadow's chin. Easing from the wall, he kept afloat by treading water. He was swimming in a square-shaped pool; the rising level was bringing him closer to the ceiling.

The water was above the opening that The Shadow had made, but the current was still pushing through. The water was seeking its outside level. When it reached a depth of ten feet, The Shadow would have his chance to grip the broken timbers of the floor above. The Shadow had been swimming about for half an hour when the water neared the required level. There were only inches to go.

The Shadow stretched his arm for a beam; could not quite reach it. A few minutes later, he made another attempt; still, his effort was short. The level had become constant.

At first, The Shadow thought that he had miscalculated the height of the flooded creek. Then, he discovered another answer.

The water in the pit had found a crevice in the wall on the lower side of the mill. It was streaming out, gushing down beside the waterfall. The outlet had equaled the intake. If new gaps formed in the lower wall, the level of The Shadow's pool would show a decrease.

Just beyond The Shadow's reach was the end of a broken beam. The Shadow gripped the brim of the slouch hat that was tilted back upon his head. Pumping heavily with his lower arm, he stretched the hat upward and clamped its interior over the end of the beam. Pulling on the tough felt brim, The Shadow drew himself up from the water.

His weight increased as he came. The end of the beam quivered as The Shadow gripped it. Had he tried to raise his body completely, the added weight would have broken the beam. Instead, The Shadow rested, holding the beam with arms fully extended.

There was a piece of flooring a little higher than the beam and to the right. The water in the pit was eddying, due to the outlet. The Shadow let himself swing to the right while he still clung to the beam. He made a long sweep with his right arm, caught the edge of the floor with his fingers.

The beam trembled under the strain; a portion of the floor sagged. Then The Shadow's weight was gone. Both hands had their new hold. The Shadow dragged himself up through the floor. Slipping, he dug one hand between two wide-spaced boards, pulled himself clear and rolled upon the solid wood.

AFTER a short rest, The Shadow reached down and reclaimed his hat, which was swinging in pendulum

fashion from the beam's end. He crept along the floor slowly, to avoid any weakened spot. He reached the doorway, came to his feet and stepped through.

The roar of the waterfall was terrific. The highway was flooded; waters were streaming around to join the lower level of the creek. The fall was acting as a dam against the heavy tide; but where the road dipped, a quarter mile below, The Shadow could see it flooded.

The road was obviously closed to traffic. His car gone, The Shadow's only way to reach the nearest suburb was by foot. Limping, The Shadow picked his way through the water that streamed across the road. He found a path to higher ground.

The Shadow took the direction toward Lengood Manor. He knew that he could reach the mansion by an angled short-cut; he suspected that he might find news awaiting him there. Threading through woods, The Shadow followed paths and muddy lanes. At last, he crossed a ravine on a footbridge and found an entrance on the far side of the manor grounds.

Despite the dullness of the day, there were no lights in the mansion. The Shadow sensed that the huge house was deserted. Coming from the trees, he approached the front door; there he read a quarantine notice that the health officers had applied.

There was something significant about the placard. It did not specify the contagious disease that had caused the quarantine. The Shadow found a suitable window, jimmied the lock with a thin strip of metal and entered the living room.

There were embers in the fireplace; kindling wood and logs were close at hand. The Shadow started a fire, then placed his cloak and outer garments upon the screen in front of the fireplace.

The Shadow went to Joland's study. He looked about for clues to what had happened. He saw a crumpled envelope lying in a wastebasket. On it, he found the written words:

Keys to the crypt

Death had come to Lengood Manor—death of a malignant sort that had lead to a prompt burial. But The Shadow doubted that it was death at all. Though he could not picture the exact details, he could reconstruct the possible part played by the death-faker, Dagbar.

Last night, The Shadow had learned that the death-faker lived close to Lengood Manor; with him, a huge Egyptian who served him. What The Shadow now needed was an exact clue to Dagbar's headquarters; and he was confident that he could gain one, in view of to-day's circumstances.

GOING through the mansion, The Shadow took the path to the garage. There, he found one remaining car, an old sedan that had been kept for hauling purposes. It had an antiquated type of gear-shift lock; the key had long since been broken off. The Shadow unlocked the gear shift with a screw driver.

Returning to the house, he stood before the crackling fire for several minutes; then donned his dry outer garments. He went to the hall, noted the time on the big grandfather's clock. It was nearly five o'clock. Morning had passed while The Shadow had lain in the pit; most of the afternoon had dwindled during his slow escape and his return to Lengood Manor.

Death, perhaps, had by this time actually extended to Roger Lengood. Though The Shadow hoped that the threatened man might still be alive, he knew that he would have to pick up another trail. That called for investigation, rather than speed. One thing was certain: Roger Lengood must have left Clearfield many hours ago.

Returning to the garage, The Shadow drove out in the old sedan. He rode past Denburton's, noting that the physician's house was deserted, like the mansion. Reaching the little center of Glynwold, The Shadow observed an undertaking establishment. Parking the car, he left his hat and cloak inside. He entered the undertaker's, to find a solemn-faced attendant who was about to close the place.

The Shadow introduced himself as a representative of the funeral home in Philadelphia from which Owen Lengood had been buried. He stated that Doctor Denburton had called by telephone, stating that there had been another death in the Lengood family. The Shadow remarked that he had been unable to locate the physician at his house.

The attendant grunted; then questioned: "Do you know what Roger Lengood died of?"

The Shadow shook his head.

"Cholera," informed the attendant, in a confidential tone. "That's what! You folks won't want that interment. It's going to be a county job, after they examine the body to-morrow."

The Shadow stared solemnly.

"Denburton must have been crazy when he called you people," went on the informant. "Unless maybe he knew the facts had leaked out and wanted to make the death look less suspicious. There's been reporters out here from Philadelphia, to-day."

The Shadow indulged in a slight smile.

"Cholera is too unlikely," he declared. "Such a death strikes me as a ridiculous rumor."

"Roger Lengood had just come home from China."

"He had? Well, that makes it different. But what does Doctor Denburton know about cholera? How could he have made a positive diagnosis?"

The undertaker's assistant smiled wisely.

"He called in a specialist," he informed. "That's what Denburton did. A fellow from right here in Glynwold. A Frenchman from Indo-China, named Doctor Guyak."

"Living here in Glynwold?"

"Sure! Just happened to come here for a quiet place to work on some experiments. Lives over on Malden Lane, clear down at the end of it."

THE SHADOW ended the conversation and departed. Once in the car, he took a circling route to Malden Lane. He passed that dead-end street; went two roads farther on and turned down. He parked his car in the driveway of an empty house.

Dusk was forming beneath the trees when The Shadow alighted, again cloaked in black. His automatics were dry; they were loaded with cartridges from a waterproof container. Guns ready, The Shadow moved back toward Malden Lane.

Close by the fence that skirted the ravine, The Shadow saw a squarish, low-set house. He knew that it must be the residence of Doctor Pierre Guyak. There were lights—not only upstairs, but in the basement. The latter shone from frosted windows that were protected with bars.

Linking past with present, The Shadow could see the entire game. A substitute Roger Lengood had

arrived at the mansion, to fake a sudden death. Doctor Guyak—whoever he might be—had been planted in Glynwold to aid in the latest job of fakery.

There was a chance that, this time, death had been pretended before a murder was actually accomplished. If so, the real Roger Lengood might still be alive. If Roger Lengood lived, one man could certainly supply news of his whereabouts.

That man would be the one who called himself Doctor Pierre Guyak. Merely an accomplice in schemes of murder, Guyak would believe himself secure. Like others, he probably thought that The Shadow was dead. An interview with Guyak would be to The Shadow's liking.

Stalking forward beneath the enshrouding trees, The Shadow moved with absolute silence. Only the patter of the rain could be heard, as the cloaked avenger neared the house wherein no dwellers expected his arrival.

CHAPTER XV. FROM THE DEAD

ONCE he had reached the wall of Guyak's house, The Shadow discovered that it was well protected against entry. The front door was heavy; windows on the ground floor were fitted with small panes, separated by metal strips.

Such protection was not suspicious for so secluded a house. It gave the impression that Doctor Guyak was merely a resident who feared acts of burglary. The Shadow, however, saw beyond that. He knew that this house must have served as an important headquarters; that one of its most formidable inhabitants was the huge Egyptian whom The Shadow had battled by the summerhouse.

Ivy vines covered one corner of the house. Approaching that corner, The Shadow ascended to the second floor. He found that the nearest window was as formidable as those on the ground floor.

Only one avenue remained: the roof. The Shadow scaled to the projecting eaves, crawled up along the slippery roof. Under the partial shelter of an overtowering tree, he found a skylight set in a metal frame.

The glass appeared to be unbreakable. The metal frame was tightly clamped. Nevertheless, The Shadow attacked it. He jammed a thin metal wedge beneath; forced through a wider strip. He used the pointed end of pliers that he had brought from the borrowed car. He finally managed to turn the metal strip edge upward to force the business end of the pliers inward.

The Shadow's gloved hand crept through the small space. He probed with the pliers; found a metal catch and worked at it. The task was difficult; it took consummate patience along with skill. The catch was so strongly held that those who had placed it there had supposed that no one could succeed in loosening it. The Shadow proved otherwise.

