

ZEMBA

Maxwell Grant

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CHAPTER I. ON THE GOLDEN ARROW

ELEVEN o'clock in the morning. The Golden Arrow was ready for departure. Standing at the eastern side of Victoria Station, the famous train was waiting for the final moment to begin its swift run from London to the Channel port of Dover.

The main departure platform had cleared. Passengers had gone aboard, a cosmopolitan throng, all bound for destinations on the European continent. From its brilliantly painted locomotive, "Howard of Effingham," back along the line of cars, the Golden Arrow seemed straining for the word to go.

Two men came dashing through a gateway. They hurried past the rear car, a baggage wagon loaded with large boxes, held in place by chains. They passed two other vans, hastened beyond the first-class coaches and scrambled aboard a Pullman car in the exact center of the train. A uniformed guard stepped on behind them.

Up ahead, the engine driver opened the regulator. With fierce, rapid chugs, the locomotive started its pull from Victoria. These last-moment passengers had held the Golden Arrow for a period of some thirty seconds.

Panting as they sank into the cushioned armchairs of the luxurious Pullman, the two men faced each other across the table that stood between them.

One, a gray-haired man with a high-bridged nose, stared anxiously as he peered through pince-nez spectacles. The other, youthful, but solemn-faced, was looking from the window as the train puffed out of the station. The gray-haired man spoke.

"I wish your opinion, Thomason. Tell me: did we delay the departure sufficiently to excite suspicion?"

"No, your lordship," replied the solemn-faced man. "See? There is the Brighton Belle, drawing ahead of us. It leaves the other side of the terminus at almost the same moment as the Golden Arrow."

The gray-haired man nodded.

"Excellent," he decided. "Of course, the Brighton Belle should pass us, for it has the acceleration of electric power. It always gains during the brief race from the terminus."

Some one had stopped beside the table. Both men turned about to see a sharp-faced arrival who had stepped up beside them. The newcomer bowed.

"Good morning, Lord Bixley," he said, in a low tone. "I am Inspector Delka, C.I.D. I saw you come aboard."

Lord Bixley thrust forward his hand. Then with a nod, he introduced his solemn-faced companion.

"My secretary, Thomason," explained his lordship. "Suppose you seat yourself across the aisle, Thomason, while I converse with Inspector Delka."

Thomason moved to the other side of the car. Delka took the armchair opposite Lord Bixley.

"I brought two men with me from Scotland Yard," asserted Delka, quietly. "I held the train pending your arrival; but I was pleased that the delay was short. Otherwise Willoughby Blythe might have suspected something."

"Blythe is aboard?" queried Lord Bixley, eagerly. "You have discovered him?"

"I believe so," returned Delka. "There is a man who answers his description, traveling in the compartment of a forward car. A second-class carriage. My men are watching him."

"The door of the compartment is open?"

"Yes. The man can be seen from the corridor. There is only one other passenger in the compartment. The door, however, may soon be closed. Therefore, I should like your secretary to walk by and glimpse Blythe long enough to identify him."

LORD BIXLEY nodded. He beckoned to Thomason and Delka gave the secretary the proper directions. Thomason went forward. The train was crossing the Grosvenor Bridge, over the Thames River; it was slowing down for the release of a tank engine which had served as pusher. The quick-stepping Brighton Belle had passed from sight.

"I held the Brighton Belle also," remarked Delka, with a smile. "I knew that you would arrive soon after eleven. So I thought it best that the passengers should see the other train and thus believe that both had left on

schedule."

Lord Bixley's eyes showed approval through the spectacles.

"And now, your lordship," added Delka, "since we are on our journey, I should be pleased to learn the reason why the admiralty seeks the arrest of another passenger, Willoughby Blythe."

Lord Bixley chuckled.

"Of course!" he exclaimed. "I had forgotten that there had been no time for explanations when I made that hurried telephone call to Scotland Yard. Very well, inspector. I shall give you a summary of the circumstances."

Lord Bixley produced some papers from his pocket. He laid them upon the table, then looked about carefully, to see that all other passengers were seated at a distance. He spoke in a tone that was little louder than a whisper.

"Willoughby Blythe had access to certain documents," he stated. "Among them was a set of sealed specifications that included every detail of our new type of submarines. That sealed envelope was stolen ten days ago."

"Yet you did not learn of the theft?"

"No. Because another envelope was substituted. One that bore counterfeit seals. Blythe was the thief; for he was the only man who could have effected the substitution."

"I understand."

The Golden Arrow was driving downward through Penge Tunnel, passing under the Crystal Palace. Electric lights had replaced the daylight. The car seemed gloomy because of the contrast. Lord Bixley and Delka looked up to see Thomason, back from his excursion to the second-class carriage.

"Was it Blythe?" queried Bixley.

"Yes, your lordship," replied Thomason. "He closed the door of the compartment just after I glimpsed him."

"Did he see you?"

"No, your lordship."

Delka put a query.

"Are my men posted?"

"Yes," replied Thomason. "One in each adjoining compartment. They are keeping watch upon the corridor."

DELKA turned to Lord Bixley, who resumed.

"To-day," he said, "we received this bold letter from Paris. It is signed by an audacious rogue who styles himself Gaspard Zemba. He declares that he holds the sealed documents and will return them to the British admiralty upon payment of one hundred thousand pounds."

"Gaspard Zemba," mused Delka. "The smoothest rogue in all France. The famous hidden criminal bobbed up again. Hm—m—m. He seems to have stolen a march on those international spies who made their headquarters in Helsingfors, Finland. Boris Danyar and his agents."

"Danyar was balked long ago," nodded Lord Bixley. "He and his agents were scattered, thanks to you and your colleagues at Scotland Yard."

"We handled only the British angle," said Delka, modestly. "The French surete and other continental authorities were quite as instrumental in breaking up Boris Danyar's game. But let us return to the important subject of Gaspard Zemba. How does Willoughby Blythe enter the case?"

"As Zemba's agent," replied Lord Bixley. "I was away from London, not expecting to return until to—morrow. Hence Zemba's letter, arriving this morning, would not ordinarily have been opened. Blythe saw the letter when it arrived."

"I see!" exclaimed Delka. "It was the tip from Zemba. Time for Blythe to leave England."

"Precisely. Blythe had an optional vacation that was his due. With the greatest of cheek, the fellow decided to leave for Paris on this very train. He was gone when I arrived at my office, at half past ten. The first letter that I chanced to open was the one from Zemba."

"And, of course, you connected it with Blythe."

"Immediately. That is why I called Scotland Yard. Since we have located Blythe, you can apprehend him whenever you wish."

The train had swept out from the tunnel; it was approaching Beckenham while Delka stared from the Pullman window and pondered. At length, the Scotland Yard man voiced a plan.

"Blythe must intend to join Zemba," decided Delka. "Since the documents have already been sent to France, Blythe is carrying nothing of value. His arrest will not restore the stolen plans; nor will his freedom work against us.

"Much might be gained by not arresting Blythe. It would be excellent to follow him to Paris, for that would produce a direct trail to Zemba. On the contrary, it would introduce complications."

"With the French police?" inquired Lord Bixley.

"Yes," answered Delka, with a brisk nod. "They would wish to introduce their own methods. By the time that we had disposed of the red tape, Blythe would have gained suspicion. Our final move would probably be no more than the arrest of Blythe in Paris.

"We can accomplish quite as much by apprehending him before he leaves England. At the same time, we should take into consequence the man's own mental reactions. Is Blythe a nervous sort?"

"Quite," replied Lord Bixley. "He has cheek; but he is high—strung. I fancy that this journey will make him more and more restless until the train reaches Dover."

"Good!" Delka thumped the table. "Then we shall arrest him there. He cannot leave the Golden Arrow, for it makes no stop during the seventy—seven miles. Picture the man's dumfounding when we stop him at the door of his compartment."

"He will be overwhelmed," asserted Lord Bixley. "Much more so than if he had been apprehended in London. You have struck a timely thought, inspector. By all means, delay the arrest until the final moment. I know the chap's false bravado. When we confront him, he will weaken."

DELKA leaned back in his armchair. He smiled as he glanced from the window. The Golden Arrow had breasted the summit at Knockholt, slightly more than eighteen miles from London. Unwearied by its climb, Howard of Effingham was ready for the terrific dash to Dover.

Soon the mighty locomotive would be devouring the distance at better than a mile-a-minute rate. A perfect stretch of trackage lay ahead, straight across the Weald of Kent. The coming portion of the Southern Railway was built for high speed.

"Suppose we order luncheon," suggested Lord Bixley, catching Delka's mood. "Your men are watching Willoughby Blythe. He can find no opportunity to escape us."

"None at all," agreed Delka. "Your lordship, I can promise you that Blythe will stay aboard this train when we reach Dover."

There was a prophetic air to Delka's tone; but the words were more significant than intended. Fate had decreed a surprising finish for the journey of Willoughby Blythe, key man to the notorious Gaspard Zemba.

At the moment of his decision, Eric Delka held the opportunity he wanted. Confident, the Scotland Yard man was holding his important move until time when it would come too late.

CHAPTER II. DEATH DEALS DOUBLE

THE Golden Arrow had reached Folkestone. As it whirled rapidly across the high viaduct above the town, Eric Delka caught his first glimpse of the sea. Seven miles through the warren would bring the train to Dover.

Delka was glancing at his watch when he left the Pullman and walked forward to the second-class carriages. It was twenty-five minutes past twelve.

Eighty-five minutes out of London. Another ten minutes to go. Delka smiled with confidence. He had left Lord Bixley and Thomason expressing their impatience for the finish of the journey; but Delka did not share the mood. He was quite willing to wait for the scheduled time of Blythe's capture.

The train was following the cliff region above the English Channel when Delka found his two aids in the corridor outside of Willoughby Blythe's compartment. They had come from their own compartments. Delka drew them toward the end of the corridor.

A dapper, mustached man edged by, coming from another car. Delka saw him enter Blythe's compartment. The dapper man was the one other passenger who had been in the compartment at the beginning of the journey. He looked like a Frenchman.

"Has Blythe come out at all?" queried Delka.

Negative headshakes. Verbal reply had become suddenly impossible, for the train had roared into blackness at that moment. The Golden Arrow was surging through Shakespeare's Cliff, to reach the beach along the English Channel.

The roar of the locomotive was terrific, blotting out all other sounds for this car was close behind the

powerful engine. Delka and his men stood silent in the feeble glow of the corridor lights.

Then the roar ended. The brilliance of daylight replaced artificial illumination. As the train slackened speed along the line of the beach, Delka gave his final instructions. One man was placed at each end of the corridor. Delka, himself, would cover the station platform.

The train veered sharply to the right, to swing into the Dover Marine Station. Delka saw the dapper Frenchman come from the compartment and stroll past one of the Scotland Yard men.

Delka nodded his approval. There was a chance that Willoughby Blythe might make a struggle. It would be best to trap him alone in the compartment.

THE train rolled to a stop. Delka, with a railway guard beside him, was the first person to reach the platform. The C.I.D. man immediately posted himself at the most important spot.

Blythe could find two ways to leave the train; one, by the corridor, which Delka's aids were guarding; the other, by the outer door of the compartment direct to the station platform itself. That was the exit which Delka covered.

The Golden Arrow was disgorging passengers. The train had arrived at twenty-five minutes of one, precisely on schedule. Already, a shunting engine had gripped the baggage vans at the rear of the train and was tugging them away, to work them around to the quay. There, the Steamship Canterbury was waiting, with smoke issuing from its single funnel.

Passengers and porters were thronging toward the steamship, to embark immediately for Calais. Twenty minutes was the time allotted for such transfer. Yet, as the platform cleared of people, there was still no sign of Willoughby Blythe.

Delka had been watching the compartment door in a hawklike fashion. He had seen Blythe on the train in London; and would have known the man immediately, for the fellow's face was long-nosed and weak-chinned – a pasty countenance that could easily be remembered. Nevertheless, Delka watched in vain for such a visage to appear at the compartment door.

Two stragglers joined Delka on the platform: Lord Bixley and the secretary, Thomason. Delka ordered Thomason to go into the car and contact the C.I.D. men in the corridor.

Thomason went in, to return two minutes later. He brought the positive report that no one had come from Blythe's compartment, by way of the corridor.

"The chap must know that we are watching him," observed Lord Bixley, to Delka. "Why not enter and apprehend him? The other passengers have reached the steamship. If Blythe offers resistance, it will endanger no one."

Delka considered. He glanced at his watch; it was nearly ten minutes of one. He looked toward the Canterbury, where cranes were swinging the boxes from the baggage wagons down into the steamship's hold. All other passengers had reached the vessel.

Delka decided to act. He spoke to a railway guard who was standing by, and ordered the man to open the outer door of Blythe's compartment.

The guard obeyed. At the same time, Delka tugged a revolver from his pocket and mounted the step beside

the compartment. He expected that Blythe would flee when accosted; but if the fugitive dashed through the corridor he would be immediately trapped by the two C.I.D. men. Delka wanted Blythe to attempt flight.

The door swung open and Delka thrust himself forward. As he did, a huddled figure came tumbling directly against him. Delka spun about, ready with his revolver as a man's form sprawled in a crazy dive, across the step, then headlong to the platform. As Delka bounded down beside the rolling form, it turned over. Delka saw the face of Willoughby Blythe.

The fugitive was dead. Blood upon his shirt front told the story. He had been shot through the heart within the compartment, before the train had reached Dover!

BLYTHER'S body was almost at Lord Bixley's feet. Astounded, the peer turned to Delka. A clatter from the compartment told that the C.I.D. men had heard the noise at the outer door and had dashed into the compartment, from the corridor. Their faces appeared at the doorway. They were in time to hear Lord Bixley's exclamation.

"A suicide!"

Delka was bending over the dead man's body. No weapon had fallen clear. He motioned to the C.I.D. men. They dived among the cushions of the compartment, to bob out with the report that no revolver had dropped within the car.

"The Frenchman!" ejaculated Delka. "He is the murderer! He fired the shot while the train was roaring through the cliff tunnel. He has gone aboard the Channel boat!"

A blast sounded from the whistle of the Canterbury. It came as an echo to Delka's statement. The Scotland Yard man barked an order to his men; they were to take charge of Blythe's body. With a wave of his arm, Delka started on a run toward the steamship. Lord Bixley and Thomason followed.

It was a hard dash to the quay; but Delka made it just as the gangplank was about to go aboard. Waving his arm, Delka halted the move, and scrambled, breathless, up to the deck. Lord Bixley came stumbling aboard a moment later.

The gangplank clattered; the boat was moving toward the quay before either man could look about. They saw Thomason, far behind. The secretary had missed the boat, for he had tripped while running along the station platform.

"No necessity for Thomason," puffed Lord Bixley. "We can carry on without him. What about this Frenchman, inspector? Do you think that you can discover him, here, aboard the vessel?"

"I intend to," replied Delka, grimly. "Our first step, your lordship, will be to visit the captain."

TEN minutes later, Delka and Lord Bixley were seated in the captain's cabin, going over a list of passengers. Their quest was a slender one, for this list included only those who had reserved private cabins aboard the Canterbury, and there were but a few dozen of such accommodations. A steward was eyeing Delka as the C.I.D. man thumbed the list. The man spoke as Delka's finger stopped.

"That man, sir," informed the steward. "The one who reserved Cabin 12. He is a Frenchman, with a little mustache."

"Rene Levaux," read Delka. "Let us make a search for him."

They went to the cabin, to find it empty. Another steward had seen the man leave the cabin. His description matched the first so perfectly that Delka knew Levaux must be the man. Having checked upon the fellow's name, the C.I.D. man posted the stewards at the cabin and started in search of his quarry.

The chalk cliffs of the English coast were already fading far behind. The Channel crossing would require only an hour and a quarter; and twenty–five minutes of that period had already elapsed. The boat had many passengers, yet Delka felt sure that he would have time to locate Levaux.

He found the Frenchman after twenty minutes more. Levaux was in the smoking saloon; and he had evidently finished several drinks from the ship's bar. Cleverly, the murderer had made himself inconspicuous by behaving in an almost conspicuous fashion. Glass in hand, he was moving about, chatting with other passengers and keeping somewhat out of sight during the process.

The Channel passage was proving a rough one. Jolting through heavy waves, the Canterbury was riding in a fashion that forced passengers to seek the security of chairs. Delka saw Levaux stagger with a roll of the ship. A heavy–built man stopped the Frenchman and helped him to a chair by a table.

Delka saw the rescuer's face. The man was wearing a heavy auburn beard that glistened in the sunlight. Delka saw a gold–toothed smile when Levaux spoke to his chance companion.

The Frenchman had evidently invited the stranger to have a drink, for they called a waiter and gave an order. Soon the man returned with two tall glasses. Delka decided that Levaux was in good company. Choosing a corner table, he kept out of sight; but all the while, he watched the space between Levaux and the door.

ANOTHER drink was ordered, a dozen minutes later. Delka decided that Levaux and the bearded man were becoming convivial. Time drifted; the roughness of the passage lessened. The Canterbury was nearing the long breakwaters of Calais harbor. The ship began to swing stern first, to make its entry.

Levaux came tipsily into view. Delka watched him go toward the door; then arose and followed. The bearded man was still at the table, glancing from the window toward the French coast line, as he lighted a cigar.

Delka took up Levaux's trail. It led to Cabin 12. The stewards let the man enter. Lord Bixley joined Delka and made inquiry:

"What now?"

"A quiet arrest," replied Delka. "This is an English ship. We are within our rights. But this time, it is advisable to wait, in order to avoid complications."

"Quite true," agreed Lord Bixley. "There is no one in the cabin, other than the man we want."

Delka had edged close to the cabin door, his hand on the revolver in his pocket. French customs officers were on the quay beside the ship and the Scotland Yard man did not intend to attract their notice. Passengers were leaving the Canterbury, heading for a train that stood alongside. This was the Fleche d'Or, the French equivalent for the Golden Arrow.

Prepared for a thundering non–stop dash to Paris, the Fleche d'Or was headed by a herculean locomotive, pride of the Chemin de Fer du Nord, or Northern Railway. The great engine formed a contrast to the British locomotive that had hauled the Golden Arrow. It was larger than the Howard of Effingham; and it lacked the colorful paint of the British locomotive.

The cars, too, were different. The Pullman at the front of the train were brown and cream in color, with golden arrows painted on their sides. Behind these cars were three others of a bluish hue. They were through sleepers for the Mediterranean Express, the celebrated Blue Train that travels from Paris to the Riviera.

As at Dover, the Calais transfer called for twenty minutes; but rapid progress with the baggage loading told that the time would be cut. The Canterbury had been delayed in passage. Delka, however, felt no tenseness because Levaux was loitering in the cabin.

The Fleche d'Or, departing at two-thirty, carried Pullman passengers only. Other passengers were standing on the quay, to take a train that would leave twenty minutes after the Fleche d'Or. Levaux, riding second-class, had no need to hurry.

GLANCING toward the train on the quay, Delka saw the bearded man who had talked with Levaux. He was entering one of the Pullman cars of the Fleche d'Or. Another glance showed Delka that nearly all persons had gone ashore from the Canterbury. Delka saw no need for further waiting. Gripping the knob of the cabin door, he turned it slowly; then kicked the barrier inward and entered.

He found Rene Levaux half sprawled upon a couch, staring upward. The Frenchman made no move when Delka entered with a drawn revolver. He appeared to be in a drunken stupor. Delka approached and clamped a heavy hand upon the man's shoulder.

The corner of the cabin was gloomy. It was not until Delka leaned close that he saw the whiteness of the Frenchman's eyes. Those optics were bulging in a vacant gaze. They had assumed a glassiness that Delka had seen in other eyes. The C.I.D. man shoved Levaux's shoulder. The body resisted with an odd heaviness.

Delka knew the answer. As the thought flashed through his brain, he heard the shrill shriek of the French locomotive. The Fleche d'Or was pulling from the quay.

With a leap, Delka sprang from the cabin and reached the deck. He could hear the locomotive's chug. He arrived at the rail of the steamer in time to see the last cars of the train as they rounded the curves that led away from the quay.

Delka's fists were tightened. He was too late to catch the train. It was already off on its one-hundred-and-eighty-five mile run to Paris.

The startled boat stewards had hurried into the cabin. Lord Bixley was standing with them when Delka returned. All were staring at the sprawled form of Rene Levaux, the man who had murdered Willoughby Blythe.

"Dead!" Lord Bixley was aghast as he spoke to Delka. "Levaux dead – like Blythe –"

"Poisoned!" interposed Eric Delka. "Again we are dealing with murder, Lord Bixley!"

"But who –"

"Levaux was drinking with a bearded stranger," inserted Delka. "I thought that their meeting was a chance one. Now I realize that it was not. The bearded man had opportunity to introduce some deadly poison into Levaux's glass."

"You are sure?"

DELKA nodded as he surveyed the dead man. He placed his thumb upon one of Levau's upper eyelids and raised it to study the rigid orb beneath.

"Yes," he assured. "I have seen a case like this before. The bearded man was the murderer."

"And he has gone?"

"Aboard the first train for Paris. Due there at five–forty; seventeen–forty by continental time."

"Then we must count upon the French authorities to apprehend this second murderer."

"Such is our only course, Lord Bixley."

Delka stepped to the deck. Lord Bixley joined him. Leaving the stewards in charge of Levau's body, the two men started for the gangplank. Twice thwarted in their hopes of catching a living prisoner, they were seeking a new quest.

Death had dealt double. Willoughby Blythe had died aboard the Golden Arrow. His murderer, Rene Levau, had found a similar fate in his cabin on the Steamship Canterbury. Another murderer was at large, a man unknown to Eric Delka; but one whose bulky frame and conspicuous beard would make him easily recognizable.

As with Willoughby Blythe; as with Rene Levau, this new quarry was located in a place that he could not leave. The French express, the Fleche d'Or, would discharge no passengers before it reached its destination.

Delka was bound upon the only course; to place this new case in the hands of the French police. They would have time to arrange the perfect capture of a bearded murderer. Their chance would come when the train from Calais arrived at the Gare du Nord, its terminus in Paris.

CHAPTER III. DEATH REACHES PARIS

IT was shortly before five o'clock when a uniformed officer entered the office of Monsieur Clandine, the Paris prefect of police. Monsieur Clandine, a keen–eyed man with a wax–tipped mustache and a pointed beard, looked up in expectation of an announcement.

"Monsieur Delka has arrived," announced the officer. "Shall I usher him here, Monsieur le Prefet?"

"At once!"

Delka entered to receive the prefect's handclasp. Monsieur Clandine motioned his visitor to a chair; then tapped a stack of papers that were upon the desk.

"I am pleased at your arrival," stated Clandine. "It was wise for you to come by plane from Calais."

"We traveled faster than the Golden Arrow," returned Delka, with a smile. "I mean your train the Fleche d'Or as you call it on this side of the Channel. It is not due in Paris for more than forty minutes."

"Quite a while to wait," observed Clandine, calmly. "We have completed our preparations long ago. All was ready within half an hour after we received the telegraph report from Calais."

"And the fast plane brought me here in time to witness the capture," chuckled Delka. "Well, monsieur, I feel

quite sure that I shall be able to identify the man with the red beard."

"That will not be necessary. We know him already."

Delka stared.

"And what is more" the prefect smiled "we have all the necessary information concerning his victim, Rene Levoux."

"Who is the bearded man?" queried Delka.

"One of whom you have heard," replied Clandine. "He is Boris Danyar, the notorious head of the spy clique in Helsingfors."

This news left Delka gaping. Pleased, Clandine delivered further facts.

"And Rene Levoux," he informed, "was the chief lieutenant of Gaspard Zemba, the mystery man of Paris."

Sudden understanding dawned upon Delka. While the prefect sat smiling, the C.I.D. man verbally pieced together the puzzle.

"Levoux was posted to kill Blythe in case of an emergency!" he exclaimed. "Blythe had blundered as Zemba believed he might so Zemba had delegated Levoux to cover him from London to Paris!"

The prefect nodded.

"And Danyar has been seeking a trail to Zemba!" added Delka. "Danyar must have recognized Levoux. When they talked, Levoux must have let something slip. That is why Danyar killed him."

Monsieur Clandine shook his head.

"I have a different theory," he stated. "I believe that Danyar already had a trail to Zemba. Seeing Levoux and noting you as an observer, he decided to eliminate Levoux and thus keep the trail for himself."

"But Danyar never saw me before!"

"So you may believe. Danyar is very clever. He has photographs of every important police officer in Europe."

"Is he cleverer than Zemba?"

"That is a question," returned the prefect, rising. "One that could only be decided by a meeting between the two. But Boris Danyar will never meet Gaspard Zemba. For Boris Danyar will no longer be at large after his arrival at the Gare du Nord. Come, monsieur. It is time for us to go to the terminus."

WHEN the prefect and Delka arrived upon the street, they found a limousine awaiting them. A police officer was acting as chauffeur. Beside the car was a man of slender build, who stood with shoulders back, in the erect exaggeration of a martinet. This bantam was attired in street clothes, like the prefect; but he seemed accustomed to pose in military fashion.

Monsieur Clandine introduced him as Sergeant Rusanne, then when they had stepped aboard the car and Rusanne had taken a place in front, the prefect made mention of Rusanne's duties.

"Sergeant Rusanne is my personal aid," Clandine told Delka. "He serves also as chief secretary in my office. All orders are checked by Rusanne; then there can be no mistake. He is a useful fellow, Rusanne; for if any of my instructions are ignored, I can hold him to account."

The prefect chuckled, as though he considered his statement a clever jest. Then he added:

"It is a system that never fails, for Rusanne has only to check all orders to subordinates. I have no time to follow up such matters; but Rusanne has. At present, as an instance, we are going to find extensive preparations at the Gare du Nord. I know exactly how everything should be. Sergeant Rusanne has made sure that all has been done as expected."

Lights were glimmering along the boulevards when the limousine neared the Northern Railway Station. A clouded sky was bringing early dusk to Paris, but daylight still held some sway. Delka's watch showed five-thirty when they alighted at the Gare du Nord.

"The express is scheduled to arrive at seventeen-forty," remarked the prefect, using the continental form of time reference. "It will not, however, arrive until seventeen forty-five. The train was purposely slowed at Amiens, then again at Creil.

"This was arranged through our emergency signal system, after your word came from Calais. Messages were dropped and picked up on each occasion. Thus our final arrangements are known aboard the train as well as here in Paris."

A pair of agents had become a bodyguard while Clandine and Delka were walking through the depot. They arrived at a platform. There, Delka saw other agents in readiness, with railway guards and plain-clothes men.

Sergeant Rusanne hurried briskly ahead; then stopped beside a row of cars that were standing empty on one side of the platform. When Delka and Clandine arrived, Rusanne opened the door of an empty compartment.

The prefect invited Delka to step aboard. They entered the gloomy interior of the antiquated third-class coach. Rusanne joined them and closed the door. Peering through the windows, none of the three could be observed by those upon the platform. Monsieur Clandine pointed toward the vacant track beyond.

"When the Fleche d'Or arrives," explained the prefect, "the car containing Boris Danyar will stop at a spot directly opposite us. He is traveling in the fifth Pullman coach, in the ninth seat from the front, on this side of the car.

"The interior of the car will be illuminated. Hence, Monsieur Delka, we shall be able to observe your bearded friend from the moment that he reaches Paris. Since several minutes remain to us, I shall explain exactly how we intend to effect Danyar's capture.

"His car is the last of the Golden Arrow Pullmans. The blue cars at the rear of the train are detached and taken from this station by a tank locomotive, for transfer to the Gare de Lyons, a usual procedure. Since the train is late in arriving, that removal will be performed immediately. Meanwhile, passengers will be delayed in leaving the Pullmans, on a pretext of customs formality. Those in the forward cars will be allowed first departure.

"Hence, Danyar will be one of the last to leave. He will be drawn to the rear of the Pullman, after the blue cars are gone. That move will protect the other passengers. All this will be done politely, by guards aboard the train. Danyar will suspect nothing until the final moment."

THE prefect lowered a window of the darkened compartment so that they could hear as well as see. Slow minutes followed; then came the slackening clatter of a railway train. Delka, staring eagerly, saw the French Golden Arrow roll inward on the track beyond the platform. He recognized the huge locomotive, then the curious bogie chassis, loaded with the luggage boxes from the Steamship Canterbury. After that, the brown and cream Pullmans that he had observed in Calais.

The last of the Golden Arrow Pullmans stopped at its designated place. Delka gripped the window ledge and stared with unrestrained eagerness. There, in the very seat that the prefect had mentioned, was the bearded man from the Channel boat, Boris Danyar, slayer of Rene Levaux.

It was not the fact that the bearded man was a murderer that made Delka so eager for his capture. The clue that Danyar held some trail to Gaspard Zemba, supercreek of Paris was the reason why the bearded killer must be taken.

