

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

Maxwell Grant

Table of Contents

<u>THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES</u>	1
Maxwell Grant.....	1
CHAPTER I. WORD FOR THE SHADOW.....	1
CHAPTER II. CRIME'S AFTERMATH.....	7
CHAPTER III. DUSK BRINGS THE SHADOW.....	11
CHAPTER IV. THE THRUST THAT FAILED.....	16
CHAPTER V. CRIME BREAKS AGAIN.....	21
CHAPTER VI. THE SHADOW'S VISIT.....	26
CHAPTER VII. TRAILS LINK.....	31
CHAPTER VIII. ANOTHER ENTRANT.....	36
CHAPTER IX. THE SECOND THRUST.....	40
CHAPTER X. MILLION DOLLAR MURDER.....	47
CHAPTER XI. THE DAY'S QUEST.....	52
CHAPTER XII. CRIME'S LINK.....	56
CHAPTER XIII. THE MAN WHO KNEW.....	60
CHAPTER XIV. THE VITAL HOUR.....	64
CHAPTER XV. DEATH AFTER DEATH.....	69
CHAPTER XVI. THE POSTPONED TRAIL.....	72
CHAPTER XVII. CRIME DENOUNCED.....	76
CHAPTER XVIII. THE SHADOW SUGGESTS.....	80
CHAPTER XIX. THE MURDERER SPEAKS.....	83
CHAPTER XX. THE MURDERER'S TOMB.....	87

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- [CHAPTER I. WORD FOR THE SHADOW](#)
- [CHAPTER II. CRIME'S AFTERMATH](#)
- [CHAPTER III. DUSK BRINGS THE SHADOW](#)
- [CHAPTER IV. THE THRUST THAT FAILED](#)
- [CHAPTER V. CRIME BREAKS AGAIN](#)
- [CHAPTER VI. THE SHADOW'S VISIT](#)
- [CHAPTER VII. TRAILS LINK](#)
- [CHAPTER VIII. ANOTHER ENTRANT](#)
- [CHAPTER IX. THE SECOND THRUST](#)
- [CHAPTER X. MILLION DOLLAR MURDER](#)
- [CHAPTER XI. THE DAY'S QUEST](#)
- [CHAPTER XII. CRIME'S LINK](#)
- [CHAPTER XIII. THE MAN WHO KNEW](#)
- [CHAPTER XIV. THE VITAL HOUR](#)
- [CHAPTER XV. DEATH AFTER DEATH](#)
- [CHAPTER XVI. THE POSTPONED TRAIL](#)
- [CHAPTER XVII. CRIME DENOUNCED](#)
- [CHAPTER XVIII. THE SHADOW SUGGESTS](#)
- [CHAPTER XIX. THE MURDERER SPEAKS](#)
- [CHAPTER XX. THE MURDERER'S TOMB](#)

CHAPTER I. WORD FOR THE SHADOW

THE Mayan Museum formed an oddity against the dusk of Manhattan's sky. Of all the structures in New York, none was more curious than this one. Its setting, moreover, added to its bizarre appearance.

The museum was squatty and square-shaped. Constructed of white marble, it loomed from a terraced plaza that verged an avenue where traffic was heavy and rapid. For this location was in the upper reaches of Manhattan, well north of the broad cross-town street that marked the end of Central Park.

The flattened hill that bore the museum was like a miniature Acropolis. Below the white walled building, beside it and in back, were crumbly, close-built houses scarcely better than tenements. The glittering lights of the avenue offset these dilapidated structures; but behind the museum, the scene was utterly squalid.

The rear street was on a lower level. There, on one side, the museum formed a high, barren wall. On the other side of the street was a row of dingy brick fronts, time-worn and battered. Broken windows outnumbered those that had panes, for most of these old houses were deserted.

The Mayan Museum was as formidable as a fortress. Its lower floor was windowless. Gratings barred access to the narrow, slitted windows of its second floor. The bronze bars broke the monotony of the white marble. So did the massive front door on the ground floor. It, too, was of bronze construction.

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

No lights glimmered from the museum. One would have classed it as an abandoned edifice. Yet the visitor had only to ring for admittance at the front door. Then up to six o'clock in the afternoon he would be admitted. Within, he would find a network of corridors and exhibit rooms, all well lighted.

There, leering Aztec gods would greet him. Shelves of ancient pottery would attract him. Glass cases filled with beads and trinkets would compel a long inspection. For the Mayan Museum was crowded with ancient relics brought from Yucatan and Guatemala.

THE curator's office was at the rear of the museum. It was small and cramped, because all larger rooms had been devoted to exhibits. Despite the confines of his office, the curator seldom left the little room. The endless task of cataloguing kept him constantly busy.

Lewis Lemand was the curator of the Mayan Museum. He was bald, rotund, methodical and easily annoyed; especially by visitors. But on this particular afternoon, Lemand had a visitor in his office; and the man was one whom he was glad to see.

This was Prentiss Petersham, the attorney who represented the Mayan Museum. Tall, sharp-faced, with outthrust lower lip, Petersham had an overbearing air that resembled the expression of an Aztec idol. He looked as though he were trying to mimic some statue that he had seen on his way to the curator's office.

An odd pair, Lemand and Petersham. As odd as the museum itself; as bizarre as the curator's office, which was lined with photographs of Mexican ziggurats and pictures of recent excavations in Guatemala. But neither the curator nor the lawyer were gifted with a sense of humor. Each admired the other for his solemnity.

Petersham was speaking, while Lemand listened, owlsh. The lawyer's tone was gruff; but it expressed keen disappointment.

"It's too bad, Lemand." Petersham shook his shocky mop of gray-streaked hair. "Too bad. But nothing can be done about it. The Luben Expedition made some rare findings in Yucatan; but the entire lot is being shipped to the Aztec Museum, in Chicago."

Lemand was slowly tapping the glass top of his mahogany desk. His lips showed a wince.

"I know how you feel about it," gruffed Petersham. "The new relics have great value. They should logically have come here. It must be a blow to you, Lemand."

"It is," admitted the bald-headed curator. His tone was a saddened drawl. "And yet, in a sense, it is not unfortunate. I am overburdened, Mr. Petersham. Frightfully overburdened!"

"Overburdened? Why? If you need new assistants, the board of directors will supply them."

"That would not help. It is responsibility that overburdens me."

"Responsibility for the curios that are already housed here?"

"Yes." Lemand nodded. He had ceased his tapping on the desk. "Particularly because of the pure gold relics that are in the lower exhibit room. They are of immense value, Mr. Petersham."

"Why should they concern you? No visitors are allowed below. That lower exhibit room is as strong as a vault."

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

"Quite. Well protected, too. It has a burglary alarm system of its own; one that is automatic. The doors are protected by a time lock. And yet well, I am apprehensive. I want no more burden than I have. I am glad, in a sense, that the Luben Expedition favored the Chicago museum. The items that the expedition uncovered are all of gold. Evil men seek gold, Mr. Petersham. Those who protect gold are in danger –"

LEMAND'S drawl had risen to a high pitch. His tone was one that carried fear. Petersham was staring closely, through narrowed eyelids. He was keenly intent when the curator's words ended abruptly. Petersham noted a look of dread that gripped Lemand's face.

"Listen!" The curator leaned forward and whispered hoarsely. "Listen! You will hear the sound that I have heard!"

He paused again. Tense seconds passed. Then came a strangely muffled sound one that no ear could have located accurately.

Click click

The noise ended so sharply that the listeners were startled. Both Lemand and Petersham half imagined that they had heard a third click as an echo. Long tension followed. Petersham broke it with a shrug.

"Nothing of consequence," began the attorney. "Such sounds are not uncommon –"

Lemand's hand was nervous with its interruption. Petersham stopped short. Instantly, the double click was repeated, as though the curator had conjured it with a wave. Lemand chewed his lips; then shook his head.

"I cannot locate it," he said, wearily. "It seems to come from within the wall; but which wall, I cannot decide. Sometimes it is frequent. At others, the interval is great."

Click click

The elusive sound came again, an instant after Lemand had spoken. The curator quivered. The noise seemed human. Its repetition ridiculed his statement.

"Listen!" pleaded Lemand. "We must locate it! The sound is ominous! It has persisted since two days ago –"

Another interruption; this was a rap at the closed door of the office. Lemand sank back in his chair. It was Petersham who gave the order to enter. The door opened; a dry–faced attendant stepped in from the lighted corridor and gazed at the shrunken curator.

"What is it, Rome?" queried Lemand, rising weakly in his chair. "Why have you come here to disturb us?"

"It is quarter of six, sir," informed the attendant. "You told me to notify you of the time."

"So I did," nodded Lemand. Then, to the lawyer: "It was on your account, Mr. Petersham."

"I have an appointment," acknowledged the lawyer, rising. "I must leave at once. We have discussed our subject, Mr. Lemand. There is no reason why I should remain longer."

LEMAND conducted Petersham out to the front door of the museum, with Rome tracing their footsteps. There, the curator drew a bunch of keys from his pocket. He used one large key to unlock the door. After an exchange of handshakes, Petersham departed. Lemand locked the door and returned to his office.

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

Nervous, Lemand left the office door ajar. Very few minutes had passed when he heard voices in the hall. The curator looked up to see Rome entering with a new visitor, a tall heavy–built man with black, pointed mustache. Lemand recognized the arrival and winced.

This was Elvin Lettigue. Lemand knew him as an eccentric millionaire who had donated funds to the Mayan Museum. Because of past philanthropies, Lettigue was always admitted promptly to the curator's office. Nevertheless, Lemand did not relish Lettigue's visits. Whenever the millionaire proposed a gift, it always had too many provisions attached.

"Hello, Lemand!" Lettigue's rumble was friendly, his handshake firm. "Just dropped in to congratulate you."

"On what?" queried Lemand.

Lettigue cupped his hand to his ear. The millionaire was hard of hearing. Lemand repeated the question.

"Regarding what?" shouted Lettigue.

"Why, about the new treasures you are gaining. The gold relics brought back by the Luben Expedition. When will the treasures arrive here, Lemand?"

"Never!" returned the curator, in a loud tone. "They are going to Chicago. To the Aztec Museum."

Anger showed upon Lettigue's bluff face.

"An outrage!" exclaimed the millionaire. "I can't believe it, Lemand. Those treasures belong here."

"Perhaps they do. But we shall not receive them."

Lettigue dropped his arm and caught a huge–headed cane that he was carrying. He pounded the point of the walking stick upon the marble floor of the office.

"Bah!" he rumbled. "They are fools! I contributed to that expedition. I thought surely that the treasures would be donated here. I shall raise a protest."

"It will do no good, Mr. Lettigue."

A pause. Amid it came the evasive sound that had previously troubled Lemand. This time, the muffled noise was almost beneath the feet of the standing men.

Click click

Lemand looked toward Lettigue. The millionaire was muttering to himself. Apparently he had not heard the clicks. Lemand turned toward the door and called for Rome. The attendant appeared.

"Did you hear a noise, Rome?" queried the curator. "Other than our conversation?"

"A clicking noise, sir?"

"Yes. Listen –"

Timed almost to the curator's words came the double click. Its direction was puzzling. Lemand swung about

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

to face his desk. He stepped in that direction and fumbled nervously with a short, stone–headed hammer a chance Mayan relic that happened to be in the office.

"Shall I listen for the noise, sir?"

The query came from Rome. The curator shook his head.

"No," he replied. "You can go off duty. I shall remain here, alone, as I have work to do."

"Very well, sir."

A RUMBLE came from Elvin Lettigue, who had been muttering steadily to himself. Apparently, he had not heard either the clicks or the conversation between Lemand and Rome.

"An outrage!" repeated the millionaire. "But you are right, Lemand. Nothing can be done about it. Nevertheless, I shall protest."

Lettigue swung on his heel and stalked from the office. Curator and attendant heard him pace along the corridor, thumping the floor with his heavy cane. As Lettigue's footsteps faded, Lemand turned suddenly to Rome.

"Go and unlock the door," ordered the curator. "Mr. Lettigue will not be able to go out."

"I left the door unlocked, sir."

"Then go and lock it!" snapped Lemand, angrily. "You were negligent to leave the door open."

"It is not yet closing time –"

"But Davis is off duty to–day. You know my instructions. The door must always be kept locked, except when you or Davis are in the front corridor."

"Sorry, sir." Rome looked rebuked. "I had forgotten."

The attendant left the office. With his departure came two clicks, from somewhere in the wall. Lemand gritted his teeth; determination had replaced his previous dread. Then the curator decided to follow Rome to the front of the museum.

Lemand arrived at the door to find the attendant locking it. He spoke new instructions, his voice a trifle testy.

"You can go Rome," ordered Lemand. "I shall lock the door after your departure."

"Very well, sir."

Rome reversed the direction of the key. He swung the big door inward. Both he and Lemand stared as a man came briskly up the steps. A wiry figure stepped into the light. Curator and attendant saw a keen face.

"Mr. Lemand?"

The curator nodded at the arrival's query.

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

"My name is Burke," explained the visitor. He looked youthful in the light. "From the New York Classic. I came to find out about the curios shipped by the Luben Expedition. When do you expect them?"

"They are not coming here," returned Lemand. "They have gone to the Aztec Museum in Chicago."

He nodded to Rome. The attendant stepped out through the door. Lemand clanged the big barrier from the inside. Burke stared blankly; Rome grinned and walked away, out toward the avenue. The clatter of a key sounded within the lock.

OUT in the dark, the reporter stood silent, slowly realizing that his interview with the curator was ended. Then he smiled. To Clyde Burke, star news gatherer on the staff of the New York Classic, this was an unusual experience. Seldom did he get cut short when on the quest for information.

Yet Clyde Burke was still smiling when he walked to the lighted avenue. He covered a block; then stopped at a cigar store. Entering a telephone booth, he put in a call. A quiet voice responded:

"Burbank speaking."

"Burke calling," was Clyde's prompt answer. "Report on the Mayan Museum."

"Report."

"Treasures not coming to the Mayan Museum. They are being shipped to the Aztec Museum in Chicago."

"Report received."

Clyde Burke still carried a smile when he strolled from the cigar store. His work was done. He had made his report. But it had not gone to the office of the New York Classic. Clyde Burke had duties other than those of a reporter.

Clyde was an agent of The Shadow, that mysterious being who hunted down men of crime. The Shadow, like others, had supposed that the Luben Expedition was sending its treasures to the Mayan Museum. Through Burbank, his contact man, The Shadow had delegated Clyde to learn when the valuables would be due.

For it was The Shadow's purpose to guard those treasures while in transit. Hence Clyde had found out all that The Shadow needed. The golden relics were going to Chicago, not to New York. The Shadow would have to cover elsewhere.

IT had also been Clyde Burke's province to note whatever else that might seem of importance. Clyde had gained but little opportunity to accomplish such a task. In his brief speech with the curator, Clyde had learned nothing that struck him as suspicious.

Rome, the attendant, had obviously been sent off duty a natural occurrence at six o'clock, the closing time for the museum. Lewis Lemand, as curator, had apparently found work to keep him in his office until later. Such were Clyde Burke's conclusions; and they were correct.

But Clyde had arrived too late to witness the separate departures of two individual visitors. In fact, he had found the front of the museum vacated at the time when he had reached there. Clyde, moreover, had heard nothing that concerned the mysterious clicks that had so recently sounded about the walls of Lemand's office.

Those were items that Clyde would have reported, had he learned them. Slight though they seemed, they

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

might have brought The Shadow to the Mayan Museum. As it was, The Shadow, uninformed, would be elsewhere. A fact that foretold misfortune.

For Lewis Lemand's apprehensions had not been unfounded. Grim events were due this very night, within that white–walled edifice where stone–eyed idols dwelt.

CHAPTER II. CRIME'S AFTERMATH

"HELLO, Burke!"

The words were sharp across the telephone wire Clyde Burke grunted sleepily. It was morning; he had been awakened by the incessant ringing of the telephone bell in the living room of his little apartment.

"Burke!"

Clyde recognized the voice. The tone belonged to Donney, assistant city editor of the Classic. This time, Clyde managed words when he made reply. He was nearly awake.

"Waked up, have you?" Donney's voice was sarcastic as it snapped from the receiver. "Well, it's time. Got a job for you, Burke. A robbery. Hop to it. Up to the Mayan Museum."

The final words electrified Clyde. He shot a prompt answer to Donney, forked the receiver and dived into his clothes. Shave and breakfast were forgotten, as the reporter hurried to the street. There, Clyde hailed the first cab he saw.

The taxi reached the Mayan Museum. Clyde saw a police car on a side street. He ordered the driver to take him to the back of the building. The cab pulled up in the rear street. Clyde disembarked to join a cluster of police and plainclothes men.

Just off the center of the museum wall was a huge hole that measured five feet in diameter. Jagged edges showed that the marble facing was only a few inches thick; but there was brick beyond it. This masonry had been shattered through a thickness of four feet.

Flashlights were blinking from the cavelike interior of the museum's basement. Clyde approached and jostled a patrolman. The bluecoat waved the reporter back. Then a stocky man in plain clothes stepped from the hole in the wall. Clyde recognized a swarthy, square–jawed face. He pushed past the patrolman.

"Hello, Joe!"

The swarthy man heard the reporter's greeting and nodded affably. He was Joe Cardona, ace detective on the New York force. Cardona's present capacity was that of acting inspector.

"HELLO, Burke!" grunted the ace. "Thought you'd be here pretty quick. Well, this is a story for you."

"Much loot, Joe?"

"Plenty! The place is cleaned. Just talked over the telephone with a lawyer named Petersham, who represents the museum. He figures it at half a million."

Clyde gaped. He had not realized that the Mayan Museum had already housed such vast treasure.

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

"All the stuff was gold," explained Cardona. "Pure gold. Not just junk curios. If the crooks melt the swag, they'll get full value."

Cardona's tone was sour.

"How did they crack the place?" queried Clyde.

The question brought a grunt from Cardona.

"How'd they crack it?" echoed the ace. "Take a look for yourself. Maybe you think this hole was part of the architect's plans."

"What I mean," persisted Clyde, "is how did they smash in without making too much noise?"

"A swell question," retorted Cardona. "If they'd been considerate, they would have left some one here to tell us all about it. But they didn't. So we figure that they used sledge hammers."

"But sledges would have been heard and –"

"And so would dynamite. This wall wasn't souped. But sledges can be muffled better than TNT."

Clyde caught the idea. Sledge hammers, muffled with cloth, would be useful in demolishing a wall. But the task, in itself, was herculean. Clyde lost count when he tried to estimate how many impacts would be necessary to smash so thick a barrier.

"Couple of hours' work, at least," decided Cardona, eyeing the gap. "But they couldn't have picked a better place in Manhattan to try it. This street is just about deserted at night. The only trouble is the patrolman."

"What happened to him?" inquired Clyde, eagerly.

"Nothing," returned Cardona "and that's just it. There was less than two hours' interval between the times that he passed here on his beat. He didn't spot anything."

"Maybe the crooks covered it when he came along."

"Maybe. That looks like the only answer. They needed more than two hours for the job."

Cardona spent a few minutes in speculation. Then, slowly, he added details.

"WE'RE shy on clues," admitted Joe. "Those wires, though, tell us one thing. See them sticking out from the bricks? They belong to a burglary alarm system."

"One that didn't work?"

"You guessed it." Cardona nodded as he answered Clyde's query; then resumed: "Maybe it was put on the fritz. After the crooks rifled the lower floor, they didn't go any farther."

"Why not?"

"Two reasons. First, there were steel doors to crack. Doors with a time lock, set with an alarm. One that they couldn't take a chance on, I suppose. Second, they didn't have to go any farther. The junk upstairs isn't worth

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

much."

Clyde was making notes on a folded sheet of copy paper. Affably, Cardona added further comment:

"Petersham tells us that he was here at quarter of six last night. When he left the place, the curator was still here. His name is Lewis Lemand. Besides the curator, there was an attendant named Rome."

"Who left at six o'clock," added Clyde, "leaving Lemand alone in the museum."

"What's that?"

Cardona's quiz was sharp. Clyde grinned.

"I stopped here at six last night," said The Shadow's agent. "I wanted an interview with Lemand about some Aztec treasures. He dismissed the attendant, then slammed the door in my face."

Cardona's gaze narrowed.

"You've told us something, Burke," affirmed the acting inspector. "We haven't been able to locate either of them Lemand or Rome."

"How come?"

"Lemand isn't at his apartment. We don't know Rome's address –"

An interruption came, as a burly detective sergeant appeared upon the scene. He had come from the front of the museum. Cardona broke off to make query:

"What is it, Markham?"

"Rome just showed up," returned the detective sergeant. "We're holding him by the front door."

"Has he any keys with him?"

"Yes. We made him hand them over."

Cardona turned to Clyde. "Come along, Burke."

WITH Markham, they arrived at the front door of the museum. Another man had arrived; he was talking to Rome. Clyde recognized the dry–faced attendant; but he wondered who the other was. The man was tall, with shocky, gray–streaked hair. His face was sharp–featured; his air dominating.

As they approached, the tall man faced Cardona. He must have decided that Joe was the man in charge, for he introduced himself promptly.

"I am Prentiss Petersham," he told Cardona. "I came up from my office, after I talked with you by telephone. Have you located Lemand?"

A headshake from Cardona. The ace took the keys and unlocked the big door. He motioned for others to enter. Then he made query:

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

"Where are the lights?"

Rome pointed out the switchboard; then pulled on the lights at Cardona's order. Somewhat reassured, the attendant made comment.

"Mr. Lemand must have turned them out when he left."

"At what time was that?" demanded Cardona, promptly.

"I don't know, sir," replied Rome. "He dismissed me about six o'clock. I do not know how long he intended to remain."

"Which way leads to Lemand's office?"

"I'll show you, sir."

Rome guided, with Cardona and Petersham close behind him. Clyde was a few steps in the rear. They reached the door of the curator's office. Rome opened it; the room was dark. The attendant found a light switch and clicked it.

"Step inside, sir."

Rome's words were to Cardona. The attendant had turned toward the corridor as he spoke. Clyde, behind Cardona and Petersham, was the first person to observe a puzzled expression that came upon Rome's face.

The reason for Rome's bewilderment was curious. The attendant was looking straight at Cardona and Petersham. Their eyes had riveted toward the floor of the room. Both men were frozen in position.

Clyde saw Rome turn, to stare in the same direction. He heard the horrified gasp that sped from the attendant's lips. Rome half staggered against the inner wall. Cardona, stepping slowly forward, opened a gap that enabled Clyde to see past Petersham.

Like Cardona, Clyde was accustomed to gruesome scenes; yet, on this occasion, the reporter was appalled by the sight before him. A body was sprawled in the center of the little room, just beside the desk.

The corpse lay face downward. Atop the skull was graphic evidence of how the victim had met death. There Clyde saw a battered wound. One ferocious blow had caved in the dead man's pate.

Clotted blood dyed the thin hair that fringed a bald crown. The marble floor was stained with an irregular pool of crimson. Close beside lay an instrument that could well have played its part in death. It was the stone-headed Aztec hammer that had previously lain upon the curator's desk.

Dropped to the floor, the stone hammer was also stained with blood. Apparently some killer had found the ancient weapon; then had used it to deliver a downward blow, struck from the rear without the victim's knowledge.

JOE CARDONA had reached the body. Skirting the pool of blood, the acting inspector reached forward and carefully raised the dead man's head. The move brought a profile into view. A groan came from Prentiss Petersham as the lawyer recognized the face.

To Clyde Burke, it was odd that the lawyer had not recognized the dead man until that moment. Probably it

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

was because of the shock that the sight had given Petersham. But Clyde, though he did not relish the scene, had already guessed the identity of the victim. So had Rome, awe–stricken in his corner.

The viewing of the face was but the visible proof of something which both the reporter and the attendant had realized almost instantly; and their simple clue had been the pronounced baldness of the victim's head.

The dead man was Lewis Lemand. Alone, trapped within the walls of his own office, the curator of the Mayan Museum had found the danger that he had feared. Though isolated from the exhibit room below; snug in a spot where thieves had failed to enter, Lemand had fallen prey to a murderous intruder.

Though circumstances indicated that the crimes had been separate, no one could doubt that their purposes had been linked. Lewis Lemand had died because he might have given an alarm.

Murder had accompanied the robbery at the Mayan Museum.

CHAPTER III. DUSK BRINGS THE SHADOW

IT was late afternoon. Reporters were barred from the Mayan Museum, with one exception. Clyde Burke was the fortunate news chaser who was privileged to remain inside the white–walled building. Clyde, however, was not there in his capacity of reporter. He was needed for his testimony.

Police Commissioner Ralph Weston had come to the museum. A brisk, keen mannered man of military bearing, Weston had chosen the curator's office as his conference room. Weston was seated behind Lemand's desk, twitching the ends of a pointed mustache. With him were three others: Cardona, Petersham and Clyde Burke.

"Give me your summary, Cardona."

Weston's order was delivered in a tone of finality. Cardona took the floor. "It sizes up this way, commissioner," stated the ace. "A gang sledged into the room downstairs and hauled out the stuff they wanted. But they didn't come up here. That is positive."

The commissioner nodded his agreement.

"Which means," went on Cardona, "that whoever killed Lemand did it independently. Probably as a precaution so he wouldn't hear the gang at work. I say probably, because there's one objection. Lemand was slain some hours before the burglars moved on the place."

"I understand," agreed Weston. "They could not have operated until just before dawn, because that was when the patrolman noticed the opening in the rear wall. But Lemand died at midnight –"

"Before midnight. Long before, according to the doctor's examination."