After ten minutes of slow, silent operation, he unfastened the skylight and dropped into a little store room that formed a portion of the cramped third floor. He found a stairway leading down and descended to the second floor.

Only a hall light was illuminated. Descending to the first floor, The Shadow found a mellow lighted living room; but it was unoccupied. He heard a slight sound from the back of the house and decided that Bela Bey must be in the kitchen. The Egyptian, as The Shadow figured it, was probably Guyak's general servant.

Before attempting an encounter with Bela Bey, The Shadow decided that a visit to the basement was in order. Since Guyak was an experimenter, it was likely that he would have laboratory equipment. He

might be in the laboratory at present; if so, he could be cornered without Bela Bey's knowledge.

The Shadow found the stairway that led below. He came to the same door where Slug had waited with Bela Bey. The Shadow listened; thought that he heard sounds from within. Ready with an automatic, he edged the door inward; then swung it open. His hand performed a sweep with its automatic.

THE laboratory was empty. The sound that The Shadow had heard was the gurgle from bubbling liquid in a large glass jar atop a Bunsen burner. The lab was lighted; its glow showed vacancy in the projection room beyond. The store room in the rear was also lighted; but there, The Shadow saw a sight that made him stand with leveled automatic.

Bodies were stretched upon the floor of the store room. The place looked like a temporary morgue. Approaching, The Shadow studied the row of stilled forms. Here were men who had died in last night's battle at the mill. Slug had doubled back to Guyak's after the fray, to unload the bodies.

The Shadow viewed four figures. First in line was a sweated rogue whose stiffened form lay face upward.

Next was a rangy thug, whose body had been unceremoniously pitched face downward. He was better clad than the first. Stooping, The Shadow turned the man's head, to see a rattish face.

The third dead man was Rabbit, as huddled in death as he had been in life. Rabbit's head was tilted backward; his face was swollen and battered from the smashes it had taken against the rocks. The force of the waterfall had literally beaten this crook to death.

Rabbit was illy clad in baggy khaki trousers and ragged jersey; but the last man in the row was better dressed. In fact, his well-fitted suit looked out of place on a man who had been a member of Slug's motley crew.

The Shadow had recognized none of Slug's lesser henchmen. There was a chance that he might know the identity of the fourth man, who was obviously a more important figure. The Shadow noted that the last man's body was turned from him, with face tilted to the floor. The Shadow gripped the fellow's shoulders and started to lift them. The body sagged with sheer dead weight.

At that instant, The Shadow heard a sound from the laboratory. He let the body slip to the floor; he spun about into the doorway of the store room. His automatic leveled toward the outer door. That portal opened; a man stepped hurriedly into the laboratory.

The arrival's appearance told The Shadow that he must be Doctor Pierre Guyak. The fellow was bearded, with pointed mustache. His face carried a certain distinction, despite the fact that Guyak had no present reason to keep up a front.

Guyak did not see The Shadow. The bearded man was too concerned with the bottle that boiled above the Bunsen burner. He took quick paces across the floor; stopped and looked at the liquid in the bottle. He extinguished the burner and chuckled. He picked up a small metal tube that rested in a rack; labeled it carefully and put it into a medical kit that he took from beneath a bench.

"It is successful, Dagbar!" clucked Guyak, aloud. "The final tests come up to all our requirements. If you will call—"

Guyak was turning as he spoke. He stopped abruptly; on the very point of mentioning a name. His eyes showed white as they stared toward the door of the store room. Doctor Guyak saw The Shadow.

TREMBLING, with shaky, backward steps, Guyak retreated to the work bench where he had laid the

medical kit. His hands were uplifted; his teeth chattered as he backed away. Guyak's nerve was gone. He was stunned by two incredibilities: first, that The Shadow was alive at all; second, that the amazing avenger should have penetrated to the heart of this well-fortified lair.

Stepping forward, The Shadow timed his own stride to Guyak's moves. He reached the center of the laboratory. His leveled .45 loomed straight before Guyak's eyes. The Shadow spoke in a weird accusing whisper.

"Doctor Guyak"—The Shadow intoned the name in sinister, mocking fashion—"I have come to learn your part in crime. You will speak the truth about yourself. You will tell the facts that concern Roger Lengood."

Trembling, Guyak nodded. His lips quavered words of confession. Guyak could see no hope in guile. The Shadow's very presence seemed proof that he must know enough facts to check on any false statements.

"I—I am a fake physician," stammered Guyak. "My right name is Pierre Guyak; but my passports—my credentials—are bogus. I was forced to join in schemes of murder—"

"In return for payment."

The Shadow supplied the statement that Guyak had not cared to mention. The false physician winced. The Shadow had heard enough about Guyak. He wanted more important facts. He issued a command:

"Tell what you know about Roger Lengood."

"Roger Lengood is still alive." Guyak licked his dryish lips as he spoke. "He was supposed to have died to-day, of cholera; but it was Dagbar who appeared as Roger Lengood. Dagbar faked death. I pronounced him dead. His condition deceived physicians."

"And Roger Lengood—"

"Left Clearfield, this morning, with a man named Leigh Harbrook. They are en route to Philadelphia; but they will stop near the town of Westwood, only twenty miles from here—"

"Specify where in Westwood."

"At a summer bungalow, two miles this side of the town. Reached from a road that crosses the covered bridge just east of Route 663. The bungalow is deserted—"

There was something odd in Guyak's sudden eagerness to supply every detail. His voice was hurried, strained in its effort to impress The Shadow with the fact that he was speaking truth. His tone was louder; yet not strong enough to carry to Bela Bey, who was still upstairs.

It was a give-away to The Shadow, who linked it instantly to the fact that Guyak had started to speak aloud while at the work bench. At that time, The Shadow had credited Guyak with hearing his approach; thereby thinking that he might be Dagbar. A different answer had come instead.

Guyak had first spoken because he had been sure that Dagbar was present. Guyak's present manner proved that he saw Dagbar; and was at this instant counting upon the death-faker's aid!

The Shadow whipped clear about, performing a wide sweep as he made the shift. His wheeling action faced him toward the door of the store room. There, on the floor, lay three corpses; above them, a glaring man who held a leveled revolver, with finger ready on the trigger.

The fourth body had arisen from among the dead. The revived corpse was Dagbar!

The death-faker had been in the store room when The Shadow entered the lab. Luckily glimpsing The Shadow's gloved fist and ready automatic, Dagbar had dived to the floor beside the row of dead men. His drop had passed unheard, thanks to the roar of the Bunsen burner.

Once again, Dagbar had faked his death stunt; this time to save his hide, not to cover crafty murder. His appearance had deceived The Shadow; but the ruse would have failed if The Shadow had gained time to examine the last of the four bodies.

Sight of Dagbar's face was a giveaway. Its natural appearance was too similar to that of the Lengood heirs. Luck, however, had saved Dagbar; luck in the form of Guyak's return to the laboratory.

Tables had turned against The Shadow. He was confronted by a snarling marksman who had gained the draw. Odds lay with Dagbar, the killer who had come back from the dead!

CHAPTER XVI. THE DEATH BLAST

IN swinging toward Dagbar, The Shadow had pivoted to the right. He chose that direction with reason. It was a feint that more than once had tricked an aiming crook.

Usually, a man with leveled gun swings to the left when surprised by a rear attack. Long had The Shadow practiced a reversal of the general procedure, until his rightward turns had become instinctive.

Not only was the move a deceiving one: it also brought The Shadow's gun in advance of him, for his right hand was first when he swung toward Dagbar. In addition, it offered The Shadow's right side as target instead of his left.

Had Dagbar fired as The Shadow wheeled, his bullet could not have reached the cloaked fighter's heart.

Dagbar did not fire on the instant. The death-faker was cool. Dagbar wanted his first shot to count; he delayed it momentarily, knowing that he still had the edge.

The Shadow's spin proved a wide one. He had swirled away to Dagbar's right, hoping to draw a wild shot. One miss by Dagbar; The Shadow could jab an answering bullet. Dagbar proved clever enough to beat The Shadow's game.

Dagbar was watching for two things: first the halt of The Shadow's spin; second, the move of The Shadow's automatic. Dagbar was holding his itchy finger for the instant that The Shadow stopped; at the same time, Dagbar was ready to stab a quick bullet before The Shadow's gun muzzle yawned in his direction.

The Shadow, too, was thinking with split-second speed.

In his whirl, The Shadow gave no especial thought to Dagbar. The Shadow knew the spot where the death-faker stood. The doorway of the store room was a gaping target that The Shadow could pick automatically. The Shadow's entire headwork was concentrated on his initial task; that of performing so astonishing a fadeaway that Dagbar would lose the benefit of the first shot.

In such maneuvers, The Shadow instinctively faded in one direction; then suddenly halted his spin. When foemen fired too hastily, their shots found space that The Shadow had left. If antagonists tried to outguess The Shadow by firing beyond him, they blasted spots that The Shadow did not reach.

Dagbar had not fired too soon. But The Shadow, ready for his sudden reverse twist, divined instantly that

Dagbar would not make the second mistake. The death-faker's gun was moving with The Shadow. It would halt and stab its bullet the moment that The Shadow employed his usual ruse.