Danyar was rising with the other passengers. Railway guards, entering the car, were making a polite announcement. The passengers settled back impatiently. Delka saw Danyar look from the window; but the rogue's face showed no suspicion. No one was in sight beside that last car in the line of Pullmans.

Yet the car was covered at both ends. There was a guard at each exit, watching the interior of the car. There were police detectives close by the steps at each platform. Peering from the darkness of the hiding place, Delka noted activities at the rear of the last Pullman.

The blue cars were being promptly detached. At the far end, the tank locomotive had already shifted into position, to draw those through sleepers out into the yards.

Passengers were stepping from the front Pullmans, in regular procession. Looking in that direction, Delka saw the platform clearing. Again, he looked for Danyar. He saw the bearded man rising, along with the others. Two guards had entered and were urging the passengers forward toward the front door of the car.

Danyar shifted in with the others, half pushed by one of the guards. He was among the last few of the thronging passengers. For a moment, he was obscured from Delka's view. One guard walked back to the rear of the car; then the other followed. Delka saw them step off and nod to the detectives.

A chug from the tank engine at the rear of the train. The blue cars started out into the yards. One guard clambered aboard; then another. The sleepers rolled smoothly from view, clearing the rear of the last Pullman. All was set for the trapping. A guard stepped aboard the rear platform of that car, then two detectives. Delka saw them gripping revolvers in their pockets.

MEANWHILE, the moving passengers had again been delayed within the Pullman. Those at the back of the throng had become impatient and had resumed seats. Boris Danyar had hunched into a luxurious armchair and was bent forward upon both elbows, studying the surface of the table in front of him.

The guard, entering from the rear, watched while forward passengers suddenly found exit. Then, quickly, the guard stepped up to Danyar. The guard was speaking, pointing to the rear of the car, inviting the bearded man to leave by that exit. Danyar gave no response. The guard stood puzzled.

Other passengers were out. The field had been cleared perfectly for Danyar's capture. Delka saw the two detectives dash in from the rear of the car, to jab their revolvers against Danyar's ribs. Still, the bearded man was motionless.

Delka heard a sharp exclamation from Monsieur Clandine; then, wildly, the prefect hurled open the door of

their car.

With Delka at his heels, Clandine bounded across the platform. Together, they dashed into the Pullman. They arrived to find the two detectives shaking Danyar's shoulders. A shove sent the bearded man backward in his armchair. Lifeless eyes were staring from above the bearded face.

Danyar's arms sprawled outward. There, projecting from his breast, was the handle of a knife. A detective wrenched the weapon from Danyar's chest. There was no flow of blood; nothing more than a tiny crimson blob upon the dead man's shirt front.

The death knife was a stiletto, long and thin-bladed. It had been jabbed straight into Danyar's heart by some one in the clustered throng of passengers, during that first rise and shuffle toward the door. Unnoticed, Danyar had slumped into the nearest armchair. The huddle of his arms had concealed the assassin's weapon.

Death had again blocked the trail to Gaspard Zemba. Death, delivered under the very eyes of the police, with no clue left to the identity of the vanished slayer!

CHAPTER IV. A TRAIL IS FOUND

"GASPARD ZEMBA! This is his deed!" The exclamation came from Monsieur Clandine. Wildly, the Paris prefect gave that news to Delka. While the Scotland Yard man stood silent, Clandine spun about and roared orders to Sergeant Rusanne and the detectives.

"Out to the station! Hold every one who has left the train! We shall find Zemba among them!"

The detectives hastened away. Rusanne remained long enough to deliver a reminding statement:

"The order to hold the passengers was given previously, Monsieur le Prefet. It was arranged in case Boris Danyar managed to leave this car."

"So it was!" nodded Clandine. "Excellent, Rusanne! The mesh that we prepared for Danyar will gain Zemba, instead. Go, Rusanne. See that all officers are obeying orders. I shall join you within a few minutes."

As Rusanne left, the prefect drew a deep breath. He stared at Danyar's body; then shrugged his shoulders. At last, he turned to Delka, with a positive statement.

"Gaspard Zemba is a clever rogue," declared Clandine. "But his career will end, once he is captured by the law. He cannot hide his identity."

"You can recognize his face?"

Clandine shook his head.

"No one could be sure of Zemba's face. He shows it seldom; and he has changed it often."

"His finger prints?"

"We have records that we believe are his."

"But you are not certain?"

"We are certain of one point only." The prefect smiled wisely as he spoke. "Of one point that will betray Gaspard Zemba. A mark which he can never efface." Clandine held up his left hand and tapped the third finger. "This finger. It is missing from Zemba's hand, from the lower knuckle upward.

"He, himself, has made light of the fact. In the underworld, Zemba has used that hand as a signal. Shown as a token, it has rallied Apaches to his aid. Here, in Paris, we have been flaunted with the jest: 'What is more powerful than the hand of the law?'

"The answer is: 'The lost finger of Gaspard Zemba'; and at times, the answer has appeared to be a true one. But to-day, that lost finger shall betray the man whom we seek. Come, Monsieur Delka. We shall examine every passenger who has left this train."

THE Gare du Nord was in a high state of commotion. Police and agents were everywhere. The passengers from the Golden Arrow had been segregated into special rooms, where they stood in huddled groups, under the cover of loaded guns.

So great had been the hubbub that the news had escaped. Earlier, it had been known that the law had concentrated upon the Gare du Nord; but at last an explanation had been gained. It was an astounding one.

"Gaspard Zemba! It is he whom they seek!"

"He has slain a man aboard the Fleche d'Or!"

"Zemba is among the passengers. They have trapped him; the law has gained him at last!"

"Ah, non! This Zemba is one grand fox –"

"You forget his missing finger –"

"Zemba has long lacked that finger, yet the fact has not availed the law!"

Such were the comments passed among excited Parisians who chanced to be in the Gare du Nord at six o'clock that dusk-ridden afternoon. The excitement had spread to the ticket windows and information booths. No one could talk of anything else but Zemba.

A tall, keen-eyed stranger had arrived in the depot during the confusion. Hawk-faced of countenance, he had the manner of an American, although no observer could have positively picked his nationality. For one thing, this arrival understood French perfectly; for he caught every comment that concerned Gaspard Zemba and the report of the death aboard the Golden Arrow.

Stepping quietly to an information booth, this tall arrival gave full proof of his mastery of the French language when he attracted the attention of a clerk and forced the fellow to heed a query.

"At what hour does Le Train Bleu leave for Cannes?"

"Ah, monsieur," bowed the clerk, politely. "Le Train Bleu is the Mediterranean Express. One must board it at the Gare de Lyon."

"I know that it departs from that station. But there are cars that connect with it from here."

"For through passengers only, monsieur. They come from Calais, attached to the Fleche d'Or. One cannot

board them here at the Gare du Nord. Besides, they have departed, seven minutes ago; to circle about Paris by the Ceinture Railway."

The tall inquirer was looking at the clock. It was six o'clock, "eighteen o'clock" according to the twenty-four-hour standard of the French railways. The information clerk made another statement.

"The blue cars left here at seventeen fifty-three," he said. "They will reach the Gare de Lyon at eighteen thirty-five. But there is no need for haste, monsieur. Le Train Bleu itself will not depart from the Gare de Lyon until nineteen-fifty."

WHEN the clerk looked up from the time-table that he was consulting, the tall stranger had gone. The clerk grunted something about the impatience of Americans. He would have had more to say, had he followed the tall inquirer. Outside the terminus, the hawk-faced personage had boarded a taxicab on the Boulevard Magenta. He was ordering the driver to take him to the Gare de Lyon, on the Boulevard Diderot.

Possibly he had doubted the clerk's information; yet there seemed to be another reason for his haste. The soft laugh that came from the tall stranger's lips was indication that he had an unusual purpose in his desire to reach the Gare de Lyon before the blue cars arrived there from the Gare du Nord.

Moreover, the stranger performed a significant action within the gloom of his cab. He had been carrying a compact briefcase. From it, he was removing blackened garments. A cloak slipped over his shoulders; a slouch hat settled on his head. Automatics clicked when they went beneath the rider's cloak. The briefcase, flattened, then folded in beltlike fashion, also disappeared from view.

The American from the Gare du Nord was The Shadow. A strange being who hunted down criminals in all parts of the world, he had left his New York habitat to deal with crime in Paris.

Somehow, The Shadow had gained news of trouble brewing at the Gare du Nord. At that station, he had found the law in charge. He had left the Northern Station to their handling and was choosing the Gare de Lyon as his own destination.

There was a reason for The Shadow's choice; and it lay aboard the three blue cars that had been shunted from the Gare du Nord. While The Shadow was riding direct by cab between two depots, the blue-cars were slowly circling just within the eastern fortifications of Paris, along the tracks of the Ceinture Railway.

Forgotten ever since their removal from the Golden Arrow, these sleepers had a laborious route to follow. Past the outskirts of the Bois de Vincennes, they would reach the River Seine; then be shunted backward into the Gare de Lyon.

IN one sleeping car, thick dusk filled the vacancy of an unoccupied compartment. The only glow that reached the unlighted interior was from the illumination of the city which the car was skirting.

The lights of Paris were sufficient to vaguely reveal a man who entered the compartment. He was attired in the showy uniform of a railway guard, with straight-brimmed cap and white gloves.

Beside the window, the guard doffed his uniform. He was wearing street clothes beneath, so the change proved a quick one. The man's head was too high above the floor for his face to be revealed; but the man's hands showed in the window light. When his gloves came off, the dim glow revealed that the third finger of the guard's left hand was absent.

Drawing a sheet of wrapping paper from a ledge of the sleeping compartment, the man chuckled harshly as

he formed a package to hold his discarded uniform. The cars had reached the Seine and were stopped upon a bridge that crossed the river. As the man completed his making of the bundle, the sleepers started their backing roll along the tracks into the Gare de Lyon.

FIVE minutes later, the blue cars jolted to a stop in the terminus. They were on the tracks of the Paris, Lyons and Mediterranean Railways. It was twenty-five minutes of seven. The blue cars would depart as a portion of the Mediterranean Express, at ten minutes of eight. Meanwhile, passengers were leaving the cars for a stroll.

The transformed guard was among them. He was the same guard whom Delka had seen at the Gare du Nord; the one who had jostled Boris Danyar. He was also the guard who had boarded the blue cars at the final moment.

He was no longer a railway guard; he looked like a passenger and the only clue to his actual identity was hidden by the package that he held tightly tucked beneath his left arm.

No one could see what was in that package; nor could eyes observe the hand that the package hid. Hence no one could discern the absence of a third finger, the mark that would have told the truth about this bold arrival. The man from the blue sleeper was the much-sought master crook of Paris, Gaspard Zemba!

The prefect of police had been right in his conjectures concerning murder. Willoughby Blythe had been on his way to join Gaspard Zemba. Rene Levaux, covering, had murdered Blythe when he saw the Englishman was being trailed. Boris Danyar, also in the game, had recognized Levaux and had craftily poisoned Zemba's dangerous lieutenant.

But Gaspard Zemba, himself, had left nothing to chance. As a guard aboard the French express, he had seen neither Blythe nor Levaux; but he had spotted Danyar and had guessed what had occurred.

Man of evil, master of murder, Zemba was muffling his face as he walked through the lighted area of the P. L. M. Depot. Not an agent was in sight here at the Gare de Lyon. By swift, unseen strokes with a stiletto, through a clever disguise and well-timed action, Zemba had totally baffled the law, to gain complete freedom from those who had been close enough to almost witness his latest deed of crime.

He was still muffling his face when he stepped into the lights of the Boulevard Diderot, outside the Gare de Lyon. But Zemba had shifted his package to his right arm. It was his left that was raised to his chin. The fingers of his left hand were clenched. His eyes keen, Zemba had spied a lonely taxicab and recognized the driver. As the man looked in his direction, Zemba unclenched his left fist.

THE taxi driver saw the missing finger, among those that were outspread against the dark cloth of Zemba's cloak. He nodded and struck down the little flag marked Libre that signified his cab was not engaged.

As the driver opened the door, Zemba stepped aboard and dropped his package to the seat. He growled an order and slammed the door himself. The taxi pulled away.

Instantly, a response took place within another cab parked only fifty feet away. A quiet voice spoke from the gloom, ordering the driver to trail the cab that had just left. The quiet tone was The Shadow's. This was the same cab that he had entered at the Gare du Nord.

Zemba's cab rolled through the traffic of the Boulevard Diderot, turning eastward toward the Pont d'Austerlitz, the nearest bridge across the Seine. Close behind it swung the taxi that The Shadow occupied. Full night had settled over Paris; with it, a trail had been found.

The Shadow, master sleuth, had uncovered the notorious Gaspard Zemba and was tracking the evildoer to his lair!

CHAPTER V. DEEDS IN THE DARK

LONG had the French police been seeking a trail to Gaspard Zemba. At last such a trail had been uncovered; but not by the law. The Shadow had found it; and he could have gained no better. He was following Zemba himself.

The police, had they been in The Shadow's place, might not have been content to follow. They would have looked for an opportunity to deal with Zemba before his cab reached the Pont d'Austerlitz. But The Shadow, working alone, held preference for areas where traffic would be less thick.

Moreover, the speed of Zemba's cab was not great. The infamous crook was in no haste to reach his destination, wherever it might be. That fact betokened false confidence on Zemba's part. Sure that his craftiness had deceived all followers, Zemba would be paying but little attention to his trail.

Once Zemba's cab had reached the left bank of the Seine, it veered away from the more important streets. The course it chose was a threading one; but The Shadow, watching ahead, was positive that Zemba merely wished to escape notice of persons whom he might pass. Nothing in the action of the crook's cab indicated that the threading process was used to throw off pursuers. Bearing northward at intervals, Zemba was progressing back toward the Seine which curved eastward from the Pont d'Austerlitz; and his cab would soon reach the Boulevard Saint-Michel. This was a district of picturesque little streets, with houses that were reminiscent of old Paris.

The cab ahead took a sudden turn. The Shadow's driver, turning quickly from the wheel, thrust a startled face toward his unseen passenger. Fear showed upon his bewhiskered face. He intended to follow no farther.

"No, m'sieu! C'est une rue de la mort!"

A street of death. Such was the taximan's verdict; and the narrow alley looked the part. The facings of its buildings were of somber stone. The street lamps had a dullness, as though descending night had stifled them. Grim silence gripped this neighborhood.

THE SHADOW hissed an order. Startled by the sound, the driver gripped the wheel. He stared straight ahead and turned the corner. Hoarsely, he whispered:

"La Mort!"

Such was the name that he had suddenly given his weird passenger. Until this moment, the taxi driver had thought that he was conveying a chance American tourist, who had shown freakish ideas of trailing cabs in Paris. But the driver had suddenly realized a transformation. Looking into the back seat, he had seen no passenger; but he had heard a whispered voice.

Death!

That being had become his passenger, according to the taxi driver's present notion. Who else but Death could have rendered himself invisible? Who but Death could have hissed that order to proceed? Who but Death, himself, would wish to continue along this street where murder lurked?

Had a grinning skull peered suddenly beside the driver's face, the man would have been terrified, but not

surprised. His one hope was that no such phenomenon would occur. To prevent such a happening, he obeyed the command of his mysterious passenger.

Zemba's cab was taking another turn when The Shadow's vehicle came into view. The slowness of the first cab showed that it was going to stop, just around the next corner. The Shadow hissed another command. His driver brought the cab to a halt, just before it reached the corner.

The Shadow spoke. His tone was like a knell; a weird, whispered warning that made the driver tremble. The man was to reverse his cab and back to the street where he had faltered. There he was to await his passenger's return. Mumblingly, the taximan promised to obey.

The door of the cab gave a slight slam. That marked the exit of the passenger. Though he strained his eyes in the dark, the taxi driver could catch no glimpse of a departing figure. Quaking, he reversed his cab and obeyed The Shadow's order.

Perhaps the taximan's eyes lacked sharpness; possibly, he did not stare long enough, for The Shadow did give visible token of his progress. Near the corner was a street lamp. Beneath its glow, a dark shape glided. Cloaked, phantomlike in form, The Shadow appeared momentarily as he took up Zemba's trail; and although the driver's eyes did not see him, there were other eyes that did.

A MAN was crouching in an old doorway across the street from the lamplight. He heard the slight thud of the taxi's door. He looked in the right direction. He had seen the first cab go by. Then he saw the living shape that had followed from the second cab. The huddled man moved forward in the dark.

The Shadow had already turned the corner. His silent progress was amazingly swift, for he wanted to deal with Zemba before the rogue had time to disappear. The Shadow's conjecture was correct. Zemba's cab had stopped and a street lamp showed the taxi driver on the sidewalk. Zemba was emerging with his package. Approaching, The Shadow saw him speak to the driver. The fellow stepped back into the cab.

Close to Zemba was a flight of stone steps that led into the basement of a sinister-looking house. The Shadow passed that opening, just as Zemba turned away from the cab. The taxi was about to move onward. Zemba was stepping from the range of the lamplight when The Shadow loomed suddenly before him.

In the dull light, Zemba's face showed ugly fury. It was an evil, distorted countenance, with glaring eyes and twisted lips that revealed the man's criminal character. In public, Zemba must have known how to control his facial contortions, otherwise, he could not have passed himself as a railway guard.

Alone, however, he had no reason for disguise; unless the hideous make-up of his visage could have been a disguise, itself. It could well be one, for Gaspard Zemba had an iron hold on Paris's crookdom; and he was in a district where thugs were certainly present. Such men would show respect for evil; a leader whose face was livid with a gloat would be the sort to gain their vicious loyalty.

Whatever thoughts gripped Zemba at this unexpected meeting with The Shadow, the supercrook did not give facial indication. His distorted countenance remained the same. His glare merely stiffened as his eyes met the burning gaze of The Shadow.

To Zemba, this being who obstructed his path was a living shape of blackness. The master rogue, however, had heard of this superfoe. Rigid, he snarled his recognition.

"L'Ombre!"

ZEMBA

An automatic loomed directly before Zemba's eyes. A whispered voice commanded him to turn about. Slowly, Zemba's arms came up; the bundle that he carried went plopping to the sidewalk. Obeying The Shadow's command, the crook turned toward the corner, ready for the march to The Shadow's taxi.

Zemba's own cab was on the move, pulling away from the glow of the lamplight, the driver oblivious to his passenger's fate. The Shadow, stepping side wise was blending back into darkness, when a sudden cry came from across the street.

The moving of the taxi had cleared the way to a view that The Shadow had not gained. Lurking on the other side of the alleyway, a pair of sweated thugs had also profited by the outward move of the cab. Luck was with them, they chanced to spy The Shadow. With the motion of that blackened form, they caught a glimpse of Zemba's upraised left hand. They saw the space where a finger should have been, for Zemba's hand was outlined against the blackness of the building wall.

THE SHADOW half turned at the shout. His left hand jabbed its gun muzzle into Zemba's back; his right whipped out a second automatic. The Shadow glimpsed the challengers; he knew them for Apaches, the sort who frequented this section. As the rogues opened fire with revolvers, The Shadow stabbed answering shots from his automatic.

The big .45 was perfect in its aim. The Shadow clipped the Apaches while they fired wide. But while their figures sprawled, he knew that another attack could be expected. Shoving Zemba to the wall, The Shadow turned toward the steps that led up from the basement of the building close beside him.

He knew what lay beneath those steps: a hidden caveau, a den held by Apaches. That cave had been Zemba's goal. These shots in the street would bring new fighters. A door pounded open. The Shadow saw leering faces framed in a dim light. He issued a challenge; a mocking laugh that halted Zemba's would-be rescuers.

For the moment, The Shadow held the upper hand. One gun was ready for downward fire; the other covering Zemba. If no other interference came, The Shadow's cause would be won. But such luck was not in the making. There were other lurkers, in alleyways close by. As if by a signal, they appeared to open battle.

Wild yells. Quick shots. Even Zemba's cab had stopped; its driver had leaped to the street and was aiming a glistening revolver. A man came plunging squarely across the street, a sweated attacker with a long-bladed knife, diving directly for The Shadow's right hand, the one which at present covered Zemba.

The Shadow blasted into action. His automatics stabbed long tongues of flame. The Apache with the knife received the first bullet from The Shadow's right. He had arrived in time to block the shot at Zemba. The man dropped his blade. Clawing wildly, he jolted The Shadow's aim while Zemba made a mad dash from the wall, out to the safety of the street.

Apaches were firing up from below; but The Shadow's right hand was already aimed toward them. With his wrist moving sidewise, he was pumping bullets into the ranks of excited foemen. Apaches were wild in their hurried aim. They sprawled in their pit. The man who had gripped The Shadow went slumping to the pavement.

Though momentarily the victor, The Shadow stood alone, with foemen everywhere about. Apaches were aiming for their shrouded target. Zemba had wheeled when he reached the stalled taxi.

The driver was grabbing up the crook's package, carrying it to the cab; while Zemba, snarling an order to all about him, was aiming for The Shadow with a revolver of his own.

There was only one course; and The Shadow took it. With the first burst of hostile guns, he faded into a sprawling dive. Shouting Apaches thought that they had clipped their lone adversary. They were wrong.

Resorting to the unexpected, The Shadow had deliberately chosen a path to safety. His dive carried him directly down the flight of steps into the Apaches' den.

The Shadow had already dropped three enemies who had lain in that ambush. Others had fallen back; then surged out to new battle. The Shadow's plunge came just as they arrived. Before a new trio of would-be killers could fire a shot, The Shadow was upon them. Sprawling beneath the weight of his driving body, they tried vainly to jab their guns against their cloaked opponent.

His fall broken, The Shadow again held the advantage. Saving bullets, he was dealing flaying strokes with his automatics. Apaches thudded at the foot of the stone steps. The Shadow sprang up to the level of the sidewalk and thrust his guns above the topmost steps, to meet all comers.

Oddly, revolvers were still crackling above. As The Shadow bobbed his head into view, he saw an Apache spin about, then sprawl in the center of the narrow street. Zemba and the others had wheeled about. They were leaving The Shadow to the men below; for they had encountered another unexpected adversary.

It was the man who had seen The Shadow pass the corner. He had watched proceedings. Creeping up, he had opened battle at the moment of The Shadow's dive. The Shadow caught a glimpse of him, a huddled, quick-darting marksman, who paused every other instant to jab quick revolver shots at Zemba and the Apaches.

Guns were training on that valiant fighter. This time, it was The Shadow who blasted an interruption. His automatics boomed. Crooks began to topple. They wheeled again toward the steps. The man at the corner rallied to The Shadow's aid. Apaches went scurrying for cover, fleeing from the field like rats.

The Shadow turned to deal with Zemba. The scowling crook had guessed that the move was coming. He had nearly-emptied his revolver; and the top of The Shadow's hat was too difficult a target. Zemba, too, had urge for flight, once his followers had deserted. He was diving into the cab when The Shadow spied him. The taxi shot away along the narrow street.

The Shadow leaped out from cover. He fired quick shots toward the departing cab. One clipped a tire. The taxi keeled and the driver came tumbling to the street. The man from the corner was thudding after him; but it was too late to stop Zemba. The master crook had dived from the other side of the cab, to scurry away behind the corner.

The Shadow saw the lone invader who had aided him. The man was plunging toward the taxi driver, who in turn was diving for cover. Then came shrill whistles. The running man stopped short; then dived off through an alleyway at the left. Up by the corner, a pair of uniformed agents came charging into view.

The taximan unwisely opened fire. The agents stopped and riddled him with bullets. Another whistle sounded from a second quarter. New agents came bobbing from an alleyway. The Shadow turned swiftly and hurried back to the corner from which he had originally come.

Passing along the narrow way that his taxi driver had termed "a street of death," The Shadow reached the next thoroughfare. There he found the driver waiting with the cab. Looming suddenly into lamplight, The Shadow sprang aboard and delivered a whispered command. Teeth chattering, the driver shot the cab forward, bound to a new destination.

As they passed a corner, The Shadow, peering from the window, caught one brief glimpse of a man who had emerged from the darkness. It was the lone fighter from the corner. So swift was the passage, however, that The Shadow had no chance to see the man's face.

Looking back, he saw the man huddled, staring; then the crouched fighter sprang across the street and through another alleyway, to escape the sudden arrival of a new squad of agents.

FIVE minutes later, The Shadow's cab was rolling along a boulevard, headed eastward. The black cloak and hat were packed away in the opened briefcase, the automatics with them. Back in his guise of a quiet-voiced American, The Shadow gave another order to the driver. Relieved at his passenger's change of tone, the driver nodded. He headed the cab toward a bridge across the Seine.

Later, the taxi stopped in front of the Hotel Moderne, a place frequented by American tourists. Quietly, The Shadow tendered the driver a fifty-franc note; then watched the cab pull away. A thin smile appeared upon The Shadow's lips.

Neither crooks nor agents had glimpsed this cab. The driver would seek neither group. To-night's experience was something that the bewhiskered taximan would much prefer to forget.

Entering the Hotel Moderne, The Shadow stopped at the desk. A polite clerk addressed him as Monsieur Balliol. The Shadow remarked that he was checking out, in order to take the midnight sleeper for Brussels.

Soon afterward, The Shadow stood by the window of a fifth-floor room, his suitcases packed and ready for the porter. The lights were dimmed; The Shadow was looking out across the city. Far distant, the light of the Eiffel Tower formed a panoply against the darkened sky, stretching high above the glow of the streets.

The Shadow had no intention of leaving Paris. His present thoughts concerned ways and means of remaining in the French capital, to deal again with Gaspard Zemba. Only through the aid of a battling horde with luck besides had the notorious crook escaped The Shadow's toils to-night.

The Shadow was also considering the entry of that other fighter, who had aided in the turn of the tide. He had mentally identified the man; for The Shadow knew much concerning present affairs in Paris. To-night's episode had been the culmination of previous investigations.

Deeds in the dark. They had come to-night; and more would follow. The darkness was The Shadow's chosen habitat. The thought brought a smile to The Shadow's lips. Then came a low-toned note of whispered mockery that faded into sinister stillness.

The Shadow had evolved his final plan. He had found a way to deal with Gaspard Zemba. One that could end the career of the supercrook when he and The Shadow held their next encounter.

CHAPTER VI. THE THIRD FACTOR

AT two o'clock the next afternoon, Eric Delka arrived at a building on the Quai d'Orsay. This structure, an Italianate building with sculptured facade, was the *Ministere des Affaires Etrangeres*, which Delka translated as the "Ministry of Foreign Affairs." It was the place that Delka wanted; for he had an appointment in the French Foreign Office.

Entering, Delka made an inquiry for Lord Bixley. He was ushered to a large reception room. After a short wait, he was brought into an office occupied by half a dozen dignified men. Lord Bixley was among the group. He introduced Delka to a Frenchman who was seated behind a large desk. This was Monsieur Louis

Brezanne, French Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Eyeing the others in the group, Delka noted that none were Frenchmen. He took one for an Italian; another for a Spaniard. He saw one man who looked like an American. While Delka was wondering about the mixed nationality of the throng, Monsieur Brezanne opened the conference.

"Messieurs," began the foreign minister, "we have done wisely to consult together. All of you are in Paris for the same reason. Each of your respective governments had been victimized by this bold rascal, Gaspard Zemba.

"In the past, various war offices were disturbed by the activities of one Boris Danyar, who headed the spy syndicate in Helsingfors. Danyar and his agents stole valuable secrets from various countries and sold them in other lands. Unfortunately" Brezanne smiled and tugged at his pointed mustache "there are certain war offices that will buy military secrets from men of Danyar's ilk."

Slight smiles passed about the group, despite the seriousness of the conference. Every one caught Brezanne's inference. Such forms of dealing with free-lance spies was by no means an uncommon practice. One, perhaps, in which some of these present had engaged.

"However," resumed the French minister, "the suppression of Danyar was a result that pleased us all. The rogue was a nuisance. I, for one, was glad when his ring was broken. But instead of Danyar, we are suddenly confronted by a greater scoundrel. Gaspard Zemba!"

MONSIEUR BREZANNE paused and waved one hand to indicate the entire group.

"All of you!" he exclaimed. "Why are you here? Because of Zemba. From each of you, he has stolen some important secret, which he is willing to restore at a given price. All of you have received letters, stating the amount.

"From you, Lord Bixley, he demands one hundred thousand pounds, in return for your submarine plans. From you, Senor Alonzo, a similar sum, for stolen fortification diagrams. From you, Signor Chiozzi, he requests a double price, because he has sealed packets that describe Italy's complete arrangements for army mobilization in the event of war.

"He wants similar amounts from the rest of you. The sum total of his demands is large. I note, Mr. Cleghorn, that you have been making a paper-and-pencil calculation. Have you added the entire amounts?"

A nod from the man whom Delka had picked as an American.

"Including the half a million that Zemba wants for the airplane plans which he stole from Washington," said Cleghorn, "his total demand comes to four and a half million dollars. I have figured as closely as possible, in considering the rates of exchange. I have translated other nations' currencies into dollars –"

"Then add another half million," interposed the French minister, solemnly. "My government is in the same predicament as yours. Our plans for anti-aircraft defense have been taken."