"I stand corrected. Lemand died during the evening. That puzzles me. Why should he have been killed at all? He would have been gone before the burglary was scheduled."

Cardona considered. Carefully, he replied:

"There are two possibilities, commissioner. The first, that Lemand found out something during the evening and had to be eliminated. The other is that Lemand might have furnished us some clue based upon his knowledge of the museum."

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

"I incline to the first."

Cardona waited for Weston to say more. The commissioner, however, made no further comment. Cardona was about to speak again when a gruff interruption came from Prentiss Petersham.

"I disagree, commissioner," declared the lawyer. "The second possibility is more likely."

WESTON stared half piqued, half surprised. He was not used to hearing objections. It was apparent that the commissioner wanted an explanation. Petersham gave one.

"This museum was Lemand's," declared the attorney. "I mean that literally. He had full charge of its arrangements. He saw to the installation of the protective devices: doors, time locks, gratings, burglary alarms. He had full custody of many records."

Weston arched his eyebrows.

"An unusual arrangement," admitted Petersham, "but one that is easily explained. The board of directors left such matters to the curator and the attorney."

"But you are the museum's attorney."

"I did not fill that capacity at the time when the museum was completed. Old Judge Frost, recently deceased, was the original attorney for the Mayan Museum."

"And he turned the record over to Lemand?"

"They were given to Lemand shortly after judge Frost died."

"And you never examined them?"

"Only in part. All affairs were in order. I saw no necessity to delve into the past. My work concerned the present and future."

"Where are the records?"

"In that filing cabinet."

"Then they will tell us facts that we need."

"Hardly. The records are incomplete. I examined them this afternoon. Many documents are missing."

Weston glared angrily. Petersham smiled an apology.

"I intended to mention this before," declared the lawyer. "Inspector Cardona allowed me to examine the records. He was here at the time. I made no comment to him, because I expected to meet you."

The explanation silenced Weston's objections. Cardona saw a chance to follow up his theories.

"THAT'S why the murderer came here," insisted Joe. "He wanted to look through the place. To grab off anything that might incriminate him. Along with it, he had to kill Lemand, because the curator might have told what was in the missing records."

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

"He intended to murder Lemand," mused Weston. "Yes, he intended it. We have a clue to that fact!" The commissioner pounded the desk. "The murderer had to leave the museum. There was only one way he could properly do it."

"By getting Lemand's keys," put in Cardona, catching the commissioner's thought.

"Exactly!" assured Weston. "Yes, the crime was premeditated. Our task is to analyze the actual plans for murder."

"Not difficult," observed Petersham. "Lemand frequently stayed here evenings. It was the rule, rather than the exception."

"But when did the murderer enter?"

"Some time during the day. To remain hidden in one of the museum rooms."

"Or perhaps just before closing time," inserted Cardona. "He had his opportunity right then."

Petersham looked toward Cardona and shook his head.

"The door was locked when I came here," declared the lawyer. "Rome locked it again right after my departure."

"But he unlocked it for Elvin Lettigue," remarked Cardona, "and left it unlocked while he and Lettigue were here in this office with Lemand. Then there's the chance of duplicate keys. But that time when Lettigue was here may still be important. Rome says that Lettigue –"

"Lettigue!" snapped Weston. "Where is Elvin Lettigue? You said that you would have him here, Cardona. We require his testimony."

"I sent Markham out to Lettigue's house," explained Cardona. "It's on Long Island. Lettigue had gone out yachting an hour before Markham got there. He was expected back, and Markham said he'd bring him in here."

"ELVIN LETTIGUE," mused Petersham, in slow tone. "An odd sort, that fellow. Lemand talked about him often."

"Concerning what?" queried Weston, promptly.

"Philanthropies," replied Petersham. "Gifts that Lettigue had promised to this museum. Offers that fell through because they always had some ridiculous proviso."

"For instance?"

"Lettigue offered to provide funds for opening a new exhibit room on the second floor. But he specified that he would finance the mural decorations only."

"To what extent?"

"One hundred thousand dollars. Double the sum necessary for the murals. Some one else would have had to supply the exhibits. Lettigue flatly refused to divide the same into two portions, as Lemand suggested."

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

"Lettigue is eccentric?"

"That instance would indicate it. Unless the offer were no more than a gesture on Lettigue's part. Sometimes I suspect that Lettigue is a bluffer in the field of philanthropy."

There was a knock before Weston could make further comment. A detective entered to announce that Markham had arrived with Elvin Lettigue. The two were introduced to the office. Clyde Burke had opportunity to study the man whom Petersham and Weston had discussed.

ELVIN LETTIGUE looked as he had the night before. His face was bluff and stolid. He was wearing gloves and overcoat; under his arm he was carrying the heavy-headed cane that seemed to be part of his attire. Introductions ended, Lettigue came promptly to the subject of Lemand's murder.

"Too bad about Lemand," rumbled the millionaire, his face expressionless. "Sergeant Markham informed me concerning his death. He was slain, I understand, in this very office."

Commissioner Weston nodded. "Where did his body lie?" queried Lettigue. He pointed with his cane. "About here?"

Lettigue had indicated almost the exact spot where the body had been found. There was nothing remarkable about the fact, however, for that space was the most conspicuous area in the room:

"That is where we found him," explained Weston, bluntly. "He had been felled by a single blow."

"And you discovered the death instrument?"

"Here it is."

Weston opened a desk drawer and produced the stone-headed hammer. He passed it to Lettigue, who tucked his cane beneath his arm in order to receive the hammer.

"We found no finger prints," stated Weston; "therefore, the exhibit may be handled. We assume that the murderer was wearing gloves."

"I saw this instrument," nodded Lettigue. He replaced the hammer on the desk, choosing a spot as he did so. "It was lying right here when I talked with Lemand yesterday afternoon."

"What can you tell us about that conversation?" quizzed Weston. "Did Lemand express any unusual concern?"

"None at all," responded Lettigue. "He was upset because the Luben Expedition had sent its treasures to Chicago. I told him that I had been a contributor to that expedition; that I resented the decision."

"You contributed to the expedition?" queried Petersham. "To what extent, Mr. Lettigue?"

"Twenty thousand dollars, as I recall it," replied Lettigue. "Perhaps a larger sum. I do not recall the exact amount. Of course, that was but a fraction of the total amount that financed the expedition. Others had promised the major portion."

"Nothing else occurred here?" queried Weston. "Nothing other than your conversation?"

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

"Nothing at all," returned Lettigue. "Except that Lemand told Rome, the attendant, that he could go off duty. That was just prior to my departure."

THE pause that followed was broken by Cardona. The acting inspector turned to Markham.

"Bring in Rome," said Cardona. Then, to Petersham: "You spoke of a clicking noise that Lemand mentioned? One that you both heard several times?"

"I did," nodded Petersham. "I attached no significance to it but the sound annoyed Lemand –"

Cardona had swung to Lettigue, with the query: "Did you hear the noise?"

"The noise?" queried Lettigue. "What noise?"

"The one that I just mentioned to Mr. Petersham."

"I did not hear what you said. I am somewhat hard of hearing. Your head was turned away when you spoke."

"A clicking noise," stated Cardona, more loudly. "Somewhere about this room. Did you hear such a noise while you were here with Lemand?"

Lettigue shook his head.

"I heard no noise," he began. "Lemand said nothing to me concerning any clicks. Nothing at all. I was here but a short while. Then Rome arrived –"

Lettigue broke off. Rome had arrived again. The attendant entered the office, in custody of Markham. Cardona sprang a sharp question, so that Lettigue could hear.

"Repeat your testimony, Rome," ordered Cardona. "Tell us: did you hear a clicking noise in this office?"

"Yes," nodded Rome. "The one I spoke about previously. It bothered Mr. Lemand."

"It occurred while Mr. Lettigue was here?"

"Yes, sir. Mr. Lettigue was here." Lettigue had seated himself; he was listening to Rome's testimony. Leaning forward, elbows supported by his huge cane, the millionaire caught every word that Rome uttered. Apparently, he was eyeing the attendant's lips to note the statement, for Rome did not speak loudly.

"I heard no mention of a clicking noise," protested Lettigue, in a rumble. "Lemand may have talked about it; but I did not hear him."

"It was just before Mr. Lemand told me I could go off duty," stated Rome. He had raised his voice. "Do you remember that, sir?"

"Yes," returned Lettigue. "I recall something of the sort."

CLYDE BURKE was looking past Lettigue. The reporter spied Petersham. The lawyer's brow had furrowed; the semblance of a smile was upon Petersham's sharp lips. Then those lips tightened. Clyde assumed that Petersham had been about to say something but had changed his mind.

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

It was Commissioner Weston who spoke. The official brought the testimony to an abrupt finish.

"These minor points are not important," decided Weston. "What we want is definite testimony. Clicking sounds, too light to be easily heard, could have no bearing on this case. Our purpose is to trace Lewis Lemand's actions during those periods when he was last seen. That much has been accomplished."

Rising, the commissioner ended the conference. All, excepting Rome, filed from the room, preparing to go their separate ways. The attendant was to remain in police custody.

Clyde Burke was one of the last to leave the front of the museum. He strolled a short way toward the avenue; then paused to watch Markham conduct Rome to a police car. Clyde saw Petersham take a cab. He observed Lettigue entering a limousine.

Clyde turned about. Weston and Cardona were standing on the museum steps. The white wall of the building offset the dusk that obscured them. Clyde saw both men plainly; also a policeman who was near them. The bluecoat was guarding the door of the museum; he had left it open, not knowing whether or not the commissioner intended to go back into the building.

Then from the darkness beside the paved walk came a whisper that only Clyde Burke heard. It was a tone from an unseen arrival, who stood shrouded on the verge of blackness.

"Report!"

CLYDE stood rigid. It was The Shadow. He knew that weird whisper, even though he could not see its author. Seconds passed; then Clyde thrust his hand into his inside pocket. He drew forth a sheet of paper; it contained notes that he had scribbled during the conference in the office.

Clyde extended the half–crumpled paper in a backward direction. A gloved hand plucked it from his grasp. Clyde caught a faint swish in the darkness; then, as he watched, he spied a singular phenomenon.

A blackened shape moved ghostlike between the standing men and the museum wall. It reached the darkness that fronted the bronze doors. It had faded when Cardona turned to the uniformed officer.

"Lock up," ordered Joe. "I am leaving with the commissioner."

Cardona beckoned. Clyde joined him and Weston and walked toward the avenue. From behind them came a muffled clang, as the guarding officer closed the big doors. Clyde suppressed a smile that his companions did not see.

The law's investigation had ended for the day. Yet another, unknown, had come to study the scene where crime had struck.

The Shadow had entered the Mayan Museum.

CHAPTER IV. THE THRUST THAT FAILED

A LIGHT glowed within the curator's office of the Mayan Museum. The glare came from the desk lamp. It showed a lone visitor who was seated there. Tall, spectral in a cloak of black, The Shadow was peeling thin gloves from his long–fingered hands.

Eyes burned from beneath the brim of a slouch hat. Their sparkle was matched by the glint of a gem upon

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

The Shadow's finger. This stone was The Shadow's girasol, the only emblem that the master sleuth wore.

Fingers opened an envelope. Clippings and typed papers slipped to the desk top. Among these, The Shadow dropped Clyde Burke's scrawled paper. All were recent proof that The Shadow, just returned to New York, had gathered up items of information gained by various agents.

Methodically, The Shadow began to make notations of his own, cataloguing matters according to the information at hand. His first tabulation concerned the Luben Expedition treasures that had been shipped to Chicago. The Shadow inscribed three names, each with a comment:

Lewis Lemand Yes

Prentiss Petersham Yes

Elvin Lettigue Question

The comments meant that both Lemand and Petersham had known that the new curios had gone to the Chicago museum; and would not, therefore, be among the treasures stored in the Mayan Museum. Lettigue might not have known of that shipment; nevertheless, he could have gained such information.

From among the clippings, The Shadow extracted one from a Chicago newspaper. It was one day old; it stated that the Luben Expedition treasures were en route to Chicago. Therefore, Lettigue could have known. So, for that matter, might any one else, if they had been on the watch for information.

The Shadow was striking toward a vital subject. He had deduced that robbery had been delayed in hope that the Luben treasures were coming to the Mayan Museum. Once it had been learned that the new items were going elsewhere, crooks had struck without further wait.

A SOFT laugh came from The Shadow's hidden lips. He had been to Chicago. There, he had watched the delivery of the Luben treasures. He had been ready to prevent crime in Illinois. Instead, it had struck in New York. The Shadow's laugh was grim.

The Shadow knew that the value of the treasures stolen from New York far exceeded those that had gone to Chicago. The gold brought back by the Luben Expedition would have been merely added swag for the robbery at the Mayan Museum.

To-day's clippings from New York newspapers gave full details of the robbery. All that The Shadow needed was an account of various testimonies. These were included in Clyde Burke's notes. The Shadow wrote three names:

Petersham

Rome

Lettigue

Keen eyes began a comparison of the testimonies. They coincided, except for a detail that Clyde had marked. That was the matter of the clicks that had been audible in Lemand's office. Petersham and Rome remembered them. Lettigue did not.

Clyde had added the explanation: Lettigue's deafness. After it he had written: "Petersham's opinion," with a

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

question mark attached. The Shadow understood. Petersham had begun a comment, but had refrained. The Shadow knew why.

Petersham had evidently thought it significant that Lettigue's deafness had been spasmodic. Lettigue had not heard the clicks; but he had heard Lemand dismiss Rome. Others had let that paradox pass. To Petersham, it meant something; to Weston, nothing. To The Shadow, it could mean either. He required further facts.

The desk drawer slithered open. From it, The Shadow produced the Mayan mallet. Weston had replaced the stone hammer in the drawer; then had forgotten it. This piece of evidence should have gone to headquarters. Cardona would probably pick it up in the morning.

The Shadow examined the mallet. His lips phrased a questioning laugh. Here, again, new facts were needed; and in this case, The Shadow had uncovered a point upon which no one else had speculated.

The Mayan hammer was evidence only because it could have been the implement with which Lemand was slain. The stone–headed weapon was suited to a murderer's use. Yet there was no proof that it was the actual implement that had been employed. Others would realize that fact later. The Shadow had anticipated a conclusion that would doubtless occur to other investigators.

The Shadow was checking other summaries. Here he found likely probabilities. His hand penned brief comments:

Crime planned beforehand. Burglary.

An interval; then The Shadow added:

Added crime if necessary. Murder.

To these he added a double statement:

Burglary postponed in hope of added spoils.

Murder rendered necessary through circumstances.

Murder. The word referred to Lewis Lemand. It was logical that The Shadow's next items should concern the dead curator.

Lewis Lemand. Had records. Heard clicks.

THE SHADOW pondered. The matter of the records was an important one. According to Petersham, Lemand alone knew their actual content. Many persons, however, might have known full well that the records could prove damaging, if found. Theft of the records would therefore be important. So would the death of Lemand, with one proviso. The Shadow inscribed one word:

Connection

Would Lemand have guessed the reason for the theft of the records? Only if something about the robbery had shown a definite connection with the records themselves. This indicated that some recent happening must have been important enough to prove a clue after the robbery. A clue to Lemand, if the curator had lived.

Clicks

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

The Shadow added that one word. Testimony showed that the clicks had troubled Lemand. They could well be the connection. Again, The Shadow considered the three names: Petersham Rome Lettigue. Each brought speculation.

Petersham admitted hearing the clicks. He also said that he had never seen the records. Hence Petersham according to his testimony was not as versed in matters as was Lemand. But an unknown murderer might have believed that Petersham had access to the records.

Why, then, had Petersham not been murdered also? The Shadow had an answer that fitted facts. Petersham's visit to the museum had been brief; almost unexpected. A plotting murderer would not have known that Petersham had heard the clicks.

Lettigue's case was different. He came to the museum more frequently. An intended murderer would have discounted Lettigue's deafness, and considered it possible that the millionaire might have heard the clicks. But Lettigue, too, had been spared. His case was the reverse of Petersham's. Lettigue could not have had access to the records.

The Shadow had skipped Rome in his summary. He concentrated on the attendant's name. With a single stroke, he eliminated it as unimportant in the future. Rome was no criminal. His release would soon be granted by the police.

Had Rome been working with a murderer, he would not have behaved in the fashion that he did. He would have guessed that Petersham had heard the clicks. Lemand had called attention to them immediately after the lawyer's departure.

Moreover, Rome would not have admitted to the police that he was negligent in leaving the front door unlocked. He would, however, have seen to it that he had an alibi covering all his actions from the time that he left the museum at six o'clock the evening before.

Rome, as The Shadow considered him, was nothing more than an ordinary museum attendant so minor a factor that even the murderer had not troubled himself about the fellow. Rome had keys to the museum; but they were not necessary. Any one could have hidden in an exhibit room, earlier in the day.

THERE was another possibility, also. The Shadow marked it with brief notations. Rome could have been a victim but for a different purpose than Lemand. The murderer could have lurked outside the museum until closing time, intending to follow Rome afterward and see to the attendant's death, thereby gaining Rome's keys.

In that case, the killer would have noted that the door remained unlocked after Lettigue's entry. He would have taken advantage of the opportunity to enter, entirely unnoticed. To let Rome leave as was usual and then deal with Lemand when the curator was alone.

The Shadow dwelt for several moments upon this possibility. His low-toned laugh showed that it fitted with his reconstruction of the crime. Then a hand thrust forward; the tug of the lamp cord brought blackness. Papers crinkled; cloth swished. The Shadow was on the move.

AT intervals, the glimmer of a flashlight appeared within the corridors of the main floor. The Shadow reached a flight of marble stairs. He descended to the lower floor. Here his progress was stopped before a pair of formidable doors.

These were the time-locked barriers. They stood unscathed, a proof that the murderer had not formed inside

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

contact with the burglars. The Shadow's flashlight glimmered everywhere. Keen eyes noted that the big doors were of the best construction. It would have been difficult to smash through those barriers.

Yet no more difficult than to break through the outside masonry, which had been wired with a burglary alarm. The Shadow considered that fact as he stood in darkness. Again, he came to a point that others had totally neglected.

An attack on the inside doors would have been preferable to the crashing of the outside masonry, for it would have been free from notice. Provided, of course, that crooks could have gained access to the interior of the museum. Such access should have been easy; for the murderer, himself, was inside with Lemand's keys.

To any investigator other than The Shadow, this deduction would have signified that the murderer and the burglars had been independent, neither knowing of the other's plans. But The Shadow did not jump to that conclusion. Instead, he started to a different spot of investigation.

His light went out. When it glimmered again, The Shadow was back again on the ground floor, picking the lock of the museum's front door. This barrier did not prove difficult. Lemand had relied upon the time locks downstairs to protect the one inner room where the real treasures were kept.

The door opened slowly. The Shadow moved out into complete darkness. He could hear the pace of the guarding bluecoat. Slowly, amid gloom, The Shadow probed the outer lock, to render the door as secure as before. Then, with silent glide, he sidled along the front of the museum.

A passing silhouette against the white wall. Such was The Shadow, as he moved unnoticed. Minutes passed. Behind the museum, blackness converged with the yawning cavity through which burglars had entered. The Shadow entered the rifled lower room.

THE flashlight glimmered cautiously, its glowing orb a mere six–inch circle. Inspection showed that the burglars had ignored the big inner doors. They had known their job: to rifle this lower room and to complete the work rapidly. The Shadow returned to the cavity.

There, his flashlight glimmered on the edges of the masonry. Gloved fingers stroked loose stone. Bits of brick crumbled under a touch. At one spot, The Shadow's hand dug to an eight–inch depth. The Shadow's laugh sounded guardedly.

The master investigator had scored another hit. He had found out why the burglars had chosen this outside course. Sledges, perhaps, had been used to begin the entry; but they had not been needed long.

The rear wall of the museum had given way like tissue. Marble, bricks and mortar had failed as an obstruction. But in this one place only. Digging harder at the crumbling edges, The Shadow came to firmer masonry.

Torn wires came beneath the flashlight's circle. The glow moved along the ground. No signs of loose–ripped wiring could be seen. The burglars had done a quick and easy job; they had gathered strands of connecting wires and had taken them along.

The Shadow knew why. Because those wires would have lain as evidence. Something about them would have told the story that the police had not gained from smashed masonry. It had taken The Shadow to discover that some force stronger than sledges had first worked within this wall, to prepare the way for entry.

The Shadow moved out to the sidewalk. His flashlight blinked and became dark as he stepped along beside

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

the wall. The reflection of a dim street lamp served to outline his cloaked shape against the whiteness of an undemolished surface.

Straight across the street was blackness a narrow opening between two sections of the row of old houses. The presence of that darkened depth must have come to The Shadow as an inkling of danger. Dark was The Shadow's habitat; he knew how it could serve a lurker.

Also, The Shadow had made discovery. He had found a clue that crooks had failed to cover. A reason why men of crime might still be on the watch. These were the reasons why The Shadow stopped, intent. They accounted for the fact that his keen ears were strained to hear the barely audible stir that came from darkness.

THE SHADOW whirled from his conspicuous spot. His limber body made a sidelong dive back toward the darkness of the cavity. With that sudden, twisting move came a sharp pop from the darkness between the houses. A sighing hiss sounded close to The Shadow's dropping shoulder. There was an impact; a crackle from against the wall.

Dropped to one arm, The Shadow raised the other. An automatic barked from his gloved fist. spurts of flame jabbed with each explosion. The Shadow had whipped a .45 from beneath his cloak; but his booming fire was too late.

Clattering footsteps were speeding through the passage across the way. A thwarted assassin was dashing for a street beyond. The man, whoever he was, had been shrewd enough to take to his heels. The Shadow knew that pursuit would be useless.

From somewhere came the shrill note of a police whistle. Guarding officers had heard The Shadow's gunfire. They would arrive with speed. Yet The Shadow still had time to deliver a flashlight's glimmer at the base of the wall.

The glow showed a mashed bullet. It was a dum dum that had come with sufficient drive to deliver death, had it found its target. The Shadow picked up the slug; then blinked off his flashlight. The would-be killer had dispatched his single shot from a high-powered air gun. The silent weapon had failed its purpose, thanks to The Shadow's quick dive.

Torches glimmered. Two bluecoats had arrived. They scoured the area behind the museum. They decided that they had heard the echoes of an automobile motor's backfire. They departed, back to their stations. When they had gone, a gliding figure moved from the darkness of a house front.

The Shadow was departing. He had learned all that he required. His clue of the crumbled wall would be sufficient. For coupled to it had been his quick escape from a lurking killer's fire. Sure proof that crooks had hoped to deal with any chance searcher who might learn too much.

A thrust in the dark had failed against The Shadow. Through its foiled delivery, the master sleuth had gained full knowledge that he had reached the beginning of the trail.

CHAPTER V. CRIME BREAKS AGAIN

"LOOKS like the mallet bunch again Burke."

It was the voice of Donney, assistant city editor of the Classic, that gave the news across the telephone. Another morning had brought a summons to a scene of crime. Clyde Burke, hanging up the receiver, was mechanical in action. He stared from the window of his living room.

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

Two nights ago, crooks had sledged their way into the Mayan Museum. The Shadow had been absent from New York that night. Clyde, himself, had failed to catch an inkling of approaching crime. With The Shadow away, the museum robbers had done their work unmolested.

Last night, however, The Shadow had returned. Clyde had seen him entering the Mayan Museum. Clyde had been confident that crime would halt. This very morning, Donney's voice had again brought the word of a successful burglary:

One so like the first that the perpetrators were obviously those who had rifled the Mayan Museum. This time, they had sledged their way into a jeweler's vault. Parker Clayborne, wholesale dealer in precious stones, had been robbed of gems valued at a quarter million.

Why had The Shadow not foreseen this crime?

Clyde, as he pondered, found the answer. Crooks were striking from the dark, picking spots that could not be located in advance. One thing alone could end their game. That would have to be inside knowledge of the criminal plans. It was apparent that The Shadow, whatever his trail, had not yet penetrated the shell that surrounded the criminal operations.

FORTY minutes after Donney's call, Clyde Burke arrived at Clayborne's. The jeweler's office was located on the second floor of an old building near Times Square. Policemen were on duty along the side street when Clyde arrived. The reporter gained admittance and reached the office itself.

Weston and Cardona were there before him. They received the reporter affably. Cardona pointed out how crime had been done. The job had been a simple one.

Clayborne's suite consisted of two offices. A strong door guarded the outer room. It formed the only entrance from the hall; and the door had not been touched.

Between the outer office and the inner was a massive metal grille, protected by a time lock and a burglary alarm. The crooks had ignored this barrier also.

They had gained their entrance to the inner room from an empty office located next to Clayborne's suite. They had sledged their way through a one-foot wall of brick, just as they had at the Mayan Museum. This wall, however, had no wiring. The task had been simpler and more rapid.

Clyde saw the gaping hole, a low, three-foot opening. Once through it, the burglars had easily picked out all of Clayborne's valuable gems; for the jeweler had depended upon his grilled strong door to keep out thieves.

Clyde and Cardona stepped through the hole into the empty office from which the crooks had worked.

There had been no murder in connection with this burglary. This time, though, the crooks had left an open clue. It was a large, two-headed sledge, its handle snapped at the middle. The head of the sledge was swaddled in heavy cloth.

"That's how they prevented noise," explained Cardona. "And the fellow who handled this mallet had plenty of beef. Plenty of it!"