With instinctive swiftness, The Shadow seized an opportunity that chance had placed at hand.

Four feet to The Shadow's left stood a bulky contrivance that formed part of Pierre Guyak's medical equipment. It was a huge heat lamp, mounted on a wheeled base. Above its squatty post, was a heavy half globe of metal, three feet in diameter.

The Shadow performed a jerky shift to the left, turning toward Dagbar as he did. His body was between Dagbar and the heat lamp. The Shadow's left fist gripped the bulky post. With a spin to the right, The Shadow snapped back beside the lamp, throwing his body for a laboratory bench. With all the force of his left arm, he wheeled the heavy lamp between himself and Dagbar. The movement was speeded by a simultaneous shift of The Shadow's body, which twisted into cover.

DAGBAR had spotted The Shadow's halt. The death-faker hesitated just long enough to be sure that the stop was real. With vicious precision, Dagbar fired. Just as he pressed the trigger, the heat lamp whirled into view, with The Shadow twisting beyond it. The Shadow had seemingly conjured a steel shield from nothingness.

Dagbar's bullet clanged the metal. The crook was pumping at his gun; once started, he intended to drill The Shadow with a stream of bullets. Slugs clanged the heat lamp in succession; as the bullets rang, The Shadow's automatic loomed straight for Dagbar.

One pull of The Shadow's trigger would have ended the death-faker's career. Dagbar, however, gained a break more fortunate than The Shadow's.

Pierre Guyak had come to life. With The Shadow's final twist, the fake physician launched in a desperate attack. Barehanded, Guyak was leaping for The Shadow. Wildly, he clawed for the cloaked fighter's gun.

The Shadow's .45 ripped loose; but with his trigger squeeze, the gun mouth jolted upward. Guyak had put in a lucky grab. The Shadow's bullet sizzled wide of Dagbar.

More than that, the attack flung The Shadow away from the protecting heat lamp, making him a new target for Dagbar's remaining shots. The Shadow offset that situation before Dagbar could fire. He gripped a new shield, in the person of Guyak.

Writhing, the bearded crook felt The Shadow's left fist clamp his throat. Like a dummy figure, Guyak swayed in floppy fashion. The Shadow swung him at arm's length, straight between himself and Dagbar.

Aiming, Dagbar would have gladly riddled Guyak's body if there had been a chance of bullets driving through to reach The Shadow. There was no such chance, however, for the space between The Shadow and his human shield added to the handicap that confronted Dagbar.

Foolishly, Dagbar stood rooted. Two seconds more and he would have been The Shadow's target, for the cloaked fighter was managing to aim despite the troublesome burden of Guyak. Two seconds, however, were sufficient to bring new intervention.

The door of the lab swung open. Launching through came Bela Bey. The massive Egyptian had recognized The Shadow on the instant. A knife in his big fist, Bela Bey was out for vicious vengeance.

As Bela Bey drove, The Shadow flung Guyak to the floor. Wheeling before Dagbar could take advantage of the fact that the shield was gone, The Shadow drove under Bela Bey's descending arm and

locked with The Egyptian. The fury of The Shadow's drive spun Bela Bey about. Again, The Shadow had a shield between himself and Dagbar.

Counting upon Bela Bey to avenge himself for previous defeat, Dagbar leaped to the center of the lab and yanked Guyak to his feet. He pointed the panting bearded man toward the door. Seizing his medical kit, Guyak darted away in flight; Dagbar followed. The death-faker stopped at the door, while Guyak was hurrying upstairs.

Again, Dagbar hoped for a shot at The Shadow; one that could be delivered without crippling Bela Bey. But The Shadow, twisting, had again swung the Egyptian between himself and the death-faker. Though he could not throw Bela Bey, The Shadow had developed amazing ability at pushing his giant adversary wherever he chose.

GLARING, Dagbar saw Bela Bey's knife clatter to the floor. A moment later, the Egyptian had gained through the loss of the blade. He obtained a double hand clamp on The Shadow's arms. The Shadow's gun hand was pointed backward over his right shoulder; his left arm was doubled half in back of him. Only through sheer strength of his lunging shoulder did The Shadow maintain an equal status with Bela Bey.

Dagbar shouted to the Egyptian.

"Can you get his gun, Bela Bey?"

An emphatic headshake came from the towering Egyptian.

"Can you sling him away from you?"

This time, Bela Bey nodded.

"Hold it!" ordered Dagbar. "Heave him hard when I give the word. Then dive for the door."

Coolly, like a painstaking marksman at a shooting gallery, Dagbar aimed his revolver toward a large greenish bottle that stood on a shelf above a work bench. Dagbar fired. The bottle cracked. Its liquid contents gushed, splattered as they struck the work bench. There was a puff of smoke; instead of liquid, spreading flames leaped from the work bench.

Turning, Dagbar picked another big bottle. He fired and broke it. Liquid streamed. There was no further result until Dagbar picked off a second bottle that stood near the spot where the first had been. That bottle shattered; a different chemical united with the first. The result was another burst of flame, accompanied by smoke.

Fire tongued along the work benches. A beaker exploded, splattering new combustibles. Flames spread; their colors were grotesque. A greenish light burst from a box of powdery substance. Yellow tongues lashed from one bottle to another. A sudden, crimson glare came roaring from all along one corner.

Dagbar aimed for a shelf near the door of the store room. He pressed the trigger; the revolver clicked. Dagbar had used his last cartridge. He had no chance to touch off the last flash of chemical flame that would bring quick devastation from the store room, where dangerous explosives were ready to be ignited. Nevertheless, Dagbar was satisfied that he had accomplished enough. He shouted to Bela Bey:

"Fling him! Then dive for the door!"

Bela Bey lunged. His long arms shot to full length; his mighty hands wrenched free. The Shadow hurtled a dozen feet away; striking the floor, he rolled to within ten inches of a flaming work bench. Recovering

with a remarkable twist, The Shadow swung about, aiming instantly for the outer door. His hurtling roll had been too long.

Dagbar was gone, up the stairs. Bela Bey was through the door; the barrier was slamming as The Shadow fired. Bullets flattened against the metal-sheathed barrier. Above the crackle of many flames came the heavy clump of a metal bar that the Egyptian had jammed in place.

TRAPPED amid the wildly spreading flames, The Shadow resorted to quick action, in hope that he could stay the fire. He saw a fire extinguisher by the outer door. To reach it, he knocked aside a flaming work bench that had been attached to the wall. Greenish light showed a light stretch of dustless plaster at the spot where the bench had been. The Shadow seized the extinguisher; as he wrenched it from the wall, he stopped short.

The extinguisher had been clamped tight against the wall; yet there was no streak of lighter plaster at the spot of contact. The extinguisher was not regular equipment; it had been installed for some special purpose.

Carefully, The Shadow tilted the extinguisher; turned the nozzle on a wispy spread of segregated flame that was running from a corner of a work bench. He sent one momentary spurt from the extinguisher; then stopped the flow. The liquid from the extinguisher ignited with a fierce puff.

Crooks had planned well. Had The Shadow sprayed full force upon a larger flame, his own act would have completed the work that Dagbar had begun. Of all the combustible substance in this laboratory, the contents of the fire extinguishers was the swiftest to ignite.

Clamping the dangerous device upon the wall, The Shadow turned toward the store room. As he gazed, flames reached the shelf where Dagbar had failed to break the last bottle. The shelf buckled; the bottle fell to the floor and shattered. A huge flash of orange flame rose ceilingward; then spread, to add new menace to the inferno that surrounded The Shadow.

Springing past the orange flame, The Shadow entered the store room. Flames had not yet reached this spot; but they were due to arrive soon. When they did, they would bring final havoc. The Shadow saw big jars of combustibles just past the bodies of the thugs. He spied square boxes in a corner; they were marked with the red word: "Explosives."

Within a few minutes, the fire would be in this room. There would be a sweeping holocaust more terrific than before. With it would come a shattering blast that would leave the house in ruins. Unless The Shadow could find immediate escape, his body would be reduced to ashes, with the corpses of the thugs.

One last opportunity struck The Shadow. No flames had reached the projection room. It offered temporary security; it also afforded possible exit. The Shadow had seen the heavy steel door that led outdoors from the projection room. He knew, however, that he must manage to eliminate that formidable barrier within a scant few minutes. The Shadow formed a strange figure, outlined in the door of the store room. The flicker of the crackling flames, with their many conflicting hues, showed him like a solitary actor under the eye-deceiving glow of a color-wheeled spotlight. From The Shadow's lips came a creepy laugh that fitted his weird appearance.

Springing across the store room, The Shadow seized a square box of the explosive. He hoisted it upon his shoulder; turned for the flame-swept laboratory. Striding through the lashing fire, he picked a zigzag course to avoid the higher shelves where flames were jetting like tongues from a gas torch.

All depended on this hazardous dash. One slip; one approach to higher flames, The Shadow's fate would

have been decided. Fire scorched the wood of the square box; but no flame took hold. The Shadow reached the projection room. He stopped at the massive, slanted door; planted the square box on the topmost step.