Astonished gasps came from the listeners. They had not known that the French war office had also suffered. Monsieur Brezanne spoke emphatically.

"That shows the cunning of Gaspard Zemba!" he exclaimed. "He has placed all of us in the same boat. He has specialized in the theft of sealed documents. He knows that he can gain the highest prices from those who

understand their worth; namely, the very ones from whom he stole them.

"If we refuse to purchase back our secrets, he can behave as any ordinary spy. He can offer the stolen plans to other governments. He will easily find unscrupulous buyers. Of course, his gain will not be so great. That is why he prefers to treat with us.

"He holds the plans, here in Paris; moreover, he is guarding the traitors who abetted him. All except Willoughby Blythe, who was tardy in leaving his own country. Under ordinary circumstances, the proper course would be to hunt him down; but Zemba has blocked that move by the deed which I so recently mentioned; namely, by his theft of documents belonging to the French government."

The foreign minister produced a letter from his desk.

"Here is Zemba's ultimatum," he stated. "The French government, like others, must pay his price. We must grant Zemba and his agents the privilege of leaving France. Should the police institute a city-wide search, sufficient enough to jeopardize Zemba's present safety, he will decamp from Paris, carrying the documents with him.

"He gives us five days to decide upon an answer. If we have not molested him; if we will make the payment and guarantee his freedom, our valuables will be restored. If we do not answer before the end of the fifth day, Zemba will go his way. Our documents will be forever lost."

A GLOOMY pause. Men were about to speak, almost ready to suggest a meeting of Zemba's terms. Then, one by one, they shook their heads. None could assume the initiative of proposing submission to these humiliating terms.

"We are in accord," remarked Monsieur Brezanne, slowly. "Being in accord, I can, therefore, propose a course. There is one hope; one way in which we may trap Gaspard Zemba."

He pressed a buzzer. A secretary answered. Brezanne told the man to introduce the prefect of police. A few minutes later, Monsieur Clandine arrived, followed by Rusanne. The bantamlike sergeant was carrying a suitcase. He placed it on the desk, at the prefect's order. Clandine looked toward the foreign minister, who nodded; then spoke:

"You may speak in full, Monsieur le Prefet."

"Messieurs," declared Clandine, facing the group, "we have to deal with the notorious Gaspard Zemba, a criminal who has once more escaped us. Yesterday, his lieutenant, Rene Levaux, murdered a man named Willoughby Blythe. Levaux, in turn, was slain by Boris Danyar. To climax the sequence, Danyar was stabbed to death by Zemba, himself.

"With that, Zemba vanished from among the passengers who had arrived at the Gare du Nord. The mystery of his disappearance was not revealed until late last night. Though subsequent developments, we have guessed how Zemba escaped. Disguised as a guard aboard the Fleche d'Or, he transferred to the blue cars of the Mediterranean Express, and circled Paris via the Ceinture Railway.

"Aboard a blue car, he must have removed his uniform. Alighting at the Gare de Lyon, he took a taxicab to a place near the Place Saint-Michel. There, he engaged in a gun fray. Agents attracted from the Boulevard Saint-Michel, were too late to capture him."

The foreign minister interposed a question:

"Which direction did Zemba take?"

"We do not know," returned Clandine. "We know only that he could not have fled toward the Boul' Mich', because the agents came from all along the boulevard and did not encounter him. He could have chosen any other direction for flight.

"However, the agents slew the driver of Zemba's cab; and in the vehicle, they found these garments the uniform that Zemba had worn when disguised as a railway guard."

The prefect produced the garments as he spoke. He laid the suit aside; then lifted one of the white gloves. Turning the glove inside out, he tugged a wadding of paper from the third finger.

"The glove from Zemba's left hand," announced the prefect, "with its telltale clue a stuffed finger. Gaspard Zemba lacks that finger from his left hand. His glove covered his identity; but he was forced to make the finger appear like the others."

FROM the suitcase, the prefect produced a chart. He attached it to the wall and let it unroll. It was a large chart on a substance resembling oilcloth and it bore the full-size figure of a man. Monsieur Clandine found a telescopic rod in the suitcase. He opened it to form a long pointer.

"A Bertillon chart," he explained. "A reconstruction of Gaspard Zemba, from descriptions. Of medium height, more than average weight. Strong physique; hands brawny. Observe the left, with its missing finger.

"A rounded face; one with a fiendish glare. An evil rogue, whose very countenance should declare his identity. And yet" the prefect spoke slowly "not one of a dozen officers recognized him yesterday at the Gare du Nord."

A lull; then, glumly, the prefect added:

"This proves that our chart is insufficient. Our reconstruction has been approximate; not accurate. The leering face of Zemba is a pose. Another of his cunning devices. He simply assumes an ugly countenance when engaged in crime. We do not know his real face. Only one point can identify him" again the prefect tapped the chart "and that is the missing finger."

Telescoping the pointer, the prefect tossed it back into the suitcase. He eyed his gloomy listeners; then smiled as he stroked his Vandyke beard. Folding his arms, the prefect made a new announcement.

"All is not lost," he assured. "There are five days still remaining. My police are powerless, for we have been ordered to use great caution in the search for Zemba. But, messieurs, we possess another weapon. We have Robeq!"

Robeq! The name struck home to Delka. He had heard of Robeq; Etienne Robeq, the noted French detective. A man whose exploits had made hazy history, during the past few years. For Robeq was a man whose feats had been kept from the public, except in the form of an unsubstantiated rumor.

"Proceed, Monsieur le Prefet," urged the foreign minister, warmly. "Tell them about Robeq."

"Very well. Etienne Robeq is a Parisian. Some years ago, he went to Marseilles; there, he joined the Foreign Legion. Captured by Tuaregs, he escaped. From then on, he became a lone spy in Africa.

"The messages that came from him were amazing. He paved the way to victory for the French campaign.

When that was finished, Robeq appeared suddenly in Marseilles. Contacting the police through proxies, he arranged the arrest of les trots freres Cortonne, three desperate brothers who had murdered a dozen victims for their money.

"His next exploit was the uncovering of a ring of counterfeiters. After that, Robeq disclosed an assassination plot against the president of France. All the while, he has kept himself a hidden factor; but he has communicated with the police at regular intervals, in search of new assignments.

"Ten days ago, we heard again from Robeq. Word came from le prefet de police in Marseilles. We had need of Robeq. We ordered him here to Paris. Last night, messieurs, it was Robeq who sought the capture of Gaspard Zemba!"

IN proof of his statement, the prefet drew an envelope from his pocket. He extracted a message and referred to it.

"In Robeq's writing," he remarked. "It states that he encountered Zemba. He declares that he will capture the man within the five days that remain. We are to receive no more messages until the final hour. We may rely upon Robeq."

The foreign minister put a question:

"How did you receive this message from Robeq?"

"It was brought to my office by a street gamin," replied the prefet. "Robeq chooses such humble messengers. The boy remembered only that a man gave him the envelope, with a promise of five francs."

"What is the answer?" inquired the foreign minister, turning to the visitors from other lands. "Are you willing to wait? To rely upon Robeq?"

Lord Bixley took up the task of spokesman.

"I should be glad to count upon Robeq," he stated, "if I were more sure of his ability. Apparently, he is worthy of reliance; yet you have never seen him –"

"Because he works in secret!" interposed the prefet. "It is his way, monsieur! In secrecy lies our strength. Ah! If Robeq would declare himself, I would be greatly pleased! And yet, monsieur, I cannot so command him!" Lord Bixley considered. He looked toward his companions. Some seemed convinced; others were doubtful. Lord Bixley thought of Delka; he turned to the C.I.D. man. Before Delka could respond, a tap came at the door. Monsieur Brezanne gave the order to enter. A secretary appeared, approached the desk and whispered to the minister.

A look of delight appeared upon Brezanne's mustached face. Nodding, he waved the secretary to the door. Facing the others, he ejaculated the news that he had received.

"All is well, messieurs!" exclaimed the minister. "There is no need for further questioning. The man of whom we speak has come to join us."

Standing at the desk, he waved his hand toward the door to indicate a visitor whom the secretary had beckoned. In dramatic tone, the foreign minister spoke a name of introduction:

"Etienne Robeq!"

CHAPTER VII. THE DELEGATES AGREE

THE man who entered the foreign minister's office was one who commanded instant attention. Not only the fame of his name, but his very appearance marked him as a person of keenness. Of more than medium height, black-haired and with a square-jawed face, he appeared quite capable of the exploits with which the prefect of police had credited him.

"We were discussing you, Monsieur Robeq," announced the foreign minister, extending his hand. "We were debating the subject of your search for Gaspard Zemba."

"As I knew you would be," returned Robeq, with a downward smile of his straight lips. His voice was a deep one. "That is the reason why I came here."

Turning to the prefect, he shook hands; then, with a note of apology, added:

"I should have liked to visit you in your office, Monsieur le Prefet. But such would not have been wise."

Without further ceremony, Robeq turned to the others. Stepping back so that all could view him, he came briskly to the point at issue.

"You have heard of me," he stated. "You have been asked to rely upon me to effect the capture of Gaspard Zemba. I can assure you, messieurs, that such a course will be your only hope. In order to convince you, let me explain the conditions that exist."

Pointing toward the wall, Robeq indicated the chart.

"That is Gaspard Zemba," he declared. "The best description that can be gained of him. Yet, though the best available, it is a poor one. It aids us on one point only. The missing finger."

Pausing, Robeq raised his left hand and tapped the tip of his third finger. Then, dropping his arms beside him, he stiffened in military fashion. Like a soldier at attention, he resumed:

"I was summoned to Paris. I was told to capture Zemba, the man with the missing finger. I was to work alone, my presence here unknown. Yet within twenty-four hours of my arrival, the underworld had passed the rumor: 'Robeq is here; he is seeking Zemba.' Such was the word that reached my own ears."

"Ah, monsieur!" protested the prefect. "It was not a fault of mine. Every effort was made to keep the secret."

"It was the fault of the police system," asserted Robeq. "Many ears – many eyes many tongues. Babblers! Bah! That is why I never visited your office. Word would have reached Zemba had I done so. I stayed away from the prefecture."

Sheepishly, the prefect nodded his approval.

"But I came here," added Robeq. "Why? Because I knew those here could be trusted. The only ones from the prefecture are yourself and this other man."

He indicated Sergeant Rusanne. The prefect introduced his aid. Robeq shook hands with Rusanne.

"Yesterday," declared Robeq, abruptly, "you bungled matters. You let Zemba escape you. You searched for him at a place where he had left. Meanwhile, I was waiting at a place where he was to be expected."

"That little street near the Boul' Mich' was a spot where I had seen Zemba before. I believed that he would return. I was stationed, watching, when he arrived. I was ready to effect his capture."

"You might have done so," challenged the prefect, suddenly, "if you had availed yourself beforehand. I could have supplied you with men."

"With bunglers! Zemba would have shunned the place had police been there. He can see a police detective through a house wall! He could smell an agent a mile distant."

"Then why did you not capture Zemba?"

"Because" Robeq delivered his sour smile "someone else was there also. Some one who intervened too soon."

THE prefect looked puzzled.

"Have you ever heard of The Shadow?" queried Robeq. "The strange being whom the Apaches fear?"

An exclamation came from the prefect.

"L'Ombre," he nodded. "Yes. An agent said that a dying Apache muttered the name last night. But there were others who gasped 'Robeq' – and when I received your message –"

"You promptly forgot what you had heard. Ah, monsieur!" His smile became friendly; Robeq clapped a hand upon the prefect's shoulder. "It is possible for many things to happen. Last night, much did happen. Gaspard Zemba, the greatest rogue in Paris, walked into a double trap. One snare was prepared by Etienne Robeq, from Marseilles; the other by The Shadow, who comes so they say from nowhere.

"It was I, Robeq, who waited, once I had seen The Shadow. Knowing of his strange prowess, I expected him to deal with Zemba. The Shadow did deal with Zemba; but the rogue raised that hand of his, with the missing finger. Apaches came from everywhere.

"The Shadow dealt with them like a living fury. Paugh! What were a dozen against one like him? They were falling everywhere; all but Zemba. He was quick enough to run for it. That was when I stepped into the fight. Separately, The Shadow and myself completed the rout of Zemba's henchmen. But The Shadow's snare had come too soon; mine, too late."

"The Shadow," mused the prefect. "He has been in Paris before. Cloaked in black a being with burning eyes he has done much to aid us in the past."

"And he will do much more," promised Robeq. He raised his right hand and wagged his straightened forefinger. "That is why I count upon success. I, too, have heard of The Shadow. The underworld has breathed his name. It is known, at last, that The Shadow like Robeq is here.

"How can Zemba exist against such odds? The Shadow, a fighter who comes from the night itself? Robeq, who has learned to lie hidden upon the wide–stretched sands of the Sahara? What does it matter if all the underworld will move at Zemba's bidding? Last night a score of his minions tasted their defeat.

"Zemba must stay hidden. Somewhere, he holds a fortress, guarded by those agents who fled to Paris from other countries. In that same place, he keeps his stolen plans. He has threatened to flee if the police disturb him with a search.

ZEMBA

"But how will Zemba know that a search is proceeding, when it is conducted by two persons whom he cannot see? I, Robeq, for one; The Shadow, the other. Like ferrets, we each seek a skulking rat and the trembling mice who are with him.

"Let Zemba have his five days! Trust in me; count upon The Shadow. Then, if the five days fail, and Zemba still remains at large, you will know that he is invincible. You may treat with him on the last day, if you wish. But I declare that the fifth day will never come!"

ROBEQ had wheeled while talking. His words were addressed to Lord Bixley, whom he had accepted as spokesman for the visiting delegates. When the detective finished his harangue, Lord Bixley looked convinced. Then, about to speak, he changed his mind and turned to Delka instead.

"We were asking your opinion, inspector," reminded Lord Bixley. "Now that you have met Robeq, what would you say as a final answer? By the way, gentlemen" he turned to the others "Inspector Delka is from Scotland Yard. He represents the Criminal Investigation Division."

Delka arose.

"I have been in Paris before," he declared. "On my last visit, I cooperated with your Department of Judicial Identity" Delka had turned to the prefect "and I hold high commendation for its methods. My respect extends to you, Monsieur le Prefet."

The prefect smiled, highly pleased.

"And because of that" Delka was turning to the delegates "I would recommend any one whom the prefect mentioned as possessing high ability. Specifically, I refer to Monsieur Robeq."

Pausing, Delka turned to the detective from Marseilles.

"I believe that you can trap Zemba," said Delka. "Last night's episode has proven that possibility. But it has proven something else as well. Any man who can observe The Shadow moving into action is certainly possessed of a marvelous ability."

"You know of The Shadow?"

The query came from Lord Bixley. Delka nodded.

"The Shadow has operated in London," he stated. "It was he who solved the case of the notorious crook called The Harvester (Note: See Vol. XV No. 2 "The London Crimes."); it was The Shadow who exposed the ways of Barton Modbury, the master of Chiswold Castle.

"The Shadow is a superthreat to all who deal in crime. Since he is in Paris, I can state from experience that Zemba's days are numbered. This is no discredit to you, Robeq" Delka turned to the detective, who bowed "because I know that you agree with me. You have, yourself, declared that The Shadow is a potent factor. Your own statement is a tribute to your wisdom."

"I take it then, Delka, that you agree with the prefect," declared Lord Bixley. "We should rely upon Robeq. Furthermore, we may be doubly confident, because of this mysterious worker whom you term The Shadow."

"Quite so."

LORD BIXLEY looked around the group. He received mumbles of approval. The French foreign minister smiled. The matter was settled. Robeq took the floor.

"I shall proceed at once with measures of my own," he declared. "At the same time, I shall keep in contact with the prefecture. Not in person, nor by notes; but through one man whom we can trust. Not yourself, Monsieur le Prefet, for you are the very person who might be watched. I shall choose this aid of yours, Sergeant Rusanne."

Robeq scrawled something on a sheet of paper. He folded it and gave the note to Rusanne.

"My address," he told the sergeant, "and with it, the name that I shall assume. Be careful when you contact me, sergeant; and I shall be careful likewise. And to you, Monsieur le Prefet, this reminder. Whatever may be mentioned concerning myself, from any source, be sure to give the word to Sergeant Rusanne."

"I shall do more than that," affirmed Clandine. "I shall detail Sergeant Rusanne to the sole duty of handling all that pertains to Etienne Robeq."

"But you must be sure that Rusanne appears to be handling other duties."

"A good point, Robeq. Then none will suspect."

"Exactly. It must not be known that I am in contact with the prefecture."

"You may rely upon Rusanne and myself to protect the secret."

Etienne Robeq turned on his heel. He strode to the door. There he stopped and extended his left hand toward his audience, with thumb and fingers straightened, wide apart. He spoke two words:

"Five days."

"Then, dropping his left arm to his side, Robeq stiffened, clicked his heels and delivered a salute with his right hand, in the fashion of a legionnaire. As the others gestured in return, the soldierlike detective stalked from the office and closed the door behind him.

Buzzes of approval broke out among the delegates, while men of different nationalities shook hands in common accord. The delegates had agreed. They would trust in Etienne Robeq. Out from cover, the celebrated detective had gone back again, promising the capture of Gaspard Zemba.

One man present wore a keen smile. That one was Eric Delka. He had clinched the game for Robeq; but he did not expect the detective to capture Zemba. Delka was counting upon another to do that work. His faith lay in The Shadow!

CHAPTER VIII. AGENTS OF THE SHADOW

EVENING had arrived in Paris. The lights of the metropolis formed a welcoming glow to the passengers who stepped from the Gare Saint-Lazare, arrived by the State Railways from Cherbourg.

Many of these were Americans, catching their first glimpse of Paris; but among the throng were too young men who showed familiarity with their surroundings. Lugging their heavy suitcases, they made directly for a waiting taxicab. One bought a newspaper while the other spoke to the driver regarding the Hotel Moderne.

Soon the cab was riding along a boulevard, where brilliant lights revealed the faces of the two Americans. One was a keen, clean-cut young chap, whose manner was brisk. The other, a trifle older, possessed a square jaw and a more stolid attitude. The first named was Harry Vincent; the second, Cliff Marsland. Both were agents of The Shadow.

It was Harry who had purchased the newspaper, while Cliff had spoken to the taxi driver. Glimpsing the headlines, Harry pointed out a paragraph to Cliff. Both were familiar with the French language. They read the news together.

"Last night," remarked Harry, in a low tone. "It looks like this fight was a follow-up to those Zemba murders that we read about, while riding in on the express. This must have happened too late to get into the morning newspapers."

"Near the Boul' Mich'," commented Cliff. "I know the district. You're right, Harry. Zemba might have ducked through there."

"With The Shadow trailing him."

Cliff nodded. Harry laid the newspaper aside.

"This means strategy," he mused. "Well, we can produce it. Leave it to me, Cliff, when we reach the hotel. After all, it's simply a case of following instructions. We are to ask for Herbert Balliol. If he is there, we stay."

"And if he has gone," added Cliff, "we go to the Pension Grandine and check in."

"To stay there until we do get a message from Mr. Balliol. Unless, of course, one is waiting at the Moderne."

"How do you size it, Harry?"

CLIFF'S question was not an unusual one, under the circumstances. When occasion called, The Shadow's agents were at liberty to speculate upon the purposes and methods of their chief. Harry began to sum an answer to Cliff's query.

"The Shadow came here alone," stated Harry, still in his low tone, which the driver could not hear, "because of war secrets stolen from Washington. He started for Paris, knowing that he must uncover a crook named Gaspard Zemba."

"And he left instructions for us to follow," observed Cliff. "There wasn't time for us to catch the same boat."

"Exactly," agreed Harry. "Rutledge Mann had our instructions for us. Go to the Hotel Moderne. That would be all, if nothing had happened meanwhile."

"But something has happened; and our added instructions should cover it."

"As always. Chances are that The Shadow has checked out of the Moderne. If he has, we go to the Pension Grandine, unless some other word intervenes. The Shadow will take care of it."

"The chief always does."

A pause. Then Harry spoke a name.

"Herbert Balliol," he said. "It has an English sound. A good name to use in Paris."

"It's the first time the chief has taken it," remarked Cliff. "Maybe this chap Zemba is watching out for Americans."

"Very likely. And it may mean even more, Cliff."

"A different type of appearance?"

Harry nodded.

"There may be a real Herbert Balliol," he declared. "One who is known in Paris and who would, therefore, be unsuspected. If that is the case, the chief will look like Balliol."

"To the dot," added Cliff. "He will be Balliol's double."

"And it may mean closer contact. We may prove to be old friends of Balliol."

"And travel about with him –"

"As I size it, yes."

Both agents spoke from previous experience; and the situation was one that they relished. Frequently, their paths lay apart from The Shadow's. They always preferred the rarer occasions when they cooperated closely with their chief.

The taxi had reached the Hotel Moderne. As it stopped, Harry motioned Cliff to remain with the bags. Stepping to the curb, Harry strolled into the lobby. He looked like a chance visitor rather than a potential guest. Harry approached the desk.

"Mr. Herbert Balliol?" inquired Harry, in English. "Is he stopping here?"

Smiling, the clerk shook his head.

"Mr. Balliol has gone," he replied. "He left here late last night."

"Did he leave a forwarding address?"

"No. He was taking the midnight express to Brussels."

WITH a shrug of his shoulders, Harry strolled out to the street. He passed a tall, uniformed doorman who had watched him enter. As Harry stepped into the cab, the doorman moved over and closed the door. Then, leaning through the opened window, he whispered:

"You came to find Monsieur Balliol?"

Harry gave a slight nod. Glancing toward the driver and noting that the man could not hear him, the doorman added:

"Hotel Princesse."

As the doorman stepped back, Harry spoke to the driver and ordered the man to take them to the Pension Grandine. Cliff gave a wise nod. They remained silent during the trip that followed. When they reached the Pension, they alighted with the bags. Cliff waited with the luggage, while Harry entered. Soon Harry came out and gave the information:

"No word for either of us. Here comes a cab. Let's hail it."

This time they gave the Hotel Princesse as their destination. Twenty minutes brought them to their goal. Entering with the bags, they found the lobby well filled with Americans, as well as Britishers.

Bell boys seized their suitcases and the arrivals approached the desk to find a large sign stating that the clerks spoke English. Harry inquired for Herbert Balliol.

"Ah, yes, gentlemen," smiled the clerk. "Mr. Balliol has reserved a suite for you, on the same floor as himself. Sign the register, please. I shall inform Mr. Balliol that you have arrived. He says that he will see you when you are settled."

Soon, Harry and Cliff were seated in the luxurious living room of a fifth-floor suite. The windows commanded a magnificent view of Paris. There were two bedrooms adjoining; the quarters were far better than those offered by either the Hotel Moderne or the Pension Grandine.

"I'm glad the chief moved in here," remarked Cliff. "Well, we guessed it right, Harry. We are old friends."

"And soon Mr. Balliol will join us."

Harry's prophecy was fulfilled a few minutes later. A knock on the door caused Harry to give a call to enter. The door opened and a tall, tuxedoed figure entered. Harry and Cliff observed a straight-lipped face beneath a high forehead that was topped by well-parted hair. They noted also that Herbert Balliol was wearing spectacles that held blue-tinted lenses.

"Good evening, Vincent," remarked their host, quietly. "Good evening, Marsland. Welcome to Paris. I see that you received my message at the Moderne."

He shook hands with each in turn. Then, after a careful glance toward the closed door, Balliol seated himself in a corner chair and removed his glasses, to place them carefully in a spectacle case.

"I wear these only about the hotel," he remarked, in quiet tone. His straight lips formed a slight smile. "For various reasons, I have adopted unusual arrangements. That, of course, is understandable; you will see other evidences of it later."

Harry and Cliff responded with nods.

"So, dropping preliminaries," resumed the speaker, in his even tone, "we can come directly to important matters. I want to tell you the details that concern last night."

BOTH Harry and Cliff were tense. Seldom did The Shadow enter into direct discussions with his agents. In New York, nearly all contact came through intermediary agents. That was a protective measure adopted by The Shadow, to fool criminals who were ever ready to strike at him through those who aided him in his work.

Here, in Paris, where The Shadow appeared at rarer intervals, the situation was different. No contact agents were available. It was not surprising that The Shadow should avoid his usual precautions. Nevertheless, the

experience was an illuminating one to The Shadow's agents.

"Last night" the steady voice roused Harry and Cliff from other thoughts "Gaspard Zemba eluded the police and came to a section where I had previously observed him. He rode from the Gare de Lyon in a taxicab. I picked up his trail and followed in another vehicle.

"Leaving my own cab, I followed Zemba and cornered him. A squad of his Apaches arrived; they chanced to catch a glimpse of his left hand. This finger was missing that token signified that he was Zemba."

Cliff and Harry watched the speaker's left hand rise; they saw the right forefinger tap the third finger of the left.

"Zemba escaped in the fight that followed." Lips held their smile as the voice proceeded. "During the quick fray, I was aided by an unexpected ally. One whose identity I recognized, for the underworld has talked about him. He was Etienne Robeq, the celebrated French detective who is also here in Paris on the trail of Zemba.

"From now on, my task is to again locate Zemba. The climax will come when that has been achieved. Meanwhile, Robeq may chance to enter the game once more. I have mentioned his name so that you will remember it.

"I want you both to remain at this hotel, reporting back at intervals, ready in case of need. To-night, you will not be needed. You may go abroad in Paris; but return soon after midnight, in case I should have instructions.

"Since you are supposed to be old friends of mine, we shall go down to the lobby together and shake hands in parting. After that" lips had ended their slight smile "our paths shall part for the immediate future."

TEN minutes later, loungers in the lobby saw Cliff Marsland and Harry Vincent shaking hands with their friend Herbert Balliol. The tall guest had donned his blue-tinted spectacles. He had the appearance of an Englishman, while Harry and Cliff were easily classed as Americans.

The trio strolled to the door of the lobby. There, other loungers heard Balliol's voice deliver a "cheerio" to the two Americans. Harry and Cliff strolled away, bound for a boulevard, while keen eyes watched their departure through the bluish spectacles. Then the tall figure of Herbert Balliol sauntered back into the hotel.

Across the street, a huddled observer had seen the parting between the two Americans and their blue-spectacled friend. That much gained, the watcher slipped from the car and reached the sidewalk. He sidled to a waiting taxicab, stepped aboard and gave a gruff order to the driver. The destination that he named was close to the Boul' Mich'.

Rolling along, the cab passed Harry and Cliff. The huddled rider spied them again; then looked through the rear window. Immediately afterward, he produced a cigarette, thrust it between his lips and struck a match. With fists doubled close together, he applied the light to the tip of his cigarette.

The flame from the match revealed his face again, more directly than had the lights from the hotel. It showed an ugly, leering visage, a countenance that could afford to take on a distorted glare, now that its owner was alone and free from observation.

Gloating, its expression resembled the evil leer that The Shadow had faced the night before when he had encountered Gaspard Zemba. The chuckle that came muffled was Zemba's also. This ugly-faced rider was pleased because he had spotted the two Americans who had chatted with Herbert Balliol.

The game was complete. Three factors had moved. New developments would soon be due in the three-way duel that involved Gaspard Zemba, Etienne Robeq and The Shadow!

CHAPTER IX. LURKERS BELOW

AT the very time when Harry Vincent and Cliff Marsland were strolling from the Hotel Princesse, two other men were sauntering along the Boulevard Saint-Michel. The two were Frenchmen. Despite their respectable attire, they had the air of Apaches.

Warily, this pair was keeping watch upon patrolling agents. The number of military police had been doubled since last night's affray. Though apparently upon ordinary patrol duty, the agents actually formed a loose cordon about the sector wherein The Shadow had battled with Gaspard Zemba.

One Apache spoke in a hoarse whisper. His words were the jargon of the Parisian streets. The other nodded; together, they edged into an alleyway and took a threaded course toward the street where last night's battle had been held. As they sneaked along, they mumbled low words.

"We must be careful," cautioned one. "Agents may be hereabouts. Be ready for trouble, Georges."

"I am prepared, Bantoire," replied the other. "But the odds are with us. The agents have finished their search of the empty nest."

"The nest that they are thinking is empty –"

"But, which still holds one little fledgling –"

"And will have two others shortly."

Repressed chuckles; then Georges questioned:

"You spoke with Jacques?"

"Oui." Bantoire chuckled. "Across the telephone. He has remained on duty."

"He has heard from Zemba?"

"Non. That is why we must speak with him."

The two had slackened their pace. They shuffled into a darkened doorway, while a pair of agents stalked past, flicking the gleams of flashlights against house walls. After pacing footsteps had faded, the Apaches resumed their progress. They arrived at the street where the battle had been fought. They found the steps that led to the caveau.

There they descended and passed a broken door. Georges crouched in the corner of the doorway and rapped his knuckles on a flagstone of the floor. A pause, then came an answer; a faint tap from subterranean depths.