There was a knowing tone in Cardona's voice. Clyde gained an immediate impression that the ace had made a guess as to the identity of the crook himself. Cardona must have noted that his tone was a give-away, for he quickly changed his tack.

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

"No finger prints on the handle," was Joe's comment. "The fellow must have been wearing gloves. We don't know who he is."

CLYDE was looking at the broken handle of the sledge. He noted that the splinters projected from one side, an indication that the tool had been smashed by a side stroke. He observed also that the unsplintered side had a rounded mark that made a slight depression. Half of this circle was on the lower portion of the handle; half on the upper.

"What gets us," declared Cardona, "is how they did the job so quickly and so quietly. There's a watchman in this building. He didn't hear a thing."

"He made his rounds past here?" queried Clyde.

"Every half hour," nodded Cardona. "After midnight he began with an inspection of the empty office."

"And after that?"

"He didn't come in the empty office until morning. But he stopped by the door on every round."

"Maybe the crooks used a skeleton key and stayed in the empty office."

"That's what they did do. They worked between times. But they didn't have many intervals, with the watchman about. He'd have heard the sledges every time he came to this floor, even though they were muffled."

Clyde made no comment. Cardona pointed across the office to an old, solid-backed bookcase, which, with a desk, were the only items of furniture in the unoccupied office.

"That bookcase was originally in front of the broken wall," explained Cardona. "The crooks moved it before they began their sledge work."

An idea spurred Clyde.

"Say!" exclaimed the reporter. "Maybe they did the job some time ago! They could have battered through the wall; then covered it with the bookcase –"

Joe's snorted chuckle stopped Clyde short.

"Better stick to reporting," joked Cardona. "You're no detective, Burke."

"But if they had smashed the hole beforehand –"

"It would have been seen from Clayborne's side of the wall."

Clyde grinned sheepishly. Cardona had shattered the reporter's theory.

"The empty office might be a clue," remarked Cardona. "It was leased by a guy named Bursley. Thomas Bursley. He took a year's lease, by telephone; and sent the money in advance, by mail. Moved some junky furniture into the place a month ago, then never occupied it."

"Did the building superintendent meet Bursley?"

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

"No. Nobody met him. What's worse, the letter that he sent with the money was typewritten and had no signature. This job was planned in advance, Burke. No question about that. But we'll have a tough job locating any one called Bursley. The arrangement was too slick."

A CALL came from Clayborne's office. It was Weston, summoning Cardona. Joe stooped and went through the shattered wall; Clyde followed. When they joined the police commissioner, they found two other persons. One was Parker Clayborne, a nervous, haggard-faced man. The other was Prentiss Petersham. The lawyer had arrived unexpectedly.

"I just learned about this robbery," stated Petersham to Weston. "I thought that it might be attributed to the same band that rifled the Mayan Museum. That is why I came here."

"We believed that the criminals were the same," nodded Weston. "Inspector Cardona will show you our only clue, Mr. Petersham. It is a broken sledge lying in the empty office beyond the shattered wall."

Cardona conducted Petersham through the opening. Clyde remained to hear what Clayborne had to say.

"The rogues avoided my strong door," asserted Clayborne to Weston. "They would not have dared attack it. The alarm would have sounded."

"The wall of the Mayan Museum was wired with an alarm," remarked Weston. "It gave no signal."

"It must have been faulty equipment," declared Clayborne. "What concern installed it?"

"We do not know," replied the police commissioner. "That, however, is unimportant. We know that a wiring, built into a wall, might prove unreliable after a time."

"I agree," nodded Clayborne. "That is one reason why I did not install wiring in my own wall. But the equipment of my strong door was in order."

"The same was true with the lower doors inside the Mayan Museum," declared Weston. "We have given them a thorough examination. The locks were of the best make."

The commissioner named the type.

"The same as mine," rejoined Clayborne. "But they handle time locks only. Some other concern must have put in the wall wiring at the museum."

The subject dropped. Cardona had returned with Petersham. Weston wanted to talk to Cardona; they went into Clayborne's outer office. Clyde lounged by the window, while Petersham began to chat with Clayborne.

THE jeweler's story was a wail of woe. He summed up the loss that he had received a total that was only partly covered by burglary insurance. He began to mention the names of wealthy purchasers with whom he had dealt. It was when Clayborne paused, that Petersham inserted a question.

The query was delivered in a low, cautious tone that Clyde did not catch. It was Clayborne's repetition of the question a trifle less guarded that enabled the reporter to learn what Petersham had asked.

"Elvin Lettigue?" asked the jeweler. "The millionaire? Yes. I have sold him gems."

A mumble from Petersham. A call for a softer tone from Clayborne. The jeweler's voice became more

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

cautious; yet Clyde caught snatches.

"Several months ago small purchases dissatisfied with the necklace I had almost forgotten –"

Evidently Clayborne's dealings with Lettigue had been intermittent; of a minor nature, and somewhat unsatisfactory. Petersham's voice took up the conversation, but his tone was loud again. The lawyer had changed the subject. He was sympathizing with Clayborne over the latter's loss.

There was a call from the outer office. Cardona was summoning Clayborne. The jeweler departed. Clyde, still staring from the window, heard Petersham moving about the inner office. Footsteps paused; Clyde sidled a glance toward the lawyer.

Petersham was standing by the shattered wall. With finger tips, he was testing a jagged edge of crumbled masonry. A broken brick gave like powder at his touch. Petersham dug deep until he was stopped by solid brick.

He began to test other spots. One crumbled; the others did not. Clyde watched the lawyer's sharpish profile. He noted a tightening of Petersham's outthrust lower lip. It looked like a smile of satisfaction.

Petersham turned suddenly; but Clyde was quick enough to avoid his notice. Once again, the reporter was staring from the window, as if interested in watching the street. Clyde heard Petersham move about by the wall. Then came an interval of silence.

"BURKE!"

The call was from the outer office. Clyde swung about. It was Cardona who had called him. The acting inspector put a query.

"Where's Mr. Petersham?" Clyde stared, actually puzzled.

"He was here a minute ago," replied the reporter. "I heard him over by the wall."

"Then he must have gone through to the empty office."

Clyde nodded. He realized that Petersham must have decided to look at the other side of the hole. Cardona crawled through to the empty office; then returned.

"He's not there," grumbled Joe, "and the commissioner wants to see him –" Weston appeared from the outer office and snapped an interruption.

"Mr. Petersham has gone," announced the commissioner. "He went out through the hall. He left word with one of the men on duty. Petersham will be at his office later in the day, if we wish to talk with him."

"There's nothing to ask him about, commissioner."

"Probably not. You can call him from headquarters, if anything new develops."

Weston and Cardona prepared to leave. The acting inspector picked up the broken sledge to carry it to headquarters. Clyde had gained all the story that he could. He left with the others, while Clayborne remained gloomily in his office.

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

Reaching the street, Clyde headed for a telephone. He put in a call to Burbank. He reported all details; Burbank received them, then ordered Clyde to visit the office of Rutledge Mann, an investment broker in the Badger Building.

The order meant that Burbank was going off duty until evening. Mann was another of The Shadow's contact agents who served by day. It also signified that Clyde would find instructions awaiting him.

MANN was in his office when Clyde arrived. Quiet, chubby–faced and methodical, the investment broker heard a repetition of the details that Clyde had given Burbank. Mann made notes of his own; then, from a desk drawer, he produced a typewritten list.

"These names," stated Mann, "are those of concerns in New York that handle burglary alarms. You will visit all of them, as a representative of the New York Classic."

"To question them about installation?" queried Clyde.

"More than that," smiled Mann. "You will find out the name of the concern that wired the wall of the Mayan Museum."

Clyde grinned. He liked the task.

"I'll handle it," he told Mann. He looked at the list. "Only a dozen names. I can finish it in a few hours, if I have luck."

Mann nodded his approval.

Once he had left the investment broker's, Clyde went to the Classic and prepared a hurried story that hit the high spots of the robbery at Clayborne's. That done, Clyde dodged a new assignment and gained a clear afternoon.

Clyde had orders from The Shadow. Coupled with Clyde's own report, these formed a double lead. Clyde Burke was positive that before the day was ended The Shadow would have progressed along the trail.

CHAPTER VI. THE SHADOW'S VISIT

"MR. PETERSHAM has not returned, sir."

The stenographer gave the information to the tall stranger who had entered the lawyer's office. It was the second time that this visitor had appeared during the afternoon. Once at two o'clock; this time at three.

"I shall wait."

The tall stranger seated himself in a large leather chair. In leisurely fashion, he lighted a cigarette and leaned back to await Petersham's arrival.

There was something commanding about the visitor's appearance, a characteristic that offset his lackadaisical manner. His face was an impressive one immobile in expression, hawklike in profile. Closely scrutinized, it bore a resemblance to a mask.

The visitor was The Shadow. He had delegated Clyde Burke to follow one trail: that of The Shadow's own making. The Shadow, himself, had taken up the task of following the lead that had come from Clyde's report.

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

This involved Prentiss Petersham. The lawyer's actions at Clayborne's were something that needed closer study. Petersham had uncovered two facts. One was that Elvin Lettigue had once dealt with Parker Clayborne; the other, that the jeweler's broken wall was powdery about its crumbled edges.

Oddly, Petersham had mentioned neither fact to Weston or Cardona. The lawyer was playing a game that resembled The Shadow's. He was keeping his findings to himself. That was why The Shadow had decided to contact Petersham in person.

Ten minutes drifted. The door of Petersham's suite swung open. In strode Petersham himself, his sharp face preoccupied with a foxlike expression. The lawyer did not observe his silent visitor. He made inquiry of the girl at the outer desk.

"Any telephone calls Miss Logan?"

"None, Mr. Petersham. There is a caller –"

"Not important." Petersham shook his shaggy head. "There is no one whom I wish to see. I am going to my inner office. Switch any telephone calls there –"

"This card, Mr. Petersham."

The girl held up a calling card that The Shadow had given her. Immediately, Petersham ejaculated the name that he read:

"Lamont Cranston! When –"

"He is here, Mr. Petersham."

The attorney swung about. He saw the seated visitor. He advanced with outstretched hand. The Shadow arose to receive the greeting. Petersham promptly conducted his visitor to the private office.

THERE was reason for Prentiss Petersham to enthuse over a visit from Lamont Cranston. The Shadow had chosen a guise that would make him welcome. For Lamont Cranston, famous globe–trotter, was reputed to be a multimillionaire who took keen interest in contributing rare curios to museums.

Petersham had never before met Lamont Cranston; but he had heard of the millionaire. Even had he met the real Cranston, he would not have suspected an imposture. The Shadow, when he guised himself as Cranston, became the millionaire's double.

"My visit concerns the Mayan Museum," remarked The Shadow, quietly, as soon as he was seated in Petersham's office. "I was sorry to read about the death of Lewis Lemand."

"You knew the curator?" queried Petersham, from behind his desk.

"Only slightly," returned The Shadow. "But I had planned to arrange an expedition to Mexico on Lemand's account."

"Why so?"

"Because he did not receive the treasures from the Luben Expedition."

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

Petersham started to nod; then paused. His face showed perplexity. "On Lemand's account?" he demanded. "But Lemand was dead before the news came out that the Luben relics had been sent to Chicago."

The Shadow shook his head.

"I was in Chicago," he explained. "The news of the Luben shipment was published there a full day before Lemand's death."

Petersham's gaze narrowed. A flicker of a smile showed on the lawyer's pursed lips. His thoughts, however, were completely veiled. It was impossible to tell whether or not he had heard this fact before.

Possibly Petersham was pleased to learn that some one else might testify that the news was public prior to Lemand's death. Or, on the contrary, his smile might have meant that he had gained some unexpected information that he regarded as useful.

"Of course," added The Shadow, slowly, "the rifling of the museum changed my inclinations. I would not care to contribute exhibits to a place that has shown itself so vulnerable to burglary."

Petersham smiled sourly.

"The newspapers state," resumed The Shadow, "that the museum was well protected. Yet the fact stands that thieves entered it –"

"Only through amazing strength," interrupted Petersham. "They malleted their way through a thick, solid wall. They repeated their same process last night, to enter a jeweler's strong room."

"I read of it," nodded The Shadow. "Why did the burglary alarm fail to function?"

"There was none at the jeweler's."

"But at the museum?"

Another sour smile from Petersham.

"Some faulty equipment," decided the attorney. "A freak of chance. Something went bad with the wiring."

"What does the alarm company have to say about it?"

"We do not know the make of the burglary alarm."

THE SHADOW'S thin eyebrows raised quizzically. Petersham made hasty explanation.

"Records were stolen," stated the lawyer. "I had no duplicates. Lemand alone knew who had installed the equipment. But I can tell you again, Mr. Cranston, that these rogues were powerful. They actually smashed down solid chunks of masonry with their sledges."

"It seems incredible!"

"I agree. Yet the evidence is undisputed. A broken sledge hammer was found at the jeweler's. I, myself, examined it."

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

"Odd that the criminals should leave it on the scene."

"They must have been in haste. They were burdened, also, with their spoils. They had no further use for a broken sledge hammer."

Petersham spoke with decided emphasis, as though convinced upon every point. His statement completed, he adroitly changed the subject.

"We expect to appoint a new curator for the Mayan Museum," declared the lawyer. "In fact, I may receive a visit from the directors this afternoon."

"Suppose, Mr. Cranston, that I communicate with you within the next week. By that time, our affairs will be so arranged that we can discuss new donations to the museum's exhibits."

Petersham's tone, though gruff, was level; as near a suave form of conversation as the lawyer's capability allowed. Petersham was trying to divert his visitor from points which he did not care to discuss. The Shadow, already well informed, caught the whole gist of the game.

Petersham had pretended to accept the police view of the robberies. Actually, Petersham had ideas of his own. He had carefully avoided mention of them. He had not spoken the name of Elvin Lettigue; nor had he described his inspection of the crumbled wall at Clayborne's. He was keeping to himself all that he had kept from the police.

He was anxious, also, to be rid of his present visitor. On entering, Petersham had told the stenographer that he expected no visitors. Forgetful, he had just told The Shadow that museum directors might be here this afternoon. It was obvious that Petersham did not intend to spend the afternoon on matters that concerned the Mayan Museum.

The Shadow knew that Petersham's full interest circled about the recent robberies. He knew also that Petersham might receive a telephone call; that if one came, it would probably pertain to the subject of crime. Therefore, The Shadow's cue was to stall.

THAT process did not prove difficult. Calmly, The Shadow began to outline plans for a new expedition to Aztec territory. Petersham, though itching to dismiss his visitor, was forced to listen. It was his only way to back up his previous bluff.

Twenty minutes passed, including intervals when The Shadow started to make his departure, then changed his mind. Suddenly, the telephone buzzed upon Petersham's desk. The lawyer scowled, darted a look toward The Shadow. He saw his visitor reaching for a cigarette.

Petersham picked up the telephone receiver. He gruffed a hello, then suppressed a look of pleasure. Confident that Lamont Cranston was not watching him, Petersham decided to hold brief conversation in spite of the visitor's presence.

"Yes..." Petersham paused. Then: "Go ahead... Yes, with the details... Good...I see. Suppose I call you in about half an hour... An hour, then..."

"Well, since you may not be there, we can leave it until to–morrow... Yes. Of course you can call me in the meantime, if necessary... What's that?... All right. Give me the number... Yes, I have paper and pencil..."

With his right hand bent so it partly shielded his writing, Petersham inscribed a telephone number upon a pad.

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

The Shadow's eyes were half closed; but his keen gaze was watching. He noted a zigzag of Petersham's fingers. He knew that the lawyer was writing the letter W.

Then a curving motion. The Shadow knew the second letter for either A or O. A repetition of the motion. The Shadow could guess the name of the exchange. It was "Woolcott," the only Manhattan exchange that began with a W. Then came two vowels.

Petersham shot a glance toward his visitor. The Shadow had become suddenly disinterested. He was gazing toward the door. Petersham's hand yielded cover as he wrote a figure that went with the name of the exchange. The Shadow had, no need to watch, for he knew that figure was coming.

But he was rising, turning toward the desk when Petersham added the rest of the number. Keenly, he spotted the figures as they appeared, aided by the motion of Petersham's pencil. The number was Woolcott 5 8362.

Petersham swept paper and pencil into a desk drawer as though the notation was of little consequence. Strolling forward, The Shadow extended a hand. The lawyer rose to bid good–by to his visitor. He followed to the door of the private office.

A wide smile appeared upon Prentiss Petersham's lips when the tall figure of Lamont Cranston had disappeared from view. The gruff–voiced attorney felt that he had easily disposed of this visitor.

PETERSHAM would have been less pleased, had he followed The Shadow. The tall stroller's first stop was a drug store across the street from the building which housed Petersham's office. There, The Shadow put in a call to Burbank. In quiet tones, he repeated the number Woolcott 5 8362.

Burbank had not gone off duty, as Clyde Burke had supposed. The Shadow had decided to keep him on the job, following Clyde's important report. Burbank served capably at present. The Shadow waited while the contact man looked up the number in a special telephone book which was listed according to numbers; not by names.

"Woolcott 5–8362," announced Burbank, in his methodical tone. "The Industrial Mining Corporation. Not listed in the regular telephone book."

Burbank followed with the address of the Industrial Mining Corporation, gaining it from his special, reversed telephone book. The Shadow completed the call, with instructions.

"Reach Burke," was The Shadow's order. "Tell him to call at the office of the Industrial Mining Corporation."

Strolling to the street, The Shadow hailed a taxi. The address that he gave was the exclusive Cobalt Club. There, he obtained a flat briefcase from the cloakroom. Outside, he waited while a sleek–looking limousine pulled up to the door.

This was Lamont Cranston's car. The chauffeur, Stanley, accepted The Shadow as his master. Boarding the limousine, The Shadow ordered Stanley to take him to an address near police headquarters.

It was well after four o'clock when The Shadow entered headquarters, following a two–block walk from the parked limousine. He was still in the guise of Lamont Cranston; but he chose a time to enter when the way was clear. Despite his leisurely stroll, he was inconspicuous.

Following a deserted corridor, the tall visitor came to an obscure locker room. There he paused, opened a locker, and arranged a broken mirror so that it caught the trickling light of a grimy ceiling bulb. He placed his

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

bag in the locker; from the bag, he took a compact make–up kit.

Removing coat and vest, collar and necktie, The Shadow began a transformation. His features changed shape like putty under his molding fingers. Dabs of white make–up altered his complexion. Instead of Lamont Cranston, The Shadow had become a pasty–faced individual whose look was dull.

Hands drew overalls from the locker. The Shadow donned the garments. He closed the locker, turned about and armed himself with mop and bucket. With shambling gait, his shoulders stooped, The Shadow moved out into the corridor. A passing detective saw him and gave greeting:

"H'lo, Fritz!"

The Shadow grunted a response in one word: "Yah."

The detective continued out to the street. The Shadow shuffled along the corridor. He had become a figure known to every one at headquarters.

He was, to all appearances, a janitor named Fritz.

The Shadow had gleaned facts through his visit to Prentiss Petersham. He intended next to hear Joe Cardona's comments concerning crimes that had befallen.

As Fritz, the janitor, The Shadow would await Cardona's arrival at headquarters.

CHAPTER VII. TRAILS LINK

AT the time of The Shadow's arrival at headquarters, Clyde Burke was entering the Greystone Building near the Grand Central Terminal. Clyde had called at nearly all of the places on his list. Another was situated in the Greystone Building. The name board listed it as the "Century Burglary Alarm Co., Room 3018."

Clyde reached the designated office. He found it to be a two–room suite, with a pair of stenographers in the outer office. Clyde noted an inner door that bore the name:

PHINEAS LOWRING

Executive Vice President

Clyde introduced himself and inquired for Mr. Lowring. He stated also that he was from the New York Classic. Two minutes later, he was seated across the desk from a portly, droopy–faced man who eyed him with a puzzled stare. This was Phineas Lowring.

"Sorry to trouble you," remarked Clyde, in an easy tone, "but the Classic insisted on an interview. They want your opinion on the robbery at the Mayan Museum."

Phineas Lowring stroked his chin.

"Since it was your company's equipment at the museum," continued Clyde, glibly, "an interview seemed important. What do you think about it, Mr. Lowring?"

Clyde was working in the dark. He had used this same line of talk with every previous interview. Officials of other burglary alarm concerns had fumed angry denials when the reporter had charged them with the

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

installation of the museum's faulty equipment.

Phineas Lowring did the same. He began to splutter that he knew nothing of the matter. His manner differed from the others. Clyde guessed that Lowring was covering facts. The reporter had a prompt way to handle it.

"I stopped at the Progress Alarm Co.," remarked Clyde. "They sent me here. Said that they knew your concern had handled the museum contract."

The bluff worked. Lowring ceased his splutter. His face reddened as he hemmed and hawed.

"Progress said that, Mr. Burke?" queried Lowring. "Perhaps well, possibly they are right. Did you say the Mayan Museum?"

"That was it."

"Stupid of me." Lowring tapped his desk with pudgy fingers. "I thought that you referred to the Manhattan Museum. Well, ah I am not sure that we did install the equipment at the Mayan Museum. Let me see –"

He paused, stared toward the ceiling; then shifted tack.

"I can give no interview," he declared. "None at all, Mr. Burke. Nothing for publication. The board that is, the directors ah, that is, they might not like it."

"Suppose I hold back the interview," suggested Clyde. "Make it nothing but a technical discussion of burglary alarms. Without quoting you."

Lowring considered. He pursed his pudgy lips; then nodded. He pressed a buzzer on his desk.

"I shall introduce you to our technician," he decided. "Perhaps he can explain ah, that is, prove that even the best of equipment is sometimes faulty. Yes, we did handle the Mayan Museum. Come to think of it, we did. But that is not for publication, Mr. Burke."

A SHARP–FACED young man arrived from the outer office. Lowring introduced him as Mr. Algar. Clyde shook hands with the technician. They left Lowring's office, crossed the hall and entered a small office that had no name on the door.

"Temporary quarters," remarked Algar, motioning Clyde to a chair. Then, briskly: "So you're a reporter, eh? Here to find out what went sour with that wiring at the Mayan Museum?"

Clyde nodded. He liked Algar's directness.

"Sorry I can't tell you," declared the technician, frankly. "It was put in before I came here. Just between the two of us, it wasn't the first bad job installed by the Century outfit.

"I've gone to a dozen places already, where they had outside wiring. Following up complaints. Some were all right; others weren't. The last man who had my job didn't know his stuff."

"Who was he?" queried Clyde.

"A bird named Jerry Quimble," replied Algar. "I wasn't told that here. I learned it from one of the places where I repaired a bad alarm system. As near as I can figure it, Quimble left plenty of lemons on his route."

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

Algar had seated himself upon the desk. He was lighting a pipe, chuckling at the time.

"This Century outfit is screwy," asserted Algar. "To begin with, Phineas Lowring is a stuffed shirt. He doesn't know what the business is all about. He landed his job through Quimble."

"The technician?" queried Clyde, in surprise.

"So I heard, somewhere," nodded Algar. "Lowring was a sort of straw man who served on dummy boards of directors. He was called in here to act as executive vice president. All he does is put his O. K. on orders that salesmen bring in."

"Who is the president?"

"There isn't any. As for directors, I've never seen any. Lowring is honest; he has charge of some funds but he's simply following a routine. He's just a glorified office boy, running the works.

"That's the lowdown, but I want you to keep it quiet. For a time, anyway, until I've chucked this bum job. It's all grief. No new orders coming in; and too much service on the bad work that Quimble installed. I'm getting out next week.

"Come in later in the week. Don't see Lowring; drop into this office. Maybe I'll have something more to tell you."

CLYDE had struck an excellent informant. He decided not to overplay the game. He strolled toward the office door; then paused, to put one more question:

"What other places have systems like the one at the Mayan Museum? Other wall installations?"

"That are likely to go sour?" laughed Algar. "You've stumped me on that one. Century installed a whole lot of them. Only Lowring could give you the list. Those are the kind that don't give us a complaint. Because they're out of sight and nobody knows when they've gone wrong."

Clyde nodded as he left the office. He decided to try Lowring again, but when he crossed the hall, he found out that the executive vice president had already left for the day. Lowring had probably foreseen a return interview.

One of the stenographers remarked that the Classic office had called while Clyde was with Algar. They had requested a return call.

Clyde knew what that meant. Burbank was seeking contact. It was a system that Burbank used regularly. Clyde thought that Burbank had gone off duty; the fact that he was still on the job signified that important moves might be in progress.

Clyde called from a telephone booth in the lobby of the Greystone Building. Burbank received his brief report; then ordered him to visit the offices of the Industrial Mining Corporation, only a dozen doors away. Clyde was to fake an interview with the man in charge; then report on the company itself.

It struck Clyde as odd that the quest should have shifted from burglary alarms to mines. But when he reached the offices of the Industrial Mining Corporation, he was startled at the similarity between it and the office that he had so recently left.

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

There was a little anteroom, where two girls were at work. Beyond was a door that bore the legend:

SETON BRINDELL

Managing Director

The door was half open. Behind a desk, Clyde saw a pudgy man who was staring out the window. Leaning back in his chair, with hands folded, Seton Brindell looked as much a fossil as Phineas Lowring.

Clyde spoke to one of the stenographers.

"I'm from the New York Classic," he began. "I would like to see –" The outer door was opening as Clyde spoke. Into the office stepped a withered–faced man who wore a senile grin. The newcomer's eyes were sharp; they alone seemed youthful, for his hair was pure white above his parchment forehead.

"Good afternoon," clucked the old man, pleasantly. "May I see Mr. Brindell?"