Fiercely, The Shadow ripped the thin cover from the red-lettered box. Reflected flames showed a powdery substance that filled the interior. The Shadow sprang back to the laboratory. Flames rushed like a curtain to block his path, filling the doorway for the moment. They subsided, as if to regain their vigor. The Shadow snatched the fire extinguisher that was at the doorway of the projection room. Wheeling about, he jabbed the nozzle past the edge of the door. He tilted the extinguisher; let its contents gush in a long, sizzling stream straight for the explosive box upon the step.

The result dwarfed all preceding episodes that had occurred within this hellish cellar.

The explosive powder spoke with a terrific blast. The whole projection room seemed to quiver. The slanted metal door was blown from its hinges.

An impact struck the wall between projecting room and laboratory, shattering it.

The Shadow was hurled to the center of the lab; he sprawled where flames had been a moment before. Fire was gone; it, too, had been hurled away by the cyclonic surge from the projection room.

The fire extinguisher bounded clear across the laboratory floor. It landed within a furnace of concentrated flames. The extinguisher puffed with a dull explosion; almost instantly, the other extinguisher blasted from the wall.

FLAMES trebled. They came surging across the laboratory like a raging sea. The Shadow was on his feet; with long, bounding stride, he was leaping for the projection room. He outdistanced the returning flames; but the roaring tide overtook him on the steps. The fire, tripled in power, was confined to the laboratory no longer. It had found the store room as well as the projection room.

Enveloped by flames, The Shadow never stopped. He dived forward from the topmost step, went headlong through the space where the slanted door had been. He was out of the withering tide, before the flames could ignite his cloak. Landing on his shoulders, he rolled down a muddy slope, to stop with a terrific jar as he hit the fence that edged the ravine.

As The Shadow struck, he heard a muffled blast that sounded like the cough from an awakening volcano's throat. The laboratory flames had captured the store room. They had reached the square boxes of explosive; had touched off the entire lot in one terrific puff.

Lying against the fence, facing backward, The Shadow caught one last glimpse of Guyak's house. The dwelling was as he had first seen it, except for the glare at the cellar windows.

Then the sight was gone. In its place came a horrendous dazzle.

Walls spread; the house roof lifted to disgorge a clutter of chunky debris: the floors and furnishing from rooms above the cellar. A Vesuvius of flame gulped skyward, lighting the clustered trees into a burnished forest. Like fireworks, the display subsided. There was a crash of walls; the clatter and thud of falling debris.

Where the house had stood, there lay a mass of ruins, crumbled to the very ground. Stone and mortar buried burning woodwork; smothered the flames except for crevices through which licking, bluish tongues crept like the weird flares of a witch's fire.

The Shadow arose; he swayed unsteadily. Ground had trembled with the mighty eruption. It still seemed

to shudder, in rhythm to the dance of the blue flame. The roar from the stream in the ravine below seemed like a pitiful murmur; scarcely reaching The Shadow's deafened ears.

The Shadow steadied against the fence. Slowly, he regained his sense of locomotion. Picking his way through the trees, he found pitch darkness. Groping at first, he finally recovered from the dazzle that had almost blinded him. With solemn laugh, The Shadow traced the route back to his car.

OTHER eyes had viewed the blast of flames that had ripped amid the trees. Other ears had heard the terrific explosion that had followed a lesser one by only a dozen seconds. These witnesses to the destruction were situated in a car that stood on a lonely road across the ravine.

Dagbar, Guyak and Bela Bey had reached that spot by rapid flight in a car that the physician owned. A two mile route had carried them across a bridge during the time that The Shadow had waged his lone battle for life.

It was Dagbar who phrased the common thought that gripped the evil trio. In sneering tones, the death-faker spoke:

“That was the finish of The Shadow.”

CHAPTER XVII. DOOMED TO THE TOMB

EARLY darkness had enveloped all of eastern Pennsylvania; for the continued rain was not confined to the environs of Philadelphia. Thirty miles from the Quaker City, the countryside was completely obscured by night.

An automobile with a California license was nosing its way along a secondary highway. Passing a junction, the car slowed. A man spoke from beside the driver:

“This looks like the place. Turn in here, Roger.”

The car swung into an old side road. Its headlights concentrated as it approached the end of an old covered bridge. When the wheels struck the rattly boards of the bridge, the driver spoke.

“I guess you're right, Leigh,” he said. “This must be the bridge.”

“Take the first lane to the right. It leads to Satterfield's bungalow.”

The car turned along a lane, which proved to be a curving one, much like a driveway. Taking an upgrade, the car came to a sprawly bungalow that stretched among the trees. Broad verandas gave the one story house a sizable appearance.

The bungalow was dark; nevertheless, the men alighted from their car. Roger remarked that it would be useless to stop, since Satterfield was not at home. Leigh insisted upon trying the front door. He found it unlocked. Striking a match, he saw an oil lantern on a table. He lighted the lantern.

The glow showed Roger Lengood standing in the doorway. He looked very much as Dagbar had represented him. Roger was the counterpart of his dead brother Owen; but he was lighter of build, almost frail. His appearance showed that he had recovered from a recent illness.

Leigh Harbrook was huskier; nearly forty pounds heavier than Roger. He was a few years older than the heir; and he looked like a man who had seen adventure. His face was bluff, flat-featured. His manner, however, was happy-go-lucky. He seemed genial when he smiled.

“What a dub Satterfield is!” exclaimed Leigh. “He wrote me he would be here all summer; to drop in any

time. The one day we happen to pick, he's gone."

"We might as well drive along, then," decided Roger, following Leigh, who had picked up the lantern and was entering a kitchen. "It's less than an hour's drive to Lengood Manor."

"I'm hungry," declared Leigh, "and there's grub here. This is Satterfield's place all right. He won't mind our cooking ourselves a meal. He and I were pals; he almost went with me on that cruise I took to China."

Leigh found another lantern and lighted it. He stood in thought; then suddenly snapped his fingers.

"I've got it!" he exclaimed. "Satterfield may have gone over to the farmhouse. Anyway, they'd know where he is. It's only a quarter mile from here. He mentioned the place in his letter."

Opening the back door, Leigh swung the lantern. The light showed a path that led past an old well.

"Walk down to the farmhouse," suggested Leigh, handing Roger the lantern. "See what you can find out. I'll pump some water and haul it into the house."

Roger took the lantern and walked along the path, his steps in time with the squeaks of the old pump that Leigh began to operate. Soon that sound had faded. All that Roger could hear was the slight patter of the rain, that had subsided almost to a drizzle.

Soon, the path ended. Roger found himself beside a farmhouse, that was as dark as the bungalow had been. Coming close with the lantern, he found boarded windows. He decided that the farmhouse had been abandoned. Roger went back to the bungalow. He entered the kitchen; found the lantern there, but Leigh was gone. Puzzled, Roger went out to the porch; the car was missing also.

While Roger stared, lights shone amid the trees. The car came rumbling back; Leigh alighted and joined Roger on the veranda. Leigh was grinning.

"Hope you didn't think I marooned you," he laughed. "I drove back to the little town and called Satterfield's house in Philadelphia. He's in there to-night. Told us to make ourselves at home."

They returned to the kitchen. Leigh tossed a newspaper on the table and began to open some canned goods. Roger found plates and cutlery. He put them on the table; picked up the newspaper and glanced idly at the front page. The journal was a Night Extra edition of a Philadelphia newspaper.

On the front page was a picture that looked like Roger's brother Owen. En route East, Roger had as yet failed to hear of his brother's death, for it had been mentioned only in Eastern newspapers, and Roger had been out of contact with his relatives. Staring at a heading, Roger saw the statement: "Lengood Heir Succumbs to Cholera."

"Look at this, Leigh!" exclaimed Roger. "It's my brother—Owen— dead from cholera. How could cholera have struck here in Pennsylvania?"

Leigh pointed to the photograph; tapped the name beneath it. Roger's eyes widened. The name under the photograph was his own, not Owen's!

"Then Owen is alive," he gulped. "But how—why is my name here? I'm as much alive as Owen."

"Owen is dead," remarked Leigh. His tone had hardened. "Read that first paragraph. It mentions that he was killed in an auto accident a few days ago."

“But I am still alive—”

“Not according to popular opinion. You died of cholera this morning. Immediately after you return from China.”

Roger wheeled. Leigh's tone carried an ugly menace. He found himself staring into ugly eyes. Leigh Harbrook's face was no longer genial.

“You've fallen for it all along,” sneered Leigh. “I didn't come out to China on a cruise. I was a remittance man, who had been there for years. My money stopped. I took up a proposition that was offered me.

“That was to come to America with you, on the same boat; to make friends and to join you on a trip to Pennsylvania. It was never intended that you should return to Lengood Manor, if that could be properly prevented. Another was to go there in your place.

“Death was marked for you; death that no one would suspect as crime. It was known that you had been ill in China. That's why some one went to Lengood Manor and faked death from cholera. Right now, people think that your body is in the crypt at Lengood Manor.”

Leigh paused; Roger stared in fixed bewilderment.

“That's where your body will be tomorrow,” he chuckled. “That's why I brought you here. No one lives in this bungalow. I have no friends named Satterfield. I sent you to the farmhouse, in case the crew was there, waiting for you. When I made my telephone call, I learned that Slug Kirbin and his crew won't be along until later.