"Bon!" whispered Georges. "To one side, Bantoire, while I raise the stone. You shall be the first to descend."

A scraping sound in the darkness. Then the noise of Bantoire creeping downward. After that came the descent of Georges. Then a click as the flagstone settled into place. Cautious whispers came amid moldy darkness; then a light glimmered.

Georges and Bantoire were in a stone-walled passage, illuminated by a single bulb from the ceiling. The glow showed their ugly faces. Georges pushed back the lowered visor of his slouchy cap to reveal a scar across his forehead. Bantoire delivered a grin that showed irregular, blackish teeth.

FACING the arrivals was another of their ilk: Jacques. This Apache was squatty, but long-limbed. His face was rough and unshaven; but the stubble failed to cover a mass of pockmarks that formed the most conspicuous feature of his physiognomy.

Without the formality of greetings, the three Apaches stalked along the underground passage. Reaching the end of it, they descended another flight of steps. Then the passage turned to the right.

Jacques pressed two switches; one extinguished the corridor light; the other brought a glow from a room ahead. The trio entered a small, roughhewn chamber.

The room had no door. That was actually a precaution, for it enabled them to hear sounds from the corridor. The taps given by Georges had sounded the full distance. Yet they had penetrated to Jacques only because they had been sharp, unusual noises. Slight sounds could not be heard from this chamber, because a low, audible trickle already pervaded it.

The monotonous gush was that of water; and it came from beneath a trapdoor in the corner. Obviously, the trapdoor led to a conduit that carried a hidden brook into the River Seine. This room was almost on a level with the river bed. Though the quays of the left bank were quite distant from the spot, the conduit formed a means of exit.

There was a large box in the center of the room; one that served as table, while smaller boxes stood about as chairs. The three Apaches seated themselves beneath the single light directly above. Georges looked toward a gloomy corner, where a crude telephone adorned the wall. Its wire led to the trapdoor.

"No word from Zemba?"

Jacques shook his head in reply to the question, which came from Georges.

"No word. Well, Zemba is wise. That is what he told us long ago. Remember how we discussed it last night?"

"The night before," corrected Bantoire.

"Last night or the night before," retorted Georges. "What difference? Zemba said that if trouble came here, he would not call again. Such was his own warning."

"And he told us to remove the telephone," added Bantoire, "and to leave here if trouble came."

"Of course," agreed Georges. "But trouble did not come."

"It came above here."

"But not here below."

BANTOIRE looked ready to argue the point. Suddenly, his manner changed. He held up a hand in warning. The others listened. They heard nothing but the trickle of the subterranean stream. Georges delivered a contemptuous laugh.

"Bantoire hears things," he told Jacques. "He thinks that The Shadow is about."

Jacques chuckled.

"He has not been about for the last twenty-four hours," he testified. "Nor was he here before then. My ears are as keen as yours, Bantoire."

"I heard something," insisted Bantoire. "The noise came from the passage."

"Do you hear it now?"

"Non." Bantoire shook his head when Georges gave the question. "I hear nothing."

"When one is not listening, he hears," chuckled Georges. "When three are listening, they do not hear. It does not make good sense, Bantoire."

Rising, Georges paced across the room and stood by the door, peering toward the darkness of the corridor. Then, with a shrug, he returned to the improvised table. From a pocket of his slouchy jacket, he removed a folded newspaper and spread it on the big box. Jacques leaned forward, eager for the news.

"Read this, Jacques," laughed Georges. "After that, we shall remove the telephone and carry it away through the pipe to the river. For such were the orders that I last received."

Georges paused, then continued:

"And should Zemba join us, we shall know him by the token of his left hand. Look, Jacques! It tells of it here in the journal."

Leaning from one side, Jacques eyed a column of the newspaper, while Bantoire did the same from the other side. Georges was in the center of the trio. One side of the table alone was unoccupied. It was the edge toward the door. So engrossed were the three that even Bantoire failed to hear the slight sound that came creeping inward.

Then came amazement. The top edge of the newspaper crinkled. A grimy shape slithered forward, straight to the center of the table, sliding to cover the very column that the three men were studying. Sharp, startled exclamations broke from the lips of the three seated men.

PLANTED on the center of the newspaper was a hand, stretched flat. Steadied by the weight that leaned upon it, that talon pronounced its identity more vividly than any other possible symbol. Conspicuous with the steadied hand was a gaping space between the middle finger and the little one.

Where a third finger should have projected, the viewers saw only a shortened stump that stopped with the lower knuckle. A left hand, its third finger missing. The token of which the trio had spoken; the very hand which had been mentioned in the newspaper. Like a living creature conjured into their midst, that hand had arrived to banish their prolonged discussion.

Rigid, the three Apaches stared, their leering faces frozen with expressions that betold amazement. Slowly, twisted lips formed grins of evil delight. The leader whose dictates they obeyed had come to stay their departure; to take them into his confidence that they might further abet his insidious schemes.

Such was the revelation that came to all three. Georges, Bantoire and Jacques each snarling a tone of glee.

They were viewing the talisman which they had hoped to see.

The hand of Gaspard Zemba!

CHAPTER X. THE CHOSEN THREE

LONG seconds passed while rigid Apaches stared. Then Georges raised his scarred forehead upward. Bantoire's ugly-toothed face came next; then Jacques lifted his pockmarked visage. Clear in the light, they saw the face of Gaspard Zemba.

Livid, that countenance fulfilled their expectations. It matched the descriptive chart that the prefect of police had shown in the foreign office. It did more than that; for no pictured representation could ever have portrayed the fiendishness that seemed to emanate from Zemba's leer.

In light, the face was changeful in expression. It had been ugly, gloating, when it had peered from the parked car by the Hotel Princesse; also when the match flame had disclosed it. But in this subterranean den, the visage of Gaspard Zemba was demonic.

The Apaches watched it change as Zemba's hunched shoulders shifted backward. The left hand bobbed up from the table. Fisted, it swept toward a pocket of Zemba's jacket. Then the hand reappeared, clutching a packet of cigarettes. The fingers of the right hand extracted a cigarette from the pack, while the left hand, loosely clenched, again displayed its token of a stump where the third finger belonged.

Then, as if by habit, the left hand thrust the cigarette pack into the pocket and remained there, no longer requiring to be in view. Pursing his leering lips, with the cigarette between, Zemba clicked a metal lighter and applied the flame to his cigarette. Blowing a puff of smoke, he removed the cigarette from his lips and gave a harsh chuckle.

"Still here, eh?" he queried. "Waiting to hear from Zemba? Bah! Such fools the three of you."

Turning his gaze, the ugly-faced intruder stared toward the telephone. His lips fumed an oath. Then:

"Remove it!"

Bantoire sprang to obey. With tugging hands, the Apache yanked the telephone from the wall.

"That is better!" Zemba's tone was a low snarl. "Paugh! When I said scamper in case of trouble, I meant it!"

"There was no trouble here, chief," began Georges, his usual bravado lessened. "We were waiting to hear from you –"

"No trouble?" Zemba's tone was raucous. "There was trouble above. That could mean trouble below. Do you think that I would have called here? When agents might have been listening, instead of you three?"

"You should have been gone long ago, telephone and all. But that can be forgotten. Since you stayed through the trouble, there was no harm in remaining. It shows that you are bold, even though you may be fools."

ZEMBA's expression changed. It showed a friendliness; yet of a sort that only such rogues as his henchmen could have enjoyed. For there was an ugliness to this new registration.

"Sometimes," observed the evil-visaged leader, "I am a fool myself. It often pays to be a fool. As it did with

ZEMBA

Danyar. There were many fools, yesterday. Blythe was a fool; so was Levaux; and Danyar the same. I was the final fool; and the wisest.

"But there are other fools about. Those who seek to interfere with my plans. One called The Shadow; another named Etienne Robeq. Like myself, they are wise despite their folly. They are more dangerous than all the police and agents put together."

With his left hand thrust deep into his coat pocket, Zemba paced the floor, puffing savagely at his cigarette. At last he swung and faced the listening trio.

"Five days!" he snarled. "I must have five days! To take less would show a weakness. It is only through strength that I can make frightened men disgorge their wealth. I must wait through those days; and I do not worry at the thought of conflict.

"Why should I be perturbed? All the underworld is at my beck. I have more men in Paris than the total number of the police. The law could not muster enough fighters to defeat me. Should I, Gaspard Zemba, give the signal, riots would break out everywhere.

"But to what avail? None except to cover flight, should I choose it. Such a time has not arrived. Cunning strategy those are the elements I need to balk these two, who like myself stay hidden."

PAUSING, Zemba waved his hearers back to their improvised chairs. Approaching them, he pounded the box that served as table, using his right fist to deliver the thumps.

"I heard you talk," he informed. "Bantouire was right. Some one was listening in the corridor. It was I. What the three of you said is true. I have others who serve me, like yourselves. To some, I have entrusted a different duty.

"They are watching a hiding place where men are staying. Men who came here to Paris at my beck; agents whom I employed to steal sealed documents from war offices. For five days, these men and their possessions must be guarded.

"The police can never find them. But The Shadow may; and so may Robeq. Why? Because The Shadow and Robeq, like myself, can be anywhere – everywhere. The Shadow by night; Robeq by day. But both can appear in the other's element. The Shadow by day, or Robeq by night.

"How will they work? By searching, by questioning; by using every device to guess where my guarded men are hidden. They are guessers, both of them. Should thoughtless tongues babble; should unwise persons make mistakes, either The Shadow or Robeq may guess my secret."

A pause. Then a gloating chuckle as Zemba's snarling voice resumed:

"I have other hiding places, should the present one prove unsafe. But I prefer to keep the one that I have chosen, so long as I know that it lies undiscovered. There is one way to test its security. That is begin a search for it myself.

"If my search fails, I shall know that the hiding place is safe. If my search succeeds, I shall know that the hiding place is faulty. How can I search for it, since I already know its location? I shall tell you. My search shall be made by the three of you!"

Pausing triumphantly, Zemba indicated each wide-eyed man in turn.

ZEMBA

"Georges Bantoire Jacques" a chuckle "the three cleverest Apaches in all Paris. Foolish, but wise. Three who have seemed to stay out of trouble. All of you know the underworld; none of you are suspected for the crimes that you did in the past.

"Any one of you might make a discovery sooner than either The Shadow or Robeq; for all of you are trusted in the underworld. Your task shall be to inquire everywhere; to speak, to listen, to learn. To work as the secret lieutenants of Gaspard Zemba, replacing Rene Levaux, who previously was my only confidant."

LEANING forward upon the big box, Zemba spoke new instructions:

"Go. Each his separate way. Be wise for once; let others play the fool. Your dwelling place shall be above the wineshop of Grotain, in the studio of the artist Lesboscombes, in the Quartier Latin. Here are keys, for all of you."

Zemba's right hand went to its pocket; then reappeared. Large keys clattered upon the newspaper that still covered the box.

"There is no artist named Lesboscombes," came Zemba's scoffed tone. "It is I, Zemba, who occupy those premises. The wineshop is a sleepy one; old Grotain will suspect nothing because of your visits. Should you be questioned, say that Lesboscombes is producing a new painting; the interior of a caveau; and that you three are the models."

While gloating lips held their leer, Zemba's left hand again emerged from its pocket, clutching its pack of cigarettes, with the telltale finger showing. Extracting another cigarette, Zemba thrust his left hand from view and gave his last instructions.

"Remember all that you see; and all that you hear," he told the Apaches. "But speak nothing that will make your mission known. Try to learn the secret of Gaspard Zemba, if you can. Report each finding when you meet with me. I shall be judge as to the merit of your discoveries.

"Have no concern about The Shadow or Robeq." A pause, with an evil gloat. "There are others who will search for them. Perhaps they will be trapped. If so, your work will be unnecessary. That is something that the future will tell. Meanwhile, spare no effort in the search that I have ordered."

Nods and mumbles from the three Apaches. Their recognized leader turned toward the outer door and motioned for them to follow. He led the way through the darkness of the passage and reached the final steps. Whispering for silence, he thrust the loose flagstone upward and emerged into the caveau above.

Stilled moments in the darkness, while walking agents paced by in the darkness of the street above, their footfalls plain to the listeners. Then Zemba's whisper, as insidious as his snarled voice.

"It is more difficult to leave this district than to enter it. I shall travel alone. You are to leave by the outlet to the river."

Zemba's form crept forward. The three Apaches heard him pass from the caveau. Clicking the flagstone, they returned to the vault below. Bantoire picked up the useless telephone while Georges extinguished the light. Led by Jacques, the trio lifted the trapdoor and made their way to the trickling stream below.

Georges and Bantoire had followed this course the night before. Jacques was with them this time, for their old headquarters was to be entirely abandoned. Splashing through shallow water, stooping as they followed the low-roofed pipe, they came at last to the outlet where the stream poured into the Seine.

Clutching the stone front of a quay, the three Apaches drew themselves upward from the threatening swirl of the river. Gaining the paving above, they shambled for the shelter of an alleyway, darting cautious glances as they went. Their trip had been a long, slow one; for the cramped space of the pipe had made them pause at frequent intervals.

SOON after the three had disappeared, a shrouded form stepped from a blackened spot close by the river. A soft laugh whispered from hidden lips. Like a living phantom, a figure glided into darkness. Soon it reached a standing taxicab near the Boul' Mich'. Stepping noiselessly into the vehicle, the cloaked arrival gave a quiet order:

"Hotel Princesse."

The Shadow, like Harry Vincent and Cliff Marsland, had gone abroad tonight. Unlike his agents, he had gone upon a specific duty. The Shadow had long since guessed the existence of that outlet from beneath the caveau.

Arriving at an opportune time, he had seen three men come up like water rats, from the surface of the Seine. He knew that they were aids of Gaspard Zemba; that they had followed instructions to desert their former hiding place. He had glimpsed a burden carried by Bantoire. He knew that the Apaches had brought forth their telephone equipment.

The question of the trio's future duty, did not apparently concern The Shadow, for he had not taken up the trail of the Apaches. The Shadow's one quarry was Gaspard Zemba; and he had not been with the departing group. The Shadow was heading elsewhere.

Gaspard Zemba would have gained insidious pleasure had he been present to observe The Shadow drop the trail of the three Apaches. But his pleasure might have faded had he also been present to hear The Shadow's whispered mirth.

There was something in that tone that boded ill for evildoers. Shrewd though Zemba's schemes might be, as evidenced by his actions on this very day, The Shadow, too, had gained results.

CHAPTER XI. AT THE CAFE POISSON

THE Cafe Poisson stands near the Rue Montmartre, not far from the Boulevard Poissoniere. The name of the restaurant was one that caused comment. Some claimed that it was an abbreviation of "Poissoniere," after the boulevard; others, maintained that "poisson," being the French word for "fish," meant that the cafe specialized in sea food.

The Cafe Poisson, though located considerably south of the actual Montmartre section, had once been well patronized by seekers of night life. It had attracted various types of habitues; and, two years before, when the police had dragged two bodies from the Seine, it was learned that the murdered men had last been seen alive in the Cafe Poisson.

Monsieur Suchet, the convivial proprietor, had sworn his innocence in the matter. Unable to bring a satisfactory indictment against him, the police had allowed Suchet to continue in the restaurant business.

Since then, wags had at intervals altered the sign above the restaurant by blotting out one "S," thus converting "poisson" into "poison." Since "poison" means the same in French as in English, the inference against the good name of Monsieur Suchet could be appreciated by Americans as well as by Parisians.

Inasmuch as the victims from the Seine had been stabbed, not poisoned, Monsieur Suchet bore the brunt of occasional jests; and pretended to treat the matter as a joke. Nevertheless, it was noted that Suchet kept a wary eye open whenever agents de police stalked past the open front of his cafe. Since the new exploits of Gaspard Zemba had come to public notice, Monsieur Suchet had been doubly cautious.

There was good reason; for such persons as Monsieur Suchet were supposed to be in Zemba's favor. The Cafe Poisson had, in a sense, been placed under police surveillance.

EXACTLY twenty-four hours after Harry Vincent and Cliff Marsland had arrived in Paris, a figure emerged from the Montmartre station of the Paris Metro, having chosen a new underground route to reach this section. Strolling along in casual fashion, the arrival entered a side street. His figure was that of Herbert Balliol.

Again, Harry and Cliff had parted with their friend. They had left Balliol in the lobby of the Hotel Princesse; he, in turn, had fared abroad soon after their departure. After his stroll from the Montmartre station, Herbert Balliol appeared later outside the Cafe Poisson.

After surveying the establishment through blue-lensed spectacles, the visitor entered and took his place at a table. He gave an order to a waiter; then turned about to eye two sergeants de ville who were seated at another table. Though apparently off duty, these officers had a purpose here, namely to watch Monsieur Suchet.

Bald-headed and fat of face; the proprietor was standing behind a small counter. Looking out through the front of the cafe, he saw a figure that alighted from a cab. Suchet's eyes sharpened; then, nervously, he produced a handkerchief and began to mop his brow. He had seen a venomous, staring face; one that he did not know, but which made him think of the notorious Gaspard Zemba.

A sergeant de ville saw the direction of Suchet's gaze and looked in the same direction. He motioned to his companion. The two left their table and started out. Monsieur Suchet sank back; but his face showed relief. A hunched figure had started away in time to avoid the officers.

All the while, Herbert Balliol had been seated motionless. Suchet had scarcely noted the new arrival; but he was soon to do so. Some one plucked at his sleeve. It was a taciturn waiter, motioning the proprietor to a rear door of the cafe.

A squinty-eyed derelict was standing there, grinning while he clinked a pair of metal two-franc pieces. The fellow thrust an envelope into Suchet's hand; then shambled away.

Fumbling, Suchet tore open the envelope. Inside, he found a message. He read it and crumpled the paper. He turned to the waiter who was standing beside him. In a hushed tone, Suchet gasped:

"It's it's from Zemba! Peste! Zemba! Les sergents de ville! They have started after him!"

"You saw Zemba?"

"I saw some one, outside the cafe. Ah! How swiftly he must have acted, to double back and pass this message to a chance loiterer. Zemba is incredible. But come, Oudrin! This means work for you. Change your coat and join me by the counter."

A few minutes later, Oudrin rejoined Suchet. Close by the counter, the proprietor spoke:

"See that tall man by the table near the entrance? The one who may be an Englishman? He is the one that

Zemba wants us to follow."

Oudrin nodded.

"Take good note of him," added Suchet. "Trail him carefully, Oudrin. Bring back full word. I shall pass it to others. It will reach Zemba."

Suchet observed that the tall stranger was eyeing others in the cafe. His inspection ended, he arose and stalked from the place. Oudrin followed. Soon afterward, the sergents de ville returned and resumed their table with disgruntled growls. Suchet smiled blandly.

MEANWHILE, Oudrin had been trailing his quarry northward. He saw the tall stroller enter a taxi. Oudrin engaged one to follow. The trail led to the Place Saint–Pierre. There, Oudrin saw him produce three nickel coins of different sizes, all with holes in the center.

Calculating five, ten and twenty–five centimes, Oudrin guessed that the tall stranger intended to take the railway, with its fare of forty centimes. Oudrin chose the steps that paralleled the cable tram, to the heights of Montmartre, more than three hundred feet above.

As a trailer, Oudrin was competent. He located his quarry and watched the stranger eye the lights of Paris from the heights. Then, a change transpired. With long, swift strides, the man started off for the section of gay night clubs that thronged the Montmartre. Oudrin had difficulty keeping up with him.

Reaching a cabaret, the man entered and nodded to the proprietor. Oudrin chose a quiet spot; then called a waiter and wrote out a short note. It went to the proprietor and came back again. Beneath Oudrin's question was the written name:

"Herbert Balliol."

Oudrin grinned. The proprietor here happened to be a friend of Monsieur Suchet. So far, the trailer had found out one important point. His next would be to learn where Herbert Balliol resided. That question was answered half an hour later, when the tall man left the cabaret. Oudrin, following, saw him go aboard a taxi; and heard the address which the supposed Englishman gave:

"Hotel Princesse."

RETURNING southward, Oudrin arrived back at the Cafe Poisson just as a drizzle was commencing. Most of the patrons had left because of the threatened rain. The sergents de ville had gone. Oudrin gave his information to Suchet.

"The man lives at the Hotel Princesse," stated the trailer, "and his name is Herbert Balliol."

Suchet smiled. Oudrin looked puzzled.

"Herbert Balliol?" queried Suchet. "Ah! That is simply the name he uses. Zemba's note told me who he was. Oudrin, you have been following The Shadow!"

Oudrin stood gaping while Suchet laughed and entered the back room. The proprietor of the Cafe Poisson made three telephone calls in succession. He came back to the counter, rubbing his pudgy hands.

"The word has gone to Zemba," he said. "You have done well, Oudrin."

ONE hour later, Harry Vincent and Cliff Marsland arrived at the Hotel Princesse. They, too, had been to the Montmartre; but they had not encountered Herbert Balliol during his brief visit. As they alighted in the increasing rain, they noted a pair of huddled men in the shelter beneath the marquee.

Harry and Cliff took them for idlers who had simply chosen to edge out from the rain. Actually, the loiterers were shrewd watchers from the underworld; henchmen who served Gaspard Zemba.

Chance had it that another cab went by the Hotel Princesse a few minutes later. A sharp-eyed passenger, peering from the interior, spied the two loiterers. The rider spoke to the driver, who stopped. The passenger alighted and entered the hotel. On the way, he gave sidewise glances toward the watchers.

The light of the lobby revealed the arrival's face. He was the man who had visited the conference in the foreign minister's office, one day before. Persons in the lobby took him merely for another guest. Not one would have believed that this could be the celebrated detective, Etienne Robeq.

Noting nothing unusual, the visitor strolled from the lobby. In his departure, he again noted the suspicious characters huddled beneath the marquee. Rain had dwindled. Instead of taking a cab, the passing visitor paced ahead for two full blocks.

Just as the rain began again, he hurried into another hotel, the Talleyrand. This was the one that Robeq had chosen. His course, by taxi, had happened to take him directly past the Princesse.

Reaching a fourth-floor room, he put in a telephone call. In a guarded voice, he announced himself as Robeq. The man to whom he was speaking was Sergeant Rusanne. Robeq's questions concerned reports from the police. He learned that there were none of consequence.

Seating himself, Robeq produced a small notebook. His firm face hardened as he studied various notations. Beneath the list he added the name: "Hotel Princesse;" then pondered and crossed it out. That done, he turned out the light, seated himself by the window and stared out over the drizzle-shrouded lights of the city.

MEANWHILE, three men had gathered in conclave within a dreary, dimly lighted room where the beat of rainfall sounded from the flat French room above. Georges, Bantoire and Jacques had assembled. They were comparing notes that they had heard.

"He was seen in the Montmartre tonight," declared Jacques. "That is all that I heard concerning The Shadow."

"I learned more," added Bantoire. "Where he was seen, I did not know. But they say that he is disguised as an Englishman, who calls himself Herbert Balliol."

"I heard it said," remarked Georges, "that The Shadow is residing at the Hotel Princesse."

"As always," commented Bantoire, "one of us knows one fact; another knows another. But none of us know all –"

"None of you, perhaps!" came a rasped voice. The three turned about to stare at the face of Gaspard Zemba. "But I know all the facts. Bah! Why do you concern yourself with this man they call The Shadow?"

"We heard reports," began Georges, taken aback by Zemba's silent entry. "Word that had passed through places where we visited –"

"But none that pertained to the quest that I have given you?" queried Zemba, interrupting. "No one spoke of

my secret hiding place?"

Headshakes from all three Apaches.

"Good," gibed Zemba. "The more you fail, the better, provided only that you work to the limit."

"We are doing so," assured Jacques.

"Ah, yes?" queried Zemba, sourly, producing a cigarette. "Spending your time listening to rumors that concern The Shadow? How do you suppose The Shadow's trail was found? I shall tell you. I gave it!"

Surprised gazes, while Zemba's face leered.

"I found The Shadow," resumed the speaker, viciously. "To-night, I followed him. By the Cafe Poisson, I had to dodge. I was seen by two sergents de ville. I placed others on the trail. They gave me the news of The Shadow. The news that you three heard.

"Bah! You know the way I work. A telephone call to one place, where my voice is known; a flash of this hand" he pressed his left against his dampened jacket, to show the missing finger "I use that token elsewhere. All word comes to Gaspard Zemba.

"I expected more than was gained. Those who observed The Shadow found out no more than I already knew. I shall take care of him." Zemba's gaze glared, while his lips mumbled ugly epithets. "Yes, I shall deal with The Shadow very soon.

"But remember! There is still Robeq. I must deal with him as well. And when I tell you that I know where Robeq is, this very minute, would you believe me? It is true. I have them both, The Shadow and Etienne Robeq. But I must take care before I act."

PUFFING at his cigarette, the gloater stalked to the door of an adjoining room, which formed his private quarters. Then, to the three who remained in the studio of the mythical artist Lesboscombes, Zemba's harsh voice came with a tone of warning.

"Remember. The friends of Gaspard Zemba are those who serve him. His enemies are those who do not. Perform your mission. Learn what you can. Discover if those whom I have trusted have talked too much. Accomplish that and you are my friends. Fail, and I shall class you as my enemies."

The door closed behind the glowering speaker as he stepped into the next room. The three Apaches nodded as they sat in silence. Their hearts were filled with something that resembled dread. They had learned to fear the whip-lashing power of Gaspard Zemba.

They were contemptuous in their thoughts of The Shadow; derisive when they considered the fame of Etienne Robeq. Compared with Gaspard Zemba, those two were helpless puppets.

Such was the opinion of Georges, Bantoire and Jacques.

CHAPTER XII. HARRY MAKES A CAPTURE

IT was late the next afternoon. Drizzly weather had brought an early dusk to Paris. Harry and Cliff were seated in their hotel room, gloomily discussing past events.

"Something is wrong," asserted Harry. "If ever there was a needle in a haystack, it is this fellow Zemba."

"A needle without a thread," added Cliff, "and Paris is a mighty big haystack."

"Every one knows about him. Every one knows he is here. Did you hear those Frenchmen laugh, up at the Moulin Rouge, when the girl sang the song about Zemba."

"An old song," recalled Cliff. "It was written about some other criminal, years ago: 'Is he fair or bronzed? Small or square? Fat or thin? Ah! Who will picture Zemba?' That was the translation, wasn't it?"

"Part of it. Then there was a gag about the police receiving a mysterious package. All they found in it was Zemba's missing finger."

"I never could get the French idea of humor."

"Nor I. But this Zemba business is too serious to be funny."

Harry was standing by the window. He turned about and put the situation squarely to Cliff.

"The Shadow doesn't have a lead!" he exclaimed. "You know how we usually work, Cliff. Some special duty for each of us. Here, in Paris, the chief could be using twenty men instead of two, if he ever had matters on the go. But that's the trouble. You and I are useless; and there is just one answer. Not a thing has broken."

"When it does," remarked Cliff, "it will be plenty hot."

"But so far, it is cold. Time is getting short, too."

"You're right about that, Harry. Somehow well, maybe I'm not expressing it just right somehow, I've lost confidence."

"In The Shadow?"

"No. Just in circumstances. It's different with you, Harry. You've been in on plenty of cases where the going was slow for a while. But with me, it's always been a bang-up proposition.

"Well," decided Harry, "we won't get anywhere in this mood. It's time for dinner; but we'd better take turns in the dining room, in case the chief calls us. We haven't heard from him since noon."

Drawing a silver ten-franc piece from his pocket, Harry flipped it. Cliff called "Heads" and the coin came with that side upward. Harry grinned and nudged toward the door. It was Cliff's first turn to eat.

WHEN Cliff strolled from the suite, he was thinking of The Shadow. On that account, he gave a slight glance toward a doorway near the elevators. That door number 504 was the entrance to the suite that Herbert Balliol occupied.

Catching a glimpse of the barrier from the corner of his eye, Cliff spotted a motion. The door was closing slowly. As it shut, Cliff gained a sudden impression of a face that had peered from within.

Cliff was about to hesitate; he overcame the impulse and continued his walk along the hall. By the time he had reached the elevator, he had done some quick thinking. Cliff knew that an intruder was in 504 and that the proper step was to trap the man. It could not have been The Shadow peering from the doorway. The

pretended Herbert Balliol was unquestionably absent from the hotel.

Strategy was also wise. Hence Cliff curbed himself and rang for the elevator. The lift arrived and carried him down to the lobby. There Cliff made promptly for a telephone and rang up Harry. Tersely, Cliff told what he had seen. Harry responded with a query:

"Did the fellow lock the door after he closed it?"

"I don't know," admitted Cliff. "I was too far away to notice any click."

"Come up again," suggested Harry. "Try the door from the outside. If it's unlocked, go into the room."

"And if it's locked?"

"I'll let you in later. You can count on me to be inside."

"But how –"

"Leave that to me, Cliff."