"Certainly, Mr. Greel," replied the girl. "Step right into his office."

Then, as Greel stepped spryly toward the inner office, the stenographer told Clyde:

"You will have to wait, sir. Mr. Brindell already has an appointment."

CLYDE was glad to wait. Greel had entered the inner office. Clyde could see him shaking hands with Brindell; and he heard the latter address Greel as "Sanbrook," which was evidently Greel's first name. The door swung shut, but Clyde could still hear conversation. The partition between the offices was thin, and it did not extend to the ceiling.

The stenographers began to thump their typewriters, which were of the noiseless variety. Clyde, listening, could hear every word that passed in the adjoining office. Brindell's voice was wheezy; Greel's tone was a crackle.

"More royalties, Sanbrook," came Brindell's puffy statement. "We are doing well with our foreign sales."

"But I am not satisfied," was Greel's protest. "It is not money, Brindell. It is the future of my invention that disturbs me."

"It has an excellent future. Excellent!"

"Not while you insist upon your present policy. I have told you again and again that my electro–vibrator is not suited to drilling mine shafts."

"Mines are buying it."

"So you have told me. So the royalties prove. But you have limited the sales to foreign countries –"

"Because the domestic market is not profitable at present."

"And all the while, you are ignoring the real use for which I intended my invention. Building contractors could use the machine to demolish antiquated structures –"

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

"Come, come, Sanbrook! That market would pay us nothing. You are an inventor. We are the persons who understand sales."

Conversation was muffled by the scraping of chairs. The door opened. Clyde saw Greel and Brindell upon the threshold. The inventor looked somewhat mollified, as he thrust a check into his coat pocket. Then, suddenly, he began an outburst.

"You understand nothing!" he clucked, facing Brindell. "Sales? Bah! What do you have to do with them? You are not the man who has made this business!"

"What does that matter?" demanded Brindell. "We are getting orders –"

"So you admit you are incompetent," snorted Greel. He chuckled. "You admit it. I am glad to hear it. You are a know-nothing, Brindell! A mere go-between, who handles the clerical work of this organization! The real brain of your organization is –"

"Never mind!"

"I'll tell you who he is! Quimble, your sales promoter! Jerry Quimble! I'll talk to him! I'll tell him your mistakes; that you would not listen to advice."

"Quimble is in the Argentine."

"I'll talk to him when he comes back from South America. He will learn how you have allowed him to defeat our own interests!"

WITH a snort, old Greel turned about and stalked through the outer office, mumbling to himself. Brindell, fuming at the doorway, stepped back into his room and slammed the door. Greel's closing of the outer door came like an echo.

A stenographer spoke to Clyde.

"I'm afraid that Mr. Brindell will not want to see you. It is late; he is in a bad mood."

"I'll come back to-morrow."

With this statement, Clyde made his departure. He had hoped to overtake Greel; but he was too late. The old inventor had already descended before Clyde reached the elevators. Yet The Shadow's agent was exultant.

He had linked the trails. There was a connection between the Century Burglary Alarm Co. and the Industrial Mining Corporation. Both dealt in electrical equipment only. Each had a dummy manager at its head. More than that, both concerns had actually been directed by a man whose name Clyde had heard twice mentioned.

Jerry Quimble.

As technician of the burglary alarm company; as traveling representative of the mining equipment concern, Quimble was obviously the real worker in both organizations. Clyde had gained facts that would be useful to The Shadow.

The agent was thinking of his chief, as he headed through the Grand Central concourse, toward the telephone. So preoccupied was Clyde that he paid no attention to a throng of persons who passed him as they came from

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

a train gate. Hence Clyde failed to gain another lead, a lucky one that he might have followed.

Among the passengers whom Clyde did not see, but one whom he would have recognized, was a bulky, bluff-faced man with a black mustache. It was Elvin Lettigue. The millionaire had just arrived back in New York from some point north.

Clyde found a telephone booth. Entering it, he lost his last chance to spy Lettigue as the heavy man stalked from the concourse. With that departure went an opportunity that would have served The Shadow.

New crime was due, despite The Shadow's progress. Had Clyde trailed Lettigue and learned the millionaire's destination, coming evil could have been thwarted.

Events were destined to prove that very fact.

CHAPTER VIII. ANOTHER ENTRANT

ELVIN LETTIGUE'S course led southward from the Grand Central Terminal. After a few blocks, the millionaire entered the side door of a large bank building. This was the Channing National, an institution that stayed open until five o'clock to receive deposits only.

Few persons were about when Lettigue entered. He had beaten the dead line by only a few minutes and most of the depositors had left. One man, squatty and square-shouldered, looked up to observe the millionaire. This fellow was standing at a desk, making out a deposit slip. He must have recognized Lettigue, for dark eyes showed a gleam, while pasty lips formed a wry grin.

Lettigue, apparently, did not notice the belated depositor. The millionaire went through an open doorway and nodded to a dignified man who was seated at a mahogany desk. The man arose to shake hands.

This was Rufus Moreland, vice president of the Channing National. His greeting to Elvin Lettigue was natural. The millionaire was one of the principal depositors in this bank.

"Just back in town?" queried Moreland. "Where were you this trip, Mr. Lettigue?"

"To Albany," rumbled the mustached millionaire. "I went there this morning. I took a look at a factory site; but it was not satisfactory."

"But you spent some money there," remarked Moreland, with a pleasant smile. "That appears to be a habit of yours."

"I did," acknowledged Lettigue. "I always do. You can always count on my arriving after hours to cash a check."

He extended a check as he spoke. It was Lettigue's own check, made out for five hundred dollars. Moreland received it and arose.

"I shall have one of the tellers cash it," said the vice president. "Wait here, Mr. Lettigue. I shall be gone only a few moments."

As Moreland ceased speaking, a sound came from the tiled wall of the office. It was muffled and repeated; an odd double click that was plainly audible.

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

"Did you hear that?" queried Moreland, turning about. "That noise has been annoying me all afternoon. Listen –"

He held up his hand as he paused. Two seconds passed; then, again, the sound:

Click click

Lettigue did not appear to notice the noise. The millionaire was holding his big-headed cane. He was placing it against the desk as Moreland mentioned the noise.

"I can't locate those clicks," began Moreland, in annoyed tone. "Sometimes they seem to come from one spot. Sometimes from another –"

"May I use your telephone?" rumbled Lettigue in interruption. "I want to call my home. To tell them I shall be there for dinner."

"Quite all right," assured Moreland. "Go right ahead, Mr. Lettigue."

MORELAND went from the office. Lettigue picked up the telephone. As he began his call, the dark-eyed depositor shifted toward the outer door. His course carried him near Moreland's office. There, the man paused to light a cigarette. He could hear Lettigue talking on the telephone.

"Hello, Daniel." Lettigue was speaking loudly, apparently to a servant. "This is Mr. Lettigue... Yes, in New York... For dinner, yes... What's that?... Ah, I had forgotten that the cook will be out tonight..."

"No, no. Do not prepare dinner. I shall stay in the city to-night... Were there any telephone calls?... From Prentiss Petersham? Humph... Will call again, eh?..."

"No. Do not tell him that I am in the city. He might try to look me up at the club, even though I shall not be there. Tell him that I have retired early... Yes, that I am home but indisposed..."

"You know where I shall be, Daniel... Yes, where I always stop...Call me if –"

Lettigue broke off. Moreland was returning with the money. The bank official had passed the pausing depositor who was outside the door; but he was counting the money and did not notice the man. Moreland did chance to catch Lettigue's final words.

"Staying in town after all?" he inquired, pleasantly. "Well, I can scarcely blame you, Mr. Lettigue. The night may be drizzly. Perhaps I shall stay at my hotel this evening."

"I thought that was your usual procedure," remarked Lettigue.

"It is," rejoined Moreland. "However, there is work that I should do here to-night. I shall put it off only if it rains. That is also part of my usual procedure. I am susceptible to colds –"

He broke off. The clicks had repeated, more noticeably than before. They even reached the ears of the depositor who still stood outside the door. The man's cigarette had gone out; he was fumbling for another match.

"My word!" ejaculated Moreland. "That noise is more bothersome than ever! I shall speak to the night watchman this evening and tell him to trace its source."

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

LETTIGUE was rising. He had grasped his cane with his right hand, while he pocketed the money with his left. Moreland was still listening for new clicks. When he saw Lettigue start from the office, he followed.

The dark-eyed depositor was gone. The outer door was swinging as indication of his departure. Moreland locked the door of his office. He was preparing to leave for his hotel; but he remarked that he had a few details to complete before departure.

Lettigue went through the outer door. It was glass paneled and the light from the bank penetrated to the sidewalk, to form a widened glow. A lurker had stepped out of sight. He was prompt to take up the millionaire's trail. He was the squatty, dark-eyed man; he had watched through the glass door to see both Lettigue and Moreland leave the office.

Hardly had the pair moved along before Clyde Burke came strolling past the Channing National Bank. The reporter had completed his call to the contact man. Curiously, he had come the same direction as Lettigue. But Clyde was just too late to spy the man who carried the huge cane. Nor did he see the squatty spy who had taken up Lettigue's trail.

BACK in the bank, Rufus Moreland had finished his final details. With hat and overcoat donned, he was starting past his own office, when he noticed one of the tellers coming in his direction. Moreland hesitated; then produced a key and unlocked the officer door.

"Come here, Tatnall," he said to the teller. "I want you to listen to the noise that I have heard."

They paused by the opened door. No clicks sounded from the darkened office. Moreland shrugged his shoulders, then closed the door. Just as he was locking it, the clicks came.

"There!" exclaimed Moreland. "The clicks! Did you hear them, Tatnall?"

"Barely," expressed Tatnall. "Shall we listen further, sir?"

"Never mind. I shall speak to the watchman to-night. That noise is bothersome. It must be traced. I mentioned it to Mr. Lettigue while he was here."

"What was his opinion?"

"He scarcely noticed it. However, he is a trifle deaf."

Moreland went from the bank, followed by Tatnall. They separated. The teller was going home for the night.

SOME blocks away, the squatty man who had followed Lettigue was standing by a lighted corner. Chagrin showed on the fellow's face. He had lost his trail. That was not surprising, for Lettigue was a brisk walker and his cane seemed to add to his speed. He had passed from the follower's view in the midst of a crowd of homeward-bound workers.

The squatty man shrugged his thick shoulders; then walked toward a hotel. He entered the lobby and found the telephone. He put in a call; but was cautious when he heard a voice across the wire.

"Mr. Petersham?"

The response must have been affirmative, for the squatty man proceeded at once.

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

"This is Clinton Jorn," he confided... "No, I am not at my office. I am going there soon; to join Dykel. I've been up at the Channing National."

A query across the wire. Jorn spoke ruefully.

"Yeah," he admitted. "I spotted Lettigue. Like we expected. Just before five o'clock. He cashed a check for five hundred smackers; then he called up his home.

"Looks like he's not going there... Where? He's stopping here in town somewhere... Yeah, I tried to tail him, but he gave me the slip... Sure, call his house if you want. The flunky will tell you that he's gone to bed early..."

"All right, Mr. Petersham, I'll call you to–morrow, like you told me to do when I gave you that ring this afternoon..."

A receiver clicked abruptly at the other end of the wire. Jorn scowled; then came out of the telephone booth. He strode from the hotel, walked a few blocks and came to a side street. There, he entered a small, narrow building that had a narrow lobby with a heavy door at the far end. Jorn ascended stairs to the second floor.

Here he stopped at a lighted office that bore the name:

JORN AND DYKEL

Investigators

JORN entered, and nodded to a tall, long–faced man who was slouched in an easy–chair. This was his partner, Dykel. The tall man arose and followed Jorn into an inner office. Jorn seated himself at an old desk, near an opened window. Across the rear street was the low roof of a dingy garage, wedged between two taller buildings. Dark was settling; the glow of the city threw a light through the space across the street.

"I tailed Lettigue," announced Jorn, in a growl. "Lost him."

"You told Petersham?" queried Dykel.

"Yeah," grunted Jorn. "He sounded sore. I don't blame him."

"What's coming next?"

"Nothing, for a while. Unless I drop in on Joe Cardona. Just to kid him along, without mentioning too much."

"That might make trouble, Jorn. You don't want to spring the gag too soon. Remember, you're working for –"

"I know who I'm working for!" Jorn's outburst was an angry one. Then, his gruff tone smoothed: "Don't worry about me, Dykel. I can handle this game well enough. It's been easy money so far, hasn't it? Without any trouble."

"Sure. Just taking orders from –"

Jorn glared an interruption.

"I get orders," he growled, "and I follow them. One of the jobs you've got is to do the same. You're working

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

for me, Dykel; and the less you know about some things and the less you talk about them the better it is all around."

Dykel tried to become nonchalant. He strolled toward the outer office; Jorn arose and followed him. The squatty man clapped his tall partner on the shoulder.

"Come on out and eat," suggested Jorn. "I've got a couple of telephone calls to make. I'd rather use an outside phone."

THE two men left the office. The lights were extinguished; only the glare from the street showed the battered desk where the pair had conferred. The blink of a huge electric sign one block away caused a changing glow upon Jorn's desk.

There was something diabolical in that ruddy flicker. It seemed to indicate that this was a den where plots were hatched.

Much had happened since five o'clock, although just one hour had elapsed. Clyde Burke, despite his early work, had missed out during the past sixty minutes.

Clyde had done well in spotting the dummy executives at the offices which he had visited. He had linked the Century Burglary Alarm Co. with the Industrial Mining Corporation. He had observed a man who might be questioned to good advantage: namely, Sanbrook Greel, the inventor.

But the aftermath had slipped past Clyde. His failure to spy Lettigue had prevented him from spotting Clinton Jorn. Thus Clyde had dispatched no report concerning the partnership of Jorn and Dykel.

That pair formed a smooth team. As investigators, they were within the bounds prescribed by law. But they were a duo who would sell out to the highest bidder. Honesty would be their policy only when it paid.

Jorn had referred to Joe Cardona. It was plain that Jorn whatever his game might be was free from worry so far as Joe was concerned. Perhaps Jorn believed that he could bluff the ace sleuth when the time came.

But if he persisted in his present work, Clinton Jorn would eventually encounter a keener brain than Cardona's. For the affairs that involved Joe Cardona also concerned The Shadow.

CHAPTER IX. THE SECOND THRUST

HAD Clinton Jorn decided to call on Joe Cardona, he would not have found the ace detective in his office. Down at headquarters, a big clock was ticking on toward seven o'clock. Yet Cardona had not returned.

He had been there earlier in the afternoon; but he had gone out. Two persons were waiting for him. One, who sat impatiently in a chair across from Cardona's desk, was Detective Sergeant Markham. The other, who was lingering in the hall, was The Shadow.

Continuing his role of Fritz, The Shadow was stolidly mopping the floor of the dingy corridor. All the while, his course was close to the door of Cardona's office.

At exactly seven o'clock, Cardona arrived. He entered his office briskly, scarcely noting the stooped, inconspicuous form that looked like Fritz. Cardona greeted Markham; then put a prompt question:

"Where's that sledge hammer?"

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

"I put it in the old safe," rejoined the detective sergeant. "Want it, Joe?"

Cardona nodded.

"Bring it in here," he ordered. "There's a guy coming to take a look at it."

Markham went from the office. Almost immediately, a tall form shuffled into view. Cardona looked up as he heard a bucket clatter against the floor. Joe stroked his chin.

"Hello, Fritz," he greeted. "Say what're you doing here to-day? I thought this was your day off."

"Yah."

"Well, if it's your day off, why don't you stay away? What's the matter would you rather work than do nothing?"

"Yah."

Cardona grinned and shook his head. Fritz's love for industry puzzled him. The fellow was one janitor who was frequently on the job after others had gone. Working on an off day appeared to be a new twist, but a consistent one.

MARKHAM arrived with the broken sledge hammer. He placed the pieces on Cardona's desk. Joe fitted the portions of the heavy handle. He put a question to Markham.

"What would be your idea," queried Cardona, "about the guy who had used this big mallet. Would he be a husky?"

Markham eyed the hammer head. He shook his head.

"I've seen heavier sledges, Joe. The guy wouldn't have to be hefty. A middleweight could handle it."

Fritz had paused in mopping. He was looking toward the desk. Cardona grinned and beckoned. He watched the stooped mopper approach.

"What about it, Fritz?" queried Cardona. "Who busted this sledge hammer. A big guy or a little one?"

"Yah."

"What do you mean by 'yah'?"

"Big man, yah. Little man, yah."

"Either one, eh? Well, that's a better answer than Markham's. Well, my answer is that the fellow was a big one." It was Markham who put a query while The Shadow still eyed the broken sledge hammer.

"How come, Joe?" was Markham's question. "What makes you think the guy was big?"

"Look at the thickness of that handle," returned Cardona. "The right grip for big fists, isn't it? And how do you think the thing was smashed? It took a husky wallop, didn't it?"

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

Markham nodded.

"A big fellow," answered Cardona. "Plenty big to swing that hammer hard enough to snap the handle in the middle."

The Shadow's head was bent forward. His dull eyes had gained a flash.

They were noting the peculiarity of the break, with the indentation at one side of the handle. The Shadow was checking on a feature which Clyde Burke had reported, but Cardona had ignored.

"Here's Dopey Mollen," announced Cardona, suddenly. "Move away, Fritz. I want this fellow to see the sledge hammer."

A SWEATERED man had sidled into the office. He was a sneaky, white-faced individual of flimsy build. Markham knew the fellow for a stool pigeon. "Dopey" was obviously the person whom Cardona had expected.

"Look it over, Dopey," ordered Joe. "Do you think we're right about the guy?"

Dopey studied the sledge hammer. He tested the weight of the head; he gripped the handle with scrawny fingers. He nodded; then spoke huskily.

"Dat's de kind o' mallet I was tellin' you about," affirmed the stoolie. "Yeah. De kind dat Sledge Ringo would use. It woulda took a beefy mug like Sledge to crack it dat way."

Markham was listening, intently. He had heard tell of "Sledge" Ringo. The fellow had once been a notorious dock wallop who had slipped from view.

"Sledge used t' brag about drivin' stakes," informed Dopey. "Dat's why he didn't use too big a hammer. Said he could get two wallops in while anudder guy was gettin' one. I seen him smash a hammer once."

"Like this one?"

"A hammer like dat. But it didn't bust de same way. It cracked up by de head."

"That doesn't matter. You can't tell where a sledge hammer is likely to break. Let's get back to Sledge Ringo. You've spotted him you're sure about it?"

"I seen him yesterday, Joe. But Sledge is layin' low. It's a bet he's got a hide-out –"

"We'll locate it. He's the bird we want. That stuff about him getting two wallops in as quick time as one is another tip. Those mallet jabs were speedy ones."

"I'll keep an eye peeled, Joe –"

"Keep under cover. Leave it to us to nab Sledge. We'll land him, even if we have to spring a round-up. All right, Dopey. You can scram."

The stoolie sidled from the office. The Shadow shambled out a few moments later, leaving Cardona in conference with Markham. Carrying mop and bucket, The Shadow kept up the gait of Fritz as he headed for the locker room.

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

SOON afterward, a shrouded form left headquarters. Later, a light clicked in The Shadow's sanctum a hidden abode where darkness persisted, except when its lone occupant was present. White hands showed beneath a bluish glare. The girasol glimmered as fingers drew earphones from the wall.

The Shadow contacted Burbank. He heard the quiet–voiced report. The Shadow made notations that covered Clyde Burke's findings. A whispered laugh sounded as The Shadow replaced the earphones.

The Shadow's right hand penned five names:

Lowring

Algar

Brindell

Greel

Quimble

Carefully, The Shadow crossed out Lowring and Brindell; but he marked a heavy line beneath the name of Quimble. The connection was apparent. Lowring and Brindell were of a pattern. Both were know–nothings who had been put in positions of authority. The man who had placed them was Quimble.

At present, Quimble was absent from the United States. Therefore, he was not concerned with present crime. Moreover, Jerry Quimble was one whose name was known to The Shadow. Quimble was a shrewd promoter, who had figured in some slippery deals. He had not been heard of for some time; and The Shadow had the reason. Quimble had been busy synchronizing the Century Burglary Alarm Co. with the Industrial Mining Corporation.

Quimble was no more than a lieutenant who had worked for some supercreek. Quimble could supply full information if trapped; but he could not be reached in South America. The Shadow wanted facts; there were two men who might supply them. The Shadow put circles about the names of Algar and Greel.

Clyde Burke had contacted Algar. The reporter could continue with that task. The Shadow would take it upon himself to meet Sanbrook Greel. Burbank had given Greel's address from the telephone book. The inventor lived at the Findlay Apartments.

IT was quarter past eight when The Shadow rapped at the door of an apartment marked 4 C. He was again in the guise of Lamont Cranston; this time attired in tuxedo. Footsteps responded to The Shadow's knock. The door opened; a withered–faced man looked at the visitor. The Shadow recognized Sanbrook Greel, for the old man fitted Clyde Burke's description.

The Shadow introduced himself as Cranston. Apparently, Greel had heard of the millionaire, for he welcomed The Shadow with a pleased smile. The Shadow stepped into an untidy living room.

"You have come to see my invention?" clucked Greel. "You have heard of my electro–vibrator?"

"I have heard of you as an inventor," returned The Shadow. "That is why I called. I am sometimes in the market for rights to new inventions."

Greel shook his head wearily.

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

"I have sold the rights," he stated. "Still, if you are interested, there might be opportunity. Come, let me show you the models of my machine."

He led the way into an adjoining room. There, The Shadow saw a small motor with wires that led to knobs set in a board. Greel pressed a switch; the motor began to buzz.

"Watch the knobs," chuckled the inventor. "See how they respond."

Sparks snapped from each knob. There were six of them, and they began a vibration while they sparkled. The Shadow's face remained inflexible. He seemed unimpressed.

"Those vibrators work their way through solid material," asserted Greel. "The current reduces the resistance. The vibration follows, allowing the knobs to force an inward course. Let me demonstrate."

He turned off the motor. Spryly, he drew two slabs of thin tile from beneath a table. He placed these upon the wooden block and drew the knobs upward, to wedge them in spaces between the tiles.

Using four metal clamps, the old man tightened the pieces of tile so that they formed a compact mass. This required heavy pressure from his scrawny fingers, but Greel was capable of the effort. His task done, Greel again started the motor.

For five minutes, the hum was regular. Then came a sharp click, that was repeated. A slight crack appeared in one tile. Another interval; then, again, the double click. The crack widened.

"The vibrators always cause the double click," explained Greel. "As they progress, results become more frequent."

Click click

A crack appeared in the second tile. The clicks continued. One tile spread. The Shadow stepped forward, hand extended. Greel uttered a clucked cry and sprang forward. He seized his visitor's arm and swung him away from the cracking tiles. In his anxiety, Greel used force; and it was well that he did.

Scarcely had The Shadow staggered to a stop before the tiles split wide apart. Fragments scattered; one chunk was catapulted straight past the spot where The Shadow had been.

GREEL yanked the switch to stop the motor. He tugged a handkerchief from his pocket and mopped his withered forehead.

"The power is tremendous!" explained the inventor. "There is enough force in that machine to cleave stone walls, even though it requires no more than an ordinary electric light circuit!"

"Astonishing!" remarked The Shadow, examining a piece of broken tile. "How long would the process require with a heavy wall?"

"A long while," admitted Greel. "Months, perhaps, unless a heavier current were employed. Then, of course, the process would be speeded."

"But of what advantage is the device?" inquired The Shadow. "It works only from the interior so far as I can understand."

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

"Ah, no!" Greel bunched the knobs and thrust them through a wide, concave disk, that looked like a plate with a hole in the center. "This demonstrates the exterior process."

He brought another slab of tile from beneath the table and laid it on the wooden block. He pushed the edges of the disk against the slab. A rubber fringe caused suction. Greel turned on the motor.

"Those tentacles will work their way into the stone," he predicted. "Once they have begun to grip, their efficiency will increase. We must allow a longer time; that is all."

Apparently, the inventor was willing to chat while the demonstration was in progress.

"What is the commercial use of the machine?" queried The Shadow.

"I intended it for the demolition of old buildings," replied Greel. "With many vibrators working, under the impetus of a heavy current, the device would crumble the strongest foundations particularly those of old structures, wherein these electric tentacles might gain crevices."

"And the device has been marketed?"

"Yes, but in a peculiar way." Greel shook his head. "I was approached by a man named Brindell, the head of the Industrial Mining Corporation."

"A mine operator?"

"No. On the contrary, Brindell owns no mines. He deals in mining equipment. He bought the rights to my machine, to use it in drilling mine shafts."

"A good use for it."

"You are wrong, Mr. Cranston. Remember: this is an electrical device. It operates well in mining until it is below the surface. Then it strikes mineral-bearing rock. When it encounters magnetic ore, the electrical current is disseminated. All is wasted."

"You told that to Brindell?"

"Certainly. But Seton Brindell is guided by a shrewd promoter named Jerry Quimble. In fact, Quimble is the brain of the Industrial Mining Corporation. Quimble is in South America, selling these machines to mine owners."

"And they have complained?"

"Not yet. But they will. Then sales well end. Quimble demonstrates the machine upon ordinary rock. He lets the mine owners find out later that it does not work properly with ore."

Greel paused. Then, with emphasis, he added:

"I consider it an outrage! Yet what can I do? I sold the rights; I receive my royalties. My protests are of no avail. I have urged Brindell to try the machine with building wreckers. He will do nothing while Quimble is still away."