“There's a big box on the side veranda. I'm to pack your body in it and leave it for them. Of course, they said that if the job was too tough, I could hold you here until they showed up. But I don't have to do that. You may have a great reputation as a marksman, but you won't last five minutes in a hand to hand fight with me.

“I'm going to throttle you. Slowly, easily, like I did with some victims in China. So as not to leave noticeable marks. You're to pass as a cholera victim; and that's what you'll look like when your body is taken from the crypt to-morrow.”

LEIGH was coming closer as he spoke. His brawny fists were moving toward Roger's throat. Roger suddenly jerked away, toward the kitchen table. He sped his hand to his coat pocket; whipped out a short-barreled automatic. Leigh stopped at sight of the weapon, his eyes glaring wildly.

“Didn't know I carried this, did you?” queried Roger, calmly. “I picked it up out West; thought it would be handy for our trip. Go right along, Leigh; tell me more about this business. I see now why you suddenly dug up some money this morning, so that we could complete our trip. Money that you claimed you had forgotten.”

Leigh Harbrook's lips were scowling. His hands were half raised; their fingers clutching helplessly. The man was murderous by nature. He was incensed at having lost his chance to deliver quick death. Roger supplied an urging gesture with his gun.

“I don't know all about it,” growled Leigh, gruffly. “You were to be the fourth man murdered. All of the other deaths were faked by a fellow named Dagbar. So was yours, to-day. He must be some distant relative, who looks like the lot of you.

“Maybe you'd like to know who fixed it up with Dagbar. All right. I'll tell you. That is, if you'll make a deal with me. I haven't done anything to you yet. I'm in a jam, the way you have me here. I'm looking for

a way out of this mess—”

Leigh was backing as he spoke, for Roger had nudged the gun again. Roger knew that it was wise to keep Leigh at safe distance. To emphasize that fact, he edged forward, past the corner of the table.

The move was bad. Accidentally, Roger jarred the table. The lantern tilted; it almost toppled. Instinctively, Roger shoved out his left hand to stop it. As he halted the lantern's fall, his right hand shifted without his knowledge.

Leigh Harbrook sprang forward with a fiendish shout. He clutched Roger's gun wrist before the heir could regain his aim. Roger jerked the trigger. The report was muffled beneath Leigh's arm. The bullet hit the partition to the living room. Roger's one shot had gone wide.

Viciously, Leigh clutched Roger's throat with his free hand. Choking, Roger staggered backward; his attacker pounded him against the kitchen shelves. Roger lost his gun; he managed only to make one last wild effort as both of Leigh's brawny hands closed upon his throat. Heaving himself up, Roger knocked a shelf loose with his head.

Tin cans bounded; one struck Leigh's head a glancing blow. The would-be murderer dropped back. Roger broke free, dived for the floor to regain his gun. He grabbed the handle of the automatic; Leigh, recovering, seized the muzzle and wrenched the weapon from Roger's weaker grasp. As Roger sprang to his feet, Leigh pounced upon him; drove a quick blow for the side of the lighter man's skull.

The gun handle struck. Roger Lengood sprawled head foremost toward the door that led to the living room. Leigh Harbrook shifted the weapon; placed his finger on the trigger. He did not fire; there was no need. If Roger had not already died, a simple choking process would complete the job.

All that troubled Leigh at that moment was the possibility that the shot might have been heard. With that thought in mind, Leigh looked toward the door to the living room. His gaze suddenly became squinty.

A BLACKENED shape was moving in from darkness. It took the form of a cloaked being, whose eyes glowed vengefully from beneath a hat brim. Leigh Harbrook stared; his turn for bewilderment had arrived. The figure that confronted him was like a living specter, that had materialized to solid form. To the murderer's startled brain came recollection of a dread name.

“The Shadow!”

As he gulped that name, Leigh saw a looming muzzle that looked large enough to swallow the puny gun that he had snatched from Roger Lengood. With a wild cry, the murderer shifted; he struck against the table. This time the lantern clattered. Its crash brought darkness. Leigh shouted his triumph as he dived for the floor.

He knew the position of the doorway. He had the bulge on The Shadow. Furiously, he ripped quick shots above the spot where Roger lay; he began to spray his bullets, in case The Shadow had managed to spring away from the door.

Amid the blasts of Leigh Harbrook's gun came a chilling, elusive laugh that seemed almost at the murderer's side. Before Leigh could guess the exact source of that challenge, a tongue of flame flashed upward from the floor. The low-ceilinged room gave magnitude to the roar of The Shadow's .45; again, the big gun thundered.

Leigh Harbrook sprawled. His gun clattered to the floor. The Shadow had outguessed his foe. He had dived in from the doorway when the lantern struck; he had flattened himself beside Roger Lengood,

knowing that Leigh would fire above the form of the man whom he had eliminated from action.

Echoes faded. Silence lay thick in the bungalow. The house was far too isolated for the sound of the gunfire to be heard elsewhere. A flashlight blinked along the floor. It showed Roger, prone and motionless. It flickered upon Leigh, crumbled beside the table.

The light went out. In darkness, there came a slight groan. Then The Shadow's whisper; after that, a voice that replied in words that were scarcely articulate. Silence followed; at last, there was a stir as The Shadow moved about. He carried Roger into the living room; returned and took Leigh's form outdoors.

At times, the flashlight blinked. At last, its successive glows were ended. Only the dull patter of the rain remained above the bungalow.

Less than an hour later, headlights glimmered in the lane that formed the driveway to the deserted bungalow. A light truck pulled up in front. Men alighted; used a bull's-eye lantern with caution. They picked their way to the side veranda. They found a packing box set against the wall.

A voice growled. It was Slug Kirbin's:

"Flash a glim into the box, Blimp. Take a gander at the lug."

Blimp did as ordered; he snorted his reply.

"It's Roger, all right," he told Slug. "Looks a dead ringer for his brother Owen. Say, though—why didn't Harbrook nail up the box?"

"He left that to us," retorted Slug. "We had to lamp the body, didn't we, to be sure about it? We'll nail the box in the truck. Get the other guys to help you load it."

All during this inspection, neither Slug nor Blimp noted an automatic muzzle, wedged beneath a window of the bungalow. Some one inside was keeping the crooks covered. When Blimp and others hoisted the box, the muzzle withdrew.

Soon, the truck had pulled away. A flashlight glimmered at the door of the bungalow; moved from the squatty house and continued into the trees. It came to Roger's car, which The Shadow had moved from sight. It kept on; reached the old sedan that The Shadow had brought from Lengood Manor.

The flashlight went out. A figure took the wheel of the sedan. The motor throbbed; headlights appeared. The old car started from the lane; it took the highway toward Philadelphia.

Crooks had found the body for which they had come. They had departed, unknowing that their actions had been observed from their moment of arrival at the bungalow.

Another trap had been prepared. This time, its deviser was The Shadow.

CHAPTER XVIII. BENEATH THE MANSION

LEIGH HARBROOK had said that Roger Lengood was regarded as dead by every one. His statement had, of course, excluded the crooks who were in the know. Harbrook had been mistaken only in regard to The Shadow.

Outside of the black-clad avenger, all who had been concerned for Roger's welfare believed that Dagbar had been the real heir. They had accepted the fact that Roger had died; that his body lay buried in the crypt at Lengood Manor.

To those closest to Roger, the situation brought deep sorrow. A pall lay over the other heirs as they sat in the living room of the antiquated Philadelphia residence that had once been the Lengood town house.

New death had ended Roy Lengood's mental chaos. Walter had managed to convince his brother that since Roger had died as suddenly as Owen, Roy could scarcely hold himself responsible for Owen's death. Eleanor's bravery following the supposed death of her third brother had called for Roy's sympathy.

Though gloom gripped the remaining Lengoods, they had attained a state of harmony. Misfortune had united them in a single cause. All of them were faced with the serious problem of survival. They were glad to be away from Lengood Manor; for that suburban mansion seemed to hold a curse.

With the three Lengoods was Alice Besson. Her presence had proven a valuable asset. Not only had it steadied Roy; Alice's sympathy and understanding had kept Eleanor from breaking under the strain of unhappiness.

Nevertheless, gloom lessened the spirits of the little group. Observing it, Alice spoke to Walter. He looked at Eleanor; then nodded his agreement with what Alice had remarked. Turning to Roy, Walter suggested that they go for a stroll toward Rittenhouse Square. Roy nodded his willingness.

THE two went out. Eleanor looked at Alice and managed a smile. She asked:

"That was on my account?"

"Yes, it was," replied Alice, frankly. "You're tired, Eleanor. It was morbid, having the others here; as bad for Roy as for you. Besides, I want to tell you something."

Eleanor's expression showed perplexity.

"I know that you will not repeat what I tell you," declared Alice, solemnly. "I can speak to you, Eleanor, because you told me of the feeling of security that gripped you yesterday."

"Because of my talk with a stranger?"

"Yes. You spoke of eyes that gave confidence. I saw eyes like them, last night, when I was near the summerhouse. I, too, felt confidence; and with reason."

"What happened, Alice?"

"I saw some one in the summerhouse. A man who could have been any one of your brothers or your cousins. He might have been Roy, Walter— even Owen. To-day, when Roger arrived, he reminded me of that same man.