Upstairs, Harry dropped the receiver as he made that final statement. He knew that Cliff would follow his instructions; and there was no time to go into details. For Harry, thinking quickly, had gained an idea.

OUTSIDE the window of this suite was a balcony. Similar projections existed all along the level of the fifth floor. Cliff, like Harry, had noticed them; but Harry had observed a point that had escaped Cliff. The balconies, though wide apart, were all supported by a broad cornice that ran the full length. That offered Harry a prompt route to Room 504.

Extinguishing the light, Harry climbed out to the balcony. Cold, driving drizzle swept against his face. The hotel wall was dark; but the cornice, being of marble, showed grimy whiteness in the gloom. It was a wide pathway; but a dangerous one, for the stone was slippery. Nevertheless, Harry felt that he could manage it.

Detaching his stout belt, he girded it about a thin iron post midway in the side rail of the balcony; then thrust the free end of the belt through the buckle.

Climbing over the rail, he gripped the loose end of the belt with one hand and clutched the brick wall of the building with the other. Carefully, he edged along to the next balcony.

All the way, Harry was prepared for a slip. He was backing away from his own balcony, ready for a quick scramble to safety should he lose a foothold. The belt, he believed, would serve him in the pinch; but the test never came. As he reached the end of his life line, Harry slid his other hand along the wall and encountered the rail of the next balcony.

Harry would have regained the belt for further use, if possible; but he saw no way to obtain it except by a return journey. However, he had gained complete confidence through this first foray. He let the belt slide down and rest upon the cornice. Scrambling over the rail of the new balcony, he reached the other side and began a beltless trip for the balcony beyond it.

Reaching his goal, he made another similar trip and this time arrived upon the balcony that was outside of Room 504. Crouching in the darkness, Harry tried the window. It was open a few inches at the bottom. Beyond it were curtains. Counting upon them for cover, Harry moved the sash upward.

Though there had been no orders from The Shadow concerning the protection of Room 504, Harry felt that he was acting in accord with his chief's interests. Those in The Shadow's service were expected to use their own initiative when occasion demanded.

This was an unusual case; one that puzzled Harry. He could not remember any time when an unknown intruder had so boldly penetrated to The Shadow's own abode. That fact, however, made Harry's action seem all the more necessary.

Huddled in the darkness of the window sill, Harry could hear a creeping sound within the room. At the same time, he caught a very slight noise from the door. Cliff had arrived and was trying the knob. Apparently, the door was latched. The prowler had heard it and was taking some action.

Creeps came closer. Hunched shoulders arrived before Harry's eyes. The Shadow's agent suppressed an elated breath. The prowler was backing toward the window, watching the door.

Alarmed by the noise made by Cliff, he had gained no inkling of Harry's arrival. Curtains swished; the hunched man was taking a hiding place within Harry's very grasp!

The whole set-up flashed through Harry's brain. The prowler had latched the door. He thought that the person trying it was the owner of the room. That was why he wanted to hide by the window. In a few seconds, he would be wondering why the door did not open, since the owner would naturally have the key. Harry decided to allow no time for speculation.

TIGHTENING, Harry lunged forward, squarely upon the man in front of him. A sharp snarl, a twist of a hunched body as Harry struck his adversary. Then, as they sprawled to the floor, the curtains came sweeping with them. The wooden curtain rod thudded on Harry's shoulders and bounded to the floor. Harry scarcely noticed the blow, so intent was he to overcome the man whom he had gripped.

Seldom had Harry ever dealt with so wiry an antagonist. The snarling man twisted, yanked his arms free and tugged at Harry's fists when they clutched his throat. For a moment, the hunched fighter wrestled loose. Then luck came to Harry's aid. His opponent's hand tangled in the curtains. Grabbing the fellow, Harry rolled him over, half smothering him in the folds of the drapery.

That stroke ended the fight abruptly. Snarls became gasps. Through the curtains, Harry caught two arms and twisted them behind a bulky back. Then, with a powerful lift, he hoisted his foe clear of the floor, curtains and all; and half carried, half hauled him to the door.

Letting the gasping man slump to the floor with the curtains, Harry clamped one knee against his back and reached up to the doorknob. He turned it and whispered a warning to Cliff as his teammate entered.

As soon as the door was closed again, Cliff switched on the light. He grinned as he saw Harry crouching upon a subdued mass that looked like a mammoth cocoon. Joining Harry, Cliff also grabbed the prisoner. Together, they unwound the curtains; then stared at the gasping captive who sprawled into view.

Harry had bagged a venomous-looking antagonist. In garb, in countenance, the man looked like a mammoth rat that had crawled from one of the famous sewers of Paris. Even his clothes, greasy trousers and a threadbare jersey, looked slimy, for they were dampened by the outside drizzle.

The prisoner was scarcely over five feet in height; his hunched, almost deformed posture made him appear even shorter. But his long, ugly teeth; the leer of his gasping lips; the clawish appearance of his hands these, plus his wiriness, showed him to be a dangerous character. Hitched to the man's belt was a sheath that

contained a long knife. Harry had kept the rogue from drawing that blade; and that capable effort on Harry's part had been a vital factor in the victory.

They dragged the ratlike man to the center of the room. Cliff plucked the knife from the sheath, while Harry kicked the crumpled curtains away from the door. Their prisoner was sitting up, glaring in an ugly fashion. He was wise enough, however, to know that he could not escape.

"Looks like an Apache," commented Cliff. "You snagged him, Harry; let me do the quizzing. I know enough of the lingo to get by."

Dropping English for French, Cliff put a series of questions, sprinkling his words with some phrases of Parisian slang. The snarly prisoner made no reply. Dropping his hands to the floor, he pushed himself upward in apelike fashion and backed away, crouching as he glared from one captor to the other.

"He looks like a dim-wit," observed Cliff, to Harry, "unless he's bluffing. If he wasn't so tough, I might be ready to think he was dumb; but as it is –"

A snarl interrupted. It came from the lips of the sweated rat. With face livid, the prisoner glared toward the door. His hand shot to the sheath from which Cliff had so wisely whisked the knife. With one accord, Cliff pounced upon the hunched Apache and thrust his arms behind his back. They, too, turned toward the door.

The portal had opened and closed again, silently. Upon the threshold stood the tall, tuxedoed figure of Herbert Balliol. Serenely, through his bluish glasses, the entrant was surveying the scene. His lips formed a half smile as he placed a cigarette between them. The Apache voiced a snarl:

"The Shadow!"

CLIFF and Harry were startled by the words; but the smile upon the features of the supposed Herbert Balliol remained fixed. To Harry came the realization that the smile denoted pleasure because of this expression of recognition. The Apache's words were a giveaway; they told that persons in the underworld had identified Herbert Balliol with The Shadow.

"L'Ombre, oui." The words from Balliol's lips were calm. Then, in a flow of French, he questioned: "Who sent you here to pry into my affairs? Gaspard Zemba?"

The ratlike Apache made no reply. The voice of Balliol hardened. Quickly, fiercely, the tall arrival delivered a voluble flow of French that carried more than its quota of Apache jargon. Threatening, accusing, the phrases were too speedy for even Cliff to thoroughly grasp them. But they worked upon the Apache.

The hunched rat spat back weakening replies. Loosening in the clutch of Harry and Cliff, he crouched back toward the wall. Hoarsely, he gave answers. Each one produced new, harsher questions. At last the tall inquisitor ceased the quiz and spoke to Harry and Cliff.

"Bind him."

There were heavy straps about a suitcase in the corner. Cliff and Harry procured them. While they were trussing up the Apache, they listened to the easy tones of Balliol, this time in English, speaking words which they took as both information and instructions from The Shadow.

"This rogue is from Zemba," came the steady tone. "At Zemba's order, he scaled the wall, from one balcony to another. His purpose was to enter and search this room. You did well to capture him, Vincent."

Harry smiled. He concluded that The Shadow had entered the room while he and Cliff were still discussing the prisoner.

"He states that he is to return to the Allee des Bijoux," resumed the speaker. "That street is located in the Montmartre. There is nothing concerning jewels about the street, but there is an Apache's caveau there. It happens that Gaspard Zemba will be in that caveau at the extreme end of the cul-de-sac.

"Obviously, the place is a trap. Zemba will, therefore, be prepared for my arrival. However" lips were smiling "he will expect me to come alone. He will be disappointed. You two will precede me. Not to enter, but to guard the mouth of the blind alley.

"When I arrive, I shall signal you, but when only you are needed. You will follow and protect me from any enemies who approach. Those ahead of me including Zemba, if he is among them will be my own particular problem."

Harry and Cliff were nodding as they finished the binding of the hunched Apache. At a further command, they rolled the prisoner into a large closet and gagged him before they closed the door. Turning, they saw the tall figure of Balliol motioning them to the hall. They understood.

FIVE minutes later, Cliff and Harry left the Hotel Princesse. They entered an ancient taxi and ordered the driver to take them to the Cabaret du Diable, in the Montmartre, which was located close to the Allee des Bijoux. Hardly had they started their ride before another cab pulled away from a curb and took up their trail.

A few minutes later, Herbert Balliol appeared beneath the marquee of the Hotel Princesse. He entered a cab and also told the driver to take him to the Cabaret du Diable. A pair of loiterers heard the order and slouched away through the drizzle. They were the men posted there by Zemba.

In the leading cab, Harry and Cliff were unrestrained in their enthusiasm. The time for action was close at hand. Zemba's lair had been located.

"He knows that only one person would dare to enter there," commented Harry. "It is doubtful, though, that he actually expects that one person to take the challenge."

"But The Shadow is coming," returned Cliff. "He'll give us time to get located. But he won't be far behind us, Harry."

Cliff was correct in that statement. Harry, too, was convinced that Herbert Balliol had also taken a taxi from the Hotel Princesse. But neither had guessed that a second cab was riding between the first and the last; trailing them, yet well ahead of the final taxi.

Knowledge of that cab would have troubled them, particularly if they had seen its passenger. At that very moment, the second cab was only fifty yards behind. Almost beside the face of its driver was another countenance that peered forward through the drizzle, showing an ugly leer.

They might have guessed that face had they seen it. The countenance that showed behind the windshield of the second cab was the face of Gaspard Zemba. Harry's prisoner had spoken; spies had sneaked away to report; but already this hidden watcher had entered the game on his own!

CHAPTER XIII. THE THREE MEET

WHILE taxicabs were rolling from the Hotel Princesse toward the heights of the Montmartre, a pedestrian was entering the lobby of the Hotel Talleyrand. This man was Eric Delka. He was on his way to visit a guest named Perquigray, whom Delka, however, knew better by the name of Etienne Robeq.

Unannounced, Delka went up to the fourth floor and rapped upon the door of a corner room. He heard a guarded query; he responded in a low tone. The door opened; Delka stepped into a room that was illuminated by a single table lamp. He smiled as he saw the square-jawed face of Robeq, topped by its black hair. He shook hands and received a firm, viselike grip.

"You have arrived in time, Delka," greeted Robeq. "I hoped that you received the message that I sent to Sergeant Rusanne. Sit down a few minutes. We cannot start until I hear from Rusanne."

"He told me that we might be going somewhere," nodded Delka. "What is it? A trail to Gaspard Zemba?"

"It may be," returned Robeq, grimly. "Last night, two sergents de ville thought they saw him near the Cafe Poisson. This evening, there is a report of suspicious characters close to the Cabaret du Diable, in the Montmartre."

"Zemba again?"

"We cannot tell. Any one may be Zemba to a sergent de ville. The order, however, is to keep only the regular patrol in the Montmartre."

"So that Zemba will suspect nothing, if he is there?"

"Exactly. I intend to go there and look for him. I need some one else who is not known, particularly in case we have to summon aid. That is why I wanted you with me."

Delka smiled. The choice suited him. Before Robeq could speak further, the telephone bell buzzed. The Frenchman answered it. Delka heard him speak in concise phrases.

"Rusanne," informed Robeq, after completing the call. "All orders are understood. Come. Let us be on our way."

They entered a station of the Metropolitan Railway, near the hotel. Robeq squandered two francs and thirty centimes buying first-class tickets. They entered the first-class coach in the middle of the train, and as they settled into the cushions, Robeq spoke in English, tinged with French.

"Ah, le Metropolitan," he chuckled. "It takes one anywhere. Provided one understands its many devious ways. Which reminds me" he studied the ticket stubs "we must consult this hachette and learn the proper correspondance. Junction, you understand."

"We have to change to reach the Montmartre," recalled Delka, who was somewhat familiar with the Metro. "I don't know where, though."

"Here it is," decided Robeq. "The junction that I thought. I have to be careful when riding on the Metro, because new lines have been added since the days when I lived in Paris. Quite a contrast, this noisy underground, to the soundless wastes of the Sahara Desert."

THEY changed cars at the proper correspondance and while they were riding alone in another first-class compartment, Robeq produced a new theme.

"The Cabaret du Diable," he mused, "is close to the Allee des Bijoux. A bad pitfall, the latter, as I remember it. Rusanne mentioned the alley in his last telephone call."

"A blind alley?" inquired Delka. "Many of them are, in Paris."

"The city abounds with them. The Allee du Diable is one of the worst. One would be unwise to enter it, even with a squad of agents at his heels."

"The kind of place that Zemba would choose."

"I know it. That is why we shall watch the outside, at a respectable distance. I shall have you summon a few officers when we near there. Our best plan would be to trap the fox when he has ventured from his den."

Finishing their subway journey, Robeq and Delka came above ground and approached the drizzle-blurred lights of the Montmartre. Blinking, red bulbs proclaimed the Cabaret du Diable. Robeq edged Delka into an alleyway at one side; then mumbled angrily at his mistake.

"Bah! I am wrong!" he ejaculated. "The Allee des Bijoux is reached from the other side. Come, Monsieur Delka."

They skirted the cabaret and entered a narrow, gloomy street. Robeq stopped his companion; they paused, pretending to light cigarettes while two Apaches slouched past.

"They may be going into the alley," whispered Robeq. "It is right behind the cabaret. Go. Find the nearest agents and tell them that you are from Sergeant Rusanne. Mention that you have a friend waiting here. If they should guess that one of us is Robeq, it is better that they should believe that you were he."

"I would prefer to pass for some dandy visiting the Montmartre. My attire indicates it. Meanwhile, I shall be prepared. It would be best to mention that your friend is armed."

Delka had noted Robeq's attire. The detective had been dressed for the street from the time that Delka had seen him. He was wearing a fashionable Derby hat, a light waterproof raincoat, and a pair of smooth-fitting kid gloves. As he mentioned that he was prepared, Robeq peeled the glove from his right hand and held it in his left while he dipped his right and into his coat pocket to bring a stub-nosed revolver into view. Delka tapped his own pocket to indicate that he was armed. After that, he hurried to locate the agents.

FARTHER UP the little street, two men were already stationed at the mouth of the Allee des Bijoux. Harry and Cliff were on duty. Unnoticed, they had watched the two Apaches shuffle past and enter the alley. Cliff whispered to Harry.

"That makes four –"

"The Shadow will know," interposed Harry, his tone as low as Cliff's. "He has calculated the odds."

"But when will he be here?"

"We don't know. But if Zemba is already in there –"

A sibilant hiss sounded almost beside the speakers. Then came the sound of a slight swish in the rain. The agents realized that a cloaked figure had come close to them, creeping in from the rear end of this street. That was the direction which they had expected The Shadow to come from.

"Remain posted."

The whispered warning was all. Then The Shadow had moved into the solid blackness of the Allee des Bijoux. Both agents huddled tense. They knew the danger that lay there. Any one of the lurking spots at the side of the alley might hold a full quota of Apaches. Zemba himself would be lurking within the innermost recess.

Then, like an open challenge to all men of evil came a whispered tone of mockery. It rose to a shuddering, sinister taunt. The laugh of The Shadow, delivered from the very heart of the alley. A token of a master battler who had entered the stronghold of his foe.

The tone startled the waiting agents. They heard it answered by a hollow echo. That told them the elusiveness of the eerie laugh. No one – not even the Apaches close at hand could have guessed the exact source of the sound.

Again the laugh; this time with rising, eerie crescendo. A shivering tone more evasive than the first. A mocking thrust that brought cries of venom. Tricked, the Apaches responded as The Shadow had planned. In a trice, they turned the tables on themselves.

Electric torches glimmered everywhere, sweeping about the alleyway to reveal the stone walls of the cul-de-sac. The lights glittered from the tops of steps that emerged from cellar dens.

The beams spread; one glimmering ray shone suddenly upon a weaving figure that stopped like a frozen statue. Burning eyes glittered in the light. Again the laugh resounded.

With it came the burst of automatics. Big guns tongued blasts of flame from black-gloved fists. Bullets zimmered for the Apache with the telltale flashlight. Instantly, that beam dropped to the ground. The Shadow was gone again, in darkness.

Apaches were springing forward, yelling their defiance, spinning their flashlights as they fired revolvers toward the end wall of the blind alley. Knives clattered against stones. Like bullets, they found nothingness. The Shadow had whirled away; his own guns roared their welcome.

LIGHTS went clattering. Yells turned to groans. The Apaches were The Shadow's targets. Their lights made them his prey. Cursing, howling, they sprawled upon the paving of the alley while a living turret blasted slugs into their midst.

Transfixed by the amazing fray, Harry and Cliff came suddenly to their senses. They heard shouts behind them. They realized that the battle in the alley was but the beginning of the fray. Apaches were surging in from the street. Quickly, The Shadow's agents turned to meet the attack.

Pumping hastily with their automatics, Harry and Cliff were suddenly bathed in the glare of new torches. For a moment, they were rooted. They dropped back instinctively, just as guns boomed and bullets sizzled past them.

Again they fired. From up the street came other shots; some Apaches swung in that direction. Then shots from the other direction, by the Cabaret du Diable. Those diverting blasts made up for the lapse of The

Shadow's agents.

Besides, the surge of Apaches hurtling toward them were men with knives; close-range fighters who were following the searchlight's path. Harry and Cliff aimed valiantly; as they did, a form arrived between them. It was The Shadow.

An automatic roared its thunderous tenor, close to the ears of Harry and Cliff. Shattering glass a howl and the searchlight was gone. Sweeping arms hurtled Harry and Cliff aside. A cloaked shape sprang squarely into the cluster of knife-bearing Apaches. The agents could hear the thuds as automatics met blocking skulls.

Another flashlight glimmered. It showed a black shape twisting from grasping arms. A knife slashed. It cleaved a huge stretch of cloth. Clawing hands gripped The Shadow. Then Harry saw a diving form go rolling from the cloak.

An automatic stabbed upward as The Shadow struck the ground. An Apache howled, dropped his knife and fell. Then another shot boomed from beside Harry's ear. The new light went out.

Cliff had used The Shadow's method. He had picked off the Apache with that glimmering torch. But the fight had become a general melee. Men were everywhere, firing up and down the street. New flashlights were glimmering. The law had arrived. Delka was back with the agents, to rejoin Robeq.

AS Harry and Cliff sprang forward, the sweeping beams gave flickering flashes of amazing scenes. Just away from them, twisting to reach the far end of the narrow streets, Harry and Cliff saw the tall form of Herbert Balliol, an expected sight, since they had witnessed the loss of the cloak and hat.

They sprang to aid, bashing down Apaches who blocked their way. Then, as they grappled with mad fighters, they saw another figure across the street. An aiming, glaring fighter, whose face they knew, though they had never seen such a countenance before.

The countenance of Gaspard Zemba, leering above a gun muzzle that pointed toward the spot where Balliol was struggling. Once those fighters broke that gun would bark. Harry and Cliff were hopelessly unable to prevent it; for they were struggling too completely with their own adversaries.

But in that moment of terrific combat came a break. Leaping forward, recklessly sweeping in front of the police flashlights came another whose identity neither Harry nor Cliff could guess. His was a square-jawed face, with black hair above. A struggling Apache gasped the name:

"Robeq!"

The twisted figure of Herbert Balliol, stretched amid grapplers whom he was driving off with the pounding swing of one gun. The snarling, gloating watcher beyond, swinging suddenly to meet the new invasion of a square-jawed man who was on the forward move.

All three were face to face each in a situation of his own. The Shadow, Etienne Robeq, who battled for right, confronted by their enemy, Gaspard Zemba!

CHAPTER XIV. THE DOUBLE CAPTURE

HARRY VINCENT was a witness to the quick events that followed. He saw the chances that were lost. Deadlocked with an opponent of his own, Harry could not participate in the quick shifts that occurred.

He saw a long, aiming arm beneath the strained face of Herbert Balliol. He saw that pointing hand go up, struck by an Apache's fist. Despite himself, Harry groaned, for with the Apache's stroke, he saw the gloat on Zemba's face, far beyond. He saw the gun beneath that evil visage, as it spat a single shot.

The Shadow's chance was gone. Another gun was booming; that of the man who had sprung forward from the ranks of the law. Harry saw the grim, square jaw of Etienne Robeq. He was firing revolver shots at the leering face of Gaspard Zemba.

Instantly, Harry realized that fighter alone had ammunition; that he was aiming toward one whose last bullet was gone! The single shot had not stopped the newest entrant. The tide was turned!

In that moment, Harry would have sworn that all was up with Gaspard Zemba. That, however, was because Harry had failed utterly to size the situation. It was not until long afterward that he finally realized how badly he had guessed.

It was Eric Delka, farther back, who had sensed partially what might happen. He had called a warning to Robeq; but the man beside him had sprung forward despite it. Delka had seen a last surge of Apaches, spring up from walls along the street. They had recognized that agents were present. They piled upon their natural enemies. With that surge, revealing flashlights again went scattering along the cobblestones.

A complete black-out changed everything. In an instant, three faces were lost. The Shadow Etienne Robeq Gaspard Zemba all were lost in total darkness. Then, as Harry felt the grip of the Apache who held him, he heard Cliff's quick voice close by.

"Harry! Where are you?"

"Here!" Harry twisted and shoved the Apache squarely toward Cliff's direction. "Take him out, Cliff!"

A gurgle. The Apache's arms went wide. Cliff, who had just downed his own opponent, was speedy in his response to Harry's plea. He had grabbed the Apache's neck. Under Cliff's choking grip, the rogue had given up the battle.

Harry heard the Apache thud none too gently as Cliff propelled him to the street. Then the two agents were together. Blindly, they dived for the spot where they had last seen the face of Herbert Balliol. Their one purpose was to save The Shadow.

Scuffling sounds. Harry gave a call. A warning hiss sounded in the darkness; a token that The Shadow was all right. Then, sprawling bodies stumbling, Harry and Cliff found themselves above a cluster of outstretched Apaches.

Back toward the Cabaret du Diable, Apaches were still struggling with agents. Delka, fighting in the blackness, had given a shout; he had heard an answer in Robeq's tone, right beside him. He knew that the detective had dived back to join the fighters who represented the law.

Agents were retreating, firing revolvers. The only security was to be behind them. Delka dragged his companion with him. He wanted to assure Robeq of safety. Once in the light, Apaches would stand no chance.

Harry and Cliff in response to The Shadow's hissed signal, were making in the opposite direction. They wanted to be away before new agents arrived; and they had just enough time to make it. Hardly had they passed the distant corner before four officers came into view. The agents stopped, just away from a corner

light.

THE situation had altered oddly. A swift fight had been held in one long block of a single street. That narrow thoroughfare had practically emptied. Agents were at both ends of it. Those by the Cabaret du Diable were still being harried by a few lurking Apaches. Delka had dragged a lone man out to safety. He was chiding him in well-intended terms.

"This place is no Sahara Desert," insisted Delka. "Your way of fighting may work in the open; but not in front of a squad of agents. Why handicap your own men?"

"It was Zemba," came the reply. "I had him covered."

"I saw it. You fired at him."

"Four shots. Bah! I was too hurried. Give me a rifle, any day, in preference to this toy pistol!"

"Too short a barrel for the range."

"Yes. But I was swinging down upon him. Blame the agents for throwing away their flashlights. Well, let them take their time. They are too late. Zemba has escaped."

Fighting had lulled. Apaches, the few that remained, were lurking, hoping that the agents would become unwise. But the officers were too wary. They held both ends of the street. They were satisfied.

True, the center of that thoroughfare marked the mouth of the Allee des Bijoux. But the alley was a blind one. Any one who backed in there would be trapped. So the agents waited; and the Apaches lingered also.

Oddly, something was happening in the Allee des Bijoux. A figure was moving; slowly, laboriously. It had come from the darkness of the beleaguered street. One fighter, tired, half crippled in the fray, was seeking temporary refuge. Gaining it, he slumped.

New footsteps crept inward. Another combatant had sought this same seclusion. He had heard the man ahead of him. He listened to the sliding sound of the sagging body. He approached. He reached the flattened form. A flashlight glimmered. It showed two faces.

The face on the sidewalk; grimy, bloodstained, was that of Herbert Balliol. The visage above, leering with its grinning lips was the countenance of Gaspard Zemba. Harry Vincent and Cliff Marsland would have been horrified had they remained to see this outcome.

The Shadow in the toils of Gaspard Zemba!

The flashlight blinked out. The stooping figure gripped the inert form upon the paving and hoisted it upward. Moving into the cul-de-sac, Zemba reached a flight of steps upon the right. Descending with his burden, he rapped at a metal-sheathed door.

At first there was no response; then the door opened slightly inward. A husky voice whispered:

"You can't come through this way! The agents are here in the Cabaret du Diable! Hide in one of the caveaux _"

"Open the door farther!" snarled the burden carrier. "Look! At my left hand!"

The barrier moved inward. A wizened-faced man stared at sight of hand pressed flat against a grimy coat. Fingers were close together; but the next to the last was a single-knuckled stump.

"Gaspard Zemba!"

WITH this exclamation, the man within stepped back and allowed the arrival to enter. Chuckling, the grimy-coated visitor came into a basement room and deposited the inert figure of Herbert Balliol in a corner away from the light. He signaled for the guardian to close the door.

"Lock it," he ordered, "and keep this fellow here. Give me the key. Then I can return later, after the agents have gone."

"But if they wish to search –"

"Remove the man before they do. You will have the key to the upstairs door. You should have another to this lower door."

"We do have another –"

"Then why be disturbed about this one?"

The inner guard grinned sheepishly. He watched the leer upon Zemba's face as the grimy-coated man bent over the form of Herbert Balliol. He saw Zemba's left hand in his pocket; he saw the right hand go to its pocket with the key.

"He will live." Zemba's face showed evil pleasure. His right hand came from his pocket. "That is good. I wish to question him; and I have ways to make men speak. Even such men as this one."

The speaker was rising. Something slipped from his pocket, because of an inward stuffed flap. It made no clatter as it fell, for it struck the edge of the rumpled coat that was worn by the stunned man upon the floor. The guardian did not notice the glimmer of the object. It was the key that he had given Zemba.

Nor was the ugly-faced captor in a position to see the key. He was turning, ready to be led above. The guardian showed him the route; up an inner stairway, past a high counter where they stooped to avoid being seen by agents. Then to a loft above the noisy dance floor of the Cabaret du Diable.

The guardian breathed a sigh of relief after he saw the figure of Gaspard Zemba shift from a window and move across the neighboring roof. He was a member of the underworld. He had obeyed the bidding of Gaspard Zemba.

He hoped that he would gain future reward for his loyalty to the evil chief. But he did not forget that he had a prisoner below. The guardian locked the upper door when he went down to the cabaret floor.

MEANWHILE, a last sortie had taken place outside the Cabaret du Diable. The last Apaches in the side street had driven out upon the agents. The attack had been short-lived. Two Apaches were shot down; the others surrendered. The law entered to search the street and the Allee des Bijoux. Eric Delka was one of the first to advance. He stopped suddenly, as his flashlights picked out blackened garments. He turned and saw Etienne Robeq beside him.

"Look, Robeq!" whispered Delka. "The Shadow was in the battle. Here are his hat and cloak!"

"Good!" came the reply. "Bundle them up. Deliver them to Sergeant Rusanne. I shall call him about the matter. Tell Rusanne to show them to the prefect."

Searchers, moving about, found wounded Apaches and carried them away. The agents also searched the caveaux, to no avail. They found the door into the Cabaret du Diable. They guessed where it led and decided to make a query inside. They went around to the front for that purpose.

Agents within the cabaret gave testimony to the fact that all had been quiet there. The proprietor was as great a rogue as the guardian who had charge of the room below. He swore that no one could have entered from the Allee des Bijoux and the agents believed him. The fact that the last Apaches had made a break for it seemed sufficient proof that there was no outlet.

THE light was out in the room below but a figure was moving in the darkness. A match glimmered. Its glow revealed the face of Herbert Balliol. The prisoner, recovered from his slump, was studying his surroundings. He managed to rise from the floor. Something clattered on the stone. Lowering the match, he found the key.

Eyebrows arched; lips formed a smile. Another match flame showed the door. Carefully, the prisoner unlocked it and crept out into the Allee des Bijoux. Lips still held their smile at the thought of such great luck. This simple escape was easier than any that The Shadow had ever experienced.