"What about the directors of the corporation?"

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

"I have never met any of them. Perhaps they do not exist. It is a strange concern, Mr. Cranston. Sometimes I think that Brindell is acting under orders from some rogue who has an ulterior purpose in controlling my machine. If I could interest persons such as yourself, they might aid me to get to the bottom of this business. I have some money saved from my old inventions. The amount is not large; but I would be willing to –"

A DOUBLE click interrupted Greel. The sound was thrice repeated, in quick succession. The inventor stopped the motor. He pulled the disk from the slab. The tile was cracked; the edges of the breaks were powdery.

"The process is slower from the exterior," stated Greel. "But it brings rapid results at the finish. Did you notice how the clicks came in such sudden progression."

The Shadow nodded. He examined the cracked tile; then glanced at his watch.

"I have an appointment," he remarked. "Will you be here to-morrow, Mr. Greel?"

"I am always here," chortled the inventor, "except when I go to collect my royalty payments. You are welcome to call at any time, Mr. Cranston."

The Shadow departed. His lips formed a thin smile as he descended in the elevator. He had solved the riddle of two robberies. The Mayan Museum had been cracked by an internal electro-vibrator, installed with the burglary alarm. Clayborne's strong room had been reached by an external device, placed behind the book case in the empty office.

Crooks had figured in the robberies. Possibly Sledge Ringo, for strong-arm tactics would be necessary to complete the clearing of the ruined walls. The sledge hammer, nevertheless, had been left at Clayborne's as a false clue. For The Shadow had formed his own conclusions regarding that broken mallet.

The handle had been snapped by laying the hammer across two objects; then striking it in the center with a much smaller mallet. The indentations and the splinters were proof of that particular process. Crooks wanted the law to think of mallets; not of electrical machines.

Through these conclusions, The Shadow had seen the necessity of the connection between the burglary equipment and the mining supplies. Quimble had covered that connection; but The Shadow had gained the truth.

ON the street, The Shadow stopped by a parked cab. He took out a packed briefcase; then instructed the driver to remain outside the Findlay Apartments, to see that nothing occurred that might concern Sanbrook Greel. The cab driver was Moe Shrevnitz, another of The Shadow's agents.

The Shadow knew that Sanbrook Greel knew too much for his own good. He wanted to keep tabs on the old inventor; to prevent complications that might involve Greel.

It was after nine o'clock when The Shadow entered the building where Clayborne's broken strong room was located. This time, The Shadow was cloaked in black. He easily passed a patrolman who was located outside. Entering the empty office beside Clayborne's, The Shadow began an inspection of the wall break.

Powdery surfaces were few. Crooks had done a sharper job here than at the museum. Prentiss Petersham, in his brief scraping, had removed nearly all the vestiges of pulverized mortar that edged the broken bricks. The Shadow's flashlight finished its glimmers as the cloaked visitor moved out into the hall.

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

There was a fire tower dead ahead. Its door was open. The blinks of the flashlight could have been seen from outside. Shielded by darkness, The Shadow moved to the doorway. There he paused, chose an angled position and raised his flashlight half above his head. He pressed the torch's switch.

An odd effect was produced. The position of the light caused The Shadow's figure to throw a silhouette against the opposite wall, by the door of the fire tower. There, like a living shape, rested a hawkish, hatted profile. The Shadow waited two full seconds.

A pop sounded from an alleyway across the street below. A whistle sizzled through darkness. A bullet from an air gun pinged the edge of the flattened silhouette. The light clicked off. The Shadow delivered a mocking laugh from the fire tower, as he whipped forth an automatic.

Footsteps clattered distant in the alleyway. The Shadow replaced the .45 beneath his cloak. Once again, a thrust from the darkness had failed. This time at The Shadow's design. The Shadow had been watching for an outside lurker.

The Shadow's laugh was echoed with a whisper. This aftermath enabled him to calculate new facts. Again he had gained proof that the underworld was deeply concerned in the past two crimes.

That meant thugs and lesser killers as servers of some supercrook.

An indication that Sledge Ringo could be in the game, even though the broken mallet was a blind. The Shadow planned work for the morrow; new trails to track through the bad lands of Manhattan.

There was work, too, for to–night. Unfortunately, The Shadow had not gained the one clue that he needed to prevent a coming crime.

CHAPTER X. MILLION DOLLAR MURDER

NEW morning. New crime.

Clyde Burke was standing within the lower vault room of the Channing National Bank. Daylight was streaming through a yawning opening to a narrow alleyway. Joe Cardona was present, making a grim survey.

"Another mallet job," growled Cardona. "The same as the museum. The same as Clayborne's. The alarm system went on the bum. But look what they had to sledge through! Concrete!"

Clyde noted the stone foundation. The edges were clean. Moldy powder had been erased.

"They grabbed the watchman," added Cardona. "He was upstairs and never heard the hammering. We found him, bound and gagged. No murder this time." Joe paused; then added, growling: "Murder wasn't necessary."

"How much swag?"

Cardona hesitated at Clyde's query; then decided to answer.

"A huge haul, Burke. More than a million! This hole touches the rear wall of the vault. They cleaned out currency and securities."

Clyde followed Cardona upstairs. Other reporters were there, gathered about the president's office. Clyde walked through the door with Cardona, while the other news hounds scowled.

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

Police Commissioner Weston was in conference with bank executives. They had finished questioning the watchman. Another eager informant had gained the floor. Cardona mumbled the man's name to Clyde:

"A teller named Tatnall. He thinks he can tell us something."

"Go on, Tatnall," Weston was encouraging. "What was it that Mr. Moreland said to you?"

"He spoke of clicks, sir," stated Tatnall. "They came from the wall of his office. It's right over the lower vault."

"Clicks!" exclaimed Weston. He swung to Cardona. "That's what Lemand heard at the museum."

The commissioner looked about. He demanded:

"Where is Mr. Moreland?"

"Not here," rejoined the bank's cashier. "He seldom arrives early, commissioner."

"Where does he live?"

"At the Hotel Runnymede."

Weston ordered Cardona and Tatnall to accompany him to his car. Clyde followed along to the street. Cardona motioned him aboard the commissioner's limousine. Weston made no objection; for Clyde had previously proven himself useful.

When they reached the Hotel Runnymede, Weston led the troop into the lobby. The hotel was antiquated and quiet; but a stir was in progress when the group arrived. Some one recognized the police commissioner. The manager hurried over with a statement:

"We just called headquarters, commissioner –"

"About what?" snapped Weston.

"About Mr. Moreland," explained the manager. "We found him five minutes ago. Dead his skull crushed."

Clyde saw a grim look flare upon the police commissioner's face.

"We came here to interview Moreland," declared Weston, sadly. "I suppose our present task is to view the body."

THEY found the dead man sprawled upon the floor of his room. Rufus Moreland had died like Lewis Lemand. His head had been bashed by a heavy missile. Beside the body lay a small, but heavy, table lamp. Its wire had been jerked from the socket. The metal base of the lamp was bloodstained.

"That's the weapon," decided Cardona. "The killer used it like the Aztec mallet. We'll go after finger prints, commissioner."

One hour later, the body had been removed. Weston, dejected, was listening to Cardona's summary. Facts were meager. No finger prints had been found upon the deadly table lamp. All that Cardona could supply was the police surgeon's statement that Moreland had been dead since eight o'clock the night before.

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

Weston decided to quiz Tatnall. The teller's testimony had been postponed because of pressure. Tatnall began with a repetition of his former statements. Then came added information.

"The clicks were muffled when I heard them," informed Tatnall. "Mr. Moreland was leaving; so was I. We had both been delayed because we cashed a check for a depositor. He was in Mr. Moreland's office previously; perhaps he also heard the clicks."

"Who was he?" queried Weston.

"One of our regular depositors," returned Tatnall. "Mr. Elvin Lettigue. He –"

"Elvin Lettigue!" barked Weston. "He was the last man to talk with Moreland?"

"The last to talk with him at any length –"

Weston interrupted with a gesture. He ordered Tatnall to return to the bank. Cardona was to accompany him to Long Island. Again, Clyde Burke managed to go along. He gained an interval to fake a call to the Classic office. Actually, he reported to Burbank.

IT was a forty minutes' ride to Lettigue's. The millionaire's home was pretentious; but not overlarge. It was situated within a large, hedged area. A portly servant answered the door when the arrivals rang. Weston gave his name. The servant hesitated.

"Come, man!" argued Weston. "I wish to speak to Mr. Lettigue. I am the police commissioner."

Weston was facing a gloomy hall as he stared through the front door. A voice boomed suddenly from the semidarkness. It was Lettigue's.

"Ah, commissioner!" called the millionaire. "Come in at once! Bring the others with you. To my study, Daniel."

The servant conducted them to an isolated room that formed a one–story addition to the house. Sunlight was bright through large windows. A cheery blaze sparkled from the fireplace.

"New information?" queried Lettigue, cheerily. He placed his huge cane in a corner and removed hat and gloves. "I am glad that I returned from my morning walk. I hope that you have apprehended the rogue who murdered Lewis Lemand."

"We bring other news," rejoined Weston. "There has been new murder, Lettigue."

Lettigue's face clouded. Clyde took the expression for a look of worryment.

"Another friend of yours has died," added the commissioner. "I refer to Rufus Moreland, vice president of the Channing National Bank."

Lettigue stared in stunned fashion. "Rufus Moreland dead?"

"Yes," affirmed Weston, "and burglars entered the Channing National Bank."

Lettigue did not apparently catch the words.

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

"What's that?" he questioned. "Murderers entered the Channing National? They found Moreland there?"

"Moreland was slain at his hotel," stated Weston, in a louder tone. "Burglars entered the bank. They rifled it as they did the museum."

Lettigue nodded slowly. His heavy tone softened as he spoke.

"Poor Moreland," he declaimed. "He told me that he intended to go back to the bank last night. I saw Moreland, gentlemen, just before he left his office. That was shortly after five o'clock. Just before I came out home."

There was genuineness in Lettigue's tone. Yet Clyde Burke noted a shrewd look on the part of Joe Cardona. The ace was regarding Lettigue's statement as an alibi.

"I intended to remain in the city," mused Lettigue. "Instead, I returned here for dinner. I was tired, after a trip to Albany. I –"

"Tell me something, Mr. Lettigue," interposed Weston. "We are anxious to know about Moreland's actions. Did he mention anything unusual while you were in his office?"

"Not that I recall, commissioner."

"And you are sure that it was only a few minutes after five when you left him? What time did you arrive here?"

CARDONA suppressed a grin. He saw where Weston was leading. Lettigue was about to respond, when his servant entered. The man picked up his master's hat and gloves, then the walking stick. Lettigue swung toward the servant.

"What time did I arrive here yesterday afternoon?" queried Lettigue. "Do you remember, Daniel?"

"It was approximately half past six, sir," returned the servant. "I had not expected you, sir, because of your telephone call. It was half an hour after your arrival until I prepared dinner, sir."

"So I dined at seven –"

"And retired at eight o'clock, sir."

Daniel left the study. Lettigue nodded, as if corroborating the servant's statement. Weston motioned the others from the room. He wanted to confer alone with Lettigue.

Out in the hallway, Cardona grumbled to Clyde.

"The commissioner slipped this time," declared Joe. "He won't get to first base with Lettigue."

"Do you think that Lettigue knows something?"

Cardona shook his head as he heard Clyde's query.

"Can't tell," he decided. "It's fifty–fifty, Burke. That's just the trouble. The commissioner was quizzing him the right way, when Lettigue got the bulge, thanks to that flunky walking in."

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

"Whether one way or the other" Cardona looked about to see that Daniel was not listening close by "Lettigue may be on the level; or he may know something. Whichever the case, he's squared himself for the present. We've got to believe him, whether we want to or not –"

CARDONA broke off. Daniel was approaching to answer the ring of a telephone bell. The call was for Cardona. The ace answered and spoke in short sentences. Daniel departed while Joe was talking. Clyde could make out nothing from Cardona's conversation. When he hung up, Cardona gave the lowdown in an undertone.

"It was Prentiss Petersham," he said. "Calling from the Channing National. He heard about the robbery. He went over there. He slipped me some news that has come out. The bank directors buzzed a bit."

"News about Moreland?"

"Yes. He was sort of a king-pin in that outfit. Handled a lot of special details. Such as the installation of the burglary alarm."

"So no one else knows about it?"

"That's it. The thing looks funny, Burke. You know, we never picked up any dope about the alarm system at the museum, either. I was sort of soured on Petersham, because he didn't know about it. But Petersham had nothing to do with the Charming National."

"Neither did Lettigue."

Cardona shot a quick glance in response to Clyde's remark.

"You've guessed what I have, Burke," he admitted. "Petersham is leery of Lettigue. That's why he called here. I think he wanted to find out what we were doing."

"I'll drop in on Petersham, later. Maybe not until to-morrow. You're right, Burke, when you say that Lettigue had no authority in the Charming National. But don't forget that he was a depositor there. Just like he was a contributor to the Mayan Museum."

"Say! I have a hunch! I wonder if Lettigue ever dealt with that jeweler, Clayborne? That's something I'm going to find out. I'll see Clayborne this afternoon. After I've talked with the commissioner."

Another ring of the telephone bell. This time the call was for Clyde. Presumably it came from the Classic office. Actually, it was Burbank, ordering the reporter off duty. Clyde had scarcely completed the call when Commissioner Weston appeared from the study, accompanied by Elvin Lettigue.

Weston shook hands with the millionaire and thanked him for his statements. That done, the commissioner decided to leave. Cardona and Clyde went with him. Silent in the commissioner's limousine, they rode out by the long front drive.

As they reached the road beyond the hedge, Clyde noted a parked coupe with a man standing beside it. The chap was gazing in the opposite direction; but Clyde recognized him, as well as his car. The arrival was Harry Vincent, another of The Shadow's agents. He had come to keep tabs on Elvin Lettigue.

WESTON said little as they rode into Manhattan. Cardona did most of the talking. The ace mentioned Petersham's call and expressed his views regarding Lettigue.

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

"Learn what you can," suggested Weston, finally. "But be careful for the present. I can't quite figure Lettigue. He is eccentric; which accounts for his behavior. But he is direct in answering questions."

"Except about the clicks," reminded Cardona. "He should have heard them in Lemand's office; and in Moreland's."

"Lettigue is deaf," returned Weston. "He watches the lips of every speaker. He might logically have failed to hear foreign sounds, such as those muffled clicks. We have much to learn, Cardona. Be shrewd with every one."

"Leave it to me, commissioner," vouchsafed Cardona. "I'll use kid gloves. I'll see Clayborne this afternoon. Petersham to-morrow."

"And in the meantime, do not forget your other task. We must find well, the man you heard about last night."

"If we don't locate him soon, we'll use the dragnet."

Both Weston and Cardona had avoided use of a certain name. Clyde knew the man they meant. It was Sledge Ringo. The Shadow had passed that name along to his agents.

After leaving Weston and Cardona, Clyde headed for Mann's office. He knew that he would find new instructions there. For Clyde was sure upon one point. Baffling though the game might be to the law, The Shadow had made progress.

To-day, Clyde felt sure, results would be obtained. The Shadow would find a way to thwart new crime, should it be scheduled for the coming night.

CHAPTER XI. THE DAY'S QUEST

IT was late afternoon when The Shadow strolled from the Pennsylvania Station, wearing a new and different garb. He had the height of Lamont Cranston; but his features were sharper and his manner more brisk. No one would have identified him with his former personality.

The Shadow had just seen Prentiss Petersham off for Washington. That had been accomplished without the lawyer's knowledge. Earlier in the day, The Shadow had visited Petersham as Cranston; after that, he had donned his new disguise.

Petersham had left New York with reliable companions. He was accompanied by three lawyers, who were going to a convention at the capital. They were not scheduled to return until the next afternoon. It was unlikely that Petersham would be able to slip away from his friends during the interim.

From the Pennsylvania Station, The Shadow went to the Findlay Apartments. He found Moe Shrevnitz occupying the hack stand. He opened conversation with Moe, who blinked when he realized that this stranger was his chief. Surprise ended, Moe reported that Sanbrook Greel had not left the building, except to go to lunch. Moe had not observed any conspicuous persons who might have been watching the inventor's apartment.

With Harry Vincent covering Elvin Lettigue, The Shadow needed only a report to cover major matters. He returned to his sanctum. There, he gained a call from Burbank. Harry was still on the job. He had seen Lettigue strolling about the Long Island estate.

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

Burbank added another report. It came from the underworld. Agents of The Shadow were searching for Sledge Ringo. So far, they had not located any trace of the missing dock wallop.

The Shadow left the sanctum shortly afterward. Dusk was gathering; cloaked in black, he formed a flitting figure as he approached a parked limousine. It was Lamont Cranston's car. The Shadow boarded it and awoke Stanley, who was half asleep at the wheel. In Cranston's tone, he ordered the chauffeur to drive him to Twenty–third Street.

Soon afterward, The Shadow appeared momentarily near the front of a dingy building. After that, his course was untraceable until a light clicked within the walls of an old office. The Shadow entered the building and had reached this temporary goal.

He had not come in by the door, for it was cobwebbed and had been unopened for months. The grimy pane of glass bore a name in reverse:

B. JONAS

This office was a blind that served two purposes. The Shadow used it sometimes as an emergency sanctum. Usually, however, it was simply a place where he received messages from certain agents. An envelope was lying on the floor at present. It had come from Rutledge Mann, who had pushed it through the mail chute from the outside hall.

The Shadow opened the envelope. It contained a report from Clyde Burke. The reporter had gone on new duty during the afternoon. He had accomplished excellent results.

Clyde had visited the Greystone Building for a chat with Algar. The technician had gained a list of places where burglary alarms had been permanently installed. The Mayan Museum and the Channing National Bank were both on the list. There were only four other places named. None were important.

This news was valuable. It indicated that only two jobs had been fixed with interior vibrators. Any others would be like the burglary at Clayborne's: accomplished by exterior devices affixed to outside walls.

The unimportance of the additional installations brought The Shadow to a new problem. Had this list given a clue to coming crime, The Shadow might move to meet the criminals. Present circumstances proved that he must work in the dark.

Would minions of some supercrook fare forth again to–night?

That was the question. To answer it, The Shadow, would have to play a long shot. It was possible that Sledge Ringo might be a party to the recent crimes; for Cardona's contact with Dopey Mollen had been a lucky one. Sledge, if in the game, might have been unwary enough to plant one of his own pet mallets, when told to leave a clue at Clayborne's.

Sledge Ringo must be found. By discovering him, The Shadow could settle the matter. If Sledge happened to be involved, a meeting with him could crimp coming crime.

The light clicked off in the dingy office. There was a swish; then silence. The Shadow had left by a secret exit. He had gone to join his agents in their search.

DARKNESS had brought life to New York's underworld. Rats of the night had come from hiding spots to meet with others of their ilk. These were the hours when crime was fostered.

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

None knew it better than The Shadow's agents. There were two who scoured the bad lands: Cliff Marsland, who held a reputation as a killer; "Hawkeye," a wizened–faced prowler who knew every joint where thugs congregated. Both had been busy during the day; both had counted heavily upon nightfall.

Cliff had left the covering of the hangouts to Hawkeye, while he had picked more–open spots. Lately, hoodlums had adopted a mode of mixing with persons who were not criminals, to avoid police observation. Yet they gave themselves away by appearing in groups.

Just off the Bowery was a shooting gallery where thugs might be about. Cliff had chosen that place as a stopping point. He had found it almost deserted; only one customer was engaged in target practice. Cliff was about to walk away when he noticed the gun that the fellow was using.

It was an ordinary .22 of the shooting gallery type, hooked to the counter by a long chain. But the marksman had added a counterweight to the muzzle end of the rifle. The gun showed a waver every time he aimed.

Cliff lounged near the sidewalk and watched the fellow make three consecutive bull's–eyes. The proprietor came over while the customer was detaching the lead weight from the gun.

"Hitting 'em, eh, Shooter?"

A gruff acknowledgment. Cliff recognized the tone; also the customer's face as the man laid the gun on the counter. The marksman was "Shooter" Hoyle, well known for his skill with a revolver.

"What's the idea of the hunk of lead? Ain't them small targets tough enough without it?"

The proprietor put the question affably; but it brought a snarl from Shooter.

"Here's your money, Jake. Lay off the questions!"

"Sorry, Shooter." Jake picked up the coins. "Didn't mean no harm. I was just wonderin' –"

Shooter's face showed an ugly look above the collar of his ragged sweater. Cliff saw beady eyes fix themselves on the proprietor. Suddenly, Shooter decided to become more friendly.

"I been tryin' out a trick rod, Jake," he told the proprietor. "One I ain't been used to. I didn't have no targets; I thought maybe if I worked with one of your rifles, it might give me some idea."

"A trick rod? A revolver?"

"Naw. Sort of a rifle. Bigger than a .22, though. It's well, it's just a gun that some mug slipped in from Germany. I'll bring it down here some day."

A quick thought struck Cliff. There were special air guns of German make that had the power of a rifle. Chances were that Shooter Hoyle was the marksman who had been taking pot shots at The Shadow.

"Be seein' you later, Jake," remarked Shooter. "Don't go squawkin' about that gun of mine. I don't want nobody botherin' me for a look at it."

"So long, Shooter." The proprietor took a chew of tobacco. Then, as Shooter walked away: "Give my regards to Sledge!"

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

SHOOTER had gone less than twenty paces before Jake turned to reload some rifles. Cliff started off on Shooter's trail. This was the chance he had hoped to get. Shooter Hoyle, the lurking marksman, was a pal of Sledge Ringo!

Shooter took to a side street. He reached an old building three doors from a pawnshop. Cliff saw him speak to a lounge near the door; then Shooter darted a look toward the second floor. He started for the next corner. Cliff gave him leeway. When he again tried to gain the trail, he was too late. Shooter had gone from sight.

Nevertheless, Cliff had gained an inkling. That old house near the pawnshop might be Sledge Ringo's hide–out.

A report to Burbank was no easy matter in this locale. Few telephones were available; it was hard to find one that was inconspicuous. Cliff started a three–block journey. On the way, he headed through a blackened alley. This was a place where he might meet Hawkeye.

"Any luck, Cliff?"

A hoarse voice whispered from the gloom. Cliff stopped beside a huddled figure. Hawkeye had been waiting; he had recognized Cliff's step.

"Yeah." Cliff spoke in an undertone. "I saw Shooter Hoyle. He was using a weighted .22 at the shooting gallery. Jake, the fellow that runs it, mentioned Sledge Ringo. I trailed Shooter past a house three doors from Dongy's pawnshop. The house was where he stopped, to talk with some lookout. I should have had you there, Hawkeye. I lost Shooter's trail –"

Cliff paused. He had heard a swish in the darkness. A strange, sinister tone broke the silence. The words were an eerie whisper:

"Instructions!"

The Shadow had arrived; unseen, unheard, he had listened to Cliff's account. Both Cliff and Hawkeye recognized the voice of their chief. Already, The Shadow was forming a plan of action. He knew the terrain which Cliff had mentioned; better even than did Hawkeye, that clever prowler of the bad lands.

"Cover the front entrance –"

These were The Shadow's orders. Together, Cliff and Hawkeye moved from the alleyway. Side by side, they circuted to the street that Cliff had left. Looking back, Cliff strained his eyes. He fancied that he saw a shape glide into a passage behind the row of buildings.

The Shadow was approaching the house from the rear. He was counting upon his agents to watch the lookout, or any others who might be at the front. If that house should be Sledge Ringo's hide–out, The Shadow would certainly uncover the missing dock walloper.

Cliff and Hawkeye reached their stations. Thanks to the darkness of the street, they easily chose crannies across from the beleaguered building where the lookout was pacing slowly back and forth. Tense at their posts, the agents awaited developments.

A break had come. The Shadow intended to use it. With the next quarter hour, The Shadow would settle the question of Sledge Ringo.

CHAPTER XII. CRIME'S LINK

THE rear of the row of houses made a curious formation. One building which The Shadow passed extended ten feet farther than the other, with windows on both sides of the projection. Then came a space of forty feet; after that, a house that had a similar projection.

This was the third from the pawnshop. It was the house that The Shadow sought. The first projecting house had held darkened windows. This one betrayed lights from the back room on the second floor. The illumination trickled through old, broken shutters.

The Shadow chose the far side of the ten-foot projection. His gloved fingers gripped a rough brick surface. He began an upward course that ended only when he reached his goal. The Shadow was an expert at acquiring toeholds. Soft-tipped shoes were silent aids.

A gloved hand pressed the bars of the shutters. They wavered, enough for The Shadow to peer between them. Windows were open within; The Shadow could see the waver of a gas jet. Then came the scraping of a chair. A brawny, middle-sized man came into the light. The Shadow saw a toughened face.

It was Sledge Ringo. The Shadow had sufficient description of the fellow to identify him. Sledge had never carved a heavy reputation as a criminal; but he had done enough to enjoy a place in The Shadow's private rogues' gallery.

The Shadow waited while Sledge paced. He saw the husky turn about and approach the door. The gas flame blinked. Sledge had stepped out into the hall. He was mumbling to some one waiting there. The sound of his voice was audible, but words could not be distinguished.

The shutter proved loose when The Shadow tried it. He muffled its creak as he swung it outward. Then, like a long, thin ghost, The Shadow swung through the open window. Reaching the floor, he drew the shutter closed. Patchy darkness filled a corner by the half-opened door. The Shadow chose that vantage point.