"Eleanor, I was doomed because of what I saw. A fiend tried to murder me; he overtook me on the path. A rescuer intervened; a strange being cloaked in black. He hurled his huge enemy into the ravine—"

Eleanor was staring, rigid. She gripped Alice's arm.

"Tell me," she pleaded, her voice almost mechanical. "If it was Roger—my brother—that you saw—why did he not appear until this morning?"

"I don't know the answer, Eleanor. Yet I am positive that I saw Roger in the summerhouse last night."

There was a footfall at the door. Both girls turned. They saw Walter. He had returned in time to hear

Alice's remark. Instantly, Walter demanded details. With a warning glance toward Eleanor, Alice repeated details that did not concern The Shadow.

"I saw Roger in the summerhouse last night," she declared, firmly. "That was why I screamed; ran to the house. I thought that he was Owen's ghost."

"That's why you kept it to yourself?" quizzed Walter. "You didn't realize that you had seen Roger until he arrived this morning?"

Alice nodded.

"I'm glad we came back," decided Walter. "Roy decided it was too damp for a walk. Where is Roy, anyway? I thought he came in with me."

At that moment, Roy arrived. He was holding an early edition of a morning newspaper; a pink-sheeted bulldog that he had purchased from a newsie going by the front door.

"Look at this!" exclaimed Roy. "A big explosion out in Glynwold. Somebody blew up the house of that French doctor. You know—Guyak—the specialist who showed up at the mansion this morning."

Walter grabbed the newspaper; read the brief account that was printed in a front page box. He snapped his fingers suddenly.

"This means something!" he exclaimed. "It wouldn't have, except for what Alice just told me. Listen, Roy. Alice says she saw Roger at the summer house last night. To-day, Roger came home; he died. Denburton sent for Guyak. On top of that, Guyak's home is blasted."

"What can it all mean?" queried Eleanor. "Can you answer that, Walter?"

"I can only make a guess," replied Walter. "Probably a wrong one; but it's worth while in the absence of a better one. One thing certain is that we have all left the manor. Perhaps the idea was to get us out of there. Roy"—Walter wheeled toward his brother—"you and I are going out to the old mansion. We're going to see if anything has happened there. We're going armed, too."

Eleanor began a protest, in which Alice joined. It was useless. Roy took to Walter's idea. The two hurried upstairs to get revolvers. They heard Walter calling a garage, ordering his car. Soon the two came pounding downstairs, pushed the girls aside, and hurried out through the front door.

"We must do something," decided Eleanor. "I wish Peters were here. He might have reasoned with them. I made a mistake in telling Peters that we would not need him until to-morrow."

"If only Mr. Joland were here," remarked Alice. "Don't you expect him soon, Eleanor?"

"He had to go to the city hall, to make sure that it was all right for us to stay here in Philadelphia. Those reporters managed to find out that Roger had died of cholera. The county health officer was so stupid."

"Why not call the city hall? Perhaps you may be able to locate Mr. Joland."

"It will be difficult, at night. Perhaps he has had to visit the health director, at his home. Mr. Joland said that might be the case. Perhaps I can get in touch with the health director."

Eleanor made the first call. She talked with the information bureau at the city hall. Offices were rung in vain. The health director's home number was an unlisted one; the bureau would not give it without proper authorization. Eleanor gave up in despair. She and Alice waited, hoping to hear soon from Joland.

MEANWHILE, Walter and Roy had reached the mansion. Roy had a key to the front door. They opened it; Walter was about to turn on a floor lamp when Roy stopped him with the whispered word:

“Listen!”

From somewhere, far below, they heard sounds that indicated footsteps. Creeping through the darkness, they reached a door to the cellar and found it open. Descending, the young men listened for new sounds; but caught none. Walter whispered a suggestion:

“The crypt!”

Both knew the way in the darkness; but as they approached, their path was lighted. The glow that guided them was an indirect one, a splotchy illumination from the floor. As they neared the glow, they saw its source.

The door of the crypt was open. The light came from within the vault where the leaden casket rested!

Foot by foot, the pair made their way forward. They stopped at the doorway. Revolvers drawn, they peered through the unbarred opening. Their eyes discerned a ghoulis scene.

Two men were stooped above the leaden casket, seeking to pry it open. The workers were guiding their efforts by the light of a lantern that they had placed upon a step ladder. They looked sinister in the glow—like grave robbers of the Middle Ages, rifling a casket vault. Stone walls gave that likeness to the scene.

Walter gripped Roy's arm warningly, but too late. Roy bounded forward, with a sharp exclamation of challenge. Walter took the only course that offered. He sprang to join his brother; leveled his own .32 on a line with Roy's.

Startled, the men at the casket sprang about. Caught by surprise, they had no chance to produce weapons. Their arms went up; helplessly, they faced the intruders who had come upon them. Both Roy and Walter stopped short; words of amazed recognition upon their lips.

The closer of the two coffin openers was Doctor Denburton; the other man was Peters. For the first time, the heirs had discovered the league that linked the family physician and the servant.

Yet their startlement did not deter them. The looks that Roy and Walter exchanged were sufficient to show that they held common thoughts. Steadily, the two young men kept their gun muzzles straight for Denburton and Peters.

Both Roy and Walter were satisfied that they had cornered the plotters who were responsible for whatever crime had come to Lengood Manor.

CHAPTER XIX. MURDER'S PROOF

DOCTOR DENBURTON faced the gun muzzles with hard-eyed challenge. His flat-featured face was scowling; his heavy brow furrowed. His fists clenched and opened. The physician's whole manner was one of suppressed fury. Peters, glaring from beside him, seemed to share Denburton's rage.

It was Roy who snapped the first accusing words:

“So you're behind this game, Denburton! Smug on the surface, you pretended that you sought our welfare. Secretly, you have plotted against us!”

Denburton regained his self-control. His response was harsh.

“What proof have you of any plot?” he demanded. “I am the one who should ask for explanations. What brings you here?”

“We want to find out what lies behind Roger's death,” put in Walter. “That's why we came here. It looks as though we've found what we wanted!”

Calmed, Denburton smiled his disdain.

“You have found a man acting in performance of his duty,” declared the physician. “I have full right to enter here. I signed the death certificate that bore the name of Roger Lengood. I was given the keys to this crypt. Technically, the body of Roger Lengood is in my custody.

“As the physician in the case, it is my privilege to enter this quarantined mansion; to bring any person whom I choose. I brought Peters because he had been exposed to the cholera; and was therefore eligible. The fact that I have chosen to make another examination of Roger's body is a matter that concerns no one but myself.

“You two, however, have defied the law.” Denburton paused; his eyes were glaring. “You had no right to enter this house without my permission. You have made unlawful entry. You are bearing arms. You have committed a criminal offense.”

Walter looked anxiously toward Roy. Denburton saw the glance and added:

“Your one course is to depart immediately; to say nothing of your expedition here. If you abide by those terms, I shall be lenient. I shall not report you to the county authorities.”

Walter wavered; but Roy was firm. He spoke quickly to his brother.

“Don't let him get away with it, Walt,” protested Roy. “Stick with me. We'll see this through.”

Walter tightened his grip upon his gun.

“Just what do you propose to do?” queried Denburton, with curled lips. His question was addressed to Roy. “Do you intend to make us prisoners? Or to shoot us in cold blood?”

“We're going to let you finish what you started,” retorted Roy. “You say you came here to examine Roger's body. To me, you look like a couple of body snatchers, though I'll admit I don't know what your gain would be.

“So I'm going to let you open that casket and make your examination. If your actions indicate that there is reason for your visit, I'll listen to other explanations. If not, we'll settle this as we choose.”

DENBURTON shrugged his shoulders. He motioned to Peters. They turned to the casket; worked on the cover and finally lifted it. Denburton stooped over the bulky coffer. He stepped back; turned toward Roy and Walter with a strained expression on his face.

“I swear that I am not responsible!” gasped Denburton, his tone changed to a plea. “I never expected—this. I thought that Roger might have died from something other than the cholera; but this is the work of another. I swear—”

Roy and Walter had come forward. They stared into the casket, expecting to see some hideous sight. Instead, they viewed vacancy. Roger's body was gone.

Roy swung savagely toward Denburton. The physician saw a mad look in the heir's eyes. With a quick

spring, Denburton snatched at Roy's gun, twisted its muzzle to one side. Peters acted with surprising agility. He pounced upon Walter from in back.

Roy's gun clattered to the floor. Denburton was too powerful for the younger, lighter man. He flattened Roy; looked to see how Peters had fared. The servant had disarmed Walter and had sprawled the young man against the leaden casket. Luck had favored Peters' surprise attack. Jolted, Walter was out of the fray.

Denburton snatched up Roy's gun. Peters copied the example, grabbing Walter's weapon. Coldly, Denburton faced the defeated heirs; then smiled wanly, as he announced:

"We can now discuss this situation sensibly. You asked for explanations. I shall give them—"

"That is unnecessary, doctor."

The hard-toned interruption came from the door of the crypt. Turning about, Denburton saw a new invader. He was Louis Joland. The gray-haired administrator was holding a leveled revolver. Joland was not alone; behind him, Denburton saw other faces. The doorway bristled with gun muzzles.