Herbert Balliol's figure seemed obscure as it moved outward through the deserted Allee des Bijoux. Then it paused. Keen ears had heard motion ahead. Some one else was moving through the darkness. A meeting was imminent. The listener acted. His long arms shot forward.

A scuffle in the darkness. Quick blows; hard, twisting grips. The fighters rolled to the cobblestones. One lay still. The victor arose, found a flashlight that the vanquished had dropped. He clicked the light. The rays showed an upturned face; that of Etienne Robeq.

Sweeping the flashlight up and down, the pretended Herbert Balliol studied his prisoner's attire. He saw the sleek raincoat; the kid gloves that adorned the hands.

With a slight chuckle, he pocketed the flashlight and kept on his way. He waited at the entrance of the cul-de-sac until he heard his half-stunned opponent stir. Then he departed, through deserted spaces.

It was Eric Delka who later encountered a man groping his way from the Allee des Bijoux. He used a flashlight and discerned the pale face of Etienne Robeq. He heard the detective give a sour laugh.

"I met The Shadow." Robeq's tone denoted chagrin. "He sprawled me in the alley and kept on his way. I did not realize who he was until after I recovered."

"He must have recognized you," smiled Delka. "It's lucky it wasn't Zemba. He would not have shown you such consideration."

"I should like to meet him. Come, Delka. Let us make another search."

AT the Hotel Princesse, Harry and Cliff were anxiously waiting in their suite when the door opened and they witnessed the return of Herbert Balliol. He still showed signs of strife; but his smile persisted as he stated briefly the facts that had occurred.

"To-night was unfortunate," he concluded. "Nevertheless, it is some satisfaction to have escaped from Zemba's toils. As for Robeq, he is not hurt. Our mutual quest will proceed."

"I shall release the little Apache who is prisoner in my room. Let me have his knife. I shall give it back to him. He has not enough nerve to use it. He was simply a fake prowler whom Zemba sent to lead me into a trap."

Harry and Cliff were speculative as they discussed matters afterward. The evening had started with unusual prospects. Action, however, had produced a medley of results, with no conclusion.

"The breaks were against us," observed Harry. "But we can count on The Shadow to bring new opportunities."

"The chief will find a way," agreed Cliff. "He took a long shot and it failed. The next time will be different."

"Zemba didn't manage to keep him."

"That's one grand break. Too bad, though, that it wasn't Zemba that the chief met in the alley. Instead of Robeq."

Harry nodded; but his gaze was puzzled. Somehow, matters had twisted to-night, in a manner that Harry could not quite understand. Deep perplexity was gripping him, despite the fact that Cliff did not share the impression.

Harry felt sure of one point alone. He knew that The Shadow would certainly find the way to another and more important encounter. He believed that Robeq would once more be concerned. Such a three-way meeting, under better circumstances, might well decide the final issue.

Harry was right in his general assumption; but he was wrong in his visualization of the details. A new meeting of three factors would take place. The Shadow Gaspard Zemba Etienne Robeq. Their paths would surely cross.

But when that final issue was produced, strange elements would enter. Deep beneath the surface lay startling facts. Details which were fully understood by only one person among all who were concerned.

Only The Shadow knew.

CHAPTER XV. ZEMBA SENDS A WARNING

CRIME'S aftermath was stirring Paris the next afternoon. Following a drizzly dawn, the day had cleared. Parisians, strolling everywhere, had found one topic of discussion: the latest exploits of the notorious Gaspard Zemba.

Chatters beside the bookstalls along the quays held talk concerning Zemba. Any one following the parapet of the Seine's left bank could hear the name buzzed time and again. Talk of Zemba, however, was not confined to that two-mile stretch of river front.

The supercrook and his deeds were the subject of discussion in every boulevard cafe. Customers who sat at tables gesticulated and flourished copies of *Le Matin* and *Le Temps*. The Paris newspapers had capitalized upon the law's invasion of the *Allee des Bijoux*. The *Cabaret du Diable*, the nearest night resort to the battlefield, had already been thronged by curious visitors.

In contrast to the outside excitement, gloom reigned within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Louis Brezanne had called a new conference. The prefect of police had been invited; also Sergeant Rusanne. Both had

arrived, to find the delegates from other countries: Alonzo, Chiozzi, Cleghorn and the others, including Lord Bixley.

"Last night was a blunder!" Brezanne was emphatic when he made this statement. "Bah! Are your agents helpless, Clandine? They held Gaspard Zemba in their grasp. Then pouf! he was gone. What excuse have you to offer?"

Clandine glared angrily at his questioner. The prefect resented the minister's criticism.

"Place the blame upon Robeq!" he exclaimed. "It was his plan to make the attack. Sergeant Rusanne did no more than to supply information to Robeq. After that, of course, Rusanne followed instructions –"

"We shall hear Robeq's version," interrupted Brezanne, testily. "Lord Bixley has requested Inspector Delka to invite him to this conference."

Both Clandine and Rusanne showed surprise. Before they could make comment, a secretary announced the expected visitors. Robeq and Delka entered, to meet the gazes of the men in conference.

THE two arrivals contrasted in appearance, exactly as they had the night before. Robeq was still playing the role of a fop. He was wearing a pale-gray fedora, a topcoat of the same color. He was wearing a small, white chrysanthemum in his lapel. He was carrying his gray-kid gloves and he held a walking stick tucked beneath his arm. Delka, in a dark coat and an old felt hat, looked somber beside his fashionable companion.

A chuckle from Robeq as he noted the antagonistic glances from the group.

"Ah, messieurs!" The detective shook his head reprovingly. "You do not like my garb? You think it unsuited to a detective? N'est-ce-pas? Is it not so?"

"Let me tell you, then, where I have been to-day. I have gone to the Cabaret du Diable and to the Allee des Bijoux, to study the ground by daylight. I, Robeq, gawked with the rest –"

"And what did you learn?" interrupted the prefect.

"I learned nothing," admitted Robeq, his square-face sobering. "Nothing that will help us locate Zemba. I am sure, however, that the rogue has left the Montmartre."

"A fact which we already know," said Monsieur Brezanne. "If you had not been wasting your time, Monsieur Robeq, we might have informed you sooner."

"Regarding Zemba?"

"Yes." The minister reached to his desk. "We hold a letter that was posted early this morning, from the Faubourg Saint-Denis. It is a new ultimatum from Gaspard Zemba.

"Substantially, he accuses us of having violated his rule." Brezanne was referring to the letter. "He states that we must, therefore, agree to pay the full sums demanded; otherwise he will leave Paris, carrying away all the stolen documents.

"As guarantee of acceptance of his terms, we must insert a special advertisement in the morning journals. That will notify Zemba that we have obtained the millions that he wants; and are ready for a prompt exchange."

Robeq's face had lost its pleasant smile. The detective was repressing a display of anger at Zemba's boldness.

"You are mentioned in the letter, Robeq," added Brezanne. "Rather contemptuously, in fact. Zemba remarks that since you have the faculty for visiting districts incognito, you would make an excellent emissary to conduct the exchange."

Robeq's temper unloosed.

"The upstart!" he stormed. "Why should we tolerate such suggestions! We have until to-morrow morning. Leave me to my own measures. I shall have Zemba before then!"

Doubtful looks and headshakes. Robeq flung his gloves upon the minister's desk. Stiffening, he looked about the group.

"You have lost confidence?" he blared. "You doubt the ability of Robeq? Tien! If that is so, I am no longer wanted. Adieu, messieurs!"

With that, the detective swept his gloves from the desk. Briskly, he donned them, turning toward the door. Brezanne made a comment.

"ONE moment, Monsieur Robeq," insisted the minister. "You came here with a mission. It is your duty to complete it."

"I am a detective," snorted Robeq, wheeling. "Not a toady! I came to receive orders, yes. But they were to be from Monsieur Clandine" he nodded toward the prefect "and not from Gaspard Zemba."

"You came to trap Zemba," said Clandine. "You have failed at that game, Robeq."

"I have not failed. There is still time –"

"But the risk is too great." This was from Brezanne. "Because of your attempts, Zemba has shortened the allotted period. Here, Robeq. Before you depart, read the letter for yourself."

The detective took the letter. His forehead furrowed; his lips fumed.

"These are not terms!" he stormed. "They are indignities! You are to publish in your announcement, the name of some place where I am to be. There, Zemba is to meet me. I am to have the money; he, the plans. Police are to be absent. Bah!"

"There is no risk," remarked Brezanne. "Your meeting can be arranged in broad daylight. Zemba will have followers close about; but we shall also have agents within a reasonable distance. It will be a zone, so to speak, which you can leave if it looks too dangerous; and Zemba, likewise. Neither of you will be jeopardized –"

"Enough!" interrupted Robeq. "You speak as though I feared danger! Peste! I have no dread of Zemba!"

"Then why not act as emissary?"

"Because Zemba demands it. That is reason enough."

"But the transfer must be made."

"Let some one else be a party to it."

"Zemba demands you be the one."

Robeq stood motionless, his gloved right hand against his chin. Suddenly his scowl ended. He gave a sharp cry of enthusiasm.

"Zemba does not know me!" he exclaimed. "No one knows Robeq! Send some other emissary let him proclaim himself to be Robeq!"

"No one else would answer," put in Monsieur Clandine. "Moreover, Robeq, you might be recognized. Zemba was present at last night's fray. You, yourself, exchanged bullets with him."

"You are right," admitted Robeq, seating himself. He turned to Delka. "Zemba saw us during that fight. He must have known that I was Robeq, in spite of my fancy attire. Is it not so?"

Delka began to nod, then pondered.

"Not necessarily," he replied. "You were foolhardy, Robeq. Too much so, in fact."

"That is true. You kept your head better than I. When you dragged me to safety, you appeared to be the leader."

"I acted more wisely, under the immediate circumstances."

"And, therefore, Zemba may have decided that I was not Robeq!"

With his exclamation, Robeq turned to Clandine, expecting approval. The prefect shook his head.

"I still insist," he declared, "that Zemba knows that Robeq was present. Sergeant Rusanne holds to the same opinion."

"I do," agreed Rusanne, slowly. "Yet there is merit in both arguments, Monsieur le prefet. Zemba saw two men. He knows that one was Robeq. He does not know the other."

RUSANNE made the statement in a tactful fashion. It was plain that he did not want to incur the disfavor of either the prefect or Robeq. Both were smiling, half pleased. It was Delka who first displayed an unexpected inspiration from Rusanne's diplomatic words.

"Here is an answer!" exclaimed Delka. "Zemba could have decided that I was Robeq! That makes me eligible for the mission. I am willing to take it." He turned to Lord Bixley: "If you are willing that I should do so."

It was Robeq who put in a sudden objection.

"Ah, non!" he exclaimed. "It is not right, Monsieur Delka, that you should undertake the risk. True, I should like to continue the quest for Zemba; and it will be spoiled if once I submit to his dictates. I should like very much to trick him –"

"Which you can," interposed Delka, "if I meet him in your stead. That was your own suggestion, Robeq."

"Yes. But I meant it for some one other than yourself. One to whom I owed no debt. You saved my life, last

night, Monsieur Delka. I should not let you fare alone in my behalf."

"Then come with me."

Robeq glanced at Zemba's letter. He shook his head.

"Impossible," he declared. "Zemba specifies, that I must come alone. And yet" he paused; his lips showed a smile "and yet there is a way. I have it!"

Commanding the attention of every one, Robeq proposed a plan.

"We shall choose a place," he asserted, "where one would expect to see a few loiterers. Zemba will suspect that detectives may be among them; he will, therefore, study them with care. They will pass his inspection, for none will be police officers.

"But I, Robeq, shall be there. So well disguised that Zemba will not suspect me. Nor will Zemba be looking for Robeq; for he will be awaiting my arrival. Monsieur Delka will come, as Robeq. Zemba will believe that Delka is his man. All the while, I, the real Robeq, will be present. When Delka is safe, away with the plans, I shall follow Zemba!"

LISTENERS buzzed with admiration. As the enthusiasm died, Brezanne questioned:

"What place will you choose for the meeting?"

"We shall decide that this evening," returned Robeq. "Monsieur Delka and myself, at my hotel."

"You must know before midnight."

"Of course." Robeq turned to Rusanne: "You will be at the prefecture?"

The sergeant nodded.

"I shall notify you there," declared the detective. "You will have time to insert the announcement in the morning journals. But I plead with you, messieurs" this to the group "let us wait until the final moment. Luck may still be with us before midnight. We may yet trap Zemba without the delivery of the money. He will be much more cautious once he has gained his millions."

While Robeq was speaking, Clandine remembered something. He produced a small satchel and placed it upon Brezanne's desk. From the bag, the prefect drew out black, knife-slashed garments. Observers arose and clustered close with interest.

"These belonged to The Shadow," announced the prefect, solemnly. "His hat his cloak even these thin, black gloves. Note how loosely the gloves are made, except for the fingers, which stretch to exceeding thinness."

"So that the hands can manage a pistol," added Sergeant Rusanne, "yet slip the gloves off and on with ease."

"How did you gain these trophies?" queried Brezanne. The minister was examining the cloak. "Did The Shadow discard them in the fray?"

"Yes," returned Robeq, promptly. "Delka and I found them afterward."

"You saw The Shadow?"

"Not until after the Apaches had practically slashed his cloak away from his shoulders. We saw him as a tall, struggling fighter, in the midst of a fierce scuffle."

"How did you know he was The Shadow?"

"He could have been no other. The Apaches, moreover, were raging blurring the name: 'L'Ombre! L'Ombre!'"

"In Paris," remarked Alonzo, the Spanish delegate, "he is a shadow. In Madrid, he would be a man."

The others smiled. Alonzo's remark was a play upon words in two languages: ombre, the French for "shadow;" and hombre, the Spanish for "man."

"Last night," declared Robeq, "he was a shadow, when the fray began. He became a man, at the finish, when he had lost his cloak and hat. Your statement actually covers the situation, senor."

"To–night," added Delka, solemnly, "he may again become a shadow."

"Without these garments?" queried the prefect.

"He may have others," reminded Delka. "In fact, he probably has."

Robeq smiled sourly at the remark.

"The Shadow is a fighter," he admitted, "yet we may regard him as partly responsible for last night's fiasco. I hope that he does not interfere again –"

Delka made no response. He was hoping the opposite. He knew from experience that the skill of Robeq could not match that of The Shadow.

The prefect was putting away the slashed cloak, ending the discussion of The Shadow. All turned to Etienne Robeq, as though indicating that he was their one hope. The detective smiled and bowed.

"Come to my hotel this evening, Monsieur Delka," he said. "We shall plan for to–night and for the morrow. Au revoir, messieurs."

The conference ended with Robeq's departure. Eric Delka accompanied Lord Bixley to the latter's hotel, the famous Palais d'Orsay, that overlooked the Champs Elysees. Lord Bixley had chosen it because the Palais d'Orsay was a rendezvous of English society in Paris.

DURING their journey, Delka maintained silence. New thoughts had gripped the man from Scotland Yard. Delka believed that Etienne Robeq could accomplish nothing to–night; that the French detective's only hope would be a coup upon the morrow, when Delka would serve as proxy in the meeting with Gaspard Zemba.

Nevertheless, Delka still believed that much could happen upon this last night enough to completely change the situation before the morrow arrived. Delka was counting upon The Shadow.

That master of strategy was still at large in Paris. He ahead of Robeq and Delka had managed to reach the Allee des Bijoux and commence hostilities with Gaspard Zemba's hordes. Delka did not agree with Robeq,

when the latter had stated that The Shadow had interfered.

If any one had interfered, Robeq was the one. Such was Delka's hunch; and it was correct, although the Scotland Yard man would have been amazed had he known the exact extent to which Robeq's entry had disturbed The Shadow's plans to deal with Zemba.

The hours that remained before midnight were to prove much more startling than Eric Delka could suppose. Long had The Shadow planned. Tonight, he would approach success!

CHAPTER XVI. THE SHADOW WITHOUT

NIGHT had arrived. The cloudless evening was bringing spontaneous gayety to Paris, after the drizzly spell. The effect of the improved weather was apparent even in the dilapidated studio of the mythical artist Lesboscombes. There was no patter of rain to-night, upon the roof of this room that lay above the wineshop run by old Monsieur Grotain.

A man was seated in the studio. It was Jacques. The Apache's pockmarked face was moody. His squatty body was hunched upon a rickety chair, his long arms hanging almost to the floor. Jacques scowled suddenly as the door of the studio opened. He started to come to his feet; then sat back when he saw Georges enter.

The second Apache was wearing a grin that curved like the scar upon his forehead. He nodded a greeting to Jacques; then took a chair of his own. A moment later, both Apaches heard the approach of footsteps. This time it was Bantoire. Leering with evil pleasure, the third Apache showed his ugly teeth.

It was plain that Georges and Bantoire had gained success to-day something that Jacques had not accomplished. But not one of the three was willing to confide in the others. The trio of cutthroats were awaiting the arrival of Gaspard Zemba. They looked like sans-culottes from the days of the Revolution; murderers plotting bloody deeds.

TIME drifted. Bantoire's keen ears detected a sound. He looked toward the door; Georges and Jacques followed suit. Another had entered. They were staring at the ugly, distorted face of Gaspard Zemba. Their fierce-mannered chief was angry in mood.

"Why are you here?" came his harsh demand. "Do you fear the agents and the sergents de ville? Why are you not continuing the search that I ordered?"

"It was useless," grumbled Jacques. "To-day, I began a trail that led nowhere."

Zemba's fists were clenching. Bantoire spoke.

"My trail was better," said the second Apache. "It gave me a goal."

"Mine also," added Georges. "One better, perhaps, than Bantoire's."

Sharp eyes gleamed from Zemba's fiendish countenance. His gaze was toward Jacques. The first Apache spoke.

"I went to the Cabaret du Diable," informed Jacques. "I talked with Corchu, who keeps the cellar there. I knew that he was one of us. He was worried, Corchu was. He asked if I had come from Zemba."

"And what did you answer?"

"That I had. I wanted to hear Corchu talk; and talk he did. He whined that the prisoner had escaped –"

An oath from Zemba. Jacques nodded.

"Escaped as by a miracle," continued the Apache. "Out through a closed door, into the Allee des Bijoux. He was gone when Corchu went to carry him to a chamber that lay deeper in the cellar."

A scowl from Zemba. Jacques added:

"Corchu was troubled. He fears the wrath of Zemba. I said that I would look for him that man who had escaped to bring him back. But I could find no trail."

"That is not surprising," growled Zemba. "The prisoner was The Shadow. I left him with the guardian whom you call Corchu."

"L'Ombre!"

The ejaculation came simultaneously from the Apaches. Zemba's face showed an annoyed scowl.

"His escape was no marvel," declared the supercreek. "I discovered later that I had lost the key that Corchu gave me. It must have dropped in the cellar. But The Shadow! Bah! I want no news of him. Tell me what about the quest to which I set you? Has news leaked out concerning my greatest hiding place?"

A headshake from Jacques. A pleased leer from Zemba, as his left hand, displaying its absent finger, came from his pocket with a pack of cigarettes.

"I have news," stated Bantoire, suddenly. "I began inquiries about our comrades who were slain in last night's brawl. I asked others where different ones had last been seen. I learned something regarding an Apache named Quintre."

Georges looked sharply at Bantoire; but the latter did notice it. Zemba's keen eyes caught the darted gaze. Bantoire was resuming; Zemba did not interrupt.

"Quintre, alone of all the fighters," said Bantoire, "had been seen in the Faubourg Saint–Germain. Why should he have been seen on the Rive Gauche when he belonged in Montmartre, on the Rive Droit?"

There was merit in Bantoire's question. The Faubourg Saint–Germain, on the Left Bank of the Seine, was a contrast to the Montmartre, far beyond the Right Bank.

"I went to Saint–Germain," continued Bantoire. "I searched about the places where Quintre had been seen. Bah! There were none that would have suited him. Only mansions of the rich some homes that once were palaces for that is where all aristocrats lived formerly."

A SHRUG of his shoulders indicated that Bantoire had finished his report. A cunning gleam showed upon the face of Georges. His story had been reserved until the last. The fact pleased him.

"I too, inquired about Quintre," informed Georges. "But not because I searched into the affairs of many who were dead. I had no need to do so. My reason for wondering about Quintre was different."

"Quintre had a comrade, Marlier. Like twins they were, everywhere together. I sought for Marlier, to learn his story of the battle. I found Marlier near the Place Saint–Michel. He was drinking absinthe, mourning for

Quintre.

"Pourquoi! Because Marlier had not been with Quintre, to fight beside him. When I asked the reason, Marlier would not speak. Not at first; but afterward, he said that had Quintre been with him, no harm would have befallen.

"Where, you ask, had Marlier been? I learned where. In the very place that Bantoire has mentioned the Faubourg Saint–Germain. It was there he went after he left the absinthe shop. I followed. He went to a graystone house and entered from an alley at the back. The windows of the house were shuttered."

"Ah!" The interruption was blurted by Bantoire. "I know the place! Chez Vraillard! La maison de la duchesse!"

It was Zemba whose snarl came next.

"The old palace of the Duchess of Vraillard," he corroborated. "What else do you know about it?"

"I know nothing," replied Bantoire.

"Then say nothing," growled Zemba. "Speak, Georges. What have you learned?"

"Only what Marlier told me," returned the Apache, wisely. "He did not mention the old palace. Nor did he know that I followed him there. But he told me that he had been on guard last night. He and three others."

"At the palace?"

"Where else? He was going back to the place, he said. That was why he had not been with Quintre. Then Marlier told me more. He and the others, he said, would guard three at a time; with one man off duty."

"And what were they guarding? Did Marlier say?"

"Yes. He said that they were guarding those who were within!"

Georges delivered his final statement with a note of triumph. Its meaning dawned upon both Jacques and Bantoire. Georges had found the leak that Zemba feared. "Guarding those within" it could mean but one thing. The Vraillard Palace was the hide–out where Zemba's foreign agents were keeping under cover. It was the spot where Zemba's stolen documents were stored!

FOR one long moment, the face of Gaspard Zemba remained unchanged. It held its characteristic distortion. Then came the transformation. It took on a fury that was greater than ever before. The Apaches stared, their mouths wide with gasps. Never had they seen such murderous ire.

"Marlier!" spat Zemba, his lips contorted into an incredible snarl. "Marlier a traitor! The others! They may be as bad as he! Les cochons! None can be trusted!"

From the fierceness of his glare, the three Apaches believed that he had included them in his tirade. Then Zemba's rage faded, to be followed by mutterings as he stood with his left hand thrust into his jacket pocket. Zemba's face showed evil commendation as he stared toward Georges.

"You have done well," growled the supercrook. "Perhaps too well. You have learned my secret. The Vraillard Palace is my last place of security. It was well chosen. The police bah! They would never have suspected it.

Robeq The Shadow they could never have guessed it, of all the places in Paris that I might have used for my headquarters.

"The guards must be changed, this very night. Three trusted men must take up new duty. What three? You! Jacques, Georges and Bantoire!"

Approval dominated Zemba's tone. The three Apaches showed ugly grins of pleasure.

"I shall take you there, to the palace," resumed Zemba. "I shall tell the others no!" A sudden fury seized him. "They are traitors, perhaps! Once a man has talked, it means danger. We must deal with them as with any other whom we might suspect of treachery. I have a way that will do for them!"

Cunningly, Zemba considered; then spoke his plan:

"Go. All three of you, with Georges as your leader. Meet outside the Vraillard Palace. Enter by the door where Marlier went. Seize the three guards, singly, if you can.

"Should you be challenged, trapped; then ask for Marlier. He knows you, Georges. Tell him that you come from Zemba. He will believe you. Tell him that the guard is to be doubled.

"Once you are believed, all will be easy. You can seize Marlier and his two companions, unaware. Find the most distant compartment in the cellar. Take the prisoners there. Remain until I join you. The rest of the task will be mine."

Zemba's teeth showed fanglike as he gloated. "Once I have questioned them, I shall learn if they are traitors. Perhaps they are but fools, like Marlier. But as I said once before, fools are sometimes wise."

The Apaches were rising. Zemba halted them.

"Wait!" he commanded. "I must leave here first. I must have time to summon others, to station them as reserves throughout the faubourg. Danger may be anywhere in Saint-Germain to-night. Do not leave here for another quarter hour."

The Apaches watched their chief leave the studio. Chuckling to themselves, they paced about until the given time had elapsed. Then they shuffled from the room, stole down the creaky stairs and reached the street below. They headed for the nearest corner.

MELLOW street lamps made the Latin Quarter a district of hazy light. The Apaches were below the Boulevard Saint-Michel, principal thoroughfare of the Quartier Latin. They kept to narrow streets. They had not traveled far, however, before a shadowy shape glided up from neighboring darkness.

A phantom being, cloaked in black. The Shadow. Somehow, he had traced these three Apaches. Gliding along behind them, The Shadow remained obscure. He came closer as the three crooks stopped beside an old sedan that was parked in an unused entry drive.

Keen ears caught mumbled conversation. Gleaming eyes watched the Apaches board the car. The Shadow glided off into darkness. Reaching another street, he stepped aboard a waiting taxi.

When the carload of Apaches rolled into view, The Shadow's taxi followed. The automobile was heading northward, the wrong direction for Saint-Germain. It reached the Rue Dauphine and crossed the Pont-Neuf the "new bridge" which is the oldest bridge in Paris. On the far side, it turned right and kept on

until the Pont–Au–Change. Turning right again, the car crossed to the Ile de la Cite, heading directly toward the Boul' Mich'.

The course was intended to throw chance followers off the trail; and it succeeded, in a sense. Traffic intervened at the Pont–Au–Change. The Shadow's cab was halted.

Apologetically, the driver leaned back to inform his passenger that he could not overhaul the car ahead. In quiet tones, The Shadow gave a destination; north of the Seine, not south.

The cab finally started. As it did, a whispered laugh sounded softly within the interior. Though The Shadow had lost the trail, he did not seem perturbed. He had heard words that passed between the three Apaches. Apparently, he had learned something regarding their destination.

The whispered laugh died; but its tones provoked a weird hollowness within the moving taxi. Somehow, that mirth had carried a chill that boded ill for the schemes of Gaspard Zemba!

CHAPTER XVII. THE SHADOW'S MOVE

WHILE The Shadow was concluding a brief journey that had commenced in the Quartier Latin, Harry Vincent was seated alone in the suite which he shared with Cliff Marsland at the Hotel Princesse.

Time had passed slowly to–day. Neither Harry nor Cliff had received any word from The Shadow. They knew that Herbert Balliol was not in his room. Hence they had come to the natural assumption that he had gone alone to the Montmartre.

That particular district seemed the logical place to pick up the trail of Gaspard Zemba. Nevertheless, Harry could not help but wonder how The Shadow could accomplish results by a new visit. The police had searched the Allee des Bijoux thoroughly. As for the Cabaret du Diable, The Shadow would scarcely venture there in the guise of Herbert Balliol. Nor could he go cloaked until after dark.

Since evening had already fallen, Harry supposed that The Shadow was at last finding real opportunity to move. Yet Harry could not help wondering about other possibilities. Gaspard Zemba, for instance. Had the crook returned to the Cabaret du Diable to learn that his prisoner was gone? Perhaps; yet it was likely that Zemba had been wise enough to keep away from a place where police would be so much in evidence.

AFTER a long wait for word from The Shadow, Cliff had gone down to dinner, leaving Harry in the suite. Soon Cliff would be back. It would be his turn to wait. Drowsy, Harry was stretched in a big chair, deciding what he would order for dinner, when the telephone interrupted his reverie.

Harry picked up the receiver. He spoke. Instantly, his nerves tingled. A voice was upon the wire. A whispered tone that carried recognition. It was The Shadow!

"Report."

The single word was a command. For a moment, Harry was confused; for he had nothing to report. Then he smiled as he realized that nothing, in this case, might mean something. He stated simply that he was alone in the suite; that Cliff was downstairs at dinner.

"Instructions –"

Harry keyed up as he heard the whispered word. Then he was all attention, listening, thrilled with eagerness

as he heard the statements that followed. Orders that meant action. News that offered opportunity. The Shadow's terse whisper ended. Harry delivered the reply:

"Instructions received."

The call ended, Harry grabbed his hat and coat and hurried from the suite latching the door behind him. The first job was to get Cliff. There would be no dinner for Harry to-night; but that did not matter. All the way down to the lobby, Harry was filled with exuberance. His enthusiasm waned, however, when he reached the dining room.

Cliff was not there.

FOR a full five minutes, Harry peered everywhere, but saw no sign of his companion agent. At last, he gave up the search. Troubled, Harry returned upstairs. In the suite, he paced back and forth, wondering what had happened to Cliff.

A dozen minutes followed. A key clicked in the door. Then Cliff entered, admitting himself with a duplicate key. He closed the door and stared at Harry.

"Where were you?"