From the hall, Sledge's voice was plain. The husky man was arguing with some comrade.

"They's five of us, ain't they?" Sledge was questioning. "That's two more than we need. Leave Zimmer and Duff on the lookout."

"What's the use of a lookout, Sledge?" was the query. "If there's nobody stayin' here —"

"We don't know what's goin' to happen, Louie. I'm telling you again, three's enough. You've got two down stairs. Move down. I'll join you there."

"What's the lay to-night, Sledge?"

"You'll find out after we start, Louie."

FOOTSTEPS departed. The door opened. Sledge stalked over toward the windows. He opened the drawer of a small table, produced a big revolver. He pocketed the gun and turned toward the gas jet. As he raised his hand, Sledge paused.

A hissed sound had caught his ear. It had the semblance of a whispered laugh, an uncanny challenge that came from somewhere near the door. Sledge showed puzzlement; then his eyes froze in a stare.

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

He had spied The Shadow. Tall, sinister, the cloaked visitant was stepping forward. The gaslight showed a cloaked form, with burning eyes that shone from beneath a hat brim. A gloved fist held a leveled automatic. The muzzle of the .45 yawned almost before Sledge's gaze.

"The Shadow!"

Sledge uttered the words almost without sound. His harsh voice had failed him. Faced by the avenger who hunted down men of crime, the husky crook was quivering.

Fierce words hissed from hidden lips. The Shadow's voice carried a command. Sledge retreated toward the windows. He stopped, his hand upon the shutter opposite the one which The Shadow had opened.

"Speak!"

The Shadow was calling upon Sledge to state his part in crime. The crook snarled. He feared this menacing avenger; yet, like all men of crime, Sledge was bitter in his effort to balk the being who faced him. Gaining sudden fury, he began a forward leap. His hand jostled the loose shutter. As it swung open, Sledge halted.

Burning eyes; leveled .45 they were too much for the crook's nerve. Sledge's lips loosened.

"I didn't bump 'em!" he croaked. "I grabbed the swag –"

He hesitated, unwilling to speak further. The Shadow's gun bulged closer. Sledge sagged backward toward the window.

"I'll talk!" he blurted.

The Shadow's silhouette had reached the wall. It showed as a looming streak of blackness, close by Sledge Ringo's whitened profile. Both The Shadow and his quarry were motionless when the unexpected came.

From yards away, a pop sounded. With it, the whistle of a missile. A cry spurted from Sledge's lips. Staggering sidewise, the crook went toppling to the floor.

A hidden marksman had seen him framed within the window. That sharpshooter had observed The Shadow's silhouette. He had guessed that Sledge was willing to talk. He had aimed a bullet for the squawker.

The Shadow knew the marksman and his weapon. It was Shooter Hoyle, using his special air gun. Practice had increased Shooter's efficiency. He had bagged a human target.

The Shadow also guessed the spot from which the shot had come. There was only one vantage point that could have served. That was the projecting house wall farther down the row. The one that The Shadow had passed on his way to the hide–out.

WITH one bound, The Shadow gained the window. His gun arm pumped, as he blasted shots through darkness. No cry came from the blackened window farther down the row the spot toward which The Shadow aimed. Shooter Hoyle had staged another quick departure.

The gaslight flickered wildly. The door was hurling inward. Halfway through the window, The Shadow turned his head. New invaders had arrived: Louie and the two thugs from downstairs. They had heard Sledge's cry. They had come upstairs on the run.

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

Revolvers barked. Had The Shadow swung about, his rising shoulders would have been clipped by thug–delivered bullets. But only The Shadow's forearm moved. While one hand gripped the window frame, the other fist jabbed inward. As bullets skimmed past The Shadow's head, his steady finger tugged.

Louie sprawled forward on the floor. A second invader staggered. The third sought the shelter of the hall; then scrambled for the stairs as he heard a mocking peal of triumph. The Shadow had followed as far as the door.

Shots blasted from below. For a moment, The Shadow waited. He heard shouts, snarls, then a tumbling noise upon the steps themselves. Cliff and Hawkeye had managed the lookouts. Driving into the house, they had clipped the crook who was heading downward.

The Shadow returned to the spot where Sledge Ringo lay. Sledge had writhed to a reclining position, his back against the center windows. The Shadow drew in the open shutter; all the while, his burning eyes were fixed upon Sledge's face.

The crook was gasping. His lips were muttering words. He needed no further urge to speak. The Shadow's shape was a blur before Sledge's glassy gaze; to the dying man that shape meant some one who would hear a plea for vengeance.

"It was Shooter who got me," coughed Sledge. "Shooter Hoyle the double–crosser! He he was put here to get me if I squawked. Set to bump me if I got in a jam.

"That's what I got what I got for working it the way they wanted. For hauling the swag for making it tough for the bulls. Shooter thought I'd squeal. That's what I'm going to do –"

Sledge's coughs slowed. A spasm wrenched his shoulders as he sagged perceptibly against the wall. For a moment his lips mumbled; his eyes looked sightless as he stared. Then coherence returned.

"The walls was soft," gasped Sledge. "A set–up! It was up to me to plant to plant a sledge –"

"A broken sledge," prompted The Shadow. His tone was quiet. "At Clayborne's."

"At Clayborne's." Sledge tried to nod, as he licked his dried lips. "One of my own sledges. They said said nobody would know the difference. Nobody knew I was in town."

"They said –"

The Shadow's emphasis was on the word "they." Sledge started to define his statement.

"They said it," he panted. "They it was Shooter said it!" Venom glared from eyes that showed a momentary flare. "Shooter Shooter Hoyle! He's the guy to get!"

"And after Shooter –"

The Shadow's words were an encouragement. They ended Sledge's attempt to cover up some one higher. But Sledge's strength was nearly gone.

"There's another guy to get," he managed. "If you if you can find him. Get hold of Jorn. Get hold of Clinton Jorn. He's he's wise. He's in –"

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

A gulp stopped the next word. Faltering, Sledge showed a pained expression. His lips twisted in anguish. His strong–built form caved forward. Hands stretched; then fingers twitched. A sighing gasp slipped from Sledge's lips. The husky was dead.

THE wavers of the gaslight threw ghoulish flickers upon the scene of death. The Shadow was spectral as he rose to full height above the body of Sledge Ringo. Seconds held tense and lingering, as though time itself had stopped with the break of Sledge's last statement.

Then came pounding from the stairs. Shrill whistles from a distance. The law was here. The Shadow knew that his agents had cleared from the vicinity. His task was to follow with speed.

Gloved fingers extinguished the gaslight. A shout bellowed almost from the door of the room. The Shadow, wheeling in darkness, was quick to reach the shuttered window through which Shooter Hoyle had fired his death shot.

The clatter of the shutter brought a hurtling invader through the darkness. Two bluecoats had arrived; one officer was plunging to prevent the escape of an unseen figure, while the other clicked a flashlight from the doorway.

The sequel was brief. Limber arms shot forward to stop the patrolman who had dived for the window. The burly bluecoat was hoisted upward. Then he came staggering back, jolted by a hard jujutsu hold. Sprawling half across the room, he bowled headlong against the officer who held the light.

To the latter, his companion's action was both unexpected and unexplainable. The officer with the light had caught no glimpse of The Shadow. Totally unprepared, he went down beneath the first bluecoat. The flashlight clattered across the floor.

Fuming, the policemen scrambled to their feet. The first mouthed an explanation while the second regained the light.

"Some bird diving out the window; he handed me a haymaker –"

But there were no signs of the mysterious fighter when the officers reached the window and flashed the light below. Only a riding shutter, that swung outward at their touch. The ground showed blankness.

Another policeman had reached the rear of the house. Those above called below. The man on the ground took up a persistent search with his own electric torch. He, too, failed to find traces of the ghostly battler. All that his flashlight showed were flickering shadows, that drifted when the glare came upon them.

ONE of those shadows lived. It was a gliding form that smoothly evaded the searching light. It was The Shadow, making his departure.

Later, near the Bowery; pasty–faced dwellers of the underworld discussed the climax of the raid.

"Some sharpshooters got Sledge Ringo –"

"Yeah. He was croaked when the harness bulls showed up."

"Three other mugs got theirs –"

"Sure! But they ain't piped nothin'."

"Because they don't know nothin'."

"Sledge was the only mug who knowed –"

A vague shape shifted off into the gloom of a tiny alleyway. Further in the depths, a whispered laugh sounded. Toughs heard the echoes; they paused in chilled wonderment. The sound was not repeated.

The Shadow's quest was ended. He had found Sledge Ringo. Though he had failed to bag Shooter Hoyle, he had learned the marksman's identity. He had caught dying words from Sledge's lips. Through them, he had gained crime's link.

Soon, The Shadow would seek Clinton Jorn.

CHAPTER XIII. THE MAN WHO KNEW

THE SHADOW had blocked off crime. That had been accomplished through Sledge Ringo's death. The Shadow, through his thrust, had forced a supercreek to sacrifice one of his most important men. Sledge and his mob had been the swag-getters. They were out. It was easy for The Shadow to deduce the methods of the supercreek, whoever that insidious rogue might be. The schemer had used Sanbrook Greel's electro-vibrators to soften walls for entry. Sledge had been delegated to go through with crimes that he himself had termed a "set-up."

More than that, Sledge had planted fake evidence on one occasion. He had left a broken mallet to indicate that the job had been pure hammer work. Sledge had done that, thinking himself safe because he had a hide-out. He had been willing to bring the trail back upon himself.

Probably because he had been promised a chance of a clean get-away later. But Sledge had been slated for elimination at the finish. His death had come early; that was all.

It was plain how Shooter Hoyle fitted into the picture.

Shooter was a one-man cover-up squad. He had lurked at the museum and at Clayborne's, because Sledge, and the swag-carriers had not had time to completely remove the traces of moldy walls. The supercreek who managed this game had probably supposed that The Shadow would be about. He had stationed Shooter to get The Shadow.

Twice, Shooter had failed. It was likely that he had not covered after the robbery at the Channing National Bank. That job had been cleanly finished. But Shooter had been delegated to another task; the watching of Sledge Ringo. Since Sledge was a weak link in the chain if once discovered the supercreek had been ready to polish him off.

Who was the supercreek?

He was the man who had murdered Lewis Lemand and Rufus Moreland. A fiend who took it upon himself to eliminate important persons who might curb his game because of their knowledge.

He was also the man behind Jerry Quimble, the promoter who had manipulated the Century Burglary Alarm Co. and the Industrial Mining Corporation. Quimble had provided such stooges as Lowring and Brindell. One man might name the supercreek. That possible informant was Clinton Jorn.

The Shadow knew of the investigator. Jorn was a fellow who played his cards craftily, aided by his partner,

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

Dykel. The Shadow's proposition would be to find Jorn, handling this detail so neatly that the investigator would suspect nothing until actually confronted by The Shadow in person. To locate Jorn seemed an easy task.

MORNING, however, brought an obstacle. When The Shadow, guised as Cranston, paid a visit to the office of Jorn and Dykel, he found it closed. Apparently, the partners had found good reason to stay away.

There were three other men who still concerned The Shadow. One was Elvin Lettigue, for the eccentric millionaire could be definitely connected with every place that crime had struck. Despite the fact that those connections were slight ones, The Shadow was keeping tabs on Lettigue, through Harry Vincent.

The second man who needed observation was Prentiss Petersham, for the lawyer had artfully wedged himself into the picture and was goading the law toward action. At present, Petersham could not be watched. He was still in Washington.

Petersham had received a telephone call while The Shadow was in the lawyer's office. That call had concerned the Industrial Mining Corporation. On the surface, it had appeared that the call had come from the handlers of Greel's invention.

To-day, The Shadow had formed another opinion concerning that call. It had been from someone who had merely named the Industrial Mining Corporation. That meant some one who knew facts that lay beneath the surface. Sledge Ringo had named such a man: Clinton Jorn.

Thus, through sheer reasoning, did The Shadow decide upon the actual person who had called the lawyer during the period when The Shadow had been at Petersham's. This conjecture, however, could produce no definite conclusion.

The third man who figured importantly was Sanbrook Greel. No matter how little the inventor knew about the illicit use of his invention, it was certain that Greel must have come under discussion when other persons conferred. Though Greel was a man who sought isolation, he would eventually be drawn into troublesome matters. Therefore, Greel must be watched.

AT noon, Clyde Burke received instructions to post himself outside the little building where the office of Jorn and Dykel was located. In so doing, Clyde relieved The Shadow. At two o'clock, The Shadow as Cranston called upon Sanbrook Greel.

The withered-faced inventor had just returned from lunch. He gave a cordial welcome to the visitor. He seemed pleased when The Shadow told him that he would like to see sterner tests imposed upon the electro-vibrator.

"Is there a chance that you could organize a company?" was Greel's question. "One that would use my equipment for demolition processes?"

The Shadow stated that such might be possible, provided that the Industrial Mining Corporation would supply machines.

"They will be forced to do so," chuckled Greel. "My royalty arrangement will make them sell machines, if the proper price is offered. Come, Mr. Cranston. I shall demonstrate the most rigorous tests."

AT three o'clock, Moe Shrevnitz wheeled up in his cab to relieve Clyde Burke. The reporter had an appointment with Joe Cardona, at headquarters. Though important, that meeting had promised nothing

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

startling. But when Clyde arrived at headquarters, he found Cardona ready for a move.

"I'm going out to Lettigue's," informed Cardona. "You can come along, if you want to, Burke. Providing you're willing to remain outside. I've got a few questions I want to ask Lettigue. I'll tell you about them afterward."

"How soon are you leaving?" asked Clyde.

"In about ten minutes," returned Cardona. "After I've made a few telephone calls."

"I'll go along."

Clyde strolled out and made a call of his own to Burbank. The contact man was prompt with emergency instructions. If Clyde found that the visit at Lettigue's might be a long one, he could signal Harry Vincent to return to town. Harry would take up Clyde's duties in Manhattan.

It was quarter of four when Clyde and Cardona arrived at Lettigue's. On the way, Clyde learned that Cardona intended to stall when he talked with the millionaire. It was probable that the interview would last until six o'clock, for Cardona could spring a bluff that he was waiting for Commissioner Weston to join him.

"I've talked with Clayborne," asserted Cardona. "He had some business with Lettigue once. I'm going to ask Lettigue about it."

"And then?"

"I'm going to talk about the implements that the murderer used. Lettigue saw that Mayan mallet at the museum. Maybe he saw the lamp that was at Moreland's."

"How would that help?"

"Because we're not sure they were actually used to club the victims. Think it over, Burke."

Clyde had previously thought it over.

So had The Shadow. Cardona's new suspicions would be something to report.

OUTSIDE Lettigue's, Clyde saw Harry's car. Leaning from Joe's machine, Clyde flicked a cigarette butt and followed with a hand signal. Harry caught it and responded. Both agents understood. Harry knew that he was to start back to Manhattan and get instructions from Burbank. Clyde knew that Lettigue had not left his driveway.

As they pulled into Lettigue's, Cardona slowed his car. He looked sharply toward the side of the house, then nudged Clyde. The latter saw a squatty, square-shouldered man sliding from a door that led into the house near Lettigue's study. The man darted a hasty look toward the car. Clyde spied a darkish, hard-set face. Then the man was off, heading to a rear gate at the hedge.

"I know that bird," asserted Cardona, as he pulled up in front of the house. "I'd give ten bucks to know what he was out here for."

"Probably to talk with Lettigue," prompted Clyde.

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

"Wise-cracking, eh?" snorted Cardona. "Sure, he was out here to talk with Lettigue. But what about?"

"Who is the fellow?"

"He runs a private detective agency. That's what it amounts to, although he calls himself a special investigator. His name is Clinton Jorn –"

Cardona paused momentarily. He did not notice the sudden interest that Clyde displayed.

"And he has a partner," added Cardona. "Tom Dykel who's a smart bird, too. Not as smart as Jorn, though he –"

They were stepping from the car. Clyde preserved silence as they rang the door bell. There was a long interval. Finally, Daniel, the butler, appeared in answer.

"Mr. Lettigue is not at home," began the servant. "If you care to wait –"

"Not at home?" demanded Cardona. "When did he go out?"

"About a half hour ago, sir."

Clyde sprang a quick one.

"We've been out front for the last half hour," remarked the reporter, shooting a look at Cardona. "It must have been before that when Mr. Lettigue went."

"He went out by the rear wicket," stated Daniel, uneasily. "His car is not kept here. It is in a garage, beyond the back of this estate."

"Going for a trip, eh?" snapped Cardona.

"Only to the village," returned Daniel. "Perhaps to the float, to inspect his new motor boat. He will be back soon –"

"Who went with him? The fellow who was just here?"

Daniel looked blank. He shook his head.

"No one was here to see Mr. Lettigue. Positively no one. If you saw any one on the premises, the person was a trespasser."

"And I suppose," put in Cardona, "that you keep a lookout for trespassers?"

"Usually, sir. But I have been lax to-day. I was busied with work upstairs. I went there just after Mr. Lettigue left –"

"All right." Cardona ended the explanations. "Show us into the study, Daniel. We'll wait for Mr. Lettigue."

THERE was no chance for Clyde to contact Burbank. It was hardly necessary, though, for Clyde had no idea where Clinton Jorn had gone. It was annoying to know that he had spotted the missing investigator. Clyde could only hope that Harry Vincent would have a similar break.

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

His hope was to be realized.

It was nearly five o'clock when Harry arrived outside of Jorn's building to relieve Moe Shrevnitz. He found the hackie leaning from the cab. Moe nudged a thumb toward the building.

"Jorn's in," whispered Moe. "Blew in from somewhere, in a big hurry. His pal's with him."

"Dykel?" queried Harry.

Moe nodded.

"Jorn must have met him somewhere. They were talking a lot when Jorn parked. That's his car over there. He was lucky to grab a space."

Harry entered the building. He went up the stairs and found Jorn's office. He could hear voices buzzing beyond the door. Harry knocked. A tall, slouchy man answered. Harry saw a sharp look on the fellow's long-jawed face.

"Mr. Jorn?" queried Harry.

"No," was the answer. "I'm Mr. Dykel. Step in; maybe Mr. Jorn will see you. What's the name?"

Harry gave it. Dykel stepped into the inner office; held conference; then returned.

"Mr. Jorn will see you."

Harry entered the office to find a squatty, darkish man awaiting him. Jorn motioned him to a chair on the side of the desk. Harry took it, while Jorn eyed the clean-cut countenance of his visitor.

Harry Vincent was calm. He had reached an important goal. It was his task, as an agent of The Shadow, to parry well in the coming conversation with Clinton Jorn.

CHAPTER XIV. THE VITAL HOUR

"YOU came to see me earlier?"

Clinton Jorn shot the question at Harry Vincent. It was plain that the squatty investigator wanted to know if Harry had been calling at the closed office. Harry was ready for such a question. He had talked with Burbank.

That, in fact, was why he had not reached the office ahead of Jorn.

"I stopped by, early in the afternoon." Harry, in giving this reply, was thinking of Clyde Burke as proxy. "But your office was closed –"

"I was out of town," interposed Jorn. "Had a case in Philadelphia. Mr. Dykel was down there with me."

The statement struck Harry as an alibi, even though he did not know that Jorn had been seen recently on Long Island.

"One of us is usually here," continued Jorn, glibly. "You just happened to pick an odd day to call, Mr. Vincent. But since you are here, I would like to know your business. You have a case for me?"

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

Harry nodded.

"I'd like to get inside facts on a certain stock promotion," he told Jorn. "One that concerns some Oklahoma oil wells. A friend of mine invested heavily; but I'm afraid he met up with a gyp concern. Do you handle such investigations, Mr. Jorn?"

"My specialty," replied the investigator. Then, his face furrowing: "That is, Dykel and I have handled a few cases of the sort. When I said it was my specialty, I mean that we have had good results with the few jobs that we have undertaken in that line."

Jorn had glibly covered his first slip. He had mixed in more cases of this sort than he cared to mention. Harry thought of Century Burglary Alarm and Industrial Mining. He was sure that Jorn knew details of how those concerns had been manipulated.

Probably, Jorn had once dealt with Jerry Quimble. Yet it would be difficult to guess Jorn's connection. Jorn was the type of fellow who might be on either side of the fence.

"I have the oil prospectus at my hotel," remarked Harry. "I can bring it here, Mr. Jorn; or perhaps you could have dinner with me. I am stopping at the Metrolite."

Jorn considered. Harry made an added invitation.

"And Mr. Dykel, also –"

"I think we can make it," decided Jorn. He glanced at his watch: "Quarter past five. Well, I'm expecting some telephone calls. Possibly an appointment later. At any rate, Dykel and I should be free by seven o'clock. Would that be suitable?"

"Yes," agreed Harry. "Could you come directly from the office?"

"Pretty near," replied Jorn. "Dykel will probably leave early, to go to the Almeda, where he lives. I could pick him up there in a cab –"

THE telephone bell interrupted. Jorn picked up the receiver. He began a terse conversation.

"Yeah... It's done..." Jorn was emphatic. "Yeah, I meant what I said... No, I haven't changed my mind since our talk. The extra cash has got to come, or I'll queer the deal.

"That's better... Yeah, I figured you'd think it over after what I'd told you... Six o'clock? Sure. I'll be here...Six o'clock..."

Jorn hung up. A satisfied expression showed upon his face. Methodically, he picked up a pencil and opened an appointment book. Harry noted two pages: one yesterday's contained a list of names. To-day's page was blank.

Jorn placed the pencil point in the space beside six o'clock. Harry saw the pencil poise, as if Jorn were about to inscribe a name. Then the investigator thought better. He lifted the pencil from the book, leaving the appointment space nameless. He pocketed the pencil and closed the book.

Dykel was at the door. The tall man's face showed interest.

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

"Was it –"

Dykel stopped, not mentioning a name. Jorn grinned and nodded.

"It was," he replied. "He came through, like I expected. Said he'd been thinking matters over."

"He'll pay the dough?"

"He'd better. You know how easily we could crimp him."

"Sure. If you spilled the word in the right place, it would mean greased skids for –"

Again, Dykel stopped. This time, Jorn had made a warning gesture. To Harry Vincent came the positive thought that he had landed the final trail.

The man who had spoken to Jorn was the fiend who had murdered Lewis Lemand and Rufus Moreland. The same supercrook who had gained huge spoils through crime. Jorn was deep in the game; yet, true to form, he was staying close to the fence.

More money. That was what Jorn had demanded to further the master crook's schemes. He had talked with the fiend himself, to give a final ultimatum.

When had that conference been held? To-day?

Not necessarily. It might have been held shortly after the first crime. Even, in fact, before crime had reared its head. But those considerations were unimportant. The vital matter was that the superkiller was coming here to see Jorn in person, at six o'clock.

The Shadow must be informed at once.

"I'll see you later, Mr. Jorn." Harry had risen. "At seven o'clock. I'll be in the lobby of the Metrolite. And Mr. Dykel –"

"Will be with me. He'll leave earlier. But I'll stop for him at the Almeda. It's near the Metrolite."

HARRY departed. He descended the stairs and reached the street. Moe was still parked beside the curb. Harry slipped the news to the hackie. Moe sped away, while Harry crossed the street. There, Harry found a good watch post in a side-arm restaurant. He ordered coffee and kept watch through the hash-house window.

Harry could see the door of Jorn's building, but not the lobby within. There was only one used entrance, however, so the watching post was a good one. Harry could observe all who entered or departed. He intended to keep vigil until The Shadow's arrival.

Five minutes after Harry had taken his new post, Dykel strolled from the office building and walked westward. Harry guessed that Jorn's partner was en route to the Almeda Hotel.

AT Sanbrook Greel's, The Shadow was seated in front of a table. He was in the inventor's improvised laboratory, watching vibrators at work within slabs of tile. These slabs were of triple thickness. Greel was demonstrating the full worth of his electrical machine.

The inventor was not about. Greel had gone to a storeroom in the basement, to obtain larger slabs of tile. He

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

had warned his visitor not to stay too close to the clamped tiles.

The Shadow had been studying the tiles for more than twenty minutes, observing them from every angle. He looked up as Greel entered, carrying an armful of small, thick oblong slabs.

"Any cracks yet?" queried the inventor.

"None," replied The Shadow.

Greel glanced at his watch and shook his head in disappointment.

"Half past five," he stated. "We started this experiment an hour ago. It should have brought results by this time."

Click click

Tiles cracked. One minute followed; then another pair of cracks sounded their arrival. Greel stopped the motor.

"That is sufficient," he decided. He unclamped the tiles. "See? One is broken in two places."

"But the other is unbroken," observed The Shadow. "The test is hardly satisfactory."

"I disagree," declared Greel. "Look. I shall show you why."

He found a small slab and a hammer. He drew back his arm and delivered a powerful stroke with the hammer. The drive, though accurate and forcible, did not crack the new tile.

"Now I shall try the one that was under electrical pressure."

Greel picked up the unbroken tile and placed it carefully on the table. He made another terrific smash with the hammer, striking the tile squarely in the middle. The treated slab shattered. Pieces scattered, leaving a heap of powder at the spot where Greel had struck.

"That proves my point," stated Greel. "And now, Mr. Cranston, we can set up these heavier tiles that I finally located in the basement. We shall give them an all-night treatment. Then, tomorrow –"

SOME one was pounding at the outside door of the apartment. Greel showed an annoyed look; then crossed his living room and opened the door. A cab driver was standing in the hall. It was Moe Shrevnitz.

"Sorry," began the cabby. "Guess I got the wrong apartment again. I'm looking for –"

He stopped, pretending that he had suddenly spied the tall form of Lamont Cranston in the doorway.