Denburton dropped Roy's gun. Peters let Walter's .32 hit the floor. Roy and Walter chimed cries of elation. They came to their feet, to join Joland. Before they had gone three paces, they saw a warning gesture of Joland's revolver; heard his harsh rasp:

"Stand where you are!"

Astounded, the heirs halted. They gaped as they viewed the ugly leer that transformed Joland's usually benign face into the countenance of a rogue.

"I shall make the explanations," announced Joland. He motioned to the door. "Let me first introduce a relative of yours, a gentleman named George Rodaine, professionally known as Dagbar. Though only a second cousin, he has the distinctive appearance of a Lengood."

JOLAND shifted; from past the bristling guns stepped Dagbar. Roy and Walter stared unbelieving, when they saw a face so like their own countenance. Denburton blinked; Peters gaped.

"Dagbar was one of the many who visited me," declared Joland, "to learn if he had any claim upon the Lengood estate. He told me much about himself. He had worked for years as assistant to a professional hypnotist. What was it you termed yourself, Dagbar?"

"A 'horse,'" returned the death-faker with a grin. "That's what they call a stooge in a 'hyp' act. I let the prof stick needles in me. I laid in store windows for hours, like I was dead."

"And later—"

"After the hyp act was washed up along with vaudeville, I started a racket of my own. I let them bury me alive, under ground. A great stunt for a free show! I played plenty of fairs out West; I used to kid the medicos for publicity. Found out I could stage a fake death so well that it fooled them."

Doctor Denburton stared at Dagbar.

"I see it all," declared the physician, slowly. "You played the part of Howard, James, Owen—finally Roger."

"Sure," grinned Dagbar. "It was a medical student who first pronounced me dead, the time I was

Howard, at the polo match. I fooled an internee at the sanitarium when I was James. I bluffed a horse doctor when I faked Owen's death. I can stop my breath for three minutes; I know how to sneak in a puff and repeat it."

"But your pulse?"

"Easy. A rubber ball under the coat sleeve, at the armpit. Pressure, like this"—Dagbar pointed with his left hand as he clamped his right biceps hard against his body—"and it's good-by pulse."

Denburton looked dubious.

"You worked it long enough to deceive certain people," he declared. "But how you managed to trick me, when you passed as Roger, this morning—"

Dagbar leered and pointed to the door. There, Denburton saw Pierre Guyak.

"Guyak helped you!" gulped Denburton. "I took his word for it. I remember that he kept talking to me during my examination, distracting my attention—"

"Enough!" The snarl came from Joland. "You made a fool of yourself, Denburton. You wondered about so many deaths; you suspected that matters might be wrong in this house. But you never believed that I was responsible. I pretended concern too well. Still, you thought that I might be a dupe; therefore, you did not confer with me.

"You showed your stupidity when you chose Peters to prowl about and report all that happened here. We intercepted his flashlight signals from the very first. We knew when he stole the telegram that came from Roger, because we knew that the wire had been sent.

"There was an investigator, wiser than yourself, who might have spoiled our schemes. Dagbar tricked him by your own device; he entered your house and flashed signals to Peters, telling him to put the telegram on my desk. That fooled the meddler who calls himself The Shadow. We trapped him in Copeburn's Mill; he escaped; but we eliminated him later in the explosion at Guyak's."

From his pocket, Joland produced a key; dangled it in front of Denburton.

"The duplicate key to this crypt," he stated. "We came here to install the body of the real Roger Lengood, which will soon arrive through a secret entrance to this cellar. Meanwhile, I shall decide your fate.

"You will disappear, Denburton, along with Peters. We thought that you might be meddling here to-night. We had decided to do away with you if you learned too much. Your disappearance would throw doubt upon your own actions.

"You two"—he glared at Roy and Walter—"will also die. I had intended that you should live, for perhaps another year. Instead, I shall have Roy appear a suicide, while Dagbar will masquerade as Walter. He will fake a final death afterward."

The heirs stood glum. Roy suddenly demanded:

"What can you gain by all this, Joland? I know that our deaths will make you permanent administrator of the estate; but Eleanor had arranged that for you anyway. The millions will go to charities, to institutions—"

Roy paused suddenly. A thought had struck him. Joland nodded.

“With all disbursements managed by myself,” declared the supercrook, “the books that have hitherto showed gains will gradually reveal losses. Funds will go to obscure, unknown museums, for purchase of little-known art treasures. Those treasures will be fake ones, supplied through proxy by myself.

“Doped contracts will be let for hospital buildings. Funds will be spent on charitable campaigns. All under my sole administration. Of nearly ten million dollars, no more than fifteen per cent will actually go to institutions. I can take my own time in completion of the game that I began more than a year ago.

“Only one man lived who could have seen through my schemes. The evidence was easy to find: the very terms of the Lengood will, the fact that certain claimants had been hushed—both were indications of my methods. Death by proxy was the means by which I won against the world; but it took bold attack to finish The Shadow, the only being who knew!”

Erect as he delivered his final outburst, Louis Joland presented a countenance that gleamed with evil triumph. Holding his pose, he suddenly raised his hand for silence. He could hear the muffled tramp of footsteps coming through the outside passages of the huge cellar.

“The body has arrived,” declared Joland. His tone carried solemn promise of doom. “We shall bestow Roger in this crypt, where he belongs. After that, the rest of you shall die.”

The listeners could feel the chilling pall of Joland's words. They knew that their doom would not be long deferred. Death would be their lot within this deep-dug crypt, as soon as Roger Lengood's body was placed in the casket that awaited it.

CHAPTER XX. THE LAST DEATH

LOUIS JOLAND gestured toward the prisoners as the tramp of footsteps reached the door of the crypt. Bristling guns nudged in response. Under the threat of aiming muzzles, Roy and Walter backed to an inner corner.

Denburton stood in momentary challenge; and Peters waited beside the physician. Joland turned with glaring eyes. Denburton also backed to the corner, motioning Peters to join him. There was no use to sacrifice the short while of life that still remained.

Dagbar and Guyak stood beside the leaden coffin; they took up the task of covering the prisoners while henchmen spread to let burden carriers enter. Into the crypt came Slug, Blimp and two of their crew. The four were carrying the packing case that they had picked up at the bungalow.

The light of the single gasoline lantern cast sufficient glare to illuminate the scene about the coffin. The prisoners were visible in their corner; enough so that any false move would have been noted. Men from the door were watching, again on the alert.

Slug turned to Joland. It was plain that he acknowledged the gray-haired man as chief; that Dagbar served as leader only in Joland's absence. Joland shot a query:

“You posted men outside?”

Slug nodded.

“Six of them,” he replied. “Watching every door. Two are on guard where we came in.”

Joland gestured toward the box.

“Open it.”

Slug and Blimp started to pry off the heavy lid that they had nailed to the large packing case. As Slug levered with a jimmy, a mammoth figure stalked into the crypt. It was Bela Bey; he had been with those at the door. Taking the jimmy, Bela Bey ripped the cover from the box with one powerful twist.

Dagbar leered across the casket, looking toward Roy and Walter.

“Too bad neither of you ran into Bela Bey,” sneered the death-faker. “He’d have wrung your necks as easily as he wrenched off that lid. He used to be a strong man with a troupe, until he joined the hyp act. I kept him with me when I started my own racket.”

Neither Roy nor Walter showed any appreciation of this unrequested information. Both itched to get their fingers on their second cousin’s neck. In their eyes, George Rodaine, otherwise Dagbar, was as much a murderer as Louis Joland.

Slug and Blimp were pulling a limp body from the packing case. Again, Bela Bey took over the task. Hoisting the limp body from among a nest of rags and crumpled newspapers, the Egyptian dropped the victim in the coffin.

ROY and Walter sighted a face that had Lengood features; they were solemn at that moment. Joland was right; the real Roger Lengood had been brought to fill the empty casket.

Pierre Guyak leaned over the casket, examined the huddled form. He raised his head and nodded; then grinned maliciously as he beckoned to Denburton.

“Perhaps,” sneered Guyak, with sarcastic politeness, “you would like to examine the dead man?”

“I would,” returned Denburton, gruffly. He stepped forward; leaned over to look at the sprawled form. He felt the pulse of a projecting right arm.

“Yes, I consider this an important privilege.”

“Why?”

The sharp rasp came from Joland. Denburton was prompt with his answer. “Because,” declared the physician, “Roger Lengood presumably died of the cholera. An autopsy will be held tomorrow. With Guyak and myself absent, many questions will be raised, especially when it is learned that Roger died by violence.”

Joland tilted his head and laughed. Guyak reached to the floor; produced his medical kit. From it, he brought a tiny pointed hypodermic syringe. The instrument flashed in the light as Guyak exhibited it.

“This contains cholera germs,” said Guyak, to Denburton. “Most of my experiments were confined to their culture. I intend to inject them into the body. The autopsy will show that Roger Lengood died of cholera.”

Mockingly, he paused; motioned toward the casket.

“Tell me,” he asked, “are you sure, this time, that the victim is dead?”

His hand still on the pulse, Denburton was about to speak. His lips parted suddenly, as though to deliver an exclamation. Denburton stopped suddenly; then voiced the statement:

“Yes. He is dead.”