Cliff was surprised at the accusing tone of Harry's question.

"At the Cafe d'Angleterre," replied Cliff. "I left word at the desk that I would be there. The dining room was crowded."

"I should have asked at the desk," fumed Harry. "Or you should have called up here when you went out. We've both made a bull."

"How is that?"

"The Shadow called. Twenty minutes ago. Immediate instructions. We've got to start at once, Cliff. I've packed my automatic. Pick up yours."

"Where are we going?"

"To the Faubourg Saint-Germain." Harry spoke rapidly as he watched Cliff dig deep into a trunk to obtain a gun. "To a little street called the Allee Mantinard. It's directly in back of the Palais de Vraillard."

"The Palais de Vraillard?"

"Yes. A big, graystone mansion that belonged to the Duchess of Vraillard. We're to wait across the way, for word from The Shadow."

"You can't mean that the palace is the –"

"That's exactly what I do mean. It's Zemba's hide-out. I gathered that from what The Shadow told me in his instructions."

"Then we've got to hurry –"

A chuckle stopped Cliff's statement. It came from within the room. Harry and Cliff wheeled toward the door, the latter gripping his automatic. Surprise, then relief, showed on their faces as they saw the tall form of Herbert Balliol.

"Cliff was out," began Harry. "I lost a chance to locate him. That is why we're delayed –"

"Haste will be unnecessary."

The comment came in the steady tone of Herbert Balliol. Calmly, the entrant waved Harry and Cliff to chairs. Then he explained:

"I intended to have you follow me. I, too, was delayed. I came back here in the hope of forestalling your departure. It is fortunate that you had not left."

Harry and Cliff smiled at the good luck.

"Since I have chosen to stop our action" the quiet voice was firm – "I shall take other precautions. As you recall, our efforts last night were partially nullified by the forces of the law. It would have been preferable had the police arrived sooner or later than they did.

"Therefore, I shall arrange for proper police assistance. Remain seated and listen while I prepare a strategic move. One that will interest you."

A SMILE appeared on the lips of Herbert Balliol. A twinkle from the eyes behind the blue spectacles. Going to the telephone, the tall strategist picked up the instrument and called a number. Both Cliff and Harry wondered what The Shadow planned.

"Hello..." Balliol's lips were still smiling; but his voice had changed its accent. "Hello... Monsieur le prefet? Ah! Good! I had hoped that I might find you at home."

The words were spoken in smooth French, a fact which made both agents nod. They knew The Shadow to be an expert linguist. But his next statements were a total surprise; one that made Cliff and Harry gasp at their chief's bold cleverness.

"You ask who I am?" The tone was bantering. "Ah, Monsieur le prefet! I am he who you have long wished to meet. Etienne Robeq, from Marseilles!

"Ah! You show surprise!" a pause; then a chuckle "you had not expected to hear from Robeq... Of course, not... Because you thought that Robeq would fail..."

"Ah, non, M'sieu'. Never. Robeq has succeeded... With a capture? Not yet; but soon... Yes, I have located Gaspard Zemba... His hide-out? No. It is in no caveau... It is a palace... Where? In the Faubourg Saint-Germain.

"The Palais Vraillard... But wait! It is for me, Robeq, to act first. Here is the plan... Yes, I shall enter... No, I need no aid... I wish only that you would place agents within half a kilometre of the palace..."

"Within the next half hour... Yes. They must be cautious... You will follow my order? Good! What is that, monsieur? Why did I not call the prefecture?"

Harry and Cliff saw eyes sharpen; then lips purred the suave answer:

"Ah! Of course, Monsieur le Prefet... But I did call there and Sergeant Rusanne was not at the prefecture... Ah, non! It would not be wise to call him... I have talked with you. That is sufficient..."

"It is you, monsieur, who must act with me... Tell nothing to the agents except that they are to obey Robeq, when he announces himself... Very good, monsieur..."

As the speaker concluded his call, he resumed the manner of Herbert Balliol. Harry and Cliff watched the receiver settle on its hook. They expected comment from The Shadow. Words came.

"The prefect was puzzled," was the comment. "Perhaps he had good reason. He had not expected to hear from Etienne Robeq. I had been saving this ruse until good opportunity. It fits Robeq's way of working from under cover. Furthermore, he listened when he heard that I had gained the trail to Zemba. But come! We must be starting, in order to arrive before the agents."

FIVE minutes later, three persons were riding in a taxicab toward the Pont-Neuf. Harry Vincent and Cliff Marsland between them, the tall figure of Herbert Balliol. To both Harry and Cliff, this expedition was a newer experience than any they had ever gained before. One that would probably never happen in New York; but which was possible in Paris.

They were riding with The Shadow. He, in turn, had discarded his guise of black. Usually, Harry and Cliff were told to act alone. The Shadow's own actions generally depended upon the cover of darkness. One course for the agents; another for The Shadow. Such had been the first plan to-night.

The new ruse had altered that procedure. Harry, speculating, believed that he had found the reason. Last night, The Shadow had stationed his agents; then had come alone. Matters had gone badly, however, in the Montmartre. That seemed the answer to The Shadow's sudden shift to a different system.

Moreover, Harry could remember episodes in London. There, at times, The Shadow had worked more openly than usual. He could afford to do so, in cities where he appeared only at intervals. London and Paris were different from New York. In America, crooks were always on the lookout for The Shadow.

Harry smiled with confidence. He looked toward the profiled features of Herbert Balliol. The blue spectacles were gone; even in the gloom of the cab, that steady face added to Harry's belief that success would be gained.

Cliff was leaning forward to toss a cigarette from the window. Turning, Cliff caught Harry's gaze and responded with a knowing nod. He, too, was confident. Instructions from The Shadow, followed by the chief's own arrival.

Both Harry and Cliff feared no ill, while The Shadow, himself, was with them. Yet they had but little inkling of the future. Though they did not guess it, they were due for complications. They were tackling Gaspard Zemba, one of the most powerful enemies whom The Shadow had ever encountered.

Startling surprises; grim dangers; the threat of death itself all these would be due to-night. Dread circumstances would confront these aids of The Shadow; episodes that would require all the skill of their chief to bring them through alive.

CHAPTER XVIII. THE LAW'S MOVE

HARRY VINCENT was not the only man in Paris who had been chafing under forced restraint. At the Hotel Talleyrand, Eric Delka was also idling away slow-passing time; but he had a companion. Delka was in

Robeq's hotel room; and the detective was also present.

Ever since dusk, Robeq had been on the point of leaving. Garbed in gray coat and gloves, his hat in readiness beside him, the detective had been prepared for an immediate departure. All that he wanted was some word from Sergeant Rusanne; any wisp of information that the law might provide. But no such word had come.

Robeq had smoked innumerable cigarettes. Exhausting his supply, he remarked that he would buy more cigarettes in the tobacco shop below. Delka agreed to wait in the room, in case Rusanne called. Robeq went out. One minute after his departure, the telephone bell rang.

It was not Sergeant Rusanne. It was Monsieur Clandine, and the prefect showed excitement. He recognized Delka's tone; finding that Robeq was out, the prefect gave the message to the Scotland Yard man.

"Five minutes ago!" exclaimed Clandine, across the wire. "A telephone call. Viola! It was Monsieur Robeq! But it did not sound like Robeq!"

"Robeq called you?" queried Delka. "Impossible! He was here until a minute ago. He just went downstairs for cigarettes."

"Ah! A hoax!" The prefect's voice denoted ire. "From some one who has not guessed that Robeq is so close with the law. I expected as much. You ask me why? Because the call did not come through Sergeant Rusanne."

"Have you called Rusanne?"

"Not yet. But listen to this, Monsieur Delka. The man who did call, said that he had learned Zemba's hiding place. Within the Palais Vraillard. Peste! How fine a place that would be. I am to send agents, to picket them about. Such was his suggestion. I must do something, even if this proves to be a hoax."

"Of course. Wait one moment, Monsieur le Prefet."

DELKA turned. Robeq had come back. Tersely, Delka explained what Clandine had told him. Robeq seized the telephone. He started a rapid conversation with the prefect. At first, the discourse was excited; then suddenly, Robeq stiffened.

"I have the answer!" he exclaimed, to Clandine. "It was The Shadow! Yes... He could have found Zemba's rendezvous... What shall we do? The answer is simple. We must act!"

"No, no... Neither course will do... I have the answer... A picked squad of agents... Ones already at Saint-Germain... Yes. I shall call Rusanne. He can arrange it.

"You wish to join us? Excellent!... Certainly, there will be time... Delka and I shall be outside. I shall tell Rusanne to come here... Yes, you will arrive as soon as Rusanne..."

Hanging up, Robeq turned to Delka.

"The Shadow is in it," informed the detective. "Clever chap! I wager that he has actually traced Zemba. He wants to work it alone; but he knows that he may need the law. That is why he called the prefect.

"Clandine wanted to spoil it all, by smashing into the Vraillard Palace. That would be a mistake. At the same time, The Shadow is taking too great a risk. I have found the way to aid him. Instead of deploying our agents

half a kilometre distant, we shall close in and enter afterward."

"Agents may prove clumsy," objected Delka. "I heard you mention them to the prefect."

"You are right," agreed Robeq, "but we are prepared for this emergency. Rusanne has already chosen picked men from every commune and faubourg. We shall have a squad awaiting us at Saint–Germain. Men upon whom we can rely."

Picking up the telephone, Robeq put in a call to the prefecture. He was connected immediately with Sergeant Rusanne. Tersely, Robeq gave the details. He emphasized the matter of the picked squad. The call ended, he turned to Delka.

"Rusanne has everything ready," assured Robeq. "He knows his business, that fellow. All will go well to–night, unless –"

Delka raised his eyebrows in query. Robeq smiled grimly.

"Unless the whole thing is a false trail," he said. "It may be such. Even this famous sleuth, The Shadow, may make false steps. But if he is right, tonight –"

"What then?"

"I shall concede," smiled the detective, "that The Shadow is greater than Robeq."

Delka duplicated the smile. He decided that no greater compliment could come from Robeq. The detective was an egotist, despite his capability.

THE prefect of police was speedy in his trip to the Hotel Talleyrand. Five minutes after Delka and Robeq had reached the street, a limousine appeared and parked near by. Robeq approached; then signaled to Delka. They joined Clandine in his car.

"Where is Rusanne?" inquired the prefect, anxiously. "I thought that he would be here before me."

"He has been giving the orders," replied Robeq. "It should not take him long."

A taxi wheeled from the corner. Rusanne stepped from it, recognized the prefect's car and boarded it. The limousine rolled toward the Seine. Rusanne, perched upon a folding seat, was explicit with his report.

"Eight agents will join us," he declared, "at an appointed place one hundred metres distant from the Palais Vraillard. They will be stationed beside the empty Maison Jollet, where no one can observe them.

"The chauffeur can park this car in the driveway beside the old Jollet house, where there is ample space. We can then proceed to the Vraillard Palace and enter by the rear door, which opens into the Allee Mantinard.

"I learned all this from those who know the faubourg. The picked squad will be sent from Saint–Germain. We may, however, arrive before them. If so, our wait will not be long. Meanwhile, as an added precaution, reserve agents will begin to form a cordon one kilometre distant.

"The cordon will close after we have entered. That, Monsieur Robeq, is how I interpreted your instructions."

"You have done well," assured Monsieur Clandine.

"Except for one point," objected Robeq. "Yet, in a sense, it is not vital."

"And what is that?" inquired the prefect.

"The matter of Zemba himself," returned Robeq. "He may not be there when we arrive. I should like to capture him; nevertheless, he is not the most important. We want those stolen documents. Unquestionably, they are in the Vraillard Palace, along with Zemba's accomplices.

"Once we have the documents, we have destroyed Zemba's game. Should he be there, we will seize him. Should he be outside, the presence of a police cordon may alarm him if he comes to the palace. Nevertheless, the cordon may be essential. You did wisely to order it, Rusanne."

The limousine was nearing the Faubourg Saint-Germain. Rusanne, referring to a pocket map, gave the chauffeur instructions. They turned into a secluded street, followed it a few blocks; then slowed down before a crumbling building that stood darkened and alone. This was the Maison Jollet. The chauffeur wheeled the car into the driveway, up a steep incline of jouncing gravel.

The passengers alighted. No agents were about. Robeq pointed to a high porch; they ascended steps and paused there. Rusanne lighted a match and referred to the street map. He turned and pointed off through a space between some smaller buildings.

THERE, framed against the sky that shone with the city's glow was a gray building, hemmed in by smaller structures that had encroached upon its once proud preserves. It looked like a fortress, with grim walls and heavy shuttered windows; It stood not much more than a hundred yards away, but lower because of a slight slope in the ground.

"Le Palais Vraillard," commented Rusanne.

"Awaiting our visit," nodded Robeq. "Is that the front of the building, Rusanne?"

"I believe so," replied the sergeant, "according to the map. The Allee Mantinard should be on the other side. The agents will tell us."

"When they arrive," put in the prefect, sourly. "What is detaining them, Rusanne?"

"Nothing. They are here."

Footsteps were crunching on the gravel. The men on the porch descended to meet the approaching soldiery. With military precision, the squad came to a halt beside the prefect's limousine. A grizzled sergeant stepped forward and saluted. The prefect turned to Robeq.

"You shall take charge," he stated. "Your orders will be obeyed."

Robeq bowed; then turned to the sergeant.

"Lead us to the Vraillard Palace," he ordered. "Proceed cautiously. We are anxious to give no alarm. We are dealing to-night with Gaspard Zemba."

The sergeant stared for a moment; but made no comment, nor did his men. The importance of the mission seemed to have struck home. Tensely, the group moved from the driveway, one dozen strong, including those who had joined the eight agents.

The law was making its move; a follow-up to The Shadow's plan. One problem remained: the part that crooks might play. Once again, a three-way meeting was possible.

Etienne Robeq Gaspard Zemba and The Shadow!

CHAPTER XIX. WITHIN THE PALACE

OBSERVERS had viewed the Vraillard Palace from the front. The bulky, gray building itself blocked the sight of the Allee Mantinard, which was the chosen route for entrance. Hence the invaders who represented the law were unaware of happenings behind the huge stone building.

There, close under the sheltering mass of grayish walls, Harry and Cliff were waiting for a signal. They were beside an obscure rear door, whispering between themselves.

"The time is nearly up, Cliff. The Shadow said five minutes –"

"And there's only half a minute longer. I hope the chief hasn't run into trouble."

"That's not likely, Cliff. The place is as quiet as a cemetery."

"That's why I don't like it. It may be a trap. An unlocked door nobody about –"

"That's only a blind. The palace is supposed to be deserted."

"But the windows are shuttered. Why shouldn't this back door be locked?"

"Zemba's orders, probably. He may be coming here. He wouldn't want to bungle around, while he unlocked the door –"

Harry broke off. He had heard a sound. The door was opening inward. A single word was spoken, in a whispered voice:

"Come."

Harry and Cliff entered the thick blackness of a basement. Beside them, they could distinguish a slight motion; but the darkness was so complete that they were unable to perceive the shape of the leader who had summoned them.

A flashlight blinked, in guarded fashion. It showed a curious cellar with vaulted archways that spread out like a catacomb. Some of the archways were open; others were blocked by wooden barricades, with doors set in them.

The flashlight, sweeping, picked out an open arch. Then it blinked at intervals, its bearer leading a forward course through the opening in the wall. The Shadow's agents followed.

The place was like a labyrinth; Harry and Cliff promptly conceded that The Shadow had done speedy work within these vaults. Five minutes had been the time allotted; and in that period their companion had traced the course he wanted. The flashlight stopped its blinking progress. Its rays settled upon a door that was one step above the level of the cellar floor.

The door had a large, old-fashioned lock. Harry decided that The Shadow must have picked it at the first

attempt, for the door opened without resistance, when a hand came into the light. It was the left hand, plain and unadorned. Frequently, The Shadow wore a talisman on that hand; a ring that contained a fire opal. Here in Paris, he had discarded that gem while playing the part of Herbert Balliol.

A wise procedure, from Harry's viewpoint. Sometimes that fiery girasol worked against The Shadow. He needed it only as an occasional token, when dealing with persons who required a symbol by which to recognize him. It was seldom necessary when The Shadow was depending upon his agents as sole helpers.

THE flashlight was extinguished. They were moving up a flight of curving stairs. Dull illumination greeted them. They arrived in a barren hallway, where a single wall bracket provided light. Harry and Cliff looked to see if their chief had donned his cloak. They saw the face of Herbert Balliol, minus the blue-tinted spectacles.

A smile of Balliol's lips answered Harry's mental query. The Shadow had no need for shrouding garments of black. The total darkness of the cellar had been sufficient. Apparently, The Shadow intended to go through with the game in the guise of Balliol. The reason became evident.

"We are ready." The whisper was Balliol's, but toned to solemnity within the hushed space of this gloomy hall. "I have found the rendezvous. Observe that door, toward the back, beneath the grand stairway to the second floor. That is where the rogues have their headquarters."

Harry and Cliff noted the door. It was slightly ajar; from its edges came dull streaks of light. Harry guessed that The Shadow had already spied into the room beyond.

"There are four men in the room," resumed the whispered voice. "Also a large safe, which must contain the stolen documents. We shall surprise the men; while you two hold the culprits covered, I shall work upon the safe.

"Zemba is not here; but that is no cause for alarm. I shall be prepared to handle him. Your work will be to keep the others helpless. Remember that our prisoners are hunted men. They will be under tension. To preserve it, we should maintain strict silence."

Guns were coming from carriers beneath Balliol's tuxedo coat. Harry and Cliff produced their own automatics. A whisper told them to remain where they were. The tall form of Herbert Balliol crouched and crept forward.

Amazement held Harry Vincent as he watched the stealth of the advance. Harry knew The Shadow's remarkable ability at silent approach, when garbed in black and covered by darkness. Rarely, however, had he witnessed The Shadow's demonstration of this ability.

There was something incredible about the motion of Herbert Balliol's form. Only a master worker could have stalked his prey in such a perfect fashion. Not the slightest sound reached the ears of The Shadow's agents.

When their creeping leader reached the door, he paused and moved his left hand up and down. It was the signal for readiness. Harry and Cliff strained forward.

Straightening, the tall form of Balliol became electric in its action. With a twist, a shoulder struck the partly opened door. With a spin that matched the gyration of a whirling dervish, the invader launched himself into the lighted room. Ready to aid The Shadow, Harry and Cliff sprang forward. They reached the doorway two seconds after their leader had plunged through.

FOUR seated men had been startled by the invasion. Grouped about a comfortably furnished room, they were staring, wild eyed, at the tuxedoed figure of Herbert Balliol. Automatics were swinging in the invader's fists. Though their gasps were savage, the trapped men were too astonished to act.

Before they had a chance to join in concerted effort, they saw three antagonists instead of one. Harry and Cliff had arrived. A total of six guns. The men in the room realized their helplessness. Their hands came up. Harry and Cliff each picked out a pair to cover.

A smile fixed itself upon the lips of Herbert Balliol. Silently, in keeping with The Shadow's coolness, the tall invader pocketed his own automatics. He strolled about the group, frisked guns from pockets and tossed the firearms into a wastebasket.

Returning to the door of the room, he closed it to the exact point where it had been before. Without a word or gesture, he stalked across the room and stooped before a small, square safe that was wedged deeply into the interior of a large, old-fashioned fireplace.

Eased by the calmness of their leader's action, Harry and Cliff surveyed the men before them. Harry was covering a fuming Spaniard and a disgruntled American. Cliff held a nervous Italian and a stolid man whose nationality was doubtful. These were the agents who had served Gaspard Zemba in other lands. Willoughby Blythe, the English spy, had never joined the group.

Besides the door through which the invaders had entered, there were two other portals, which faced each other from far corners of the room. Doorless, these openings formed yawning cavities to darkened rooms beyond; but they were curtained, to relieve the emptiness. The draperies, however, were parted slightly; and Harry was half facing one while Cliff held a similar view of the other. The prisoners had their backs to the doorways.

Hence The Shadow's agents held complete control against surprise invasion. As for the door through which they had entered, its present condition still ajar would enable them to detect sounds from the hall. Both Harry and Cliff felt sure that The Shadow would remember that outer door while he was working at the safe.

Moreover, they were struck with admiration of The Shadow's method. The total silence was impressive; it made the prisoners jittery, wondering what would come next. Harry and Cliff could notice troubled eyes that darted blinking glances toward the form of Herbert Balliol. Long fingers were manipulating the dial of the safe. Trapped rogues were plainly worried.

THICK walls; shuttered windows; solid floors these were elements that made the old palace soundproof. No one in that upstairs room could possibly have heard sounds from outside or beneath. Not even The Shadow. Hence there was nothing to tell of new invaders who had just arrived.

The Allee Mantinard was a shut-in, darkened street; and the rear of the Palais Vraillard topped a slight slope of ground. Hence the prefect of police and his companions had reached the palace easily; their approach guarded, despite the muffled tread of the accompanying agents. It was outside the door, however, that word came for a halt. The order was given by Robeq.

Removing his gloves, the sleuth approached and tried the low door to the basement. A grunt was his comment on the fact that the barrier was unlocked. He returned and whispered to the others to remain where they were. Robeq entered the cellar. A few minutes later, he returned.

"I see no guards," he whispered. "Either the place is unwatched, or The Shadow has been here to trap the men on duty. Come, Delka; we can investigate. The rest of you move inside. Keep closing up behind us."

Delka moved ahead with Robeq, while Rusanne deployed the agents. Monsieur Clandine had placed himself in the position of an observer, believing that such competent men as Robeq and Rusanne could handle matters best. Flashlights were bathing the basement walls. Advance was speedy.

Logically, Robeq and Delka were taking the open passages. Assured by the safety of numbers, they discarded caution. Prowling about, they both came upon the door by the step. Robeq decided to investigate. He gave a hoarse whisper to Rusanne, telling the sergeant to extinguish lights. Opening the door, Robeq found the steps. He and Delka ascended.

They came to the gloomy hall above. Peering cautiously, Robeq's sharp eyes spotted the door of the room where The Shadow's forces had invaded. Robeq whispered to Delka, telling him to wait. The detective advanced through the hall.

IT was Delka's turn to stare with profound amazement. Harry Vincent had credited The Shadow with infallible prowess in the art of stealth. Delka, in turn, gave the palm of honor to Robeq. The detective had a surprising manner of approach.

His body became rigid. His arms extended as he threw his shoulders back. Fingers and thumbs were stiffened and outspread; his arms, themselves, extended like balancing poles. With the long gait of a tight-rope walker, Robeq crossed the hall. Not a creak betrayed his process.

Delka saw him ease when he reached the door. He watched the detective peek through the crack. Then Robeq withdrew. Turning, he repeated his long, slow stride, feeling the floor with his toes before shifting weight from one foot to the other. Joining Delka, Robeq drew the Scotland Yard man down the basement stairs. They found Sergeant Rusanne in the gloom. The prefect was a few steps below.

"The Shadow has trapped them," whispered Robeq. "He has men with him. They are holding four rogues covered while The Shadow is trying to open a safe."

"Is Zemba there?" inquired Clandine, anxiously.

"No," was the reply. "That is why we must reveal ourselves. You enter first, Monsieur le Prefet, with Sergeant Rusanne. Declare yourself to The Shadow. He will recognize you. Do not be hasty, for Delka and I must bring the agents.

"Once we have congratulated The Shadow upon his deeds, I feel sure that he will cooperate with us. The prisoners will be ours. We shall find the documents in the safe. Then we may proceed to lay a trap for Zemba.

"I said to avoid haste." Robeq delivered a chuckle. "That, I believe, will be wise. We should not disturb The Shadow in his present operation. He may be able to open the safe if given time. Probably only Zemba knows the combination. It would be excellent to have the documents regained before he chances to arrive here."

Monsieur Clandine spoke his approval. With Rusanne, he ascended the stairs and the two paused in the hallway, a few paces away from the top of the stairs. The prefect's bearded face showed tension; Rusanne was strained.

The bantam-sized sergeant looked eager to complete this job. But the plan was to wait. Listening, the two could hear motion on the stairs. Robeq and Delka had drawn in the agents and had closed the door below.

OUTSIDE the Vraillard Palace, there was no one left to witness another arrival at the small rear door. There, another figure had crept from somewhere. How long he had been lurking hereabouts, no one could have told.

But it was likely that he had lingered across the Allee Mantinard, where hiding places were many.

The profile of the newcomer's face was outlined against the whiteness of the door. Above his huddled body, that visage stood out. Its gloating expression was one that betokened expectation of a coming meeting. Lips were twisted in a distorted leer; eyes were narrowed to form a vicious glare.

Like a creature of evil, this last arrival was creeping in upon those who had gone before. Though alone, he displayed a malicious confidence, as though triumph, long wanted, had come at last within his clutch. Though widely sought in Paris, this solitary arrival did not have the air of a hunted man.

For he was counting upon aid when he had passed the door. He was the one who had dispatched three Apaches to an earlier mission within the Palais Vraillard. The face that showed against the whiteness of the door was that of Gaspard Zemba!

CHAPTER XX. INVADERS MEET

A NEW flashlight was blinking quickly in the cellar of the old palace. Its gleam had begun only after its owner had crept far into the interior. Satisfied that no others were about, the last arrival had begun his operations.

The light showed the door to the stairway. A harsh chuckle told that the newcomer was satisfied. Creeping about, he approached archways that were blocked by wooden barriers. One door refused to budge when he tried it. Another portal balked. But the third opened almost at a touch.

Entering a deeper portion of the cellar, the creeping prowler closed the door behind him. His flashlight blinked at intervals as he penetrated farther. Suddenly it was answered by another click. A powerful electric lantern blazed from a cavity in the wall. The glare revealed the crouched figure of Gaspard Zemba.

An instinctive snarl came from fuming lips. Zemba's left hand started to come from its jacket pocket, bringing a revolver. The electric lantern went out. Bantoire's voice delivered a hoarse welcome from the spot where the light had been.

"Chief!"

Zemba's flashlight glimmered. It showed Bantoire; then, the flashlight, too, was extinguished. Zemba's order followed:

"Turn on the lantern, Bantoire; but turn it toward the floor. We do not want too much light."

Bantoire obeyed. He saw Zemba come into the range of light. He noted that his crooked chief was carrying a square package, which formed a cube measuring about eight inches in each direction. Zemba placed the object carefully upon the floor.

"What did you accomplish?" he snarled. "Come, Bantoire! Tell me!"

"We bagged them," reported Bantoire. "There's where we put them. It leads to the wine cellar."

He pointed to the yawning opening from which he had come, to indicate a flight of curving stone steps where cobwebs clung to musty walls.

"They argued," sneered Bantoire. "They said that we were traitors, not they. Georges settled that by rapping

Marlier with a gun butt. The others kept silent after that. Guillon and Puyan. Bah! They knew what was good for them!

"Georges and Jacques stayed below, to watch the prisoners. I remained here. I signaled them when Sudette arrived. He was the fourth guard, coming to relieve Marlier. He tried to flee. I captured him."

"Which way did he try to escape?" demanded Zemba.

"Yonder," replied Bantoire, pointing to another stairway that led upward. It was fully thirty feet distant. "It would have been bad had he gained it. Georges investigated afterward. Those stairs are a route to the rendezvous. They lead to a side room; beyond it are curtains. Georges saw that the room beyond was lighted. He heard men talking."

"Peste!" Zemba's voice showed anger. "Why do you tell me all this? This palace is mine. You are a fool to explain where stairways lead. Come, Bantoire! Signal to Georges and Jacques. I shall speak to all of you."

Bantoir approached the stone steps and gave a low, suppressed whistle. Footsteps followed. Georges and Jacques arrived in the light. Their ugly faces showed grins when they spied Zemba. Then the hardened expression of their leader's countenance made them show soberness.

"There has been trouble here," snarled Zemba. "While you have been awaiting me, others have entered."

ASTONISHED gapes. The Apaches exchanged gazes, realizing for the first time that their penetration to the cellar depths had rendered it impossible for them to know what might have happened at the outer door.

"The Shadow has entered," sneered Zemba. "Next, the police, headed by Robeq. They have agents with them. All have gone upstairs."

Apaches uttered angry snarls. Zemba shook his right fist, to silence them.

"Forget those men you captured," he ordered. "They will be safe below. Have you gagged them?"

Nods from the Apaches.

"Good! Then go to the stairway in the outer cellar. Open the door and listen. I shall go up by these other stairs."

Zemba pointed to the path that Bantoire had mentioned as leading to a side room by the rendezvous.

"Wait until shots are fired," was the next order. "Then attack by the stairs. Open fire when you meet the agents. Show them no mercy."

Jacques displayed a wicked grin.

"I shall bring the machine gun," he chuckled. "The little one, from the wine cellar. With Georges and Bantoire on either side –"

"Enough!" snared Zemba. "Make your own plans for the attack. Remember. My shot will be the signal."