"Say!" exclaimed Moe. "You're the man I'm looking for! I been sitting out by the avenue with my flag down, waiting for you to come back. The meter's gone past six bucks already –"

"That's right," interposed The Shadow, in Cranston's leisurely tone. "I had forgotten about the matter, my man."

He turned to Greel.

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

"I came in this man's cab from the Cobalt Club," explained The Shadow. "Fearing that you might not be at home, I told the cab to wait. This poor chap had been waiting all afternoon."

"That's all right, governor," put in Moe, apologetically. "Maybe I can make you a special rate for the waiting time."

"Quite unnecessary." The Shadow glanced at his watch. "It is after half past five. I should be going to the club." Then, to Greel: "Of course, you had planned another experiment –"

"That will not matter," broke in the inventor. "My plan, Mr. Cranston, was merely to set up the apparatus so that it could work overnight. It would require only a few minutes to clamp the tiles in place."

"Then you will need me here no longer."

"That is correct."

The Shadow said good–by to the inventor and followed Moe to the street. The cab was waiting outside. The Shadow stepped aboard. He made his first comment as they started away from the apartment house.

"Report."

"JORN'S in his office," explained Moe, through the front window. "Vincent talked with him. Somebody important is due after six o'clock. Vincent is watching."

The Shadow ordered the taxi driver to stop at a drug store. There, The Shadow entered and put in a call to Burbank. He received a more detailed report, that Harry had sent in from the lunch room across from Jorn's. He also gained news concerning Clyde Burke.

Cardona had given up waiting for Lettigue's return. He and Clyde were coming in from Long Island. Clyde had managed to make a call, telling that he had seen Jorn at Lettigue's.

The Shadow returned to Moe's cab. Gloomy dusk was settling. Moe turned on his lights as he swung toward an avenue.

"I'll make Jorn's by six –"

Moe mumbled the prediction as he swung a corner. Then, with a sudden grunt, the cab driver jammed his brakes. A large truck, lacking lights, had rolled suddenly across his path. The truck was making a right turn; Moe a left.

The crash came. The cab careened almost to the point of a turn–over, then righted itself and sideswiped a parked car. Moe held to the wheel and brought the cab to a stop. He looked about for his passenger.

The Shadow had taken a hard jolt, against the door of the cab. He was recovering as Moe helped him to the curb. For a moment, he stood dazedly; then managed a smile, in the fashion of Cranston.

"It's all right, driver. Call another cab for me."

Before Moe could comply, a burly traffic cop intervened. He wanted details, as well as names. The truck driver was blaming Moe Shrevnitz. The policeman wanted The Shadow's statement.

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

It was five minutes before The Shadow had extricated himself from the broil. Carrying a briefcase that he had taken from Moe's cab, he entered another vehicle and ordered the driver to take him to an address near Jorn's office. The new driver ran into a traffic jam.

Minutes had been lost, fully a dozen. The Shadow was forced to bank upon the hope that Jorn's visitor, too, might be delayed until after six o'clock; or that the conference would hold the visitor at the investigator's office.

For six, the vital hour, was striking while The Shadow was still en route to his important destination.

CHAPTER XV. DEATH AFTER DEATH

EIGHT minutes past six. Harry Vincent, staring from the lunch–room window, was doubly dubious.

No one had entered Jorn's building since Dykel's departure. That meant that the murderer had not arrived for conference; it meant also that The Shadow had been delayed.

Harry imagined that Moe Shrevnitz had experienced difficulty in contacting The Shadow. He did not know of the clever ruse that Moe had contemplated and used. It was the accident alone that had held back The Shadow.

Nine after six.

Blackness covered the doorway across the street. Against the angled gloom from the lobby, Harry caught a glimpse of a shrouded figure that momentarily took a human shape, then faded.

It was The Shadow.

Harry's chief had entered. All was well. Harry knew that The Shadow could lurk somewhere to await Jorn's visitor. After that, the game would be The Shadow's.

There was a chance, perhaps, that circumstances would twist so that Jorn would still keep the appointment with Harry at the Hotel Metrolite. The Shadow's arrival was Harry's cue to depart. The agent knew that the chief had lingered at the doorway as a signal. Harry left the lunch room.

ACROSS the street, The Shadow was still in the lower lobby of the narrow building. He had moved past the stairs. He was studying the obscure door that formed a rear entrance to the building.

That door was important, for it might be useful as an exit. Normally, the door should have been locked. But when The Shadow tried it, the door yielded. Leaving the barrier in its present condition, The Shadow moved toward the stairs.

When he reached Jorn's office, he noted something odd. There was no steady light from the space beyond the frosted door that bore the names of Jorn and Dykel. Nothing but a blurred, intermittent crimson that blinked dully through the clouded pane of glass.

The Shadow tried the door. It opened. He stepped into the outer office. All was dark except for that same intermittent glow. The Shadow discovered the source of the faint crimson light. It came from beyond the window of Jorn's inner office.

An electric sign was blinking from beyond the space between the rear street buildings. The Shadow could

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

discern the parapet that ran along the front of the low–roofed garage across the street.

The office looked as though Jorn had left it. The investigator could have left the building also; for that rear door would serve as a passage below. Harry Vincent had slipped in his watchfulness. His station in the lunch room had not given him sufficient view of the building's tiny lobby.

If Jorn had left, he might return. The inner office would make a good waiting spot if The Shadow could find a place of concealment. With this thought in mind, The Shadow entered the inner room; then stopped short.

The Shadow's keen eyes were toward the floor. They spied a whitish shape extending from the end of the desk. The distant electric sign furnished an increase of crimson glow. The Shadow saw that the white thing was an outspread hand.

A flashlight glimmered, focused against the floor. The Shadow stepped past the desk. His disk of light revealed an upturned face. It was a darkish, blood–streaked countenance. The face of a dead man: Clinton Jorn.

A GRIM laugh in the gloom. The Shadow's form, vaguely outlined by crimson glare, became invisible as the distant sign blinked off. The Shadow knew the cause of Jorn's fate. The murderer had kept his appointment.

Six o'clock had brought a man whom Jorn had expected. A supercrook who had expressed willingness to pay the investigator for silence. Instead of money, the fiend had brought death. He had assured himself that Clinton Jorn would never speak.

Again the flashlight, closer to Jorn's head. It revealed a huge gash above the dead man's forehead. Once more a smashing blow had brought death in the same manner as with Lemand, and Moreland.

The telephone was at the edge of the desk. New crimson light from the window showed moisture upon the telephone's base. Again the murderer had left trace of a possible weapon. The moisture was blood. The telephone could be the object that had been employed as a killer's bludgeon.

Another object showed in the ruddy glow. It was Jorn's appointment book. The Shadow had heard of it through Burbank, when the contact man had relayed Harry's report. The Shadow pulled the cord of a desk lamp. He opened the appointment book.

On the left page, he saw a list of names, none of which were familiar. They represented persons with whom Jorn had kept appointments on the day before. Each name was carefully written.

The right page was blank, with one exception. Jorn had expected no visitors until six o'clock. He had started to write a name in that space; but had done no more than make a large dot with his pencil at the lower left of the space itself.

The desk lamp showed opened drawers in the desk. The murderer had lost no time. Arriving at six, he had struck down Jorn. Then he had spent a few minutes snatching away any papers that might have caused trouble, if found.

The appointment book was conspicuous. Had the murderer regarded it as important, he would have taken it along.

Hence, it was obvious that the killer's name would not be found in the book. Nevertheless, The Shadow gave a whispered laugh. That blank page on the right, with its single, penciled dot, conveyed information of its

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

own. To most investigators, it would have been useless. To The Shadow, it held significance.

The Shadow moved toward the chair which Jorn had occupied behind the desk. He had some purpose; from this scene of murder, he intended to make his first important step to overtake the murderer.

As The Shadow stepped between Jorn's body and the window, his tall form was plain against the light of the desk lamp.

It was that fact, itself, that warned The Shadow. Quick to realize his position, he wheeled suddenly, springing straight inward across Jorn's body. The Shadow was not an instant too soon.

A pop sounded from beyond the window. A whistling bullet whizzed past the cloaked figure. Missing The Shadow by a scant inch, the winging slug found the frosted pane of the outer office. Glass shattered.

The Shadow had caught the cord of the desk lamp. While glass still tinkled, he yanked out the light. His free hand whipped forth an automatic. The Shadow knew the source of the shot and who had fired it. Shooter Hoyle was again on the job; the marksman had fired his air gun from behind the parapet of the rear garage.

The window of Jorn's office was wide and low. The Shadow was in darkness, which served as his only cover. Shooter's air gun could no longer serve him. But the sharpshooter was better equipped upon this occasion. Shooter expected to get The Shadow.

Almost with the extinguishing of the desk lamp came a rapid clatter like the rattle of an electric drill. Bullets sizzed through the left side of the opened window. A figure had risen above the parapet, holding a bulky object within the reflected glare of the distant crimson light.

It was Shooter, with a submachine gun. He was using the "typewriter" to spray a stream of bullets from left to right, across the whole space of the window. That hail of bullets would surely down any one who might be in its path. The Shadow had no chance to dive for cover.

He was in the center of the room; sure to be dropped within another second. But The Shadow, when he acted, used split–seconds as time spaces. He punctuated the rattle of the machine gun with a direct stab of his automatic. The big .45 blasted a message straight for the figure on the parapet.

The machine gun stopped as suddenly as it had begun. The electric sign lost its glow, to hide Shooter's form in silenced darkness. The Shadow's bullet had winged home. That lone shot had found Shooter Hoyle before the machine gunner had reached the halfway mark of the window.

Two seconds followed. Again came redness against the sky. It showed a writhing figure half across the parapet, a clinging form that clutched desperately to the dead machine gun. A gargling, cry was audible as the twisting figure loosened. Shooter Hoyle had lost his balance.

A dying wail sounded as the marksman toppled head foremost from the rail. The cry ended as Shooter vanished downward to the street. A thud against cement; the crash of the jouncing machine gun. Shooter's part in crime was ended. Mortally wounded by The Shadow's timely shot, Shooter had gained an abbreviated death through his plunge.

There were shouts from below. Passers–by had heard the machine gun; they had witnessed Shooter's fall. Some had seen flame spurt from the window of Jorn's office. They were gathered about Shooter's body; they were pointing upward. The Shadow, however, was back from the window.

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

He had lifted the receiver of Jorn's telephone. An opened book beside him, he was checking the telephone directory to find the number of the Almeda Hotel. The temporary glow of the electric sign was furnishing the light that The Shadow needed.

The Shadow obtained his number. In a feigned, but important voice, he gave astounding words, that brought blurted answers from the clerk on the other end of the line.

"Find Mr. Dykel," ordered The Shadow. "At once! His life is in danger! Tell him to seek police protection!"

HANGING up the receiver, The Shadow whisked out through the front office. He passed the door with the shattered panel. He reached the lower lobby just in time to hear police whistles from the front street. The law had walled in the rear street; police had decided to enter the front door of Jorn's building.

The Shadow took to the back passage, through the same door that the murderer must have chosen. He anticipated a delay; perhaps serious difficulty, but this time, luck was in his favor. The passage did not lead to the rear street. Instead, it opened into a courtyard that furnished access to an adjacent building.

Five minutes later, The Shadow had stepped aboard a taxi that was parked in a gloomy spot one block away. The drowsy driver did not realize that he had obtained a silent, mysterious passenger. The taxi man merely nodded when a quiet voice from the rear seat gave the destination:

"The Almeda Hotel."

The Shadow was following up the call that he had made. He was close upon the trail of a supercrook whose ways were those of murder.

CHAPTER XVI. THE POSTPONED TRAIL

WHEN The Shadow arrived at the Almeda Hotel, he found the place in uproar. Excitement was apparent as the cab neared the final street; hence it was in the guise of Cranston that The Shadow had alighted.

He knew that murder had been already accomplished; that Jorn's murderer had reached the Almeda before the telephone call. In the lobby, policemen were already on duty. Guests were thronged in obscure corners.

The Shadow had packed his cloak and hat in his portable briefcase. Passing as a chance arrival at the Almeda, he took his place in a corner. He had postponed his trail. There were better possibilities if he remained at the hotel.

It was not long before a police inspector arrived. Afterward, a police surgeon put in his appearance. About half an hour after The Shadow's arrival, a big car pulled up in front of the Almeda. Commissioner Weston stepped from the automobile.

This was the man whom The Shadow had awaited. As Weston came through the lobby door, he ran point-blank into a tall personage who was coming outward. Weston exclaimed recognition.

"Cranston! What are you doing here?"

"Good evening, commissioner," returned The Shadow. "I chanced to be at this hotel when the excitement happened. I supposed that you might be along. Some one spoke of murder."

"Come with me," suggested Weston, grimly. "You can see it for yourself."

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

The invitation was not a surprising one. Ralph Weston and Lamont Cranston had long been friends, though they saw each other but seldom. In fact, Weston had rarely seen the real Cranston. Most of his meetings had been with The Shadow, when the latter was posing as the millionaire.

On other occasions, Weston had taken his friend Cranston to the scenes of crimes; and he was quite glad to do so again. Somehow, Cranston's presence had frequently brought surprising finds, where murder was concerned.

THEY reached a room on the third floor of the Almeda. There they found the dead form of Thomas Dykel. The tall man was lying face foremost on the floor, just inside the unlocked door. The back of his head was bashed and formed a gory sight.

Dykel had been felled by an improvised weapon. The Almeda, an old hotel, was equipped with antiquated fire apparatus. The killer had wrenched the massive nozzle from a fire hose in the outside hall. This implement was lying on the floor by Dykel's body.

Weston introduced The Shadow to the police inspector, a dapper-faced man named Gurney. The inspector gave the commissioner a brief report. Then Weston summed the situation.

"This is the second of two murders," he explained. "The first occurred in the offices of Jorn Dykel. The killer entered there and slew Clinton Jorn. The death instrument in that case appears to have been the telephone that was on Jorn's desk.

"Inspector Cardona was called to that scene and I joined him there. There was gunplay at the office. A dangerous gunman named Shooter Hoyle opened fire from across the street. Some one either Jorn or the murderer managed to snipe Hoyle and tumble him into the street.

"Immediately after the report of Jorn's death, headquarters received a call from this hotel, stating that Thomas Dykel had been found dead in this room. Here, we see that the killer detached the nozzle from the fire hose in the hall. It certainly made a formidable weapon. Dykel must have left the door unlocked. He was easy prey for the unknown killer."

WESTON began a new study of the scene. The fire nozzle showed no finger prints. Weston remarked that the same had been the case with the telephone at Jorn's.

"We are sure of one thing," he told The Shadow. "The murderer is the same man who slew Lewis Lemand and Rufus Moreland. You have certainly read about those deaths, Cranston?"

"There is a similarity," agreed The Shadow, quietly, "but where is the motive, commissioner?"

"Cardona sees one," explained Weston. "Lemand and Moreland were killed because they knew facts that concerned burglaries. Jorn and Dykel could have died for the same reason."

"Yet there has been no new burglary."

"Jorn was a private investigator, whose ways were slippery. Dykel was in his confidence. What is more, Cardona was lucky enough to gain a link this afternoon."

"A link between the crimes?"

"A link that concerned Jorn. Do you happen to know Elvin Lettigue, Cranston?"

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

The Shadow nodded.

"I have seen him at the Cobalt Club," he recalled. "An eccentric sort, Lettigue. What about him?"

"Cardona saw Jorn at Lettigue's this afternoon."

"Did he speak to Jorn there?"

"No. Jorn left too quickly. Lettigue was not at home; nor has he returned. I think there may be —"

The telephone rang. Inspector Gurney answered it. He turned the telephone over to Weston, with the simple comment:

"Cardona."

Weston held a terse conversation. He gave Cardona details of the death at the Almeda. Then he listened to something that Joe had to say. He agreed with Cardona on every point except one. To that, Weston said with a note of finality:

"Don't take Burke with you."

WESTON stood pondering, after the call was finished. Then he looked about. Seeing no one except Gurney, Cranston and the police surgeon, Weston decided to unburden his mind.

First, he brought a flat book from his pocket and scanned its pages, then shook his head.

"I brought this, to study it in the car," he remarked. "It is Jorn's appointment book. But it is blank, so far as to-day is concerned. I left Cardona at Jorn's office; but he failed to find any immediate clues. Nevertheless, he has gained one point.

"Cardona had intended to talk with a lawyer named Prentiss Petersham, who was connected with affairs at the Mayan Museum. Earlier to-day, Cardona called Petersham's office Petersham is an attorney and found that he was in Washington. Cardona left word for Petersham to call headquarters on his return."

Weston paused, to smile in satisfaction.

"Petersham arrived at his office only a few moments ago," declared the commissioner. "He called headquarters; he was transferred to Jorn's office. Cardona told him about the deaths of Jorn and Dykel. Petersham was much concerned. It appears that he knew something about the pair.

"Cardona did not give me details, except that Petersham had first called Lettigue's home for some reason, and had found out that Lettigue had come back to his house. Then Petersham proposed a plan that I told Cardona he could accept."

The Shadow's gaze was keen, although Weston did not notice it. The commissioner was reflective.

"Petersham says that an interview with Lettigue may solve these riddles," continued Weston. "But he also named a man whose testimony may prove important. So much so, that Cardona immediately sent Detective Sergeant Markham up to find the fellow.

"I refer to an old inventor named Sanbrook Greel. Cardona and Petersham are going to his apartment. From

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

there, they are going to Long Island, to meet Elvin Lettigue. I shall proceed there also. If Sanbrook Greel had testimony, it will probably be of a peculiar sort. Petersham says that he is a human oddity."

"He is," remarked The Shadow. "I have met Greel."

"You have?" queried Weston. "What do you know about him? Particularly his inventions? Petersham says they may have some connection with recent crimes. That is what Cardona told me."

"Greel invented an electrical device," stated The Shadow, "that produces remarkable internal vibrations. I have seen the machine in action."

"How recently?"

"This afternoon."

Weston looked incredulous. The Shadow delivered a slight smile.

"Greel wanted to interest me in his invention," he explained. "He believes that it would be valuable in the demolition of buildings."

Weston's eyes narrowed. The commissioner was catching the connection.

"I came here shortly after I left Greel," added The Shadow, in an indifferent tone. "I intended to go back and see him to-morrow. If you wish, commissioner, I can accompany you on the present journey."

"I would appreciate it immensely, Cranston!"

WESTON held brief conference with Gurney. The Shadow strolled across the room and eyed Dykel's body; also the heavy fire nozzle that lay beside it. The nozzle was of brass. Its pointed end tapered to a shape that would have made an excellent hand grip for the murderer.

The Shadow could picture a strong arm delivering a clean blow, wherein the weight of the nozzle figured through its sheer mass. His thoughts ran back to Jorn's telephone; to the lamp at Moreland's; to the Aztec mallet in the Mayan Museum.

He compared them with the broken sledge hammer that had been left at Clayborne's. Had the police known that that clue was a false one, they would have thought the same of these weapons. The Shadow was considering that angle of the case.

His thoughts, however, turned to other features; even though his eyes still looked toward the brass nozzle. The Shadow had postponed his trail because he knew that the murderer could be located later. He held no great regrets for either Jorn or Dykel; for they were crooks themselves. No other persons were in immediate danger; hence The Shadow had seen no need of speed. He had hoped to save Dykel, despite the fellow's character; that failing, he had chosen his present tactics.

Now, into the situation had come a forcing of the issue. Prentiss Petersham, back in New York, had produced the unexpected. Greel had been brought from obscurity at Petersham's wish. Both were going to Lettigue's. Weston wanted his friend Cranston to be there. That pleased The Shadow.

The situation promised an immediate climax to the run of crime. Postponement was ended because of the coming journey. At Weston's invitation, The Shadow was taking up his trail again.

For The Shadow had gained his final conclusions concerning the perpetration of crime. Elvin Lettigue's home was the one place where he wished to go. For there, without a question, The Shadow would confront the man he sought.

The supercreek plotter of burglary, master of insidious murder, would be present at the coming conference. There would The Shadow reveal the man of crime.

CHAPTER XVII. CRIME DENOUNCED

LIGHTS were gleaming at Lettigue's when Weston's car arrived. Parked automobiles were in the driveway. Others had arrived before the commissioner and The Shadow.

Daniel, strained–faced, admitted the arrivals. He conducted Weston and The Shadow into Lettigue's spacious study. There they found Cardona and Markham, seated opposite Elvin Lettigue, whose heavy face showed a glower.

Opposite were two others. Prentiss Petersham, whose eyes were sharp beneath his mopy hair; Sanbrook Greel, his withered face pale, his eyes perplexed.

Lettigue fairly bellowed a welcome when he saw Weston.

"Glad you're here, commissioner!" he roared. "What is this game? A charade of some sort? This upstart" he motioned to Cardona "this bounder has shown the audacity to order me about! Within my own home, mind you! With my dinner turning cold upon the table!"

"You have exceeded your authority, Cardona," rebuked Weston. "I gave you no right to place Mr. Lettigue under technical arrest."

"Wait until you hear the story, commissioner," pleaded Cardona. "I told Mr. Lettigue he'd have to wait here until you came. That was all. This is the time for a showdown."

"Right!" grumbled Lettigue. "That suggestion has my agreement. How about my dinner, Daniel? Is it stone cold?"

"Yes, sir," acknowledged the servant from the door. "I fear so."

"Then heat it up again," ordered Lettigue. "This matter will be settled by the time it is ready. Come, commissioner. Order this subordinate of yours to deliver his comments."

Weston turned to Cardona. "Proceed," he instructed, sharply.

CARDONA hesitated under the commissioner's disapproval. Prentiss Petersham stepped to Joe's rescue.

"I am the one responsible," asserted the lawyer, gruffly. "Let me do the talking, commissioner."

Weston agreed. He turned, saw The Shadow and motioned him to a chair, with the low comment:

"Listen to this, Cranston. You may figure later."

"My story," declared Petersham, "begins with the burglary at the Mayan Museum. It was there that I gained certain suspicions regarding the murder of Lewis Lemand. I wondered if the curator had actually been slain

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

with the Aztec mallet."

"I had the same doubt," put in Cardona. "If you want, commissioner, I can –"

Weston gestured for silence. He wanted Petersham to continue.

"It chanced that I knew Clinton Jorn," resumed the attorney. "He came to my office, voluntarily, soon after I had been to the museum to view matters there. Jorn stated that he would like to work privately on the case. He insisted, however, that I tell no one of his connections."

"Why?"

The query came sharply from Weston. Petersham had a prompt reply. "Because Jorn had a theory," declared the attorney, "that fitted with facts he claimed to know. He told me enough to make me believe that he would be valuable. I realized that if I refused his terms, he might say nothing."

"Go on," decided Weston. "What next?"

"Jorn believed that some electrical device had been used for the destruction of the museum wall," explained Petersham. "He knew of such a contrivance. One that was being marketed by a concern called the Industrial Mining Corporation. Jorn gave me the telephone number of that concern."

The Shadow's lips held the slightest semblance of a smile. This fitted with his final theory of the call that had come to Petersham's office.

"AT Clayborne's," resumed Petersham, "I examined the shattered wall. I found powdery traces about the edges. They fell, as scrapings, when I probed them. I doubted that they had been the result of strokes with a sledge hammer."

"Why did you not mention it?" demanded Weston. "I was there at Clayborne's."

"Jorn again," explained Petersham. "The fellow was parceling information piecemeal. He was doing investigating work independently of my own. I needed to know more before I spoke. Especially about about –"

He paused. It was Lettigue who inserted an interruption:

"About what, Petersham?"

"About the man concerned with murder," snapped the lawyer. "Jorn and I had theories. We wanted proofs."

"Did you get them?" questioned Weston, sharply.

"We did," returned Petersham. "But during the interim, Rufus Moreland met an unfortunate death. I was sorry then that we had not spoken sooner. But I felt that I could still rely upon Jorn; and he was sure that there would be no more deeds of death.

"Here, specifically, is what Jorn learned. Two corporations had been manipulated. One was the Century Burglary Alarm Co.; the other, the Industrial Mining Corporation. Both were operated by one rogue, through some proxy arrangement."

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

"To what purpose?" demanded Weston.

"The Century Burglary Alarm Co. received electro–vibrators," returned Petersham. "It installed them in certain places. In the wall of the museum; in the wall of the Channing National Bank. The one at Clayborne's jewelry establishment could have been planted on the outside."

"Quite true." The agreement came from Greel. The inventor was nodding.

"I know at last why the Industrial Mining Corporation did not want my invention to be introduced in North America."

Greel looked toward The Shadow.

"You saw its operation, Mr. Cranston," reminded the inventor. "You can testify to the efficiency of my machine. My creation, intended for commercial purposes, has been misused. I was disturbed because it was used for drilling mine shafts, a purpose to which it was not suited. My word!" He shook his head. "I would have been outraged, had I known the vile use to which some rogue had put my invention!"

Petersham was impatient. He took the floor as soon as Greel had finished.

"JORN knew too much," stated the lawyer. "So did his partner, Dykel. They were in danger, though they apparently did not know it. Lemand and Moreland were murdered because they knew too much. This evening, when I arrived in New York, I found out that new crimes had been committed.

"The murderer had found out about Jorn's investigation. So he killed Jorn; then Dykel. But the murderer did not know that I had learned so much from Jorn. That left me free to tell all, particularly since my promise to Jorn ended with his death."

"You can name the murderer?"

The anxious query was from Weston. Petersham, towering to his full height, gave prompt response.