Dagbar sprang to the casket as Guyak was preparing to jab the hypodermic. The dead-faker grabbed

the arm that Denburton held. Flinging it aside, he clamped his hands upon the sideways tilted face; turned it up into the light. He saw a face that was somewhat like his own, yet masklike. Turning his own head, Dagbar shouted to Joland:

“This man is not dead! He is not Roger Lengood—”

Dagbar never finished his cry. The hand that he had dropped came up from beside the supposed corpse. From beneath the coat that girded the body, the hand brought an automatic, a heavy .45. Swung with a short forearm drive, the hand jabbed the weapon squarely against Dagbar's skull.

Guyak saw eyes open; caught the flare of their burning gaze. Even as the sledged blow landed on Dagbar's skull; Guyak gave a mad cry and tried frantically to drive his hypodermic into the arm that had made the swing. The body in the casket twisted. Its left hand nailed Guyak's wrist; on that instant, the bearded man's wrist jammed down upon the edge of the casket. Guyak was levered from his feet; he sprawled headforemost across the rising body.

From across the back of Guyak's neck came the muzzle of the automatic. Blazing eyes showed above it; disguised lips delivered a mocking peal of challenge that shuddered the thick atmosphere of the crypt. Louis Joland knew that taunting tone; so did Slug Kirbin and the henchmen with him.

The laugh of The Shadow!

BROUGHT here in place of Roger Lengood, The Shadow had postponed his intended climax. From within the packing case he had heard words that told him prisoners were here. He had played the role of Roger, waiting for the best opportunity to strike.

More than that, The Shadow had turned the crooked game upon its perpetrators. He had faked death, as cunningly as Dagbar. He had deceived the false physician, Pierre Guyak. Doctor Denburton, unduly keyed, had merely chanced to gain an inkling that The Shadow was alive.

Forced to prompt action, The Shadow had slugged Dagbar, who was closest and therefore most dangerous at the moment. He was treating Guyak as he had before; using the bearded man as a helpless shield for the fray that was due to come.

The Shadow's automatic roared as crooks jabbed their guns in his direction. He blasted toward the door, where clustered reserves held strong position. Slug and Blimp fired in reply; then dived outside as a man sagged between them. The Shadow clipped Blimp, who howled as he grasped his gun arm. Others dived with Slug.

Joland leaped to the side of the casket, hoping to drive in a timely bullet. The Shadow saw the beginning of the move; counted upon others to stop the supercrook. The Shadow gauged well. Denburton was as quick as Joland. The physician caught the murderer's gun arm; shoved toward the ceiling.

Wisely had The Shadow ignored Joland. Another, most dangerous of all attackers, was on the move. Where Joland had tried to drive from The Shadow's right, Bela Bey came pouncing from the left. His big knife whipped from his jacket, the giant drove a long, sweeping stroke straight for The Shadow's unguarded left side.

The Shadow rolled leftward; with him came the struggling figure of Pierre Guyak. Bela Bey was already launched; he could not halt his drive. One instant, the knife blade seemed surely destined to cleave The Shadow; like a flash, the next instant found a clawing barrier between.

Bela Bey's blow struck. The huge knife buried past the beginning of its hilt, deep into the body of Guyak.

The bearded crook slumped, flattening The Shadow beneath him. Fiercely, Bela Bey tried to wrench his knife free from a gush of spouting blood.

That move was the Egyptian's last. From above Guyak's shoulder came a flash of flame. Bela Bey had delayed unwisely. The tongue that issued from The Shadow's automatic darted like an arrow, straight for the giant's heart. The bullet that sizzled with that thrust marked the end of Bela Bey.

As the huge Egyptian crashed like a falling tower, The Shadow gave a twisting hurl that sent Guyak's knife-bearing body clear of the casket. As Guyak crashed the floor, The Shadow gripped the casket edge; came to his knees and vaulted free. He thundered shots at the doorway, knowing that crooks might make a surge. That warning given, The Shadow swung to face a milling throng.

JOLAND had gone berserk. He was smashing off four opponents. Roy, Walter, Peters—all had joined Denburton. They were spinning away, headlong. Only Denburton remained; The Shadow leaped to the physician's relief. As he did, he heard a warning cry from Peters, who was sprawled back against the wall.

The Shadow wheeled; saw Dagbar rising beside the casket. The death-faker had recuperated from the blow that he had received; though groggy, he was aiming with his gun. Simultaneously, a shout of triumph came from Joland as the supercrook sent Denburton skidding along the floor.

The shout brought an answering cry from the hall. Slug had heard Joland's call. He and his thugs were starting inward with a drive. The Shadow was due for attacks from three directions.

The men whom The Shadow had saved thought him doomed. They did not know the extent of The Shadow's prowess; the full measures that he had taken to insure victory. They were due to learn.

Spinning away from Dagbar, The Shadow took Joland first. His automatic boomed its message while the supercrook was still fingering revolver trigger. Joland sagged as he received his bullet. He lost his gun as he slumped to the floor.

Still shifting wide, toward the doorway, The Shadow was on the draw with his left hand. Dagbar was firing; his bullets thudded the wall. This time, The Shadow had outguessed the death-faker. By making no halt, no reverse, he was ahead of Dagbar's aim.

The Shadow knew that Dagbar would be hasty, because craft had failed him in the battle at the laboratory. He knew also that Dagbar was still groggy from his blow; that his marksmanship would be off. Those wide shots proved the accuracy of The Shadow's knowledge.

Wheeling past the doorway, The Shadow jabbed back with his freshly drawn gun. Dagbar's pumping hand went up; his snapping finger delivered last shots to the ceiling. Tilting backward, Dagbar lost his balance; his arms spread wide as he flattened, face upward.

Twisting about, The Shadow faced the door, sidestepping toward Dagbar's body as he aimed. He was ready for Slug and the others, should they arrive. He had chosen his position to draw their fire toward himself instead of the men whom he had rescued. Yet the laugh that quivered from The Shadow's lips seemed to tell that his battle was ended.

AS if in answer, shots roared from outer passages. Slug, the first at the door, stopped short and wheeled. Another man jammed up against him. Both turned wildly to look along the outer passage. Those in the crypt heard the whistle of bullets; the snapping ricochet of slugs that crackled the cellar walls.

A fierce barrage was sweeping in from two directions. Slug and his squad were in its path. The Shadow

saw Slug take aim; then stagger. The man beside Slug fell. Calmly, The Shadow put away his automatics. Reaching in the packing case, he dipped deep beneath its bundled contents and brought out cloak and hat.

Echoes ended in the outer passage as The Shadow donned his blackened garments. Men, brought by The Shadow's order, were waiting his new command. The Shadow strode from the crypt. He faded in the darkness of the passage. A full minute passed; then came pounding footsteps.

Into the crypt came an eager arrival: Roger Lengood. He saw his cousins; hurried to grip their hands. Roy and Walter introduced him to Doctor Denburton; then to Peters. In reply to questions, Roy told the details.

Recovered from Harbrook's attack at the bungalow, Roger had found The Shadow beside him. The Shadow had learned from Roger that Slug Kirbin was coming for a body. The Shadow, capable at make-up, had molded his features to resemble Roger's. Crooks had come; Roger had covered while they examined the supposed body.

After Slug and his men had gone, Roger had made for a telephone. He had put in a call, as instructed by The Shadow. He had then headed for Lengood Manor. Outside, he had joined a valiant band composed of agents who served The Shadow.

WHILE The Shadow was in the crypt, his agents had overpowered outside guards. With Roger, they had entered the cellar just as the sounds of gun fray had begun. They were in time, as The Shadow had expected, to mow down the final surge of Slug's crew.

As Roger finished his terse story, there came a token that hushed all those who heard it. The tone was triumphant, strangely near despite its distance. Weirdly chilling, it came from the outer night, whence The Shadow had departed, followed by his agents.

The laugh of The Shadow, toned with victory. Mirth that told of conquered crime; that thrilled the rescued men who heard it. Such was that token from the night, that faded, yet seemed to linger with echoes that could not be forgotten.

There were those in the crypt who did not hear that tone. Louis Joland, superplotter; Bela Bey, giant murderer; Pierre Guyak, false physician. All were dead; and with them lay one other, as lifeless as themselves.

Stretched at the feet of Roger, Roy and Walter was the prone form of a man whose face was marked by the characteristics of their own, except for the ugly smile that its lifeless lips could no longer hide.

Dagbar, the death-faker, had paid for his evil work. His impostures were ended. His deeds revealed, he had found the state which he had so cleverly pretended in the past.

Final death had come to Dagbar. The Shadow's verdict to the death-faker would never be revoked.

The veil of danger and death which hung like a pall over this family had been lifted by The Shadow. The way was open to a life of quiet and happiness for this household.

But for The Shadow, speeding away, there was no prospect of rest; no relief from his unceasing battle against crime. More danger lay ahead; a great peril which menaced another group of people, and which The Shadow had to remove. It was danger to Partners of Peril; it was a strange, unheard-of death; which threatened its victims, then succeeded in its ends while the law was lying in wait!

Real death faced The Shadow in this new campaign. It would cross his path sooner than any one

expected, and give him a battle that transcended any narrow escapes he ever had before.

THE END