"But you will be alone!" exclaimed Bantoire. "Suppose they pursue you? They will drive you down the secret stairway, chief. Then we –"

"Bah! Do you think I do not know my business?" Zemba's right forefinger pointed to the square package. "What do you think this box contains?"

"A bomb!" expressed Georges.

"You are right." Zemba's evil leer had returned. "My shots first; then this but only if necessary. Bullets alone may start them in the opposite direction. All agents are cowards. At any rate, none will pursue Gaspard Zemba!"

The finger pointed to the electric lantern. Bantoire extinguished it. Jacques whispered that he would descend to gain the submachine gun. Zemba's order came for the other two to await him. Footsteps shuffled upon stone; then faded, to be followed by a creepy creak. Zemba alone, his package with him, was ascending the secret stairs.

As yet, all had remained the same in the upstairs rendezvous. There was a reason. The tall figure of Herbert Balliol was still crouched in front of the compact safe. Harry and Cliff, watching him at intervals, decided that their chief had struck a tartar.

The Shadow was uncanny in his ability at detecting strong-box combinations. This safe, however, was unquestionably a formidable one. It belonged to Gaspard Zemba, who had been willing enough to leave it in the care of other crooks. Honor among thieves was a myth so far as Gaspard Zemba was concerned. It stood to reason that the safe would be a tricky one.

Suddenly, Harry became tense. The Shadow had apparently given up his task. Harry saw the tall, tuxedoed figure arise and turn. Then he observed that Herbert Balliol's face was staring directly toward the door of the room. A quick hand whisked an automatic from its tuxedo pocket. With that, the door swung inward.

"Greetings, monsieur!" came a quick voice. "Greetings! We are friends!"

A smile appeared upon the features of Herbert Balliol. His gun hand lowered; his head delivered a bow. Then came a gesture to Harry and Cliff. They could relax their vigil. Still covering their prisoners, The Shadow's agents gave quick glances toward the door. They saw their leader advance with an extended hand.

"Monsieur le Prefet." The words came with a perfect French accent. "Allow me to introduce myself. I am Herbert Balliol; these gentlemen are friends who have aided me in an expedition against Gaspard Zemba."

"You are The Shadow?"

Balliol's smile broadened.

"Perhaps," he remarked dryly. "Ah, M'sieu', you have brought others with you."

"This is Sergeant Rusanne." The bearded prefect indicated the bantamweight beside him. "He is my trusted aid. But there are others also. I shall summon them, with your leave."

A bow of Balliol's head. The prefect turned and motioned at the door. Promptly, Delka and Robeq appeared. Then came the agents, clustering in the hall. Rusanne gave the latter orders; they clumped to stationary positions inside the room, with their sergeant and another blocking the door.

Delka and Robeq had entered ahead of the agent. The prefect was introducing them to Herbert Balliol. Delka smiled when Clandine referred to Balliol as The Shadow. Delka had met The Shadow in the past and

regarded him as a friend, no matter what his guise might be.

"And this," announced the prefect, with a profound bow, "is Etienne Robeq, most celebrated of all the detectives in France."

PRISONERS stood scowling as they observed the introductions. The Shadow, quiet, in the guise of Balliol; Robeq, stiffened and alert, like a soldier of the Foreign Legion. Four trapped men were hopeless in the presence of the two whom they most feared.

Two strategists had met within a room where the law held control. Backed by five others, with eight agents besides, this double victory stood complete. All told, there were fifteen armed invaders, against a pitiful quartet of prisoners whose revolvers had been wrested from them.

Such was the present situation; and Monsieur Clandine wore a smile. The bearded prefect felt that anything could be accomplished now that Etienne Robeq and The Shadow had come together. This was a meeting that Clandine had long desired.

But had the prefect glanced toward the curtains at the far left corner of the room, his delight would have become momentary dismay. Another was present at this meeting; one whose presence was unsuspected; an enemy whom Monsieur Clandine would fear so long as that foeman lived.

Peering from beyond the draperies was a triumphant, gloating face. A countenance that the prefect would have classified at sight. The visage of Gaspard Zemba!

CHAPTER XXI. TWISTS TURN THE GAME

"AH, Monsieur L'Ombre, you have done exceeding well. Pay no further attention to that safe. We shall dynamite it, later. That duty belongs to the police."

It was Clandine who was speaking. Having delivered his polite announcement, the prefect turned and indicated the prisoners.

"As for these four," he added, "I shall ask your permission to take them with me. They shall be delivered to Monsieur Brezanne, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Their own governments have sought their capture."

Then, facing the tall form of Herbert Balliol, the prefect again queried:

"Have I your leave, Monsieur L'Ombre?"

"You have my leave," replied Balliol. "But you have asked permission of The Shadow."

"And you are The Shadow!"

A shake of Balliol's head. A pleasant smile.

"There stands The Shadow!"

Clandine gaped. Balliol was pointing directly toward the famous detective, Etienne Robeq.

"Impossible!" gasped the prefect. "What! Robeq is The Shadow? Then who are you, Monsieur Balliol?"

"I?" The query came with a laugh. "I am Etienne Robeq!"

CLANDINE stood stupefied, glancing from one to the other. Eric Delka was completely bewildered. As for The Shadow's agents, a light was dawning upon them. Harry Vincent had remarked upon the oddness of The Shadow's actions. Cliff remembered Harry's comments. They were gaining an explanation at last.

"I shall make the case plain," declared Herbert Balliol. "As I have just said, I am Etienne Robeq. I came to Paris to seek the notorious Gaspard Zemba. I learned that my presence here was known. I stayed away from the prefecture. I knew that word was leaking somewhere.

"A strange rumor had reached the underworld. Talk of The Shadow a belief that he might be in Paris. I learned later that tension, alone, had begun that rumor. But it chanced to be correct. In my search for Zemba, I happened, one night, to glimpse The Shadow. He was cloaked in black. I saw him in an alleyway not far from the Boul' Mich'.

"I supposed that The Shadow had found some trace of Zemba. The next night, I watched the same spot. That was the night when Zemba arrived in Paris after his murder of Boris Danyar. A taxicab arrived, with Zemba aboard. Another came, carrying The Shadow.

"I was sole witness to the fight that followed. I joined it to aid The Shadow. Gaspard Zemba escaped us. Both The Shadow and I departed. Again, I saw his taxicab."

The real Etienne Robeq paused. He looked toward the supposed Robeq, who smiled his approval of the statements. Both had relaxed. The former Herbert Balliol, in particular, had dropped his part of an Englishman.

"Apaches saw The Shadow that night," resumed the real Robeq. "But I, alone, noted his taxi. I traced it. The driver talked. He told me that his passenger went to the Hotel Moderne. Going there, I learned that a guest named Herbert Balliol had checked out hurriedly, to take the midnight train to Brussels.

"Viola! He could have been The Shadow. I went to other hotels. There was no Herbert Balliol. An idea inspired me. I went to the Hotel Princesse. I registered there as Herbert Balliol."

Harry and Cliff exchanged understanding glances. They expected what was coming.

"The doorman at the Hotel Moderne aided me," laughed Robeq. "He promised to send all inquirers for Balliol to the Hotel Princesse. The next day, these two arrived. They joined me."

Smiling, Robeq indicated The Shadow's agents. Then, with a shrug of his tuxedoed shoulders, he resumed:

"You ask why I became The Shadow? I shall tell you. I thought that perhaps Zemba would trail him also. I wanted to meet Zemba. I knew that my action would not harm The Shadow. Instead, it gave me a way of covering up the fact that I was Robeq.

"Seeking The Shadow, Zemba would find Robeq! But instead of men from the underworld, my visitors proved to be friends of The Shadow. Men who would have gone their own way had they not found Herbert Balliol. Knowing that they must take me for The Shadow, I kept up the pretense.

"My position was strengthened. I had two men who would obey my commands. So I went to the Cafe Poisson and sent a note to the proprietor. He thought it was from Zemba. It told him to have me followed. Thus did Zemba learn of Herbert Balliol, the man whom he thought was The Shadow.

"Zemba laid a trap in the Allee des Bijoux. We captured a prowler who was sent to give the word away. Zemba was afraid to visit The Shadow; he wanted The Shadow to come to him. It was I, Robeq, who went, with The Shadow's men to aid me. I believed that we could nullify the trap.

"Zemba was there; but the conflict proved to be a draw. The cause seemed hopeless until to-night. I still played the part of The Shadow, but I had learned nothing. Then, to-night, these two men received a message from the real Shadow!"

TRIUMPHANTLY, Robeq pointed to Harry and Cliff. The final truth had come to that pair. They knew at last why The Shadow had called; then had appeared and changed his plans. The Shadow had called first; then Robeq had come, in the guise of Balliol.

"I understood everything!" cried Robeq. "The Shadow had learned Zemba's true hiding place. He wanted his agents here. Good! But I, Robeq, could not stay out. That is why I called you, Monsieur le Prefet. I wanted the police to be about.

"And all the while" Robeq's smile was broad "I had begun to realize how clever The Shadow was. He, too, had been forced to change his plans. So he became Etienne Robeq! Why? Because he knew that I, the real Robeq, had made it a policy to keep away from the prefecture.

"I saw you, Monsieur L'Ombre, during the fray in the Montmartre. I guessed the part that you were playing. I knew that when I called Monsieur le Prefet to-night, he might in turn call you. He did; and you cooperated. So we are here, in Zemba's headquarters, our quest completed, so far as stolen goods are concerned. Our next step, Monsieur L'Ombre, is to capture Gaspard Zemba!"

The real Robeq extended his hand to the false Robeq, who smiled and received it. Harry and Cliff put away their automatics, for the agents were in charge. The Shadow's agents stepped over to join the former Robeq, whom the real detective had identified as The Shadow.

"Your version of the story, Monsieur L'Ombre," suggested the police prefect. "It may have details which Monsieur Robeq has not given us."

"Quite true." Drawing himself a full inch taller, the former Robeq faced his listeners. "However, Robeq has told enough. I have another matter to discuss. It concerns Gaspard Zemba!"

Listeners were intent. None were glancing toward the far curtain; but glances to that spot would have been futile. The face of Gaspard Zemba had withdrawn. His form could no longer be seen beyond the drapes.

"Gaspard Zemba" keenly, the listeners harkened to the pronouncement of the name, since it came from The Shadow's lips "Gaspard Zemba is a man of many devices. But even he was deceived by your strategy, Robeq. He thought that you as Herbert Balliol must actually be The Shadow."

Robeq nodded, pleased at The Shadow's corroboration.

"Zemba believed that you were The Shadow," resumed the speaker, "and, therefore, he wondered what had become of Etienne Robeq. What do you suppose that Zemba decided? I can answer. He came to the conclusion that Robeq had taken to the underworld; that there on certain occasions he actually showed the boldness of pretending that he was Gaspard Zemba!

"So Gaspard Zemba connived a scheme of his own. He decided that he could play a similar game. If Robeq could be Zemba; then Zemba could be Robeq. Like yourself, Robeq, Zemba made the mistake of supposing

the game to be a double one. But that was incorrect. The game was played three ways!"

A sudden startlement flickered upon the features of Robeq as he surveyed this speaker whom he thought was The Shadow. The others saw the look and understood it. Before any could make a move, the climax came. The man whom they thought to be The Shadow began to speak again. This time his voice took on an insidious snarl; his square face instantly displayed a hideous leer.

"Fools!" he challenged. "You never guessed my game! You thought first that I was Robeq! Now, you take me for The Shadow! I am neither! I am Gaspard Zemba."

WITH that, he swung his left hand upward, spreading thumb and fingers. All were straightened stiffly, a peculiarity that Eric Delka had often noticed with this man who he thought was Robeq.

"You want proof that I am Zemba?" came the snarled query. "Look! At this third finger! I no longer have use for it!"

With the second finger of his right hand, the revealed Zemba snapped the third digit of his left. The top portion of that third finger popped away. It struck bare floor beyond a rug and clattered there, an empty shell of metal that had been fitted to the stump which now showed upon its owner's left hand.

"You saw that finger often," snarled Zemba, to Delka. "But you never suspected it to be a fake. The coloring was perfect. It fitted tightly, held by suction. It filled my glove, which it wore often. But enough! Come, Rusanne! Show these fools how helpless they are."

Grinning like a little ape, Sergeant Rusanne swung to the agents. He barked an order. The entire squad used their revolvers to cover Robeq. Clandine, Delka and The Shadow's agents. The four prisoners who had been trapped by Harry, Cliff and Robeq, were automatically freed!

The odds had twisted about. Instead of fifteen holding four; fourteen now covered five. The picked squad of agents was composed of crooks. Sergeant Rusanne, the prefect's trusted aid, was a tool of Gaspard Zemba!

A laugh came from the supercrook.

"How did the underworld know that Robeq was in Paris?" jeered Zemba. "Through Rusanne! How were documents stolen from the French government? Through Rusanne! Yes, Rusanne, with Zemba in back of him!

"How did I know everything? Why did I play the part of Robeq with security? Because I had Rusanne. Remember, Monsieur le Prefet when I first appeared as Robeq, we arranged that all contact should be through Sergeant Rusanne!

"That was how I learned of meddling to–night. Because you heard from Robeq directly and not through Rusanne. Of course, you called me; you did not know me to be Gaspard Zemba. So I told Rusanne to have his picked agents ready.

"These are Apaches whom Rusanne summoned from their caveau, where I have kept them in readiness. There are no agents anywhere about. Fools, you fell for everything that I proposed. To–morrow, Delka was to meet with Zemba, to transfer the money and receive the plans. Certainly, he would have met with Zemba. For he would have met me. No chance for any interference, while I accepted as Robeq was arranging the details."

A MOMENTARY pause. The ex-prisoners had been frisking the new captives. The five helpless men were thrust back toward the fireplace. Zemba ordered Rusanne to send the false agents into the hall. He had enough men to hold these prisoners helpless.

"To-morrow," scoffed the supercreek, "I shall gain my millions. It will be easy. Rusanne and I shall arrange it. Monsieur le Prefet has gone from Paris, so Rusanne will say. I shall state that Delka is at my hotel.

"We shall keep you as hostages until we gain the millions. After that death. All of you will be useless. There will be no one to trouble me." Zemba's face hardened suddenly. "None except The Shadow. Peste! I had forgotten him that masquerader who has tried at intervals to pass himself as an imitation of Zemba. Bah! He could never succeed with it. Not while he has this finger!"

Zemba leered and pointed to his left hand, to indicate the single-knuckled stump. Contemptuous grins showed on the faces of the crooks whom he had rescued. Suddenly, Zemba's expression changed.

"Wait!" he exclaimed. "The Shadow as Zemba those guards below –"

He darted a look at Robeq, who was minus the blue-tinted glasses that he had used as a device to cover the fact that his eyes lacked the keenness of The Shadow's. Robeq blinked slightly. Zemba scowled.

"The guards below!" he stormed. "You did not capture them as I had supposed. You captured no one except the men within this room. Perhaps The Shadow –"

Zemba stopped, abruptly interrupted. A taunting sound was rising from the far corner of the room. A burst of sinister mirth that came as a counter challenge to the devices of a supercreek. Shuddering laughter broke with quivering echoes. Gaspard Zemba wheeled.

Curtains had parted by the farther door, at the left. There, cloaked in his garb of black, stood The Shadow!

CHAPTER XXII. THE LAST RECKONING

A LONE fighter, faced by a horde of foes. Such was The Shadow's status, here in the headquarters of Gaspard Zemba. The Shadow had penetrated to a spot of utmost danger. He was faced by double duty. A battle must be won; five prisoners must be rescued.

Ever since that night when Zemba had circled Paris aboard the blue cars of the Mediterranean Express, The Shadow had been playing a dangerous role. Previously, he had spotted the caveau where Georges and Bantoire met with Jacques. Bantoire had been right. The Shadow had been watching their hide-out, spying on them, even in its depths.

On the night after his first fight with Zemba, The Shadow had come to the caveau, to introduce himself as Zemba. He had used the three Apaches whom Zemba had discarded. He had given them the quest of discovering the one fact that he needed the location of Zemba's own headquarters!

The Shadow had talked with the Apaches as Zemba. He had watched them as The Shadow. They had worked out of the studio that The Shadow had given them. Finally, he had used the trio to capture Marlier and the guards, here in the Vraillard Palace. Zemba had never guessed what was going on. He had not even suspected possibilities until this moment of The Shadow's appearance within the curtained doorway.

In the three-way medley, clever minds had worked cunning plans. Etienne Robeq had pretended to be The Shadow. Through that scheme, he had gained the aid of Harry and Cliff. Gaspard Zemba, passing himself as

Robeq, had actually invoked the aid of the law and had been able to introduce false agents. But The Shadow had topped the game. Guised as Zemba, he had actually tricked Zemba's own Apaches into aiding his destruction of the supercrook's best schemes!

To Harry Vincent and Cliff Marsland, that part of the game was still puzzling. But they realized other facts. When they had gone from the Hotel Moderne to the Pension Grandine, The Shadow had been watching for them. He had seen them continue to the Hotel Princesse. He had found out that a Herbert Balliol was staying there. He had known that Balliol must be Robeq.

For only Robeq could have profited by pretending to be The Shadow. That game would have been useless to Zemba. Hence The Shadow had reasoned that Zemba could have chosen the role of Robeq. A possibility that proved to be fact. First, leakage of news from the prefecture had suggested its likelihood. Then had come the appearance of a man who claimed to be Robeq. The Shadow had long—since divined that the twist was a triple one.

To—night, luck had gone against The Shadow. Through his three Apaches, he had cleared the way for invasion. He had counted upon Harry and Cliff. Robeq, unfortunately, had found them still at the hotel. Stepping into the game, Robeq had called the prefect. That had resulted in information reaching Zemba.

Reaching the Palais Vraillard, The Shadow had been too late. He had made no haste, for he wanted his agents posted. Sending agents, he had realized all that had happened. Talking with the unsuspecting Apaches, he had learned of the secret stairs up from the cellar. Arriving at his listening post, he had heard everything. He had opened the package that was supposed to hold a bomb. From it, he had brought his garb of black. That package had been a device to deceive the three Apaches.

ALTHOUGH he had foreseen developments, The Shadow had been unable to intervene. Matters would have proven confusing to the very men whom he had come to aid. Until the truth was out, The Shadow could not have acted. But now that Zemba had gained full control, the opportunity had come.

Even now, The Shadow could have waited; but he saw a chance that might not come again. Zemba had sent the false agents to the hallway. Robeq, Delka, Harry, Cliff all were still capable to aid. Moreover, Zemba had forced the issue, by stating sudden suspicion regarding the guards who should have been on duty in the cellar.

This was a time that called for swiftness. Well did The Shadow meet the crisis. Thrusting himself through the curtained doorway, he had drawn attention by his challenging laugh. Zemba had turned; so had all others. Five helpless men were freed from menacing guns; for every weapon swung to greet The Shadow.

Automatics blasted their prompt message before a single crook had time to fire. Muzzles tongued spurts of flame that stabbed like fiery daggers. Four men were The Shadow's targets. One was Gaspard Zemba; the second, the traitorous Sergeant Rusanne; the last two were false agents, who were still within the room.

Zemba and Rusanne sprawled simultaneously, while tugging at revolver triggers. They fell, firing uselessly and wildly, beyond heavy chairs that blocked further gunfire. The false agents, slower on the trigger, were spilled by the next blasts. One fired badly, peppering the wall beside The Shadow. The other did not fire at all.

The Shadow had ignored four others. They were the foreign spies, who had disarmed Harry, Cliff and the other prisoners. Those spies had thrown captured guns into the wastebasket and were fishing out their own instead. They were in the correct position for the mass attack which came.

Robeq and Delka were closest to the spies. Quick thinkers, they leaped forward to down those immediate foemen. Harry and Cliff were farther, but fully as spontaneous in action. They grabbed for the other pair.

Four pairs of fighters sprawled upon the floor; and into the fray came Monsieur Clandine. Having no antagonist, the prefect snatched the wastebasket. He yanked two guns from it and swung to aid The Shadow.

Clandine's move was timely. The false agents from the hall were piling in with fury. The Shadow, sweeping forward to meet them, was quick with opening shots. Clandine joined; the agents fell back. Rusanne, who had been clipped in the left shoulder, bobbed up and snarled as he aimed for Clandine. The Shadow swung and blazed a shot that rolled the traitor to the floor.

A hiss from The Shadow. Clandine pounced over to aid struggling fighters. Delka and Cliff were being overpowered. Clandine used a gun butt to club the spy who fought with Delka. Robeq, hurling aside his own antagonist, piled to Cliff's aid. Harry was subduing the man with whom he grappled.

DURING that action, The Shadow stood alone. He was facing the outer door, awaiting a six-man attack. He knew those false agents to be desperate fighters. Otherwise, they would not have joined the service of Gaspard Zemba. When they came, they would arrive en masse. This was their opportunity, while The Shadow stood unaided.

Oddly, the hands of The Shadow differed. The right one was gloved; the left was bare. No girasol glittered from his finger. He was like a statue formed of darkness except for that ungloved left hand. He was waiting for the danger that he knew was due.

Shouts from the hall. Six figures bounded into view. Like a phalanx, the uniformed fighters hurtled forward, revolvers barking as they came. Their object was to sweep through the open door; to riddle The Shadow, despite the cost of themselves. When the front men fell, the others would remain.

Automatics answered. The foremost agent sprawled before he reached the door. Then, from beyond the wildly barking guns came the crackles of new revolvers. While The Shadow waited, the false agents spread. Flinging themselves to the floor of the hall, they turned to protect themselves against an unexpected flank attack.

The three Apaches had arrived from below. The Shadow had counted upon them. They were attacking from the door of the stairs.

Georges and Bantoire had opened fire with their revolvers. The false agents had broken; then had dropped for cover. They had seen Jacques, between the other Apaches, ready with his submachine gun.

To the three Apaches, the uniformed men appeared to be ordinary agents. There was no opportunity for explanation. The Apaches were following orders that they believed had come directly from Zemba. Agents were their natural enemies. They were prepared to annihilate the squad.

The machine gun rattled. Jacques was spraying it while the false agents fired their revolvers. Bullets streamed against the walls of the hallway. Then the hail ceased. A widened grin spread across the pockmarked face of Jacques. He had exterminated the six false agents.

Georges was slumped upon the floor. Bantoire tottered; then sprawled. Jacques glared. Revolver shots, planned for Jacques, had reached the Apache's comrades. Snarling as he started forward, Jacques was looking for another chance at massacre.

ZEMBA

Within the beleaguered room, The Shadow waited. But while he watched the door, an action took place beside him. A figure was coming up from the floor. It was Gaspard Zemba. The Shadow's first shot clipped the crook's gun wrist. Zemba had lost his revolver; but he had lain waiting, in hope of future action. He had heard the clatter in the hall. He knew that the machine gunner might be one of his Apaches.

WITH a sudden lunge, Zemba reached his feet and sprang upon The Shadow. The cloaked fighter wheeled. Zemba's left fist caught The Shadow's right wrist. The Shadow swung his left-hand automatic. Zemba stabbed with his wounded arm. A lucky jolt sent the automatic bounding from The Shadow's bare hand.

A snarl from the door. It was Jacques. He saw The Shadow. The latter's head swept backward. His slouch hat skimmed to the floor; cloak folds slipped from his neck. Above that garb of blackness, Jacques saw the leering features of Gaspard Zemba.

Jacques saw the real Zemba also; he spied another visage that was distorted in fiendish anger. For a moment, Jacques had favored The Shadow; his loyalty turned again to Zemba. He could not spy the latter's left hand; but suddenly, he saw The Shadow's. The black-clad fighter had suddenly flattened his hand against the front of his cloak.

There, framed against a solid background, Jacques saw a hand that lacked its third finger, except for a short stump. The Apache needed no other talisman. Stopping his finger on the trigger, he aimed his machine gun toward Zemba. His final hesitation proved his finish.

A revolver barked. It was Robeq's. The detective was a sharpshooter, skilled through his service in the Foreign Legion. His bullet found the Apache's heart. Jacques rolled headlong to the floor, carried forward by the weight of his machine gun.

The Shadow's left hand remained motionless while Zemba, twisting, glared at the sight of the missing finger. Then came a whispered laugh. The hand moved forward, away from the black cloak. A bent finger straightened. The missing digit-popped into view.

The Shadow had matched Zemba's device of a false finger. He had found it quite as simple to be one finger short. Always, when he had shown his hand to Apaches, The Shadow had placed it upon a table, against his coat, or encircling a pack of cigarettes. With other fingers pressing close together, the illusion had been perfect. A finger gone from the lower knuckle outward!

With a lunge, The Shadow sent Zemba sprawling. Venomous as before, the supercrook snatched up a revolver that lay beside the body of Rusanne. He aimed with his left hand. Steadily, The Shadow covered him. Once before these two had met in duel, near the Allee des Bijoux, when The Shadow had been Zemba; and Zemba had been Robeq.

On that occasion, Zemba had loosed a wild volley of bullets; while The Shadow had deliberately fired one wide shot. He had wanted to spare Zemba, then. At that time, The Shadow had not learned the location of the murderer's hide-out.

There had been another in that fray in the Montmartre. Etienne Robeq, at that time passing as Herbert Balliol. Then, he would have fired at The Shadow, had he gained the opportunity. Remembrance of that error struck him at this moment. Robeq aimed for Zemba and fired. The Shadow had been waiting, testing Zemba's nerve to the last. Robeq's bullet saved him the trouble of dispatching the evil murderer.

Other revolvers sounded, hard after Robeq's. Delka and Cliff had responded instinctively. Zemba's rolling body sprawled motionless in death.

ZEMBA

THE SHADOW stepped across to the safe, where Harry and Clandine were holding the four spies. He stooped before the fireplace. With steadied fingers of his ungloved left hand, he began to manipulate the dial upon which Robeq had failed. Harry, while he watched, remembered other events.

It had been The Shadow who had come into the Allee des Bijoux behind the Cabaret du Diable. The Shadow, as Zemba; but with his cloak, hat and gloves covering the disguise. He had come ahead of Robeq. The Shadow had fought. He had lost his black garb. After that, he had appeared as Zemba. Robeq as Balliol had come from the far end of the street. Harry had thought him to be The Shadow, when the flashlights had started their play!

Harry knew now why The Shadow had so easily escaped Zemba. Actually, the prisoner had been Robeq; his captor, The Shadow. To aid Robeq, The Shadow had deliberately left him the key. Then, later, Robeq had actually trapped Zemba, in the Allee des Bijoux. Thinking Zemba to be The Shadow, Robeq had let him go. Apparently, it had been The Shadow capturing Robeq!

Strange twists of circumstances; yet all were plain at last. Right had gained the victory; to complete the triumph, the door of the safe swung open. The Shadow had solved the combination. Stepping back, he let the others throng forward, eagerly. Robeq, Delka and Clandine, while Harry and Cliff guarded the spies.

Sealed packages came forth in eager hands. Bulky envelopes containing their important documents. The military plans from which Gaspard Zemba had hoped to reap his millions. Besides these trophies were stacks of money, boxes of gems loot that Zemba had gathered in other campaigns of crime.

A warning hiss.

Robeq and Delka sprang about, leaving Clandine at the safe. The Shadow had picked up his slouch hat; again it was on his head, while his left hand was pointing toward the four spies. He wanted them guarded. Robeq and Delka nodded, though they did not know The Shadow's reason.

THE answer came. The Shadow beckoned to his agents. They headed for the door at the left, through to the room beyond the curtains. Lights blazed suddenly. Robeq and Delka heard the roar of new gunfire; then snarls, thuds and groans.

Marlier and the other guards had broken their bonds. They had guessed that matters could have gone wrong; for they had been given detailed instructions by Zemba, including the possibility of a fake squad of agents. The Shadow had heard them coming up by the secret stairs. He and his agents had gone to deal with them.

While Robeq and Delka listened, Clandine cried out. The spies were making a sudden lunge, to overpower their three remaining captors. Robeq and Delka wheeled as one. The spies were upon them. Guns boomed. Robeq and Delka had no other alternative.

Two of the spies sprawled dying. A third cringed, clutching a wounded arm. The last spy surrendered. Delka had him covered; Clandine held the recovered spoils. Robeq dashed to aid The Shadow. He reached the far room, to find it dark. He clicked a flashlight and surveyed the scene.

Sprawled about were helpless Apaches: Marlier and the others who had made their mad attack. They had met The Shadow and his agents. The master fighter and his aids had gained the opening shots. They were gone, all three, down by the secret stairway.

As Etienne Robeq lingered upon this scene of final fray, he heard a sound which held him rigid. It came from depths below, like a voice of vengeance issued within the confines of a tomb.

ZEMBA

It was a laugh that spoke of triumph. Mirth that came as a last knell; a toll of judgment, to mark the end of the notorious Gaspard Zemba. To Etienne Robeq, it came also as a parting token from The Shadow and the stalwart men who had aided him in battle.

Such was the laugh of The Shadow.

THE END