"Yes!" The lawyer's tone was fierce. "I can name the man who manipulated two companies to plant the machines in places he wanted them! The man who had Sledge Ringo leave a broken mallet at Clayborne's, to mislead the law! The man who slew Lemand Moreland Jorn Dykel! Who left blind clues at every scene!

"The Aztec mallet," Petersham enumerated. "The table lamp, the telephone, the fire nozzle all were false instruments. While he deceived the law, the murderer boldly and deliberately carried the real implement everywhere he went.

"It is here. In this very house. Not in this room, but somewhere else." Petersham looked shrewdly about; then turned to Lettigue. "Where is that heavy–headed cane of yours, Mr. Lettigue?"

TOTAL hush followed Petersham's words. Then Lettigue came to his feet with a roar.

"You are accusing me?" he stormed.

"You you –"

"Where is the cane?" demanded Petersham. "Produce it, Lettigue!"

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

The millionaire stood fuming. Then he shouted for Daniel.

"Bring my cane!" he ordered. "The large one, Daniel!"

"Yes, sir."

Daniel started away. Cardona bounded after him. They reached the front hall together. When they returned, Cardona was lugging an umbrella stand from which three canes projected. He had stopped Daniel from picking out the canes.

"None of those are the canes," remarked Cardona, puzzled. He looked to see that Markham was watching Lettigue while others crowded about. "These are all light canes."

Greel, more stooped than the others, spied something deep in the umbrella rack. Cardona thrust his arm downward. He came out with two pieces of wood. They represented Lettigue's cane, broken in half.

"Dykel's death did it!" exclaimed Petersham. "Lettigue broke his weapon with the final blow!"

"You fool!" snorted Lettigue. "Fools to accuse me of crime. I was here on Long Island when those men died. I have not carried my heavy cane today."

"Who can prove that you were here?" demanded Petersham. "In the nights when Lemand and Moreland were slain?"

"Daniel can," assured Lettigue. "Ask him –"

"I'll ask him something," broke in Cardona. "Where was Lettigue this afternoon, Daniel. When Jorn was here?"

"Jorn!" bellowed Lettigue. "I never saw the fellow –"

"He came here," insisted Cardona. "Probably to look things over. You spotted him and followed him."

"Nothing of the sort! I was at the boat landing, alone." Lettigue looked scornful. "I go there nearly every afternoon. To-day, I found the place cluttered. Vandals had entered to strew everything about. I stayed there to clear up the boathouse. I like it to be shipshape."

A gargled interruption came from Sanbrook Greel. The outraged inventor was springing forward, shaking an accusing fist.

"YOU rogue!" cried Greel. "You are the one who holds the control of my invention! You grasped my signed agreement. I knew that Brindell was the tool of some one like yourself."

Weston thrust himself between Greel and Lettigue. Petersham gave a quick suggestion.

"Open Lettigue's safe," remarked the lawyer. "See what we find in it. We want documentary evidence. Lettigue, himself, may be able to supply it. Facts about those companies; Greel's agreement."

Lettigue became indignant. He was about to storm a refusal when Cardona, yanking open a desk drawer, came across a paper with a list of numbers.

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

"Here's the combination," announced Cardona. "Shall I open the safe, commissioner?"

"Yes," ordered Weston "if Lettigue gives permission."

"And if he does not," gibed Petersham, "it will be evidence against him." Weston took Lettigue's silence as permission. Cardona went to the safe. The group was tense as Cardona turned the dials. Varied expressions showed on many faces. All were strained except one.

That was The Shadow's. Calm in his guise of Lamont Cranston, the master investigator waited. Though evidence was piling up against Elvin Lettigue, The Shadow knew that twists were coming before this game was ended.

CHAPTER XVIII. THE SHADOW SUGGESTS

THE safe door was opened. Joe Cardona was piling papers upon Lettigue's safe. Prentiss Petersham was examining them with him. Exclamations came from both.

"Stocks in the Century Burglary Alarm Co.!" informed Cardona. "It looks as though Lettigue hold control of that outfit."

"And here are other securities," added Petersham. "The Industrial Mining Corporation belongs to Lettigue."

Lettigue was blurting incoherently, as Markham restrained him. Weston joined in the search of the millionaire's papers. He found a signed paper; it was Sanbrook Greel's transfer of his rights in the electro–vibrator.

"Is this your signature?" queried Weston, turning to Greel. "Do you remember this paper?"

Greel studied the document in the light; then nodded.

Finds were increasing. Among them were transfers of stocks bearing Lettigue's signature. Weston flashed these before Lettigue's eyes. The mustached man became coherent.

"Forgeries!" he stormed. "I never heard of those companies! I never knew of these papers! I could not have told you who Sanbrook Greel was until to–night!"

"You knew Lewis Lemand," reminded Petersham, "and Rufus Moreland."

"And you dealt with Clayborne," put in Cardona. "The evidence is pat against you, Lettigue."

"Cardona is right," nodded Weston. The commissioner turned to The Shadow. "This is positive evidence, Cranston."

"It is unfortunate, commissioner," remarked The Shadow, "that you have not uncovered a sufficient quantity."

"Not sufficient?" exclaimed Weston. "That is absurd, Cranston! We have reams of evidence here –"

WESTON paused; he saw a smile fixed upon The Shadow's thin lips. The commissioner realized suddenly that The Shadow's quiet tone had carried a tinge of irony.

"I get your meaning, Cranston," asserted Weston, soberly. "You are suggesting that perhaps we have found

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

too much evidence. That the case against Lettigue is too tightly closed. But we are dealing with a schemer –"

"One who covered up his trail."

"Yes. Marvelously! Until we uncovered him and found him holding evidence –"

"For which he has no use."

The Shadow's final words reached Lettigue. The mustached man had swung about; he was staring intently at The Shadow's thin lips.

"I saw what you said!" exclaimed Lettigue. "You are right, sir –"

"Pulling the deafness stall again?" queried Cardona, from across the desk. "Watching people's lips, Lettigue? So you can claim you don't hear sounds like clicks?"

Cardona's words apparently passed unheard. Lettigue was shouting his case to Commissioner Weston.

"I never saw those documents before!" insisted Lettigue. "I swear it, commissioner! Incriminating papers, with my signature forged that's what they are! Look at my own cane broken placed here to throw more doubt upon me. This man is right" he shot a grateful look toward The Shadow "right when he said the evidence was too good."

"Claiming the stuff was planted, eh?" demanded Cardona. This time Lettigue heard him, for Cardona was close. "All right, Lettigue. Who planted it?"

For a moment, Lettigue was at loss. Then he saw The Shadow's lips move. Silently, they formed a name. Lettigue pounded the desk with his fist.

"I'll tell you who planted it!" he cried. "The man that you saw here, Cardona. Clinton Jorn!"

LISTENERS stood stunned. Lettigue saw that he had won a point. He concentrated on Cardona.

"You are my witness!" he boomed. "The best one that I could seek. If I had chosen to slay Jorn, why did I not do so while he was here? Bah! I never heard of Jorn! Daniel will tell you that I kept all intruders away from my premises."

This time, Cardona made no objection to Daniel as a witness; nor did any other listener.

"Jorn came here to make trouble for me," insisted Lettigue. "He must have known my ways. He disturbed the boathouse, knowing that I would stay there to clean up. He opened my safe it is an old one that I bought cheaply and he placed those papers there. He could have easily found my cane, to break it."

Petersham jabbed a doubt.

"Jorn broke your cane?" he queried. "As evidence in Dykel's death? Before Dykel was slain?"

"Not in Dykel's death," retorted Lettigue. "It would have served as evidence in Moreland's murder."

"Quite right," agreed Weston. He turned to The Shadow. "Good logic, in my opinion. Do you agree, Cranston?"

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

"It is possible," stated The Shadow. "But if so, Jorn slipped, which is also not unlikely."

"How did Jorn slip?"

"Surely some one must have seen the cane intact since Rufus Moreland was murdered."

"Jorn did slip!" shouted Lettigue. "There you have it! I can tell you who did see that cane." He swung to Cardona. "You saw it after Moreland had died."

Cardona had suddenly become Lettigue's ally. The ace explained his reason. His shift had logic.

"Jorn was a fox," admitted Cardona. "Planting evidence was his specialty. Forgery wasn't beyond him. We never pinned it on Jorn; he wasn't known as a crook but he was slippery. He worked for big dough –"

"Which a crook would pay him," added Lettigue. "A crook a murderer one who wanted a scapegoat."

Prentiss Petersham was standing beyond Lettigue's desk. The attorney was purple as he delivered violent accusations.

"Lettigue is the crook!" denounced Petersham. "Don't let him get away with this trumped-up story! The evidence is against him! Jorn was in his pay. That is why Jorn was here."

"Jorn looked like he was doing a sneak," recalled Cardona. "Burke was with me, commissioner. He saw Jorn, too. I'd like to know who Jorn was working for."

"For me!" roared Petersham. Then, suddenly, he stopped. "No. Jorn was working on his own."

Petersham realized that he had made a slip. Lettigue caught it and glared triumphantly.

"JORN worked for you," he reminded, facing Petersham. "You have admitted it." Then, scornfully: "You were lax in your knowledge of the museum's affairs, Petersham. Odd that you should have been so active in pushing this case against me."

"It was Jorn who –"

"Jorn who worked for you?" Lettigue was triumphant in his sarcasm. "That's so, Petersham. You were close to him, weren't you? Where were you the night that Lemand died?"

"At the theater," began Petersham. "I was –"

He stopped again.

"Alone?" queried Lettigue. "Of course. Alone, too, when Moreland died. Keeping facts to yourself, weren't you? When did you get back to New York, Petersham? At what time this afternoon?"

Petersham restrained himself. He showed a sudden dignity. He faced Commissioner Weston and spoke steadily.

"This afternoon," he declared, "I arrived in New York from Washington. I intended to come in by the Royal Blue; but decided to take an earlier train. I was probably in town at the time Jorn died; but I doubt that I could have reached his office in time to slay him."

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

"Lettigue, however, would have had time to come out here after performing double murder. That is for you to judge. I ask you to examine both cases. That is why I am stating facts impartially. I have told my story. Lettigue has told his. Choose for yourself, commissioner."

The situation was tense. Joe Cardona stood pondering; Sanbrook Greel was looking from Lettigue to Petersham; Commissioner Weston was wordless. Matters had changed about. Dispute had certainly been thrown into the consideration of the evidence just found in Lettigue's safe.

The broken cane lay on the desk. Even its status was uncertain. If Petersham spoke true, that cane might be the death instrument. If Lettigue's claims held, the cane was a blind clue.

Oddly, the burden had shifted suddenly from Lettigue to Petersham; then had become equalized. Petersham's demand for a weighed judgment had made all listeners think deeply. A grim quandary had gripped Commissioner Weston. In his period of doubt, the commissioner turned to the one who had brought the dilemma. He looked to The Shadow.

"I am baffled, Cranston," admitted Weston, frankly. "Obviously, we need some outside clue. Something so valid that it could not have been planted."

"Something," suggested The Shadow, "that concerns Clinton Jorn?"

"Yes!" exclaimed Weston. "That might solve it, Cranston! I have the murderer here before me, have I not?"

"You have," returned The Shadow, calmly.

His eyes were steady as he spoke. They seemed to drill all who met them. Nothing in the gaze of Lamont Cranston showed direct accusation against either Lettigue or Petersham. Both waited, listening as The Shadow spoke.

"IN Jorn's office," came the deliberate words, "you found an appointment book. Jorn had an appointment with the murderer at six o'clock. From it, you may learn the murderer's name."

Weston had yanked forth the appointment book. He was pointing to the page that represented the current day.

"This page is blank," he claimed. "It cannot help us, Cranston. It is totally blank!"

"Not quite, commissioner," observed The Shadow. "But I must leave you, commissioner. My briefcase is in your car. Could I rely upon your chauffeur to drive me to the station?"

"Certainly, Cranston." Weston was nodding as he looked at the book. "Tell him to take you to the station. But about this appointment book. You say that it can hold a clue –"

Weston looked up. He saw the figure of Cranston strolling through the doorway. Again, the commissioner's eyes sought the right page of the book. This time, Weston's gaze narrowed. A tiny mark took his attention.

The Shadow had gone; but he had left the solution to the riddle. It lay in the commissioner's own hands.

CHAPTER XIX. THE MURDERER SPEAKS

"NOT quite blank."

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

Joe Cardona came over beside the commissioner, as Weston muttered the words. Joe saw his chief point to the space to the right of six o'clock.

"See, Cardona?" queried Weston. "There is a long dot. An indentation made by a pencil point."

"As if Jorn was going to write a name," remarked Cardona. "Yes, that would be it. But which name would it be? Lettigue or Petersham?"

Both named were edging closer. Weston motioned them back. Greel watched the two; the inventor seemed to be itching for a spring upon whichever man should be denounced as the rogue.

"Consider the page at the left," suggested Weston, when Cardona had no reply. "Notice how the names are written for yesterday's appointments. All in the same hand."

"Carefully written," added Cardona, "in old-style letters."

"Some have first names at the beginning," remarked Weston, "while others do not. Wait, Cardona! Look at this dot that Cranston mentioned! It is at the extreme left of the space and –"

"In the lower left corner. The very beginning of the line."

A pause. Then Weston mused, "Lettigue. It won't do, Cardona. Jorn would have begun an L higher up and to the right."

"And the same with Elvin," added Cardona. "An E would have started from the same spot as an L."

A satisfied smile showed beneath Lettigue's heavy mustache. The millionaire glanced toward Prentiss Petersham. The lawyer stared at Weston.

"Petersham. P for the first letter." Weston pondered as he spoke. "That would start at the extreme left, Cardona."

"But higher up," reminded Joe. "What's more, Prentiss begins with the same letter."

"Then Petersham is cleared. Unless our theory is wrong."

"We can't get around that dot, commissioner. It's the beginning of a word. Mr. Cranston gave us the right start."

"He agreed that the murderer must be here with us."

"And yet –"

Petersham had duplicated Lettigue's smile. Perhaps, in that mutual relief, both found new inspiration. Cleared temporarily, they were stepping forward. A hoarse cluck came from Sanbrook Greel.

"Stand back!" ordered the inventor. "You heard the commissioner's warning!"

An exclamation came from Petersham, as the lawyer saw the fierce look that had come upon Greel's face. Lettigue echoed Petersham's cry. Weston looked up; so did Cardona. The latter grabbed the appointment book.

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

"Sanbrook Greel!" Cardona pointed as he gave the name. "At the left; at the bottom! Letter S or letter G either fits –"

A SHARP warning from Weston stopped Cardona. Joe stared; the appointment book slipped from his hand and thudded the floor. Greel had made an agile spring to the corner of the room.

From his pocket, the inventor had whipped a stubby revolver.

Greel's face was livid. His hand quivered, but not with nervousness. He was ready to drill the first attacker who might turn in his direction. Hands moved upward. Greel mouthed jeering words; his tone was evil.

"Fools!" clucked the inventor. "My game was plain; yet you blundered! Only chance gave you the final answer. Even that came through a man who missed his opportunities. Cranston himself was deceived.

"He walked out because he did not even know the value of his own suggestion. He probably believed that you are still disputing over Lettigue and Petersham. One, a millionaire who had urge for wealth; the other, a lawyer who could deal in crafty procedure.

"Not an old inventor." Greel's tone was filled with sarcasm. "You did not credit me with lust for gain or ingenuity in crime. That is what I expected; that is why I allowed myself to become conspicuous."

Greel paused. He was close beside a large window, in the deepest corner of the room. He used his free hand to hoist the window sash; but not for an instant did he let his revolver uncover the men before him.

"I had money," chuckled Greel. "Enough to finance crime. I had an aid Jerry Quimble who did his work here; then left the country. He gained control of the small concern I needed, the Century Burglary Alarm Co. He put Lowring, a know–nothing, in charge.

"Quimble formed the Industrial Mining Corporation. He inserted Brindell there, as another dummy figure. I held the stocks; other documents, transferring rights in my invention. I was ready, then, for crime!"

Glee gripped Greel. He continued:

"I needed crooks to aid me. Sledge Ringo served, with Shooter Hoyle as a reserve. Sledge had his band. Those workers were gained through Clinton Jorn. Yes, Jorn was deep in crime, when it was ready. I withheld action until the proper time.

"My electro–vibrators were buried in the walls of the Mayan Museum and the Channing National Bank. We placed one outside of Clayborne's strong room. Two million dollars awaited us! Awaited me" a chuckle "for I shall share it alone."

GREEL stared at Lettigue; then Petersham. His gaze showed contempt.

"I needed a dupe," he stated. "Lettigue served that purpose. Because he had wide acquaintance, but knew few persons closely. I knew Lettigue by sight. I had seen the cane which he always carried. I knew that he frequently remained at home.

"Jorn helped me in picking Lettigue. All we needed then was some one to serve as a crusader. Some one who would steer the law along the path we wanted. That is why Jorn sought Petersham. We had picked Petersham as our proper man. The one to provide Lettigue's undoing.

THE SLEDGE-HAMMER CRIMES

"There were murders. I chose those deeds for myself. To-day" a harsh chuckle "to-day, there was call for two more. Jorn and Dykel. They knew too much. They wanted more money. Jorn waited for a five o'clock telephone call from me.

"I called him at five-fifteen, when I made an excuse for leaving Cranston, who was in my laboratory. I told Jorn that I would see him at six; for I expected Cranston to go before then. He did. I departed also. I murdered Jorn; then went to Dykel's hotel and killed that trouble-maker also."

Greel seemed happy as he gave the details.

"I killed them," he added, coldly, "as I killed Lemand and Moreland. By using instruments that were at hand. I wore gloves; I delivered sure, swift strokes to eliminate the men who might have let out facts too soon. I knew that they might have heard clicks; that they knew that equipment had been bought from the Century Burglary Alarm Co. I did not want investigations to be pushed too rapidly.

"You knew too much, Petersham. But Jorn was taking care of you. So I held the swag, hidden in an old house on Seventieth Street. The keys, the exact address all are in the drawer of a laboratory table at my apartment. But you will never find them.

"Why? Because I designed another trap; one that is here, in this very room. The carpenters who added this study to the house installed my electrical machines with it. They have been working for many months. No clicks to warn you, Lettigue, for this was a special job.

"The electro-vibrators have ceased their operation. But when I press this switch, terrific current will shoot through them. You will see the effect of my invention. All of you will see it. But none will live to talk of it. Destruction will be complete!

"This was an emergency precaution, Lettigue. To bury you alive, that your death would look like suicide, in case occasion demanded. To prove, by your death, that you were the man who schemed for riches. You not I! That is what the world will think. The belief will be that you took others to your own destruction!"

WITH his free hand, Greel swept away a molding from the window frame. A hidden switch showed bare. The inventor's twitchy fingers gripped it. His other fist held its ready revolver. Back to the window ledge, Greel was ready to spring from the window as he pulled the switch.

"Death!" Greel's cluck was gloating. "Death to all of you! Death to every one who shall ever block my schemes!"

His fingers drew, then stopped. A sound from the blackened doorway of the room caused every eye to stare in that direction. Greel saw a shrouded shape upon the threshold. Burning eyes peered from beneath a hat brim. A leveled automatic bulged from a black-gloved fist.

With a maddened cry, Sanbrook Greel aimed his stubby revolver. He gained no chance to press the trigger. The automatic thundered its echoes through the low-built room. Like a stabbing arrow, flame spat toward Greel's stooped body.

A sighed snarl slipped from the murderer's lips, as Sanbrook Greel lost his clutch upon the switch and rolled, curling, to the floor.

The Shadow had returned. With one bullet he had stopped the stroke of doom.

CHAPTER XX. THE MURDERER'S TOMB

RIGID men stared toward their rescuer. Weston and Cardona, Lettigue and Petersham all stood bewildered by their own delivery. With them gaped Markham and Daniel, two figures who had been inconspicuous and helpless throughout the progress of events.

All watched The Shadow's eyes. The burning gaze turned toward the spot where Sanbrook Greel sagged wounded, against the wall. They saw why the murderer still lived. The Shadow had clipped his shoulder, above the hand that had sought to tug the wall switch.

Deliberately, The Shadow had aimed to cripple the murderer and render him incapable of his threatened action. In his collapse, Greel had lost his revolver. The Shadow had not needed a second shot.

Words issued from The Shadow's hidden lips. They were intoned in sinister fashion. Those words refuted Greel's claim that his game had been unknown.

"Your game was plain," affirmed The Shadow. "Plain from the day when it began, so far as it concerned Elvin Lettigue. He had the position of a dupe; not of a murderer. His visit to the museum would have been folly for a slayer."

Greel rallied as The Shadow paused. The murderer was trying to rise.

"I was at the museum," panted Greel. "Planning planning to follow – Rome. I saw Lettigue enter. It it fitted well."

"It served your schemes," hissed The Shadow. "Served them well, that chance visit. But it cleared Lettigue in my eyes. It shifted suspicion to Petersham."

Greel's eyes were bulging, almost with a question.

"To Petersham," repeated The Shadow, "until he cleared himself at Clayborne's when he scraped away all vestiges of powdered edges at the entrance through the wall. Had Petersham been the criminal, he would have no longer needed a man to be on watch.

"Yet Shooter Hoyle was there that night, when I paid a visit. Shooter was unnecessary. His presence drew suspicion from Petersham. Only a slight doubt that remained. One that cleared when I learned of you, Sanbrook Greel."

A light glimmered in the inventor's eyes. Greel, alone, realized the part that The Shadow had played. The visit of Lamont Cranston popped suddenly to his memory.

"YOUR workers were eliminated," added The Shadow. "Partly by my hand. You had no way to continue with your crimes. Lately, you had a visitor. One whom you whisked away from your machine when it crackled. You showed then that you were possessed of latent strength.

"To-day, you smashed a tile with a hammer. A straight, powerful blow so like the death strokes that the resemblance could not pass unnoticed. Your game was ended, Greel. It remained only to implicate the last of the underlings who served you."

"Jorn was one," gurgled Greel. "Dykel, the other. But I slew them. You did not stop me."

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

"I arranged to meet with you and Jorn," intoned The Shadow. "Chance delayed me. But it gave me the opportunity to dispose of your murderous understudy."

"Shooter Hoyle!" gasped Greel. "He should have killed you –"

"But Shooter failed. Failed as he had before. You gained Jorn as a victim; then Dykel. Only because I had not learned that you might wish to slay them. I gained that inkling after I had left you free to act."

Greel was still rising. His good hand was clutching at the window frame. The Shadow made a final statement:

"One planted clue: a broken sledge hammer. Its crudity was as bad as your other false trails, Greel. The implements that you left on the scenes of your crimes were intended to be thought of as false."

"Because of Lettigue's cane –"

"Yes. But they were too obviously placed to have been left as blinds. I knew them for what they were. Instruments of death!"

A CLATTER sounded from across the room. Daniel had seen Greel's hand crawling almost to the wall switch. The servant was opening a window beside him. Markham made a leap for another sash and raised it.

A snarl from Greel. His fingers had reached the switch. They were quivering upon it. Daniel bolted through a window. Markham followed suit. Then stouter witnesses caved. Lettigue and Petersham hurdled to the safety of the outside ground.

Greel's fingers tugged. Weston and Cardona each chose a window. Clustered, the men outside could see the strange scene within. The Shadow was still inside the doorway. He had gauged Greel's strength. The inventor's hand was still trying to pull the switch.

A final snarl. Greel tugged; this time, his grip was certain. As the switch came down, The Shadow whirled. Greel, losing balance, toppled forward toward the dark–cloaked figure that was whirling toward the door.

The scene changed. Splintering crackles came from the walls and ceiling of Lettigue's weakened study. Long flashes of light shot vividly, darting like streaks of man–made lightning.

The entire portion of the low–roofed wing collapsed. Plaster, beams; roofing all came ripping, pouring into a mass of confused debris. From the midst of that shaken structure issued a hideous, dying scream that was muffled by a cloud of rising dust.

Sanbrook Greel had sprung the death trap that he had designed for others. Hoping to take The Shadow to doom, the inventor had made his last convulsive effort. Those who saw the fearful finish stood huddled in the darkness behind Lettigue's house.

When lights had blinked off from the crash, they had seen The Shadow turning. Had he been overlong in his delay? None could tell.

Solemn men circled the house. Weston found his chauffeur standing beside the car. Shaken, the commissioner asked the first question that came to mind.

"Where where is Cranston?"

THE SLEDGE–HAMMER CRIMES

"I took him to the station, sir." The chauffeur stood puzzled. "Then I returned. What what has happened, commissioner? I heard a fearful crash."

WESTON made no reply. Others had reached the car. A half–stunned group, they stood silent, as if listening for a token from the night. It came; a parting call that rescued men had hoped to hear.

From somewhere off beyond the hedge, a long, weird laugh. A sinister, trailing peal of mirth that carried a tone of solemnity. It was an outlandish knell; like a voice from another world, crying its strain above a murderer's tomb.

That laugh carried triumph. Though chilling, it brought confidence to men who had been saved from doom. It meant that their mysterious rescuer still roamed. Master of vengeance, The Shadow would gain future victories over men of crime.

He had timed his departure from the death room. Timed it to the ultimate second. Clear of the falling walls, The Shadow had traveled through the main portion of the house. He had gone his way; in parting, he had declared his final message to those who stood mute beside the house.

Spoils of a supercrook would be regained. False suspicions had been raised from innocent men. Justice had been done.

It was The Shadow's triumph.

THE END